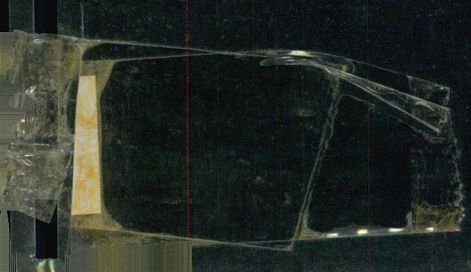

NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Faculty of Design
Department of Visual Communications

The Origins and Development of Satire in the Caricature of Ronald Searle.

by

Brenda Dermody

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INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I intend to examine the origins and development of satire in the work of the British caricaturist Ronald Searle. I also wish to question the traditional status of graphic satire as a minor genre. In order to do this I will demonstrate that graphic satire is a revealing reflection of the society in which it is produced. To date, there has been very little written analysis of graphic satire. It is generally neglected, considered by critics to be ephemeral or trivial (49). I would argue, however, that graphic satire has as valid a social comment to make as literature and is worthy of the depth of analysis that is applied to literature. The most notable characteristics of Searle's caricature is the cruel and violent nature of both his visual style and subject matter. It is the origins and development of these elements that I wish to examine.

Cruelty and violence, from domestic conflict to international war, have always been features of human existence. The twentieth century, however, has seen the evolution of mass society, mass cruelty and the potential to create global destruction. Studies in human psychology have revealed that the forces which created this situation are inherent in human nature. (19 p.99). Searle's experience of The Second World War awakened him to this fact and completely coloured his view of humanity. He was not alone in this. In post World War Two British Society the theme of "Corruption of Innocence" (13. P.19) became prevalent in literature. People began writing about childhood in a negative way. The reason for this was that the themes of innocence and corruption could become a rejection of experience and, therefore, life (13 P. 99). The shattering of the idyll of childhood was

used as a metaphor for the shattering of society by the forces of disintegration which brought about the war, genocide and the threat of nuclear destruction. Although many of Searle's drawings, especially the later ones, may have but a tenuous link with the idea of making a joke, humour plays an important part in his work. He explains why,

> One real advantage of being a humorist is that you set a trap. People are conditioned in a certain way to approach a humorous drawing more openly than something which may pose more of a problem. The fact that you pose a problem when they are inside the trap is cheating, perhaps, but, if you have something to say, it is a very direct way of getting into contact with a very general public. (51, P.803).

My exploration of the origins and development of this satirical humour falls into two main chapters. The first, deals with Searle's wartime drawings and how they affected his post war work up to 1955. The second, looks at Searle in the 1960s and 70s and his response to the social change which began to take place towards the end of the 1950s.

The first section of Chapter One consists of brief biography of Searle up to 1939 and an indication of the type of cartoons he was producing before he went to war. The second section deals with Searle's experience as a prisoner of war in Singapore. Searle had attended art college briefly in 1939 before his studies were interrupted by the war. Thus he had a basic academic grounding in drawing. However, it was during the period he spend as a P.O.W. that he developed an accurate, visual reportage style, determined as he was, to bring back pictorial evidence from those more or less unphotographed years (39, P.9). Although the subject matter of these

documentative drawings is often distressing and disturbing, the drawings, themselves are a straight visual record of events. They contain neither exaggeration nor cruel humour.

The third section explores the origins of black humour in Searle's cartoons which can again be dated to the war years. It was during this period of great violence and cruelty that both of these elements entered his cartoons. Thus it can be seen that his work has already begun to make telling social comments.

The fourth section outlines the social and cultural changes brought about by the war. In the aftermath of the Second World War people had to come to terms with evil on and unprecedented scale. Also, Britain, like the rest of Europe, was in a state of physical, mental and financial exhaustion. I relate Searle's well known St. Trinian's cartoons to the social and cultural upheaval in Britain in the 1940s and 50s, comparing them to William Golding's treatment of a similar subject in his novel Lord of the Flies. I also compare the St. Trinian's cartoons to his war drawings. Similarities in the images used in both would indicate that the St. Trinian's cartoons are a criticism of the violence and evil in human nature which was highlighted by the war.

The second chapter consists of three sections. The first deals with the cultural upheaval which took place at the end of the 1950s in Britain when post war austerity was replaced by the new consumerism of the 1960s. In this new consumer society advertising flourished, and personal and corporate image became a prime concern. This concentration on image led to the growth of a counterbalancing, strong form of satire in

the media, literature and the graphic arts (13. P.18). I discuss how Searle's experiments in distortion of the body to show moral decay, correspond with the work of his contemporaries, the novelists William Golding and William Burroughs. The 1960s also ushered in a new sexual freedom. William Burroughs' savage sexually explicit attacks on Society used literary shock to communicate social malaise to his readers. This technique was also adopted with great effectiveness by Searle.

The second section of Chapter Two outlines the aims and achievements of George Grosz the German satirist of the 1920s whose drawings greatly influenced Searle. He too makes use of savage satire to provoke his audience into awareness.

The third and final section examines a set of drawings, by Searle, which combine his misanthropic vision of society with the savagery that he had admired in Grosz, the rabid sexuality gleaned from Burroughs and the morally decrepit state of humanity as outlined by William Golding. It is possible to see how the strength of his caricature of society has developed since the days of St. Trinian's. However it is also apparent that his view of humanity is still very much coloured by his realization of mankind's potential for evil which was "driven into the open by the compulsions of war" (50. P. 470).

CHAPTER ONE

i A Pre-War Biography of Ronald searle: 1920 - 1939

ii Documentary Drawings of the Second World War: 1939 - 1945

iii Ideas Sketchbooks: 1942 - 1945

iv Post-War Britain Social and Cultural Change: 1945 - 1955

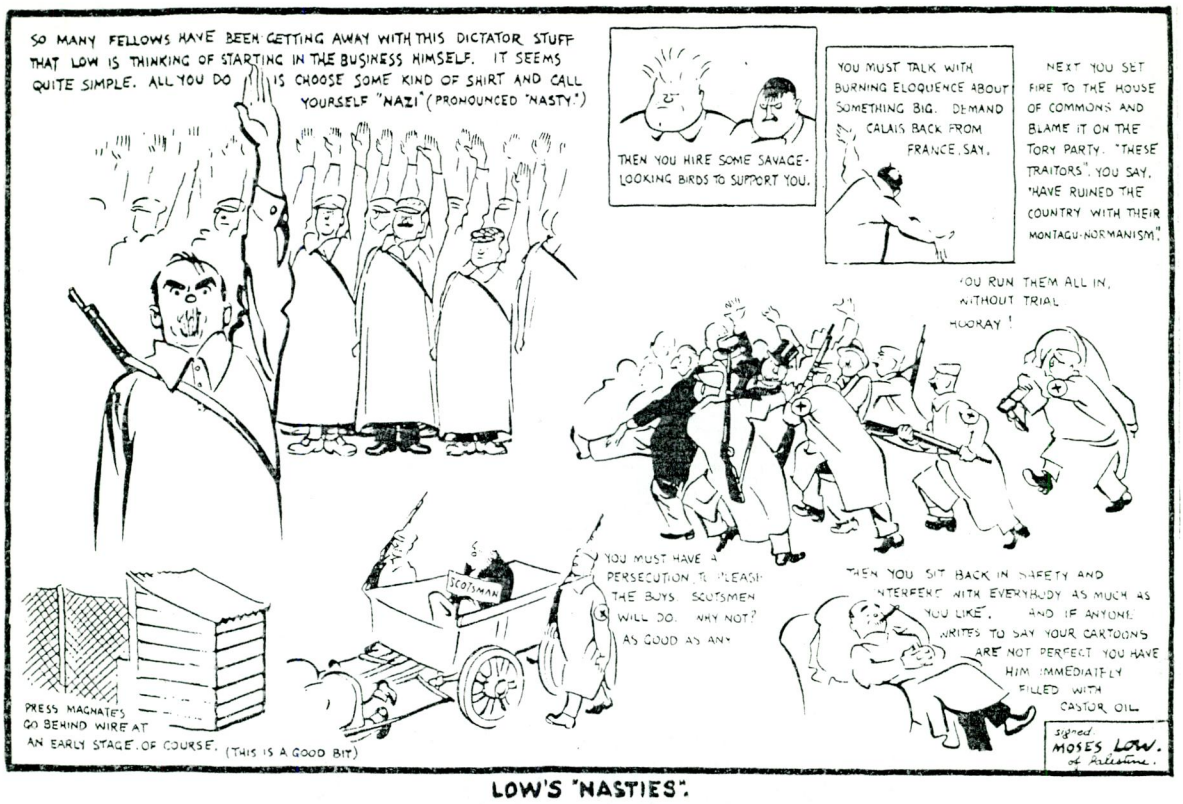
v The St. Trinian's cartoons as a microcosm of Society

PRE-WAR BIOGRAPHY 1920 - 1938

The graphic humour of Ronald Searle has been in print for just over fifty five years. Born in the university town of Cambridge, on the 3rd March 1920, Searle began submitting cartoons to the local newspaper, the Cambridge Daily News when he was just fifteen. These early attempts at cartooning were quite unoriginal. Searle borrowed freely from the styles of various popular cartoonists and caricaturists of the day. His influences included David Low (fig 1 and 2) E.M. Bateman (fig 3 and 4) and other Punch cartoonists, including Lewis Baumer (fig 5).

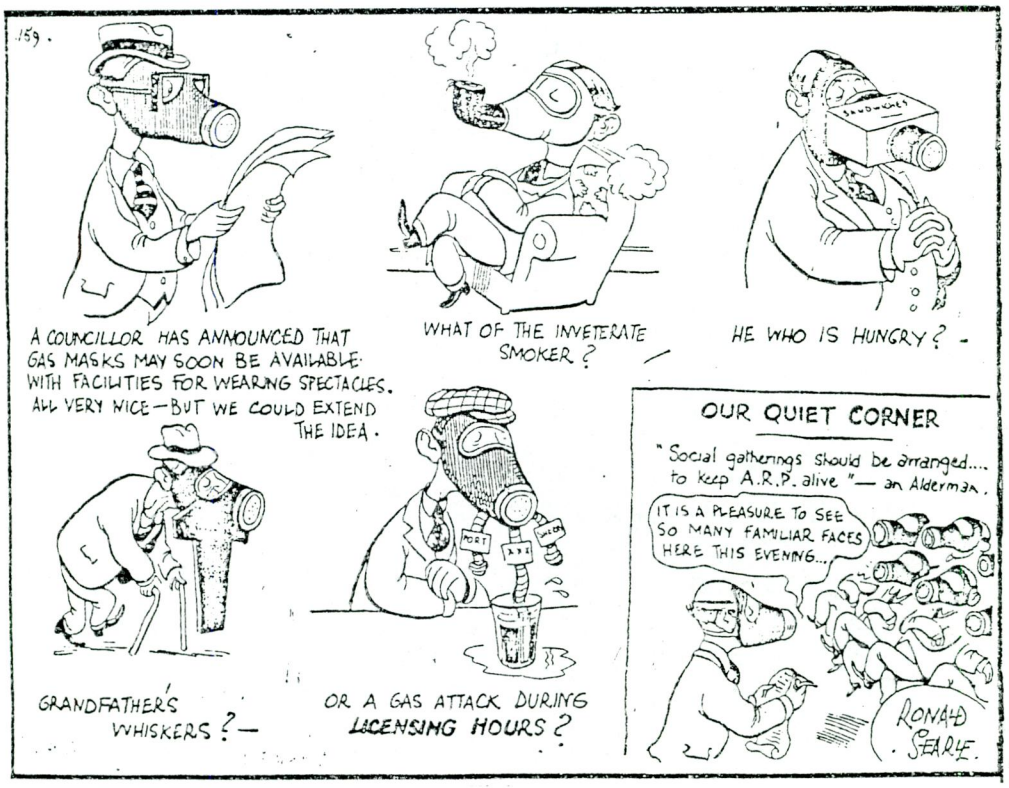
Searle began attending night classes at art school in September 1935 and in 1938 he won a scholarship to attend the Cambridge School of Art, full time. There, he received a highly academic grounding from his tutors, in the tradition of Henry Tonks and the Slade School, which involved an intimate knowledge of the anatomy of the human figure to be gleamed from painstaking observational drawings (1, P.75).

It was shortly after he began his full time study of art that he discovered the work of the german artist George Grosz (1893-1959). Grosz was a notorious critic of the First World war and of Weimar society in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s. Searle came across Marcel Ray's monograph of Grosz in a Cambridge bookshop and, although it was unusual for anyone British to favour anything German in 1939, just before the war, Searle purchased the book and was later to remark: 'It cost me two shillings and changed my artistic direction'. 'Grosz explored the rotting military mind; the filth of war and the stench that lingered after it'. (8, P.44).



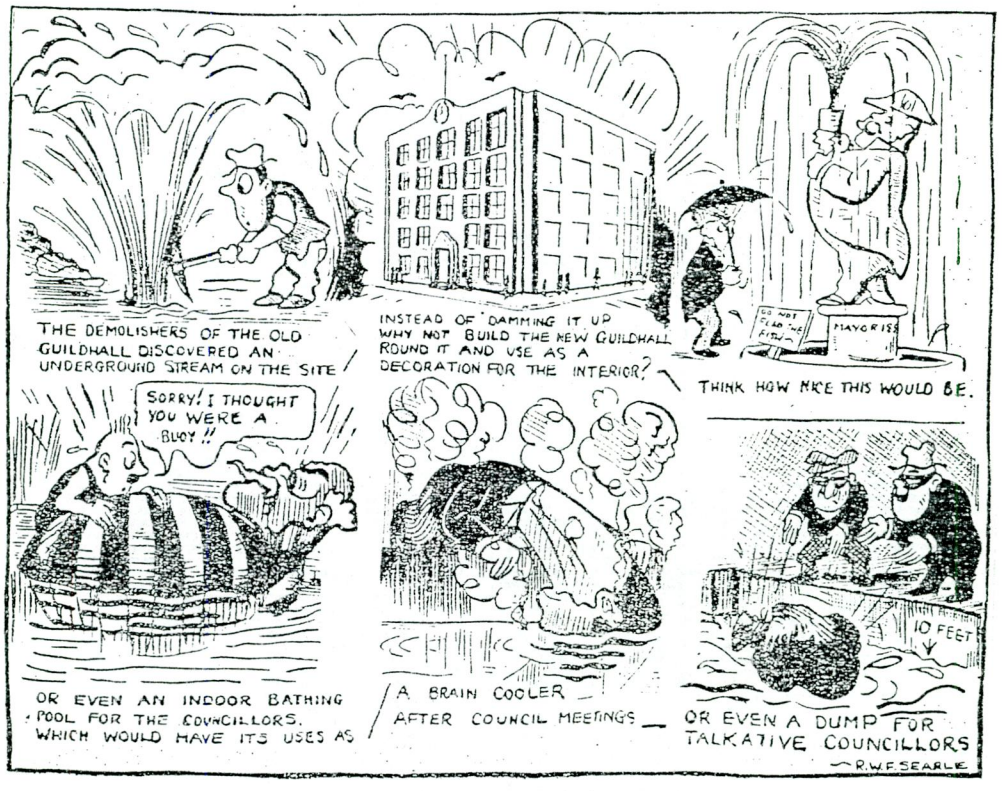
LOW'S "NASTIES".

1 "Low's Nasties", David Low, Evening Standard, 14.4.1933.

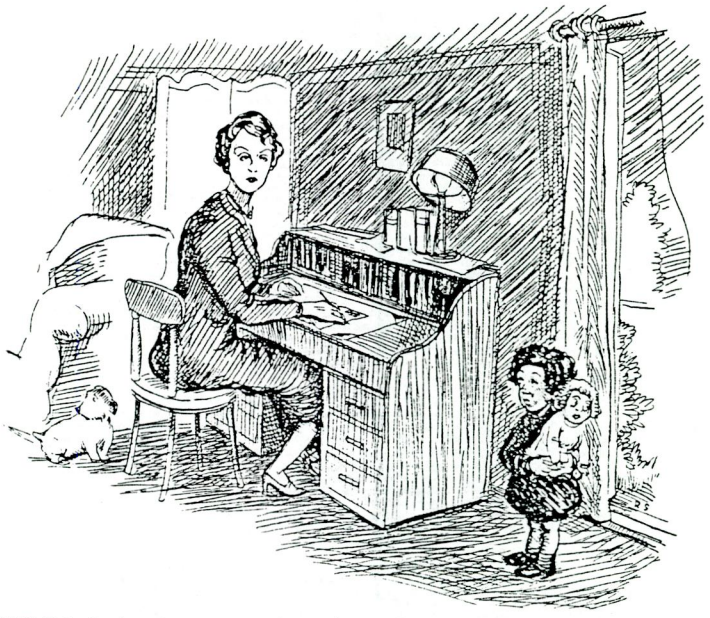


2 Cambridge Daily News, Cartoon, 3.12.38

3 Self Portrait, H.M. Bateman, 1928.



4 Cambridge Daily News, Cartoon, 26.10.35



CHILD (who has just come in from the garden): 'What's for tea?'
MOTHER (who dislikes having the little horror ask questions): 'Tea should be seen and not heard.'

5 Pseudo Punch Cartoon, Granta, 8.6.38

Grosz had been deeply affected by his experience of War and this was reflected in his satirical drawings. However, even before the war, his art had been violently critical of human nature, a fact which he attributes to the deprivations of his youth. Grosz's father, a veteran of the Franco Prussian War, died when the boy was only six. The boy's mother had to struggle to make ends meet and the family moved to the gloomy working class district of Wedding in Berlin. Here the widow earned a meagre living sewing shirts and renting out rooms to lodgers in a tenement setting. Grosz was later to recall,

> that pessimism of the metropolis, the crushing hidden poverty of ordinary working people, the bleak bustling streets around the Wedding district - all of this found an echo in me - engraved itself deeply in me. I have never forgotten those lean years in Berlin and it was not until many years later that I found away of expressing what I had experienced. (11. P.13)

It is worth noting that several of the greatest satirical figures, including James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, Jonathan Swift and more recently Gerald Scarfe, have all experienced traumatic personal loss in their youth. Swift's father died several months before he was born and the child was subsequently sent away to school at the age of six. His family were not well off and he felt the consequences of this throughout his education. Gillray also had a deprived childhood. His father, a war veteran who had lost his right arm, sent the young James away to be educated at the "savagely run" Moravian School in Bedford (11 p 16).

More recently, the artist Gerald Scarfe was constantly ill from asthma throughout his youth. He missed most of his primary education, becoming isolated from his friends. A narrow escape from death due to a lack of

communication between hospital staff left him with a deep fear of being put in incompetent hands (56, P.18), a sentiment clearly visible in his savage political caricatures.

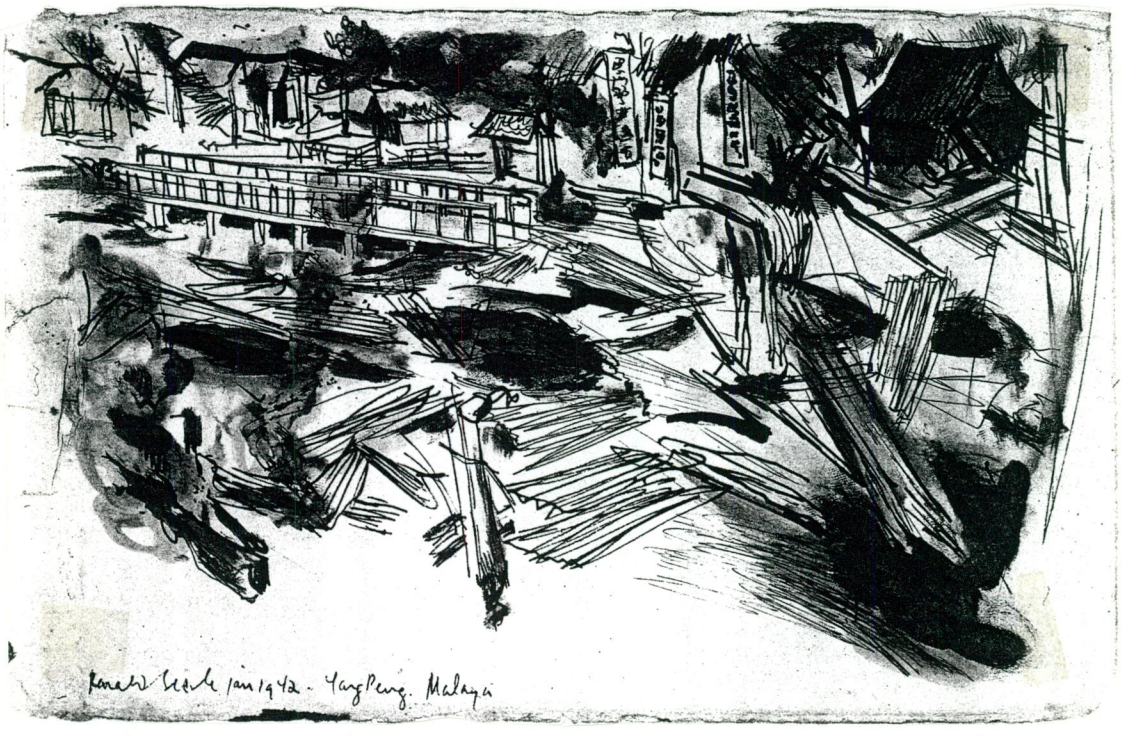
The awakening of these artists to the harsh realities of death, isolation, physical illness and financial hardship at such a young age could be interpreted as a loss of childhood innocence. Since all of the figures mentioned above are renowned for their cruel and macabre satire it is reasonable to suggest that their black humour was born from the shattering of an idyll - that of childhood (11, P. 17).

The satire in Searles work was also born from cruel circumstances. The idyll of Cambridge society in which Searle spent his youth, was shattered by the Second World War, and Searle's view of humanity was to be completely altered by this experience of war. Meanwhile, the last Searle cartoon run by the Cambridge Daily News carried the optimistic caption.

> Your territorials are up to strength. ARP is ready, education plans are complete. We trust that their services will not be needed - but, they are it is up to us to behave as the English Channel does when we are not crossing it - REMAIN CALM. (8,p.44).

Later, Searle could hardly bear to look upon this piece of work (8, P.44), but then he was looking at it with eyes that had seen as much of the degradation of war as George Grosz.

6 Night Convoy, The 287 Field Company R.E. on night manouvers "somewhere in Scotland", Spring, 1941. Ink, wash and gouache.



7 Yang Peng, Malaya, January 1942, Ink and wash.

DOCUMENTARY DRAWINGS
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939–1945

It was during his spell in the British Army and the years spend in interment in the P.O.W. camp in Changi that Searle became an artist. He had interrupted his studies at art college in Cambridge to go to war and this new experience of army life provided a stimulus for drawing (Fig. 6). He kept a visual record of his early days in training and the long ocean Voyage to Shanghai, which stopped off at locations as far apart as North Africa and Halifax, in Canada, where he sketched the locals. He began to develop a keen interest in visual reportage, even recording scenes from the days prior to his captivity, which were spent retreating from the seemingly ubiquitous, invisible enemy, burning out any villages they came across, or any thing which might be of comfort to the Japanese.

> Meanwhile the Japanese moved forward to chop into small pieces all the wounded that had to be left behind. (39. P. 53).

As can be seen from (Fig. 7), his drawings from this period have become quite expressionistic, and already it is possible to see how he has developed the ability to record the essence of a scene rapidly, in ink, using a pen and wash technique.

Following their surrender the allied troops were herded into a prison camp and left over crowded and malnourished to live with the gradual decay of their bodies. It was here that Searle acquired his competence at drawing the human figure. Each day revealed new horrors and it was around this time that he assigned himself the task of emerging from the various camps, the jungle and finally from the prison with a significant pictorial record of those more of

8 The third year, Changi Gaol, Singapore, 1945.

9 A 'beating up' for failing to number in Japenese, sketch completed in Changi Gaol at a later date, 1944.

less unphotographed years (39, P. 9). Searle himself stated that the drawings were not a means of catharsis; conditions, he pointed out, were far too basic for that. He preferred to call them the graffiti of a condemned man. (39, P.10). This statement is supported by the drawings themselves. Deliberately un dramatic, they show the men lying around dreaming of home in the living quarters shared by far too many (Fig. 8). Yet others are composite drawings done from rapid sketches in situ and re-drawn later when there was time or relative privacy (e.g. Fig. 9, Roll call with beating). Thus Searle was already working in the manner of a professional reportage illustrator. However unlike an observer-reporter, he had no time to reflect on and digest his material. The drawings, he said,

> Were made by an unwilling (albeit self appointed) participator-recorder involved in an intimate drama more appropriate to the Dark Ages then to the surrounding global war fare
> (39, P.9)

The prisoners were severely mal nourished. At one point they received only 11oz of food per day, at least two thirds of this being rice which is low in nutritional value. They were beaten quite frequently and under constant siege from malaria and the main killer disease, cholera. By the end of the first year five hundred men had died from "natural causes" and seven people had been executed. (39, P.62)

In spite of all this Searle feels that much of the ill treatment was not due to an evil inherent in the Japanese race but a polarity in ways of thinking and completely different philosophy of life and death. The Japanese Military Code stated that "Duty is weightier than a mountain while death is lighter than a feather", (39, P. 120) and this was upheld not only

by the Imperial Guard but by every "ill fed common soldier" (39, P. 120). Rather than targeting a specific race Searle criticises the political and governmental leadership systems for their general bungling and inept handling of local and global situations.

> We were not, it appeared, recognised as conventional prisoners of war as established by well meaning but misguided politicians, but as shameful captives. The traditional Japanese military philosophy allowing no alternative to victory but death, we were the dishonoured, the despised, the lowest of the low. Armbands were issued to this effect to be worn by certain of the camp administration bearing the inscription in Japanese, "one who has been captured in battle and is to be castrated or beheaded, at the will of the emperor. (39, P.80)

The Japanese prison guards were, violent and cruel towards their captives. They regarded them as sub human slaves, or beasts of burden, and treated them as such. The random torture and gratuitous brutality were the symptoms of what William Golding refers to as "Mankind's essential illness". That is, that man's nature has in it a great potential for evil and the only way to curb this evil is to recognise it for what it is and to realise that the source is ourselves. Searle commented with hindsight that if some attempt had been made at reaching a mutual understanding, then the notoriously "unpredictable and inscrutable" aspects of the guards behaviour could have been explained and some general conditions been negotiated (39, P. 120). But this was not the stuff of war. Subsequently, many ex P.O.W. organizations fuel themselves emotionally upon a continuing hatred of the Japanese.(8, P. 69)

10 Banzai! First days, Singapore, 1942.

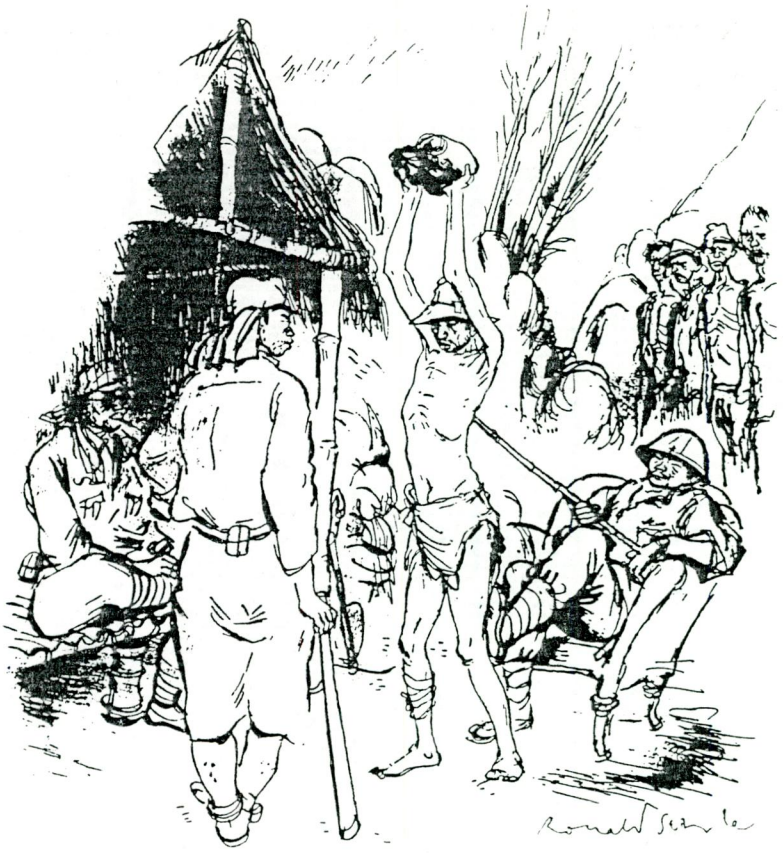
11 'Jap Officer', Singapore 1945.

In a 1975 radio interview recorded in The Listener magazine Searle recounts how his experience of war and his forced excursion to the base of human deprivation has shaped his world view.

> Everything is rooted there I think. To go into those sort of circumstances of total isolation and brutality and total filth and disgust and slavery, inevitable marks you, marks you way, your outlook on anything you do, or anything your relate to afterwards. (51, P. 802)

The portraits of the guards, which had initially been quite generalised, (Fig. 10), later became more specific and the cruelty in their characters more apparent (Fig. 11). Individual crimes were graphically itemised (Fig. 12) but not exaggerated. These drawings are not the bitter caricatures that one would expect of a prisoner under these conditions. Searle never caricatured the Japanese prison guards did he directly caricature prison life. Perhaps because both were too real and too close to be able to regard them with humour. Or perhaps it was because, as Davis suggests, he knew that behind the mask of his enemies were human beings also caught in their own torment. (8, P. 69)

These drawings are significant, firstly, because they provide an important historical record of events which otherwise might never have been visually documented; and secondly, because the strong linear quality of these images was to form the basis of Searle's post war style. As I stated in my introduction it was during these years that Searle really developed as an artist. Also, the drawings mark the first appearance of cruelty in Searle's work. Humour, however, was deliberately absent. This he reserved for his more public work. Indeed, his work was probably never so sombre again, a fact illustrated by the parallel



12 'Lunchtime Games', Thialand, 1943.

development in his art of a macabre wit. This new black humour can be seen in the second set of sketches I intend to discuss in this section. His cartoon ideas notebooks.

13 "There goes our blinkin' parapet again." Bruce Bairnsfather World War I.

14 "Any orders today, Sire?" Will Dyson, Caricature of the Kaiser World War I.

IDEAS SKETCHBOOKS: 1942 - 1945

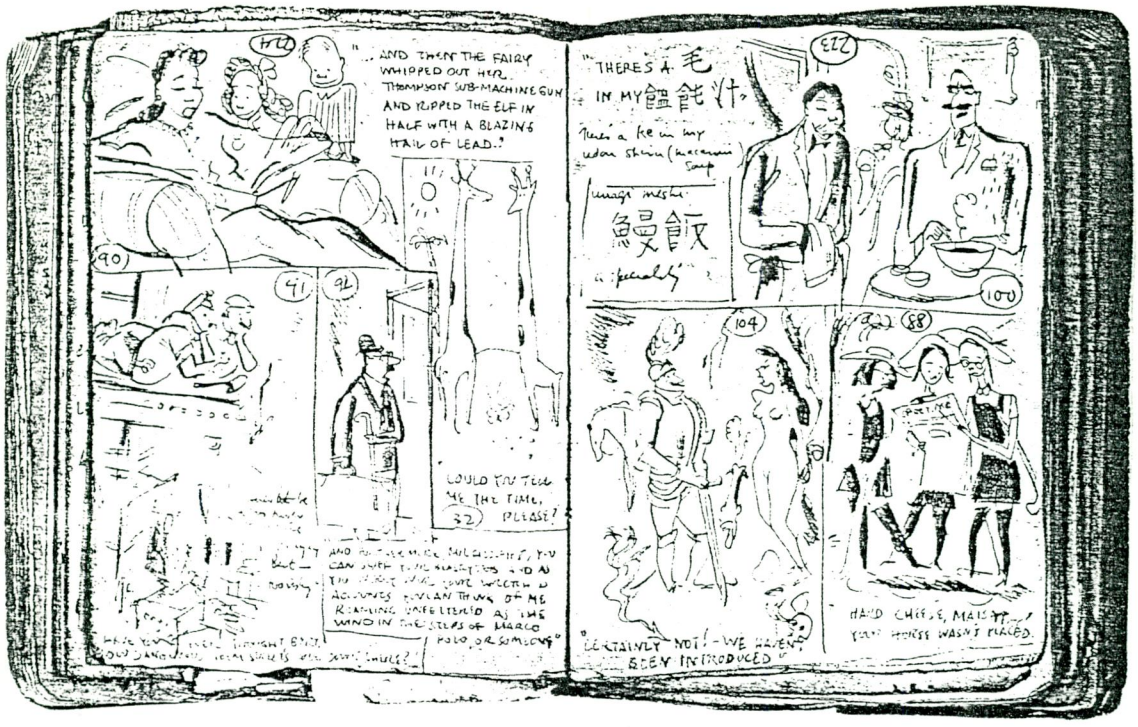
During his period in the prison camp Searle also kept several volumes of sketchbooks filled with set and costume designs for the shows which the prisoners produced. More importantly, they contained hundreds of 'gag' cartoons and ideas for jokes. These would be used in the two camp newsletters published, for very short runs, in 1942 and later in 1944 or simply to be passed around as the 'latest Ron Searle cartoon'(51, P. 803) The concept of humour as a tonic for the troops was not a new one. During the Great War many new humorous publications were started including The Passing Show which appeared on 20 March 1915. This was a cheaper version of Punch, costing only a penny. It featured cartoonists such as Edward Tennyson, Reed, one of Punch's own stars, George Whitelaw and Leo Clancy. Blighty, subtitled A Budget of Humour from Home, appeared on 31 may 1916 for free distribution to members of the forces with the help of subsidies from private firms such as Keith Prowse. For almost the first time there were a lot of cartoons in a 'naturalistic style' (56, P. 129) showing soldiers as real life men and not merely as symbols (i.e. circus animals, drawings with labelled parts). Old Bill was the most famous and best loved cartoon soldier of the war. He was 'a short man with a walrus moustache, a podgy nose and a philosophic cast of mind' (56, P.130) and he, along with his two mates Bert and Alf, was the brainchild of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather.

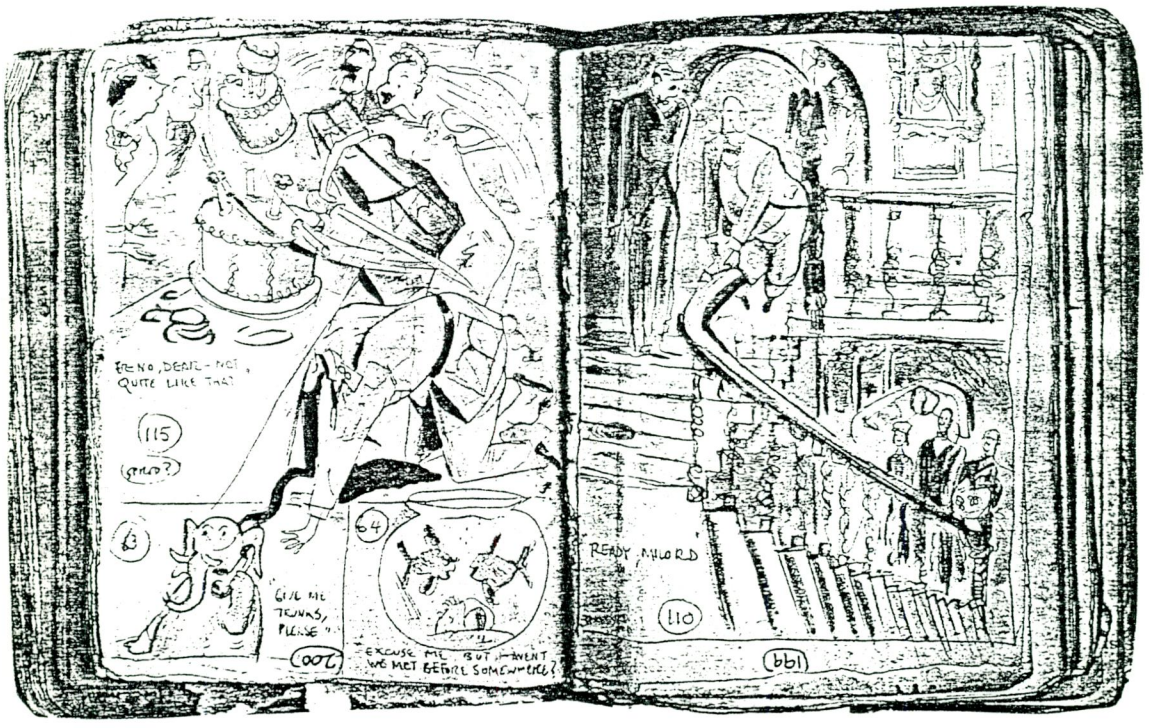
These cartoon characters were popular in the trenches since they helped to distance the soldiers from reality by transcribing their extraordinary experiences into the terms of normal life again. As Hugget points out,

> The soldier is not running away from the German bombardment, but from a wasp, the hole is not a shell hole, but a cage for a canary; the rats are to be feared more than German bullets; (56, P. 133).

Two soldiers wading through knee deep water console themselves with the thought that they do not have to put up with all the winter slush and mud in London streets or even worse, the increase in the price of whiskey. This form of humour was employed as a mild form of escapism a 'shield against reality' (56, P. 133). One important point about these cartoons is that generally 'Old Bill' and the other caricatured 'Tommies' were a great deal older than their real life counterparts and especially most of the soldiers who still stare youthfully out of newspaper advertisements or who sing merrily in photographs as they march cheerfully towards the front and their first encounter with trench warfare. Painting the soldiers as older than they actually were when making humorous comments on the bleaker side of military life had the effect,it would seem, of limiting the pity both of those at home and the self pity of the soldiers themselves. (56, P. 133) Rather than make a truthful comment, on the whole, these cartoons provided a reassuring message to all to keep on smiling. There were exceptions of course but mostly in the field of political caricature by artists such as Will Dyson (Fig. 14) whose work revealed his deep hatred of snobbery, greed and militarism. (56, P. 142)

A glance through some of the pages of Searle's 'ideas' sketchbook thirty years later, in the Second World War, reveals the makings of a different approach, in an interview for radio, recorded in The Listener magazine, Russell Brandon, Searle's friend and fellow





15 One of several Cartoon ideas notebooks Changi Gaol, Singapore, 1942–5.

P.O.W. recalls Searle's first joke of the genre that was to make him famous.

> It was of a little boy standing in the doorway a frightful little boy with freckles across his face and smoking a rifle saying "I've just shot Auntie. (51, P. 802)

One of my particular favourites, because of the perversity of the humour, and the means by which it expresses the inverted system of values of the time, depicts a cosily domestic scene of a mother reading a grimly realist version of a fairytale to her children. The minimally drawn faces of the children epitomise childish innocence and the home setting is idyllic (Fig.15) the caption reads,

> ... and then the fairy whipped out her Thompson sub-machine gun and ripped the elf in half with a blazing trail of lead. (8, P. 68)

The effect is hilarious but is over shadowed by the darker side of the humour relating to the extremes of violence experienced by Searle. Note that the gun-wielding fairy is female. Women and children, particularly little girls, are cast in brutal villainous roles in Searle's arena of wit and he does give some small clue as to why this is so. In an interview he said that when you have spent several years totally without female company, it is only a small step from not knowing how women behave to imagining them to be capable of virtually anything. (8, P.102).

Thus it was during the time spent by Searle under conditions of extreme depravation, cruelty and degradation that a macabre sense humour began to appear in his drawings. The particular brand of humour found in these drawings reflects the environment in which they were produced, and becomes a feature of Searle's post 1945 work.

POSTWAR BRITAIN 1945 – 1955
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE

1945 marked the end of the Second World War in terms of armed combat. The dropping of the Atom Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in August of that year, acted as a catalyst in bringing the war to a close. However is also created a new cause for fear, the threat of global destruction. Peace was guaranteed only by the threat to both Eastern and Western Powers of mutual destruction. (13, P. 54). People also had to contend with the revelation of unprecedented horrors which came with the opening up of the concentration camps and the discovery of inhuman degradation and genocide on a massive scale. The population of Europe was in a state of physical, mental and financial exhaustion. (18, P.ix).

In Britain, normal life had been increasingly disrupted since the outbreak of War in 1939. The blackout, which was loathed by all, was imposed two days before war was declared on 3rd September 1939. Lights were extinguished in the city streets and in country lanes. All private and public buildings, and most vehicles were affected.[1] (56, P. 168)

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[1] Road deaths almost doubled in the first two months of the war and so the government relaxed the restrictions on car headlights, allowing the use of lights with slitted, metal covers and pedestrians were permitted to use torches covered with tissue paper to dim the beam. The intersections of main roads were also dimly lit with a single light.

16 SOCIABLE FOLK. "Oh, I don't want anything in particular, but I think this is always such a nice CHATTY queue". Lee, The Evening News, World War II.

17 "You stand there talking about fair shares, without understanding the basic rules of humanity. How do you expect my little dog to live?" Tribune, 9.2.51.

Food rationing, which had been introduced on the 8th January 1940 continued up until 1957. Queuing became an accepted way of life. Fig 16 shows a cartoonist's response to this situation. The cartoon by Lee for the Evening News depicts a 'Chatty queue' of Sociable Folk who seem more interested in obtaining the latest gossip than spending their coupons. Lee's humour is mild and inoffensive. Searle, by contrast, is more cutting. His delight in satirizing the selfish Tory Lady in her fur-coated, wrinkly, elegance can be seen in Fig. 17.

This style of cruel satire had been popular with Searle's fellow prisoners in Changi and it quickly became very much in demand in Britain.

> My humour was born out of circumstances which were extremely black. And this found an echo in the popularity I had in England immediately after the war, when things were extremely black. (51, P. 802).

Searle's notorious St. Trinian's characters invented by him during the war virtually become the centre of a cult (Fig. 18). Grown men donned school uniforms and wore pigtails for fancy dress and young girls shortened their gymslips and adopted a rebellious air in emulation of this terrible band of morally decrepit females. When Searle eventually destroyed the girls in 1953, Cecil Day Lewis composed a poem in their memory.

Searle himself felt that the cartoons were so popular because the audience of the forties and fifties in Britain had changed. It seemed that they wanted more than the amusing re-enforcement of pre War Values (51, P. 803). This was almost certainly the first time that this society had been presented with a picture of their offspring as a corrupt throng of 'wild cats'

18 Collage for Souls in Torment, 1953, mixed media.

19 'Hell! My best scotch.' Lilliput, 1952.

(book title) who had, like the population itself, seen too much too soon. Searle said of the series,

> it found an immediate reaction because it was perhaps the first time in the history of cartooning that someone had simply stated that children could be cruel, disgusting, revolting, inconceivably un-19th-century-child-like (sic) (51, P. 803).

The St. Trinian's cartoons deal with the themes of chaos and corruption of innocence, two themes which were prevalent in the culture of the 1940s and 50s in Britain, particularly in the field of literature. Angus Wilson wrote short stories based on the corruption of childhood innocence such as Strawberry Jam which deals with the loss of innocence of a child who is witness to adult cruelty (13, P. 9). Certainly the Trinian's seem to emulate their elders. In Fig. 19 a young school girl curses the fact that her bottle of Scotch has gotten smashed, in her suitcase, on her journey to school.

P.H. Newby, when writing in 1951 on the state of the novel in post war years, commented on the number of young writers who were dealing with childhood experience in this negative way. This he attributed to 'the state of unbelief or bewilderment in which they live. The atmosphere was threatening so that the war seemed in spirit to go on and on'. (13, P.20). Russell Braddon makes an interesting comment on the state of physical and mental exhaustion prevalent among the British people post 1945. He compares them to the prisoners in Changi pointing out that they were going through a similar ordeal, if to a lesser degree.

> I think that he (Searle) worked for the same market, a market that was slightly under-nourished, under privileged, going through shortages and things. (51, P. 803)

The war marked a turning point in Searle's life and in his artistic direction. It was between 1939 and 1945 that he crystallised his artistic style and it was from this seedbed of horror that his work for approximately the next fifteen years was to come.

> Searle as a personality and as an artist, until the mid-forties, remained wholly consistent with the one I had known in Changi. He didn't change at all. And his work was the same. (51, P. 803)

William Golding was another British author who had been profoundly effected by his experience of war and its aftermath. He used childhood experience as a vehicle for the expression of man's inhumanity to man in a manner remarkably similar to Searle. His 1954 novel, Lord of the Flies, traces the story of a group of school boys whose plane crashes, leaving them stranded on a desert island with no adult leadership.

It is up to the boys to fend for themselves and through their activities Golding traces the evolution of man from an unsophisticated, fruit eating creature to his present state of totalitarian butchery overshadowed by the threat of self destruction (28, P. 259). The fable is, in a sense, an anthropological study. Survivors of what is presumed to be a nuclear war or a bombing attack, Golding restores the children to a tropical paradise representative of Eden (28, P. 258). Their subsequent re enactment of the process which has brought them to this state is not influenced by any extraneous forces, thus the cruelty and violence with which they ultimately turn the island into a burning hell must have come from within the boys themselves. 'Man produces evil as a bee produces honey' claimed Golding (28, P. 258).

The 'loss of innocence' (14, P.223) for which Ralph weeps at the novels close, is neither transformation from childish goodness to adolescent depravity, nor a development of civilization into wildness. It is, rather the coming of an awareness of the evil or the 'darkness of man's heart' that was present in the boys all along. (57, P.2)

20 Owing to the international situation, the match with St. Trinian's has been postponed. Lilliput, Oct. 1941.

21 "Hand up the girl who burnt down the East Wing last night" Changi Gaol, Singapore, C1944-5, Lilliput, April 1946.

The St. Trinian's Cartoons as a Microcosm of Society

Examining human nature in microcosm is a long established literary device (57, P.4). One could take children to represent essential, pristine human nature. (57, P.2) By concentrating on the world inside a British all-girls boarding school Searle uses both of these conventions to comment on the war and its effect on British Society in the 1940s and 50s.

The first cartoon in the series is more in the line of a precursor as it does not actually depict the St. Trinian's girls, rather it heralds their arrival and the impending war. Fig. 20 depicts a black stockinged, be-spectacled group of uniformed school girls scanning a school notice board which bears the announcement. 'Owing to the international situation the match with St. Trinian's has been postponed.'

Ironically Searle's own life, along with the lives of many other men, was about to be suspended as he went off to join the armed forces in 1939. But for the bare thigh visible above the stocking top and the unkind rendering of the lumpy schoolgirl bodies, there is little indication of the violence, savagery and cruelty which was to follow.

The first actual St. Trinian's cartoon (Fig. 21) was drawn in Changi gaol, Singapore, during the year 1944 and eventually published in Lilliput[2] magazine five years after its precursor. (8, P. 76)

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[2] Liliput was a small format be-monthly publication measuring 5 1/2" X 7 1/2". It generally featured light-hearted articles on topical events along with short stories, photographs of celebrities and plenty of illustrations by graphic artists such as Searle. It is no longer in print.

22 "And this is Rachel, our head girl". Lilliput, 1951.

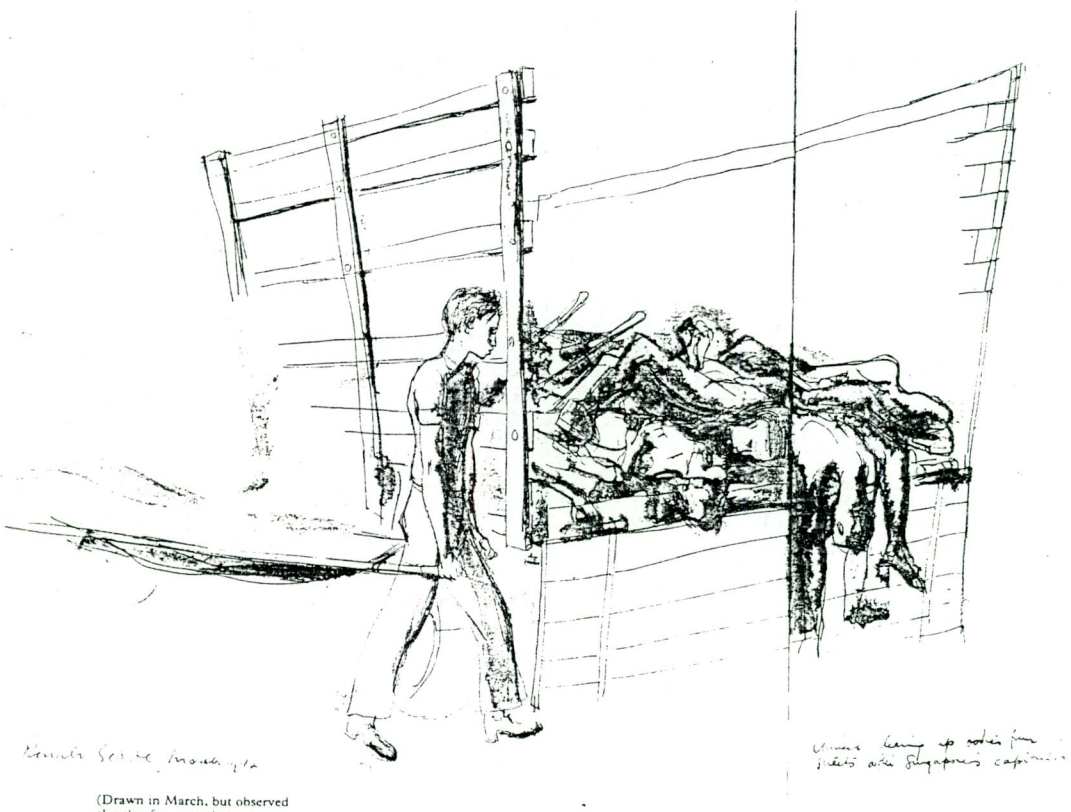
23 Heads of 'unco-operative' Chinese and Malay civillians an display as a warning to others. Singapore, 1942.

Here Searle begins to explore the school itself showing a rather witless looking bunch of students, smiling innocently at an irate school mistress who demands impatiently, 'Hand up the girls who burnt down the east wing last night.'. There are remnants of Searle's earlier pre war drawing style, for example the simple outlines and areas of flat black and white with very little shading or loose penwork. However the blandness inherent in the rather tame sentiments of his earlier work has evaporated in the heat of universal violence.

The girls' appearance was to degenerate further as their escapades worsened. Their legs became spindly and insect like and their bodies bloated, like fat black spiders, (after several years of starvation it is not unreasonable to suggest that Searle came to identify the enemy, and thus evil, as being fat or at least well fed). They lurked in dark corners of the school perpetrating terrible deeds such as 'Rachel' the 'head girl' who is shown sharpening the blade which she uses to collect her gruesome trophies (Fig. 22) human heads which she arranges neatly in rows on two shelves. The joke is, of course, in the pun on 'head girl' but a glance through Searle's war drawings (e.g. Fig. 23) will reveal the source for the bulk of the Trinian's escapades.

Searle viewed the war as a 'wickedly inept political Sacrifice' dominated by 'Chaos' and bureaucracy (39, P.7). His detestation of officialdom, particularly the high ranking military kind, is clear in the detached disapproval of the two mistresses picking their way through the human remains of violent conflict under their feet (Fig. 24). The cartoon can be compared to (Fig. 25) which records the civilians of Singapore clearing up dead bodies, which have been

24 "Cleaners getting slack, Horsefall". 1951.



(Drawn in March, but observed shortly after capitulation.)

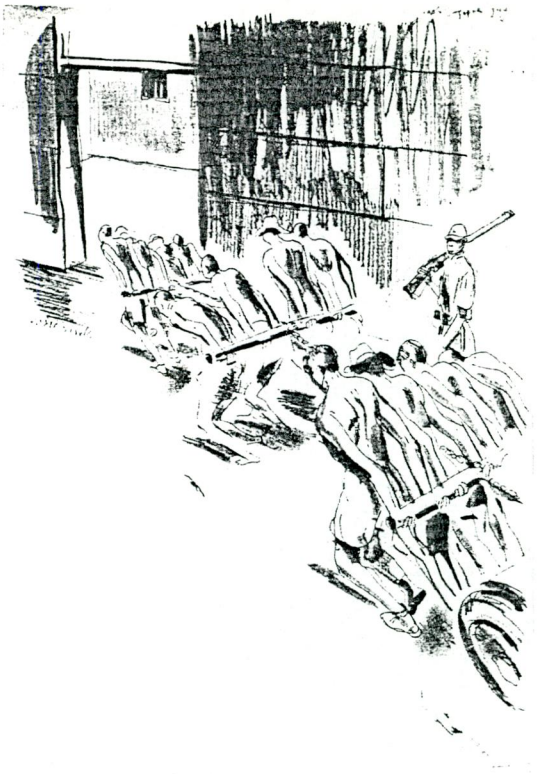
25 "Chinese cleaning up bodies from the streets after Singapore's capitulation." Observed in February but drawn later in March 1942.

lying in the streets during several days of conflict, into the back of a truck. The mistress in Fig 24 have the swelling chests and stiff upper lip of military generals who place human life as a poor second to military victory. Searle experienced this ruthlessness first hand. When his battalion in Singapore was driven to retreat by the Japanese Churchill issued the following statement in response to the crisis,

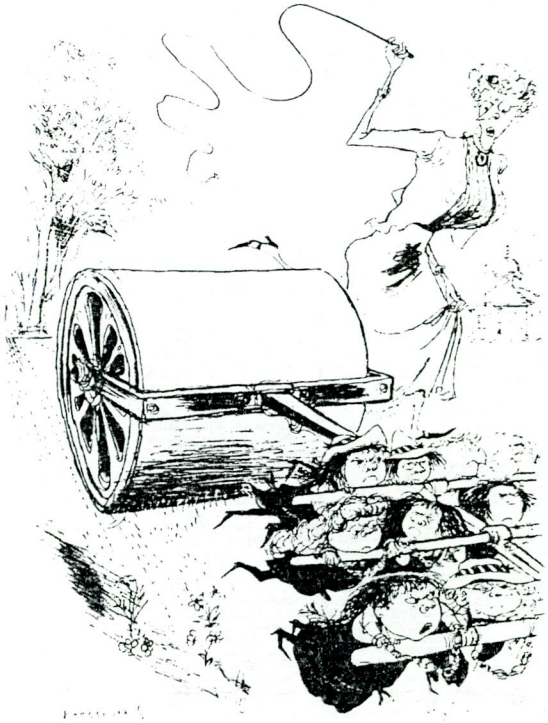
> There must be no thought of saving the troops or sparing the population, the battle must be fought to the bitter end .... commanders and senior officers should die with their troops..... (Ho,ho,) (39, P. 57).

The bracketed remark is Searle's, a further indication of his scepticism. Their ultimate defeat, in Searle's view was the logical conclusion of 'chaotic military and political mismanagement' (39, P. 58) which was a feature of the war throughout.

Thus it can be seen that there are strong connections between Searle's experience in Changi and the St Trinian's cartoons. It is possible to suggest that there is a direct correspondence between the teachers and the Japanese. The drawing Light duties for sick men (Fig. 26) certainly relates to the cartoon Bloody Sport days (Fig. 27) in a manner which would support this argument (8, P.100). A lot of the time, however, the pupils and their mistresses are seen as partners in crime, as in Fig. 28 an unusual example, not dealing with war but with a horse doping scandal which was in the headlines at the time. Searle himself clarified the relationship:



26 "Light Duties" for sick men', Changi Gaol, Singapore, July 1944.



27 "Bloody Sportsdays ... "Lilliput, May 1952.

28 Fair play, St. Trinian's, ue a clean needle" Lilliput, 1950.

29 "I didn't realise it took so long.", 1952.

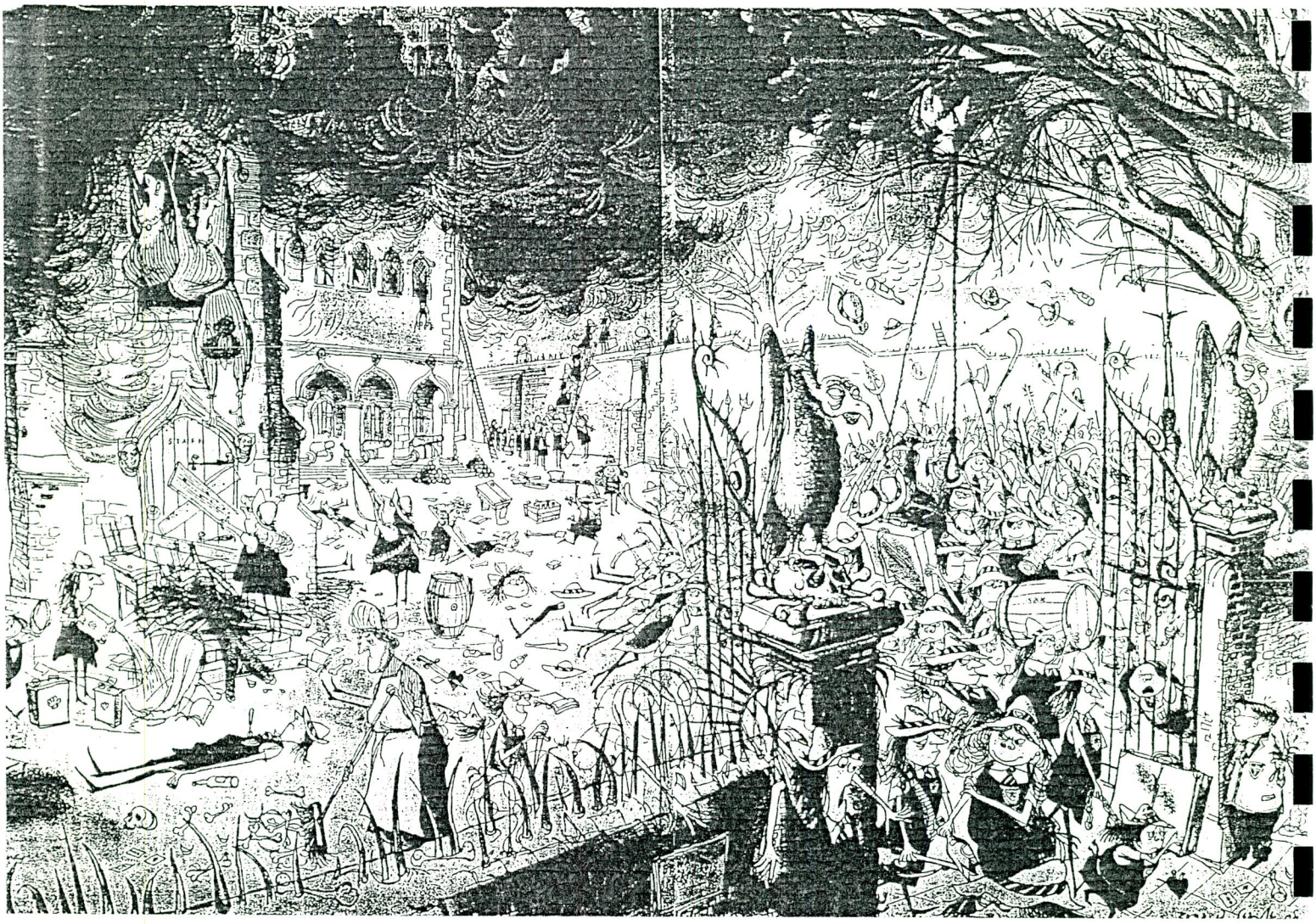
30 "Well done, Cynthia, it WAS Deadly Nightshade," Lilliput, March 1954.

> The staff behind an extremely old fashioned facade conceal equivalent excesses and plenty of lesbianism. They insist on good manners at all times and in all circumstances, (that does not rule out the Japanese) but are extremely tolerant (that does) even to the point of employing an abortionist nurse to look after the (pupils') children. (8, P.101).

Russell Davies argues that the girls are not threatening but funny, (8, P.102) however I would disagree. Take for example the clinical interest with which the two girls are watching their school mate drowning, (Fig. 29), or, Fig. 30, in which the teacher praises the pupil who has correctly named the substance which has just been used to poison another student. Surely this morbid curiosity and sadistic activity was not to distant from the motives which drove Nazi scientists to perform the most horrific medical and scientific experiments on unwilling victims. As I have previously pointed out, these satirical drawings were made at a time of great upheaval in world history. A time predominated by violence and slaughter. In a revised edition of A Short History of the World H.G. Wells wrote of the

> tremendous series of events (which) had forced upon the intelligent observer the realisation that the human story has already come to an end and that homo sapiens, as he has been pleased to call himself in his present form, is played out. (13, P. 40)

In 1953 Searle destroyed the school and its occupants in a huge fire. It seemed to him to be the most fitting ending for his monstrous creation. The destruction of St. Trinian's by fire (Fig. 31) is remarkably similar to Goldings destruction of the island in Lord of Flies by fire, following a violent conflict (14, PP. 212-222). Both, it could be argued, echo the prevailing fear of global destruction which



31 Illustrated, magazine, 1953.

would be the inevitable consequence of a third World War. Thus it can be seen that just as Golding's Lord of the Flies is an anthropological study of the evolution of society in microcosm, Searle's St. Trinian's cartoons are a comment on the cruelty and violence in human nature which were driven into the open by the chaos of war.

CHAPTER TWO

1. Social and Cultural Change
   in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.

2. Social Satire
   in the work of George Grosz: 1916–1930

3. A Modern Rake's Progress 1967–1968

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGE IN BRITAIN IN THE 1960S AND 1970S

The killing of the St. Trinian's girls in 1953 was, with hindsight, quite symbolic as it marked the beginning of the end of the old order in Britain. Post war austerity was drawing to a close with the end of rationing in the mid fifties and the advent of the affluent society' and 'the new morality'; two terms which were to become regular catch phrases in the late fifties and on into the 1960s. Not unusually, neither was intended by its originator to have the meaning it ultimately acquired. (19 P.2) In 1958 J.K. Galbraith published his study of the American economy, The Affluent Society. His main point was that the growth of large independent corporations had diverted resources away from state control which was subsequently unable to carry out its social responsibilities. He described the resulting condition as 'private affluence : public squalor'. This was not really the case in Great Britain where the Welfare State had greater prominence and there was a lesser degree of affluence (19, P.2). However, after the post-war austerities the 'affluent society' seemed to represent something desirable and guiltily dangerous' bringing about social change in Britain.

'The New Morality was debased even further from the intentions of its originator. Dr. John Robinson, the Bishop of Woolwich published a small paperback called Honest to God in 1963. One of the chapters was titled The New Morality. Robinson had intended challenging the traditional language used by the Church but not its doctrine. However he was misinterpreted and the publication was sensationalised by the Observer which ran an article under the headline Our Image of God Must Go. The 'New Morality' recommended by Robinson

was similar to the old one, the only difference being the idea of a personal God as the principle of harmony in the world. 'God is love' was the Bishops belief. The 'love generation' which evolved in the mid 1960s made rather different sense of the personal chastity which the Bishop of Woolwich was advocating in his new morality. (19, P.23)

By the end of the 1950s Harold Macmillan, leader of the Tory Party had coined his own catchphrase for the 1959 election, 'You've never had it so good.' This marked the switch in social and political emphasis from general social need to the needs of the individual. This shift gained its own momention with the proliferation of consumer goods in the 1960s and 1970s. (13, P.17). Private affluence substantially increased for a lot of people and at a time of full employment both middle and working class families found themselves for the first time with some disposable income (13, P.17). Few could argue with Macmillan's optimistic statement.

In this new consumer society advertising became supremely important. Goods were mass produced for which mass consumption had to be stimulated rather than to meet any established need. This affected not only products but the image of people and of corporate concerns. Even churches felt they could no longer do without the services of professional marketing (13, P. 17). All aspects of life were affected by this concentration on image. It raised the expectations of the consumer to a life style which for most was unattainable, through the depiction in advertising of ideal 'families, kitchens, gardens or holidays' (13, P.18). Television had the power to promote people of minor importance or talent to the status of major personalities in a process which was

backed up by the popular press. This situation where credibility becomes more important than actuality, and presentation more important than content, was deplorable to Searle, who from the beginning of his career had set out to tell the truth as he saw it. He was not alone in his scepticism. A number of articles were published under the title Whats wrong with Britain? and the subject became a recurring feature of daily journalism. Penguin books even published a series of special editions with the same title. Anthony Sampson, the author of the famous Anatomy of Britain published in 1962 gave an account of the changing Britain of the 1960s,

> Within two years the credit squeeze ended, sky scrapers rushed up, supermarkets spread over cities, newspapers became fatter or died, commercial T.V. began making millions, shops, airlines, even coal and banks had to fight for their lives. After the big sleep many people welcomed any novelty; any piece of Americanization seemed an enterprising change, and any thrusting tycoon however irresponsible was regarded as a phenomenon.

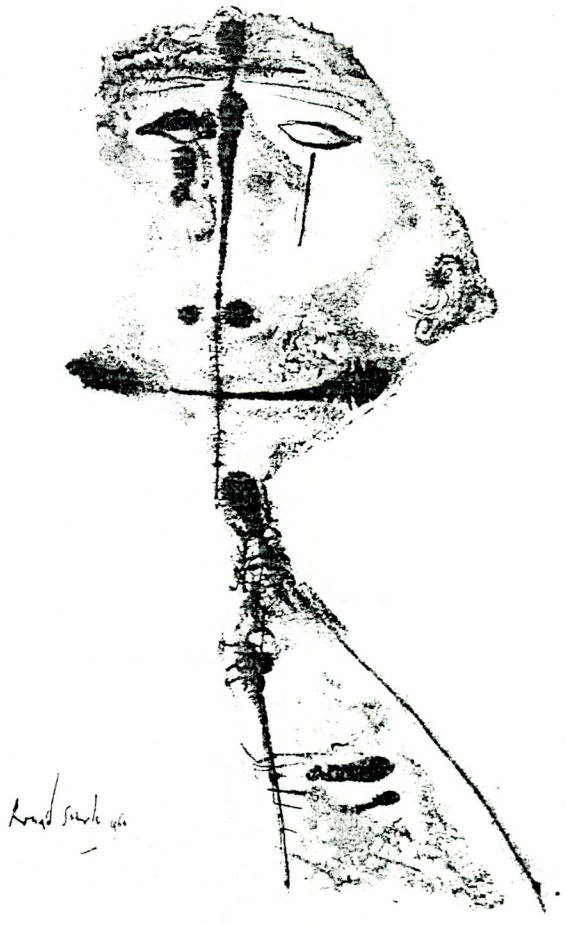
Thus alongside the obsession with image there was the growth of a 'counter balancing scepticism' (13, P.18). This also manifested itself in the development of a strong form of satire replacing the gentler ironic humour of the 1940s and early fifties. That Was The Week That Was with its taboo breaking and iconoclasm became highly popular and was frequently criticised at question time in the House of Commons, (13, P.19). Private Eye magazine was published for the first time in 1962 and survived despite a number of libel actions against some of its more scurrilous, though sharply revealing, articles. People were eventually coming around to a 'Searle's Eye View'

(Punch 1964) of their society in that the cosily reassuring institution of British Humour was being replaced by a more trenchant satire.

A more dispirited response to the changing western society came from a number of writers in the 1960s and 70s. William Golding continued his exploration of the theme of diseased humanity in his 1964 novel The Spire. The central character, Jocelin, a medieval church builder discovers the earthbound egotistical roots of his spiritual ambition to build the largest spire in England onto his Cathedral. The Cathedral is, however, founded on slime, and the deeper the workmen dig the foundations for the tower, the closer to Hell they come. When the Spire is finally completed it leans crookedly and Jocelin's own spine is bent and deformed by Tuberculosis (9, P.34) a dual symbol of evil and inner corruption manifesting itself outwardly. In 1963 Golding was to comment.

> I am becoming more and more convinced that humanity, the people we are, those we meet, is suffering from a terrible disease. I want to examine this disease, because only by knowing it is there any hope of being able to control it. And when I look around me to find examples of this sickness, I seek it in the place where it is most accessible to me, I mean in myself.

Distortion of the body was a technique also adopted by Searle to bring out the flaws in human nature. As I have shown in my discussion of the St. Trinian's cartoons, the girls' bodies became progressively more distorted as time passed and their deeds grew more evil. Their legs became spindlier, their torsos more swollen and shapeless, and their heads sank down onto their shoulders giving them a hunched, prematurely aged look (Fig. 22). In the early 1960s in an attempt to discover how much he could distort the human form



32 From Anatomies and Decapitations, 1962.

so that it would still be recognisable, Searle put his work through a series of extreme experiments. With a pen, ink and watercolour he used drips, blots and layers of washes, overlapping and
bleeding into each other, held together by a framework of violent scratchy pen strokes, to render the human figure (Fig. 32).

The title of the series Anatomies and Decapitations is both investigative and destructive. In the 73 drawings completed between 1962 and 1964 Searle is dissecting the human psyche concentrating on the expression of emotion, and a new way of depicting the body.

> I know I am only on the fringe but, for me , it is the most exciting personal development in all the years I have spent exploring the medium of graphic art ... The frailty of human character is my mushroom bed. (8, P. 143)

The large, disturbing, drawings are very negative representations of the human body. The pen strokes, ink blots and contorted shapes are violent, and the figures though evidently human exist in a state of 'sub human grotesqueness' (8, P.143) displaying a horror of the body comparable to that which he experienced in Changi. (Fig. 33) It is interesting to note that an anatomy is also defined as "a withered emaciated person" (Concise English Dictionary) a description which would definitely be applicable to a great number of these new characters. The similarities between the 'prisoner dying of cholera' (Fig. 33) and the tortured human head (Fig. 34) are evident, around the eyes, especially, and the hairless skull and withered neck. Searle used this device of heavily underlined eyes in a great number of his post-war cartoons (Fig. 35) including this caricature of an English gentleman outraged by the controversial

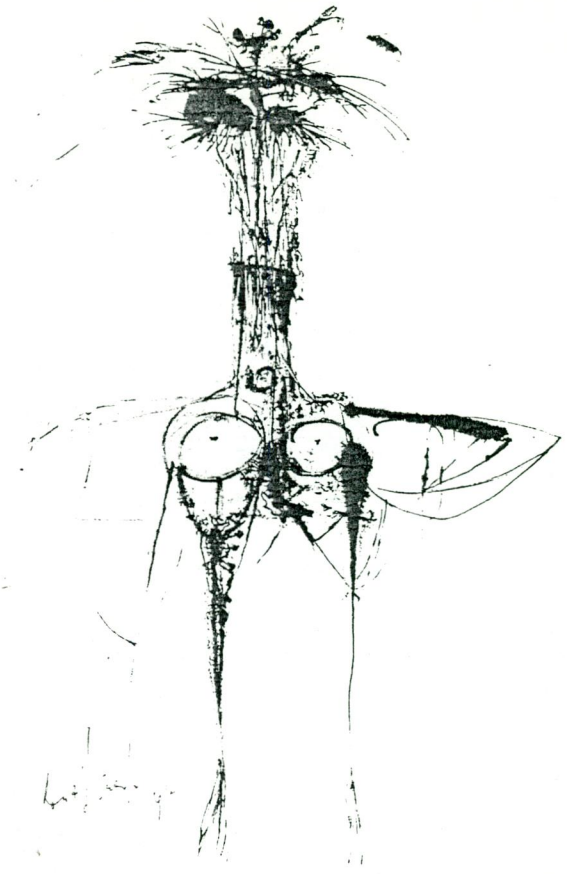
33 'Prisoner dying of Cholera', Siamese Jungle, Thailand, 1943.

34 From Anatomies and Decapitations' 1962.

35 Detail, 'Consequences of putting Mr. Graham Sutherland's latest portrait on public exhibition' Punch, 1954.

36 "Nobody Loves Me", from A Few Complexes, (Twelve pen drawings on the theme of Frustrations and Complexes 1972.

37 "On the Bayswater Road", London, 1950.



38 From 'Anatomies and Decapitations", 1962.

39 Insect Play, 1972.

portrait of Winston Churchill painted by Graham Sutherland in 1954. However, in later years it was used more to convey sense of deep misery and self pity as in this monstrous creature from the 1973 series A Few Complexes (Fig. 36) which illustrates man's habit of blaming his psychological condition on external forces. Nobody loves me is the caption for this image and who could love this misshapen creature who is wallowing in his own grotesqueness and self pity? The title A Few Complexes, with its obvious references to Freudian psychology, suggests that Searle is again visually expressing the diseased human condition. He uses a similar vocabulary to express the physical sickness of the man dying from cholera and the mental illness of the creature drowning in self pity.

Davies makes the connection here between Searle's drawing of a woman, most likely a prostitute,on the Bayswater Road in London, (Fig. 37) from 1950 and (Fig. 38) from the Anatomies and Decapitations series. He notes the similarities around the eyes and the breasts (8, P.142).

> it might be worth noting, in passing that at the time Searle completed this savage representation of the female forms (Fig. 6) he was actually in the process of getting a divorce from his first wife having 'disappeared' (51, P. 803) leaving only a note, in 1960).

In my opinion this abstraction of the female form formed the basis for later drawings such as Fig. 39, Insect Play which seems to be based on the Black Widow Spider's habit of eating her mate after copulation. The larger insect is given the human female characteristics of breasts, fingers, arched eyebrows and Searle's strongest feminine symbol, large elongated eyes with thick dark lashes. Once again the links between the three representations of women are

in the eyes and eyebrows, the breasts, and of course the aura of cruelty that surrounds them.

Anatomies and Decapitations, not surprisingly did not win popular fame. They were exhibited in New York, the obvious psychological connotations seemed to appeal to the Americans, who saw them as close relatives to the Rorschach ink blot tests. (8. P. 143) They were later exhibited in Germany, but never in England and, unlike the rest of Searle's work, they were never collected into book form. A selection of them were printed in Graphis in 1963 where the editor defined them as 'the mature commentary of an extremely sensitive observer upon human frailty of this day and age.' (53, P. 386)

This exploration of the universal through the personal was carried out in a savagely explicit, highly satirical manner by the controversial writer of the 1960s, William Burroughs, in his best known book The Naked Lunch, first published in London in 1964. Searle has always been closely involved with literature and writers, working alongside journalists such as Eric Keown, and writers, such as Geoffrey Willians and Patrick Cambell in the fifties and he was personally friendly with several great literary figures including Somerset Maughem, James Thurber and most importantly Samuel Beckett. In an interview with the B.B.C.'s Line Up television crew in 1968 he explained the importance of Burroughs and the Beat group of writers with whom Burroughs was associated. Searle stated that,

> literature has made such vast strides forward in the sense of saying what it wants to say, there is no artistic possibility of saying what has been said for example in the Last Exit to Brooklyn or The Naked Lunch, two books that I feel are the most extraordinary puritanical documents, bringing a terrifying indictment - if one could say, graphically, what has been said by these two books.... then, I think the way is open for a vast movement in graphic satire. (8, P. 154)

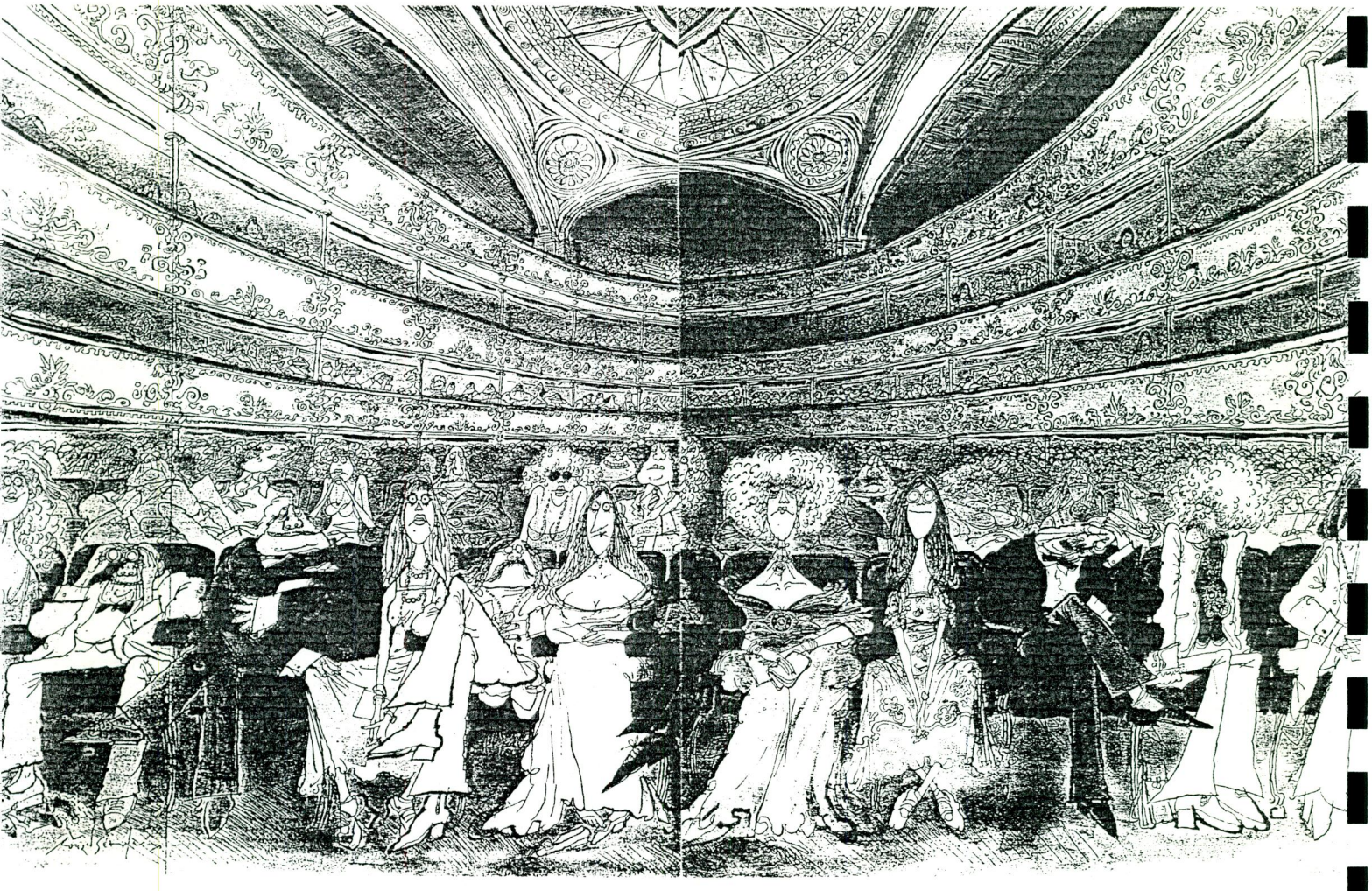
Burroughs, an ex heroin addict, who had finally come off drugs after fifteen years of addiction, published one novel, Junkie, in 1953, dealing with his experience of drug addiction. The Naked Lunch his second novel also deals with his experience as an addict. However, he uses the drug society as a microcosm for the 'sickness of normal society' which has its own hallucinatory and addictive poisons (6. P.27).

Drugs and sex are both metaphors for the commodity fetishism which governs all human transactions in a monstrous universe. Society, Burroughs is saying, is dominated by addicts to those other drugs, "power hunger, control addiction and inhumane experiment" (6, P.27), which are part of the alienating process that cuts individuals off and creates social illnesses such as the drug culture.

As with Searle and Golding, the attitudes of Burroughs and the Beat group were formed during the violent historical climate of the second World War and its aftermath. Of their name, The Beat Group, John Clellon Holmes wrote in 1988,

> Everyone who has lived through a war, any sort of war, knows that beat means not so much weariness as rawness of the nerves; not so much being filled up to here; as being emptied out. It described a state of mind from which all unessential have been stripped leaving it receptive to everything around it but impatient with trivial obstructions. To be beat is to be at the bottom of your personality looking up; (20, P. 146).

Much of the material of The Naked Lunch consists of very imaginative, highly unconventional and sadistic activity, a great deal of it sexual. This according to the publisher John Calder is all intended to stress the connection between sex and death and cruelty now well known to anthropologists and psychologists. (6, P.28) Searle has dealt with this theme in a visual way as can be seen in Fig. 39 which I discussed above. Burroughs describes a scene from a surreal, blue movie in which a man and a woman have sex while she is killing him, then she begins to eat him. (4, P.85) Burrough's purpose, as with Swift's A Modest Proposal is to make his readers aware of their basic instincts in order to stop cruelty and exploitation through self awareness. To this end Swift advocated eating babies to cure the Irish Famine, shocking those who otherwise would not have been aware that there was a famine or bothered to think about ending it. (6, P.28) He viewed the rise of Nazism as a twentieth century Roman festival popularly supported because it realised the cruelly that lies just below the surface in all of us. One only has to read a small part of The Naked Lunch to realise that Burroughs does not in any way advocate or condone the behaviour of his characters. Through literary caricature he satirises them cruelty, exposing their egotistical self importance in a manner similar to Searle.

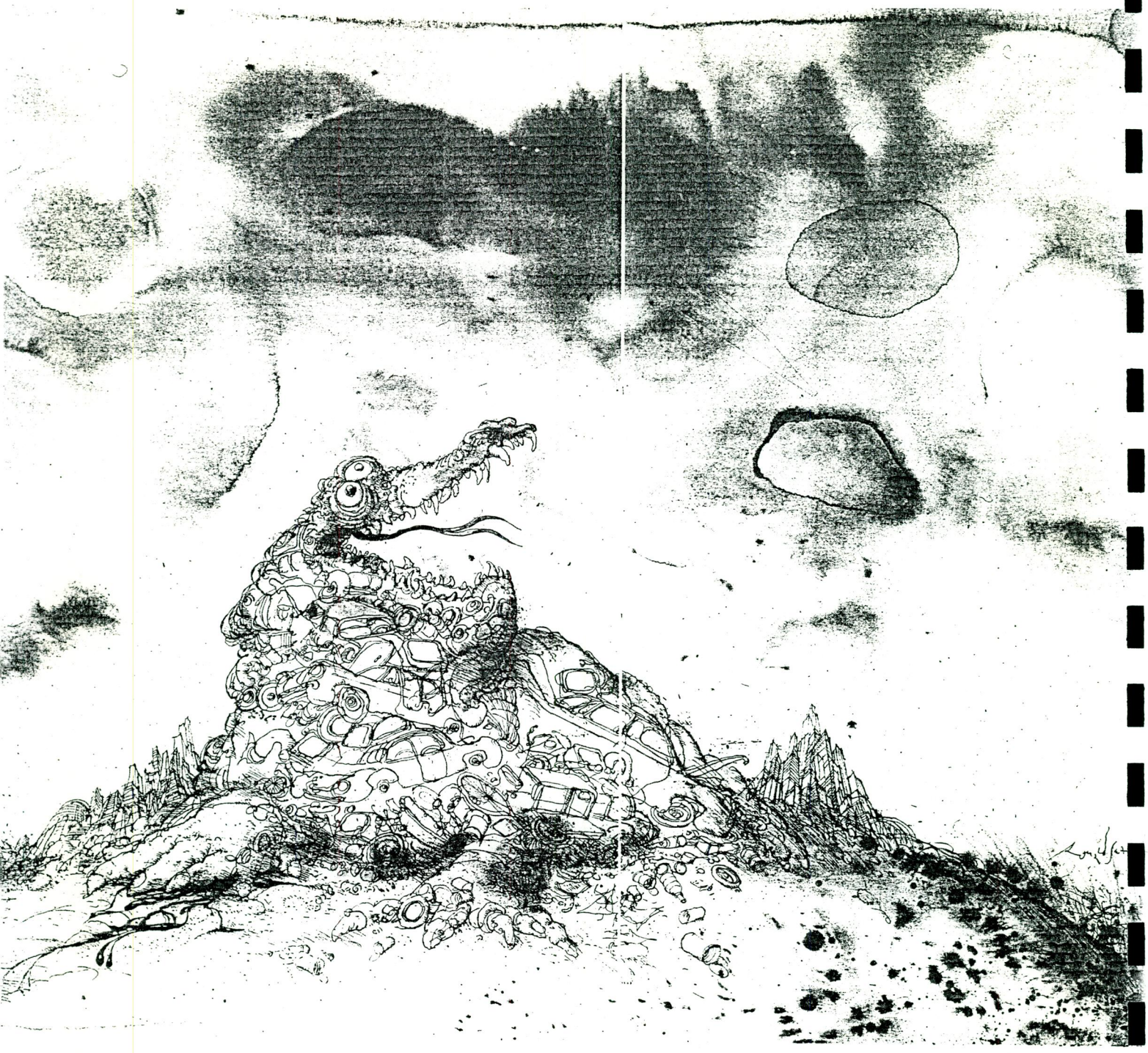


40 "The Cultured Ones", 1975.

> Luncheon of the Nationalist Party on balcony overlooking the market. Cigars, Scotch, polite belches ... The Party leader strides about in a jelleba smoking a cigar and drinking scotch. He wears expensive English shoes loud socks, garters, muscular hairy legs - over all effect of a successful gangster in drag...
>
> A street boy climbs over the balcony rail.
> Lieutenant : 'No we don't want to buy any used condoms! Cut!'
> P.L: 'Wait ... come in, my boy. Sit down ... Have a cigar ... Have a drink ..."
>
> He paces around the boy like an aroused tom cat.
>
> The Naked Lunch

A similar comment on the base instincts which break through the facades of wealth and social status can be seen in the behaviour of the row of spectators in Searle's ironically titled caricature of The Cultured Ones.(Fig. 40)

Another form of Satire used by Burroughs is the creation of monstrous creatures which are grotesquely inhuman, but have the characteristics of humans. These traits are the weakness of lust, greed and sadism. They are creatures from science fiction, an element of Burrough's work prompted by the developments of the age where the politics of the decade were dominated by the race to the moon between Russia and America, and the splitting of the atom which produced the potential to destroy ourselves completely. However, science fiction writers of the British avant garde of the 1960s turned away from outer space and set about exploring inner space with the idea that mankind was travelling in the wrong direction. (19, P. 85) Burroughs gives his creatures weird and surreal names such as 'Mugwumps', 'Latahs', Liquefactionists' and 'Divisionists'.

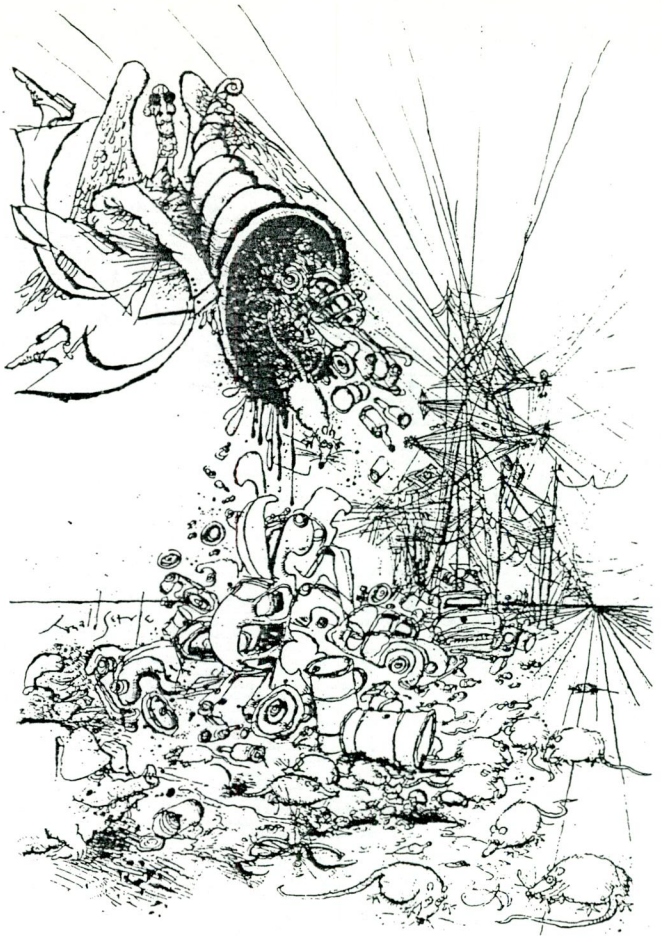


41 The Monster, 1973

> The Boy looked into the Mugwump's eyes blank as obsidian mirrors.
>
> From the open bronze mould emerged a transparent green shape crisscrossed with pulsing red veins, liquid screen eyes swept by colour flashes - A smell of sewage and decay breathing from years of torture, films, orgasm death in his black eyes glistening with the slow fish lust of the swamp mud-
> Long tendril hands ...
>
> The Naked Lunch

This creature from Burroughs imagination could be a written description of the grotesque creature drawn by Searle, as an image of mans psychological illness controlling his physical appearance (Fig. 36).

Burroughs depicts a world full of waste and debris, used contraceptives, discarded belongings, old clothes, insects and rats. The wake of modern consumer society, a theme which also became a preoccupation of Searle's, is vividly depicted by him as a living creature, made from rubbish and scrap abandoned by humans. Literally rising up out of the ground it towers over the urban landscape which has created it, (Fig. 41). Again, in a drawing entitled Landscape with Angel of Affluence (Fig. 42). Searle depicts a winged figure dressed in the garb of a businessman or marketing agent wearing dark glasses to hide his eyes emptying a cornucopia of wrecked cars, tin cans and other assorted rubbish, crawling with rats and even a pig onto a vast, empty plain which is punctuated by a complex network of telephone and electric cables. Not content with exploiting his fellows, man has set about destroying his environment. This abstract landscape is a common feature of Searle's later work. It is highly reminiscent of the stage sets designed by Samuel Beckett for his plays such as Waiting for Godot, Happy Days or the scene which Beckett suggests would lie on the other side of



42A Landscape with Angel of Affluence, 1972.

42B Samuel Beckett, from, As the Imagination Sees them, Series in Punch, 1961.

the two windows in Endgame. His description of the set for Happy Days is as follows,

> Maximum of simplicity
> Blazing Light
> very pompier trompe l'oeil backcloth to represent unbroken plain and sky receding to meet in distance (55, P. 2321).

The first appearance of this background stage setting in Searle's work was in an Imaginary Portrait of Samuel Beckett (Fig. 42B) completed by Searle as part of a series he did for Punch in 1962 entitled Searle's Eye View.

Beckett made progressively less and less, use of scenery, lighting and movement, truncating the actors bodies with dustbins or mounds of earth. In Not I he even abstracted the body completely using just a spot lit mouth on a darkened stage. He adopted these techniques to widen dramatic horizon, and establish a continental existentialism and a non realist made on the English stage thus dramatising his sense of futility and human isolation (7, P. 218) in Endgame there is the suggestion that the characters are the last surviving beings and that the earth has been destroyed by some great disaster, a reference perhaps to man's destructive tendencies.

Like Burrough's, Golding and Searle, Beckett was moving inwards towards the core of the human psyche (20. P.184). He is exploring what Martin Esslin defines as the tragic difficulties of becoming aware of one's own self in the merciless process of renovation and destruction that occurs with change in time, the difficulty of communication between human beings and the sense of deadness and hopelessness that is experienced in states of deep depression (7, P. 28) (Fig. 36).

Thus it can be seen that there was a growing revolt against modesty and control in literature and the arts, and a move towards a greater expressiveness of which The Beat Group were probably the most extreme examples. Their writings were a response to what was happening in Western Society. The description of the opening party of the Institute of Contemporary Arts' new premises in April 1968 by its director Michael Kustow could well have been a passage from a Burroughs novel or a Searle caricature:

> At the end of the gallery a wiry looking avant-garde ballerina performed something erotic with a brass bedstead, wearing a Napoleonic hat, in the centre, The African band had got into its swing, and a girl was undulating above people's heads her belly button drawing the lecherous gazes of esteemed public faces. it was a sight for the pen of Hogarth so distant leap from the raffish eighteenth century Convent Garden or George Grosz had they been able to make the not so distant leap from 19th Century Covent Garden or lush twenties Berlin, (19, p. 124).

In 1967 Searle was commissioned by the American Holiday magazine to do a series of drawings based on St. Pauli in Hamburg for a feature they were running on the city's attractions. St. Pauli, however, was no ordinary tourist spot, it was a notorious red light district also known as the 'Reeperbahn'. (8, P.147). In the resultant drawings Searle's debt to both Hogarth and George Grosz is evident as he traces a tourist's progress through the seedy world of the German subculture.

43 Pandemonium, George Grosz, 1914.

43B "Thanks Jesus", 1973.

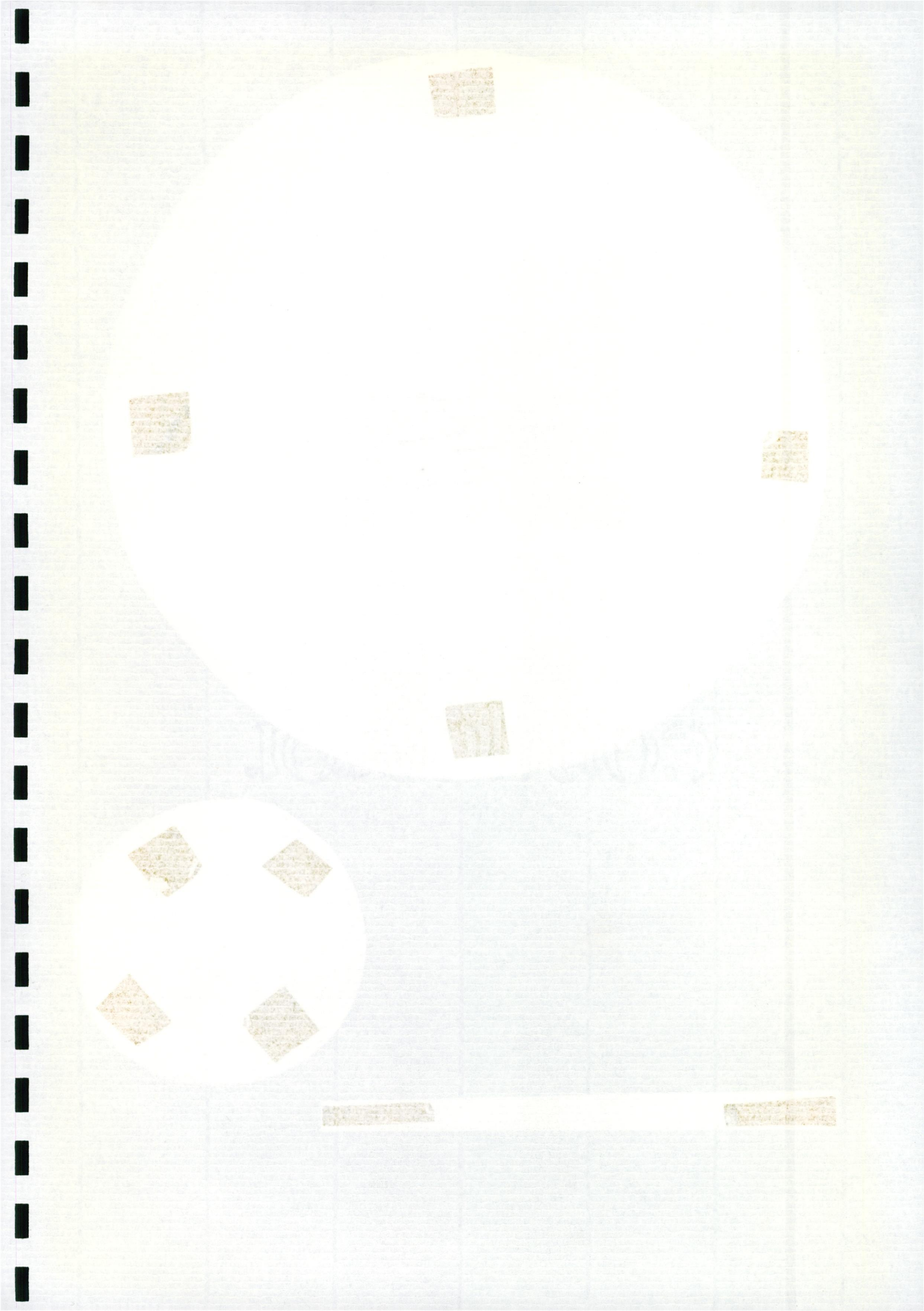
SOCIAL SATIRE IN THE WORK OF GEORGE GROSZ

The work of George Grosz, as I have pointed out in the introduction, had a great influence on the young Searle. In 1939 his discovery of a book drawings by Grosz had introduced him to the possibilities of pictorial rage and scorn in a more contemporary context than Hogarth, Gillray or Daumier, the other great masters of satire whose work Searle admired. Grosz may have been responsible for the violence and cruelty present in Searle's work from Changi on. However, it was not until this point in his career that the influence of Grosz became strongly evident.

There are abundant technical similarities between the two artists particularly in their use of line and their rendering of the human figure. They also share a similar world view, satirizing the bestial side of man's nature ie corruption, lust, greed, and cruelty. 'Men are pigs', wrote Grosz in a letter to Otto Schmalhausen in March 1918. (25, P.58) This was a sentiment frequently echoed by Searle in his caricatures (Fig. 43B) Like Searle, Grosz experience of war had helped to shape his outlook on humanity.

Grosz had been invalided out of the army for the second time in two years, in May 1917 due to a mental breakdown. His shock and horror at the outbreak of the first World War can be seen in the drawing Pandemonium (Fig. 43), which indicates his reaction to the war, as he recorded it in his auto biography A Small Yes and a Big No

> I felt the earth beneath me tremble and this tremor was evident in my paintings and watercolours. (25, P.17)

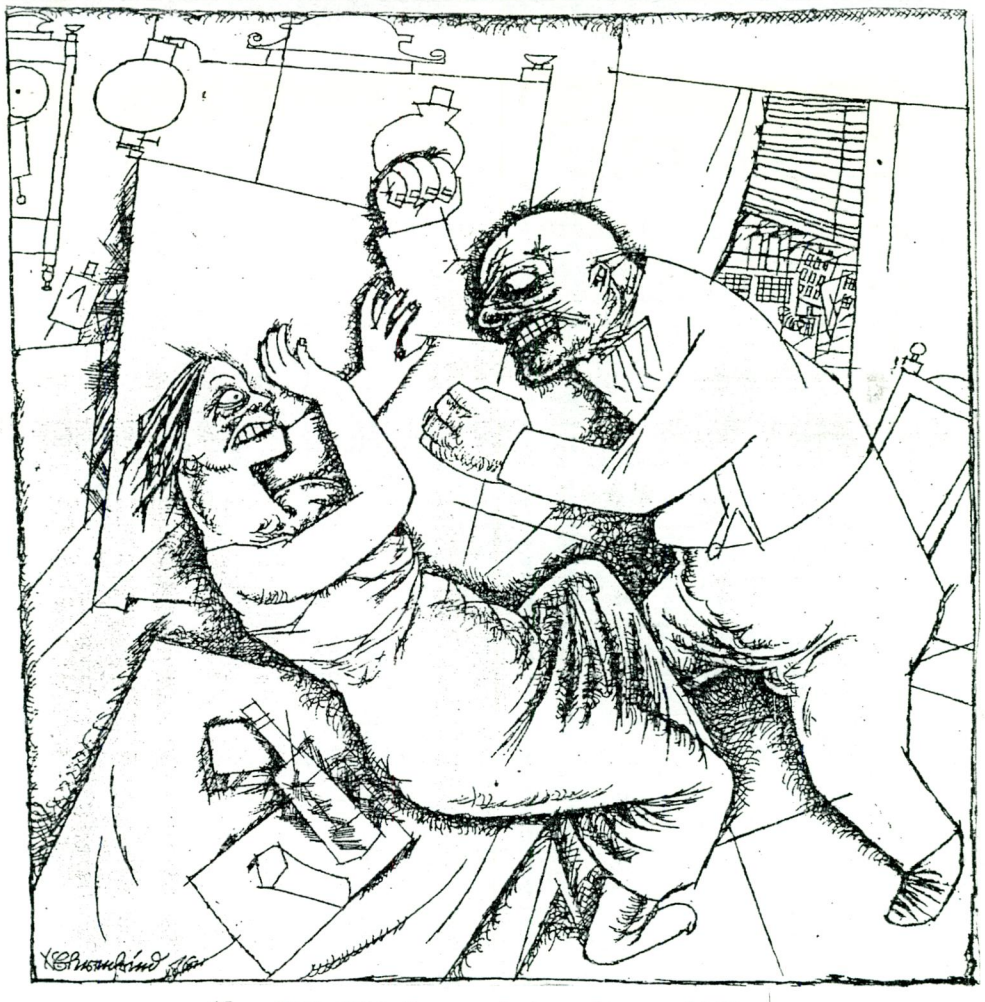


44 Medal Design, to commemorate George Grosz, Clay, French Mint, 1977.

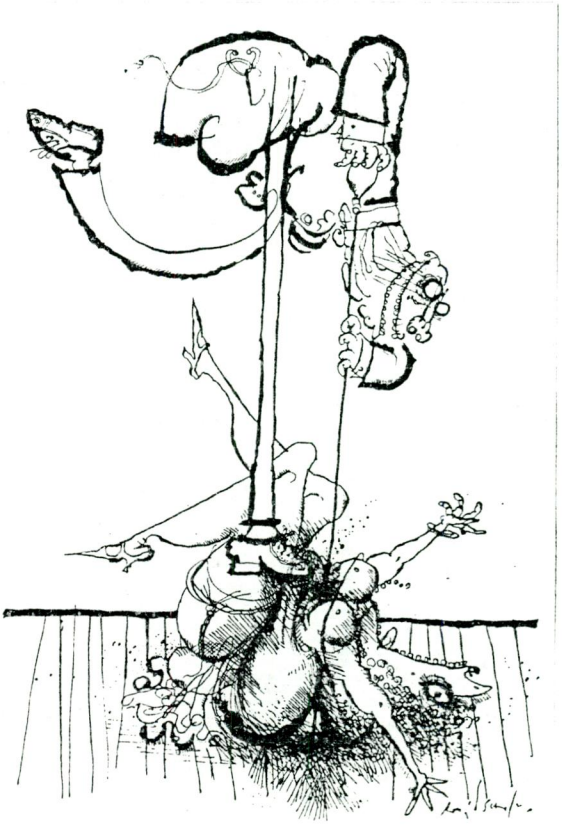
For Grosz the chaos of the modern city reflected the chaos of a world which was marked by war. (22, P.38) Following his release from the army he returned to Berlin where the omnipresence of the war in speeches, rallies, newspapers and parades made him realise the devastating fact that the acceptance of violence and the craving for life were not confined to the German front. The city and its people were the focus of the plague. He set out to 'strip people of their flimsy masks of pretence' and expose what William Golding referred to as 'the darkness of man's heart'. (14, P.223)

In 1917 Grosz joined the Communist Party but although he became a notorious satirist feared and hated by the right wing militarists he could not produce the idealistic propaganda required of him by the left. Thus he soon fell from the favour of the hard line Communist Party members. Searle had joined the Labour Party shortly after the war and had produced drawings for The Labour Party Press Service, which ran a weekly page in Tribune however he was also supplying cartoons for the right wing Sunday Express. (8, P.87) He later regretted his involvement with the Labour Party as a loss of the independent neutrality of the artist.

Searle was commissioned by the French Mint to design a series of medals to commemorate his historic ancestors in the field of graphic satire. Between 1977 and 1978 Searle designed medals paying tribute to Otto Dix, Jon Heartfield and George Grosz, the three most powerful satirists of the Weimar Republic in the interwar years in Germany. The front of the Medal designed for Grosz (Fig. 44) depicts a stern faced, three quarter portrait of the artist surrounded by the subjects from many of his bitter caricatures. On the reverse side a woman is kissing a fat, middle class



45 Domestic Scene, George Grosz, 1919.



46 I can't help it, I had a dominating mother, from A Few Complexes, series, 1972.

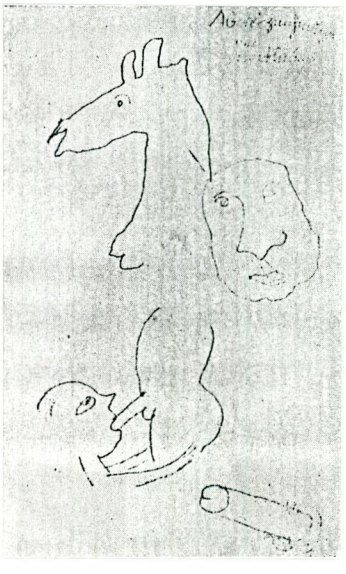
German business man, a comment on greed and lust frequently made by Grosz. However, Searle however, has modelled the man in the form of a pig, as if to emphasise the point being made by Grosz. In an essay Searle contributed to the Bulletin du Club Francais de la Medaille he wrote of Grosz:

> By nature he was an outsider and, even as a convinced communist, he could not swallow a party line that glorified the proletariat as representatives of all that was pure and good.
>
> Basically he was misanthropic, recognising that Man, whatever his class or political flavour, was equally capable of being squalid, sordid and bestial, (8, P.170).

In the writing of this passage Searle could have been describing himself. Grosz and his contemporaries, Otto Dix and the slightly older Edward Fuchs rejected the repressed sexuality of the middle classes. They did not idealise sex, rather they had read Freud and acknowledged sex as a basic human instinct, whose repression, they believed, would lead to its expression in a perverted form. In 1919 their Dada manifesto called lightheartedly for an immediate regulation of all sexual relations in an 'international Dadaist spirit' by the establishment of Dada sex head quarters', (11, P. 41).
Fuchs, who was involved in compiling a complete cultural history of erotic art, interpreted Grosz's drawings of lust and violent sexual acts as a form of protest against a society in which sexual repression led to this type of crime (Fig. 45) Grosz, like Searle, Burroughs and Golding, was emphasising making the link between sex, violence and death, (Fig. 46).

Despite their liberated views on sex, the group had quite conservative ideas about the role of women in society. The Weimar Republic brought more open

47 Fair Spain, far in the south, George Grosz, pen and watercolour, 1919.



48 Copy of a lavatory graffiti, 1916, George Grosz.

recognition than before of homosexuality, bisexuality and lesbianism, but it did not up date its model for hetero sexual relations. Grosz grew up in a society which stressed the differences between the genders. He had also read the misogynist writings of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Otto Weiniger. Thus he saw men and women as polar opposites, with men being 'active, creative, innovative, the sole makers and preservers of culture', while women were passive, uncreative, inactive, concerned solely with sexuality procreation and the preservation of the family', (11. P.42).

Thus women became merely the passive objects of male desire, symbols of temptation and victims of male perversion (Fig. 47). This is most probably why Grosz depicted men fully clothed and women either naked or with their breasts, buttocks or genital area showing through their clothes - a device which signifies that the male viewer is mentally undressing the woman. (Fig. 47)

In art school Grosz studied the drawings and paintings of Toulouse Lautrec and Daumier as well as Japanese draughtsmanship, which would account for his strong linear style and his interest in the seamier side of society, his desire to communicate his vision of a world corroded by greed and hate led him to adopt the deceptively simple line and naive figure drawings reminiscent of children's art. What he wanted to achieve was,

> Brutality, Clarity that hurts
> There are enough musics that send people to sleep, (10, P.66).

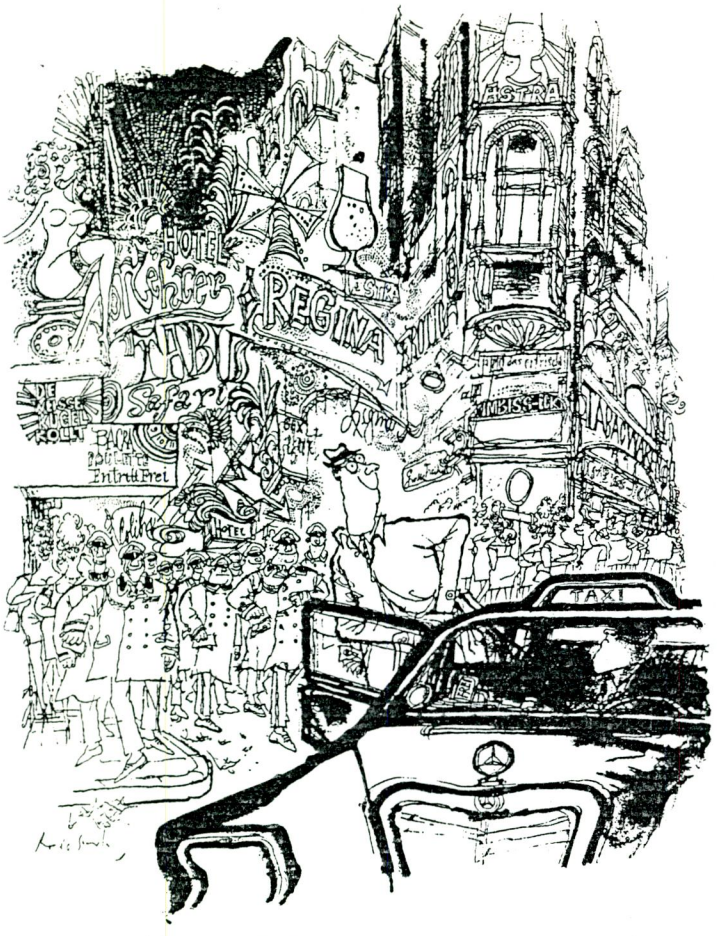
In his search for a readily accessible visual language he also looked to graffiti and the crude, erotic drawings made by itinerant artists in bars and bowling

alleys, for the price of a few drinks. The direct simplicity of these drawings were necessary, he felt, to shock his audience into awareness of the rotten state of society. In a discussions with Kessler, a patron of his, Grosz stated that it was necessary for artists to use the simplest and most startling pictorial language possible in order to achieve this effect, (Fig. 48).

> In order to achieve a style which .... would render the blunt and unvarnished harshness and unfeelingness of my objects I studied the crudest manifestations of the artistic urge. In public urinals I copies the folkloristic drawings; they seemed to me to be the most immediate expression and the most succinct translation of strong feelings, (25, P. 38).

Using the techniques of exaggeration and abbreviation Grosz sought to convey man's inhumanity to man, to his audience. He hoped that by depicting crimes and cruel acts in an exaggerated manner his images might have a 'restraining effect on reality'. He wanted to become

> the German Hogarth, consciously objective and moralist, (he wanted) to preach improve and reform, (25, P.60).



49 Hamburg St Pauli, 1967,
1: Welcome to the Reeperbahn.

50 2: Initiation Into the Spirit of the Bierhalle.

51 3: The First Night Club (10 pm).

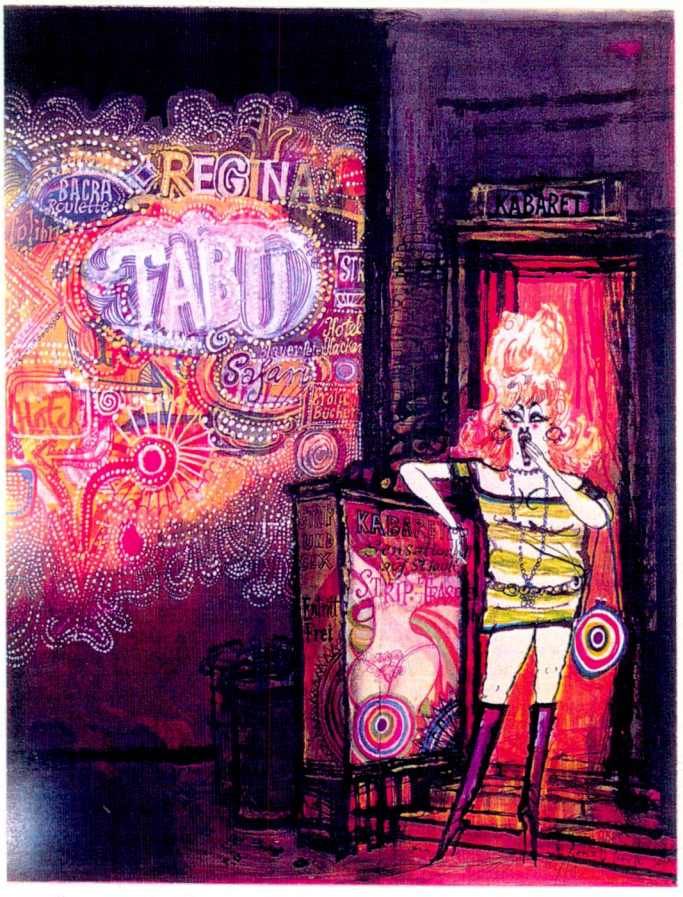
52 4: The Second Night Club (11 pm).

The St. Pauli drawings (Figs. 49-54), most clearly show the effects of the new movements in society on Searle's caricature. The most notable changes are the revolt against modesty and restraint, the stronger satiric response brought about by the emphasis on image and advertising , and the explicit approach he had first discovered in George Grosz and then found echoed in Burroughs. The most telling sign of the times is the fact that a travel and leisure magazine should advertise a haven of prostitution, sexual perversion and human exploitation as a suitable location for a holiday.

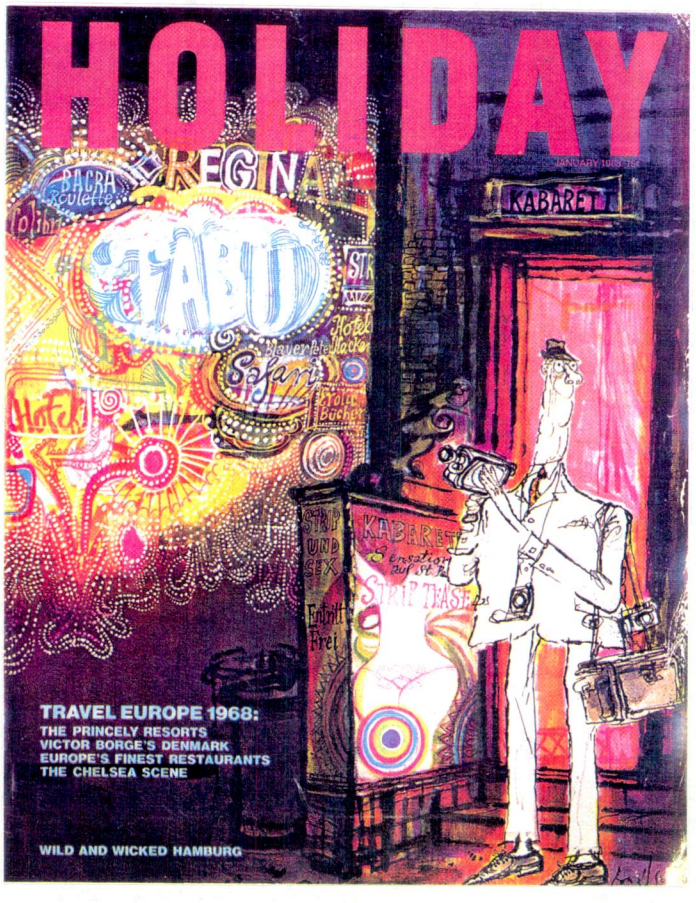
Frank Zachery, the art editor of the American Holiday magazine, commissioned Searle to do a series of illustrations in 1967 to accompany an article called Wicked Cities of the World, Part I. Zachery knew that Searle was one of the few artists he could trust to come up with an 'acceptable job on striptease, prostitution and sado-masochistic display'. (8, P. 148) However the drawings Holiday received from the pleasure palaces of St. Pauli were more explicit than they had bargained for. They had clearly not allowed for Searle's 'new un British frankness' (8. P.148) on the matter of sex. He had portrayed the seedy side of Hamburg in all its festering glory. Holiday returned all of the drawings to their creator requesting that the 'bare bosoms be somehow adorned and the token fringes elongated into skirts', (8, P.148). For the cover art Searle had rendered a full colour image of a prostitute in a doorway, obviously bored by the whole scene, backlit by the crimson glow of the red light district (Fig. 55). This proved to be too much for the Holiday management who, despite the nature of the article, could not accept a street walker,however

53 5: Not well received for trying to use credit card.

54 6: Dawn.



55 Original cover art for Holiday, 1967.



56 Alteration to cover art for Holiday, January 1968.

bored, on the front of their magazine. Searle, obviously irritated by the hypocrisy of an organization who would run a feature enticing people to visit a place and then balk at showing it as it was, altered the drawings temporarily with cut-out and stick on amendations (Fig. 56). He then restored them to their original condition and published them in his own collection at a later date (8, P. 149).

Billed in the magazine as A Modern Rake's Progress, the six illustrations trace the progression of a tourist through the red light district of St. Pauli. They document his arrival his visit to a beer hall and to several night clubs, which feature erotic dancing, sadomasochistic performances and all-girl wrestling. He winds up in a dust bin, down a side alley, among the rubbish and the rats, spent, both physically and financially.

The contemporary Rake's Progress is not he first time that Searle had borrowed from the work of Hogarth. In 1954 he did a series for Punch by the same name. In it he dealt with the cycles of ambition, social advancement and downfall, in the lives of actors, clergymen, lawyers, M.P.'s, soldiers and artists. This extract from The Poet (Fig. 57) shows a character who conformed to the type George Orwell characterised as 'the nancy poets' (8, P. 107). By the standards of Punch in the mid fifties the prominent bottoms of the German boys make quite a daring reference to homosexuality. By the end of the 1960s all such subtlety had been abandoned.

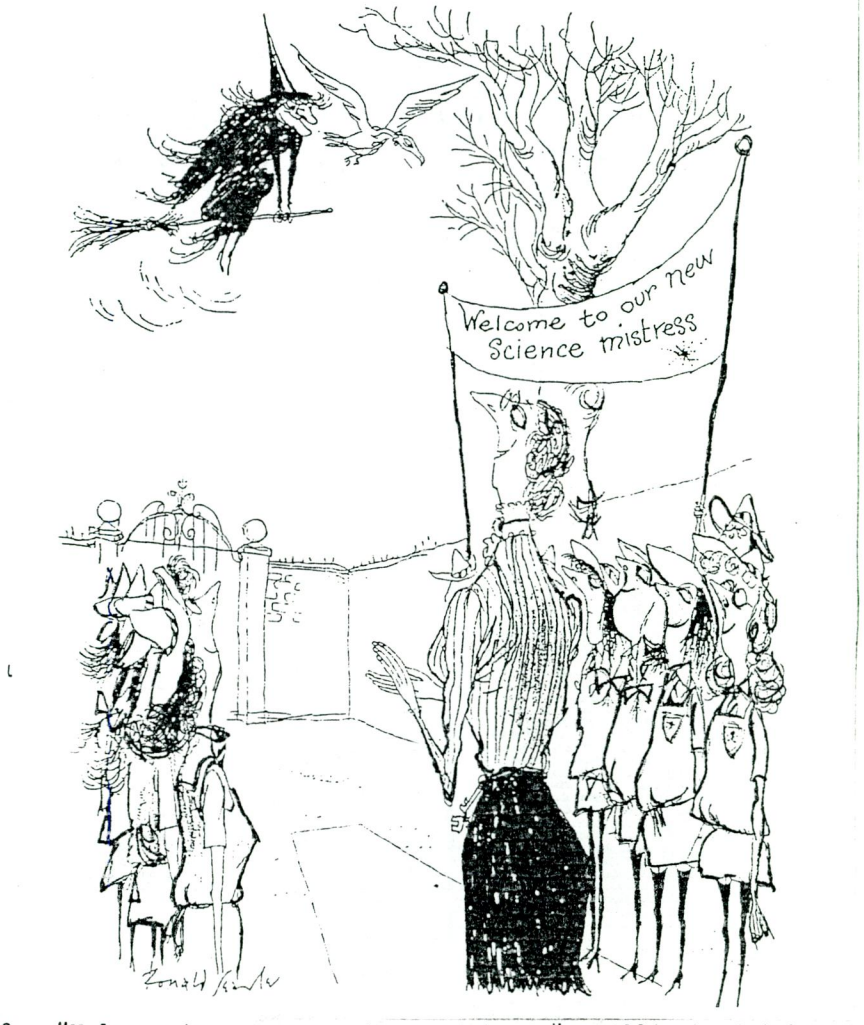
The St. Trinian's girls of the 1940s and 1950s had always hinted at this type of aggressive sexuality. They always wore short black skirts, with their stocking tops and suspenders visible, a Searlish

57 'The Rake's Progress: The Poet', Illustration No. 2 from a series of 6, Punch, 24.3.1954.

58 Parents' Day, Lilliput, November 1957.

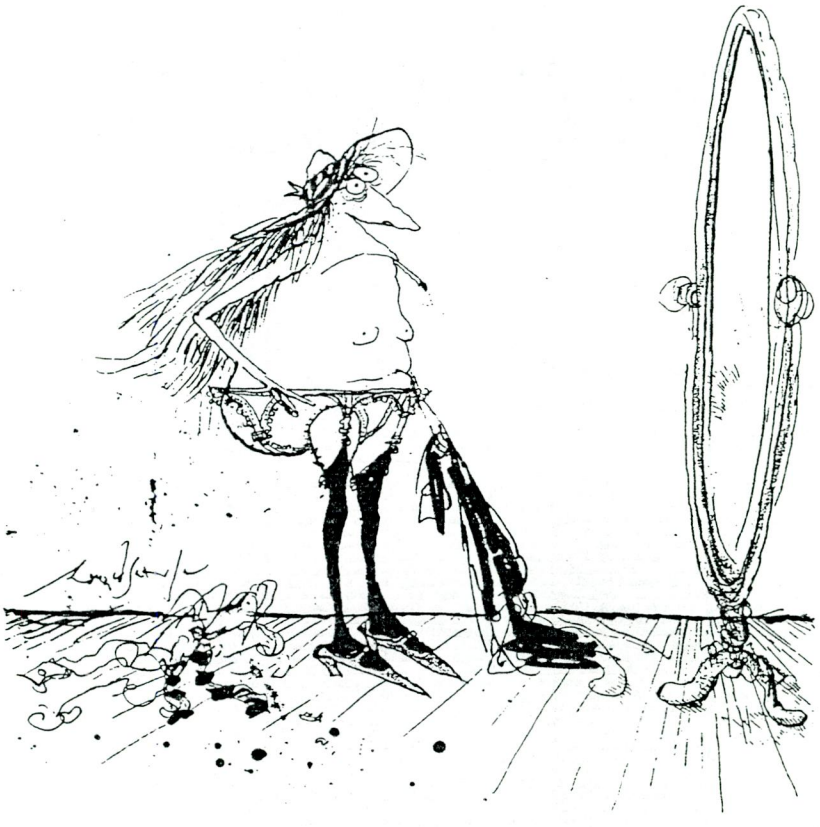
indication of loose morals. They had long wild hair and black pointed shoes like witches or she devils. Searle actually caricatures several of the girls as devils (Fig. 58) and meddlers in witchcraft (Fig. 59). He depicts the arrival of the new science mistress as a witch flying in on a broomstick (Fig. 60). The girls drank, smoked and gambled and Searle spoke of an abortionist nurse who looked after the students' children whilst the young mothers refined heroin base in the school laboratory (8, P. 150). Many of the St. Pauli women have the same slit shaped eyes as the St. Trinian's a characteristic which can be traced back to the Japanese prison guards of almost thirty years earlier, (Fig. 61). This is particularly evident int he cruel expression of the domineering figure in Fig 52. who is wielding a whip. She is one of the few women wearing stockings and suspenders, the trademark of St. Trinian's, most of the other prostitutes have dispensed with underwear. The most striking similarity between the St. Pauli women and the St. Trinian's is that in both cases the females are depicted as the chief manipulators and creators of chaos and evil. It is as if Searle is portraying the inevitable fate of the girls who in their youth also personified corrupted innocence and evil. It provides an interesting picture of the parallel developments of St. Trinian's reaching adulthood (Fig. 62) and the social evolution from the repressive post war years to the extremely permissive 1960s. Searle is showing us the negative side of this evolution which has led to sex and sadism being advertised in a magazine for general public consumption. Paradoxically, without this new sexual freedom, his drawings would not have been published at all, due to their frank, sexually explicit nature.

59 "Now ask him to abolish homework", Lilliput, October 1950.



60 "Welcome to our new science mistress", Lilliput, October, 1950.

61 Japanese officer, Changi Gaol, pencil and wash, 1945.



62 Telescopic photo taken through the ladies room of a well-known Port Said Hostelry, 1981.

63 Nigel Molesworth, 1953.

64 Fair Spain, far in the South, George Grosz, pen and water colour, 1919.

The Modern Rake, with his blazer white shirt and striped tie, seems to be a direct descendent from Nigel Molesworth a fictitious public school boy invented by the writer Geoffrey Willians and illustrated by Searle (Fig. 63). First created for Punch towards the end of the second World War, the Molesworth cartoons were then collected into a series of books between 1953 and 1959. Although he was a scheming, mischievous school boy, Molesworth in adulthood proves no match for the professional manipulators of his sexual instincts. They distract him with seduction, while they go through his clothing (including his sock, Fig. 52) to extract all of his money.

Stylistically the illustrations owe a lot to the drawings of George Grosz who Searle acknowledged as a great influence. The most obvious similarity is the prevalent atmosphere of chaos in, for example, Fig. 51 by Searle and Fig. 64 by Grosz. Although Grosz uses the futuristic technique of juxtaposing simultaneous events and pictorial cuts within the picture frame ie the legs of the female nude on the left are sharply truncated revealing a sexual scene below her, Searle prefers a more realistic spatial setting. However both drawings depict frenzied human activity summed up by Grosz in his autobiography in a Small Yes and A Big No,

> Life had no other aim than to satisfy one's hunger for food and women. There was no such thing as the soul the main thing was to get what he needed. (15, P. 75)

This description equally fits the world of St. Pauli (Figs. 50-52).

65 White South African, Cape Town, June 1941.

66 "There's a smell of riffraff around here!" From The Face of the Ruling class, George Grosz, 1921.

The strongest link between the styles of the two artists is the bitingly satirical way they treat the human figure. Searle first discovered this trenchant form of satire in Grosz's work just before the war and assimilated it to a certain degree quite quickly as can be seen in this portrait of a white South African Gentleman, sketched by Searle on the way to Singapore (Fig. 65). It is quite similar in style to this portrait of a member of the ruling class by Grosz. (Fig. 66). Over the years this savage satire has become as much a part of Searle's own style did in a interview he explains why :

> One says that my drawings are cruel. Sure, they are cruel, if they attack a subject, they are meant to attack in an extremely positive way,

however it was not really until the mid 1960s that his debt to Grosz became fully apparent. Searle's treatment of women is frequently similar to that of Grosz. In both cases women are depicted either naked or with their bodies clearly visible through their clothes. (Figs. 64 - 51) The latter is a device pioneered by Grosz, as a parody of the way that men see women purely as objects of sexual desire. Both artists also depict the women as fat and ugly (Figs. 64 and 51). They have slit shaped, heavily darkened eyes and dark lips creating a mask of make-up which fails to hide the physical manifestations of their moral ugliness.

> When I look at he majority of my fellow men I see no beauty or handsome shapes. The same thing happens with women...' (records of the Ecce Homo In Das Togebuch (The Diary 23rd February 1924).

While both artists portray violent sexual activity, the women in Grosz's drawings are usually passive, dominated by men, as in the couple on the left side of (Fig. 64): whereas, the women depicted by Searle are

67 At 5 o'clock in the morning from, The Face of the Ruling Class, George Grosz, 1921.

68 'I'm Compensating', from A Few Complexes, 1972.

more aggressive and scheming (Fig. 52). Note the cynical expressions and bare toothed snarls of the prostitute by the bar on the right and the whip wielding central figure. In Fig. 53 a group of prostitutes publicly thrash a man who tried to avoid paying cash, and he enjoys it. Searle is obviously attacking the debasement of the sexual act and the calculated materialism which lie behind the crumbling facade of St. Pauli.

The men depicted by both Searle and Grosz are similar in appearance. They are fat bellied business men, in suits and hats, often wearing round pebble spectacles to hide their greedy eyes (Figs. 50 & 64). Grosz depicted the bourgeois as fat, contrasting their excesses with the harsh existence of the workers (Fig. 67). Searle also saw fatness as a symbol for greed and self indulgence (Fig. 68) and it is tempting to trace this back to his days in Changi where the prisoners starved while the Japanese guards were well fed. (Fig. 69). Both artists provide a hard hitting commentary on what Uwe Schneede defines as 'a Kaleidoscope of bourgeois longings and desires' (25 P. 88.)

Grosz uses the image of death, in the form of a skull, (Fig. 47) to remind us of the transitory nature of all things earthly (Fig. 64) (25 P. 88). Searle depicts the short lived nature of physical pleasure by showing the 'Rake' discarded at the end of the night with the rest of the garbage. He lies unconscious while the prostitutes, standing around the corner, await the arrival of the next pleasure seeker. (Fig. 54. 6).

In this set of illustrations it is possible to see how Searle's satirical language has developed in response to the changes in society. George Grosz once remarked

69 Japanese prison guards, 1944.

70 Hamburg drawings from, Secret Sketchbook, 1970.

that the best caricature was made in times of great social upheaval (58) a statement which is definitely supported by his own and Searle's work. Searle's career spans one of the greatest periods of social change in Britain and he has strengthened his attack on human weakness in this society in several ways. Firstly, by closely observing humanity one can see how the sketches for the St. Pauli series relate closely to the illustrations, (Fig. 70). Secondly by distorting the human body to convey spiritual or moral ugliness through physical ugliness, and thirdly by using a cutting, satirical line akin to that of George Grosz in his savage criticisms of German society in the 1920s. If his caricatures seem cruel, it is because his humour 'was born out of circumstances which were extremely black' (51 P.803). Cruelty, according to Searle, is the stuff of satire,

> The whole art of humour, the whole art of satire, and the whole art of caricature survives only on attacking weakness. If there were no weaknesses in the human race, there wouldn't be any ground for criticism." (51 P.803).

Conclusion.

My intention in this dissertation has been to question the traditional status of graphic satire as a minor genre. This I have attempted to do in two ways: firstly by placing it in context to demonstrate is social and cultural relevance; and secondly by demonstrating that the subject and techniques of graphic satire can be compared with those employed in literature and drama which are both acknowledged as having great social and cultural significance.

The work of Ronald Searle spans an era of great social change in both British and Western Society. Old standards of civilization were being destroyed by forces which had created two world wars, the clinical, mass murder of the concentration camps and the prevailing threat of global destruction by nuclear war. In the aftermath of World War II there was an increasing awareness, that these negative forces - which students of theology would call evil and those of psychology, libido, (13 P. 315) - come from man himself. The rediscovery of original sin, or the flawed nature of man, was the subject of Searle's St. Trinian's cartoons and also of William Golding's Lord of the Flies. Both used the theme of the corruption of innocence to convey their disillusionment with humanity in the post war years.

The second section accounts for the further shift away from old values and the advent of a more permissive society which focused on the needs of the individual. The development of a consumer society along with the corresponding emphasis on personal and corporate image led to the introduction of a correspondingly strong form of Satire and a move away from the propriety of earlier years. As I indicated in Chapter Two, these

changes in society are again reflected in Searle's caricature. In the final section of Chapter Two I outlined how Searle has combined his misanthropic vision of society with the rabid sexuality he found so powerful in Burroughs' writings, the savagery which he had first seen in the work of Grosz, and then found echoed in Changi, and the spiritually diseased state of humanity as outlined by William Golding.

From this social and cultural analysis of the work of Ronald Searle it is clear that the graphic satirist can provide an insight into humanity which is as valid as those offered by literature. If anything, graphic satire has the advantage over literature of being more accessible to a greater number of people because of its direct visual nature and its use of humour to capture peoples interest. This is evident throughout Searle's work particularly that which was completed in the 1960s and 1970s when Searle's caricature advanced in thematic scale to encompass issues such as the greed and ugliness of the consumer society, the destruction of the natural environment, and the sexual, spiritual and economic angst of modern man. The message about humanity in the caricature of Ronald Searle is important and highly relevant we should heed what he has to say.

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