**The Rhetorical Portrayal of Public Servants in British Political Satire**

**Andrew S. Crines**

**Abstract**

This chapter presents a rhetorical analysis of British political satire using the Aristotelian modes of persuasion vis-à-vis *ethos, pathos* and *logos.* These refer to the credibility, emotion, and logic of how political satirists seek to construct and communicate a message to their audiences. This chapter argues that different types of rhetorical style exist across the case studies (namely, *The Thick of It* and *Private Eye*) given their distinct audiences and their expectations. Ultimately, by employing this theoretical approach, the chapter concludes that British political satire is an active participant in the political process rather than an objective observer that can fashion political opinions and affect the quality of political discourse in British politics.

**Introduction**

Satire has been one of the key ways that public servants have been represented in popular culture for centuries, to act as a corrective force and check on the power of elites, for example through the cartoons of revolutionary periods that pilloried monarchs. In the age of mass democracy, it is elected politicians that bear the brunt of the satirist’s jokes. A common cultural narrative in the UK, is that it was the growth of satire in the 1960s, through comedy shows on television such as *That Was the Week That Was* that led to the erosion of deference for elected leaders and public servants. The purpose of this chapter is to understand *how* satirists rhetorically represent public servants (particularly politicians and political actors) and subsequently the messages about their competence and honesty.

The analytical approach of this chapter will be methodologically informed by the Aristotelian modes of persuasion (*ethos*, *pathos*, *logos*). Respectively, these refer to the character/credibility (*ethos*) of a speaker; to their use of emotional arguments (*pathos*); and to their use of statistical and/or empirical evidence (*logos*). This analytical approach has proven methodologically robust in the scholarship of Atkins *et al* (2014);Crines (2013, 2014a, 2014b); Hayton & Crines (2015); Finlayson (2012), Toye (2013), amongst others. By using this approach it is possible to isolate specific rhetorical approaches used by political actors in their style of communication and approaches to broader engagement. This chapter shall examine two case studies of satire from the UK – namely, the television programme *The Thick of It* (made internationally famous by the 2009 film version *In The Loop*, which satirises the run-up to the 2003 Iraq War ) and the weekly news magazine *Private Eye.*

**Case studies of satirical representations of public servants**

These have been selected because of their longstanding reputations in the United Kingdom as ballasts of contemporary political satire. Each represents different approaches to political satire. *The Thick of It* (created by Armando Iannucci, a satirist in the UK who wrote and/or produced keynote series such as *The Day Today, Knowing Me, Knowing You with Alan Partridge; The Saturday Night Armistice;* and *Veep,* amongst others) seeks to replicate how political actors and public servants are seen to interact with each other in such a way as to seek legitimacy as an accurate representation of how the UK functions as a liberal democracy. *The Thick of It* portrays ‘the news media and politicians of all colours as being in cahoots, forming a social apparatus which is rotten to the core, and thereby offering a challenge to liberal democracy’ (Basu, 2014: 89). One of the key figures in *The Thick of It* is Malcolm Tucker (played by Peter Capaldi) as the confrontational Director of Communications who often engages in combative exchanges with other characters, such as Nicola Murray (played by Rebecca Front). Those exchanges became set-piece moments in the satire as a way of communicating a specific framing of the relationship between public servants and political actors.

*Private Eye* is one of the UKs longest running satirical magazines which provides caricatures of public servants and politicians as to poke fun at key moments in political life:

‘*Private Eye* provides a complex mix of investigative journalism, satire (sometimes referred to as “lavatorial schoolboy humour”), spoof current affairs articles, gossip, cartoons and cartoon strips. From its inception, upper and upper-middle-class associates, who met at public school and university, have produced *Private Eye’* (Lockyer, 2007: 769).

These two forms of satire have been selected as examples because of their different approaches (*The Thick of It* as a corrosive force; *Private Eye* as a more sympathetic actor). The use of spoof in *Private Eye* allows it to create its own political moments that derive from real-world political actors and public servants.

The central objective of this chapter is to provide a discussion about how political satire is rhetorically constructed using these outlets as representative samples of broader avenues of political communication employed by satirists. By doing so it will be possible to see how political satire rhetorically constructs certain images and ideas that are then communicated to an audience.

Political satire uses elements of reality in a person or situation before exaggerating them to in order to convey a particular image and/or message (Crines, 2014b: 149). Both *The Thick of It* and *Private Eye* use exaggeration and mimicry as a means of positioning themselves as credible voices of the audience. This is vital because it establishes them as avenues of communication that they use to frame audience reactions and attitudes towards political actors and public servants more generally. It is also useful to note, as reflected on by Flinders (2012: 155) in his defence of politics that ‘research suggests that an increasing number of television viewers cannot easily distinguish between entertainment and fictional dramatisations, on the one hand, and news or current affairs programmes on the other’ . Furthermore, ‘numerous studies indicate that the tone of political humour is predominantly aggressive and unflattering toward politics as it frequently emphasizes and assails ostensible failures of political processes and wrongdoings of public figures’ (Lee & Kwak, 2014: 307). This suggests political satire, and the messages it communicates, have a significant impact upon our understanding of politics which can affect how politicians are viewed.

**The Rhetorical Art of Political Satire**

The main tools within a satirist’s arsenal are impersonation, replication, and caricature. Rhetorically, these are valuable tools because they enable the satirist to connect with an audience who have certain beliefs that seek confirmation. For example, in *The Thick of It* the belief may be that all politicians are self-serving and weak and in *Private Eye* that political actors are essentially driven by ego. *Impersonation* is vital because it allows the satirist to claim pre-existing and privileged access to public service which the audience lacks (Lunsford, 1978). *Replication* enables the satirist to recreate real-life political situations in a manner likely to appeal to their target audience (*ibid*.). Similarly, *caricature* then enables satirists to create their own forms of representation that appear credible and realistic for an audience (*ibid*.). In combination with each other these forms of rhetorical engagement allow satirists to frame public servants in ways that i) enable them to communicate a message about political actors and ii) position themselves as detached observers whilst in fact being key players themselves within the liberal democratic political framework.

In order to be effective the satirist needs to misrepresent the motivations and behaviours of political actors (Crines, 2014b: 150). This is a fundamental element of satirical exaggeration and, therefore, the means by which their message is to be communicated. Indeed, an objective of the satirist is to provide confirmation in an audience that public figures are somehow deficient in personal character and are therefore deserving of ridicule. Such confirmation is designed to elevate the audience to a position of superiority over the public servants in order to create a sense of distance. By doing so political actors are seen as ‘different’ to the majority and therefore deserving of excessive criticism in a public space. By positioning themselves as detached observers, satirists are able to claim a moral position from which to engage in the communicative process. This position is vital in growing their own rhetorical credibility, which is often at the expense of the object of their ridicule.

It is also vital to remember that satirists predicate their criticisms on the assumption that there is an abstract normality from which public servants have somehow deviated. Indeed, ‘satire depends for its authority upon a state of affairs to which history rarely attains’ (Bruns, 1979: 127). Consequently political actors are expected to behave (which is often far above the moral standards of most members of society) vs how they able to behave (as normal members of society). The expectations often far exceed the realities of everyday citizens. Indeed, ‘political satire… carries an implication of an abstract normality from which public figures have somehow deviated’ (Crines, 2014b: 148). Put simply, their purpose is to position public actors on a higher level of morality thereby making it easier for the satirist to claim deviation. Indeed, such elevation creates a mechanism by which ridicule is enabled. The audience accepts this higher expectation because of their position as public servants, and therefore are expected to behave in a manner far above that which is expected of other members of the citizenry. Needless to say this expectation is mostly unachievable, however it enables the satirical process to rhetorically function thereby manipulating audience expectations.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the case studies of *The Thick of It* and *Private Eye*, whilst loosely using the Aristotelian modes of persuasion as an analytical framework. By doing so it will show how political actors are portrayed by the satirist, and how the deviations from assumed norms are constructed for the purposes of ridicule. Indeed, by doing so this chapter will highlight how their portrayal in *The Thick of It* and *Private Eye* far exaggerates political behaviour and instead presents an artificially created caricature of political life that belies the complexities of public life.

**The *Ethos* of Political Satire**

*Ethos* relates to the character and credibility of the political actor. It is how they wish to be viewed and how they are able to act as public figures. For example, political actors construct their persona based on assumed values they seek to protect and advance whilst also presenting themselves as a ‘good person’. That goodness is essential in political rhetoric given it is how public figures convince audiences that their arguments are valuable and worthy of attention. Indeed, this reflects an element of Quintilian’s (2001: 271) argument that to be a good orator, one must ‘talk a great deal about what is good and honourable’. Needless to say, however, it is the role of political satire to dismantle their image through a process of re-framing and presenting their own rhetorical message.

The audience represents the key component of political communication. They are the recipient of the messages being put forward by political actors and the satirist, as such how they present themselves determines which will be most effective in convincing an audience of the validity of their argument. To prove effective, satire is presented by constructing its character (e*thos*) by reflecting and confirming audience expectations. For example, *The Thick of It* uses a style of presentation that positions the viewer within situations as though they are part of the performance. Put simply the production style is designed to mimic documentaries through the uneven camera and on-screen captions. This mimicry is vital because it positions the medium of communication amongst those that tell factual information and historical stories from other informed sources – the contemporary trope of “fly-on-the-wall” documentaries about politics and policy-making. By using this method of presentation themselves, the satirists are aiming to position the viewer as an observer of political ineptitude in order to confirm their own pre-existing image that they expect the audience to recognise. This approach can prove effective amongst an audience if they are able to secure a sense of realistic portrayal.

Centrally, *The Thick of It* is designed to ‘confirm’ the message that political actors are amoral egotists that lack any sense of public service. This is an essential element of the message because it aims to position itself within an assumed pre-existing image that have been constructed by the media. As mentioned above, however this is exaggerated. The extent of impropriety amongst public servants is taken to an extreme in order to captivate the attention of audiences. Yet for the satirists the exaggeration needs to appear premised upon reality. In the case of *The Thick of It,* the reality is an exaggerated portrayal of the ‘advisers and the whole Campbell-Mandelson communications’ strategy of the New Labour era (Plunkett, 2012). By claiming to base their message on the reality of a political operation, the producers are claiming *ethos* in their message.

It is also useful to remember that Alistair Campbell (2013: 149) – Tony Blair’s Director of Communications during the New Labour period – argued ‘good satire often depends on taking an idea with a grain of truth and building it into a mountain’. This suggests that *The Thick of It* (and other satirical outlets) are successful because of their use of exaggeration. Indeed, he goes on to argue that ‘hot temper becomes something closer to psychosis, minister in need of assurance becomes gibbering wreck, desire for government message to be heard becomes a nihilistic, stop at nothing war with anyone and everyone’ (*ibid*: 149). For Campbell, exaggeration is a key objective of political satire and in that sense *The Thick of It* is successful at constructing and communicating its message. Consequently it is unsurprising to see public servants misrepresented in order for the satirist to achieve their objective, yet this confirms the perception that political actors are therefore expected to be satirically portrayed in such a way as to confirm deviance.

The consequence of this is that the audience will remain detached from public servants. The perception will be repeated that such deviance from an assumed social norm is normal behaviour for political actors and, therefore, deserving of mockery and contempt from the audience. The deviations can include (but are not limited to) corruption, sexual infidelity, or another form of variation from an exaggerated portrayal of so called ‘normalcy’. *The Thick of It* needs to portray political actors as different in order to achieve their communicative objectives, which are to create a sense of discontent amongst the viewers because of their (so-called) higher standard of moral normalcy.

Yet, it would be facile to suggest this is restricted to *The Thick of It*. For example, *Private Eye* gains its *ethos* from how it exaggerates the behaviour or appearance of public figures. A key difference between the two is that *Private Eye* positions itself from an even higher position of assumed morality whilst framing its messages in the style of a ‘public schoolboy’. This is how *Private Eye* constructs its credibility and ability to critique political actors. Moreover, *Private Eye* uses mockery as a way of making it a more critical observer without the intention of correcting public behaviour. Essentially, this makes it a more conservative outlet, thereby being less corrosive in its impact relative to *The Thick of It*.

The intended audience is also assumed to have more knowledge of politics than the viewers of *The Thick of It* and this is reflected in the style of humour. Indeed, *Private Eye* uses ‘in jokes’ and political awareness rather than the more superficial understanding of politics required to enjoy the message of *The Thick of It*. It is from this position which *Private Eye* gains its rhetorically *ethos* whilst also aiming to act as an observer. Furthermore, *Private Eye’s* approach requires a higher degree of ‘cultural capital’ amongst its readership (Crines, 2014b: 151). Cultural capital refers to the level of artistic awareness gained through the education system. For example, naming the letters page ‘The Grovel’ with a figure wearing a top hat and smoking a long cigarette (Private Eye, 1979: 6) or *The Llewllyns* featuring a student from Cambridge called Harry who becomes a Christian whilst musing ‘the human soul becomes a dewdrop on the dandelion’ (Private Eye, 1981: 4). This requirement also comes from the framing of the satire through literary allusions or references to classical thought and cultural capital. Often the satirist will assume the reader is aware of the classics, poetry, and ancient figures from the classical world in order to preclude some from the message whilst embracing others. This reflects the essentially conservative character of the publication, as well as embracing soft elitism in the style of the publication. For example, public figures may be compared to historical situations as a means of positioning them within alternative but recognisable contexts. As an illustration, Conservatives may be compared to owners of workhouses; socialists may be compared to characters from Orwell; or liberals as the sophists. These are exaggerated caricatures that (for the audiences) possess an element of truth in their *ethos*. This element is sufficient to confirm the message of the satire, thereby enabling the effective communication of a critical political message. Needless to say, each of these would be designed to frame contemporary politicians in such a way as to prove detrimental to them as political actors.

As a fundamental element of political rhetoric, *ethos* is one of the most important because it sets the scene for the discourse. It establishes who political actors are (be they politicians, public servants, or satirists) and what their intended objectives are likely to be. The character and credibility of each enables them to act and communicate with authority. Put simply, it gifts each a voice that can be used to garner political success or satirical impact amongst their respective audiences. Consequently, it becomes an essential part of the rhetorical lifeblood of democratic discourse within a liberal society.

**The *Pathos* of Political Satire**

Emotions are a vital element of how the satirist can control the responses of their chosen audience (Crines, 2014b: 153). Put simply, the satirist intends the audience to feel in a particular way about the message they are communicating. As Finlayson (2012) rightly notes, ‘emotional tenor is part of what an ideology is and traditions of political thinking can be characterised by their particular emotional tones’ (Finlayson, 2012: 761). These could be emotions that are often characterised as either positive or negative. Positive emotions include feelings of joy, amusement, and laughter. Negative emotions include fear, anger, and discontent. Needless to say these are asymmetrical and a successful satirist can make their audience feel many emotions across the spectrum, yet by embedding specific emotional responses in an audience the rhetorician is able to compel them to action (*ibid.)*. Consequently, how the satirist (and political actors) use emotions determines the extent to which they can manipulate their intended audience.

More specifically, *The Thick of It* frames its messages in a way that makes audiences feel both amused and frustrated by the portrayal of political actors. The amusement is aimed at those who are simply inept and therefore figures of fun, whilst the frustration aims to create a sense of anger at how the satirist wants them to believe the United Kingdom is governed. By doing so, the satirists are intent on controlling their audiences. Needless to say, *The Thick of It* is simply an exaggerated form of political portrayal that is designed to appeal towards pre-existing assumptions about political actors. As previously noted, *The Thick of It* plays to these pre-existing assumptions that political actors are self-serving egotists with little or no self-awareness. This is a highly negative emotion that (if believed) could prove highly detrimental to the confidence an audience has in the abilities of political actors.

A particular example of such a negative portrayal can be found in Malcolm Tucker. Tucker symbolises what the satirist wants the audience to believe political actors are whilst presenting those negative emotions in such a way as to be entertaining. Indeed, the behaviour is intended to shock and amuse the audience in equal measure. As Armando Iannuci reflected for *The Guardian,* ‘we all look forward to the Malcolm moments in the same way we look forward to the Darth Vader moments in *Star Wars’* (Rawnsley, 2012). The moments of insult are presented as something for the audience to enjoy, despite the impact they can have on the image of politician. Indeed, these moments are rhetorically intended to expose the characters and confirm the cynical message that political actors are unlike most other members of society because of these objectionable characteristics. Yet it is these characteristics which the satirists intend to use as emotive vehicles for their messages.

Ultimately, the purpose of the satirist is to use *pathos* as way of constructing annoyance amongst the audience towards the political process, and even to transform some characters into mouthpieces for the audience. For example, in terms of *The Thick of It*, Stewart Pearson (Malcolm Tucker’s opposite number and trained professional in political communication for the Conservative Party) becomes that voice by transcending the fourth wall in the final episode to convey something of the public mood towards David Cameron’s government. In so doing he describes the Conservative Party as being incapable of genuine change and that the modernisation strategy of the Cameron period had been largely a failure as a result. This builds upon a recognisable, logical premise around which to construct the *pathos*: that politics is simply an undesirable profession and so the satirist is aiming to invoke anger in the audience in order to create a specific response *vis-à-vis* alienation.

Moreover, the language of *The Thick of It* aims to present itself as an accurate portrayal of how political actors speak and so frames itself as an informed window into British political life. This portrayal aims to create a sense of normalised difference in the language political actors use towards the voters. Indeed, this is a normalised sense of indifference towards the voters in how political actors describe the public. For example, describing the electorate as ‘muggles’ in relation to their political knowledge and indifference to mental health following the suicide of a homeless member of the public by describing it as ‘the Bohemian Rhapsody of suicide’ (series 4, episode 3). The trivialisation of the public is an attempt by the satirist to create distance between the viewers and the characters, thereby intentionally growing the alienation between political actors and the voters. Indeed, the premise of this hostility is intended to be casually indifferent and therefore represents their lack of humanity which (for the satirist) is the responsibility of political actors. However, of course real-world political actors across the spectrum do possess the same emotions and needs as the audience and the satirists’ more cynical portrayal is intended to entertain and perpetuate stereotypes without informing.

In terms of *Private Eye*, their use of emotion relies more on the foolish behaviour of political elites rather than attempting to construct an overly cynical message. This *pathos* is comparable to that of a corrective authority within private boarding schools who seeks to ridicule the misguided conduct of the highly talented yet badly behaved schoolboys. For *Private Eye*, the ridicule aims to come from a position of assumed authority because of the tone of the language used. In terms of the satirist, such a position is self-awarded because of its longstanding cross-party ridicule and assumed position above political figures in public life. Thus, the *pathos* derives from a position of ‘superiority’ that is almost sympathetic to public figures in how the message is framed. In part this sympathetic approach (relative to *The Thick of It*)can be found in the intended impact of the satirical message. For example, whilst *The Thick of It* constructs itself as a mouthpiece intending to expose and punish political ineptitude, *Private Eye* strives to offer knowing yet embarrassing public exposure of political indiscretion. This distinction is key because it is by no means a challenger to the assumptions about political life, yet it positions itself as one aiming to portray political actors as figures who have deviated from an assumed normative value. This corrective satire is intended to be communicated in an amusing manner intended to invoke humour.

Tied to this is the satirists’ intention of portraying political actors as figures of fun and ‘knowing exasperation’ amongst the target audience. The audience is expected to feel a sense of amused frustration at public figures. Moreover, how the message is communicated is key towards understanding its success. For example, one way this rhetorical technique is effective is the way it uses images of political actors and other set-pieces to insert a fake quote in order to present them as essentially figures of mockery. The aim of the strategy strives to use *pathos* as a way of positioning political actors as foolish yet well meaning. This distinguishes *Private Eye* from *The Thick of It* because the intention is not to overly erode confidence in political actors, rather it is simply to momentarily poke fun before moving onto the next public figure. For example, Cecil Parkinson thanking Margaret Thatcher for ‘standing by me’ before responding ‘you’re fired’ following a sex scandal (Private Eye, 1983: 1).

As noted with regard to the ethos, in order to be effective, the *pathos* of *Private Eye* assumes a level of political awareness amongst the readership. To some extent this can act as a rhetorical barrier in choosing who the audience is that might be able to fully engage with the *pathos*; the reader must first have a level of prior understanding of the reality of a political situation. An example of this would be how *Private Eye* uses sarcasm. Sarcasm and wit are essential tools in *Private Eye’s* armoury of *pathos.* As an illustration, in 1981 *Private Eye* ran a cover showing the leader of the UK Labour Party, and official opposition, Michael Foot (at that time a very unpopular political figure) walking his dog in a park under the headline ‘Thousands March in Pro-Foot Rally’. Despite the reality of the picture being Foot simply walking, the headline re-framed the picture as one of *pathos*-driven mockery. Needless to say this was an attempt to tell a broader story about Foot’s lack of political support that the reader was assumed to be aware of. However, the wit comes from the simplicity of the image and the broader undertones of the headline. Combined with Foot’s absence of support was the use of ‘Worzel Gummidge’ (a fictional scarecrow from a popular 1970s children television programme) as a nickname in order to highlight Foot’s style of personal dress (he famously wore an informal donkey jacket while taking part in Remembrance Day commemorations at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, which was portrayed as a disrespectful act by political opponents). Whilst these messages were essentially harmless, they aim to construct an ongoing persona that aims to gain a degree of political traction and impact amongst the voters.

Consequently, *pathos* is one of the most important elements of effective communication for the political satirist. Regardless of the aim of the satirist (be that corrosive or corrective), *pathos* enables the satirist to reframe politics in such a way as to impact upon the image of real-world political actors by arguing politicians are either inept, foolish, or corrupt.

**The *Logos* of Political Satire**

The remaining element of rhetorical analysis concerns how political actors and satirists use logical arguments and/or empirical evidence – the *logos* (Crines, 2014b: 156). *Logos* refers to the ‘extent to which public arguments rest on appeals to the structure of reality (Finlayson, 2012: 761). How *logos* is conceptualised when evaluating political satire comes through how the messages themselves are premised. Put simply, for the satirist, *logos* is the art of presenting a believable scenario that appears to be based on real events whilst taken to an exaggerated extreme. *Logos* also conveys the importance of a message and why the audience should listen. To do this political satirists construct their set-pieces that appear logical whilst smoothing over their real-world complexities. Put simply, they are simplified versions of real-world situations that have been made accessible to the audience in such a way as to appear believable.

For example, Westminster select committee meetings in *The Thick of It* are used not to discuss policy or conduct investigations as in the House of Commons, but rather they are used to provide a reductive arena with the appearance of reality in order for the satirist to continue constructing character conflict. By doing so, the satirist is able to change the real-world complexities of a situation into a *logos-*based arena to continue telling a *pathos-*led narrative. In terms of *The Thick of It*, this is often to continue framing politics around a hostile and essentially self-serving environment in which members of a select committee are inept and those giving evidence are duplicitous. Indeed, whilst the ineptitude and duplicitous natures of the characters provide the *pathos*, the arena conveys the *logos.*

A further example of how complexities are reduced to simple narratives comes in the fourth series of *The Thick of It* when Malcolm Tucker successfully removes the leader of the opposition by releasing a story that Nicola Murray (the leader) simply supported an unpopular policy before securing the leadership. The *logos* of the premise (and the real-world connection) was the apparent discontent in the UK Labour Party over the performance of the then leader Ed Miliband and the desire to replace him with someone more attuned to the political age. The narrative and setting constructed by the satirist is successful and believable to the viewer because Tucker is framed as a dangerous political operator with a considerable level of internal power. The *logos* derives from the idea that party leaders can (and are) removed by powerful spin-doctors and that it is a true reflection of how politics functions. This belies the far more complex process faced by real-world political actors, however for the reductive purposes of the satirist it is entirely plausible that such a figure possesses the power to wilfully remove their party leader. Indeed, internal democratic processes and leadership challenges sit outside of the satirists’ interest because it becomes overly complicated for the narrative they are seeking to construct, thereby selling a more simplistic interpretation of politics to the audience. Moreover, given the apparent knowing position of the satirist, it garners further *logos* as an accurate interpretation of political life despite the realities facing political actors.

*Private Eye* also employs *logos* when constructing its satirical messages. The set pieces and settings (whilst humorous) aim to have a logical foundation around which to construct and present the message. The logical coherence underscoring the message comes from the plausibility of the setting and how they use their position as a *logos-*based corrective body to prove convincing. By doing so, the corrective force of the message emerges and they are able to fulfil their satirical objectives. This enables the reader to feel as though the message could be true. For example, Harold Wilson’s *Labour Weekly,* Tony Blair’s, *Parish Newsletter,* David Cameron’s *School Academy,* and Theresa May’s *The Headmistress Writes* columns*.* These are each intended to replicate stereotypical perceptions of how each of the political actor are perceived to be. For example, Wilson’s piece was designed to provide a flavour of the various socialist publications produced in the 1970s; Blair’s ridiculed his piety; Cameron’s referenced his time in the Bullingdon Club (an exclusive all male dinner club for select University of Oxford students) to convey something of his detached background; whilst May’s replicated her robotic, cold style as an authority figure. Each are presented in a style that seeks to mimic the assumed real-world style of the political actor being parodied and so garners a sense of *logos* with the reader. In actuality, these are entirely fictional and are more *pathos-*driven, yet in the contexts in which they are presented they are framed around *logos* as a way of communicating a logical message.

Fundamentally, the mimicry and mockery of political satire uses *logos* to trivialise the complexities faced by real-world political actors. It is essentially a reductive art that aims to present political ideologies, party leaderships, and effective statecraft models as irrational and devoid of logic. To do this both *The Thick of It* and *Private Eye* present simplified solutions to complex problems in a way designed to make them seem obvious to an audience. This process successfully undermines the *ethos* of the political actor whilst growing their own, and also partly undermines attempts to create an informed electorate. Indeed, given only a surface level of awareness is necessary to appreciate the *logos* of the satirical message, it can be argued that satire may replace the need for an educated voter.

In summary, how the political satirist uses *logos* depends on how they frame their political messages. Whilst a surface knowledge is needed for *The Thick of It*, the target audience for *Private Eye* needs a more developed understanding of politics. For example, to appreciate the *logos* of messages concerning Brexit the recipient would benefit from a developed understanding of the challenges that have faced British political actors since 2016. Examples include the Queen asking Theresa May ‘how low can you go’ to which she responds ‘I’ve appointed Boris as Foreign Secretary’ (Private Eye, 2016: 1) or showing a blank page as a ‘Theresa May Memorial Issue: The Prime Minister’s Legacy in Full’ (Private Eye, 2019: 1). This is because the *logos* of the message often appeals to those who have been closely involved in, or observed, the development of the negotiations for the UK to leave the European Union, and so to appreciate the humour a more developed understanding would be beneficial. Consequently, whilst it is possible to rely heavily on the satirist to contextualise and frame a message around a certain level of awareness, it is by no means possible for the audience to fully engage with the satire of *Private Eye* and *The Thick of It* without some level of pre-existing political knowledge.

**Conclusion**

The objective of this chapter was to provide a brief overview of how satirists rhetorically represent public figures and political actors. The modes of persuasion represent useful analytical tools in drawing out a selection of representative insights about how audiences can be manipulated by political satire. This chapter has drawn attention to two case studies and how their approaches to satire differ. *The Thick of It* is largely a corrosive example of satire which appears to actively undermine the image of politicians by being essentially reductive. In this case, it is the simplicity of the satire that impacts upon the quality of how representatives are seen by the audience. As Alistair Campbell, quoted above, noted, the exaggeration creates a series of characters that become parodies of political actors. How *The Thick of It* then conveys them to the audience can affect attitudes towards real-world political actors. In contrast *Private Eye* is a more corrective form of political satire that seeks to highlight impropriety whilst leaving trust in political actors largely unaffected. This approach enables *Private Eye* to frame its satirical approaches in a more conservative style. The mimicry of political actors in real-world scenarios draw out their foolishness in a way that appears more forgiving of political actors than seen in *The Thick of It*.

Rhetorically, both satirical outlets use the modes of persuasion, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*, in different ways. For *The Thick of It*, the *ethos* derives from its style of presentation and settings, whilst using *pathos* to instil a sense of frustrated anger amongst the audience. For *Private Eye*, its *ethos* comes as a corrective form of presentation with the primary uses of *pathos* being amusement. Both use *logos* in a manner that assumes some political awareness amongst the audience. By doing so they both present caricatures of political actors in a way that communicates a simplified version of politics to the audience. The audience is intended to believe that the representation is accurate and, therefore, the reductive approaches to political complexities implies a detached political class. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that the examples of satire offered by this chapter fail to educate the audience about political realities whilst still providing an entertaining if harmful representation of liberal democracy.

**References**

Atkins, J., Finlayson, A., Martin, J., and Turbull, N. (2014) *Rhetoric in British Politics and Society*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Basu, L. (2014) ‘British Satire in *The Thick of It’, Popular Communications*, 12 (2) 89-102.

Bruns, G. (1979) ‘Allegory and Satire: A Rhetorical Mediation’, *New Literary History*, 11 (1) 121-32.

Campbell, A. (2013) ‘Interview with the author’, 26 May.

Crines, A. (2013) ‘An Analysis of George Galloway’s Oratorical and Rhetorical Impact’, *Politics*, 33 (2) 81-90.

Crines, A. (2014a) 'The rhetoric of neoliberalism in the politics of crisis', *Global Discourse*, 5 (1), pp. 116-129.

Crines, A. (2014b) ‘Rhetoric and Satire – Spitting Image and Political Comedy’ in *Rhetoric in British Politics and Society*, Palgrave: Basingstoke.

Finlayson, A. (2012) ‘Rhetoric and the Political Theory of Ideologies’, *Political Studies*, 60 (4), 751-67.

Flinders, M. (2012) *Defending Politics: Why democracy matters in the twenty-first century*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Lee, H. & Kwak, N. (2014) ‘The affect effect of political satire: sarcastic humour, negative emotions, and political participation’, *Mass Communication and Society*, 17 (3) 307-28.

Lockyer, S. (2006) ‘A Two-Pronged Attack? Exploring *Private Eye’s* satirical humour and investigative reporting’, *Journalism Studies*, 7 (5) 765-81.

Lunsford, A. (1978) ‘Aristotelian Rhetoric: Let’s get back to the classics’, *Journal of Basic Writing*, 2 (1) 2-12.

Hayton, R. & Crines, A. (2015), *Conservative Orators from Baldwin to Cameron*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Private Eye (1970) 19 June, No. 222.

Private Eye (1979) 22 June, No. 457.

Private Eye (1981) 11 September, No. 515.

Private Eye (1983) 21 October, No. 564.

Rawnsley, A. (2012) ‘Armando Iannucci vs Andrew Rawnsley’, *The Guardian*, 2 September.

Quintilian (2001) *An Orators Education Book II*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

The Thick of It (2005-12) Series One to Four, 19 May 2005-27 October 2012.

Toye, R. (2013) *Rhetoric – A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.