School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts

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Speaking Truth: The Play of Politics and Australian Satire

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the contemporary interplay between satire and politics, focusing on texts that envisage and engage with politics in unconventional and often mischievous ways. There is a long tradition of scholarship concerned with issues such as satire's ability to promote subversion, awareness, apathy or even cynicism; the potential, or lack thereof, of satire to influence any change in political or journalistic discourse; and the relationship between satire and "truth," particularly in satire's capacity to "speak truth to power." My research expands on this tradition, asking, how does televisual and online political satire contribute to shifting political discourses? Focusing primarily on the under-researched relationship between satire and Australian politics, this question is considered through textual and discursive analysis. Firstly, I examine the difference between cynicism and its ancient counterpart kynicism in order to illustrate how different types of satire approach the idea of truth and truth-telling. I then explore how the larrikin, the carnivalesque and a cultural "distaste for taste" play an important role in the way satirists are given legitimacy to speak on political issues in Australia. My research observes that in the current media landscape, satirists and politicians are encroaching on each other's spaces. The satirist is given a licence to speak both satirically and seriously about politics, and the politician attempts to gain cultural capital through playing with the satirist in good humour, sometimes actively satirising themselves. This direct interplay between satire and politics has contributed to three significant shifts within political discourse: certain satires are now being used as trusted, legitimate sources of political information and truth; politicians increasingly engage with satirists or use satire in ways that suggest a political attempt at co-option; and those who I define as "citizen satirists" are engaging in practices of consumption and production resulting in online satirical texts that have, due to the global flow of information, started to contribute to political debates in more traditional mainstream media.

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Introduction

This thesis examines how the contemporary interplay between satire and politics has influenced discursive shifts within political discourse. Recently, contemporary texts, namely *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and *The Colbert Report*, have been studied not just for their satire of journalism, but as a complement to or, in some cases, even a replacement of journalism. A growing number of people, particularly those aged 18-35 years, use such satire for entertainment, critique and information. Scholarship on "fake news" is extensive and provides a considerable background to my research. The thesis itself supplies a significant contribution to this scholarship in a number of ways. Though I do extensively cover the relationship between satire and journalism, I reframe this research around political discourse. Scholarship on satire has always been concerned with how satire mediates the political, as is this thesis, but I am more interested in how satire engages directly with politics. I examine how satirists and politicians interact with each other, particularly how and why politicians are actively seeking out the satirist as an interviewer (as in the case of Stewart or Colbert) or a playmate in performances (as with the Australian satirical team *The Chaser*) ranging from the serious, with perhaps a few quips here and there, to actively satirising and mocking themselves. Conversely, it explores the satirist's evolving role in public debate, both through their satirical performances and their appearances in more traditional avenues of political journalism. This thesis fills a substantial gap in scholarship about *The Chaser* and, to a lesser extent, the UK's *The Thick of It*. *The Chaser*, though active on Australian television for over a decade, has been the subject of little scholarship outside the work of Stephen Harrington. Research on the critically acclaimed UK satire *The Thick of It* is virtually non-existent.

Definitions

This thesis works within particular definitions of satire, parody and irony. These terms have been subject to extensive academic debate over time and the issue of definition has always proved to be fraught. As with most complex ideas, definition depends on context and is, even then, rarely fixed. The following definitions are by no means finite and should be understood as primarily informing the arguments and

scope of this thesis. First, parody, a close cousin of satire, can be broadly understood as "any cultural practice which makes a polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (Dentith *Parody* 20). This imitation can be direct, as in the impersonation of a specific person or text, or it can be more general, as in the parody of a genre or cultural practice. In this thesis, parody is taken to be both mocking and affectionate imitation.

My distinction between satire and parody is that satire has a critical edge. Simply, as Stephen Colbert once said, "satire is parody with a point" (qtd. in Blake n.pag). While parody often involves making fun of the powerful, imitation provides the source of laughter. In satire, laughter often comes from a recognition of the critical statement behind the imitation. Satire involves a "direct attack on human vice or folly; it must contain lampoons on individuals or critical and hostile comments on political or social life" (Hodgart 31). In satire, social criticism is obscured by "a high form of 'play,' which gives us both the recognition of our responsibilities and the irresponsible joy of make-believe" (11). The recognition of something real or familiar in "make-believe" is a crucial part of satire. As Hodgart succinctly explains,

> The satirist does not paint an objective picture of the evils he describes, since pure realism would be too oppressive. Instead, he usually offers us a travesty of the situation, which at once directs our attention to actuality and permits an escape from it (12).

Both satire and parody regularly involve a complex play with language, frequently in the repurposing of utterances. Utterances can be one word or many sentences, and they are dependent on the situation in which they are expressed. This is not to say that language is random or defined strictly by the individual. Each sphere in which language is used has a relatively stable, widely understood set of shared language codes and utterances. Bakhtin calls these speech genres, which include professional language, military language, academic language, conversational language, and so on (*Speech Genres* 60). Utterances are regularly taken from their specific speech genres and used in other contexts. Volosinov calls this reported speech, "an utterance belonging to *someone else*, an utterance that was originally totally independent, complete in its construction, and lying outside the given context" (116). Reported speech can be a direct quotation from an expert in an academic text or one person relaying what they heard someone say to another person. Bakhtin notes that reported speech is never just a repetition of an utterance. The different context

and tone of the speaker relaying another's utterance inflects that utterance with "dual expression" (*Speech Genres* 93); it holds the meaning of the initial utterance and the reinterpretation.

Parodic speech, reported speech that is mocking, can be considered "double-voiced:" it takes the utterance of another for its own purposes (Morson 65). Audiences of parodic speech are privy to a second meaning "beyond the word" (Dentith *Bakhtinian Thought* 48) of the person or text being parodied. In this way, the words of the parodied subject are,

> 'Made strange'…precisely in the direction that suits the author's needs: they are particularized, their coloration is heightened, but at the same time they are made to accommodate shadings of the author's attitude – his irony, humor, and so on (Volosinov 131).

Irony is another "double-voiced" form that is crucial in understanding satire. Though similarly difficult to define, irony can be understood as "a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance" (Baldick n.pag). Hutcheon challenges these definitions of irony that see it as "simple logical contradiction (and meaning substitution)" (63). Instead of seeing irony's double-voiced nature as "an *either/or* substitution of opposites," she argues that it involves "*both* the unsaid *and* the said working together to create something new. The semiotic 'solution' of irony would then hold in suspension the said plus something *other than* and *in addition to* it that remained unsaid" (63). While irony is "always structured on a relation of difference" (65) between the said and the unsaid, Hutcheon maintains that in recognising irony, we perceive the literal statement (the said) and the its ironic inflection (the unsaid) in "an oscillating yet simultaneous perception of plural and different meanings" (66). This is a very simplified version of Hutcheon's work on irony, excluding her exploration of irony's edge and discursive communities, but it does serve the purpose of this thesis.

Of course, it should go without saying what Hutcheon and many theorists stress when it comes to understanding all things satire, parody and irony: all rely on the linguistic, cultural, social and political contexts in which they are deployed. The master satirist is one who can work speech genres into unexpected contexts, or mix the conventions of a particular speech genre with utterances that do not belong. Speech genres are naturalised constructs that people deploy, depending on context,

without thinking. Satire's ironic or parodic use of utterances in strange ways or contexts often destabilises this normalisation.

These definitions are valuable though limited by their focus on style or aesthesis, and rely heavily on literary criticism. Satire, parody and irony have traditionally been marked out as art forms, literary genres, or sub-genres of humour. Paul Simpson, however, usefully extends how we understand satire by defining it as a "discursive practice…in the Foucaultian sense" (8). Satire, as a practice, occurs not only in texts, but in everyday life: in the home, in the workplace and, indeed, in politics.

At this point, it is important to note that all references to discourse in this thesis are understood within Foucault's model. Therefore, discourse is not used here within its everyday parlance as discussion or debate. The reader will note that I strictly avoid the phrase "public discourse," a term popularly used to denote public opinion and debate. Instead, I use the idiom of "public discussion," "public debate" or similar when referring to this phenomenon. Discourse, as it is used in this thesis, encompasses entrenched knowledges, practices and ways of speaking. To talk of political discourse is to speak of the values, truth claims, practices and speech genres that govern the realm of politics and those who inhabit it, namely politicians, journalists, satirists and citizens alike. Different people or "subject positions" within political discourse can be achieved through the acquisition of particular knowledges and the participation in and acting out of certain practices or actions, all through various interactions with other players within and often in conjunction with other discursive fields. Discourses consist of "discontinuous practices, which cross each other, are sometimes juxtaposed with one another, but can just as well exclude or be unaware of each other" (Foucault "Order" 67).

Truth claims, used to justify and normalise the values and practices inherent in politics (or, indeed, any social field) are "dependent on institutional and discursive practices" (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 40). Foucault calls this a game of truth, "a set of procedures that lead to a certain result, which, on the basis of its principles and rules of procedures, may be considered valid or invalid;" simply, "a set of rules by which truth is produced" (qtd. in 40). As they are played out in the various discourses we simultaneously inhabit, games of truth "discursively [position] us to see the truth about ourselves, our desires, and our experiences" (40). This understanding of truth as discursively produced and naturalised underpins the methodology and ontology of this entire thesis.

In considering satire as a discursive practice, Simpson draws on these Foucauldian understandings of discourse, saying,

> Patterns of discourse are seen not as symbolising neutrally a 'natural' order of things, but rather as a *naturalised* order locatable in prevailing relations of power and predicated upon the particular power relations that are immanent in each discourse event…The object of analysis is not so much individual human subjects engaged in discourse but rather, the relations between the subject *positions* that are taken up in discourse (84).

Simpson defines three shifting subject positions within satiric discourse: the satirist, the *satiree* (the audience) and the satirised (the target). He also argues that the discursive practice of satire,

> Requires a *genus*, which is a derivation in a particular culture, in a system of institutions and in the framework of belief and knowledge which envelop and embrace these institutions. It also requires an *impetus*, which emanates from the perceived disapprobation, by the satirist, of some aspect of a potential satirical target (8).

In defining satire, this thesis draws on literary criticism from the likes of Hodgart, Dentith and Bakhtin, while also seeing satire as functioning similarly to Simpson. It considers satire as a practice, and explores the place of this practice within political discourse. The subject positions of interest here are that of the satirist, the audience/voter/citizen (the *satiree*), and the politician (the satirised). The thesis studies how power relations between these three are negotiated and what this means for how politics is mediated, understood and practiced.

Limitations, Methods and Ethics

This research is driven by a fascination with political discourse and who is trusted to provide "the honest truth" about politics. Undeniably, this could be approached in many different ways. I have chosen satire as my focal point, but I acknowledge that satire is just one of a myriad of factors that influence fluctuations within the practices, ways of knowing or representation of politics. Satire is but one lens with which to study the dynamic and vast pluralities of political discourse.

This thesis is, of course, the product of both calculated and unintentional limitations. While it does draw on many examples from the US and UK, it is

primarily interested in the interplay between satire and politics in Australia, as this is an under-researched area of study. US and UK examples provide substantial comparative material, namely through the following instances: satire being used as legitimate political information or commentary; the changing role of the satirist in the mediation of politics; how such satires actually represent politics; and how politicians and satirists engage with one another. This was done not just to provide comparison, given the various cultural and political connections between Australia, the US and the UK, but because current research in this area is predominantly focused on the US context.

The thesis itself focuses predominantly on television and online political satire from the last decade, though Chapter 3 provides a brief account of the larrikin carnivalesque tradition in Australian satire from as early as the 1920s. This focus on popular mass media and new technology texts has resulted in the exclusion of satire in newspaper cartoons, literature and theatre. This decision was made for the sake of narrowing the research sample to a manageable size and also due to the thesis' interest in politician-satirist interaction. Therefore, *The Chaser* series, *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are studied most extensively. *The Thick of It* and "Kevin Rudd P.M." are notable exceptions as, even though they do not feature any interaction between politician and satirist *in* the text, politicians have interacted with or drawn on them in interesting ways *outside* the text. The place of the satirist as legitimate political commentator within political and journalistic discourse has been largely restricted to Australian examples, as have online manifestations of satire television and political party campaigning. Examples of online user-generated satire in this thesis are more diverse. Many Australian creators are featured, but given the global nature of the internet and the flow of communication and politics that is of most interest in this section, I have allowed for more variety in the origins of texts.

The UK satire *The Thick of It* is featured more predominantly than other UK or US comparative material, an anomaly which might appear strange given my focus on Australia. This choice was made because *The Thick of It* provides an illustrative example of complex *parrhesiastic* cynical satire (concepts to be discussed in Chapter 2) that has captured public imagination when it comes to the "honest truth" about politics. It usefully allows me to set up my theoretical ideas about contemporary satirical practice in Chapter 2, before moving on to the Australian context in Chapters 3 and 4. Australia provides a detailed case study of a broader phenomenon

where the realms of satire and politics increasingly interact. I believe that many of my conclusions can be extended to the UK and US, particularly in relation to the cultural capital given to satirists and the way politicians are interacting – and attempting to co-opt – satire.

The choice to focus exclusively on satire has, at times, required flexibility. In the Chapter 4 discussion of comic licence and ruptures in textual containment, I have also included examples of comedy and comedians alongside satire and satirists. This chapter looks at instances where satirists have been granted a licence to speak on political matters outside the confines of their satire; for example, in cases where a satirist may write a predominantly serious newspaper article or provide commentary on a news program. *The Chaser* is the main group of satirists given license to do this in Australia, but there are also a number of comedians who are occasionally granted similar rights. Here, comedians are understood as practitioners of comedy, where comedy is seen as a generic, loose term that describes a variety of humorous performances. It is commonly used to both encompass a variety of such performances, including satire, but also to describe those performances that are less easily classified as being a specialised humorous art form like satire. There are comedians who use satire on occasion, but not to the extent that it encompasses their entire practice, as with the satirist. Due to the current dominance of *The Chaser* in Australian's satirical and political landscapes, comedians who also engage with politicians or political journalism are discussed to provide contrast. The inclusion of comedians and comedy in the thesis also provides another way of illustrating the cultural capital of the larrikin in Australia, a topic that features heavily in Chapters 3 and 4.

Given that satire and, to a lesser extent, comedy more generally are still very male-dominated, there is a distinct lack of examples featuring female satirists in this thesis. Women have slowly been entering the realm of satire, with notable examples such as Tina Fey and Amy Poehler from *Saturday Night Live*, and Samantha Bee and Jessica Williams from *The Daily Show*. However, women are rarely the prominent players in political satire and satirical performance is still gendered as masculine, particularly in Australia. While I do discuss the place of gender in the formulation of the larrikin figure in Chapter 2, the politics of gender within satire is largely considered to be beyond the scope of this thesis.

Methodologically, the thesis engages in critical textual and discursive analysis. Textual analysis is used to unpack the technical and philosophical devices at work within a wide range of texts, mainly audio-visual political satire and political news programs. By studying satire's philosophical underpinnings and its aesthetic and political techniques, I seek to shed light on how such elements contribute to satire's cultural capital and its representation of politics. Discursive analysis is conducted to further examine how these texts interact more broadly with political and media practices, particularly in relation to how they draw on, play with and contribute to political discourse within Australia. In Chapter 5, this is broadened to include the interplay between satire and politics online. Texts and discourses are then considered within a multitude of global cultural flows.

I must stress that while these methods of analysis are certainly descriptive, they are predominantly and purposefully critical. Norman Fairclough promotes a critical approach to textual and discursive analysis that studies texts "with a view to their social effects" (*Analysing Discourse* 11). This methodology is based on the premise that "texts are socioculturally shaped but they also constitute society and culture, in ways which may be transformative as well as reproductive" (*Media Discourse* 34). In other words, texts produce and are products of the social world. This thesis is concerned with how satirical texts produce and are products of political discourse. Therefore, my methodological approach incorporates a thorough analysis of the sociocultural and sociohistorical context in which the aforementioned texts are situated. It is informed by Fairclough's methodological approaches in *Media Discourse* and *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, and is conducted in the spirit of Foucault's critical and genealogical styles of discourse analysis, where,

> The critical portion of the analysis applies to the systems that envelop discourse, and tries to identify and grasp these principles of sanctioning, exclusion, and scarcity of discourse…The genealogical position, on the other hand, applies to the series where discourse is effectively formed: it tries to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I mean not so much a power which would be opposed to that of denying, but rather the power to constitute domains of objects, in respect of which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions (Foucault "Order" 73).

All the texts I study are in the public domain, including those that are observed online. However, as noted in the 2012 Association of Internet Research (AoIR)

Ethics Guidelines, online users "may operate in public spaces" and "acknowledge that the substance of their communication is public, but that the specific context in which it appears implies restrictions on how that information is – or ought to be – used by other parties" (Markham and Buchanan 6-7). Due to the "fuzzy" nature of this public vs. private understanding of online spaces, the AoIR provides guidelines, instead of rules, that involve a consideration of how users *see* their online spaces, even if those spaces are freely and publically accessible. AoIR advocate a flexible, yet ethical approach to online research, given that the variety of different spaces and activities (forums, blogs, personal profiles, tweets) are so varied. Therefore, while I conducted textual and discursive analysis of online material that is easily available to anyone with an internet connection, I did so with a consideration of how users view the context in which they publish. More details about my methodological and ethical approach to online material can be viewed in the appendix.

Ontologically, this research comes from a social-constructivist position, a point worth stressing given the following discussions regarding truth and who speaks it. This thesis maintains that truth, like so much of human experience, is socially constructed. It does, however, acknowledge that while people outside the academy are only too aware of things like spin and bias, they generally hold the truth to be essential[1]. These essential truths may be discursive social constructions, but they are still very "real in that they determine or influence how people see themselves and behave" (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 40). My interest is in who is trusted to speak the truth in the world of politics, especially as it is a realm widely considered to be deeply untrustworthy and manipulative. Trust and legitimacy are two very important, and arguably very rare, commodities in political discourse. I therefore examine how satirists are sometimes cast as "truth-tellers" within a constructivist framework, but I also acknowledge that this phenomenon relies on realist ontology.

This thesis has been divided into five distinct but linked chapters. Chapter 1 provides a review of current literature on contemporary satire and its place in televised political culture. It also assesses various debates about the discursive evolution of journalism, particularly in relation to current debates about journalism quality, or lack thereof. Chapter 2 is concerned with satire's relationship to truth. It interrogates the idea that satire produces cynicism and provides an innovative

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[1] Essentialist and essentialism are understood as "a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity" (Fuss xi).

reimagining of kynicism, a more principled version of contemporarily-understood cynicism. I examine kynicism's roots in the ancient Greek philosophy of Cynicism, the history of its chief practitioner Diogenes of Sinope, and its semiotic evolution through to the present day. *Parrhesia*, the ancient Greek practice of truth-telling through frank and fearless speech, is introduced as a concept that neatly describes the style of "speaking truth" conducted by the kynical satirists of the current era. This study is conducted in order to show the manner in which contemporary satire envisages politics and truth on a spectrum between kynical to cynical. This spectrum, I believe, can be used to identify whether satire allows politicians to play along in a way that either demands more from politics or encourages a resignation to apathy. *The Chaser* provides an example of a more kynical satire, and *The Thick of It* offers a case of satire that, while having kynical elements, leans closer to the cynical end of the spectrum.

Chapter 3 examines the role of national identity and cultural narratives in Australian manifestations of satirical *parrhesia*. It bolsters and extends the term "larrikin carnivalesque" within an in-depth study of Bakhtin's theory of carnival, Bourdieu's concepts of taste and habitus, and various scholarship on Australian humour and the mythic figure of the larrikin. A short history of notable Australian satire is provided to show the larrikin carnivalesque tradition, followed by a case study of today's kynical carnivalesque larrikins, *The Chaser*. The satirical *Rove* segment "Kevin Rudd P.M." is comparatively analysed to show how cynicism manifests in the Australian satiric tradition of the larrikin carnivalesque.

Chapter 4 delves further into the larrikin's cultural capital by looking at instances where comic licence, which grants satirists and other humourists permission to misbehave, is extended so that the satirist is also granted license and legitimacy to speak in non-carnival spaces. Here we see a breach in carnivalesque containment, where the fool who becomes king in carnival also retains some of that legitimacy and authenticity outside the carnival. This is illustrated through a study of recent cases of satirists and comedians being invited, welcomed, revered and, at times, feared in the realm of political journalism and political campaigning. After assessing cases where the satirist becomes king in non-carnival places, I explore instances where the politician (or "king") seeks the fool's endorsement through appearances on satire programs and attempts at humour when faced with the likes of *The Chaser*.

Chapter 5 looks at how the interplay between satire and politics manifests online. First, the use of social media by and in television satire is examined, including the sanctioned and illegal proliferation of television satire paratexts. This is followed by a section on the politician's use of social media to connect playfully with voters. Voters themselves then become the focus, namely those who create and distribute satire online. The chapter goes on to introduce a new paradigm in which to study the work of these non-industry content producers, modifying the term "citizen journalism" to "citizen satire" to encompass the aesthetic, technological and political practices of autonomous online satirists. Using Appadurai's global flows and landscapes, this chapter argues that citizen satire may be distributed solely online, but the nature of these intersecting global landscapes allow it to enter local public debate.

Finally, the thesis is concluded with a summary of my findings and a brief consideration of future research avenues. I also provide a tentative imagining of possible developments in the roles that satirists, politicians and citizen satirists play in the way we envisage politics.

Chapter 1

Performing News: Background on Current Scholarship

In 2007, the Pew Research Centre found that Jon Stewart, *The Daily Show*'s satiric anchor, was considered to be the fourth most trusted journalist in America alongside traditional mainstream journalists such as Tom Brokaw, Anderson Cooper, Dan Rather and Brian Williams (Kakutani n.pag; "Pew Summary of Findings" n.pag). Two years later, a *Time Magazine* poll named Stewart the most trusted newscaster post-Walter Cronkite, receiving 44% of the vote (Linkins n.pag). In 2010, Stewart and his faux-conservative equivalent Stephen Colbert, of *The Colbert Report*, held a joint rally to "restore sanity"/"keep fear alive" in public debate, an endeavour of satire and disenchantment with the American news media. It drew a crowd of 215,000 people to the Washington Monument (Montopoli "Stewart Rally Attracts" n.pag). On advice from Jon Stewart, some attendees called for decorum in public debate by humorously challenging extremist protest movements with placards such as "signs are an impractical medium for civil discourse" and "stark raving reasonable" (qtd. in Montopoli "Stewart Rally Signs"). Others, who followed Colbert's call to "keep fear alive," satirically encouraged further fear-mongering in news reporting by dressing up in Halloween costumes (many dressed as bears, Colbert's so-called "biggest threat to America"). Even "real" journalist Brian Williams, the anchor of NBC Nightly News, has said that "many of us on this side of the journalism tracks often wish we were on Jon [Stewart]'s side. I envy his platform to shout from the mountaintop. He's a *necessary branch of government*" (qtd. in Smith n.pag, emphasis added).

This is a small sample of numerous startling examples that illustrate the slippage and convergence between satire, journalism and politics in the 21st century. Jon Stewart, the satirist labelled "trusted," "a journalist," and a "necessary branch of government," is one of many contemporary satirists who now possess a large amount of cultural capital in the world of politics and political journalism. While satirists have provided political commentary for centuries and, indeed, satirical comment and cartoons have run alongside traditional journalism since the days of the early press, the last few decades have seen a considerable overlap in the work done by journalists and political satirists. In 2010, for example, Jon Stewart responded to criticism from *Fox News* by saying,

To say that comedians have to decide whether they're comedians or social commentators, ah, comedians do social commentary *through comedy*. That's how it's worked for thousands of years. I have not moved out of the comedian's box into the news box, the news box is moving towards me ("Bernie Goldberg").

This quote summarises a recent shift in how news and public knowledge is produced and received. Increasingly, citizens turn to satirists as trusted sources of information. Satirists are invited onto news programs to provide earnest political commentary as well as humour, just as journalists and journalism itself move towards discursive models more akin to entertainment than traditional Fourth Estate journalism. The "news box" isn't just moving towards satire and comedy, it has merged with it. The evolving nature of news, particularly the form it takes and who is trusted to provide it, contributes to the evolution of political discourse itself. Politics is framed in varying ways, and political campaigning now includes previously untouched avenues of communication. Increasingly, politicians do more than appear on comedy or satirical programs; they actively partake in satiric performance.

Former Labor MP Lindsay Tanner diagnoses this new media landscape with what he calls the "sideshow syndrome," where the trivial triumphs over the critical, though he does not consider satire's place in said "sideshow." He argues that journalists are now little more than court jesters: "they entertain and sometimes lampoon the powerful, but are careful not to seriously challenge the status quo" (136). As a result, he says that politicians "have to be entertainers in order to win" (92) and that spin "now lies at the heart of the political process" (14). In Tanner's experience, this trivial back and forth between journalists and politicians has even gone beyond satire. He says that the "real-life interaction between media and politicians is, in fact, worse than the caricatures parodied in *The Hollowmen*," (116) the scathing 2008 ABC satire about public relations in Australian federal politics. Although acknowledging that spin and performance have always been part of media and politics, he concludes that in the last decade, the sideshow syndrome "has more or less taken over" (150).

Although Tanner laments the "sideshow" of Australian media and politics, he never discusses satire or politicians' engagement with satire, aside from this brief reference to *The Hollowmen*. While he is scathing of politicians appearing on comedy programs like *Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?* and *Talking 'Bout My Generation*, he fails to mention their appearances on satire like *The Chaser*. It is not

clear why he chose to exclude satire in his discussion on less traditional media where politicians take part in the "sideshow." Through either willing or unwilling participation, politicians can now expect to face the satirist in the press gallery, the news interview, at the party convention or even their homes. Satirists use highly subjective and often profane language to formulate surprisingly critical and challenging questions that catch politicians unaware. This tactic, Gray notes, has "the power to challenge the individual public figure's image, at the same time as it launches a parodic-satiric attack on journalism's velvet glove treatment of public figures that rarely demands answers to truly provocative questions" ("Throwing Out" 159).

Examples of such satire have been observed and studied all over the world, with a particular focus on the American "fake news" television programs *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. Similar examples can also be seen in Australia's *The Chaser* series, the UK's *Brass Eye* and the work of Sasha Baron Cohen in *Da Ali G Show*, and the movies *Borat* and *Bruno*. Political satire that remains within the studio, with a set of fictional or "based upon" characters, has also had a marked impact on contemporary political debate. Some of these texts include America's *South Park* and *Saturday Night Live*, and Australia's *Frontline*, *The Hollowmen*, and the interviews of John Clarke and Brian Dawe. The UK has a long satirical tradition that includes two satires, *Yes Minister* and *The Thick of It*, that mock the inner workings of two different generations of British Government. There have also been satirical magazines and online newspapers that have made the news themselves, such as UK magazine *Private Eye*, US online newspaper and video broadcast *The Onion*, and parts of the Australian online newspaper *Crikey*.

Ironically, this vast "sideshow" of contemporary political satire can be seen responding critically to Tanner's sideshow syndrome with its own carnivalesque antics. McCheseny puts it simply: "if we had a legitimate or decent media you wouldn't have to put on a clown suit to get noticed" (qtd. in Boler "Introduction" 34). This sentiment has been expressed by many academics and political commentators who have argued that the likes of Stewart and Colbert are reacting to the media's failure to inform citizens on matters of political importance. Coupled with criticism that politicians have become more skilled at handling or "spinning" the media, it is often suggested that the media is failing in its watchdog role and that satire has been picking up the slack. This chapter examines current scholarship on satire's place in

changing media and political environments, setting up a background for following chapters that examine the contemporary interplay between satirist, journalist and politician more closely.

Satire and the Growing Prevalence of "Journalisms"

As early as 2003, journalist Bill Moyers asked Jon Stewart if *The Daily Show* was an "old form of parody and satire…or a new form of journalism" (qtd. in Boler "Transmission" n.pag). Stewart's response was that such a question "speaks to the sad state of comedy or the sad state of news…I think, honestly, we're practicing a new form of desperation" (qtd. in Boler "Transmission" n.pag). The following year, Stewart appeared on CNN's debate show *Crossfire*, famously pleading that the two hosts "stop hurting America," commenting that even the red bow tie worn by one of the hosts was an illustration that they were "doing theatre, when [they] should be doing debate" (qtd. in Erion 11). Australian satirists repeat similar sentiments. When interviewed by *The Rolling Stone* in 2008, *The Chaser*'s Andrew Hansen disputed that *The Chaser*'s main target was politicians. Instead, he said their programs were "driven by an inbuilt hatred of the media" (qtd. in Stone 55). Over-reliance on media releases, editorial compromise for commercial or partisan reasons, and emotive sound bites, graphics, camera angles and music: these satires act out such journalistic techniques of "theatre" to parodic excess. Stewart and Hansen's comments, alongside the satirical texts themselves, illustrate a mistrust of the media, a "desperate" plea for journalism to return to a critical engagement with current events that contributes positively to public debate.

This desperate plea is based around the notion of the Fourth Estate. In the early 1800s, Thomas Carlyle attributed this term to Edmund Burke, who reportedly said, "There were Three Estates in Parliament; but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a *Fourth Estate* more important far than they all" (qtd. in Carlyle 92). At the time, the first three estates were seen as "the Lord Spiritual, Lords Temporal and Commons," viewed in contemporary society as "the legislative, executive and judicial arms of government" (Stockwell 4). As an estate separate from the first three, journalism sits "inside the political process yet outside the institutions of governance" (4). The principle of the Fourth Estate is broadly understood as the very purpose of the news media: to provide information about the three arms of

government so that citizens can make informed decisions when voting. If information, such as a politician's private life, does not serve the public interest, it should not be reported. What is and is not in the public interest has long been debated and relies heavily on context; for example, a politician's private life may indeed be of public interest if it contradicts their policy stances. Instead of contributing to further debates about public interest, a venture well outside the scope of this thesis, the public interest and principles of the Fourth Estate are noted here because they form the basis of many debates about media quality. The news media is expected to act as a watchdog over the three estates of government. David Marr argues that "the tone of a democracy is set by the dialogue between a nation and its leaders" (3). The media has long been seen as the facilitator of this dialogue, just as it has long been accused of failing in this role by public intellectuals, academics and satirists alike.

Many theorists therefore attribute the success of political satires like *The Daily Show* and *The Chaser* to their ability to respond to this perceived decline in quality journalism. Boler and Turpin argue that "central to the popularity of TDS [*The Daily Show*] and the Crossfire event is the widely-shared frustration and perception that the news media is failing democracy" (388). For Hynes, Sharpe and Greg, "would-be-dissenters" in Australia have had to seek alternative means to address matters of public importance after "a decade of ideological warfare under the Howard government" and "a compliant mainstream media" (34). *The Chaser* and their infamous APEC stunt, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, are cited as a reaction and even a remedy to such environments of corrupted public debate. Sotos suggests that these critical satires be seen as a *Fifth* Estate. In applying the term to *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*, she argues that such satire "serves an essential function...a kind of 'Fifth Estate,' the watchdog of the Fourth" (34). Heflin furthers a similar line of argument, asserting that *The Daily Show* acts as an "ombudsman… [that] calls attention to the failure of the news media to provide insightful analysis to prepare citizens for active involvement in public life" (26-7).

The notion of the Fifth Estate is by no means new. It has been used to categorise such diverse groups as scientists (Little 299-306; Gross 13), bloggers (Cooper 14), social media users (Jericho 1) and non-government organisations (Eizenstat 15-28). While the term has been widely applied, its meaning has been largely uniform. In most instances, the Fifth Estate describes a group of people who work outside the other four estates but within what they believe to be the best interests of the

community, frequently acting in a watchdog role when one of the estates, normally the Fourth, has failed. These groups are often seen to be in the service of high ideals, like truth or justice. For Little, who applied the term to scientists in 1924, "the professional spirit which animates the Fifth Estate is essentially one of service. Its compelling urge in the search for truth springs from the conviction that the Truth shall make men free" (301). The members of the Fifth Estate have particular qualities, such as a willingness to question and work in the service to others, that Little believed "could be utilized in government to the incalculable advantage of us all" (305). Dutton argues that, in the case of internet users or "networked individuals" (Wellman qtd. in 2), the Fifth Estate is actually an extension of the Fourth Estate. While other uses of the Fifth Estate classify it as something very separate (such as Little on scientists), most do not see the Fifth Estate as a replacement of any of the other estates. Rather, the Fifth Estate is classified as a group of people who have the ability to reconceptualise the way we think about and engage with the three arms of government and the media.

Citizens are indeed turning to satire as a source of information on the four estates. In America, recent studies have shown that 21% of American youths aged between 18-29 years get their news from *The Daily Show* (Gettings 16; Heflin 31). *The Colbert Report* has also gained a similar following. Interestingly, a 2007 study found that viewers of *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* were the most informed on current events in America (Boler and Turpin 401-2). In Australia, a similar move towards news-based satires has also occurred. Turner observes that from the 1990s, young people increasingly began to derive their news from comedy or satirical programs such as *Good News Week*, *Frontline*, *The Panel, The Glasshouse*, and *The Chaser*. Drawing on Casimir's study of news audiences between 1991-8, Turner also notes that while viewership of news-based satires or variety programs went up, most news programs saw a significant drop in their audience (aside from *ABC News* and *Ten News*, who respectively gained 11.1% and 19.6%) (*Ending the Affair* 5).

Lockyer usefully illustrates the link between satire and journalism by showing how UK satirical magazine *Private Eye* can be considered "investigative journalism" or "satirical journalism," in distinct contrast to exposure or tabloid journalism. Satires like *Private Eye* share a similar goal to investigative journalism, in that they seek to "discover the truth and to identify lapses from it" (de Burgh qtd. in Lockyer

767). Many of the examples in this thesis show satire using interview and extensive research in its production and delivery. Campbell calls this combination of satire with the techniques of investigative journalism, as seen in the likes of *Private Eye* or Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*, "investigative satire" (qtd. in Lockyer 777), a term easily applied to the likes of Stewart, Colbert and *The Chaser*.

For his PhD thesis, Stephen Harrington ran focus groups with a number of *The Chaser* viewers and found that many of them used the program like an information source, citing it as more "credible" than mainstream news (qtd. in "Public Knowledge" 286). One viewer said that she came away "having learnt something, even though it's presented in a…humorous way" (qtd. in "Public Knowledge" 286). Another viewer even identified *The Chaser* as an alternative to the news, saying that,

> The mainstream media is so shut down these days that the range of news and views is so limited that – good gracious – we are actually dependent on the likes of [*The*] *Chaser* and *Crikey!* to actually get an alternative view. Now that actually says something pretty sad about our media in general, I think (qtd. in "Public Knowledge" 208).

While the appeal and success of these satires are often attributed to the failure of the Fourth Estate, Harrington and other theorists also expand this by suggesting that these satires are symptomatic of journalism evolving, not failing. Indeed, political satire like *The Daily Show* and *The Chaser* can be seen as part of journalism's ongoing discursive shift. Theorists such as Lumby, Hill and Stockwell have observed that, while journalism has been influenced by entertainment, entertainment has in turn been influenced by journalism, in what is known as "infotainment." This genre consists of a "grab bag of styles" (Stockwell 2) including reality television, lifestyle programs, talk shows, celebrity news, breakfast television and documentaries. Hill refers to this genre as "factual television," in that it is "a container for non-fiction content…concerned with knowledge about the real world" (3). Harrington argues that journalism should actually be reimagined as "journalisms" ("Public Knowledge" 33; "Uses of Satire" 49), encompassing the wide variety of genres that make valuable contributions to public knowledge without adhering to traditional journalistic practice.

Factual television or "journalisms" are relatively new media forms in comparison to the long tradition of journalistic reportage, and the previously mentioned theorists believe that instead of dumbing down the media, these new

forms contribute to a wider range of viewpoints and information. Lumby argues that infotainment programs like *Oprah* or *Ricki Lake* bring private issues, such as domestic violence and eating disorders, into the public domain, thereby stimulating public debate and awareness (*Bad Girls* 118; *Gotcha* 194). More importantly, she argues that they offer new avenues of agency and subjectivity for marginalised groups, prompting the question, *whose* discourse is at stake in the decline of traditional journalistic values and practices? Those who criticise this shift and call for a return to traditional practices tend to use reductive, elitist binaries, such as hard vs. soft news and journalism vs. entertainment. An increasing number of theorists, such as Hill and Lumby, argue that instead of diminishing information, infotainment diminishes traditional journalism's exclusive claim to truth and knowledge. This is not to say that satirists or infotainers can claim any greater veracity, only that the medium is shifting with new technologies and can provide new spaces and a wider variety of diverse voices previously not represented in traditional media forms.

While a wider range of viewpoints can be seen as optimal, these programs have also been accused of contributing to further marginalisation by ascribing themselves as the only avenues for marginalised people to articulate their experiences, reinforcing their lack of access to mainstream avenues. Furthermore, as Turner points out, Lumby and others fail to explain why many of these new forms of media often victimise and scapegoat those marginalised groups that they claim to be representing (Turner "Tabloidization" 74). Ross and York note that *The Daily Show*, for instance, "repeatedly draws on a fund of ethnic and national stereotypes" (355). These programs may provide a space for the discussion of topics normally ignored by traditional journalism, but the programs themselves are sometimes designed in a way that relies on or furthers the victimisation of already marginalised groups. The satirical stereotyping often done on *The Daily Show* differs dramatically to the less reflective type on *Oprah* or *Ricki Lake* style programs, but even parodic stereotyping, done to shame those who partake in it seriously, may inadvertently contribute to the persistence of such marginalisation.

Turner usefully summarises these debates about journalism and infotainment according to two sides: one that involves "liberal anger at 'the decline of journalism,'" and the other which encompasses "a broadened definition of news which nevertheless stops short of thinking how specific instances may enact a specific politics" ("Tabloidization" 72). Harrington argues for this broadened

definition, but also considers how new forms of "journalisms" enact a certain politics, saying,

> There needs to be a point at which we recognize a middle ground between the overly pessimistic and over-celebratory accounts of modern news, and also begin to flesh out the important differences between genuinely democratic and merely demotic news forms ("Popular News" 276).

While one must acknowledge that popular media forms, such as political satire, can offer something valuable to our society, "just because something is popular does not excuse it from the role which it was created to serve in the first place, especially when that role is still so vital to the health of the public sphere" ("Popular News" 275). Ultimately, critical engagement with these texts should not focus so intensely on whether traditional journalistic values and practices are employed, but instead on what information is being used and "for what purpose?" ("Popular News" 279). Harrington compares *The Daily Show* and *Entertainment Tonight* (*ET*), both popular non-traditional forms of news, but notes that only *The Daily Show* uses its popularity to deal with issues from the public sphere, like politics and economics, and the private sphere, such as domestic violence. *ET*, on the other hand, gossips "with great seriousness over the personal lives of celebrities" ("Popular News" 279). Harrington therefore provides a useful way of embracing broader definitions of journalism while also expecting some semblance of critical engagement from those "journalisms."

Even in understanding satire as one of many "journalisms," it is still important to note how satires such as *The Daily Show* and *The Chaser* can be seen to work within the dichotomy between old and new media. On one hand, they are examples of infotainment and the possibilities of new media forms. Yet even as they illustrate a move away from traditional news practice, they seem to mourn the loss of traditional journalistic discourse and Fourth Estate values. This contradiction is indicative of "a cultural shift...even for staunch postmodernists" where there has been a "renewed desire for truthfulness and accountability" (Boler "Transmission" n.pag). *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Chaser* and many other mass media political satires consistently demonstrate that news, truth and knowledge are constructed phenomena, even as they appeal to the widely-shared belief "that we have been lied to [by the media and politicians], that this is wrong, and that there is a truthfulness that should be delivered" (Boler "Transmission" n.pag). These satires can be seen to "exert

control through spectacle" (Boler and Turpin 386); ironically, the spectacle of satire reveals and critiques the spectacle in journalism and politics.

Satire and Televised Political Culture

Satire, as one of many new "journalisms," has become a "key part of televised political culture" (Gray, Jones and Thompson 6). At its best, it can "energise civic culture, engaging citizen-audiences…inspiring public political discussion, and drawing citizens enthusiastically into the realm of the political with deft and dazzling ease" (Gray, Jones and Thompson 4). *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* have been at the centre of most scholarship on contemporary political satire. There have, however, been notable contributions on other programs. Gray's study of the 90s British current affairs satire *Brass Eye*, which successfully fooled politicians, actors and journalists into reading fake public service announcements, shows the role that "parodic-satirical television can play in *reauthoring* public figures" ("Throwing Out" 152).

In one *Brass Eye* segment, satirical journalist Chris Morris spoke to numerous public figures about a fake drug from the former Czechoslovakia called Cake. He tricked the likes of entertainer Rolf Harris, comedian Bernard Manning, radio and television personality Noel Edmonds, Thatcher press secretary Sir Bernard Ingham and conservative MP David Amess into making very serious faux public service announcements. Convinced that the drug was real, they earnestly declared that Cake had "led to one young child crying all the water out of his body and to a girl throwing up her own pelvis bone" (Manning qtd. in "Throwing Out" 160), that it "simulates the part of the brain known as Shatner's Bassoon" (Edmonds qtd. in "Throwing Out" 160) and that "several people had actually been brained by saucepans thrown out of tower-blocks used to make this kind of Cake" (Ingham qtd. in "Throwing Out" 160). Amess took the issue so seriously that, during parliamentary debate, he asked the Secretary of State for the Home Office what was being done about Cake in a push to make the fake drug illegal in the UK ("Throwing Out" 162). It was only when the program was aired that the numerous public figures discovered the ruse. Gray argues that this kind of trickery works to "thoroughly defamiliarize the process by which public figures create and manicure their image" ("Throwing Out" 162).

Over the last five years, there has also been growing scholarship on Australia's *The Chaser*, a group of satirists that are known across Australia for their grotesque humour and absurd ambushes on journalists and politicians. *The Chaser* started as a satirical newspaper, but it is the satire's television incarnations on the ABC that have made *The Chaser* team such recognisable and iconic figures in Australia's political landscape. Their earlier work in 2001, such as *CNNNN* (which stood for *The Chaser NoN-Stop News Network*) and *The Chaser Decides*, took the form of satirical news programs. The team dressed like journalists, complete with camera crew and ABC press pass, but their behaviour and questions were satirically pointed or absurd. Harrington rightly notes that "if there is a single thing that could define *The Chaser*'s modus operandi, it would be their propensity for unannounced, face-to-face confrontations with famous political or media figures" ("Uses of Satire" 42). In 2006, after a few years off the air, *The Chaser* team returned in *The Chaser's War on Everything*, a program that included the faux journalist ambushing press conferences, but also featured random musical numbers performed in public spaces, literal "testing" of the claims in advertisements, and many other absurd (and not always political) satiric performances. The program format moved from the news room parody of *CNNNN* and *The Chaser Decides* to a kind of variety satire show, but still included satirical attacks on journalism, especially through the segment "What Have We Learnt From Current Affairs This Week?"

The Chaser gained worldwide notoriety in 2007 when their fake Canadian motorcade breached Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum security in Sydney, a historic event which shall be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. By this time, *The Chaser* team were highly recognisable. Despite its success, *The War* was cancelled in 2009 a few episodes after the infamous "Make a Realistic Wish" skit (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 and 5) that was widely attributed as the nail in *The War*'s coffin. *The Chaser* returned a year later for the Australian Federal Election in *Yes We Canberra* (*YWC*). The news and politics were heavily satirised, but politicians regularly laughed and took their ambushes in good nature, recognising *The Chaser* team instantly. Only once in the five-episode series did a member of *The Chaser* appear in the journalist's suit to ambush and question a politician. Their studio locale had also changed. Gone were the satirical news desk of *CNNNN* and *The Chaser Decides*, as well as the fun variety show set with couches and "memorabilia" of previous skits as seen in *The War*. This time *The Chaser*

performed as the "warm up act" for ABC news program *Lateline*, co-opting its set for their program. In 2011 and 2012, they dedicated an entire program called *The Hamster Wheel* to the satirical deconstruction of Australian journalism. In 2013, they returned for another election special in *The Hamster Decides*.

Almost all scholarship on *The Chaser* texts have been dedicated to their most popular, and perhaps most notorious, series *The War on Everything*. Flew and Harrington have argued that the great value of *The War*'s regular confrontations with politicians is that they have "a higher chance of throwing political actors 'off-message' than traditional journalistic approaches, and can therefore bring about moments of candour from those under interrogation" (165). This can also be said of all *The Chaser* programs, where political ambush is a regular occurrence. Harrington also stresses that *The Chaser* complements traditional journalism, by providing "existing accounts of the same event with a more critical perspective" ("Uses of Satire" 48). Niall Lucy notes that *The Chaser*'s APEC stunt exposed an "inevitably empty and groundless *spectacle* of state control" (99). *The Chaser* team exhibit a great ability to show "that what anything is said to mean is irreducible to a restricted zone of proper interpretations and legitimate truths" (100-01).

Other scholarship challenges the idea that political satire is a complementary and valuable form of political commentary. Ross and York, as mentioned before, argue that stereotyping on *The Daily Show* does sometimes "delegitimize or, in Bourdieu's terms, demobilize the speaker" (356) who uses such reductive classifiers, but that the program still "mock[s] American political culture with a generous amount of complacent laughter at what is not American" (367). In another study which surveyed 332 undergraduates, it was shown that many viewers missed the irony behind Stephen Colbert's dead-pan, though excessively absurd, satirically conservative performance. LaMarre et al. found that even though both conservative and liberal viewers understood *The Colbert Report* was comedy,

> There are stark differences in how they see the comedy, who they think is being satirized, and how those differences polarize the electorate by reinforcing their own set of beliefs as valid and the opposing set of beliefs as laughable (226).

In other words, conservatives and liberals both thought that Colbert spoke for them and their beliefs, with most conservatives believing that Colbert "truly meant what he said about liberals" (222-23). This is a remarkable finding that suggests in the case of dead-pan satire, it can sometimes reinforce instead of challenge the

political ideology it targets, raising a number of questions about satire's effectiveness.

Regardless as to the value one ascribes to contemporary political satire, few can dispute that it plays a significant role in the communication of politics today. As Hamm observes, politicians are now seeking out satire for political announcements and media opportunities. In 2004, the eventual Democrat Vice-President candidate John Edwards even announced his presidential candidacy on *The Daily Show* (155). Likewise, satirists are cheekily getting directly involved with the political process. Stephen Colbert himself announced that he would run in the 2008 US election as both a Democrat and Republican in his home state of South Carolina. While he never made it onto the ballot, polls revealed that he held 28% of the vote among 18-29 year olds, with 13% of the vote overall (195). In Australia, Pauline Pantsdown, the satiric drag double of One Nation's Pauline Hanson, did make it onto the ballot. Simon Hunt, who played the drag act, legally changed his name to Pauline Pantsdown and ran for the Senate in the 1998 Federal Election (Bogad 83-4). While he was unsuccessful, his satirical campaign ruthlessly mocked and criticised every step of Hanson's own campaign.

While these instances have been studied as examples of satire's growing influence and popularity, there is little research on how they impact the performative nature of politics. Despite Harrington's excellent work on *The Chaser*, there are few other scholars contributing to research about the team's significant place in Australian political and media landscapes. This thesis brings a unique perspective to current scholarship by looking directly at instances of politicians crossing over into the satirist's realm, and satirists crossing over into spaces normally reserved for politicians and journalists, particularly in the under-researched satires of *The Chaser*, *The Thick of It* and online user-generated satire. It also looks at a claim often made of satire – that it speaks *truth* to power – and how philosophical rhetoric, comic techniques and national tropes contribute to the privileged, trusted position of many satirists. Even Lindsay Tanner believes the sideshow syndrome that plagues contemporary media and politics could be tempered by media that delivers "complex information in interesting formats" (193) or programs that feature an "entertainment format built around serious content" (196). He proposes that outspoken commercial radio presenters or "shock-jocks" provide one such form because they,

Connect larger, often less-educated audiences with the content of political issues
in a way that no one else does. Apart from one or two who are totally outrageous
protagonists or unabashed entertainers, the shock-jocks are a vital point of
connection between the democratic process and the wider world…they provide a
point of connection between serious and complex political issues and the
concerns and feelings of ordinary citizens (195-96).

This thesis argues that such a statement can be even more meaningfully said of
contemporary satirists.

Chapter 2
Kynical Dogs and Cynical Masters

Not Being Taken for Suckers: The Cynicism vs. Kynicism Debate

Satire has long been accused of breeding cynicism and contemporary satire has not escaped this accusation. In their article on "*The Daily Show* effect," Baumgartner and Morris found that a survey of college students felt more negativity towards both presidential candidates in the 2008 US Presidential Election after watching *The Daily Show* than with any other hard or soft news program. They propose that this negativity produces cynicism, which "dampen[s] [political] participation among an already cynical audience (young adults) by contributing to a sense of alienation from the political process" (362-63). They also argue that while *The Daily Show* audiences have been shown to be more educated and more confident in their ability to understand politics than those of other news programs, this is the result of Jon Stewart "simplif[ying] politics" (353) by only "highlight[ing] the absurdities of the political world" (362) and because youth audiences are more "impressionable" (344). This so-called impressionability means that the cynicism bred by *The Daily Show* is said to have an adverse effect on its audience's engagement with or trust of politics.

Australian satire has faced some similar allegations. Louise Staley suggests that *The Hollowmen* is cynical, arguing that the series and "Australian political satire [in general] is an extension of a national distrust of politicians" (17). Michael Hogan, who explores the level of cynicism produced by political cartoons in New South Wales from 1901 to 1999, goes so far as to propose that negativity and cynicism are a "consequence of the demands of the genre" (41) of political humour and satirical cartoons. While Baumgartner, Morris and Hogan all argue that a level of criticism is vital for the health of democracy, they warn that consistently negative criticism produces cynicism, which in turn erodes public trust in the political system. They propose that this erosion of trust results in apathy and disillusionment, potentially impacting levels of absenteeism at the ballot box. Hogan notes that absenteeism is not so much an issue in Australia where voting is compulsory, but suggests that political cynicism "has been one of the factors helping to erode popular support for the major political parties, with support going increasingly to independents if not to fringe anti-liberal groups such as One Nation" (28). More recently, a similar

argument could be made for the growing public support of Australia's left-wing progressive Greens party, who received the largest swing in primary votes at the 2010 Federal Election (+4% average for the House of Representatives, with the entire Coalition coming in second with only +1.5%). In all states and territories except for NSW, Labor's -5.4% swing in the primaries were largely taken by the Greens (Green n.pag).

Haydon Manning and Robert Phiddian assert that Hogan's claim of cynicism is exaggerated and, rather, that cartoons "maintain public scepticism about the motivations and spin of politicians" (41) in a way that contributes to the tenets of the free press. Hogan's suggestion that political cartoonists should present both positive and negative views of politics in the interest of balance shows a distinct misunderstanding of how audiences view and use satire, and of the genre itself. "In the interests of healthy democratic debate," they argue, "[cartoonists] should publish and (if necessary) be damned. Their licence is only worth having if they push it" (Manning and Phiddian 35).

Furthermore, other research suggests that any such cynicism is not producing the level of disengagement or apathy that has been expected, nor are young audiences more "impressionable" when it comes to discerning the quality of information. On the contrary, Jeffrey Jones argues that those who have grown up in the "digital era" (246) are used to an environment and culture that is permeated by spectacle and artifice. Irony, the "language of satire," may therefore "seemingly maintain a degree of *authenticity* to younger citizens simply because it doesn't seem so closely aligned with the 'manufactured' realities that politicians, advertisers, and news media construct and would have them believe" (J. P. Jones 246). Amber Day argues that instead of producing a "lack of conviction, smugness, detachment, and cynicism," (qtd. in J. P. Jones 246) irony has become a "new marker of sincerity" (Day 42), a more self-aware language that seeks to expose both its own construction and the construction of others. She proposes that it provides a sense of authenticity because it "seems more transparent in its willingness to point to its own flaws and fakeries" (32).

Karen Lury sees a similar trend in British youth television in the late 1980s and early 1990s, where she observes an "aesthetic sensibility that combined 'cynicism and enchantment'" (1). This aesthetic reflects young people's familiarity with technology and artifice. These audiences refuse to be "taken for suckers" (1), but also

have a self-aware enjoyment or "enchantment" with said artifice. She observes that many television performers "demonstrate, and articulate, a way of both revelling in, and sneering at, the world of celebrities and television itself" (125), an observation that can be usefully extended to contemporary satirists like Stewart and *The Chaser*.

Instead of producing hollow, over-simplified accounts of politics, as Baumgartner and Morris propose, these satires use what Gray has termed "critical intertextuality," a technique that mimics, mocks and makes fun of the news and politics in a way that enables audiences to "construct and define their relationship *with the news* [and politics] *itself*" so that they are "better equipped to read through and *filter* through political information" (*Watching The Simpsons* 104). Other researchers have echoed similar arguments. For example, in analysing news coverage of the 2008 global financial crisis, Chihab El Khachab found that while both traditional and satirical coverage provided "symbolic reductions of otherwise complex realities," these reductions were presented as real or objective in traditional news whereas satire worked to "expose the fundamental artificiality of such representations" (14).

Importantly, Baumgartner and Morris do not define what they mean by cynicism. In response to their article, Jones argues that even if Stewart and *The Daily Show* are to be understood as cynical, there is a place in contemporary politics for cynicism as understood within its ancient Greek origins. Originating from Diogenes and the ancient Greek philosophical movement of Cynicism, this type of cynicism has been given the spelling "kynicism."[2] Jones describes Stewart's rhetorical style as "kynical" because unlike cynicism, his arguments hold "a firm insistence that politics and the conduct of public life need not be this way" (249). Kynicism can be briefly summarised as cynicism without its nihilistic nature. Cynicism questions and doubts that which it finds abhorrent, hypocritical or untrustworthy, but it does so in a defeatist manner. It is "the condition of lost belief" (Chaloupka xiv); it sees no hope for change. Kynicism also questions and doubts, but does so while maintaining a

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[2] The spelling of kynicism and cynicism has been used in various ways in other texts on cynicism, as we understand it in modern day usage, and kynicism or ancient Greek Cynicism. Kynicism has often been used to denote ancient Greek Cynicism, while others have opted to differentiate modern definitions of cynicism with ancient Greek Cynicism through capitalisation. Throughout this thesis, I have opted to use kynicism to refer to the philosophy that derived from the ancient Cynics, cynicism to refer to modern day usage or "negative" cynicism, and Cynicism or "Cynics" (capitalisation) to refer to the ancient Greek movement itself. The use of the word "kynics" shall refer to one who echoes the practices and philosophies of the ancient Cynics, but is not necessarily a philosopher of the ancient Greek movement.

position that there is a better way of doing things. It is a "cheeky, subversive practice" (Chaloupka 171) that uses joking, profanity, humiliation and mocking for a "morally regulative" purpose (Sloterdijk 304). In his work on *The Simpsons*, Gray identifies the difference between cynicism and kynicism, and notes that kynicism has a positive potential:

> Where cynics have lost faith in the existence of truth, and where their cynicism serves as a reaction to this loss of faith, kynics hold on to a notion of truth, but since they see it being perverted all around them, their kynicism and laughing ridicule serves as a defense and an offense to this state of affairs (*Watching The Simpsons* 154).

Peter Sloterdijk argues the main difference is that while both cynicism and kynicism question the sincerity of everything, cynicism is a "shameless, 'dirty' realism that, without regard for conventional moral inhibitions, declares itself to be for how 'things really are'" (193); it maintains that its position of "all claims to truth are distorted" is in fact the only truth. He refers to it as "*enlightened false consciousness*," one that believes it knows all there is to know and "holds anything positive to be fraud, and is intent only on somehow getting through life" (546). Kynicism, on the other hand, is "*self-preservation* in crisis-ridden times," a "critical, ironical philosophy of so-called needs, in the elucidation of their fundamental excess and absurdity" (193).

Aside from Jones' and Gray's brief discussions of kynicism as an alternative way of viewing *The Daily Show* and *The Simpsons*, few researchers have explored the use of kynicism to explain the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary satire, especially in relation to Australian satire. In this chapter, cynicism, as it is understood today, and kynicism, its ancient more principled cousin, shall be separately and jointly interrogated, particularly in relation to Australia's *The Chaser* and the UK's *The Thick of It*. This chapter argues that by conceptualising political satire along a dynamic spectrum between the kynical and cynical, we may better understand how satire envisages politics in postmodernity and, in turn, how certain satires may be more resistant to co-option by politicians or the "modern cynic."

Diogenes and the Dogs of Kynical Philosophy

Kynicism is best personified by Diogenes of Sinope, the ancient philosopher who Plato is said to have called "Socrates gone mad" (Rankin 232; Sloterdijk 104; Chaloupka 4). While his works, if indeed there were any, have been lost to history, stories and anecdotes about his philosophy and his existence survived through ancient texts such as Diogenes Laërtius' *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. Debates about the historical basis of these stories have not belied their ability to communicate the philosophy of Diogenes and the ancient Cynics. In one of the most famous anecdotes, Diogenes is said to have walked through the busy streets of ancient Athens, swinging a lantern about in broad daylight. When asked what he was doing, he said that he was "looking for people" (Sloterdijk 162) or, as it is popularly translated, "an honest man" (Esar 215; Chaloupka 3).

This anecdote illustrates how the ancient Greek philosopher was the first of what Sloterdijk called the "kynics." Sloterdijk takes his term from the ancient Greek "kynismos," which encompasses a philosophy that seeks truth not through reasoned argument but through cheeky and subversive challenge. Diogenes truly embodied kynicism, and was himself labelled a "kyon," meaning dog, because he chose to live in poverty on the streets and regularly displayed exhibitions of public defecation and masturbation resembling that of a stray canine (Chaloupka 5). He embraced this title, responding to those at a banquet who threw him bones as if he was a dog by putting his leg up and urinating on them (Laërtius 234). As a kynic, he engaged in "satirical resistance" in order to bring about "uncivil enlightenment" (Sloterdijk 102). This "uncivil" enlightenment countered the more civilised philosophies of the time. It is the "*satirical* element of critique" used to "counteract the false abstractions and long-term goals of the dialectic of enlightenment" (Bewes 28-9). Here, Sloterdijk argues that "something unsettling but compelling had happened with philosophy" (104): the low, the dirty, the playful and the rude were utilised by those who were jaded by the all-encompassing but unrealised idealism of philosophers such as Plato. While Plato sought to disengage the body from philosophical debate through "high theory," Diogenes emerged with a "subversive variant of *low theory* that pantomimically and grotesquely carries practical embodiment to an extreme" (104). For Diogenes, Plato and his contemporaries were idealist elitists whereas he and his fellow Cynics, as the

"'guard dogs' of all humankind," aimed to bring philosophical awareness to the masses, "not just for members of an elite group" (Flynn 111).

Cynic philosophy was built around the ancient Cynic credo "deface the currency." While anecdotal and historical evidence suggests that Diogenes literally defaced the coinage of Sinope (Branham and Goulet-Cazé 8; Cutler 28), thereby earning him exile from his native city, "defacing the currency" also acted as a metaphor for kynical practice. To deface the currency, one was meant to test and challenge "all usages and laws to see whether or not they had any genuine validity. If they did not, it was the Cynics' role to deface them until they were abandoned" (Cutler 28). For Foucault, defacing the currency represented the Cynics' "extreme, indeed scandalous, pursuit of the true life as an **inversion** of, a kind of carnivalesque grimace directed toward, the Platonic tradition" (Flynn 110, Flynn's emphasis). Despite defacing the currency and rejecting idealism, kynicism still has its own logic, its own set of "ideals." In its ancient form, it was not simply a subversion of idealism, but a call back to ethical naturalism[3]. Concrete bodily experiences, based in the tactile natural world, were considered more real and truthful than the social world. Social conventions, hierarchy and etiquette were seen as human creations, abstractions that took humans away from their "true" nature. As Diogenes swung his lantern in search of people, he questioned the very way we define human beings. His practice of defecating and masturbating in public were confronting acts that illustrated just how much the animalistic nature of human beings is warped from its very "nature" by socially constructed notions of what it means to be human.

To Diogenes, the real nature of humanity was far more base and bodily than other philosophers were prepared to consider. He believed that their theories about life and how one should morally live "offended nature and truth" (Chaloupka 4). When Diogenes searched for people with his lantern, he found only performances of people, abstractions from the real nature of the human being. He maintained that human beings' "animal sides," the instinctual or biological, should not be seen as a source of shame but as something innate and therefore innocent. He observed that while humans felt shame for their bodily impulses, they "remain[ed] unmoved by their irrational and ugly practices, their greed, unfairness, cruelty, vanity, prejudice,

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[3] The definition of naturalism here is taken from ethics, where naturalism is "the doctrine that the criterion of right action is some empirical feature of the natural world, such as the happiness of sentient beings or the self-preservation of an individual, group or species" ("New Fontana Dictionary" 565).

and blindness" (Sloterdijk 168). To be in control of or contain one's desires and bodily impulses was, for Diogenes, to "behave irrationally and inhumanely" (162).

Diogenes' animal-like behaviour, therefore, was not inspired by some "random grossness" (Flynn 110), but by an "active pursuit of the 'true life,'" where one sought to harmonise "one's 'doctrine' with one's 'life'" (Mazella 29). Kynicism was a *lived* philosophy, an "enacted wisdom" (Bosman 98). It is important to note, though, that Diogenes was not content in just living his "true life;" the many anecdotes about him betray a man and a philosophy driven by a missionary zeal. He is thought to have said, "other dogs bite their enemies, but I my friends, so as to save them" (Stobaeus qtd. in *Diogenes the Cynic* 24). Audience participation was crucial to the conduct of his philosophy, hence why he chose to live his "true life" in Athens' busiest public spaces. In one story, Diogenes is ignored when orating gravely on an issue so he resorts to whistling to get people's attention. Once a crowd has gathered, he scolds them for "coming earnestly to nonsense, but slowly and contemptuously to serious things" (Bosman 97). This and all of the aforementioned examples clearly illustrate the performative nature of kynicism, where a trick such as whistling or lighting a lantern in the daylight is used to gather and then confront its "attracted audience with their own distorted values" (97). One must therefore recognise that despite the anti-theoretical nature of kynicism, embodied by Diogenes' commitment to living his philosophy, it still had the function of critique. Diogenes was not just a dog who lived a true life according to nature; his public barking and biting served a corrective purpose.

All of these anecdotes about Diogenes show that in defacing the currency, "humor [was] the chisel stamp of Cynic discourse" (Branham 93). Bosman describes Diogenes and the Cynics as the "humourists of antiquity" (99) and Sloterdijk argues that Diogenes' weapon against idealism was "not so much analysis as laughter" (160). Humour and satire were key to Diogenes' performances and allowed him to subvert social conventions without "sinking into pure animalism and cultural pessimism" (Bosman 95). It also offered him a way of engaging in outrageous, socially-unacceptable behaviour without entirely alienating his audience. In other words, "the dog had to fawn in order to bite" (104).

Parrhesia: Kynicism and Truth-Telling

In savagely defacing the currency, kynicism rails against the use of abstract conventions in fixed ways, especially in ways that dictate how people should or should not behave. Ironically though, it still comes from an essentialist position based around what it believes to be true. As Sloterdijk notes, "despite all apparent lack of respect, the kynic assumes a basically serious and upright attitude towards truth and maintains a thoroughly solemn relation, satirically disguised, to it" (296). This upright attitude towards truth reflects what Diogenes was said to have prized as "the most excellent thing among men:" "Freedom of speech" (Laërtius 243). This particular form of freedom of speech was known as *parrhesia* (παρρησία), which translates broadly to "saying everything" and "telling the truth as one sees it" (Monoson 52-53). Monoson identifies two elements that are consistently associated with *parrhesia*: "criticism and truth-telling" (53). To speak with *parrhesia* is "to confront, oppose, or find fault with another individual or a popular view in a spirit of concern for illuminating what is right and best" (53). *Parrhesia* involves a strong relationship between belief and truth: a *parrhesiast*[4] does not say anything that they do not believe, unlike one who uses rhetoric which can disguise both the truth and the rhetorician's real opinion. *Parrhesia* is a blunt and risky "truth-telling" (Flynn 102): it has the "function of *criticism*" (Foucault *Fearless Speech* 17) because no amount of harm or insult to the *parrhesiast* or the *parrhesiast's* interlocutors is an excuse not to tell the truth. Furthermore, the *parrhesiast* is always less powerful than the one to whom they speak: *parrhesia* "comes from 'below,' as it were, and is directed towards 'above'" (*Fearless Speech* 18).

However, simply telling the truth does not make one a *parrhesiast*. To clarify this, Foucault defines three other types of classical truth-tellers. The first is "the prophet," who tells the truth "not in his own name, as does the parrhesiast, but as a mediator between the principle speaker and his auditors" (Flynn 104), for example, between God and the people. The prophet is not as clear or unambiguous as the *parrhesiast*, and may hide or "veil" as much as or more than they reveal. The

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[4] The spelling of *parrhesiast* is varied across different sources. In the English translation of Foucault's *Fearless Speech*, it is spelt "*parrhesiastes*" and is rarely, if ever, used in the plural. In Flynn's chapter on Foucault's discussion of *parrhesia* in *The Last Foucault*, the spelling "*parrhesiast*" (singular) and "*parrhesiasts*" (plural) is used. I have chosen to use Flynn's spelling.

parrhesiast remains in the present, whereas the prophet may speak of both present and future. The second truth-teller is "the sage," who, while having wisdom, feels no obligation to share it. The sage, when speaking the truth, does so in general terms. The *parrhesiast*, on the other hand, has a duty to speak and speaks of "the individual and of the present situation" (104). The final truth-teller is the teacher-technician, whose ability to tell the truth is a technical skill learned through training and is "capable of being transmitted to others" (104). The teacher-technician aims to be as clear as possible in transmitting their knowledge and, like the *parrhesiast*, has a duty to speak the truth. However, the teacher-technician faces no danger in their truth-telling, whereas the *parrhesiast* is in the inferior position in a truth-telling exchange. The teacher-technician is always the superior, their knowledge coming from "above" and being directed "below."

Foucault observes that different types of truth-telling are privileged over others in varying discourses. For example, religious discourse has often favoured the prophet and the *parrhesiast*, while academic discourse has relied on the sage and the teacher-technician (Flynn 104). As previously mentioned, *parrhesia* was closely aligned with the ancient Cynics, especially Diogenes. Foucault defines three main types of "parrhesiastic practice" (*Fearless Speech* 119) used by the Cynics. The first was "critical preaching," a "form of continuous discourse" (*Fearless Speech* 119) that was utilised by generations of philosophers before and after the Cynics. The difference with kynical preaching was that it was delivered to the public, or a much wider audience than had previously been privy to the philosophical preaching normally reserved for a more elite audience. Furthermore, the preaching contained "no direct affirmation of the good or bad" but rather focused on freedom and self-sufficiency (*Fearless Speech* 120). While their naturalism led them to believe that a "natural life" free of social constraints was the best kind of life, their preaching did not espouse the virtues of such a life, but was critically "directed against social institutions [and] the arbitrariness of rules of law" insofar that they hindered one's access to a "natural life" (*Fearless Speech* 120).

The second type of *parrhesiastic* practice used by the Cynics was "scandalous behaviour," the aim of which was to call into question "collective habits, opinions, standards of decency, institutional rules, and so on" (Foucault *Fearless Speech* 120). This kind of behaviour is evident in many anecdotes about Diogenes, where he cheekily subverts the constructed nature of social behaviour. By masturbating in the

street, for example, Diogenes questioned why it was acceptable to fulfil one bodily need in public, such as eating, whereas other needs were not seen as appropriate, commenting that he "wished it were as easy to banish hunger by rubbing the belly" (*Fearless Speech* 122; Laërtius 233). Finally, the last kynical *parrhesiastic* practice was "provocative dialogue," where the *parrhesiast* seeks to make the interlocutor more self-aware of their relationship to truth through hurting the interlocutor's pride (Foucault *Fearless Speech* 126-33). Through this and the other *parrhesiastic* practices, the Cynics made truth-telling one of their main pursuits.

The ancient Athenians saw the acceptance and tolerance of *parrhesia* as a sign that political life was free from tyranny. *Parrhesia* was more than an ideal about speaking frankly, it was a democratic practice extended to all Greek citizens (although this excluded all women, children, slaves and non-Greeks). Assembly debate granted citizens two rights: *isegoria* (equality: the right of every citizen to contribute to public life on equal footing) and *parrhesia*. While *isegoria* granted every citizen the right to speak, it did not guarantee the quality or integrity of the speaker. Athenians were said to be particularly suspicious of self-interest disguised by flattery and expert oratory, and feared that such speech could "corrupt the deliberations, leading to the neglect of the public interest and, perhaps, to disastrous decisions and actions" (Monoson 59). *Parrhesia* was seen as a counter-measure to this type of speech. The very "invocation of parrhesia asserted the personal integrity of the speaker" because the risk involved in speaking frankly was seen to affirm one's commitment to truth (60).

Louisa Shea argues that *parrhesia* was a notion transformed by the Cynics, from the state-sanctioned right of a few to speak on matters of governance, to "the prerogative, indeed duty, of all human beings…to speak one's mind in any and all circumstances, on public as well as private matters, whether formally invited to do so or not" (11). To the Cynics, *parrhesia* was paramount before anything else, including personal or social preservation. When Alexander the Great saw Diogenes searching through a pile of bones and asked what he was doing, Diogenes is said to have told him that he was looking for the bones of Alexander's father but could not tell them apart from the bones of a slave (Wilson 73). He did this out of the duty of *parrhesia*, risking death at the hand of the powerful sovereign because the *parrhesiast* "prefers himself as a truth-teller rather than as a living being who is false to himself" (Foucault *Fearless Speech* 17).

While Sloterdijk and Chaloupka both identify kynics as having a "moral streak" (Chaloupka 208), both are also keen to stress that this morality differs dramatically from Platonic and Socratic notions of morality as well as more contemporary understandings of morality. Kynical or *parrhesiastic* morality is not about what is right or wrong, but rather what is true, and frequently the moral struggle towards the truth involves challenging other sets of morality. For kynicism, "truth often speaks against all conventions, and the kynic plays the role of the moralist who makes it clear that one has to violate morality in order to save it" (Sloterdijk 142).

Furthermore, kynicism's endeavour for "the truth" should not be mistaken as a sense of idealistic hope or indeed a solution to bringing about more truthful or honourable conduct. While it maintains that there are better ways of doing things, kynics do not provide advice about how things should be done better. Diogenes' life of poverty, living as a dog on the street, may have been illustrative of his commitment to live in accordance with his doctrine, but his public performance of such a commitment served more as a subversive act that worked to expose social hierarchies and conventions rather than replace them. As Bosman observes with Diogenes,

> Whether [he] intended his ideal audience to turn to the radical Cynic lifestyle is debatable; his real audiences certainly did not. Rather, they would typically have responded the way audiences of political satire in repressive societies normally do: they returned to society, albeit with a wider perspective on themselves and a measure of irony towards their world, and feeling more in equilibrium because of it…The Cynic position induces 'laughter of excessive nature' to those able to recognize the artificiality of societal conventions, at the same time excluding those who remain merely shocked at the lack of propriety (103).

The analogy between kynicism and political satire is certainly apt. Satire too has been widely celebrated for pointing out the various foibles of politics, society and life in general, but criticised for offering no solutions to the wickedness it observes. Kernan describes this as "the satiric plot" (30). He observes that while the plot of literary forms such as comedies and tragedies involve "a series of events which constitute a change," satire ends "at very nearly the same point where we began" (30). In other words, the corrupt worlds in satirical texts do not change, at least never for the better. As Kernan describes in his study of English Renaissance satire,

[The satirist's] characteristic purpose is to cleanse society of its impurities, to heal its sicknesses…He employs irony, sarcasm, caricature, and even plain vituperation with great vigor, determined to beat the sots into reason or cut away the infected parts of society; but the job is always too much for him…evil multiplies faster than it can be corrected or even catalogued (33).

Yet the satirist fights on in what Kernan defines as "the belief that he simply needs to apply the lash more vigorously" (33). He argues that this absence of plot, "this constant movement without change," is what "creates the tone of pessimism inherent in the genre" (33).

Kynicism's satirical resistance often involves a similar type of "constant movement without change." For example, Diogenes is said to have satirically subverted Plato's claim that "man is a two-footed, featureless animal" by plucking the feathers from a chicken and bringing it to Plato's school, proclaiming, "This is Plato's man" (Laërtius 231). Cynicism was not a philosophy of written or verbal doctrine, but one of lived example. Diogenes provided challenge, not theory. Indeed, Diogenes' only offer at an alternative theory about human nature was gestured at through performing, or "living," in what he felt was more true to human nature. As Chaloupka notes, "kynics issue a reminder, not a program. They compose a gesture, not a project" (209).

While this lack of "a program" is certainly a valid complaint when considering the limitations of kynicism, it does not undercut the value inherent in its reminder. Kynicism may not offer solutions to the injustices or untruths that it subverts, but it shows "that there are other ways to live – other bases for moral claims, other ways to frame expectations, other ways to imagine politics" (Chaloupka 209). Instead of providing hope, solutions to political and social injustice, or a moral code, kynicism seeks only the truth.

The Evolution of Kynicism and Modern Cynicism

Dogs that humorously bark the truth: one can see how many contemporary satirists could be considered modern day kynics. Jones has already defined Jon Stewart as a kynic, and Gray argues that there is a "*Simpsons*-related kynicism…[which] leads to discussion and *fosters* community" (*Watching The Simpsons* 155). Cutler identifies the comic Dilbert, along with other contemporary

satires such as *South Park* and Ali G, as contemporary kynical[5] texts, noting that contemporary kynicism does not lose any of its potency by abandoning the life of poverty used by the likes of Diogenes and other ancient Cynics. Instead, he argues, that contemporary kynics,

> Can work as effectively, if not more effectively, from within the representative structures they seek to criticize as they can from the outside shouting in. The ability to be heard is fundamental for the [kynic] seeking to effect change from within" (168).

Cutler does not, however, discuss the potential limitations of "working from within." Kynical satirical resistance can certainly gain an extra layer of subversion if it manages to criticise the system that it operates within, but it may be similarly shut down or limited by those very systems. This ties in again to the risk involved in *parrhesia*. *The Chaser* team, as shall be discussed further on, take varying risks when it comes to their frank speech. By working within the confines of the ABC, a public broadcaster, they are less beholden to the kinds of commercial arrangements and commercially-based editorial censoring that they could face on a commercial station. They have nonetheless found their satire censored when the ABC, usually fuelled by public complaint, has decided that they have gone too far. Such examples, including the Make a Realistic Wish Sketch, shall be discussed later in Chapter 4 and 5. Cutler rightly notes that there is an edge to kynics who can subvert from within, but it must be noted that there are inherent conditions, often financial or editorial, regularly imposed on their satiric practice.

Aside from Cutler's examples, it is rare to see kynicism or ancient Greek Cynicism applied to contemporary satire outside the study of classical philosophy or modern day cynicism. Of course, kynicism is not a philosophy that should be plucked from its ancient origins and directly applied to contemporary contexts. Many scholars have observed that since the days of Diogenes, the philosophy has changed, used by different ages and different discourses in various ways. For example, Shea observes that philosophers such as D'Alembert, Premontval and Diderot sought to "tame" Diogenes for the Enlightenment project. They recognised that Cynicism had a socially-disruptive and revolutionary potential, but were also aware that this

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[5] Please note that Cutler uses the word cynical and cynic in his text in the same way that this thesis uses kynical and kynic. To avoid any confusion, quotations from Cutler will have "cynic" replaced with "kynic" where appropriate.

disruptive nature could endanger the peaceful and emancipatory aims of the Enlightenment itself. D'Alembert believed that "every age, and ours above all, would need a Diogenes; but the difficulty is in finding men courageous enough to be one, and men courageous enough to suffer one" (qtd. in Shea 23). This Diogenes, however, was refashioned as a man of letters, one who stood for "independence (from patronage and from collaboration with tyrannical governments in particular) and the free, courageous expression of truth," without the "misanthropy and indecency" of his ancient counterpart (30).

Mazella and Roberts, respectively, have noted a similar taming in early modern England and the French Renaissance, to the extent that Fougerolles, the first French translator of Diogenes Laërtius, retells the stories of Diogenes' public masturbation through euphemism only and other scholars, such as Erasmus, ignore it completely on the grounds of "Ciceronian 'decorum'" (Roberts 237). The popular retelling of the story about Diogenes' lantern where he searches for "an honest man," not just "people," is in fact an "inaccurate though durable version" stemming from Samuel Rowlands' *Diogenes Lanthorn* (1608), which was strongly influenced by Guazzo's "recasting of Diogenes as Ciceronion conversationalist" (Mazella 56).

Mazella has also shown that the concept of cynicism, often embodied by literary or dramatic representations of Diogenes and the ancient Cynics, has gone through a number of semiotic shifts from ancient to modern. This was a slow process, where the Cynics became increasingly associated with misanthropy but their *parrhesiastic* displays were more or less valued as a type of corrective "snarling" philosophy (Johnson qtd. in Mazella 15). In the early nineteenth-century, cynicism lost its connection to the ancient philosophy that bore its name, and there was a "shift from snarling to sneering cynics, or from cynical railing to cynical disbelieving" (182). The distinctive difference is that kynical dogs snarl a warning, while cynical dogs sneer and give up.

In both scholarship and public debate, it is common to describe our age as symptomatic of this sneering cynicism. Sloterdijk even defines modern day human experience as imbued with a particularly corrosive form of cynicism that he calls "modern cynicism." Since Sloderdijk wrote before the fall of the Berlin Wall, this term reflects the tensions of a world gripped by Cold War. Despite this, the meaning that Sloterdijk gives to this term can also be applied to cynicism today. Modern cynicism knows we exist in a world of empty constructions but instead of subverting

and exposing these constructs like kynicism, or simply giving up like cynicism, modern cynicism plays with those constructs for its own benefit. Sloterdijk believed that modern cynicism was a trait of those in positions of power, "*a cheekiness that has changed sides*" (111). Instead of trying to tackle broad cultural mistrust of politics through change, "the cynical master lifts the mask, smiles at his weak adversary, and suppresses him" (111). Political modern cynicism in particular gives in and plays along through media management and policy based on focus groups.

More recently, Bewes has used Sloterdijk's definition of kynicism and modern cynicism to describe the postmodern condition, but, like other scholars, his application does not recognise the subversive potential of kynicism or the possibility that a kynicism resembling that of the ancient Cynics could exist in postmodernity. Instead, he opts to criticise the contemporary age, especially its politics, as deeply cynical. He argues that,

> Cynicism, by which I mean a melancholic, self-pitying reaction to the apparent disintegration of political reality (in the form of 'grand narratives' and 'totalizing ideologies'), is the result of a process which I have characterized as the 'reification' of postmodernity, where a series of essentially metaphysical insights is taken to be a declaration of truth about the nature of contemporary political reality (7).

Bewes acknowledges the many varied definitions of "postmodern" as a term used to describe a style of art, a set of theories and the contemporary age. His interest lies, however, in the "decadence, relativism and irony" (31) of postmodernity. He argues that these three symptoms of postmodernity have produced a cynical desire and political call for "authenticity and its derivatives – honesty, sincerity, moral scrupulousness [and] 'good intentions'" (10). He distinguishes the difference between kynicism, a satirical "anti-theoretical, *gestural* critique" (28), and contemporary cynicism, but does not see it as a potential remedy to the cynicism of modern times in the same way as Sloterdijk. Instead, he believes that "something very like 'kynicism' is increasingly fashionable in Britain at least, and it seems to be nothing more radical or challenging than yet another flank in a pervasive rearguard action against postmodern 'inauthenticity'" (29).

Bewes provides an example from 1994, when the artistic movement known as the K Foundation burnt one million pounds in a "kynical" performance that illustrated contempt for the art world. Bewes saw this as an attempt to be "authentic"

artists, one that failed not only because of the mysticism they created through the private burning of the money (save for the invited attendance of a single journalist), but through allowing it to be re-represented by the journalist in his article, an act which made the burning a "work of art." "The intention to demonstrate authenticity," Bewes argues, "is implicated in the demonstration itself…To make a statement, 'artistic' or otherwise, is to concede at once to the violent demands of signification" (59). In other words, a statement is itself a representation, something that stands in for the real and therefore cannot be authentic. This desire for authenticity can be seen to resemble Diogenes' desire for a natural life. However, this thesis counters Bewes' suggestion that the K Foundation's burning of one million pounds is a kynical act, arguing instead that it is a distinctly cynical performance. While it makes a statement about the constructed nature of money and artistic value, it makes no gesture towards any natural or fundamental truth to art or life. In addition, the significant amount of money burnt illustrates that the kynical act of *parrhesia* or truth-telling, should one choose to label it as such, is not coming from a position of social or economic inferiority.

In seeking to overcome postmodern cynicism, Bewes proposes a number of solutions, one of which argues that "if willingness to rubbish 'the world as it is' is taken to be an underlying principle of political action…then society will be one in which politics is credible, effective and exciting, embodying the extremes of both energy and depth" (217). I believe kynicism can be considered a "willingness to rubbish 'the world as it is.'" I also argue that even though representations of Diogenes and kynical philosophy have experienced a semiotic transformation into the more nihilistic cynicism we understand today, that does not mean that kynicism itself has entirely transformed *into* cynicism. Rather, kynicism still continues to exist in postmodernity in a distinct though evolved form alongside its cynical counterpart.

This distinct form encompasses a dialogue that plays out between the postmodern and modernity. Firstly, contemporary kynicism shares postmodernism's disdain for all-encompassing grand narratives and reason. Furthermore, just as postmodernism is more about the dismantling of modernity than it is about furthering a particular philosophy, project or cause, kynicism is a philosophy that stands against something, rather than *for* something (Cutler 93). Cutler argues that the tension that informs the modernity/postmodernity struggle is one that has existed throughout the history of ideas. He sees them as new terms for the to-and-fro between, on the one

hand, Platonic claims that reason guides us towards truth and, on the other, the kynical exposure of such reason as constructed, a human invention that obstructs the real. "All that changes," he argues, "is the historical context" (117).

The contradiction of postmodernism, however, also appears in kynicism. While postmodernism claims that the grand narrative is dead and expresses distaste for totalising theories, it does itself provide grand narratives and theories about the contemporary spectacle-laden world. Kynicism, too, as much as it rails against idealism, maintains that there is essential truth. Where once kynicism accessed truth through naturalism, contemporary kynicism holds onto more ambiguous notions frequently linked not to living naturally, but to living justly. While naturalism represents the opposite of the Enlightenment's campaign for truth through reason, kynicism's uncompromising assertion that truth and equity are definable is itself decidedly modern.

In this way, kynicism can both have its cake and eat it too. On the one hand, it protests against idealistic constructions that dictate human behaviour and lay claim to truth, while on the other, it claims that there is indeed a truth out there. Though he does not use kynicism in his work, Baym has observed a similar tension in the work of Stephen Colbert, using modernism and postmodernism to explain this phenomenon. He argues that,

> Colbert enacts a postmodern cultural form that effaces boundaries among traditional discursive domains, delights in fragments and fractures, and rarely says anything that it might actually mean. But Colbert's postmodern *style* exists in ironic tension with its deeper and decidedly modernist *agenda*. If bullshit is an effect of postmodernism, parody is a modernist textual device, one defined by its critical edge and its unyielding faith that beyond the mask, there is some kind of linguistic normality – that words can, *and should*, mean something (141).

The combination of a postmodern style with a modernist agenda is an apt description for both Colbert and many other contemporary satirists and satires. I argue, however, that with Colbert and other kynical satirists, this "modernist agenda" is not as absolute and unambiguous as one normally considers such agendas to be. The kynical satirists of today do not "apply the lash more vigorously" in some idealistic, futile hope that something will change, as Kernan describes of their ancestors in his definition of the satiric plot. While there is a definite claim that truth exists outside media and political spectacle, this is only gestured towards and rarely,

if ever, stated. I propose that this kind of gesturing be considered an example of the dialectic nature of contemporary kynicism, which is ironic, self-aware and suspicious of grand narratives, much like postmodernism, while at the same time exhibiting an ethical impulse that is decidedly modern. This ethical impulse ensures that the irony and parody of contemporary kynicism is not the "blank parody" famously proposed by Jameson in *Postmodernism, or, The Logic of Late Capitalism*, where texts only succeed in nostalgic homage or self-aware irony without any meaningful reflection. Bewes claims that "the concept 'postmodern' has reified to such an extent that any attachment to useful notions such as identity or subjective agency is dismissed as 'essentialist' by a banal sensibility for which 'irony' and 'parody' enjoy the status of perverse creeds" (47). This may be true of cynicism in postmodernity which, even if it does desire authenticity as Bewes suggests, does not believe it exists. To make this claim of *kynicism* in postmodernity ignores the way in which kynical irony and parody, as they roll their eyes at idealist essentialism, still call for truth, a trait more aligned to modernity. One cannot ignore the ethical impulse of kynicism, an impulse cynicism does not share.

Contemporary Kynicism: *The Chaser*

Understanding how kynical philosophy manifests in postmodernity, with its performative and *parrhesiastic* practice of defacing the currency, can be witnessed in some contemporary political satires. In an attempt to illustrate this, I would like to present the following example. In 2007, *The Chaser* staged a fake Canadian motorcade that breached Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum security in Sydney, New South Wales (NSW). Three four-wheel drives with tinted windows, clearly displaying Canadian flags, two motorcycles and four fake secret service runners were waved through security checkpoints, one of which was the "ring of steel" cordoning off the "red zone." The secret service runners all had fake security passes, which were clearly marked with an identification photo, the APEC logo watermarked with the word "JOKE" and "Insecurity," and "It's pretty obvious this isn't a real pass" (S2 E15 *War on Everything*). These passes, however, were never checked and the team got within a block of US President Bush's hotel. When *Chaser* member, Julian Morrow, realised how far the fake motorcade had gone, he ordered it to turn back. The real security response was accommodating: "You can do

what you want, matey." "The road is yours." *Chaser* member Chas Licciardello, dressed as Osama bin Laden, emerged from one of the four-wheel drives and the joke was exposed. After questioning Morrow and famously allowing Licciardello's fake bin Laden to wander around after him without being apprehended, 11 staff members of *The Chaser's War on Everything*, including Morrow and Licciardello, were arrested on location.

APEC's estimated $170 million security effort, the largest Australia had ever seen, included the deployment of more than 5,000 NSW police officers, 1,500 military troops, 450 federal police and the construction of a five kilometre long, three metre high fence, nick-named "the Great Wall of Sydney," that cordoned off sections of the Sydney CBD as an exclusionary zone for APEC leaders and dignitaries (Bryant n.pag; Hynes, Sharpe and Greg 35). APEC laws allowed police to hold people without bail. Using these new powers, police arrested, strip-searched and locked a 52 year-old man in jail overnight for crossing the road incorrectly ahead of an APEC motorcade (Bryant n.pag; Hynes, Sharpe and Greg 35). The arrested man later labelled it "a fool's comedy," yet it was *The Chaser* that "exposed the clowns and asked us to join in the laughter" (Hynes, Sharpe and Greg 35). APEC's extravagant security measures were critiqued as hampering basic civil rights under the guise of protection and exposed as embarrassingly fallible. Certain signifiers – a motorcade with a country's flag, apparent secret service runners, and so on – were shown to be entirely arbitrary.

Images of Licciardello's fake bin Laden and Morrow's fake secret service runner were broadcast all over the world, even the US's Fox and CNN news networks and the UK's BBC, internationally shaming APEC's security effort ("Chaser's APEC"; "Fake Motorcade"; Moos n.pag; "TV Show Breaches"; Vause 6 September 2007). The Australian Government, led by John Howard at the time, was similarly humiliated. Judith Brett argues that the moment when *The Chaser* team breached APEC security, "Howard's days as a Strong Leader were over" (45). She adds that, "[Opposition Leader Kevin] Rudd standing at the APEC podium speaking Mandarin and [Foreign Minister Alexander] Downer blathering on about his French was not as powerful a symbolic moment in the unravelling of Howard as the *Chaser*'s penetration of the Great Wall of Sydney" (48).

The Chaser team became the very subject of the news they so often satirised. The risks involved with this stunt were reported widely. Andrew Scipione, the NSW

Police Commissioner, said, "we had snipers deployed around the city. They weren't there for show," and Neil Fergus, the former intelligence chief for the Sydney Olympics, said that "somebody might have been shot" ("Chasers 'shot'" n.pag). While media commentators debated if *The Chaser* had "gone too far," 87% of 28,451 people polled by the *Sydney Morning Herald* found the stunt to be funny ("Chaser APEC Stunt" n.pag).

　　The Chaser were already well known (and still are) for their often grotesque and convention-breaking public displays, especially in ambushing politicians and other public figures at press conferences and on the campaign trail. *The Chaser*'s antics regularly embody the kynical practice of defacing the currency in a *parrhesiastic* spirit. This practice appears in their earliest work where, for example, *Chaser* Craig Reucassel ambushed Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen and, after thanking him for returning the Church to the Bible, asked why he believed in some items of scripture (e.g. Leviticus 18:22, that a man should not have sex with another man, a line used by Jensen to justify church discrimination of LGBT people) but not others (e.g. Exodus 35:2 that people who work on the Sabbath should be put to death, or Leviticus 20:20-21 that one with a defect of sight may not take communion) ("CNNNN: Holy Homosexuals"). Jensen nervously complimented Reucassel's knowledge of scripture as he tried to walk away. These types of ambushes are still regular features of *The Chaser*'s satire.

　　However, it is the APEC stunt where, in speaking the truth frankly to power, *The Chaser* took their greatest risk. Even taking into account that they had not expected the stunt to have gone so far, and if we regard the claims that they could have been shot as a little hyperbolic, they still knew that even attempting what they were doing would be viewed harshly under APEC laws. Indeed, they were arrested, charged with entering a restricted area without justification and faced a prison sentence of 6 months. While the charges were eventually dismissed, APEC and *The Chaser*'s numerous other public performances illustrate that their satire often involves risk, ranging from public ridicule to being arrested. *The Chaser*'s performances, both in public and shared with a wider audience through broadcast, can be seen as a form of satirical resistance that tests and challenges today's political and social currency. If it is found to be fraught, the currency's artificiality is exposed and then defaced through their satire. As with Diogenes, *The Chaser* provides challenge, not theory.

Like most satire, it is reactive and rarely gives any suggestion of what could replace the currency it tears down.

Similarly to the ancient Cynics, audience interaction is crucial to *The Chaser*'s satire. The APEC stunt relied on the security officers' response. The scathing satire and exposure of APEC's security failings is at its best when passes are ignored and Morrow is told "you can do what you want, matey." In other examples, such as when Bishop Jensen is ambushed by Reucassel, it is Jensen's inability to explain why he insists on the validity of some sections of scripture while ignoring others, that most clearly exposes the artificiality of characterising one group or act as deviant while also engaging in practices (such as working on the Sabbath) that, by the same rhetoric, are considered abhorrent.

Again, as with Diogenes, humour grants *The Chaser* a tool that simultaneously allows them to be subversive yet palatable to their audience. Viewers who observe their public displays in person may not always understand or appreciate the humour – the APEC security officials certainly did not – but over a decade since their first television appearance, they are so recognised as satirists that almost every politician faced with public ambush now tries to respond with good humour. Even when ambushed figures do not respond well to *The Chaser*, this adds to the humour for those viewing at home. Of course, humour does not guarantee protection in every instance. *The Chaser* had their program pulled off the air for two weeks, their third season of *The War* cut short and the program cancelled after wide-spread public outrage about a skit that, while parodying charity advertising, was seen to be an attack on children with cancer.

Alongside these affinities with the kynicism of Diogenes, there are also many differences that I would argue are shared by other contemporary satires with kynical elements. The naturalism so stressed by Diogenes is not as strong in contemporary examples. The satire of *The Chaser* does reveal that all humans share a material, bodily nature regardless of their social status, but their truth is not informed by seeking out and living a "natural life," revolving instead around more ambiguous notions of truth and social justice. They satirise what they consider to be political abuses of truth and justice, but never state what truth or justice might be, allowing it to be more fluid and ambiguous. Furthermore, contemporary satirists do not "live" the philosophy in the same way that Diogenes and the ancient Cynics did. While many of them, especially *The Chaser* team, enact their philosophy through public

performances and ambushes on public figures, once the cameras are turned off, they do not continue to live this way. Their televised performances stand in for Diogenes' enacted philosophy of preaching through lived example. Contemporary satires may be considered the playground of "dogs," but the satirists do not live like dogs outside the satirical performance. Arguably, the failure to commit to kynicism's lived philosophy denies *The Chaser*, and indeed all mass media political satirists, the status of kynic. But looking at *The Chaser* series, we observe satire that defaces currency not just to cynically tear convention apart but in a kynical *parrhesiastic* spirit to reveal the truth, even at the risk of personal embarrassment, public outrage or more.

The Kynical/Cynical Spectrum: *The Thick of It*

Sharon Stanley makes a valuable point when she notes that even in postmodernity, we do not need to accept a "bleak account of universal cynical triumph;" even those who display a propensity towards cynicism are not cynical about everything (400-1). She stresses that cynicism is always likely to be partial, and that "the possibly of re-enchantment always lurks on the horizon" (406). Just as it is useful to disregard universalising narratives about cynicism and postmodernity, so too is it useful to do away with strict categories of kynical or cynical when it comes to satire and politics. It is therefore important to note few satires can be simply seen as purely kynical or, indeed, purely cynical. Rather, I propose that it is more useful to consider how different contemporary satires may range across a spectrum between the kynical and the cynical.

The Chaser series and, as argued by Jones, *The Daily Show* have already been identified as kynical satires. They have cynical skits that are nihilistic, but much of their satire leans towards kynicism. Cynical satires may still engage in truth-telling and satiric resistance against idealism and power. Satires that have cynical elements may even exhibit a strong ethical impulse. But with cynical satires, any ethical impulse or *parrhesia* does not work from the position that truth and justice is essential and should not be denied. The only truth that exists in cynicism is that there is no truth left, and that nothing can be done to restore social justice to politics, if ever it did exist. As noted before, this is not to say that kynical texts offer solutions

or hope; rather, they maintain politics should not and, more importantly, need not be "this way."

There is probably no satire that is strictly kynical or strictly cynical. A satire can present politics as abusing essential ideas of truth and justice (kynical), argue that politics should not be this way (kynical), while inevitably saying there is no truth left (cynical). A fine example of this kind of satire would be the British series *The Thick of It* and its feature length off-shoot *In The Loop*. They follow the work of the British Government's Director of Communications, Malcolm Tucker, an aggressive bully widely believed to be based on Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's infamous Director of Communications and Strategy (Dee n.pag). As the "Prime Minister's enforcer" (S1 E1 *The Thick of It*), Tucker ensures that ministers stay on message and that the media produce favourable reports about the government. He is the epitome of Sloterdijk's modern cynicism. *The Thick of It* has many characters that act in this way, but none more so than Tucker, who sees every broken part of the political system and works to manipulate it even further for political advantage.

The Thick of It focuses on Tucker's dealings with the Minister and staffers of the Department of Social Affairs (later the Department of Social Affairs and Citizenship or DoSAC). In Season 4, a change of government brings Tucker to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. All the staff, politicians and journalists he deals with are just as morally dubious but a lot less competent than him. Every policy decision is based on what will read well in the media and accrue the government more favour, and there are no limits to how far they will go. For example, when DoSAC gets a new Minister, Tucker bullies her into sending her daughter to a government school because doing otherwise would communicate to the media and the public that she thinks "all the schools that this government has drastically improved are knife-addled rape sheds" (S3 E1 *The Thick of It*). When accused of being a bully, Tucker responds with "How dare you! Don't you ever, *ever*, call me a bully. I'm so much worse than that" ("Special 1" *The Thick of It*).

Tucker is, oddly, the hero of *The Thick of It*, or rather, its anti-hero. His explosive, manipulative behaviour and excessive profanities are directed at the politicians of his party, the opposition, the media, the ignorant public, everyone he deems stupid or not playing their part. In many ways, audiences disillusioned by current political discourse can identify with his rage, and perhaps relish in watching him ruthlessly punish political and journalistic figures. However, as the master of

*The Thick of It*s modern cynics, Tucker truly does smile at his weak adversaries and then suppress them. While his fury towards the political system may make him the most relatable character in the series, he also represents the very thing that *The Thick of It* presents as being wrong with politics.

Furthermore, there are no good, moral characters in the government, opposition or media staff rooms of *The Thick It*. This in itself does not make the satire cynical. Politics and the media are presented as grossly corrupt and self-serving, with the implication that they should not be this way, a rather kynical position. In one instance, there is a character who represents the public good, a woman who, after losing her husband to a building site collapse, campaigns to change building regulations. She is nicknamed the "people's champion" and, when offered the chance to speak at a government party conference, becomes a prized object that is pulled back and forth between Tucker and the DoSAC staffers. She tweets about her experience, including an instance where she sees Tucker hitting one of the staffers, and later yells at them for treating her so badly. This is one of the closest examples of public empowerment against the onslaught of political corruption. However, Tucker responds by ordering his staffers to "put her on a train back to shit town or wherever the fuck she came from" (S3 E3 *The Thick of It*). Inevitably, the government does not feel much, if any, fallout from the tweets of the "people's champion," instead leaking to the press that she has been dropped from the party conference for unspecified and invented "extremist views."

The most dynamic moments between the kynical and cynical come when Tucker is sacked, first in Season 3 and then definitively in Season 4. In Season 3, Tucker is only sacked after being "out-spun" by a more manipulative staffer and gets his job back in the following episode through even shiftier means (S3 E7 and E8 *The Thick of It*). In Season 4, Tucker orchestrates circumstances where the leader of his party, who he feels cannot win the next election, must resign in shame. In doing so, however, he gets himself caught up in an inquiry that discovers he was responsible for leaking the private health records of a mentally-ill member of the public who went on to commit suicide. Tucker never admits to anything, even in the face of photographic evidence of him in possession of the man's National Health Service (NHS) number, but in his last testimony to the inquiry, he delivers a scathing speech from one modern cynic to the next:

Please don't insult my intelligence by acting as if you're all so naïve that you don't know how this all works. Everybody in this room has bent the rules to get in here because you don't get in this room without bending the rules. You don't get to where you are without bending the rules, that's the way it is…But you decide that you can sit there, you can judge, and you can ogle me like a page three girl. You don't like it? Well, you don't like yourself, you don't like your species and you know what, neither do I. But how dare you come and lay this at my door? How dare you blame me for this, which is the result of a political class which has given up on morality and simply pursues popularity at all costs. *I am you and you are me* (S4 E6 *The Thick of It*).

Tucker truly does fall from grace, and in the final episode he is arrested for perjury. In trying to turn himself into the police without media attention, he asks Ollie Reeder, a staffer he mercilessly bullies and then trains in the ways of spin-doctoring, to help him, begging "give me my fucking dignity" (S4 E7 *The Thick of It*). Reader abandons Tucker, the man who made him, and is given Tucker's old job. Though Tucker does finally fall on his sword, a rather hopeful moment, the system continues, suggesting that even in the rare moments where corrupt individuals face their comeuppance, there are even more corrupt people and processes that will fill the void left behind. There is no hope for a return to truth or justice, if ever they existed; master modern cynics, the likes of Tucker and his staffers, define the truth.

Snarling at Master Modern Cynics

While, on a spectrum between kynicism and cynicism, *The Chaser* leans closer to the kynical end and *The Thick of It* to the cynical, both also display elements of the other. There are a number of reasons why considering mass media satire on this spectrum is valuable. First, it reflects the hybridity of mass media satire, and acknowledges that how satire envisages politics is not simply constructed as strictly bleak or strictly subversive. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, it provides a way of examining how satire talks to power, namely whether it engages in *parrhesia*, speaking frankly to power "above" in a way that involves taking risk. Politicians have been appearing in non-journalistic media, like talk shows, for decades now. In the last decade, this practice has extended to interviews on comedy or satire programs and, more recently still, to actually playing a part in satiric performance.

Extensive scholarship has already established that *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* are trusted as authentic political commentary as well as humour. *The Chaser* and *The Thick of It* are also regarded as particularly astute. Perhaps, for this reason, we see politicians not just appearing on satire programs but also performing alongside the satirist.

In *The Chaser*'s 2010 election special *Yes We Canberra*, a number of prominent politicians performed on the program, including Labor's Maxine McKew, who was hooked up to a fake lie detector that supposedly flashed green when she told the truth and red when she lied (S1 E3 *YWC*). They called it the "pollie-graph." US Presidential Nominee John McCain appeared on *Saturday Night Live* next to Tina Fey's satiric double of Sarah Palin, and Vice-President Joe Biden, dressed as a cliché hotdog vender, handed out hotdogs to military officers – or "returning warriors," as he called them – in Colbert's audience. Colbert even took his program to Iraq for a week in 2009, the first non-news program to be filmed, edited and broadcast from a combat zone. During the telecast, President Obama appeared live via video link and ordered the US Military Commander of Troops in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, to shave Colbert's head in the typical army buzz cut (Robertson n.pag). While no politician could appear on *The Thick of It*, UK politicians have co-opted "omnishambles," a term coined by Tucker to describe the new minister in Season 3. In the last few years, Labour ministers have used it to describe the coalition government on numerous occasions during parliamentary debate ("David Cameron accused" n.pag). Given these examples, one must ask if politicians, in playing along, can co-opt the reverence given to some satirists. Can the modern cynic gain the perceived endorsement or even the appearance of a *parrhesiast* by playing along? While I will explore this in following chapters, I turn here to another anecdote about Diogenes, perhaps the most famous about him and Alexander the Great, in a preliminary consideration of this question.

In the story, Alexander sought to display his generosity to Diogenes by granting the poverty-stricken philosopher a wish. Diogenes, who was said to have been lying lazily in the sun, was approached by Alexander. When the sovereign asked him what he desired, Diogenes asked for Alexander to "stop blocking my sun!" (Sloterdijk 160; Laërtius 230). Here, we see the kynic's commitment to defacing the currency of power and to *parrhesia*. For Sloterdijk, this anecdote illustrates an "emancipation of the philosopher from the politician" (161). The kynic refuses to show the politician

any form of respect as dictated by social etiquette. He also dismisses the reverence given to power, opting for the bodily enjoyment of sunlight over the socially-determined status or comforts that power can provide. At the same time, he illustrates his commitment to speaking frankly, even at great risk to himself, and offers an apt affirmation of his relationship to nature, a subversion of the "mythical genealogy whereby the king, as descended from a god, was supposed to personify the sun" (Foucault *Fearless Speech* 121).

What, perhaps, makes *The Chaser* more kynical than cynical is that the team rarely allows the politician to "step into their sun." When hooked up to the "pollie-graph," McKew tries to be playful in her responses, but is often labelled a liar by the machine. *The Chaser* continues to challenge and ridicule, defacing the politician's attempt to play along as opportunistic. While the best of cynics can be just as ruthless, their show of disrespect is not driven by the kynical "missionary zeal." Even the cynic that defaces currency still does so from a nihilistic position, where everything remains fraught and hopeless. A dangerous kind of cynic allows the politician to play along, bleakly giving in to the idea that politicians will never be held to account in any meaningful way; worse still is any kind of cynical practice employing modern cynicism itself. The kynic, however, tears convention apart with a *parrhesiastic* goal: to reveal truth and show that currency found to be fraught – often the politician's – should be abandoned for something better. Although what constitutes "something better" is rarely suggested, the kynic still holds that it is essential and beyond any form of political manipulation.

Contemporary satirists, especially when faced directly with the smiling politician, should therefore "snarl" instead of "sneer." For theorists of contemporary satire, using the cynical/kynical spectrum may assist in identifying whether or not such satire allows the modern cynic to escape without having their currency torn down, and whether such an act of defacement demands more from politics or furthers a resignation to apathy and futility. In the following chapter, I look at the place of nationalism in kynicism and *parrhesia*, particularly in Australia where larrikinism and the carnivalesque play an important role in the way satirists are given legitimacy to speak.

Chapter 3
The Larrikin Carnivalesque

The Larrikin: Australian *Parrhesia* and National Identity

Soon after taking office as Prime Minister in 2010, Julia Gillard gave a speech about her experience of growing up in Australia, her values and her hopes for the country under her leadership. She labelled Australia an "egalitarian country with [a] larrikin embrace," and damned "commentators" who "sliced and diced [Australians] into separate tribes with different values, tastes and ambitions, based on how long they stayed in education and where they live" (387). She went on to say that these commentators divided Australians into three categories, "elites, aspirationals and rednecks," which she firmly repudiated. "We're not elites, aspirationals and rednecks," she argued. "We're simply Australians and proud of it" (387). Here, Gillard perpetuated the long held cultural narrative of the egalitarian country, informed by the idea that Australia is a classless society. In this narrative, the upper, middle and lower classes – the "elites, aspirationals and rednecks" – are dissolved into a single, unified class: Australian, and proud of it.

In this chapter, I narrow my examination of contemporary political satire to Australia, taking a closer look at its importance to a single country's politics. Conversely, I examine how cultural narratives privilege certain people and ideals in politics, and how Australian satire plays within, subverts and gains cultural currency from said narratives. The aforementioned egalitarianism, for example, is seen as fundamental to the Australian national character, which "assumes that Australians do not tolerate injustice and that everyone can have, and should get, a 'fair go'" (Greig, Lewins and White 167). This myth has been particularly pervasive in Australian culture. Notably, empirical data on Australian egalitarianism shows that it is more myth than reality (171), but this does not negate its contribution to how national Australian identity is imagined. Furthermore, Gillard's distinction between the egalitarian Australian and the "slicing and dicing" commentators illustrates rather ironically that there is a cultural distaste for "elites" or what is defined as "the upper class," a distinction that has long held sway over the formation of Australian national identity. For a supposedly egalitarian country, Australia has numerous cultural myths that narrativise conflicts based on class division.

Turner and Edmunds have observed that the political embrace of anti-elitism has a long history, with former Prime Ministers such as Bob Hawke trading on "his larrikan (sic) past in order to present himself as 'an ordinary bloke'" (236). As Australia's first female Prime Minister, with a background in law and radical left-wing student politics, Julia Gillard had a difficult task in aligning herself with the enduring image of the "ordinary bloke." A powerful woman is often represented as being a "wowser," a too-serious enemy of the larrikin. Larrikinism has long been the domain of men. While there was a female equivalent of the larrikin in the 19th century, known as "the larrikiness, 'donah' or 'clinah'" (Rickard 79) and some contemporary women such as Dawn Fraser have been called larrikins, the discourse of larrikinism is "bound up with understandings of masculinity" (82). In damning elites and celebrating the larrikin, Gillard can be seen as trying to appropriate the qualities of the more beloved of these two national tropes.

In this and other modern usages, larrikinism has lost its original connotation with the 1880s "spoilt and undisciplined" children, particularly boys, of colonial Australia (Rickard 78). These larrikins were rough urbanites with a "swaggering walk" and "'leery' look" (79). As Rickard argues, law enforcement and the middle class saw these early day larrikins as an offense to public decency and potential bringers of violence, but cartoonists regularly represented them as nothing more than a nuisance, hence beginning the representation of the larrikin as a harmless troublemaker. The bohemian artists and writers of *The Bulletin* took up the figure of the larrikin, but moved it out of the city and enriched it with bush legend traditions, largely through the poetry and stories of Andrew "Banjo" Patterson and Henry Lawson. The larrikin became a rural figure, which served to perpetuate *The Bulletin*'s "urban projections of the Australian bush worker as the source of radical nationalism" in a time when Australia was moving towards Federation in 1901 and trying to form its own unique national identity separate from the mother country (Collins 87). This disruptive, naughty figure became popular among the working class as a form of opposition to the "wowser-ism" of political campaigns that sought to legislate public decency between 1891 and 1911 (87). Today, larrikinism is normalised, no longer threatening as it once was in the early days of colonial Australia. The contemporary larrikin is a "carefree, mischievous character, with no intentional meanness" (Rickard qtd. in Vine "Lovable Larrikin" 68).

The figure of the larrikin has some keen similarities with Diogenes and the kynics, both embodying a subversive willingness to question convention. Kynics were and still are disruptive yet principled truth-tellers. However, just as kynicism has its more nihilistic cousin in cynicism, larrikinism has been known to slide into apathetic disinterest and resignation. Both cynicism and larrikinism have the potential to be just as normalising as they can be subversive. Furthermore, just as the figure of Diogenes and kynicism itself has been transformed for and through every age, so too kynicism has been influenced by the very place and culture it seeks to subvert. In Australia, this Diogenes-esque figure takes the form of the larrikin, an anti-authoritarian, anti-elite ordinary bloke who "tells it like it is" in the fashion of the blunt *parrhesiast*. The kynical truths underlying the satire of *The Chaser* are often informed by national myths and narratives used both ironically and earnestly to challenge and unite, sometimes simultaneously, those who identify with said narratives.

In seeking to better understand how kynicism works in the Australian context, it is important to explore the unique national myths that play out within Australian satire. Australian narratives not only influence national styles of humour; humour itself has a special place in those narratives, especially in the construction of Australian identity. Even the Australian Government website features a page on Australian humour in a section titled "About Australia," which is split into four sections: "Our Country," "Our Government," "Australian Stories" and "Australia in brief" (facts and figures about Australia). Under the section on "Australian Stories," humour is covered under Australian Identity, alongside such identifiers as "the beach," "the bush," "mateships, diggers and wartime," "Ned Kelly" and even the "Holden car" ("Australian Identity" n.pag). Australian humour itself is split into four categories that cover "black sense of humour," "mocking the wowser," "anti-authoritarian humour," and "self-mocking" ("Australian Humour" n.pag). Academic definitions follow a similar, though much more in-depth and critical line of argument.

Australian humour has been linked to the country's convict history and ideals of the bush legend, where the harsh social and rural environments of the past have contributed to a style of humour where, according to Dorothy Jones, "individuals are represented as victims of fate or adversity retaliating against the plight with a grimly humorous acknowledgement of their own impotence" (76). Vane Lindesay and Ian

Turner have separately argued that Australians identify with adversity and failure, and that fatalistic self-mocking humour has been a way of dealing with this (D. Jones 77, 83). Jones argues that,

> Fatalistic irony…contains within itself seeds of protest and revolt, directed sometimes against an alien, hostile environment, sometimes against the social institutions those in power have sought to impose upon it, and frequently against both together. Fatalism and stoic endurance are offset by a quality which can best be summed up as riotousness (77).

Jones identifies this duality of the fatalistic and the rebellious as a marker of Australian humour, where there is a contrast between "stoic endurance and anarchic disorder" (78). She provides a great example of this in Henry Lawson's story *The Loaded Dog*, where men in the bush hopelessly mine rock using explosives in the vain hope that they will find their fortune in gold. One of the characters, Andy, gets so excited about transporting the mining technique of using explosives to fishing that he creates an incredibly powerful explosive charge. This charge is discovered by the men's dog Tommy, who manages to light the six foot fuse when he runs up to the fire where the men are camping. The dog chases the men excitedly, not realising that their screams and their running is not a game. Before the charge explodes, the men, followed closely by Tommy, run into the town and the local pub, where chaos ensues as everyone tries to get away from the playful dog. A mongrel sheep dog takes the charge from Tommy and is killed, leaving Tommy alive and oblivious. For Jones, this part of Lawson's story is typical of Australian humour where "explosions of farce, anarchy or absurdity punctuate the bleak monotony of daily life only to subside leaving everything as it was before" (79-80). The "stoic endurance" of the harsh environment, which yields barely any fruit even in the face of explosives, gives way to anarchy only for a moment. Just as convicts punctuated the cruelty of their existence by defiantly inventing ironic slang, such as "red shirt" after a flogging (D. Jones 77), so too this provided only a temporary reprieve.

One could argue that talking about convict and bush tropes may be useful for considering the British history of Australian anti-authoritarianism and larrikinism, but it does not include the humour of Aboriginals and also does not necessarily align with today's multicultural Australia. Jessica Milner Davis does identify Australian humour as being anti-authoritarian, but she only briefly links it to things like geographic isolation and the idea of the "little Aussie battler." She suggests that we

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define Australian humour by looking at "how Australians *use* humour rather than the nature of the humour used" (38). She argues that humour has been closely aligned to how Australians identify themselves and others, saying,

> For Australians, using and appreciating (or at least tolerating) humour is not so much permitted as compulsory. This is a culture that deploys humour openly as a weapon to identify those who are truly 'at home', in both the land and the society (38).

She defines Australian humour as an "acculturating ritual" (39), where a willingness to "take the piss" is used to identify and unite different groups of people under the banner of "Australian." While marking difference through "us vs. them" narratives, this practice acts as a way of defining qualities that bring together all Australians. Even though it does highlight the differences between other Australians, it also welcomes "them" as "one of us" through the practice of "taking the mickey." Davis notes many scholars and commentators have identified that taking the mickey or having a "broad licence" (41) is considered to be an Australian "democratic right" (40), something Australians all share and have a right to do.

This "right," as it were, has even to some extent been legally protected. In 2006, the Copyright Act was amended so that the use of copyrighted material in parody or satire does not constitute a copyright infringement (Part III: 41A and Part IV: 103AA "Copyright Act 1968"). The Attorney General at the time, Phillip Ruddock, submitted this amendment, arguing for it on the basis that,

> Australians have always had an irreverent streak. Our cartoonists ensure sacred cows don't stay sacred for very long and comedians are merciless on those in public life. An integral part of their armoury is parody and satire – or, if you prefer, 'taking the micky' out of someone (Ruddock n.pag).

Here Ruddock, who was part of a government that was being mercilessly grilled by satirists, cartoonists and comedians at the time, recognises that humour is an important aspect in how Australians identify and relate to one another.

Jones and Davis provide valuable insights into the history and function of Australian humour. This thesis aims to contribute to this through the notion of the "larrikin carnivalesque," a useful framework for exploring the politics (i.e. the political and social function) and aesthetics (i.e. the stylistic techniques) of Australian cynical and kynical satire. Australian satire has a great affinity with a style of rebellion known as the carnivalesque. Coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, the

carnivalesque has previously been used by scholars to explore the more grotesque examples of Australian humour. While the larrikin carnivalesque sheds light on the "what" and the "how" (the aesthetics and the politics) of Australian satire, the kynical/cynical spectrum can be used to explain "why" the fools and larrikins of kynical Australian satire are able to enact a form of Australian *parrhesia*.

While it shares the anti-authoritarian, self-deprecating grotesque realism frequently utilised in kynical practice, not all Australian satire or humour is kynical. Nor can the title of larrikin imply the instant classification of kynic, as the larrikin is a figure that can be famously indifferent to the cause of ethics or politics. There is a tension between larrikin indifference and kynical ethics, especially when it comes to Australian satires that can be seen as the embodiment of both kynicism and larrikinism. Needless to say, this chapter aims to illustrate how the same politics and aesthetics can be used for different purposes. In cases of cynical Australian satire, the larrikin is more of a modern cynic, acting out against authority as a way of gaining more cultural capital in a society that values anti-authoritarianism. The cynical carnival acts more as a safety valve than as an attempt to subvert or challenge. The kynical Australian satire, however, plays with that beloved anti-authoritarianism, breaking the limits of acceptable rebellion in a way that "defaces the currency" of Australian nationalism. The larrikin, either kynical or cynical, may be a beloved figure in Australian society, but the kynical larrikin's ability to challenge widely shared stereotypes while simultaneously inhibiting them, either ironically or literally, alongside their insistence that there is truth, or "a real Australia," out there, grants them a licence and trust that is often denied to the cynical larrikin. The kynic's carnival may also act as a safety valve, a rebellion contained within the sanctioned space of satire, but it is more likely to inspire critical reflection on the currency that is so ruthlessly defaces.

The Carnivalesque: Allow'd Fools, Symbolic Rebellion or Both?

The larrikin carnivalesque is a term that has been used to signal a particularly Australian "subversive, anarchic...form of humour [which acts to] destabilise, demystify, mock authority" (Moore qtd. in Colvin n.pag). Tony Moore used the larrikin carnivalesque in his 2007 lecture to The Sydney Institute to describe the grotesque aesthetics of *The Chaser*, *The Glasshouse* and the Barry McKenzie films

(Moore "Left Humour"). The phrase has also appeared in an article by Sue Turnbull on *The Chaser*'s style. In Moore's lecture and Turnbull's article, the word "larrikin" signals a crude and cheeky Australian rejection of authority, while "carnivalesque" implies an added element of excess, theatrics and the grotesque. The term carnivalesque is almost synonymous with the work of Bakhtin, and indeed, theorists like Docker and Wendy Davis have previously used Bakhtin's carnival to explore the stylistic conventions of Australian comedy. While Moore uses Bakhtin's notion of the carnival to explore Australian bohemianism and the aesthetics of Barry McKenzie, the term "larrikin carnivalesque" has yet to be expanded in great theoretical depth. Through exploring the roots of the phrase within a Bakhtinian paradigm, this thesis provides a way of exploring the aesthetic and political underpinnings of Australian political satire, both kynical and cynical.

Dentith identifies a carnivalesque text as that "which has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces, within its own structures and by its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper" (*Bakhtinian Thought* 65). Its techniques are aligned with medieval carnival practice, celebrating a bodily grotesque which engages with "numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings" (Bakhtin *Rabelais* 11). There are many ways in which the carnival has been analysed and these can be broadly categorised into the historical study of medieval carnival practice itself, and the exploration of the carnivalesque within cultural texts. Much like their literal carnival counterpoint, carnivalesque texts are sites of inversion where the world is tipped upside down with the "suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (*Rabelais* 10). The "lower stratum" (*Rabelais* 309), both bodily and hierarchical, is celebrated over the high. The open consuming and excreting orifices – anus, mouth and nose – are privileged over closed bodily realms, such as the head, mind and reason. Kings, queens, clergy and other figures of power are openly mocked.

Dentith argues that the very point of carnival is to mobilise mocking and exaggeration against "the humourless seriousness of official culture" (*Bakhtinian Thought* 66). The vernacular of carnival, known as the language of billingsgate, encompasses "curses, oaths, slang, humour, popular tricks and jokes, scatological forms, in fact, all the 'low' and 'dirty' sorts of folk humor" (Stallybrass and White 8). Bakhtin stresses that, through its mocking and degradation of authority and

norms, the carnival has a utopian vision. Carnival laughter is directed at both those being mocked, and those doing the mocking, since the carnivalesque exposes the bodily, excessive ridiculousness of everything and everyone. In this way, Bakhtin's carnival is a regenerating process: "to degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better" (Bakhtin *Rabelais* 21).

Bakhtin has been criticised as overly idealistic in his definition of carnival as a regenerating, utopian force. While carnival practice often transgressed social norms, it also frequently enforced them. This can be seen in *charivari*, a medieval ritual which forced those who acted outside of society's sexual norms, often "unruly women," to be seated backwards on a donkey and paraded through a jeering crowd (Dentith *Bakhtinian Thought* 74-5; Stallybrass and White 24). Such examples as *charivari* pose questions about the carnival's autonomy from the dominant. Furthermore, in the carnival setting, uncrownings occur without ramifications because they are contained within a safe carnival space sanctioned by authorities. It is understood that when the carnival is over, previous social and political hierarchies continue. Brottman, in her analysis of football fan culture, calls the carnival "*licensed* misrule, a contained and officially sanctioned rebellion, after which everybody goes back to work" (23). In her examples, football fans uncrown their opponents through aggressive club chants and dress. In normal social situations outside of this carnivalised space, such behaviour would likely provoke violence. The carnival space, however, manages this aggressive behaviour, allowing fans to assert excessive masculinity without any damage to society as a whole. In this way, the carnival acts as a safety valve, letting off steam in a sanctioned environment to avoid conflict and instability flowing over into civil unrest. Dentith uses Shakespeare to summarise this depressurising trait of the carnival, calling it the mere work of "allow'd fool[s]" (qtd. in *Bakhtinian Thought* 73). Here, one can see a link between the carnival and Sloterdijk's argument that, in the modern world, kynicism has succumbed to modern cynicism. While a Bakhtinian perspective may argue that carnival play resembles a similar form of satirical resistance as kynicism, complete with its subversive and disruptive potential, Sloterdijk's modern cynicism implies that the modern carnival is only a device that gives the *appearance* of having the freedom to subvert.

Debates regarding the carnival frequently play out in a similar manner to debates about cynicism. Just as there are those who believe that any form of cynicism can

produce a dangerous apathy that discourages participation in civil life, so too the carnival has been labelled a purely conservative force for managing social tensions. But just as cynicism should not be considered without its more engaged cousin kynicism, the carnival cannot be viewed simply as a safely contained space. When discussing Brottman's example of football fans performing plays of aggression, we must consider what happens when containment is breached and carnivalesque behaviour boils over into actualised violence. Medieval carnivals themselves were known to erupt into riots (Docker 197), and Davis argues that the carnival is not merely a safety valve, but a force allowing for new ways of thinking about social relations (qtd. in Docker 195). These new ways of thinking may have real world consequences, influencing ideals and ultimately cultural practice. Theorists such as Stallybrass and White work to discourage this continuing debate as to whether the carnival is truly subversive or just the work of "allow'd fools," instead stressing that the carnival and carnivalesque texts transgress hierarchy through symbolic inversions. Therefore, the carnival cannot be classed as either inherently conservative or progressive; it can "constitute a symbolic rebellion *by* the weak or a festive scapegoating *of* the weak, or both at the same time" (Stam 95).

For example, Thompson uses the carnivalesque to explain how US adult cartoon *South Park* can appear both progressive and conservative. Its crude cartoon cut out aesthetics, bad taste themes and obscene language are understood as having "characteristics of the carnivalesque" (219). The politics of the program have been notoriously difficult to pin down, as it has a history of attacking both left and right wing movements, issues and people. Rather than claiming it for a particular political persuasion, Thompson argues that the bad taste carnivalesque aesthetic "works as a response to the 'official' discourses" (226) offered by society, especially those that rely on the idea that politics can only be understood as a binary between conservative and liberal. Rather than conveying a single partisan viewpoint, he proposes that "*South Park*'s carnivalesque mode creates a space for viewers to engage multiple social discourses from a variety of political subjectivities, while undermining the supposed legitimacy of those discourses" (226). This multi-faceted, always varying politics is held together by the aesthetic consistency of the carnivalesque which, instead of appearing politically schizophrenic, enables varying perspectives to be provided in a coherent approach that "[makes] sense (and fun) of culture" (220). In this way, the carnivalesque allows the program to be "meaningful in different ways

for *South Park* conservatives *and* liberals" (215). Thompson also notes that the carnivalesque aesthetic of *South Park* is not always political; the grotesque and billingsgate are sometimes little more than "a whole lot of offensive noise, signifying nothing" (227), even reinforcing "official" attitudes about, for example, women. But this in itself is a pertinent point; the carnivalesque is not so much progressive or conservative, but political, normalising or, as Stam argues, both at the same time.

Some theorists, such as Dentith, advise caution when using the carnival as a theoretical framework for understanding contemporary texts due to its historical specificity. Bakhtin wrote in the isolated and restricted intellectual environment of early 20th century Soviet Russia, and claimed that the employment of carnivalesque techniques went into decline after the 17th century. Stallybrass and White, while labelling Bakhtin's claims nostalgic, draw out the complexity of historical specificity by aligning the modernisation of Europe to the othering of carnivals. Instead of a disappearance, the carnival underwent a structural and symbolic shift during a time where industrialisation and scientific discourse lodged itself into the consciousness of Europe: "The carnivalesque was marked out as an intensely powerful semiotic realm precisely because bourgeois culture constructed its self identity by rejecting it" (Stallybrass and White 202). The lower stratum and other such carnivalesque imagery were evoked in structured formats, such as popular theatre, to contrast the upper class with those who did not have access to new scientific and technological advances. Reason and the mind, qualities of the higher stratum, were prized as a quality of the elites.

Docker and Stam, however, criticise such theorists as Bakhtin, Stallybrass and White for being ethnocentric in their focus on European carnivals. Any claims of loss or change, they suggest, ignore the carnivals of Latin America and the Caribbean, which continue to flourish from a long and creative tradition (Stam 90). This is not to say that an "authentic" European carnival was lost while non-Western carnivals thrived, nor does it mean that the European carnival was merely a construct used by the bourgeois to enact or define the other. Historical and cultural specificity is important, but the intense focus on the European carnival as a paradigm for the carnivalesque often consumes critical analysis of the practice itself. Once a face-to-face interactive event localised in a physical space, the carnival has evolved with industrialisation and globalisation. The carnival can still be seen inhabiting physical spaces in sub-cultural protest and celebration, such as Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras

parades, but the contemporary carnivalesque is more often enacted in mediated forms that are both more contained in content and interactive potential, yet free from geographic boundaries. Attempts to define an "authentic" carnival, especially one based around a specific time period, often ignore this fluidity. The change was not sudden, nor did one type of carnival completely replace the other, but rather, these shifts illustrate the dynamic nature of cultural phenomena. When observing contemporary contexts, the medieval carnival should instead be seen as a useful metaphor, with focus redirected onto carnivals as symbolic sites of transgression and inversion situated within their own historical and cultural contexts.

South Park is not the only contemporary satire to be classified as "carnivalesque." Many theorists, such as Thompson, Docker and Stam, have broken away from the historical confines of the medieval carnival to study its "recurrent organising image" (Dentith *Bakhtinian Thought* 78), which continues to permeate throughout contemporary society. Docker goes so far as to define the 20th century, with its many mass media forms, as another high period of the carnivalesque alongside medieval Europe (185). The carnivalesque has been used to analyse forms of postmodern pop culture, from Wendy Davis' work on *Kath and Kim* to Patrick Fuery's study of the carnivalesque in film theory. For Thompson, applying a theory developed to interpret the practices of medieval folk culture to a cultural artefact of an industrial, globalised 21st century is legitimate because "it helps us understand not just our own cultural moment but how popular culture changes" and that the carnival remains "a space for meaningful play" (220). Gray, Jones and Thompson, in their introduction to *Satire TV*, stress that the carnival is a useful paradigm for understanding how many satirical texts use the grotesque and the obscene in situations that normally hold reverence in order to enable audiences to reflect on naturalised cultural hierarchies and practices. In this way, the carnival "encourages viewers to play with politics, to examine it, test it, and question it rather than simply consume it as information or 'truth' from authoritative sources" (11). Gray, Jones and Thompson dismiss criticism that carnivalesque texts are merely allowed safety valves, or that they foster cynical "holier than thou" attitudes, arguing that the very act of laughing is reflexive and empowering.

Stam, who uses Bakhtin's work on language and the carnival to study film and other mass media forms, defines mass media as a "simulacra of carnival-style festivity" (92), arguing that it is not fully carnivalesque because it is rarely

subversive. Stam falls into the trap of ascribing Bakhtin's nostalgic utopianism to the carnival, but he also observes that mass media forms have a "conflictual heteroglossia pervading producer, text, context and reader/viewer" (221). Heteroglossia, as defined by Bakhtin, refers to the polysemy of language. Instead of being fixed, language is employed differently depending on the context in which it is used. In this way, "the evolution of linguistic forms is tied to changes to social relations" (Dentith *Bakhtinian Thought* 39). Therefore, despite the seemingly one-sided performance of mass media, Stam and Docker note that no players in this carnival are passive spectators. Owners of media companies, while in control of mass media production, are nevertheless influenced by the preferences of viewers; higher ratings equate to larger advertising revenue. Further complications come into play with public broadcasters that are government funded and regulated, thereby relying on taxpayer money as opposed to commercial advertising. The point is pertinent here as many carnivalesque Australian satires come from the ABC, a public broadcaster. The dynamic of spectator, performer, owner and sponsor relationships has some affinities with the interactive behaviour of players and spectators in carnival events, making it viable to use Bakhtin to study mass media texts.

The Larrikin Carnivalesque: An Australian Satiric Tradition

The carnivalesque is a particularly useful framework when exploring the politics and aesthetics of Australian satire since it frequently inverts norms without entirely transgressing authority, often in absurd and grotesque ways. The larrikin carnivalesque, therefore, is a uniquely Australian inversion of official, serious culture. Instead of the clown of medieval Europe, Australia's carnival fool is the larrikin, "playing up to the audience, mocking pomposity and smugness, taking the piss out of people...[and being] sceptical, iconoclastic, egalitarian yet suffering fools badly, insouciant and, above all, defiant" (Gorman x). As well as engaging in overt obscenities, the larrikin's practice of piss-taking, which, as Lucy notes, is "all about appearing to play by the rules of one language-game while in fact playing by the rules of another" (101), can be seen as an example of carnivalesque inversion. The larrikin carnivalesque uncrowns, mocks and subverts within a safe, contained space that acts as both a safety valve and an avenue of symbolic rebellion.

The language of billingsgate can be seen in Strine[6], colloquial Australian phrases, Australian vowels and obscenities, often used in sacred or serious contexts. Through her work on *Kath and Kim*, Wendy Davis illustrates the importance of the language of billingsgate in the construction of Australian carnivalesque satire. Grotesque language mishaps, such as Kim wishing to be "effluent" instead of "affluent," broad Australian drawls with "distorted vowels" ("Television Field" 356) and *Kath and Kim*-specific slang, such as "foxymoron," mock Australian suburbia and establishes the *Kath and Kim* style. The verbal style and unique words or phrases are instantly recognised and associated not only with the comedy program, but as language that is uniquely Australian.

While the "larrikin carnivalesque" as a term has not been heavily expanded within a Bakhtinian paradigm, Bakhtin has been used to study Australian comedy before. Docker has been particularly influential in applying the carnivalesque to Australian mass media. Specifically, he uses the notion of the fool and the grotesque bodily aesthetic in considering two Australian comedians, Roy "Mo" Rene and Graham Kennedy. Roy Rene, famously known as Mo, was a stage and radio comedian in the 1920s to late 1940s. He played a grotesque Jewish clown, emphasising his large nose, blackening his eyes, adding a patchy beard with makeup, talking with a high-pitched lisp and clothing himself in over-sized suits. In the fashion of carnival laughter, his comedy was directed against spectators and his Jewish self. He played with race and inverted sexual norms through cross-dressing and skits where he would flirt with soldiers. In *McCackie Mansion*, a popular radio program in which he played the protagonist, his son Young Harry constantly made fun of Mo, another example of carnivalised inversion through the destabilisation of social hierarchies. Mo's whole repertoire formed the basis of a "yiddish grotesque" (Harris 144) clown-like figure, a larrikin who allowed audiences to enjoy a subversion of social restraints without escaping them entirely.

Docker and Harris argue that, despite having a less grotesque appearance, Graham Kennedy took over the mantle of clown for Australian television. Host of television shows such as *In Melbourne Tonight* and *Blankety Blanks*, Kennedy brought studio audience, producer and film crew out in front of the camera's lens as performers themselves. He would mock himself by acting out displays of implied

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[6] Strine describes a broad Australian accent.

homosexuality – Kennedy was famously a closeted gay man (Goldsworthy 66) – with his show's "straight men" (Docker 211). The grotesque came in Kennedy's bulging eyes and his constant reference to bodily functions, with skits revolving around toilet humour and sex. Mo and Kennedy were typical carnival clowns. They were "endearing and disturbing, lovable and inspiring of fear, discomfort [and] dislike, for no one is safe from the fool's mocking barbs" (Docker 218). While Docker states that they "disclose no single discursive meaning" (217), he claims that their clownish behaviour destabilised the bush legend, "a key trope of historiography in Australia" (214) based around a white male-centred rural identity. Tension regarding homosexuality, race-relations, family and gender norms, normally unchallenged or taboo in open conversation, were released within the safely contained space of Mo and Kennedy's comedy. This did not necessarily provide a complete transgression of these norms, but allowed for a level of destabilisation. The larrikin – one that not only mocked those in authority but also mocked themself and everyone else – was already a long held image in Australian consciousness. Mo and Kennedy bought a new edge to the tradition.

No account of the larrikin carnivalesque would be complete without mentioning Barry Humphries, known most famously for his creations Dame Edna Everage, Les Patterson and Barry McKenzie. St. Pierre has called Humphries' many personas "a carnivalesque of classlessness, clothing, and comestibles…turning the 'establishment' quite upside down" (St. Pierre 31). They are characters rich with grotesque realism. The more contemporary Edna is an excessive display of tacky jewels, purple hair and sequined dresses, but even the 50s and 60s incarnations of the more plainly dressed suburban housewife was still a "pantomime dame" (K. Leahy 165). Edna's attempts at being respectable always fall away when she reveals her lower class suburban roots through such comments as "how unusual to serve spaghetti bolognaise without the toast" (*Adventures of Barry McKenzie*) and when she cheerfully and unwittingly engages in innuendo like "oh look, this must be the closet my son Kenny said he came out of" ("Guess...Laundry") or "to think that the caress of one little finger can take all the frustration out of wash day" ("Guess...Washing Machine").

Moore identifies Humphries' Barry McKenzie films as a key example of the larrikin carnivalesque with such "carnivalesque elements" as "drunkenness, gluttony, parody, sexual ribaldry, gender confusion, riot and the grotesque" (*McKenzie Movies*

27). The two movies are full to the brim with comic uncrownings, grotesque displays of the lower stratum, and a colourful display of Australian Strine, slang and swearing. Barry himself is "the mythical Australian" (Pender 72); his behaviour and his language is "highly exaggerated and included some inventions" but still celebrated the "vulgarity of the Australian idiom" (72) In *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, Barry is forced to visit "the mother country" with Aunt Edna as his chaperon in order to inherit a large sum of money from his father. As the title implies, he has all kinds of adventures in London. At one stage, he is being interviewed at the BBC studios as an "authentic Australian" when a fire breaks out. He and his friends notice that everyone else in the studio is doing "sweet F.A.[7]" about the fire so they decide to put it out using the "one-eyed trouser snake" (*Adventures of Barry McKenzie*). The men are plied with a seemingly endless supply of Fosters beer as they attempt to urinate the fire out in a quintessentially carnivalesque display of consumption and urination where the BBC, a hallowed British institution, is usurped and uncrowned. Other authority figures are regularly uncrowned in a similar manner, with a psychiatrist "chundered[8]" on and a policeman smacked in the face numerous times with a door and then urinated on.

Moore labels Humphries a "contradictory artist;" he is "intrigued by low life and vulgarity" yet he is also a "sophisticate who despairs of suburbia" (*McKenzie Movies* 7). It is this duality that has caused many debates as to whether Edna, McKenzie and the other Humphries' personas are a challenge to upper class morality or an expression of Humphries' "disdain for working class Australians" (*McKenzie Movies* 25). While Moore does believe that Humphries has a level of disdain for some of his fellow Australians, he also argues that McKenzie in particular was taken up by Australians as a "working class hero" (*McKenzie Movies* 25-26) because he epitomised larrikinism that used "bawdiness, rowdiness and irreverence as weapons against those who would unfairly seek to condescend or control" (*McKenzie Movies* 26). Humphries' intent is therefore irrelevant, even if it can be known, because the result is still a celebration of Australian larrikin carnivalesque. St Pierre insists that while Humphries is a satirist, he is not a political satirist because he does not "foster political understanding in his audience; rather, he creates laughter as a cultural expression through which people might better understand their middycosm, wherever

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[7] F.A. is a popular acronym for "fuck all."
[8] Chunder is Australian slang for vomit.

it is" (133). In this way, Humphries' carnival provides a simultaneous mocking and celebration of the working class, as well as a potential point of self-reflection.

The larrikin carnivalesque, as illustrated by Mo, Kennedy and Humphries, clearly has a long history. Continuing the tradition in the 1970s, Gary McDonald's character Norman Gunston, "the most boring reporter in Wollongong" (Bye, Collins and Turnbull 143), fumbled onto television in the ABC's *Aunty Jack Show* and later in his own program, *The Norman Gunston Show*, which started on the ABC in 1975 and moved to commercial television on Channel 7 in 1978. Gunston is a pale-faced scrawny figure with an oily comb-over, a bright blue suit and small squares of toilet paper on his face where he cut himself shaving. He asks inappropriate questions and his uncoordinated and bumbling nature confuses his international guests, making them look foolish and "reversing the norm of unequal cultural exchange between the local Australian host and his overseas celebrity guests" (Bye, Collins and Turnbull 144). This larrikin feigns naivety, anxiety and a kind of fidgety awkwardness to both mask and enhance this subversion; alongside ocker, working-class bravado, the larrikin figure has been known to strategically take up foolishness and contrived ignorance to disarm any accusations of seriousness. When Gunston moved to Channel 7, this subversion of the variety show host was less pronounced, a symptom many ABC programs stand accused of when moving to commercial television.

In his formative years at the ABC, Gunston's grotesque appearance is aided by equally grotesque performances around toilet humour, sex and drugs. His rendition of "Send in the Clowns" is performed with the distorted facial expressions of a sad clown and gestures that played on words, such as indications towards his "rear" on the word "career" (*The Gunston Tapes*). Gunston turns the figure of the intelligent journalist and suave variety show host into a fool, mocking the reverence that his contemporaries give to celebrities and politicians. McDonald calls his character the "little Aussie bleeder," a play on the more serious "little Aussie battler," a dig at the Australian notion of hardship associated with a harsh colonial history. It also mocks Gunston as being everything that the Aussie battler is not: spineless, grotesque and foolish. This kind of mocking is also directed towards Gunston's ABC broadcaster and audience, in an example of carnival laughter where spectators were encouraged to laugh at themselves. This can be seen in a segment on "The Art of Lovemaking," where a female and male figure in skin-tight white body suits, which cover them completely including their faces, have the ABC Logo over their genitals and the

woman's breasts. When the figures get into bed and make suggestive movements under the sheets, Gunston bursts onto the screen, begging them to stop as he implores his audience, "please don't ring up or anything" (*The Gunston Tapes*), acknowledging the stereotype of the ABC viewer as elitist and quick to complain.

Gunston bought the larrikin carnivalesque to politics through ambush tactics that can still be seen in *The Chaser* programs today. His appearance on the steps of Parliament House, during the Governor-General's dismissal of the Whitlam Government on 11 November 1975, has been described as a "quintessentially Australian moment" (Wendt qtd. in Bye, Collins and Turnbull 147). When Whitlam emerges to a crowd furious at the Governor-General's action, Gunston interrupts, addressing the crowd in place of Whitlam.

> Gunston: [loud and indignant] What I want to know, is this an affront to the constitution of this country?
> Crowd: Yes!
> Gunston: [still loud] Or was it just a stroke of good luck for Mr Fraser?
> Crowd: No!
> Gunston: [suddenly mild] Thanks very much, I just wondered... (Bye, Collins and Turnbull 147; *The Gunston Tapes*).

Wendy Davis uses the comedy of Norman Gunston to argue that the carnivalesque can be a resistive force. She proposes that the attendance of Gunston at Whitlam's dismissal "can be understood in terms of the mobile quality of carnival's wandering clowns" ("Production" 84). Davis posits that,

> If television is a technology of control – globalised, modulating, without any escape – then our relation to it as viewers and consumers can also be one of inhabited resistance. We can, and should, construct a tactical and elusive relation with television – question, comment, laugh and critique, while recognising that it is perhaps futile to try to oppose or escape television's globalising processes ("Production" 91).

As a bumbling clown, positioned inappropriately in a space of televised political turmoil, Gunston engages in carnivalesque behaviour that is a tactical response from within a technology that Foucault would have defined as disciplinary and Deleuze considered controlling (W. Davis "Production" 87).

The Norman Gunston Show's satire is formed around the variety show host. It makes fun of public figures *through* Gunston. *The Gillies Report*, on the other hand,

satirises through the excessive mimicry *of* those figures. Broadcast on the ABC in 1984-5, *The Gillies Report* was formatted as a current affairs program intermingled with skits satirising politicians. For instance, in one skit John Clarke, in a heavily-styled wig that barely hides his baldness, acts as a newsreader. Looking down at invisible cue-cards between each story, similar to journalistic practice at the time, Clarke mocks both the way journalists report and what they report. In one example, he informs viewers that "meanwhile, the Democrats are still grappling with defining the extent to which they're different from the bigger parties in terms of how similar they are to the bigger parties." A clip of Max Gillies, playing Democrat Party founder Don Chipp, is then shown, with Chipp proclaiming that, "we're not a one issue party, we're a one party issue. Want a well-hung senate? Vote Democrat" ("Here Is the News"). His eyes bulge, his head twitches to the right and his mouth contorts grotesquely, as if having great difficulty speaking, exaggerating Chipp's well-known mannerisms and crass speech. The sexual innuendo of "well-hung" senate is not simply grotesque, but mocks Chipp's policy stance on freedom of expression which resulted in the introduction of an R rating to the classification system and the "unbanning" of previously censored, often sexual, material while he was a Liberal MP.

The Gillies Report is most famous for its satire of Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Gillies mocks Hawke's smug confidence, while also drawing out the Prime Minister's nervousness and indecision through mimicry of jerky eye movements and compulsive fiddling with his cufflinks. This Hawke is grotesquely excessive, with an exaggerated Australian drawl and unrealistic arched eyebrows. In one skit, Gillies' Hawke sings about his success in an election campaign advertisement as stereotypical Australians dance around him and sing that the public is gullible and insufferable but, "We can do it if we put Australia first" ("Put Australia First"). Nationalism is continually mocked as a political tactic, through clips of Australian industry, sport and a figure dancing with the America's Cup. Hawke raps that "the deficit's down, everyone's had a tax cut and Australians are talking to each other again. They're happier. You never saw this under Fraser!" ("Put Australia First") He then jumps up on his desk and break-dances. A final campaign message flashes on the screen: "Put charisma first." While break-dancing and rapping seems out of place with the real Hawke, or indeed the behaviour of any Prime Minister, this excessive display mocks Hawke's widely-recognised "everybody's mate" persona often

embraced in media coverage. *The Gillies Report* uses grotesque realism and comic inversions, as discussed above, where the goal "is not ridicule, it is recognition" (Watson qtd. in Bye 83). It acts in a carnivalesque way, where the performer and spectator laugh at both everyone and themselves in the most interesting of satire, which, "rather than creating scapegoats...explores the system that we share, and for which everyone must accept responsibility" (Bye 82).

A more recent example of Australian carnivalesque is the drag act Pauline Pantsdown. Simon Hunt, a gay activist opposed to the policies of MP Pauline Hanson, became famous during the 1998 Australian Federal Election as Hanson's excessive parodic double, Pauline Pantsdown. Hunt's performance as Pantsdown has been described as "electoral guerrilla theatre" (Bogad 71), a "carnivalesque mocking of Hanson's public image" (Stratton 4) and a "Bakhtinian carnivalisation of politics" (McCallum 211). The turning of "Hanson" into "Pantsdown" is itself a carnivalesque act through highlighting the lower stratum. Bogad, Stratton and McCallum, while not situating their critique within a Bakhtinian paradigm, do use grotesque realism and the carnivalesque as terms to describe Hunt's act. He gave public performances and interviews in drag, with a frizzy red wig, lopsided lipstick and tacky red dresses, mimicking Hanson's accent, phrases and look. Moreover, the language of billingsgate often took the form of Hanson's own voice, mixed and reworked into songs that mocked Hanson as being dangerously racist and hilariously ignorant.

After the success of the Pantsdown songs, one of which was banned, the other of which became an ARIA-nominated hit, Hunt legally changed his name to Pauline Pantsdown and ran for the Senate in the 1998 election. The safety valve question comes into play here: Hunt had no capacity or desire to win a senate seat, nor did he provide a viable alternative to Hanson or her policies. But, as Bogad says, the purpose of the electoral guerrilla's satire is to "drain the resources and the legitimacy of the greater power through harassing tactics and spectacular 'zaps' and 'hits,' mimetic excess, and the use of the enemies' weapons against them" (83). In this case, Hunt used Hanson's own voice in his songs and wore her actual dress, even down to the exact same brand as Hanson herself. This not only attacked Hanson's politics as divisive and unintelligent, but also exposed her "anti-politician" or "ordinary Australian" persona as artificial (Stratton 21-2). Given that Hanson lost her seat in the 1998 election, McCallum argues that Pantsdown is "one of the few political satirists in current Australian politics ever to have influenced an election result"

(219). I would argue that such a claim is difficult to prove, and that there were many factors that contributed to Hanson's loss. However, Hunt's unrelenting satirical attacks on Hanson, as well as the highly publicised court case for defamation that Hanson bought against Hunt, surely contributed to the poisoning of Hanson's public image.

The Australian Distaste for Taste: Privileging the Lowbrow and the Larrikin

The larrikin carnivalesque, as an aesthetic and a politic, has a great presence in the history of Australian satire. This, as well as Gillard's speech on the "egalitarian country with its larrikin embrace," illustrates that lowbrow or popular taste is a marker of great cultural capital in Australia. Taste, as defined by Bourdieu, is not an individually-determined preference towards certain cultural artefacts, but a socially conditioned disposition that "reflect[s] an individual's position in the social hierarchy" (Turner and Edmunds 220). "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (Bourdieu *Distinction* 6); in other words, taste acts as a way of marking distinctions between social classes. Moreover, Bourdieu sees taste as a classification that reinforces and reproduces class hierarchies in that the elite or dominating class "install their cultural preferences as the standard of what is the highest, best, and most legitimate in national culture" (Seidman 143). Bourdieu argues that there are three kinds of cultural taste: highbrow, middlebrow and popular or lowbrow, respectively aligned to the dominant, middle and lower classes (Turner and Edmunds 220-1).

Bourdieu understands the difficulty that any social theory faces in either leaning too close to structural determinism, in which human beings are deemed to act purely according to social structure, or in privileging individual agency to the extent that social conditioning is ignored. He therefore situates his theories about class and taste within the notion of habitus. Habitus, as defined by Bourdieu, refers to "interpretive schemas, largely unconscious or tacitly at work, that tell us how the world works, how to evaluate things, and that provide guidelines for action" (Seidman 142). The key here is that habitus is an *unconscious* sense, a "feel for the game" (Bourdieu *Field* 5), that causes one to be more inclined to a particular set of behaviours in particular circumstances. It is not a set of rules that one consciously obeys, but a dynamic, interpretative "set of dispositions which generates practices and

perceptions" (*Field* 5). The behaviours produced by habitus feel natural, but are in fact socially constructed practices that have been learnt and naturalised over time to the point where they have become second nature. Bourdieu posits that "the 'unconscious' is never anything other than the forgetting of history" (*Outline* 78); habitus is the result of this amnesia. Even the act of wearing clothes illustrates the work of the habitus. While it feels very natural, the very act and the style of clothes selected is a "product of history," the result of thousands of years of socially constructed practices and understandings about gender, modesty, age, and so on, that are learnt by individuals from a young age.

Though his notion of habitus has also been criticised as too deterministic, Bourdieu and many others have continually stressed it is not some kind of socially-constructed destiny: "dispositions are long-lasting: they tend to perpetuate, to reproduce themselves, but they are not eternal" (Bourdieu "Habitus" 45). In other words, habitus changes; "being a product of history, that is of social experience and education, it may be *changed by history*, that is by new experiences, education or training" ("Habitus" 45). Furthermore, as mentioned previously, habitus is not a set of rules simply "obeyed," but an *interpretive* structure that requires individual agency (though similarly constructed) to interpret, strategise and at times innovate within the habitus. Within all these understandings, habitus can be summarised neatly as "regulated improvisations" (Bourdieu *Outline* 78).

The notion of habitus therefore acknowledges that, as "the product of social conditioning" (Allen and Anderson 71), it is reasonable to expect that individuals who exist within a similar class and have similar informal and formal forms of education will share similar tastes, but varied experience produces deviations resulting in individual preferences and tastes. The hegemonic nature of habitus just makes radical deviations unlikely. The tastes of the dominant are legitimised and replicated through particular fields such as education and even language; words such as "high" and "low," "tasteful" and "vulgar," are associated with practices of the upper and lower classes respectively. Bourdieu's work on taste, particularly in exploring how taste works to legitimise the dominant, is based on sociological surveys of France. In an inversion of Bourdieu's French model of taste, Australian taste values lowbrow art more than high. Those in positions of power frequently seek cultural legitimacy through the appropriation or expression of taste for what would be considered low or vulgar art forms. Russel Ward argues that "Australian culture

emerged from the 'bottom' not the 'top;' from the worker, not the boss; from the popular not the elite" (qtd. in Elder 47). Indeed, Moore argues that Barry McKenzie remains funny today because the "stand off" between "arrogant, complacent elitism, and an uncontrollable, democratic larrikinism" is still alive and well in "Australia's creative and political life" (*McKenzie Movies* 28).

Turner and Edmunds' research observes that there is a "distaste for taste" (219) in Australia. In 2002, they interviewed 28 Australian "post-war elites" drawn from *Australia's Who's Who* on matters of cultural consumption and taste. They found a widely-shared aversion, even among cultural elites, towards cultural products deemed to be highbrow. The interviews showed that while these Australian elites have the high level of education and economic capital required to access highbrow art (and indeed, some occasionally do), they tend to be "cultural 'omnivores'" (234), consuming a wide variety of texts seen as high, middle or lowbrow. When they consume high art, they freely admit to having a limited knowledge of that art, leaning towards the "classics" only. Their knowledge of middle to lowbrow art, however, is extensive. This illustrates that in Australia there is a,

> Deeply rooted populist ethos, known as larrikinism, which suggests that to have highbrow taste, at least in an ostentatious way, is to have bad taste. Australians do not display upper-class tastes in public because that is not considered to be *truly* Australian (Turner and Edmunds 235, emphasis added).

This suggests that while there are entrenched classifications regarding what is high and low culture in Australia, especially when it comes to anti-elitism, taste is not reinforced or legitimised *through* class hierarchies but through imagined national narratives *about* class and nationalism. One's class status may have some bearing on one's "Australianness," but no more so than a *taste* for culture that is proudly considered to be lowbrow or working class. One could be exceptionally wealthy and still not be considered "an elite" within prevailing anti-elitist discourse. The Australian multi-millionaire media mogul Kerry Packer was often represented as being an "ordinary bloke" because of his widely-publicised taste for lowbrow culture, regardless of his interest in more high-class pursuits such as polo. Upon Packer's death, radio personality Alan Jones labelled him "an everyman – the voice of Australians with no voice" (qtd. in Elder 44). Then Prime Minister John Howard said Packer understood "what made the ordinary bloke tick" (qtd. in Elder 44). While these comments may say more about the shared conservatism between Jones,

Howard and Packer, Elder argues that Packer gained his Australianness through "traits associated with the working man type," especially his "love of working-class culture" (44).

Furthermore, in a broad study of Australian taste in the 1990s, Bennett, Emmison and Frow found that differences in taste were influenced significantly by age and gender, with class only accounting for slight shifts in cultural preferences (217-9). In regards to television, older audiences from 36-45, 46-59 and 60+ expressed a preference for news programs, while youth audience (18-24 years) expressed a preference for humour (77). When it came to gender, women overwhelmingly preferred popular soap operas and "'quality' drama," while their male counterparts showed a taste for local sports programs and sitcoms (217). Aside from programs like Britain's *Heartbeat*, which can arguably be considered middle-brow, all favoured television programs were "lowbrow" or "popular," such as *Melrose Place*, *The Footy Show* and *The Simpsons*. On the Americanisation of Australian taste, they found that youth audiences also had a larger taste for American cultural products than their generational predecessors, but that, in all age groups, this equated to "very little change in a belief in the importance of Australia in biographical self-awareness or in the view that Australia remains a culturally distinct nation" (225). This study, therefore, illustrates that taste is influenced not just by access and education, but by factors such as nationalism, age, gender and the type of cultural products in circulation, as in the mass importation of American texts.

More recent statistics show that *The Chaser*, especially the series *The War on Everything*, is another favourite with Australian audiences. In 2007, the second series of *The War on Everything* received ratings as high as 2.4 million people per episode, making it the most watched comedy ever on the ABC (Ritchie n.pag). It rated strongly with people aged 16-39, with one in two young people watching television during the *War*'s timeslot tuned into the satire program (Ritchie n.pag). After a 18 month hiatus, the third season debuted with an audience of more than 1.5 million, beating popular American commercial rivals *Criminal Minds*, *The Mentalist* and *Law and Order: SVU* ("Strong Ratings" n.pag). Weeks later, after airing its unpopular "Make a Realistic Wish" sketch and in a timeslot opposite a State of Origin match, the program still pulled more than 1.1 million viewers ("Chaser's Ratings" n.pag). A year later, their 2010 election series *Yes We Canberra* debuted with just under 1.5 million viewers ("Gruen, Chaser" n.pag).

The privileging of lowbrow taste as an indicator of Australianness, even when it comes to the consumption of overseas texts, helps explain why carnivalesque larrikins such as *The Chaser* are afforded such cultural capital, especially among young people. The carnivalesque larrikin is grotesque, lowbrow, anti-elite and anti-establishment. In studying the history of the larrikin and the ordinary Aussie bloke, Felicity Collins observes that the 2006 Australian movie *Kenny* received critical and popular acclaim because its sincere, hard-working protagonist who worked with Portaloos had all the national traits of the "decent Aussie" (84). *Kenny*'s lowbrow subject matter, and its working class hero, contributed to the widely-drawn contention that the movie was a portrayal of the so-called "real" Australia. It was co-opted into the culture wars, marked as a "victory for the 'ordinary' Australian 'battler' over the professional, middle-class 'elite'" (84), providing another example of the inverted nature of Australian taste where, in comparison to Bourdieu's France, the lowbrow is awarded more capital than the highbrow. The larrikin, whose wisdom or knowledge is based on common sense and working class experience, has more currency than the professional, the expert or the academic.

The Two-Faced Larrikin: Tension between Larrikin Apathy and Kynical Engagement

A great deal of Australian satire uses the figure of the larrikin, as embodied by Gunston, Gillies and Hunt, to respectively attack the populism of figures such as "the Aussie battler," larrikin Bob Hawke, and "the ordinary Aussie" Pauline Hanson, suggesting a kynical interrogation of these Australian tropes through the act of satire. Rickard notes that the larrikin "can not only take 'the piss out of people' but stand in judgment over them" (83), suggesting a purpose behind the seemingly juvenile act of taking the mickey. However, there is a remarkable tension here between the "tell it how it is but take it as it comes" apathy of the larrikin and the kynic's playful yet earnest endeavour for truth. Larrikinism itself can be democratic or apathetic, cynical or kynical, or a mixture of them all. In some discourses, the larrikin's anti-authoritarianism is seen as an act of democratic defiance. Vine argues that larrikinism played a big part in the identity of early Australian journalism because it worked alongside "normative theories of journalism involving independence and holding those in power to account" ("Lovable Larrikin" 68). Acting defiantly, in

defence of the journalistic ideal, was seen to be a key identifier of the Australian journalist. In her doctoral thesis, Vine calls the larrikin a "democratic figure" ("Larrikin Paradox" 4) and argues that "it is precisely the larrikin's very irresponsibility that makes him, or her, a key enacting agent of Australian journalism's declared public responsibility" ("Larrikin Paradox" 40). This "larrikin paradox," where a sense of irresponsibility is the very thing that enables and encourages the journalist to act for the public interest, can be seen as particularly kynical. Just as the kynic uses satirical resistance in their truth-telling, so too the larrikin journalist uses defiance and irresponsibility in the name of the free press.

Vine argues that the larrikin ideal has been lost in contemporary journalism ("Lovable Larrikin" 68). Vine's research, surveying journalists who began working in 1974 and in 2003, found that contemporary journalists tended to be more conservative, used polite as opposed to profane language, had less aggressive body language and were less willing to break the law than their 70s counterparts ("Lovable Larrikin" 70-72). Accordingly, Vine concludes that there is a "disappearance of defiance – larrikinism's fundamental principle – within Australian journalism culture. Journalism culture no longer supports 'pride' in 'fighting for change' and 'sticking it up the establishment'" ("Lovable Larrikin" 77). Vine's work shows that the larrikin has been aligned with a democratic form of defiance. The democratic imperative of the larrikin, and the subsequent decline of larrikinism in journalism, may also help to explain why satirists who embody a kynical larrikin tradition are invited onto news programs as trusted commentators or experts, a phenomenon that shall be explored in the next chapter.

Vine summarises the seemingly contradictory nature of the larrikin by observing that it "resists reductions to 'hero' or 'villain'" ("Larrikin Paradox" 102). Culturally, the larrikin has shared what White defines as the "split personality" of Australian diggers, "portrayed as an ideal type on the one hand and, with self-mocking humour, as an unkempt larrikin on the other" (qtd. in Collins 88-9). The split personality of the larrikin, as represented throughout a variety of different times and texts, tends to range between the apolitical and the transgressive. Collins argues that despite the larrikin's seemingly polysemic character, as exemplified in Australian texts from 1919's *The Sentimental Bloke* to recent films like *The Castle* and *Kenny*, it has often come to stand for "the real" or authentic Australian. The larrikin, she argues, is "an imaginary but powerful figure of national rhetoric" (90). Manning Clarke shares a

similar sentiment, arguing that larrikinism "no longer depicts us as we truly are" but acts as a "myth by which [Australia] defines and justifies itself" (39). Larrikins, such as Kenny, legitimise "the delegation of 'Aussie values' to the safe-keeping of an idealized and sentimentalized 'ordinary' Australia" (Collins 90). In other words, larrikins and their "ordinary" and "common-sense" knowledge are privileged as trusted and authentic. The larrikin, due to its alignment to a perceived real, authentic Australia, is therefore a figure that works to legitimise and naturalise Australian cultural narratives about identity and values. Collins argues that the larrikin in Australian humour can serve this normalising function, using the "indecent larrikin" of the early 70s as an example of "carnivalesque comedy" where the "grotesque, fornicating, defecating, decaying yet regenerative body [acts] as the site of deep existential ambivalence from which there is no escape" (89). However, the larrikin, like the carnivalesque, can also be subversive, as Collins is keen to explain by arguing that "the iconoclastic return of the larrikin spirit of transgression [can be seen] in the top-rating series *The Chaser's War on Everything*" (90).

The tension between the ambivalent larrikin and the engaged kynic can be reconciled through the understanding that the larrikin, like the carnival fool and the kynic/cynic, can have both normalising and subversive traits, depending on how it is deployed. Notably, however, this tension is frequently not reconciled. The larrikin kynic may rely on tropes that work to maintain the status quo and the larrikin cynic may also provide moments of transgression. They may also work simultaneously alongside one another, with the kynical satirist personifying, and gaining legitimacy from, the apathetic larrikin figure while challenging the very national ideals that inform its construction. The larrikin kynic often performs as apathetic or naïve in a manner akin to Socratic irony, where the target is led through a number of staged questions or scenarios to draw out the flaws in said target's argument or position. It also masks the seriousness behind the kynic's critique by making them appear laid back, foolish or uninvested.

This can be seen in an example from *The Chaser*'s 2011 *The Hamster Wheel* series, where Craig Reucassel provides a report on proposed reforms to the poker machine industry. Reucassel satirically sides with Clubs Australia, who ran a media campaign arguing that such changes to poker machine laws were "un-Australian" and would damage local community recreation, sport and ANZAC day events. In a full tuxedo, he skips into the Bull Dog's League Club, which made $69.5 million

from poker machines in 2010 and gave "a whopping $1.2 million" back to community events and sponsorship. When he leaves the club, he is wearing only his underwear, excitedly proclaiming, "Hey, look what they gave me!" (S1 E8 *Hamster Wheel*). Using Clubs Australia's logic, he labels the whole of Western Australia (WA) "unAustralian," because WA state laws do not allow the use of poker machines in clubs and pubs. He visits WA, dressed as a stereotypical miner to "blend in," and speaks with the WA RSL President, former Premier Geoff Gallop, and the Director of the not-for-profit community organisation Centrecare. Reucassel ignores his guests who say that WA has the biggest ANZAC day events and the fewest problem gamblers in Australia. He claims that "as you can see here, the football clubs of Western Australia are really struggling without the money provided by problem gamblers," while the camera provides a panoramic view of WA's large Patersons Stadium (S1 E8 *Hamster Wheel*). Reucassel juxtaposes Clubs Australia's claim that limiting poker machine use is "un-Australian" with the ironically-illustrated vibrancy of the same key identifies of Australian life, like the pub, football and "the diggers" in Western Australia.

This satire acts to call out Clubs Australia for being un-Australian itself, taking advantage of problem gamblers to boost their profit margins while hiding behind token donations to stereotypically Australian recreation and events. Reucassel frequently takes on the figure of the "true-blue Aussie," putting on a strong Australian accent and using local colloquialisms. This acts to critique the Australian figure used by Clubs Australia in their campaign advertisements while simultaneously adding validity to his status as a true larrikin. It works to subvert abstract ideals of "Australianness" that are used to distract their audience from the "real" truth, while also gaining legitimacy through those very ideals.

The Chaser: Today's Kynical Carnival Fools

The Chaser texts are sites of the larrikin carnivalesque, complete with grotesque, lowbrow humour that informs a kynical satiric resistance to mainstream politics and journalism. Their now infamous APEC stunt may one day be considered a "quintessentially Australian moment," just as Gunston's place in the dismissal of the Whitlam Government is so fondly remembered. Hynes, Sharpe and Greg argue that *The Chaser* team appeal to a "familiar image of Australian resistance – namely

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larrikinism – and this is crucial to its popularity" (36). *The Chaser*'s popular antics, much like that of Gunston, Gillies, and Pantsdown, suggest a shared taste for the lowbrow, anti-authoritarian humour of the larrikin, and reflect a concern among the public. In Vine's words, the APEC stunt "[exposed] the 'Emperor's new clothes' of hyper-security" ("Larrikin Paradox" 28).

The Chaser, in all their satirical papers, theatre shows and television programs, are the epitome of the larrikin carnivalesque. All of their texts deploy varying degrees of grotesque realism, excessive comic inversions and carnival laughter. *The Chaser* characters subvert the image of the politician, the journalist and even the public through highlighting the grotesque bodily lower stratum. They regularly crash press conferences, asking absurd or grotesque questions of politicians and public figures, so that over the last decade, politicians have now learnt to behave with good humour whenever faced with one of *The Chaser*'s ambushes. Their vernacular and general style is often summed up with the word "undergraduate" (Fyfe qtd. in Turnbull 76), implying a sense of immaturity associated with student pranks. While meant as a criticism, this is a quality *The Chaser* team revel in, laughing at themselves for indeed being true larrikins, complete with the immature, the foolish and the grotesque. In one instance, Morrow even ironically calls his fellow *Chaser* members "stupid undergraduates" (S1 E1 *Chaser Decides 2007*), taking up the position of wowser. They mock themselves, critics who take such "undergraduate" humour seriously, and audience members who, despite being so-called elitist ABC viewers, enjoy lowbrow satire.

The label "undergraduate" also alludes to the dynamic nature of Australian taste, especially in how it functions within *The Chaser* series. Tertiary education tends to be associated with the elite, and indeed, all of *The Chaser* team graduated from university with degrees in law or arts. Julian Morrow proudly said that in the early days of *The Chaser*, when it was a penniless satirical newspaper, he worked as "an employment lawyer by day and a defamation practitioner by night, conscientiously ignoring the often petty rules of libel" (Morrow n.pag). This two-faced figure belonged to both the elite and the working class, making his money in a "high class" profession and then spending it in an act of anti-authoritarian larrikinism that revelled in the kind of bad taste that produced the headline "Centrepoint jumps two in world's tallest building rankings" the day after the September 11 terrorist attacks (Morrow n.pag). When used in this context, "undergraduate" is a term that illustrates

a curious intersection with elite and working class taste. To behave like a "stupid undergraduate" is to both attend higher education and engage in pranks that are of poor taste, a practice associated with the beloved working-class larrikin. This interesting class dynamic can be seen as a manifestation of the Australian defensiveness towards being called a wowser, combined with student prankster traditions. It illustrates that larrikinism allows one to make social critiques and be highly educated without being labelled a "tall poppy" or wowser. Being a "stupid undergraduate" negates the charge of elitism that can be directed towards those in higher education, again illustrating how a preference for working class taste, particularly larrikinism, provides one with more "Australianness" than one's actual social position.

Of course, the undergraduate and the grotesque are deployed throughout *The Chaser* texts in many different ways. They have exhibited immature grotesque displays that, as Thompson said of *South Park*, resemble "a whole lot of offensive noise, signifying nothing" (227). In one skit, for example, Reucassel squats over a portable camping toilet in front of a busy city newsagent and reads the newsagent's papers and magazines to see how much he can get away with in regards to public conventions of decency (S2 E6 *War On Everything*). While Diogenes may have approved of this form of satirical resistance, seeing it as a challenge to social conventions that work to control the more "natural" forms of human behaviour, this public display is more about the faux-pas of "reading before/instead of buying," with Reucassel also making himself comfortable on a fold out bed as he indulges in the practice of "try before you buy," and says little else beyond this challenge to good taste.

However, in most of their programs, *The Chaser*'s performance of the larrikin figure tends to be one of democratic defiance. In satirical versions of McDonald's advertisements, Hansen and Taylor assure McDonald's patrons that they don't use pig fat in their ice-cream, saying, "all our dairy products come straight from Aussie cows." Hansen then grinds a fake blood-spattering cow's head into a soft serve machine, which then drips blood onto a McDonald's sundae (S2 E4 *War On Everything*). This satire mocks McDonald's for their advertisement of a company website called *Make Up Your Own Mind*, where patrons are encouraged to find out the "truth" about what McDonald's use in their food. The grotesque is employed to not only mock McDonald's history of using low grade ingredients in their food, but

also to uncrown McDonald's authority in making a claim that their website is a balanced and reliable source of information. Hansen and Taylor call *Make Up Your Own Mind* a "one-sided propaganda website" and, in a keen example of double-voiced reported speech, say that it is "made of 100% Australian bull." The carnivalesque aesthetics serve the larrikin's kynical defiance. Furthermore, the grotesque itself is informed by the kynical implication that the McDonald's website illustrates an injustice to truth, but that truth, derived from a bit of the larrikin's common sense, is indeed available.

An equally grotesque, kynical display can be seen in *The Chaser*'s uncrowning of Kevin Rudd and the media regarding the Rudd ear wax incident. This refers to the 2007 media obsession with a piece of film footage that showed Kevin Rudd picking his ear and then putting his finger in his mouth. *The Chaser* "commemorate" this incident by creating an advertisement for a bust sculpture of the Labor leader made entirely out of dripping ear wax, which Licciardello then licks (S1 E2 *Chaser Decides 2007*). This grotesque uncrowning of Kevin Rudd is one of many kynical skits that highlight the media's wide-spread coverage of trivial information, failing to allow for in-depth dissection of government and opposition policy.

Journalism comes under regular carnivalesque attack, almost always in a manner that kynically demands a return to the values of the Fourth Estate. In *Yes We Canberra* (*YWC*), for example, Hansen and Licciardello note that journalists are starting to time their reports to be in "the thick of the action," airing a clip of *Ten* journalist James Boyce speaking to the camera as he walks alongside a rather bemused Tony Abbott, and another clip of *Seven* journalist Mark Riley standing in the way of a police car door as officers try and load an arrested protester into a car. To mock this technique, footage of Riley is superimposed over a scene of a red-haired figure bouncing up and down enthusiastically on another figure under the bed sheets, described as a report where "the PM [Gillard] was sharing a private moment with her partner" (S1 E4 *YWC*). This provides a clear example of the carnivalesque, where the fool situates the subject of its mockery (both journalism and Gillard) within a degrading, grotesque display in order to subvert its claim to authority and seriousness.

The Chaser team couple grotesque imagery with a crude, lurid language of billingsgate, which is used, at times, either ironically or earnestly to take up the larrikin vernacular including what Bakhtin called the "unofficial elements of speech"

(*Rabelais* 187), such as swearing and other profanities. In Episode 4 of *YWC*, for example, *The Chaser* perform a musical number that uses the word "fucked/fucking" 35 times (*YWC*). Such language is considered to be a "breach of the established norms of verbal address; they refuse to conform to conventions, to etiquette, civility, respectability" (Bakhtin *Rabelais* 187). Bakhtin saw such a transgression of established language norms as unifying, where "a group of people initiated in a familiar intercourse...are frank and free in expressing themselves" with their own "particular argot" (*Rabelais* 188). Not only does the use of "unofficial language" establish a vernacular that unifies *The Chaser* texts, it creates a "special collectivity" (*Rabelais* 188) between *The Chaser* and their audience. Swearing and using bad language are also practices aligned with the larrikin and the laid-back nature of "Australianness." Baker argues that "lowbrowism" is a persistent feature in the Australian lexicon:

> There is a deliberate speaking down, an avoidance of anything suspected of being highbrow in thought or word, a straining after the simplest and lowest common denominator of speech. The effect of this tendency towards lowbrowism is to make larrikin slang far more typical of Australia than we might anticipate (122).

> Episode 16, Season 2, of *The War* provides an example that illustrates the aesthetics of grotesque realism, the "unofficial" verbal style of *The Chaser*'s language of billingsgate, and the kynical nature of their satirical critique. In their segment "What Have We Learnt From Current Affairs This Week," Hansen and Licciardello identify the top three "super menaces" of society, as categorised by current affairs programs. The number one super menace is listed as Asians. They propose this while viewing clips from a *Today Tonight* (*TT*) report where reporter Bryan Seymour asks a sample of Asian Australians three questions to test their patriotism: 1. "Have you heard of Don Bradman?" 2. "Do you Waltzing Matilda?" 3. "Have you ever tried pavlova?" When a clip shows that the interviewees cannot answer, Licciardello acts shocked, exclaiming, "you don't know what a pavlova is? Take your substantial contribution to the country and piss off!" On the aggressive "piss off," Licciardello throws a pavlova at the camera, which leaves a dirty smear on screen until the next segment (*War on Everything*). Licciardello's ironic juxtaposition of "substantial contribution" and "piss off" can be interpreted as

mocking the superficial media categories that define a valuable Australian citizen, while the pie throwing follows in the carnivalesque tradition of degradation.

In addition to the aggressive pie-throwing, Hansen and Licciardello take to the streets of China Town and ask Asian Australians what they think of *TT* and Bryan Seymour. The responses appear scripted, as they share the same kind of undergraduate vernacular. Their interviewees describe Bryan Seymour as "a fuckwit" and "a shoddy journalist." Their final interviewee, a young man in his twenties, answers with, "oh, Bryan Seymour? Um, isn't he that dickhead arsewipe mother-fucking slut from *Today Tonight* hosted by that bitch...um, can I give a message to Bryan Seymour?" Hansen and Licciardello act somewhat intimidated by the young man's aggression, but let him deliver the message, which is, "Bryan Seymour, fuck you!" The larrikin vernacular, shared by *The Chaser*, their subjects and their audience, is aggressive, full of swearing and non-apologetic. This small rebellion against official language assists in creating the "undergraduate" *Chaser* style of the larrikin carnivalesque, while also unifying those willing to speak it. Asian Australians, through the use of this language, speak the lexicon of the larrikin, identifying and proving themselves to be the very epitome of Australianness.

Kynical Larrikin vs. Cynical Larrikin

The Chaser's grotesque aesthetic is used to kynically "deface the currency," using, for example, sex to question the conventions of journalism, as in the *YWC* Mark Riley skit. The use of grotesque realism and billingsgate to subvert the branding of Asian Australian as "unAustralian" is not just a simple act of anti-authoritarian larrikinism; it is informed by an ethical impulse that has a very stringent attitude towards truth and justice. Seymour's assertion that not knowing what pavlova is makes one unAustralian is cast as false and unjust, but this is not presented cynically. Reality and truth is still seen to exist beyond Seymour's distortion, but its very nature is ambiguous, implied through ironic and hyperbolic acts like throwing pavlova and swearing, rather than explicitly stated.

Being carnivalesque, however, does not make a satire kynical. "Kevin Rudd P.M.," a segment on variety show *Rove* in 2008 and 2009, is a useful example of cynical larrikin carnivalesque. Its title, a play on the 80s crime drama *Magnum P.I.*, provides a clue as to its content. It features edited news footage of then Prime

Minister Kevin Rudd and other prominent politicians of the time, spliced in with scenes from famous movies and television programs, to form a plot that focuses around the fictional, but frequently topical, misadventures of the Prime Minister. The audio from this footage is replaced by narration from a camp, childish Rudd with a particularly idiotic laugh. Other politicians have nicknames and personas, turning Rudd's life into a farcical "super heroes and villains" story. Treasurer Wayne Swan becomes Rudd's dim-witted side-kick "Swannie," Liberal Leader Malcolm Turnbull is mocked as Rudd's arch-enemy, the sly, elitist "Silvertail," and American President Barack Obama, called "Derek Obama" by Rudd, is cast as the cool kid who Rudd desperately tries to impress.

The plot of each episode is absurd, and frequently utilises the grotesque and billingsgate. For example, Rudd protests to tourists defecating on Uluru by penning a book called "How to stop defecating on national icons" and holding a press conference where he asks, "look, would you please stop shitting on Uluru? It's unhygienic for one thing and I think we now know it wasn't a dingo that stole her baby, it was the damn poo creature!" (S2 E26 "K.Rudd P.M."). In other episodes, Rudd is run over by an ice-cream truck and, upon returning from the dead, declares to the world that he is the second coming of Christ (S2 E1 "K.Rudd P.M."), removes Swannie's brain with a household drill (S2 E14 "K.Rudd P.M."), organises a music festival/orgy called "Ruddstock" (S2 E23 "K.Rudd P.M."), and hangs out at the restaurant Hooters with Bill Clinton, nicknamed "Pantless Bill" (S2 E27 "K.Rudd P.M.").

"Kevin Rudd P.M." cannot be classed as entirely absurd, grotesque farce. Rudd's antics are at times related to topical policy decisions. In Episode 1, when Rudd believes he is the second coming, he tries to "show daddy [God] [he] was best" by deciding to "hand out shitloads of cash," referencing Rudd's stimulus package that involved giving each working Australian $950 (S2 E1 "K.Rudd P.M."). He declares that "Jesus may have turned water into wine, but my miracle was bribing people with sweet sweet money!" In another episode, when trying to make himself likeable to the Australian public after berating a flight attendant, he asks a press conference, "alright, who wants super-fast internet?" Rudd is then booed and one voter demands, "give us our jobs back," but his only response is, "okay, super-fast internet it is!" (S2 E9 "K.Rudd P.M.") Throughout the series, both Rudd and Swan's handling of the 2008 global financial crisis is presented as irresponsible.

Furthermore, the satire involves many carnivalesque uncrownings and hierarchical inversions. Rudd is mocked for being a populist leader, uncrowned as a nerd trying too hard to be cool. His use of social networking is made fun of through the Rudd character gleefully declaring "twitter time!" to inform the public of such events as him cutting his toenails (S2 E8 "K.Rudd P.M.") or urinating against a wall backstage after an interview with Rove (S2 E20 "K.Rudd P.M."). One instance of "twitter time" grotesquely extends the actual instance of Rudd verbally abusing a flight attendant, turning the widely-reported event into a gleeful declaration that he "threw the meal right in her face. Scolded her good" (S2 E8 "K.Rudd P.M.").

The grotesque and the elevation of the fool to the status of king (whether that fool be the king himself, as in "Kevin Rudd P.M.," or the satirist, as in *The Chaser*) are techniques used in both the kynical *Chaser* and the more cynical "Kevin Rudd P.M." However, even as the carnival of "Kevin Rudd P.M." relies on the idea that Rudd truly is a populist, the existence of any fundamental sense of truth that should be demanded beyond this is never alluded to. "Kevin Rudd P.M" has a cynical truth, that the performance is the reality. Its satire has less of an ethical impulse, settling on making the audience laugh by mocking Rudd as a populist "dork" without suggesting any other truth or expectation one should demand beyond this. There is no insinuation that more can be demanded of Rudd, Swannie, Silvertail or the others.

With *The Chaser*, however, a kynical enactment of the larrikin carnivalesque is driven by an ethical insistence on justice and truth, however ambiguously stated that may be. Even the Rudd ear wax sketch, another grotesque uncrowning of Kevin Rudd, was informed by a kynical demand for the media to adhere to the values of the Fourth Estate. Rudd himself, as in "Kevin Rudd P.M.," has often come under attack by *The Chaser* team. Many of these are cynical, normally based on the idea that Rudd is a nerdy publicity machine and nothing else. Cynical uncrownings, it should be noted, often involve a focus on personality, mannerisms or appearance. But other *Chaser* attacks on Rudd are deeply kynical. One such skit challenges Rudd's belief that the sacred Aboriginal site Uluru should be open for tourists to visit and climb on, as it has been in the past, despite calls from the Aboriginal community to have such practices banned. Reucassel and Taylor open the sketch by saying that this seems to conflict with Rudd's pro-reconciliation image, and wonder how Rudd would feel if people were walking all over a site that was "sacred to him." Julian Morrow, complete with stereotypical climber's vest, jeans, backpack, camera and a rope, puts

this to the test by attempting to climb Kevin Rudd's community church during its regular Sunday service. When Rudd arrives for the service, Julian seeks his help:

Morning, Kevin, could you have a word to the owners of the place? They won't let me climb this place. They keep on banging on about the spiritual significance of it or something. Can you have a word to them? (S3 E7 *War on Everything*)

Rudd ignores his request and goes into the church. As Morrow waits for the Prime Minister, he slings his rope over a part of the church outside and tries to climb it. As Rudd is coming out, a police officer requests that Morrow stop.

Police: Sorry, mate, you can't climb up.

Morrow: Can't climb up?

Police: No.

Morrow: Why not?

Police: Coz you don't own the building.

Morrow: But we don't need to respect the owner's wishes, do we?

Police: Yeah we do (S3 E7 *War on Everything*).

This exchange continues until Rudd is almost out of ear shot. Morrow ends it by saying, "I might climb Uluru instead. It's probably easier actually."

This sketch is a form of kynical satire where Morrow's disrespectful display illustrates the reverence that the traditions of Christian Australians are afforded in comparison to their Aboriginal counterparts. It clearly criticises Rudd as being hypocritical, but also relies on the idea that the inequitable manner in which Aboriginal sacred sites are treated, in comparison to Christian sites, is unjust. Ironically, *The Chaser*'s larrikin display can be seen to imply that Rudd should be respectful of Aboriginal sacred sites, which may not seem to be in the spirit of larrikinism which tends to scoff at any request to be respectful. While this can be inferred by the prank, I would argue that Rudd's hypocrisy and inequity is the focus of Morrow's attack, not the actual treatment of sacred sites or cultural traditions. Inequity, not respect, is the issue here. It is an example of the kynical larrikin's democratic defiance which demands social justice and equality.

The Rudd ear wax skit provides an example of *The Chaser*'s use of kynicism and the larrikin carnivalesque. This Uluru skit, however, is not as strong an example of the larrikin carnivalesque; even though it involves a comic uncrowning of Rudd, and is obviously in the spirit of larrikinism, it has none of the grotesque realism of the ear wax skit. However, it provides a useful example of the kynical larrikin at

work in contrast to the cynical larrikinism of the Uluru sketch from "Kevin Rudd P.M." The premise for both sketches is based on reports of disrespect towards Uluru. In the "Kevin Rudd P.M." episode, titled "Ulurpoo," this is turned into a story where Rudd tries to get people to stop defecating on the national icon by holding a press conference, writing a book, and by "offending people on radio" by saying that radio host Kyle Sandilands is "stupidly fat" and "has a girl's beard." He eventually sends "Old Red" (Julia Gillard) on Rove's other program *Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader?* When Old Red is asked the question, "What is the best thing about Ayers Rock[9]?" she responds by saying, "you can shit all over it!" Rudd then has to organise a rally to counter Old Red's comments, with footage of Rudd cheering at a football match dubbed over with, "you will not poo on Uluru!" (S2 E26 "K.Rudd P.M.")

This "Kevin Rudd P.M." episode is full of the bodily grotesque through constant reference to defecation and doctored photos of Uluru covered in faecal matter. Billingsgate can be seen in making politicians say words such as "shit" and "poo," subverting the "official language" of the serious public figure by dubbing them over with profanities. Footage of Rudd signing books and speaking seriously at press conferences, practices that are uncrowned as elitist, is spliced together and dubbed over in a mischievous way, turning Rudd into a fool who struggles with the day to day running of the country. Rudd is again reduced to a cynical caricature, doing "publicity" in any way he can to get his message out, even if it means mimicking the offensive stylings of Kyle Sandilands and sending "Old Red," who cannot even stay on message, to a game show. The charge of cynicism should not be taken as a criticism; this satire is cheeky and figures of power are playfully uncrowned as clueless fools. Again, however, it cannot be considered to have the kynical element that means its satire is informed by some endeavour towards truth. There is no demand for something more real or true, whatever that might be. While one could argue that it mocks Rudd as too politically correct, as being a wowser, the strange act of uncrowning Rudd by making him a silly, almost larrikin-like figure who resorts to childish name-calling, negates the potential to make such a criticism. Rudd may be uncrowned as clueless, but he is also incredibly fun and silly, the king who bosses around Swannie and always ends up beating the wealthy, posh (and therefore elite) Silvertail, even though he is much cleverer than Rudd. It is a larrikin call to laugh at

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[9] Ayers Rock was the title given to Uluru by white settlers. While it is still known by this name, it has become more common in the last decade to refer to the site by the Aboriginal name of Uluru.

figures of power, whereas *The Chaser*'s Uluru sketch provides a larrikin call to laugh that goes further by mocking Rudd's hypocrisy as essentially unjust. "Kevin Rudd P.M." has fun by turning the Prime Minister into a poo-obsessed idiot; *The Chaser*'s sketch *reveals* Rudd to *be* an idiot by highlighting the constructed, contradictory nature of Rudd's attitude towards Uluru, alluding to an underlying form of inequity in his policy.

Throughout this chapter, it has been established that Australia has a kind of "perverse hero-worship" of the larrikin (Pearl qtd. in Vine "Larrikin Paradox" 107). Australian taste, in stark comparison to Bourdieu's French taste, privileges lowbrow and working class art forms and pursuits, so that the ultimate symbol of "Australianness" is not one's class, but one's taste for what is considered to be working class. The larrikin, a crass working class and anti-authoritarian figure, is regularly invoked in Australian cultural narratives about identity. The larrikin can, at times, be Australia's equivalent of a Diogenes, a "pub philosopher who likes nothing more than bringing the mighty to account, or championing the cause of society's powerless" (Burns qtd. in Vine "Larrikin Paradox" 5-6). This description of the larrikin as "bringing the mighty to account" or "championing" causes for the powerless is perhaps a little too pronounced; the larrikin, like Diogenes, is no activist or advocate. The larrikin is more of that "pub philosopher" whose defiance of authority is shown more through performing or living in ways that illustrate a flagrant disregard for understood standards of good taste and respectability. The pro-larrikin and anti-elite narratives that play out in Australian national discourses are reminiscent of the anecdotes about Diogenes mocking Plato for the way he practices philosophy. The "Diogenes-esque" larrikin stands over the intellectual elite with a common sense knowledge based on experience and shared through lived example, while the "Plato-esque" elite are denigrated for a knowledge based on reason and shared through lecture. This is a simple and metaphoric way of expressing what has been teased out as a much more complex imagining of Australian identity throughout the chapter. However, it alludes to a single point that within Australian cultural narratives, the larrikin figure is positioned as a beloved and trusted *parrhesiast*.

Chapter 4
Interplay, Licence and Containment

The Larrikin's Comic Licence

For Harrington, Norman Gunston's role at the Whitlam Dismissal illustrates "just how deeply intertwined satire and politics have been in Australia for nearly four decades" ("(Really) Fake News" 28). Satires of the news, or "fake news," and programs that blend current affairs with entertainment have been a "strong feature of Australia's national television culture" ("(Really) Fake News" 30). This is by no means an exclusively Australian phenomenon. Some critics believe that Britain's "satire boom" of the 50s and 60s "'lost its edge' and withered away" by 1963, but Stephen Wagg argues that, with the likes of *Private Eye* and *That Was the Week That Was* popularising satirical takes on politics, satire in British political journalism has become "deeply woven into public discourse and has helped to define a new paradigm for the mediation of the public sphere" (324). Politicians in many countries no longer restrict themselves to traditional news programs, appearing on variety and comedy shows, as well as on satire. Their appearances suggest an awareness of the satirist's growing cultural capital in the realm of politics. Wagg argues that traditional political media has itself developed a "tone of reflexive mockery and scepticism," such as the "Come-Off-It-Minister style of interrogation adopted by [British journalist] Jeremy Paxman" (324-5). More recently, as this chapter shall observe, the interplay between satire and politics has taken another step further, with satirists leaving the realm of satire and entering the realm of serious political commentary. Some satirists can step into a different discourse, such as political journalism, and take with them a substantial amount of authority. Many satirists still assume the role of *parrhesiast* when engaged in serious political debate alongside journalists, politicians, academics and public intellectuals.

Wagg argues that the contemporary trend of satirists and comedians being asked to cover, for example, controversial issues for current affairs television is because they are "perceived as truth-tellers outside of the organizational publicity machines [of politics and journalism]" (327). Wagg does not address how or why a satirist or comedian is perceived as a truth-teller, or by whom. This is an issue that this thesis seeks to address. Australia's "hero worship" of the larrikin, its taste for the lowbrow

carnivalesque, as well as the kynic's playful valuing of truth illustrates how certain satirists are privileged as *parrhesiasts* in Australia. Of course, not all political satirists can do this. One of the most telling signs that a satirist is considered a *parrhesiast* is when they are repeatedly invited onto traditional news or current affairs programs to provide serious political commentary. This chapter explores instances where the kynical satirist enacts the role of *parrhesiast outside* of satire, breaching carnivalesque containment by being given a licence to speak seriously on political matters without a comic play-frame.

First, the matter of comic licence needs to be discussed. I previously noted that the carnival can be seen as potential symbolic subversion, a safety valve or both. These debates rely on the notion that the carnival is a sanctioned but potentially subversive arena that is kept separate from everyday life. Sometimes this arena can be physical, in the form of a theatre or football stadium for example, but it can also be metaphoric, where the carnival itself is culturally understood to be a realm where outrageous behaviour may occur. The very genre of satire is understood in a similar way. The label of satire, comedy or humour provides one with a contained, sanctioned space where certain behaviour is licensed.

The university is one such sanctioned space where many influential satirists first gained their comic licence. Humphrey Carpenter argues that "universities are natural breeding grounds for satire. Clever young people, coming inevitably into conflict with an older generation of academics, turn to wit and mockery" (26). The "undergraduate humour" of *The Chaser* and many others was born from traditions of university dramatic societies and their undergraduate revues. Carpenter observes that topical satires, often playing on the conflict between young and old, were performed by Oxford and Cambridge students as far back as the sixteenth century (26). Members of this undergraduate tradition, particularly those from the Cambridge University Footlights Dramatic Club, played a large role in Britain's satire boom, producing the influential stage revue *Beyond the Fridge* and the television news satire *That Was The Week That Was*. Footlights alumni continue to have a massive impact on British satire, with contemporaries including Sasha Baron Cohen, Stephen Fry, Hugh Laurie, John Lloyd (creator of *Have I Got News for You*, *Not the Nine O'Clock News* and *QI*) and John Oliver (*The Daily Show* correspondent and interim anchor from June to September in 2013 while Jon Stewart was on leave). Both *Private Eye* and *The Chaser* began as school publications, developed and grew at

Oxford University and the University of Sydney respectively, before burgeoning into fully fledged satirical papers. *Private Eye* was also brought to life by many members of Footlights, particularly Peter Cook and Nicholas Luard. Richard Ingrams, *Private Eye* founding member and editor until 1986, said that he and the magazine's contributors were "just a group of ex-university students trying to carry on behaving like university students" (qtd. in Engel n.pag).

The university, with its history of undergraduate revues, papers and pranks, provides a space where one can learn about, comment on and engage with the realm of adults, while still having the licence to behave less seriously than that realm usually demands in other environments. Ingrams' comment about "trying to carry on behaving like university students" and Julian Morrow's ironic jibe of "student undergraduates" to his fellow *Chaser* members, are informed by this understanding. Satire, both within and outside the university environment, is a space that allows such behaviour. It is widely understood that in the genre of satire and comedy more broadly, one is merely "joking" and is therefore not to be taken seriously. Many satirists have used the "just joking" defence as a way of mitigating any offence their work may cause. Any accusations of bias, over-simplification and *schadenfreude* are disarmed by the "just joking" catchcry, just as any claims of legitimacy or seriousness are also denied. Jon Stewart regularly dismisses his influence, always insisting that he is "just a comedian." In his famous appearance on *Crossfire*, the hosts answer his accusation that they were "hurting America" by criticising *The Daily Show*'s lack of balance and depth. Stewart answered this with the "just joking" defence, reducing *The Daily Show*'s status as legitimate contributor to political discourse by saying "the show that leads into me is puppets making crank phone calls" and that he didn't realise "news organizations look to Comedy Central for their cues on integrity" (qtd. in Boler and Turpin 395).

John McCallum argues that "the comic licence is based on one essential premise: *comedians do not tell the truth*. No matter what they say, they are just joking…their licence grants them the right to transgress" (203). Here, McCallum argues that comedians are allowed to get away with behaviour that would otherwise be considered unacceptable because it is understood that they are joking. In the skit where Craig Reucassel squats over a camping toilet outside a newsagent, the studio audience can be heard laughing while the people walking past and the newsagent staff appear shocked or embarrassed, illustrating that Reucassel is given a licence to

misbehave when what he is doing is framed within the genre of television satire. The studio audience know that Reucassel is just performing; the people on the street are not so sure.

McCallum's statement that comedians do not tell the truth should not be seen to suggest that comedians or satirists do not speak any truth; rather it means that they may not speak a literal truth. Satirists tell their truths in the realm of subtext and metaphor, so that Gillies' rapping and break-dancing Bob Hawke speaks a truth about Hawke's public persona, not any truth about Hawke actually break-dancing. The sanctioned realm of satire allows Gillies to call himself Hawke while doing so, and knowledge of the genre provides the audience with context in which to understand it. It is this comic licence that allows the satirist to "transgress" because people understand that they are "just joking."

The understanding that the satirist is "just joking" does, however, mean that the satirist is often taken less seriously or dismissed. Furthermore, a comic licence may also come with conditions. McCallum argues that comic licence is more restricted in Australia, partly because freedom of speech is not a constitutional right as it is in America, and partly because "truth alone is not a defence" in Australian defamation law, where the defendant has to prove both truth and public interest (203). Comic licence also does not grant its user license to say or do absolutely anything. There are topics that may be considered "off-limits" culturally, and though these are not defined or fixed, any satire that is seen to be stepping over the line by the majority of its audience can face harsh retribution. *The Chaser*'s infamous "Make A Realistic Wish" sketch, where the team faced a large public backlash for a skit where dying children were told to be more realistic with their last request, saw *The War on Everything* taken off the air for two weeks and the ABC Head of TV Comedy, Amanda Duthie, fired ("Comedy head axed" n.pag). This third and consequently final season of *The War* was cancelled after only eight episodes, when previous seasons had gone well over 20. Kevin Rudd, who was Prime Minister at the time, weighed into the debate despite not seeing the skit, saying that the satirists should "hang their heads in shame" ("Hang your heads" n.pag). He added,

> I actually don't mind the Chaser taking the mickey out of me or any other
> politician, at any time and any place. But having a go at kids with a terminal
> illness is really beyond the pale, absolutely beyond the pale (qtd. in "Hang your
> heads" n.pag).

Rudd's comment reflected public sentiment about this particular example of satire crossing the line. *The Chaser* did apologise for any offence caused and, when they returned, they took Rudd up on his suggestion by turning their previous "Make a Wish" parody into a skit that advertised the "Rudd Safe Haven," a safe house for staff who had faced the brunt of Rudd's infamous temper (S3 E3 *War on Everything*).

All of these factors regarding licence influence how transgressive satire can be, either by permitting behaviour that would normally be considered off limits, or censoring what can be said or done through legislated or cultural restrictions. This thesis maintains that having to perform in a socially-sanctioned space can still be transgressive. Satire's "symbolic rebellion" comes in the topics it addresses, the comic techniques that are used, and the audience that receives and interacts with it. Even though it is a genre that is "just joking," it still seeks to speak the truth. The mark of a satirical *parrhesiast* is that society grants them both a comic licence and a licence to talk on political matters outside the realm of humour.

Breaching Containment: The Fool Becoming King in Non-Carnival Spaces

As was shown with the carnival in Chapter 3, many theorists acknowledge that transgressive behaviour and uncrownings are often sanctioned by a literal or metaphoric contained space or licence. Few theorists actually address the potential for, or ramifications of, a break in this containment. Textual containment is breached, for example, when the satirist becomes part of the press gallery or the party conference, as frequently occurs on *The Chaser* or, conversely, when satirists are invited out of the genre of satire and into the more serious realm of political commentary on hard news and current affairs programs. Breaching carnivalesque containment in these ways can be seen as an example of kynical "enacted wisdom" (Bosman 98), where the kynic preaches their philosophy through public action and performance instead of lecture or theory. Just as Diogenes took to the streets with his lantern, *The Chaser* team and *The Daily Show* correspondents breach the safe space of satire and directly engage with politics and journalism.

Containment is also breached when satirists are invited onto non-satirical programs. Australia's love of the larrikin and the lowbrow means that Australian kynics are often granted both a comic licence and a licence to speak earnestly on

political matters. This can be observed when *The Chaser* team, either together or individually, and popular comedians such as Mikey Robins (*Good News Week*), Magda Szubanski (*Kath and Kim*) and Josh Thomas (*Talking 'Bout Your Generation*) appear on traditional news or political programs like *Q&A*, *Sky News*, *Lateline* or *Compass*, or as guest columnists in newspapers. This acts as an extension of carnivalesque inversion, where the fool becomes king in non-carnival spaces like journalism and politics. Julian Morrow, on presenting the 2009 Andrew Olle Lecture[10], noted the interesting choice they had made in asking him, a satirist known to be particularly unruly, to speak at such an event by saying that he was "the first person to give an Olle Lecture who's also been thrown out of this event" (n.pag), illustrating the complex role he had been given.

There are times when the satirist may actually use traditional news sources as a mouthpiece, as opposed to satire, to provide information to their audience. For example, Craig Reucassel used *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper and *Q&A* to create public awareness about long-standing government legislation that bans the use of parliamentary video footage for satirical or comedic purposes (Reucassel n.pag; "Q&A: Royal Wedding"). He presents this law as particularly hypocritical given Rudd's statement that the BBC needed to "lighten up" and "get an Australian sense of humour" after they banned *The Chaser* from using footage of the Royal Wedding between Prince William and Catherine Middleton in their satire. Reucassel interviewed presenters from other "non-news news-related" programs such as ABC's *Hungry Beast* and Ten's *The 7pm Project*, and argued that, "it is far more 'un-Australian' that satirists can't sink their teeth into their own Parliament than a stupid royal wedding" (n.pag).

However, most of the time, satirists are asked to provide commentary, not information. Individual *Chaser* team members, usually Julian Morrow or Craig Reucassel, and a wide variety of political satirists and comedians have been invited onto news programs to provide both serious comment and entertainment. They are often questioned directly on matters relating to freedom of speech and the limits of satire or comedy, but their most interesting answers come in relation to politics. Often their comments are intermingled with humour. *Q&A* provides a useful

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[10] The Andrew Olle Lecture is an annual lecture presented by a high-profile journalist or media figure. Since 1996, it has been hosted by the ABC in honour of the radio broadcaster Andrew Olle, who died suddenly of a brain tumour in 1995 ("About Andrew Olle" n.pag).

example of this. For example, when Reucassel was asked about refugee policy on
Q&A, he used humour to challenge the argument that refugees should go into
detention if they do not go through official asylum channels. He highlighted the
desperation some asylum seekers face by saying, "if you're in Afghanistan in a war
zone, it's not like there's an Australian citizenship bench there handing out
pamphlets for you" ("Q&A: Euthanasia").

However, Reucassel also addressed the issue without any hint of humour. He
challenged the politicians on the panel who supported refugee detention, pointing out
several times that refugees who came by official channels were allowed to live in the
community while their applications for asylum were assessed. He argued that asylum
seekers who had come to Australia through unofficial channels were being
criminalised in the debate, while the desperation of their situation was being ignored,
and that both those who arrived by plane and by boat should be able to have their
claims processed in the community.

Josh Thomas, the openly gay stand-up comedian and team captain on comedy
program *Talking 'Bout Your Generation*, also switches between humour and
seriousness as a guest on *Q&A*. On the issue of gay marriage, he jokingly argued,

> I just want a day where I can get all my friends and family, I can say, 'I really
> love this guy. Now buy me some presents. I'm sick of buying you some,' you
> know. I'm sick of it. It's always give, give, give when you're gay. I just want a
> toaster ("Q&A: Gen-Y").

At other times, Thomas passionately and earnestly illustrated his knowledge on
the issue, arguing,

> This is actually not a controversial issue. Sixty-three per cent of people want to
> see this. Seventy-four per cent of Labor voters want to see this. At the moment
> in this country you have – if you're gay, you're at a much higher risk – you're
> much more likely to experience self-harm, depression, homelessness, eating
> disorders, drug abuse. You're five to 14 times more likely to attempt suicide and
> the biggest contributing factor to that is homophobia and the Marriage Act, as it
> stands, it empowers homophobia and it needs to change ("Q&A: Gen-Y").

There is a difference between comedians like Josh Thomas, whose comedy is
less political, being invited onto *Q&A*, and satirists whose work is almost entirely
political being invited to talk at a forum such as the Andrew Olle Lecture. In the
former, there is an expectation that the comedian will provide a comic take on topic

issues, but then go on to provide both comedy and a serious perspective. With Julian Morrow at the Andrew Olle Lecture, there is more of an expectation that he will be providing serious comment.

On programs like *Q&A*, satirists have also been known to usurp the position of panel mediator, grilling the politicians as one would normally expect of a journalist. In one episode of *Q&A*, Reucassel is so insistent on questioning comments made by fellow panellist and Liberal MP Christopher Pyne, that the panel mediator and ABC journalist Tony Jones asks him if he'd like to "shift over one seat" into the position of host ("Q&A: Euthanasia"). During a *Q&A* episode that dealt with the Labor Party replacing Kevin Rudd as Prime Minister with Julia Gillard, Magda Szubanski continually asks National Party Senator Barnaby Joyce if the Coalition would do a similar thing if they were having problems with their leader. She insists that they would and that Joyce's assertion that the act was "wrong" is only political point scoring ("Q&A: Gillard Coup").

In most instances, the satirists and comedians receive a great deal of audience applause. This is not surprising when they are being humorous, but what is most interesting is that the audience seem especially receptive when satirists go after politicians, often in a ruthless and serious manner, for not answering a question or being inconsistent. When politicians go after each other, or the panel mediator (usually Tony Jones) insists that a politician "answer the question," audiences tend not to clap or cheer as loudly. I appreciate that this point is somewhat fraught; audience member response is dependent on a wide range of factors such as their political views and individual preferences for expressing applause (some are much more vocal and will yell out). What is most important here is the very fact that satirists and comedians are actually invited onto programs like *Q&A* to provide comment on political issues alongside politicians, journalists, public intellectuals and academics.

In another example of the fool becoming king in non-carnival spaces, *Chaser* Chas Licciardello took on the role of co-host for ABC's *Planet America*, a hybrid entertainment news program that covered American politics and current affairs in the lead up to and months following the 2012 US Presidential Election. It featured reporting, commentary, analysis, satirical or humorous skits, and interviews, mostly from ABC's studios. The program was listed as "news," aired on ABC's 24 hour news channel ABC24, placed under a list of news programs on the ABC website and

filed under the category of "News and Current Affairs" on ABC's catch up streaming website *iview*. The program, and Licciardello's role in it, provides an interesting case of both the discursive shifts within political journalism and the kynical larrikin's privileging as a *parrhesiast*.

ABC News Radio personality John Barron was Licciardello's co-host. The role that each host plays on the program is incredibly ambivalent. Barron is dressed in a suit and always presents the "news" segment of the program, speaking directly to the camera and narrating news footage as one would expect of a news anchor. Licciardello, on the other hand, wears casual clothing featuring a different American election campaign t-shit, such as "Ford 76" and "Reagan Bush 84," every week. He also speaks in a more colloquial tone than Barron. However, Barron is by no means Licciardello's "straight man," nor is Licciardello the "comic relief" on the program. Barron regularly offers opinion, often in a humorous manner, and regularly peppers his traditional, straight style of news reporting with out-of-place but nonetheless amusing colloquialisms. For example, he has described a sponsor of US Republican Presidential Nominee contender Newt Gingrich as a "sugar daddy" ("30 March 2012") and called the relationship between President Obama and UK Prime Minister David Cameron a "bromance" ("16 March 2012"). Furthermore, Licciardello is regularly called upon by Barron to explain the American legislative and executive systems and provide information about previous elections. Licciardello directs the camera to his laptop for statistics, graphs, diagrams and images to explain the political history and process in America so often that at one point he says, "I hate to do it again but let's go right back to the laptop" ("2 March 2012").

Licciardello still provides a heavy dose of humorous commentary, and his statistics-based segment "Stat Dec" is very reminiscent of *Chaser* in-studio skits with its mixture of political information and news footage satirically spliced with humorous clips from popular movies, television or viral videos. In one instance, he illustrates how much Americans dislike their Congress (sitting on 9% approval) by showing that it is less popular than Nixon during Watergate (24%), BP during the Gulf oil spill (16%) and America going communist (11%). Only 3% consider Congress as "above average" and Licciardello says that they were probably "these guys," cutting to a viral online video of a young man eating alight corn chips with his hair on fire. Licciardello poses the question, "why don't Americans just vote them out," and is then attacked by a group of people presumed to be angry voters.

Licciardello answers his own question with more statistics, showing that even though only 19% of Americans do not think Congress spends too much, 57% think Congress should spend more in their district. Furthermore, only 20% of Americans think most house representatives should be re-elected, but 53% say that *their* house representative should be re-elected. Licciardello argues that eventually, the gap between approval and disapproval will get so big that "you'll be able to fit *anything* in there," with a graphic of approval statistics separated by a gap that fits a tyrannosaurs-rex, Sydney's Centrepoint Tower and eventually Kyle Sandilands's ego-engorged head. Licciardello yells directly at the camera, calling Americans "you selfish whining hypocrites," and is then seen cowering on the ground as the angry voters kick and boo him despite assurances that he is not referring to them ("16 March 2012").

In *Planet America*, Licciardello jumps from *Chaser*-style antics to serious political commentary with little pause. This, and the way Barron refers to Licciardello when it comes to very detailed legislative processes, positions Licciardello as a strange mix between expert and satirist. The program itself fluctuates between humour and journalism to such a degree that in an interview with former Newt Gingrich aide Scot Faulkner, Licciardello earnestly seeks clarification about specific Gingrich policy changes over the last five years and then cheekily congratulates Faulkner for being able to work with Gingrich without marrying him[11] ("16 March 2012"). The program provides a clear example of how the kynical larrikin can escape the generic containment of the carnival satire and still play the fool-inverted-as-king role. Licciardello is the kynical *parrhesiast*, given the licence to provide both satire and trusted political commentary. In a way, Licciardello's role on *Planet America* exemplifies the tension between the trouble-making and truth-seeking nature of the kynic, as well as the slippage between information and entertainment that occurs in contemporary journalism and satire.

Planet America is by no means the first of this kind of hybrid program. Other Australian examples in the last few decades include *Good News Week*, *The Glasshouse*, *The Panel*, *Hungry Beast* and *The Project* (originally *The 7pm Project*). *Good News Week*, *The Glasshouse* and *The Panel* involved, in various formats and segments, humorous comment on topical events, often about local and global

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[11] This is a reference to Gingrich's three marriages which involved infidelity and eventual marriage to work colleagues.

politics, as well as more obscure news items such as *Good News Week*'s coverage of the Darwin Awards, an internet-born accolade given to those who "protect our gene pool by making the ultimate sacrifice of their own lives…[by] eliminating themselves in an extraordinarily idiotic manner" ("Darwin Awards: Rules" n.pag). *Hungry Beast* and *The Project* share more in common with *Planet America*, as they approach current events with both seriousness and humour, whereas the other programs tended (all of them are no longer on the air) to focus more on humour, making political jokes more than making political comment, either earnest or satirical. *Hungry Beast* reporters have been nominated for and won the Walkley Award for Excellence in Journalism. Monique Schafter won in 2011 for best television current affairs reporting (less than 20 minutes) ("Monique Schafter" n.pag) and Ali Russell was nominated for Excellence in Coverage of Indigenous Affairs in 2010. This nomination came in the same year that *Hungry Beast* was nominated for an Australian Film Industry (AFI) Award for "Best Light Entertainment Television Series" ("Metro Screen" n.pag). This is a startling illustration of how these satire/news hybrids are being recognised not just for entertainment, but for the information and critical political commentary they provide.

Hungry Beast was, however, axed in the same year that it won a Walkley, with *The Project*, a weeknight current affairs/comedy hybrid on Channel 10, now the only program to continue in 2013. *The Project* does not focus purely on politics or current affairs, including entertainment reviews and celebrity interviews alongside its coverage of the daily news. It also rarely provides political satire, hence its lack of attention in this thesis. However, its prominence in the 7pm and then 6pm timeslot of a commercial station, alongside the proliferation of hybrid satire/news programs and the increased presence of satirists providing serious political commentary in traditional political journalism, shows not only that the fool is breaching the containment of satire, but that satirists are indeed, as Wagg argues, "perceived as truth-tellers" in the public sphere.

Breaching Containment: The King Seeks The Fool's Endorsement in Carnival Spaces

The aforementioned breach of carnivalesque containment impacts the discursive practices that it clashes with, in this case with politics and journalism. Many scholars

and public intellectuals have observed that politicians have adapted how they sell themselves and their policies, seeking a platform through comical avenues as well as more traditional hard news sources. This phenomenon has seen Margaret Thatcher write and star in a *Yes Minister* sketch in 1984 ("The Thatcher Script" n.pag), and then-Presidential candidate Bill Clinton play the saxophone on *The Arsenio Hall Show* in 1992, a moment seen as a "turning point" in his campaign because it allowed him to make "a personal connection with voters" (Saal n.pag). Clinton's appearance on *The Arsenio Hall Show* is an example of a more common instance of the politician going outside traditional media to variety, panel or comedy programs. The Thatcher example, of a politician actually playing along and being part of political satire, used to be a much rarer occurrence, though it has become more common recently.

In Australia, politicians regularly appear, both in and out of election season, on comedy and variety programs. Journalist Dennis Atkins believes that Democrat Senator and Leader Natasha Stott Despoja "became as famous for her appearances on frivolous television shows like Good News Week as she was for any policy position" (qtd. in Muir 64). During the 2010 election, Tony Abbott appeared as a judge on *Hey Hey It's Saturday*, Shadow Treasure Joe Hockey regularly appeared on *The 7pm Project*, and *The Chaser*'s *Yes We Canberra* featured numerous politicians from the major and minor parties, either through ambush or prearranged guest appearances. *The Chaser* programs are particularly influential and unique in Australia because they have become one of a few satires to actually feature politicians not just as guests but as active participants in the satire itself. This is another breach of containment, where the king seeks to play in the fool's carnival without being uncrowned.

In the early 2000s, *The Chaser* provided something unexpected that hadn't been seen since the days of Norman Gunston: they brought satire and mischief *to* the politicians without giving prior warning or time to prepare, something that pre-arranged appearances on comedy programs do not allow. Even more insidious than Gunston, *The Chaser* looked like journalists, dressed in suits with ABC press passes and cameras. Tracking the decade-long history of *The Chaser* on television, from *The Election Chaser* to *The Hamster Decides*, the team's carnivalesque aesthetics and politics have largely remained the same. What has changed is the way that politicians and journalists respond to them. Where once public figures responded

with confusion or frustration, now they engage *The Chaser* with good humour. This can be seen as political recognition of *The Chaser*'s cultural capital, and that it is perhaps something worth co-opting.

The Chaser first appeared on television in *The Election Chaser*, a news satire that covered the 2001 Federal Election between John Howard and Kim Beasley. During the program, some politicians laughed and played along with *The Chaser*'s antics, but few would tolerate them for very long. In one of their earliest public performances, Craig Reucassel goes to Parliament House dressed respectably as a journalist but takes a foam bat and a "refugee" with him, asking federal members if they would like to "bash a refugee" because it is something politicians "really love to do…there are so many votes in it and it's really fun!" (S1 E1 "Election Chaser 2001"). Some politicians are very serious in their responses; Labor's Dick Adams and Wayne Swan, and the Liberal's Kevin Andrews and Warren Entsch dismiss Reucassel once he asks them if they'd like to "bash a refugee," tell him "no" or ignore him and walk away. Entsch even tells him to "piss off." Labor's Duncan Kerr has a small laugh but then tells Reucassel that he thinks some people would find the gag funny and that it is very sad. Others, such as Liberal Alby Schultz, give him a small laugh after realising that Reucassel is not a "serious" journalist but walk away without responding. Only the National's De-Anne Kelly talks with Reucassel, telling him that the actor playing the refugee is a "good-looking fellow." She laughs when Reucassel tells her that such a response won't get her up in the polls. Labor's Mark Latham plays along to an extent, grabbing the bat and hitting Reucassel instead of the refugee, but he then walks away, pushes past the camera and calls him a "fucking idiot" (S1 E1 "Election Chaser 2001").

By the 2004 Federal Election, when Mark Latham is leading Labor against John Howard, Latham's response to *Chaser* stunts is a lot less aggressive. In one skit, Reucassel ambushes Latham at a café and bets him $50 that he can't say Labor campaign slogan "ease the squeeze" seven times on the leader's "Great Debate." Latham actively recognises Reucassel, gets his first name right, and takes the bet (S1 E1 "Chaser Decides 2004"). Following *The Chaser*'s 2001 debut on television, through 2002 and 2003's news parody *CNNNN* and the 2004 Federal Election special *The Chaser Decides*, politicians begin to slowly recognise *The Chaser* team and there is an increase in politicians responding humorously. While a great deal of this is dependent on the individual politician and what *The Chaser* production team

decide to show, fewer politicians are seen surprised or overtly frustrated and more seem to instantly recognise and smile at the team.

Some politicians even reference previous ambushes by *The Chaser*. After numerous media reports regarding Treasurer Peter Costello's desire to take over the leadership of the Liberal Party from John Howard, Reucassel offers Costello "Quit Smirking Patches," promising him that he'll be "number one" in the public's eyes if he can stop smirking. Costello laughs and responds by saying "but I was supporting Alan Cadman. I'm in the Cadman camp" (S2 E9 "CNNNN"). Here, Costello references a previous *Chaser* skit where the team spread rumours that little-known backbencher Alan Cadman was challenging John Howard for the Liberal leadership (S2 E4 "CNNNN"). They fuelled the fire by seeking Liberal and Labor comment on the matter they had fabricated, which resulted in playful, confused and angry responses. Few politicians respond as wittily to *Chaser* ambushes as Costello, but more and more of them laugh, smile and attempt to reply humorously.

Liberal Tony Abbott illustrates one of the greatest shifts in politician behaviour towards *The Chaser*. When he is ambushed in *CNNNN* and *The Chaser Decides* 2004, he either laughs nervously and walks away or completely ignores them. In one episode, *The Chaser* team compare his unwillingness to talk to them with his reported discussions with high-ranking Catholic clergy, referencing a news interview where he displayed an inability to immediately "recall" if he had met with Catholic Cardinal George Pell during an election campaign. They show multiple clips of Abbott ignoring them, and Reucassel proposes that they might have more luck if they take a different tack. He then crashes a press conference dressed as a Catholic bishop and is ignored by Abbott again until the end of the conference when Reucassel asks "have you met with an Archbishop in the last 10 minutes?" Abbott finally responds by saying, "mate, you're not funny and you should get outta here" (S1 E3 "Chaser Decides 2004"). The tone in Abbott's voice is one of frustration, without any of the friendliness that the use of "mate" often implies.

From the first series of *The War on Everything* in 2006, however, Abbott seems to change his tactic of ignoring or expressing frustration with *Chaser* ambushes. He even makes a few jokes, as in the human-animal hybrid sketch, where *The Chaser* team question him over comments made regarding stem cell research potentially leading to human-animal hybrids. Dressed as a centaur, mermaid, and minotaur, Reucassel, Licciardello and Morrow crash a media appearance at a pharmacy,

demanding to know why Abbott finds human-animal hybrids so offensive. He laughs and tells them that he thought human-animal hybrids were meant to be more muscular, and when he is asked if he wants to "kiss the mermaid," he asks "what'll I turn into?" and then kisses his own hand before planting it on Licciardello's cheek (S1 E24 *War On Everything*).

During the 2010 Federal Election, where Abbott was the Liberal's candidate for Prime Minister, he appears just as receptive on their election special *YWC*. In one instance, Reucassel challenges Abbott regarding his stance on Howard-era industrial relations legislation WorkChoices because it conflicts with the opinions expressed in his book *Battlelines*. Abbott is friendly, saying "you're back," and puts an arm around Reucassel's shoulder in a friendly fashion. Even though he ignores a lot of Reucassel's comments, he responds by telling him there will be an election edition of *Battlelines* and that he wants him to buy it (S1 E1 *YWC*). Later in the campaign, Reucassel ambushes Abbott on the campaign trail again, this time in relation to a comment Abbott made about the government exercising the same kind of budgetary restraints over its spending as households and businesses. First, in-studio, Reucassel, Taylor and Morrow point out that households are technically in more debt than the government because, unlike households with mortgages, the government's debt is much smaller than its incoming revenue. This is illustrated in graphics, and is then compared to the "average homeowner like, say, this guy," with a graphic of Abbott's income ($242,000pa) vs. his mortgage debt ($700,000). Reucassel ambushes him in order to "warn" him about "this big new debt," complete with graphs comparing Australia's level of debt with Abbott's. Abbott laughs and while he appears flustered, he says he has "learnt the lessons" of having a large debt. He then ignores Reucassel and walks away but keeps smiling (S1 E4 *YWC*).

This change in attitude and behaviour from Abbott and other politicians helps illustrate a discursive shift in how politicians campaign. This shift can be seen even more so in the increase of politicians and even journalists appearing on satire programs to engage directly with the satire, often by satirising themselves. This is the realm where the king can be seen to seek the fool's endorsement within carnival space. When *The Chaser* team or any other satirists ambush politicians on the campaign trail, the politician may still engage in how they are being satirised but they rarely take part in the satire itself by playing a satirical version of themselves. This kind of media appearance was once very rare, with politicians appearing on

more traditional news and current affairs programs. One notable exception in Australia is Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's appearance in the movie *Barry McKenzie Holds His Own*, where he gives Edna Everage the title of "Dame" in a parodic performance that ironically refers to Whitlam doing away with the imperial honours system in 1972 (Pender 68). Pender refers to this clash of politician and satire as "a moment when the politics of Australian theatre and the theatre of Australian politics directly and hilariously coincided" (67). She sees it as a "calculated act of populism" that contributed to Whitlam's ongoing commitment to "new nationalism," one that was "brash and confident" but also highly ambivalent (68).

At the time, this was a rare occurrence of the politician satirising themself within a satire or comedy performance. In contemporary politics, this has become a lot more prevalent. *The Chaser*'s *YWC* provides plenty of examples. It is also the first *Chaser* series where politicians appeared willingly in extensive pre-arranged appearances, not ambushes or short scripted skits. The premise of these appearances all revolve around the politician playing a game. In Episode 1, Julie Bishop, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, went on the program and used her "death stare" in a staring competition with one of *The Chaser* team and, later, a garden gnome, which, after receiving a rather aggressive stare from Bishop, fell backwards and smashed on the floor (S1 E1 *YWC*). She plays along and makes a few jokes, saying that her stare has been classified as a weapon by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and telling viewers they should not try her stare at home. She jokingly asks if the game is a new format for the Leader's Debate, asks if Licciardello is "all they've got" as a competitor, pretends to intimidate the gnome and puts her hands up in victory when she wins both times.

In Episode 3, Labor's Maxine McKew is hooked up to the "pollie-graph," a fake lie detector that flashes green when she supposedly tells the truth and red when she supposedly lies. She plays along, just like Bishop. As mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, she tries to be playful in her responses, but is often labelled a liar by the machine. When she is asked if she prefers "Julia" or "the real Julia,"[12] she replies, "Julia is a tough minded lady and I like tough-minded ladies." When asked if she believes a proposed Labor citizen's assembly is a good idea, she answers yes. The machine

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[12] This refers to a term used by Gillard herself during the 2010 election, where she promised to go off script and show Australia "the 'real Julia'" (Hudson n.pag).

flashes red on both occasions and McKew challenges the machine, asking what is wrong with it. Reucassel says her waffle is confusing it. When she is asked if Labor politicians ever lie, she pauses and then, with a smile, answers "the very idea, the very idea, I don't know how you could suggest such a thing." She is labelled as "very clever" because the machine does not make a sound (S1 E3 *YWC*).

When *The Chaser* turn to McKew's career as a journalist, she is asked if she was a better host of *Lateline* than Tony Jones, to which she replies, "I had my nights." Reucassel off-handedly answers, "yeah, but none of them were on *Lateline*," and she laughs but says he is really unkind, and the machine agrees. Reucassel seems embarrassed and apologies. She moves on to say that some of her female constituents think that Jones is a bit of a "dream boat," and, when asked how she thinks veteran ABC journalist Kerry O'Brien votes, she laughs and, after denying that she has any evidence either way, says, "I suspect he swings." Hansen then says she has "passed" the "pollie-graph" and is awarded a disabled Former Liberal Leader Andrew Peacock, who she wheels away (S1 E3 *YWC*).

Australian politicians have also played with satires of themselves on other satire, comedy and variety programs. In an interview on *Rove* in 2009, Kevin Rudd was convinced to repeat the catch-phrase of his satirical double from "Kevin Rudd P.M." At Rove's request, Rudd even posted "*Twitter* time" on his own *Twitter* account, tweeting on 1 July 2009, "OK Rove. As requested. Its twitter time. KRudd" (@kruddmp). If we are to attribute this discursive shift within political campaigning to modern cynicism, it can be seen as an act where figures of power knowingly try to play within the carnival without being uncrowned as a fool. This growing trend has roots in the enduring image of the larrikin. Politicians who have been able to present themselves as the "every man" (and it tends to be men) or the "ordinary bloke" have generally had more success with the electorate, as has been argued in relation to Bob Hawke.

In early 2012, for example, Hawke was challenged to skull a beer at a cricket match, called on to have "one for the country, Robert!" (Zavan n.pag; "Bob Hawke skulls"). When the 82 year old skulled the beer in one gulp, he was cheered by the crowd and a video of the feat received 250,000 views in a matter of days ("Video's creator" n.pag) and almost 1 million views on *YouTube* in only two months ("Bob Hawke skulls"). The man who gave Hawke the beer called him "a legend" and "a great Aussie bloke," saying that "(NSW Premier) Barry O'Farrell and little Johnny

(Howard) were just waving from the grandstand. Hawke's not afraid to get down there and get dirty with the people" ("Video's creator" n.pag). In his memoirs, Hawke himself suggested that his world record for speed beer drinking – downing two and a half pints in eleven seconds as a university student – was the single most influential feat on his political success by "endearing him to a voting population with a strong beer culture" (Lion n.pag).

The Dynamic Interplay between Satire and Politics

The issue of co-option brings us back to licensing, particularly the issue of who has the authority to speak. The genre of satire sanctions behaviour that would otherwise be unwelcome in non-humorous contexts. It also provides the audience with a set of expectations and understandings. One knows that satire is "just joking" and that joking is sanctioned, contained and understood within the generic space. Satire that breaks its containment by intruding directly on the worlds of politics and journalism is therefore particularly subversive, disrupting discursive practices and generic expectations. The viewer at home knows *The Chaser* is a satire; the citizen or public figure outside the studio may not. In the case of *The Chaser*, and many other satires that escape their licensed spaces, many would respond with shock and offense at the satirist behaving outrageously in violation of the rules of the discourse being invaded. This surprise has faded with recognition of the satirist and their antics. Politicians and journalists have modified how they react. This, of course, is not to suggest that satire has solely influenced recent shifts in political media practices. The nature of discourse is dynamic and responds to a wide range of factors. The so-called tabloidisation of journalistic practice over the last few decades, for example, has been influenced in varying degrees by changes to media ownership and broadcasting/publishing legislation, the growing prominence of digital technology (particularly in the areas of self-publishing) and the media management units of political parties and governments, to name a few. Satire is just another factor contributing to the evolution of political discourse.

To say that "containment is breached" acknowledges the dynamic play that occurs between discursive fields. Even separate sanctioned spaces, particularly carnivalesque spaces of misrule, are never truly closed or contained. Habitus may be enduring but when fields overlap or containment breaches, what is licensed

behaviour – and who is licensed – evolves. In the breach of satirical containment in Australia, satirists who can both adhere to larrikin lowbrow taste and behave in a kynical manner can expect to receive good humour from public figures faced with their antics. Furthermore, audiences have come to expect not only "joking" from satire, but also satirical truth-telling. The larrikin *parrhesiast* is expected to act within Vine's "larrikin paradox" of democratic defiance and irreverent irresponsibility. This interplay has even been formalised in the form of hybrid programs such as *Planet America* and *The Project*, and through the growing appearance of satirists on traditional news programs. Conversely, journalists and politicians have invaded satire with, for example, ABC journalist Tony Jones and Channel 9 journalist Michael Usher self-satirising themselves in *Chaser* skits, or politicians like Julia Gillard playfully deferring to comedian Kitty Flanagan to explain democracy on *The 7pm Project* ("Kitty on Democracy"). Politicians and other public figures, including journalists, have gained a licence to play, just as certain satirists have been licensed to provide serious political commentary.

Can the politician co-opt the cultural currency of the larrikin by playing within satire, by entering the carnival space to play, especially in satires that audiences consider to be sites of *parrhesia* where the larrikin "tells it how it is?" Any answer to this question would be highly dependent on a long list of variables, such as: what the politician is asked to do, how they perform, public perception (which will of course vary), and so on. In acknowledging that these variables are numerous and dynamic, I would suggest that one of the key factors in whether or not a politician is able to gain currency from successfully playing within the satire relies on them being able to play without being completely uncrowned, and this is often dependent on whether the satirist is willing to suspend such an uncrowning. The act of being playful and laughing at being mocked or insulted gives the politician some credit, but this is challenged each time the fool puts them in their place. When it comes to Maxine McKew, for example, *The Chaser* team uncrown her continually despite any attempt at good humour or fun by using the "pollie-graph" to label her efforts as either true or false, sincere or dishonest. This said, the pollie-graph's agreement with McKew's playful insistence that Reucassel was unkind in his comments about her previous role as *Lateline* host can be seen as a moment where the carnival fool is outplayed and usurped by the king, confirmed by Reucassel appearing genuinely embarrassed by the harshness of his off-hand comment. I would, however, argue that this chapter has

provided examples that show the kynical fool, already imbued with the cultural capital of the larrikin truth-teller, is having substantially more success at playing the king in non-carnival spaces than the king is at playing in carnival spaces without being uncrowned.

Chapter 5

Mischief 2.0: Global Flows, Online Politics and Citizen Satirists

Introduction: The Interplay Within Global Flows

The last chapter observed that there is an interplay between satire and politics, where both satirists and politicians have increasingly intruded on each other's spaces. It would be remiss to ignore how new technology, namely the internet and social media, has come to influence both this interplay's dynamic, and the way that audiences engage, participate and even contribute to satire and politics. For satirists and politicians, the internet has provided a new space to broadcast and advertise, whether they intend for it to do so or not. It is a space where scandalous or pertinent satire and political "gaffes" can go viral, replayed by millions of people all over the world. Tech-savvy individuals, from the established television satirist to the anonymous *YouTube* user, can easily take that footage and splice it into other footage for satiric effect. This technology has also made it easier for audience members to create and distribute their own original satirical content. In an age where anyone with a smartphone or a blog can be considered a journalist, or what is known by the hotly-contested term "citizen journalist," new user-generated satire appears online every day, often in the form of what I have termed "citizen satire." This is political satire being done online by private citizens, "the people formerly known as the audience" (Rosen qtd. in Bruns 73) who act autonomously from production companies and political parties. Citizen satire, as a term, offers a useful descriptor for examining the aesthetic, technical and political practices of these satire *produsers*, using Axel Bruns' combination of user and producer. Citizen satire, like numerous other online texts, often escapes the online environment, replayed, discussed and consumed in local mainstream media contexts. Moreover, television satire and political communication have transformed, and is still transforming, in online environments far removed from their initial broadcast, context and audience. Using Appadurai's notion of global landscapes, particularly *mediascape* and *ideoscape*, this chapter examines how the interplay between satire and politics is discursively shaped by intersecting, dynamic and often fractured global flows that are taking place online.

Cultural phenomena have never been static. More recently, though, their construction, consumption and very fluidity occur in rapid global networks. In his

1996 book *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai examines this "new global cultural economy" (32), observing that human experience in globalisation exists within a variety of imagined, though very real, global landscapes that are transnationally constructed and locally indigenised. While his work is well over a decade old, Appadurai's observations are remarkably apt for today's world dominated by global communication networks and social media. As a way of exploring these landscapes, particularly the impact that their "complex, overlapping, disjunctive" (32) natures have on the world, he proposes what he calls an elementary framework that looks at the relationships between "five dimensions of global cultural flows:" ethnoscapes, financescapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes (33).

By ethnoscapes, Appadurai is referring to the diverse and always shifting landscape of movers and travellers: "tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals" (33). The prevalence of temporary and permanent travel, or, in his words, "the woof of human motion" (33-34), has not completely eroded community and family networks, nor has it dissolved national or ethnic divides. Rather, it now contributes substantially to their construction and instability. Financescapes refer to the flow of global capital, where "currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed" (34-35), while technoscapes are the similarly rapid flows of "mechanical and informational" (34) technologies. The global flows between these three landscapes are unpredictable and potentially volatile given that each landscape has its own internal logic.

Though I acknowledge the significant importance of ethnoscapes, financescapes and technoscapes in the conduct of and access to politics, it is Appadurai's two "landscapes of images" (35) – mediascape and ideoscape – that shall be focused on here given the scope of this thesis. Of course, technoscapes that allow the rapid distribution of and access to new technologies like smartphones, tablets, laptops, wireless internet and so on are extremely important in the way that people access online texts and social media. However, given limited space, I have chosen to focus more on those landscapes that deal exclusively in the representation of political and politically satirical ideas. Mediascapes refer to,

> the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public

interests throughout the world, and to the image of the world created by these media (35).

In other words, mediascapes are typified by the growing number of people who have the ability to produce and distribute information and the vast array of images and narratives that this creates. One's media landscape is no longer dominated by a single state-controlled entity; it now includes vast multinational media conglomerates, narratives and texts from foreign nations, even individual, small group and internet-based publishing. Appadurai argues that the most significant effect of these competing mediascapes is that they provide "large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed" (35). These images contribute to how one comes to see their world and the world of others. They provide "image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality…out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places" (35).

Ideoscapes also contribute to this world building. Much like mediascapes, ideoscapes are "concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counterideologies of movements explicitly orientated to capturing state power or a piece of it" (36). Given the numerous mediascapes that have global reach, our ideoscapes have become similarly abundant and fractured where political narratives "require careful translation from context to context in their global movements" (36). This feat is virtually impossible, as certain elements will always be lost (or rather, transformed) in translation when the global or the foreign go through a level of indigenisation, simultaneously influencing what is part of the local ideoscape itself. When "political actors" invoke these narratives, they "may be subject to very different sets of contextual conventions that mediate their translation into public politics" (36). Appadurai argues that Enlightenment ideals – "*freedom*, *welfare*, *rights*, *sovereignty*, *representation*, and the master term *democracy*" (36) – compose these ideoscapes and that they are mediated differently in and through various mediascapes in different local and global contexts. For example, a piece of satire, accessed globally through a transnational mediascape like *YouTube*, may go viral online and spread to local mainstream mediascapes, thereby becoming a talking point in the local ideoscape. It may work to reinforce or challenge local ideoscapes, or it may

contribute to transnational community building, uniting people who are spatially disconnected. The possibilities are endless, with the only certainty being that "disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture" (37).

Appadurai argues that habitus breaks down in a world occupied by so many disjunctures, that culture becomes an "arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation" where multiple, conflicting narratives or "imagined worlds" are offered to "multiple and spatially dislocated audiences" (44). As he goes on to say, "more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before" (53). Appadurai argues that the effect of global flows is that our lives are "more often powered not by the giveness of things" – habitus – "but by the possibilities that the media (either directly or indirectly) suggest are available" (55), opening up more possibilities for these "improvisations." Despite Appadurai's stress on the multitude of imagined worlds offered by globalisation, even he admits that habitus, while changed, has not been entirely replaced. He stresses that Bourdieu's idea of improvisation is important here. Improvisation has always been possible within habitus, but it "no longer occurs within a relatively bounded set of thinkable postures but is always skidding and taking off, powered by the imagined vistas of mass-mediated master narratives" (55-56). This is a pertinent point for this thesis, as I aim to demonstrate that the improvisation (and following innovation) done by journalists, satirists and politicians in the contemporary mediation of politics has caused political discourse to evolve and continue to be forever evolving. Lee Edwards, in exploring the global flow of public relations, sees Appadurai's "imagination" as "reminiscent of Bourdieu's notion of 'the field of the possibles' – the range of social trajectories and positions perceived by individuals as available to them, and defined by their habitus" (32). Global flows expose one to more social trajectories, so habitus is transformed, but habitus also continues to regulate those trajectories. I am not suggesting that the level of fluctuations within global landscapes correlate to dramatic sudden shifts in habitus or discourse. This change was and continues to be gradual.

As shown in previous chapters, particularly the last, journalism and satire (operating through various mediascapes) are increasingly occupying the same spaces in highly blurred or ambiguous ways. The world of politics has always used the media to exert ideological power. Today there are numerous, complex mediascapes that possess vast cultural capital, illustrated by the trust given to Jon Stewart

alongside, and often above, actual journalists. Political actors must now engage with multiple mediascapes to exert ideological influence; hence we see politicians engaging in satiric performances on *The Chaser*, holding debates on *YouTube* and tweeting jokes with online users, alongside participation in more traditional print or broadcast interviews. In Appadurai's words, "habitus now have to be painstakingly reinforced in the face of life-worlds that are frequently in flux" (56). Ideoscapes constantly try to capitalise and regulate the mediascapes that talk about them, something which is much harder to do globally and online. The following sections explore how television satire and the conduct and mediation of politics has been transformed by online mediascapes, and will define and examine the work of citizen satirists, arguing that the nature of our intersecting, dynamic and often fractured global landscapes allow for online material to enter and shape local mediascapes and ideoscapes.

TV Satire Online: "Living On" Beyond the Broadcast

Major developments in technoscapes have often correlated to changes in the format and delivery of information via mediascapes. This can be traced back to the printing press, the telegram, the telephone, and so on, where a development in technology has seen a change in the dominant medium of various mediascapes. This also influences the type of content produced by the mediascapes. The invention of DVD and Blu-Ray formats saw television series and films generate a wealth of extra material for audiences, and the internet has only intensified the level of extra material available before, during and after a broadcast or cinema release. Online social media also allows viewers to distribute and produce this extra material themselves, using simple web cams and smartphones to complex computer software. These developments have transformed television satire into hybrid texts that exist, develop and change in an environment separate – though now very interconnected to – its initial broadcast. Satires that were once viewed only on television are now available online and can be viewed, both legally and illegally, from anywhere in the world at the viewer's convenience. Social networking websites like *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *Tumblr*, user-generated video sites such as *YouTube* and *Vimeo*, and illegal file-sharing/torrent sites like *PirateBay* have made the distribution of satirical material remarkably easy.

In an attempt to fight illegal file-sharing, many television channels have also made their programs available online for a limited period through "catch-up TV," enabling viewers to stream videos but not download digital copies. Commercial stations have attempted to ensure the future of its old advertising model with "un-skip-able" advertisements appearing before videos, with some cutting full episodes into multiple clips so that programs feature online "ad breaks." Most television stations also restrict viewer access to catch up TV, particularly whole episodes, depending on where the user's IP address or internet server is based. For example, ABC *iview* and BBC *iPlayer* cannot be viewed by internet users outside Australia or the UK respectively, though some *iPlayer* material has been made available to global audiences. Comedy Central, which hosts extensive free archives of *The Daily Show*, *The Colbert Report* and *South Park*, inform Australian viewers that their videos are not "available at your location." Australian viewers must either buy episodes on iTunes or pay to view them through a Foxtel pay-TV subscription. Of course, there are ways around these restrictions, such as file-sharing or using a proxy server to disguise one's IP address but these, and most other mechanisms that do not require payment, are generally illegal.

Alongside catch-up TV websites, television stations have also established a significant presence on *YouTube*. Their *YouTube* channels feature trailers, behind the scenes clips, additional footage, and excerpts previously broadcast on television. *The Chaser* have even made fun of this in a series of satirical "exclusive web extras" for Season 2 of *The Hamster Wheel*. Mocking the triviality of much online content, as well as the ABC's comparatively small tax-funded budget, a wobbly web-cam captures a corner in their office ("Bonus Web Extra 2"), an ABC cleaner and his mop ("Bonus Web Extra 3"), a tap in an ABC toilet ("Bonus Web Extra 4"), and Chris Taylor and Andrew Hansen saying a quick 39 second hello because "every TV show now has to have web extras for the benefit of the 37 people who actually watch them," before apathetically signing off with "that's it. Re-tweet please" ("Bonus Web Extra 1"). This kind of extra footage is known as a paratext, one of many that surround and inform our understanding of a primary text, in this case *The Hamster Wheel* and *The Chaser* texts more generally. Gerard Genette defines paratexts as constituting "a *threshold*…that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back" (2) from a text; paratexts "surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it" (1). In the foreward to the English translation of

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Genette's *Paratexts*, Richard Macksey describes paratexts elegantly and simply as "liminal devices" that "mediate the relations between text and reader" (qtd. in Genette xi).

Writing in 1987, Genette focuses on the peritexts and epitexts that surround literature. He defines peritexts as those paratexts that live "within the same volume" (4) as the text itself, like the title, preface, chapter titles, headings, footnotes and so on of a book. The very function of the peritext is to invite the reader in, though the actual manner in which they inform our understanding of the text varies widely. An epitext, on the other hand, is "any paratextual element not materially appended to the text within the same volume but circulating, as it were, freely in a virtually limitless physical and social space" (344). In other words, they exist outside the text. In relation to the literature of a pre-internet dominated world, Genette considered epitexts to be book reviews, interviews, public responses, diaries, correspondence, and so on. One of the most crucial distinctions between the peritext and the epitext, one that shall be demonstrated later in this chapter, is that the epitext "in contrast to the peritext – consists of a group of discourses whose function is not always basically paratextual (that is, to present and comment on the text)" (345). They may serve private purposes, or to comment on a separate text (for example, the likening of one well-regarded work to a newer one to bestow status on the later), but nevertheless inform how one comes to understand a text.

Jonathan Gray has expanded Genette's initial work to include the type of paratexts that surround written and audio-visual texts today. For Gray, paratexts "create texts, they manage them, and they fill them with many of the meanings that we associate with them" (*Sold Separately* 6). Today's paratexts can include, but are by no means limited to, trailers, behind the scenes footage, actor interviews, websites, merchandise, reviews, and a wide variety of fan-created texts like fan art, fan fiction, fan websites and memes. Due to websites like *YouTube*, "deleted scenes" or "director's commentary" footage is no longer restricted to DVD or Blu-Ray formats. Paratexts that are generally provided to viewers as DVD or Blu-Ray-only extras are regularly uploaded to *YouTube* by viewers and, even though this is illegal, requests to take this material down from television and film studios do not seem to come fast enough to combat multiple users uploading through separate accounts. In some cases, online viewers are privy to extensive excerpts of programs before they are broadcast. Some even encourage online users to download, edit and then share

footage, as with Stephen Colbert's Green Screen Challenge, where, as the name suggests, he provides footage of himself against a green screen so that users can easily edit it. In others, footage that has been removed from the original broadcast or footage that, for whatever reason, was unable to be broadcast, appears online from either official or unofficial sources. This is a key feature of the evolving mediascape, where changes in the technoscape have made it easier for anyone to publish material but harder for them to control access, distribution and the various epitextual uses of that material. To a certain extent, this could be said of many texts pre-internet, but the ease and speed in which online users take, repurpose and publish audio-visual material is dramatically enhanced by social media networks and technologies.

The Chaser provides two examples of this development in action. The first, their infamous "Make a Realistic Wish Foundation" sketch, demonstrates this lack of control over material. This sketch was broadcast in Season 3 of *The Chaser's War on Everything*, and took the form of a parodic charity advertisement that purported to offer children with cancer a "realistic" wish instead of the more extravagant wishes granted by the Make a Wish Foundation. In one instance, a child who wanted to meet film star Zac Efron was offered a stick. The sketch was publically condemned as over the line and offensive, with, as mentioned earlier, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd publically telling *The Chaser* to "hang their heads in shame" ("Hang your heads" n.pag). It was removed from subsequent re-runs and not included on the Season 3 DVD. Despite successive episodes referencing the skit and the controversy it caused, the scandal itself was seen as so infamous (and the sketch, perhaps, too offensive) that it did not need to be explained or provided to the viewer. In the past, it would be relatively hard to access and share this material. Now, however, the sketch is easy to find on video websites such as *YouTube* ("Make a Realistic Wish") and can easily be shared through social networking sites. Online newspaper articles and entries on *The Chaser*'s and *The War*'s *Wikipedia* pages, all easily accessible, also reference the sketch. Julian Morrow acknowledges that new technology poses a new challenge for television satire, and television more generally, saying,

> Even though the ABC immediately withdrew the *Make a Realistic Wish Foundation* sketch from all its platforms, including the web, that sketch was practically impossible not to see. Much to our regret. Within minutes of its broadcast, it – like almost all TV content now – was digitally captured and posted on YouTube, in multitudinous acts of flagrant illegality that, as a

copyright owner, I wholeheartedly endorse. Consumer-based video piracy has its upside. Banning content just ain't what it used to be. Although in that particular case, I wish our geek fans had done us a favour and not helped that sketch find a larger audience (n.pag).

As Morrow notes, this technology also has its upside, where banned, censored or "lost" footage can find new life and new audiences online. For example, in April 2011, the ABC planned to broadcast live coverage of Prince William and Catherine Middleton's wedding with satirical commentary provided by *The Chaser* team on ABC2. The Prince of Wales' private office Clarence House demanded that this be cancelled and then contacted British broadcast suppliers, including the BBC, Associated Press Television News (APTN), Sky and the Independent Television Network (ITN), to "ensure the ABC would have no access to footage if it ignored the request" (Idato n.pag). Clarence House then declared that no footage of the royal wedding could be used for "any drama, comedy, satirical or similar entertainment program or content" (qtd. in Idato n.pag). The ABC had already negotiated two separate broadcast feeds: one hosted by BBC journalist Huw Edwards to air on ABC1 and another "'clean feed' of video only," provided by APTN, for *The Chaser*'s coverage on ABC2 (Idato n.pag). The BBC and APTN imposed the Clarence House restriction upon these negotiations two days before the wedding, forcing the ABC to cancel their *Chaser* coverage ("ABC Forced" n.pag). No such restrictions were made on Channel Nine, which planned to broadcast Dame Edna's commentary, or Channel Ten with their commentary provided by *The 7pm Project*. ABC TV Director Kim Dalton argued, "clearly, the BBC and Clarence House have decided The Chaser aren't acceptable" ("ABC Forced" n.pag), but perhaps it can also be seen as an illustration of *The Chaser*'s place as feared kynical truth-tellers, whereas Edna and *The 7pm Project* are considered safe, modern cynics who know how to play the game.

This ban saw *The Chaser* at the centre of more public outcry, this time in their support, with many seeing it as an indictment on free speech. Rudd commented again, saying that the BBC needed to "lighten up" and develop "an Australian sense of humour" (Robinson n.pag). While the ban was specifically directed at *The Chaser*, it was also applied to other notorious satires such as *The Daily Show*. In a keen illustration of global flows at work, the restriction on using wedding footage for satire was applied globally to local mediascapes. On *The Daily Show*, Stewart cited

The Chaser, "a very funny Australian satirical broadcast," as an example of how "ridiculous" this ban was, and sought a kind of satirical revenge by "covering" the wedding through *The Daily Show*'s own footage: a computer animated version of the wedding made by clumsy but infamous Taiwanese animators that featured grotesque and, as gleefully described by Stewart, "borderline offensive" versions of the ceremony where Gollum presented the rings and Hitler attended the "royal consummation" ("Uncensored"). The dynamic of global flows is clearly present in this example, where a ban is introduced globally due to a program in a relatively small Australian mediascape, an American program responds by outsourcing animated satire to Taiwan which is then aired on an American cable network and its globally-accessible website (ironically, of course, Australia is one of the few regions unable to access this website).

While, *The Chaser* commentary never did go to air, they had made a number of pre-recorded sketches to be aired before and after the live footage. After the wedding, videos from this footage were released via *YouTube* on *The Chaser*'s channel chaserhq and on the ABC channel NewOnABCTV. They could then be readily accessed by anyone with an internet connection, commented on and "liked" or "disliked" by *YouTube* users. On the ABC channel, the video "World Wedding Fever" was by far the most accessed with 126,426 views, and 698 likes to 67 dislikes (as of 30 September 2012). This video juxtaposes hype about the royal wedding with footage of devastation and war across the world. It re-captions footage of non-English speaking people talking about the recent earthquakes in Japan, the violent uprising in Libya and continuing war in Afghanistan so that they are "translated" as talking about the royal wedding. For example, a Japanese man is translated as saying "I'm very excited about the wedding of Wills and Kate. It's kept me alive through this very difficult time." The faux-journalist commentary from Andrew Hansen explains, "this Tokyo man lost everything in the earthquake, but says his thoughts are only concerned with whether or not Kate's lost too much weight ahead of the big day" ("World Wedding Fever").

On *YouTube*, users can make comments, "vote up" or "vote down" other comments, and even report a comment as spam or abuse. The most "voted up" comment goes to the top of the comment list in a section labeled Top Comments. The top comment on the "World Wedding Fever" video, with 298 thumbs up, read:

What a great parody! And pretty witty too, once you think about it. It really
makes you think about how even though there are important issues (like the ones
shown in the video) going on in the world, people still choose to focus on a
wedding that doesn't really matter to anyone. Boy, the world have really got
their priorities right! *coughcough* Well done, Chaser. :) ("World Wedding
Fever").

The top comment on the unofficial user upload of the "Make a Realistic Wish"
sketch (with 89 thumbs up) is much more playful, reading "personally id rather the
stick over zac efron" ("Make a Realistic Wish"). A debate in the comments section,
which features over 600 comments, still continues to rage about whether or not the
sketch went over the line, with users contributing new comments even four years
after the sketch's initial upload. These two sketches, though intended for or initially
broadcast on local television, found new lives online in a mediascape where users
adept at using new technology can upload, edit and comment on them in ways that
extend or change their paratextual meanings. As Gray notes, "a paratext constructs,
lives in, and can affect the running of the text" (*Sold Separately* 6). The internet,
especially social media, brings an interesting dimension to this. The internet grants
an intangible, limitless and often free space with significant audience potential to text
producers who create official[13] paratexts. However, the internet has also provided a
space where official producers have less control over these paratexts. Banned or
censored material finds a new home online, and all footage is easily shared, re-edited
and re-contextualised. Therefore, official paratexts that are banned or censored can
continue to contribute to the semiotic meanings surrounding their textual
counterparts, where in the past they would simply disappear. On *YouTube*, viewers
can comment, debate, like or dislike videos in an environment that visually and

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[13] In relation to paratexts, I use the term official and unofficial in a slightly different manner to
Genette, who defines official as "appl[ying] to everything that, originating with the author or
publisher, appears in the anthumous ["produced during the author's lifetime"(6)] peritext" (10). He
defines unofficial (or semiofficial) as "most of the authorial epitext: interviews, conversations, and
confidences, responsibility for which the author can always more or less disclaim with denials of the
type 'That's not exactly what I said'…[it] is what the author permits or asks a third party (an
allographic preface-writer or an 'authorized' commentator) to say"(10). In this chapter, official and
unofficial are not taken from Genette's work. Instead, I define an official paratext as a peritext or
epitext that has been created and sanctioned by those who produce the text itself, often studios,
production-companies and authors. Unofficial paratexts are epitexts that have been created by users,
audience members or people not officially attached to the production or marketing of the text – fans,
commentators, video artists, and such – and are not sanctioned by those who produce the text. While
text-creators may publically express admiration for an unofficial paratext, they are still understood as
non-sanctioned or "unofficial."

semiotically frames the text, where fans or "haters" of *The Chaser* continue various narratives about the satire as larrikin defiance or puerile undergraduate humour. New technology allows these banned or censored paratexts to not only "live in" *The Chaser*'s "official" texts but to "live *on*," continuously affecting how *The Chaser* texts as a whole are read and understood.

The internet has also allowed for an interesting extension of broadcast programs, not just a space for paratexts to be accessed. Jon Stewart, for example, regularly tells viewers to go to *The Daily Show* website to see the "full" interview between himself and a *Daily Show* guest. He frequently asks the guests on camera if they can "hang around" for an extended interview that is privy only to the studio and online audiences. Almost every television interview now features its extended counterpart online. These extended interviews behave differently than paratexts that are created specifically as extra footage (as with "behind the scenes" features) or those collected from the cutting-room floor (as with deleted scenes). Due to Stewart's continual reference to them in the television broadcast, especially his regular on-air request that guests stay for a longer interview or "go to the web," the extended interview has almost become part of the program itself. It is expected now. This was made particularly clear when, on the 18 September 2012 broadcast, Stewart mentioned that his guest Salman Rushdie was unable to stay for an extended interview instead of asking him, indicating that extra time was normally allowed in production and that guests were being asked beforehand if they were free to stay longer ("Salman Rushdie"). Most of these extended interviews are with politicians, political commentators or public figures, and involve in-depth discussion regarding policy or topical events. The internet acts as a space for *The Daily Show* to provide more serious political commentary and, due to its high frequency and reference in edited broadcast editions, has become known as a feature of *The Daily Show*, not just an "added extra." While this kind of material would normally be considered an epitext, it behaves as a kind of hybrid epitext/peritext, in that is simultaneously *outside* the text but considered a regular feature *of* the text.

As this example shows, the internet is not just changing how television satires are accessed, received and understood, it is also influencing the show themselves, sometimes in real time. Social media is steadily creeping its way into pre-recorded and live broadcasts. News programs (particularly *Q&A*) often use tweets and *Facebook* statuses to provide viewers with the opinions of "real people," and this has

been satirised widely by news-based satires like *The Chaser*, *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report*. While I have yet to discover examples of real tweets or posts appearing non-satirically on satire programs, they have started appearing on news-based comedy programs, some of which feature satirical content. The Channel 10 comedy program *Can of Worms* has been particularly active in social media. *Can of Worms* discusses topical events and issues that range from silly questions based around toilet humour to serious ethical debates, with host Chrissie Swan, comedian and in-studio relay of social media content Dan Ilic, and celebrity guests. They conduct numerous *Facebook* polls and compare the results with the opinions from their guests and feature viewers' tweets and *Facebook* posts throughout the show. In their final two episodes for 2012, they encouraged viewers to live-vote via free smartphone app zeebox to decide which (out of a choice of three) "best-of" segments would be aired at the end of the program, putting a limited but rare amount of control in the hands of viewers ("S2 Ep. 14 (1/6)"; "S2 Ep. 15 (1/6)"). Social media is instrumental in how the show runs, and viewers are encouraged to contribute both light-hearted and serious comments to the debate.

Can of Worms' use of social media is, however, fairly clumsy. Comments and polls from online users are used more as "add-ons" to the broadcast debates and rarely provide any meaningful commentary or points of discussion. Here, the interactive practices of one mediascape can be seen influencing another, but the other has yet to determine how to meaningfully and organically include those interactions. The medium of television is clearly transformed by the online mediascape, particularly in the online proliferation of official and unofficial television paratexts, but this flow of content and practices is currently very one-sided. Television has become particularly good at using online spaces, and users even better at appropriating televisual material, but social media's inclusion in broadcasting itself has yet to be figured out and is currently very "faddish."

It is perhaps for this reason that television satires, particularly the ones discussed in this thesis, have steered away from using social media in the same fashion as *Can of Worms* and *Q&A*. Interestingly, even on *Can of Worms*, which is currently the most social-media heavy comedy program in Australia, instances of political satire still do not feature social media interaction from viewers. Dan Ilic regularly goes to the street to conduct absurd tabloid-style vox-pops, petitions or sketches, usually with a straight face, to add a tongue-in-cheek and often satirical edge to one of the

week's discussion points. For the episode that discusses whether or not same sex couples should be allowed to adopt children, Ilic goes to the street as a satirical faux conservative, asking strangers to sign his petition to ban hipsters from having children. To promote his cause, he holds up a sign that reads "God hates irony," a parody of the religious fundamentalists known to protest gay rights with "God hates fags" signs ("Should Hipsters"). In these more satirical segments from Ilic, there is no social media intrusion.

Television satire is currently much happier using social media for the publication of paratexts and, of course, as a subject of satire itself. Interestingly, fake viewer tweets on *The Chaser*'s more recent programs have replaced the fake scrolling news bar (a popular feature of news broadcasts in the early to mid-2000s) from *The Chaser Decides* and *CNNNN*, reflecting and satirising changing journalistic practices. *The Chaser* has mocked *Q&A*'s broadcast of live user tweets in particular by having fake live tweets appear on their programs since *YWC* in 2010. Recently, on *The Hamster Wheel*, they claimed that child sweatshop labour was used to produce all the *Q&A* tweets. Chris Taylor even encouraged viewers to tweet under the hashtag "#shameqandashame" ("Q&A Expose"). Many online users did use this hashtag during following *Q&A* episodes, but none of these tweets ever made it to a *Chaser* episode. This is just one example which suggests that while social media has changed the way television satires and their official paratexts are accessed, used and interacted with by viewers, the contempt that the likes of *The Chaser* have displayed towards the journalistic use of social media has, so far, extended to wariness in using social media as part of satire itself.

Politicians "Feeling Mischievous" Online

Online political activity, from political parties to individual activists, has been known to contribute to the messages and images mediated offline in local mainstream mediascapes. Yet dominance online does not always translate to ideological power offline. Nonetheless, various players in the ideoscape try to hijack online spaces to exert ideological power on and offline. Politicians have increased their online presence on social networking sites like *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and use *YouTube* to post videos on policy and campaign advertisements. The internet, much like satire, has not only provided an extra avenue for campaigning, it has also given

politicians a place to let their guard down, where they can present themselves as "normal people." In Australia, as illustrated in Chapter 3 and 4, this is especially important as the easy-going larrikin holds a great deal of cultural capital. While it could be argued that a fear of "the gaffe going viral" has contributed to the over-scripted nature of 21st century politics, new technology has also provided a space where some politicians put down the script. Greg Jericho argues that when politicians are willing to use social media, particularly *Twitter*, "in a way that allows for some familiarity with their followers" there is in fact a "political benefit" (268). He cites Labor's Tony Burke and the Liberal's Malcolm Turnbull as two prime examples of effective social media use by Australian politicians.

When he first registered on *Twitter*, Tony Burke tweeted about fairly bland, everyday occurrences, such as "walking back to my unit from Parliament House," gaining such notoriety that his style was mocked with the hashtag #tweetliketonyburke (Jericho 264). On *Twitter*, hashtags are used to group together tweets on a similar topic. Users tweet something, followed by a hashtag, and other users can then search that hashtag to find out what other people are saying on that particular topic. In this case, users would tweet something mundane, like "blinked" (@madeinmelbourne qtd. in Bourke n.pag) and "dashed across room to tweet about jiggling teabag" (@melijt qtd. in Bourke n.pag), followed by the #tweetliketonyburke hashtag. Being grouped together under the same hashtag, users participated in and contributed to a playful mocking of Burke's *Twitter* style. Within its first hour, #tweetliketonyburke became a trending[14] hashtag in Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra and Adelaide. It even included a tweeting exchange between *Chaser* Julian Morrow (@MoreOj), who tweeted "on the phone to @Tony_Burke," and Burke himself, who responded with "on the phone to @MoreOJ" (qtd. in Bourke n.pag).[15]

The Burke hashtag was started by journalist and prolific tweeter Latika Bourke, who was inspired by what she called "*The Chaser*-ing of Minister Burke who'd just been pinged for tweeting banalities" (n.pag). This "Chaser-ing" refers to a segment on *YWC* where *The Chaser* examined Burke's *Twitter* use, calling it "a summary of

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[14] In this context, and throughout this chapter, trending or trend refers to the most popular hashtags on *Twitter*. They change regularly depending on what is being posted or tweeted and are often dependant on popular memes and topical events.
[15] I have used Latika Bourke's article to reference these tweets because the #tweetliketonyburke hashtag was not popular enough to generate a trend list in 2012 when this particular material was gathered.

everywhere he walks." They then ambushed him on the campaign trail, demanding to know why "you've just taken 12 steps and you haven't tweeted a thing" (S1 E1 *YWC*). Burke played along with his reputation as a bad tweeter and got out his phone, posting "12 steps with chaser" (@Tony_Burke 24 July 2010) to *Twitter* right there with them. In doing so, he showed that,

> He understood the medium much better than the many journalists who had been mocking him. [He] began tweeting things like 'having a coffee with @KateEllisMP which I think is worth tweeting but apparently is a #tweetliketonyburke.' Burke realised that Twitter, as snarky and full of criticism as it is, loves someone who is prepared to laugh at themselves (Jericho 264).

In other words, Burke knew how to behave on *Twitter*, combining policy announcements and criticism about his political rivals with the more light-hearted #tweetliketonyburke and regularly replying to tweets from his followers in an informal manner. As the example with *The Chaser* shows, online activity can contribute to a politician's image outside the online mediascape. Since *Twitter* only allows users to publish and respond to small posts of less than 140 characters, in-depth analysis or interaction is clearly impossible. What *Twitter* does is act more like a springboard by starting particular conversations grouped together with hashtags, by directing users to more extensive sources of information, and by providing a space where users can instantly and briefly interact with each other.

According to blogger Drag0nista (known widely to be freelancer Paula Matthewson), Burke "has got the balance right. He uses it to make real connections with real people" (qtd. in Jericho 264; Drag0nista n.pag). She saw his technique as particularly clever. For example, when Burke tweeted about driving to Canberra for a parliamentary sitting, she could "see those of Burke's constituents on Twitter nodding with approval that their MP drove himself to Canberra rather than take the easier limosine-plane-limosine (sic) option" (Drag0nista n.pag). The image of Burke driving himself and "taking the piss" via #tweetliketonyburke adheres to all those imagined but nonetheless powerful ideals of what constitutes a "real Aussie." Burke's *Twitter* use could be the result of a clever media strategy, as Drag0nista notes, but when a user can respond instantaneously and cheekily in an environment that demands speed in 140 characters or less, any strategy itself becomes obscured by the delivery.

Of course, Tony Burke is by no means the only politician who gains access to "the real" by juggling the informal and playful with more serious commentary. Many politicians use *Twitter* in a similar way. Kevin Rudd, as noted previously, has tweeted "twitter time," the catch phrase of his satirical double from *Rove* (@kruddmp 1 July 2009), WA MP Mark McGowan's *Twitter* bio read "MP for Rockingham WA. Not to be confused with British corgi eating performance artist of same name" (@MarkMcGowanMP), and Greens Senator Scott Ludlam promoted his speech on the US military's place in Australia by tweeting "all of our bases are belonging to the US" (@SenatorLudlam 20 November 2012), a play on the popular internet meme "all your base are belong to us." Malcolm Turnbull, a prolific tweeter, has noted that he "'enjoyed the interaction and debate on twitter,' and that his tendency to engage can 'sometimes depend on how mischievous' he is feeling" (qtd. in Jericho 267).

Turnbull's "mischievousness" can be observed in his response to a tweet by Rupert Murdoch. In the aftermath of the 2012 Connecticut school shooting where twenty children and seven adults were killed, Murdoch tweeted, "Terrible news today. When will politicians find courage to ban automatic weapons? As in Oz after similar tragedy" (@rupertmurdoch 14 December 2012). Turnbull tweeted back, saying "@rupertmurdoch I suspect they will find the courage when Fox News enthusiastically campaigns for it," alluding to Fox's infamous anti-gun-law rhetoric (@TurnbullMalcolm 15 December 2012). This damning yet "mischievous" comment received both scorn and praise from Turnbull's followers, with praise and agreement far outweighing scorn. One user called it the "best tweet ever" (@GLComputing 15 December 2012) and another simply requested "please challenge for the liberal leadership" (@charlegoldsmith 15 December 2012). Party leadership is just one issue from local mainstream mediascapes that crossed over into the online mediascape a number of years ago. Initial news about the 2010 Labor leadership spill was announced on *Twitter* by ABC's Chris Uhlmann, scooping all other media outlets, followed by various Labor members tweeting support for particular candidates only three hours after Uhlmann's first tweet (Jericho 23-25). Various offline debates continue online, leadership and gun laws being just two of them, providing a small example of how the flow between online and more traditional mediascapes is dialectical and, indeed, mischievous.

For Turnbull, the online mediascape featuring *Twitter* requires politicians to "loosen up a bit" and "be prepared to poke a bit of fun" (qtd. in Jericho 267). But Turnbull and all of these politicians also use other media tools, like official party websites or news interviews, where they also behave very seriously. These seemingly larrikinesque behaviours on *Twitter*, when done well, do not contradict the politician's more serious persona. As *Twitter*, much like satire, is an informal space, skilful use gives the impression that the politician is letting their guard down, revealing the real, more laid back person behind the public persona. This is perhaps more so in Australia, where the cultural "distaste for taste" (Turner and Edmunds 219) privileges the working class larrikin figure as more authentically Australian. Informality, forgoing luxuries and being self-depreciating all assist in cultivating such an image. Referencing pop culture, especially internet pop culture (as with Ludlam), also shows an awareness of the ever-changing ironic language of tech-savvy youth, one of the politician's most likely audience members on *Twitter*.

The other significant group to follow politicians' social media use is, of course, mainstream media journalists, like Uhlmann and Bourke (though Bourke is known more for her online reporting), creating a feedback loop between online and traditional mediascapes. This exchange, while dialectical, is uneven and unpredictable. Tony Burke's online banalities received more attention in local mainstream mediascapes than Turnbull's witty challenge of Rupert Murdoch. This was perhaps partially due to Murdoch's significant ownership of Australian mainstream media, but also because the global flow of information is so fractured and ephemeral that what is picked up and sustained in local mediascapes and ideoscapes can be very hit or miss. Turnbull's ability to be witty has gained him a regular online following, while Burke's online-awkwardness-turned-to-online-larrikinism caused a trending fever-pitch online and offline in local mediascapes where the larrikin holds cultural capital. Both politicians recognise that social media is a medium of play and irony; Burke's success illustrates a further awareness of cultural capital as it exists in offline local mediascapes and ideoscapes.

This kind of awareness, however, has yet to be displayed meaningfully in online party campaigns, particularly in campaign videos or advertisements. All major parties and most minor parties in Australia use social media as a space to upload campaign material, and some of this features satire. Some notable examples include Labor's 2010 parody of the song "Time Warp" from *The Rocky Horror Picture*

Show, which uses kitsch cartoon animation to satirise Abbott's history with health initiatives and WorkChoices, and in the Liberal's 2011 series of advertisements featuring a parodic South-Park-esque aesthetic to satirise Gillard, the 2010 Rudd spill and "the faceless men" controlling the Labor Party.

These online-only advertisements suggest some awareness of the internet's love of parody, but the messages behind the advertisements themselves are fairly serious and lacking in any self-reflective irony. The brunt of the satire is very much directed towards the opposing party, much like advertisements in more traditional media formats. Labor's "Time Warp" did go viral, helped by being reposted on *Crikey*, the *NovaFM* website and *The Australian* blog "The Diary" run by journalist Caroline Overington, but failed to become a talking point in offline local mediascapes. Both videos call on notions of larrikinism, the fair go, and other nationalistic markers of authenticity; the Labor blog that accompanied the "Time Warp" video argued that "this video comes from the great Australian tradition of having a laugh. Even in an election campaign you need to keep a sense of humour" (Labor HQ). Despite using the "just taking the mickey" argument, the blog went on to stress the video's more serious implications. It used more typical campaigning language, including buzzwords and slogans to emphasise the political purpose of the clip:

> It's a bit of fun, but the clip does have a serious side. When it comes to Tony Abbott's views on Australia's future, there is a lot at stake. Tony Abbott's policy Time Warp is no joke. We just can't afford a Time Warp backwards to WorkChoices, backwards to cutting health care and education funding, more cuts to broadband and not responding to the challenge of climate change…Let's NOT do the Time Warp on 21 August (Labor HQ).

Online campaign advertising like this example works too much like its predecessor, trying to capitalise on local cultural capital but broadcast in an online mediascape without the self-reflective irony which appeals to online users. The aforementioned advertisements did use some online staples, like kitsch cartoons and pop culture (*Rocky Horror* and *South Park*) not commonly utilised in more traditional campaign media. Political junkies, the types who would be viewing the material on party websites and party *YouTube* channels, were encouraged to share or repost the material. This does illustrate a growing political awareness of the kind of material that is best received on the internet, and perhaps an attempt to co-opt the techniques used by satirists and online content creators. But as discussed in Chapter

2, and argued by the likes of Kury and Day, online youth audiences are all too familiar with artifice and often display a kind of ironic enchantment with it. Texts that display irony gain a sense of realism, even when the viewer is only too familiar with the manufactured nature of such texts, because irony has become "a new marker of sincerity" (Day 42), a so called "willingness to point to its own flaws and fakeries" (32). Few of these advertisements actually do this, their campaign message stated directly instead of satirically, albeit in a much more fun and humorous manner. It is still very early days in the party-use of online mediascapes.

User-Generated Content: Defining "Citizen Satire"

The last two sections examined how television satire and politics have evolved through the various clashes between online and offline mainstream mediascapes. These shifts are still ongoing and incomplete, as can be seen in the awkwardness of online political advertising and the use of social media on television, as opposed to the much more organic use of television in online social media. In both sections, user interaction was discussed briefly to show that television satire producers and political actors lose an element of control over the material they produce and the message they are trying to communicate. In this section, users, especially those that produce content, become the focus.

One of these users is the Australian law student, former intern for *The Chaser* and "off-hours satirist" (Bercovici n.pag) Hugh Atkin who, on 19 March 2012, posted what would become one of the most popular *YouTube* videos about the 2012 US Presidential Election. "Will the Real Mitt Romney Please Stand Up," a parody of rapper Eminem's "Will the Real Slim Shady Please Stand Up," is a vast collection of media clips cut up and pasted together where Obama and Romney's own words and media appearances are used to mock Romney's "flip-flopping" policy positions. Many other politicians and media pundits are also used in the video, though Romney features most prominently. The music from Eminem's song plays in the background and the quick succession of different clips spliced together sees Romney say things such as, "with regards to abortion, you can choose your own adventure," "my dog is on the roof,"[16] "I'm going to get my lawn cut by illegals," and "I'm Mitt Romney,

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[16] This references the media's obsession with a report that Romney once put his dog in a carrier and strapped it to the roof of his car.

and I'm the real Romney, all the other Mitt Romneys are just mass debating" ("Will the Real Mitt Romney"). The video received over 7.5 million views by the end of 2012 and was discussed and aired on mainstream broadcast news stations and websites in the US, UK and Australia. While Atkin had previous experience as an intern for *The Chaser*, he sampled, edited, produced and distributed the video completely independently as "just another" *YouTube* user. This example shows how user-generated content, produced in Australia from a variety of American news texts and distributed solely online, can infiltrate local mainstream mediascapes (in the US, UK and Australia) in a way that shapes discussions in local ideoscapes.

Before going into more depth about the impact of Atkin's video, one needs to examine the discursive field that governs the consumption, production and distribution of these kinds of texts. Atkin's video is just one example of the kind of user-generated content that now dominates an internet environment frequently labelled "Web 2.0." According to Tim O'Reilly, who coined the term, "the Web of the 1990s had *content* as its defining characteristic. The new Web, Web 2.0, differs as its chief feature is *sociality*" (Han 4-5, emphasis added). This reflects the dominance of social media and the resultant blurring between who produces and who consumes media and information. In his work on blogs, *Wikipedia* and *Second Life*, Axle Bruns argues that "consumers themselves are now no longer just that, but active users and participants in the creation as well as the usage of media and culture" (16). He argues that traditional production chains, where information went from producer to distributor and then finally to a passive consumer, have changed. Now consumers take on a,

> Hybrid user/producer role which inextricably interweaves both forms of participation, and thereby become *produsers*…[who] engage not in traditional forms of content production, but are instead involved in *produsage* – the collaborative and continuous building and extending of existing content in pursuit of further improvement (21).

Atkin's video is a fine example of *produsage*, where a consumer has taken existing content, developed and extended its semantic potential, and shared that remixed content with the world. While Bruns is more focused on blogs where multiple *produsers* contribute, provide feedback on and rewrite various forms of content, and Atkin's video could be seen as a "self-contained, unified, finished entity" instead of a more *prodused* product that is "inherently incomplete, always

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evolving, modular, networked, and never finished" (Bruns 22), the concept of *produsage* still demonstrates how the distinct categories of "consumer" and "producer" become problematic online. Atkin consumed hours of news and press conference footage, cut it up and then produced and shared a new piece of content. His video is a keen illustration of the internet's predisposition for *produsage* and how a 21st century interplay between satire and politics is not just played between the journalist, the established satirist and the politician.

Web 2.0 technologies make it a great deal easier for the audience to participate directly with this interplay, whether it be through commenting on satire and tweeting politicians, or the creation of satirical paratexts and original content. Even the ability to share satirical videos via social media illustrates a shift in how audiences consume and use media content. *Facebook* is designed so that users can embed or upload videos and photos onto their profile walls[17], other users' walls, and on the walls of Pages[18]. Users are free to caption the video or photo however they like, and users regularly use pop cultural images to ironically or humorously comment on their own lives. One can "like," "comment" and, perhaps more in the spirit of *produsage*, "share" another user's text by either sending it to another user privately or by reposting it on their wall, re-captioning the image or video where, unless consciously selected otherwise, the original caption from the first user still remains.

While *Facebook*, with its user profiles and "friends," lends itself to being more personal than *Twitter* or *YouTube*, users also use the share function in less personal, often political ways. For example, a few days after *The Hamster Wheel* aired and uploaded a segment on the media's unequal coverage of Muslim and non-Muslim protests and riots ("Inside The Wheel"), a *Facebook* user shared the *YouTube* clip on a *Facebook* Page of Australians protesting "Muslim dominance." The video became embedded in the Page's wall, sandwiched between posts that many other users deemed racist, with the user's commentary: "You might find this interesting" and "I hope this challenges your views." Making one's own political message by sharing and contextualising independent content happens online constantly. It also shows how epitexts can be used in ways that differ from a paratext's normal function of bringing a viewer to the text. Here, the *Facebook* user's paratexts (the sharing and the accompanying captions) were not designed to promote *The Chaser* texts but to

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[17] On Facebook, a wall is a user's web page of chronologically-organised posts.
[18] A Page is the term given to the profiles of interest or fan groups.

support a particular political viewpoint. These kinds of epitexts still paratextually contribute to how we come to understand *The Chaser* texts before we even come to them. In this case, the sharing and paratextual framing – "I hope this challenges your views" – contributes to expectations that *The Chaser* texts are left-wing and progressive.

Many doctoral theses could be written on the plethora of material that illustrates the various ways in which audiences consume and use satire online. To serve the purpose of this thesis, however, this section shall focus on what I call the "citizen satirist," a *produser* that significantly remixes or creates original satirical content. I will therefore not be including content that could be more easily identified as fan content, such as fan fiction, fan art, program archiving and the *produsage* of fan vids, such as the numerous *YouTube* compilations of *The Thick of It*s Malcolm Tucker swearing. "Citizen satirist" is a modification of the term "citizen journalist," a title born from the idea that in the digital era, where most first-world people have smartphones with cameras, video-recorders and internet access, "every citizen is a journalist" (Oh qtd. in Bentley et al. 239). Citizen journalism has been identified in many different forms, for example, in citizens' blogs that provide both reportage (such as the insights of many Iraqi citizens experiencing the Second Gulf War, or the Muslim youths that used social media to spark, build momentum for and record the Arab Spring) and commentary (such as Greg Jericho's Australian politics blog *Grog's Gamut*). The label of citizen journalism has also been applied to citizens' pictures, videos and first-hand experiences relayed to or used by mainstream journalists, a practice that John Buckingham believes should "more accurately be described as 'witness journalism'" (95). Generally, citizen journalism challenges the idea that journalism is the "exclusive domain of the professional" (Allan 18). Whereas traditional mainstream journalism is exemplified by "gatekeeping," where trained journalists select what is considered to be worth reporting, citizen journalism is known instead for its practice of "gatewatching," which "relies exactly on that ability of users to decide for themselves what they find interesting and worth noting and sharing with their peers" (Bruns 74). For Bruns, citizen journalism is an example of news *produsage*, where a community of users "gatewatch" and,

> Add further information, multiple points of view, and background detail to
> extend the initial coverage [of an event] – often to the point that the quality

detail and discussion of the story well outstrips what is possible in industrial journalism's limited coverage of the same news item (74).

According to Gillmor, who refers to citizen journalism as "grassroots journalism," this is news "by the people, for the people" (qtd. in Buckingham 94). Jay Rosen famously described this more active role of citizens in journalistic discourse by referring to them as "the people formerly known as the audience" (qtd. in Bruns 73). For Gillmor and many others, citizen journalism is the start of something bigger, where "news is no longer a lecture, but a conversation; and this 'open source journalism' is also leading to new forms of 'open source politics'" (qtd. in Buckingham 94). Other theorists are much more cautious, noting that the lack of gatekeeping can result in inaccurate or poor quality journalism (Bruns 70; Kaid and Postelnicu 150), and that what does constitute citizen journalism is hardly challenging the power and dominance of mainstream media (Buckingham 94). Keen is a great deal harsher, accusing citizen journalism of "offering up 'opinion as fact, rumour as reportage, and innuendo as information'" (qtd. in Buckingham 96). More and more though, citizen journalism is being seen in less extreme binaries, as a more or less useful "complement to traditional journalism, rather than a replacement" (Buckingham 95). Many practitioners even advocate the development of a more hybrid model, also known as "pro-am journalism," where "pro journalists and the users [amateurs] work together in the production of high quality editorial goods" (Rosen qtd. in Jericho 3).

Citizen journalism, despite debates over its subversive potential, is a useful paradigm to start from when considering the emergence of various satirical activities online, as they involve similar processes of *produsage* where "the people formerly known as the audience" take a more active role in the production of political satire. Furthermore, it is the political implication behind the word "citizen" that helps inform my coining of citizen satire. Jessica Ainley argues that the very term citizen journalism "fundamentally misrepresents the motivations and intentions of people who are using such new media tools" (Buckingham 110). She focuses exclusively on those users who share their experiences and photos of newsworthy events through social media, suggesting that people who are often called citizen journalists are actually eyewitnesses (Ainley n.pag). As Buckingham observes, Ainley "argues that the term 'citizen' mistakenly frames participants as having political motivations,

while the term 'journalist' implies that they are gathering material with the primary intention of reporting news" (110).

It is this very understanding of the word "citizen" – where the user can be seen creating texts imbued with political purpose – that, while perhaps not being appropriate for everything classed as citizen journalism, informs my definition of citizen satire. Though I suspect the word "citizen" in citizen journalist represents more the fact that the journalist in question tends to be a non-industry *produser*, Ainley's point does reflect the widely-held association of citizenship with voting, an inherently political act. This understanding, where the user is seen as political and not just consuming and/or producing, is well-suited to how I define citizen satire. Citizen satire is user-generated satire that not only mocks and plays, but also makes a strong political critique. It is almost entirely reactive; it rarely provides new information, instead responding to and engaging with existing media in a way that, at its best, recontextualises political issues. While it is frequently kynical in nature, informed by the same *parrhesiastic* principles as industry-produced/mainstream satire, it can also venture towards cynicism, where hope for truth and justice is seen as lost but the citizen satirist still believes in sending up that which they find corrupt. Citizen satire comes in many formats depending on the user's chosen medium (e.g. audio-visual on *YouTube* or text-based on *Twitter*) and their skill with technology. Audio-visual citizen satire may be filmed on shaky hand-held camera phones, or be the product of high production values, skilful editing and multi-user collaboration. Some may even form small independent communities that seek donations to produce their content. Citizen satirists are not marked by training or production quality, but the political imperative of their work and their autonomy from industry producers.

The issue of autonomy is an important yet problematic one. In defining citizen satirists as independent or autonomous, I am referring to those whose work and public personas are created without any connection to industry or mainstream producers. Clearly, citizen satirists often rely on the mainstream media for content; Atkin's video would certainly not be possible without the footage from multiple mass media news networks. However, their acts of *produsage* and the persona that they embody both online and offline, should their texts escape the online environment, are separate from any industry producers and organisations. Atkin's previous experience as a *Chaser* intern puts some questions over his autonomy from industry producers; coverage of his Mitt Romney video through the ABC and *Planet*

America was no doubt influenced by Atkin's association with the satirists. In some ways, Atkin could be a case for a different category of online satirical content: pro-am satire. But I argue that his work fits more in line with citizen satire, as his public persona has been cultivated through his own independent online production and the only source to even allude to his internship was *Planet America* (UK, US and most Australian media outlets ignored this). In fact, Atkin won his internship on *The War* with his *YouTube* video "Kevin Rudd – Chinese Propaganda," a satire of Rudd that worked through a parody of Maoist propaganda ("Chasing The Chaser" n.pag). If *Chaser* Chas Licciardello or *Daily Show* correspondent John Oliver produced and distributed similar videos online, this would be a different matter. Their public personas have been constructed through the mainstream media, not online, and their association with these programs would no doubt influence the reading and the success of their texts, even if they were produced independently. Atkin's success and public persona, however, was cultivated *purely* by his online activity, not by his past association with *The Chaser*.

It also needs to be stressed that while it may seem superfluous to define citizen satire like Atkin's video as having a political imperative, this distinction is made because of the volumes of satirical texts online that feature politics and politicians but make very limited, if any, political statements. This is by no means a criticism – having fun with politics is still valuable engagement – and is instead made here given this thesis' focus on satires that take very principled stances which often contribute to discussion within and about political discourse. To demonstrate this difference, we can compare two "Gangnam Style"[19] parodies featuring Obama that were released during the 2012 US election. The first, by Reggie Brown, features Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama impersonators doing PSY's famous horse riding dance moves and lift scene. As in PSY's "Gangnam Style" video, this Obama has a dance battle in a car park and appears in a train station, a toilet stall and a sauna. The video does not feature any parody of PSY's mainly Korean lyrics, except for the replacement of "Oppan Gangnam Style" with "Obama Gangnam Style," the only words spoken in

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[19] "Gangnam Style" is a music video released by K-pop (Korean pop music) star PSY. This video clip received over 1 billion views on *YouTube* 6 months after its release, making it the first ever video to receive over 1 billion views in *YouTube's* history ("PSY on Twitter" n.pag). It spawned thousands of parodies online, on television and on radio around the world. While K-pop had been popular in various internet sub-cultures for some time, PSY's video bought K-pop to mainstream global audiences. It is particularly well-known for its tongue-in-cheek dance moves, particularly one that resembles riding a horse.

the video ("Obama Gangnam Style"). While the video does satirise Obama's "cool guy" image, the almost verbatim mimicry of PSY's video without any allusion to Obama's actions as President serves more as a parody of PSY than a satire of Obama. No comment is said, acted or implied about Obama's character, history or policies. It is a fine impersonation of Obama and an excellent parody of PSY's famous video, but the video itself makes no political statement and fails to recontextualise any political issues. The video was widely popular, garnering over 10 million views, and while it is user-generated satire, it cannot be considered citizen satire.

A second popular Obama "Gangnam Style" parody provides a comparative example of citizen satire. This video, sitting around 7.4 million views, stars Eric Schwartz (a.k.a. Smooth-E), Iman Crosson (a.k.a. Alphacat) as Obama and Sean Klitzner as Romney. It cites many events from the election campaign, as well as many Obama policy initiatives. It also parodies PSY's dance moves and settings, much like Reggie Brown's video, but features Schwartz, the only prominent performer not impersonating a political figure, rapping a satirical election version of PSY's lyrics as if he is adjudicating and commenting on the battle between Obama and Romney. It features both praise and criticism of the two Presidential candidates:

> The last four years he's been saying change and hope-a
>
> Promising and promising to get you back in yo job
>
> Republicans say too much money spent and it's not kosher
>
> Now they're coming back to take it over ("Obama Style").

In this verse, Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden throw away money as Romney and Republican Vice-President Candidate Paul Ryan scramble to pick it up, reflecting conservative criticism that Obama and Biden have failed to put a hold on government spending. In the next verse, Obama is praised for decisive action ("Launched Obamacare, Went to Pakistan and finally got Osama there") and the Republicans are implicitly criticised as out of touch for objecting to Obama's attempt to raises taxes on wealthy Americans ("But when he tried to put a taxes on the millionaires, They want him out of there, they're saying it right on air, An econo-mare") ("Obama Style"). In the chorus, Schwartz claims not to know who would be better for the country, only concluding playfully that "Clint Eastwood thinks he

[Obama] is invisible[20]" and "I do know who would win in basketball." At the end of the video, Schwartz issues a directive to go out and vote, rapping that on polling day, "most of us will stay at home with our computers on, Yo are you insane?" This "Gangnam Style" parody is citizen-satire, user-generated satirical content with a serious political message that critiques both Obama ("He's loved by everyone from George Clooney to Oprah, But hated by everyone who's gone through a foreclosure") and Romney ("Don't need to see your birth certificate (Romney: I was born here), Just your tax returns[21]"), while encouraging *YouTube* viewers to go out and vote.

Atkin's Mitt Romney video is another fine example of citizen satire. It critiques the media as obsessed with trivia ("the dog is on the roof") and presents the media coverage as never-ending and bland by opening and closing the video with a television set full of static and a sea of Romneys multiplying on the screen. It also highlights Romney's staged public persona by heightening his already awkward comments and movements by cutting them up and mashing them together in what Michael Serazio calls "Romney's jerky mash-up flow" (n.pag). Serazio goes on to argue that "The Real Mitt Romney" and Atkin's other videos are not just funny, but they are "art," for they "cleverly satirize not only politicians, but the state of public discourse" (n.pag). Atkin's first viral hit came in the 2008 American Presidential Elections with the more affectionate "BarackRoll," another remixed mash-up of media footage, this time with quotes from Barack Obama mashed together so that the then Presidential candidate sings Rick Astley's "Never Gonna Give You Up" ("BarackRoll"). It received over 7.1 million hits, and another video, where Obama is

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[20] This references Clint Eastwood's infamous speech to the 2012 Republican National Convention where he had a seemingly improvised satirical argument with an invisible Obama, directing his tirade to an empty wooden chair.

[21] This line refers to conservative media obsession with Obama's birth certificate, with many claiming that he would not produce it because he was born in Kenya, thereby making him ineligible for the Presidency. These claims of illegitimacy continued after Obama produced his birth certificate. Romney faced many claims of racism in the liberal media after he announced proudly at a rally that no one had asked to see his birth certificate, with the implication being that as a white man he was more obviously American. The mention to tax returns refers to Romney's refusal to release years of tax returns, with many claiming that he had not paid his fair share of tax or, as one tax return revealed, that he had paid his fair share of tax on investments but that his tax rate (as he did not have an income with which to pay income tax) was substantially lower than most middle class Americans, outraging many voters.

seen "rick-rolling"[22] a speech by his rival John McCain, received over 3.6 million ("John McCain BarackRoll'd").

Atkin produced another video in September 2012, this time with Obama's words spliced together into "U Didn't Build That," a parody version of MC Hammer's "U Can't Touch This." This video satirises the media's obsessive coverage of a comment where Obama said "somebody invested in roads and bridges, if you've got a business, that, you didn't build that." Clips of Obama's words are spliced together to say "out of context, those words aren't mine," but also "Osama Bin Laden, I killed, and that was a mission you didn't build," highlighting the Democrats' construction of Obama as the sole person responsible for Bin Laden's death. Another sentence produced from Obama quotes – "if you've given three dollars before, I'm asking again for a few dollars more" – makes fun of Obama's infamously unrelenting fundraising efforts ("U Didn't Build That"). Numerous clips of conservative and liberal media pundits arguing over the meaning behind the "you didn't build that" comment are spliced between Obama's remixed words, as well as footage of Michelle Obama dancing. Even Julia Gillard appears in this video, supporting the President with her mashed up words by describing the doubt over Obama's birth certificate as the "ravings of the eccentric lunar[23] right." While this video received fewer hits, it still garnered 1.2 million in less than two months. Serazio calls Atkin's videos "pitch-perfect meta-commentary on the state of politics and media in America today," and argues that the audience also gets critiqued, with "Atkin's rat-tat-tat pastiche expertly satiriz[ing] our collective lack of political patience and our unfortunate willingness to evaluate candidates using the language of theatre: performance, optics, choreography, and so on" (n.pag).

The commentary provided by citizen satire is made all the more potent by global flows that transcend the number of views a text may garner online. Atkin's videos were featured globally in many online blogs and newspapers, news broadcasts in Australia and the US, and were subject to thoughtful analysis in a number of online magazines during the election. Just as US mediascapes were mined for the production of the videos themselves, so too were they picked up and used in various separate online and offline local mainstream mediascape. Some media outlets

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[22] Rick-rolling is an internet meme where a hyperlink, seemingly for another topic of interest, redirects the user to a video clip of the 80s Rick Astley's song "Never Gonna Give You Up."
[23] This refers to Newt Gingrich's proposal to establish a colony on the Moon if he was elected President.

broadcasted the video as "mere fun" or "the newest viral hit" to complement their election footage. In various other news broadcasts and the likes of Serazio's online commentary, the video provided a focal point for discussions about Romney's willingness to change many of his policy stances in an attempt to sell himself as a staunch conservative during the Republican primaries, among many other election issues or debates. Atkin was also interviewed on some of these Australian and US programs, with *Planet America* ("23 March 2012") and the US's American Broadcasting Company program *Power Players with Jake Tapper* (Trapper, Coolidge and Pham 1 October 2012) featuring extensive and analytical discussions with Atkin himself.

Atkin's piece of user-generated satire entered discussions within multiple ideoscapes, a feat virtually impossible for individually-produced content prior to the invention of social media. This flurry of activity and discussion far outstripped the attention given to Reggie Brown's "Obama Gangnam Style," even though it garnered almost 3 million extra views on *YouTube*. Views and traffic are still relevant, hence their mention here, but must be understood as just one indicator of a text's reception, consumption and influence in a single space. Seeing these online texts (or, indeed, any text) as operating within a myriad of global flows opens up our understanding of how texts contribute to the unevenly evolving nature of discourse. The following sections examine this through three common techniques used by citizen satirists: remixing existing content, original content production, and fake-tweeting.

Citizen Satire Remixing TV Satire: Malcolm Tucker Grills Gordon Brown

Hugh Atkin's videos show remixing at their best, where the refashioning of news footage provides commentary on politics and the news itself far beyond the online mediascape where it was initially distributed. Audio-visual political satirists of all kinds use news footage extensively in their work, but many online users also sample television satire in a way that simultaneously relies on and expands the paratextual meanings surrounding that satire. An example of this can be seen in lumbowski's *YouTube* video "Gordon Brown, The Bigoted Woman and Malcolm Tucker." The video is based on a major campaign gaffe by Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown in the 2010 UK elections. After talking to a pensioner regarding

immigration and crime, and expressing how "very nice" it was to meet her, Brown was caught on tape complaining about the encounter, saying,

> That was a disaster – they should never have put me with that woman. Whose idea was that? It's just ridiculous…[when a staffer asks what the woman said] Ugh everything! She's just a sort of bigoted woman that said she used to be Labour. I mean it's just ridiculous. I don't know why Sue brought her up towards me (qtd. in "Gordon Brown 'Mortified'" n.pag).

Brown swiftly apologised when it was revealed that his comments had been recorded, arguing that he had misunderstood her comments, but many commentators saw the gaffe as markedly damaging for a party that was already down in the polls. BBC political editor Nick Robinson said it was particularly disastrous because it clearly "showed the gap between [Brown's] public and private face" ("Gordon Brown 'Mortified'" n.pag). lumbowski's *YouTube* satire plays with this very idea, focusing on the event as an illustration of the spin-machine gone wrong, exemplified by *The Thick of It*s Malcolm Tucker. Copying the stylistic conventions of *The Thick of It*, a blank screen appears part way through the first few clips with the title "The Thick of It." The word "Live" is then faded in. Clips of Brown talking to the pensioner, driving away, making those comments, and then later apologising are spliced between footage of Tucker, who appears to be responding to Brown's actions. When Brown says "that was a disaster," Tucker responds with "yeah, you're coming off more smug than glum." As Brown continues, Tucker (who appears in a car, seemingly the car where Brown made his comments) responds more aggressively, struggling with his seatbelt and yelling,

> Jesus! Do you not think it would have been germane to check who you're talking to? Am I gonna have to run around so you know when to shut your gob and when to open it? Do you honestly believe that as a Minister you can get away with that? ("Gordon Brown...Tucker")

Footage of Brown apologising is then overlaid with Tucker saying, "It's a pity we couldn't just make an abbreviation of it, you know, like PFI, which I think stands for Pretty Fucking Embarrassing, if you're a bit sloppy about the details" ("Gordon Brown...Tucker").

By selecting appropriate footage from multiple episodes of *The Thick of It*, editing one of Tucker's rants so it is more appropriate for Brown's gaffe, and splicing it all between Brown's two-faced display, lumbowski makes a clear

connection between the blatant spin-doctoring and disgust of the fictional Malcolm Tucker and the nonfictional world of UK politics. Even the use of the title screen with the word "live" suggests that *The Thick of It*s savage satire has come to life, and that the BBC satire itself is a realistic reflection of how contemporary politics is conducted.

As a user-generated paratext, the video does more than associate Brown with the likes of Tucker, it also contributes to the "construction and circulation of textual meaning" (Jenkins qtd. in Gray *Sold Separately* 145); in other words, it extends how we can interpret, understand and relate to *The Thick of It*. Gray argues that user-generated paratexts "invite different relationships to the associated film or television program, and all stand to recalibrate the text's interpretive trajectory as a result" (*Sold Separately* 162). He stresses that not all paratexts have equal semiotic influence, a pertinent point given that this video in particular only got just over 17 thousand views. While this is still a lot of views, it pales in comparison to other *YouTube* paratexts of *The Thick of It* and *In the Loop* which have garnered well over 100 and 200 thousand views, most of which are celebratory compilations of the satire's creative swearing and abuse, often conducted by Tucker in "best of" vids. The number of these kinds of paratexts and their number of views cannot be singled out as a clear indicator of paratextual influence, especially when paratexts take so many different forms and, as they are consumed, contribute collectively in various degrees to how a text is framed. Furthermore, not all paratexts are created equal. Official industry-generated paratexts are often seen as more legitimate (they have an "authorised" blessing as such) and are therefore given more weight in how viewers come to interpret a text. Unofficial user-generated paratexts (epitexts) are often products that carve "alternative pathways through texts" (*Sold Separately* 143) and allow users to explore certain aspects of a text in more detail than the text or official paratexts allow. In the case of lumbowski's video, it furthers a popular understanding that *The Thick of It* is a realistic portrayal of how contemporary politics works, while associating contemporary politics with the cut-throat satirical spin of *The Thick of It*.

Comments on the video reflect this narrative, with one user arguing that "it goes to show just how relevant *The Thick of It* is to real world politics" and another posting, "I immediately thought 'The Thick of It' and Malcolm Tucker when I saw Brown's bigoted woman gaff. I went looking on youtube and there you were with this wonderful piece" ("Gordon Brown...Tucker"). Another asked, "where's the

pisswoman," referencing a first season episode where the Social Affairs Minister Hugh Abbot is confronted by a woman who is struggling with the care of her elderly mother. She asks the Minister, "do you know what it's like to clean up your own mother's piss?" Much like Brown, Abbot is considerate towards the woman before being particularly nasty behind closed doors. One of his staffers is even filmed and then broadcast swearing at the woman to shut up (S1 E4 *The Thick of It*). *Guardian* blogger Kathy Sweeny also identified these similarities, noting that Brown's encounter was "like viewing a live-action episode of The Thick of It" and that it was "strangely reminiscent" of Abbot's fictional encounter (n.pag). She then posted a number of "Thick of It moments which seem remarkably – unbelievably perhaps – similar to the real-life political rough and tumble" (n.pag). Brain Reade of *The Daily Mirror* made the same observation, saying that fans of *The Thick of It* would be "suffering déjà vu (and split sides)" when observing Brown's gaffe (n.pag).

Another *YouTube* video uses the exchange between Abbot and the "pisswoman" by putting the audio over footage of UK Health Secretary Andrew Lansley being confronted by a member of the public. This video received over 79 thousand views and was so expertly dubbed that many users thought Lansley had truly made Abbot's comments, much to the scorn of those users familiar with *The Thick of It*. The visual action between Lansley and the elderly lady eerily reflects *The Thick of It*s audio, even down to Lansley smiling to the visibly angry woman as the audio has her questioning what he finds so funny ("Andrew Lansley"). It, like the Gordon Brown and Malcolm Tucker video, further narratives about contemporary politics as "mere spin" and dishonesty, and contributes to the widely held interpretation of *The Thick of It* as a disconcertingly accurate satire of the political process. This déjà vu, where action in the ideoscape seemingly proves assertions made in the mediascape, contributes to a lessening of ideological power for the political actors concerned and an increase to the vilified textual producers of programs like *The Thick of It*. Satire may reveal or uncover manipulations in politics, but it is another thing altogether when politics confirms the legitimacy of this uncrowning.

Original Citizen Satire: Rap News

Not all citizen satirists use and remix pre-existing footage from news or television satire. Many create satire, with little or no repurposed footage. A fine

example of this can be seen in Juice Media's "Juice Rap News," a series of videos that use satire and rap to critique topical issues, especially the mainstream media's coverage of such issues. Its website describes it as "the internet nation's off-beat musical, current-affairs programme, responsible for turning bollocks-news into socio-poetic/comedic analyses which everyone can relate to and understand" ("About Juice Rap News" n.pag). Its Melbourne-based creators, Hugo Farrant and Giordano Nanni, have produced 20 editions of Rap News since 2009, and have featured cameos from high-profile public figures such as Julian Assange[24] ("Rap News 5"; "Rap News 20") and Noam Chomsky ("Rap News 10"). All the videos feature a news anchor character named Robert Foster (played by Hugo Farrant), who raps social commentary and interviews outrageous characters that satirise both politicians and political ideologies more generally, particularly in the form of General Baxter, an American general who stands in for American imperialism, and Terence Moonseed, a neo-hippy conspiracy theorist. Foster is frequently the voice of reason against his guests' excessively ridiculous claims and behaviours, much in the same way that Jon Stewart, as observed by Gettings, frequently corrects or calls out his satirically ignorant and unethical correspondents on *The Daily Show* (20-22). Foster plays the truth-teller role, even directly calling for truth, justice and fairness.

Rap News itself regularly tackles the same issues, especially promoting pro-environmental, anti-war and anti-censorship narratives. On the spectrum between cynical and kynical, Rap News sits firmly on the kynical end of the spectrum. While it appears deeply cynical about the integrity of governments, politicians and the mainstream media, it continually hails revolutionary narratives about the potential for the internet and grassroots action in what it often calls "the human experiment." It consistently maintains that truth is something that can and should be sought. Like many of its television satire equivalents, Rap News is left-leaning but also attacks those who identify with the left but are deemed to be betraying its values. An example of this can be seen in the "rap battle" that Foster adjudicates between satirical versions of famed British climate change denier Lord Monckton and former US Vice-President and climate change campaigner, Al Gore. Lord Monckton is

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[24] Julian Assange made contact with Farrant and Nanni after seeing their first video and invited them to visit him in London for a "sneak peak" of the Iraqi War Logs before they were released by Wikileaks, an experience which shaped the subsequent Rap News 5 which featured Assange himself (Martin and Roldan n.pag).

presented as quite a deranged figure, his arms flailing and his body shaking about aggressively as he raps about "the Empire" and "natives" of the developing world. In an exchange with Foster, Monckton's evidence against climate change comes under scrutiny:

> Foster: Lord Monckton! Let me hear from you. Have any of your articles been peer reviewed?
>
> Monckton: Well, no, but the SPPI has published a few.
>
> Foster: The Science and Public Policy Institute. Their chief policy advisor happens to be who?
>
> Monckton: Well, me.
>
> Foster: You? So you publish you. I think we've heard enough from you. People, please, research the truth. Nowadays it isn't tough to do (Farrant and Nanni "RN 3 Transcript" n.pag; "Rap News 3").

Yet Gore also faces harsh criticism. He is satirised as egotistical, using climate change for his own self-interest. He is seen having make-up applied as Foster throws to him and in one exchange, he even manages to squeeze product placement into his environmental message:

> Monckton: …I'm not lying and unlike Gore, I'm not proselytising.
>
> Gore: Well, I'm not prosel-whatchamatising, I'm providing *The Inconvenient Truth* on DVD for 25.99 and if we keep piling CO2 at a maximum rate, disaster waits, we need Cap And Trade (Farrant and Nanni "RN 3 Transcript" n.pag; "Rap News 3").

Despite instances such as this, Rap News is still much more radical and idealistic, maintaining its kynicism while investing essentialist notions of truth and justice in people and movements, something that the likes of *The Chaser* and *The Daily Show* rarely do (though there have been notable instances). Julian Assange and Wikileaks are consistently constructed as saviours of the Fourth Estate, featuring predominantly in 6 of the 20 videos. Rap News' constant heralding of Wikileaks as a true pillar of the Fourth Estate is an example of how particularly kynical satires may sometimes veer towards idealism. In Rap News 13, Assange is presented as a heroic Luke Skywalker-type figure in a *Star Wars* parody where Rupert Murdoch stands in for the evil Emperor and the American military is imagined as General Baxter in Darth Vader garb. The satirical Assange double, in this edition and others, does not make a lot of jokes, instead making his claims solemnly, for instance, by declaring

"we publish truth instead of lies." Foster supports this claim by saying that both Assange and Murdoch have "transformed journalism's focus," adding "by exposing secret dealings," and gesturing to Assange, "or by keeping truths enclosed," and gesturing to Murdoch (Farrant and Nanni "RN 13 Transcript"; "Rap News 13").

Eventually, Assange is taken away by two women in lingerie and Storm Trooper helmets – "Swede Troopers" – in reference to Sweden's attempt to extradite Assange on sexual assault charges. Rap News alludes to these charges with some ambivalence. By using Storm Troopers to represent the women making the sexual assault claims, Rap News can be seen adhering to the idea that the charges are invented and the women involved are mere tools of those who wish to extradite Assange to Sweden and then to America to face charges of treason and "aiding the enemy." However, the satirical Assange's response to the Swede Troopers destabilises this reading. He grins, looks the women over and then says to Foster, "hey, this reminds me of my time in Sweden." Rap News, while clearly suggesting that the charges are being used as a way to extradite Assange to America, does not pass comment on whether or not he is guilty of those charges. On the one hand, Assange's willingness to go with the women and the women taking him away could be seen to imply that the sex between Assange and the two women was consensual. On the other, Assange's grin, his confident, almost arrogant body language, and the boastful "hey, this reminds me of my time in Sweden," present Assange as having the power and cockiness of young men who joke crudely and disrespectfully about sex, women and consent. Assange is still very much the hero of Fourth Estate journalism in Rap News, but his image as a heroic incorruptible figure is, even for just a moment, problematised by this ambivalence.

This is one example of how Rap News manages not to lapse into complete idealism by showing that, while it will define certain people and movements as principled, it will not blindly assert that those people are essentially just and true. Ultimately, Rap News maintains kynicism's ever-questioning nature and demand for truth. As original user-generated satire with hundreds of thousands of views each video and the participation of high-profile public figures, Rap News is a prime example of citizen satire with kynical bite. Interestingly, despite being an Australian production, Rap News focuses predominantly on American politics. Australian public figures are rarely satirised or discussed, aside from Rap News 13, where Gillard is shown to be a tool of the American "Empire," and Rap News 20, which

covers the 2013 Federal Election and features parodies of Gillard, Rudd and Abbott, alongside an appearance from the real Julian Assange. The only Australian public figure to appear extensively in the videos is Assange, with numerous mentions to and affectionate mimetic representations of the Wikileaks founder. Even this, though, is mainly done in relation to America's stance on Assange's work with Wikileaks. His Australian citizenship – and the Australian Government's consequential reaction to Wikileaks – comes up in only one video. This can be seen as a reflection of the dominance of American content in various Australian mediascapes, and the ease in which the internet allows one to gain access to foreign mediascapes and ideoscapes.

The Rap News videos are hosted exclusively on *YouTube*, even to the extent that the videos are embedded on their independent website from *YouTube*. Yet Rap News is another example of citizen satire truly transgressing its online distribution point. The duo have been interviewed by Montreal print and online magazine *The Link* (Pool n.pag), the Portland "artisan collective and interview series" The Art of Dismantling (Richards n.pag) and San Francisco-based citizen journalism project *Media Roots* (Martin and Roldan n.pag) among numerous other online publications. The raps have featured on television via the global satellite television network Al Jazeera English ("Listening Post") and the pair have been interviewed by the American bureau of global television network Russia Today ("Rap News: Juice is Loose").

Rap News 20 has garnered the most press attention for notable reasons. In this episode, Foster interviews satirical doubles of Rudd, Gillard and Abbott in an attempt to learn more about their policies for the 2013 Federal Election. The video uses parodic scenes, references and even music from the popular fantasy series *Game of Thrones*, in a ruthless satire of the Rudd-Gillard coups, current Australian refugee policy, Abbott's history of sexist and homophobic statements, and the general negativity of the politicians' "violent campaign" (Farrant and Nanni "RN 20 Transcript"; "Rap News 20"). Ken Oathcarn, a character who represents bogan[25] Australia, as played by Nanni in numerous episodes, visits the real Julian Assange

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[25] "Bogan" is Australian slang for "an uncultured and unsophisticated person" ("Australian Oxford Dictionary"). In many ways, a bogan is much like the larrikin; they share many working class national traits and are seen to be uniquely Australian characters. However, the bogan shares none of the self-aware playfulness or anti-authoritarianism of the larrikin.

who is confined in London's Ecuadorian Embassy.[26] Oathcarn convinces Assange that if he is to be successful in his election bid for a Senate seat, he is in need of a make-over. Assange dons a flannel shirt, a blonde mullet wig and a fake Australian flag tattoo, and proceeds to sing a parody of John Farnham's "You're The Voice." The video went viral soon after being posted online. Not only did it feature in numerous high-profile online publications such as *Buzzfeed* (Hall n.pag), *Salon* (Gupta n.pag), and the online version of *Esquire* (Hepburn n.pag), it also featured on *The Chaser*'s 2013 Federal Election coverage (S1 E3 *Hamster Decides;* "Hamster Decides"), *The Project* (26 August 2013 *The Project;* "The Project"), ABC Radio, who interviewed Farrant and Nanni (Young n.pag), *The New Yorker* (Coscarelli n.pag), *The Huffington Post* ("Julian Assange Stars" n.pag) and *The Guardian* ("Julian Assange Dons" n.pag).

Rap News 20 was criticised and praised, with most of the commentary focused on Assange's appearance instead of the election satire. In a keen illustration of Rap News transcending its online mediascape, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa publically chastised Assange for his appearance in the video, telling a press conference, "we have sent him a letter: he can campaign politically [from the Embassy], but without making fun of Australian politicians. We are not going to allow that" ("Ecuador President Rafael" n.pag). Additionally, many major media outlets failed to recognise the video as satire, calling Rap News 20 a "campaign video," in what Farrant and Nanni described as "true to form." They added,

> In the world of the internet parody culture, what we're doing is accepted and most people and most of the comments on the video and on *Twitter* and *Facebook* are overwhelmingly positive. It's no surprise that once things are taken out of context and brought into the world, of, you know, the considerably more sober world of the mainstream media, these out of context quotes can be portrayed as offensive…We don't really engage with that audience. Our audience is on the internet. We really pride ourselves on making an internet show and we're trying to get people away from the more conventional, centralised, one-way media model, such as, basically, the traditional media. We love the fact that people can watch the video, post comments, we reply to

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[26] In 2012, Assange successfully sought diplomatic asylum from Ecuador to avoid extradition from the UK to Sweden. He has been in London's Ecuadorian embassy since.

comments, it's a two way dialogue, it's a totally different culture (qtd. in Young n.pag).

Clearly, Rap News is an example of citizen satire transcending online mediascapes to contribute to debates that occur in global and local ideoscapes. Even its very production is indicative of the global flow of technology, communication and community. While based in Melbourne, Rap News involves the volunteer collaboration of multiple online users all over the world, including users who translate the raps into 11 different languages, an animator and visual effects artist in Germany and an MC from Greece. Rap News also seeks donations to "help us remain independent, and [all donations] go towards the costs of creating new episodes: e.g. equipment, costumes, wigs and Robert's shampoo" ("Donate" n.pag). Transcripts and MP3s are made freely available to anyone who visits the website. Aside from donations, Rap News received funding in 2013 from Kindle Project, an organisation based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that provides funding to

> People and projects addressing a broad range of issues and avenues of change, including: conflict transformation, education, environmental and social justice, the arts, food and seed sovereignty, public policy, civil disobedience, film and other media ("About Us" n.pag).

Rap News received one of seven 2013 Makers Muse Awards, which "honours artists working in all mediums and forms" who are "questioning, confronting, exploring, framing or reframing" various mainstream or dominant ways of understanding or experiencing the world ("Makers Muse Awards" n.pag). Application for these awards is by invitation only, further illustrating Rap News' global reach. Due to its increasing production values, donation and funding support and multiple-user contributions, Rap News can be seen to walk the line between citizen satire and pro-am satire. In its current state, I prefer to consider it an example of a citizen satire project, where *produsage* occurs through the fragmented pooling of multiple individuals' skills and resources. Production is still done autonomously of any industry body or group, despite funding and the duo's interaction with and support of Wikileaks.

Citizen Satire on Twitter

Citizen satire does not only emulate its television counterparts; many examples can be found outside the audio-visual medium. One example can be seen on *Twitter*, where there has been an explosion of fake accounts parodying everyone from popular fictional characters and celebrities, to dead US presidents and contemporary journalists. Twitter has become a space where parody and satire run rife. Some examples include @CheneysOldHeart, a twitter account pretending to be the evil old heart that was removed via organ transplant from Former US Vice-President Dick Cheney, and @FakePewResearch, an account tweeting parodic statistics like "this year's most popular women's costumes: sexy nurse (25%); sexy cop (25%); victim of patriarchal culture (50%)" (31 October 2012). In a truly postmodern twist, there are numerous parody accounts of satirical politicians, with *The Thick of It*s main characters featuring in numerous accounts (such as @MrMalcolmTucker, @MalcolmTucker_, @Malcolm_Tucker, @PeterMannionMP, @NicolaMurryMP and even @MalcTuckersMum).

In Australia, fake accounts of politicians and journalists are also abundant. *Australian MP Tweets*, a website that tracks Australian politicians' *Twitter* usage, has collated a list of fake Australian politician accounts totalling 98 accounts as of 2012 (@AusMPtweets), and many additional fake accounts can be found online. These accounts tweet satirically-excessive policy statements from the point of view of the politician being parodied. They also reply to and tweet other users (often corresponding official accounts), and respond to topical issues. For example, when journalist Latika Bourke tweeted "oh the tests we could apply to pollies before they're allowed to enter the Chamber…", the fake account @SenatorJoyce satirised National's Senator Barnaby Joyce's rural ocker bloke persona by replying "'Can you run 100m carrying a sheep'? (for WA, substitue (sic) a 50kg sack of rock'). Like a real Australian" (30 May 2012). On the other side of politics, @WayneSwan satirises Treasure Wayne Swan's economic management by tweeting things like "Xmas: What do you get someone who has everything? More Debt! #MyGiftToYou #Swanee" ("Xmas..." 11 December 2012) and "'Hi Wayne, its Treasury here. Unfortunately you under estimated the deficit by $22Billion this year." #CallsThatWerentPranks" ("Hi Wayne..." 10 December 2012).

Many of the fake *Twitter* accounts are a lot more affectionate in their mocking. @Fake_Penny_Wong parodies Labor's Penny Wong as a bad-mouthed bad-ass politician, who tweets things like "I've seen alcoholic seagulls regurgitate fresher stuff than what Abbott is in #qt[27]" ("I've seen..." 28 November 2012), "the Libs in Govt is more of a Shelbyville idea #auspol[28]" ("The Libs..." 10 December 2012) and "who's the Customs head honcho I need to have removed for allowing pastel colored men's shorts back into the country? #auspol" ("Who's the..." 25 September 2012). There are numerous other examples, and more fake accounts pop up every day. High profile politicians all feature in multiple satiric accounts that range from the vitriolic and cynical to the affectionate and frivolous. While all constitute a valuable expression of playful engagement with politics through parody and satire, not all can be considered citizen satire. Under my definition of citizen satire as user-generated satirical content informed by critical political sentiment, @andrewbolt provides an excellent example.

@andrewbolt, one of the most popular and highly publicised fake twitter accounts in Australia, is a satire of controversial, right-wing columnist Andrew Bolt. Before 2010, @andrewbolt made no direct indication that it was a fake account, using Bolt's name but letting the excessive bigotry of the tweets signal that the account was a parody. It mocked Bolt's famous alarmist statements with such tweets as "I suggest we limit the population with a 'one lefty' policy. That is if a family has more than 2 lefties, the smaller one gets shot" (qtd. in Ramadge n.pag)[29] and constantly used the word "barbarian" after the real Andrew Bolt used it in his column. Bolt would later describe the user behind @andrewbolt as a barbarian, much to the user's delight. In August 2010, Bolt publically acknowledged the account's existence for the first time, despite it being in existence for well over a year and a half, and claimed that the account was "guilty of identity theft and defamation" (qtd. in Ramadge n.pag). He requested that *Twitter* shut down the account three times and then threatened the user publicly on his *Sun Herald* blog, but these attempts failed

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[27] #qt is the hashtag used when tweeting comments about Parliament Question Time. It is commonly used by journalists and politicians.

[28] #auspol is a popular hashtag used to tweet about Australian politics. The mention to Shelbyville, the rival town to *The Simpson's* Springfield, also aligns this parody Wong with popular culture.

[29] I cannot quote directly from @andrewbolt during this period because all the account's tweets before September 2010 were deleted. There was no statement about why these tweets were removed, but as the real Andrew Bolt began to claim defamation in August 2010, it is reasonable to assume that the user deleted all the tweets that were previously made without the stated proviso that they were fake.

to bring down the account. While @andrewbolt instantly changed its listed name and bio to specify that the account was fake, it continued to mock Bolt, tweeting, "Other Bolt has just updated his blog using the word 'barbarians.' I no longer know who the parody is" (qtd. in Ramadge n.pag).

To this day, @andrewbolt continues to publish regularly, posting tweets such as "Gay marriage leads to polygamy which lead to horse marriage which leads to a generation of gay, promiscuous horses. To this I say 'nay'" ("Gay marriage..." 6 July 2012) and "If Aboriginies (sic) really want equality then they should start living as long and being as wealthy and well educated as the rest of us" ("If Aboriginies..." 26 January 2012).@andrewbolt satirises the rhetoric from Bolt's columns and blog posts, but also parodies the man's politics more generally by responding to topical political events (often live-tweeting *Q&A*) even when Bolt has not made a comment on said topic or issue. There is strong political purpose behind this citizen satire. The day after Bolt made his public threats, the user behind @andrewbolt wrote a non-satirical article for *Crikey*, saying:

> I felt as a major right-wing commentator [Bolt] would make an ideal target for my satirical pen…Satire is a powerful tool. The *Pure Poison* blog does a great service by rebutting many of Bolt's articles, but in thousands of words. Using Twitter I can make the identical point in 140 characters and it will have more of an impact. This seems to cause Bolt bother.
>
> Andrew has charged that I am too close to his writing and not parodic enough, perhaps not realising that this reflects worse on him than it does on me…He also claims that I am engaging in "identity theft", which sounds as though I am renting suits in his name and not paying the bill. This, too, is nonsense. I encourage *Crikey* readers to read my tweets and decide for yourself whether I am parodying him or stealing his identity. If Bolt is right, Bob Hawke should take Max Gillies to court (Fake Andrew Bolt n.pag).

The user astutely identifies that brevity is what makes *Twitter* such a useful platform for citizen satire. When done well, a sentence or two can skilfully satirise and therefore lay bare the mechanics behind a political position, argument or journalistic technique. Users who follow these fake accounts can also get in on the satirical act, tweeting back similarly ridiculous responses and posting satirical tweets with hashtags invented by fake accounts. For example, in 2012, Julia Gillard was continually questioned over her alleged involvement in the fraudulent use of an

Australian Workers' Union (AWU) slush fund. Despite holding many interviews and press conferences, one of which lasted for almost an hour until every question was answered, Gillard continued to face questions in the media and in Question Time. Mocking both Bolt and the media for demanding that the same questions be answered for months on end, @andrewbolt encouraged followers to "post your legitimate questions to #gillardquestions so she can't ignore them. Together, we will get to the bottom" ("Everyone post..." 22 November 2012). Many users then created their own little satirical jabs at the media using this hashtag. When @andrewbolt tweeted "are Gillard and L Ron Hubbard the same person? I'm not saying they are, but why won't she admit it? #gillardquestions," the user @AbstractCode replied, "@andrewbolt Did Gillard shoot JFK? Why is she hiding time travel from us? #GillardQuestions" (@AbstractCode 22 November 2012). The tweets got sillier and sillier, with @andrewbolt tweeting "Gillard remains silent on the 7 herbs and spices. Are they ground up people? #gillardquestions" ("Gillard remains..." 22 November 2012). Other users continued, posting tweets like "is the carbon tax a cobra strike or a python squeeze?[30] Why is she silent on snake similes? #GillardQuestions" (@punzikstan 22 November 2012) and "until Gillard addresses it, how can we know that she didn't kill Harold Holt! #gillardquestions #holtquestions" (@ComradeSteeve 23 November 2012). Though each individual's satire is limited to a single sentence or two, they are pointed and concise. When each tweet is pooled together under the #quillardquestions hashtag, users contribute to a much larger satire on the media's treatment of Gillard and the AWU scandal. The hashtag has the ability to bring together and create a much bigger and interactive satire than the individual tweet allows.

   Twitter activity and user posts have become instant "vox-pop" sources of material for television and print journalists, with many programs featuring tweets from all over the world as some kind of barometer of public opinion. This is another example of the overlap between global mediascapes, where mainstream mediascapes mine content from online mediascapes, which itself mines the mainstream media. The political debates on *Twitter* are often real-time responses to topical events, where users argue, vent, satirise and seek more information or justification from the

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[30] This references Tony Abbott, who argued that the carbon tax's influence on the cost of living would be a "python squeeze" (gradual) not a "cobra strike" (sudden). The user satirises both Abbott and the media in this instance.

journalists or politicians involved in these events. Debate is a lot more unwieldy, and users may often respond to an agenda set by the mainstream media, but what is actually picked up and run with is set by users. Politicians have been known to respond instantly when challenged by a trending hashtag or even an individual user with a rather pointed tweet on policy. The real Andrew Bolt resorted to public threats online and in print in an effort to silence @andrewbolt, and other mainstream media outlets responded by publishing some of @andrewbolt's most ruthless tweets. Tweeting satire may not set or change the mainstream news agenda, but it is another example of the evolving nature of citizen engagement with politics.

Playing with Habitus: *1984* is not an "instruction manual"

This chapter has provided examples of how interactions between global landscapes have contributed to discursive fluctuations in television satire, the mediation of politics (especially by politicians themselves) and even citizenship. Television satire has been paratextuality extended by official and unofficial online texts, found spaces to publish additional content, and also lost a level of content control to online users. Politicians and political parties have found new ways of engaging with and presenting themselves to voters online that can, at times, influence their image offline. If television is a medium of images, social networking is a medium of play and irony. Any user, let alone politicians, able to demonstrate a level of play and irony gains a lot more legitimacy in online spaces. There is a clear difference between the informal mischief of politicians on *Twitter* and the serious use of parody and satire in online election campaigning. While both show a growing awareness and use of social media, the satirical campaign advertisements never quite manage to lose their clear attachment to the party machine. Despite the fun, the modern cynicism behind this kind of satire shines through.

As for online users – "those formerly known as the audience,"– they display a range of evolving practices in their online engagement with politics through satire. By exposure to rapid global flows, online users are changing the way they make political statements. They form communities and projects that transcend ethnicity and geography, and create content that, at its most successful, breaks out of its online distribution point and enters local and foreign mediascapes and ideoscapes in varying ways. Even at the less active end of the social media spectrum, audiences of this

online activity can comment, share, re-tweet, reply, quote and re-caption all of this online material. At the more active end, there are user-generated content and citizen satirists, where the audience actually creates their own media.

To make any conclusive statement about the actual influence of social media, user content and satire on political discourse would be misleading and impossible, especially given the multitude and changeability of global flows. We can, however, return to observations about the relationship between Appadurai's global flows and Bourdieu's habitus. Edwards argues that Appadurai's work "adds more depth to our understanding of how change emerges by explicitly moving away from traditional formulations of dominance and, instead, focusing on the new global cultural economy" (33). The "complex, overlapping, disjunctive" (Appadurai 32) nature of global flows exposes citizens to many different possibilities and ways of imagining and interacting with the world. This multitude of imaginings opens up possibilities for change in the habitus; in other words, "imagination is an important locus of resistance to symbolic power" (Edwards 43). Edwards goes on to acknowledge that "the imaginaries of dominant groups are more deeply embedded in the global order" (43) and I do largely agree with this sentiment. I would only add that social media enables users more scope to access and envisage different political "imaginaries" because, as Jericho said of *Twitter*, "the message now arrives through a medium not controlled by anyone" (27). Social media websites may be owned by large, profit-driven companies, some of which have large and intrusive advertising (namely *YouTube* and *Facebook*), but the manner of discussion or conduct is not directed by a top-down structure but by individually-driven interactions between users. Habitus is an "*open system of dispositions* that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 133). Active online users exist within social conditions that are global and ever-modulating, opening up the variety of experiences and imaginings that can destabilise habitus.

If the internet is to continue providing a space for people to envisage politics differently and in varying ways, it is important that citizen satirists and other online users have a level of freedom uninhibited by harsh copyright, censorship and privacy laws. The ever-evolving nature of Web 2.0 means that *how* one plays online will continue to change, and how such change will manifest is already a hotly discussed topic on and offline, often with citizen satirists themselves. In the 23 March 2012

episode of *Planet America*, Chas Licciardello interviewed Hugh Atkin about "Will the Real Mitt Romney Please Stand Up?" only a few days after its release. As well as cheekily calling Atkin "as good as a cat," referring to the popularity of cat videos and memes on the internet, Licciardello asked Atkin about copyright, particularly given that Atkin's first major viral hit, "BarackRoll," was initially taken down for breaching copyright law. Licciardello noted that Atkin's response to this had been in another mash up video, "A Muted Response," where numerous public figures and comedians were mashed together to challenge out-dated intellectual property laws. Large sections of a Rick Astley interview where he was actually asked about "BarackRoll" were included, where the singer described Atkin's parody of his song as "priceless" and "absolutely brilliant" ("Muted Response"). Astley also added, though this section of the video was not shown on *Planet America*,

> What I think is amazing about the internet is that it's under people's control. I know "corporations" [gesturing, using scare quotes] also kind of run the internet to some degree but people can do whatever they wanna do with it ("Muted Response").

> Licciardello was particularly interested in Atkin's response given that he could see the copyright issue from two perspectives: as a content creator and as a law student. Atkin acknowledged that copyright was a "tricky issue" but that there were well established laws in Australia, the UK and the US that allowed for "fair use parody" and that media companies should be a bit less trigger happy when issuing copyright infringement notices ("23 March 2012"). "BarackRoll" did after all return online and still remains on Atkin's *YouTube* channel, having proven that it was fair use.

While copyright is and will continue to be a complex issue for content creators, Astley's comment that the internet is "under people's control" is worth examination. Rap News is constantly promoting the importance of the internet staying "under people's control," seeing it as the last forum free from government control and surveillance. In one video, a satirical George Orwell calls those unconcerned with internet regulation "noobs,"[31] gesturing at a copy of *1984* and emphasising that it is not "an instruction manual" (Farrant and Nanni "RN 15 Transcript"; "Rap News 15"). He promotes a mantra for users to live by – "Who controls the Internet,

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[31] A noob (often spelt n00b) is an internet term that describes users who are new and particularly amateurish in their use of a particular online technology.

controls the data, And who controls the data, controls the future" – and then encourages the use of Tor, an onion router that allows users to surf and communicate anonymously. Rap News anchor Foster thanks Orwell – who renames himself George *Tor*well – and continues on the issue of control and surveillance,

> We're told we need safety, which is precious, yes,
>
> But can a society that can enforce *all* its laws ever progress?
>
> Hindsight shows that many figures guilty of "thought-crime"
>
> Turned out to be luminaries and heroes before their time.
>
> But if a surveillance state had reigned then in this form and design
>
> Just think of all the progress we may've all been denied:
>
> Could lobbies for women's or gay rights have appeared and thrived
>
> Would revolutionary ideals have materialised
>
> Would science have pioneered or even survived,
>
> If every word had been monitored by thought police and spies?
>
> Big Brother brings chilling effects, freezing our collective hopes
>
> He doesn't protect *our* safety, but protects the status quo,
>
> And threatens this internet, the one channel yet uncontrolled
>
> whose openness we are now called upon to effect and uphold (Farrant and Nanni "RN 15 Transcript"; "Rap News 15").

This may seem like simplistic revolutionary narrative, but it echoes similar sentiments from Atkin's anti-copyright video featuring Astley and many other content producers online. Currently, skilled online users like Atkin, the Rap News duo and a generation of politically-active youth who grew up with social media and new technology do have an advantage. Their habitus, their "feel for the game," operates within the field of social media and online spaces. As has been shown throughout this chapter, politicians, journalists and the mainstream media industry can be very hit or miss when it comes to online activity. As a whole, they still fumble with the constantly-changing lexicon and practices of the online mediascape. Online users, however, have already developed a "feel" for the online field that means their habitus allows them to adapt easily to rapid changes.

Conclusion

In 2010, *The Daily Show* provided unique coverage of the US 9/11 first responders health care bill, the Zadroga Bill. This bill would provide $7.4 billion in health care for the fire fighters, police officers and health workers who suffered chronic health problems directly caused by their work as 9/11 responders (Beam n.pag). The bill was, however, not successful because Republicans refused to pass any legislation before the Bush tax cuts to the top 2% of income earners in America were extended. Republicans also disagreed with the way the bill would be funded through a tax. This tax would close a corporate loophole that allowed foreign multinationals to avoid paying tax on monies earned in the US due to the fact they were incorporated in tax-haven countries. While the bill did get a majority of votes, it did not get the two-thirds that the Democrats required, a procedural set on the bill so that Republicans would not have the opportunity to make any amendments.

Jon Stewart delivered his most scathing performance, mixing satire with genuine, vitriolic outrage. He labelled the bill "the least we can do/no brainer act of 2010" ("Lame-as-F@#k") and chastised Republicans, the party that "turned 9/11 into a catch phrase" ("Worst Responders"), for promoting and benefiting from patriotic 9/11 narratives and then filibustering first responder health care. He shamed Republicans through a satirical "tribute." Introducing the clip, he said,

> Here's a little tribute we put together to some of those illustrious Republican Senators who, when it has served them in the past, have found comfort and advantage in evoking the heroes of 9/11, and yet, when it came time to return the favour, delivered their message loud and clear: *no* ("Lame-as-F@#k").

The clip juxtaposed patriotic 9/11 quotes from Republican Senators alongside footage of them casting their "NAY" vote on the Zadroga Bill. It featured patriotic music in the background, with lyrics such as "I'm proud to be an American," until finally, a love heart with "GOP + 9/11 2001-2010" in its centre appears on screen and breaks in half ("Lame-as-F@#k").

As the filibuster continued to be drawn out, the media came into Stewart's firing line for failing to report on the bill. Stewart shamed the three major broadcast networks – ABC, CBS and NBC – for ignoring the Zadroga Bill for over two and half months yet reporting such things as the Beatles back catalogue coming to iTunes. He called it an "an outrageous abdication of our responsibility to those who

were most heroic on 9/11" ("Worst Responders"). In mock desperation, he declared, "you know what, I hate to say this. This is a job for Fox News, the nation's leading source of 9/11 based outrage." As the satire continued, it was revealed that Fox News had also ignored the issue, with only one Fox reporter seeming "perturbed by it at all, and although he railed against the filibuster, he never mentioned that it was the Republicans holding up the bill"("Worst Responders"). Starting with feigned enthusiasm and surprise, Stewart eventually punctuated his words by banging his fist on his desk, saying,

> Yet, there was one network that gave the 9/11 responders story the full 22 minutes of intense coverage that it deserves but that network, unfortunately, was Al Jazeera. Our networks were scooped with a sympathetic Zadroga Bill story by the same network that Osama Bin Laden sends his mix tapes to" ("Worst Responders").

> In the 16 December broadcast of *The Daily Show*, the final show for 2010, the entire episode was dedicated to coverage of Zadroga, including an interview with former Republican governor Mike Huckabee who urged his fellow Republicans to pass the bill. Most notably, the episode featured a panel interview between Stewart and four 9/11 first responders, all of whom had major health problems. When Stewart asked how they felt about the filibuster, they responded by saying, "we're disgusted, we're disappointed and unfortunately we're hurt. We are proud protectors of the constitution, for the people, by the people, and we wanna know where it was lost" and "for us to be here now, nine years later, still fighting just for our health, for our compensation…I have stage four inoperable throat cancer" ("9/11 First Responders").

This episode was unique for a number of reasons: it dedicated the entire program to advocating for one issue; a Republican was interviewed specifically to rally support for Stewart's cause; and the 9/11 responders who appeared were given a voice on a comedy program in lieu of traditional news that had ignored them. Yet, what made this coverage truly remarkable were the events that followed. The next day, the news media started to cover the issue. On Fox News, conservative pundits turned on Republicans in a fashion unprecedented on the famously right-wing news network. Shepard Smith, host of *Fox Report*, first asked, "how do they sleep at night after this vote on ground zero first responders?" Despite Fox News' cagey relationship with *The Daily Show*, Smith referenced Stewart's coverage the night

before, saying, "he's just flat on, absolutely right," before unleashing his own
Stewart-esque tirade against his own conservative base:

> We're able to put a 52 story floor building so far down there at Ground Zero,
> we're able to pay for tax cuts for billionaires who don't need them and it's not
> going to stimulate the economy. But we can't give health care to Ground Zero
> first responders who ran right into the fire? ...It's disgusting, it's a national
> disgrace, it's a shame and everybody who voted against it should have to stand
> up and account for himself or herself. Is anybody going to hold them
> accountable?...They [first responders] just need a little bit of help, it wasn't a lot
> of money in the grand scheme of things, we spend a lot more money giving
> Warren Buffet his income tax refunds than we do doing anything for those
> people ("Shepherd Smith Rant"; "Shepard Smith Unloads" n.pag; Beam n.pag).

The major networks also picked up on the story, with ABC's evening newscast
and MSNBC's *Rachel Maddow Show* quoting from and replaying extensive excerpts
from *The Daily Show*'s footage, particularly Stewart's interview with the four 9/11
first responders (Stelter n.pag). By 18 December, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand reported
that the bill had gained new Republican support and she hoped they could pass the
legislation before the end of the year (Hulse n.pag). In an article for *The Huffington
Post*, Senator Gillibrand wrote, "the media is more interested in this bill than they've
ever been before, thanks in large part to Jon Stewart's devoting an entire episode of
The Daily Show to the bill last week" (n.pag).

On 20 December, Cenuk Uygur of *The Young Turks*, the largest online news
network in the world[32], discussed these events following *The Daily Show*'s coverage
and reported that the bill now only needed one vote to pass. He credited Jon Stewart
with influence that he had never witnessed in any other commentator:

> I'll tell you, if Jon Stewart hadn't done that show, there's – I know politics, I
> follow it day in day out, I know all the nitty-gritty, I know what was proposed, I
> know what was on the docket. That was not gonna get brought back up, that was
> just gonna die, but Jon Stewart *single-handedly* brought it back and changed it
> and now it will pass. I mean, I cannot give the guy enough credit. I literally have

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[32] The Young Turks reference the *American Heritage Dictionary* in their namesake, taking "Young
Turk" to mean a "young progressive or insurgent member of an institution, movement, or political
party" and a "young person who rebels against authority or societal expectations" ("Company - Young
Turks" n.pag). The network and their programs, most of which are hosted on *YouTube*, are as
professionally produced as their television equivalents and generate 50 million views per month.

never seen any commentator on TV have that kind of effect, not even the Fox News guys, okay, and certainly no progressives. Give him all the credit in the world. You know, look, it already has a great name, but if it didn't – you know, of course, it's in honour of one of the responders – but if it didn't, it should be called the Jon Stewart Bill ("Jon Stewart Changes").

By 22 December, the bill was passed. Though the bill was scaled back to $4.3 billion, *The New York Times* reported that the Senate "unexpectedly approved it just 12 days after Republican senators has blocked a more expensive House version from coming to the floor" (Hernandez n.pag). Both Uygur and Senator Gillibrand called the momentum to get the bill passed a "Christmas miracle," a sentiment that Gillibrand repeated when the bill finally cleared the Senate. Senator Chuck Schumer told ABC News, "the bill has been a huge priority for us in New York, but Jon's attention to this helped turn it into the national issue it always should have been" (qtd. in Madison n.pag). New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg acknowledged that,

Success always has a thousand fathers, but Jon shining such a big, bright spotlight on Washington's potentially tragic failure to put aside differences and get this done for America was, without a doubt, one of the biggest factors that led to the final agreement (qtd. in Carter and Stelter n.pag).

Kenny Specht, one of the 9/11 first responders who Stewart interviewed, said, "I'll forever be indebted to Jon because of what he did" (qtd. in Carter and Stelter n.pag). Even the White House credited Stewart, with Press Secretary Robert Gibbs telling the press gallery, "I think he has put the awareness around this legislation. He's put that awareness in what you guys cover each day, and I think that's good" (qtd. in Madison n.pag). Gibbs even expressed hope for Stewart's influence the day before the bill passed, saying, "I hope he can convince two Republicans to support taking care of those that took care of so many on that awful day in our history" (qtd. in Madison n.pag).

While Stewart refused to comment on the bill's passing and has long rejected any claims of seriousness or influence, he was widely cast, from the White House to first responders themselves, as the person who got the bill passed. This remarkable example shows kynical *parrhesia* and a breach in carnivalesque containment that raises implications beyond the scope of this thesis. Here, the satirist provides not just trusted political commentary, but also effective advocacy. As this thesis draws to a close, I come to consider how my study of contemporary political satire functions

and what it contributes to research going forward, taking this example as an exemplar of the things I have discussed and of possibilities I have yet to consider.

In essence, my thesis provides a study of how political discourse evolves through the interplay between satire and politics. In Chapter 1, I reviewed current scholarship which argues satire has become a source of political information that we increasingly trust in lieu of more traditional journalistic sources. Some proposed that this was the result of a failure in the media, with satire acting almost like a Fifth Estate in calling the Fourth Estate to account. Others suggested that it was symptomatic of changes in journalistic discourse. Stephen Harrington encouraged scholars to expand their understanding of what constitutes journalism, classing non-traditional texts that contribute to robust public debate, like *The Chaser*, as "journalisms."

Chapter 2 explored kynicism, the ancient roots of cynicism, through the "satirical resistance" of Diogenes and his brand of frank truth-telling known as *parrhesia*. It evaluated how kynicism manifests in contemporary satire, such as *The Chaser* and *The Daily Show*, arguing that contemporary kynicism is a postmodern, ironic form driven by an ethical impulse more akin to modernity. I proposed that fellow scholars consider such texts along a spectrum between the kynical and the cynical, using *The Thick of It* as an example of a more cynical text. When satire snarls in kynicism, instead of more cynical sneering, the satirist can be seen demanding more from politics, investing their ridicule in an idea that truth and justice does indeed exist beyond any form of political or journalistic manipulation. In the case of the Zadroga Bill, Jon Stewart's kynical snarling served as a catalyst for the intense public and media pressure that prompted the bill's passing.

In Chapter 3, I supplied an account of the larrikin carnivalesque to bring Australian politics and satire sharply into focus. The carnivalesque was examined as a textual practice where misrule and grotesque realism supersede previous social hierarchies and conventions, all contained within a safe, licensed space. Australia's "distaste for taste" is easily mobilised through carnival in ways that, like all manifestations of carnival, can be subversive, conservative or both. By studying the larrikin's cultural capital as a beloved *parrhesiast* in Australian culture, the chapter showed how national identity and cultural myths play into who we trust to speak or provide truth. I explored the larrikin carnivalesque tradition in Australian satire, arguing that *The Chaser* are today's kynical carnival fools. "Kevin Rudd P.M." was

given as an example of the cynical larrikin carnivalesque, and was shown to lack the ethical impulse implicit in *The Chaser*'s more kynical satire.

Chapter 4 used the theories of kynicism and the larrikin carnivalesque to analyse instances when satirists and politicians intrude on each other's spaces in Australia. It discussed the issue of comic licence, particularly in who is granted the licence to speak in arenas such as satire, politics and journalism, and observed multiple cases where carnivalesque containment breaks. I argued that the kynical fool, already imbued with the cultural capital of the lowbrow larrikin truth-teller, is having substantially more success at playing the king in non-carnival spaces. In comparison, when the king attempts to play within carnival spaces as a way of co-opting this authenticity, they are often uncrowned.

In Chapter 5, I examined how this interplay between satire and politics has manifested online. Television satire "lives on" beyond its initial broadcast, with social media providing a space for the promotion, archiving, sharing and fan re-authoring of satire programs through the distribution of legal and illegal paratexts. However, television satire currently avoids the use of social media in its satire, unlike news programs and comedy shows like *Can of Worms*, instead choosing to mock its perceived triviality through satiric sketches and fake live tweets. Politicians were shown to use social media either brilliantly or badly; the "mischievous" tweeting of Tony Burke and Malcolm Turnbull illustrated that a sense of self-deprecation and irony is beneficial for one's reception through social media, but online party advertising displayed none of these techniques in their Time Warp/*South Park* parodies. The modern cynicism behind such a tactic was clearly visible.

Finally, I used Appadurai's global flows and Bourdieu's habitus to investigate a section of the audience and their place in the interplay between satire and politics. I coined, defined and examined "citizen satire," user-generated satire that makes a strong political critique. Citizen satirists are individual users who may work alone or together in online communities, but they are always autonomous from industry producers. They are *produsers*, partaking in the act of simultaneous consumption and production, and are marked by the political imperative of their work, not production values. Through my main examples – Hugh Atkin, "Malcolm Tucker vs. Gordon Brown," Rap News and @andrewbolt – I showed how global flows facilitate the production and distribution of online satire. Citizen satirists and other online users are changing the way they engage with politics. At its best, citizen satire breaks out

of its online distribution point and enters political debate in local and foreign mediascapes and ideoscapes. Hugh Atkin's videos were found to be particularly successful, with his Mitt Romney video acting as a focal point for many critical discussions about the Republican primaries both on and offline.

This thesis as a whole presents politics as a realm in which certain satirists inhabit the position of *parrhesiast*, where politicians attempt to gain authenticity as an "ordinary person" or "anti-politician" through engagements with the satirist's carnival, and citizen satirists have started to shape political discussion beyond the online spaces where they operate. Returning to Stewart's Zadroga Bill coverage, we see an example of where this interplay may go in the future, with more satirists playing the role of advocate as well as truth-teller. Through the intersections between global flows, other voices are being established and legitimised in political discourse. It will be interesting to see if online satirists like Atkin and the Rap News duo start to build more prominence in the mainstream media, and whether or not such "advocacy satire" could have any kind of success online. Stewart's Zadroga Bill case is indeed exemplary, and no other examples from *The Chaser* or *The Colbert Report* present themselves. While *The Chaser* and Colbert have certainly displayed influence as truth-tellers, there are no cases where their commentary or action can be seen to initiate changes in the law. It cannot be easily hypothesised if advocacy satire is another potential step in satire's evolving place in political discourse; even Jon Stewart goes to great lengths to stress that he is "just a comedian" and his advocating for the Zadroga Bill has never been extended to any other issue, at least not to the same extent.

Yet, some satirists and comedians alike are actively getting involved in the political process. Recently, comedian Beppe Grillo formed and led the political party Five Star Movement[33] in Italy's 2013 general election, picking up 25.55% of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies (the lower house) and 23.79% in the Senate ("Italy Election Deadlock" n.pag). Italy's "clown prince of politics" gained political momentum through his V-day campaign (the V standing for *vaffanculo*: fuck off) which took the form of large public rallies against political and media corruption. Together, Grillo and the crowd would chant *vaffanculo* in a "group therapy session releasing the tension and anger over the failure of Italian politics" (Corcoran n.pag).

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[33] Though Grillo lead the party, he did not actively run for election due to his criminal record which, in Italy, disqualifies a person from seeking political office.

In Brazil, the clown Francisco Oliveira Silva, more commonly known as Tiririca, was actually elected to congress in 2010, using satiric taglines such as "Vote for me as federal deputy so I can help the needy, especially my family" ("Brazilian clown" n.pag).

In Italy's deadlocked election, Grillo ruled out a coalition with any party and said he would not support any new government ("Italy Election Snub"). He maintains that there is truth and justice beyond political manipulation, but not in the current political class who he describes as "liquefied in political diarrhea (sic)" (qtd. in Anderson and Serrapica n.pag). He offers no solutions except a cross over into idealism, claiming that his party wants to bring about a "cultural revolution of the society: to change the political class is the first step" (qtd. in Anderson and Serrapica n.pag) without any of the ironic or self-effacing awareness of Stewart or *The Chaser*. Tiricica, on the other hand, was invited to stand for election by Brazil's minority Republic party, despite having no prior interest or knowledge of politics; an example, perhaps, of modern cynicism where the political party successfully enlisted the help of a popular humourist. Once elected, Tiricica hoped he could influence change. Despite voting against his own party and the government on a few occasions where he believed certain laws would be bad "for the people," his ultimate cynical conclusion was that "those who do the wrong thing…won't stop because this world functions this way" and "what does a congressman do? He works a lot and produces little. That's the reality" (qtd. in J. Leahy n.pag).

It is through Grillo and Tiricica that the cultural capital of the satirist, the comedian or the carnival clown is shown to deliver more noise than action or influence. Here the satirist tries to invade the politician's realm of governance. For *The Chaser*, Stewart and Colbert, they only ever intrude on the *mediation* of politics and, in turn, the politician tries to manage their image through interactions with such satirists. Stewart's Zadroga Bill coverage offers a case that, in considering the best way for satire to actually effect political change, strikes a balance between the two extremes, playing the role of advocate in its representation of political issues while never quite leaving the play-frame of satire. All of these cases illustrate that the satirist is an influential figure, and I would encourage further research not only in how the *parrhesiast* fool influences political discourse but whether or not they constitute positive change. While positive change would certainly be hard to quantify, scholars need to look at the way people discursively invest truth in figures

like satirists, and watch for its abuse in ways that limits our imaginings within habitus. Kynics, working freely within global flows, are valuable because of their constant struggle forward. Their end point, the truth and justice that they insist upon, will never be achieved, but the striving for it enables the imaginings and possibilities that allow innovation within habitus. Even in a world of spectacle and simulacra, truth and authenticity remain powerful mobilising ideas in the discourse of politics.

These thesis-specific guidelines were drafted through consideration of the 2012 Association of Internet Research (AoIR) Ethics Guidelines and through discussion with my supervisors and Associate Professor Michele Willson of Curtin University's Department of Internet Studies. They are based around the understanding that online users make certain material public, but they consider those spaces within a varying degree of public vs. private.

Public Persona and User Identity

I studied examples of freely-available online satirical content and the public sharing and commenting on said content via social media sites such as *YouTube*, *Twitter* and *Facebook*. No login or registration was required to view this material, though login and registration was almost always required for users to post or publish such material. I have grouped users into the following catagories:

1. Public Figure: A person who is widely recognised and has a public persona independent of their online use. For example, politicians, journalists, television satirists, comedians, public commentators and celebrities.

    Referencing procedure:

    As per the referencing of offline texts, public figures will be referenced by name.

2. User with a public persona: A user who regularly publishes online, has an online following, freely identifies themselves with an invented username and/or their real name, actively and freely cultivates a public online identity, and may give interviews or be the subject of news articles or broadcasts, both online and via more traditional media (television or newspaper). In this thesis, I mainly studied material from users with a public persona.

    Referencing procedure:

- Users with a public persona who use their real name shall be quoted and referenced using that name when it forms part of their online identity and reputation (e.g. Hugh Atkin).

- If a username is used instead of a real name, that username shall be quoted and referenced.
- When a user is known widely by a username and a real name (e.g. blogger Grog's Gamut a.k.a Greg Jericho), the name they use when publishing shall be referenced.

3. User with little or no public persona: A user who uploads videos, makes comments and/or tweets but does not have a significant online following and persona. Users with little or no public persona may still occasionally upload content that is widely and publically seen and shared (e.g. a user who posts a popular one-off satirical video that mashes together scenes from a television satire with footage from parliament).

Referencing procedure:

Varied occurding to website and material posted (please see below methods for specific websites).

Method: Specific Websites

YouTube

Satirical videos on *YouTube* were textually analysed. When quoting or referencing these videos, the creators are referred to by username (though usernames may also be the same as the user's actual name, like Hugh Atkin). Since users widely consider creating and broadcasting material on *YouTube* to be a public activity, this is the only case when a user with little or no public persona is be referenced directly (and only by username).

From time to time, user's public comments on these videos are quoted, but usernames are not disclosed, regardless of public persona. Videos or comments made by users who publish under their real name (or a name that clearly identifies the user's offline identity) will not be used in the research unless they are a public figure or a user with a public persona (again, such as Hugh Atkin).

Twitter

Twitter is an online environment widely understood as a public broadcasting space. However, the following considerations were still made:

Generally, only satirical or playful tweets of public figures were analysed.

Satirical or playful interactions between public figures and individuals with less or no public persona were only analysed when all concerned did not have locked accounts (i.e. all their tweets were broadcasted publically).

Tweets made by those with less or no public persona were only referenced in the research by username when:

- The user engages in a public conversation (through tweets) with a public figure or user with public persona (e.g. as seen in multiple satirical exchanges between the infamous @andrewbolt parody account and multiple users regarding government policy).

- The user is posting under a popular hashtag as a form of public political engagement (e.g. users mocking MP Tony Burke's widely-reported style of tweeting the mundane by using the #tweetliketonyburke hashtag).

Facebook

Facebook is considered to be a much more private space, with users limiting what information they share publically and with other users. The only time *Facebook* is referenced in the thesis is to illustrate how some online users post clips of satire to make political points. Only instances on public Pages were explored (i.e. *not* individual profiles or groups/Pages that require users to become members/"like" the Page in order to view the content). Such instances, when used in the research, were only referred to generally. Users were not identified in any way and user comments were not directly quoted or referenced in any manner that could be used to identify the user.

Duty of Care

Despite the methods I used for specific websites, I have not disclosed online identities or included specific examples of online activity when I believe that any harm or embarrassment could come to the online user or creator. For example, during the 2012 US Election, numerous US citizens tweeted that if Obama won, they would move to Australia. Many users justified this because they believed the Australian Prime Minister was a male Christian when, at the time, a female atheist was in office. Australian *Twitter* users then responded to these US users, a few in particular, with ridicule that was both vitriolic and satiric. Some US users deleted their accounts and tweets, but much of the material is still publically available through caching and screenshots that other users share. In a case such as this, the harm or embarrassment to the users does not justify identifying them or using tweets that could be used to identify them. All care was taken to ensure that users' online activity was not taken out of context.

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