

# Sketchy Depictions – Gendering of Female Politicians in Editorial Cartoons

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## Sketchy Depictions – Gendering of Female Politicians in Editorial Cartoons

<https://www.e-ir.info/2019/05/20/sketchy-depictions-gendering-of-female-politicians-in-editorial-cartoons/>

INEZ GALLAGHER, MAY 20 2019

In recent years, we have seen a proliferation of women in high-profile positions of political power. In advanced democracies, we arguably no longer need to ask, 'where are the women?' (Enloe, 1989) as they are seen, heard and discussed frequently with many regarded as 'household names'. However, in a society in which the lines of the popular and political are becoming increasingly blurred, we must question as to *how* we are shown these women. While misogyny and sexualisation in cartoons has been widely discussed, there appears to be less discussion of or interest in masculine constructions of female politicians or of 'gendering' in political cartoons. By analysing cartoons of British leaders, Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May, this paper will question as to whether the masculinization/feminization of female leaders reflects their political success/failure at a given time. This leads to wider questions of why gendering is such an effective weapon politically, referencing the 'symbolic annihilation' of women and securitising ability of editorial cartoons. It will first provide an overview of editorial cartoons and the literature on the subject. It will then describe the methodology undertaken before analysing four sketched cases of May and Sturgeon at periods of strength and weakness. Findings and themes will then be discussed before concluding that female politicians are 'gendered' by political cartoonists. This reflects their political power in that they are masculinized at times of strength and feminized at times of weakness, contributing to the symbolic annihilation of women by the media and marking female leaders as a security threat to the state.

Editorial or political cartoons are a unique medium of both journalistic communication and artistry. Unlike photography (a feature of all newspapers), political cartoons are performative. They are 'not expected to reproduce reality, but to make an engagement with it' (Hansen, 2011, p. 60) by means of caricature and mockery, allowing for a strangely culturally acceptable direct critique of political leaders and events. Shim (2017) describes them as 'visual sites of contestation...of resistance' (p. 401) meaning that they lend themselves to political analyses. Editorial cartoons are designed as a 'fast-read', impressionable, and provocative form of visual communication, unique in the situation of a mostly verbal medium: 'they exaggerate and distort in a type of publication that values factual accuracy and objectivity' (Seymoure-Ure, 2001, p. 333). A move to the internet, and the circulation of editorial cartoons on social media, has undermined this claim somewhat (Richardson, et al., 2013, p. 61) as cartoons are no longer so embedded in print. This development has, however, undoubtedly increased editorial cartoons' readership and has facilitated greater discussion surrounding them. The power of this de-contextualization is most apparent in the context of 'cartoon controversies', occurring when visuals intended for a local platform are circulated globally (Müller, et al., 2009, p. 37). Although performative, cartoonists do not so much create the negative sketches and associations but draw to reflect existing societal opinion. While editorials present readers with reasoning and evidence, editorial cartoons often present a more vulgar, emotional and cruel comment (ibid, p. 68). Editorial cartoons are designed to convey meaning instantly but they rely on a culturally literate reader or, as Streicher (1967) describes them, 'passionate, stand-taking, mass reading publics' (p. 433), as while the 'visual images may be clear, the meanings attributed to them depend on the social, cultural and political context in which they are perceived' (Müller, et al., 2009, p. 32). This allows for nuance and greater emotive value and means that any analysis of editorial cartoons must look contextually and intervisually. It also means, however, that the meanings of cartoons can be misunderstood or missed. As a politics undergraduate (and thus, not an art historian), I cannot claim to have fully understood or interpreted the cases chosen. There are likely details I have missed. According to Seymoure-Ure, this also means that cartoonists have 'tended to keep quite close to the tastes of their readers, in both the manner and content of their

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drawings' (2001, p. 335) making cartoons generally 'quite a conservative medium' (ibid). While Seymour-Ure's claims may hold true to an extent, in relation to the current political context I refute this for several reasons. Firstly, more and more cartoonists are working freelance and so tend not to draw for a specific media outlet (Morten, 2017). Secondly, this 'conservatism' differs from what others have said about cartoons' deliberately provocative nature and, thirdly, as this essay will go on to discuss, even left-leaning, progressive papers still use femininity as a weapon in cartooning which I would not say reflects 'the tastes' of their readers, however, could be viewed as a reflection of society generally.

As the political world progresses in terms of gender balance, the editorial cartooning world does not. Although assumedly a dated statistic, it was reported that 98.5% of cartoonists in the US were male (Wilkinson, 1981, cited in Gilmartin, 2001, p. 63) meanwhile within the UK, a 'boys' club' of editorial cartoons is still spoken of with women tending not to be given the same platforms as men, particularly in national newspapers. A woman has never been employed full-time as a cartoonist for a national newspaper since most available contracts were signed by men 'employed for life' decades ago (Morten, 2017). This is not to say that female cartoonists do not exist. Their work is published in newspapers (albeit less frequently than that of men), shared on social media and is important within the growing DIY/alternative zine culture, many of which feature a feminist theme such as 'WHIP', a zine of political cartoons exclusively by women. Female cartoonists have also been historically influential, for example, within the Suffragettes movement (ibid). A gender imbalance within the British editorial cartooning world in relation to British political world will, however, mean that editorial cartooning will inevitably be a distorted medium coming from a majority old, white, male voice. This could potentially be why sexism and misogyny tends not to be taken seriously within the editorial cartooning world. Martin Rowson – an editorial cartoonist featured regularly in *The Guardian* – writes that his 'get out clause will always be that anyone who doesn't like it [a cartoon] "can't take a joke"' (Rowson, 2000 cited in Seymour-Ure, 2010, p. 336). This does not seem particularly fair considering men are most often the satirical perpetrators and femininity (or lack thereof) the punchline.

## Literature Review

There is growing interest in the study of images within the fields of politics and international relations, particularly within debate over the relationship between popular and political cultures. The most recent developments in international relations are said to be borrowed from fields such as art history and film studies. Hansen (2011) claims this to be, at least in part, reflective of a growing media or as McNair (2006) puts it, a descent from cultural 'control' to 'chaos' (p. 199), blurring the lines of the popular and the political and moving cultural ownership and circulability from the exclusive press to the public. In relation to editorial cartooning, the mass discussion surrounding cartoonist, Mark Knight, and his racist depiction of Serena Williams is an example of this, with Knight's personal Twitter getting 74,000 mentions overnight post-publication (Herald Sun, 2018). Editorial cartoons are not a new form of media and so, there is a wealth of discourse surrounding them. This section will focus on two developments in the field of visual politics: the idea of 'symbolic annihilation' and of images and security.

In a gender context, there have been several content analyses of women in editorial cartoons, for example, Gilmartin and Brunn (1998) analysed 48 cartoons depicting the 1995 United Nations World Conference on Women. They found that, despite being a conference for and about women, women appeared in editorial cartoons less frequently than men and, when drawn, were sketched in stereotyped, negative images or as weak and silent in relation to men. These findings held true in Gilmartin's later (2001) paper on the sketching of Republican Presidential candidate, Elizabeth Dole, in the 1999 Presidential race. Again, Gilmartin undertook a content analysis – though much larger – looking at 750 images through a gender lens. Again, women tended to receive far less media attention than men and, when they were seen, the cartoons focussed more on personal rather than political issues by stereotyping, sexualising, drawing women as subordinate to men and in private rather than public situations such as a cartoon of Dole in a negligée urging her husband to join her in bed (Gilmartin, 2001, p. 57). Connors (2010) employed similar methods when analysing the 2008 Democrat presidential campaign, comparing depictions of race and gender within the candidates of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Like Gilmartin, they found that Clinton's gender and appearance was used as a negative force. Clinton was regularly drawn in domestic situations, for example, washing up dirty dishes in a kitchen sink, wondering as to whether her outfit compromises her appearance (Connors, 2010, p. 306). Cartoonists also focussed on Clinton's emotionality, questioning whether her femininity rendered her

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inappropriate for the presidency (ibid). These scholars' claims are in-keeping with the idea of the 'symbolic annihilation' of women in the media, referring to the press's systematic 'demonization, trivialisation and personalization' (Gilmartin, 2001, p. 56). Editorial cartoons are an aggressive force designed to demonise and trivialise by referencing personal characteristics. I offer two additional categories of symbolic annihilation of 'domestication' and a more general idea of 'gendering' of women by the media as will be discussed. These analyses were situated in a US context where female politicians in leadership roles or running for office are still largely the exception. This is one of the reasons why my analysis is situated within the UK as, while parliament is nowhere near balanced, female politicians are no longer exceptional nor does the job of a leader come with the same masculinist criteria as that of the President of the United States.

Another development that this essay will borrow from is that of visual security/securitisation. The Copenhagen School states that 'security' – or 'insecurity' – is a verbal construction. Threats are identified by means of vocalisation or verbal articulation (Buzan et al., 1998 cited in Hansen, 2011, p. 53). Several have argued this to be an under-theorisation of securitisation as it ignores those who may be unable to or choose not to speak (eg. Hansen (2000)) and subordinates the visual to the textual. Founding the literature on visual securitisation, instances where images can 'speak security' (2011, p. 51), Hansen argues that the study of images in the context of securitisation requires both an intertextual or intervisual analysis of both the image itself and discourses surrounding it 2011, (p. 53) using the case study of the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis. Cartoon controversy and visual securitisation was also studied by Müller et al. (2009) looking at the responsive publication of cartoons in Iran ridiculing the Holocaust and a series of cartoons of Libyan leader, Khadafi, published in Bulgaria. They claim that cartoons are intended for a local audience and become 'dangerous depictions' when moved from this context and circulated on a global platform (p. 37). Cartoonist, Steve Bell's, engagement with the US 'war on terror' was discussed by Dodds (2007) who found that cartoons were important in creating an anti-war discourse by means of ridicule and subversion of geopolitics (p.174). Like Hansen, Shim (2017) discusses how best to 'read' an image using the case study of a comic produced by the South Korean Ministry of National Defence surrounding the sinking of one of its navy ships, linking 'a "serious" matter of "high politics" with an "unserious" item of popular culture' (p. 399). They argue that comics (and thus visuals) are 'crucial sites of politics and not mere instruments of propaganda' (p. 414) but that comics are a form of visual 'storytelling' whereas cartoons make a visual 'statement' (p. 400). Regarding gender, they find that masculinity and femininity are articulated by means of colour (the male character wearing blue and the female, pink) but also through the characters' behaviour and occupation with the professional (male) and the personal (female) used to metaphorically represent the South Korean government (male) and the 'critical but uninformed, distracted and passive' South Korean public (female) (p.407). Cooper-Cunningham (2017) studies cartoons' securitising abilities in relation to depictions of Donald Trump, discussing the importance of textual/visual interplay in cartoons and of chromatology (2017). Although relying on different methodologies, each of these scholars point to the importance of context and argue that, within politics and international relations, visuals need to be taken seriously. Each, however, is situated within the context and discourse of 'crisis' – Muhammad and subsequent cartoon controversies, 'war on terror', Cheonan sinking and – arguably a crisis – the election of Donald Trump. The analysis that will follow is situated contrastingly within the standard, quotidian, British domestic political sphere and so, the cartoons studied are unlikely to carry with them the same 'shock factor' of those discussed above. Securitisation and gendering is, however, still evident.

## Methodology

The subsequent section of this essay will analyse four editorial cartoons by means of critical visual discourse analysis drawing on suggestions from Hansen (2011). In each, I will look for indications of symbolic annihilation and securitisation. Visuals are always constructed through various practices, technologies and knowledges meaning that a critical approach to address an image's societal meanings and effects is necessary (Rose, 2007, p. 11). Hansen provides a framework for studying visual security of four components with an emphasis on reading intervisually/textually. They state that a study of visual securitisation 'requires an analysis not just of the image as a free-standing entity, but of the ways it is constituted through spoken and written discourse' (Hansen, 2011, p. 51) with this 'discourse' relating to both verbal and visual articulations. First, the image itself is studied, assessing visual elements of composition and colour and any reference the image may make to other discourses. In editorial cartooning, sketches may explicitly reference other artworks, historical events or cultural norms.

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Second, the image's immediate intertext is examined by looking at text immediately surrounding the image. This could reference other images. In this case, this comes from titles and comments surrounding the image and editorial lines of the newspapers which have published it. Because of how the images were sourced, the immediate intertext cannot be examined fully. The images were de-contextualised in the sense that they were viewed outwith the newspaper setting they were mostly published in. Where possible, I discuss general political leanings of newspaper and their likely view of the leader depicted as well as the text of the tweets the images are sourced from.

Third, Hansen advocates analysing the wider policy discourses surrounding the image, looking at domestic and international politics and prevailing political opinion. This essay will, for this, assess the political credibility of those depicted with regard to political events at time of the cartoons' publication.

Fourth, Hansen suggests looking at the texts attributing meaning to the image such as news reports or reactions on social media (Hansen, 2011, p. 55). For the purpose of this paper, this fourth aspect will not be analysed as much other than referencing amounts of comments/ twitter interaction where possible. This is, in part, due to selection of the cases – I specifically did not choose the most controversial images in circulation – for example, Christian Adams' depiction of Theresa May as Christine Keeler described as 'Pure Misogyny' (Norris, 2017) – as I wanted to look more at the systematic and customary gendering within cartoons. Because of this decision, there is little reaction and thus, few other texts attributing meaning to the images.

The gendering of the images will be examined compositionally looking at shapes, bodies and colour as a performative means of expression. In the context of securitisation, Cooper-Cunningham states that disregarding images' colour 'leaves visual securitisation scholarship partial and ignores how colour enacts and (re)appropriates security' (2017). Colours exist naturally and independently but their meanings are socially constructed, marking their use as significant in the 'classification, hierarchisation and marking of individuals, groups, ideas, values, and so on, into specific symbolic categories' (Anderson, et al., 2015, p. 441). Political cartoonists use colour symbolically in the construction and re-construction of gender stereotypes and roles. Colour is also used as to create focal points within images and to contrast.

Where relevant and possible, this essay will aim 'read' the images through Hansen's framework discussed above. As stated, depictions of the UK's Prime Minister, Theresa May, and Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, will be analysed, each at a time of political strength and of political weakness. Since seeing women in positions of power is not uncommon in UK politics, I assumed that cartoonists would not treat their femininity as particularly exceptional. Cases were selected by Google and Twitter searches of the leaders' names alongside the names of famous editorial cartoonists and snowballed from there. Twitter searches were included as most newspapers are not freely accessible online but some cartoonists for example, Peter Brookes, tweet the images in time with the papers' publication. Twitter also shows reaction and engagement with the cartoons. Each image will be analysed individually referencing culturally established gender dichotomies e.g. male/female, strength/weakness, blue/pink followed by a discussion which explores the overall themes, similarities and differences.

## Images

Each of the images are sketches of women (and in all bar the second, men also) that were drawn by men. The dissonance created by the progression of women in the political world but lack of progression in cartooning has led some to wonder as to whether cartoonists actually have 'the graphic repertoire to draw women as other than out-dated, extreme stereotypes, such as the wild-eyed "femi-nazi", the sexually-aggressive seductress, or the witless bimbo' (Gilmartin, 2001, p. 63). The cases selected do not necessarily adhere to the extremity of this rule but an interesting point is raised regarding the inability of (male) cartoonists to draw women without using their gender or feminine status as the satirical force, focusing on the personal rather than the political.

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The first image is a cartoon by Peter Brookes for the Times which plays on gender by showing Theresa May in relation to Jeremy Corbyn (Brookes, 2017). An immediate reading sees May as powerful and aggressive. She sits atop a gun, ready to fire at Corbyn who is contrastingly weak and passive. Compositionally, the leaders are masculinized and feminized. May's control of the gun is indicative of the military and warfare, an overtly masculine field littered with phallic imagery (Cohn, 1987, pp. 693-694). May's command of the arguably phallic gun gives her character a masculine power that she – as a woman – is not expected to have. Thus, May is depicted as socially exceptional and disorderly. May is, however, still feminised by the tropes or stereotypes of lipstick, a pearl necklace and high heels, in this case May's iconic leopard print kitten heels first worn at a Conservative party conference in 2002 and trivialized by the media since (Freeman, 2002; BBC, 2007; Stacey, 2016) for being bold and indicative of a sexual promiscuity unacceptable for a Prime Minister to be exhibiting. Looking at colour, Corbyn is mainly in softer, neutral colours with the white indicative of innocence and purity and thus femininity. May is, contrastingly, dressed in blue symbolising masculinity but also the Conservative party/ its ideology – a key feature of which is that of 'traditionalism' (Green, 2002) which could be taken to mean a more traditional, stereotypically masculinist, system of power that May's femininity does not fit in with. The strong text, 'BRING IT ON!', contrasts and problematizes Corbyn's more feminine look and position. May, contrastingly, is silent. May is also drawn with a sort of witch-like wickedness, perhaps adhering to the 'femi-nazi' image as discussed by Gilmartin (2001). Tensions between the leaders' masculinity and femininity are created with both leaders drawn as only partially meeting their genders' expectations.

Looking intervisually, the image could be relating to the iconic image of the 'tank man' of Tiananmen Square, a still un-identified rebel protester who stood and repeatedly blocked a row of tanks with his body at a pro-democracy demonstration in Beijing in 1989 (Widener, 1989). The 'tank man' has become an anonymous, universal symbol of resistance and, in this image, makes May's aggression (and thus, masculinity) even more obvious.

The immediate intertext would have been that of The Times, the paper that published the cartoon. This cannot be analysed but, the paper is known to have a more right-wing political leaning. They endorsed the Conservative party in the 2017 General Election and so, I assume that the immediate intertext would be praising May over Corbyn. The Times has a high readership and the tweet from which I sourced the image generated 5 comments, 54 retweets and 89 likes. It is, therefore, assumed that the image was seen widely in various contexts.

The political context of the image is that of a 'snap' UK General Election announced on the 18th of May 2017 by May with the intention of gaining a stronger Conservative majority in parliament to ease Brexit negotiations (BBC, 2017). It was predicted that this would be a success for May with pollsters predicting as much as a 10-point lead and a 74-seat majority (Watts & Rentoul, 2017). Therefore, the image was created and can be read within a context of May's political success.

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The second image is a cartoon by Chris Riddell for the Observer (Riddell, 2018) playing on femininity by depicting May as Miss Havisham, an icon of failed womanhood from Charles Dickens' novel, 'Great Expectations' (1861). May is drawn as an old, fatigued, undesirable woman, embodying a socially 'inappropriate' femininity. She is witch-like with feminine tropes of pearls and lipstick. Her clothes and skin are a slightly yellowed white. White generally refers to femininity, innocence, virginity and purity but the yellowing or dirtying of this posits May as a flawed, failed woman. To her right is an equally old, cobwebbed wedding cake held up with decaying pillars. The words, 'TORY BREXIT', are printed on the lowest tier, clearly a play on May's 'Strong and Stable' mantra. On the cake are tropes of previous Conservative governments – Cameron and pigs and Thatcher with a pearl necklace and a handbag. The background of this is black, with the only light on the image coming from a candle with the text, 'PEOPLES VOTE' burning brightly. The text, 'NO EXPECTATIONS', refers to the lack of hope in Brexit negotiations and in May, herself as a leader. The image appears to be drawn within a private, domestic setting. Her seated position is indicative of an absence of strength.

The character of Miss Havisham is a spinster and, thus, a failed, disordered woman. Jilted by her fiancé and unable to move on, she spends days in her wedding dress. The 'jilted' aspect is interesting as it depicts Havisham as passive rather than active in her undoing, the calling-off of the wedding was not her decision thus, May can be read as passive within this cartoon and in Brexit negotiations – a powerless political leader.

The cartoon was first published in the Observer. It was sourced from the Guardian (a sister paper) online which republished the cartoon with the title, 'Theresa May waits...and waits for Brexit' and subtext, 'Like Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham, the prime minister sits alone and unloved' (Guardian, 2018) making explicit reference to Dickens' character. The papers are left-leaning and so their negative image of May is unsurprising, however, their generally progressive outlook – particularly on gender and woman's issues marks the attack on May's femininity as more unexpected than that of The Times. At time of writing, the image was shared 1,320 times and commented on 1,798 as well as being viewed by Observer's readers.

The political context of this image is that of May's failure and lack of credibility as Prime Minister in terms of the political instability and crisis of Brexit. At time of publication, the European Union had just agreed to May's Brexit deal only for it to be met with hostility and disapproval from MPs of all parties and from the public (Peter & Hawkins, 2018).

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The third image is of Nicola Sturgeon in relation to Ed Miliband drawn again by Peter Brookes for The Times in the run up to the 2015 General Election (Brookes, 2015). The cartoon shows Sturgeon in a mothering role, affectionately holding on to a newborn Miliband at the door of number 10, playing on ideas of both the public and the domestic spheres as while we are aware of what happens outside number 10 the public are kept away from negotiations/happenings within. The positioning of Sturgeon and Miliband just outside assumes that, although they have public importance, aspects of their real relationship remain hidden and private. Sturgeon wears a saltire ring on her ring finger, implying that baby Miliband is a product of and subservient to Sturgeon and Scotland, with Sturgeon enacting appropriate femininity by having a child within wedlock. The floral print on Sturgeon's top is feminine while the yellow is symbolic of freshness and optimism. The text featured, 'LABOUR PAINS...' adds to the image's representation of Miliband as a newborn and Sturgeon as a mother. Although likely an image with the intention of trivializing Miliband rather than Sturgeon, its satirical force comes from Sturgeon's 'acceptable' femininity as a mother, how this doesn't necessarily fit into a political environment, and how humorous it is that Miliband could need 'looking after' by a woman.

The image was found on Twitter and so, its intended immediate intertext cannot be examined. The Times are, however, generally right-leaning, backing the Conservatives in the election. They have high readership so it is likely that the image was circulated widely. On Twitter, the image got 103 retweets, 50 likes and 13 public replies.

The image is situated in the political context of the 2015 General Election and pre-election negotiations between Labour and the SNP – specifically, Ed Miliband ruling out a potential Labour/SNP coalition but leaving open the potential for an informal deal (Watt, 2015). From an intervisual perspective, the image plays on similar themes to that of a Conservative poster of a small, and thus powerless, Miliband in Alex Salmond's pocket that was published in the same election (Perraudin & Mason, 2015) but uses the character of Sturgeon, and her femininity, as the comic aspect. The image is not in the context of political weakness of Sturgeon herself but more in that of perceived political strength of the Conservatives compared with Labour and the SNP combined.

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The fourth, and final, image is of Nicola Sturgeon and David Cameron at a urinal (Kamensky, 2015). The image was sourced by google searches, is currently unpublished and is available to buy online. However, its intention as an editorial cartoon remains the same as with the other images. Immediately, Sturgeon is seen to be matching, if not outdoing, Cameron's masculinity by her position at a urinal, facing the wall while Cameron is worriedly facing her, embarrassed. The context of the image is within the public rather than the domestic/private. Cameron wears a grey suit whereas Sturgeon wears a top with a saltire and a kilt. Both are immediately symbolic of Scotland and of Sturgeon's position as First Minister yet, kilts are not traditionally worn by women. They are symbolic of Scottish masculinity and historic strength. The cartoon still features the typical feminine trope of high heels which appear out of place. This contrast is elaborated by the colours of Sturgeon's clothes, the masculine blue and the more feminine red, symbolic of love and seduction. The politicians are drawn with equal height even though Sturgeon is propped up by heels.

Unlike the other images, this cartoon was not published by any newspapers and is now unlikely to be so as Cameron is no longer relevant. It is unlikely that this cartoon has been widely circulated and seen – perhaps because of the controversial nature of its gendering. It, therefore, cannot be studied intertextually and the politics of the cartoons intended paper is unknown. However, the masculine depiction of Sturgeon compared with Cameron's embarrassment leads me to believe that it was drawn with a kind of admiration of Sturgeon, as if she (although a woman) is now equal to – if not manlier than – the men of British politics, confidently and unashamedly displaying her manhood next to Cameron who was, at the time, the most powerful man in the UK, as Prime Minister.

The cartoon was published online on the 8th of May 2015, the day after the 2015 UK General Election where the SNP recorded a historic landslide victory by winning 56 out of the 59 Scottish parliamentary seats (Kerr, 2015). This positioned Sturgeon as the leader of the third largest party in Westminster and a much stronger oppositional force to Cameron than was previously expected of the SNP.

## Discussion

In each of the cases discussed, a deliberate 'gendering' of the female politicians is a noticeable satirical tool. Masculinisation at a period of political credibility and feminization at a period of weakness is recognizable. In images 1 and 4, May and Sturgeon are drawn in the public sphere coloured in blue, publicly exhibiting their superior penis size to that of the male leaders. This masculinization is understood immediately and requires no prior cultural knowledge. The subtlety comes when reading the images intervisually – May is related to the brutal Chinese authorities of 1989 and Sturgeon to wild Scottish warriors – rendering the sketches as relatable to the 'femi-nazi' stereotype as discussed by Gilmartin (2001, p. 63). By nature of being a political woman, the leaders are acting outwith the confines of their defined roles as women – caring in the private/domestic sphere rather than the public/political. Female power brings with it negative connotations of anger, irrationality and confrontation and, to an extent, deceit and witchcraft which publics undoubtedly remain sceptical of, despite advances towards equality. The cartoonists do, however, draw the women in high heels and pearls to highlight their femininity.

Conversely, the women are feminized at times of political weakness, yet images 2 and 3 enact upon this differently. In image 2, May is sketched in a private, domestic setting as the epitomical disordered woman: unloved, undesirable and alone. Her inability to act within the societal confines of femininity reflects her political failure/ flaws. 'Jilted' women become something to laugh at. The cartoon implies that she needs and is waiting for a man to come back and save her just as Miss Havisham is in *Great Expectations*, trivializing her status as a female leader. Image 3 contrastingly depicts Sturgeon as the acceptable woman – married, caring and nurturing – but reduces her to being the carer of a child rather than the state as if to say that motherhood is the most appropriate role for her. She is sketched in relation to Miliband, the irony being that Miliband (a powerful man) requires a woman to look after him. Neither image fits fully into one of Gilmartin's categories, maybe closest to the 'witless bimbo' (2001, p. 63), but a relationship between masculinization/feminization and strength/weakness is identifiable, each helping to maintain a patriarchal structure by trivializing powerful women.

The gendering of Sturgeon and May in editorial cartoons is indicative of 'symbolic annihilation'. The term was first



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coined by Gerbner (1972) regarding the role of violence in television who noted that, '[r]epresentation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation' (p. 43-44, cited in Gilmartin, 1998, p. 535). Since then, the idea has been co-opted by scholars who have applied the theory to women, claiming that 'women have been symbolically annihilated by the mass media's consistent condemnation, trivialization or ignoring of women and women's issues' (ibid). Unlike in Gilmartin's analysis, May and Sturgeon were not 'ignored' by the cartoonists. They were visible focal points. They were, however, drawn in a way that condemned and deprecated their status as powerful women and so, May and Sturgeon were symbolically annihilated by trivialisation, domestication and gendering.

With reference to visual security, the gendering of May and Sturgeon can be read as a securitising move, positing them as a threat to the state for being either too masculine (and thus, threatening and aggressive) or too feminine (and so, out of place in the public, political sphere) to act well as political leaders. Importantly, cartoonists do not draw from their own opinion, they distil a society's political and social opinion into a fast-read image meaning that the securitising force of the images comes from the society's scepticism of female leaders, seeing them as disorderly in relation to cultural perceptions of how women should act.

What this paper has not discussed– due in part to space restrictions – is the gendering of male politicians. I do not deny that they receive similar treatment. In fact, I expect that similar uses of femininity as an indication of weakness, masculinity as strength and generally, gendering as a means of securitisation would be noticeable, again reflecting cultural gender binaries of male/female, political/private, strong/weak and so on.

## Conclusion

This paper has sought to answer as to whether the gendering of a female political leader reflects her political credibility at a given time. By critically analysing discourses and reading four images intervisually, it concludes that – indeed – both May and Sturgeon were feminised at a period of weakness and masculinised during a time of political strength. This is characteristic of the symbolic annihilation of women in the mass media and can be read as a means of 'securitising' the leaders as a threat to the state. Despite having a vastly different politics, role and following, treatment of the leaders in terms of gendering by cartoonists (representative of various newspapers with different leanings) appears to be the same. Since editorial cartoons are drawn to satirise political events, this gendering may be read as a reflection of the public's scepticism of female political leaders.

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Date written: January 2019*