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## Political Confection

### Making a Meal of It

A confection is a thing made with other things (Latin: *con-facere*), which is to say that it is a thing made by combining physical ingredients and also (or alternatively) by combining elements within a process. Confectionary Performance is always complex in the etymological sense of plaiting or weaving elements together, but many Confectionary Performances are nevertheless mundane and easy to perform. Even the most basic method of making a cup of hot tea by using a teabag involves a combination of physical elements – at minimum these are water, heat source, teabag, and cup – as well as a combination of procedural elements, which typically include procuring the teabag and the cup, placing the teabag in the cup, boiling the water, and pouring the water into the cup. There are of course numerous background elements to confectionary processes, including environmental conditions, but such elements are properly regarded as contributions to the performance only to the extent that they have been selected or influenced for that purpose. In a Confectionary Performance, as I use that term, the maker and the spectator will both appreciate that the performance is a deliberate one of making something by combining other things. ‘Synthesis’ and ‘articulation’ would serve as satisfactory synonyms for ‘confection’, but the advantage of ‘confection’ as a description of making processes that persuade spectators is the word’s association with pleasing sweetness. The very word persuasion originates in the idea that a person is moved ‘through sweetness’ (*per-suade*). Persuasion first entered our lexicon because our ancestors understood that moving rhetorical effects are produced through sensory stimulation. Sweetness, in rhetoric or in food, can be delightful. Horace quotes the young knights who, rejecting dull poetry, said that ‘[h]e has won every vote who has blended profit and pleasure, at once delighting and instructing the reader’.<sup>1</sup> Cicero stated similarly that the ‘supreme orator’ is ‘one whose speech instructs, delights, and moves the minds of his audience’;<sup>2</sup> and, following Cicero in the early modern period, Thomas Wilson described the

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*, §§343–344, H. Rushton Fairclough (trans.), *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, Loeb Classical Library 194 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926) 478–479.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *De Optimo Genere Oratorum (The Best Kind of Orator)*, §1.3, H. M. Hubbell (trans.), *Cicero*, Vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library 386 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949) 357.

‘ende of Rhetorique’ as being ‘To teach. To delight. And to perswade’.<sup>3</sup> Sweetness is the spoonful of sugar that makes the medicine of a message go down. As Wilson puts it, ‘to delite is needfull, without the which weightie matters will not be heard at all, and therefore him kunne I thanke, that both can and will ever, mingle sweete among the sower’.

## A Question of Discipline: Psychology and Rhetoric

Richard R. Lau, a professor of political science, contributed the chapter ‘Classic Models of Persuasion’ to *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion*.<sup>4</sup> In it he asserts that ‘[t]he scholarly discipline in which the study of persuasion fits most directly is psychology – social psychology, to be specific’.<sup>5</sup> We can certainly learn a great deal from modern psychological science as we try to understand why people derive so much pleasure from observing Confectionary Performance and are so potently persuaded by it. To that end, we examine the insights of modern psychology in some detail in the next section. I would contend, however, that there is another scholarly discipline that deals equally directly with modes and means of persuasion; one with a much longer pedigree in explaining the dynamics of human behaviour and which is truly ‘classic’ (to use Lau’s word). I am referring to rhetoric. Rhetoric began in ancient times as the study of the technical arts of public speakers (in Greek ‘rhetors’; in Latin ‘orators’) of the sort that we would today call lawyers and politicians. From there it developed into an art of poetic, literary, and dramatic practice. Rhetoric, as practised through dramatic performance on the theatrical stage, on the political stage, and in the court room, can be considered a precursor (and now a partner) to social psychology practised through experiment. Hence the statement attributed to Eugene O’Neill that ‘dramatists were psychologists – and good ones at that – before psychology was thought of’.<sup>6</sup> Shakespeare, who was intensely educated in rhetoric at school and became a master practitioner of the art, has been called ‘a very great psychologist’.<sup>7</sup> In the introduction to his book *Theatre and Mind*, Bruce McConachie boasts of theatre’s longstanding psychological wisdom, writing ‘it’s nice to see that science has caught up with the theatre’.<sup>8</sup>

Psychology and rhetoric offer different perspectives on persuasive performance because the two disciplines exist for different purposes. Rhetorical study

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), 1560 edition, G. H. Mair (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) xx.

<sup>4</sup> Richard R. Lau, ‘Classic Models of Persuasion’, in Elizabeth Suhay et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 29–50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Glynne Wickham, *Drama in a World of Science* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) 46.

<sup>7</sup> Lionel C. Knights, *Further Explorations: Essays in Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965) 42.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce McConachie, *Theatre and Mind* (London: Springer Nature Limited, 2013) 2.

is intensely practical. It observes that certain techniques produce certain effects, and it demonstrates the efficacy of those techniques through practical demonstration – that is, through performance. The psychological sciences are more concerned to establish why, as a matter of human cognition and behaviour, certain techniques work the way they do. In the course of its endeavour, social psychology occasionally coins new terminology for concepts that rhetoric named millennia ago. Take the idea of ‘attitude’, which Lau says has ‘proved indispensable to social psychology’.<sup>9</sup> Something like it was a feature of rhetorical studies as far back as Aristotle, when it went by the name of ‘ethos’. If one wants to understand the motivations of human behaviour and the means of human persuasion, it is still highly informative to start with the rhetorical wisdom of ancient authors and to consider how that wisdom has been applied in practice over the centuries since. Consider the example of one of the psychological insights described by Lau. He observes that ‘[s]ocial judgment theory derives from a long line of research in cognitive psychology on the perception of physical stimuli’ and that the influence of individual stimuli on judgment is in part ‘a function of both the total range of stimuli to be categorized or judged and any anchor or norm that is provided’. He illustrates this idea of the ‘anchor’ by noting that ‘the first 50-degree day after a long cold winter seems delightfully warm while the first 50-degree day after a long hot summer is very cold ... Different anchors or adaptation levels lead to very different judgments’.<sup>10</sup> As social judgment theory attributes variability of human perception to such factors as the anchor of prior experience, so we find in Shakespeare acute awareness of the fact that a taste or sound which seemed sweet at first can cease to be pleasurable in excess. The famous opening words of *Twelfth Night* provide one of several instances: ‘If music be the food of love, play on; / Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, / The appetite may sicken, and so die’ (1.1.1–3). Where Lau discusses the psychology of differing human perceptions of a ‘50-degree day’, Shakespeare’s Bolingbroke identifies psychological limits to our capacity to relativize temperatures imaginatively:

O, who can hold a fire in his hand  
 By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?  
 ...  
 Or wallow naked in December snow  
 By thinking on fantastic summer’s heat?  
 (*Richard II*, 1.3.294–299)

<sup>9</sup> Richard R. Lau, ‘Classic Models of Persuasion’, in Elizabeth Suhay et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 30. (See, e.g., Anselm Strauss, ‘The Concept of Attitude in Social Psychology’ (1945) 19(2) *The Journal of Psychology* 329–339.)

<sup>10</sup> Richard R. Lau, ‘Classic Models of Persuasion’, in Elizabeth Suhay et al. (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Electoral Persuasion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 34.

As rhetoric and psychology differ in their aims, so they differ in their ethical aspect. Rhetoric, from its earliest iterations, has been concerned with the contribution of performance technique to the improvement of an individual's ethical good life and its contribution to the commonwealth of the political community. Plato rejected bastard forms of rhetoric that neglect this ethical motivation, and Aristotle (doubtless mindful of Plato's critique) subsequently promoted a species of rhetoric that has ethical considerations at its heart. In the early modern period, in which there was a renaissance of Aristotelian rhetoric as developed in the works of such Roman writers as Cicero and Quintilian, Thomas Wilson (the author of the popular early modern rhetorical manual *The Arte of Rhetorique*) described rhetoric as the ethical art of 'moving pittie, and stirring men to shewe mercie'.<sup>11</sup> Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (1599) can be appreciated as a study in the political chaos that ensues when rhetoric is concerned not to make political peace but only to win a political contest. The rhetoric of Mark Antony in that play is exemplary of the point.

The fact that the most excellent exponents of the art of rhetoric have been lawyers, politicians, and dramatists reveals that rhetoric has always been about something more than persuasion. It is about social construction. Good rhetoric for the lawyer, politician, and dramatist succeeds when it engages in disputes constructively, and when it aims to constitute communities through consensus. It is probably fair to say that nowadays too few lawyers and politicians appreciate that their rhetorical performance ought to be directed, not towards beating down the opposition, but towards building up society and making peace. Psychology, for all its merits as a scientific discipline, does not, cannot, and should not pursue ethical outcomes in this way. It is inherent in the nature of pure scientific endeavour that its ethical ambitions should be negatively framed in terms of avoiding unethical means rather than positively framed in terms of achieving ethical ends. The discipline of rhetorical practice is subject to no such ideological constraint.

### **Holding a Mirror Neuron up to Nature**

Studying the rhetorical arts will assist us greatly as we consider the persuasive effects of Confectionary Performance, but the science of psychology also offers several potentially important insights. Perhaps none is more important than the psychological finding that watching others perform tasks triggers in our brains the same sense that we experience when we perform similar tasks ourselves. The phenomenon has been demonstrated using functional magnetic resonance imaging, which shows that in response to the external stimuli of performance actions, a mirror response occurs in various parts of the

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Wilson, *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), 1560 edition, G. H. Mair (ed.) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) 133.

observer's brain,<sup>12</sup> and that hand gestures, for example, trigger different mirroring pathways to facial gestures.<sup>13</sup> What is less clear is the biological basis for the phenomenon. The leading theory attributes it to the presence of 'mirror neurons' in the brain. Experiments conducted in the early 1990s in the lab of Giacomo Rizzolatti, a neuroscientist at the University of Parma, showed that mirror neurons in the monkey brain fired when the animal carried out an action or saw (or heard) another animal performing the same action.<sup>14</sup> As Rizzolatti noted at the time:

We are exquisitely social creatures. Our survival depends on understanding the actions, intentions and emotions of others. Mirror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct simulation. By feeling, not by thinking.<sup>15</sup>

Any suggestion that mirror neurons are the sole psychological seat for the complexity of human emotions must be doubtful, but how significant it is in our post-truth age to appreciate that the Confectionary Performances of politicians might bypass our logical thought processes in order to influence us through our feelings.

Dr Vittorio Gallese, one of Rizzolatti's group at the University of Parma, confirms the next logical conclusion, which is that representative arts engage us because they produce effects through our neural mirror response. He cites the work of Baroque sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini. In Bernini's sculpture, *The Rape of Proserpina*, when we see the hand of the god Pluto grabbing Proserpina's thigh, we perceive a real hand pressing into real flesh rather than a single inanimate slab of marble carved into forms of hand and thigh.<sup>16</sup> Italian scientists continue to be highly influential in the field. Marco Iacoboni, a Roman by birth and subsequently a professor of psychiatry and biobehavioral sciences at UCLA, has reported some of the most exciting demonstrations and made some of the largest claims for the phenomenon. It seems fitting that a scholar born in Rome should continue a tradition of behavioural observation that was in ancient times so minutely systematized by rhetorical scholars and practitioners in that city. Iacoboni and his colleagues report that when presented with the performance of the simple action of picking up a cup of tea from a table, mirror neurons automatically anticipate the actor's intention (to drink from it or to tidy it up) according to the different contexts of the

<sup>12</sup> Valeria Gazzola and Christian Keysers, 'The Observation and Execution of Actions Share Motor and Somatosensory Voxels in All Tested Subjects' (2009) 19 *Cerebral Cortex* 1239–1255, 1239.

<sup>13</sup> Pier F. Ferrari et al., 'Two Different Mirror Neuron Networks: The Sensorimotor (Hand) and Limbic (Face) Pathways' (2017) 358 *Neuroscience* 300–315.

<sup>14</sup> Giuseppe Di Pellegrino et al., 'Understanding Motor Events: A Neurophysiological Study' (1992) 91 *Experimental Brain Research* 176–180; Vittorio Gallese et al., 'Action Recognition in the Premotor Cortex' (1996) 119(2) *Brain* 593–609.

<sup>15</sup> Sandra Blakeslee, 'Cells that Read Minds', *New York Times*, 10 January 2006. <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

action (being respectively a table set neatly ready for tea to be taken, and a messy table at which tea has apparently already been taken).<sup>17</sup> This is a radical new insight, for it suggests that intentions might be inferred from witnessing an action in context, and not just inferred to others but in some way sympathetically experienced and anticipated in the brain by the observer of the action.

It has been shown that human brains evidence a mirror response not only when someone ‘kicks a ball, sees a ball being kicked, hears a ball being kicked’<sup>18</sup> but also when someone ‘says or hears the word “kick”’.<sup>19</sup> Our brains automatically suit the action to the word – which is precisely the pairing that Shakespeare’s Hamlet encouraged theatrical players to pursue in their performances. Thanks to modern psychological science, we now know what dramatists have suspected all along – that if actors accompany speech with unsuitable actions, the subconscious psychology of the audience will automatically detect the error. Thus, one study observes that in everyday life, ‘motor imitation can be influenced by providing verbal instructions but also disrupted by task-irrelevant single words’.<sup>20</sup> As such, an instructor who utters a random word out of place might cause a trainee to misplace a stage in a manual process. One reason why speech and gesture are still so hard to separate, even in the language-dominated world of the modern human, is that speech is thought to have developed from, or alongside, gesture. Indeed, they still share the same psychological communication system.<sup>21</sup>

One of Iacoboni’s largest and most significant claims is that mirror neurons are a neurological basis of human empathy:

<sup>17</sup> Marco Iacoboni et al., ‘Grasping the Intentions of Others with One’s Own Mirror Neuron System’ (2005) 3(3) *PLOS Biology* e79.

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Blakeslee, ‘Cells that Read Minds’, *New York Times*, 10 January 2006. See Evelyne Kohler et al., ‘Hearing Sounds, Understanding Actions: Action Representation in Mirror Neurons’ (2002) 297 *Science* 846–848; Christian Keysers et al., ‘Audiovisual Mirror Neurons and Action Recognition’ (2003) 153 *Experimental Brain Research* 628–636.

<sup>19</sup> Sandra Blakeslee, ‘Cells that Read Minds’, *New York Times*, 10 January 2006. See, for example, Olaf Hauk et al., ‘Somatotopic Representation of Action Words in Human Motor and Premotor Cortex’ (2004) 41(2) *Neuron* 301–307 (the abstract summarises the finding that the words lick, pick, kick ‘differentially activated areas along the motor strip that either were directly adjacent to or overlapped with areas activated by actual movement of the tongue, fingers, or feet’); Giovanni Buccino, ‘Listening to Action-Related Sentences Modulates the Activity of the Motor System: A Combined TMS and Behavioral Study’ (2005) 24(3) *Brain Research: Cognitive Brain Research* 355–363.

<sup>20</sup> Haiyan Wu et al., ‘Object Words Modulate the Activity of the Mirror Neuron System during Action Imitation’ (2017) 7 *Brain and Behavior* (<https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.840>).

<sup>21</sup> Paolo Bernardis and Maurizio Gentilucci, ‘Speech and Gesture Share the Same Communication System’ (2006) 44(2) *Neuropsychologia* 178–190; Elisa De Stefani and Doriana De Marco, ‘Language, Gesture, and Emotional Communication: An Embodied View of Social Interaction’ (2019) 10 *Frontiers in Psychology* 2063; Giacomo Rizzolatti and Michael A. Arbib, ‘Language within Our Grasp’ (1998) 21 *Trends in Neurosciences* 188–194; Friedemann Pulvermüller, ‘Brain Mechanisms Linking Language and Action’ (2005) 6 *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 576–582.

[I]f you see me choke up, in emotional distress . . . mirror neurons in your brain simulate my distress. You automatically have empathy for me. You know how I feel because you literally feel what I am feeling.<sup>22</sup>

What Iacoboni's Roman forbears would have called pathos generated through rhetorical action, the modern psychologist calls empathy or sympathy generated through a neural response to gestural behaviour. The language has changed, but the story stays the same. One thing that has changed radically are the media through which our performances are displayed. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic forced it upon us, in-person, face-to-face performances were losing territory to performances mediated through video and film. A child cannot be taught to mimic human behaviour by a television screen so well as by a present-in-person human parent, and by the same token adults are not as susceptible to mediated gestural performances as to live ones. Iacoboni again: 'Mirror neurons work best in real life, when people are face to face. Virtual reality and videos are shadowy substitutes.'<sup>23</sup> That said, mediated performance is still powerful, as is evident from our emotional susceptibility to cinematic 'weepies', Netflix comedies, high-adrenaline video games, and YouTube videos of people comedically but painfully coming a cropper when attempting hare-brained stunts.

Of further relevance to our concern to understand the persuasive effect of witnessing Confectionary Performance is the finding that action imitation following the stimulus of hearing the names of manufactured objects (e.g. 'thread', 'pen', 'chopsticks', 'watch', 'cup') induces stronger brain activity in the mirror neuron system than hearing other types of word.<sup>24</sup> This might suggest innate human affinity for active engagement with things that have been made and are manipulable. Another experiment compared the effects of observing a complex task (turning a key in a lock) with a more basic manual task. It found that both observations activated the fronto-parietal mirror system, but that brain activity is higher in the observation of the complex task than in the observation of the simple task.<sup>25</sup> Psychology is therefore gradually gathering the neurological evidence to prove what rhetoricians have always assumed on the basis of anecdotal experience: that observers and audiences engage more actively with more active forms of performance, are more likely to grasp points made through performances that engage the hands in the manual manipulation of graspable objects, and are most intensely stimulated by complex sequential processes of making things – what I call 'Confectionary Performances'.

<sup>22</sup> Sandra Blakeslee, 'Cells that Read Minds', *New York Times*, 10 January 2006. <sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Haiyan Wu et al., 'Object Words Modulate the Activity of the Mirror Neuron System during Action Imitation' (2017) 7 *Brain and Behavior* (<https://doi.org/10.1002/brb3.840>).

<sup>25</sup> Laura Biagi et al. 'Anterior Intraparietal Cortex Codes Complexity of Observed Hand Movements' (2010) 81 *Brain Research Bulletin* 434–440.

## The Great British Bake Off

The fact that Confectionary Performance triggers the brain's mirror neuron system might explain the extraordinary popularity of cooking shows on television. In the UK, none has been so popular as *The Great British Bake Off* (GBBO), a show that features a knockout competition between amateur bakers.<sup>26</sup> The show, which was originally judged on the BBC by celebrity cook Mary Berry and celebrity baker Paul Hollywood, and which is staged in the setting of a village fête marquee, is in many ways quintessentially British. Its reassuringly typical depiction of British character might be part of its appeal in America, where it has been aired to critical acclaim,<sup>27</sup> but this hardly explains the popularity of cooking shows in general. The best, perhaps only, way to account for the intense and ostensibly unlikely appeal of watching people cook food which viewers can neither smell nor touch nor taste, is to accept that the activity of watching others make things is in itself psychologically engaging and satisfying. The pleasure comes in part from the sensory stimulation of imagined textures, scents, and tastes, but also in large part from the vicarious experience of participation in a process of Production. Nothing stimulates our Making Sense quite so effectively as witnessing a Confectionary Performance, and few modes of Confectionary Performance are quite so enticing, quite so appealing to the full range of senses, as cuisine craft. It may be that Confectionary Performance appeals to the brain so powerfully because the brain recognizes the Making Sense of the complex activity of confecting cuisine to be similar to its own activity of making integrated sense of diverse stimuli.

To recognize the popularity of GBBO and shows like it, the National Television Awards in the UK invented a new awards category for the 'Skills Challenge Show' (subsequently 'Challenge Show'). GBBO won the inaugural 'Skills Challenge Show' award in 2015 and two of the three losing nominees were other competitive cooking shows (*MasterChef* and *Come Dine with Me*). The third unsuccessful nominee was *The Apprentice*, a show most famous now because the American original was hosted for more than a decade by Donald Trump. The man who promised to 'Make America Great Again' came to popular prominence through a show grounded in the vicarious pleasure of watching others perform complex tasks and the voyeuristic pleasure of watching them fail. Many of the tasks featured on the show were Confectionary Performances, such as devising new sandwiches and designing new toys. In psychological terms the popularity of skills challenge shows, especially those that involve making, may be attributable in large degree to the ways in which Confectionary Performance triggers the mirror neuron system in the human

<sup>26</sup> Sarah Rainey, 'How the Great British Bake Off Changed Britain', *The Telegraph*, 12 October 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Vicky Baker, 'Why Americans Love the Great British Bake Off', *BBC News, Washington*, 27 January 2019.



brain. That said, there is at least one rival to cuisine craft in this regard. A study has suggested that the mirror neuron system might also explain the popularity of pornography.<sup>28</sup> Mrs Berry (not the celebrity cook, but a character in a George Meredith novel) advised, ‘don’t neglect your cookery. Kissing don’t last: cookery do!’,<sup>29</sup> but in terms of their psychological appeal the two activities might not be so very different – certainly it wouldn’t be surprising if essentially the same neurological source lies at the base of vicarious viewing pleasure in both cases. It is to generate vicarious viewing pleasure, and to foster a sense of viewer participation and co-Production – or to use a more usual term, to generate ‘engagement’ – that Confectionary Performance has become a common trope of political media. This is our next topic.

### ***Kitchen Cabinet: When Politicians Cook***

The most blatant example of politicians using Confectionary Performance to show that they have the common touch and can make complex things cooperatively must surely be the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s television programme *Kitchen Cabinet*. The programme is as charming as its title is witty. The format is a conversational interview with an Australian politician conducted by political journalist Annabel Crabb while she and the politician prepare a meal together, usually in the politician’s home. The programme works brilliantly to make the politician appear approachable and down-to-earth. (We can note in passing that descriptions by which a person is said to be ‘down-to-earth’, ‘grounded’, prepared to ‘get stuck in’, to ‘roll their sleeves up’, and to ‘get their hands dirty’ are always taken as compliments, which is a testament to the fellow feeling generated by the observation that someone is willing to carry out basic manual work.) Guests on *Kitchen Cabinet* have included Scott Morrison, who went on to be Australia’s thirtieth prime minister.<sup>30</sup> We encounter Mr Morrison’s manual skills again in Chapter 9 on ‘State Building’, where we find him putting together a cubby house with his daughter. It would be cynical to suggest that he is deliberately manipulating his media image to appeal to Australians’ characteristic affinity for informality in their politicians, but he certainly seems adept at manual craft and at putting on a performance without seeming crafty. It is a performance, though. He lets slip in his *Kitchen Cabinet* interview that as a child he witnessed his father’s work in local politics and ‘quite enjoyed the theatre of it all’.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Alison Motluk, ‘Mirror Neurons Control Erection Response to Porn’, *New Scientist*, 16 June 2008.

<sup>29</sup> George Meredith, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel: A History of Father and Son* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1905) chapter 28.

<sup>30</sup> Scott Morrison was minister for social services (2014–2015) at the time he appeared on *Kitchen Cabinet* and treasurer of Australia (2015–2018) when his episode (season 5, ep. 1) first went to air on 28 October 2015. He became prime minister on 24 August 2018.

<sup>31</sup> <https://youtu.be/8sJyb5zAOi4> (7’00).

Former UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson is certainly a man who relishes political theatre. He has gone out of his way to cultivate celebrity status throughout his political career, including through guest appearances on popular television shows such as the soap opera *Eastenders*, the ancestry show *Who Do You Think You Are?*, the automobile magazine show *Top Gear*, and, as guest host, the political quiz show *Have I Got News for You*. On his *Top Gear* appearance, his host Jeremy Clarkson said, ‘most politicians . . . are pretty incompetent and then have a veneer of competence . . . you do seem to do it the other way round’. In response to this playful taunt, Mr Johnson demonstrated his trademark self-deprecating jocularly, saying ‘you can’t rule out the possibility, that you know, beneath the elaborately constructed veneer of a, you know, a blithering idiot, there lurks . . . a blithering idiot’. Of course, Mr Johnson is no idiot, and he knows it, but a master of the ‘elaborately constructed veneer’ he certainly is.

Taking full advantage of Mr Johnson’s performing talents, the Conservative Party has occasionally produced short promotional videos featuring Confectionary Performances by their leading man. We focus here on three videos which at the time of writing can all be accessed on the party’s YouTube channel. The first was posted during the 2019 general election campaign and is tagged ‘Boris Johnson’s hilarious election advert | 12 Questions to Boris Johnson’ (12 November 2019).<sup>32</sup> It originally went out on Twitter with the teaser: ‘We bumped into Boris on his tea break. Here’s what happened.’ The second was posted after the Conservatives and Boris Johnson won the general election and is tagged ‘Boris and Stanley Johnson made some mince pies and it was brilliant’ (24 December 2019).<sup>33</sup> The third, released in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, is tagged ‘This is how we’ll BUILD BACK BETTER – watch our latest Party-Political Broadcast!’ (7 October 2020).<sup>34</sup> The mince pies video isn’t subtle. Not only does it seek to tap quite transparently into the nation’s penchant for cooking programmes, and GBBO in particular, but Boris Johnson also made a candid admission as he cooked. Giving an insight into his rhetorical method, he said: ‘the whole thing is an extended metaphor. What you have here is a series of ingredients . . . and what you need is a binding element, there . . . the egg . . . which will bring it all together.’ This binding together of ingredients is, of course, the very definition of a Confectionary Performance. He then suggested that the NHS might be the nation’s ‘binding element’. A few months later he would find himself both personally and politically in the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic and bound to the NHS more tightly than he could ever have foreseen. As Boris the baker pops his tray of mince pies in to cook, he declares them ‘oven ready’ – a favoured metaphor for

<sup>32</sup> ‘Boris Johnson’s Hilarious Election Advert | 12 Questions to Boris Johnson’, Conservatives, 12 November 2019, <https://youtu.be/97zPDojMWiQ>.

<sup>33</sup> ‘Boris and Stanley Johnson Made Some Mince Pies and It Was Brilliant’, Conservatives, 24 December 2019, <https://youtu.be/OuaQDxEWRIA>.

<sup>34</sup> ‘This is How We’ll BUILD BACK BETTER – Watch Our Latest Party-Political Broadcast!’, Conservatives, 7 October 2020, <https://youtu.be/cIB2IN7n0A4>.

his government's Brexit deal with the EU.<sup>35</sup> The video titled 'This is how we'll BUILD BACK BETTER' (7 October 2020) is considered in more depth in Chapter 9, where we examine 'Boris the Builder' and his fondness for Confectionary Performance in relation to construction language and projects. Suffice to say here that even the 'BUILD BACK BETTER' video has a brief moment of baking in it, when we see cupcakes being constructed in a family kitchen. The video we will spend most time with here is the one in which Johnson is interviewed 'on his tea break'. It is slightly more subtle than the other two only in this respect: that its elements of Confectionary Performance, while present, are not expressly advertised to the audience as being deliberately metaphorical and are not expressly mentioned in the title of the video. Despite this, the essential message of the tea break video can be read as one of hands-on making. It sought to impress upon voters the need to cast their vote at the 2019 general election in a way that would form a new Parliament to support the government in delivering Brexit. Through hands-on making processes and talking about hands-on making processes, the video impressed upon voters the sense that the power to make a difference lay in their hands.

What, then, are the linguistic and performative elements by which the 'tea break' video sought to conjure the Making Sense in its audience? To answer that question, there now follows a brief commentary on six elements of script and action selected from the video, followed in each case by some thoughts on their relevance to the Making Sense.

## I

### Script

INTERVIEWER: 'How do you typically start your day?'

JOHNSON: 'I tend to get up pretty early and then I go down and take the dog for a walk, and dog does his business and so on and so forth.'

### Action

Johnson performs no accompanying actions of note, but the phrase 'get up' followed by 'go down' employs antithesis to establish a dramatic sense of theatrical space and movement.

### The Making Sense

We are invited to imagine Johnson engaging in an everyday physical task, including, if our imagination runs that far, the humble (and socially responsible) task of stooping down to clean up after his dog. This might convey the sense that he is a man who is not afraid of the hands-on work of clearing up a

<sup>35</sup> It features in Boris Johnson's introduction to the Conservative Party's 2019 general election manifesto (24 November).

mess made by others. The humble nature of the task following the spoken antithetical sequence of ‘up’ and then ‘down’ produces a sense of condescension, not in the modern patronizing sense, but in the older sense of a higher-status person coming down to meet others at the level of their common humanity. Shakespeare’s Mark Antony uses this technique in his forum speech at Caesar’s funeral when, with the words ‘shall I descend? And will you give me leave?’, he asks the crowd’s permission to join them on the floor of the forum (*Julius Caesar*, 3.2.160).<sup>36</sup> All these elements taken together excite aspects of the Making Sense through making contact and evoking humble hands-on labour with the promise of making an improvement to the state of things. In short, the act of condescension from high status to low performs the hope of making a better society.

## II

### Script

INTERVIEWER: ‘When was the last time you cooked, and what did you make?’

JOHNSON: ‘The last time I cooked was last night and I made steak and oven chips, which were very good.’

### Action

Johnson points his right index finger on ‘steak’ then gives a thumbs up (with his right hand) on ‘very good’, before turning to lead the interviewer towards the threshold of a small kitchen.

### The Making Sense

Johnson’s express references to the meal he ‘cooked’ and ‘made’ continues his performance as the hands-on politician who gets things done. Cooking is employed for its direct appeal to the Making Sense. Whether intended or not, the reference to ‘steak’ produces a homophonic connection to each individual voter’s ‘stake’ in society, and the accompanying stabbing motion of the index finger can be read as a gestural illustration of the act of ‘staking out a claim’. The reference to humble ‘oven chips’ advances his performance of a rhetorical ethos of humility and confirms his ‘common touch’.

## III

### Script

INTERVIEWER: ‘What’s your favourite band?’

JOHNSON: ‘Look, this is either The Clash or it’s The Rolling Stones, and mainly I listen to The Rolling Stones nowadays, so you can make of that what you will.’

<sup>36</sup> See the discussion in Gary Watt, “‘Shall I Descend?’: Rhetorical Stasis and Moving Will in *Julius Caesar*”, in Gary Watt, *Shakespeare’s Acts of Will: Law, Testament and Properties of Performance*, The Arden Shakespeare (London: Bloomsbury, 2016) 109–147.

**Action**

Johnson walks towards the kitchen work surface and picks a solitary tea bag out of an open transparent plastic storage jar of teabags. He drops the teabag into a white mug.

**The Making Sense**

The words ‘make of that what you will’ are uttered exactly simultaneously with the action of removing the tea bag from the jar. This may be coincidence, but if it was calculated it was a rather brilliant combination of word and action, for the effect is to invite the viewer to make a choice while giving the viewer the impression that the performer knows how to make things simple. It is significant that Johnson never once mentions that he is making a cup of tea. He demonstrates it through action rather than words. As for his taste in rock bands, what should we make of his preference for ‘The Clash’ and ‘The Rolling Stones’? Again, it may be entirely coincidental, but the names of both bands conveniently conjure up the sense of action, movement, and breakthrough that Johnson evokes elsewhere in the video through the phrases ‘going gangbusters’ and ‘knock it through’, the latter referring to his stated aim of getting Brexit done. The fact that both bands are English combines with the tea-making to produce a performance calculated to appeal to Brexit-supporting voters.

**IV****Script**

INTERVIEWER: ‘What would you say to someone who’s wondering who to vote for at this election?’

JOHNSON: ‘I would say it is a very, very simple choice.’

**Action**

Johnson picks up the mug containing the teabag and walks over to a tap. He pours ready-boiled water from the tap into the mug.

**The Making Sense**

The interviewer’s question raises the crucial issue that all previous questions and answers have been building up to. Performing the very simple action of pouring pre-boiled water into a mug demonstrates through the simplest mode of making a cup of tea that it is easy for voters to act to make a difference through their action of voting. The fact that tea-making is one of the most common Confectionary Performances in the daily lives of UK voters serves again to cultivate the sense that Johnson has the common touch and helps to relate the Making Sense of his Confectionary Performance to their own performance of making a choice at the ballot box.

**V****Script**

JOHNSON: ‘A coalition of chaos with Jeremy Corbyn at the lead, at the head ...’

**Action**

Johnson bends down to retrieve a plastic container of milk from a small fridge, then twists off the cap.

**The Making Sense**

Twisting the ‘cap’ off the container is literally to twist its head off (Latin *caput* = ‘head’). Performing this action just after he talks of his rival Corbyn being the ‘head’ of a chaotic coalition of Johnson’s political opponents gestures a figurative decapitation of his rival or, less viscerally, a removal of the opposing party’s figurehead.

**VI****Script**

JOHNSON: ‘... or you can go with us, get Brexit done with our deal, which is ready to go, oven-ready, slam it in the microwave, it’s there.’

**Action**

Still holding his mug of tea in his right hand, with his left arm (elbow raised upwards) Johnson mimes an awkward under-arm, back-handed action of slamming shut the door to an imaginary microwave oven.

**The Making Sense**

Following the Confectionary Performance of the elements in tea-making, Johnson makes express reference to his ‘oven-ready’ Brexit deal as he enacts an element in the Confectionary Performance of cooking. Both performances – tea-making with a tea bag in a mug and microwaving food – are the simplest modes of making tea and making a meal. He is stressing through words and performance that he trusts the voters to make a simple choice at the ballot box (to pop their vote in the box in the way he pops a teabag in a cup and a meal in a microwave), while inviting them to trust him to bring simple finality to Brexit by slamming shut the oven door.

More than a year after this video was made, Boris Johnson (by then prime minister) returned to his theme while adding a reference to the contentious issue of EU member states fishing within UK territorial waters. In his Christmas message, delivered on Christmas Eve 2020 he said: ‘That oven-ready deal was just the starter . . . This is the feast – full of fish, by the way.’ Johnson even wore a tie adorned with a repeating fish pattern and showed off

a dog-eared bundle of paper – a working copy of the Brexit deal in the final form that had just been agreed. As ever with Johnson, the performance was total, right down to costume and props. Whatever else he makes, he always makes an impression.

As with all propaganda, there is of course a risk that a Confectionary Performance will backfire. To judge from comments on YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, Johnson's tea break video played well to many viewers, but to his entrenched opponents it simply made him look more ridiculous and disingenuous. Rishi Sunak (prime minister at the time of writing) suffered a similar backlash when he sought to take a leaf out of Johnson's book. Just a week or so into his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer in Johnson's government, Sunak tweeted an image of himself in an office kitchen holding a metal teapot in one hand while his other hand plucked a teabag from a massive, catering-sized pack of Yorkshire Tea. He captioned it: 'Quick Budget prep break making tea for the team. Nothing like a good Yorkshire brew' (@RishiSunak, 21 February 2020). Sunak is the Member of Parliament for Richmond in North Yorkshire, so the choice of Yorkshire Tea was an understandable one. However, the performance rang somewhat hollow. It was not so much that Sunak, who was born and educated in Hampshire in the south of England, had no strong personal association with the county of Yorkshire, but that his immaculate dress, speech, and generally 'posh' demeanour sat awkwardly with the staged use of budget teabags and his colloquial use of 'brew' as shorthand for 'cup of tea'. It might be thought that a budget bag of teabags would communicate an attractive blend of Britishness and economic prudence, and for some viewers it probably did, but his opponents apparently struggled to see past Sunak's political party allegiance and the widely publicized fact of his own personal wealth. The social media backlash resulted in a veritable 'storm in a teacup', with some even calling for a boycott of Yorkshire Tea. Concerned for its brand image, the company responded by pointing out that the Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn had made a similar gesture during a visit to York in 2017, when he'd said that he'd happily discuss climate change with Donald Trump over a pot of Yorkshire Tea.<sup>37</sup>

### 'Hot Dish Is a Great Unifier – Just Like Amy'

The United States supplies an example of cuisine-based Confectionary Performance in a political context that suggests a tantalizing connection between making food and making laws. In 2011, Al Franken (the then Democratic senator for Minnesota) inaugurated a cooking competition between the members of Minnesota's congressional delegation. The winner was fellow Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar. She went on to make the most of her victory, for the *New York Times* reports that when Ms Klobuchar was

<sup>37</sup> 'Yorkshire Tea "Shocked" by Backlash over Rishi Sunak Photo', BBC, 24 February 2020.

running for the Democrats' nomination for president in 2020 she hosted a number of 'Hot Dish House Parties' at which she served her winning 'Minnesota hot dish'.<sup>38</sup> Invitations to the house parties advertised the metaphoric potential of the humble baked dish with the line: 'Hot dish is a great unifier – just like Amy'.

Katie Rohman, the managing editor of the *Duluth News Tribune*, was right when she called Klobuchar's 'Hot Dish House Party' a 'piece of political theatre', but only partly right when she called it 'amusing'.<sup>39</sup> It was amusing in the sense of being light-hearted and in the sense that the Confectionary Performance stimulated participants' physical senses in a manner akin to an 'amuse bouche', but there is serious political power in amusing performances of this type. Amy Klobuchar's communal gatherings around food show that she has understood that politics is itself an art of Confectionary Performance by which ingredients and people are bound together to make a whole – *e pluribus unum* ('out of many, one'), as the national motto of the USA puts it.

The connection between making food and making laws is suggested by another of Amy Klobuchar's accomplishments. According to GovTrack data for 2017, the legally trained Senator Klobuchar was the first ranked among all senators of more than a decade's standing when it came to cosponsoring bills, a rise of one position from her achievement in 2016. As the GovTrack website explains: 'Cosponsorship shows a willingness to work with others to advance policy goals.' In 2017, she was placed third for cosponsorship compared to all senators. In 2018, she maintained third spot, and in 2019 rose to second in the all-senator list of cosponsors. So we can see that Amy Klobuchar is not only a champion maker of meals, but also a champion maker of laws in cooperative mode. The fact that she particularly excels in cosponsored laws may be revealing of her aptitude for confection – the process of making something by bringing diverse elements together.

### Odour Is in the Brain of the Beholder

As with all modes of rhetorical performance, Confectionary Performance depends for its success upon the co-Productive participation of an audience. In political contexts, hot dish house parties and the like can work with small-scale gatherings, but Confectionary Performance to the masses is normally remote and mediated in ways that make it impossible for the performer to influence members of their audience through direct contact with their senses of touch, taste, and smell. If such a performance is persuasive in the strict etymological sense of delighting and moving 'through sweetness', it can only be because the audience has been engaged through conscious and

<sup>38</sup> Kim Severson, 'A Classic Midwestern Dish Becomes a Talking Point in Iowa', *New York Times*, 28 January 2020.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*



subconscious appeals to their imagination and through the sort of sympathetic sensory response that we now associate with the brain's motor neuron system. With this in mind, it is worth pausing to consider the part played by the audience's taste as a factor in the Making Sense as it relates to Confectionary Performance.

The sense of smell or scent is central to our perception of nuanced taste, and taste and scent are together central to our sense – and to our language – of nuanced judgment. Bad smells and tastes produce a signally strong negative reaction, which is no doubt down to their deep-seated primitive association with diseased, rotten, and otherwise unpalatable food and unhygienic environments. Hence, we still communicate the strongly negative judgment that 'something's off' or is 'rotten to the core' or is 'sickening' with such visceral sensory phrases as 'that stinks', 'something's fishy', 'it leaves a bad taste in my mouth', 'that's in poor taste', and 'you're just bitter'. One of our standard words for strongly negative judgment – 'disgust' – literally means 'contrary to taste', and psychologists have shown that the severity of our moral judgment is amplified when choices are made in the presence of disgusting smells and in disgusting environments.<sup>40</sup> The evolution of language confirms the evolution of biological psychology, for judgment in the sense of 'choice' is etymologically nothing other than a description of 'taste', the Proto-Indo-European root \*geus- being the basis both of the English word 'choice' and Latin word 'gustum' ('taste').

When we use the word 'olfactory' to refer to making smells, the relevant 'factory' is the brain of the receiver rather than the originator of the physical stimulus. A rose does not produce a scent – the human brain does. At the very least, the receiver's olfactory sense must be regarded as a co-Producer of the aroma. The brilliant Italian jurist, rhetorician, and philosopher Giambattista Vico made precisely this point almost three centuries ago when he wrote that 'a living being makes the odor in the smelling' (*animans odorem olfactu faciat*).<sup>41</sup> Human sensory 'faculties' are so-named, he says, because the senses *make* sensations ('faculty' being derived from the Latin verb *facere*, 'to make'). In the late nineteenth century, Dewey put the point in modern scientific language when he wrote that 'sensation is the result of the *activity* of the psycho-physical organism, and is produced, not received'.<sup>42</sup> The social psychologists Waskul and Vannini observe likewise that '[t]o sense . . . is to make sense',<sup>43</sup> adding that '[t]he physiological nature of odors is, in fact, the raw

<sup>40</sup> Simone Schnall et al., 'Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment' (2008) 34(8) *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 1096–1109.

<sup>41</sup> Giambattista Vico, *On the Most Ancient Wisdom of the Italians*, Book I, cap 7 (1710), Jason Taylor (trans.) (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010) 103.

<sup>42</sup> Herbert W. Schneider (ed.), *John Dewey: The Early Works 1882–1898*, Vol. 2 (1887) (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press 1967) 43, emphasis in original.

<sup>43</sup> Dennis D. Waskul and Phillip Vannini, 'Smell, Odor, and Somatic Work: Sense-Making and Sensory Management' (2008) 71(1) *Social Psychology Quarterly* 53–71, 53.

material of which olfactory perception is fashioned – and that fashioning is quintessentially cultural and natural at the same time'.<sup>44</sup>

We prefer our bodies, our clothes, our cars, and our homes to smell pleasant, and even in virtual or remote performance we might respond sympathetically to Confectionary Performance when it evokes some of our culture's favourite scents. The popularity of GBBO and Boris Johnson's decision to ape it in his mince pie-making video makes sense when one appreciates not only that Confectionary Performance appeals holistically to the Making Sense, including the haptic sense evoked by hands-on processes, but also because baking makes pleasant scents – not in our nose (it's a rare television that emits a perfume) but in our brain. The smell of 'freshly baked bread' ranked first in one survey of the UK's fifty favourite smells, and the smell of 'cakes baking in the oven' ranked fifth in the same survey.<sup>45</sup> A question put to Boris Johnson in his 'tea break video' also makes sense when scents are borne in mind. The interviewer put to him the choice 'fish and chips or a Sunday roast?' Those meals rank at positions nine and eight respectively in the nation's top-fifty scents. Boris Johnson's reply – 'fish and chips on a cold night on the beach' – brings in the 'seaside' (ranked sixth in the list of favourite smells). It might seem that Johnson missed an olfactory trick when he made tea instead of coffee (the smell of coffee comes in at number four, whereas tea didn't make the top fifty), but one can appreciate why he would prefer the traditional appeal of tea to the British psyche (even if by some measures coffee is now the most popular hot beverage in the UK). For all his olfactory prowess, as demonstrated in the tea-making video, Johnson risked undoing all his good work when he referred to the act of cleaning up after his pet dog. The performed humility and civic responsibility of the act might not be enough to compensate for the bad smell it leaves in the audience's mind.

Johnson's tea break and mince pie videos conjure up half of all scents ranked in the top ten by popularity. The five not alluded to are bacon (2), freshly cut grass (3), coffee (4), freshly washed clothes (7), and fresh flowers (10). Perhaps a future video will capitalize on the popularity of gardening television shows and bring us a politician with a flask of coffee cutting grass and flowers then popping their muddy clothes in the wash. The bacon, however, is best avoided – partly because it may be off-putting to vegetarians and observant Jewish and Muslim voters, but also because UK politicians and voters remember 'How a Bacon Sandwich Derailed Ed Miliband's UK Political Career'.<sup>46</sup> That's the *Huffpost* headline to an article looking back on the day in the 2014 general election campaign when former Labour Party leader Ed

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> Gemma Francis, 'Freshly Baked Bread Tops Poll of Britain's Top 50 Favourite Smells', *The Mirror*, 25 May 2015, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/freshly-baked-bread-tops-poll-5761432>.

<sup>46</sup> 'How a Bacon Sandwich Derailed Ed Miliband's UK Political Career', *Huffpost*, 10 December 2018.

Miliband staged a photo-op of himself buying flowers for his wife (a good olfactory choice) and eating breakfast. It was the latter that proved a disaster for those who, in the words of the article, ‘had been crafting his image’.<sup>47</sup> He was meant to be consuming a bacon sandwich, but newspaper photographs gave the visceral impression that the sandwich was consuming him. The lesson for politicians is simple – if you want to ‘make it’, make it – but never eat it.

Political performance works best when it appeals (we might say ‘panders’) to popular taste. In the mid-seventeenth century (even before Vico), Baltasar Gracián had associated the senses with the cultivation of ‘good taste’. Patrícia Branco and Richard Mohr suggest that this may be ‘the earliest use of the term in the sense of refined judgment’,<sup>48</sup> adding that Gracián, like Vico, ‘identifies taste not with the tongue, but with “olfato”, the olfactory’.<sup>49</sup> The tongue is a rather crude touchstone of taste. It covers such basics as sour, salty, sweet, bitter, and savoury (umami), but cannot detect more nuanced flavours. Fine judgment belongs to the nose,<sup>50</sup> and specifically to the sense of smell.<sup>51</sup> Branco and Mohr note that Gracián favoured the cultivation of a sort of sixth sense or common sense (*sensus communis*) to govern the five major senses.<sup>52</sup> Modern psychology suggests that the brain does indeed manage sensory stimuli synaesthetically in something like the way that Gracián anticipated. The Making Sense as I describe it is likewise associated with the combined cognition and critique of sensory impulses. When we make things or see others making things, our brains employ our sympathetic sense of making to make combined sense of what would otherwise be discrete, confusing, and potentially contradictory stimuli. A good example of the brain’s capacity to impose a dominant sense upon stimuli that are quite literally contradictory is the McGurk effect, by which the brain hears the sound shaped by the movement of another person’s lips even when the audible signal received by the ear is a different sound.<sup>53</sup> To be precise, the McGurk effect stimulates the eye with the sight of a person silently and repeatedly mouthing one syllable (‘va’) while the sound of another syllable (‘ba’) is simultaneously emitted. Remarkably, the

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Patrícia Branco and Richard Mohr, ‘Odore di Napoli: What if Jurisprudence Came to Us through Smell?’, in *Non Liqueur: The Westminster Law and Theory Lab Working Papers, Law and the Senses: Smell* (London: University of Westminster, 2015) 58–75, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Goodrich, ‘Proboscations: Excavations in Comedy and Law’ (2017) 43(2) *Critical Inquiry* 361–388.

<sup>51</sup> Patrícia Branco and Richard Mohr, ‘Odore di Napoli: What if Jurisprudence Came to Us through Smell?’, in *Non Liqueur: The Westminster Law and Theory Lab Working Papers, Law and the Senses: Smell* (London: University of Westminster, 2015) 58–75, 60.

<sup>52</sup> Baltasar Gracián, ‘El Criticón’, in Lorenzo Gracián (pseudonym), *Obras de Lorenzo Gracián* (Madrid: Pedro Marín, 1773) 148.

<sup>53</sup> Lawrence D. Rosenblum, *See What I’m Saying: The Extraordinary Powers of Our Five Senses* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010) 254–256, section headed ‘Your Brain Hears the Speech You See’.

brain hears the syllable that is silently mouthed and cannot hear the syllable that is actually being emitted. The brain decides that if the auditory signal contradicts what the eye has seen, the sense of sight should be preferred.

We conclude by returning to the observation made at the outset of this chapter that the art of rhetoric has always appreciated the psychological realities that modern science is only now beginning to confirm. When it comes to producing a persuasive rhetorical performance, the rhetoricians knew that the key is to appeal to the Making Sense by making or talking about making, and to perform in ways that delight the senses. There is, though, a danger in delight. Bertolt Brecht used the term 'culinary theatre' to decry drama that panders to the audience's tastes and which only seeks to feed them through feelings rather than provoking them to think.<sup>54</sup> The complaint has an ancient antecedent in Aristophanes' critical depiction of public speakers in his play *The Knights*,<sup>55</sup> where it is suggested that 'a sausage seller is the ideal orator, for he will know the most delicious recipes'.<sup>56</sup> It is at the point of sale that our role as co-Producer comes into play and we are required to exercise 'Receiver Responsibility' (an attribute I discuss in more depth in Chapter 11 in the context of 'fake news'). If we develop our awareness of the power of Confectionary Performance and of its capacity to make opinions palatable and persuasive, we will be forearmed to counter and resist. Just because someone's making it, doesn't mean we're swallowing it.

<sup>54</sup> Werner Hecht, 'The Development of Brecht's Theory of the Epic Theatre, 1918–1933' (1961) 6 (1) *The Tulane Drama Review* 40–97.

<sup>55</sup> Aristophanes, *The Knights*, in Alan H. Sommerstein (trans. and ed.), *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, Vols. 3–5 (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1981) 214–216.

<sup>56</sup> Jennifer Wise, *Dionysus Writes: The Invention of Theatre in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) 159.