

**2004 INVITATIONAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE
AUSTRALASIAN HUMOUR SCHOLARS NETWORK
AT UNSW, SYDNEY**

“SUBVERSIVE HUMOUR”

Saturday 20th March 2004 (9.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.)

**Australian Graduate School of Management Building
(AGSM) at UNSW**

**Entry: Gate 11, Botany St, Randwick; parking in non-reserved places in the
nearby Parking Station and fore-court is free on Saturdays. In case of problems,
collect a parking voucher from the AGSM Front Desk on arrival.
(AGSM Front Desk Tel: (02) 9931 9200)**

CONVENOR AND CHAIR: JESSICA MILNER DAVIS

TIMETABLE

9.00 – 9.30 am	<i>Registration; Tea and Coffee</i>
9.30 – 10.10	Lindsay Foyle, Cartoonist with <i>The Australian</i> and Cartoon Historian, “Forty Years of Drawing History at <i>The Australian</i> ”
10.10 – 10.50	Dr Robert Phiddian, “Drawing the New World: Bruce Petty in the Whitlam Years”
10.50 – 11.20	<i>Morning Refreshments</i>
11.20 – 12.00	Ron Stewart, “Frank A. Nankivell: An Australian Cartoonist in Late 19th Century Japan”
12.00 – 12.40	Dr Alexis Tabensky, French Studies, UNSW, “TV and Political Satire: the Case of <i>Les Guignols</i> and the French Presidential Elections 2002”
12.40 – 1.40 pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.40 – 2.00	Dr Heydon Manning, School of Politics, and Dr Robert Phiddian, School of English, Flinders University, “Australian Political Cartooning: a Virtual Archive?”
2.00 – 2.40	Dr Carmen Moran, Social Work, UNSW, “Allies’ Humour of the Second World War – Similarities and Differences”
2.40 – 3.00	Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW, “Measuring Preferences for Satirical Humour – Developing a Humour Preferences Scale”
3.00 – 3.20	<i>Afternoon Tea</i>
3.20 – 4.00	Michael West, 21 st Century Corporate Satirist, “Real-Time Public Satire: its Perils and its Pleasures”
4.00 – 4.40	Dr Heydon Manning and Dr Robert Phiddian, “In Defence of the Political Cartoonists’ Licence to Mock”
4.40 – 5.30	Open Discussion, led by Discussant Prof. Conal Condren, Politics and International Relations, UNSW
5.30 pm	<i>Refreshments and Close</i>

ABSTRACTS

Lindsay Foyle, Cartoonist with *The Australian* and Cartoon Historian “Forty Years of Drawing History at *The Australian*”

The Australian newspaper was first published in 1964 and from the very first issue cartoons have been an important part of the paper. Bruce Petty, Albury Collette, Larry Pickering, Bill Mitchell, Peter Nicholson and Bill Leak are just some of the cartoonists to have worked on it. But while the paper has taken pride on publishing cartoons not every cartoonists who has worked on the paper has gone away happy. Some of them left, some died and some were sacked. Lindsay Foyle, a past president of the Australian Cartoonists Association and a pocket cartoonist for *The Australian*, has tracked them down and discovered who is still laughing.

Dr Heydon Manning, School of Politics, Dr Robert Phiddian, School of English, Flinders University “In Defence of the Political Cartoonists’ Licence to Mock”

Recently Michael Hogan has criticised political cartoonists as contributing to the atmosphere of cynicism that, he alleges, is damaging Australian political institutions. He also questions whether cartoonists should have any more licence to mock and be unbalanced than other journalists have. Based particularly on the research we have undertaken into cartoons during the last three Federal Elections, we take issue with Hogan in three ways: 1. We argue that audiences view cartoons as satire rather than journalism, and consequently interpret them differently from the way they would if cartoons were presented to them as balanced commentary. In other words, audiences view cartoons as if they do, in practice, have a special licence. 2. We critique the idea that the Australian public is getting more cynical, both by questioning the concept of cynicism - one person’s cynicism is another's healthy scepticism - and by assessing electoral survey material to question what objective basis the “cynical public” hypothesis can claim. 3. We explore how influential political cartoonists actually are in influencing public opinion. In the end, we defend cartoonists’ right to mock public figures and institutions and explore further the place of cartoons in the ecology of Australia’s political life.

Dr Heydon Manning, School of Politics, Dr Robert Phiddian, School of English, Flinders University “Australian Political Cartooning: a Virtual Archive?”

Members of “The Flinders Satire Cartel”, Haydon Manning, Murray Bramwell, and Robert Phiddian, have been developing a website that might provide the basis for a virtual archive of Australian political cartooning. A preliminary working model will be displayed with discussion about the challenges of collecting, storing and retrieving cartoons.

Dr Jessica Milner Davis, Visiting Fellow, Arts and Social Sciences, UNSW “Measuring Preferences for Satirical Humour with a Critical Message – Developing a Humour Preferences Scale”

Distinguishing between humour that is playful, satirical, sentimental, “black” humour or many other types is as challenging as distinguishing between flavours, tastes or styles (eg of music or art). We *know* what the differences are, but how to describe them? Using literary comic styles as a starting point, I have developed a questionnaire which is designed to

elucidate some of the parameters that I believe underlie these distinctions and I will present the instrument and discuss its strengths and limitations.

Dr Carmen Moran, School of Social Work, UNSW
“Allies’ Humour of the Second World War – Similarities and Differences”

Much has been said about ‘typical Australian humour’ and writings about Australian wartime humour frequently extol its putative uniqueness. This paper looks at how unique Australian humour really is, particularly in terms of characteristics such as self-deprecation, irreverence for authority, and understatement and irony. Two separate analyses are presented. First cartoon humour (of the comic type) is considered. The *Bluey and Curley* cartoons by the Australian cartoonist Alex Gurney are compared with the *Willie and Joe* cartoons by the American cartoonist Bill Maudlin. Second, the jokes and comic songs of Australian soldiers are compared with those of British soldiers. There are examples from both American and British humour that show similarities to Australian humour. Differences are also noted. For example, the American cartoons discussed here were grimmer, more critical of the war effort, and more replete with gallows humour towards the end of the war than the Australian cartoons considered here. Admittedly, conclusions about wartime cartoons can be limited by the samples selected. Furthermore humour may be constrained by censorship, both in terms of control of ‘obscenity’ and concern over maintaining morale of others. Censorship appears to have had less of an influence on the unattributed jokes and songs of wartime, and these show an Australian humour with more criticism of authority, greater grimness, sexually explicit references, and strong swearing than that found in the published cartoons. Given there is no single type of humour during war, nor a single target audience, conclusions about the nature and function of humour in war must always remain qualified. Nevertheless, it is probably unwise to continue to describe Australian war humour as unique just because it can differ from other humour at times.

Dr Robert Phiddian, School of English, Flinders University
“Drawing the New World: Bruce Petty in the Whitlam Years”

Bruce Petty began cartooning at *The Australian* in 1964 and drew powerfully in the years of decay of the Coalition Government. In 1972 at long last he got what he had been praying for: a progressive Government. Then things started to come apart. This presentation is a survey of his work over the Whitlam years, with all their hopes and disappointments.

Ron Stewart, PhD Candidate, Graduate School of Languages & Cultures, Nagoya University, Japan
“Frank A. Nankivell: An Australian Cartoonist in Late 19th Century Japan”

Despite his success in the fields of cartooning, painting and printmaking, Frank A. Nankivell (1869-1959) is little remembered today in his country of birth Australia or in the two countries where his artistic career blossomed, Japan and the US. This paper will examine and attempt to restore to history one aspect of his long career, his activities as a cartoonist spanning roughly twenty years, from part time caricature contributor in Australia to full time cartoonist for New York humour magazine *Puck*. In particular, this paper will look at his contribution to the development of modern cartooning in Japan, where he worked as a cartoonist between 1891 and 1894, and taught cartooning to one of the most influential figures in early twentieth century Japanese cartooning, Kitazawa Rakuten.

Dr Alexis Tabensky, Dept of French, Modern Language Studies, UNSW
“TV and Political Satire: the Case of *Les Guignols* and the French Presidential Elections 2002”

Politicians, football players, singers, actors, television presenters and other well known faces of contemporary French society are the most exploited targets of “Les Guignols”, a humoristic and popular television program in France. Political life is in particular a rich source of satire: attitudes, friendships and rivalries among Presidents and Ministers of all political sides become familiar images for spectators. The traditional confrontation between the Left and the Right is always one of the strong points of the program. Words, gestures and mimicry are typically associated with these somehow funny people who happen to be governing the country. The program is based on a routine that creates complicity between the actors and the audience (in and out of the studio) and, to some extent, humanizes the political character.

However the results of the last (May 2002) Presidential elections broke down the traditional pattern: the candidates of the second round of balloting were not, as it has been the case for the last thirty years, the representatives of the Right and the Left but those of the Right, Jacques Chirac, and the National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen (Head of the Far Right party that fiercely opposes immigration). Following this, the televised presidential debate, a “classic” of French television that traditionally opposes the Left and the Right, did not take place: Jacques Chirac plainly refused to debate with Jean-Marie Le Pen and did not even mention his name at other public performances! Through the analysis of a selection of “Les Guignols” broadcast during the presidential campaign, the paper will focus on how “Les Guignols” represented (or not!) the odd situation the country was living, and whether they used “the presidential debate that never was” as a material to make people laugh.

Michael West, Professional Satirist and Business Columnist, *The Australian*
“Real-Time Public Satire: its Perils and its Pleasures”

Four days a week, on page 2 of the Business Section of *The Australian*, a deadly serious column explores the power of satire, what works, what doesn't, what invokes legal and personal consequences. Although a writer might, for instance, carry on at length in solemn, well-researched discourse, a strong argument and critique of business mores, a couple of satirical lines may have a far more powerful impact on the public consciousness. My aim as satirical columnist is to capture the imagination of the public through satire, using iconoclasm, sarcasm etc to demystify the stockmarket and business through humour. The aim is to entertain, to make the point, to contribute to finance and politics through humour. Most of what I do is deadly serious, it affects stock prices, hurts hip pockets, exposes sophisticated shysters, makes a trenchant political point. People read it, and tend to remember it better because it entertains, and therefore it is more powerful in many ways than “serious journalism”. However, downsides for the author – and publisher – are sometimes substantial.