On the use of the digital moving image in retooling the Australian political cartooning tradition to a new media context.
DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

Signature: …………………………………………………

Date: ……………19 December 2013………………..
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, who taught me the value of books and the power of words.

And

my eldest daughter Escha, who was born at the same time as this project. She taught me patience and perspective.

And

my youngest daughter Saachi. She taught me to delight in the small things.

And

the beautiful Marcia. Her faith in me gave me the focus, endurance and good humour to complete my project.
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ABSTRACT

This research clarifies the position of the contemporary Australian political cartoonist in the context of a changing media landscape, and examines the implications of the shift of dissemination of news and current events away from news print media to the Internet. The observation that the political cartoon has, throughout its history, adapted and evolved in response to various socio-political and technological changes invites the question of how the art form might continue to endure as a vehicle for subversive political comment in the digital media age. In exploring the creative possibilities afforded by new media technologies and analysing where these outcomes intersect with the conventions and functions of political cartoons, the study specifically locates the digitally constructed, political moving image within the Australian political cartooning tradition. This position is investigated and supported through three key activities: critical engagement with the extant literature; insights gained through interviews with professional, practising political cartoonists deemed to be pioneers of the political moving image; and my development of a creative practice centred on production and dissemination of political animations. The provision of a new, revised taxonomy for the critical analysis and classification of political images compels practitioners, scholars and prize-givers to eschew hitherto inviolable determinants in the characterisation of political cartoon images so that the tradition can endure in the foreseeable future.
In many ways my approach is not dissimilar to the making of a cinematic shot - if I find that my chosen image is not working then it can be simply a matter of winding the action backwards or forwards a few frames until I find the scenario that works.

INTRODUCTION

Given the quality and pedigree of Australia’s political cartoonists, it is surprising that more scholarly attention has not been dedicated to them. Cartoonists themselves have devotedly published surveys and collections of Australian political cartoons - most prominently Vane Lindesay and Les Tanner - and every now and again a collection of the works of a featured cartoonist will appear on book store shelves. Russ Radcliffe’s annual *Best Australian Political Cartoons* anthologies have provided a showcase of the diversity and quality of Australian cartooning since 2003. There has also been some limited public exposure through the activities of The Museum of Australian Democracy, in their annual *Behind the Lines* exhibitions, which publicly acknowledges the legitimacy of political cartoons as both an art form and as valid expressions of social and political commentary.

But apart from the work of a handful of academics - most notably Margeurite Mahood, Professor Joan Kerr, Associate Professor Robert Phiddian, Jonathan King and Ann Turner - research into the lives and works of these larrikin social commentators remains largely neglected. There is even less discussion about the craft in a contemporary context, in particular in relation to a fast changing mass media landscape and developments in new media and digital technology. Questions of the position of the contemporary Australian political cartoonist in a changing media landscape remain unexplored, and the implications for the art form of the shift of dissemination of news and current events away from print media to the Internet and mobile media unexamined.

This thesis is a first step towards redressing this gap. My investigation examines in theoretical and practical terms the implications of the digital

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1 The annual *Behind the Lines* exhibition was hosted by the National Museum of Australia from 2002 to 2010. From 1997 to 2001, the then Old Parliament House hosted the annual *Bringing the House Down* exhibitions of Australian political cartoons.
media revolution on this historically print media artform. Specifically I explore the use of animation and video in retooling the art to a digital media context. In so doing I map the trajectory of the Australian political cartooning tradition from static image to animation, spanning the early colonial period up until the present day. I introduce Harry Julius as the first Australian pioneer of moving image political cartoons, whose animations during the Great War featured in _Australasian Gazette_ newsreels. The crux of my research is the period from the 1960s onwards, and this is reflected in my interviews with contemporary, professional cartoonists whose public practice engages both the static and moving image, namely: Bruce Petty, Peter Nicholson, Jon Kudelka and Rocco Fazzari. In drawing the video mash-up into the tradition, I also introduce Hugh Atkin as an innovator and pioneer of this form of political satire.

My discussions with these artists illuminate their creative impetus for working across the two forms. I reveal the extent to which they view their engagement with the moving image as intersecting, or being separate from, their static image practice. I examine their ‘cartooning brain’ in determining how the creative tools they employ in the creation of a newsprint cartoon can be similarly applied to the production of an online animation; and I identify how they exploit the distinctive characteristics of the moving image to convey a satirical concept. In addition, I survey their broader engagement with digital technology, with respect to production and publication of their work. Finally, in acknowledging the labor-intensive nature of moving image production, I discuss their capacity to sustain output within their respective vocational contexts.

My own practice involved the production of static and animated cartoons. My work responded to both historical traditions and the contemporary situation, which is characterised by the decline of traditional news print media and the development of digital technologies. Beginning from a sound theoretical foundation, I sustained a practice that in turn informed and clarified the key assertions of this thesis. I successfully translated the

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2 The tradition is not exclusively a print media one. As I will argue in later chapters, the animated cartoons of Harry Julius can be considered a part of the Australian political cartooning tradition.
conceptual tools applied in my static image practice to a moving image context, and achieved success in disseminating my animations to a substantial online and broadcast audience.

In imagining how the political cartooning tradition might evolve in the 21st century, I analyse two related aspects of the art: the socio-technological forces currently challenging the news print media paradigm as the dominant vehicle for cartoon publication and dissemination; and the new media strategies that can be exploited by practitioners in ensuring that the tradition can endure into the digital future. In arguing that moving image works such as animations and video mash-ups be unequivocally considered a part of the political cartooning tradition, I present a new, revised taxonomy for the classification and analysis of political cartoons.

The dissertation is comprised of six chapters. The first chapter provides the historical context for the study and is presented in two parts: the first part describes the principal cartoonists and publications that influenced and led the development of the art in Australia. Particular emphasis is given to historian Jonathan King’s arrangement of these individuals and publications into five ‘schools’ of Australian political cartooning. The second part of the chapter introduces the cartoonists who, through their engagement with the moving image, can be considered pioneers of the moving image political cartoon. Presented as a series of case studies, and augmented by personal insights gleaned from my interviews with them, the aim is to establish the work of these key individuals as being historically precedent to a new, broader political cartooning tradition.

Chapter two describes the form and function of political cartoons: their satirical character, socio-political function in the news print media, visual structure, the influence they wield and the freedom of expression they enjoy. In explaining the esteem in which political cartoonists and their work are held in Australian society, tendentious humour is discussed as a component of Australian cultural identity. I also document the existing taxonomical frameworks for the categorisation and analysis of political cartoons.
In Chapter three I argue the validity and import of accepting animation and video mash-ups in the political cartooning tradition. In part one of the chapter I contrast and compare print media political cartoons with animated political cartoons. I take as my starting point the Pulitzer Committee’s acceptance of animation in political cartooning prize submissions, and the research of Dr Karon Speckman that draws parallels between print media cartoons and animations. I frame the dissenting views proffered by those who would resist the alignment of animations with print media cartoons, and present counter arguments based on my own assertions and observations made during my interviews with pioneering individuals in the field. In part two of the chapter I discuss video mash-ups as visual satirical objects, and present an exemplary case study of internationally renowned Australian mash-up artist Hugh Atkin to demonstrate that his work fulfills much – but not all – of the criteria used in the categorisation of political cartoons.

The taxonomical superstructure I present and discuss in chapter four is premised on Medhurst and Desousa’s taxonomy and contains my own revisions to accommodate the following image types: static cartoons, animations and video mash-ups. In recognising advances in printing technology as well as in digital production and dissemination, this new taxonomy acknowledges the temporal nature of animated and video images. It also includes topicality and the use of colour as among the essential components in the categorisation of both static and moving image forms. I was compelled to augment the taxonomy to formalise the expansion of the tradition, and provide cartoonists, scholars, critics and prize givers with a framework in which to consider the spectrum of technology and media processes available to the contemporary political cartoonist.

Chapter five details my own research-led political animation practice. I produced 42 unique animations,\(^5\) which I disseminated and published in a variety of physical and digital contexts, including: television broadcast, online opinion sites, art galleries, public space projections, digital media festivals and video sharing site YouTube. Conducted specifically for this project, the body of work responded to the technological, aesthetic and social developments during the five-year period between 2006-11. In that time the key developments in the field were the rise of accessibility and engagement with digital technology. My practice was concerned with both the production and dissemination of political animations. With respect to production, this involved exploring and developing specific techniques and processes that became increasingly sophisticated and complex; and in the case of dissemination, the objective was to test modes and avenues for publication and transmission to a broad audience. In drawing on theoretical research into the political cartooning tradition and current technological trends, my practice was historically grounded but responded to very contemporary developments.

The sixth and final chapter begins by remarking on the decline of the newspaper as a context for discussion of alternative and emerging production and dissemination strategies. On the strength of my interviews with experts in the field, theoretical investigation and research-led practice, I document the technological environment in which new media cartoonists operate and the tools with which they ought be equipped in producing and disseminating their images to an audience. I describe production strategies in terms of software and hardware, concept development strategies and the impact of technology on the form and character of images; dissemination and publication strategies in terms of social media and mainstream media, both broadcast and online; and the consumption of digital political cartoon images in terms of their mediation on computer screens, portable communication devices, hybrid devices and TV broadcast. Finally, I

\(^5\) The 42 animations I produced as a part of this thesis are presented as chapters and in chronological order on the attached DVD. Not all of these works are directly referenced in this text. In-text references to works cite the corresponding chapter location on the DVD; while the accompanying illustration’s footnote cites the online location of the work.
examine how mainstream access and engagement with new media technologies has implications for democratic participation with respect to the production and consumption of political satire.

My research has led me to conclude that, while the political cartoon and newspaper have enjoyed a sustained and symbiotic relationship for over a hundred years, the existence of the former need not be predicated on the survival of the latter. The digital media revolution that society is currently witnessing presents a paradigm shift in how the public consumes news media and engages with its associated imagery. What remains constant is the teleology of political satire images, and the role that political cartoons perform in democratic discourse. This thesis formally proposes the expansion of the political cartooning tradition to accommodate the new media that is utilised in the production, dissemination and consumption of contemporary political cartoons. My assertion that certain types of digital moving image can and should be considered political cartoons may at first glance appear to be a revolutionary departure from the tradition. My practice, interviews with Australian cartoonists and critical engagement with the extant theory suggest otherwise - that my position is, in fact, wholly consistent with the technological and historical trajectory of the political cartoon tradition to date.
CHAPTER ONE : PART ONE - HISTORICAL CONTEXT

My thesis is predicated on the notion that certain types of moving image political satire constitute an evolutionary development in the political cartooning tradition. In order to reframe a moving image practice in terms of a static image tradition, it is necessary to understand both the historical context of the tradition as well as the creative and technological impetuses of those whose cartooning practice extends to moving image works. The history of political cartooning is punctuated by social and technological developments that have shaped, in their various ways, the production and dissemination of these images. As well, pioneering individuals have emerged who, through their inspired engagement with the art, have influenced the trajectory of the tradition in terms of style and design.

In this chapter I provide in the first instance an overview of the Australian political cartooning tradition with respect to its history and major players. In the second part of the chapter I introduce the five Australian political cartoonists who have extended their professional practice to include political animations, and can be seen as pioneers of the moving image political cartoon. Later chapters investigate in more precise terms the form and function of political cartoon images, and how static and moving images can be aligned within a single tradition.

The story of political cartooning in Australia echoes something of the broader shaping of Australian culture and identity as a whole, with the dominant competing influences of the United States and Britain providing, through various stages of cross-pollination, the guiding tenets and principles around which the Australian tradition was built.¹ Without retracing a timeline all the way back to the dawn of image making, or even satirical drawing, it is appropriate to outline the major events and figures which influenced the development of political cartooning in these two countries.

¹ Alan Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?” (paper presented at the Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Canberra, Australia, June 18, 2006).
A western tradition of political cartooning had been established well before the publication of the first recognised political cartoons in the US and Britain. Various artists have for centuries produced satirical drawings and caricatures for the amusement of their peers, but it was the invention of the printing press in the late 1400s that for the first time enabled circulation of illustrations to a large public audience. Those artists credited with establishing a political cartooning tradition through the drawing and publication of graphic satire include Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), a Flemish painter and satirist popular for his “grotesque paintings of strange inventions and abstract symbolism”. His style is said to have “fueled the imagination of Martin Luther”, who in the 16th century employed opinion cartoons on posters and illustrated booklets against opponents to great effect. The accessible imagery and references he employed in the drawings - Biblical scenes juxtaposed with the same image substituting caricatures of members of the Catholic Church in the positions of the antagonists - allowed a largely illiterate mass audience to connect with them. The success of Luther’s cartoons promoted cartoons as a form of criticism of hegemony in Europe.

Pamphlet newspapers provided the dominant printed news information source in mid-1700s London. An English cartooning tradition had begun around this time with the satirical illustrations of William Hogarth, James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and George Cruikshank. These images were typically displayed and sold from print shops, and often made their way into coffee house, tavern, club, salon and tea party conversation. Cartoons did not enjoy mass circulation in a news journalism context until the mid-1800s, when a new illustrated press of the rising middle-class began to establish itself. While there were many attempts to launch periodicals in US and Western Europe, this form of communication was only immediately successful in Britain, thanks to that country’s extensive railway network and “large reading class of shopkeepers, clerks, merchants and industrialists,

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4 Thorn, “Early formulations of American identity.”
obsessed with the ideas of progress and self-improvement.”

These new picture papers were to become the most influential form of visual communication of their time and provided artists with “their biggest audience since the Middle Ages”.

Nearing the end of the 19th century Sir Francis Carruthers-Gould became Britain’s first full-time political cartoonist.

US independence campaigns inspired that country’s first political cartoons. Benjamin Franklin is credited with creating and printing America’s first popular editorial cartoon. His famous *Join or Die* cartoon, drawn in 1754, was published in every newspaper in America.

Paul Revere’s *Boston Massacre* cartoon from 1772 is reputed to be the most influential picture in American history. Thomas Nast, whom *The New York Times* called “The Father of the American Cartoon”, created many of the enduring symbols in the lexicon of political cartooning: the republican elephant, the democratic donkey and the gaunt Uncle Sam among others.

Political cartooning occupies an enduring and distinguished position in the Australian cultural fabric. First gaining prominence in *The Bulletin* and *Smith’s Weekly* publications in the 1880s, Australian political cartooning has evolved from its American and English roots to establish itself as what former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, called a “vigorou expression of Australian irreverence, impudence and iconoclasm.”

Portrait painter and eminent cartoonist Bill Leak, observing the vibrant, unpretentious and socially relevant nature of political cartooning in Australia, declares it “our proudest and most robust artistic tradition.”

The personal attributes for which Australians have come to be mythologised – irreverence, larrikinism and a healthy skepticism towards those in

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7 Ibid.
8 Thorn, “Early formulations of American identity.”
authority – have both shaped, and been amplified by, the Australian cartooning tradition. This narrative thread of Australian national identity sits comfortably with the satirical tradition and political cartoons in particular. The basis for colonisation - the establishment of a penal colony – was viewed even at the time as being somewhat of an absurdity and presented a ripe target for satirical jibes in the British press. It could be said that Australia’s political cartooning tradition has its roots in the very rationale for settlement.

The tradition of radical cartooning that had matured in Britain by the time the penal colony was founded did not immediately transplant itself to colonial soil. Indeed early examples of Australian visual satire are rare, owing to the strict censorship that prevailed in the early years of colonisation to 1824. With the relaxation of censorship laws came the publication of the first non-government, independent news publications and from there an Australian political cartooning tradition emerged.

In prescribing an exact date at which point the history of Australian political cartooning officially began, William Lushington Goodwin’s publication of drawings in Launceston’s Cornwall Chronicle from 16 April 1835 presents a useful starting point. Goodwin’s position as editor, printer and publisher of the paper afforded him the opportunity to publish his drawings, initially printed on woodcuts and later from etched plates. Goodwin’s drawings were highly derivative of English illustrations; indeed his famous Freedom of the Press cartoon was a direct plagiarism. Nevertheless, his series of images critical of Governor Arthur “laid the foundation for press freedom”

14 Ibid.: 11.
15 Victor Isaacs and Rod Kirkpatrick, Two Hundred Years of Sydney Newspapers: A Short History (North Richmond: Rural Press Ltd, 2003).
and his subsequent victory provided by Arthur’s premature recall to England, “established a radical precedent” for political cartooning in Australia.\(^\text{19}\)

Up until this point, cartoons did not enjoy a place in the popular press. While some cartoons inspired by social upheaval and despotic governors of the day survive, Jonathan King points to the “the limited means available, the character of the early settlers, and the extreme censorship”\(^\text{20}\) in explaining the dearth of early examples of Australian political cartooning. The constraints imposed by censorship laws began to relax with the influx of free settlers and the accompanying demand for self-government. However the press freedom that emerged in the 1820s did not see an influx of political graphic satire, because “it was still not journalistically respectable to run cartoons”.\(^\text{21}\)

Around a decade after Goodwin published his first cartoons, E.B. ‘Billy’ Barlow produced a number of cartoons attacking New South Wales Governor Gipps. The cartoons tapped into an existing groundswell of public discontent and contributed to the undermining of the Governor’s authority and reputation.\(^\text{22}\) The role that Barlow’s cartoons played in the Governor’s early recall consolidated the use of graphic satire as a political weapon. By 1850, regular anti-government cartoons were being published in the *Adelaide Monthly Almanac*.\(^\text{23}\)

The gold rush of the 1850s and the accompanying influx of population and increase in personal wealth provided the platform for a more sophisticated public engagement with news reporting. Evolving beyond the pamphlet and broadsides of previous decades, political cartooning well and truly entered the mainstream consciousness in 1855, with the publication of *Melbourne Punch* magazine. Historian Jonathan King identifies *Punch* as the first of five schools, or spheres of creative influence, of Australian political

\(^\text{19}\) King, *The Other Side of the Coin*, 10.
\(^\text{20}\) Ibid.: 15.
\(^\text{22}\) King, *The Other Side of the Coin*, 15.
\(^\text{23}\) Coleman and Tanner, *Cartoons of Australian History*, 7.
cartooning.\textsuperscript{24} Identical in format and style to the English \textit{Punch} established 14 years earlier, it provided the first widely distributed platform for political cartoonists in this country.\textsuperscript{25} The stable of \textit{Melbourne Punch} cartoonists included Nicholas Chevalier, Montagu Scott and Tom Carrington, whose works borrowed heavily on the classical allusions and symbols that punctuated the drawings of their English counterparts.\textsuperscript{26} By the 1870s most state capitals published their own versions of the magazine,\textsuperscript{27} and the flavour of the cartoons gradually shifted from the typically English sensibility of describing class foibles to the distinctly Australian pastime of examining class structure.\textsuperscript{28}

The increasingly radical complexion of the colony, its expanding wealth and advances in printing technology contributed to an environment where political cartooning could flourish. At the time of colonisation, print making technology was evolving from the cost-prohibitive process of etching or engraving images onto copper plates that was common throughout the 1700s, to the development in the mid-1800s of sectioned wood blocks.\textsuperscript{29} Each subsequent improvement in technology – from woodcuts to stone lithography and then from drawings to photo-engraved line art mass-produced by letterpress\textsuperscript{30} – reduced the cost of publication and dissemination of cartoons, and consequently expanded their audience.\textsuperscript{31}

The \textit{Punch} publications dominated the political satire landscape until the advent of \textit{The Bulletin}. Established as \textit{The Sydney Bulletin} in 1880, the magazine was an immediate hit with the reading public. The Bulletin proclaimed that it had “obtained a powerful influence and was an unprecedented literary and commercial success”.\textsuperscript{32} In her book, \textit{The

\textsuperscript{24} King, \textit{The Other Side of the Coin}.
\textsuperscript{25} King, \textit{The Other Side of the Coin}, 37.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Bruce Petty in King, \textit{The Other Side of the Coin}, 9.
\textsuperscript{29} Thomas Milton Kemnitz, “The Cartoon as a Historical Source,” \textit{Journal of Interdisciplinary History} 4.1 (1973), 86.
\textsuperscript{31} Kemnitz, “The Cartoon as a Historical Source,” 86.
\textsuperscript{32} The Bulletin, in King, \textit{The Other Side of the Coin}, 65.
Archibald Paradox, Sylvia Lawson discusses The Bulletin as a media phenomenon:

From 1880 to the years after Federation and the Boer War this journal penetrated its society and gripped attention in ways for which it is hard to find any parallel, even in the highest times of national radio and television.33

The Bulletin created a ‘national idiom’ and heralded a ‘Golden Age’ of Australian political cartooning.34 This second school of cartooning revolutionised the art in Australia by pioneering the photo-engraving process and presenting cartoons in a news, rather than satirical, context.35

The introduction of photographic line and half-tone reproduction in The Bulletin helped nurture ‘black and white’ art as an art form in Australia.36

The status of black and white artists was consolidated by their inclusion in the Society of Artists annual exhibitions, meaning that political cartoonists were now recognised as bona fide artists rather than frivolous and glib graphic interlocutors.37

The Bulletin’s founder, journalist John Feltham Archibald, promoted Australian black and white art as a matter of policy,38 while editor William Traill imported its leading artists – American Livingston Hopkins and Englishman Phil May. Alan Moir comments that “Hopkins’ dry, laconic wit was an instant success and became one of the spring wells of the later ‘Australian’ humour”, while Phil May’s influence on the drawing technique of his Australasian colleagues was “immediate and widespread”.39

33 Lawson, p.ix
34 King, The Other Side of the Coin, 11.
36 The term ‘black and white art’ was coined by Australia’s first political cartoonists as the preferred nomenclature for their craft.
37 The Stanleys, 1.
39 Alan Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?” (paper presented at the Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Canberra, Australia, June 18, 2006).
Hopkins and May were early protagonists of an emerging comic cartoon style, while artists George Ashton and Percy Spence were among those inspired by the Art Nouveau trend that gripped the black and white illustration movement in the late 19th century. The drawings of Norman Lindsay and Percy Leason represented the culmination of the gradual fusion of the two approaches, where the refined flourishes of erotic and macabre imagery merged with a cruder, lighter and more whimsical treatment of line and subject matter. This transition initiated a distinctive Bulletin style that was characterised by bush idylls, bacchanalian scenes and appeals to nationalist sentiment.⁴⁰

Moir observes the dynamic and turbulent socio-political environment in which these cartoonists worked:

> It must have been an exciting time on The Bulletin for the artists and writers during the late 1880s and through the 90s with the immense questions facing the coming young nation; A Republic or a Constitutional Monarchy? Would all States join? Universal Suffrage? This was the pioneering era of mining, droughts, depressions, the development of the Labor Movement… all grist for the cartoonists’ mill.⁴¹

The growth of the labour movement in the late 19th century inspired a third school. Claude Marquet, Syd Nicholls and New Zealander George Finey, all of whom had contributed to The Bulletin at various stages, gave the Left a voice in their anti-war, anti-conscription cartoons in the years leading up to and including the First World War.⁴² The cartoons of Finey in particular earned the opprobrium of his editors at Labor Daily, Truth and the

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⁴¹ Moir , “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.
Leading to his sacking or resignation from each paper. Syd Nicholls’ anti-profiteer cartoons in Direct Action were aligned with the editorial direction of the paper, though their publication led to a prison term for his editor under the War Precautions Act.

Despite the events of the day providing a rich lode of material for cartoonists to draw on, their role was mainly one of comic illustration of editorial direction - cartoonists were rarely afforded opportunities for independent comment. The career of David Low in New Zealand, Australia and England did much to establish the cartoonist as an independent political commentator on the editorial page of newspapers.

After a year working at The Canterbury Times, David Low joined The Bulletin in 1911. Low was a skilled draughtsman whose early drawing style lent itself to Phil May’s influence. His later transition from fine cross-hatching to a full-flowing brush was an innovation in political cartooning and established something of a trend with those who followed him. Low developed his signature style before he left Australian shores for England in 1919.

Unquestionably a talented illustrator, it was his astute reading of the political landscape and adept manipulation of political imagery that largely accounted for his expansive influence. Low was one of the first commentators of any journalistic persuasion to identify Hitler as a threat to the global order, and his relentless attacks on the dictator ran counter to his newspaper proprietor’s appeasement position. Such was the perceived threat of his output to their propaganda strategy, that in 1937 the Nazis sought to...

46 Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.
48 Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.
restrain Low’s output by exerting pressure on the British Government. As Lindesay has written, during his career Low was considered “the dominant cartoonist of the Western World” and was “arguably the most acute political cartoonist working in Britain in the twentieth century.” Disseminated in *The Evening Standard*, Low’s simple, witty cartoons influenced cartoonists worldwide.

Smith’s Weekly, named after its founder Joynton Smith, established a fourth school in 1919. The paper became a magnet for progressive cartoonists, particularly with rival publication *The Bulletin* becoming increasingly conservative from the 1920s. Virgil Reilly, George Aria, Emile Mercier and Stan Cross were all contributing artists for the paper, with the latter becoming a founding member of the world’s first society of cartoonists in 1924, ‘The Black and White Artists’ Society’. Cross also lent his name to ‘The Stanley Awards’, which were established in 1984 to recognise the nation’s outstanding cartoonists. With the emerging dominance of the daily newspaper, *Smith’s Weekly* ceased publication in 1950.

The 1950s saw the emergence of some internationally renowned and highly influential cartoonists. Pat Oliphant and Paul Rigby both began their careers in Australia – Oliphant with the Adelaide *Advertiser* and Rigby with Perth’s *Daily News* – before finding acclaim in America and England respectively. Meanwhile, a fifth school emerged at *The Australian* from 1964 with cartoonists Bruce Petty, Martin Sharp and Aubrey Collette. While Lindsay, Ted Scorfield and Les Tanner plied their trade at *The Bulletin*, *The Australian* responded to government rhetoric by providing a platform for

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52 Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.
53 King, *The Other Side of the Coin*, 115.
55 King, *The Other Side of the Coin*, 161.
cartoonists wanting to provide an opposing viewpoint to the anti-communism rife in the electorate.\footnote{Ibid. While Norman Lindsay’s contract with The Bulletin was terminated in 1958, he continued to submit work for publication. His last published cartoon in The Bulletin was in 1967.}

Bruce Petty is widely regarded as the doyen of Australian political cartooning. His free line drawing established a convention that some observers described as resembling “the victory dance of a fly escaped from an inkpot”.\footnote{Ibid.: 185.} Moir remarks of Petty’s innovative approach to graphic style and subject matter:

> Bruce Petty added a new way of looking at political cartooning. Now not only about politicians, he introduced a whimsical way of looking at the institutions of democracy; e.g. the Public Service, education, law, religion, defense etc., sometimes all together, with an ease that hadn’t been seen here before. It broke down barriers for cartoonists and opened up a whole new range of topics.\footnote{Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.}

Few political cartoonists working in Australia today - Petty himself still cartoons for The Age – do not cite Petty as an influence and inspiration.\footnote{Anna Day, “The Wizards of Oz: Aussie Cartoonists Do It Their Way,” The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics 5.3 (2000).} His work heralded the arrival of modern cartooning, typified by fast drawing, minimal use of text and attuned to the social and political zeitgeist.\footnote{King, The Other Side of the Coin, 185.}

Beyond King’s typology, the 1970s saw the emergence of an impressive array of talent: Larry Pickering, Michael Lodge, Emeric Vrbancich, Geoff Pryor, John Spooner, Ron Tandberg, Michael Leunig, Frank Bernier, Patrick Cook and Peter Nicholson among many others. Some of these men have retired, though many continue to work with the contemporary generation of Australian political cartoonists, including Bill Leak, Alan
Moir, David Pope, Cathy Wilcox, Judy Horacek, David Rowe and Mark Knight.

The five schools of Australian political cartooning identified by King have shaped the mainstream of the tradition and provide a framework in which to locate contemporary practice. The schools do not tell the whole story of political cartooning in this country, however, as many artists outside of this context have made valuable contributions to the craft. For example, for a profession that overwhelmingly attracts to its ranks white middle-class males, any published work by indigenous and female artists is significant.

As established through the groundbreaking work of Joan Kerr, after WW1 it was not unusual for women to contribute cartoons to publications. Even so, Mollie Horsemann and Joan Morrison – who came to be known as ‘The Smith’s’ Sisters’ after The Smith’s Weekly for which they worked – were remarkable for their status as permanent employees of the paper.61 In 1912 Ruby Lindsay helped establish The Suffragette magazine with Christabelle and Emily Pankhurst.62 In responding to the hostility of mainstream cartoonists, the cartoons of the suffragette movement succeeded in appropriating the language of the opposition to ridicule arguments against women’s suffrage.63

Indigenous cartoonists Kevin Gilbert and Lin Onus contributed to Koorier in the 1970s, and more recently Danny Eastwood and Frank McLeod’s cartoons have appeared in the Koori Mail and Aboriginal Law Bulletin respectively.64 Eastwood and McLeod’s work tends to focus on social and political issues from a distinctly urban indigenous perspective and as such their audience falls outside the mainstream. Nevertheless their work plays an important role in educating and providing a voice for its indigenous readers.

61 Kerr, Artists and Cartoonists in Black and White, 16.
62 Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?”.
64 Kerr, Artists and Cartoonists in Black and White, 11. At the time of writing, Eastwood remains as a political cartoonist at the Koori Mail and McLeod contributes cartoons to the youth magazine Streetwise.
Race and gender still present obstacles for indigenous and female cartoonists, if professional affiliation with a mass-circulation daily newspaper is any measure. No indigenous cartoonists work for any major newspapers,\textsuperscript{65} and women, while not the novelty they once were, are still relatively rare in the field. Fiona Katauskas, Judy Horacek and Cathy Wilcox are the three most prominent women cartoonists working in Australia today.

Australia’s political cartoonists enjoy a degree of public exposure beyond that which they achieve through the publication of their cartoons in newspapers. As will be discussed in the following chapter, many cartoonists find a platform to express their views on radio, television, art galleries, museums and public lectures. Their preparedness to express their views on a range of socio-political issues, and the public’s preparedness to listen and consider those views, is a healthy indication of the status of the cartoonist in Australian society, and the state of the art in general.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. 11.
CHAPTER ONE : PART TWO - THE BEGINNINGS OF A MOVING IMAGE TRADITION

There is no tradition of Australian moving image political satire per se - at least not in the shape or form that one would readily associate with the political cartooning tradition – and no broader historical context in which to locate the practice of those political cartoonists that have produced moving image works. I will therefore adopt a case-study framework to introduce the public figures who can be seen as pioneers of the brand of moving image political satire defined in this thesis. I will discuss their background, the nature of their work, the context in which they worked or continue to work, their graphic style and, in most cases – but not all - what factors contributed to their decision to discontinue their production of these images.

In examining the creative and technical environment in which these individuals operated, what motivated their engagement and the extent to which they could sustain it, I will position these case studies as precedents for a contemporary political cartooning practice. These case studies provide an overview of the current state of this hitherto neglected art and establish a point of reference for further discussion in later chapters about why moving image political satire of this nature can, and must, be brought into the broader political cartooning tradition.

The capacity for animation to draw on established forms of graphic visual satire, while offering new opportunities to explore devices that enhance the narrative, appeals to many political cartoonists. To date, five Australian newspaper cartoonists have produced publicly broadcast or disseminated political animations: Harry Julius, Bruce Petty, Peter Nicholson, Jon Kudelka and Rocco Fazzari. Julius died in 1938, and of those still living, only Fazzari currently sustains a regular publishing practice. The others tend to cite time and fiscal constraints as inhibiting factors in the production of animation, rather than any specific creative or technical demands placed on them as artists.
Political cartoons and animation enjoy something of a symbiotic relationship. As will be discussed in later chapters, the two forms are intrinsically visual narrative objects whose meaning is inferred from the interplay of satirical devices such as metaphor and caricature. There are clear distinctions between them, though these differences pertain more to temporality than to graphic style or function. While Kudelka alone insists that the time-based structure of animation makes it a "totally different beast" from the static cartoon, Petty describes animation as "just a technique… as natural as going from cross-hatching to another style". Nicholson asserts that "a political animation is a cartoon, there’s no question about that"; while Fazzari happily admits "I’ll plunder any kind of visual form to get the message across".

Petty observes that political cartoonists are "driven by the great search for innovation". The alacrity with which cartoonists have historically embraced technological advances in printing and publishing is given impetus by their pursuit of an audience. Their craft is concerned with the topicality and immediacy of visual responses to political and social events, and their capacity to reach and engage with the public is pivotal to their role as social and political commentators.

In this context it is unsurprising to observe that Australia’s first notable animation was a political one produced by a newspaper cartoonist. Harry Julius’ *Cartoons of the Moment* was a series of animations produced from 1912-18 and shown in weekly public screenings of *Australasian Gazette* newsreels. The newsreels of the day were screened to cinema audiences in

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66 Jon Kudelka, Interview by author. Tape recording. Canberra, Australia, 12 Sep 2011.
67 Bruce Petty, Interview by author. Tape recording. Sydney, Australia, 8 Dec 2009.
69 Rocco Fazzari, Interview by author. Tape recording. 11 Jul 2011.
70 Petty, interview by author.
Australia and New Zealand and provided the only alternative news source to print media. The animations began a tradition of Australian animation and at the same time established a tradition of animated political satire.

Julius was already an accomplished illustrator, cartoonist and caricaturist when he began producing his *Cartoons of the Moment* series. The animations used caricature and satire to comment primarily on WWI politics from the Allies’ point of view. They tended toward propaganda in that they supported the *Gazette’s* position on the war and its pro-conscription stance. Occasionally, Julius’s animations drew inspiration from social as well as political issues. *The Evolution of the Skirt* (1916), for example, comments on the apparently ever-decreasing length of women’s skirts and in doing so, predicts the mini-skirt nearly fifty years before it came into fashion.

Filmed at 16 frames per second on orthochromatic film stock, the silent animations employed a stop-frame technique coupled with live-action footage. An early adopter of the new media technology of the day, Julius applied for a patent for his stop-frame animation technique of photographing an arrangement of cardboard or celluloid parts that are then rearranged or reconfigured for subsequent photographic plates. To counter the image contrast issues associated with this medium, Julius also made use of paper or celluloid cut-outs consisting largely of white figures on a dark background.

The typical format of these animations consists of three distinct technical processes that also provide something of a framework for a three-act narrative. First, the opening live-action sequence shows Julius perusing a newspaper, presumably for inspiration for the animated content to follow. Next, a ‘lightning sketch’ live-action technique is employed to show the hand of Julius creating and adding detail to the images, sketching in and altering the outline as he lays out the graphic framework of the cartoon. The final act has Julius remove his hand, and the drawn elements seemingly

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come to life via a stop-frame technique that advances the cartoon to its inevitable resolution, or pay-off.

The animations, which vary in duration from 43 seconds to over 11 minutes, employed many of the principal satirical devices commonly associated with political cartoons: caricature, the use of symbols, and puns. Descriptive, explanatory titles and captions were also used to help clarify the meaning of the visual content. The various devices Julius employed facilitated the multiple roles demanded of the animations in their newsreel context: to convey timely information, make a point without spoken commentary and entertain the audience. It is not known how exactly the audience responded to these clips, though the visual tricks employed by Julius in their production must have provided a spectacle in an era where film and animation was still very much a novelty.

It is not clear why Julius discontinued his weekly animations after 1918; one possibility is that the advent of films with sound made newsreel production more expensive, and animations came to be seen as an indulgence. Another possibility is that, with the end of the war, funds for propaganda material dried up along with its audience; satirising the enemy in wartime is easier to justify in terms of cost and audience appeal than the satirical probing of social and political mores during peacetime. Whatever the reason, it would appear that Julius’ animations became cost-prohibitive. Julius subsequently moved into the advertising field, and while he continued to produce animated short films, his Cartoons of the Moment series remain his only publicly broadcast political satirical works.

Around thirty years after Julius’ last animation was screened, and well before he began his career as a political cartoonist, Bruce Petty secured a job with The Owen Brothers animation studio. It was here, using a single-frame Aeroflex camera, that Petty learned the 12th of a second frame movement that was the cel-animation standard of the day. In recalling that period, Petty describes an exciting time of technical discovery and innovation, where film was wound back in the dark and achieving specific effects such as dissolves and fades involved a lot of trial and error (“we
were all inventing the wheel”). He was especially attracted to the mechanical apparatus employed in animation production – growing up fascinated by his father’s orchard machinery, it was more the mechanics than the aesthetics that appealed to him at that time.\textsuperscript{74}

Petty has said that his interest in animation was a natural culmination of his passion for drawing and taste for film,\textsuperscript{75} though his engagement with the medium has largely been peripheral, in professional terms, to his main occupation of political cartoonist. His animations tend to be satirical commentaries on the social, economic and political characteristics that define our society. They contain a substantial amount of descriptive information and graphic content and as such they tend to be relatively lengthy. \textit{Leisure}, the film for which he won an Academy Award in 1976, was over 13 minutes long; his latest film, \textit{Global Haywire}, is 80 minutes long. The \textit{Human Contraptions} series that Petty created for the ABC were all 4 minutes duration, a length that was determined by broadcast requirements.

Petty addressed the challenges of working with equipment that was not compatible with his preferred rapid and fluid animating style by engineering his own ‘animation machine’. The light required to illuminate his drawing surface produced excessive heat that made his paint dry too quickly and made him uncomfortably hot. To counter the heat emanating from the bulbs he instead focused a relatively small amount of light (500 watts) through the transparencies on which he painted and into the camera lens via a pair of strategically placed magnifying lenses. Petty also manufactured a mechanical solution that facilitated the placement and bringing into the drawing area of the transparencies. Petty claims that his solution at least halved the time needed to animate. He says that while the technique allowed for a very rapid production process, it inevitably invited errors and demanded improvisation.

\textsuperscript{74} Petty, interview by author

Until 2000, Petty created his animations with a 16mm Bolex camera, using a stop-frame technique and drawn in the same free-flowing hand as his cartoons – though the morass of energetic line-work that is his trademark, is treated in a more economical fashion. The line work in Petty’s cartoons typically fills the entire panel whereas the complexity of line work is generally pared back in his animations. When complex and intricate detail is introduced to aid the narrative or for satirical impact, it tends to emerge over time, or in film terms, a number of frames. As will be described in greater detail in chapter 3, Petty cleverly uses space in his frames to build tension and advance the narrative, by introducing a space that is soon filled with visual elements.

Petty augments this quality in his animations through cinematic devices such as camera movement and rapid jump cuts. The images are constructed through a combination of hand-drawn and photographic elements, though *Global Haywire* marks an evolutionary milestone in Petty’s practice through its use of video footage.\(^{76}\) The evolution of Petty’s animation style owes much to his embrace and application of contemporary technology. Petty uses modern media methods to enhance his communication while maintaining his unique visual style. In the past 12 years Petty has embraced the digital software programme Flash as his animation tool of choice. The polished line work that Flash tends to produce does impact on Petty’s style to an extent, but he is comfortable sacrificing line accuracy for the benefits of digital production.

In various contexts Petty has described his natural drawing style as “very tenuous”, “improvised” and “borrowed from Thurber”.\(^{77}\) His chaotic visual style is derived from his use of line and his inclination to draw quickly.\(^{78}\) Self-deprecatingly he admits to be lacking in drawing skill; he considers his drawings “just a device, just a calligraphy”.\(^{79}\) He claims not to know what aesthetics is exactly, but observes:

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\(^{77}\) Petty, interview by author.

\(^{78}\) Petty, interview by author.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
…when you see something that’s got a level of information that’s got nothing to do with the content, cerebral stuff. I think it’s interesting that the two ideas of actually communicating a thought and actually thinking what’s going to look good, there’s some overlap there.  

Despite the fact that Petty has produced shorter animations of around 30 seconds to a minute long - a length more appropriate to publication in an online news context – he initially wasn’t able to convince his employers at Fairfax Media to provide incentives for him to produce them for the online edition of The Age. Petty admits that had he been persistent he probably could have persuaded the executive - and could persuade them still - to allocate a budget for animation production. His insouciance in this regard is attributable to his not being prepared to invest, at the expense of his many other creative activities, the substantial amount of time required to sustain a regular animation practice.

Peter Nicholson has enjoyed an illustrious career as a political cartoonist and can be considered another pioneer of Australian political animation. As a friend and mentor, Bruce Petty introduced Peter Nicholson to animating with the Bolex camera, a modified version of which was used to produce the animated satire Rubbery Figures. First produced in 1984 - coincidentally the same year that the very similar satirical puppet show Spitting Image first went to air on British TV - Rubbery Figures was designed to be “the equivalent of a political cartoon on television… funny, topical, quick, biting and informed”. 

The programmes were a combination of live-action footage of puppet figures and cut-out animation shot at 18 frames per second. Each 5-minute programme took a crew of around twenty people three or four days to produce. Puppeteers would mime the words of a pre-recorded soundtrack

80 Ibid. 
81 Ibid. 
82 Turner, In Their Image, 83. 
voiced by the talented Paul Jennings, who provided the voice caricatures for each character. Screened as a segment within a number of shows and also as a stand-alone programme, both on the ABC and on commercial television, *Rubbery Figures* survived until 1990, at which time budgets dried up and Nicholson turned his energy to other projects.

From 2002 until 2009 Nicholson produced short computer animations, published bi-weekly, and then later weekly, on *The Australian*’s online newspaper site. Nicholson assumed the role of lead animator, creating the key frames, with the in-between frames filled in by one or two assistant animators. Nicholson’s use of vector-based software Flash facilitates an intuitive production process that brings to his animations much of the spontaneity and immediacy inherent in his drawings. Drawn with a bright, vibrant palette and in the same distinct visual style as his cartoons, Nicholson combined clever scripts and dialogue—voiced once again by Paul Jennings—to reinforce the comic impact of the caricatures. The collaborative aspect of his work is significant in that it allowed him to generate an animation within the framework of a weekly media cycle—a degree of prolificacy difficult to achieve for the individual artist.84

*The Australian* gave Nicholson a budget that was designed for an output of one animation a fortnight; but he observed that when the animations were published once a week they started getting a lot more views, or hits. To accommodate a weekly as opposed to bi-weekly schedule, Nicholson made the animations shorter and more spontaneous. He accumulated a large subscription base, which he personally managed via emails, and his animations would typically attract around ten thousand unique visitors on the first day. That number would drop off after three days but viewer traffic would persist for another two or three weeks. In terms of unique views the animations were far more successful than the website’s news video clips, which were not unique to *The Australian*, and often published after people had seen them elsewhere. The success of the animations points to the capacity for political animations to attract a large online audience.

84 Nicholson, Interview by author.
Curiously, his employers were unable to extract any tangible, commercial benefit from Nicholson’s original and exclusive content.

In the end Nicholson found that doing animations at the same time as print cartoons was exhausting. When his cartooning colleague at The Australian, Bill Leak, suffered a serious injury that kept him away from work for an extended time, Nicholson picked up some of the slack and found himself working six days a week. As well as the actual drawing work being tiring, coming up with ideas was also draining. Despite maintaining his creative will to continue producing animations, Nicholson could not sustain his output in a professional context and, consequently, has had to put his animation practice on hold, indefinitely.

Nicholson professes to missing animation because he has invested so much time and energy into mastering the software. He observes, in rather self effacing terms, that up until that point his animations were “pretty conventional looking”. He is somewhat disappointed that, having worked out how to do it systematically, he was unable to persist in developing more visually interesting ideas. Had he been able to maintain his animation practice, Nicholson insists that his caricatures and narrative structures would have been treated in more radical and interesting ways.

In looking to other projects, Nicholson is attracted to the idea of producing a different kind of moving image cartoon, one that he refers to as a ‘drawlk’. This is a concept inspired by public talks Nicholson has done where he delivers a narrated cartooning performance. Reminiscent of the live illustration format popularised by Rolf Harris and the Mr Squiggle television show, Nicholson develops a drawing and explains it as he goes, making unexpected changes and additions along the way. Appearing spontaneous, the performances take a fair amount of rehearsing. The response he has enjoyed from audiences has been so positive that he intends to produce similar pre-recorded video versions for publication on The Australian’s website. If and when Nicholson engages this project, the works

85 Nicholson, interview by author.
86 Nicholson, interview by author.
will provide another facet to the diverse spectrum of moving image satire published online.

In 1996 Jon Kudelka went to Sydney to do an animation course, simply because, he “wanted to do a bit more drawing”. 87 He also enrolled in life drawing classes, as he recognised it as the “basis of classical animation”. As a political cartoonist with The Mercury at that time, he was interested in applying his newfound animation skills to political satire. 88 In observing the creative potential of presenting political satire in an animated context, Kudelka’s insight reflects a broader symbiosis that exists between drawing and animation.

In the fledgling days of the Internet, Kudelka’s initial aim was to have political animations broadcast on television rather than online – not simply because of the technical limitations of the Internet at that time, but because the remuneration would be better. Things did not pan out that way though - whilst Kudelka has produced a number of commercial animations, his foray into political animation has been muted because he found that, ultimately, there was no market to build a sustainable broadcast-oriented practice; and as a hobby it was just too time consuming.

Beginning his cartooning career as a freelance cartoonist, and coming from a technical background, Jon Kudelka was an early adopter of the ‘mobile office’ concept. With the advent of mobile phone technology, Kudelka’s studio became whatever he could fit into a bag. When it came to investing in his work, Kudelka did not skimp on the technology. After a couple of well-paid animated TV commercials he bought a Cintiq – a draw-on-screen style computer that brings the user into a more direct engagement than can be had with a graphics tablet. Kudelka’s whole studio became the Cintiq, a laptop computer and a mobile phone - a total digital mobile solution.

Each of the three political animations Kudelka has produced is markedly different in style. Johnny’s House is a collaborative work presented in the

87 Kudelka, interview by author.
88 Ibid.
style of an animated sit-com: the graphics are cleanly rendered, with boldly
drawn outer contours supporting finer-lined inner contours, and evenly
shaded with a muted pantone palette. The action is presented on planes, with
characters generally maintaining a fixed orientation and distance to the
camera. This is both to simplify character movement and avoid the
challenges posed by perspective. *Four UnAustralians*\(^9\) by contrast is a
black and white animation drawn in a vibrating line and no tonal attributes.
Shot with a single, fixed camera, the narrative is a one-line gag rather than
the sequence of gags presented in *Johnny's House*.\(^9\) Kudelka’s third
animation, *101 Uses for John Howard*\(^9\) is a montage of 101 static cartoon
images. Drawn in a sketch style with an abundance of cross-hatching detail,
the rapid pace of the image sequence renders the image detail unreadable
unless the work is freeze-framed. Effective engagement with this animation
relies on the viewer interrupting the flow of images to focus on one
constituent frame in the whole.

Although he enjoyed some success creating animation for TV commercials,
a number of factors have contributed to Kudelka subsequently being unable
to sustain a financially viable practice in political animation. Collaboration,
which for some artists offers a means for the artist to share the burden of
production, was a source of frustration for him. As director on an early 3D
animation project he clashed with the producer over creative decisions.
Where the producer was inclined towards a conventional 3D aesthetic,
Kudelka wanted to imbue the animation with a more 2D drawn sensibility.
Kudelka prefers the hand-drawn sensibility that 2D animation processes
afford over the computer-manufactured aesthetic that characterises the
images produced with 3D software, saying:

23 August 2010).

\(^{90}\) Jon Kudelka YouTube site, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmzWvKcC1_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmzWvKcC1_A) (Accessed 10 March, 2013).

\(^{91}\) Jon Kudelka YouTube site, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF0uG8qvHd0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PF0uG8qvHd0) (Accessed 10 March, 2013).
I think one thing about the political cartoonist is that they’re meant to be kind of like the people’s poet; and unless 3D is incredibly well done, it looks plastic, it doesn’t look hand-made. I deliberately played on the fact that my cartoon style looks pretty hand-made. It allows more latitude to my humour than something a bit neater.  

With respect to static cartoons Kudelka has always worked with editors, and his relationship has always been that they back his judgment. But he asserts that satirical animation is very difficult to promote to online newspaper editors because of the time and cost involved in production. He says of the ‘gatekeepers’:

…you need to pass the budgets through various people who think they have an idea, and the more you workshop satire, the less likely it is to survive the process. It just sucks the life out of it. I think with editorial cartoons one person’s got to be driving, it’s not a democracy.

Ultimately though Kudelka simply does not have the time to devote to animation production. With a young family and “at least 14 or 15 static cartoon deadlines a week” he sees it as an endeavour that would take a lot of his time for little financial return. When Bill Leak was injured, Kudelka’s workload, like Nicholson’s, tripled. He has since ceased freelance work out and declined to work with Peter Nicholson on animation productions because he could not commit to the schedule demanded from these types of projects.

Rocco Fazzari, a contracted cartoonist with the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age newspapers, began using animation in 2008 to exploit the creative opportunities presented by the Fairfax Media group’s transition to online news media. In exploring the emerging digital landscape in which increasingly he was to participate, Fazzari observed the points of

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
convergence and disparity that existed in the different production methods availled by print media on the one hand and digital media on the other. Through intuition and practical investigation, he identified those aspects of static image production that could be transferred to an audiovisual context in the production of a moving-image political cartoon. At the same time, he noted the special characteristics of audiovisual media and how these could complement traditional drawing techniques. Fazzari was interested in pursuing animation as a means to “bridge the divide between print and digital media”,95 and to create dynamic, moving image works that retained the artistic integrity of a static frame.

Blogs are an integral component of Fairfax Media’s online strategy to building readership communities - they provide a framework in which its journalists publish commentary and opinion pieces. Having already established and successfully maintained a blog presence on The Sydney Morning Herald’s online site, Fazzari had an ideal context in which to explore and develop his animation practice. The blog allowed him to intermittently publish his newly-developed animations alongside his static drawings. This strategy of publishing animations whenever he was able to produce them freed Fazzari from the pressure of a regular production regime and at the same time allowed his readers room to adjust to this new political cartoon paradigm.

Coming from a fine arts background in painting and illustration, and having little experience with computer technology, Fazzari’s initial explorations constituted rather crudely animated gifs that Dr Karon Speckman, in her study of political animation, defines as ‘value added’ animation;96 that is, Rocco imbues a hand drawn image with repetitive movement via the cycling of two or three sequenced images.

95 Fazzari, Interview by author.
Although the added movement of value-added animations provides visual interest to the static cartoons on which they are based, the extant metaphor remains unaffected. As Rocco familiarised himself with the technology of producing images in an animated sequence, he became interested in how he could expand and evolve a metaphor. He gives the example of a caterpillar that might turn into a cocoon, which then turns into a butterfly and flies away - and is presented in a seductive way that will engage the viewer. Suspense is one such seductive component, where the manner and timing of the construction of a metaphor can be manipulated to direct the viewer toward the subsequent pay-off or resolution. Heavily influenced by the absurdist and surrealist 1960s European cinema, Rocco is attracted more to the “absurdity of politics and the way it works and the characters” rather than the gag per se; developing temporal-based metaphors provides a perfect context in which he can indulge his penchant for the absurd.

Fazzari began to explore narrative structures through the application of claymation techniques. As he gained confidence with his engagement with digital technology, his work evolved into a stop-frame photomontage object that, like Julius’ work, incorporates a range of media and textures but retains a hand-drawn character. Illustrated and photographic images combine with claymation, video transitions and sound effects to produce animation that has a tactile character, one where the hand of the artist in the production process is very much apparent.

Bringing in drawings as cut-out, stop-frame elements is part of Rocco’s exploratory approach to his creative process. He derives a lot of enjoyment from working with contrasting textures such as chalk, charcoal, photographs, clay and live footage. As well as the pleasure that comes from the tactile experience in the making process, Fazzari feels that this application of a diverse range of media enhances the surreal and absurd qualities in his work.

Despite the moving image format affording the possibility of spoken dialogue, Fazzari’s use of text is a preferred communication strategy that

97 Fazzari, Interview by author.
stems from his visual arts background. He professes to be challenged by words, so chooses to explore visual metaphors and imagery in his work rather than include voices and dialogue. It also provides a visual connection to his static cartoons. The synchronicity of style between Fazzari’s static cartoons and his animations is deliberate. On a practical level, he finds it easier to utilise and develop forms with which he is already familiar. In aesthetic terms he believes that drawing on his experience as an artist in terms of textures, composition and format he can achieve a seductive quality about his work. But this synchronicity is also an attempt to retain what he sees as the authenticity of the digital image. He is very much concerned with exploiting the hand-drawn character in his animated work, as he sees this as crucial to his intent of creating a link or bridge of sorts between the print object and the digitally animated object. To render animation in a completely different style is, for him, to remove that link.

Far from being concerned or hesitant about the potential for the technological processes involved in producing animation to change the aesthetics of his image, Fazzari believes that the unique and identifiable qualities of his work will transfer into his digital practice. As a self-taught practitioner, Fazzari embraces the individual quirks of exploratory process that manifest in the resulting image, and in so doing he incorporates these characteristics into a style that is discernibly his.

Being untrained and having no mentors to guide him, Fazzari explores freely with materials and techniques. He explores digital processes in his free time and develops confidence with these before fully employing these in his work. For many novice digital artists, engaging with the requisite technology can be intimidating as the processes are often counter-intuitive, and there is a natural inclination to not want to ‘press the wrong button’. Fazzari’s ingenuous attitude to the challenges of digital skills acquisition is to embrace mistakes:

I love making mistakes because it means you’ve learned

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98 Fazzari, interview by author.
99 Ibid.
something… if you observe that you’ve made a mistake and you’re aware of it that means you’ve progressed.\textsuperscript{100}

Fazzari’s naïve approach to digital technology also affords him freedom from commonly accepted production paradigms. The stop-frame process he currently employs in making his work consists of using a photocopier to copy-email images to himself, as opposed to the more common - and comparatively time-consuming - procedure of scanning images using a computer and scanner. This low-tech solution is innovative as it uses an older technology to achieve the same result but in less time. If the concept comes quickly, Fazzari can churn out an animation in a day or less.\textsuperscript{101} It is the excitement of getting an idea out, of giving it material form, that powers him through the labour intensive part of the making process.

In developing a strategy for animation production Fazzari spent a lot of time in his office watching others engaging with online video content. He observed that the viewer takes some time to adjust to the content and prepare themselves for their engagement with it. Responding to this observation, Fazzari typically allows a few seconds where, in his words, “nothing much happens”. Note the parallel between this approach and the introductory device of the artist perusing a newspaper in the opening frames of a typical Julius animation. Both strategies establish for the viewer a passive and receptive space in which they can consider the context of the ensuing frames before a more active engagement is demanded of them.

Fazzari is a sole operator by choice as much as necessity. Fairfax Media is at this stage unprepared to increase its budget to accommodate additional artists; but Fazzari chooses to work erratic hours that are not conducive to a collaborative production model. He also enjoys the fact that there is no precedent for what he does, so is largely left alone by his employer to do his work. Through his sustained and disciplined practice Fazzari has earned the trust and encouragement of his newspaper, which has chosen to publish his

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\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{101} This rate of production is far superior to what I managed to achieve in my own animation practice. As I describe in chapter five, my works typically took at least 20-40 hours to complete.
\end{flushright}
work on their ipad app and has recently allowed him a day dedicated to specifically developing his animated work.

With this support from his employer, an increasing and devoted fan base and a passion for animation that shows no sign of diminishing, Fazzari has no intentions of ceasing his practice. He is enjoying himself so much that he somehow feels that he is duping his employer into accommodating his indulgence. He says, in self-deprecating terms:

“I’m blessed that I’m in this time in history, where no one knows what the hell’s going on with the digital world or age and just about everyone thinks that everyone else knows what they’re doing. I don’t know what I’m doing. So if they think I know what I’m doing, I’m going to let them think that.”

Of the broader trend towards digital consumption of news media, and how cartoonists can participate in this environment, he believes that, “…anyone that can do something different and go along with it or explore something I think will find a niche.”

For a long while Peter Nicholson’s animations provided the only examples of Australian political animation that were published as regular responses to news events in the weekly or monthly news cycle. Fazzari began his animation practice around the time Nicholson ceased his, and has become the sole salaried animator in this country. Outside of Fazzari’s animations, a gradual but steady number of animations and mash-ups have found their way onto news content sites. No doubt the result of online newspaper editors looking for ways to maximise audience appeal by utilising the multimedia properties of the web environment, these works are typically sourced free of charge from publicly available video sharing sites. The strategy of trading content for the cachet and kudos of publication has unfortunately become a trend that, for the time being, remains convenient.

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
for online news content providers. The approach provides them with little incentive to engage dedicated, professional artists, while those publications that can afford to commission their own talent generally do so from the ranks of existing employees.

In 2007 *The Age* began commissioning contracted graphic designer Simon Rankin to animate the ideas of cartoonists Andrew Dyson, John Spooner, Matt Davidson and Bruce Petty. For a two-year period the animations were published on the newspaper’s online site and were supported by a podcast facility and associated YouTube channel. When Rankin left Fairfax he was not replaced, as it was determined that Fazzari’s emerging animation practice could fill the gap. Aside from the Fairfax newspapers, online-only newspaper *Crikey.com* features a ‘video of the day’ page consisting of satirical and humorous content sourced from elsewhere on the Internet. At the time of writing, these publications provide the only online news content sites that actively promote and publish moving image satire.

The financial incentive for editors of online publications to employ animators, or purchase the licensed animations of freelance contributors, is not yet adequate to sustain this sort of content indefinitely or consistently. Now that bandwidth is generally more than adequate to accommodate multimedia content, the biggest impediment to news sites featuring animations is economics and whether people will pay for content.  

Greg Beato observes the logic of incorporating animations on news sites given the advertiser-driven trend towards high-impact, visual motion-oriented ads:

> Readers find them annoying, because ads designed to be viewed are being plopped down in the middle of sites designed to be read. But if those sites carried animated cartoon series, they’d have a much better context for delivering rich-media ads.\(^\text{105}\)

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If editors and publishers observe that animations can increase their audience, and subsequently their advertising revenue, it is likely that cartoonists like Jon Kudelka will be able to make animation a vocation where it was once only sustainable as a hobby. Some evidence of this can be found in the US, where the audience for domestic political satire is substantially larger than it is in Australia. Mark Fiore has been making a living from his animated works since 2001, while Ann Telnaes made the decision to end print circulation of her cartoons in 2008 to focus on producing animations for *The Washington Post*. Many of these animations were also syndicated to UK-based *The Guardian Unlimited*. Meanwhile, animations on cartoonists’ blogs tend to draw a lot of traffic. Mike Shelton’s publication of animations on his blog increased traffic four-fold, while Walt Handelsman’s animated works are consistently among *Newsday.com*’s most emailed items.  

In recent years the number of political cartoonists in the US that have focused more of their professional time and effort on producing animations includes Bill Mitchell, Don Asmussen, Matt Davies, Nick Anderson, Gary Varvel, Rex Babin and Mike Thompson. While this trend is reflected to a lesser degree in Australia, there is every reason to assume that the stable of political animators will expand here as well. The generational changing of the guard that will occur in the coming decade with the retirement of many of the current crop of cartoonists may see the emergence of a new breed of tech-savvy political cartoonists; coupled with the increasingly sophisticated and advertiser-friendly online environment, the future looks bright for political animation.

CHAPTER TWO – VISUAL SATIRE AND AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Visual Satire

The defining attribute of most political cartoons is their use of satire. Condren argues that, by virtue of its array of formal characteristics and informing purposes, satire is “unsuitable for essentialist definition”.¹ He nonetheless offers, for the purpose of applying copyright law, a working definition of satire as “the critical impulse manifesting in some degree of denigration, almost invariably through attempted humour”.² Unsurprisingly, given the visual, graphic character of political cartoons, satire is considered in this thesis not as a literary genre but as a function of humour and rhetoric. There has, in recent years, been a concerted scholarly effort to challenge the putative literary-theoretical inclination to genericise and canonise satire. Simpson positions this “preeminent form of humour”³ as a culturally discursive practice rather than a genre of discourse. He argues:

Satire has no ontological existence but, rather, that the status of “satire” is something that is conferred upon a text and this conferral is as much a consequence of the way the text is processed and interpreted as it is of the way it is produced and disseminated.⁴

Phiddian observes that “what literary attention to satire does is treat things as a problem of form and interpretation.”⁵ In remarking on the ubiquity of satire across a range of contemporary social and cultural contexts, he is not

⁴ Ibid.: 153.
inspired so much by the sophistication and competence with which a text is interpreted but the diversity of responses that a satirical work might elicit from its audience.\textsuperscript{6}

Satire is a critical and aggressive art that derives its impact most often through the technique of reduction: a person or group is degraded or devalued in an attempt to reduce their stature and dignity\textsuperscript{7} while simultaneously affiliating with another person or group. Political satirists employ ridicule, sarcasm, irony and caricature to “lampoon vice and folly in political life”\textsuperscript{8} in a way that entertains and resonates with their audience.

The role of humour as an effective channel for the expression of controversial ideas and beliefs has been well researched.\textsuperscript{9} Jerry Palmer observes that “humour can be used to directly subvert well-established rules of behaviour by raising taboo topics that can remain on the agenda.”\textsuperscript{10} Mark Rainbird asserts that humour can inspire an audience to question prevalent hegemonic assumptions and can therefore be seen as a “form of resistance that may enact political change.”\textsuperscript{11} In his categories of humour, Freud describes satirical or “tendentious” humour as:

[...] especially favoured in order to make aggressiveness or criticism possible against persons in exalted positions who claim to exercise authority. The [tendentious] joke then represents a rebellion against that authority, a liberation from its pressure.\textsuperscript{12}

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\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.; 46.
\textsuperscript{11} Mark Rainbird, “Humour, Multiculturalism and ‘Political Correctness’,” (paper presented to the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference, September 29 – October 1 2004, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia), 5.
\textsuperscript{12} Freud, \textit{Jokes and Their Relation}, 149.
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John McCallum locates Australian popular humour in the Anglo-Celtic tradition. It is “dry, laconic, self-mocking, cynical and irreverent”, but is at the same time aggressive and provocative.\(^{13}\) He states that:

In the comic negotiation of power you may be aggressive or submissive, but are most interesting when you are both at the same time. Self-mocking jokes work because they can be read both of these ways. They complicitously offer an easily accessible reading to general audiences used to the form, and a covert reading strategy to anyone who cares to look for it.\(^{14}\)

This brand of humour is evident in the works of Australian political writers and cartoonists such as Banjo Patterson, Henry Lawson, Joseph Furphy and John Norton.\(^{15}\) Dorothy Jones writes that “Australian humour…is closely bound up with a concept of the Australian character as egalitarian, anti-authoritarian and irreverent towards social pretension.”\(^{16}\) This archetypal Australian character, most popularly extolled by Ward, was a frontier-type fashioned by the convict experience, continued colonial subservience to Britain and adversity in the face of an adverse natural environment.\(^{17}\) Although Jones admits that contemporary Australian life leaves “little scope for irreverence, defiance of authority or genuine egalitarianism”,\(^{18}\) Catriona Elder acknowledges the resonance that this mythology carries in modern Australian society.\(^{19}\) Australian political cartooning is distinguished by its evocation of characteristics that are popularly understood to be inherently Australian, but are also defining aspects of effective satirical humour. Satire

\(^{14}\) Ibid.: 213.
\(^{16}\) Jones, “Serious Laughter”, 82.
\(^{18}\) Jones, “Serious Laughter”, 82.
\(^{19}\) Catriona Elder, Being Australian: Narratives of National Identity, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 2007), 34.
is a brand of humour and protest that is attuned to a mythologised national narrative and dispensed fluently and naturally by this country’s cartoonists.

**About the Political Cartoon: Function**

Matthew Hodgart proposes several conditions upon which a society’s tolerance of political satire depends: a degree of free speech; an interest on the part of an educated public to become involved in political affairs; some confluence on the part of the satirist that he or she can have an influence; and a large audience that enjoys wit and imagination and understands satire.\(^\text{20}\) In considering the subversive nature of visual satire, political cartooning might be viewed as a yardstick against which the democratic health of a nation or state can be measured. Owing to its at times obscene, offensive or politically sensitive nature, the political cartoon is seen by Ranan Lurie as “the most extreme form of expression that a society will accept or tolerate.”\(^\text{21}\) Veteran cartoonist Alan Moir, in remarking that “political cartooning pre-dates true democracy by many years”, positions cartoonists “at the pointy end of Democracy’s creation” and “at the front of the front line in its defense.”\(^\text{22}\)

Manning and Phiddian observe that “basic to any satirical work is that it should question received opinions and affront decorum.”\(^\text{23}\) They liken cartoonists to “canaries sent down the mine shaft of public debate to discover how fresh the air is there, how safe it is for freedom of speech.”\(^\text{24}\) In arguing against censorship of political cartoons, they attest that political cartoons are “one of the checks and balances in a democratic system that seek to make it difficult for people to get away with abuses of common standards or morality, probity or wisdom.”\(^\text{25}\)

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\(^{21}\) Ibid.: 22.

\(^{22}\) Alan Moir, “What is This Thing Called Political Cartooning?” (paper presented at the Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Canberra, Australia, June 18, 2006).


\(^{24}\) Ibid.: 133.

Michael Hogan acknowledges that “the best political satire, whether acted out, written down, or drawn in cartoons, can cut to the core of political debate and highlight the real choice available in a working democracy,” but says that there should also be some consideration of the boundary lines between healthy satire and a rather more destructive cynicism. In questioning the role of political cartoons in engendering public cynicism towards politics and politicians, he argues that cartoonists should be subject to the same limits and constraints of expression that are imposed on journalists.

The prevailing attitude of cartoonists and social commentators seems to be that a cartoonist’s license is only worth having if it is exercised. Joel Pett declares that it is “a far worse sin to self-censor than to cross the line occasionally,” while Rogers argues that “if (cartoonists) cannot criticize the government during times of crisis, our guarantee of free speech becomes meaningless during times of relative security.”

The role of the political cartoon is not to inform the reader in the manner of journalistic text. In his article The Cartoon as a Historical Source, Thomas Kemnitz declares that, “the cartoon cannot match the printed word for dispassionate comment, and it is incapable of the reasoned criticism and detailed argument of the editorial.” He adds that the political cartoon provides “little insight into the intellectual bases of opinion.” Bruce Petty describes cartoons as “an appalling abbreviation”, whose accuracy is often sacrificed for entertainment. He echoes something of Kemnitz’s sentiments in concluding that political cartooning, as a component of

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27 Ibid.
31 Ibid.: 86.
society’s self-analysis, is, “high on impact, random on accuracy and aesthetics determined by the mass of readership.”33

Neither Kemnitz nor Petty suggests that political cartoons do not fulfill an important role in the news media; rather that their function is more one of commentary than news reportage. Manning and Phiddian explain that “cartoonists are not an information source; they are part of public debate, ostentatiously engaged in comment rather than reporting”. Political cartoons are satirical representations of news events, located in rhetoric rather than fact - they are not literal, nor are they intended to be taken literally. As satirists, cartoonists make “different implicit claim for the truth value of their work from the claim that underlies journalism.”34

The strength of the political cartoon lies in its capacity to convey ideas in a way that is at once accessible and, hopefully, indelible. They speak to their audience in a different voice from text-based analysis and comment. Marguerite Mahood states in her book *The Loaded Line: Australian Political Caricature 1788-1901* that:

[The political cartoon] is a reflection, not of the historian’s idea of history, but of the common man’s reaction to the political events of his day. It is framed in terms its viewers understand; it speaks the language of its time with all its current catchwords and phrases.35

Roe writes of the cartoonist’s ability to translate political concepts into metaphorical images. In observing the “current context of corrupted idioms of public language”, she applauds the political cartoon’s “unique ability to condense and concentrate issues that would be too complex or defamatory in print.”36 Ian Mathews provides the example that writers will rarely accuse

33 Ibid.
34 Manning and Phiddian, “In Defence of,” 34.
a public figure of being a liar, but that a cartoonist will happily endow a subject with a Pinocchio-like nose to exact the same effect. In explaining why cartoonists are typically granted a broader license than writers when it comes to charges of deformation, he cites two reasons: firstly, visual metaphors are comparatively more ambiguous than descriptive text, and therefore less easily determined in a court of law to be incontrovertibly defaming; second, the targets of a satirical cartoons are generally disinclined to make their offense publicly known for fear of being seen to “lack a sense of humour.”

Guy Hansen, the curator of the annual *Bringing the House Down* exhibition, says:

> Cartoons are now one of the most important weapons in a newspaper's armory of political analysis. Unlike a news article or column, the cartoon has the capacity to almost instantaneously dissect a political issue. It [a cartoon] can often have more veracity and insight than hundreds of words of text-based analysis.

Political cartoons generally convey their message “quickly and pungently” and as a result, they are able to more likely than text-based communication to get their point across to the audience. Coleman and Tanner note that the inherent unfairness and crudeness of political cartoons allows them to capture the public sentiment of the day with more accuracy and greater authenticity than journalists’ articles. Chris Lamb, in referring to the 2000 US presidential election, predicts that in generations to come, it may be that

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39 Kemnitz, “The Cartoon as Historical,” 84.
the most realistic picture of the event was provided by political cartoonists.\textsuperscript{41}

Cartoonists are often said to represent the citizen’s perspective of public life, though Roe expands on this definition, positioning cartoonists “on the borderline between the tradition of the artist as social critic and the journalist as social commentator/reporter, between the ‘high’ culture of the intellectual and the mass culture of their newspapers’ readership.”\textsuperscript{42} Citing Posner’s survey of political satire as public intellectual genre, she concludes that cartooning provides “a new space for public intellectuals to perform.”\textsuperscript{43}

Posner defines a public intellectual as “someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma, [and] who cannot easily be co-opted by governments and corporations.”\textsuperscript{44} In drawing political cartooning into the sphere of public intellectualism, Posner explains that it is the cartoonist’s use of satire that qualifies them in this field:

Satire is the public intellectual genre par excellence. It conveys social criticism with enchanting, seductive obliquity, avoiding drab social science, heavy-handed didacticism, and explicit and therefore quickly dated prophesy…An equally important point is that satire is the public intellectual genre which only the independent public intellectual can contribute.\textsuperscript{45}

Additionally, Roe says of Australian cartoonists that their engagement with the public sphere often extends beyond their specific graphic trade, to participation in public forums, journals and media interviews. That they frequently discuss topics primarily in their capacity as engaged citizens,

\textsuperscript{41} Lamb, \textit{Drawn to Extremes}, 57.
\textsuperscript{42} Roe, “Graphic Satire,” 59.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.; 57.
\textsuperscript{44} Richard A. Posner in Roe, “Graphic Satire,” 55. This assertion assumes the substantial degree of editorial independence typically enjoyed by political cartoonists.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
rather than as graphic artists, provides further evidence of their public intellectual credentials.\textsuperscript{46} It says something of the regard in which Australia’s political cartoonists are held by the public that their graphic satirical analysis of the events of the day can afford them a broader platform in which to comment on matters of social and political import.

**About the Political Cartoon: Structure**

In her discussion *Metaphor and index in the language of political cartoons*, Cristina Penamarin suggests that the cartoon is “a text of the author’s design, signed and marked by their personal drawing style.”\textsuperscript{47} The cartoon genre, she says, achieves a genuine discourse “not the way a hieroglyph does, which requires that each graphic sign be translated into a verbal expression, but rather by producing its own mode of expression which, though basically intertwined within the realm of words, is able to dispense with them.”\textsuperscript{48}

Cartoons often contain graphic elements that are codified via popular figures and cultural references.\textsuperscript{49} The discourse which Penamarin describes is premised on the viewer’s capacity to draw on the relevant cultural memory to gain meaningful access to the metaphors and analogies contained within the image.\textsuperscript{50} The discourse includes “a visual language of signs, conventions and rhetorical devices used to convey and interpret meanings.”\textsuperscript{51} Comprehension is therefore dependent upon a reader’s fluency

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\textsuperscript{46} Roe, “Graphic Satire,” 58.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Charles Hou and Cynthia Hou in Werner, “On Political Cartoons”.
in recognising graphic symbols and cultural references and translating them into a meaningful narrative.

The narrative aims to be persuasive, and as such political cartoons are typically arranged into two rhetorical devices: caricature, which parodies the individual, and allusion, which creates the situation or context into which the individual is placed.\(^{52}\) The context is given rhetorical weight by its adherence to one or several of the following categories defined by Morris: condensation, combination, domestication, opposition.\(^{53}\) Speckman clarifies these categories in her analysis of animated editorial cartoons:

> Condensation involves compressing complex issues into a single metaphor such as showing inflation as a monster; combination blends dual or multiple references, such as combining politics with sport; domestication: compares someone to a familiar figure to the reader, such as portraying Saddam as Hitler; and opposition uses opposites to portray an idea, such as how a child would react to a situation differently from an adult.\(^{54}\)

As well as the structural elements inherent in political cartoons, Charles Press identifies and categorises them into three ‘tones’\(^{55}\): descriptive; laughing satirical; destructive satirical. Manning and Phiddian expand this list to include a fourth category, ‘cartoons that exhibit savage indignation’.\(^{56}\) The ‘tone’ of political cartoons varies over time and also according to cartoonist, media form or targeted audience.\(^{57}\) It is important to be aware that this taxonomy provides merely a broad guide to categorising cartoons as not all readers will derive the same message from any one cartoon.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{52}\) Werner, “On Political Cartoons”.


\(^{56}\) Manning and Phiddian, “In Defence of”.


\(^{58}\) Ibid.: 9.
The ‘descriptive’ cartoon tends to lack a strong social or political conviction and its main purpose is to lightly entertain its reader. Their humour tends more toward the comic than the satirical. The ‘laughing satirical’ cartoon is reformist in nature, accepting the legitimacy of those in power while seeking to correct or highlight their behaviour. ‘Destructive satirical’ cartoons, on the other hand, do not accept the legitimacy of the power structures of the day; they have a revolutionary tone and are most often published outside of the mainstream media in activist journals, newsletters and pamphlets. Manning and Phiddian observe a gap in the taxonomy prescribed by Press, and create their own category: ‘cartoons that exhibit savage indignation’. They describe such cartoons as neither fundamentally loyal to the system, nor bent on its destruction, and assert that many Australian cartoons fall into this category. In Townsend’s analysis of political cartoons examining the ‘workchoices’ debate, the author found that all cartoons sampled fell into the ‘laughing satirical’ and ‘savage indignation’ categories.

Within these categories, there are commonly accepted to be six different artistic techniques that might be employed in a political cartoon to achieve the desired impact: metaphor, caricature, captions and labels, exaggeration, satire and irony - all of which, according to Trudeau, “mitigate against fairness”. These techniques are typically applied to four major topics: political commonplaces; literary/cultural allusions; personal character traits; and situational themes. Seymour-Ure defines the categories of imagery that cartoonists generally draw upon to frame their chosen topic: occupational; sporting; historical; theatre / literature / visual arts; animal; inanimate objects; common cultural reference, everyday image/ figure of speech and topical non-election events.

59 Manning and Phiddian, “In Defence of”.
61 Garry Trudeau, in Lamb, Drawn to Extremes, 34.
While the stylistic elements that provide the graphic foundation of political cartoons remain constant - line and form; size of objects within frame; exaggeration or amplification of physiological features; placements within frame; relation of text to visual imagery; rhythmic montage within frame\textsuperscript{\textendash} the symbols that cartoonists invoke to communicate the meaning and context of the image tend to change depending on pop culture artifacts.\textsuperscript{65} Speckman observes a “shrinking pool of shared imagery” being responsible for a lack of effective, high-impact cartoons in online publications; she suggests that modern youth are more familiar with pop culture references and do not understand the historical references that have traditionally been a mainstay of political cartoons.\textsuperscript{66}

**On the Influence of Political Cartoons**

Many cartoonists lament the perceived decline of influence of political cartoons in recent years and the loss of radicalism and dynamism that characterised the art during the 1960s and ‘70s. Pat Oliphant wonders how “such a confrontational art form… could be allowed to fall into disregard, disuse and ultimate dismissal.”\textsuperscript{67} In a less literate and less media-saturated era, political cartoons provided a lens through which public debate and discussion could be focused. Although there is no empirical research to suggest that political cartoons are or have ever been influential enough to sway the political beliefs, attitudes or voting intentions of their readers, there are numerous historical examples that point to political cartoons having provided a catalyst for debate or galvanised public opinion.\textsuperscript{68}

In explaining the declining influence of political cartoons, Oliphant points to the reluctance of newspapers to propagate controversial views subsequent to their evolution as corporations beholden to their stockholders rather than the public. He also blames political correctness, ‘visually illiterate’ editors

\textsuperscript{64} Medhurst and Desousa, “Political Cartoons”.
\textsuperscript{65} Speckman and Ponche, “Animated Editorial Cartoons,” 5.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
and modern day political cartoonists who disregard structure, accurate caricature and the fundamentals of design and drawing. Oliphant believes that, despite the Internet and other diversions, political cartoons belong in newspapers. He laments:

…as long as newspapers themselves continue to lose influence… and through their loss of focus continue chasing after such illusions as youth readership…and continue to pander to the sinister influences of political correctness… or run a contentious cartoon one day and offer abject apologies for it the next, their influence and the influence of the political cartoon will commensurately decrease.\(^69\)

Raising literacy levels must also contribute to this perceived decline; the better read the populace, the less reliant they are on pictorial representations of events. In her study on the printed image as a component of cultural expansion and transformation in the 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century, Patricia Anderson attributes the success of the printed image over text-based communication at that time to relatively low literacy rates.\(^70\) When Dan Backer also declares that, “The factor which probably influenced the rise of cartoons more than any other cultural factor was a high illiteracy rate”\(^71\) it is reasonable to conclude that a high literacy rate might play some part in their diminishing influence.

The decline might also be attributed, more simply, to a greater proliferation of images in contemporary society and a greater variety of mediums in which they are presented. The medium of choice for political cartoons, the newspaper, does not occupy the same prominent position in news opinion and analysis as it once did. There is still plenty of political satire around,

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\(^69\) Ibid.
though nowadays it is just as likely to take the form of television entertainment or video and blog content on the Internet. These developments and their impact on the traditional still-image political cartoon will be discussed further in chapter four.

While Lamb cites a number of instances where cartoons may have influenced the decisions of governing politicians in the US, little quantitative research exists that provides any insight into the extent to which political cartoons in isolation influence the political beliefs, attitudes or voting intentions of their readers. He concludes that “rarely does a cartoonist know what, if any, difference he or she has made.”

Michael Hogan believes that political cartoons have at least enough influence to contribute to the level of cynicism for politics and politicians held by many citizens in modern democracies like Australia, a claim supported by studies undertaken by Brinkman, Baumgartner and Morris. In response to Hogan’s claim, Manning and Phiddian suggest that any increase in levels of cynicism is the fault of the politicians themselves, and that more cartoons with a sharper edge would benefit the political system. This view appears to also be supported by Baumgartner’s study, which suggests that political satire elicits a positive effect on political participation in spite of a negative effect on candidate evaluations. Most researchers agree that political cartoons do not have a significant influence, if any, on public opinion or editorial positioning; but nor do they feel that this should be the principal measure of their value. Posner, in Roe, states:

It is doubtful whether a political cartoon can influence public opinion; the most one can say that, as with all forms of political satire, it demonstrates to those in power that

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72 Lamb, *Drawn to Extremes*, 33.
73 Ibid.: 25.
76 Manning and Phiddian, “In Defence of”.
77 Baumgartner, “Editorial Cartoons 2.0”.
not everyone agrees with them. Cartoonists are “disturbers of the canonical peace”.78

Manning and Phiddian state that cartoons lack transformative appeal because they tend to be read by a “self-selecting minority of the voting public” whose political convictions are predetermined and inflexible.79 Furthermore, political cartoons are merely one component of the political journalistic opinion landscape, whose influence as a whole is itself nebulous. Sally Young cites statistics that point to a very low level of engagement in political news and information among the general Australian public.80 Other studies point to reasonably high levels of public interest in politics, where fewer than a fifth of respondents admitted to paying ‘not much’ attention to the subject, and almost nobody declared that they took no interest in politics whatsoever.81 Cartoons make a valuable contribution to public debate because of their capacity to focus attention, stimulate debate and provoke argument. This capacity is evidenced by the frequent letters to the editor either applauding – though mostly deriding – a recently published cartoon. In achieving these things they can be considered a component of what John Keane calls ‘monitory democracy’, where various “extra-parliamentary power-scrutinising institutions” promote political participation and public monitoring of power.82

About Censorship

In his analysis of political cartooning in the US, Chris Lamb concluded that the 9/11 terrorist attacks “profoundly changed the rules of engagement for cartoonists”. In the immediate aftermath of this event even the most controversial of American cartoonists – including Oliphant – ceased their satirical attacks on Bush and US foreign policy.83 When some cartoonists

78 Posner in Roe, “Graphic Satire,” 64.
82 Ibid.: 689.
83 Lamb, Drawn to Extremes.
decided to call an end to the ‘cease fire’, many were roundly condemned by readers, commentators and opinion writers. While many editors supported their cartoonists and their work, some newspapers refused to publish cartoons for fear of attracting the ire of their readers or, indeed, their government. America’s cartoonists during this period found themselves subject to the censorship of their editors, or willingly suppressed their own voice.

Political cartoons are a legally and constitutionally protected form of expression in the US, although many American cartoonists lament that their work is nevertheless shackled by notions of political correctness and subject to censorship by editors sensitive to lobby groups and advertisers.

No such laws protect the cartoon in Australia, though as Manning and Phiddian observe, “there is so little case law that one has to conclude that cartoonists enjoy something very close to immunity from prosecution.” There are however plenty of examples of cases of cartoons being pulled by editors to suggest that the fear of litigation is much more pervasive than the reality of effective immunity from prosecution.

Perhaps the most famous example of editorial censorship in Australia is The Age’s refusal in 2002 to publish a Michael Leunig cartoon. The cartoon, which appeared to compare the plight of Jews in World War II German concentration camps with the plight of Palestinians in modern Israel, was deemed by editor Michael Gawenda as “intelectually lazy, consciously designed to wound and… motivated by antipathy to Jews.” The cartoon, brought into the public sphere when broadcast on ABC television’s Mediwach programme, gained further notoriety when it emerged that Richard Cooke, a freelance journalist associated with The Chaser satirical group, submitted the cartoon to a competition run by the Iranian newspaper

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84 Ibid.: 15.
The competition was run as a retaliatory gesture in protest at the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of twelve cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed, which came to be seen by many as something of a litmus test for the extent of freedom of speech in Western societies.

At some stage in their career, many cartoonists will be asked by editors to either rework contentious cartoons, or submit a new one altogether. This will usually be done on the grounds of taste, or if an editor deems the offending image potentially libelous. Court action brought about in response to defaming or libelous cartoons occurs on very few occasions and succeeds even less. In 1986 an action was brought by architect Harry Seidler against Fairfax over a Patrick Cook cartoon that depicted the fictional “Harry Seidler Memorial Retirement Village” as a box where “sandwiches went in the front and shit came out the back”. The action and subsequent appeal failed, with the judge ruling that the capacity for exaggeration by a cartoonist was perfectly legal.

More rarely political pressure will be exerted on a publisher or cartoonist to desist from their satirical attacks. Les Tanner noted “an interesting disinclination” on the part of *The Age* in running cartoons critical of then state premier Jeff Kennett, after the politician protested the persistent portrayal of him as a figure whose foot was planted in his mouth. For the most part however, Australian cartoonists appear unfettered by the political sensibilities of either their editors or their readership.

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Michael Hogan asks whether the function of the political cartoonist is fundamentally different from that of the journalist, and questions the cartoonist’s freedom to “lampoon mercilessly”.\(^{94}\) Hogan attests that, in various guises, political cartoons promote the idea that: there is little to choose between the candidates, policies or parties; that election promises are lies; that politicians are liars and concerned only with their self advancement; that voters are incompetent to make the adjudication their vote represents; that elections are a waste of time; that elections are irrelevant; and that the institutions of democracy are corrupt.\(^{95}\)

If the cartoonist is simply a journalist who uses visual humour, he asserts, then their work should conform to journalistic standards of objectivity and fairness. Hogan asks, “if it is unfair and possibly actionable for a journalist to imply that a politician is a liar or a crook, it is not also unfair for an artist to do the same?”\(^{96}\) Given that political cartoons predominantly reinforce the negative images of politics and politicians – with few countervailing positive images – Hogan believes that cartoonists should be held accountable for the degree of cynicism directed at political institutions by the electorate.

In their response to Michael Hogan’s paper, Manning and Phiddian contest that “arguing for internal balance in cartoons misconceives the cartoonists’ role.”\(^{97}\) The cartoonist is “clearly involved in comment rather than reporting, and the comment they make is obviously and recognizably extravagant”.\(^{98}\) The authors also point to the range of formal and informal pressures that demarcate the limits of satirical freedom: defamation laws; sedition laws; internal editorial and corporate pressures; popularly accepted standards of ‘good taste’; and the “desire to be responsible”.\(^{99}\)

If it is accepted that the cartoonist occupies a unique position in the journalistic landscape, one that is understood by readers to be fundamentally

\(^{94}\) Hogan, “Cartoonists and Political Cynicism,” 30.
\(^{95}\) Ibid.
\(^{96}\) Ibid.: 37.
\(^{97}\) Manning and Phiddian, “In Defence of the,” 10.
cynical, acerbic and witty, then their role can only be diminished if restrained by notions of accuracy and balance. This special contract that exists between the cartoonist and the reader affords a license to lampoon, mock and satirise those in positions of power in the name of healthy democratic debate. Manning and Phiddian argue that the extensive license granted to cartoonists “is one, not insignificant, indication that a liberal democratic polity seeks to practice its ideals.”

100 Manning and Phiddian, “The Political Cartoonist,” 149.
CHAPTER THREE : PART ONE - ON MOVING IMAGE AS POLITICAL CARTOON

In this chapter I examine and compare the material and teleological characteristics of printmedia political cartoons and animated political cartoons. In critically reflecting on the viewpoints of prize givers, scholars and cartoonists themselves, I determine that the alignment of the two image types within a single, political cartooning tradition is not only possible in a categorical sense, but also desirable in a historical sense. In the second part of this chapter I also agitate for the inclusion of video images within the tradition through the provision of a case study of prominent video mash-up artist Hugh Atkin. In the subsequent chapter I set out a taxonomical framework for the formal categorisation of moving images as political cartoons.

For all the technological developments that have punctuated the timeline of political cartooning, the onset of the digital media revolution has ushered in an era where cartoonists find themselves, for the first time, operating in a news publishing context that supports both silent static images and audiovisual moving images. Where the technological shifts away from woodcuts to the incrementally more advanced printing processes that followed preserved the drafting-illustration paradigm that has been the cartoonist’s traditional domain, digital media has expanded the cartooning toolset in the most radical of ways. The satirical image is now no longer bound by the confines of a printed frame and may now be shown as a sequence of images with sound.

This is a confronting development for many newspaper cartoonists. Their profession already under siege in the United States from syndication and downsizing, the emergence of multimedia platforms and the production possibilities they afford present what could be viewed as an existential threat to the craft. For some cartoonists, the form of a political cartoon is irrefutably bedded in the hand drawn tradition. In this respect form does not follow function, but is immutably welded to it. This is by no means a
unanimous view; indeed many panel cartoonists also produce animations which they, and others, consider to share the same fundamental character.

In 2007, for the first time in its history, The Pulitzer Prize for editorial cartooning was awarded to a cartoonist whose submission consisted of both print cartoons and animations.¹ Walt Handelsman was awarded the prize ahead of two other finalists, Nick Anderson and Mike Thompson, whose submissions also included animated work. In 2010, freelance animator Mark Fiore was awarded the prize for a portfolio that consisted exclusively of political animations. Having amended the citation in 2006 to also accommodate online images in a print cartoon portfolio, the Pulitzer committee once again amended the citation in 2009 to remove altogether the prerequisite that entries be published in print. In 2012 the citation was once again updated to unambiguously acknowledge animation, and now reads:

For a distinguished cartoon or portfolio of cartoons, characterized by originality, editorial effectiveness, quality of drawing and pictorial effect, published as a still drawing, animation or both.²

While the cartooning community appears divided as to the merits of the Pulitzer committee considering animations alongside of static cartoons – some declaring that they ought not be considered at all, others arguing for the creation of a separate category for animated images³ – the committee’s acknowledgement of political animations as serious editorial content both legitimises their role in the journalistic landscape and also raises questions about hitherto commonly accepted determinants in the qualification of images as a political cartoons.

Detractors point to other forms of satirical or subversive animation and muse that animated television shows such as *The Simpsons* or *Southpark* might also be considered eligible for the Pulitzer Prize.⁴ They observe that political animations tend towards the comic and humorous at the expense of the controversial and indignant tone that distinguishes the best newsprint cartoons.⁵ Speckman does acknowledge, however, that the perception that animation promotes comedy and one-liners over biting and insightful satire may be more of a result of the creative choices of the artist and the socio-political climate in which they operate than any inherent qualities in the medium.⁶ Pat Oliphant was not even considering animation when he attributed the decline in the potency and controversial character of contemporary political cartoons to politically correct and “graphically challenged” cartoonists and editors.⁷

Printmedia purists contributing to blog discussions have trouble reconciling the moving image format with the traditional, hand-drawn panel cartoon, claiming that the categorisation of animations as political cartoons disavows the art form of its historical and physical uniqueness. Others are concerned that the often-collaborative nature of animation will pit the team against the solo artist in the conferring of cartooning awards and prizes.⁸ Cartoonist and animator Jon Kudelka considers the two forms as being diametrically opposed, owing to the nature of engagement with the content in terms of both the conception of the idea by the artist and subsequent consumption of it by the viewer.⁹

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⁴ Stantis, “A Zany Development”.
⁶ Ibid.
⁹ Jon Kudelka, interview by author. Tape Recording. Canberra, Australia. 7 Jun 2011.
Those who decry the classification of political animations as political cartoons tend to focus on the respective differences in media type and process, arguing that political animation, while inarguably satire, fails the crucial litmus test of not being able to be viewed on the printed page.\textsuperscript{10} Where the cartoons published on online-only news sites such as \textit{Crickey.com} can, for purposes of meeting this criterion, be printed onto a single page, it is imperative to consider - given the inexorable trend toward digital news media consumption - what are the essential components of a political cartoon outside of its presentation on a page.

For many cartoonists, a defining and essential characteristic of their work is that ideas are presented within the confines of a single frame. Traditionally, cartoonists work within the spatial constraints determined by the print media format in which their work is located. In awarding the 2007 Prize for Editorial Cartooning to an artist whose submission contained animated content, the Pulitzer Committee rejected the notion that a political cartoon should contain just a single frame.\textsuperscript{11} If the capacity to reproduce the image on a single page or frame is the principle determinant in their categorisation, then neither animations nor video mash-ups could be called ‘cartoons’. Mash-ups and animations are undoubtedly visual satirical works, but including them in the political cartooning tradition means accepting a broader range of criteria.

A further consideration in the categorisation of political animations, and one that is implicit in the selection of the 2007 Pulitzer Prize finalists, is that political animations - like political cartoons - tend to deal with events that are topical. Where print cartoons typically comment on events that play out over a 24-hour news cycle, however, the time-intensive nature of animation production precludes this degree of immediacy. In discussing this constraint in his approach to developing concepts, Walt Handelsman declares “you have to look at news in a different way. You have to look at broader issues

\textsuperscript{10} Stantis, “A Zany Development”.
\textsuperscript{11} In this context and throughout, ‘frame’ refers to the boundary of the image as a whole, and not to any constituent ‘panels’ that might be incorporated within.
that last for weeks and months.”\textsuperscript{12} This is a discrepancy that I observed in my own conceptual development of static and animated political cartoons.\textsuperscript{13} In order that an animation retain its currency and resonate with the viewer at the time of publication, the moving image cartoonist must identify and anticipate which issues will remain topical in the media throughout the production period and slightly beyond.

The acknowledgement of animations as political cartoons also appropriates and recontextualises the grammar of film into the cartooning paradigm. In considering the mash-up as an evolutionary step in the political cartooning tradition, the question of form needs to recognise structural and aesthetic elements that lie outside of the illustrative and drafting framework of the image. In film parlance, the ‘form’ of the image may be derived from time-based structures and processes such as timing, editing, cuts, arrangements and montage. In terms of the production of the image and the artist’s engagement with the media, the cartoonist and the mash-up artist increasingly share similar modes of image capture, manipulation and output. Hand drawn components occupy the same digital canvas as photographic or film components; to a degree they are treated the same, as image data.

Some techniques inherent in animation have their parallels in print. Static cartoons that include within the frame a number of panels designed to be read in a sequence provide the cartoonist with a strategy for delivering a linear narrative. This format is similar to the storyboards that animators and film makers initially develop in planning the action, shots and composition of their moving image works. Indeed many of the images included within this text are a strategically selected array of multiple video frames that reference and describe the moving image works from which they are extracted. In the sequential reading of such images, this format implies change over time. It is therefore effective in imbuing in a static image a sense of dynamism and temporality that is intrinsic to the audiovisual image.

\textsuperscript{12} Walt Handelsman in Alan Gardner, “Pulitzers should include separate category for animation,” \textit{The Daily Cartoonist} (2007). 

\textsuperscript{13} I will discuss this aspect of concept development further in chapter five.
but cannot be achieved within a single panel. This effect has been well researched by Di Liddo, McLeod and Cortsen in relation to cartoon strips and comics.

With respect to the classification and categorisation of political cartoons, the extant taxonomies do not distinguish between the single or multiple-panel static image.\textsuperscript{14} The distinction is useful to make in comparative terms with the moving image as it points to a degree of cognitive equivalence in the narrative treatment of the respective image types. The capacity of the multiple-panel cartoon to represent space and time locates it somewhere on a ‘spatio-temporal’ spectrum between the single panel image at one extreme and the moving image at the other. On the one hand, multiple-panel images are able to describe a temporal progression of narrated actions and events; on the other hand, like the single panel cartoon, the multiple-panel cartoon contains the beginning, middle and end of the narrative within a single frame, where past, present and future occupy the same compositional space.\textsuperscript{15}

The conceptual and structural intersections that exist between static and moving image sequences do not necessarily translate to a fluent application of techniques by the cartoonist conversant in each of the respective media processes. For example, the delayed irony achieved by the ‘Ken Burns’ effect, where the viewer initially is shown only a part of the scene before having the entire scene revealed - or the reverse – is easily replicated in both moving and static images. Some techniques in animation are not so easily communicated in the static image, such as events reliant on timing for comic impact. In addition, the use of sound in animation provides a metaphorical, temporal device not available in print. For all the distinctive qualities of political animation, however, the rhetorical devices used to engage the viewer are familiar to the static cartoon.

\textsuperscript{14} In this context and throughout, ‘static’ refers to the lack of inherent motion contained within the image object, and not to the implied character of the constituent graphic elements.

Metaphor

In her examination of political animations, Speckman provides a coding system for the categorisation of political animations. She defines an animated political cartoon as one that contains “at least one frame with something moving” - with a frame being “a portion of the cartoon that contains one complete thought or idea”. In drawing a direct comparison with print cartoon imagery, Speckman applies Seymour-Ure’s categories in the examination of the following political animation forms or modes: ‘value-added’ print mode; ‘musical revue’ mode; and ‘The Daily Show’ mode. ‘Value-added’ implies the application of additional rudimentary animation to an essentially print-style cartoon; ‘Musical revue’ mode presents multiple frames based around a central theme, such as a song or situational context; while ‘The Daily Show’ mode - named after the popular satirical TV programme – contained many frames designed collectively to be persuasive.

Speckman reveals that animated cartoons depend on the same categories and metaphors for understanding as static cartoons – with the notable distinction that animations may employ several or many categories in the one cartoon. In addition to those defined by Seymour-Ure, Speckman adds ‘pop cultural references’ as a category. She notes the added emphasis on pop cultural references in lieu of the historical references favoured in print media cartoons. This is attributed in speculative terms to the demographic at which the animations are most often aimed not being equipped with the requisite cultural and historical references. In some instances the lack of such references may be a consequence of the animators themselves not being fluent or interested enough in applying this vocabulary in their animations. Speckman acknowledges that “cartooning metaphors have changed in the past, and editorial cartooning has survived.”

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17 Ibid.; 14.
18 Ibid.; 20.
19 Ibid.; 22.
Where Speckman’s analysis of animated cartoons seeks to identify their distinctive qualities compared with static cartoons, the conclusions she draws from her study focus predominantly on cultural concerns that might theoretically impact on their efficacy and potency as political symbols. In identifying the challenges faced by political animators in producing images that promote the best attributes of static political cartoons, Speckman identifies a number of concerns facing the print media cartoon, namely: homogenisation of drawing style and satirical devices promoted by Internet access to the global catalogue of political cartoons; a reduced application and engagement with historical and cultural imagery by contemporary cartoonists and their audiences; and the risk-averse inclination of cartoonists not to offend or challenge the political and social status-quo in a post 9-11 atmosphere in the US. Speckman seeks to discover whether the animated image is at all placed to address these concerns. She concludes that, while political animations do not appear to suffer from homogenisation in style or content, they fail to address the remaining concerns. In other words, contemporary political animations suffer from pretty much the same cultural failings as contemporary static cartoons, and any distinctive qualities they have are not adequate in and of themselves in delivering a more potent and effective graphic satirical object.

In reflecting on the ‘60s as a ‘Golden Age’ of political cartooning, as many cartoonists and scholars are wont to do, Petty remarks, quite simply, that for cartoons to achieve a similar kind of potency and influence as they did in the ‘60s, “you need a ‘60s”.”20 The ‘60s presented an era of diverse, frenetic creative output that was synchronous with a socio-political environment of protest and activism. In describing the mood of the time and the events that inspired cartoonists of the day, Petty recalls the post-war mood of adventure that permeated society:

…there was a huge visual and cultural hit from plays and poets and writing and posters and publishing, magazines, typefaces, everything… but there was also the women’s

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20 Bruce Petty, interview by author. Tape Recording. Sydney, Australia. 8 Dec 2009.
movement, there was also black power; there were movements here, there was Wave Hill, there were the Aboriginal bus tours - and universities were the core of it, and newspapers knew it and so they cultivated it.\footnote{Ibid.}

Since that time Petty has observed the changing nature of the socio-political landscape and the impact this has on imagery. He observes that governments have surrendered a lot of the levers they once had with respect to how society is organised, with a subsequent shift in power and influence to corporate interests. In spite of their cultural, social and political influence, boardrooms tend to lack the same transparency and accountability to citizens that is demanded of governments. This has altered the visuality of people and events that has traditionally been exploited by cartoonists in their construction of metaphors. The challenge for cartoonists engaging in satirical comment on these issues is how to present concepts and ideas to which the reading public may be only partially privy.

As the nature of power and authority shifts, so too then does the nature of the imagery used to describe it. Similarly, as the popular culture zeitgeist transfers its weight away from literary and historical memory and towards mass-media and entertainment artifacts, the pool of shared imagery changes in kind. The potential of animation as a vehicle for the delivery of potent visual satire can therefore be more sensibly attributed to the capacity of the individual artist in conceiving and developing metaphorical images than any inherent shortcoming of the medium.

In fact, the temporal nature of animation affords the artist conceptual strategies not available to the static image cartoonist. Animated images can allow greater scope for extending metaphors and exploring concepts in a more expansive way. What Fazzari likens to a ‘tattoo’ or ‘stamp’ in the static cartoon becomes a more fluid and expansive device when employed in an animated sequence. Where a similar effect might be achieved in a multiple-panel cartoon, the execution is constrained by the limited detail that can reasonably be applied within the boundaries of the frame. Petty
compares this unique capacity for animation to incorporate sophisticated and evolving metaphors with the manner in which a well written article or novel develops an idea or concepts. In describing part of the appeal of animation in constructing metaphorical images, Petty explains that:

> With [static] cartoons we just do a big suitcase and say that’s democracy – you just label it democracy and that’s it, we don’t have to do anymore – well you do the same with animation, but you can open the suitcase and then something comes out: voting systems or parties or corruption...\(^{22}\)

Bruce Petty’s *Human Contraptions* series uses the metaphor of an evolving machine to communicate the chronological development of human activity in a range of key fields and disciplines. Produced episodically, Petty devotes around five minutes to investigations of education, finance, globalism, art, media, medicine, law and government. In each animation, the respective machine evolves in response to each significant stage of human endeavour, beginning with a simple apparatus that becomes increasingly more sophisticated and complex as we reach the present day.

In the episode dealing with government, for example, the viewer is introduced to the concept of ‘the common good’, the protection, administration and management of which spawned the first government ‘machine’ (fig. 1). In the ensuing frames the viewer is introduced to concepts such as politics, bureaucracy, corruption, union representation, political ideologies, welfare, corporations and regulation – all of which, Petty suggests, are prone to collapse and occasional violent revision. The principal metaphor of the ‘contraption’ is sustained throughout, providing a visual and conceptual anchor for the viewer to maintain their grasp and understanding of sophisticated and often abstract ideas.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.
Fazzari’s animation *Julia and Obama: True Love* comments on Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s decision in 2012 to host a rotation of US marines in Darwin (fig. 2). The agreement is metaphorically illustrated as a tryst between Gillard and Obama that begins at a drive-in movie theatre and culminates in the birth of their love-child, revealed in the closing frames crying in a crib surrounded by a brace of Chinese babies. Within the temporal context of the animation, Gillard and Obama’s relationship is shown through its evolutionary stages: from the initial impetus provided by the Chinese flag and silhouetted fighter jets appearing on the drive-in screen, to the aggressively amorous advances of Gillard towards Obama; and finally the post-coital embrace, all taking place in a convertible sports car brandished with ‘ANZUS’ number plates. The Ken Burns effect of zooming out from a smaller detail is employed in the closing frames, allowing the viewer to first absorb the image of the crying infant – unmistakably recognisable with its red hair and Afro-American features –

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Fig. 1 Bruce Petty, *Human Contraptions: Government*, 2002. Digital video. 23

before the Chinese babies are revealed as a benign, but - thanks to the overlay of more fighter jets - nonetheless ominous presence.

![Image of animated sequence](image)

**Fig. 2** Rocco Fazzari, *Julia and Obama: True Love*, 18 Nov 2011. Digital video.24

In my animated work *John Howard’s Ultimate Gift to Tony Abbott* (fig. 3, chap. 41 on attached DVD), I exploit the metaphor of John Howard bequeathing a car to his ideological successor Tony Abbott as representative of the latter’s embrace of the former Prime Minister’s political positions on abortion, gay marriage and climate change. The John Howard caricature describes his “1957 Liberal Conservative” as running on “greenhouse gases and workchoices.” With a bound and gagged Malcolm Turnbull secured in the boot, and the back seat occupied by shadow ministers Julie Bishop, Joe Hockey and Barnaby Joyce (“the wife and kids”), Howard enthuses that it is “not the flashiest of cars, but very practical.” As Prime Minister Kevin Rudd comes into view in a gleaming red Ferrari before accelerating rapidly out of

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shot, Howard delivers the punch line to Abbott: “Never mind that Tony, he’ll be paying that off for years.” The metaphor provides the overarching structure for a one-minute narrative that conveys multiple concepts in a fluid and coherent way. The equivalent idea framed in a multi-panel, printed format would require many panels and sacrifice much of the pacing and timing which lends to the clip so much of its comic weight. For example, a static panel sequence would not effectively convey the moment when the Barnaby Joyce caricature blows a raspberry at Abbott, or achieve the dramatic entrance and exit of Kevin Rudd.

Fig. 3 Digital video by author, John Howard’s Ultimate Gift to Tony Abbott, February 2010. Digital video.25

The challenge in devising and framing metaphorical constructs in an animation context lies in the artist’s capacity to shape the metaphor into a broader narrative, one that will be sustained over a period of time. The manner in which the metaphor evolves over time ought to be in some way revelatory and suspenseful in order to maintain viewer interest and provide them a satisfactory resolution or pay-off. Where a static cartoon’s use of metaphor provides the clues for completion of the enthymematic chain in the one frame, these clues in an animation need to be presented and revealed to the viewer sequentially in linear time. In this way the cartoonist actively directs and orders the viewer’s reception of the ideas and information contained within the image. The cartoonist as animator thus needs to be aware of the form of a metaphor over time and how much time can reasonably be devoted to each frame to maximise the satirical potential of their work.

The intended rhetorical impact of the static and animated political cartoon image is the same: to achieve an enthymematic engagement with the viewer through the strategic selection and arrangement of imagery that introduces, explores and contextualises social and political constructs and events by way of easily recognised and processed metaphors. The two forms present as a similar brand of satirical puzzle; the cartoonist provides some of the parts of the puzzle and the viewer solves it through their grasp of the meaning of those parts independent of, and in relation to, each other. The static image performs this function within the confines of a single frame; whereas the animated image achieves this over a number of frames measured in time.

**Temporality**

The temporal aspect of the animated image that is readily accepted by Petty, Nicholson and Fazzari as a mere convention of style is anathema to Jon Kudelka’s view of the two forms. Where Nicholson states that “a political animation is a cartoon, there’s no question about that”[26], Kudelka describes

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static cartoons and animations as “completely different beasts”. He notes that “the form of the thing will definitely change the way you think about it”. Kudelka’s observation is supported by a raft of axiomatic, polemical and critical theory that makes clear the extant material and cognitive distinctions in the making and reading of static and moving image objects. Munsterberg, Arnheim, Delueze, Bezin and eminent others have written extensively on the representational qualities that separate the filmic image from the static visual arts. Gombrich recalls Lessing’s concept of the ‘Pregnant moment’ in remarking that, in terms of the making of the image, the static caricature “has to compensate for the loss of the time dimension by concentrating all required information into one arrested image.” Sachs-Hombach advances Gombrich’s theorising on the nature of movement in images in declaring that:

…with the temporal dimension of film there occurs a disambiguation of what is represented – dispelling many uncertainties, and leading to a more immediate, perception-like, recognition of pictorial content.

More recently, Chow and Fox draw on the critical reflections of Manovich, Darley and Ward in describing the relationship between material and mental images:

Moving images can be a vehicle toward reconciling our understanding of this intricate relationship because they constitute a specific type of embodied cognition process.

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27 Jon Kudelka, Interview by author. Tape recording. Canberra, Australia, 12 Sep 2011.
28 Ibid.
As well, the empirical research of Detenber et al reveals “significant and relatively specific effects on emotional responding” with respect to a viewer’s engagement with static and moving images.32

The question that needs to be resolved with respect to locating the moving image in the political cartooning tradition is whether these distinctions ought to take precedence over their similarities in a categorical sense. In terms of their role in democratic discourse, I argue that the materiality and subsequent cognitive characteristics of the respective image types are of lesser consequence than their teleological function as visual satirical objects. In so doing I acknowledge Cubitt’s plea for a formal structure that supports the materiality of the different media practices as well as their commonality in communication.

The assertion that political cartoons ought be defined exclusively by the drafting-illustration paradigm that has hitherto comprised the material and mechanical processes of their production is a kind of media essentialism that art philosopher and media theorist Noel Carroll rails against. Carroll repudiates the supposition that “each artform has its own distinctive medium, a medium that distinguishes it from other forms”33 in saying:

That an artform is not static – at least because it can acquire new media with unpredictable, nonconverging possibilities – indicates that one cannot hope to fix the telos of an artform on the basis of one of its constituent media.34

To insist, under the guise of the artform’s ‘historical and physical uniqueness’, that a single medium can and should direct the extent of the effects that can be employed within the artform, is to deny the capacity for the art to evolve and adapt to new technologies. It is not unimaginable that

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34 Ibid.; 52.
the newspaper will, in the coming decades, be consumed exclusively by digital means. Immediately, one of the traditional material assets, paper, is removed from the production rubric. Where does one draw the line with respect to what can be considered acceptable in terms of materiality? The media essentialist view of the world is in this regard unyielding and inflexible. It is also unnecessarily defensive in assuming that the incorporation of new media into the artform somehow presents an existential threat to the static image. Carroll argues that, for the sake of sustaining a dynamic and vigorous tradition, artforms are better thought of in terms of media, as opposed to a single medium:

For if artforms possess several media, there is no reason to suppose that they will all converge on a single effect or even a single range of effects. The media that comprise a single artform may sustain different, nonconverging potentials and possibilities.\(^{35}\)

Cubitt has stated that any attempt to draw the audiovisual movement that typifies contemporary moving images with silent, still images “must do so by ignoring the distinctions between them or by creating a discourse which embraces the two in their difference.”\(^{36}\) His call for a formality stems from the concern that a purely ideological and discursive analysis may achieve the latter at the expense of the former. What then are the inherent distinctions that can be observed in the two media types?

The grammatical structures employed in the two forms share attributes such as use of contrast, colour, composition and perspective; yet the language used in moving image production and analysis is one of temporality: shots, edits, frames and action. Where the static image is an enduring physical object, the moving image is of a finite duration. Where the totality of the static image can be apprehended in one instant, the moving image can only be meaningfully observed via the structural and temporal relationships shared between constituent images in a sequence.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.; 52.
Movement

Temporality affords the possibility of actual, as opposed to implied, movement. For the purpose of distinction I shall follow Currie’s example in his philosophical treatise on film narration and discuss the notion of temporality in terms of change over time, and specifically the unfolding of action that characterises moving image works. Static image cartoons do after all, like photographs and paintings, exhibit temporality through representation as well as the experience the observer brings to its viewing. However, the constitutive elements of an animation or video image share a temporal relationship that does not exist in the constitutive elements of a static cartoon, and in this sense the moving image is a distinctively, and intrinsically, temporal object.

The relationship between constituent parts allows for four variations of movement in the moving image: that of the characters or objects in the frame; that of the camera, in terms of tilts, pans, dollies and tracks; optical lens effects such as zooms, focus shifts and distortion prisms; and movement achieved in structural terms through the editing and organisation of constituent frames in a sequence. With respect to animation, and in terms of the creative focus of the artist, priority of movement is generally granted to characters in the frame above all else. This is especially the case for political animation, which necessarily emphasises character through animation of political figures and personalities.

Timing of actions and distortion of physiological features and objects provide the central tenets of character animation. The most widely recognised canon for character animation is that established by Walt Disney and his stable of animators from the 1930s onwards. Their principal aim has been to achieve movement that adheres to the basic laws of physics, while at the same time establish a precise and exaggerated distortion that accentuates emotional timing and character appeal. It is the model to which most

contemporary Western commercial animation production typically aspires; and yet its time-consuming and labour-intensive nature makes it an approach that only the better-resourced animators can practically pursue. As well, its ubiquity as a design template inevitably promotes a homogenous visual vocabulary that negates the individual style, charm and idiosyncrasies that can, and should, be exploited by the solo-operator.

The primary function of movement in a political animation is not to demonstrate physicality à la the Disney model, but to facilitate a joke. Disneyesque characters are emotive agents that exist in a variety of narrative contexts, and their performance is designed to evoke and sustain a broad spectrum of emotional responses in the viewer. The characters that populate a political animation bear far less of a performative burden; creative decisions relating to timing and distortion are considered first and foremost in terms of their satirical context and anticipated comic value. Given the topical nature of political animation and the time constraints this imposes on production, this comparative freedom from performative constraints is readily exploited and embraced by political animators.

The seamless precision achieved in Disney-style animations is made possible because it is produced at 24fps (frames-per-second), which is the same rate at which cinematic film is recorded and played back. In contrast, at a frame rate of 12fps, Petty, Nicholson, Fazzari and Kudelka produce half the number of drawings for each second of animation. Straight away this imbues the motion with a more jerky, staccato quality; actions are less fluid, movement less precise. Though the transitions between frames are less smooth, overall timing is not affected, with actions and events transpiring at the same points in the timeline.

Harry Julius operated at 16fps to produce his stop-frame animations. He designed a system that ostensibly allowed him to operate his figures as 2D puppets. Where primary animation was achieved through moving the character as a whole from point A to point B over a number of frames, secondary animation was achieved in rudimentary fashion through movement of the character’s neck, shoulders, hips and, occasionally, the
eyes. Even animators practising today tend not to imbue their characters with more sophisticated, fluid movement than that which Julius realised in his animations. The character animation of Nicholson, Fazzari and Kudelka is also predominantly primary in nature. Secondary animation is applied sparingly as it adds a further burden on production that is often not vital in terms of conveying the cartoon’s message. On the other hand, perhaps somewhat serendipitously, the activation of predominantly primary animation affords the cartoon a comic value owing to its caricaturisation of movement.

The animator manipulates the sphere of action, or space within the frame, via a virtual camera that has, in a practical sense, the same functionality as a real-world camera. In terms of its capacity to perform movement, a virtual camera is infinitely more flexible than its real-world equivalent, unconstrained as it is by physical space or mechanical limitations. Animators use this extended capability for movement sparingly, being careful not to disrupt the viewer’s expectations of camera behaviour to the point of distraction. Additionally, camera movement places a production burden on the illustrative animator by demanding more drawing of them. Any camera move that presents a shift in scene perspective - for example a tilt, pan or dolly - requires that perspective to be communicated as a distortion of the drawn scene elements. Typically animators will avoid this burden by making use of tracking shots, which do not necessitate a shift in perspective. While additional drawing is required to include scene elements that once resided *hors-champ*, this can be achieved by the addition of scene detail, rather than a redrawing of an entire scene with each frame of camera movement. Even so, in a comic discipline where output is typically completed in a week or less, each technical process must be carefully considered in terms of how it services the joke. In my own 3D animation practice, I incorporated camera movement only when deemed essential to the satirical or rhetorical impact of the animation - for example in a conceal-reveal format.  

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39 I discuss my use of camera movement in more detail in chapter five.
Lens effects such as zooms, focus shifts and distortion prisms are relatively easily applied to images through use of contemporary digital video editing software. Zooms are the most commonly applied of lens effects, as they provide an effective way to focus viewer attention towards a specific part of a scene, or away from a subject to reveal more of a scene. Which type of zoom is applied is determined by what the animator wants to focus viewer attention on first: a zoom-out will first show the character or subject followed by the broader scene context, while a zoom-in does the opposite. In production terms zooming in is more economical as it does not demand additional scene detail be drawn, as is the case with zooming out. Focus shifts and distortion prisms are rarely used in hand-drawn animation; they are typically live-action, photorealistic cinematic devices and somewhat limited in the type of information they can convey in an animation context.

The editing and organisation of constituent frames in a sequence is the final variation of movement that can be achieved in moving image works. The arrangement of single images along a linear timeline for output as a movie sequence is the bread and butter of video editing, and provides the overarching temporal structure in an animation. Single images provide the basic unit for a shot, which in turn provide the building blocks for a sequence, or movie. The duration and order of shots has as much an impact on comic timing as the movement of characters, objects and cameras within those shots. How long a viewer is held up or advanced through the action is a function of video editing and made at the behest of the animator’s better judgment. In my animation Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations, for example (chap. 25 on attached DVD), the satirical weight of the animation relies heavily on the duration of the shot. The lingering on the scene beyond the last frame of action invites the viewer to expect further action that is subsequently not delivered. The desired impact is that the viewer correlate the anticipation of action within the image with the expectation of political action in addressing indigenous disadvantage beyond the symbolism of the apology – and conclude that nothing of

substance come from either. The precise timing that establishes this sense of
anticipation is a result of careful editing, and based on an intuitive sense of
how long the viewer’s attention should reasonably be held in the shot.
Precise editing will maximise the comic or dramatic potential of an
animation; poor editing decisions will have the viewer lose interest either
through not allowing enough time to comprehend the visual content, or
leaving so much time that the imagery grows redundant.

Sound

Temporality also affords the moving image artist the possibility of sound.
Cubitt astutely observes that the moving image is “embedded in the
sonorous”; that it is not merely a visual object, but rather an audiovisual
one: “moving pictures are sounds that have colonized light.” 41 In his study
on audiovisual aesthetics, Michel Chion notes that sound, unlike vision,
“presupposes movement from the outset”, and may reinforce the temporal
character of moving images in three ways: in an animated sense, by imbuing
in the image a perception of detail, precision and immediacy - or
alternatively, of ambiguity, oscillation and distance; in a linear sense, by
imposing a sense of succession in an image sequence through use of
synchronous sound; and in a vectorised sense, by implying and suggesting
future action through anticipation and expectation. 42 Chion goes on to
describe the manner in which sound can serve as a binding agent in an
image sequence, bringing unity and cohesion to the visual structure through
use of sound overlaps, atmospheric sound and non-diegetic music. 43

Audiovisual artists have the capacity to select and manipulate sound to
direct and control the viewer’s aural perception just as they direct and
control the viewer’s visual perception through selection and manipulation of
image elements. 44 For the purposes of this discussion I will use the term
‘acoustic montage’ to define the application of sound to image for aesthetic

42 Michel Chion, Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen, (New York: Columbia
43 Ibid.; 47.
44 Jacobs, The Movies as Medium, 245.
effect. This is achieved in a technical sense by editing and combining audio and visual elements in an audiovisual editing programme. The sound elements are brought into the software and arranged across a timeline that is shared by the visual elements. Each sound can be assigned a track, and as such can be layered, edited and manipulated with various special effects. Successfully managed, the output is a seamless audiovisual object.

Chion coins the term ‘synchresis’ to describe “…the spontaneous and irresistible weld produced between a particular auditory phenomenon and visual phenomenon when they occur at the same time.” Speech, noise or music, purposefully fused with the moving image, can serve metaphorical or mnemonic functions that enhance and intensify meaning. When used effectively, sound is capable of expanding the viewer’s experience and deepening the expressive and informative value of an image by providing information not afforded by the visual content alone. Indeed the relationship between sound an image is a symbiotic one, as Chion notes:

Sound shows us the image differently than what the images show alone, and the images likewise make us hear sound differently than if the sound were ringing out in the dark.46

As a component of film, speech is most often reconciled with image as either the embodied voice of actors or the non-diegetic voice of narrators. In the animated cartoon, speech is embodied insofar as its mediation by animated agents, which may be human or anthropomorphic in character. As in film, speech in animated cartoons can be used as a device to intensify the characterisation and dramatisation of the narrative. Chion describes sound in film as ‘voco-centric’ and ‘verbo-centric’ because human beings are in their behaviours also; and as a consequence, voice captures and focuses attention before any other sound.47 The information provided by speech also configures meaning within an image by framing the visual information presented therein.

Speech is especially important to the political cartoon, because so much of its information is derived from the attributed thoughts and utterances of political figures. In the days before sound cinema, Julius provided this information as text embedded in the image. While clear parallels can be made between the use of text in a static cartoon and the use of text in this moving image context, Julius seeks to imbue the reception of this text by the viewer with a narrated agency brought by a sequential and temporal reveal of the word elements in the text. The appearance of the words, one after the other to form their phrases, echo the rhythm of aurally perceived speech. In the case of a static cartoon, the reader has a discrete period of time in which

Fig. 4 Harry Julius, *The Crown Prince of Death*, c.1915. 16mm Film.48

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to absorb the text information. In Julius’ animations, it is the animator who directs the ideal speed at which the text is to be read and absorbed (fig. 4).

Bruce Petty’s animations are dialogue-heavy, but the voice is delivered exclusively in non-diegetic terms by a narrator. In his Human Contraptions series, the voice is provided by Andrew Denton; in Global Haywire the narrator is Tom Baker. This contrasts with his static cartoons, where he employs speech bubbles as well as captions to convey text-based information. Petty has clearly made the decision to employ the most appropriate device to convey the required information in the respective media types. With respect to the animated works, the images are rendered incomprehensible when stripped of their accompanying speech.

The expressive capacity of speech as sound reassociated from voice performance to image also makes possible its use as an auditory/acoustic, or voice, caricature. An effective voice caricature enhances or exaggerates the characteristic features of the target speaker, or agent, with regard to pitch register, voice quality, dialect, prosody and speech style. The emphasis and repetition of words or phrases related to the target speaker can further enhance the impression.

Such is the cognitive weight of the audiovisual image, that with the appearance of a recognisable figure caricature on screen comes the expectation or anticipation in the viewer’s mind of a corresponding voice caricature. The voice of an animated character ought to be distorted in an acoustically comparable manner to the distortions portrayed in the physiology and behaviour of the animated character. In this way the animated character presents more easily as a unified personality, an agent of their own speech. While it is possible to impose speech onto character that does not necessarily conform to the expectations of caricature, the decision to do so must be negotiated by the artist with care to ensure that the contract

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sought with the viewer in establishing a unified character remains intact. In this case, decisions relating to timbre, pitch and accent must be sympathetically applied to the image to avoid a cognitive dissonance between voice and character.

Peter Nicholson admits that, were it not for his access to the talented and extraordinarily versatile voice artist Paul Jennings, he would not have produced his animations in the way he has done to date. Script and voice play a pivotal role in Nicholson’s animations, with Jennings providing the voice caricatures for all but the female characters. Nicholson and Jennings first began working together on Rubbery Figures, a collaboration that lasted years. So, when Nicholson got a budget from The Australian to produce animations it made sense to for him to pursue a similarly voice-intensive practice. Nicholson considers his most successful animation to be Keating and the World Sledging Cup, partly because it featured Richie Benaud, Paul Keating, Kevin Rudd and John Howard all in the one sketch, and “those were all of [Jennings’] favourite voices.”

The cognitive impact of voice caricature on an audience is neatly exemplified by the popular attribution to John Elliott of a phrase uttered by Jennings as the voice of a Rubbery Figures puppet of the then Liberal Party President. The phrase “pig’s arse”, was used as a tag line when the show was aired on Steve Vizard’s Fast Forward comedy show in the 1980s. Such was the frequency with which John Elliott was queried on the phrase, and how prevalent its attribution to him was, that he felt the need to clarify on his website, via a letter from Peter Nicholson, that its true origin was a puppet’s utterance and not his own.

Noise is far more easily incorporated in the works of predominantly visual artists (as cartoonists tend to be), as sound effects are easily obtained from online libraries. Typically noise will consist of synchronous sound that is paired in either a diegetic or non-diegetic sense to the image. Synchronous

52 Nicholson, interview by author.
sound implies that there exists a direct association in the mind of the viewer between what is heard and what is seen on screen. An example of this applied as diegetic sound might be the sound of a car that is visible to the viewer. As non-diegetic sound, the viewer would hear the sound of a car, but not see the car itself. In both cases the noise provides an acoustic envelope in which the visuals are contained and imbued with added meaning, mood and atmosphere.

In *Johnny’s House*, Jon Kudelka uses the non-diegetic noise of ‘canned’ studio responses as a device to both situate the animation within the conventional sit-com genre, as well as provide cues for the comic and dramatic events that punctuate the animation. In addition, non-diegetic audio provides cues and context for the action. The sound of an unseen rooster, for example, establishes the time of day; the sound of an unseen dog barking and eating food contextualises the actions of one of the on-screen characters. The noise of footsteps, doors closing and water splashing provide the diegetic sound effects that provide acoustic depth to the scene by locating the actions in time and space.

Bruce Petty’s *Global Haywire* features a rich and complex tapestry of sound, for which his son Sam won an AFI award in 2007. Noise is used apparently sparingly against a soundtrack and spoken narrative, with frequent overlaps that bind together adjacent shots. But the spare use of noise belies its sophistication, as careful attention reveals that the effects track is a combination of layered, nuanced effects that mesh together seamlessly with the image. The more obvious diegetic and literal noise that accompanies live action video footage of a bustling crowd, for example, is layered with the sound of cartoon footsteps, thereby distinguishing and bringing into sharp relief the action of a hand-drawn character that hurries across the screen. This capacity to bring into focus specific visual elements through use of sound serves Petty’s somewhat chaotic graphic style well, as

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it provides an effective strategy in assisting the viewer in making sense of the image.

Music, like noise, is relatively easy to apply to image. It can serve a mnemonic and metaphorical function, by evoking in the viewer the mood, lyrics or symbology of a chosen song and coercing a correlation with the image content. Music also provides a rhythmic structure that, imposed on the image sequence, orders or augments the existing rhythmic structure provided by the visuals. Alternatively, a song may provide a foundational rhythmic framework within which the visuals are then created and inserted.

In Nicholson’s animation *Pulp Mill Rockers*, a Midnight Oil song is ‘performed’ by that band’s lead singer-turned-Labor Minister Peter Garrett in an ironic juxtaposition that reminds the viewer of the apparent conflict between the environmental ideology portrayed in Midnight Oil’s music, and the pragmatic politics that Garrett has since embraced as a politician. In this way, the song serves a mnemonic function in contextualising Garrett’s political history, with the music becoming a metaphor for Garrett’s shifting ideologies.

Fazzari evokes a Beatles-esque musical vibe in *The Ruddles* in drawing a parallel between Yoko Ono’s pivotal role in breaking up the Beatles, and Gillard’s failure to resurrect the poll support for Labor enjoyed under her predecessor Kevin Rudd. The evolutionary stages of the Beatles’ musical development is framed in the animation to punctuate the equivalent rising and ebbing fortunes of the Labor party under both leaders, and culminates in an angelic choral tones that hints at the resurrection of Kevin Rudd to the leadership. The music binds the images together in a rhythmic framework that also presents as a chronology of events.

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Similarly, but more acutely, the *Ten Green Bottles* melody provides the overarching rhythmic structure for Jon Kudelka’s *Four UnAustralians*\(^{57}\) animation. The meter of the tune is echoed on screen with a bouncing ball device that directs the viewer to follow a corresponding narrative text. The pauses in the melody also correlate with pauses in the action, and raise the expectation in the mind of the viewer of a subsequent comic action to fill the void – which is delivered. This pause-action pay-off cycle plays out three times before culminating in the final pay-off and resolution of the piece. The use of the melody in this case initiates a rhythmic contract of sorts with the viewer, who, having recognised the tune in the beginning frames, accompanies the piece with a prescribed set of expectations with respect to the associated visuals.

Acoustic montage is unfortunately treated as an afterthought or inconvenience for many visual artists. This is simply because they tend to lack the requisite skills and experience in working with the medium. Peter Nicholson and Bruce Petty have been collaborating with audio engineers for many years, and understand the benefit of treating sound with the same care in production as the visual elements. Petty has, since 2003 enjoyed the collaborative support of his son Sam; while Nicholson was fortunate to be assigned a budget for his animations for *The Australian*, and was thus able to prioritise sound. Rocco Fazzari enjoys no such collaborative or fiscal support for his animations, so must innovate and adapt as best he can. Until the day comes when animators are better remunerated for their work, the solo operator will be the norm and the well-resourced operator the exception.\(^{58}\)

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58 The limited capacity of the solo operator to incorporate sound in moving image production will be discussed in the context of my own animation practice in chapter five.
Navigating the temporal in production

In terms of developing the initial concept for a static cartoon or animation, Jon Kudelka describes the contrasting approaches that exemplify his respective practices:

…the political cartoon’s got to hit you all at one moment; anything that’s time-based and has got a narrative in it, you immediately remove the possibility of one punch line.59

Structurally speaking, Kudelka observes the process of filling a panel with graphic elements as distinct from sequencing a series of images along a linear timeline. For Kudelka, the application of rhythmic montage in panel cartooning is not easily achieved when working with a timeline. Where he finds the former a very instinctive process, the latter, typically requiring the directing of voices and linear editing, is for him the opposite.

The difficulty that Kudelka describes in wielding a narrative in a moving image context is visibly apparent in the few political animations that he has produced. Where he delivers a succinct and economical narrative in his multiple-panel static cartoons, his moving image attempts have been comparatively awkward. The action sequence presented in his cartoon *Expert Makeover* is presented as eight panels of action contained within a single frame (fig.5). Kudelka controls the timing and rhythm of the montage through the spacing of the graphic elements and the fragmenting of the text. The narrative reaches its conclusion in a measured and efficient fashion, delivering a satisfying reward for the reader. In contrast, the timing of *Four UnAustralians* is overly wrought; in lacking suspense, the pay-off is diminished as a result. The melody that accompanies the images appears to direct the timing of the action, but the visual elements that occupy the frame space are not dynamic enough to sustain interest in what is a simple and somewhat predictable narrative.

59 Kudelka, interview by author.
Kudelka’s 2002 work *Johnny’s House*[^61] is a three-minute animation that is derivative of a sit-com, complete with title sequence and canned laughter. Initially intended for serial production in instalments that followed a weekly news media cycle, the animation was a collaborative venture that took a team of four writers and animators five days to produce. The project was ultimately deemed unfeasible owing to the cost of production and its labour-intensive nature that placed undue stress on the team. Hence the first episode was also its last.

The underlying structure of *Johnny’s House* is a sequence of set-piece gags, with the animation’s comic value derived principally from the use of spoken dialogue. Having established the context of a share-house populated by prominent politicians of the day, the action is driven by character interaction that culminates in a visual gag and spoken punch line. The dialogue references political events with which the viewer must be familiar to derive meaning from the animation, and in this respect it functions well as a satirical object. However, the dialogue is delivered in an overly stilted manner that interrupts the action of the piece as a whole. This may have

been a deliberate creative decision to closely mimic the comic timing of the classic – that is to say dated - sit-com structure upon which it is based, but it does not translate well in a contemporary animation context. The structural dynamics of the animation can reasonably be compared with that of *The Flintstones*; yet the speed of imagery has escalated dramatically since the ‘70s and, in my opinion, a more appropriate frame of reference for the concept may have been better found in contemporary animated or live-action sit-coms such as *The Simpsons* or *Modern Family*.

Where there exists an evident disconnect between Kudelka’s static and moving cartoons, there is a harmonious synchronicity in Rocco Fazzari’s approach to image production across media. The treatment of line and form, construction of metaphor, and manipulation of spatial and temporal elements resonate with a familiarity of character that demonstrates a similar thinking process in the development of both static and moving images. In reflecting on his foray into the moving image, Fazzari says that from the outset he observed sequential phases in his creative process and concepts; a kind of beginning-middle-end structure that made exploring video and animation a natural progression. He remarks of his print cartoons that it is typically the ‘middle’ that provides the structure for his static drawings, so developing these concepts into a time-based narrative is simply a matter of bookending the middle act with a set-up and resolution.62

Some insight into this conceptual process can be gleaned from Fazzari’s blog, which more often than not presents both static cartoon and animation responses to a single issue. While some responses draw on differing treatment of metaphorical context, the juxtaposition of the two forms frequently reveals imagery that clearly indicates a conceptual synthesis between static and moving image. The animation *Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott's Horror Run* features the two political leaders as visitors to a amusement park who endure a frightening train ride. The static image shows the two leaders in the train, replete with terrified expressions (fig. 6); while the animation expands on this metaphor by presenting the lead up to this

62 Fazzari, interview by author.
action, as well as a concluding act that shows Gillard and Abbott emerge from a dark tunnel as laughing clowns (fig. 7).

Fig. 6 Rocco Fazzari, *Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott’s Horror Run*, 8 Jun 2012. Digital image.

Fig. 7 Rocco Fazzari, *Julia Gillard and Tony Abbott’s Horror Run*, 8 Jun 2012. Digital video.

Fazzari explains that his use of sound, which is restricted to noise and music, comes from an illustration tradition that doesn’t incorporate speech bubbles. Instead of relying on speech as an acoustic device to communicate information, he conceives ideas that are largely conveyed by imagery, and supported in most cases only by incidental audio as a means for emphasis or metaphorical weight. Fazzari’s natural disinclination for dialogue and captions in his static cartoons is reinforced in his animation practice by the added burden it places on production. By applying himself predominantly to image making, Fazzari avoids those processes for which he has little interest or aptitude, thus maintaining a fluent and efficient workflow.

In contrast, audio is for Bruce Petty a device that facilitates the conveyance of concepts that are far larger in narrative scope than those he conveys in his static cartoons. His animations are scaffolded by a tightly scripted audio track that has at its core a non-diegetic, narrated dialogue. The narration provides the broad narrative for the works, but also helps contextualise the images in an immediate meaning sense. But despite the script-based structure of his animations, they have at their heart a concept that is, like his static cartoons, serviced by visual metaphors.

The oftentimes elaborate and visually complex elements that he affects in his static images are echoed in a similarly sophisticated animation style. Figure 8 shows the sheer volume of visual and conceptual information that Petty so fluently renders in his static cartoons, while figure 9 shows a similar graphic treatment in his animation. Many of his drawings could almost be described as contraptions themselves; they are intricately engineered designs conceived through a profound and innate grasp of his subject matter, and an innate sense of conceptual coherence and flair for visual arrangement. Equally, Petty’s animations can be described as the temporally-based twin of their static counterparts, harnessing as they do the same conceptual and graphic genealogy in their conception and execution.

\[65\] Ibid.
Fig. 8 Bruce Petty, 10 July 2010. The Age.

Fig. 9 Bruce Petty, *Human Contraptions: Law*, 2002. 16mm Film.\(^\text{66}\)

Despite the often complex character of his graphic style, Petty is also able to effectively apply quietude in his static and moving image work. Moments of visual or temporal serenity allow the viewer to rest a moment before further engagement with the information to come, creating a tension within the composition that invites scrutiny of the image in its entirety. Figure 10 shows the manner in which Petty can exploit negative space, which in this example envelopes a complex and detailed graphic region of the image. This space has the effect of drawing the viewer’s eye away from the dense, information-rich visual elements, before these elements invite the viewer back for continued examination. The same sense of rest is achieved in his animations through frames where the visual information is pared back or dissipates before more detailed drawing ensues in subsequent frames (figure 11).

Bruce Petty observes that his drawing style exploits an outline style reminiscent of American cartoonist James Thurber (fig. 12), and one that particularly lends itself to animation. Free of the burden of detailed shading, Petty is able to focus more energy towards the distortion of his lines. He modestly attributes his drawing style in both static and moving image form to his own inherent impatience. The energetic line work and frequent use of motion lines reveals something about Petty’s perception of the tableaux he creates in his static cartoons. To him, they are not simply moments frozen in time – the use of lines to convey movement in objects implies a scene that is perceptibly in motion. The notion of temporality then is integral to his thought processes and output in both static and moving image forms. Petty’s conviction that configuring a political cartoon into a time-based format is “as natural as going from cross hatching to another style” is thus easily reconciled.

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67 Petty, interview by author.
68 Ibid.
Fig. 10 Bruce Petty, *Australia at the Crossroads*, 19 July 2007. The Age.

Fig. 11 Bruce Petty, *Human Contraptions: Law*, 2002. Digital video.69

Peter Nicholson, a one-time protégé of Bruce Petty, is a versatile satirist who has worked across multiple media, including sculpture. He designed all of the 3D puppet caricatures for his Rubbery Figures sketches, and has been producing animation for nearly 40 years. His political animation practice was heavily informed by his experience with producing Rubbery Figures. Of the satirical puppet show he says:

I always thought of Rubbery Figures as a cartoon because it used essentially the type of imagery of a cartoon; but it still always had to obviously be a script, because it had to have a beginning and an end, and a middle; whereas a cartoon has a beginning end and middle altogether in the one cartoon in the newspaper; so you only look at it once, and it leaves things open, it doesn’t have to finish with a big bang.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Nicholson, interview by author.
Nicholson may consult with others regarding the efficacy of a newly-drawn static cartoon intended for publication in the next day’s newspaper, but those whose comment is sought are generally journalistic colleagues. On the other hand, Nicholson frequently engaged the services of a script writer to assist in massaging the script of an animation to its fullest comic and satiric potential. Like Petty’s animations, Nicholson’s moving image works are heavily reliant on dialogue – though in contrast to Petty’s non-diegetic narration, Nicholson’s acoustic treatment is defined by voice caricature. Nicholson was inclined to actively direct voice talent Paul Jennings to ensure that the performance was tighter or less inhibited depending on Nicholson’s creative vision. An audio engineer then edited the various voice takes to produce a coherent, seamless voice track replete with sound effect elements. In contrast to the way Fazzari goes about doing his work, Nicholson’s well-resourced approach to animation production imitates that of a professional studio environment.

The script development process that Nicholson underwent in realising his animations, and the three-act structure they assume, clearly distinguishes them from his static images. The same can be said though of Nicholson’s animations that I have observed of Petty’s: that at their heart, in their initial conception, lies the purposing of a metaphor or metaphors to convey a rhetorical and satirical intent. As well, despite the script-intensive character of his animations, there are clear correlations between Nicholson’s static and moving image works. These are evident in the vibrancy of his signature colour palette and the distinctive style of his caricatures (figures 13, 14). Having established the satirical framework in which the drawings will reside, the constituent parts in both static and temporal forms conspire to achieve a similar result.
Fig.13 Peter Nicholson, *Rudd to Keep Baby Bonus 550*, 15 March 2008.\(^{71}\)

Fig.14 Peter Nicholson, *Boom Boom*, 3 March 2008. Digital video.\(^{72}\)

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The compelling three-act structure that typifies Harry Julius’ animations is defined by three separate and distinct media strategies: the live-action introduction; the lightning sketch middle; and the stop-frame pay-off. Each act also has its own temporal character, and serves as a scaffold for engagement by an audience whose literacy of moving image objects would have been necessarily limited. The first live-action frames showing Julius perusing a newspaper before proceeding to his desk to begin drawing, provide the context for the action to follow on two fronts: that the drawings that subsequently appear on screen are issued from his pen; and that these drawings directly correlate with the news of the day as presented in the principle news media of the day. The second act, which shows the graphic elements hand-drawn at double-speed onto the screen canvas, directs both the order and timing at which the viewer reads and understands the image content. When Julius’ hand is removed in the third act, and his drawings assume an agency perceptibly all their own, the audience engages with both the novelty of images apparently come to life, as well as the punch-line or resolution to the satiric narrative.

In the absence of synchronised, recorded audio, Julius presented text-based information in the form of speech-bubbles and captions. As described earlier in this chapter, the text appears as a sequential reveal of words and phrases, thereby directing the speed at which the text is read by the viewer. The writing itself also functions as an identifiable graphic signature of sorts, being written in the same style Julius adopted in his static cartoons (fig. 15 and 16). Coupled with Julius’ distinctive caricatures, audiences familiar with his newspaper cartoons will have had an immediate and direct association upon which to base their reading and engagement with the moving image screen counterpart.

The combination of novel image-making processes with familiar graphic imagery, placed in a recognisable situational context, allowed Julius to capitalise on the creative opportunities afforded by the emerging film technology of the day without encroaching on the potential for audience engagement. The time-based nature of his animations presented for Julius a new way of exploring political cartoon imagery while at the same retaining
its principal rhetorical and satirical function. Julius identified in the emerging screen-based media a different avenue for engaging an audience with a brand of visual political satire that was distinctive in its temporal treatment of narrative, but nonetheless rooted in the tradition of static political cartoon imagery.

Fig. 15 Harry Julius, Vote Labor, c. 1929. 73

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The points of distinction that separate the static and moving political cartoon image from one another have been presented and discussed in this chapter in terms of both their teleology and materiality. The argument is not framed in terms of the two forms being in some sort of competition with one another; nor is it to be inferred that the ubiquity of digital telecommunications and media platforms must inevitably see the moving image political cartoon supersede the static political cartoon image as the preeminent form of visual political satire in the news media. Given the immediate nature of the static image and its capacity to respond to news events playing out in a 24-hour news cycle, the panel cartoon will inevitably endure and survive the technological shift in our consumption of news media. Equally, the moving image cartoon’s capacity to engage in a truly multimedia, time-based context, affords a dynamic experience where news events can be explored in ways that extend and enhance the viewer’s understanding of a given issue.

In terms of embracing the moving cartoon image into the printmedia political cartooning tradition, the material distinctions acquiesce to the

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broader function of both forms. Julius recognised nearly a century ago that the issues he explored in his animations were grounded in the news media, and that presenting them in animated form invited a visual and satirical treatment that was derivative of his static cartoons. Contemporary cartoonists exploring the moving image format are simply exploiting a material characteristic afforded by the medium in which their work is increasingly disseminated and consumed.

While the creative process at their conception may require some adaptation of metaphorical and narrative approach on the part of the cartoonist, the intended satirical and rhetorical impact on the viewer should remain the defining feature of the political cartooning tradition. As the nature and character of news media platforms evolve, so too should the nature and character of the political satire tradition framed therein. To deny the tradition the opportunity to draw on all of the creative and material potential at its disposal in the contemporary newsmedia landscape is therefore misguided. This approach would seek to preserve notions of historical and physical uniqueness that are tethered to a medium that may well not exist a decade hence. It also assumes that the printmedia newspaper is the ideal context in which political cartoons should be framed. Clearly, when reflecting on the role that cartoons play in the democratic discourse of the nation, this is not the case.
CHAPTER THREE: PART TWO - THE VIDEO MASH-UP IMAGE

If the categorisation of political animations is contentious, then the idea of bringing satirical video content into the political cartooning fold would almost certainly be too long a bow to draw for many. When Michael Leunig began integrating photographic content in his full-colour printed cartoons in *The Age*, few would have questioned that he was still engaged in the act of cartooning. And yet the contemporary practice of creating satirical ‘mash-ups’ – most often produced by re-editing photographic video and audio content to comic effect – is not so readily accepted as a cartoon. If the hand-drawn component of a cartoon is significant in its categorisation, then many of Michael Leunig’s graphic satirical works would not qualify (fig. 17).

![Image](image-url)

**Fig. 17** Michael Leunig, 17 May 2006. The Age.

In this part of the chapter I discuss satirical political video mash-ups and present a case study of Hugh Atkin as an exemplar of video mash-up practice. I discuss the creative and technical processes inherent in the production and dissemination of his work; as well as how images presented
in the video mash-up format can, with some modifications to existing taxonomies for the categorisation of political cartoons, be considered a part of the political cartooning tradition.

In determining the extent to which a video image might be considered a political cartoon, I contrast and compare an exemplary video mash-up created by Atkin with the categorical frameworks and taxonomies provided by Medhurst & Desousa, Morris, Charles Press and Manning & Phiddian. In identifying the image attributes, or lack thereof, that would place the video mash-up outside of the existing taxonomic frameworks, I proceed in the following chapter to resolve the disparity via a revised taxonomy for the categorisation of political cartoons.

The political video mash-up is a phenomenon that came to mainstream prominence in 2007. It was part of a socio-political and technological zeitgeist that was punctuated by the widespread adoption of digital and networked technologies and the use of YouTube and other web2.0 technologies as platforms for political communication and public activism. At the same time, the convergence and hybridisation of media has created a production and dissemination framework where the political cartoon, a traditional component of print media, and the political video mash-up, a derivative of film process and culture, can now be mediated by a common media platform.

It is in the context of these shared platforms, in particular news distribution and opinion sites, that I compare the form and function of political cartoons and video mash-ups and suggest an aligning of the two hitherto separate disciplinary traditions. The shared context is significant in that the audience for both image genres now overlaps in a way that is historically different from the divergence created when film (initially) and broadcast emerged as competitors to print as vehicles for news image dissemination.

Video mash-ups are characterised by a digital production process involving the sampling, editing and compositing of archival or captured audio/visual material into a seamless, derivative video object. Occasionally the artist may
insert illustration or text elements. These processes are derived from emulsion film manipulation and editing techniques, so parallels to traditional film production are readily apparent. The replication of the grammar of source material is a typical component of political mash-ups, which seek to mimic the high production values of broadcast media whilst disturbing the content.

Bruce Petty observes that the mash-up image constitutes a contemporary visual language that society is increasingly embracing through film, advertising and music video clips. He nonetheless agrees that the mash-up is a visual form that stems from the same visual satire tradition as political cartooning. Petty points out that technology tends to drive the form of political cartoons, but content equally is key to their relevance. Engagement with technology provides a framework that needs to be held together by informed commentary. In terms of both form and content, maintaining the relevance of the political cartoon image relies on cartoonists being able to “escalate it above what the current imagery speed is.”

In describing the shift in the visuality by which society creates its political symbols and images, Petty summarises:

…do you get better information, or do you get a better impression and a more original idea, from something that is in the manner of a video clip? Because that’s the language we’re all going to, that kids are going to think in… So if you want to keep up, your political statement ought to be as good as a video clip.

Similarly, for Fazzari and Nicholson, creative content takes precedence over material content with respect to how they might categorise satirical political images. The satirical intent of the cartoonist in the making of images is more significant than the specific visual character they assume. In the production of his images, Fazzari rejects any notion of being “bolted down

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75 Bruce Petty, Interview by author. Tape recording. Sydney, Australia, 8 Dec 2009.
76 Ibid.
by realism or traditional cartooning method or style” 77 Nicholson’s assessment that “certainly a video mash up is very much like a cartoon” 78 emphasises the rhetorical bearing the image has on the viewer and the way meaning is derived from the information presented therein.

Kudelka’s view is more entrenched with respect to the materiality of the image and its subsequent impact on the viewer. He considers mash-ups and cartoons as sharing some common attributes but being markedly different in crucial ways. In terms of the use of a space – be it physical or temporal – the cartoonist and mash-up artist both set out to “fit a piece of satire into a space as best (they) can.” 79 But part of the contention for Kudelka is that cartoonists rely on their ownership of a recognisable, signature style to establish a familiar relationship with their readers; and while the mash-up artist may cultivate a style through their individual approach to editing and arrangement, the grammar employed is photographic and therefore not as readily associated with its creator.

This assessment belies the range of tools and techniques at the mash-up artist’s disposal, as well as the manner in which issues are framed by the content. In the same way that individual film makers and photographers can be identified by the technical and creative decisions applied in the production of their images, video mash-ups can reveal the ‘hand of the artist’ in a multitude of ways: acoustic treatment, editing and arrangement of images and clips, timing and rhythmic structure, inclusion of text and graphic elements, and overall production values. Kudelka admits that with respect to Leunig’s use of photographic imagery in some of his cartoons:

[...] as long as it’s got the signature in the bottom right hand corner you know it’s by Leunig and you know the hand of the man who’s there. 80

77 Fazzari, interview by author.
78 Nicholson, interview by author.
79 Kudelka, interview by author.
80 Ibid.
At the very least, with little else by way of style to distinguish the mash-up work of one artist from the next, the video equivalent of the artist’s signature – the title frame – is always at the artist’s disposal.

Petty insists that the visual language of cartoons can, and should, evolve with the visual language of society. Historically cartoonists are driven by the great search for innovation as much as technology and technique; but Petty is not sure that the production of political cartoons will be the near exclusive domain of newspaper cartoonists that it has been to date. He emphasises that whoever is producing the next generation of cartoons ought to be well read and informed, so that the focus of their commentary is on content rather than spectacle. On a future of political cartooning that will inevitably feature moving images, Petty remarks that, “I hope there are people who read papers and read history and can do video clips, that’d be my hope”.81

**The Video Mash-up Artist**

Hugh Atkin certainly fits this description. A law graduate from Sydney University and currently a post-graduate University of Oxford scholar, Atkin has a keen interest in the politics of government, and a penchant for political satire. His YouTube channel currently has over seventeen thousand subscribers and the sixty-six videos he has produced and uploaded have been viewed over twenty-seven million times. He often attracts mainstream media coverage for his videos, both in Australia and the United States. Based on the size of his audience alone, he can be considered a successful practitioner. The extensive account of his background and creative practice in this chapter provides an insight into how Atkin has so effectively pioneered a satirical video mash-up practice that has already inspired imitators and can be regarded as the standard to which political mash-ups be compared.

Atkin first came to prominence with his satirical mash-ups of the Australian and US election campaigns in 2007. His work *Chinese Propaganda Video*...
(fig. 18), viewed over 200,000 times on YouTube, cleverly parodies several themes emergent in Kevin Rudd’s 2007 campaign. Atkin incorporated audio, video and illustration in a piece whose relatively short duration and topical nature made it ideal for inclusion on online newspaper sites at the time. His work was one of dozens created by so-called ‘guerilla video makers’ during the campaign that helped establish the ‘mash-up’ as a widespread media practice. The often amateur nature of mash-ups lends to them a raw, unpolished quality that, among other things, promotes the idea that ours is a democracy where anyone with a bit of technical nous and something to say can contribute to the democratic conversation. Observes Atkin:

The thing I really enjoy about doing it is seeing the reaction to it, seeing people enjoy it… I’m looking to do something that’s entertaining that will cast a different light upon something for some people or get some people more engaged in an issue that they may not otherwise have thought about. I’m not trying to produce creeds or to be too didactic; but I also don’t want it to be completely vapid or lacking any political point.\textsuperscript{82}

Atkin’s interest in video mash-up production was born from his experience as a member of the Sydney University Law Review, and then as a side clerk at a law firm. When Atkin began uploading his videos to YouTube in 2007, he saw it as “just a continuation of the stuff I’d been doing in the University Law Review”. His breakthrough \textit{Chinese Propaganda Video} was heavily derivative of a video he’d done when a summer clerk at a law firm, where he had depicted the then managing partner as Chairman Mao.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{82} Hugh Atkin, interview by author. Skype Recording. Canberra, Australia. 28 Mar 2012.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
Having enjoyed a fair amount of media exposure in the local press for *Chinese Propaganda Video*, Atkin entered the video in an online competition run by the ABC’s *Unleashed* opinion site. A public audience cast votes on their favourite satirical video and Atkin’s work easily won with over 50% of the votes. The prize was an internship with the Chaser television satire team, followed by a 6-month contract producing satirical

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videos for the ABC. Atkin describes the intensity and demands of working as a full-time satirist:

Spending the 2 weeks with the Chaser team I understood how different it was trying to do it at a full-time level. The amount of ideas they have to work through to actually put together a coherent hour or half hour of television each week is very different from being able to have a random idea on a Saturday and then put a video together. I got an appreciation of how different it was to do it as a hobbyist to doing it as a professional.\(^{85}\)

Atkin was partly prepared for the demands of full-time production. Before he commenced the internship and production contract he developed in notebook form a catalogue of potential ideas to draw on if in any given week he was bereft of ideas. He admits that, in those times when he found himself stuck for inspiration, “there was a certain amount of going to a back-catalogue”.\(^{86}\) Very occasionally Atkin found that he was completely at a loss as to what to do; on those rare instances he says he would either forego production of a video for that week altogether or make a video that, in his own words, “was pretty shit.”\(^{87}\)

Unlike the political cartoonist, who is oft inclined to sketch out and develop an idea on paper before drafting the polished drawing for publication, Atkin develops a concept through targeted perusal and selection of video clips. Having arrived at the initial inspiration for a satirical response to an event, he scours Internet archives for images that he then configures into a coherent video sequence. Atkin points out that the source material he incorporates in his videos is all publicly available archival footage, and far more easily found now than when he started out. American cable television network C-span for example, makes their archive available online. He isn’t inclined to maintain a library of clips, preferring instead to rely on footage that is reasonably current. The practice of constant browsing for material to

\(^{85}\) Atkin, interview by author.  
\(^{86}\) Ibid.  
\(^{87}\) Ibid.
furnish a concept also allows him through happenstance to encounter footage that he can exploit in a separate concept.

One of the substantial challenges for contemporary political animators and video artists is managing a production process most typically associated with a collaborative team. Atkin assumes the role of director and producer, with any collaboration extending to script development and bringing in friends and family as acting talent on those videos that are sketch-oriented and require an acting performance. In one case he produced the audio with the assistance of ABC studio staff, but otherwise “it’s all just me with my handy-cam and a portable mike”. Video mash-ups constitute the majority of Atkin’s work, and he produces these exclusively in video editing software Premiere Pro.

Atkin’s approach to editing is intuitive and relatively straightforward: after importing selected video clips into Premiere Pro, he arranges them along a timeline and shifts each video clip incrementally by frames backwards or forwards along the timeline. He will typically compile a number of versions of the same sequence, each with slight variations in the timing, and select from these the sequence he deems most effective. His experience with the Law Review is where he developed his sense of comic timing. As well as inviting critical feedback from his friends, Atkin hones the satirical impact of his videos through watching them hundreds, or thousands, of times over before he finally uploads them for publication online.

Despite being adept with the requisite technology and having some years of experience with video production, Atkin finds that some of his concepts are beyond his capacity to produce on a technical level. In these cases Atkin will not generally discard the idea but scale the video back with respect to its technical and creative scope. His recent video Will the Real Mitt Romney Please Stand Up? was predicated on the Republican presidential candidate delivering a set of rap lyrics styled around rap singer Eminem’s song Will

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88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
the Real Slim Shady Please Stand Up?. The original concept featured a rap battle between Obama and Romney, replete with music-video style special effects, but it presented too great a challenge in terms of technique and the time Atkin could reasonably devote to it. Ultimately the concept was scaled back so that Atkin could manage its production requirements and release the video while it retained its topicality.

Atkin’s dissemination vehicle of choice is YouTube. He embraces it for its popularity as a video sharing portal – no other site compares to YouTube when it comes to the sheer volume of users and visitors it attracts. But for Atkin the experience has not been entirely positive; he has found himself at the receiving end of YouTube’s copyright infringement policies on at least two occasions. For example, despite having satisfied the copyright owners that a music track used in his Barack n’ Rolled video was fairly used for purposes of satire, YouTube nonetheless decided to pull the video. On another occasion Atkin had a pulled video reinstated, having successfully challenged an alleged breach instigated by the copyright holders of a video clip used in his Clinton and Cruise: On The Campaign Trail video.91

The use of copyrighted material in music mix-ups and video mash-ups is a topic that is receiving much attention in creative communities as well as in academic scholarship. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the subject in detail, Atkin himself has been active in researching the legal context in which his work resides. He has determined that his satirical works constitute fair use of material and, independent decisions made by YouTube with respect to their publication of content not withstanding, is assured of their legality.

Atkin’s approach to technical and creative process, as well as the final output of his enterprise, is, on the face of it, vastly different from the manner in which a political cartoon is conceived, developed and published. And yet, when considered as political satire, they demand a distinct engagement of the viewer that is wholly different from other political video

satire, such as sketch segments of *The Chaser* or *The Daily Show* variety, or sit-com cartoons in *The Simpsons* or *Southpark* vein. In fact the construction of meaning in the audience response to these images has compelling parallels with the manner in which political cartoons achieve their purpose. In utilising accepted taxonomical frameworks in a critical examination of Atkin’s work, the parallels are drawn into sharp relief.

**Taxonomical Comparison**

Medhurst and Desousa identify six elements of graphic style available to the artist: use of line and form, the relative size of objects within the frame, exaggeration or amplification of physionomical features (caricature), placement within the frame, relation of text to visual imagery and rhythmic montage. They define four invention topoi by which a cartoonist constructs first order enthymemes: political commonplaces, literary/cultural allusions, character traits and situational themes. These topoi are employed in the image using the organising principles of contrast, commentary and contradiction. Additionally, Morris identifies four devices through which cartoonists affect rhetorical content, these being: condensation, combination, domestication and opposition. Press offers three tonal categories into which political cartoons typically fall: descriptive satirical, laughing satirical, destructive satirical. Manning and Phiddian add to this list ‘cartoons that exhibit savage indignation’.

The first observation that can be made about Hugh Atkin’s work in analysing the parallels that exist between video mash-ups and political

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cartoons is that he produces these videos as a direct and immediate response to current events occurring over a fixed news cycle. While political cartoonists are inclined, from time to time, to pen drawings that comment on issues and events of a more generic rather than immediate nature, the topicality or currency of the image with respect to news events is an important distinction in their classification as political cartoons. This distinction should equally be applied to the moving image as doing so distinguishes the satirical works appearing in online news sites and broadcast current affairs shows from other politically-inspired video and animated works (Southpark, for example).

The next point of comparison is the frame itself. The cartoon typically resides within a panel, where the mash-up relies upon the video frame for the boundaries of the image. Therein, many aspects of style can be applied equally to video as to illustration. The hand drawn character of the cartoon provides the obvious point of distinction between the cartoon and video image. Caricature and the use of line and form are two stylistic elements that, strictly speaking, do not have their equivalent in the video object except when introduced as digitally drawn or scanned images. However, digital video editing does allow the artist to make decisions concerning the relative size of objects within a frame, as well as their placement, through the cutting, scaling and relocation of elements. Contemporary video editing software provides the operator with a wide variety of tools that facilitate the dissection and manipulation of images, including text, in a way that resembles the photomontage process.

Montage describes the way meanings evolve from the whole of the aesthetic and rhetorical artifact and is essential to the impact of any political cartoon. Medhurst and Desousa describe visual montage as “the clash of constituent parts to form a coherent whole – the clash of distinctive elements, which, in their conflict, invite the reader to perceive an idea that is greater than the sum of its parts.” They contend that the degree that meaning is shared between the cartoonist and his readers occurs as a result of the juxtaposition of the visual elements on the page (the artistic truth) and the interpretation

94 Medhurst and Desousa, “Political Cartoons”, 217.
of that juxtaposition in the mind of the reader (rhetorical truth or conviction).

Where the montage in a static image is created via the juxtaposition of visual elements within the frame, it is the juxtaposition of image frames in a sequence that typically achieves the impact in the moving image. Atkin’s videos draw on some of the forms and structures inherent in the montage and photomontage traditions in their production method and construction of metaphor. His works are closer to the film montage tradition in terms of process, while his use of available imagery aligns his practice more closely with the photomontage tradition as exemplified by John Heartfield. Heartfield’s images, constructed of bits of unaltered journalism, comment on media constructions of reality through the fragmentation and recomposing of media excerpts. His images direct a rereading of commercial mass media as well as function as strong political polemics.\(^{95}\)

*Chinese Propaganda Video,* with a duration of just under three minutes, stitches together a series of video clips, appropriated from film archives, television commercials and television footage, into a seamless metaphorical narrative. A dramatic musical soundtrack - monumental, iconic, nationalist and communist in character - and a single spoken-word Chinese narrative accompany the images. A subtitle banner acts as a visual unifying element across the multiple frames and offers comic value in the mismatch between the spoken dialogue and the purported translation.

As the title suggests, the video parodies Chinese propaganda films. The premise for this parody is a conflation of three political themes or contexts occurring at that time: the first is the context provided by the 2007 federal election campaign. The second is Rudd’s well-publicised diplomatic tenure in Beijing and his fluency in Mandarin. The third is the Coalition campaign strategy of highlighting Communist party links with Labor party candidates – a theme that also feeds into a broader perception in some parts of the electorate that the Labor party is sympathetic to communist ideals. The

parody provides the overarching metaphor for the work as well as a unifying framework for montage.

The parody reframes Kevin Rudd as a Chairman Mao like figure, with the video presenting a satirical mythologising of his upbringing, rise to power and pursuit of the federal leadership. This reframing is achieved via several stylistic and rhetorical devices employed throughout the video. The

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juxtaposition of actual Chinese propaganda imagery with actual images of Rudd recontextualises both sets of images and alters their original meanings and perceptions in the mind of the viewer. In addition to the rhythm and timing of the montage, the use of analogue film artefacts and editing devices locates the video in a different era. The opening frames (Fig. 19) show the head leader, frame markers and counters, while film scratches, speckles, noise and grain have been applied to the image as post-production effects to simulate the look and feel of emulsion film.

Atkin condenses the various aspects of Rudd’s persona and activities as presented in the public sphere into a single metaphor of Rudd as authoritarian figurehead. He combines the multiple references of Communist Party politics, Kevin Rudd’s leadership style and the federal election. Domestication is seen in the comparing of Rudd to Mao; and opposition, or contrast, is created between the popular conception (or reader’s expectations) of Rudd and the exaggerated portrayal of him as shown in the video.

The video draws on all four of Medhurst and Desousa’s topoi: political commonplaces include the federal election, political alliances, policy and strategy and political image making; literary and cultural allusions include Chinese Communist party propaganda, and the perceptions held by some of the Labor party as communist party sympathisers, and the commercial product character of Mr Sheen and the children’s fictional character Tintin (it is interesting to observe the use of Mr Sheen and Tintin as a sort of caricature by proxy, where Atkin exploits not just the visual resemblance of these characters, but their associated character traits of wholesomeness and moral fortitude as well); other character traits implied by the images include, wealth, earnestness, kind heartedness, virility, ruthlessness, and fluency in Mandarin; situational themes include Rudd’s rural/farming upbringing; appearances on the Sunrise morning TV programme; alliance with Gillard against Beazley, Rudd’s apparent alignment with Howard on some policy areas, education revolution policy, public castigation of Robert McLelland and the Scores nightclub incident, where Rudd was reported to have frequented the New York strip club.
The tone of the work fits into Press’s ‘laughing satirical’ category. This category implies a critical, satirical tone, but one that accepts the legitimacy of those on the receiving end. With this satirical representation of Rudd as Mao, Atkin invites a range of responses from his audience without challenging the legitimacy of either the featured political players, or the system in which they operate. The work variously lampoons Rudd’s leadership and campaigning style, policy platforms and personality traits; an alternative reading of the work infers mockery of the representation of government politics in the media and the political forces seeking to portray the Labor party as communist sympathisers. Despite the revolutionary imagery though, the work is not revolutionary or destructive in tone; the work lacks the urgency or compulsion to act in response to a political or social injustice that is characteristic of cartoons that exhibit savage indignation. And while the work contains descriptive elements, the work compels the reader to participate in the enthymematic form in order to derive meaning – that is the cultural memory and experience of the reader are central to their interpretation of the work.

With respect to those taxonomical attributes that are distinct to hand-drawn cartoons and not readily applied to the video image, I argue that a revised and expanded taxonomy that reinterprets these attributes for a video image context is both reasonable and appropriate. Medhurst and Desousa point out that, in the context of their taxonomy, caricature as a component of visual style is used in its narrow sense. In the subsequent chapter I will discuss how caricature ought be construed not merely in terms of graphic style, but also in a literary sense as manifest in the exaggeration, amplification, or over simplification of behavioural and verbal characteristics. As a reductive strategy, caricature both distorts and abbreviates personal attributes for satiric effect. The notion that the strategy be applied exclusively in terms of physiology is conveniently and appropriately applied in a graphic taxonomy sense, but doing so in a broader satirical context misrepresents the function of caricature.

In Atkin’s video, Kevin Rudd is caricaturised as a squeaky clean, Mandarin-speaking autocrat. In terms of literary caricature, the impression resonates as
an abbreviation, or distilled essence, of a broadly accepted truth. The inference of the caricature is so strong because it cultivates not merely the simplified persona of Rudd as propagated by his political opponents, but the image that Rudd himself projected during the 2007 election campaign. This conflation of different aspects of Rudd’s character allowed for disparate perceptions of the intended meaning of the video, dependant to large extent on the cultural memory and political persuasion of the viewer. Atkin was especially satisfied with this reception, saying:

People took very different things away from the Kevin Rudd video. I like that people could take different things away from it, and that it’s not so blatant that it’s easily dismissed as being just a pious and propaganda piece.\(^\text{97}\)

The use of line and form is the second element of visual style described by Medhurst and Desousa that does not readily have its equivalent in video. As will be discussed in the next chapter, I will argue that form, as applied to video in the context of temporal montage, can describe temporal as well as physical characteristics. As components of rhythm, pacing and timing are structural attributes that contribute to the visual character of a video object. Decisions made with respect to these attributes influence and direct the viewer’s reading of the image, and the manner in which meaning is constructed from the visual elements presented therein.

The overall form of the video is a typical three-act narrative. Bookended by the same propaganda poster image of a Mao-esque Rudd, the main body of the piece is a succession of video clips that read as the contrived biography of a communist leader. The opening frames are delivered in a slow tempo that serves to establish the aesthetic and satiric character of the video. The relatively even-pacing of the video clips references the considered pacing of ‘60s era Communist Party propaganda video. Rhythm is imparted through the timing and pacing of the clips, as well as the duration allocated to the subtitle elements delivering the supposed English translation of the narrated

\(^{97}\) Atkin, interview by author.
dialogue. The comparatively slow pacing of the closing frames informs the viewer that the action is coming to an imminent end, but is given a rhetorical flourish in the form of a musical crescendo and satirical call to action.

The considered temporal framework of *Chinese Propaganda Video* is highly effective in delivering a substantial amount of information at a rate that is easily processed by the viewer. It is a substantial achievement on Atkin’s part to have edited, arranged and organised the disparate images into a seamless and coherent video object. Ultimately it is the temporal quality of rhythm that provides the formal structure of the satirical video image. Through the treatment of timing and pacing Atkins shapes the rhythm in his videos to achieve a desired satirical impact. Rhythm is thus a formal arrangement device through which the temporal form of a video object can be manipulated and described.

In the ensuing chapter I will expand on how form and caricature can be described in a temporal sense and treated as elements of visual style in the production of moving image satire. Through the case study presented in this chapter I have demonstrated how, through critical comparison of an exemplary video mash-up with established taxonomical frameworks, the video mash-up image is closely aligned with the key formal attributes of the political cartoon image. It is my expectation that the proposed expansion and revision of the existing taxonomy formulated by Medhurst and Desouza will provide scholars, prize-givers and interested others with an unambiguous classificatory system for the categorisation of political images - one that will allow the tradition to evolve with the social and technological developments that characterise contemporary digital visual culture.

That a political animation or video mash-up might be considered a political cartoon points to a convergence of creative and technical process that parallels the broader convergence and hybridisation of media promoted by Internet and digital technologies. We live in an era where animators and film-makers apply cartooning techniques in the production of moving image works, while at the same time we see cartoonists incorporating digital
photographs and applying photomontage techniques in the production of static cartoons. Each of these strategies is typically executed under the auspices of a common set of digital technologies – notably a personal computer and an Internet connection – and disseminated via a common platform to an audience engaging with the same technology.

Some will claim that, as with animation, including mash-ups in any assessment of political cartoons disavows the art form of its historical and physical uniqueness. From hand engraving to photo-engraving, colour printing to digital image manipulation, cartoonists have a longstanding tradition of embracing technological advances to enhance their practice and improve on their capacity to communicate their message. It is my contention that embracing the moving image in the political cartooning tradition does not constitute a revolutionary changing of the guard in the discipline; rather it serves to expand the possibilities and opportunities of politically engaged citizens to contribute to the democratic discussion in ways that make us laugh.
CHAPTER FOUR - A REVISED TAXONOMY FOR THE CATEGORISATION OF POLITICAL CARTOON IMAGES

In this chapter I introduce a revised taxonomical framework for the production and criticism of political cartoon images, one that accommodates the moving image. Having described in the previous chapter how cartoonists engaging the moving image typically exploit the same metaphorical devices as those employed in the static image, I contend that the rhetorical and satirical function of some moving image works is identical to the traditional function of the political cartoon.

Further to this, in arguing that the political image’s function should be the principal determinant in their classification, I conclude that the stylistic strategies and decisions employed in their production are subject to media context and are therefore elastic. The creative tools and processes employed in an image’s production ought to correlate with the media it exploits in its dissemination. Placed in the context of the technological advances and developments to which cartoonists have adapted and responded over two centuries, the political cartooning tradition resides more in the response to the work and less in the material nature of the work itself.

That function should be non-negotiable and form should be negotiable is premised on the changing modes of image production and dissemination with respect to the publication and consumption of contemporary news media. A revised and expanded taxonomy acknowledges the diversity of visual forms published and disseminated in a news media environment that is increasingly digital in nature. This shifting paradigm includes the video image - seen most often in a political satire context in the form of video mash-ups - as well as animation.

In my offering of a revised taxonomy, I embrace in its entirety the structure provided by Medhurst and Desousa and add to it those attributes that are applicable to the production and criticism of moving image objects. In addition, I add the attribute of colour as a style element available to the
graphic artist engaging in either static or moving image format. Colour is an element not addressed by Medhurst and Desousa, the most likely explanation being that when developing their taxonomy in 1981, its use in print media political cartooning – and especially in newspaper cartoons which provided the set upon which their taxonomy was based – was rare.\(^1\)

Thirty years on, colour is ubiquitous in news media both in print and online, and is a style element heavily exploited by cartoonists. For this reason colour as a seventh element of graphic style should be included in a revised taxonomy.

It is intended that the expanded framework be drawn on in a holistic fashion when reflecting on political satirical images. For example, where Medhurst and Desousa identify the ‘relation of text to visual imagery’ as an element of graphic style available to the cartoonist, I do not distinguish the use of text in a static image context from its use in a moving image context per se.\(^2\)

Similarly, the ‘exaggeration or amplification of physionomical features’ can equally be applied to visual caricature where the character described is either dynamic or in stasis.

The expansion of the taxonomy with respect to stylistic choices is achieved through provision of a set of stylistic elements that are specifically available to the moving image artist. The proposed taxonomy will therefore be comprised of two sets that, in concert, encompass the stylistic decisions available to the contemporary political cartoonist. It is expected that some images, especially animations, will inevitably draw on style elements from each of the classificatory sets.

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\(^2\) Where text objects are subject to temporal behaviours, it is the behaviours and their resulting teleological impact that are attributed significance in a revised framework, rather than the inherent function of text itself.
Colour

Colour employed in political cartoons may serve a descriptive, metaphorical or emotive function - or a combination of these. Cartoonists can use descriptive colour to isolate and bring into sharp relief constituent graphic detail, add volume or depth to a scene and describe mood. As a purely descriptive element, colour is applied to the image in a largely decorative sense: while not essential for understanding, it clarifies detail and facilitates the reading of the image. When used to clarify and frame a metaphor, colour is valuable as a device in those situations where the metaphorical construct rests on a reading of the image that is not as readily communicated in black and white. In an emotive context, colour may be used to represent character traits and attributes, by virtue of their association with certain behaviours.

Kudelka utilises a pastel-hued palette to lend volume and depth to images that are otherwise heavily reliant on simple, contoured line work to describe the form of characters and objects within the frame. The expanses of desaturated wash block out the negative space, while the positive space is filled with slightly contrasting or neutral colours to lift them from the background and bring them into relief (fig. 20). Where narrated captions dominate the canvas, Kudelka often discards the background altogether, making use of vibrant hues to lift the graphic forms from the text elements (fig. 21).

Fazzari uses subdued gouache and water colour washes to achieve volume and depth, while at the same time areas of flat colour provide points of contrast and accents in the image. The colours applied to the spinning wheel in figure 22 clarify the separation of the segments and assist the reader to better discern the text framed within. A dark gray wash provides a background and imbues the image with a depth beyond that offered by the drawn elements alone. In figure 23 the use of colour allows the figure of pyjama-clad Gillard to rest adjoined to the shadowy spectre of a nightmarish Rudd in a material sense, while perceptibly the two figures maintain some spatial distance from one another. The red and blue hues that describe Gillard’s form locates the figure unequivocally in the foreground, while the
darkly ominous form of Rudd looms threateningly, but never encroaches from the background. The implied meaning achieved through this graphic treatment is that Gillard is at once trying to escape from, but is inseparably joined to, the persona and presence of Kevin Rudd.

Fig. 20 Jon Kudelka, 5 June 2011. The Hobart Mercury.

Fig. 21 Jon Kudelka, 6 September 2012. The Australian.
Fig. 22 Rocco Fazzari, 8 September 2011. The Sydney Morning Herald.

Fig. 23 Rocco Fazzari, 26 February 2011. The Sydney Morning Herald.
Bruce Petty uses colour sparingly, either to highlight those graphic elements that hold the greatest conceptual weight in the reading and understanding of the image; or simply to provide a visual rest and break up the often complex detail in some of his drawings (fig. 24). In figure 25 Petty applies vibrant colour to the middle-ground figures of Tony Abbott, a Navy Chief and the principal objects in the scene – a toy boat and rubber duck - while rendering the background characters in a darker, generic wash. In so doing the key visual elements are made distinct from the foreground and background elements, focusing viewer attention on them while giving depth to the image. The use of red on the documents shown in the foreground prompts the reader that this information, while secondary in conceptual import, provides information that illuminates the broader context of the image – namely the Coalition policy of turning asylum seeker vessels back to Indonesia. Colour is not essential to the reading of the image, but it does clarify the visual field by separating the primary components from information that is less critical to comprehension.

In figure 26 Nicholson eschews detail in favour of colour in the portrayal of inclement weather as a metaphor for the prevailing political mood. The heavy, luxurious greys and greens used to describe the sky and ocean allow Nicholson to treat these elements with a broad brush without sacrificing their metaphorical weight. Colour in this instance also serves to isolate the information-rich middle ground from the foreground and background, providing both depth and clarity to the image.

In figure 27, Bruce Petty uses a brilliant splash of red in a predominantly black and white image to colour the contents of a wine glass. The meaning suggested of the liquid is that of wine as a metaphor for blood. While the metaphor could have been presented without colour, and inferred from the context of a wine glass being filled by a bottle labeled “civilian casualties”, the use of colour serves a descriptive function as well as maximising the emotive impact of the metaphor.
Fig. 24 Bruce Petty, *May 2012 Budget Money*, 9 May 2012. The Age.

Fig. 25 Bruce Petty, 22 October 2012. The Age.
Fig. 26 Peter Nicholson, *Parliament Rescue*, 28 June 2012. The Australian.

Fig. 27 Bruce Petty, 23 July 2006. The Age.
Nicholson’s use of colour in figure 28 is more essential for establishing the central metaphor and subsequent meaning of the image. Here, colour not only enhances the descriptive character of the image, but furnishes metaphor with essential detail. Without the rendering of the nest of eggs in a golden hue, the identity of the goose would be almost entirely ambiguous. The red blood spatter on the budget chopping block also implies that mining, as represented by the goose, is not the only target of Wayne Swan’s budget cuts. The meaning of this part of the drawing would be less clear were the image rendered in black and white.

Fig. 28 Peter Nicholson, *Mining Goose Laid Golden Egg*. 31 March 2012. The Australian.
Colour might also be employed in caricature, to depict emotive states such as embarrassment or rage (red), jealousy (green) or feeling sick (green); or character traits such as a fondness for alcohol (red nose) or perceived prissiness (rosy cheeks). Nicholson used to depict the then Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock with a pale blue complexion to emphasise both his literal deathly pallor as well as his figurative cold-heartedness (figure 28). In figure 29 the caricature of Tony Abbott, rendered with a reddish nose and ears, is suggestive of both his sun-drenched, outdoor athleticism as well as a tendency to hot-headedness. The rosy cheeks of the Christopher Pyne caricature in the same image point to his perceptibly prim and proper character, a treatment that Nicholson also often extended to former Foreign Minister Alexander Downer (fig. 30).

Fig. 29 Peter Nicholson, *ATSIC Purse Strings*, 12 April 2003. The Australian.
Fig. 30 Peter Nicholson, *Tony Abbott Hits Wall*, 18 September 2012. The Australian.

Fig. 31 Peter Nicholson, *What Downer Knew He Knew*, 31 August 2006. The Australian.
Topicality

In addition to an expanded toolset of stylistic approaches, I propose that the notion of topicality, or currency, be formalised in a taxonomical context. I refer to topicality in the sense of images that respond directly to the journalistic text in which they are contextualised or embedded; or to events that transpire and play out over a fixed news media cycle. While some cartoonists, notably Michael Leunig, occasionally deliver cartoons that do not respond directly to topical news events, their status as political cartoons is granted – if it is at all – by virtue of the context of their publication alone. That is, their presentation *in situ* with the daily op-ed articles of the newspaper might be considered as validating their classification as political cartoons. This is a tenuous perspective to apply to the political cartooning tradition because, withdrawn from this media context, many of Leunig’s images would fail to meet the usual classificatory criteria for political cartoons.

The notion of news currency or topicality is one that is assumed in academic discourse on political cartoons, rather than formalised in a taxonomical sense. This formal consideration of topicality with respect to static images has perhaps been ignored because of the force of the political context granted by their publication in newspapers. The newspaper is a discrete object, separated in a material sense from news consumed in other media formats. Newspaper content published online exists in a digitally hybridised media environment, where boundaries separating that content from the plethora of other online content are fluid and easily perforated.

It cannot be relied upon that a political cartoon appearing online will necessarily be viewed in its intended media context. Indeed many images that can be qualified as political cartoons are published and disseminated outside of traditional news media outlets: on blogs, opinion sites and social media. Without a textual reference in which to place the image, the image context must be assumed by the reader. The context in this case is granted exclusively by the reader’s memory, in terms of both their familiarity with events and the associated cultural symbology employed in the image.
Medhurst and Desousa allude to the topical nature of political cartoons in discussing memory as “an art of evocation which draws upon shared cultural symbology to invite completion of an enthymematic chain.” As the potency of a political cartoon image is reliant upon this evocation of memory, it can reasonably be assumed that – in the absence of a textually provided context - the nearer the temporal proximity to events depicted in the image, the more easily context and meaning can be construed by the reader. A formal stipulation that a political cartoon be topical, either with respect to a current newsmedia cycle or the journalistic context in which it is presented, is therefore both desirable and necessary in a categorical sense.

This formal recognition of topicality is especially pertinent to the moving image, given the many manifestations of social and political satire which assume this form. A formal classification of satirical, political moving images should reasonably distinguish between sketches and comedy routines, sit-coms and video-blogs. It is relatively straightforward to locate sketches and comedy routines in the realm of performance. As well, the rhetorical and satirical devices and strategies employed in performance are often distinct to oratorical discourse and very different from those framed in graphic discourse.

More problematic is the distinction between similar visual artifacts, such as video mash-ups and long-form animation. The labor-intensive nature of video and animation production, as opposed to hand drawn panel cartooning, implicates topicality as a creative constraint. The need to generate a relatively immediate response to current events consequently shapes the duration and complexity of that response. The narrative that constrains the duration of the image is itself constrained by the resources available to the artist with respect to time and technical aptitude. From the outset, conceptual development of a political cartoon is hostage to its topical nature.

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Bruce Petty’s long-form political animations, while undoubtedly political in flavour, are not produced as direct and immediate responses to events occurring over a fixed news cycle. Nor are they presented in a journalistic context. They are laboriously produced over a period of months rather than days, in a careful and precise manner, and broadcast on television. They are designed to inform, elucidate and make accessible broad social and political constructs that would otherwise be difficult for the layperson to penetrate in text form. The topics that Petty engages in these animations require an expansive and predominantly descriptive narrative, which sets this work apart from the pithy, topical character of his political cartoons. While there are similarities in his moving image and static image cartoons, their teleological function is dissimilar enough that they should be regarded as separate and distinct satirical forms.

Similarly, some of the content of long form animation such as *The Simpsons* and *Southpark* is undoubtedly situated in the realm of political satire. As well as the socio-cultural and socio-political issues explored in these shows, some of the subject matter is specifically focused on the politics and mechanics of government. The broad narrative in which the subject matter is framed, however, and the timeframe in which it is produced, negate any notion of immediate commentary on current events. The emphasis of topicality in political cartoons directs an image that is delivered in context of developments that punctuate the daily, weekly or monthly news cycles. In contrast, political satire such as *The Simpsons* and *Southpark* delivers images in broad, generic terms that bear little correlation to the newsmedia in which political cartoons have traditionally been framed.

In acknowledging the special and symbiotic nature of the relationship that political cartoons share with text-based journalism, I assert that topicality is an inherent component of print news media political cartoons. To suggest that this might be a criterion that is somehow not applicable in a moving image context is to argue against the very function and purpose of this brand of political cartoon imagery. That news consumption is shifting towards a hybridised, multimedia platform does not negate the premise that political cartoons ought remain in context of current events. Indeed the location of
political cartoons in an online environment, where the publication and consumption of news content occurs in an even more immediate sense than it does in print, emphasises rather than diminishes the importance of topicality.

**Temporality**

The six elements of graphic style identified by Medhurst and Desousa apply equally to hand-drawn animated cartoons and static cartoons. The animator makes use of the same graphic techniques as the panel cartoonist: use of line and form, the relative size of objects within the frame, exaggeration or amplification of physionomical features, placement with the frame, relation of text to visual imagery, and rhythmic montage. I present this observation as a given, premised on the fact that both image formats exploit the same techniques and processes, and, as discussed in Chapter 3, employ the same metaphors for understanding in their production. The animated image is, after all, simply a sequenced assemblage of images that can be viewed in their constituent parts as single, hand-drawn frames. The unique stylistic attributes imbued in the animated image therefore pertain to its temporal nature.

The temporal aspect of both animation and video images is defined by their audiovisual nature. In addition to Medhurst and Desousa’s six elements of graphic style, I propose an additional set of seven stylistic elements readily available to the creator of audiovisual political cartoon images. The arrangement of constituent frames within the image, as well as the treatment of audio within the image object, will be discussed in terms of temporal montage and acoustic montage. The proposed elements deliberately correlate to those offered by Medhurst and Desousa for the sake of easy comparison and contrast. They are: colour; use of line and form; exaggeration, amplification or simplification of behavioural characteristics; placement and compositing within the frame; rhythmic montage; temporal montage; and acoustic montage.
Colour in Motion

When applied to a moving image format colour can achieve similar effects to those affected in a static image, but has the added capability of changing over time. Changes in colour can enhance the descriptive and metaphoric qualities of an image. These effects include, but are by no means restricted to: environmental effects such as day turning to night (and vice versa) or weather changing (figures 32, 33); a character’s shifting emotional state; or visual effects, such as the flashing light of an ambulance (fig. 35), or a pot overheating on a stove (fig. 34).

In Jon Kudelka’s *Johnny’s House* (fig. 32) the transition from night to day indicated by the change of colours in the frame opens the action and establishes early morning as the time of day in which the subsequent action occurs. This information provides an immediate context for subsequent character behaviours such as making breakfast and competing for the bathroom and toilet, as well as interaction with others. The colour change, coupled with the diegetic sound of a rooster crowing, provides an elegant descriptive device that negates the use of other devices, such as clocks or speech.

In *Howard’s Climate Report* (fig. 32) Nicholson employs changing colour values on a weather map to show that Australia’s weather is getting hotter. The map transitions from a cool green, through inundations of clouds of orange, red and yellow, before being engulfed in flames. The use of colour is descriptive in that it provides information about the suggested state of the geographical climate in Australia; but it is also used in a metaphorical sense, together with his ultimate state of undress, in alluding to the heat being felt by then Prime Minister John Howard’s in his diminishing political capital on the climate change policy front. Foregoing colour in representing climate change in this animation would mean heavier reliance on line and form to emphasise graphic elements such as the sun. As it is, the application of colour and its transitional changes present an immediately recognisable situational theme to the reader, and one that frames a broader metaphorical context.
Nicholson’s treatment of a pot heating up on a stove in *Ugly Johnny* (fig. 33) shows a similar representation of weather change to the *Howard’s Climate Report*, though this is achieved metaphorically through portrayal of the pot as the world rather than the more literal device of a weather map. The visual effect of the pot growing progressively hotter before ultimately boiling over is managed entirely through change of colour. The subsequent action of the pot falling from the stove is thus perceived as a predictable and reasonable culmination of the action that precedes it. Interestingly, the colour in this case is the only graphic element that changes throughout these frames, and thus provides the only visual indicator of temporal action in the sequence.

Fig. 33 Peter Nicholson, *Howard’s Climate Report*, 3 Nov 2006. Digital video.⁵

Fig. 34 Peter Nicholson, *Ugly Johnny*, 15 March 2007. Digital video.⁶

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Use of line and form

The use of both line and form in moving image objects contains subtle but substantive differences from their application in the static form. When imbued with the capacity to change over time, line and form can be manipulated to achieve effects that redirect the viewer’s engagement with the image, sustain interest or provide information that enhances understanding. The deformation of constituent line and form elements within the frame affords the possibility of dynamic gesture and movement. The behaviour of objects within the frame can be described with greater nuance and detail than can be rendered in the static image, and this is achieved through the treatment of line and form over time.

One of the key attributes of the ‘lighting sketch’ technique employed by Harry Julius in his animations is the gradual reveal of line and form over time. In Crown Prince of Death Julius directs the order and timing of information of both text and line to the audience. The opening hand-written frames provide topical context in describing a failed military action

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instigated by Crown Prince Wilhelm of Germany against the Allies. On the proceeding blank canvas, the visual pun of a caricature of the Crown Prince being assembled from a uniform adorned with human skulls is strategically and gradually revealed. With the skull motifs providing the first graphic information to the audience, the macabre character of the imagery is immediately established while the identity of the emerging figure as the Crown Prince is withheld until the final frames.

The lightning sketch technique invites the viewer to predict the shape and form that the line will ultimately assume while urging the line to completion. In the process the artist drip feeds selected information to the viewer, such that the eventual reveal of the drawing provides the punch-line, or resolution to the piece. While the drawing could reasonably be presented in a single, static frame, it is through denying the viewer the glimpse of the totality of the image from the outset that presents a distinctly temporal mode of engagement with narrative. In the static frame the viewer must actively participate in the assembly of visual information to derive meaning; whereas in a temporal context it is the artist who, through the application of line and form over time, directs the viewer from the beginning of the narrative through to its conclusion.

The dynamic quality of animated line and form can also be exploited to sustain interest in the quiet moments of some moving image works. Jon Kudelka’s *Four UnAustralians* features four characters seated facing the camera at a bar (fig. 36). The characters are crudely and somewhat naively drawn with a consistent line thickness and no shading. Accompanied to the tune of *Ten Green Bottles* and subtitled satirical lyrics, the animation is punctuated by each character in turn being plucked from the bar by an invisible force at the tune’s recurring long pause. As it is only at these punctuations that genuine movement occurs, Kudelka uses a vibrant, undulating line to imbue the scene with a dynamic quality that would otherwise be absent throughout the still sequences. It is only in an image sequence that the movement and energy of the line can be grasped – as a single frame, the image presents as an unremarkable and wholly static
drawing. Viewer attention is thus sustained through a temporally invigorated treatment of line.

Fig. 36 Jon Kudelka, *Four UnAustralians*, 13 June 2006. Digital video.  

The deformation of line and form assists in the communicating of actions and events where movement enhances the viewer’s understanding of what they are looking at. In Nicholson’s *Boom Boom* the distress of the aircraft representing the economy is made visually apparent by the wildly fluctuating dial needles in the cockpit. In *Howard’s Sleep Disorder* it is the movement of the jagged lines that transverse the frame that gives the screen the character of a wave monitor. Throughout Bruce Petty’s *Human Contraptions* series the constant flux of the line work in the ever-changing imagery is essential in helping the viewer negotiate complex cause and effect events and maintain confluence with the spoken narrative.

As components of style, line and form effected temporally assume a character that is unique to the moving image format. The artist must consider not just the construction of the ‘key’ drawings that punctuate the motion, but also how the intervening (or ‘in-between’) frames direct the reading of the image sequence. The possibility of time affords the artist

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unique strategies for presenting graphic information, which in turn invites particular responses from the viewer in their reading of the image. The treatment of line and form in moving image works is distinct from its application in static images with respect to temporal behaviour; a separate style category for taxonomical purposes is therefore appropriate.

**The exaggeration, amplification or simplification of behavioural characteristics**

Caricature in political cartoon discourse typically refers to the exaggeration or amplification of physiognomical features. While this same caricaturisation of physical appearance can readily be applied in animation, the moving image format provides a performative space that the cartoonist can further exploit in the caricaturisation of gesture, personality and character traits. The animator would typically achieve this through deformation of line and form, whereas the mash-up artist applies this reductive strategy through the selection and editing of audiovisual clips.

In *Pulp Rock*12 Peter Nicholson’s rendering of Peter Garrett reduces the former Midnight Oil front man’s widely recognised and stylised dance moves to an exaggerated parody. The resulting caricature presents a figure whose gestures help contextualise the topical content of the animation. The lampooning of Garrett’s stage persona is reinforced by the caricaturisation of his physical features and voice, and prompts the viewer to recall and contrast the singer’s activist-oriented past with his recently adopted political principles.

In the same animation Nicholson applies his customary treatment of John Howard’s eyebrows to convey the former Prime Minister’s perceived earnestness of expression. John Howard’s profuse eyebrows are almost universally exploited by cartoonists in their drawn caricatures of him; through instilling movement, Nicholson is able to parody a perceived behavioural disposition through their exaggerated animation. Similarly,

Nicholson exaggerates the idiosyncratic deformations John Howard’s mouth assumes when he speaks. The protuberant lower lip that is a caricature staple in the static drawings of so many cartoonists, is granted further comic impact through its animation from one extreme pose to the next. The range of expressions that can be achieved in animated caricatures afford a more expansive rendering of characters than is typically seen in the static image.

The opening frames of Hugh Atkin’s *Will the Real Mitt Romney Please Stand Up* invite the viewer to construct a response to the question of “who is the real Mitt Romney?”. The ensuing frames present a portrait of the 2012 Republican presidential candidate as a policy flip-flopper and hypocrite who holds opposing views concurrently on issues such as immigration, abortion, corporate governance and taxation. By framing and constraining Romney’s political persona within a montage of selected screen grabs and sound bites, Atkin reduces Romney to a parody. The audio track is an assemblage of sound bites that are satirically lyricised to the rhythm of Eminem’s *Will the Real Slim Shady Please Stand Up*. The rap song is a mnemonic that recalls an oft-used catchphrase of Romney’s political opponents, and provides a musical structure that Atkin exploits through the agency of Romney’s own broadcast media appearances. At the conclusion of the piece, the viewer remains unenlightened as to Romney’s position on every issue of import to the 2012 Presidential election. The piece is not designed to clarify policy platform, but to reinforce through caricature the perception that Romney’s principles are mutable and his true character impenetrable.

**Placement and compositing within the frame**

Decisions regarding composition and arrangement of elements within the frame help direct both the viewer’s gaze and engagement with the image. When viewed as a composition strategy, compositing allows the artist to assemble form from constituent parts and convey depth through the layering of disparate visual elements. It is an approach reminiscent of photomontage, where complex images rely on multiple graphic elements being brought

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together as a composited whole. Being able to manipulate graphic elements in layers also affords flexibility in the arrangement of objects in relation both to each other and within the frame. Although a technique readily applied in the production of static images, the process is more often seen in the layer-based time disciplines of 2D stop-frame and cel-animation. Video editing software also provides compositing tools that achieve similar effects.

Harry Julius uses the canvas as a construction surface in the creation of his stop-frame animations. Through the manipulation of 2D puppets and other planar elements, often employed in concert with a lightning sketch technique, Julius achieves animation effects that are not as easily realised through hand-drawn lines alone. In *Watching the Eclipse*, the figure of a citizen reading a newspaper is sketched out by Julius’ hand before assuming an agency apparently all its own as Julius’ hand is removed and the character’s limbs spring into motion. The figure gazes upwards to view a sun emblazoned with the visage of the German General Erich Ludendorff, whose eyes shift nervously to follow a moon that has entered the frame. The moon moves to overlay itself in front of the sun, before revealing the pay-off for the animation - an image of Lord Kitchener on its surface. Julius also uses composites, or overlaid, elements in this animation to produce the special effect of text appearing on the newspaper held by the principal character. The initially blank newspaper surface sees its text revealed through a wipe transition resulting from the gradual pulling away of a blank element from the graphic surface of the newspaper.

Many of Rocco Fazzari’s 2D animations are a montage of composited video, photographic and hand-drawn elements. The opening frames of *Tony Abbott’s Bid for the Female Vote* present an image built from several layers of visual components. The base layer, or background, consists of a video plate showing a rotating disco mirror ball reflecting its garishly lit environment; the next layer closest to the camera is a photograph of a leopard skin laid out on a timber floor; the third layer - itself a

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photomontage of hand-drawn and photographic elements - contains a hand-drawn cut-out caricature of Tony Abbott, reclining with open shirt to reveal a photographic muscular torso, and grasping a photographic steam iron; the final layer, closest to the camera, is the glowing and steaming “HOT” text.

While the use of composited elements achieves an economy of production – for example the time saved in relying on video footage of a mirror ball as opposed to the effort of hand drawing these frames - the visual impact of Fazzari’s animations is one of contrasting form, textures and colours. The application of the various media types also places the focal point of the animations on the hand-drawn caricatures, with the photographic and video components typically used to furnish backgrounds and props. The rendering of caricatures as figures with coloured heads atop light, grey scale bodies reinforces the character-centric focus by presenting a contrast of colour and shade as well as texture.

**Rhythmic montage**

Medhurst and Desousa define montage as “…the way meanings evolve from the whole of the aesthetic and rhetorical artifact”;16 while rhythmic montage is “the impression created by the interaction of invention, dispositional and stylistic elements” - or in short, “the way a cartoon works for a reader.”17 While Medhurst and Desousa’s category could readily be applied to a moving image context, for the purposes of clarity this taxonomy makes a distinction between the rhythmic montage that occurs in a single frame and the rhythmic montage that is effected in a frame sequence.18 This categorical separation emphasises the impact of temporal affordance in the production of, and experiential engagement with, the elements required to construct meaning.

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17 Ibid.; 217.
18 “Single frame” again refers to both single-panel and multiple-panel images.
When viewing a single frame, the viewer has access to the entirety of visual information required to derive meaning from the image. The engagement demands of the viewer active participation in the construction of meaning, with respect to assessing and prioritising the symbolic values of the respective constituent elements. The artist working with the static image has at their disposal a range of stylistic choices in promoting particular readings and interpretations of the image ahead of others. For example the artist might use the relative size of a given object to prioritise its symbolic value over less significant objects in the frame.

Static image cartoons direct the attention of the viewer via the rhythmic montage of formal elements within the frame, namely text and the placement of objects. Rhythmic montage in a temporal context describes the arrangement and editing of audiovisual material, based on continuity and progression of images, to establish visual coherence across separate frames in a sequence. It also describes the arrangement of shots which, combined, elicit an intellectual meaning. A multiple-panel cartoon might achieve a similar effect, though it is distinct from the audiovisual image in that the viewer is able to engage with the entirety of the image.

When viewing a time-based image sequence, the reader has access only to the information that is presented at any given moment on the screen, as well as the information that they have stored in memory. The time-based nature of animation and video-mash-ups allows the artist to first withhold then reveal visual information to the viewer. The moving image artist is thus able to more actively direct the flow of information and, consequently, more actively direct the viewer’s experience in their construction of meaning.

We have already observed in Julius’ animations how line and form can be revealed over time to direct the viewer’s engagement with the content. The motion and deformation of objects within the frame can also be manipulated to draw viewer attention to various actions and events. As well, use of the camera is a common technique in the direction of scene content. The camera can be manipulated both within the shot to reveal or conceal scene elements
through zooms, tracks, pans and dollies; and throughout the sequence in the form of shots revealing different angles and scenes.

Peter Nicholson’s *Echo*\(^\text{19}\) is typical of his engagement with rhythmic montage and demonstrates how scene elements and shots can be directed to frame a satirical concept. The shots present an array of different scenes that, combined, describe the following relatively complex chain of events: then-Prime Minister John Howard visits the Governor-General to call an election; Howard raids the budget surplus to deliver tax cuts to the electorate; Howard announces poor polling results with his Coalition Party Room and how to develop a strategy to counter that of then Opposition leader Kevin Rudd; Howard announces bogus election commitments to deceive Rudd; the press corps challenge Howard on these commitments; and finally, Rudd writes down the same commitments, observing, “You never know when you might need some policies”.

Within these shots, animated events communicate and furnish the broader context of the sequence with satirical and descriptive detail. A montage of graphs displayed on the caucus room television set illustrates the poor polling described by Howard; while another montage illustrates each of the bogus election commitments proposed by Howard. In several shots the figure of Kevin Rudd emerges suddenly from unexpected places and repeats Howard’s utterances. This action reinforces the comic impact of Howard’s claim that Rudd just “repeats everything I say”, as well as emphasises figuratively the literal notion that Howard is struggling to attain political space and distance from Rudd. The meaning and comic impact of the punch line delivered in the final frames is only appreciated through engagement with, and comprehension of, the array of content preceding it.

In *John McCain Gets BarackRoll’d*\(^\text{20}\) Hugh Atkin conflates the 2007 US Presidential campaign with the Rick Roll’d phenomenon, where


unsuspecting Internet users would be directed to a music video of Rick Astley. The video features original footage of John McCain standing on a stage before a large screen and addressing a Republican convention audience. As McCain begins his speech, a compositied video of then Democratic Presidential candidate Barack Obama performing dance moves and delivering the lyrics to Rick Astley’s *Never Gonna Give you Up* appears on the screen. Audience reaction shots, wider views of the crowd images and a confused McCain dwarfed by the larger-than-life Obama are fused with audio of Obama as well as “Obama!” chants.

The video effectively satirises a range of issues that characterised that campaign. McCain’s inability to ‘cut through’ with the broader electorate is alluded to by his inability to capture the attention of the convention audience; his relatively advanced age and demeanour is conveyed in shots that present him as awkward and uncertain; while the media appearances presented on screen and their arrangement into song exploits the perception of Obama as hip and modern. The seamless arrangement of shots and use of audio presents the impression that Obama has hijacked McCain’s convention with his video performance. By rearranging and reconstructing the original convention footage, Atkin subverts the video object away from its documentary propaganda roots and recontextualises it into political parody.

**Temporal montage**

Where rhythmic montage establishes spatial and proximal relationships between formal elements in the image sequence, temporal montage determines the rhythm and structure of the sequence, both with respect to constituent frame elements and the image as a whole. Where the static image cartoonist must contain the beginning, middle and end of the narrative within the one frame, animators and video artists work with linear time. The rhythmic elements of pacing and timing, situated within a narrative structure, conspire to imbue the object with mood and energy.
The animator is able to control the pacing and timing of objects within the frame through the manipulation of line and form from one frame to the next. At the same time, the arrangement and editing of shots in the sequence directs the pacing and timing of the animation as a whole. The video artist is able to control pacing and timing through editing decisions such as the duration of frames between cuts, transitions and overall length of the work. The rhythmic character of moving image works directs much of the mood and energy of the narrative and thus invites different modes of engagement from the viewer.

Political cartooning is an inherently narrative-based art. Whether framed within the static border of a newspaper cartoon, or delivered in an image sequence, the satirical puzzle presented to the viewer is invariably one of storytelling cause and effect. The tableaux presented in static cartoons constitute a moment frozen in time; implicit in the image are the actions and events that preceded the frame and those that may follow. Moving image works simply remove any ambiguity in the temporal character and specific behaviour of these actions and events.

The rhythmic structure of moving image political cartoons is thus intertwined with the expectation of clear narrative arcs that contain a beginning, middle and end. The treatment of sound and image needs to be balanced such that each part is granted adequate – but not excessive – time to convey information. Where the constituent audiovisual parts of an animation or mash-up are dispensed in too few frames, information is not properly absorbed by the viewer; delivered in too many frames, engagement becomes laboured.

The broad rhythmic structure of Bruce Petty’s animations is imposed by the scripts upon which they are based. The descriptive non-diegetic narration is serviced by metaphorical as well as literal drawings that are highly dynamic in character. Almost every frame is in a constant state of flux, thanks to at least one constituent graphic element being in motion at any given moment. This imparts a frenetic vibrancy in the image that demands the complete attention and a relentless engagement of the viewer. Moments of rest are
provided only by the occasional static frame and frequent pauses in the dialogue. By allowing space for reflection in the tempered delivery of the narration, Petty exploits the energetic pacing and timing of the visuals to sustain viewer interest over a duration around five minutes. In musical terms, the narration analogously serves as the rhythm while the drawings offer the melody.

In contrast, Fazzari’s substantially shorter animations are, in an audiovisual sense, serene and contemplative. The relatively languid timing and pacing of the animated elements and soundscapes belies the often biting and derisive nature of the satire. *Eat Hot Crow* comments on the events surrounding radio “shock jock” Alan Jones and his derisory comments about – and subsequent apology to - Prime Minister Gillard. The animation opens with the customary title screen, featuring the title text and related image – in this case a crow served hot on a plate. The audio overlay of a radio broadcaster introducing the Jones’ breakfast programme rounds out the introduction, which serves to provide the topical context for the animation. Fazzari deliberately employs this style of preface to allow the viewer to adjust to their engagement, and absorb the context for the subsequent content.

Throughout the animation, Fazzari lingers on just two scenes that are framed within six alternating shots: the first is a fictitious “Jonestown”, where dinosaurs roam streets decorated with Jones-sanctioned products and “Chatham House Rules Apply” – but ultimately falls into decay as the advertiser desert it; while the second shows Alan Jones dining in a metropolitan penthouse, waited on by Opposition leader Tony Abbott, and apparently insincere in his mea culpa.

Fazzari’s signature stop-frame animation style typically forgoes smooth transitions between actions, gestures and shots, which challenges the persistence of vision necessary for conveying fluid animation. In this way

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Fazzari reveals the temporal space between frames and the actions contained within them. This brings the focus onto the scene objects themselves and the contexts in which they are placed, rather than their broad gestural characteristics and behaviours.

The duration of the shots, at around ten seconds each, affords ample time for the viewer to examine and process the image content. In this example, audio grabs of Alan Jones dominate the sound track and provide the contextual information for the imagery. The considered flow of shots and economical treatment of sound are designed to afford the viewer a comfortable and leisurely engagement with the content. Fazzari acknowledges the laid back tempo of his moving image works by calling them “espresso video animations”.

Hugh Atkin has created several mash-ups that synchronise audiovisual media grabs of politicians with pop songs. In these cases the timing is driven largely by the tempo of the songs and their respective lyrics; the appropriate grabs need to be shoehorned into the song structure to create as musically seamless a sequence as possible. Atkin’s Changes mash-up is introduced with a montage of clips showing various US politicians discussing “change”. The word “change” is brought into sharp relief through its gradual isolation from a broader sentence context, and assumes the character of a musical sample that synchronises with the introduced musical score and lyrics of David Bowie’s song Changes. With the song providing musical cohesion throughout, subsequent clips contain speech grabs that correspond to the actual song lyrics. The impression this mash-up conveys is of multiple political figures collaborating to provide vocals to a pop song, or “singing from the same song sheet”. The cuts and edits need to be well managed and precise to ensure that the rhythm of the piece is uninterrupted and its overall structure cohesive.

Acoustic montage

The relation of sound to image in audiovisual objects presents a montage in the sense that neither the vision nor the sound perceived independent of one another offers the requisite information to construct meaning from the object. In this discussion I define acoustic montage as not merely the juxtaposition of sound and vision, but specifically the aesthetic effect achieved through composition of various sound elements into a coherent audio track. The sequencing and layering of audio elements along a timeline allows the artist to build rich and complex sound environments. As described in the previous chapter, diegetic and non-diegetic speech, noise or music can be employed in audiovisual objects to achieve various effects, such as sound as metaphor, sound as caricature, sound effects and musicality.

Audio is also a device that allows the video artist to manipulate the rate at which the viewer is able to unpack the narrative. In Atkin’s Chinese Propaganda Video, the tempo and structure of the narrated dialogue coupled with the musical score complements the three-act narrative. The symphonic fanfare of the introduction is followed by a middle section of non-diegetic spoken narrative, underscored by pulsating, rhythmic musical events of military precision; finally, the end frames are accompanied by the same brass fanfare that introduced the piece, bookending the imagery to its conclusion.

Atkin’s use of the Mission Impossible theme music in Clinton and Cruise: On The Campaign Trail also provides the underlying tempo and crescendo for the imagery. The music provides a rhythmic base which Atkin reinforces through the overlay of audiovisual interview grabs of then-Democratic Presidential nominee candidate Hillary Clinton, and Hollywood actor Tom Cruise. The selected video clips are strategically chosen for the specific speech elements they contain, while their sequential juxtaposition provides both the overall rhythmic structure for the work as well as its satiric narrative. The concluding statements of Clinton and Cruise are accompanied
by a building musical crescendo and finale that offers a satisfying third act resolution to the piece.

At the same time, audio can be used for metaphorical purposes. In the same video, the *Mission Impossible* music performs a mnemonic function that links Cruise to his professional work and establishes a metaphor for American Hollywood mythology, triumphalism, and the cult of celebrity. Through the juxtaposition of audiovisual grabs of Clinton, the forces of US politics and politicians are also enveloped in the same metaphor. In *Chinese Propaganda Video*, Atkin uses a digital audio synch tone to mimic the analogue bleep of an emulsion film audio track and locate the film in a perceptibly different era; while the Chinese narration and dramatic music intensify the imagery, enhancing the metaphor of Rudd as Mao.

The script-heavy animations of Peter Nicholson are heavily reliant on voice caricature for their satiric impact. In *Boom Boom* the caricatures of then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and senior minister Julia Gillard are endowed with exaggerated voices that capitalise on the former’s clipped and proper tones, and the latter’s nasal, Australian drawl. Nicholson’s characters are made more compelling and granted greater agency through the provision of effective voice caricature. The application of an unconvincing voice caricature risks creating a cognitive dissonance in the mind of the viewer, where suspension of disbelief is challenged by the discord between sound and image.

There are strategies that satirists can employ to negate the lack of convincing voice caricature in character-driven works. ABC television sketch artists John Clarke and Bryan Dawes circumvent this satirical hazard by establishing with the viewer a contract of sorts that has their identities presented through the context granted solely by the nature of the dialogue. US animator Mark Fiore presented his caricature of then-President George W. Bush with a high-timbre, cartoon-like voice. Fiore’s intent was one of reduction, where the voice caricature reflected a political figure that had the credibility of a children’s cartoon character. Where such contracts can be
effectively negotiated between the artist and the viewer, voice and image can remain perceptibly unified without the expectation of voice caricature.

The economical application of various diegetic and non-diegetic audio effects provides an additional layer of sound in Nicholson’s animations. Use of diegetic sound in *Boom Boom* indicates that the aeroplane, as a metaphor for the economy, is in distress, while the non-diegetic speech of the pilot conveys information regarding the economy that helps contextualise the actions and events. Nicholson typically uses sound effects to ‘ground’ the imagery, and provide acoustic punctuations to the key movements and events presented in the animation of characters and objects. The application of voice caricature and sound effects together creates a soundscape that adds both depth and coherence in the audiovisual image.

**Conclusion**

When Medhurst and Desouza devised their taxonomical framework for the production and criticism of political cartoons, the news mediascape they were investigating was substantively different from the one we know today. Economically viable colour image reproduction technology had not yet made its way into newspaper printing facilities and the Internet as an audiovisual mass-media platform did not exist. The production and dissemination paradigm in which political cartoonists operated was characterised by black ink and paper. Today’s cartoonists have at their disposal the full digital creative suite of computers, graphics software and tablets. Their work is published and disseminated online via newspaper sites, blogs and email.

Despite the dramatic technological shift in the news mediascape, the nature of the satire dispensed therein remains fundamentally unchanged. Today’s political cartoonists employ very much the same rhetorical strategies in satirical pursuit of the same victims as they have done for centuries. Historically, the art of political cartooning has endured, adapted and capitalised on advances in technology. The rhetorical and satirical character of political cartoons has largely remained constant, while the impact of the
technological developments has been exhibited through shifts in graphic style and technique.

I have shown in this chapter that a revised taxonomy of satirical political images in the news media can be produced largely through addressing questions of stylistic technique. Firstly, the addition of colour to the existing set of stylistic techniques available to the static image cartoonist is a necessary revision that recognises technological developments in newspaper printing. Secondly, the provision of a parallel set of techniques acknowledges the audiovisual spectrum of processes applied in the production and criticism of moving image cartoons. Finally, in addition to points of style, the notion of topicality formalises the distinction of political cartoons as satirical objects that present immediate responses to news events occurring within a current media cycle.

The character of news production, dissemination and consumption has changed so dramatically in recent years that it is difficult to predict the shape and form it will assume ten years hence. It is not within the realms of fantasy to imagine that the print newspaper, in the developed world at least, will be seen as an anachronism. The endurance of the political cartooning tradition in the midst of this upheaval relies on cartoonists, prize givers and scholars being able to embrace the audiovisual image as an evolutionary stage in the art. This revised taxonomy shows that contemporary digital news media presents merely another technological paradigm through which the political cartoon will continue to perform its traditional, teleological function. In this respect, the survival of the political cartoon in the digital media age is thankfully not contingent on the survival of the print news media.
CHAPTER FIVE - DEVELOPING A POLITICAL ANIMATION PRACTICE

In this chapter I document my creative and technical engagement with the animation medium and outline the digital media production and dissemination strategies I exploit as a new media-savvy political cartoonist in pursuit of an audience. I conducted this work as a means to resolve the key theoretical questions that are central to this research, namely: where do the static political cartoon and moving image political cartoon intersect with respect to form and function? Do they share common traits and characteristics that invite an alignment of the two hitherto separately considered traditions? And, in the context of an increasingly digital news media environment, what digital production and dissemination strategies, if any, can facilitate a regular, sustainable moving image cartooning practice that engages an audience? While some of the strategies I discuss point to commercial incentives and revenue potential for the political cartoonist, the focus is not on income generation but on the inherent value of this mode of participation in the broader democratic discourse of Australian society.

My political cartooning practice began within the context of this research-led thesis. I brought to this task a background in 3D computer animation, three years’ experience in cartooning for a university newspaper and an interest in the politics of government. What I knew and understood about political cartooning was gleaned only from having, over the years, consumed many of them along with my breakfast cereal. In comparing Peter Nicholson’s print cartoons with his political animations - at the time Nicholson was the only cartoonist in Australia who was producing political animations on a regular basis - I found that the moving image political cartoon appeared to share some of its structure and visual vocabulary with the static cartoon (an observation supported by Karon Speckman’s research). In determining how equipped I was to produce animations that

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1 The 42 animations I produced as a part of this thesis are presented as chapters and in chronological order on the attached DVD. Not all of these works are directly referenced in this text. In-text references to works cite the corresponding chapter location on the DVD; while the accompanying illustration’s footnote cites the online location of the work.
might plug into the Australian political cartooning tradition, I therefore felt it necessary to first explore my capacity to generate satirical drawings in response to current affairs and events.

In concert with my theoretical investigation of political cartoons, I informed the development of my political cartooning by establishing a dossier of current events and relevant articles, and also began a collection of the works of various Australian political cartoonists. I maintained a visual diary, in which I began to sketch out a number of cartoons. In the examples below (figures 37-42) I aimed to comment on a range of issues, both domestic and international. I sought to apply the traditional political cartooning conventions of caricature, captions and metaphor and – in striving to create a more sophisticated and layered response – the conflation of two current affairs events or issues within the one frame. Michael Leunig’s frequent use of photographic imagery in his cartoons also provided some inspiration in the use of digital imaging techniques in cartooning.

Fig. 37 Cartoon by author, Collateral Damage, November 2006. Digital image.²

² Refers to the 2006 US mid-term elections, where Donald Rumsfeld was seen to be a political casualty and scapegoat for the Bush administration’s mishandling of the unpopular Iraq occupation.
Fig. 38 Cartoon by author, *Banana Republic*, November 2006. Digital image.

Fig. 39 Cartoon by author, *The Big Picture*, May 2006. Digital image.

3 Refers to the dramatic increase in the cost of bananas resulting from a cyclone wiping out much of Australia’s banana crop, which was accompanied by an upward movement of petrol prices and interest rates.

4 Refers to the issues considered to be of great import to the ‘moral left’ – refugee policy, education and reconciliation - and those considered to be important to the mainstream: economic prosperity.
Refers to the imbroglio surrounding a local daycare’s provision of reading material showing same-sex parents, and a report revealing the extent of child abuse in some indigenous communities.

Refers to John Howard’s declaration on radio that “someone should take that stupid programme [Big Brother] off the air”. The image features the Big Brother logo, with the single eye referencing Alan Moir’s signature caricature of a one-eyed John Howard.
An homage to a popular cartoon by Stan Cross – shown below – showing the leaders of the US, Britain and Australia in a precarious position with an Islamic suicide-bomber.

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**Fig. 42** Cartoon by author, June 2011. Digital image.\(^7\)

\(^7\) An homage to a popular cartoon by Stan Cross – shown below – showing the leaders of the US, Britain and Australia in a precarious position with an Islamic suicide-bomber.
Fig. 42 (cont.) Stan Cross, *For Gorsake Stop Laughing, This is Serious!*, 1928. Smith’s Weekly.
Production

Satisfied that I was able to frame current social and political events in pithy, satirical drawings – while making no claims to the extent that the images might be considered especially potent or funny - I determined that I could apply similar conceptual thinking to the development of moving image works. I envisaged a similar creative process: investigate the range of potential topics and accompanying imagery; reflect on what might be revealed about the topic in rhetorical terms; consider the imagery that could be exploited in a metaphorical context; and conceive how the metaphor might be resolved graphically and - as is the nature of the moving image - temporally.

From the outset of my animation production I placed a time constraint on the turnaround time from concept to publication. The intention was to develop responses to political events that played out over the course of a weekly news cycle; I also wanted to establish as authentic a set of creative and technical constraints as possible in simulating the role of an animating political cartoonist. For my first animations I therefore imposed a time limit for output of anywhere between 20-50 hours. I applied a range of processes to determine the length of time taken to produce them, and what styles or processes provided opportunities for minimising production time. One approach was to create animation loops using a short looping animation sequence, output from Maya\textsuperscript{8} and presented with the Quicktime utility. In observing Quicktime’s capacity to display relatively small and looping images, and in a private viewing context, Manovich compares the introduction of Quicktime to the introduction of Kinetoscope in 1892.\textsuperscript{9}

\textsuperscript{8} Autodesk’s Maya is the industry-standard 3D computer animation software solution and my preferred animation tool.
\textsuperscript{9} Lev Manovich, \textit{The Language of New Media} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 263.
Fig. 43 Digital video by author, *Ten Little Terrorists*, June 2011. Digital video.\(^{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Author’s YouTube site, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NgVApk23sM (Accessed 10 March, 2013). A looping animation consisting of two parts, each showing a ‘cause-and-effect’ scenario of US foreign policy, religious fanaticism and terrorist recruitment.
I found that looped animations were effective where the repetition of an action, and its repetitive viewing, was appropriate for comic context and satiric impact – such as the never-ending production of suicide bombers emerging from a factory labeled “US Imperialism” or “Islamic Extremism” (fig. 43, chap. 1). The advantage of looping images is that their relatively small file size allows them to be easily integrated as gifs into websites and, in particular, social networking blogs such as Tumblr. While beyond the scope of this research, the currency of animated gifs as an online communication dialogue tool and social media trope is attracting a great deal of attention from scholars. In the context of this project, I concluded that the reasonably quick production time that loops allow did not adequately compensate for the limited reach of rhetorical and satirical concepts that these structures afford. That is, where the cartoon’s narrative is not benefited from the repetition of movement.

With respect to visual style, I drew on photographic imagery, stencil art and conventional 3D animation. After some experimentation with looping animation, I looked to image appropriation as a means of rapid production. The four video works that comprise the Australian Values series incorporate web-appropriated images in a montage interspersed with text and ending with a quote by then-Prime Minister John Howard or Peter Costello (fig. 44, chaps. 3-6). The process of image acquisition was not as rapid as I had first presumed, given the difficulty in sourcing suitable images from the web; finding images relating to a specific subject matter, and at a resolution appropriate for video production, was time-consuming. Sourcing images from newspapers, books and magazines was equally labour-intensive as the images had to first be scanned and treated in Photoshop before bringing them into the Finalcut video editor. The editing process in Finalcut – placing them in a timeline, determining clip duration and applying transitions between clips – took about as long again. Ultimately, production of video photomontage afforded interesting conceptual possibilities while not presenting an especially rapid production process – each video took around 30 hours to produce. At this stage I was not exploring the use of sound in video, though this was a deliberate creative decision with respect to the Australian Values series, rather than a
strategy to minimise production time. I found the impact that silence brought to these works to be highly effective.

Fig. 4 4 Digital video by author, *Aussie Values #1*, July 2007. Digital video.\(^{11}\)

\[11\] Author’s YouTube site, \text{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFPDkF9b-IM} (Accessed 10 March, 2013). The video plays on the marketing campaign slogan of the day (“Where the bloody hell are you”), the portrayal of women in Australia’s media, and the quoted statement made by then-PM John Howard.
Fig. 45 Kara Walker, *A Work on Progress*, 1998;\(^{12}\) Political street art in Melbourne, artist unknown.\(^{13}\)

Fig. 46 Michael Fitzjames, *Dystopia*, 26 May 2007. Sydney Morning Herald.


I observed the historical use of silhouette animation and found visual parallels in Kara Walker’s politically charged works and the many examples of street art found in Melbourne’s laneways and elsewhere (Fig. 45). The works of Michael Fitzjames (Fig. 46), cartoonist with *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Financial Review*, provided another reference point for the use of silhouettes in political cartooning. At the same time I was giving some thought to modes of dissemination; as well as the computer screen, I looked to portable communication and multimedia devices such as mobile phones and iPods, and at the possibility of ephemeral projections in public spaces. In considering the adaptability of an image to both small screen and monumental projection, I explored the use of silhouettes. The high contrast images made them ideally suited for viewing on either a mobile phone or building face. The lack of an audio track was again a decision based on the conceptual aims of the works, but also considered the technical environment in which the works were designed to be viewed.

Among the challenges presented by using silhouettes in political animation was how to effectively render caricatures and have them recognised by an audience. In my first silhouette-style animation, *Regional Unrest*, I used captions, in the form of a sign labeled “Johnny’s Place”, to accompany a caricature profile of John Howard (fig. 47, chap. 7). The caption helped establish this caricature in the visual vocabulary of my work, and subsequent works were able to present the caricature independent of explanatory text (fig. 48, chap. 8). In dealing with Kevin Rudd, whose profile is not as distinct as Howard’s, I presented him face-to-camera to exploit his distinctive white hair, round face and rectangular glasses (fig. 49, chap. 19).

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14 The provision of text labels is a common strategy used by political cartoonists in familiarising readers with their visual vocabulary. When Alan Moir discarded his physiologically-correct likeness of Joe Hockey for a bright yellow ‘smiley face’, for example, the caricature was accompanied by descriptive labels such as ‘Joe’ and ‘shadow treasurer’; Moir has since dispensed with these labels, assuming reader familiarity with the character.
Fig. 47 Digital video by author, *Regional Unrest*, July 2007. Digital video.\(^{15}\)

Fig. 48 Digital video by author, *The Logger*, July 2007. Digital video.\textsuperscript{16}

Fig. 49 Digital video by author, *Chinese Whispers*, September 2007. Digital video.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Author’s YouTube site, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_a5FOQn34l (Accessed 10 March, 2013). Detail from ‘Chinese Whispers’, showing the front-on caricature of Opposition Leader Kevin Rudd.
Fig. 50 Digital video by author, *Chinese Whispers*, September 2007. Digital video.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18} Author’s YouTube site, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_a5FOQn34I (Accessed 10 March, 2013).
Fig. 51 Digital video by author, *Swimming with Sharks*, November 2007. Digital video.\textsuperscript{19}

*Chinese Whispers* shows silhouettes of both Rudd and Howard, though Howard has been modeled as a 3D character. The motion of the camera as it tracks across the scene from left to right reveals, through the shot’s perspective, both Howard’s profile and front-on aspect (fig. 50, chap. 19). The figure’s presentation in this way allowed me to establish a new front-on caricature for John Howard that drew on the already-established profile caricature. This technique is also found in *Swimming with Sharks* (fig. 51, chap. 18), where the figure’s head, in turning from the approaching sharks to connect with the viewer’s gaze, provides the comic impact in the animation.

These animations also explore the use of camera movement in establishing context and revealing narrative objects and metaphors over time. *Regional Unrest* reveals the context, through caption and metaphor, of Prime Minister Howard’s focus on the Iraq war as a threat to national security. As the camera tracks right, past windows featuring the Victorian furniture, bathroom and cricket paraphernalia with which John Howard might easily be associated, the consequence of the Prime Minister’s focus on Iraq at the expense of growing unrest in the Asia Pacific region is revealed through the metaphor of a menacing figure approaching the back door, i.e. from “our own backyard”. This use of the camera to guide the viewer’s gaze through a narrative context to a satiric conclusion is a device employed in many of my silhouette-style animations.

The challenge of portraying caricatures using pure silhouettes - that is, forms presented as solid objects with an outline but little or no internal detail – led to the exploration and production of some engaging forms and narratives in my animations. So long as the animations contained one or two principal and easily recognisable characters, the style remained appropriate. The silhouette device did not lend itself as easily to the handling of multiple characters of lesser prominence than the prime minister or opposition leader. In wanting to introduce other political players, I decided to apply a different visual approach that nevertheless borrowed some of the conventions I had established in the silhouette-style works.
Election07 (fig. 52, chap. 21) used the scrolling camera device to present a review of some of the significant events of the 2007 Federal Election campaign. The piece also introduced a soundtrack – John Butler Trio’s Good Excuse - as an additional metaphor to those contained within the imagery. The work retained something of the 2D visual quality of earlier silhouette-style works, with detail provided largely by photographic elements treated in Photoshop. Photographs of politicians were sourced from the web and treated with a half-tone filter to portray a television broadcast textural quality. Other photographic elements include various props – among them a fob watch, chainsaw, tree, and currency – while remaining elements were modeled in 3D and textured to suit the overall visual style. The colour palette was pared back to allow colour to be used as metaphor, for example Julia Gillard’s red hair juxtaposed with Mao’s Little Red Book and the Gunn’s Pulp Mill presented in Green as one-time environmentalist Peter Garrett hurls Greens leader Bob Brown into the machinery.

Up until this point I had avoided conventional 3D animation because that was the animation technique with which I was most familiar. I first wanted to explore other processes and techniques in determining whether there were alternative, less labour-intensive methods of animation production. Despite the 3D production processes incorporated in Chinese Whispers and Swimming with Sharks the aesthetic was essentially 2D in its avoidance of texturing, lighting and sophisticated animation such as lip-synching. Nonetheless, while I was producing video montages and silhouette animations, I was also building up a small library of 3D character models. When I concluded that sourcing images and building scene elements for 2D-style animations were equally as time-intensive as 3D animation production, I began to explore the possibilities of working in this medium.

It was immediately apparent that the visual aesthetic demanded that sound be an integral part of the animations. Further, the 3D nature of the image aligned it with film and theatrical performance, of which sound was an essential component. Peter Nicholson’s Rubbery Figures productions of the 1980s and ‘90s provided inspiration for how I might place 3D characters in
a performative context. In developing concepts I needed to take into account how sound was going to be used in the animations, whether through music, spoken dialogue or audio effects. All of these approaches come with their own set of challenges. With respect to use of commercially recorded music I needed to be aware of copyright law; spoken dialogue demanded the development of satirical scripts and provision of appropriate voice caricatures for the characters; while the use of audio effects requires the sourcing of production-quality sound files and their manipulation in audio software packages.

Developing a library of character models involved the virtual construction of 3D caricatures. I employed the simplest of modeling and texturing techniques, with caricatures being derived from primitive forms built from minimal surface and textural detail. The various heads shared some structural detail and I made use of a base model template in the modeling of individual heads. I also saved some time by assigning each head to an identical body, though male and female bodies showed some variation through accessories such as ties, buttons and earrings.

After modeling, rigging, texturing and lighting, the most time-consuming aspect of 3D animation production is the animation of elements and creation of visual effects. Therefore, once the models had been built and textured, and lighting rigs assembled, the approach to movement of characters and inclusion of effects mostly determined the production turn-around time. Placement and animation of cameras, rendering image sequences, editing of shots, laying down audio tracks and compiling the final video provide the remaining tasks in the production workflow. Figure 53 shows the various production stages of modeling, rigging, texturing, lighting and animating a character.
Fig. 52 Digital video by author, *Election ‘07*, November 2007. Digital video.\(^{20}\)

The first animation I attempted in this style, *Poll Air* (fig. 54, chap. 16) established an approach of minimal character animation, minimum cameras and simply designed sets. *Poll Air* portrays John Howard and Peter Costello as pilots at the controls of an aircraft in distress. The scene provides the metaphorical context of the animation and the dialogue provides the satirical set-up and resolution. The second 3D animation, *John Howard’s Concession Speech* (fig. 55, chap. 22), employs a similarly economical visual and performative treatment. It shows Howard standing in a softly lit void offering his assessment on his election loss. I performed the spoken dialogue for each of these animations. These early attempts at 3D political animation reinforced some of my presumptions about the 3D animation

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21 Frames showing (from top-left to bottom-right) character modeling, surfacing, texturing, rigging, lighting and animation production workflow.

22 The tenuous condition of the aircraft is described through the see-sawing movement of the plane, intermittent flashes of red - denoting a warning light - and audio of engine noise.
production workflow and revealed my capacity to develop and voice satirical dialogue.

Fig. 54 Digital video by author, *PollAir*, August 2007. Digital video.  

Fig. 55 Digital video by author, *John Howard’s Concession Speech*, November 2007. Digital video.  

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While I continued to experiment with image appropriation and silhouettes, this style of 3D-generated image provided the main technical and aesthetic direction for my animated works. This was partly because I felt that there were still opportunities to add satirical value to the works through more sophisticated character performance; but also because I was by this time contributing works to the ABC’s *Unleashed* website, and the commitment to maintaining a regular output placed constraints on my explorative activity. Although the production deadlines were those I set for myself, and not by the ABC, I stuck to them rigidly to ensure that my creative process was as authentic as possible with respect to the deadlines demanded of professional cartoonists.

What I found both frustrating and liberating about working within such time constraints was the necessity to publish the work as it stood at the deadline. Frustrating because there were always aspects of the work that I felt needed more attention, from the initial concept through to final editing; and liberating because, despite the perceived shortcomings of the animation, sometimes these shortcomings did not adversely affect the satirical impact of the work. In my own assessment of the quality and impact of my work, around one in five of my animations ‘hit the mark’ in a satisfying way.

The animation I produced in response to the Federal Government’s apology to the ‘Stolen Generations’ of indigenous Australians, *Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations* (fig. 56, chap. 25), is arguably my strongest work. It depicts, in unflattering and unsentimental terms, a trio of indigenous Outback Indigenous Australians, sitting in a circle surrounded by the paraphernalia of excess alcohol consumption and petrol sniffing. From stage left a van emblazoned with Kevin Rudd’s campaign logo enters at speed, and, arriving at a sudden halt, proceeds to blare Offenbach’s *CanCan* from giant horns and trumpets while spewing forth red, white and blue confetti. The music is prematurely and unceremoniously cut short as the horns disappear and the van exits stage right as quickly as it arrived, leaving the trio of characters staring at each other, wondering and perplexed at what they have just witnessed.
The strength of this animation arises from a combination of several factors. Firstly, its sentiment ran counter to the vast majority of cartoons commenting on the event at the time, which were largely sentimental and supportive of the apology (so it derived some impact from being different). Secondly, the confronting imagery could be read a number of ways, and therefore invited – challenged even - the reader to actively engage with the animation to derive meaning. Thirdly, the intended message of the animation - that the symbolism of the apology would have to be accompanied by practical measures if it were to achieve any positive impact on the appalling living and social conditions of many indigenous Australians – turned out to be prescient. The animation was viewed over 6000 times in the first month and provoked some passionate discussion on the YouTube page on which it was posted.

**Dissemination**

I have explored several avenues for dissemination of my work to date, these being: online video sharing site YouTube; social networking site Myspace; group exhibitions in galleries; video projection in public spaces; ABC Unleashed website; News Ltd’s The Punch website; Crikey.com website; group online project Mobile Politics; ABC television’s QANDA programme; and Melbourne’s annual Digital Fringe Festival.25

The first part of my strategy in attracting an audience was to develop an online profile, as I believed that the online environment presented the most likely medium in reaching a relatively broad and diverse demographic. Online access is relatively cheap, and not bound to time or space in the way that, say a gallery is. Posting videos to video sharing sites such as YouTube is free and requires no resources beyond an Internet connection and the technical means by which to produce the work. Publishing under the pseudonym ‘Poltoons’,26 I designed a YouTube site, a Myspace site and a

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25 See Appendix Two for full list of creative practice
26 A conflation of ‘political cartoons’, I adopted the moniker initially as a means to maintain online anonymity.
blog site, using the limited design tools available to users to apply a degree of consistency in the layout and colour palette (fig. 57).

Fig. 56 Digital video by author, *Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations*, February 2008. Digital video.  

Fig. 57 Screenshots of author’s YouTube, Myspace and blog sites. JPEG.\textsuperscript{28}

Not having the skills or resources during the early stages of my project to develop my own website, I decided that these personal sites provided the appropriate means through which to build and maintain an online profile. The YouTube site in particular has provided an adequate tool with respect to raising an audience and helping raise interest in my work among those able to offer publication opportunities. While I struggled to find time in my practice to raise awareness of my work through extensive self-promotion on blogs, political and other community websites, I did enjoy some success in attracting such opportunities. The first of these availed itself when I entered ABC online’s *Sledge* competition for political video satire. The ABC had set up a YouTube site to invite submissions, and its producers invited me to publish my animations on their recently developed *Unleashed* online opinion site. Over the next ten months, I contributed my animated works to *Unleashed* and every one of them was published (fig. 58).

Around the same time that my animations were being published on *Unleashed*, Crikey.com contacted me with a proposal to come on board as a satirist. The producers required a full-time commitment which I was unable to accommodate, but two of my animations were nevertheless published on their site. The National Library of Australia also contacted me for permission to include *Election07* in their online *Pandora* archive. Meanwhile, my animations were being viewed anywhere from 2000-15000 times thanks to their presence on *Unleashed*, where in the months before this they were receiving around 200 views. Many of them were also attracting some robust comments on the YouTube feedback facility.

My blog gave me a tool to organise my thinking and document my process, though without any vigorous marketing and promoting of the site it remains lost in cyberspace. Few people would stumble across the content in the same way that they would in the YouTube environment. Similarly, Myspace is more of a social networking site than a place where people actively seek out video content. Blogs and social networking sites need to be managed, maintained and promoted in a way that demands a substantial time investment on the part of the user - more time than I was able to devote to it. Consequently these sites have fallen by the wayside as vehicles for
promoting my work. At the same time, the success I have enjoyed in attracting interest from publishers and viewers alike through other avenues suggests that new media artists can be selective in the strategies they employ in promoting their work.

Fig. 58 Screenshot of ABC’s *Unleashed* webpage, showing author’s works published in ‘Sledge Video Satire’ section.29

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Fig. 59 Author’s animations exhibited on framed iPods at the BOOM! Exhibition, NTUA Taipei, March 2007. Personal images of author. JPEG.
The physicality of the galleries and the positioning of my animations on their walls was something I found intriguing. The notion that these satirical entertainment objects - designed primarily for a mass, mainstream audience - were located within what might be considered by some to be an exclusive art space, was an interesting juxtaposition. Further irony was provided in the presentation of these digital, moving image works in frames, complete with mattes, that would normally house prints or photographs. I enjoyed observing the way viewers engaged with the works – their small size demanded they got up close (fig. 59). Additional animated works presented in this format were exhibited in Canberra’s 2008 Vivid National Photography Festival, in the group shows *Surface Light* and *Suburban Zeitgeist*.

My work has been exhibited online and on screens at the 2007 and 2008 Melbourne Digital Fringe festivals (fig. 60), with the 2007 submissions all being credited with a ‘curator’s pick’. Having earlier participated in a projection event with the ANU School of Art *BEAM* projection group, I again collaborated with the group in providing images for their installation in Canberra’s *Domain* 2008 temporary public art project. I found the nature of spectatorship that is attached to the monumental projection of images, and the textural qualities that light projection imbues in them, highly compelling. While it is interesting for me as an artist to present my work as art objects, these satirical animations are designed to be consumed in the immediate temporal context of the events on which they are commenting. The immediacy of this context is lost in an exhibition, with the works lent an archival quality that diminishes their satirical impact.

In 2008 a new television show on the ABC called *QANDA* (for ‘Questions and Answers’) presented an opportunity for broadcast; in keeping with the ‘community forum’ spirit that this show was promoting, the end credits are accompanied by a ‘video mash-up’ submission. I have since submitted four animations to *QANDA* with each one being broadcast. The show has a broadcast audience of around 500,000; compared with the few thousand views I was receiving for my animations on *Unleashed*, this represented a substantial increase in the exposure of my work. In the following chapter I
cite Jim Macnamara’s research into intermediation and the hybridisation of media platforms, which supports an approach of seeking publishing and dissemination opportunities online and via broadcast in maximising audience.

As well as broadcasting the submissions, the QANDA website allows registered users to maintain a profile page, with visitors able to watch the submissions and contact the user. The third animation I had broadcast on QANDA, GFC (fig. 61, chap. 37) attracted the attention of a News Ltd online producer, who subsequently invited me to create weekly animations, on a contractual basis, for their newly-developed The Punch online opinion site. Whilst I was unable at the time to commit to what would have been a full-time exercise producing animations, I nonetheless submitted two works to the site for publication as an unpaid contributor. The editor also requested an accompanying text that would on the one hand provide topical context,

but also explain something of the creative process behind the animation (fig 62).

Fig. 61 Digital video by author, GFC, February 2008. Digital video.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{31} Author’s YouTube site, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-koU_1lkUs (Accessed 10 March, 2013).
Fig. 62 Screenshot of New Limited’s The Punch webpage, showing author’s works embedded with accompanying text.

An aspect that has been little explored in my practice to date with respect to dissemination of my work has been the use of portable digital communication devices. When I commenced this project, the capacity for mobile phones to access online content was an emerging, though not widely adopted, technology. My intention was to explore the capacity of bluetooth technology in the dissemination of content in public spaces. Bluetooth involves free, wireless communication of data across synchronised, proximal portable communication devices. The technology is notoriously unstable, and, with the receiver having to authorise incoming communication, I found in early experiments that this method was not going to provide an effective means of disseminating animated content. On three separate occasions, in three different types of public sphere – shopping mall, open-air plaza and public transport – I was unable to secure even one connection with other users. Since my these experiments, the advent of online browsing on mobile phones and other portable devices such as iPad-style tablets, users now freely access animated content by pointing their browsers to sites such as YouTube.

**Audience**

The various modes of dissemination I have engaged with to date - galleries, festivals, online, television broadcast and public space projections - imply a diversity of audience demographics. However, obtaining an accurate representation of the audience across each of these activities is problematic. With respect to television broadcast and online sites that use their own video embedding system, often the most valuable and revealing data is generally confidential to the providers of the dissemination platform, or else available only through costly subscription to data and analysis groups such as OzTAM or Encore. The size and shape of audiences visiting galleries or public spaces can only be determined through questionnaires and surveys and require analytical processes that lie outside of the scope of this project.

With respect to my online activity, some very useful and specific data can be gleaned from YouTube *Insight* utility. The majority of my online audience to date has arrived at my animations through YouTube or ABC
Unleashed. Because the animations appearing on ABC Unleashed are embedded instances of my YouTube animations, it is therefore possible to extract viewer-related data for the bulk of my online activity. For example, of the three animations that have each attracted between 10000-15000 unique views (or ‘hits’), the following data can be gleaned: 95% of views occurred within the first two weeks of publication on YouTube and ABC Unleashed; 70-80% of views came through embedded instances with the remainder of views coming from YouTube searches and related video content; the two most viewed animations attracted at least 50% of its audience from the 35-54 age group, while the third animation attracted over 20% of its audience from the under-17 group; around 70% of viewers were male; based on the audience attention graphs for each of these three most viewed animations, few viewers replayed them for a second viewing. The attention graphs for animations that did not receive as many views as the three most viewed animations indicate that the most viewed animations are not necessarily the most successful in terms of viewer engagement.

While the data that can be extrapolated from YouTube’s Insight utility is highly useful and leads to some interesting questions – i.e. whether the impact of a political animation is more suitably measured by viewer ‘hits’ or viewer interest - the data that can be assembled from readily available documentation and reportage regarding television broadcast is limited. For example, in 2009 the viewing audience of the Q&A programme is averaging 520000 across the metropolitan regions, with Sydney providing over one fifth of this audience; the average viewer is aged over 40 and lives in a family with an above-average income, with most viewers aged over 65 (source: Crikey.com, OzTAM, Q&A).

The Q&A data is indicative of a reasonably large and somewhat diverse audience. However, these figures do little to assist in the determination of what sort of impact the animations had on the viewing audience. Combining the data across the media types and applying the results of one dataset onto that of another is not especially scientific, though it is not unreasonable to assert that an animation that is well received on YouTube or ABC Unleashed will be similarly well received on ABC Q&A. This reception
cannot be considered a measure of influence, however. No research I have observed to date has addressed the extent of influence that contemporary political cartoons have on actually changing the political views of its audience, owing to the difficulty in determining an empirical mechanism by which this could effectively be measured. Equally, I do not presume that any influence achieved by my political animations can be definitively measured, or that this ought to be a consideration in gauging the success of my work. The most a political cartoonist can hope for or expect is that their statement has contributed in a positive sense to the mosaic of social and political comment that informs the democratic discourse in their society.

In seeking a diverse audience for my political animations, I conclude that an online-only practice – unless supported by substantial amounts of time and energy devoted to self-promotion at the expense of creative practice – tends to succeed in attracting only a niche audience. My engagement with mainstream media outlets such as Q&A and Unleashed supports the theoretical research presented in the following chapter that intermediation across media types is highly desirable, if not necessary, in achieving a broad public awareness of my work. The fact that the majority of my YouTube audience engaged with my work through embedded instances, and my recent forays into public broadcast of my animations, would appear to support this. Arriving at this conclusion has been the result of a sustained and extensive explorative practice.

Through this creative activity I have also been able to make the following assertions with respect to the relationship between static and moving image political cartoons: firstly, that the development of concepts can be pursued through similar creative and intellectual processes; second, that the visual language and rhetorical structures employed in the static image can equally be applied in a moving image format; and finally, that the audiovisual image contains additional, inherently temporal characteristics that can be exploited to comic and satiric effect. I have also been able to demonstrate, through a regular production and publication regimen, that political animation can provide an effective means of establishing and sustaining a regular political cartooning practice.
CHAPTER SIX – POLITICAL SATIRE IN THE NEW MEDIA AGE

Decline of the newspaper

A number of media and social commentators have remarked on the decline of the print newspaper, with respect to the readership and circulation of daily newspapers.¹ The fact that readership, and hence advertising revenue, is collapsing in this medium has obvious implications for the status of the political cartoonist. As readers explore alternative avenues for consumption of news and opinion, political cartoonists need to survey the contemporary mediascape and identify fresh opportunities for publication and dissemination of their work.

In the US, many cartoonists see the attrition of newspapers and diminishing employment opportunities as inextricably linked to a decline in the influence of the political cartoon. Lamb observes the poor state of the art with the number of full-time cartoonists working for daily papers in 2003 at 30-year low.² According to Plante, only 84 full-time editorial cartoonists are working for the nation’s more than 1500 daily newspapers, with perhaps another 100 or so contributing to papers on a part-time or freelance basis.³ The downgrading of the role of the political cartoonist in the US news print media is the combined result of economics and editorial regard for the role of editorial cartoons. When readership falls, advertising revenue falls and the pool of money available for salaries is diminished. Newspaper editors with a low regard for political cartoons invariably dissolve the position of the full-time cartoonist and look to syndicated cartoonists as a way of minimising expenses.⁴

³ Bruce Plante in Lamb, Drawn to Extremes, 222.
⁴ Ibid.; 225.
The problem is not so pronounced in Australia, where five newspapers owned by one of two media groups – Fairfax and News Limited - account for approximately 40% of total newspaper sales. This narrow distribution of media ownership offers a more stable employment environment for Australia’s political cartoonists. The attitude of local media proprietors, who are generally supportive of the cartoonist’s role and value their independent contributions to the newspaper is also a significant factor in the stability enjoyed by cartoonists. This support can be seen, for example, in the op-ed pages of Murdoch-owned *The Australian*, where Bill Leak’s or Peter Nicholson’s cartoons appear alongside the often completely opposing viewpoint expressed in the editorials.

In his discussions with some of his US counterparts Kudelka reports that, where political cartooning is viewed in the US as a commoditised craft, Australian cartoonists are viewed more as individuals practising an art. The heavily syndicated environment in which American cartoonists operate demands of them a relatively interchangeable or generic graphic style. Australian cartoonists on the other hand have the freedom to make their work unique and distinct from that of their peers. Kudelka observes:

> I think the one way I’m looking to survive whatever’s going to happen to newspapers is that I will be a fairly unique artist and people will want my stuff for what it is. And they couldn’t get someone else into replace me, that’s the whole point.

Nonetheless the print newspaper does not occupy the same esteemed position as the principal arbiter of news and opinion that it once did. The advent of radio and television provided the newspaper’s first real

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8 Jon Kudelka, Interview by author. Tape recording. Canberra, Australia, 12 Sep 2011.
competition for audience, and the entrenched position that the Internet now occupies in the mediascape has further diminished its hegemony. The accessibility of confrontational and controversial cartoons has diminished as the public is exposed daily to an overwhelming number of competing images.\textsuperscript{9} Certainly the proliferation of media technologies has adversely impacted on the traditional role of political cartoons in promoting civic discourse and shaping the way people make sense of their world.\textsuperscript{10}

The declining influence of political cartoons might then be attributed to the decline of the print newspaper and the fact that, in today’s society, there are so many competing demands for the reader’s attention. The Internet is a dynamic, content-rich environment; and while some innovations that take advantage of the non-linear manner in which readers engage with online content have made their way into the paper’s online format, the political cartoon remains an element that has been merely transplanted from print to screen. Newspapers were initially slow to recognise and take advantage of this new information paradigm with respect to screen format, multimedia potential and dissemination of content to the audience.

\textit{The Sydney Morning Herald} online newspaper site is Australia’s most frequented newspaper website.\textsuperscript{11} Some of this traffic will access the online cartoons presented therein. And yet, while some innovations have made their way into the paper’s online format that take advantage of the non-linear manner in which readers engage with online content, the political cartoon remains an element that has been merely transplanted from print to screen.\textsuperscript{12} It may be that such a format appeals to those readers raised on a

\textsuperscript{9} Townsend, “How Political, Satirical,” 4.
\textsuperscript{12} One innovation that some online newspapers have brought to the presentation of the political cartoon is the gallery format: the daily editorial cartoon is revealed by clicking on a text link or thumbnail, often opening a separate gallery through which the viewer can navigate to past cartoons.
diet of print media, but is not as appealing to the generation raised on online content. Matt Ozga argues that:

Transplanting a static political cartoon from its equally static print environment to the dynamic information superhighway effectively enervates the original cartoon of any power it might once have had.\(^{13}\)

Despite having been somewhat slow to recognise the threats and opportunities presented by the Internet, newspapers have in recent years begun to reorganise content to suit online viewing behaviour and develop strategies for garnering revenue from their Internet presence. Many online newspapers now demand a subscription fee from readers, and their approach to advertising has become more sophisticated, with less reliance on classifieds and a greater focus on demographically-targeted advertisements.\(^{14}\)

**New Media Strategies**

During the 20\(^{th}\) century newspapers replaced journals, magazines and pamphlets as the most common vehicle through which political cartoons were disseminated and consumed by the public. The Internet has in turn promoted a gradual but inexorable decline in newspaper circulation and readership as readers eschew metropolitan dailies in favour of online news content providers.\(^{15}\) Cartoonists have a longstanding tradition of embracing

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technological advances to enhance their practice and improve on their drawings’ capacity to communicate their particular message. From hand engraving to photo-engraving, colour printing to digital image manipulation, cartoonists have consistently been enthusiastic in their embrace of new techniques. The challenge for the contemporary political cartoonist is to adapt their art to a changing and increasingly sophisticated mediascape.

Two areas can be immediately identified as providing opportunities for the political cartoonist in the digital media environment. One can be found in the nature of dissemination of digital content, while the other relates to new production methods made possible by advances in hardware and software technology. As Agar notes in his paper *Technology and British Cartoonists in the Twentieth Century*:

> Cartoons have always depended on technology for circulation, but changing communication technologies have transformed the art, either by opening or closing opportunities to reach an audience, offering new means of reproduction, or by suggesting new topics, or even ways of thinking about the world.\(^{16}\)

With advances in digital image technology come new forms of spectatorship within mass culture.\(^{17}\) The nature of dissemination of digital content and production methods made possible by advances in hardware and software technology offer opportunities to enhance the traditional function of political cartooning in the news media while also creating opportunities to reach new audiences. A further consideration is the manner in which the audience might engage with the material through Web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, social networking sites and video sharing sites. The interactive nature of these new media genres may broaden the impact of the cartoonist’s work through their capacity to find new and unintended audiences and also elicit direct responses and feedback from readers. We

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\(^{16}\) Agar, “Technology and British Cartoonists,” 2.
\(^{17}\) Andrew Darley, *Visual Digital Culture: Surface Play and Spectacle in New Media Genres*, (London: Routledge, 2000), i.
are witnessing the arrival of a new paradigm for political cartoon production
and dissemination, one facilitated by society’s engagement with new media.

**Production**

The spectrum of image production techniques and processes available to the
digital artist includes: image manipulation and appropriation; video; and
animation. Through integration into established forms and paradigms,
existing analogue techniques such as editing can be performed digitally
easier, cheaper and faster. At the same time digital imaging introduces
distinctive modes of image combination and recombination. Darley notes
that “although digital imaging techniques are new, the aesthetic uses they
are put to and the forms they take are not; they contain and display
distinctive characteristics whilst at the same moment relying on prior
cultural practices and forms for their shape and character.”

The proliferation of computer technology in the production and
manipulation of images has expanded creative opportunities for artists and
invites a reassessment of categorisation of art disciplines. Andrew Darley
notes that the increased affordability and efficiency of digital technology
has allowed digital artists to draw on established forms and techniques
while at the same time developing “distinctive modes of image combination
and recombination.”

In terms of production techniques available to the contemporary political
cartoonist, digital imaging programmes such as Photoshop present the most
accessible and intuitive tool with respect to cost and ease of use. Combined
with a graphics tablet – or a computer with draw-on-screen technology –
this method of image production echoes traditional mark-making techniques
and is therefore easily learnt. The benefit of this graphics technology lies in
its flexibility; these programmes offer the cartoonist an infinite colour
palette, a variety of simulated paper stocks, pen and brush types, and the
capacity to easily manipulate and edit graphic elements; the artist can also

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19 Ibid.: 133.
introduce collage elements such as photographs and appropriated imagery. All of these capabilities serve to broaden the vocabulary of the visual communicator.

Hand-drawn cartoons are a very spontaneous and immediate response to political events, and the time required to produce moving image cartoons militates against such spontaneity. Animations and video mash-ups represent the most radical shift in form and process available to the cartoonist. Where previous advances in printing and publishing technology have facilitated more spontaneous approaches to creating political cartoons, advances in digital animation have not presented the contemporary cartoonist with the same creative potential. For example Bruce Petty produces rather intricate animations using traditional film techniques that are relatively time consuming and incompatible with generating spontaneous or immediate responses to current political events. Adopting a digital approach does not necessarily resolve these issues; in fact it can present further obstacles in the creative process, such as the need to develop technical proficiency across multiple production processes. For many artists, this necessitates a collaborative approach to production or at the very least demands a simplification of elements, or a pared-down approach to creating graphic elements.

Animators and video artists creating political work are also required to think differently about the issues they satirise in terms of their currency and longevity in the news cycle. An issue that appears and disappears from public interest within 24 hours does not afford adequate production time for the moving image cartoonist. The comparatively labour-intensive nature of animation and video production also makes them a less cost-effective option for newspaper editors. Economics is a significant drawback for moving image satirical content on the web, with editors and content providers being unable to justify the cost of artist fees and salaries. The increasing

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proliferation of on-line advertising does promise a potential revenue stream for political animators and video artists publishing their content online.²¹

**Dissemination**

The Internet has changed the way editorial cartoonists distribute their work and compete with others.²² Undoubtedly the greatest benefit that the Internet has offered the political cartoonist to date has been the capacity to distribute their work instantly and widely. Pulitzer-prize winning cartoonist Clay Bennett says of the Internet that “its most profound impact on editorial cartoonists has probably been in the delivery of our work.”²³ Resident cartoonists need not live in the same city as the newspaper that publishes their work; *The Age*’s Michael Leunig for example lives in rural Victoria and submits his cartoons via email (while Leunig and other cartoonists have been using fax machines for decades, this method of image transmission somewhat compromised the integrity of the line). The capacity to send high quality, colour images instantly and cheaply also facilitates the syndication of cartoons.

Online and wireless image distribution assumes a nonlinear quality, which is not inherent in the distribution and consumption of traditional print media cartoons. The cartoonist-editor-print-reader model has been subverted so that cartoonists may circumvent the editorial process altogether via self-publication on their website or blog; or they might find that their cartoons spread virally via email and social media to find audiences outside of the newspaper readership.

**Blogging and Social Media**

For mainstream media cartoonists, blogs authored outside of the auspices of the newspaper provide a vehicle for engaging an audience beyond the print

²² Glaser, “Can the Internet Rejuvenate Editorial Cartooning?”
newspaper readership. The practice of blogging has emerged not only as a way for artists to publish work independently and garner revenue through sales of their work, but also as an integral component of online editorial opinion and analysis. Jon Kudelka is one of the more active participants in online publication in the Australian political cartooning landscape. He started his blog in 2009 initially as a means to maintain a visible presence in the mediascape:

I’ve always had a suspicion that the whole newspaper staff cartoonist job was going to vanish eventually so I used the blog to keep my foot in the door.\(^{24}\)

Blogging allows Kudelka to publish his satirical responses to news and current affairs in a very instant and immediate fashion and also allows him to publish the journalistic articles that place his work in their relevant context. Like many cartoonists who publish their work online, his site also includes a mailing list protocol that facilitates the dissemination of his cartoons to readers whilst also being able to garner instant feedback from his audience.\(^{25}\) Self-publishing in this manner allows the political cartoonist a mechanism to circumvent the editorial process by publishing cartoons that might otherwise be deemed too offensive for publication and endorsement by the newspaper editors (this is not an strategy that Kudelka himself has employed to date). Primarily however, Kudelka’s main impetus for maintaining a blog is commercial. He has invested in a top of the range printer and sells 3 or 4 archival prints each week,\(^{26}\) which provides him with a significant revenue stream.

Kudelka has also recently taken up Twitter as a means of communicating with his audience. He describes this as a new mode of engagement that gives him “some idea about what some of the [engaged] people are thinking.”\(^{27}\) Twitter is not a vehicle for dissemination of images, but it does provide another point of contact between cartoonists and their audience. As

\(^{24}\) Kudelka, interview by author.  
\(^{26}\) Kudelka, interview by author.  
\(^{27}\) Ibid
well, being a strictly text-based dissemination platform, it provides a different voice for the graphic-oriented cartoonist. How that voice might be consolidated in the public perception of the cartoonist and the reception of their work is a question for the future; though it is reasonable to presume here that the maintenance of a recognisable and persistent presence with an audience is a positive strategy for new media artists to pursue, both in terms of exposure and keeping abreast of topical trends and attitudes.

The Sydney Morning Herald’s Rocco Fazzari publishes his work in a blog embedded in the newspaper website. Fazzari started his blog five years ago as a way of feeling less isolated and sharing his creative process with the wider community. His earlier foray into blogging, the period between 2006 and 2009, was especially interesting from an artistic point of view as he documented the news stories upon which his cartoons were based, and included preliminary sketches and drafts of the final cartoon to reveal something of his artistic process. The blog led Fazzari to investigate animation as a satirical tool.

Fazzari’s blog exemplifies the shift in media strategies employed by Fairfax media executives in recent years. Where economies of scale used to be measured in terms of the number of unique hits an article or cartoon attracted, Fairfax CEOs are now emphasising the use of blogs as instruments for building an online audience of loyal, community-based readers. These are groups of readers who specifically follow a blog because they are attracted to the content found within. In this way, the success of a video is no longer measured purely on the number of views it receives in a given week, but on how effectively the blog in which it is published establishes and builds a community over time. The way Fazzari describes his readership is as readers who visit the blog expressly to watch his videos: “they’re not people who walk in and out of the room.” Fazzari may have a relatively small following of thousands rather than tens of thousands. Nonetheless, the engagement of this audience is significant in terms of building a community around his work.

29 Rocco Fazzari, Interview by author. Tape recording. 11 Jul 2011.
30 Rocco Fazzari, Interview by author.
31 Ibid.
thousands, but in the Fairfax model, ten or twenty bloggers with a similar following equates to a substantial, broader, online readership.

By any measure Fazzari’s blog can be considered successful, attracting a readership that regularly places it in the top five in any given week.\(^{32}\) The feedback facility typically features dozens of posts from readers keen to offer their perspective on the political issues presented in the cartoon. He reveals something of the irritation of some of his written-word blogging colleagues in saying, “that’s pretty fantastic when you consider that I’m not a journalist.”\(^{33}\) Success breeds success, and Fazzari’s blog enjoys a prized patch of online real-estate in being located on the front page of both the online and ipad editions – which has in turn increased his viewership. Fazzari also states that the differentiation of his product means that his work is often coupled with the op-ed text of a reputable political commentator. For example, in recent months his work complements articles written by Political and International Editor Peter Hartcher.

**You Tube**

Video sharing website YouTube has become a phenomenon of the digital media age. Launched on 15 February 2005 by three former PayPal employees, the site allows registered users to upload a wide variety of video content for viewing by visitors to the site. Content ranges from movie clips, TV clips and music videos to amateur videos such as video blogs, short films and animations. The volume of traffic as a proportion of total Internet traffic makes it the third most visited site in the US and the sixth most visited site in Australia.\(^{34}\)

Despite more than half of YouTube’s US audience being 35 or over,\(^{35}\) politicians were quick to recognise the site’s potential in accessing the reputedly politically disengaged youth demographic. Politicians released

\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.


policy announcements and positions; Hillary Clinton even announced her candidacy for the presidency on YouTube.\textsuperscript{36} What was once primarily an amateur video sharing site had become a legitimate platform for conveying political information to the electorate.

In remarking on the 2007 Australian federal election Jim Macnamara observed a “major shift in mediated communication during political campaigns” away from network television and major newspapers to online media sites such as YouTube.\textsuperscript{37} Bruns notes that, “Especially early on in the campaign, launching a YouTube channel and releasing a few announcements through YouTube rather than standard PR channels was able to (briefly) capture the mainstream media spotlight.”\textsuperscript{38} But politicians quickly learned that this medium could not easily be managed and controlled on their own terms. During the 2006 US midterm elections, there were at least three races where YouTube was said to have played a major part in the defeat of an incumbent Senator.\textsuperscript{39} The capacity for users to capture and publish content that can attract huge audiences within hours means that every gaffe made by a politician, every casual aside and contradictory statement, can be amplified to an extent well beyond the scope of the traditional print and broadcast media.

The interactive nature of YouTube, where viewers can post text and video responses to existing videos, also leaves politicians susceptible to parody, ridicule and abuse. Macnamara, citing Severin and Tankard, observes that such forms of intermediation are increasingly common and often outnumber official political communication.\textsuperscript{40} For example, within hours of former Prime Minister John Howard releasing his climate change policy on YouTube, “thousands of derisory, hostile and frequently rude comments


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.; 2.


\textsuperscript{39} Ashley Jordan, “Broadcasting yourself (and others): How YouTube and Blogging have changed the rules of the campaign,” \textit{Hinkley Journal of Politics} 9 (2008), 79.

\textsuperscript{40} Macnamara, “E-Electioneering: Use of new media,” 13.
appeared in the comments section of the YouTube link, with seemingly no capacity on the part of the Prime Minister’s representatives to moderate them, respond to them, or even have them deleted”. His efforts to engage young voters were undermined by the popularity of the satires and mash-ups that proliferated in response to his video releases. The non-partisan political lobby group Getup – noted by The Sydney Morning Herald political editor Peter Hartcher as one of the “six unique features” of the 2007 federal election - created a satirical send-up of the government’s I can do that climate action ads (“Creating an ad campaign to make the government look cleaner? I can do that!”).

The lack of traction that party political YouTube videos achieve – and the success of many of the satirical responses - can be attributed to the former’s adherence to television broadcast conventions and a lack of awareness of online video sensibilities. It is the satirical spoofs, mash-ups and parodies that are republished across the blogosphere and spread virally via email. Hugh Atkin’s Kevin Rudd - Chinese propaganda Video, which deftly connects a number of political themes in a biographical parody of the then Opposition leader, is one of several satirical videos that has made him something of a cyber celebrity both in Australia and the US. Hugh Atkin’s YouTube page lists him as the twentieth most viewed YouTube user in Australia.

These satirical videos perhaps owe much of their success to the politicians and political parties who, in seeking to benefit from the exposure that YouTube can provide, have instead created an open forum that leaves them vulnerable to subversive and comic protest. Regardless, it is this very success that renders video satire a substantive component of democratic

41 Terry Flew, “Not yet the Internet election: online media, political commentary and the 2007 Australian federal election,” Media International Australia 126 (2008), 3.
43 Bruns et al, “Election Flops on YouTube”.
44 Ibid.
45 Lauren Wilson, “Mouse clique that roars.” The Australian, 6 Apr 2008, Review.
discourse. Just as the emerging film industry in 1920s India “helped citizens to feel publicly represented in the language, religion or region of their choice”, YouTube videos provide a means by which citizens can assess and respond to the on-message communications of their elected representatives and other power institutions. Together with other forms of new media communication and networks, YouTube provides a power-monitoring mechanism through which “the powerful...come to feel the constant pinch of the powerless”.47

In questioning the Internet’s capacity to increase democratic participation by citizens, Rolfe cautions that Web 2.0 technologies such as YouTube do not so much promote positive discourse as present an “additional avenue for satirically savaging those who would prove their credibility with us”.48 Nevertheless, the language of the common citizen is well represented in these forums. In his paper on new media use in the 2007 federal election, Jim Macnamara declares, in rhetorical terms, the value of YouTube in providing a valid context for political discussion and exchange of ideas:

A question to be asked is whether [the prevalence of satirical videos on YouTube] is a failure of new media to provide a public sphere of political discourse... or whether spoofs, parodies and even abuse are part of the public sphere, allowing citizens to express their views in their own language and cultural context rather than being bound to a lingering liberal bourgeois concept of political discourse that requires reasoned and rational debate.49

For animation and video satirists, YouTube has become, and will remain for the foreseeable future, the only game in town. The current trend is for websites to embed YouTube videos; that is, rather than consume their own data storage space by hosting the original content themselves, websites

48 Rolfe, “From Big to Little,” 1,11.
embed videos via a URL code that points browsers to the YouTube clip. The video is played in the site being visited, but is hosted, or sourced, from the YouTube site. Hugh Atkin doesn’t bother uploading his work anywhere else – once uploaded to his YouTube site, he can email the video URL to friends and media outlets who can immediately view it. His legion of subscribers ensures that his videos will be shared either via direct links to the site, or as embedded videos in news and opinion sites, social networking sites and blogs.

**Portable Communication Platforms and Tablet Devices**

The evolution of the mobile phone into a portable multimedia communication device allows phone users to access the Internet and send visual content to their peers and others. The relatively recent iPad phenomenon appears to have established the portable tablet device as an ubiquitous digital tool around the home and in business and education. Phones, tablets and personal computers are becoming more or less identically hybridised; each of them performs some specific tasks better than the others, but their overall functionality is more or less the same. Certainly the capacity to access and play back video content is equally serviced by these devices.

Content may consist of videos or images which the users have uploaded to the phone themselves, had delivered by peers via MMS, or downloaded from the Internet. Uptake of this technology has accelerated in just the last couple of years, as manufacturers and communications providers devise ways of delivering the products more reliably and inexpensively. Until recently, the cost of accessing and downloading video content has been prohibitive for many; video file sizes are relatively large and can easily consume a user’s available data download allowance through habitual and frequent use. In the short-to-medium term though the trend is towards

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50 Australian Multi-Screen Report: Trends in Video Viewership Beyond Conventional Television Sets
universal broadband Internet access and more affordable subscriptions.\textsuperscript{51} It appears that the opportunity presented to satirists in dissemination of their work to portable media platforms will best be achieved through cheaper, universal Internet access. This looks like being achieved through the National Broadband Network infrastructure project, which is currently being installed across Australia and aims to provide 93\% of individual premises with access to broadband internet services.\textsuperscript{52} Users may then readily access content through video sharing sites, social networking sites and emails.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore the psychological impact of these devices on browsing habits, but it is nevertheless interesting to consider what appears to be a fundamental shift in how we consume video content online. Until recently, content was viewed on a screen in a fixed location: either in a cinema, on a television set or on a desktop computer. Portable digital devices have changed our viewing space, and by extension, inevitably, will have changed the way we receive and manage video content. In speculative terms, portable devices may promote the consumption of shorter, bite-sized videos. It may emerge that this technology becomes the primary vehicle for the dissemination and consumption of political animations and mash-ups.

\textbf{New Media and Democratic Participation}

The dynamic nature of the Internet, and Web 2.0 technologies in particular, may yet have profound implications for the role of the political cartoon in modern democracies. In 2008, 40\% of US voters used the Internet to get news and information about the campaigns, up from 31\% in 2004.\textsuperscript{53} An increasing number of citizens now look to the Internet for information about


politics, and a growing number of politicians and activists use the Internet as a vehicle to promote themselves and disseminate their message. The implications for the political cartoonist in seeking their audience is that the Internet user may engage with politically-related content either deliberately, through focused browsing, or incidentally, as the result of targeted political communication and advertising.

The use of the Internet as a political communication tool as well as a communication tool and source of news and entertainment, provides an environment where a satirical political image can achieve multiple contextual viewpoints. Political cartoons can be delivered as invective, affirmation, clarification or persuasion depending on the context in which they are presented to the viewer. The satirical image when viewed in isolation on the Internet might lack the potency to persuade or move to action those who view it; placed within a broader context of opinion and analysis the political cartoon can function as a component of a broader and potentially persuasive conversation.

Not all researchers and commentators equate the proliferation of Internet media with increased community engagement and participation in democratic discourse. Rolfe and others conclude that “increased blogging and wikis, greater amounts of online information and more use of Web 2.0 by citizens does not necessarily mean more participatory democracy when viewed from the angle of public power”.54 Jordan cites Margolis and Resnick’s ‘normalisation thesis’, which contends that, far from revolutionising social and political life, the Internet

…has done little more than provide a new medium through which established patterns in all aspects of social life (e.g., commerce and social interaction), and by deduction political life, can be and are merely recreated in virtual form with little change.55

54 Rolfe, “From Big to Little,” 10.
Jim Macnamara’s paper, *E-Electioneering: Use of new media in the 2007 Australian federal election*, reveals that politicians have been slow to recognise or apply in their web marketing and communication strategies the interactivity and ‘conversation’ features that distinguish Web 2.0 media:

…while the level of new media use [by politicians] is growing, the method of using new media echoes traditional media practices – that is, it is predominantly one-way information dissemination.\(^{56}\)

In regard to broader citizen access and engagement with the Internet however, including the production of subversive forms of political satire, Macnamara concludes that:

…some level of digitally-enhanced democracy is emerging and bringing a changed sense of community, a greater sense of participation, less dependence on official channels and expertise, and a repositioning of politics within popular culture.\(^{57}\)

Henry Jenkins, in *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, notes the characteristics that distinguish broadcast media from new media in political communication: access, participation, reciprocity, and peer-to-peer rather than one-to-many communication. Given these different principles, he concluded that digital democracy would likely be “decentralised, unevenly dispersed, profoundly contradictory, and slow to emerge.”\(^{58}\)

In terms of engaging with an audience, another reality for the political cartoonist to consider is the increasingly fluid relationship between media institutions. In his paper *Not yet the Internet election: online media, political commentary and the 2007 Australian federal election*, Terry Flew


\(^{57}\) Ibid.; 18.

highlights the increasingly multi-channel nature of effective socio-political communication:

…new voices in the media will not just be bloggers or citizen journalists, but will also have strategies to work across multiple media channels, and across the domains of mass media, online self-publishing, and the various forms of ‘editing-lite’ online media.  

The successful political cartoonist in the new media age might be distinguished by their capacity to publish and disseminate their still image cartoons on Facebook, blogs and the op-ed pages of broadsheet media; and publish moving image works on YouTube, ABC online, as well as through broadcast and narrowcast media channels. Or, they could simply be a citizen with access to some basic software programmes, an Internet connection and something to say that resonates with others.

Conclusions

The production and dissemination opportunities provided by the Internet and new media technologies also present significant challenges to the political cartoonist. While the Internet houses a potentially huge audience, it is not often easy to access and engage this audience. The same advances in technology that open up new modes of production can be time consuming to learn and employ. The skills sets required of artists engaging in digital production and dissemination also challenge the traditionally spontaneous nature of political cartooning.

There are practical implications for cartoonists who seek to publish and disseminate their work online within the framework of a regular daily or weekly media cycle. An online profile needs to be promoted to an audience and nurtured; this can be challenging for any cartoonist, but especially for those who do not enjoy an existing public profile from their prior practice in traditional print media. Cartoonists seeking to publish online must be

Flew, “Not yet the Internet,” 14.
prepared for constant engagement with digital technology, both in terms of the means of production as well as the means for dissemination.

Macnamara observes the increasing hybridisation of media platforms and the concept of intermediation between media types. In contemplating the effectiveness of Internet media genres in reaching a mass audience, he wonders whether the intermediation of social networking sites with print and broadcast media is essential in achieving anything beyond a small, niche audience. He cites an editorial in *The Australian*: “while Myspace and YouTube are important arenas for reaching out to younger voters, the decisive battles will be waged in the mainstream media.” A study conducted by the University of Technology Sydney’s Australian Centre for Public Communication concluded that: “In future, all media content may be ‘mash ups’ and intermediation will be the norm.”

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61 Ibid.
62 The Australian Centre for Public Communication is a University of Technology Sydney initiative, established by the Public Communication Program Area to facilitate research and debate in the area of public communication.
CONCLUSION

There is an ancient Taoist fable that tells the story of a farmer whose only horse runs away. When his friends sympathetically lament the farmer’s bad luck, he responds, “good luck, bad luck… who can say?” The subsequent sequence of events sees the horse return with two wild horses, one of which breaks the farmer’s son’s leg – which helps him avoid being conscripted to fight in a war. In response to each of these events the farmer’s friends either celebrate or bemoan his fortune. Each time, the farmer answers his friends in the same way: “good luck, bad luck… who can say?”

This thesis provides, I hope, some comfort for all those who lament the perceived decline of the political cartooning tradition. Cartoonists and commentators who observe various contemporary forces conspiring to diminish the role of the cartoon image in public discourse can draw solace from the notion that the artform has endured for hundreds of years through its practitioners’ capacity to adapt and exploit the socio-political and technological conditions of the day. Seen in positive terms, the decline of the printmedia newspaper as the dominant publication and dissemination platform for these images merely echoes previous transitions in the tradition. The crucial difference in this transitional phase is that the superseding medium provides a multimedia environment that offers the political cartoonist unprecedented creative opportunities.

It is too early to determine how effectively newspapers are negotiating the transition from print to online publishing. What is clear is that the environment into which they are transitioning is a highly competitive one with respect to news and opinion dissemination. The Internet is a hybrid media platform where the traditional separation between radio, television and news print media does not exist. The 24-hour, multi-channel nature of user accessibility and interaction with Internet content further fractures the news and opinion audience. As well, much of the content is saturated with
the audiovisual image, which further challenges the old newspaper publishing paradigm.

The challenge for newspapers is whether they can establish a revenue model that enables them to maintain their core craft online. While the static political satirical image remains an integral component in the publication models of newspapers, the future of the tradition is not guaranteed by its location in the newspaper stables. My contention is that the resilience of the tradition and its capacity to adapt to change is best assured by unhinging itself from its dependence on the news print media and embrace the full suite of opportunities afforded by new production and dissemination platforms.

Chapter one places in a historical context the apparently radical changes in production and dissemination methods brought about by the digital media revolution. By laying out the social and technological trends and developments that have punctuated the evolution of political cartooning over many years, moving image political cartoons can be seen to represent an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, step in the political cartooning tradition. Each technological advance has challenged cartoonists to consider the production of their images in various ways: woodcut technology, for example, imposed on their illustrative style a bold, heavy line where tonal variation was achieved through variation in line thickness; while photo-engraving promoted for the first time the use of pen and ink as a standard medium.

At the same time, technological advances in concert with broader socio-political developments have left indelible marks on political cartooning practice. Photoengraving not only facilitated stylistic approaches in the work of cartoonists, but allowed their work to be printed within hours of the drawing’s completion. Coupled with the public’s thirst for images around the turn of the 20th century, newspaper proprietors saw an opportunity to profit from running daily cartoons. The professionalisation of the craft in a news print media context, which many see in retrospect as a
great boon for the tradition, carried with it the pressure placed on cartoonists to frequently and consistently deliver effective, polished cartoons on current events. They also surrendered their true independence as social and political commentators to the editorial team under which they worked.

With respect to locating the moving image in the political cartoon tradition, this too is not without its historical precedents. The case studies presented in the second part of the first chapter reveal that political cartooning and animation have been closely aligned in practice for many years by cartoonists, if not by scholars and prize-givers. The moving image practice of these pioneers provides a link between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’. What may have at first been viewed as a marginally related and peripheral activity when seen through the prism of political cartooning can now be seen as a pivotal disciplinary construct in its nascent stages.

In order to locate the moving image in what has historically been a static image art, I have argued that the audiovisual image is distinct from the static image in terms of visual style, but not function. The premise for this contention rests in the first instance on analysis presented in Chapter two, where I investigated the formal and structural characteristics of the political cartoon on the basis of existing taxonomical and classificatory frameworks and in particular the comprehensive taxonomy provided by Medhurst and Desousa that frames the political cartoon as a rhetorical object.

Having investigated the inherent characteristics and attributes that qualify images as political cartoons, I proceeded in Chapter three to examine the animated political image. Through contrasting and comparing this format with its static counterpart, I revealed the links, overlaps and intersections between the two media forms. In identifying that political animations achieved the same rhetorical outcomes and were created with the same satirical intent as print media cartoons, I observed that the distinctions that separated them pertained exclusively to style. This allowed me to proceed with addressing those aspects of style in the extant taxonomies that do not
accommodate the moving image. I concluded that the two forms must reasonably and sensibly be housed within a single tradition and that be facilitated through the provision of a revised taxonomy.

The second part of the chapter presents the most radical contention of the thesis: that, in the context of a digital media production and dissemination paradigm, the video mash-up image can also be considered a political cartoon. In providing a taxonomical case study of Hugh Atkin that examined the intersections and connections between this media form and static image print news media cartoons, I established that the creative distinctions between the two are not fundamentally dissimilar from those that separate the animated and static forms. I concluded therefore that a new taxonomy of political cartooning must provide the scope to accommodate all moving image types, irrespective of the specific manual processes employed in their production.

Based on the conclusions of the previous chapter, as well as on the findings arising from my own animation practice, discussed in detail in the ensuing chapter, I presented in Chapter four a revised taxonomy for the analysis and categorisation of political images. The increasingly digital character of contemporary news and opinion dissemination demands of cartoonists an unprecedented engagement with digital tools. In acknowledging the digital media processes and methodology in the creation and publication of political moving images, the taxonomy acknowledges modern production techniques and covers the entire scope of the tradition’s methods and processes.

My approach was to accept in its entirety the taxonomy of Medhurst and Desousa, and furnish it with the stylistic attributes that I determined were distinct to the digital moving image. I also added colour as an attribute of style that pertains to both static and moving image cartoons. The additions I put forward consider the intrinsically temporal nature of audiovisual images. For the sake of easy comparison and contrast I deliberately correlated these with the framework proffered by Medhurst and Desousa. The revised
taxonomy now includes the following style attributes: colour; use of line and form; exaggeration, amplification or simplification of behavioural characteristics; placement and compositing within the frame; rhythmic montage; temporal montage; and acoustic montage.

Chapter five provided an exegetical investigation of my own political animation practice, which I developed in order to both inform and confirm my theoretical conclusions. The aims of my creative activity were twofold: Firstly, I wanted to ascertain the relationship between static image and moving image cartoons. I aimed to discover the nature of the creative impetus that underpinned the making of both forms. I concluded that concept development can be considered in a comparable way; that the satirical intent was identical; and that the same visual vocabulary and rhetorical structures can be employed in both image types. Secondly, I wanted to determine what, if any, digital production and dissemination strategies can facilitate a regular and frequent moving image cartooning practice. In sustaining a regular production schedule and publishing my animations in a wide variety of media contexts, I concluded that political animation can indeed provide a viable vehicle for political cartoon satire.

In the sixth and final chapter I presented an overview of the contemporary new media environment in which the political cartoonist is now situated. The decline of the newspaper as the principal publication platform for their work was used as a pretext to discuss the impetus for identifying and pursuing future new media production and dissemination opportunities. In observing the various creative and technical strategies that are often employed in making digital images for public consumption, it emerged that contemporary political cartooning practice offers substantial opportunities to engage an audience outside of the traditional editorial paradigm. I discussed the various approaches to digital image production in terms of creative process and software tools. With respect to dissemination strategies I identified the principal Internet and Web 2.0 technologies that cartoonists can avail themselves in reaching out to an audience.
The relative ease of access to image production tools and access to an audience that digital technology facilitates reveals a potential shift in the socio-cultural impact of political cartooning. With a computer and Internet connection, creative and politically-aware individuals have at their disposal all the requisite tools needed to freely participate in a mode of democratic discourse that was previously difficult for amateurs to penetrate. On the other hand, participation does not necessarily equate to achieving meaningful dialogue with a substantial audience. I observed that the challenge of maintaining a constant engagement with digital technology is one that political cartoonists need to recognise and embrace if their input to the democratic conversation in a new media context is to achieve anything like the enduring and sustained presence in the public consciousness that it once did in the news print media.

In surveying the contemporary news media-scape and advising on how political cartooning can effectively negotiate the digital revolution in the context of the broader tradition, I have provided a positive assessment on the state of the art in Australia. I do acknowledge, however, that periods of transition in any sphere of activity tend to generate uncertainty; this in turn brings into sharp relief the perceived threats to those concerned. Less immediately apparent are the opportunities that change can bring, and the purpose of this research has been to identify and explore those opportunities. The shift in image production and dissemination away from print media to digital media will inevitably be of concern to those who have invested their time and energy in the receding technologies.

Another avenue for exploration is the future of newspapers themselves. It seems a fair observation to make, given the historical relationship that political cartoons and newspapers share, that so long as the latter endures so will the former – irrespective of other technological developments. Tablet devices of the iPad variety – which did not exist when I commenced this thesis - are now an ubiquitous personal technology device. Their role in the resurgence of the online newspaper is being keenly observed by industry and academia. In his paper on the potential impact of the iPad on the newspaper industry, Terry Flew notes:
The Apple iPad has… been identified in the newspaper industry as the best means to address the “perfect storm” of rapid technological change, new competitors, more fickle consumers and footloose advertisers, and challenges to established business models and production and service delivery processes.1

The potential impact of tablets on the news media is not restricted to newspapers. They are a social and technological phenomenon whose effect on audience behaviour and engagement with content will occupy researchers for many years. A truly portable multimedia platform, it is currently the quintessential digital content interface and affords a genuinely portable content production and dissemination solution for users. Its impact on the political cartooning tradition may yet prove to be profound.

Ultimately, this research is significant in that it provides a contemporary context in which to frame creative and scholastic activity. My thesis fills a gap in current political cartooning scholarship and provides a foundation for future discourse. The revised taxonomy presented here provides, for the first time, a formal academic framework in which political animation can be situated within the broader political cartooning tradition. More radically, I have argued the case for the moving video image to be brought into the tradition under the auspices of the same taxonomical superstructure. Embracing new modes of political cartoon image production is both historically consistent in the context of the tradition, and essential to the endurance of the art in the digital media age and beyond. It is very likely that, many years hence, those who share a passion for political cartoons will reflect on this latest period of transition and celebrate the diversity of forms that it inspired. And perhaps, like our fabled Chinese farmer, they might even wonder what all the fuss was about.

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APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS


2008 Retooling Political Cartooning to a New Media Context, Metro, 157 (June): 90-93. ISSN: 03122654

2007 Refereed paper, Taiwan-Australia New Media Arts Forum, NTUA Taipei.
Conference proceedings for 2007 International New Media Arts Festival: Boom! An Interplay of Fast and Frozen Permutations in New Media, Taipei: National University of the Arts, December 2007, pp100-104


2010 Inside Cartooning: Making the Most of the Liberals, News Ltd The Punch online, 24 Feb.

2009 An Animated Discussion about Political Cartoons, News Ltd The Punch online, 13 July.
APPENDIX TWO: LIST OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

Creative Works: Exhibitions

Jul 2011  Group exhibition: *Art Machine*, ANU Gallery
Sep 2009  Group exhibition: *BeginningMiddle&End*, ANU Gallery
Jun 2009  Group exhibition: *Art Works*, ANU Gallery
Nov 2008  *DOMAIN* public art project: projection installation with BEAM group, ANU School of Art
Oct 2008  Works selected for 2008 Melbourne Digital Fringe Festival
Aug 2008  Group exhibition: Vivid National Photography Festival *Surface Light*
Jul 2008  Group exhibition: Vivid National Photography Festival *Suburban Zeitgeist*
Dec 2007  National Library of Australia Pandora online archive: “Election’07”
Oct 2007  Participant in Arts ACT grant project *Mobile Politics*
Oct 2007  Works selected for 2007 Melbourne Digital Fringe Festival
July 2007  BOOM! works featured in documentary broadcast *In The Name of Art*, on Taiwan Public Television (PTS).
May 2007  Group exhibition at BOOM! Exhibition, Taipei
May 2007  Group exhibition at Guandu Museum and Gallery, Taipei
Mar 2007  Projection installation with BEAM group, ANU School of Art

Creative Works: Broadcast and Online

July 2010  *GFC*, IDTV Dutch National Television.
Feb 2010  *John Howard’s Ultimate Gift to Tony Abbott*, News Ltd The Punch website.
Feb 2009  *GFC*, ABC Television, QANDA episode 2.
Feb 2009  *GFC*, ABC Unleashed website.
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<td>Aug 2008</td>
<td><em>Dr Nelson’s Prognosis</em>, ABC Unleashed website.</td>
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<td>Jul 2008</td>
<td><em>Consume</em>, ABC Unleashed website.</td>
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<td>May 2008</td>
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<td>Apr 2008</td>
<td><em>Kevin Rudd Addresses Peking University Students</em>, ABC Unleashed website.</td>
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<td>Mar 2008</td>
<td><em>Ten Little Terrorists</em>, ABC Unleashed website.</td>
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<td>Mar 2008</td>
<td><em>The Liberals – Behind the Scenes</em>, ABC Unleashed website.</td>
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<td>Sep 2007</td>
<td><em>Australian Values #2</em>, PTS, Taiwan National Television, <em>In the Name of Art: Visual Art in Taiwan.</em></td>
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APPENDIX THREE: LIST OF CREATIVE WORKS AND SYNOPSISES

- All works are 720x576 pixels resolution unless otherwise specified
- All links navigate to author’s YouTube page and last accessed 17 September, 2013.

01. Cycle of Violence, (16 July 2007), 00:24 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NgVApk23sM

Initially intended to be viewed as a looping animation, this version is presented in a clip format for viewing as an embedded video. Using the image of an assembly line as a metaphor for the production of Islamic suicide bombers, the opening frames show a factory labelled ‘Islamic Extremism’ churning out an endless procession of exploding suicide bombers; before transitioning to a second scene showing an identical factory but labelled ‘US imperialism’.

02. Johnny’s Coal Diner, (16 July 2007), 00:31 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIsyNM70bmo

Initially intended to be viewed as a looping animation, this version is presented in a clip format for viewing as an embedded video. Prime Minister John Howard takes the form of a waiter slavishly waiting on a ravenous, obese dinner patron – for China - whose bowl he continuously replenishes with coal as fast as it is eaten.

03. Australian Values #1: Women (30 July 2007), 00:23 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFPDkF9b-IM

In 2006 Prime Minister John Howard described the attitude towards women in some sections of the Muslim community as being “out of line with mainstream Australian society.” Around the same time, Tourism Australia launched a tourism campaign built on a bikini model uttering the slogan “where the bloody hell are you?” This video delivers the tourism slogan in single word text fragments interspersed among a rapid montage of images taken from the covers of popular Australian men’s magazines. By ending the clip with the Prime Minister’s quote, the intent is that the viewer question whether the Australian mainstream might also examine its attitude towards women.
04. Australian Values #2: Refugees, (30 July 2007), 00:22 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTxZGZEB5fo

In 2005 Deputy Prime Minister Peter Costello, in commenting on the secular nature of Australian society, declared, “These are Australian values and they're not going to change and we would expect people, when they come to Australia or if they are born in Australia, to respect those values.” This clip, comprised of a montage of images of child asylum seekers, concludes with this quote and in so doing frames Costello’s statement in the context of the Coalition government’s contentious management of Australia’s response to asylum seekers arriving by boat - in particular the detaining of children in detention centres. John Howard’s famous “we decide (who comes to this country)” refrain is interspersed with the images to reinforce the perceptibly hostile and callous attitude of the Australian government towards asylum seekers. The intent of the clip is that the viewer place the nation’s treatment of asylum seekers within the broader context of “Australian values”, and ask whether the two are compatible.

05. Australian Values #3: Cronulla, (30 July 2007), 00:21 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6DxcODvQgE

This clip juxtaposes the same Costello quote as above with images of the 2005 Cronulla riots, where thousands of mostly Anglo-Australians gathered to violently protest against a series of earlier alleged assaults instigated by males of ‘Middle-Eastern appearance’. The proliferation of Australian flags and symbols lent the protest a nationalistic, sectarian tone. The ‘Oi!’ component of the popular Australian cheer ‘Aussie Aussie Aussie, Oi Oi Oi’ is quoted in text interspersed with the images to emphasise the appropriation of Australian symbols for xenophobic effect. The intent of this clip is that the viewer place the nationalism exhibited by the rioters within the broader context of “Australian values”, and ask whether the two are compatible.

06. Australian Values #4: Aboriginals, (30 July 2007), 00:17 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XM2DCTB7GcQ

This clip juxtaposes the same Costello quote as above with images of Indigenous disadvantage and the 2004 Redfern riots, where police clashed with local indigenous residents protesting the accidental death of an indigenous youth. The intent of this clip is that the viewer place the extent of indigenous disadvantage within the broader context of “Australian values”, and ask whether the two are compatible.
07. Regional Unrest (30 July 2007), 00:30 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxSzGfC49OA

In the context of the Iraq war and unrest in the Solomon Islands, this silhouette-style animation uses the metaphor of Australia as a house, with Iraq situated near the front yard and the Asia-Pacific region in the backyard. Prime Minister Howard, armed with a rifle, guards the front yard from his rocking chair. As the camera pans to the rear of the house, a creeping figure clutching a crowbar ominously encroaches into the backyard. The image is one of a Prime Minister fixated on a far-away war at the expense of due attention to trouble closer to home.

08. The Logger (30 July 2007), 00:32 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FHcAzP8KWy8

This silhouette-style animation depicts Prime Minister Howard as a chainsaw-wielding logger, standing at the base of a tree he intends to cut down. As the camera pans up, the branches are revealed via labels as the various policy platforms and conditions perceptibly under threat or discarded by Howard.

09. Iraq, (16 July 2007), 00:21 sec
(Not published online)

This animation comments on the US strategy of attempting to democratise Iraq through invasion and subsequent military occupation. A silhouetted Baghdad skyline at dusk is shown. A large wooden mallet labelled ‘democracy’, and wielded by an unseen character wearing a stars and stripes themed shirtsleeve, enters the frame and hammers the skyline several times before withdrawing from the frame. The clip fades to black as smoke begins to rise from the skyline.

10. Strongman, (16 July 2007), 00:21 sec
(Not published online)

This animation comments on the sectarian turmoil facing post-invasion Iraq and the ambitions harboured by the US of delivering stable leadership to the country. The clip presents a silhouetted figure in front of a US flag and behind a block of text that poses the question of whether the US has discovered “an Iraqi leader capable of ruling Iraq... a military strongman who can preside over the warring factions and restore order”. The silhouetted figure is then revealed to be Saddam Hussein, the man deposed as leader by the US-led invasion.
11. Sheik Hilaly’s Day Out (30 July 2007), 00:31 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2OY3QXAHWE

Australian Muslim imam Sheik Hilaly delivered a sermon asserting that a woman’s dress sense might serve as an invitation to rape in the same way that “uncovered meat” attracts a cat. This hand drawn animation is a scrolling sequence of static panels, and places Hilaly in a variety of mundane, everyday contexts involving interaction with women. On each occasion, the woman’s question is seen by Hilaly – revealed through thought bubbles - as an invitation to sexual congress. The intent is to present Hilaly’s assertion as symptomatic of his own preconceptions and misperceptions.

12. Moral High ground, (21 March 2007), 00:24 sec
(Not published online)

The metaphor of John Howard climbing a mountain to reach the ‘moral high ground’ is used to comment on the Liberal Coalition government’s attempt to call into question Kevin Rudd’s integrity over his meetings with disgraced politician Brian Burke. As Howard climbs toward the summit, his progress is stymied by the children overboard, Tampa and AWB controversies. These events ultimately overwhelm him just as Kevin Rudd, with Brian Burke nonetheless straddling his back, easily ascends the slope.

13. The Coal Miner, (30 July 2007), 00:44 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=824H_XM25V8

This silhouette-style animation uses the metaphor of Prime Minister John Howard as a coal miner to describe his economic management model. This animation presents John Howard as a Prime Minister whose economic fortunes are predicated on providing China with the natural resources necessary to produce material goods that Australians consume. The evaporating money and implied looping structure of the animation suggests that the cash flow is temporary, and dependant on China’s thirst for resources.

14. Dirty Laundry, (3 July 2007), 00:40 sec
(Not published online)

Here a sequence of iconic Australian clothes lines in a spacious backyard is used to metaphorically define mainstream Australian identity, while hanging from each is an item of the nation’s ‘dirty laundry’ hung out to dry: an orange prison jumpsuit represents David Hick’s contentious detention in Guantanamo Bay; a burqa represents Australia’s wary perception of Islam; and an academic gown represents the dismissive attitude to higher education and scholarship.
15. Cat Burglar, (16 July 2007), 00:42 sec
(Not published online)

In 2007 Prime Minister John Howard was seen to be failing to gain traction on a resurgent opposition leader Kevin Rudd on several policy fronts. Howard is presented here as a cat burglar who raids Kevin Rudd’s office for policy initiatives and proceeds to present them as his own to mainstream Australia.

16. PollAir, (15 August 2007), 00:36 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5f2lhqNM0

John Howard and Peter Costello, pilots of an aircraft in distress, discuss their options for regaining control of the plane. Howard proposes a “race campaign”, to which Costello replies, “the troops are already deployed” (in reference to ADF support in the 2007 Northern Territory intervention); an “advertising campaign”, which Costello then suggests is negated by “Union chatter”; and a “scare campaign”, to which Costello responds, “we no longer have a doctor on board” (in reference to the Muhamed Hanif controversy). Costello suggests a “cash dump over the marginals” as a last, desperate measure to rescue the plane.

17. Me Too, (28 August 2007), 00:23 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snwgE0gFTao

The very similar policy platforms of Prime Minister John Howard and opposition leader Kevin Rudd is represented here by the window advertising belonging to two shops. Where Howard’s shop advertises state intervention in the Northern Territory (indigenous communities intervention), Tasmania (hospitals funding) and Queensland (council mergers) - and claims to be “tough on terrorists” and fiscally responsible – Kevin Rudd’s shop simply says, “What he said…but 18 years younger”. The animation suggests that Kevin Rudd’s strategy is to align his party with key Coalition government policy platforms while at the same time using his comparative youth as a differentiating feature.

18. Swimming with Sharks, (13 November 2007), 00:30 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8dD6r5evXQ

This animation shows Prime Minister Howard’s electoral predicament by placing him alone in a small life raft that is soon to be set upon by three ‘policy’ sharks representing rising interest rates, the Iraq war engagement and industrial relations.
19. Chinese Whispers, (12 September 2007), 00:26 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_a5FOQn34I

What should have been a triumphant staging of the 2007 APEC summit for Prime Minister John Howard instead turned into an international stage for Kevin Rudd to show off his fluency in Mandarin and knowledge of China. This silhouette-style animation shows a relaxed and comfortable Kevin Rudd sharing a joke in Chinese with a Chinese delegation, as the camera pans right to reveal John Howard, left by himself and clutching balloons.

20. Military Crackdown in Burma, (8 October 2007), 00:17 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLA2rqTwnoQ

This non-too-subtle silhouette-style animation uses the repeating image of a single protester being shot by a single soldier to place China’s silence on Burma’s military crackdown of its citizens in 2007 in the context of its own crackdown of its citizens in 1989.

21. Election ’07 (12 November 2007) , 01:20 min
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvU-CgZpqQY

This side-scrolling animation showcases some of the main political players and events that punctuated the 2007 federal election campaign. After a succession of satirical micro-narratives – for example the Democrats being portrayed simply as a name on a tombstone, and Peter Garrett conspiring with Malcolm Turnbull to toss Bob Brown through a Gunn’s pulp mill - the clip concludes with several disinterested and disengaged figures slouched in front of a flat screen TV emblazoned with the slogan “Keeping interest at record lows” (echoing Howard’s once-successful election mantra regarding interest rates).

22. John Howard’s Concession Speech, (26 November 2007), 00:39 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLWLhszaTZw

As Prime Minister, John Howard sought to put into perspective his diminishing standing in the electorate by comparing voters’ attitudes towards him in the lead up to the 2007 federal election with their view of Paul Keating in 1996. After losing his own seat in an overwhelming ALP victory in 2007, it was apparent that voters nonetheless sought to punish Howard.
23. Malcolm Turnbull’s Leadership Pledge, (11 December 2007), 00:45 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_H_2l0nO34

The well-worn political expression “he/she has my full support” is typically uttered by politicians in the days and weeks preceding a leadership challenge. Here, the lack of sincerity in the phrase is highlighted by Malcolm Turnbull repeatedly speaking the phrase to camera in an attempt to perfect its delivery. It took months rather than weeks, but Turnbull eventually challenged Brendan Nelson for the leadership, and won, in September 2008.

24. Peter Garrett’s Christmas Stocking, (25 December 2007), 00:33 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NhRdVKkQ93Y

Following Labor’s 2007 election win, Peter Garrett was widely expected to be awarded a broad environmental ministerial portfolio. Instead, he was appointed Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts while ministerial responsibility for Climate Change and Water went to Penny Wong. At a UN Climate Change conference in Bali, Garrett was gagged from commenting on Australia’s policy on climate change, which many perceived as Kevin Rudd risk-managing Garrett after the latter’s reckless quip to a journalist regarding Labor’s post-election plans (subsequently explained away by Garrett as a “short, jocular conversation”). In this animation, Garrett dons a ‘sorry’ tie as the only remnant of his idealistic, activist past, as he pens a Christmas thank you letter to Santa.

25. Kevin Rudd’s Apology to the Stolen Generations, (14 February 2008), 00:24 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3GJa_Sm930

Three Outback indigenous characters, surrounded by the detritus and paraphernalia of excess alcohol and drug consumption, passively watch on as a fast moving van comes to a sudden stop nearby, spewing forth confetti, flashing lights and brass fanfare before exiting the scene as quickly as it entered. The three individuals are left regarding each other in silent incomprehension. Kevin Rudd’s apology to the ‘Stolen Generations’ is illustrated here as a noisy and highly visible symbolic gesture that is destined to leave no tangible, positive outcome on the peoples to whom it is directed.

26. Brendan Nelson’s Diary, (18 February 2008), 00:30 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6udKT48XYbc

This animation shows new leader of the opposition Brendan Nelson draw inspiration from the ‘me too’ strategy that Kevin Rudd employed so successfully to win government. The expression on Nelson’s face in the closing frames suggest that he is not convinced of the strategy.
27. Kevin Rudd on Climate Change and the Economy, (27 February 2008), 00:13 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJbngTu0uro

Kevin Rudd has staked much political capital on tackling climate change and sustaining the nation’s economic prosperity. The imagery of melting icecaps illustrates Rudd’s predicament of having to devise and implement an effective climate change policy, whilst keeping a lid on inflation and government debt.

28. The Liberals: Behind the Scenes, (12 March 2008), 00:37 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1WfbP9IKFLY

This animation presents a sequence of three shots that describe the very different positions in which Brendan Nelson, Malcolm Turnbull and Peter Costello find themselves in opposition: Nelson appears bereft of political ideas and strategy; Turnbull is sitting back and awaiting a chance to ‘knife’ Nelson; while Costello is counting the days until he can quietly exit parliament altogether.

29. Beijing 2008 Shooting Trials, (18 March 2008), 00:12 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9YG_iUfBo0

This variation on a previous animation, Military Crackdown in Burma, depicts a placard emblazoned with the Olympic rings on its face, held by a protester who is subsequently shot and killed by a lone soldier. The animation comments none-too-subtly on the lack of freedom to assemble and protest in China, which many see as a breach of human rights that is incompatible with the ideals and aspirations of the Olympic movement (Beijing hosted the Olympic Games in 2008).

30. Ruddese (11 April 2008), 00:23 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhJXcDpt0t8

In 2008 Kevin Rudd delivered an address in Mandarin to a hall full of Beijing University students. This animation seeks to ridicule Rudd’s famous verbosity by pairing subtitles of one of his English quotes with the Mandarin audio. The clip closes with one Chinese audience member saying to another that he’d prefer that Rudd speak in English, because he couldn’t understand what he was saying in Chinese. The intended irony is that Rudd’s dense, bureaucratic language cannot be understood by anyone.
In conflating the cynical, but no doubt highly effective, repetition of political phrases and slogans with the occasion of Wayne Swan delivering his first budget as treasurer – one that targeted spending on middle-income Australia - this animation has Swan utter nothing but the phrase “working families” over and over until he collapses behind the dispatch box.

When photographic artist Bill Henson was embroiled in a controversy surrounding an exhibition of his work that featured nude 12-13 year old girls, Kevin Rudd entered the debate by declaring the images “revolting” and having no artistic merit. Some months earlier, Rudd faced a scandal of his own after it became known that he had frequented a strip-club in New York and could not confirm or deny reports about his inappropriate behaviour because he had “had too much to drink”. By placing Rudd inside of the ‘Scores’ nightclub declaring, “I don’t know art, but I know what I like”, the animation seeks to question his credibility both as an art critic and moral arbiter.

As a newly-appointed Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts in a Rudd Labor government, former activist and Midnight Oil front man Peter Garrett had to exchange idealism for pragmatism. On several occasions his own principles and portfolio statements appeared to be compromised by having to support the differing views of the Prime Minister. The animation reflects on this conflict by portraying Peter Garrett as an interned subject of a Mao-style re-education camp. Rudd, well known for his knowledge of China and fluency in Mandarin, is represented by an iconic-style portrait that hangs below a loudspeaker in an austerely furnished room. Through the loudspeaker emanates a recording of Rudd declaring his viewpoints on matters relating to Garrett’s portfolio: the petrol prices and carbon tax, Bill Henson’s controversial photographs, and Japan’s whaling activities. The closing shot reveals Garrett’s evident discomfort by zooming into his glazed and wild eyes, and climaxes with the musical refrain of Midnight Oil’s Beds are Burning.
34. Consume (9 July 2008), 00:33 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApJFNJupxW0

An observation made during the ongoing debate about climate change policy by those opposing urgent action to contain the impact of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment was that committing Australia to Kyoto Protocol targets would adversely impact on Australia’s “way of life”. By juxtaposing audio of a ‘shouty ad’ – viewed by many as an especially obnoxious symptom of materialism in the developed world – with a static image of two malnourished third-world children, the clip seeks to highlight two contrasting “ways of life”: one that will be threatened by action, and the other that will be exacerbated by inaction.

35. Dr Nelson’s Prognosis, (13 August 2008), 00:34 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCIGwxCW450

This animation invokes the Monty Python-esque image of a dismembered foe who has not yet accepted his clearly apparent defeat. The camera opens with a close-up of Brendan Nelson, accompanied by a number of his own utterances regarding his leadership position. As the camera slowly pulls back, the extent of Nelson’s injuries is revealed, giving lie to Nelson’s positive quotes.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQK9X9L3QkQ

This animation depicts a number of contributing factors to Brendan Nelson’s ongoing political difficulties as opposition leader: his failure to land a blow on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd; the release of Peter Costello’s memoirs; and Malcolm Turnbull’s obvious, but hitherto restrained, leadership aspirations.

37. GFC (9 February 2009), 01:11 min
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-k0U_i1kUs

The metaphor of a semi-trailer is used to show a US economy failing under the stress of the sub-prime mortgage crisis and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, spurring the global financial crisis in 2007/2008. Around the same time George Bush, represented here as something of a simple cowboy behind the wheel, was replaced by newly-elected President Barack Obama. As the truck demolishes a succession of smaller vehicles/nations, it finally bears down on the vehicle bearing Australia’s flag. The occupants, Kevin Rudd and Wayne Swan, nervously assess their options and decide to prevent the advance of the truck by tossing stimulus packages of budget surplus at it. In the closing frames, and with the truck still threatening, Rudd encourages Swan, saying, “Keep going Wayne, we’ve nearly lost him”.

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As opposition leader, Malcolm Turnbull developed a reputation as being obstructionist thanks to his initial refusals to pass government bills on the stimulus package, ‘alcopops’ tax and broadband network. At the same time, Kevin Rudd’s approval rating continued to climb just as his own rapidly fell. The imagery of a bad dream is used to sum up Turnbull’s troubles, and concludes with bedfellow Peter Costello urging him to “just this once say yes”.

Two penguins, considering the shrinking icecap that is their home, discuss procuring the services of a smuggler who can get them to Australia by boat. The animation links climate change with ‘environmental refugees’, and makes reference to stimulus payments, a delayed ETS, and the $21K first-home buyers grant.

Malcolm Turnbull, growing increasingly robust in his senate opposition to the passage of some government bills, is portrayed as a customs officer scrutinising the policy baggage of ‘new arrivals’ Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Treasurer Wayne Swan and Environment Minister Penny Wong. Turnbull observes in turn that Wong’s ETS policy closely resembles his own, less expensive version, and that Swan is trying to sneak past a $58 billion deficit – which, after a hysterical interjection from Family First Senator Stephen Fielding – he lets through so long as Swan accepts a carton of cigarettes (a metaphor for Turnbull’s proposed cigarette tax). When Rudd presents his boogie board – a nod to the Schapelle Corby incident – Turnbull discovers a large bag of structural deficit, which Rudd hastens to deny knowledge of. The action cuts to a close-up of the glazen-eyed John Howard and Peter Costello, who comment approvingly on the quality of the structural deficit they are smoking.

The title of this animation is inspired by Tony Abbott’s claim that his daughters’ virginity was the ‘ultimate gift’ they could give someone. In this context, John Howard’s ‘ultimate gift’ is a used car – employed here as a metaphor for a set of political ideologies and agendas that Tony Abbott would likely embrace as newly-installed leader of the opposition. The animation also presents Julie Bishop as something of a ‘mother hen’ to Joe Hockey and a brattish Barnaby Joyce, and the vanquished Malcolm
Turnbull bound and gagged in the boot. As Howard and Abbott gaze on Kevin Rudd slowly passing by in his gleaming red Ferrari before speeding off, Howard’s closing remark points to Kevin Rudd’s attractive political machine being built on debt.

42. Inglorious Bastards (23 May 2011), 1920x1080 pixels, 00:32 sec
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hCMr4-8kTQ

The animation responds to comments made by Liberal shadow minister Sophie Mirabella and Liberal senator Eric Abetz that compared Julia Gillard unfavourably with then-Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi for her assessment of voter reception to the proposed carbon tax. Set in a psychiatric ward, the animation shows Tony Abbott and Andrew Robb as senior doctors listening via a translator to a strait-jacketed Colonel Gaddafi, who channels Gillard in protesting, “it is not a carbon tax but a fixed price on carbon that is the first step towards an emissions trading scheme”. Abbott dismissively declares Gaddafi delusional, at which point Mirabella and Abetz enter the room and perform a lobotomy on him. His brain removed, Gaddafi channels Abbott’s famous statement that “Climate change is absolute crap” – at which point Abbott responds (in echoing the last line of the Quentin Tarantino film after which this animation is titled), “This could just be my masterpiece”.

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