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Throwing Soup at Van Gogh: The Framing of Art in Climate Change Activism by British Mass Media

Abstract: Throwing food at famous paintings (e.g., a can of soup thrown at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*) represents a rather novel form of climate change protest. The study, which is further presented in the article, seeks to unpack the way British mass media cover the food-throwing incidents that take

place in the context of climate change activism. To that end, a corpus of texts was collected on the official websites of the leading British mass media outlets that describe the instances of throwing food at the world-known canvases by climate change activists. The corpus was analysed qualitatively in line with the theoretical premises of i) intermedial ecocriticism proposed by Bruhn (2020a, 2020b) and ii) framing methodology developed by Entman (2007). The results of the corpus analysis indicated that British mass media frame the famous paintings involved in the climate change protest incidents by foregrounding the monetary value of the paintings and the extent of damage done to them concurrently with de-emphasising the climate change component. The findings are further discussed and illustrated in the article.

Key words: art, British mass media, climate change activism, framing, intermedial ecocriticism, throwing food at art

Introduction

In concord with the volume's art-centred research theme, the article presents and discusses a qualitative study that seeks to identify how mass media in the United Kingdom frame throwing food at art objects (typically, iconic paintings by famous artists), which constitutes a relatively recent form of climate change activism. The first incident of throwing food at well-known canvases took place on 14 October 2022 at the National Gallery in London, the UK, when two climate change activists threw an open can of soup at *Sunflowers* by Vincent Van Gogh. Following that, a similar incident was reported to have taken place at the Barberini Museum in Potsdam, Germany, where a group of climate change protesters threw potato puree at Claude Monet's *Grainstacks*.

Whilst these incidents represent climate change activists' protest against political and corporate actors' inaction to undertake proper measures in order to mitigate the effects of climate change (Chen et al., 2022a, 2022b; Fisher & Nasrin, 2021; Kapranov, 2022; Svensson & Wahlström, 2023), they reflect an intricate and multi-layered interplay between climate change activism on

the one hand and famous art objects on the other hand. It should be noted that the world-renowned paintings, which are involved in the food-throwing episodes, are not reflective of any noteworthy anti-climate change agenda. On the contrary, they are associated with the motifs of nature, which is the case of both Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Monet's *Grainstacks*. Whereas it would be more logical to expect throwing food at a canvas that depicts an industrial landscape with numerous factory pipes that pollute the atmosphere with greenhouse gasses, climate change activists' food-throwing acts, evidently, appear to be centred on the famous paintings with climate-change friendly motifs. Conceivably, the food-throwing incidents are not as linear and simple as they might seem and they are in need of a comprehensive scientific investigation.

However, there is no state-of-the-art research that elucidates throwing food at the legendary canvases as a form of climate change activism. Moreover, there is no current research that addresses mass media's coverage of throwing food at the acclaimed paintings. The present qualitative study is one of the first attempts to bridge the existing gap in scholarship by means of providing an account of how British mass media frame throwing food at art by climate change activists. In this regard, the article's author concurs with Chen et al. (2022a, p. 1), who posit that more research is needed in order to understand how climate change protests are discussed, framed and presented in the digital discursive space of mass media. Arguably, shedding light onto the framing of climate change protests associated with throwing food at famous art objects by British mass media could facilitate the general public's awareness of and interest in understanding this novel phenomenon (Chen et al., 2022b). Guided by the aforementioned considerations, the study aims at answering the following research question (RQ):

RQ: How do British mass media frame throwing food at paintings?

Seeking to answer the RQ, the study utilises the following theoretical considerations: i) framing (Entman, 1993), which is applied to the reporting of climate change activism by British mass media and ii) intermediality, which is contextualised in the study under the aegis of intermedial ecocriticism (Bruhn, 2020a). Framing and intermediality, respectively, are briefly outlined in the subsequent sections of the article. Thereafter, the article proceeds

to the present study and discusses its major findings. Finally, the article concludes with the summary of the findings.

Intermedial Ecocriticism: Theoretical Considerations

Conceived broadly, intermediality is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that liaises media with artistic, scholarly and everyday communication (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019, p. 288). In line with Elleström (2010) and Chrzanowska-Kluczewska (2019), intermediality is regarded as a transgression of boundaries between heterogeneous media types (e.g., a poem and a painting) that facilitates the comparison of their form/forms and content. Whilst the present study is informed by the broad interpretation of intermediality (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019; Elleström, 2013), its theoretical underpinnings, however, involve a narrow approach towards intermediality, which, in accordance with Bruhn (2020a; 2020b), is referred to as intermedial ecocriticism. Following Bruhn (2020a, 2020b), intermediate ecocriticism is operationalised in the study as the relationship between the human and non-human that is manifested by means of a critical analysis of literary and media representations, as well as aesthetic practices in the context of the Anthropocene (Bruhn, 2020a, pp. 8–9). In other words, intermedial ecocriticism involves cultural practices that are reflective of human attitudes and behaviours towards the non-human world, for instance, nature, artifacts, art objects, etc. (Geal, 2023, p. 1). It should be noted that in addition to intermediality (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019; Elleström, 2013), Bruhn's (2020a, 2020b) intermedial ecocriticism is informed by a long-standing Anglo-Saxon approach to ecocriticism (Buell, 2001; Heise, 2006; Khan, 2019; Małecki & Woźniak, 2020).

Harkening back to the seminal publications by Elleström (2010, 2013), intermedial ecocriticism as an approach "enables comparisons across different media types, with both form and content issues" (Bruhn, 2020a, p. 13). In terms of the cross-comparison of media types, it should be explained that a critical feature of intermedial ecocriticism is represented by media

transformation, which involves the way "medial content or form is transformed from one medium to another" (Bruhn, 2020a, p. 10), Media transformation, or in Chrzanowska-Kluczewska's (2019) terminology "transmediality"

> [...] covers phenomena non-specific to individual media but occurring across them in an independent way. These are: motifs, themes, archetypes, thematic variants, figuration, and narrativity, which all can be found in the texts of literature, opera, theatre, ballet, film, the visual arts, music (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019, p. 289).

In the context of intermedial ecocriticism, the construal of transmediality can be emblematised by a research article on climate change, which at some point in time is used as the plot of an environmentally-themed film (Bruhn, 2020a). In accordance with Bruhn (2020b), the boundary crossing between the heterogeneous media in the process of media transformation takes time, thus revealing a temporal perspective (Bruhn, 2020b, p. 123). We may illustrate the latter contention by a 17th century Dutch canvas that depicts an idyllic pastoral landscape, which, later, was printed as a 20th century postcard and, currently, published online as a digital image that symbolises eco-friendly sustainability in the news coverage by a 21st century mass media outlet.

Bruhn's (2020a, 2020b) approach towards intermedial ecocriticism and, in particular, his views on media transformation are further explored in the article in the context of food-throwing incidents that are framed by the leading British mass media outlets in their news reports. Prior to doing so, however, the construal of framing needs to be outlined and discussed, since it represents another theoretical and methodological cornerstone of the present study.

The Framing of Climate Change in British Mass Media: Literature Review

Framing is defined as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them

to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, p. 164). Typically, a frame represents the definition of a problem, its causal analysis, and a certain moral judgment in conjunction with the problem (Entman, 1993; Megura & Gunderson, 2022; Kapranov, 2016). According to Entman (1993; 2004), framing creates and points to the importance of certain ideas, and activates "schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way" (Entman, 2007, p. 164). It should be noted that two or more frames that share several identical or similar frame elements are regarded in the literature as mega-frames (Batchelor & Zhang, 2017).

Entman's (1993, 2004, 2007) definition of framing and his methodological approach towards its analysis are extensively employed in research on climate change discourse (Boykoff, 2009; Kapranov, 2018a; Megura & Gunderson, 2022; Shehata et al., 2022). As far as the framing of the issue of climate change in mass media is concerned, the literature indicates that it is framed differently by mass media in the countries that are regarded as the most considerable carbon emitters, for instance, the United States of America and the UK (Boykoff, 2008; Carvalho, 2010; Chen et al., 2022a; Kapranov, 2017a, 2017b; McAllister et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2018). In particular, whilst the faming of climate change in the USA is reflective of accountability, morality, and uncertainty (Newman et al., 2018), and techno-optimism, i.e., the possibility of mitigating and, potentially, solving the issue of climate change by resorting to modern advances in technology (Megura & Gunderson, 2022), British mass media frame the issue of climate change via alarmist and denialist narratives (Boykoff, 2008; Carvalho, 2010; Kapranov, 2015; Schmid-Petri & Arlt, 2016). It has been established that the alarmist narratives are overused by the British mass media outlets, especially tabloids, whose framing of climate change is reflective of impressionistic and emotional coverages that verge on catastrophism and climate fundamentalism (Boykoff, 2009; Kapranov, 2018b; McAllister et al., 2021; Norton & Hulme, 2019; Schmid-Petri & Arlt, 2016).

The framing of climate change as the tonality of doom (Boykoff, 2008) is coupled with that of morality, which is reminiscent of the framings by the American mass media (Newman et al., 2018). In particular, *The Economist* frames Shell's climate-change activities as i) an immoral corporation and

ii) a sinner, respectively, which evoke biblical and religious imagery and de--emphasise Shell's climate-change mitigating measures (Kapranov, 2017a). In terms of the biblical Armageddon in the framing of climate change, Norton and Hulme (2019) argue that British mass media frame the issue as an imminent catastrophe that is associated with "hurricanes, droughts, biodiversity loss, disease, instability and mass migration" (Norton & Hulme, 2019, p. 120).

Another important type of framing of climate change by the British mass media outlets involves technology-based solutions that are applied in order to mitigate the consequences of global warming. One of the solutions is represented by nuclear power (Doyle, 2011) that is framed as a crucial means of climate change mitigation. In this this regard, Doyle (2011) points to nuclear power as a critical component in the range of measures that, potentially, could avert the negative consequences of climate change and, concurrently, facilitate Britain's energy security.

In addition to the technology-based and alarmist framings, Saunders, Grasso, and Hedges (2018) have found that the faming of climate change correlates with the quality and political leanings of the mass medium. Specifically, whilst *The Guardian*, which is Labour-leaning, is seemingly more engaged in covering the issue of climate change, the more conservative *The Mail*, *The Telegraph* and *The Times* are reported to be less sensitive to the climate change agenda. These findings are in line with the prior studies (Kapranov, 2018b) that point to the role of political divide in the framing of climate change by the British mass media outlets. Specifically, the literature (Kapranov, 2018b) indicates that the Conservative-affiliated mass media outlets frame the issue of climate change as a challenge, whereas their Labour counterparts tend to frame it as a battle to be won.

It follows from the literature review that climate change is associated with a wide range of frames in the British mass media outlets that are reflective of alarmist, morally-charged, and technology-related narratives. However, the literature does not specify whether or not there are frames that involve art objects, especially famous paintings, which are used as a focal point of climate change activism. Moreover, there are no published studies that shed light onto how British mass media frame the throwing of food at famous art objects

as a means of climate change protest. The study that is further presented in the subsequent section of the article provides some preliminary insights into this novel phenomenon.

The Present Study

The present qualitative study was informed by Bruhn's (2020a, 2020b) approach to intermedial ecocriticism and anchored in the framing methodology by Entman (1993, 2004, 2007), which was employed in order to untangle the recent phenomenon of throwing food at iconic paintings as a manifestation of climate change protest. Guided by the RQ (see the introductory part of the article), the study sought to pay specific attention to unpacking how the British mass media outlets framed the famous paintings that were involved in climate change-related protests associated with throwing food at the iconic canvases (i.e., Vincent Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Claude Monet's *Grainstacks*, respectively). To that end, the study aimed at collecting and analysing a corpus of online coverages of food-throwing acts by climate change protesters that were reported by the following British mass media outlets – *Metro*, *SkyNews, The BBC, The Daily Mail, The Guardian, The Independent,* and *The Telegraph*. The choice of the mass media outlets was determined by their representation of a wide spectrum of the UK's socio--political life, including tabloids (e.g., *Metro*), the Labour-leaning *The Guardian*, the Conservative Party-affiliated *The Telegraph*, and the national broadcaster *The BBC*.

The corpus of online coverages of the food-throwing incidents was collected by means of accessing the official websites of the aforementioned media outlets. The descriptive statistics of the corpus, presented in Table 1, reflected the total number (N) of words per news coverage, the total number of multimedia (for instance, pictures, videos, etc.) per news coverage, inclusive of the number of multimedia that depicted the iconic paintings that were thrown food at (i.e., *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, respectively). It should be noted that the total number of words in the corpus was calculated

to be 6 546 (mean = 467.6; standard deviation = 104.6), whereas the total number of multimedia elements was estimated at 48 (mean = 3.4; standard deviation = 2.2).

Table 1. The Corpus of the Study

#	Mass Media	N words	N multimedia (inclusive of iconic paintings)
1	*Metro*: the coverage of Monet	371	Total N = 8 (N multimedia with the painting = 6)
2	*Metro*: the coverage of Van Gogh	667	Total N = 6 (N multimedia with the painting = 4)
3	*SkyNews*: the coverage of Monet	334	Total N = 2 (N multimedia with the painting = 2)
4	*SkyNews*: the coverage of Van Gogh	420	Total N = 4 (N multimedia with the painting = 3)
5	*The BBC*: the coverage of Monet	503	Total N = 1 (N multimedia with the painting = 0)
6	*The BBC*: the coverage of Van Gogh	384	Total N = 2 (N multimedia with the painting = 1)
7	*The Daily Mail*: the coverage of Monet	519	Total N = 6 (N multimedia with the painting = 4)
8	*The Daily Mail*: the coverage of Van Gogh	467	Total N = 6 (N multimedia with the painting = 3)
9	*The Guardian*: the coverage of Monet	533	Total N = 1 (N multimedia with the painting = 1)
10	*The Guardian*: the coverage of Van Gogh	625	Total N = 4 (N multimedia with the painting = 3)
11	*The Independent*: the coverage of Monet	354	Total N = 2 (N multimedia with the painting = 1)
12	*The Independent*: the coverage of Van Gogh	571	Total N = 3 (N multimedia with the painting = 2)
13	*The Telegraph*: the coverage of Monet	325	Total N = 2 (N multimedia with the painting = 1)
14	*The Telegraph*: the coverage of Van Gogh	473	Total N = 1 (N multimedia with the painting = 1)

Source: own elaboration

In terms of the methodology, it should be specified that frames in the study were identified on the basis of the qualitative analysis developed by Entman (1993, 2004, 2007) and modified by Kapranov (2018a). In line with the methodology, the texts in the corpus (inclusive of the multimodal elements) were analysed individually by means of applying the following procedure. First, each text was analysed manually in order to identify the presence of key words (e.g., *Sunflowers*), recurring phrases (e.g., climate change) and sentences (e.g., The protesters threw a can of soup at Van Gog's *Sunflowers*) that could point out to the issue, which in our case was represented by the incidents of throwing food at the world-famous paintings in the context of climate change protests. Thereafter, the manual procedure of looking for key words and recurring phrases/sentences was extended by the application of the computer program AntConc version 4.0.11 (Antony, 2022) that enabled the search of each individual text in the corpus for lexical bundles and key words in context (KWIC). A sample of the computer-assisted search for the KWIC "painting" in the coverage by *The Guardian* was yielded in AntConc and outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. An Illustration of the Computer-Assisted Search for the KWIC 'Painting' in *The Guardian*

#	KWIC 'Painting' in *The Guardian*	KWIC Frequency
1	Painting is protected with a glass screen	1
2	Painting is unharmed	2
3	Painting is unlikely to have been permanently damaged	1
4	Painting of the protection of our planet and people?	1
5	Concerned about the protection of the painting	1
6	Painting, which is protected by glass	1
7	What appears to be tomato soup over the painting	1

Source: own elaboration

It should be particularly emphasised that the aforementioned computer-
-assisted search was used as an additional element in the qualitative
analysis. Having obtained the key words and KWIC in AntCont, the author of
the article reread each text in the corpus several times in order to ascertain
how the recurrent words, phrases and sentences were related to such
frame elements as i) the setting or formulation of the issue (e.g., a world-
-renowned masterpiece as a focal point of climate change activists' protests),
ii) the problem's cause (in our case, the reason associated with food-throwing
at), iii) the moral judgement and/or evaluation of the issue (i.e., what kinds of
appraisal and/or emotive components were used by the author of the news
coverage in relation to throwing food at the masterpiece), and iv) a certain
conclusion and/or summary, if any, suggested in the news coverage (for
instance, what kind/kinds of actions and developments could be drawn
from the food-throwing incidents). The final part of the qualitative framing
analysis considered whether or not a particular frame involved a multimodal
visual element, if any. Specifically, each text was examined for the presence
of *Sunflowers* or *Grainstacks* in the immediate textual context of the frame
involved. Particularly, the analysis sought to establish the connection between
the visual element (typically, a picture of *Sunflowers* or *Grainstacks*) and
either the setting of the issue, the cause of the issue, and/or, a certain moral
judgement or evaluation associated with it. The results of the qualitative
framing analysis and their interpretation within the theoretical tenets of
intermedial ecocriticism (Bruhn, 2020a, 2020b) are provided in the subsequent
section of the article.

Results and Discussion

The results of the qualitative framing analysis indicate that the British mass
media outlets frame the instances of food-throwing at *Sunflowers* by Van
Gogh and *Grainstacks* by Monet in a similar manner, which in all the cases
highlights the throwing of food at the famous masterpieces as the formulation
of the issue that is associated with the reasons that pertain to climate change

activism. In other words, it has been established that two elements of framing are identical in all news coverages in the corpus, namely the setting or formulation of the issue and its cause. However, it follows from the analysis that the framing of throwing food at *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, respectively, presumes the difference in the moral judgement and evaluation of the food--throwing instances, as well as in the conclusions and further developments that are drawn from the incidents, which in their turn, define the framing. These findings are illustrated by Table 3 below.

Table 3. The Framing of Food-Throwing at Van Gogh's *Sunflowers* and Monet's *Grainstacks*

#	Mass Media	Framing the Instances of Food-Throwing at *Sunflowers*	Framing the Instances of Food-Throwing at *Grainstacks*
1	*Metro*	"The absence of damage"	"The valuable painting thrown food at"
2	*SkyNews*	"Criminal damage"	"The valuable painting thrown food at"
3	*The BBC*	"The absence of damage"	"The absence of damage"
4	*The Daily Mail*	"The valuable painting thrown food at"	"The valuable painting thrown food at"
5	*The Guardian*	"Criminal damage"	"Climate change protest"
6	*The Independent*	"The valuable painting thrown food at"	"The absence of damage"
7	*The Telegraph*	"The closure of exhibition of the painting"	"The closure of art galleries"

Source: own elaboration

It is seen in Table 3 that the framing of food-throwing incidents differs substantially from the types of frames that are discussed in the prior literature (Boykoff, 2008; Carvalho, 2010; Kapranov, 2018b; McAllister et al., 2021; Norton & Hulme, 2019; Schmid-Petri & Arlt, 2016), which posits that news coverages of climate change-related issues typically involve the alarmist and denialist narratives that entail catastrophism and climate fundamentalism

(Boykoff, 2009; Schmid-Petri & Arlt, 2016). Moreover, whilst the previous studies report the frames associated with environmental risks (Norton & Hulme, 2019) and the role of technology in climate change-related issues (Doyle, 2011), the analysis in the present investigation has not yielded any similar frames (see Table 3). Hence, the framing of throwing food at the famous paintings as a form of climate change activism is considered novel and divergent from the canonical frames that are typically employed by the leading British mass media outlets as far as their coverages of climate change-related issues are concerned.

Having argued that the present findings are novel, let us discuss them through the lens of intermedial ecocriticism in the sense postulated by Bruhn (2020a, 2020b). In order to facilitate the discussion, it seems relevant to group the frames outlined in Table 3 in the following mega-frames (i.e., several different frames that share two or more elements in common):

1) **Damage**, which is comprised of the frames "Criminal damage" and "The absence of damage" by *Metro*, *SkyNews*, *The BBC*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent*;
2) **Value**, which involve the frames "The valuable painting thrown food at" by *Metro*, *SkyNews*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Independent*;
3) **Climate change** protest that is represented by the frame "Climate change protest" by *The Guardian*;
4) **Closure**, which is composed of the frames "The closure of exhibition of the painting" and "The closure of art galleries" by *The Telegraph*.

As previously noted in the discussion, all frames in the present study exhibit two shared elements (i.e., the setting/formulation of the issue and its cause), which, consequently, entails that the aforementioned mega-frames are unified by i) the climate change activists' food-throwing acts at the famous canvases (i.e., the setting of the issue) and ii) the context of climate change protest (i.e., the cause of the issue). It should be observed that the food-throwing acts, however, are embedded into the frames, as well as into the mega-frames, where they are not foregrounded, with the exception of "Climate change protest" by *The Guardian*.

Let us dwell upon the foregrounded, or other terminology salient (Entman, 1993) elements in the mega-frame **Damage**, which involves "Criminal damage" and "The absence of damage", respectively. Whereas "The absence of damage" is foregrounded by *Metro, The BBC*, and *The Independent*, "Criminal damage" is made salient by *SkyNews* and *The Guardian*. In terms of the latter, *the BBC* reports that "one of Van Gogh's famous Sunflowers paintings has been cleaned and is back on display" (2022). In order to amplify the frame, *The BBC*, as well as *Metro,* employ multimodality, which is represented by the photos of undamaged *Sunflowers*, as seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Imagery Used in *The BBC's* Frame "The Absence of Damage"

Source: *The BBC* (https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-63254878)

Unlike *Metro, The BBC*, and *The Independent*, however, both *SkyNews* and *The Guardian* regard throwing food at the paintings as a criminal act and frame it, accordingly, as "Criminal damage." The salience of criminal accountability is further facilitated in the framing by the multimodal elements that emblematise the written text of the news coverage so that the visual content represented by the photographs becomes a stylistic element of the frame (Wozniak et al., 2015). This contention is illustrated by the self-evident photo that is used by *The Guardian* (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. The Imagery Used in *The Guardian's* Frame "Criminal damage"

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/oct/15/just-stop-oil-
-protesters-charged-van-gogh-painting-soup-sunflowers

The visual element in the frame "Criminal damage," which is exemplified by Figure 2, lends further support and saliency to *The Guardian*'s (2022) narrative that foregrounds the climate change activists' criminal responsibility, e.g. "Two women have appeared in court charged with criminal damage to the frame of Vincent van Gogh's painting Sunflowers."

The mega-frame **Damage** is reflective of several interrelated and complex phenomena from the point of view of intermedial ecocriticism (Bruhn, 2020a, 2020b). First, we may argue that the relationship between the human behaviour and the non-human world, represented by art objects (Geal, 2023) is unpacked by the British mass media outlets via a purely anthropocentric approach that emphasises the extent of a physical action, in our case throwing of food at the well-known artifacts (*Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, respectively), that inflicts harm and impairs the artifacts' value. Attributing salience to such human behaviour towards the paintings takes place at the expense of the broader contextual background, which involves the relationship between the humankind and the dramatic changes in the habitat associated

with the issue of climate change. Given the magnitude of climate change, it would be expected, quite logically, that the British mass media outlets would foreground the elements of the narrative associated with climate change protests as the primary focus of food-throwing incidents. Then, consequently, the mega-frame **Damage** would be characterised by a news coverage that communicates to the public at large the extent of damage the humans cause to the non-human environment, first of all, to the global climate system. However, such kind of salience is not present in the framing. On the contrary, instead of becoming a metaphor for the ideal or, leastwise, optimal human habitat (Elleström, 2013), *Sunflowers* as well as *Granstacks* are objectified in the frames (see Table 3) as artifacts whose value and material existence are damaged by the climate change activists. In other words, the symbolic value of *Sunflowers* as well as *Granstacks* as the potential beacons of a "brave new world" of the carbon-neutral future (Grafton et al., 2017) seems to be relinquished or, rather, demoted to the status of a prestigious and expensive artifact on a par with a costly car or any other material object that can be damaged.

The second phenomenon, which is associated with the mega-frame **Damage** and its constitutive frames, is less obvious in the corpus of news coverages. Nevertheless, it evident from the corpus that the British mass media outlets quote the climate change activists, who acknowledged that they were aware of the protective glass over the paintings when they threw food at them (*Metro*, 2022). They also indicated that they knew that the glass would minimise the damage to the canvases (*The Guardian*, 2022). Whilst the climate change activists are reported to exhibit awareness of the potential damage to the paintings from their food-throwing acts, British mass media do not seem to provide evidence of the activists' aesthetic attitudes towards the world--renowned paintings. Moreover, there are no indications in the corpus that refer to the activists' attempts to employ the iconic paintings (i.e., *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*) as an aesthetic means, an epitome of their climate change protest. Conceivably, there is no apparent effort on the part of the climate change activists to incorporate the eco- and climate change-friendly motifs depicted in *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks* as a protest symbol against climate

change inaction. From the perspective of intermedial ecocriticism, we may contend that the activists fail to turn the famous canvases into transmedial symbols (Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, 2019), which could epitomise their activism. To be more precise, the corpus does not contain any mentions of the climate activists' attempts to produce flyers, films, installations or videos with *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, respectively, as the protest symbols. It seems like the masterpieces are used as the focal point of climate change protest due to their status of the world-renowned and highly valuable paintings in the monetary sense of the word.

The aforementioned observation finds further support in the mega-frame **Value**, which is comprised of the frames "The valuable painting thrown food at" by *Metro*, *SkyNews*, *The Daily Mail*, and *The Independent*. Judging from the news coverages, these mass media outlets foreground the monetary value of the canvas by reporting that the climate change activists i) "threw two tins of Heinz tomato soup over the iconic £76 million painting" (*The Daily Mail*, 2022), ii) "threw mashed potatoes at a Monet painting worth $110m in Germany" (*SkyNews*, 2022), and iii) "entered the museum on Sunday wearing high vis jackets before approaching the painting, which sold at auction for $110million in 2019" (*The Daily Mail,* 2022). It seems that the aspects of value associated with *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, for instance, aesthetic, functional, ideological, psychological, symbolic, etc. are backgrounded by the British mass media outlets that assign salience to the monetary aspect of value only, e.g., "Mashed potato thrown over £96,000,000 Monet painting" (*Metro*, 2022). The mega-frame **Value** and the way the British mass media outlets set priorities in reporting the acts of throwing food at the iconic paintings by climate change activists are evocative of the widely spread phenomenon of monetisation of art (Karlsen, 2022) that, seemingly, overrides a host of ethical considerations associated with human responsibility for minimising the causes and mitigating the consequences of climate change (Gardiner, 2010). Proceeding with this contention further, it appears possible to argue that the mega-frames **Value** and **Damage** are indicative of the British mass media outlets' convergence on the view of the acclaimed paintings as valuables that can be damaged.

In contrast to **Value**, however, the mega-frame **Climate change** is characterised by the exclusive focus on the issue of climate change in the narrative, which is found in *The Guardian's* coverage of the food-throwing act at Monet's *Grainstacks*, as seen in excerpt (1) below.

(1) The protesters said the stunt was designed as a wake-up call in the face of a climate catastrophe. "People are starving, people are freezing, people are dying," one of the activists said in a video of the incident tweeted by Letzte Generation (*The Guardian*, 2022).

As far as *The Guardian's* framing is concerned, its attention to the climate change-related agenda supports the prior literature (Saunders et al., 2018), which reports that the faming of climate change correlates with the political affiliation of the mass medium outlet. Given that *The Guardian* is Labour--friendly, it is, perhaps, not surprising that it is concerned with the issue of climate change and climate change activism in contrast to either conservative *The Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph* or a popular tabloid *Metro*. This finding is also in agreement with the prior studies (Kapranov, 2018b), which indicate that British mass media's political leanings play a role in the framing of climate change and climate change activism, respectively.

Unlike *The Guardian* and other mass media outlets, the Conservative--affiliated *The Telegraph* frames the climate activists' food-throwing acts as **Closure**, which is composed of the frames "The closure of exhibition of the painting" and "The closure of art galleries." Judging from *The Telegraph*'s coverages, the issues of climate change and climate change-related protests are marginally mentioned, whilst the priority in the framing is given to the discussion of "the consequences for culture-lovers" (*The Telegraph*, 2022) that may arise at some point in future due to the food-throwing acts at the iconic paintings. Notably, no other moral and/or aesthetic considerations are brought to the fore in **Closure**. Moreover, it is inferred from the frames "The closure of exhibition of the painting" and "The closure of art galleries" that **Closure** is oblivious to the agenda of climate change and, as such, could be described as post-natural in the sense referred to by Oppermann (2016), which

presupposes a certain detachment from nature. Specifically, *The Telegraph*'s major concern rests with the closed museums and art exhibitions, which might remain closed for a long time due to the food-throwing incidents. In this regard, the mega-frame **Closure**, which is present only in the news coverages by *The Telegraph*, seems to converge on the more frequent mega-frame **Damage** and diverge substantially from *The Guardian*'s framing whose focus is on the climate change-related protest.

Conclusions

The qualitative study that is discussed in the article has sought to establish how iconic paintings by Van Gogh and Monet are framed by the British mass media outlets in conjunction with climate change activists' protests. In particular, a specific form of climate change protest is examined in the study, namely climate change activists' food-throwing at the famous masterpieces *Sunflowers* and *Grainstacks*, respectively. Whilst climate change activism that is aimed at political and corporate actors is well-documented (Fisher & Nasrin, 2021; Kapranov, 2022; Shehata et al., 2022; Svensson & Wahlström, 2023), there are currently no published studies that focus on climate change activism associated with the iconic paintings that are exhibited at the world-famous museums. Hence, the present study should be considered one of the first attempts to elucidate the food-throwing phenomenon as a form of climate change activism.

The qualitative framing analysis has revealed that the British mass media outlets frame the food-throwing incidents by emphasising criminal damage or the absence of damage to the paintings, their monetary value, and the fear of closing the galleries and public access to the paintings due to climate change activism. With the exception of the frame by *The Guardian*, the major mass media outlets in the UK, surprisingly, do not seem to frame the incidents of food-throwing at the iconic paintings through the lens of climate change protest per se. This finding is novel, especially in light of the cornucopia of research studies on climate change activism (Buzogány & Scherhaufer, 2022; Chen et al., 2022b; Kapranov, 2022).

The fact that the British mass media outlets de-emphasise the issue of climate change in the series of food-related climate change protests could be accounted by the following suggestion. Presumably, the cultural, historical, aesthetic, as well as monetary values of the famous canvases by Van Gogh and Monet override the climate change-related considerations that are involved in the food-throwing incidents discussed in the article. Paraphrasing a well--known parable "when the cannons are heard, the muses are silent," one may argue that the issue of climate change is silenced by the iconic paintings, whose monetary value seems to supress the issue of climate change.

Acknowledgements

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