

The Risks of Satire Transcript

So does satire undermine the political process?

It can undermine people's respect for politicians and its institutions but I'd argue that satire itself is part of the political process, that to attack politicians on the media using comedy is all part of a healthy democracy.

So you think that the comedy and political world are too close together?

When I was writing for *Spitting Image* it was very interesting which politicians we covered and which ones we didn't and some of the ones we didn't wanted to be on the show. Edwina Currie sent in a lock of her hair so that we would get it right as a sort of hint that she'd like to be of a celebrity status that had a rubber double of its own. Similarly when I worked on *Have I Got News For You* we'd have politicians coming on and quite often it would increase their profile and help their status. I genuinely think that Boris Johnson would not have been Mayor of London if he hadn't made himself so popular on *Have I Got News For You*.

Have the boundaries changed or how have the boundaries changed?

The boundaries have been pushed back and back and back. So I remember studying *That Was the Week That Was*, trying to get my head round the notion that it was shocking to say that politicians were a bit bad or to criticise them at all. This was why this was must see viewing in 1963. But gradually over the 60s and 70s we sort of came to understand that our politicians were not perfect. *Spitting Image* did it with the Royal family in the 80s and I think now political satirists are struggling cause it's sort of a presumption among the electorate that our politicians are no good, and there's no great satirical programme on TV and I think we're really doing the cruellest thing that we could do to our politicians which is just ignoring them completely.