

T1517

NC 0033281 X



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART & DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

An Examination of the Television Show Spitting Image.

"...equal injustice for all."

**SPITTING
IMAGE**

by

Caoimhe Mulroy

submitted to

The Faculty of History of Art & Design and Complementary Studies

in candidacy for the

Degree of Bachelor of Design

1995

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- Sara Alabaster** Roger Law's Personal Assistant who sent over a book called Tooth & Claw - The inside story of Spitting Image, via RTE.
- Pablo Bach** Caricaturist and modeller with Spitting Image for the past ten years whom I interviewed in London on 8th February 1995.
- Gemma Bradley** NCAD Library
- Mark Burton** Spitting Image script writer for five years who granted me a telephone interview.
- Killian de Buitlear** Researcher in television who helped to arrange interviews with Pilbrow and Burton.
- Grainne de Buitlear**
- Oscar da Costa** Caricaturist and modeller with Spitting Image for the past ten years whom I interviewed in London on 8th February 1995.
- Matt Lane** Assistant manager of the Spitting Image Workshops who brought me on a tour of the premises on 8th February 1995.
- Giles Pilbrow** Present producer of Spitting Image who granted me a telephone interview.
- Alan Pleass** Head of the Department of Design, RTE, who made representations on my behalf to Spitting Image.

Trinity College Library

X-tra Vision Video Libraries

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1	Introduction	
Page 3	Chapter One	Jokes and Humour Cartoonists as Critics Media for Social and Political Criticism Development of Caricature as a Weapon Cartoon as social barometers
Page 17	Chapter Two	Transition from Print to Television The Power of the Print Technological Innovations
Page 25	Chapter Three	Spitting Image Origins of the Show Background & early lives of Fluck and Law The Partnership - Luck and Flaw Structure of the Show Subject Matter and Targets of Spitting Image
Page 53	Chapter Four	Function and Impact of Spitting Image Case Studies Treatment of the Royal Family Introduction of the Queen Mother
Page 89	Chapter Five	Success and Future of Spitting Image Overseas Projects
Page 96	Conclusion	

LIST OF PLATES

Page 6	PLATE 1: "Royal Hobbies," George Cruikshank, 1819
Page 8	PLATE 2: "Beer Street," William Hogarth, 1751
Page 9	PLATE 3:
Page 11	PLATE 4: "Two Grotesque Heads," Leonardo da Vinci
Page 13	PLATE 5: Examples of Anthropomorphism (Incl 5a, 5b, 5c)
Page 16	PLATE 6: "A March to the Bank" James Gillray, 1787
Page 19	PLATE 7: "Charles Philipon: The Pear" Daumier, 1831
Page 20	PLATE 8: Print Shop Window
Page 26	PLATE 9: Opening Titles for Spitting Image
Page 30	PLATE 10: "The Assassins" Roger Law, 1968
Page 31	PLATE 11: "Circus Politics" Fluck and Law, 1974
Page 33	PLATE 12: Ronald Reagan emerges from a cowboy boot, 1976
Page 34	PLATE 13: "Feasting on a corgi" Fluck and Law, 1980
Page 35	PLATE 14: Fluck and Law with ceramics, 1979
Page 36	PLATE 15: "Thatchers" Fluck and Law, 1979
Page 39	PLATE 16: Modelling Department in Limehouse Studios, 1985
Page 42	PLATE 17: Peter Fluck working on a clay model, 1985
Page 45	PLATE 18: Modelling Technician working
Page 45	PLATE 19: Modelling Technician working
Page 46	PLATE 20: Margaret Thatcher in mans suit, Fluck and Law, 1987
Page 50	PLATE 21: "The Windsors" Spitting Image, 1994
Page 51	PLATE 22: "Good 'ol Johnnie Major" Spitting image, 1994
Page 54	PLATE 23: "The Iron Maiden" Fluck and Law, 1979
Page 56	PLATE 24: "The Grey Man" Spitting Image, 1994
Page 58	PLATE 25: Michael Heseltine, Spitting Image 1994
Page 58	PLATE 26: "Kinnochio" Fluck and Law, 1987
Page 60	PLATE 27: "Studies in Power" Fluck and Law, 1992

Page 62	PLATE 28: Margaret Thatcher, Fluck and Law, 1987
Page 63	PLATE 29: "Thatcha" Fluck and Law, 1989
Page 63	PLATE 30: Photograph of Thatcher, 1995
Page 65	PLATE 31: Mrs. Thatcher out to lunch, 1985
Page 66	PLATE 32: "Miss Discipline" 1979
Page 67	PLATE 33: Tory Government Ministers, Fluck and Law, 1979
Page 69	PLATE 34: David Steel and david Owen
Page 71	PLATE 35: J. Major eating peas, 1993
Page 71	PLATE 36: J. Major and matchstick model
Page 72	PLATE 37: "Downing Street", 1995
Page 73	PLATE 38: "Downing Street", 1995
Page 75	PLATE 39: "They're Off"
Page 76	PLATE 40:
Page 76	PLATE 41:
Page 78	PLATE 42: Buckingham Palace balcony, 1986
Page 79	PLATE 43: Princess Diana and Princess Anne, 1986 Prince Charles and Princess Diana and Baby, 1980
Page 79	PLATE 44: The Queen Mothers Tattoos, 1985 Prince Edward gets a degree, 1985
Page 81	PLATE 45: The Queen at home, 1987
Page 84	PLATE 46: Prince Charles on the telephone, 1987
Page 86	PLATE 47: Jack Nicholson, 1987 Tina Turner, 1987
Page 87	PLATE 48: Pope John Paul II, 1987 Roger Moore, 1987
	PLATE 49: Da Do Ron Ron - Ronald Reagan, 1985 Ronald Reagan puppets in the workshops, 1995
	PLATE 50: Ronald and Nancy Reagan, 1987

**"By making our enemy small, inferior, despicable
or comic, we will achieve in a roundabout way
the enjoyment of overcoming him...
...A joke will allow us to exploit something ridiculous
in our enemy which we could not,
because of obstacles in our way, bring forward
openly or consciously...
...Tendentious jokes are especially favoured
in order to make aggressiveness or
criticism possible against persons in exalted positions
who claim to exercise authority."**

(Sigmund Freud)

INTRODUCTION

Spitting Image is a satirical British television show in which personalities in the public eye are caricatured, made into puppets and presented to the audience in a Punch and Judy type setting. In my thesis, I propose to examine the show with regard to its function and its impact on society. I will also look at its roots in eighteenth and nineteenth century caricature along with the developments in technology over the centuries that allowed the creators of Spitting Image to take up the challenge of bringing the art of caricature into the television age. Echoing back to the early days of eighteenth and nineteenth century caricature, Spitting Image is a continuation of a strong British tradition.

I will begin by looking into the function of jokes and humour in society and the development of satire into a form of commentary. I also propose to look into the idea of cartoonists as critics and the development of political cartoons into a form of journalistic comment. At this stage, I hope to concentrate on the area of caricature and its development as a medium for social and political expression.

Technological advances over the decades has meant that the media for presenting caricature to the public is now wide and varied. I propose to look at how these technological innovations, such as the development of the printing press and later the introduction of television, has affected the art.

Taking these points into account, I wish to examine the television show Spitting Image in depth. After discussing how the show originated and the background of the creators, Fluck and Law, I propose to examine, through a number of case studies, how the show has developed as a social barometer of our time.

Most of my research has been conducted through examination of newspaper and magazine articles written about the show from its inception to the present. The books *Tooth & Claw: The Inside Story of Spitting Image* and *A Nasty Piece of Work: The Art and Graft of Spitting Image* were also major sources. My primary sources were Spitting Image videos dated 1984 and 1994, which gave me an overview of the progression of the show over the past ten years. I was fortunate enough to make contact with the

Spitting Image workshops in London, through which I obtained numerous interviews. In February 1995, I was lucky to be given the opportunity to travel over to London and see the workshops first hand. Once there, I interviewed two of the longest serving caricaturists and modellers, Pablo Bach and Oscar da Costa. I met Roger Law briefly but unfortunately, my time there was short and I did not get the chance to interview him. I was very pleased to go over to the studios myself and get information and commentary by the staff on the specific issues I wanted to explore. I also obtained information on projects which are happening now and others planned for the future.

My aim is to look at Spitting Image in a scholarly way. I have chosen not to explore the origins of the show nor the technical side of puppet making in great depth as these have been documented before in other publications. I am also aware that the Spitting Image company has expanded into other areas besides the show ie. television advertisements and short films, but as my argument only includes an examination of the function and impact of the show and its context in history, I shall only mention these other projects briefly.

In the following chapters, I hope to give an interesting insight into the Spitting Image television show and hopefully prove that it is worthy of a place beside the great masters in the history of caricature. The show produces a manifestation of political and social commentary that is unique in today's world, marks a renaissance of the satiric arts, and more importantly a rebirth of caricature as a weapon.

CHAPTER ONE

Jokes and Humour

Media for Social and Political Criticism

Cartoonists as Critics

Evolution of Caricature as a Weapon

Jokes and Humour

Jokes have been circulated throughout the centuries by word of mouth. As a rule, one cannot tell where they came from, who invented them or when and where they appeared for the first time. Their common denominator was that jokes were passed from mouth to mouth among the silent majority, the people who had been deprived of a legitimate means of expression. Thus jokes assumed the role of "vox populi" (the voice of the people) in countries and periods lacking free elections, a properly functioning parliament, satirical magazines and, in our time, uncensored radio and television.

In the book *Taking Humour Seriously*, Jerry Palmer argues that we must take humour seriously (as well as humourously) or fail to understand a fundamental element of culture. Throughout history, humour has always been an essential part of the life of the nations and its seriousness lies in the fact that it performs an important function in the society of these nations.

What purpose is there in humour and laughter? What function does it fulfil? In the twentieth century answers are usually cast in terms of social, psychological or biological functions; in other words, humour is seen as part of our collective adaption to our situation. A commonplace observation among recent psychological analyses of humour has been that it has the capacity to reduce anxiety. Another function that is ascribed to humour is that it allows the mention of taboo subjects. (Palmer, 1994, p60) It is also true that in Freudian terms all attempts to make sense of the world around us, ie. "all conscious coherent thought (among other things) is a product of the ego's attempts to impose order on its world." (Palmer, 1994, p117)

As a caricaturist and co-creator of Spitting Image, Roger Law admitted:

You do get upset about things, you get upset about policies or certain people and there is a certain amount of satisfaction in being able to slag'em off in public. (Luck & Flaw, *An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, 1985).

Until the end of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, Britons could exercise their opinions in speech, writing or art without fear or hindrance. Ministers were freely savaged but could do little about it. Prosecutions were started only for blasphemy, and there were few legal actions for defamation - the satirist's victims knew

quite well that court cases would make them even more ridiculous than the satire itself. Such was the power that the satirist, the caricaturist or the comedian held over its targets.

People were often so afraid of the consequences the cartoonist's prints would bring, that they would buy up all the prints for fear they would be published, as well as destroying the plate from which they were made. During the Regency, when the Prince sometimes bought up an entire edition of a print to prevent it from undermining his reputation, satire flourished. Even Cruikshank, a prominent caricaturist in the eighteenth century, was prepared to accept £100 from the King in return for a promise not to show him in any compromising situations. (Cork, 1985, p14) Plate 1 shows the Prince Regent taking his mistress for a ride.

At this time, the political and social caricaturists were so influential, people in authority lived in fear of their cartoons and their acidic humour. In many cases the artist was not out to make jokes as such even though his graphic warnings may have been laced with humour. "By the mid-nineteenth century, cartoon and caricature were the foremost media for social criticism, and being a cartoonist was a fairly respected profession too." (Heller, 1992, p12) In the documentary, *An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, Law states that, "the ability to make people laugh is a fascinating tool and a weapon."



PLATE 1

"Royal Hobbies, or The Hertfordshire Cock-Horse!"

The Prince Regent takes his Mistress for a ride.

George Cruikshank

1819

Cartoonists as Critics

All of us get more information than we can absorb. What we yearn for is interpreters who seem to make sense of things that are and will be important to us... We turn either to critics of the government whom we trust because we share their points of view, or to many critics with many different vantages. (Press, 1981, p51)

The critic has a function of informer - linking the politicians with Joe Public. The cartoonist has a special advantage among the babbling army of critics.

They can sugarcoat their messages by stuffing them into a little allegorical drama, so that if they are skillful, their points will slide down easily and don't get stuck in the craw as the printed word sometimes does. (Press, 1981, p52)

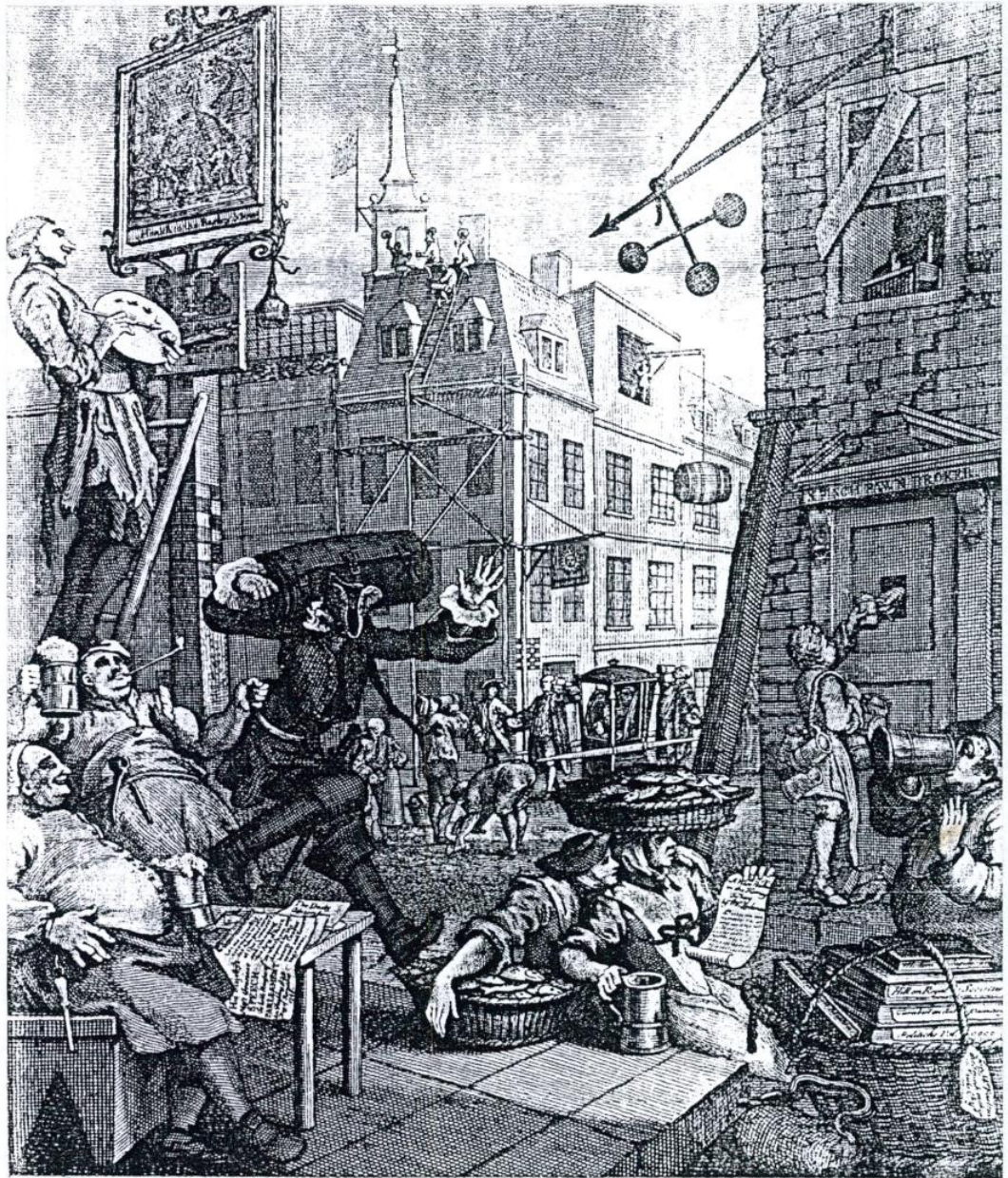
They can also insinuate relatively subtle cues and hints as signals of what they think, and thus sometimes say what others dare not.

Cartoons differ in purpose, whether they seek to amuse, as does *comic art*; make life more bearable, as does the *social cartoon*; or bring order through governmental action, as does the successful *political cartoon*. (Press, 1981 p11) These categories were worked out by a man called Alan Dunn, himself a cartoonist of considerable merit in the 1960s.

Comic Art is the most innocent form of cartoon comment. The artist's goal is simple entertainment in a weary world. This kind of art tries for a humourous and good-humoured observation on daily life and problems. (Press, 1981, p12)

A second type of cartoon is that of **social comment**, with a little more cutting edge added to the purely comic. Plate 2 shows a print by Hogarth called "Beer Street." For that, they call the artist a humourist rather than a comic. In such cartoons, the artist aspires to comment about daily life and its problems. His or her main purpose is to bring on the wry smile of recognition - hopefully to make life and its irritations a little easier to take. (Press, 1981, p13)

On the subject of the **political cartoon**, Dunn says, "It seeks to do more than amuse or make one sigh out 'Well, that's life'; it tries to influence the viewer to a particular viewpoint and predispose him or her to a particular action." (see plate 3) The cartoon can encourage action on a social question, but the solution to the problem must somehow involve putting lighted matches under politicians and getting the off their



Beer, happy Producer of our Life
Can sunny Strength impart,
And wearied with Fatigue and Toil
Can cheer each manly Heart.

Labour and Art upheld by Thee
Successfully advance,
We quaff Thy balmy Juice with Glee
And Walter leave to France.

Genius of Health, thy grateful Taste
Revoke the Cup of Joy,
And warm each English generous Breast
With Liberty and Love.

PLATE 2
"Beer Street"
William Hogarth
1751



"The Election," William Hogarth, 1755

PLATE 3

backsides.(Press, 1981, p13)

Most political cartoons are a form of journalistic comment designed to influence viewers with regard to specific political events of the day.

A political cartoon is worth looking at just because it is enjoyable to stick pins in fools and villains or to watch others doing it...The cartoonist is part of that linking process which connects the general public and its political leaders - a give-and-take rough and tumble out of which comes what the pollsters call public opinion. (Press, 1981, p11)

The place and time in which graphic art developed both as a means of political expression within a system as a functional instrument of that system was England in the eighteenth century. English political prints at this time were aimed at influencing the circles that determined, or thought they could determine, future policies. But what was new, and what would influence a whole current of political graphic art right up to our own day , was that it seemed to be committed to participating in the making of policies by serving as a vehicle for the expression and formation of public opinion itself. (Philippe, 1982, p94). "The cartoonist is viewed as one of many media critics whose comments contribute to the support of a system by it's citizens." (Press, 1981, inside cover)

Origins of Caricature

The idea that art might reflect and represent the gross as well as the beautiful has a deep history. The notion definitely interested Leonardo da Vinci, for example, who laboured daily at creating his beautiful art but spent his spare time making candid drawings that explored the irregularities of his fellow Italians by purposefully exaggerating their distinctive physical traits. (Heller, 1992, p10) Plate 4 shows two of his drawings.

The origin of the word caricature actually comes from the Italian, caricare, meaning to overload. One of the first contributors to the art, Annibale Carracci asserted that "the perfect deformity" reveals "the very essence of a personality". (Cork, 1985, p14)

"...a caricature is a picture that exaggerates, or overloads physical traits and features for the purpose of absurdity. While this exaggeration is often used for



PLATE 4
"Two Grotesque Heads"
Leonardo da Vinci



humorous effect, it is worth noting that grotesquery for its own sake is some times employed as well." (Heller, 1992, p10)

Caricature as an art form enabled artists to unleash criticisms which would never otherwise have found a visual outlet. As Roger Law said, "With caricature, you can actually make very simple statements, your statements." (Luck & Flaw, *An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*).

In the seventeenth century, when the word was coined, caricatural grotesquery served as a reaction to (or respite from) the rigors of official painting and sculpture, and also as a critique of contemporary art and values. The word came into English use in the eighteenth century as a gentlemanly accomplishment learned in Italy on the Grand Tour. It was imported from Venice where artists who practiced anthropomorphism (the commingling of animal and human traits for purposes of making allegory) called their art caricatura. (Heller, 1992, p10) They reflected those physiognomic traits that the human eye could not see but were nonetheless obvious when revealed. (see plates 5a, 5b, 5c) In cultural and social caricature, the subject is more often the target of a mild jest than of ridicule whereas in almost all political caricature, the personage is pilloried.

To art historian William Feaver, author of *Masters of Caricature* in 1981, the creators of Spitting Image Fluck and Law appear in the tradition of the nineteenth century French caricaturist Daumier who would crucify victims in his age by making caricatures of them as three-dimensional statuettes. He thought however, Fluck and Law could fashion their statuettes with more precision. Fitted with glass eyes and human hair, with skin texture gruesomely evoked by airbrushing, their heads rarely left any room for confusion about the identity of the victim. Feaver thought that Fluck and Law's eerie and uncanny models gave them a special place in the history of caricature. He also thought all caricaturists were, to some extent, "getting their own back" on politicians and public people. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p8)

I think that in British history, Gillray certainly leaps out. In a way, it was a little easier for him I think because the caricatures that he produced which went to quite a large audience at the time, would have been seen by a lot of people as the only portrait they ever saw of that particular person. I think someone like Gillray was definitely working to express his feelings about people in power or people in general. I don't think he liked humanity very much. (Law, Luck & Flaw, *An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, 1985).

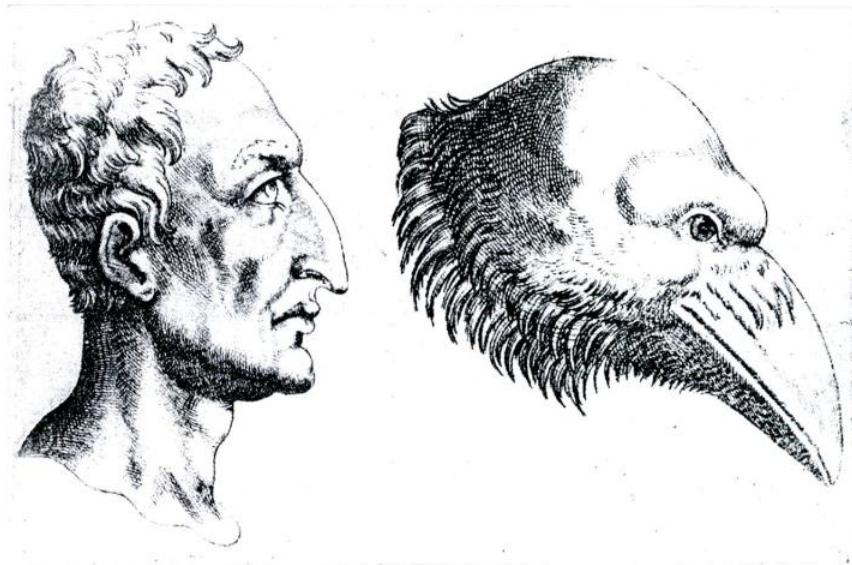


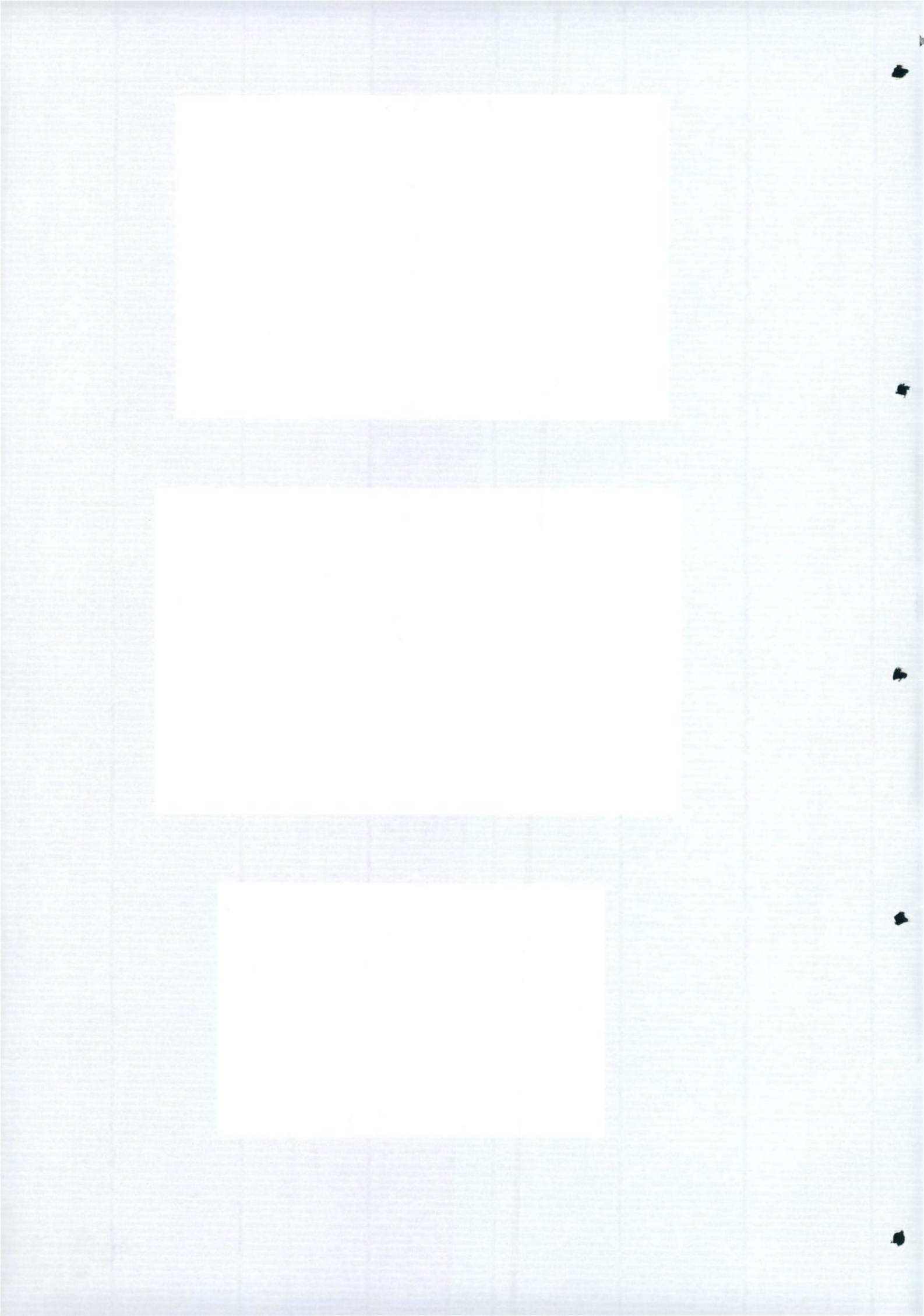
PLATE 5a



PLATE 5b



PLATE 5c



Visual satire has always played a leading part in helping to make people socially and politically aware. Caricaturists have often created, or at least moulded the public image of prominent and notorious personalities (Economist, 1985, p94). Professor Brian Morris, Principal of the University College of Wales, comments, "a satirist is a demolition expert".(Clarke, 1990, p12) Satire is born of aggression, he claims, and a desire to hurt. He does not think that having demolished, the satirist should be offering an alternative view of society. "The satirist is not obliged to give any kind of answer whatsoever." (Clarke, 1990, p12) However, the public destruction of personalities is considerably easier to justify if the exercise is carried out in the name of truth rather than purely for entertainment and the personal gratification of the satirist. (Clarke, 1990, p12)

Ian Hislop, editor of *Private Eye*, thinks that "personal satire is the only effective way of commenting on public life, precisely because you focus on issues through personalities, rather than getting lost in vague generalities." (Clarke, 1990, p13) In today's society of PR image-making for politicians, the caricaturist has an added advantage.

Political caricature exposes for all to see the character and personality of our politicians. They try to answer for us that haunting political question - 'What is X really like?' (Press, 1981, p49)

When I spoke to one of the Spitting Image caricaturists, Pablo Bach, in February 1995, I asked him if he had an insight into his victims personalities as well as their facial features. He answered, "Yes, you take all this into account or if you don't know the person, you kind of imagine it or you can have a guess maybe, what that kind of person is like." (Mulroy, London, 1995)

Political satire is an entity broadly based on truth, with a background in seriousness, but with a tendency to exaggerate or fabricate a story, a performance or whatever the case may be, to create an effect. In his 1960 book *Rabbit Run*, John Updike made the point that, "The difficulty with humourists is that they will mix up what they believe with what they don't; whichever seems likelier to win an effect." (see plate 6)

If a person desires to be a humourist, it is necessary that the people around him shall at least be as wise as he is, otherwise his humour will not be comprehend

ed. (James Stephens, The Demi-Gods, 1914)

Cartoons have developed as barometers of the relationship of mutual influence between the cartoonist and his public. (Press, 1981, p1)



A MARCH to the BANK. Vide. The Grand Fleet, Great, & Daquid &c. Morning & Evening.

PLATE 6

"A March to the Bank"

James Gillray

1787

The regular transit each evening and morning of a detachment of guards to and from the Bank of England was widely regarded as a nuisance to pedestrians. Gillray distil the inhumanity of the marching soldiers who follow a leader who prances over the bodies of the citizenry.

CHAPTER TWO

Transition from Print to Television

Evolution of the Print - The Print as a Weapon

One of the Italian founders of caricature, Annibale Carracci, is credited with saying that "A good caricature, like every work of art is more true to life than reality itself." During the eighteenth century, the English combined the sixteenth century genre of the exaggerated drawing of an individual's features with the existing tradition of emblematic satire, (see plate 7) and created the social and political print. This genre spread into magazines, newspapers and posters in the nineteenth century and expanded into the editorial cartoon, the strip cartoon and the comics. With the arrival of animation and other such technology, it has been extended to film and television. (Economist, 1985, p94).

With the development of printing, availability of paper and the skill of graphic artists in the seventeenth century, the significance of the multiple print as a communication tool was realised. Mass graphic reproduction came about due to a need to bring to the level of common understanding, the leading personalities and important events of political, social, military and religious life. The print of the eighteenth century, which began life as an instrument for documenting and illustrating religious stories, and as a medium for the glorification of kings, developed into a most effective form of visual communication. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards prints were used as the weapon of groups opposed to authority. They became increasingly virulent in their condemnation of abuses. The downtrodden masses had become aware that graphic reproductions represented a weapon at their disposal for confrontation with authority. The new iconography was addressed to a clientele of suddenly huge proportions, with a new social, intellectual and spiritual horizon. To serve this new audience, prints adopted political, social or ideological subject matter. The protest prints cry out against injustice, and expose poverty and death, the fruits of bad government. A study of the prints and printmakers and the satires of the cartoonists of the years to follow document the dramatic phenomenon of a society awakening to political and social awareness.

Three hundred years of images represent a history of power and man's attitude towards it, the image itself that power projects, and human aspirations for a well ordered society. They give an intriguing perspective on the social, political and cultural life of Western society. (Philippe, 1982, p6)

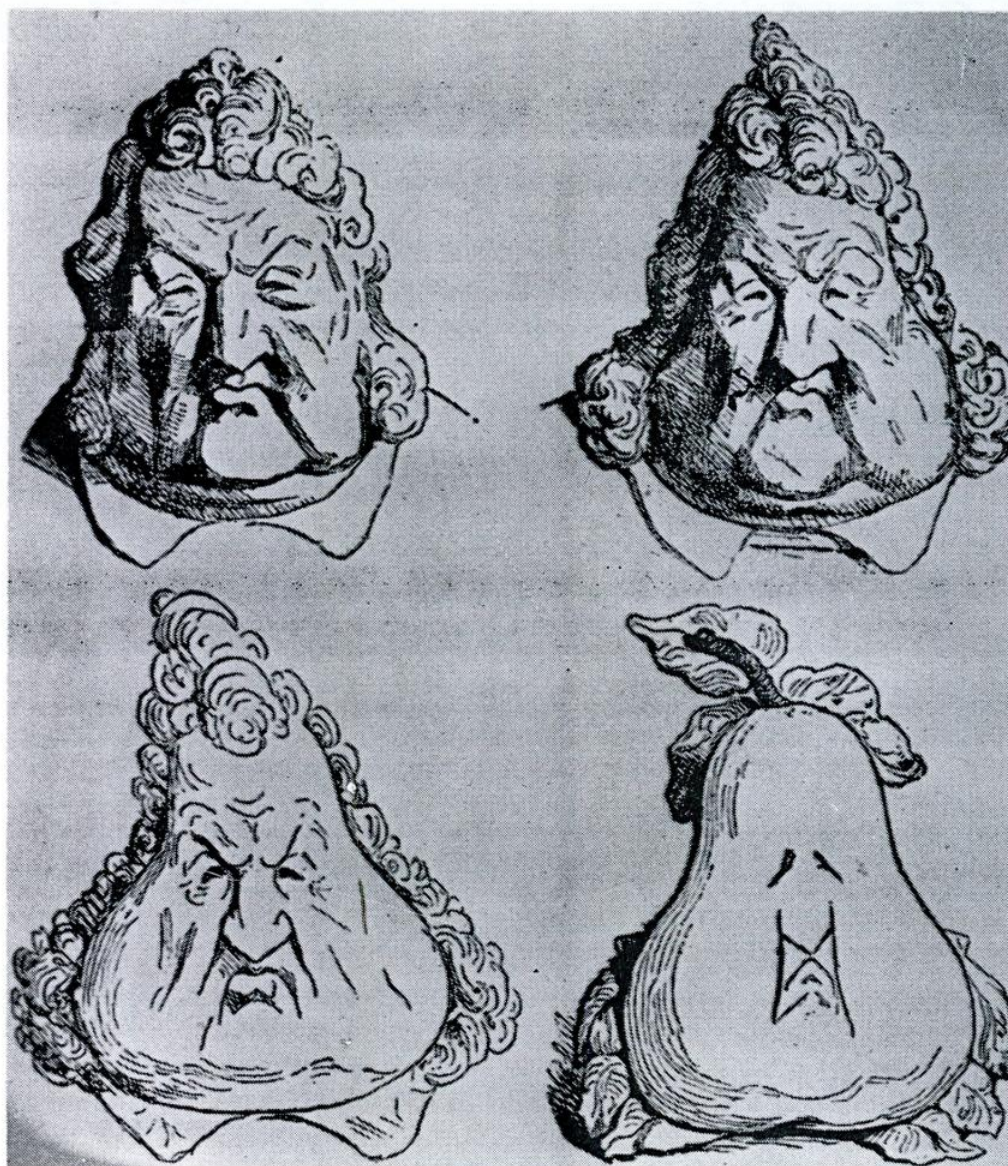


PLATE 7

Charles Philippon: The Pear
Daumier
1831

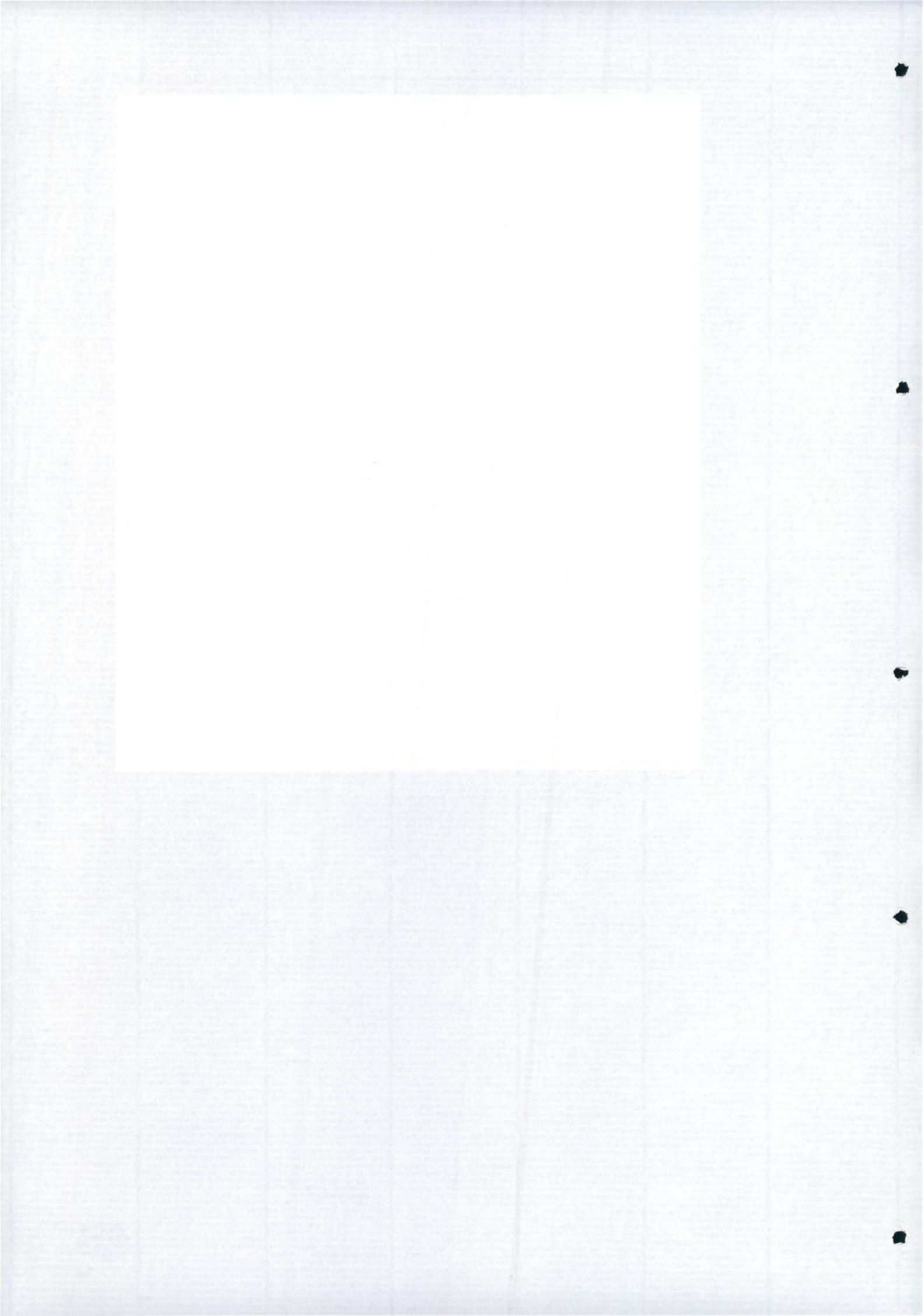
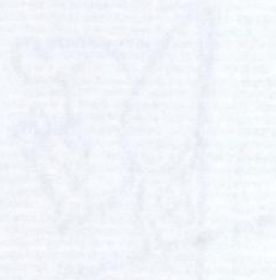
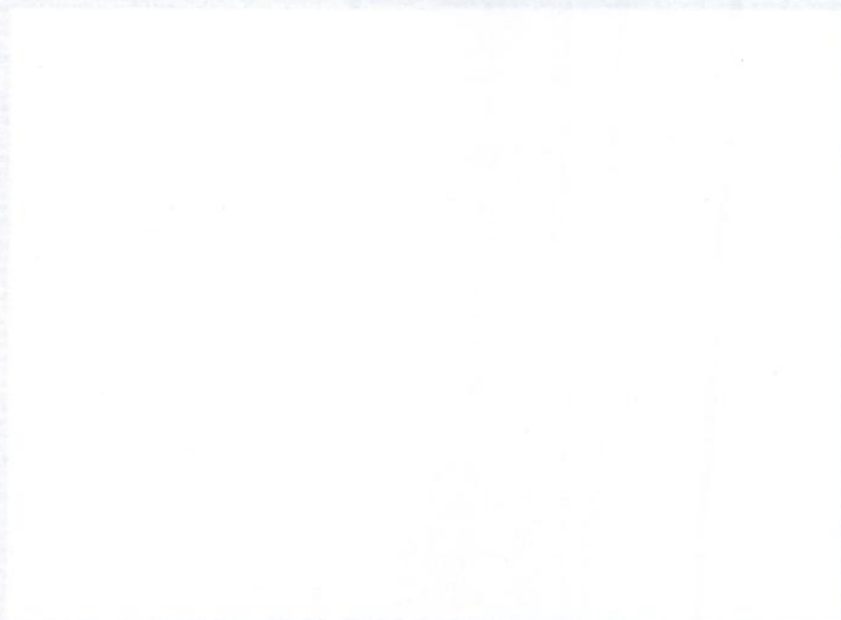




PLATE 8
Print Shop Window



The print was a mass medium - universal, direct and immediate. It has been frequently pointed out by many authors, how the invention of printmaking revolutionised communication and so speeded up the movement of ideas. It had much the same function as television has today.

A mass medium, it broadcast the sensational events of the time, such as the discovery of a new continent by Christopher Columbus; it denounced atrocities and abuses; it cast ridicule; it lauded and magnified heroes, alternately negative and positive. The image thus replaced the word in mass communication: it became one of the languages of the modern world. (Philippe, 1982, p6)

Until the early twentieth century, the works produced by graphic artists - in the form of handbills, posters, single sheet etchings, engravings, woodcuts and lithographs as illustrations for newspapers, journals and pamphlets - were the primary visual means with which Western society commented upon itself. The majority of prints included here were critical in inspiration and satiric in method and were produced in the belief that they would do some good. The fact that they are still reaching an audience today is a testament to their enduring power.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, 'print-sellers' commissioned cartoonists and caricaturists to produce work and the print shop windows became popular spectacles. (see plate 8) The exclusive gossip and scandal of high society was transformed (through the art of the print) into a colourful pantomime that everyman in the street could comprehend. Prints became available for hire; they were collected in portfolios and passed around at dinner parties as a source of entertainment.

In the documentary, *Luck and Flaw's Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, Roger Law, co-creator of *Spitting Image*, is given a tour of the V&A museum by the curator Richard Godfrey. They make an interesting comparison between the past and the present as they consider the subject of print shop windows.

Godfrey: "One of the great, great features of London's street life that anybody, high or low, could walk down the street and look at the caricatures. They couldn't necessarily buy them - they were actually very expensive - they were 2⁶/₃ shillings each which was perhaps more than a weekly wage for some people."
Law: "So they were mainly for toffs."
Godfrey: "If you didn't want to buy the print, you could sometimes hire out portfolios for the evening, put down a deposit of 5 shillings and get 2⁶ back when you took the portfolio back."
Law: "Like a video."

Godfrey: "Exactly like a video shop, you took the thing out for an evening - for an evenings entertainment."

The rise of the press in the revolutionary phase of the nineteenth century meant that prints became increasingly popular in newspapers. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, prints adorned publications such as *Punch and Fun (England)*, *Simplicissimus (Germany)*, *La Caricature* and *La Charivari (France)*. The press laws in France strictly curbed the insolent prints of their caricaturists and illustrators. The British freedom of the press was the envy of outsiders for a century before it spread to other peoples. In the twentieth century, although prints still appeared in newspapers and caricature journals, they also became increasingly popular in the comic strip as graphic commentaries on events of the time.

The development of the printing press brought the cartoon to life. Before then an artist's drawing, when political, suffered from two handicaps. It would be seen by only a few people as a scrawl on a wall or a few scratches on a paper passed round among a few friends as a private joke. (Press, 1981, p34)

The impact that technology ie. the development of the printing press, had on printed cartoons seems to have had four effects:

1. It increased the output, ie. the potential press run.
2. It allowed for the reproduction of drawings more quickly.
3. It allowed for the reproduction of drawings more cheaply.
4. It allowed for the reproduction of drawings with accuracy.

To Charles Press, author of *The Political Cartoon*, the impact of this technical improvement process on the artist as a critic of his times was such that:

1. It set the upper limits on the number of openings available for those wishing to make a living as political cartoon critics.
2. It determined what would be the mass outlet for an artist's political output, that is, the potential audience for the cartoons.
3. It affected the artist's independence in making political comments and critical judgements.
4. It determined the artistic limitations the artist would have to accept if he or she wanted work reproduced for a mass audience. (Press, 1981, p35).

The Medium of Television

Nowadays, television has taken the place of the printed word as the centre of

our culture. Television functions as a social ritual, overriding individual distinctions, in which our culture engages in order to communicate with its collective self. It dominates our lives. It is the twentieth century medium. Our television sets keep us in constant communication with the world - it is our culture's principal mode of knowing about itself.

Technology is such that it has progressed and allowed media such as radio, film and television to be utilised by anyone who wants to avail of it. Electronic media may conflict with printed media but many caricaturists have also progressed and found a way to use these new media, for example, Roger Law and Peter Fluck, creators of *Spitting Image*, have attempted to broaden the impact and appeal of caricature by using television as a platform to present their puppet caricatures to a mass audience.

Television is one of the most highly centralised institutions in modern society - its centralisation allows it to speak to all members of this highly fragmented society. "Television," Billy Graham has written, "is the most powerful tool of communication designed by man." With the onset of television, comedy was given the opportunity to broadcast its ideas and statements to a vast audience.

Because of the nature of television, it has the power to command and the power to change attitudes. How television stages the world becomes the model for how the world is properly to be staged. Our unease in this area stems from the way that the medium works: it absorbs the messages it transmits, it invents a reality of its own and ends by luring the world into the confines of its box. In the end, television turns out to be a mixture of fact and fiction, fabrication and faking, its chief characteristic is that the audience, with much encouragement, continues to believe in it despite all odds.

T.V.'s pervasiveness and power have brought with them demand for impartiality which doesn't afflict the printed press.

"You expect a newspaper to have a strong political view and nobody minds," says John Lloyd, who produced the first series of *Spitting Image*, "but television is different, I think most producers have a sense that they ought to be impartial. Of course, you are going to hit the party in power harder than the opposition, but the rule of thumb is equal injustice for all." (Fielding, 1992, p6)

With our high-tech electronic and digital media instantaneously and constantly

spitting out imagery that is transmitted to millions of people simultaneously, the question to ask is whether the art of drawn, painted, or sculptured caricature is still a viable means of commentary and criticism. In my opinion, the fact that *Spitting Image* was created and has been popular for the past eleven years is proof that it is.

CHAPTER THREE

Spitting Image



PLATE 9

Still from the opening titles of the recent Spitting Image series.
1994

Origins of Spitting Image

It all began with a man called Martin Lambie-Nairn, who produced the graphics for current affairs shows at L.W.T.; the idea for *Spitting Image* developed through his work on the *Weekend Programme*. In Lewis Chester's book, *Tooth & Claw*, Lambie-Nairn is quoted as saying:

The politicians who were appearing would come and have drinks and a chat afterwards. They'd always come with their wife or a secretary and their invaluable first words on entering the Green Room were 'How was I?' - we thought that should be the name of the show (the show in question being *Spitting Image*). Anyway, I began to see that they were very different people to the public image that came across on television. Things that they were saying on the screen were not the things they believed. As a politically naive person, all this was an eye opener to me. (Chester, 1986, p2)

He toyed with the idea of creating a satirical programme about such people and realised that it would have to be visual, indeed had to be televisual. Then, in the dead of night in the winter of 1981, it came to him. Lewis Chester described the materialisation of the idea as a new, grown-up generation of the Muppets (a children's television show from the seventies brought to life by animal-like puppets created by Jim Henson). As Lambie-Nairn had his own graphics business, he had enough money to put a little risk capital into something he believed in. The next stage was the problem of who should make the "New Model Muppets." (Chester, 1986, p2)

The solution was Peter Fluck and Roger Law - a double act that had been destroying the vanity of even the most self-effacing politicians for a decade previous. Their caricatured plasticene models appeared in such publications as *The Sunday Times* and *Private Eye* and the two had achieved enormous acclaim, not to mention numerous awards. (Jones, 1984, p18)

In the late 1960s Peter Fluck and Roger Law were friends working separately as cartoonists. Law was an astute researcher and acerbic conceptualist; Fluck, a brilliant draughtsman. In 1975, they joined into a partnership and sculptured caricature models out of plasticene. They made their figures clothes, gave them lifelike features and photographed them against ambitious backdrops.

It was in the 1980s that the *Spitting Image* programme made its appearance. With the help and skill of Fluck and Law, it turned out to be a show in which figures in

the public eye were caricatured, modelled and animated, echoing back to the early days of the printed political caricatures of artists such as Gillray and Cruikshank. *Spitting Image's* 3D characters gave life to the flat caricatured scenes of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The show marked a renaissance of the satiric arts, and more importantly, the rebirth of caricature as a weapon through the media of television. When asked how did they feel when the first episode of Spitting Image was broadcast in February 1984. Fluck said, "Embarrassed." Anticipating the controversy, Law said, "Like a close spectator of a major disaster." (Chester, 1985, p10)

Background - Early Life and Schooldays

Although Fluck and Law have an intimacy that suggests early childhood friendship, they did not in fact meet until they were first year students at Cambridge Art School aged 16. The main thing they had in common then were families with not a trace of an artistic background. (Chester, 1986, p3) As commercial art students Fluck and Law found that they made each other laugh. They also shared politics, both on the left as well, as an interest in caricature, which was not entirely approved by the school. The standard fare was life and plant drawing, sculpting, painting, ceramics, woodcuts, lettering and stage design - broad enough for most. (Chester, 1986, p5)

From childhood, Roger Law had no interest in his father's business which was the building trade, and as he had a passion for the creative arts. Drawing offered the prospect of a way out. He left the village school, aged 15, without qualifications. The headmaster was not upset to see him go. His parting benediction was: "I don't know what will become of you in life but wherever you go I hope you learn some manners." (Chester, 1986, p4)

Peter Fluck's upbringing was more genteel than Roger Law's. His father was cautious and conservative and eventually saved enough money to open his own grocer's shop. As a result of the distressing frequency with which people managed to delete the 'L' from his father's sign, which he had painted, Fluck learned never to underestimate the depths to which popular humour could go. (Chester, 1986, pp4-5)

Roger Law's grandparents were among the first people in his neighbourhood to own a TV set, and he can remember, aged 12, being forced for hours to watch a snow-storm on it called "The Coronation" when he wanted to be out playing. "This undoubtably damaged any royalist tendencies I might have had," he said. (Law, 1992, p12) On the subject of meeting Peter Fluck, Law said:

I think I was, and probably remained, a shade too boisterous and uncouth for his more refined taste. The thing that doomed us to each other's company was the fact that we made each other laugh. (Law, 1992, p19)

Soon after meeting they got a flat together. At college, the teacher that kept them most in line was Paul Hogarth, a descendant of the graphic artist, William Hogarth. He had travelled the world drawing for a living and introduced the raw-edged Fluck and Law to the disciplined concept of "the artist reporter." (Chester, 1986, p5) Essentially, this meant that the artist dealt with the topical issues of the day as his raw material.

This was immensely appealing as I was drawn to the idea of making visual statements rather than just representations. And I was already dabbling in caricature. (Law, 1992, p20)

Fluck said:

It wasn't so much what he taught us, though that was good. Or the books that he loaned us, which were great. It was the fact that he was one of the few teachers who didn't have a chip. Most seemed somehow disappointed, but Hogarth was entirely different - a man doing something he really liked and making a living. Exactly what I wanted, of course. (Chester, 1986, p5)

From the outset, Fluck was seen as the moderate, while Law gave evidence of being a wild youth training to be a wild man. Lewis Chester describes Law as being the more awesome of the two, huge and black-bearded with a boisterous laugh and when the occasion warranted, a nice line in thunderous rages. For the most part, he was described as an exceptionally genial giant. Fluck, at six foot three inches, was much smaller. He was equally biblical in appearance, and was as soft spoken as Law was noisy. (Chester, 1986, p3)

Beginning their Careers

At the age of 19, Law started as a cartoonist on *The Observer*, and moved to *The Sunday Times*. His first plasticene models, ancestors of the present puppets, appeared in



PLATE 10

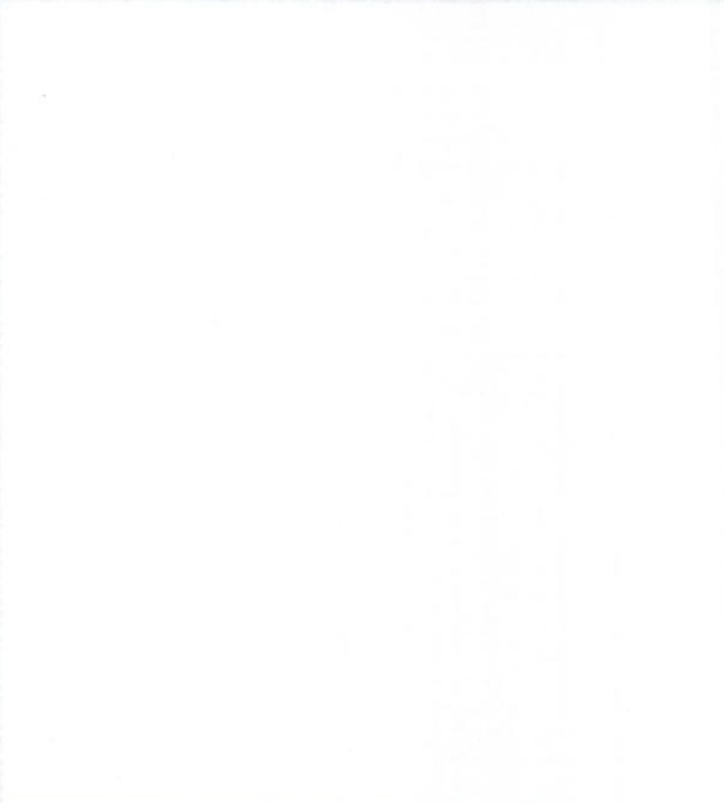
"The Assassins"

Plasticene model for The Sunday Times Magazine.

Roger Law

1968

The subjects were Lee Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan and James Earl Ray the men who had assassinated J.F.Kennedy, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King respectively. Rendered in the style of American artist, Jasper Johns, each of the designated killers wears the campaign button of his victim.



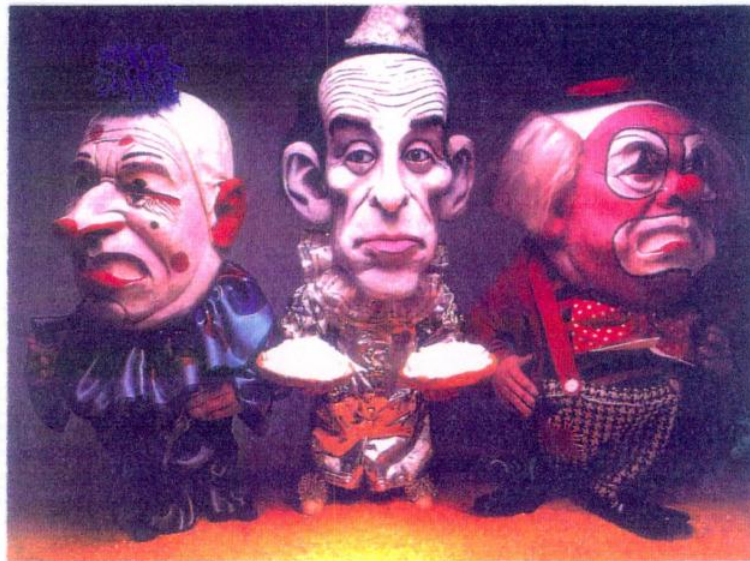


PLATE 12

"Circus Politics"

Fluck and Law

1974

Plasticene model for an article in The Sunday Times, on the 1974 General Election. In the approach to the election, the Liberal Party, led by Jereme Thorpe, was seen as a threat to a majority by either the Tories under Ted Heath, or Labour, led by Harold Wilson.

In these illustrations, Thorpe poses a threat with custard pies on one page, and delivers them on the next.



The Sunday Times Magazine in 1966. Plate 10 shows an early model produced for *The Sunday Times*. At this stage of his career, Law's style was quite unrefined and the caricatures in this picture do not possess the same brutality as do his later works. However, a progression can be seen if we look at plate 11, *Circus Politics*. The characters in this picture are strongly linked to the Spitting Image models of recent times through the way they are rendered ie. facial distortions, glass eyes, hair and costumes. Fluck followed this with a range of horrific models for the cover of *The Economist*, as well as work for *Private Eye* and *The New Statesman*. (Fernand, 1987, p11) The models were very successful in Britain but Law also entertained freelance work from American publications. When Law called from the United States in 1976 to say "help" (he was overcome with the freelance work - the Americans liked their caricature models bigger and even more horrible), Peter Fluck undertook to assist him and their formal partnership began. (Chester, 1985, p10) Plate 12 shows a cover illustration of Ronald Reagan emerging from a cowboy boot, guns blazing, to contest the 1976 election.

We already had a name for a partnership, Luck & Flaw. It had been bestowed on us back in our college days by Alec Heath, the head of the art school, as he was changing his trousers. Our tutors were always changing their trousers in those days before rushing off to be seen at some smart university event. On one such occasion, a young member of staff had burst in on Heath, trouser round ankles, who looked up and said: 'For God sake close the door, before that awful pair Luck & Flaw see me like this.' And the spoonerism had stuck. (Law, 1992, pp115-116).

In their work, through caricature, Luck & Flaw aimed to tell the truth about the insanity, corruption and limitless folly of contemporary life. They wanted to extend the art of caricature from mere prints and newspaper cartooning (Cork, 1985, p14), and from the outset, they entertained the dream of a television dimension to their work, but they were to run through a lot of their own and other people's money before it could be realised. (Chester, 1985, p10)

The partnership was based in a tiny Methodist Temperance Hall in a Cambridge back street. There, their 3-D models were fitted with glass eyes and human hair, with skin textures gruesomely evoked by air brushing. Their plasticene heads became an international commodity before long. The Americans loved their work and the German magazine *Stern* was enchanted by their study of the Queen and Prince Philip feasting on



PLATE 12

Ronald Reagan emerges from a cowboy boot, guns blazing, to contest the 1976 election.
Cover Illustration for *The New York Times Magazine*.

Fluck and Law
1976

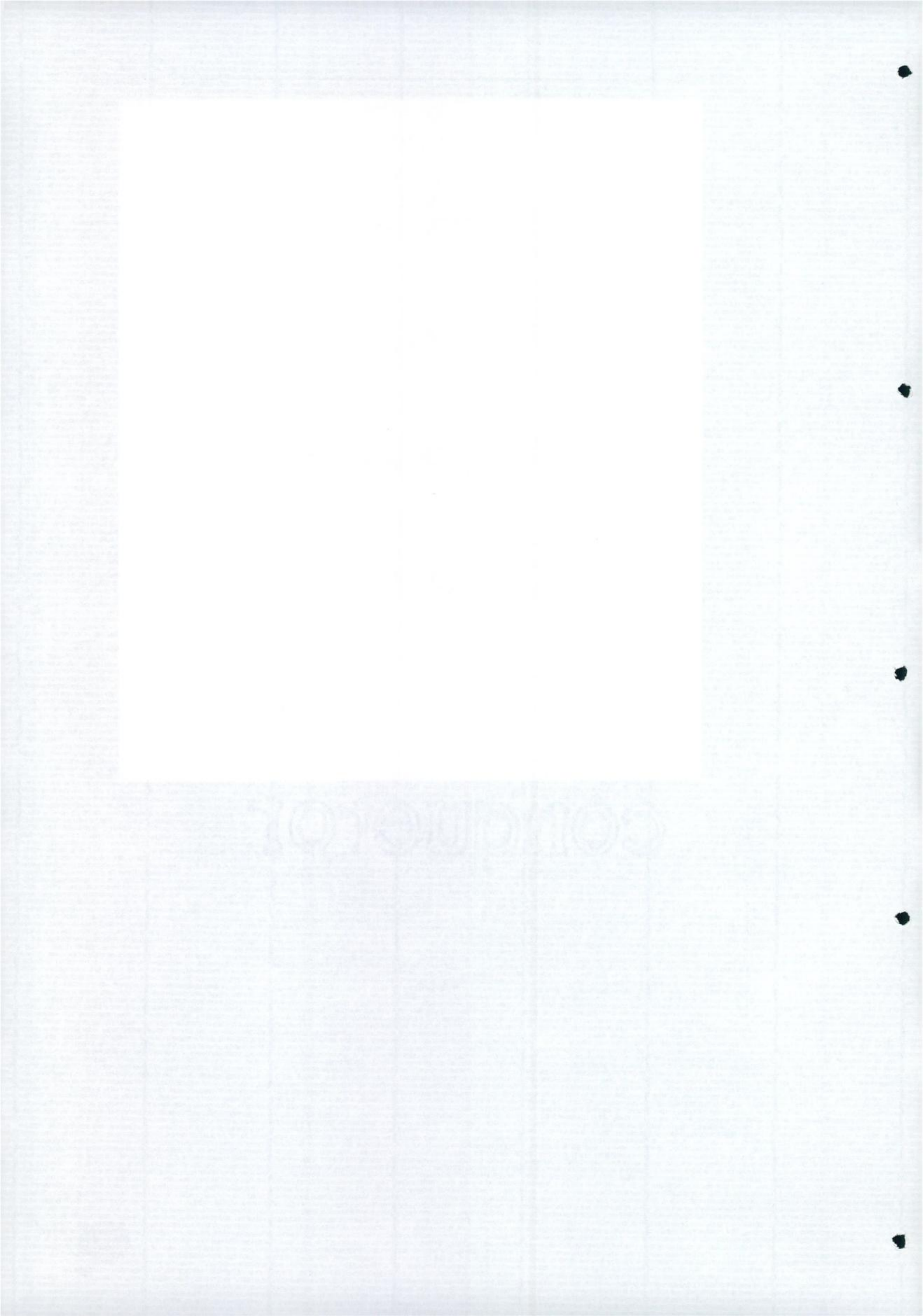




PLATE 13

"Feasting on a corgi"

Fluck and Law

1980

The Royal Couple feast on a corgi. This model was commissioned by the German magazine, *Stern*, to illustrate a feature on poverty in Britain. It also appeared on the cover of the Australian edition of *Time* magazine.



PLATE 14

Roger Law (left) and Peter Fluck (right) stand over their assortment of popular personalities as teapots, mugs and eggcups.

1979



PLATE 15

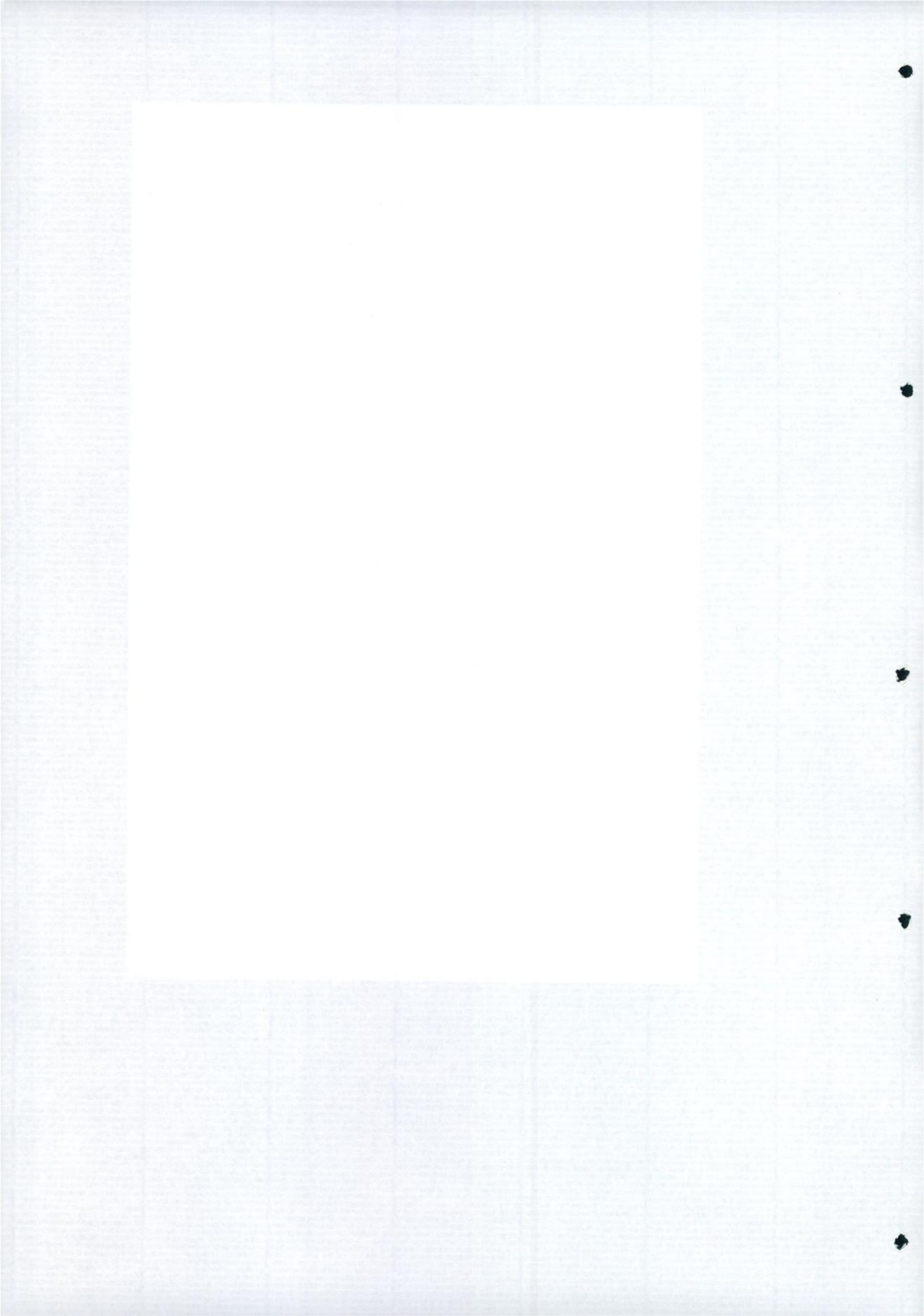
"Thatchers"

Toby Jug with Denis as its handle.

The jug was made to commemorate ten years of Tory Rule.

Fluck and Law

1979



a corgi to illustrate a feature on poverty. (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p56) (see plate 13) Plates 14 and 15 show some of Fluck and Law's early ceramic work.

It was all pretty much a cottage industry until early in 1981 when the call came from Martin Lambie-Nairn with the proposal of a lunch date and the idea of presenting the models as rubber puppets for television. (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p56) This idea materialised into the television show, *Spitting Image*. It turned out to be "a 28 minute string of hilarious sketches featuring the movers and shakers of our time in a modern Punch and Judy setting." (Heller, 1986, p98).

Before *Spitting Image* came along, it was said that nothing had any bite since *That Was The Week That Was*, the satirical show of the 1960s created by David Frost, Ned Sherrin and Willie Rushton. When *TW3* began, it had the shock of the new on its side. Lampooning had always existed in written and cartoon form, but the public were simply not used to people being cheeky about politicians on T.V. They sat up startled in their own front rooms while a whole generation of politicians were being ridiculed.

When it premiered in 1984, *Spitting Image* was the first topical comedy show on British television since *Not the Nine O'Clock News*.

When Peter Fluck and Roger Law first joined up with Martin Lambie-Nairn, he offered them enough money to spend two years experimenting with animating the models and trying to bring their ideas to life. (Other investors included Clive Sinclair and Esprit) There are three basic approaches to animation and each was explored before puppet production began. (Law, 1992, p164)

The classic approach, made famous by Walt Disney, is cell animation, in which movement of the characters is produced by hundreds of drawings, tracing the activity frame by frame. This method was rejected on the basis that full cell animation would come in at up to £1,000 a second, which was not very cost effective. (Law, 1992, p164)

A more accessible form of animation is stop motion. In this type of animation, you start out with three-dimensional figures (not unlike the ones that Fluck and Law were already making), and then move them by very slow degrees, clicking away at each halt to build up the animation, again frame by frame. Initially, they were very attracted

to this stop motion method, but the main constraint they kept coming up against was time. (Law, 1992, p164) Both methods mentioned were very extremely consuming.

Then came the third form of animation, namely puppetry, in which the animation is provided by concealed human limbs. The advantage of puppets was that they could be filmed in real time. Law could not be persuaded that puppets on strings were a realistic way forward. The other method in this form of animation was puppeteers using direct 'hands-up-the-throat' techniques. Despite the huge success of the Muppets, Fluck and Law were by no means convinced that this approach was entirely right for them either. (Law, 1992, p165)

I remember going to a lecture by Henson (creator of the Muppets) in which he explained that the Muppets were successful precisely because they were not people. With Kermit - a piece of green rag with two ping-pong balls for eyes - there were no problems of credibility, he was a veritable frog. Henson thought it unlikely that anyone could achieve the same necessary suspension of disbelief with puppet people." (Law, 1992, p165)

The first eighteen months of *Spitting Image* was a period of trial and error as Luck and Flaw struggled to give life to their caricatures. By late 1982, Peter Fluck and Roger Law had assembled with three others to form the Spitting Image Production Company (this gathering became known as the Gang of Five). The first to join was Tony Hendra, a satirist whom Roger had met in America in the 'seventies. Hendra was the man who invented the "Not" concept, producing publications like *Not the Bible*, *Not the Wall Street Journal* and *Not the New York Times*. The second to arrive was John Lloyd, a young but experienced broadcaster who had borrowed the "Not," concept to produce *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, a successful BBC comedy programme starring Rowan Atkinson. The third to arrive was Jon Blair, a documentary producer. It was Blair who presented the show to Central Television. The next stage was making a pilot programme, which was done in some style and received very well. (Law, 1992, p169)

When Pauline Jones asked Roger Law the reason for their move into this totally different area (from print to television) in an interview in 1984, he said that the decision was based purely on economics. The success of Luck & Flaw's editorial work was largely because they kept their overheads down. They worked with things they thought were fun to do. However, due to the very strength and distinctive, instantly recognisable

to this stop motion method, but the main constraint they kept coming up against was time. (Law, 1992, p164) Both methods mentioned were very extremely consuming.

Then came the third form of animation, namely puppetry, in which the animation is provided by concealed human limbs. The advantage of puppets was that they could be filmed in real time. Law could not be persuaded that puppets on strings were a realistic way forward. The other method in this form of animation was puppeteers using direct 'hands-up-the-throat' techniques. Despite the huge success of the Muppets, Fluck and Law were by no means convinced that this approach was entirely right for them either. (Law, 1992, p165)

I remember going to a lecture by Henson (creator of the Muppets) in which he explained that the Muppets were successful precisely because they were not people. With Kermit - a piece of green rag with two ping-pong balls for eyes - there were no problems of credibility, he was a veritable frog. Henson thought it unlikely that anyone could achieve the same necessary suspension of disbelief with puppet people." (Law, 1992, p165)

The first eighteen months of *Spitting Image* was a period of trial and error as Luck and Flaw struggled to give life to their caricatures. By late 1982, Peter Fluck and Roger Law had assembled with three others to form the Spitting Image Production Company (this gathering became known as the Gang of Five). The first to join was Tony Hendra, a satirist whom Roger had met in America in the 'seventies. Hendra was the man who invented the "Not" concept, producing publications like *Not the Bible*, *Not the Wall Street Journal* and *Not the New York Times*. The second to arrive was John Lloyd, a young but experienced broadcaster who had borrowed the "Not," concept to produce *Not the Nine O'Clock News*, a successful BBC comedy programme starring Rowan Atkinson. The third to arrive was Jon Blair, a documentary producer. It was Blair who presented the show to Central Television. The next stage was making a pilot programme, which was done in some style and received very well. (Law, 1992, p169)

When Pauline Jones asked Roger Law the reason for their move into this totally different area (from print to television) in an interview in 1984, he said that the decision was based purely on economics. The success of Luck & Flaw's editorial work was largely because they kept their overheads down. They worked with things they thought were fun to do. However, due to the very strength and distinctive, instantly recognisable



PLATE 16
Modelling Department in Limehouse Studios
1985

NO
CONTINUED

profile of their images, they encountered some problems. (Jones, 1984, p18). "Visually, they have a lot of clout," says Law, "therefore, we couldn't appear more than perhaps three times a year in any one publication." With this limitation, the obvious thing for them to do was to find other areas that would be suitable for their particular genre. Television was the natural follow-on. Law explains that at that time, they were still tied up with magazines and earning a good living, but they still had no capital which would allow them to experiment in translating their static models into moving characters. As they had entertained the idea of a television dimension to their caricatures and the major factor that was holding them back was funding, they jumped at Lambie-Nairn's proposal. (Jones, 1984, p19)

With the success of their pilot film, the business started to develop in earnest. What Fluck and Law, schooled in the print, failed to realise was television's enormous appetite for material. As demand came for the manufacture of more puppets, they had to move premises to large factory-like property, Limehouse Studios, in 1986.(see plate 16) (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p56). In the same article, Law explained:

What we have here is the first high-tech caricature sweatshop in history. Note the masses of extremely young people, most of whom sleep under the benches at night. Note also the advanced quality of the facilities they enjoy, if you leave out the odd mangle. They're at it at all hours, researching, drawing, modelling, foaming, fitting, mechanics, painting the heads, doing the wigs, making the bodies and costumes. Ten processes in all. (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p56)

In the Fluck and Law partnership, Law has the position of working up the grand design while Fluck comes in later with the telling warts and creases that do so much to disgrace an appearance. With the large staff they have acquired now, all the models produced have to be passed as fit by Roger and Pete. This is not always an easy decision as they can all get carried away and lose all likeness. "When that happens," says Fluck, "we call in the Limehouse security man and let him be the judge." (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p56)

The results of this intense labour were among the most unflattering caricatures of political, social and cultural leaders in a generation, and would ultimately take portrait caricature to a new plateau that would soon result in a radically new and popular medium of social and political satire for television and film. (Heller, 1992, p62)

In his article, *Laughing Stocks*, John Dugdale tells of how *Spitting Image*

Productions Ltd. as a business has often been described as "one of the success stories of Thatcher's Britain." But he also discusses how the company of the 1980s was slow to exploit development opportunities and was uncertain how to move into foreign markets. (Dugdale, 1990, p15)

In the early days when money was a problem Law reckoned they should take the opportunity to lighten the haulage and earn a traditional dishonest penny. Gillray, the 18th century father of modern caricature, used to sell his original plates to politicians tired of being lampooned. When asked why they wouldn't sell off puppets on the same principle of enlightened blackmail?, Peter Fluck answered, "Never work. They couldn't bear not to see themselves on the show the next week." (Chester, 1985, p10)

Tooth & Claw, Lewis Chester's 1986 book, documents the early years of the show and suggests several factors contributing to under-performance (notably the constant internal arguments over strategy). The *Spitting Image* company began as an uneasy coalition of three groups:

1. The puppet makers at Limehouse Studios under Roger Law and Peter Fluck.
2. Comedy writers or producers from television and radio, such as John Lloyd, Doug Naylor and Rob Grant.
3. Sympathetic suits who provided financial backing, like Clive Sinclair and the designer Martin Lambie-Nairn. (Dugdale, 1990, p15)

In Roger Law's words, it was "a pirate ship with too many pirate captains." (Dugdale, 1990, p15) Most of the key personnel resisted indiscriminate cashing in on the show's success, although books, records and T-shirts were viewed as acceptable spin-offs. (Dugdale, 1990, p15) Another problem encountered at the start was that, although the puppets were wickedly funny, they were also curiously flawed - at least according to their makers, who felt that they were "too damn static." (Heller, 1992, p62)

Within the team, there are full-time writers as well as freelancers, caricaturists of all descriptions - there are those who sketch the personalities for the puppets, people who make hairdo caricatures, clothing caricatures and those who do the voice and music caricatures. Puppet makers, modellers and scenarists are also employed. (Heller,



PLATE 17

Peter Fluck working on a clay model of a puppet
Limehouse Studios
1985



CONFIDENTIAL

1986, p98)

After a long period of trial and error, the crew became more professional at producing and operating the puppets. Concentration was on mobility of the features such as blinking eyelids, swivelling eyeballs, bodies and arms to make the puppets look credible as characters on screen. (Jones, 1984, p19) The puppet operating system, devised by Peter Fluck involved two people manning a life-sized puppet. One person uses his right hand to control the puppets head and facial expressions, while his left arm fits into the puppets left sleeve in order to make it move. A second person manipulates the eyes, and could work the right arm if necessary. The puppets hands fit the puppeteers like gloves and so movement is made to appear very natural. (Heller, 1986, p102)

On the subject of the puppeteering, one of the mould-makers, Tim Watts, has said: "It sounds silly, but I really hate the puppeteers when I see them distorting the caricature mouths, though I know they're trying to get life out of the characters." (Chester, Spit and Polish, 1986, p59). Contrary to this, the caricaturist Oscar da Costa said, "the puppets can be lovely, but there is something dead, so it's up to the script writers and puppeteers to bring them to life." (Mulroy, London, 1995)

According to David Stoten, an assistant caricaturist, it normally takes a week to make a model and drawing may account for a half day or a full day. Then, "Roger casts a superior eye and if he approves, the next stage is to get it on the stick." (Chester, 1986, p59)

Leading off from this studio is a twenty five foot long bench with room for six people to work at. It is scattered with potter's wheels and armatures (the sticks) with caricature heads emerging upon them among great hunks of clay and other essential debris. On the boards above are tacked sketches and photographic references. (Chester, 1986, p56).

Plate 17 shows Peter Fluck working in the modelling room in Limehouse Studios. The modelling area is no longer exclusive to Fluck and Law. They have had many assistant caricaturists through the years: Tim Watts, David Stoten, Oscar da Costa, Chris Sharrock and more recently, Pablo Bach and Mark Reeves. (Chester, 1986, p56)

It is not widely known that the puppets on the show are produced by two entirely different techniques. Some are made from latex, while others are fashioned in foam.

Experience had shown that latex was right for thin people while foam was more appropriate for more rounded figures. Bodies are usually of fairly standard construction. As most of the puppets are operated from near shoulder height, lightness of material was very important. (Chester, 1985, p10)

Heads are usually made from rubber foam set in glass fibre moulds or from latex set in plaster. By this method, moulds taken from the caricaturists' clay models are simply filled with latex, and a film is allowed to form over five hours. The excess latex is poured off, and the film, which constitutes the caricature, is left for twenty-four hours, after which, "it is dragged forth like a Wellington boot, ready for use." (Peter Kidd, moulder) Plates 18 and 19 show the modelling technician working in the foam room. "The heads of politicians recently mangled, hang by meathooks from a ceiling rack to dry." (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p58) According to Lewis Chester, it requires five separate chemical ingredients and the mixing must be precise to ensure the correct amount of air is in the substance. After this, curing the foam takes another three to four hours at 100 to 200 degrees celsius. (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p59)

Another major part in the production of a puppet is their costume. Sue Gibson is head of the wardrobe department and has known Fluck and Law since their schooldays. On interviewing Gibson, Chester has noted that she sees herself as defending workshop fantasy against the creeping realism of the writers. She claims:

They'd like the Cabinet in dark suits and so on. I've held out for Tebbo (Norman Tebbit) in his leathers, Heseltine in his flak jacket and Maggie in her man's suit (see plate 19) because I think it's more enjoyable that way. But I've had to make a lot of fuss." (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1986, p59)

When I interviewed the present producer of *Spitting Image*, Giles Pilbrow in December of 1994, what, in his opinion, makes a caricature effective. His answer was that "the puppet has to work in each department." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) He explained that if you pinpoint something about someone (meaning a physical trait or mannerism) that everyone accepts is right, the audience will acknowledge it. "If the deformity that they [meaning the caricaturists] exaggerate is something everyone already recognises, then it is successful." He said that in a successful caricature, the artists have to push the features as far as they go but still maintain the likeness. However, he said that "there is



PLATE 18

Modelling technician passing a puppets head through a mangle
or rolling press to drain off excess water.

Cairo Studios
1995.



PLATE 19

Modelling Technician holding an early stage of a Prince Charles puppet.

Cairo Studios
1995



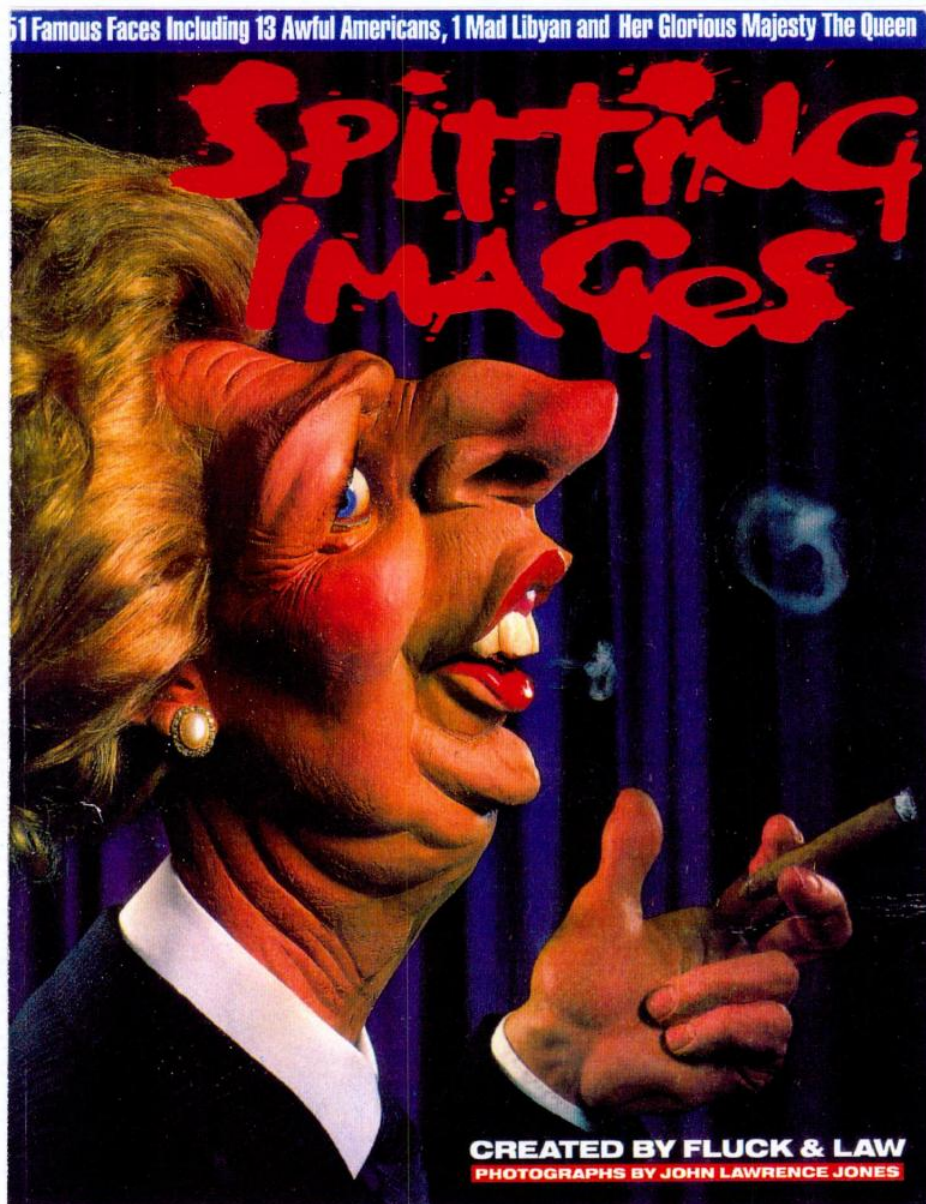


PLATE 20

Margaret Thatcher

This model was used as the cover illustration for
the Spitting Image publication, *Spitting Images*.

Fluck and Law

1987



a risk of shooting yourself in the foot - you have to go too far in the right direction." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) The caricaturist Pablo Bach described this well when he said, "If you go too far, it's like pulling a rubber band too far - it snaps." (Mulroy, London, 1995) According to him, the caricature had to work on a number of levels.

1. Image - firstly, the visual portrayal of the person has to be accurate.
2. Voice - the impersonation of the character has to be accurate.
3. Sketch - the context of the sketch that they are in has to be effective (witty, satirical, humourous)
4. Puppeteering - the way the puppets move has to be convincing. (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994)

Roger Law also enforced one of these points in his biography, *A Nasty Piece of Work*, when he said, "It being television, it was the punter's perception, not the artist's, that ruled." (Law, 1992, p184) He also emphasised the importance of being aware of what other caricaturists were doing with particular characters. In the documentary, *An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, he also said, "People must look at each others. I mean we do. Because you're relying also on what's in people's heads - your audience's heads - of what they think it looks like." (An Illustrated Guide to Caricature, 1985)

Another interesting thing about the show was the big question of who to portray and who not to portray. I put this question to a script-writer Mark Burton during a telephone interview in November 1994. He told me that, as the nature of the show was "quite tabloidy," the people they write scripts for are people in the public eye or people who are popular at the time the series is being produced. (Mulroy, Dublin-London, Nov 1994) When I asked Pilbrow what kind of celebrity was suitable for portrayal on the show he said:

- someone who is well-known, by approximately 90% of people
some characters are depicted because they're famous, others are done just because they're popular at the time of the series.
- someone who has a distinctive face - suitable features to distort
- someone who has an individual slant to their personality - a person that you can

make a sketch about. Pilbrow said, "It's good to have a context to put the characters in." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994)

From our interview, I gathered that *Spitting Image* is a writer-based show. This means that in a lot of cases, the writers will come up with an idea for a sketch, and the puppet for the personality concerned will be made accordingly (for example, John Major as the Grey Man). Giles explained how the script writers can sometimes go over the top with ideas and have to reject them and also how, as a team, they discuss things at length before ever going ahead with sketches. In his opinion, "there's no point doing something for the sake of it, if it doesn't have a context." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994)

In his biography, looking back on the life of *Spitting Image*, Roger Law said:

We realised Spitting Image could only work if we became a tight-knit team. And that's what happened. The writers got better, the direction was tighter, the ideas were funnier." (Law, 1992, p104)

Over a period of time, the show also became more populist by playing not just political passions but to the sports and theatrical interests of the audience. With hindsight, Law thought they had been wrong to have been so insistent about political content in the early days.

We had this vision that you could do twenty-four minutes of political satire, but it just wasn't there. The show had to broaden out. The important thing is being able to respond when a big political event does occur. (Chester Tooth & Claw, p117)

When talking with Giles Pilbrow on the same subject, he told me that the personalities depicted on the show had chopped and changed. He described how, at the start, the novelty of puppets on television was enough to satisfy the audience but as time went on "the show has had to evolve to survive." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) This was straying away from the purpose of the show as it was originally created as a platform for political and social comment, presented in the same vein as the hard-hitting caricatures of previous centuries. However, in the producer's opinion, the show is now light entertainment - 10% of the content is hard-hitting satire and the rest is just "a mix of silly jokes that are good fun." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) He agrees that nowadays the big percentage of the show is more populist rather than social or political. He

described the show as, "satire with a spoonful of sugar." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) There is a risk, however, judging by some of the sketches recorded in recent series that politician-bashing is being replaced by soft celebrity mimicry. Incestuous show-biz send-ups are not traditionally what *Spitting Image* is all about. "To spit or not to spit, that is the question." (Dugdale, 1990, p15)

Another question which was addressed during the interview with Giles Pilbrow was that of knowing when a particular puppet had served its time. The reply was, "When they outlive their news life, they outlive their puppet life." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994) The producer gave me an example: when Graham Taylor finished as the manager of the English soccer team, he was no longer portrayed on the show. On the other hand, Pilbrow talked about how the same personalities were often featured as regulars throughout the series, and although they appeared in every show, he felt that it was not repetitive but instead, created a kind of continuity within the series as a whole. (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994)

Usually, at the beginning of the show, there is a cabinet scene. This will be the story of the week.

To ensure absolute topicality for the programme, the team have the opportunity to record up to two minutes on the Sunday morning before transmission in the evenings. This allows them to take any wayward politician, or celebrity, who has strayed to the forefront of the media that particular week, and caricature him or her on the show. (Jones, 1984, p19)

All the team agree that the shows strength lies in the up-to-the-minute material. Law says that "everyone gets into a newspaper frame of mind." That takes Fluck and me back to where we started - in print. (Fernand, 1987, p11) The rest of the show is pre-recorded during the previous week. Along with the cabinet scene, there is also a tradition that has emerged now which involves a song at the end of the show. The other remaining sketches in the show are either regular features or once off sketches about popular entertainment figures that were recently in the news. Another interesting point to note is that in the recent series, animation has made a come back. The opening titles of the show are animated and two other features that stand out are "The Windsors" and "Good 'ol Johnnie Major." (see plates 21 & 22)

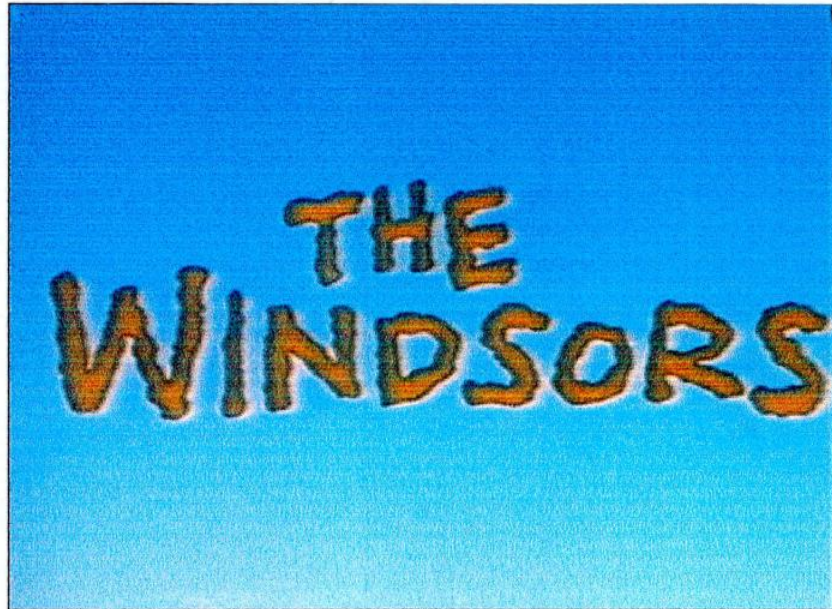


PLATE 21
"The Windsors"
Stills from animation.
Spitting Image Series
1994

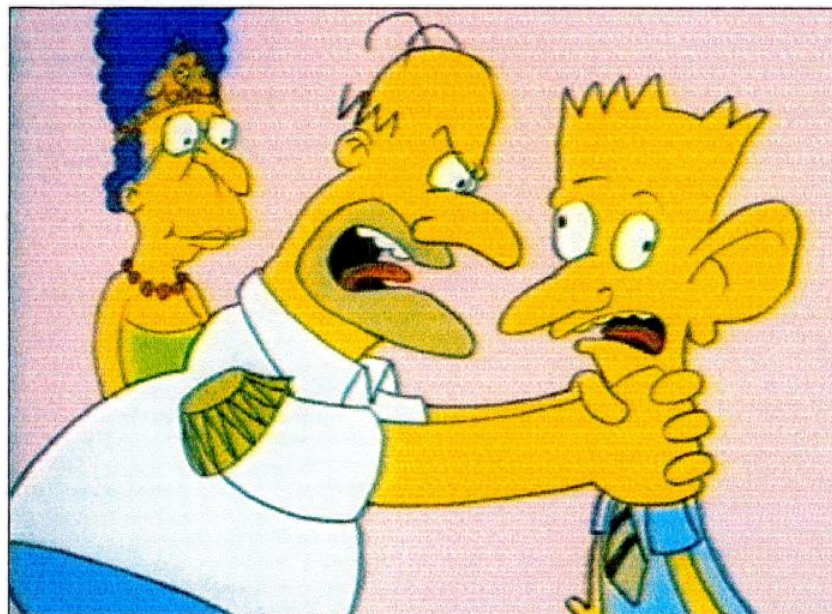
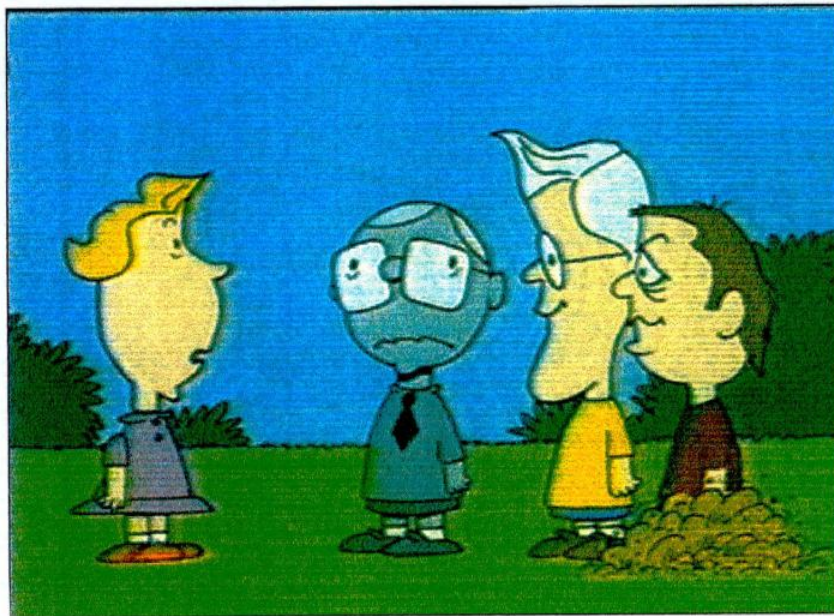
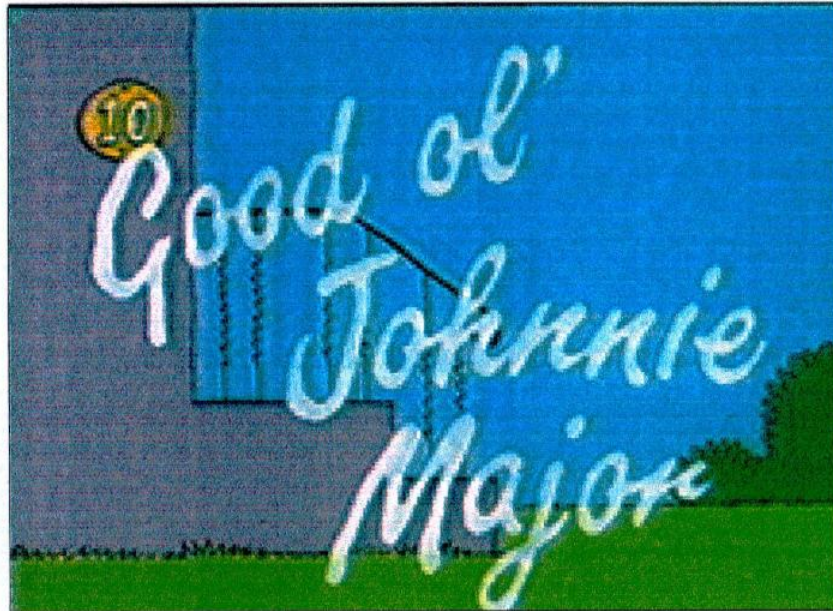


PLATE 22

"Good 'ol Johnnie Major"
Stills from animation.
Spitting Image Series
1994





"The Windsors" is an animated cartoon rendered in the same style as the successful American cartoon, "The Simpsons." As can be seen in plate 21, Prince Charles assumes the role of Bart Simpson with the Queen and Prince Philip taking the place of Homer and Marg Simpson. "Good 'ol Johnnie Major" is also an animated feature, this time rendered in the style of the cartoon, Charlie Brown (with Major playing the part of Charlie Brown).

In the recent series, there are a number of regular features. These include,

1. John Major as the Grey Man making matchstick models of various buildings.
2. Big Hurd, Big Bird (Douglas Hurd) and John Major as Kermit the Frog in "Downing Street". This sketch is presented in the same way as the children's programme, "Sesame Street". (see plates 37 & 38)
3. Tony and Cherry - The Labour leader and his wife as a double act.
4. Jackson, Presley and Baby (which is a cross between Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley)

There are three episodes of Spitting Image on the go at any one time, and the producer has to plan the recording of show B and co-ordinate the scripting of show C while show A is being made. Three of the programme's component strands (songs, animation sequences and regular features) are prepared well in advance and the main script is finalised sixteen days ahead of transmission: only the two-and-a-half minute allowance for late-recorded topicals provides for a quick response. The writers, therefore, are obliged to look towards future events, rather than satirise what has already happened. (Dugdale, 1990, pp14-15)

Despite Spitting Image's high production values, it would be just a collection of witty puppet caricatures if not for the brilliant behind-the-scenes machinations. The writing is smart and the direction is skilled. (Heller, 1992, p66) Everybody plays an important role in producing an effective puppet. John Lloyd had a sophisticated theory:

The show is really like a federation. Everybody feels as if they're servicing it, but that it's not really theirs. Everybody also feels that it's their part that has got it to a high standard, and that but for the fault of someone else, it would be absolutely brilliant. But nobody feels it's a direct reflection of their own personality. I don't, the writers don't, and Rog and Pete certainly don't. The dolls rule. (Chester, Tooth and Claw, p145)

CHAPTER FOUR

Function and Impact of Spitting Image



PLATE 23

"The Iron Maiden"

Mrs. Thatcher as the new Prime Minister is portrayed here for The Sunday Times.
As the Iron Maiden, she was portrayed covered in heavy metal kitchen utensils.

Fluck and Law

1979

On the question of whether the *Spitting Image* Company were trying to subvert the fabric of society as we know it, they allowed that this was their intent but they did not seem to be getting anywhere. (Chester, 1985, p10) The makers of the programmes are careful to avoid grandiose claims about their role and their place in the history of British satire. The pricking of pomposity, after all, provides much of their source material. But, unlike most exponents of this ancient art, they insist that they do follow an old tradition and that they perform a useful job in society. (Clarke, 1990, p12) Fluck and Law did not create *Spitting Image* just to become a factory of witty objects; they wanted to satirise people in the most memorable possible. (Heller, 1992, p64) Bill Dare, a past presenter of the show once said,

People in the public eye have teams of researchers and make-up people and image controllers who help them present themselves in the best way. We're slightly redressing the balance by taking all that away - robbing them of their dignity. (Clarke, 1990, p13)

Peter Fluck thought that laughter at the expense of the famous was a positive virtue, "Everyone we attack has already been made famous by their own publicity machines or by the newspapers." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p117) In the article, *It's not a knockout*, Helen Fielding gave an insight into how she saw satire working in connection with *Spitting Image*. It included a quote by Tim Bell:

The images which the programme presented were an extension of ideas which already existed in people's minds and in the media. Because the show presented them in such a grotesque and exaggerated way they became catchphrase ideas in the public consciousness, and as such, yes, they did damage people. (Fielding, 1992, p6)

If we look at a photograph of Mrs. Thatcher or John Major, it can be seen that they are not altogether unpleasantly formed. But as Roger Law pointed out in his biography, when many people try to imagine them (and I have found this myself), "they will very likely flash up in the minds eye in the form of Spitting Image grotesques" - as the Iron Maiden (see plate 23) or the Grey Man.(see plate 24) (Law, 1992, inside cover) Such is the visual impact of the show. "The very best caricatures tell an essential truth and for that reason can be worn by their victims for life and even beyond." (Law, 1992, inside cover)

The custodians of the moral order were quick to appreciate that *Spitting Image*

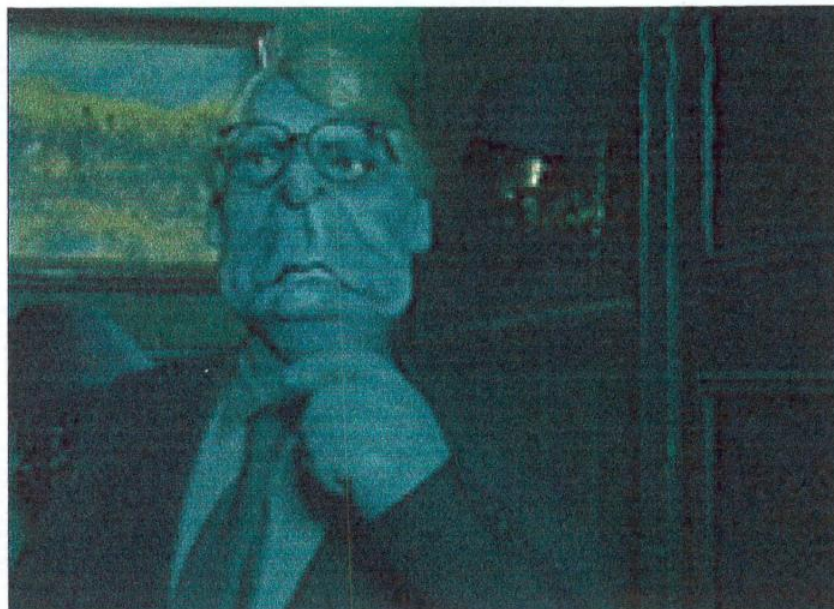
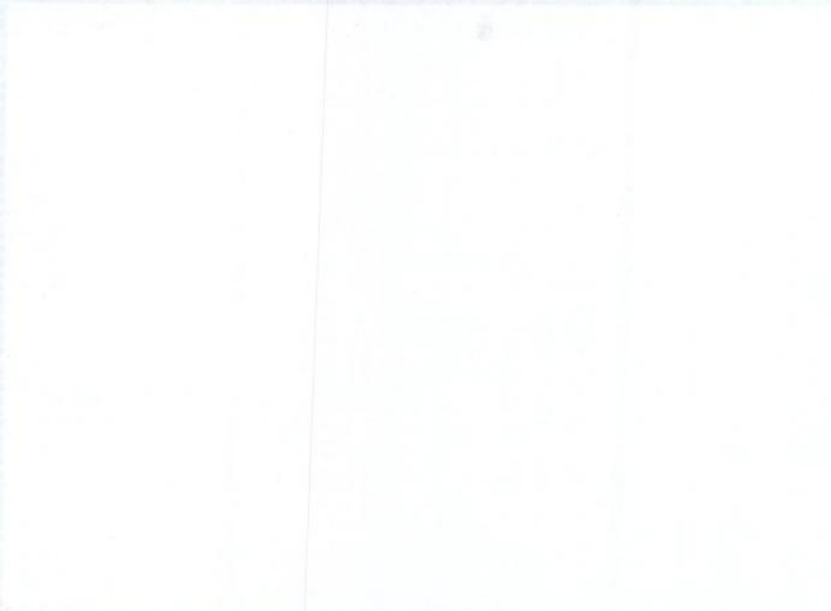


PLATE 24

"Grey Man"

Still of John Major in the Spitting Image Series
1994



threatened the nation's most cherished symbols. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108) In his biography, Law said, "While the show's insights may be too diffuse to have any decisive effect on how people vote, I think that it undoubtedly has influenced perceptions." (Law, 1992, p192) He said that their modest but continuing political effect has been to keep the feet of the nation's leaders just that little bit closer to the ground. "It's probably among the reasons why Spitting Image has proved to be rather more than a flash in the pan." (Law, 1992, p192)

"To be in it is merely a bore. But to be out of it, simply a tragedy." (Fernand, 1987, p11) Spitting Image has proved itself as the ultimate social barometer. It is as topical and more political than any newspaper gossip column. The show has become the latex *Who's Who*. (Fernand, 1987, p11) It's clear that Spitting Image is not only a financial and critical success, but also a hit among some of the parties being satirised. Law said, "We're told that it's kind of an honour to be made into a puppet. People who aren't done are actually hurt." (Heller, 1986, p134)

Given what they have to endure, it seems extraordinary that so many real people want to be done by Spitting Image. Oscar Wilde is credited as saying, "There is only one thing worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p137) When Jeffrey Archer was so eager to be included that he submitted photographs of himself and tapes of his voice to the Image office at Limehouse Studios, the team toyed with the idea of leaving him out. They said, "But we couldn't, he was too dreadful not to be in." (Fernand, 1987, p11) Michael Heseltine wanted to purchase his puppet for months, but the things cost £ 5,000 to make. (see plate 25) Peter Fluck, co-founder of Spitting Image with Roger Law told him he could have it return for a donation to Labour party funds. Heseltine declined. (Franks, 1993, p33) It is a well known fact that there is a shared determination among the victims of this modern satire to put a brave face on their discomfort - to express feelings of fondness, for instance, for their rubber alter egos on Spitting Image. (Clarke, 1990, p12)

The show is famous in its own right but is eternally dependent on the celebrity of its subjects. The royals may go on and on, as Prime Ministers would if they could,



PLATE 25

Michael Heseltine
Still from Spitting Image Series
1994



PLATE 26

"Kinnochio"
Neil Kinnock as Kinnochio with his wife Glenys, as Jiminy Cricket,
being a guide to the Labour leader's conscience.
From the book, Spitting Images
Fluck and Law
1987



but pop stars, television and sports personalities are no sooner modelled than they have disappeared from the public eye. The game, therefore, is to spot the likely ones before they are household faces and then help them, whether they like it or not, towards such a status. (Franks, 1993, p32) Each rubber model is fashioned with one single defining idea - Bill Dare's team tried to boil the characters down to their essence and to express that essence in a single word. (Franks, 1993, p32)

The potential impact that Spitting Image could have on its audience is such that in 1987, one of the episodes was scheduled not to be broadcast until after the election. However, in 1992, they produced an election special which was cleared for broadcasting. In the show, God advised people to vote Labour and the Devil voted for John Major. Plate 27 shows the candidates John Major, Neil Kinnock, Paddy Ashdown and Ian Paisley. A spokesman for the Independent Television Commission said, "We couldn't see any reason why not, given the assurances on balance between the three parties. After all, making people laugh isn't the same as changing anything." (Fielding, 1992, p6) In the same article, John Lloyd stated how it is always the same with politicians: you can say what you like about their politics, but if you say that they have pimples or that they dribble they get into a terrible state. He said,

Let there be much tininess, dribbling and rampant spottiness...to punish them for irritating the rest of us to death with their horrid dreary election campaign. It will secretly irate some top level personal egos. (Fielding, 1992, p6)

The question that has to be answered here is that of television having the power to command, having the potential to cut and bite as well as influence the general public to a particular viewpoint. In Fielding's article, Harry Enfield said, "People just don't vote for rubber puppets. I don't think satire has any effect on politics." Fielding argued, "Pish and posh, I say. Just because satire doesn't bring down governments all on its own doesn't mean it has no effect." (Fielding, 1992, p6) The editor of *Private Eye* and former writer on Spitting Image has the opinion that, "No one ever got laughed out of power that simply... But people vote as a result of a range of sources of information. And satire is definitely there as one of them." (Fielding, 1992, p6)

The targets for the puppet maker's satire range from politicians to Royalty and



PLATE 27

"Studies in Power"

The leaders of the main political parties,
created for a *Private Eye* 1992 General Election poster.

Fluck and Law

1992

sports stars to musicians, the main features of each being subject to brutal exaggeration. When talking with the present producer Giles Pilbrow, he told me about the masses of correspondence received about particular puppets and scripts - some complimentary, some not. However, they get little feedback from the actual people they portray because he says they know they'll probably be hit harder the following week. In January 1986, soon after the start of the third series, Lewis Chester contacted one hundred British victims of Spitting Image and asked them their view of the show in general and their thoughts about the particular puppet of themselves, the responses from which will be discussed later. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p138) Pilbrow also told me how the show has a group of lawyers at Central TV who oversee the personalities and their context in the shows because, in his own words, they have, "a huge potential for being taken to the cleaners." (Mulroy, Dublin-London, 1994)

As the creators of the Spitting Image puppets, Fluck and Law may not have elevated caricature to the level of fine art (although this may be disputed), but no one has done more to broaden its impact and appeal. Fluck said, "I love it when people look like they ought to." (Fernand, 1987, p11)

The portrayal of some of the characters in the show and the realistic animation of them through the skill of the puppeteers along with the accurate voice impressionists has helped to make the visual images of the puppets stick in people's minds. In Law's opinion, Mrs. Thatcher and the crazed Michael Heseltine were probably the two most popular characters in the show for many years, but they very very closely followed by Neil Kinnock as Kinnochio (see plate 26) and David Steel as a babe cradled in the arms of David Owen. (Law, 1992, p192) I would like to now examine a few of the political subjects portrayed by Spitting Image as well as discussing the Royal Family and their treatment by the show.

In the article, *Spit and Polish*, Law said,

Some subjects are more demanding than others. We had a terrible time making Mrs. Thatcher. After about ten attempts it got to be like writers block. The trouble is that she really looks like any housewife you might find in Sainsbury's. In the end we made one of what she's like rather than what she looks like. (Chester, *Spit & Polish*, p56)



PLATE 28

Margaret Thatcher as she appeared in the *Spitting Image* publication, *Spitting Images*.

The Prime Minister looks up pleasingly at a monument erected in her honour.

The statue is dressed in a suit with waist-coat, shirt and tie and is smoking a cigar.

Fluck and Law

1987

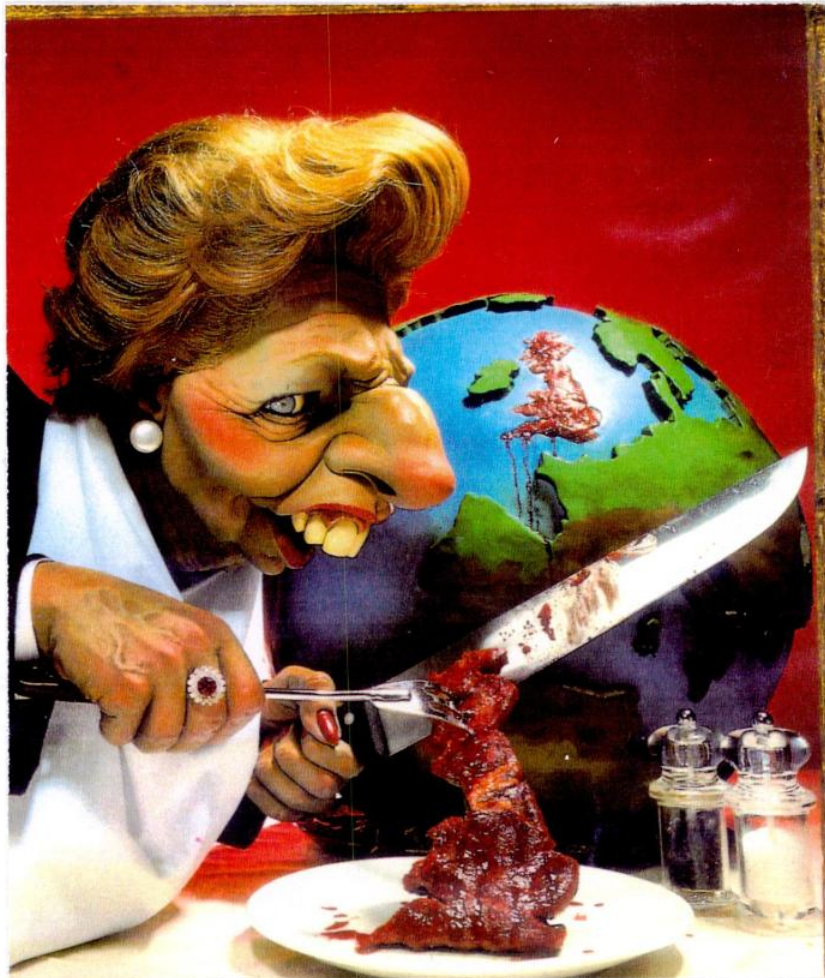


PLATE 29

"Thatcha"

This model was produced to illustrate the cover of the Spitting Image publication,
THATCHA: TEN YEARS OF THE DRAGON
Fluck and Law
1989



PLATE 30

Photograph of an early Thatcher puppet (left)
and a monster type rendering (right)

Ian Hislop, former *Spitting Image* script writer said,

On *Spitting Image* we enjoyed making her into a man and had her standing up to pee in urinals and so on. But, in the end, I think that's probably what she likes. She probably does think she's surrounded by men who are all bloody wet. (Rusbridger, 1988, p19)

The comedian Stephen Fry tended to agree saying that the *Spitting Image* version of her as a kind of Hitlerian figure is almost playing into the hands of those who like her, "you know, strong and iron-willed, iron-clad and all the rest of it." (Rusbridger, 1988, p19) Plates 28, 29 & 30 show a range of portrayals of Mrs. Thatcher over the years.

In one of the early shows, circa 1985, there is a scene in which Mrs. Thatcher awakes from her sleep dressed in Union Jack pyjamas and night-cap, to the sound of a ticking noise. She wakes up her husband Denis, beside her, and asks if he knows what the sound is. He responds by saying that it's the sound of his pace-maker. Margaret gets annoyed, hits Denis and tells him to turn it off so that she can get back to sleep. With that, Denis has a heart attack and Margaret goes back to sleep. (Spit with Polish, 1985) This sketch removes any sense of love or affection between Mrs. Thatcher and her husband. It also accentuates a coldness within her personality.

Plate 31 shows another scene of the same period, Mrs. Thatcher is in a restaurant with some of her colleagues from the Cabinet. She is reading the menu and smoking a cigar. The waitress approaches,

Waitress:	Would you like to order, Sir?	
Thatcher:	Yes, I will have a steak.	
Waitress:	How d'you like it?	
Thatcher:	Oh, raw please.	
Waitress:	What about the vegetables?	
Thatcher:	Oh, they'll have the same as me.	
Crowd:	Absolutely.	(An Illustrated Guide to Caricature, 1985)

During each of these sketches jabs are made at Mrs. Thatcher's femininity and personality. Brian Walden, television presenter and former Labour MP, said that as far as effect goes, he thinks the show tends to reinforce stereotypes that already existed in a relatively harmless way. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, pp134-140) This is particularly true of the Margaret Thatcher character.

The final scene I will mention here involves Michael Heseltine using the facilities in the men's toilets along with another Cabinet Minister. Mrs. Thatcher walks in



PLATE 31a
Mrs. Thatcher out to lunch
Still from Spitting Image Series
1985



PLATE 31b
Close up of Mrs. Thatcher
Still from Spitting Image Series
1985





PLATE 32

"Miss Discipline"

Model of Mrs. Thatcher as "Miss Discipline"
which appeared in the publication *Men Only*.
Fluck and Law
1979



PLATE 33

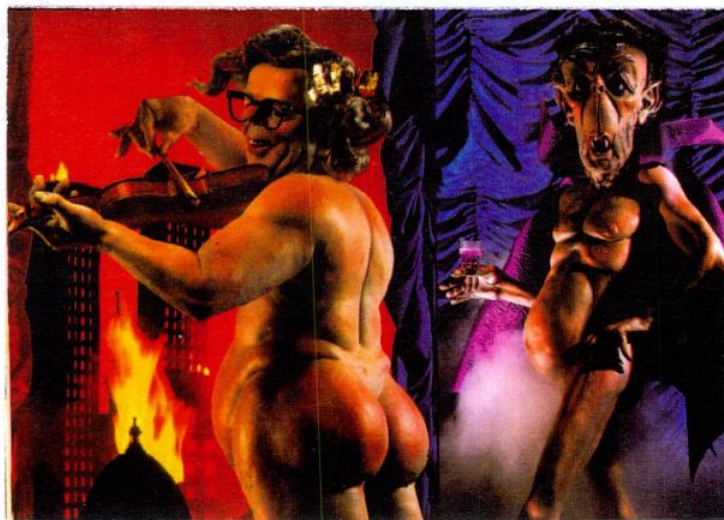
Luck and Flaw felt that the election of a Tory Government in 1979 and the emergence of Britain's first woman Prime Minister called for something outrageous. (Plate 32 accompanied these models)

Above: Willie Whitelaw, as an unclothed jailer

Below: Geoffrey Howe as a fiddler (left) and Keith Joseph (right) as a nude vampire.

Men Only

Fluck And Law
1979





dressed in a pin-stripe suit, shirt and tie and proceeds to ask Heseltine what he is hiding from her this week. She then lines up with the men and standing up, proceeds to use to facilities as a man would while Heseltine addresses her with such titles as "your wonderfulness," and "your imperial scrumptuousness." (Chester, *Spit and Polish*, 1985)

Mrs. Thatcher dominates all the government scenes of this early period. All the politicians call her Sir and she has a habit of hitting and kicking them.

Roger Law recalls that a friend from *Newsweek* was chatting with Thatcher at a party. During a lull in the conversation, he asked her if she ever watched *Spitting Image*. She coldly replied, "I don't ever watch that program!" (Heller, 1986, p105) It has been generally accepted through the years by cartoonists and satirists alike that Mrs. Thatcher was never affected by the styles in which she was portrayed or caricatured. Heath said, "It's depressing to think you may be having no effect at all." (Rusbridger, 1988, p19)

If you were a cartoonist in Berlin in 1935 and drew an anti-Hitler cartoon they might come round and beat you to a pulp, but at least you'd have known that your drawing worked. (Rusbridger, 1988, p19)

Throughout the years, critics and viewers alike have said that in a show such as *Spitting Image*, politicians are fair game. In most of the programs, the politicians of the day are portrayed as a collective bunch - sometimes like children. In February, I asked Oscar da Costa if he ever felt as if he was being particularly nasty when distorting someones features. He admitted that when portraying politicians, "you conceive things in a crueller way." (Mulroy, London, 1995) Plates 30 & 31 show an early model of Mrs. Thatcher and her Cabinet Ministers as they appeared in a 1979 edition of *Men Only*. In the Thatcher era, there was a scene where the conservative ministers Denis Lawson, Geoffrey Howe and Michael Heseltine were sitting around a table in the government offices. Howe says, "I love it the day before they close parliament and we all bring in games - it's really good isn't it."

Plate 34 shows a sketch which brought a lot of attention to *Spitting Image* - that of David Steel in David Owen's pocket. You might imagine that Sir David Steel would have more reason than most to feel aggrieved. The programme's portrayal of him in Dr.



PLATE 34

David Steel and David Owen

David Owen's pocket - looking up at his master with a hopeless adoring smile, became a campaign issue in the 1987 election. (Clarke, 1990, p12) Sir David went on the record saying that Spitting Image's treatment of him as a wimp in David Owen's pocket had damaged his political career. (Fielding, 1992, p6) He acknowledged that it almost certainly damaged the Alliance's chances. But he harbours no grudges. He said, "It didn't upset me. I was concerned about the political effect it had; but only after the event. At the time I accepted it was part of the game." (Clarke, 1990, p12) In the article *Spit and Polish*, Steel said,

I wince a bit when I watch it. I'm not at all sure about my puppet gazing up adoringly at David Owen and calling him "dear". I would also like to know why my puppet is so small when I am noticeably taller than Neil Kinnock. (Chester, *Spit & Polish*, p57)

In their portrayal of David Steel, the show picked up on perceptions which existed already and highlighted them. No one could possibly say how much of the damage to Steel came from the show and how much from the elements of truth on which it was based, but that did not stop Steel being certain that satire had had an effect. (Fielding, 1992, p6)

Robert Harris, political journalist with the *Sunday Times* said:

If you're made to look like a complete, grey, hopeless, little wimp, it means you're not taken seriously. They may say that no one is ever laughed out of power, but Major might well be the first. (Fielding, 1992, p6)

The consensus at *Spitting Image* is that the portrayal of John Major has turned into one of the greatest triumphs in the gallery of eight hundred characters. (see plate 22) Bill Dare, a previous producer of the show, said that when Major came in, the team felt sure that there was someone who had been promoted above his ability, a dithering accountant suddenly being called upon to run the country. Dare said,

In some ways, we would have liked to portray him more nastily. But he wasn't, so in his place we stuck a man who was more concerned with eating his peas. And because that version was accepted, it became quite damning. The crises get worse, dramatic measures are needed, and there he sits, just an accountant. (Franks, 1993, p33)

The sketch involving John Major eating his peas was used as a runner throughout the series in 1993. In the recent series, this act was replaced by another regular feature in which John Major makes match-stick models of buildings while his wife, Norma, sits in



PLATE 35

A still of John and Norma Major at the dinner table eating peas.

Still from Spitting Image series

1993



PLATE 36

John Major makes a matchstick model of Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament in his spare time as his wife Norma looks on.

Still from Spitting Image series

1994



PLATE 37
"Downing Street"
Stills from Spitting Image Series
1994





PLATE 38

"Downing Street"

Above: Big Hurd, Big Bird (Douglas Hurd)

Below: John Major as Kermit the Frog

Stills from Spitting Image Series

1994



the background.(see plate 36) In a similar way to the "pea sketch", this scene emphasises how mundane the Prime Minister's existence is. (see plate 35) Another sketch used as a regular feature in the recent series was "Downing Street." It was rendered in the same style as the children's television program "Sesame Street." (see plates 37, 38) John Major played the role of Kermit the Frog and Douglas Hurd played the part of Big Bird. (his character was called Big Hurd, Big Bird)

It's not just politicians who grin and bear it. Mary Whitehouse too, is prepared to accept the personal barbs: she's more worried about the unkind treatment of the Royal Family - the only ones, she says, who can't easily hit back. In the past, the aristocracy might have been able to have unruly tongues cut out. Now they have to rely on the libel laws like everyone else - something they've been extremely reluctant to do. (Clarke, 1990, p12)

As the Fluck and Law partnership evolved into *Spitting Image*, the royals became a much bigger item. The royals made regular appearances among their early plasticene models for print (see plate 39), but they were to be fiercely criticised by Mrs. Whitehouse, among others, for making mockery of people who could not answer back. Law's opinion on the subject was that the royal's "inability to answer back" was clearly a matter of their own choice and certainly not a fact of life. He continued,

Moreover, as mockery of the Royal Family goes, ours is mild in comparison to that has gone before. People who are keen to know just how savage anti-royal caricature can be should consult James Gillray's studies of George IV. In those days the Crown exhibited a healthy ability to answer back by buying up Gillray's plates. So far, alas, I have yet to be tempted with a similar offer for the models. (Law, 1992, p10)

Plate 40 shows a model made on the occasion of the marriage of the Duke and Duchess of York. One would think that Fluck and Law were being very crude here, however plate 41 demonstrates how they were influenced by James Gillray's portrayal of an earlier Duke and Duchess of York.

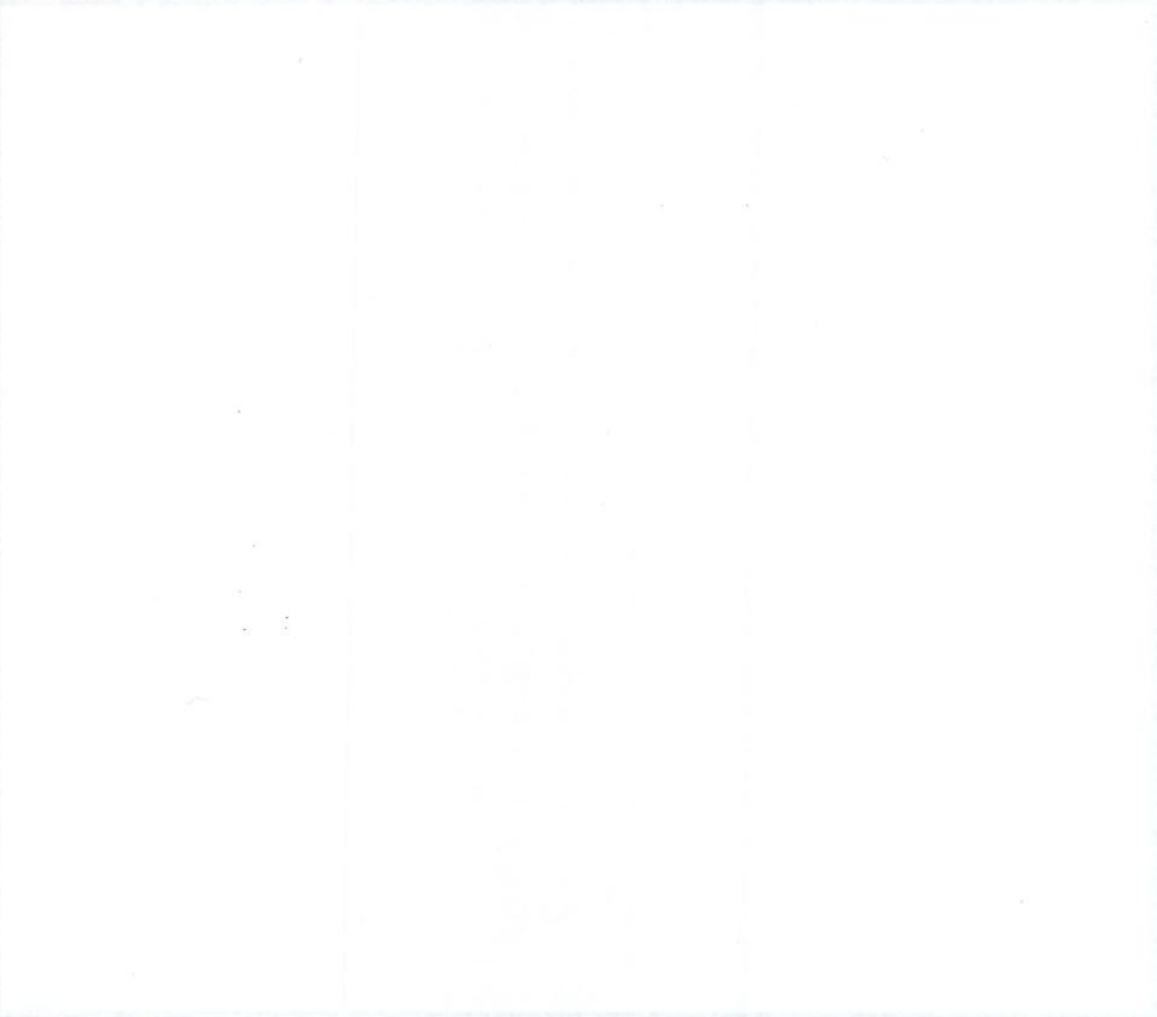
The treatment of the Royal Family generated more hate mail than all the other issues put together. Individual politicians might have their defenders, but for the most part politicians as a class were regarded as fair game. Mrs. Thatcher bald, dressed as a man, or in search of an electric razor, could excite adverse comment but it was defence of the Crown that brought out the letters of menace and disgust. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p105)



PLATE 39

"They're Off"

A mix of photomontage and modelling
A study of Princess Anne and Captain Mark Philips
made for *Nova* magazine on the occasion of their marriage.
Fluck and Law
1979



CONFIDENTIAL

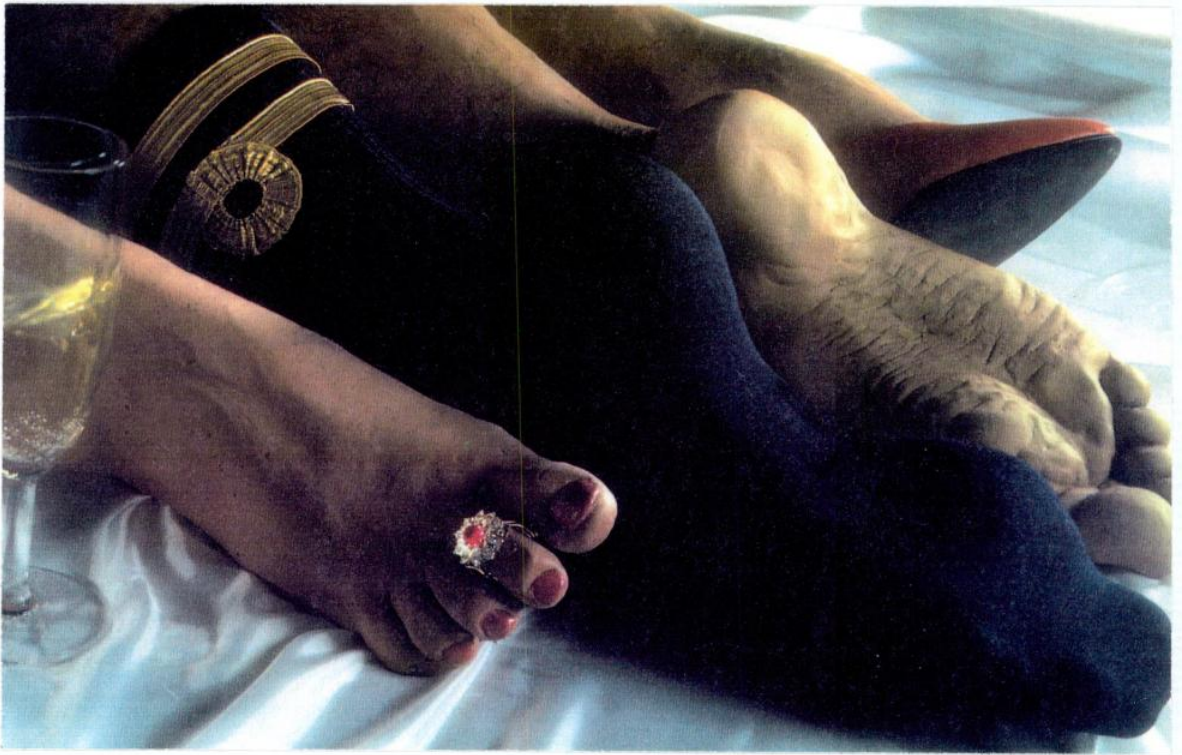
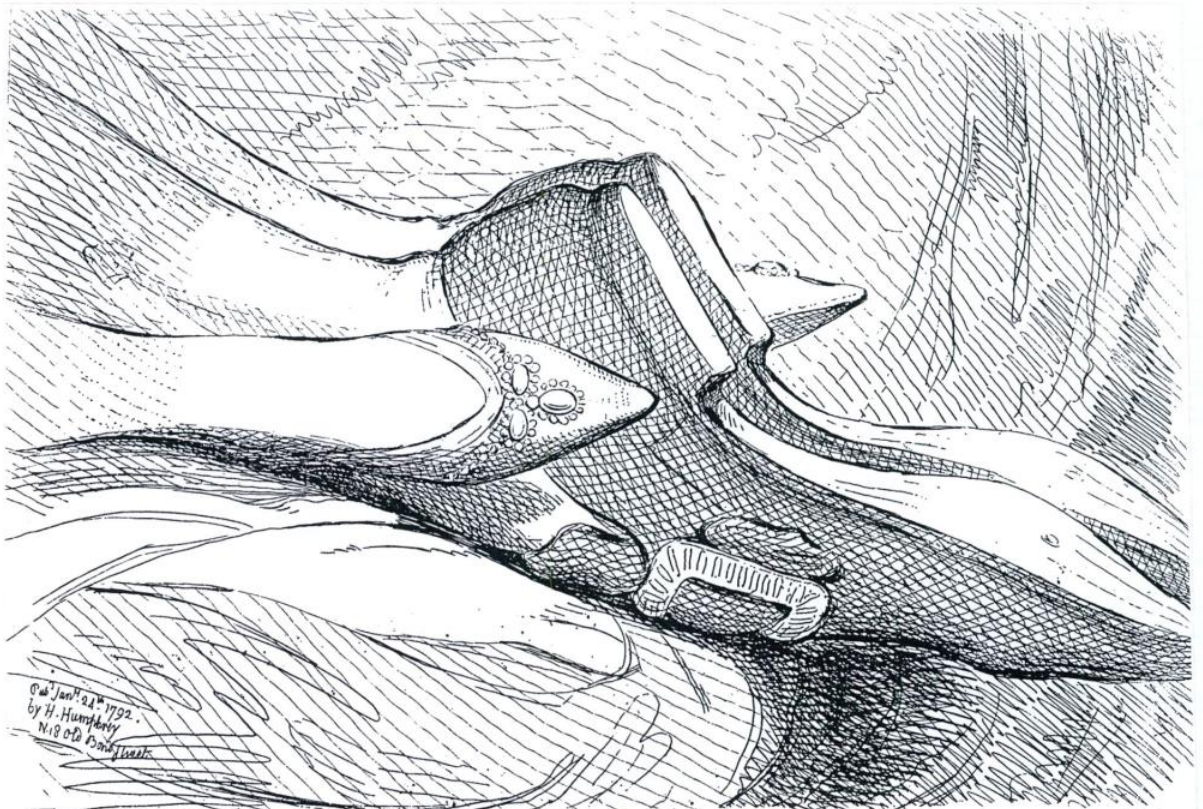


PLATE 40

An update of Gillray's portrayal of the Duke and Duchess of York in 1792
Fluck and Law
1986



FASHIONABLE CONTRASTS; or The Duchess's little Shoe yielding to the Magnitude of the Duke's Foot 20

PLATE 41

"Fashionable Contrasts"
James Gillray
1792

From the outset, the team suspected it might be stirring intense emotion in caricaturing the royals. At the same time, no aspect of their work seemed more sanctified by tradition. Royalty had been a prime target of lampooning since its infancy. In their reasoned letter of reply to people who claimed they'd been made "physically sick" by the show, Jon Blair and John Lloyd tried to underscore the democratic benefits of this tradition. They would also have none of the suggestion, made by Mrs. Whitehouse and many others, that the royals could not answer back. There was nothing in any Bill of Rights or in the Constitution that enriched this principle. It was also their opinion that the fact that the royals withheld their views was a matter of choice and not a fact of life, as Roger Law had said. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p106)

Lewis Chester stated that the show never considered itself to be anti-monarchy in any way. But, for some, the joy of Spitting Image was that it broke these sanctified protocols of the medium of television. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p106)

The strongest justification used by Lloyd in favour of doing the royals was that the royal caricatures were "affectionate". Portraying the Queen as bossy, her consort as a boor, her sister as a tippler, her eldest son, Charles, as a wimp, her second son as a lecher and Prince William as the smartest of the bunch, seems to stretch the definitions of affection to the outer limits. But it was very much the case that both writers and puppeteers considered the royals the megastars of the show precisely because they were benignly conceived. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p106) Plates 42 to 45 show a collection of Royal characters.

Some evidence of a specific royal attitude emerged in October 1985 with the publication by Faber & Faber, of *The Spitting Image Book*. Living up to its claim to be appaulingly disrespectful, the book featured the Queen and Prince Philip in swimsuits, the Queen Mother sporting "Gin & Tonic" tattoos (on her knuckles) (see plate 44a), and Prince Andrew as a nude spread with a profusion of sausages on his lap. Two booksellers "by Royal Appointment" refused to stock the book and the chairman of Faber & Faber, Michael Shea, received a call from the Queen's press secretary. Under the circumstances, Shea felt his firm was no longer a suitable publishing house for the collect-



PLATE 42

Buckingham Palace balcony on the occasion of
the marriage of Prince Andrew and Sarah Ferguson in 1986
Fluck and Law
1986



PLATE 43a

Princess Diana and Princess Anne, who were alleged to have had some differences, appear nose-to-nose in one of Spitting Images early books.

Fluck and Law
1986



PLATE 43b

A study of Prince Charles and Princess Diana with their baby son, Prince William.

Fluck and Law
1980



PLATE 44a
 The Queen Mother's tattoos
The Appaulingly Disrespectful Spitting Image Book
 Fluck and Law
 1985

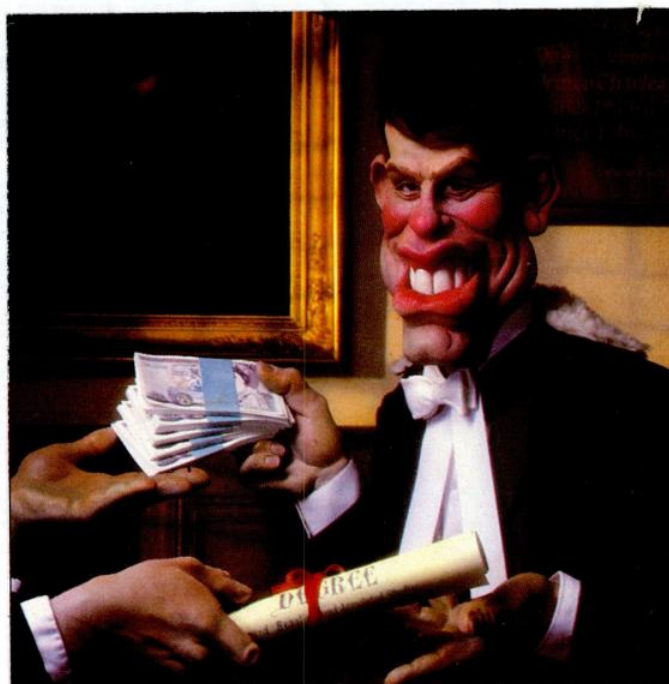


PLATE 44b
 Prince Edward hands over money in return for a university degree.
The Appaulingly Disrespectful Spitting Image Book
 1985



PLATE 45

The Queen at home
This puppet of the Queen appeared in the book, *Spitting Images*
Fluck and Law
1987

ed speeches of Prince Charles. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p138)

The Royal Family had been in the show since its inception. Throughout the first series the only one missing was the Queen Mother. At the start of the second series, it was said that it was the only significant royal bridge to cross. At this time she was actually getting conspicuous by her absence. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p107) The producer, John Lloyd said, "Newspapers would bait us saying we'd never dare to do the most beloved granny in the Western World. I thought it was time to take up the challenge." (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p107)

By February 1986, the two elements required were a credible character and a suitable sketch. Lloyd remembers telling Fluck and Law to "make her relatively nice." (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p107) The script that Lloyd finally endorsed had the Queen Mother billed as a deeply saintly person who talked Assisi-like with the animals.(reference to the Italian St. Francis of Assisi who used to converse with the animals) She was then to appear inquiring into the telephone; "Have you any tips for the 3.30 at Aintree today?", the response coming from a horse at the other end of the line. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p107)

At the time the crew wanted to introduce this sketch, the director, Peter Harris, whom Lloyd described as a "real old royalist" (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p107) was not at all keen. Lloyd said, "Nobody could be a greater fan of the puppet Queen, but he drew the line at a puppet Queen Mother." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p107) It turned out that the show in question was directed by his alternate, John Stroud. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p107)

Lewis Chester describes the run up to the depiction of the Queen Mother as classic media hype. On the Tuesday before the scheduled transmission of the Queen Mother sketch, Peter Harris gave a features interview to the *Birmingham Daily News*, in which, he let the cat out of the bag. Harris said,

We have never been unkind to the Royal Family, but personally I do not think we should have a puppet of the Queen Mother. I fought hard against it but I am told the puppet is being made. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108)

It was hoped that the remark, buried in the columns of a local newspaper, would go

unnoticed. But, unfortunately, by Friday morning every national paper had seen it and was on the phone demanding to know what the Queen Mother story was, and where were the pictures of the puppet. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108) John Lloyd had a paralysing moment when a freelance journalist rang to say that he'd heard through a contact with the writers that they were thinking of doing a drinking competition between the Queen Mother and Princess Margaret. Lloyd did not want to give an outright denial as it was just possible that somebody had set such an idea down on paper and the journalist might have it. All he could say was that there was no way it would get on air. "The story never appeared, though the journalists tip had been entirely correct." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108) For the records, Lloyd would say, "The Queen Mother is the most loved member of the Royal Family and because we have included all the other immediate family members, we felt we could not leave her out." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108) *The Daily Express* was up in arms at this statement and devoted the lead item of its opinions column to the impending outrage.

She has done more for the spirit of Britain than any of the squalid backroom boys who hide snide and shallow jokes behind their sniggering puppet faces. Bringing the Queen Mother into this series is obviously a desperate attempt to boost viewing figures. The public have an excellent opportunity to redress this *Spitting Image*. By switching off. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108)

The problem that Lloyd now saw was that the Assisi-type sketch for the Queen Mother now looked tame when set against the background of public furore. Lloyd thought a more stylish joke, that took account of the debate, would be in order. "So stylish was it, that some people seemingly missed it altogether." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p108) In the last thirty seconds of the show a statement came from a voiceover:

It has been widely reported in the newspapers that a so-called puppet of the Queen Mother would appear on this week's programme. To the press, the public, and the many Members of Parliament who have so kindly rung to complain, we would like to admit that this was an outrageous and contemptible untruth perpetrated by us to bring the programmes into line with current Government policy guidelines. *Spitting Image* have never made such a puppet and were on holiday at the time it wasn't made. Thank You. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, pp108-109)

Then, on teetered the Queen Mother puppet to say, "Oh, what a pity. I was so looking forward to it." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p109) The switchboard at Central TV remained unjammed and only six phonecalls of complaint about the Queen Mother's appearance



PLATE 46

Prince Charles as he appeared in the *Spitting Image* publication,
Spitting Images
Fluck and Law
1987

were received. Chester told of how some observers were actually impressed with the way *Spitting Image* had ridden out the press storm, featured the Queen Mother and come out laughing. Ratings for the show that everybody had been advised to switch off came out at 11.4 million - comfortably the highest of the series. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p109)

The introduction of the Queen Mother into the *Spitting Image* series should be regarded as a great breakthrough in terms of televisual satire. As mentioned in Chapter One, one of the many functions of humour is its capability to introduce taboo subjects into everyday conversation, or in this case, into a television programme. It is interesting to see how various characters and various situations have gradually become acceptable since the inception of *Spitting Image*. No triumph was greater than the portrayal of the Queen Mother. Such is the acceptability of the puppet that increasingly, over the years, the character has developed into somewhat of an alcoholic.

The Royal Family have never offered any feedback regarding their opinions on their portrayal on the show. However in a book entitled, *The Cartoonists View of Royalty*, published in 1978, the foreword is given by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales.(see plate 46) He says,

I have always felt that an ability to laugh at yourself is an essential requirement for a sane existence in this world. Cartoonists, almost more than anyone else, help to relieve unnecessary tension, deflate ridiculous pomposity and emphasise the funny side of something that may threaten to become dangerously serious. It is also considerably easier to libel someone pictorially (and get away with it) than it is to do so by the printed word! (Grosvenor, 1978, p7)

After reading this, I wonder if his view changed at all after the production of *Spitting Image*.

As *Spitting Image* evolved, it presented sports and entertainments characters along with their cast of political and royal targets. (see plates 47 & 48) The sporting world seemed grateful for the attention. Snooker player, Steve Davis enjoyed the show and found it "quite a compliment to be included." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p142) Boxing Commentator, Harry Carpenter, said:

I have had many rewarding hours of entertainment watching *Spitting Image*. There has always been a place in TV for good satire and *Spitting Image* has ably filled it in recent years. My own feeling about being portrayed in the programme

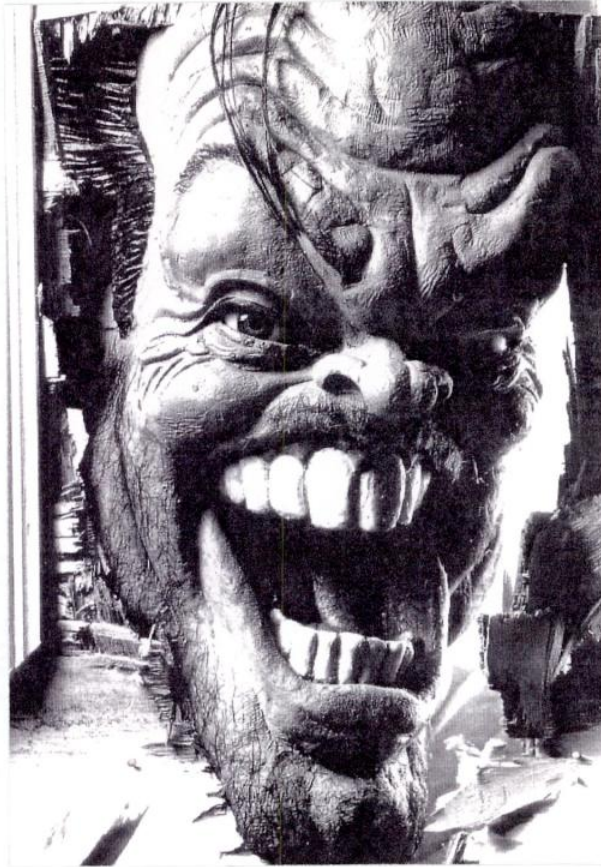


PLATE 47a

Jack Nicholson as he appeared in the book *Spitting Images*
The illustration is a scene from the film, 'The Shinning'
Fluck and Law
1987

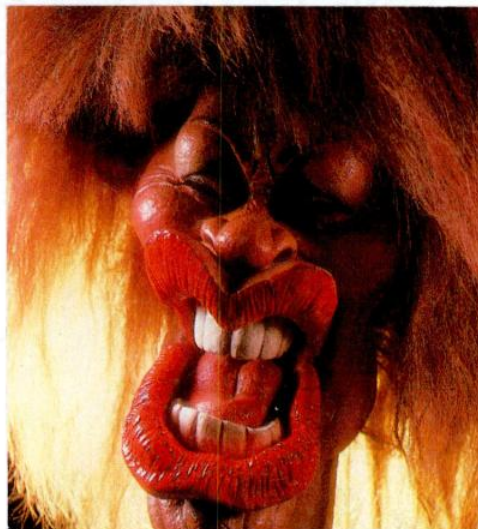


PLATE 47 b

Tina Turner as she appeared in the book *Spitting Images*
Fluck and Law
1987



PLATE 48a (above)
Pope John Paul II
as he appeared in the book
Spitting Images,
Fluck and Law,
1987

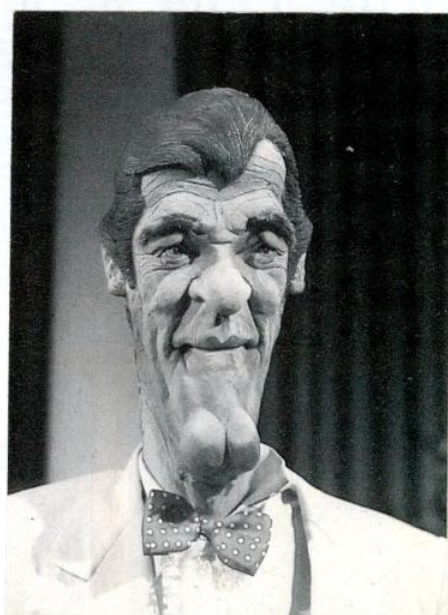


PLATE 48b (left)
Roger Moore 007
as he appeared in the book
Spitting Images,
Fluck and Law,
1987

is basically one of gratitude for being noticed! By *Spitting Image* standards, I seem to have been treated less savagely than some others. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p142)

Football commentator Jimmy Hill had a reservation, but not one that hampered his enjoyment:

I like the show. Part of me resents the taking of extreme liberties with the Royal Family, yet, I don't mind any fun at Ronald Reagan's expense. Politicians are fair game, as are all personalities. Like all entertainment, it depends so much on original ideas and witty scripts. At its best it's hilarious. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p142)

The impact that *Spitting Image* has had on the general public and other performers is tremendous. In his article, *New Model Army*, Alan Franks discussed how some puppets have a life that extend beyond the screen, providing a crossover between the shows and supposedly real world of celebrity. Jimmy Saville never said "Rattle, rattle, jewelry, jewelry," but his puppet did, and so, as a result, did his stage impersonators. (Franks, 1993, p33)

Spitting Image's caricatures range from the impishly comic to the wickedly savage. They are masterpieces of distortion, sometimes wildly exaggerated, while others are decidedly true to life. But what gives these puppets their untold power is that they are truly part human. While the viewer knows that they are made of foam, the gestures are so realistic that the caricatures are mentally transformed into living beings. (Heller, 1992, p64)

CHAPTER FIVE

SUCCESS AND FUTURE OF SPITTING IMAGE

The success of the *Spitting Image* show has forced the company to grow into a de facto media conglomerate, complete with books, videos, tapes, novelties, and other television series to its credit. This is something which is not always to Fluck and Law's liking. (Heller, 1992, p64)

When I travelled to England in February of this year to visit the Spitting Image workshops, I got an insight into how much the company has grown and I was surprised to see the amount of other projects which have been taken on. The company has recently purchased a new warehouse-like premises which they have called Cairo Studios. It is located in Nile Street on the north side of London. The building has five floors, each facilitating a department: drawing room and model-making area, wardrobe, film and animation, reception and Roger's office along with other offices.

Before 1990, *Spitting Image* never quite managed to get its international act together. However, increasingly since then, trial episodes have been made and marketed abroad. When I was in the modelling room of the workshops, one of the caricaturists, Oscar da Costa was sculpting a caricature of a Greek television presenter. He told me about shows similar to Spitting Image ongoing in countries such as Spain, France, Greece, Portugal and Czechoslovakia, and although they produce the scripts in the respective countries, they order the puppets from England. (Mulroy, London, 1995) Da Costa said, "we already have it down to a fine art you know because there are also mechanisms and things and eyes so, they prefer to order it from us." (Mulroy, London, 1995)

Spitting Image was shown briefly in the United States in 1987, but was taken off the air, according to reports in the British press, after a flood of complaints about repeated treatment of President Reagan as a doddering old buffoon. (Palmer, 1994, pp166-167)

On early shows, one could see a leather-jacketed Ronald Reagan on a motorbike, as the Leader of the Pack (see plate 49a), with his wife Nancy singing his favourite campaign song, "Do do Ron Ron." (*An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*) In one particular scene, from 1985, Ronald wakes up to the sound of a Mickey Mouse



PLATE 49a
Da do run Ron Ron
Still from Spitting Image Series
1985



PLATE 49b
A selection of Ronald Reagan puppets at the Spitting Image Workshops
1995





PLATE 50

Ronald and Nancy Reagan as they appeared
in the Spitting Image publication, *Spitting Images*
Fluck and Law,
1987

alarm clock and picks it up as though it were a telephone. As the camera pans across the room, it can be seen that the President keeps his brain in a glass of water beside his bed.

Mr. Reagan's advisor, Don, enters the room with breakfast:

Don: Morning, Mr. President.

Reagan: Morning Nancy. How about a little kiss for Mr. Cutee Pie?

Mr. Reagan's advisor then proceeds to place the brain into the President's head.

Reagan: Don, would it bother you if I said a little prayer?

Don: No Sir, I'll join you.

Reagan: What's the guy's name?

Don: God, Sir.

Reagan: Yeah, that's the fella. Dear God, I can't talk to you at the moment, I'm in a meeting. I'll call you in the morning. Amen.

Don: Now, about your schedule, Mr. President.

With this, Mr. Reagan decides it's "beddi-bye-booz time" and he goes back to sleep.

In his book, *Taking Humour Seriously*, Palmer said,

The cancellation of the British satirical programme *Spitting Image* on American TV suggests that either American humour or its public regulation may be different in this respect from British. (Palmer, 1994, p4)

During the tour around the workshops, I had seen Roger Law on the premises but not Peter Fluck. When I asked of his whereabouts, I was told that a number of years ago, Peter Fluck separated himself from the company and got involved in a *Spitting Image* shop in Covent Garden. There is, apparently a certain amount of resentment among a few of the staff members over this as it was basically a marketing scheme to sell promotional items. Unfortunately, the idea did not take off and the shop closed down having lost a huge percentage from the *Spitting Image* bank account. There was also a premises called The *Spitting Image* House of Wax in existence where the puppets were exhibited for the general public and, it was hoped, immortalised forever in a museum-type setting, but this too closed down a few years ago.

Eleven years on from its inception, I got the feeling that there is still a tremendous amount of energy in the staff of the workshops. One seldom sees a whole building full of employees enjoying their work so much. Oscar da Costa said, "It's nice to do what you like and get paid for it." (Mulroy, London, 1995) There has always been and still is a vigorous quest for alternatives to the actual show because obviously the show cannot go on forever. In the past, Fluck and Law have produced plasticene models or puppet characters to animate fairy stories eg. Treasure Island. At the moment, ideas are

unfolding for a simplified sit-com called *Caxton Villa*, using a small range of characters. The show will be run for ten minutes each week as a series and is due for broadcasting in November 1995. Apart from this, *Spitting Image* also have two television advertisements to their credit: Cadbury's Creme Egg and "I Can't Believe it's not Butter."

When I spoke with producer Giles Pilbrow, he said that he thought *Spitting Image* was a great idea and definitely had a future because it was "such a versatile format." (Mulroy Dublin November 1994) After that he joked about computer generated caricatures but he really didn't know what the future was going to hold. He said something to the effect that they will wait for technology to advance and then they will follow. (Mulroy, Dublin-London, November 1994) Walking around the studios with the assistant manager, Matt Lane, he told me how the crew were of the opinion that although the caricatures and puppets in the the show had reached a very high level, they think that the scripts are not quite up to standard. (Mulroy, London, 1995)

In Chester's book, *Tooth & Claw*, Barry Norman was someone who was not at all happy with the show. He gave his opinion as follows:

I don't even enjoy watching myself on TV, so why should I watch a gross caricature? I did actually see some of the first series of the show and stopped watching because the scripts tended to be spiteful and malicious and not really funny. (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p140)

Of the original "Gang of five" only Fluck and Law remain as major shareholders in the company. However, they cease to be hands-on in the old sense. Fluck's main energies are now engaged outside *Spitting Image* in the areas of robotics and environmental sculptures. Roger Law's main contribution, aside from some original drawing, is keeping the show on the road as chairman of the enterprise. (Law, 1992, p193) He also travels abroad a lot to promote the skills of the company as they are regarded as world leaders in the field of caricature and puppet-making. (Mulroy, London, 1995)

What bothers Fluck and Law now is not what they are doing for *Spitting Image* but what *Spitting Image* is doing to them. In the book, *Tooth & Claw*, they said after the first five years spent developing and making caricatures for Britain's most original and disrespectful television comedy, they sometimes find it hard to see the funny side of

things. The endless hassles and compromises involved in working for television are no recipe for what they regard as their best work. (Chester, Tooth & Claw, p1) The transition from print to television involved two artists already expert modelmakers in plasticene, having to become proficient in creating and modelling three-dimensional caricatures, making them flexible and mobile through experimentation with different chemical substances, also becoming knowledgeable in the area of mechanics, to make the features move. "*Spitting Image* never did manage to achieve the political cutting edge that Fluck and I had originally always seen as part of its purpose." (Law, 1992, p192) The reason for this may have been the need for balance on television. There was, and still is, an eternal quest for characters that would make the show work. In Chester's book, it was written that "sometimes they just know they are losing their edge." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p1)

In my opinion, *Spitting Image* produces a manifestation of political and social commentary that is unique in today's world. The show marks a renaissance of the satiric arts, and more importantly a rebirth of caricature as a weapon. (Heller, 1986, p105) I admire Fluck and Law for taking up the challenge of bringing the art of caricature into the television age and as such, continuing a strong British tradition. Roger Law once said, "You could say that ours is the story of two men who innocently drifted from print to television and got slightly famous and very, very old." (Chester, *Tooth & Claw*, p1)

CONCLUSION

Through an examination of the work of caricaturists over the centuries, we can relish the vendettas of their time and enjoy their celebration or deflation of the eminent, the powerful, the glamorous and the plain notorious. They give us an intriguing perspective on the social, political and cultural life of Western society from the seventeenth century to the present day. As I have stated before, they document the dramatic phenomenon of a civilisation awaking to political awareness.

As Freud said, "by making our enemy small, inferior, despicable or comic, we will achieve an a round about way the enjoyment of overcoming him." Co-creator of *Spitting Image* Roger Law reinforced this when he said, "the ability to make people laugh is a fascinating tool and a weapon." (*An Illustrated Guide to Caricature*, 1985)

I have looked at how humour functions in society and how caricature has developed as a medium for social and political expression. I have also examined these ideas in relation to *Spitting Image*. On examining the *Spitting Image* show, I felt it necessary to stand back and view the programme against a backdrop of centuries-old tradition of safety valves for laughing at the authority of the day.

As can be seen from the examination of the origins, the structure and the subject matter of the show, *Spitting Image* is well equipped to take its place in history among the masters of the art of caricature and political and social comment.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BINDMAN, David, Distortion and Display - English Caricature, 1620 to the present", Times Literary Supplement, 5 July 1985, p750.
- CHESTER, Lewis, Tooth & Claw - The Inside Story of Spitting Image, London, Faber & Faber, 1986.
- CHESTER, Lewis, "The Merciless Puppet Masters", Sunday Times, 24 March 1985, p10.
- CHESTER, Lewis, "Spit and Polish", Sunday Times Magazine, 14 Sept. 1986, pp 55-57 p59.
- CLARKE, Nick, "Target Practice - Has modern British satire lost its cutting edge?", Listener, 26 April 1990, pp 12-13.
- CORK, Richard, "Gillray's Legacy - A New Spirit of Satire", Listener, 25 July 1985, pp 13-14.
- DUGDALE, John, "Laughing Stocks", Listener, 1 Nov. 1990, pp14-15.
- DUGDALE, John, "Who's laughing now?", Listener, 19 Nov 1987, pp 41-42.
- FERNAND, Deirdre, "Mugging up on the ins and outs of a new image", Sunday Times, 11 Oct 1987,
- FIELDING, Helen, "It's not a knockout - TV political satire has lost its edge", Sunday Times - Section 6, 5 April 1992, p6.
- FRANKS, Alan, "New Model Army", Times Magazine, 6 Nov 1993, pp32-33.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Luck and Flaw's Illustrated Guide to Caricature, Television Documentary, Spitting Image Productions, Network 2, 1985.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, The Appaulingly Disrespectful Spitting Image Book, Faber & Faber, London, 1985.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Spitting Images, London, Book Club Associates/Century Hutchinson Ltd. 1987.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Goodbye - 1992, The Royal Year in focus by Spitting Image, London, TMP Communications, 1992.
- HELLER, Steven, "Spitting Images - Britain's most biting TV revue", Print, Vol. 40, May/June 1986, pp 98 - 105.
- HELLER, Steven & ANDERSON, Gail, The Savage Mirror - The Art of Contemporary Caricature, New York, Watson-Guption Publications, 1992.
- HUGGETT, Frank E., Cartoonists at War, England, Guild Publishing, 1981.
- JONES, Pauline, "Spitting Images", Graphics World, No 47 March/April 1984, pp18-19.
- LAW, Roger, A Nasty Piece of Work - The Art and Graft of Spitting Image, London, Booth-Clibborn Editions, 1992.

-
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Pablo Bach, caricaturist and modeller for Spitting Image for the past 10 yrs., private interview at Spitting Image Workshop, Cairo Studios, London, 8 Feb, 1995.
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Mark Burton, script writer for Spitting Image, telephone interview, Dublin-Reading, 7 Dec 1994.
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Oscar da Costa, caricaturist and modeller for Spitting Image for the past 10 yrs., private interview at Spitting Image Workshop, Cairo Studios, London, 8 Feb, 1995.
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Lindon, mould and foam maker for Spitting Image, private interview at Spitting Image Workshop, Cairo Studios, London, 8 Feb, 1995.
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Matt Lane, assistant manager of the Spitting Image Workshop, Cairo Studios, London, 8Feb, 1995.
- MULROY, Caoimhe with Giles Pilbrow, present producer of Spitting Image, telephone interview, Dublin-London, 14 Dec 1994.
- PRESS, Charles, The Political Cartoon, London, Associated University Presses, 1981.
- PHILIPPE, Robert, Political Graphics - Art as a Weapon, Oxford, Phaidon, 1982.
- RUSBRIDGER, Alan, "Funny Peculiar", Guardian, 23 July 1988, p19.

PRIMARY SOURCES

- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Spit with Polish, Compilation Video, Spitting Image Productions, 1985.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Rubber Thingies, Compilation Video, Spitting Image Productions, 1985.
- FLUCK, Peter & LAW, Roger, Spitting Image, Series of Winter 1994, Spitting Image Productions, Central TV, 1994.

APPENDIX I

- MULROY:** Could you outline the process you go through to create a Spitting Image puppet?
- BACH:** First, we are given over the pictures and videos. And so we take prints from the videos as well, as we can freeze it in any frame or any position we want. Then spend half a day doing loads of sketches - as many as we can until we're happy. Front profile, different angles. When we are happy with the sketches we start modelling the head and take two days / two days and a half modelling the head. Once the head is finished it is moulded outside. They take a fibreglass mould and then they make the foam and inject into the mould with a core inside. Foam-latex. Then, once the skin comes out, they make the mechanisms of the eyes - blink and side to side and they insert into the fibreglass skull and then they fit up the whole thing with the skin. Then it's painted, then the hair is dressed, bodies, clothes and everything and it's finished.
- MULROY:** How do you choose a suitable person to caricature?
- BACH:** During the series there is a team of writers and according to what's happening in the news, they come up with a list of sketches and a list of people so they give us this list of people and we do them.
- MULROY:** What kind of people do you like doing / What kind of people are simple to do?
- BACH:** Well, generally, it's the people who are in the news you know, but we prefer the ones who are caricatures / walking caricatures already. Yeah! With strong features is easier.
- MULROY:** Have you been influenced in any way by 18th or 19th century British caricaturists like Gillray and Cruikshank?
- BACH:** Yes, I think the first time I became interested in caricature was when I saw a picture by Hogarth and then I started seeing other people as well and I like Gillray and Cruikshank, Rowlandson.
- MULROY:** And French people like Daumier?
- BACH:** And then Daumier is one of my heroes, you know. He was really one of the first ones that came up with three-dimensional caricature almost accidentally. He used to do, just as a model like this, for his drawings and yeah, I admire him very much. and then of this, I can say David Levine, Mont Dracha from Mad had influence when I was a kid, Hertzfeld, early Scarfe maybe.
- MULROY:** What kind of background did you come from - did you go to art school?
- BACH:** Yes, I did five years of art school.
- MULROY:** In Britain?
- BACH:** In Argentina. I was interested in caricature already before going to art school, but I decided to do painting but when I came out I haven't done much painting since. I do more sculpture than painting.
- MULROY:** Did you do caricatures while you were at college?
- BACH:** For me, not for college. It wasn't very well received.
- MULROY:** Is there such a thing as a caricature going too far - pushing somebody's features too far?
- BACH:** Well, I believe if the likeness is lost, it means that something went wrong there because the likeness has to be kept intact, because basically I mean caricature is like a reflection of what the person is - in an essence, how it's seen. So if you go too far, it's like pulling a rubber band too far it snaps. There has to be some kind of harmony. There's a relation between the features that are the likeness so if you distort that too much, you lose it.
- MULROY:** When you are caricaturing somebody, do you have an insight into their personality as well as their facial features?

BACH: Yes yes, I mean you take all this into account or if you don't know the person, you kind of imagine it or you can have a guess maybe, what that kind of person is like.

MULROY: Do you think there's a house style regarding how you produce caricatures, like if you look at the show, you would instantly recognise a Spitting Image caricature. Is there a kind of style that emerges?

BACH: Yes, there is. I mean all the people who were working here when I first started had my same, and even Roger Law and Peter Fluck, we all had the same more or less background, like inspirations like you were saying before. But then you know, we all had to sort of adapt to, more or less, Fluck and Law's style which was the style that they used to have before Spitting Image...

MULROY: In print?

BACH: Yes. And so, in the end we more or less all blended in. We have our own styles, different styles but you know, we all sort of accommodate into a similar one.

MULROY: Do you think the caricatures you produce nowadays are as nasty as the 18th or 19th century ones, or are as hardhitting in the way they are done?

BACH: Some of the 18th century ones are worse. (He laughs) But, Spitting Image has gone quite far in some cases.

MULROY: When making a new puppet, how many models of the same puppet would you do, for different expressions?

BACH: Only one, only one. We make several sketches but then we make one puppet. It has to be more or less in a neutral expression so...

MULROY: So the puppeteers can move the mouth.

BACH: Yes, so you can, you know. Maybe we, if it's necessary we give it a brow movement or whatever but it generally has to be neutral.

MULROY: Is it you who decides on the particular distortion to make in the puppets like John Major as the Grey Man?

BACH: Well, painting it grey is a decision of the writers. My decisions are on the visual side...

MULROY: So you decide if it's somebody's nose or somebody's mouth or if it's somebody's hairstyle that is exaggerated?

BACH: Sure, yes.

MULROY: So you have the say as regards how the caricatures turn out?

BACH: Yeah, it comes out when we do the sketches and we decide how we going to make it look.

APPENDIX II

- MULROY:** Are there any other countries in Europe that produce a similar show to Spitting Image?
- da COSTA: Yes - Italy, Portugal, Czechoslovakia. Yes a few of them order puppets.
- MULROY:** They don't produce the caricatures over there themselves?
- da COSTA: No, no, because I don't know, we already have it down to a fine art you know because there are also mechanisms and things and eyes so, they prefer to order it from us which is difficult sometimes because we don't know the caricatures. He (Pablo Bach) went once to have a look so we fax caricatures hoping that somebody on the other side have a sense of caricature.
- MULROY:** So, they have the same kind of sense of humour as regards the way you portray people?
- da COSTA: Well, I'm not sure exactly what the sense of humour is but I suppose after the sense of humour comes through the programme - because the puppets I mean, can be lovely, but there is something dead so it is up to the script writers and puppeteers to bring them alive.
- MULROY:** How long have you been working here?
- da COSTA: Oh, on and off about ten years.
- MULROY:** And you really like what you do?
- da COSTA: Oh, yes, it's fun, it's fun doing it - you know, it's nice to do what you like and get paid for it.
- MULROY:** What first interested you in getting into caricature?
- da COSTA: Well, I always did caricatures from when I was a child. You see the caricatures I work for newspapers, when I got older, magazines and all sorts of things. I have things published here, books, postcards, always to do with caricature of celebrities lets say, all the stars, politicians.
- MULROY:** That's abroad, not in Britain.
- da COSTA: No here, I lived here for a long time. Well, when I was little I started doing it then, and then when I came over I carried on doing it here, and then one day they called me and I came to see them. I used to do caricatures on paper - graphic so he asked me if I could...
- MULROY:** Model?
- da COSTA: Yes, sort of. So eventually I tried - I hadn't done it before. Because he (Pablo Bach) was a sculptor before, but I was more of a painter. So, it worked and here I am.
- MULROY:** And were you also influenced by 18th and 19th century caricaturists like Gillray and Hogarth and Cruikshank?
- da COSTA: Well, probably yes!
- MULROY:** Were you familiar with their work as you were growing up?
- da COSTA: Yes, probably, yes! There are loads of excellent caricaturists. My favourite of all of them is an American, very old now, called Hertzfeld, among others. But, yes, the English, but you, you have your own vision, you know, your own perception, your own personal perception. So you have to do it your way. Caricature is something that is very difficult to learn - how to do caricature. You have to come with that sort of eye. First thing is to see them normally or distorted. Sometimes I have a break and I do other things yes, away from caricature. So I don't think in terms of caricature. I mean, while I'm doing this, you know what they call professional deformation - sometimes, even with another friend sitting on the tube or whatever in the pub, I say, "look at that face - that's an easy one." You know what I mean. So, we're thinking all the time.
- MULROY:** You can visualise people as caricatures just by looking at them.
- da COSTA: Girls are always more difficult. Girls are so much prettier and their fea

tures are much smaller. And then you have to make them like women and it's different - it's a different approach almost. So much softer rather than more rugged...Unless it's somebody like Dot Cotton. Then you go for her. This is more sort of, they describe as bimbo type (he's referring to the clay caricature head is is presently making of a Greek television presenter), she's got to be all big boobs, flossy hair

MULROY: Do you ever feel like, oh, I'm being particularly nasty here, I'd better tone this down a bit. Do you ever feel you're being very nasty about their physical features.

da **COSTA:** Yes, sometimes you go for especially politicians, you conceive things in a crueller way. Movie stars or rock stars, you go for them as well, then maybe we do something more affectionate - if it's like they are idols. But with politicians yes, we are nasty.