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Degree: M.A. Year of presentation: 2005

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts in Art History
in the
University of Canterbury.

by

Melinda Johnston

University of Canterbury
2005
ABSTRACT

This thesis considers the ways in which the prints of Barry Cleavin utilise parody, satire and irony in a myriad of complex and inter-related ways. Cleavin understands the possibility of alternative interpretations, and by presenting this in his art he encourages his viewers to actively participate in the forming of questions. This call for reflection relates to our understanding of pictorial conventions and art historical traditions, as well as to contemporary society, our use of language and the incongruities of the human condition. In considering parody, satire and irony in Cleavin’s prints, this thesis shows that they are not simply separate devices employed only occasionally, but rather that all three are inter-related and inextricably linked to Cleavin’s search to provoke questions, disturb complacencies, and present alternative realities.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Jillian Cassidy, for her assistance at every stage, and for her wonderful support and encouragement, not just of this thesis, but of my academic career in general. I would like to thank David Bell for so generously giving his time to assist in the editing of this work. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Liz, Bronwen and Andrew for their dedicated editing, and to Daniel for his help with researching this paper. I am also grateful for the encouragement offered by my parents, especially in terms of their considerable generosity in facilitating the production of this work. Thanks also go to my friends in the art history department; Jungeun, Barbara and Jessica, for their understanding support of this long project.

I also wish to thank the following organisations for their sponsorship of my research; the NZFUW (Inc.) Canterbury Branch Trust Board, the Graduates Association, and the Ethel Rose Overton Scholarship Trust. I would like to extend my thanks to the staff at art galleries around the country, particularly to those at the Forrester Gallery, the Wellington City Art Gallery, and the Marshall Seifert Gallery, who, owing to their belief in the value of the works of Barry Cleavin, went beyond the call of duty in facilitating my research. Thanks are also due to Rodney Wilson for his enlightening comments on a subject clearly dear to his heart. Finally, I wish to thank Barry himself, for his tremendous generosity over the last three years, as he responded promptly and helpfully to my requests for information, and also for his continued production of a body of work which has provided me with both a fertile subject for study as well as a source of much pleasure.
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INTRODUCTION

Barry Cleavin’s status as a printmaker of significant stature within the New Zealand art scene is widely recognised. Since graduating from the University of Canterbury School of Fine Arts with Honours in 1966, Cleavin has been actively involved in the promotion and development of the print medium within New Zealand. It has often been noted that Cleavin’s career paralleled the rise of the discipline in this country, and that his early years as a printmaker coincided with the ‘heyday’ of the New Zealand Print Council.\(^1\) However, unlike the Print Council itself, Cleavin’s career has shown remarkable resilience, and from his initial development in the 1960s, through to his appointment as head of printmaking at the University of Canterbury (which has been described as beginning a decade of printmaking unparalleled in the history of Canterbury),\(^2\) he has maintained a steady profile within the New Zealand art scene. Cleavin has exhibited both within New Zealand and overseas on a regular basis, and this in conjunction with his phenomenal volume of work provides a strong indication of the consistent presence which Cleavin has sustained for over forty years.

The most frequent claim regarding Cleavin’s work concerns his superb draughtsmanship and mastery of the printmaking medium. Leading this assertion has been art historian Rodney Wilson, who has repeatedly stressed Cleavin’s technical talents, especially as they relate to his tightly detailed drawing style, which he believes is worthy of a naturalist.\(^3\) Many other reviewers have followed Wilson’s lead, so that Cleavin’s drawing style is

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1 The first Print Council exhibition was launched at the Auckland City Art Gallery in 1967. For a short history of the New Zealand Print Council, see Anne Kirker, Prints – A Coming of Age. The Walter Auburn Memorial Lecture, 1987, printed by the Friends of the Auckland City Art Gallery.


rarely absent from any consideration of his work. In her catalogue entries on the prints of Barry Cleavin, Cassandra Fusco has instead chosen to focus on the linguistic side of Cleavin’s prints, placing particular importance on the interaction of his titles and images, claiming that ‘Barry Cleavin has long been associated with images that need to be thought about, an invitation he invariably extends with his evocative titles’.4 This again is an angle that has been frequently echoed, with reviewers noting Cleavin’s predilection for images which reinforce the literary pun contained in his titles. Perhaps the most relevant claims regarding Cleavin’s work in terms of my intentions in this thesis, are those which recognise that Cleavin’s prints are built in European traditions of printmaking. In 1975 Wilson wrote that ‘Cleavin uses the past and he uses the present, producing prints which, while belonging so much to European art and thought of today, are absorbed by yesterday and belong as much to art and thought of a half millennium or more ago’.5 In 1992 Pat Unger similarly claimed that ‘following five centuries of European printmaking tradition, Cleavin also transfers his vision of life’s endless ironies and inanities onto etching plate and paper’.6 Because of the space constraints of newspaper articles, observations like those of Wilson and Unger have not considered what I believe to be the wider implications of their claims. It is the recognition that Cleavin’s prints utilise these art historical traditions, as well as parody, satire and irony that will provide the basis for my investigation into the ways in which Cleavin generates meaning in his prints.

The claim that Cleavin’s prints use parody, satire and irony, is not a new observation, however these three elements have only ever been noted in isolation, and then in only a superficial way with no further consideration given to the implications of what these terms might mean, or what they might tell us about Cleavin’s work. Perhaps the work that came closest to exploring these elements was Kenneth Laraman’s Master’s thesis

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6 Pat Unger, Barry Cleavin. *Art New Zealand*, no. 64, Autumn 1992, p. 50.
Images of War in New Zealand Printmaking and Painting. Laraman included Cleavin’s work along with others by Jan Nigro, Trevor Moffitt and Michael Smither in his chapter entitled ‘Irony and Parody in War Images’. Frustratingly though, Laraman only extended his analysis of parody and irony to a standard dictionary definition and so failed to extend the wider applications of these terms to Cleavin’s works.\(^7\) While it is not my intention to attempt a definition of these three elements, I believe that in considering different aspects of the history and theory associated with each, we can see that Cleavin’s work consistently use these three key elements in inter-related ways in order to generate meaning.

In my analysis of the ways in which Cleavin generates meaning in his work, it is not my intention to explore technique, or even to focus on Cleavin’s stylistic concerns, except for those instances where the style is used in such a way that it develops the work’s meaning. In her Master’s thesis, printmaker Carole Shepheard noted that in New Zealand writing on printmaking, the ‘process’ continues to dominate discussion, with a descriptive approach that she believes to be almost unparalleled in other disciplines.\(^8\) Indeed, Cleavin himself has claimed that ‘the thing of being a printmaker is a real nuisance’, as he feels that if he has to talk about technique then the work has failed.\(^9\) Given that my focus is not on process, I have also not restricted my consideration to any one print medium, although there is a preponderance of etchings, chiefly because these represent the greater part of Cleavin’s oeuvre. My consideration of examples of Cleavin’s ink jet prints and lithographs produced within print workshops, is based on their relevance to Cleavin’s use of parody, satire and irony, rather than for the wider issues inherent in Cleavin’s use of these media. Whilst I draw from a wide range of Cleavin’s works spanning the five decades of his print production, I will not be considering his early abstract works from the 1960s as they do not

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\(^7\) Laraman cites the definitions given in what he calls the Oxford shorter dictionary, with irony as ‘the quality of being so unexpected or ill-timed that it appears to be deliberately perverse’, and parody as ‘a grotesque imitation, a travesty’. Kenneth Laraman, Images of War in New Zealand Painting and Printmaking 1960-1992. M. A. Thesis, University of Otago, 2001, pp. 56-7.


fall within my focus on the content of Cleavin's prints. In considering a broad range of
Cleavin's works, it has proved impossible to maintain a chronological approach, not least
because my thesis is divided on the basis of three key aspects, but also because Cleavin
himself returns to ideas from decade to decade, developing earlier beliefs in terms of
contemporary issues, or in some instances extending his informal series across twelve
years, or revisiting others after ten.  

In Chapter One I will focus on the varied ways in which Cleavin has used parody in his
prints. Beginning with a consideration of the ways in which parody can function to help an
artist come to terms with the weight of art historical traditions, I then note the ways in
which Cleavin has used the works of Eadweard Muybridge, George Stubbs and Andreas
Vesalius to generate both specific parodies and a general parody of the conventions of
European anatomical illustration. I will also demonstrate that while Cleavin is undoubtedly
eclectic, there are identifiable similarities amongst his source material, including his use of
the works of those who are 'masters' of their field, and works which are based upon
systems of classificatory thought. Chapter One also includes a consideration of the
'paradox of parody' in relation to Cleavin's ambivalent attitude towards much
contemporary art analysis. Finally, I will examine the extent to which recent theories of
parody, which focus on its ability to act self-reflexively, can be considered in relation to
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construction and images derived from artist's manuals.

Chapter Two demonstrates that like Cleavin's use of parody, his use of satire has its basis
in art historical traditions, especially as they pertain to the role of graphic art as social
commentary. This importance of tradition in understanding Cleavin's works will be
considered in relation to the 'language' of satire, as Cleavin's works utilise variants on the

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10 Cleavin first produced A Series of Allegations in 1988, but reworked two of the plates and re-printed them
in colour in 1998, while he says that his works The Last Dog, 1981, Nuclear Fossils, 1986, and M. B. T. and
Lemur, 1993, were part of an informal grouping of works that dealt with nuclear issues.
animal fable, the satirical imagery of puppets and masks, the character type and the political portrait. I will also examine some of the influences on Cleavin’s prints by the works of J. J. Grandville and Honoré Daumier, as well as their links with works by Francisco de Goya and William Hogarth. In this chapter I will also consider Cleavin’s use of variants of traditional satirical techniques for generating meaning including the reductio ad absurdum and the ironic defence. Finally in Chapter Two I analyse some of the ways in which Cleavin has engaged with the enduring themes of satire to express his concerns as they relate to war, the nuclear threat, genetic modification, and to wider issues of the transience of species.

In Chapter Three my focus on irony is less concerned than the other two to develop a coherent theory of irony itself, instead it represents the starting point for a consideration of Cleavin’s engagement with the relationship between the verbal and the visual and some of the themes associated with general irony. In Chapter Three I begin with an analysis of Cleavin’s use of simple irony, before considering the importance of visual and verbal relationships in terms of his use of titles and word play. I also note the way in which Cleavin’s works often utilise irony heuristically, prompting the viewer to reflect upon and question the wider use of words and images. In the second half of Chapter Three I focus on Cleavin’s use of irony to comment upon the world and to point to the incongruities evident in the human condition. This includes considering themes which fit under the heading of general irony, including the ironies of inevitable ignorance, and the vanity of human wishes.

In generating meaning in his prints, Cleavin never just presents a simple version of objects or events; there is always at least a second layer of meaning present. Which is not, however, to say that he is presenting an underlying or ‘real’ truth, but rather that in showing his viewers that there are other possible ways of seeing and understanding he is opening up the field for a questioning response. This questioning impulse shares
similarities across parody, satire and irony to such an extent that I believe that it would be
difficult, if not misleading to consider Cleavin's work as relying on only one or two of
these elements alone. In his use of parody Cleavin considers the traditions of art history,
never just using them unquestioningly, often combining them with our understanding of the
ways in which art can function. In his use of satire Cleavin investigates society and asks
that his viewers look again and reflect upon his work, while his use of irony functions both
as a device to highlight the discrepancy between appearance and reality, and to prompt the
viewer to a wider consideration of our systems of meaning and existence. Cleavin's work
is not about a belief in the need to find answers, rather it finds value in the attempt to
search and to formulate questions, and in doing so, utilises parody, satire and irony in a
myriad of inter-related and complex ways.
CHAPTER 1: Parody

Of the three aspects of Cleavin’s works which I will consider in this thesis, parody, much more than satire or irony, is directly concerned with art traditions. In the use of ‘appropriated’ images, parodists are necessarily involving themselves with previous art works, and in a wider sense, with notions about where artists derive their source material. Parody is not a new phenomenon but it has established a definite presence amongst the arts of the twentieth century, which in turn has lead to many recent attempts to redefine its nature and function. It is not my aim nor desire to define parody here, and indeed I do not believe that it would be useful to impose a strict definition of parody on to Cleavin’s work. Rather, I wish to consider some aspects of recent parody theory to see what they can tell us about the ways in which Cleavin uses parody in his prints.

In his survey of recent writings on parody, Simon Dentith forms an inclusive account of parody which sees it as ‘any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice’, with varying degrees of attack which can be directed at the parodied text or not. However, as I will explore later, there is no consensus as to whether parody necessarily involves criticism of the target text, but I believe that in not imposing this restriction, I can come closer to an understanding of the ways in which parody functions in Cleavin’s prints. Many of the sources that I have based this chapter on are, out of necessity, derived from literary theory, as aside from Linda Hutcheon’s account of parody in twentieth century art forms (which itself draws from a wide

range of cultural practices), there has been very little written on parody in the visual arts. I do not believe that this in itself alters the validity of my basic definition of parody, as whether the object of the parody is a text, image or something else entirely, the basic distinction that it uses ‘appropriated’ elements still holds true.

Working from this basic definition, in Cleavin’s work we can begin to see that he uses art traditions by directly including elements of past works, by analysing styles and being acutely aware of their absurdities, and by responding to art history itself and incorporating this into his work. I will begin by examining how parody has functioned in Cleavin’s work as a way to come to terms with the weight of past art traditions, especially in relation to the influence of Gabor Peterdi. I will then look at various works where Cleavin has directly appropriated preformed images, and consider these in relation to his artistic aims, as well as arguing that while he is undoubtably eclectic, he often uses works by those who are ‘masters’ of their field, and have their basis in systems of thought which tend towards the classificatory. In this chapter I will also consider the importance of the knowledge of the viewer of parody, specifically through a consideration of the controversy generated by Cleavin’s work in the early 1980s. The ‘paradox of parody’ will also be considered in relation to Cleavin’s ambivalent attitude towards much contemporary art analysis. Finally, I will consider the extent to which recent theories regarding parody’s ability to act self-referentially apply to Cleavin’s prints, including his use of the systems of linear perspective and images derived from artists’ manuals.

Beginning his artistic career at the University of Canterbury School of Art in 1963, Cleavin was, from the first, exposed to the ‘traditions’ of art history. In the early 1960s students at Ilam were still instructed in life and still-life drawing, drawing from the antique, measuring in the Trajan column manner, perspective drawing and isometric projections.³ Amongst the

³ Rodney Wilson, Barry Cleavin. Lecture given by Rodney Wilson at the University Canterbury, for the School of Fine Arts lecture series 'A Degree of Excellence', 18 September 2003.
teachers at the art school Cleavin recalls that they had been introduced to ‘a very English breakfast’ by lecturers William Sutton, Jack Knight, Russell Clark and Maurice Askew, whilst through Rudolf Gopas they had been introduced to the works of Klee, Kirchner, Rouault, Kollwitz, and what Cleavin describes as the kind of drama obvious in the darker European thought and imagery. While Cleavin’s years at art school were certainly important in his development as an artist, it was the master printmaker Gabor Peterdi (1915-2001) who was to exert the most enduring influence. In the early 1960s Stanley Hayter’s New Ways of Gravure was widely recognised as the printmakers’ bible, but it was Peterdi’s text Printmaking: Methods Old and New, 1959, which for Cleavin provided the foundation for discovering the print process as a malleable, literate art; Cleavin has claimed ‘for description and passion – Peterdi was it’. Peterdi was Professor of Art at Yale University, but when Cleavin went to work with him in 1972, was on sabbatical at the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Peterdi’s text demonstrates a remarkable understanding and appreciation of both his contemporaries and the great printmakers of the past, as well as demonstrating his exploration of every facet of intaglio and relief printmaking. Cleavin is undoubtedly amongst many artists who have been inspired by Peterdi, both through aspects of his style, and through his assimilation of Peterdi’s beliefs regarding the printmaking medium. Peterdi has famously declared;

I make prints because in using the metal, the wood, and all the other materials available, I can express things that I cannot express by any other means. In other words, I am interested in printmaking, not as a means of reproduction, but as an original, creative medium. Even if I could pull only one print from each of my plates, I would still make them.

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8 Peterdi, p. xxiii.
This statement is one that Cleavin has echoed on numerous occasions to explain his choice of the printmaking medium. Peterdi also believes that 'the more you know about your craft, the freer you can be from it', and he claims 'to me real freedom arrives when the artist’s creative instinct can function without limitation and without consciousness of technical means'. This statement is reflected in Cleavin's careful development of his printmaking skills, where, as Pat Unger has written, 'Cleavin controls technique rather than letting technique control him'. When Peterdi wrote his book he felt that printmaking was witnessing a great renaissance, but that it was also at a turning point, where the period of experimentation for its own sake was over, and he urged that artists 'have to digest what we know in order to express who we are'. Peterdi also claimed that 'the technique or performance for its own sake is meaningless unless it serves to express content'. These ideas were echoed by Cleavin in 1968 when he declared 'all techniques are to be assimilated, and then used for a cause. Never for the technique itself. The method should never dominate or intrude'. So it was, Cleavin says, 'all about 'How' you did something, in order to 'Say' something'.

As well as taking this printmaking ethos from Peterdi, Cleavin has also drawn inspiration from Peterdi’s prints themselves. In The Garden, 1966, [figure 1], Cleavin used the work of artists whom he admired in order to develop his own style. In the entry on this work in the Ewe and Eye catalogue, Rodney Wilson claims it 'combines references to several interests of the artist at the time'; the male figure is derived from Paul Klee's Two Men Meet, Each

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10 Peterdi, p. xxii.
12 Peterdi, p. x.
13 Ibid., pp. xxii-xxiii.
14 Joyce Jones, Art Against the Odds. Otago Daily Times, 22 August 1968, p. 15, but also repeated in Peter Cape, Prints and Printmakers in New Zealand. Auckland, 1974, p. 45. Interestingly, this idea is also repeated by Denise Copland in Jill McIntosh (ed.), Contemporary New Zealand Prints. Wellington, 1989, p. 96, where she has written 'techniques for their own sake do not interest me. The infusion of printing ink on paper does. The techniques are always at the service of the image'.
Believing the Other to be of Higher Rank, 1903, while the background refers to the Flight[s] into Egypt by both Martin Schongauer and Albrecht Dürer. However, I believe that the form of the print owes a great deal to an etching by Peterdi entitled Adam and Eve, 1947, [figure 2]. By combining the deferential man of Klee’s work, with the layout of Peterdi’s print, Cleavin provides an early example of his ongoing consideration of the theme of male and female relations, while one reviewer also noted his ‘obese Eve and Adam of uncanonically advanced age, comments wryly on the passage of time, the loss of youth and the advance of death’. Throughout many of Cleavin’s prints there are echoes of visual cues drawn from Peterdi; his early work Apocalypse, 1966, in which fine contour-like lines trace the distorted forms is reminiscent of Peterdi’s works of the 1940s and early 1950s, while Cleavin’s The Entanglement, Memento Mori, 1993, recalls Peterdi’s print The Fish, 1952, through its tangled relief etched lines.

As well as this more direct influence from the printmaker Peterdi, Cleavin has used works derived from wider art history to develop his own prints. Rodney Wilson has recalled how students in Gopas’s art class at Ilam were required to closely follow the work of an artist they admired, even to the extent of producing an exact replica. Cleavin chose the work of Klee; owing to the appeal of their small scale, their extraordinary graphic nature, the very carefully worked surfaces and the enigmatic imagery. From these early art school exercises, Cleavin’s prints of the late 1960s and early 1970s developed this consideration and emulation of the work of artists whom he admired. In these prints there are references and images drawn from western art history, for instance Leonardo da Vinci’s Homo ad circulum (Vitruvian Man), 1485-1490, in Tube Burial, 1970, while Battle of my ten medieval digits, 1966, uses figures adapted from Ukiyo-e prints, and crowded forms reminiscent of the

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18 Wilson, lecture 18 September 2003.
19 Collins, p. 28, and Ewe and Eye, p. 14.
alphabet of the Gothic printmaker Master E. S. 20 These prints clearly demonstrate one possible function of parody, where it acts as both homage and an attempt to overcome the influence of the past. 21 In his print, BCAD, 1969-1970, Cleavin has reworked Dürer’s Adam and Eve, 1504, in ‘homage from a contemporary printmaker to a master printmaker: Barry Cleavin (BC) to Albrecht Dürer (AD)’. 22 In considering the work of previous masters Cleavin was also increasing his ‘graphic literacy’ and developing his own sense of the significant elements of these artists’ works and styles. The parody theorist Linda Hutcheon has written that many twentieth century artists have openly claimed that the ironic distance afforded by parody has made imitation a means of freedom, 23 but if this is correct then it would not be unreasonable to expect that this type of parody would occur more frequently in an artist’s early works, and less frequently as they developed their own style. In Cleavin’s oeuvre however, while the influence of some artists has lessened, in many instances, such as his use of Eadweard Muybridge, George Stubbs and Andreas Vesalius, the works have exerted an enduring influence. Cleavin has always drawn from a diverse range of sources, and the claim that he is eclectic is neither new, nor does it require any particular insight into his works. A number of writers have noted the ways in which he has drawn elements from both high and low art, 24 and Rodney Wilson has said that Cleavin has

always enjoyed an eclectic magpie’s mind, which alights on things, recalls things, forms the junctions and creates disjunctions. He reads widely, listens to music broadly, hears and reads

20 Eve and Eve, p. 8. The detailed abstracted patterning in this work is similar to the circular form included as part of Cleavin’s print Fragment III, from the same year.

21 Margaret Rose has noted that in German the word ‘zitieren’ (to quote), also describes the evocation of ghosts, which shows the ‘exorcising’ function of parody can be described as a form of ‘zitieren’ in which the ghosts of the past are quoted in order to be overcome. The critic J. Gerald Kennedy has developed this idea of ‘parody as exorcist’ by suggesting that in using earlier works, parodists may be engaged in an enterprise to exorcise a secret demon, thereby ridding themselves of an early writer’s perplexing and undesired influence. See J. Gerald Kennedy, Parody as Exorcism: ‘The Raven’ and ‘The Jewbird’. Genre, vol. 13, no. 2, Summer 1980, p. 161.

22 Auckland City Art Gallery: artist file, Barry Cleavin, notes on works held in their collection.


24 For instance Heather Curnow has written ‘Cleavin is unashamedly eclectic. The letters from alphabet soup become a font of type. Children’s toys, key ring gimmicks, anatomy textbooks and popular advertising images are all grist to his mill’ . See Heather Curnow, Words, images meet in eclectic explosion. The Mercury, 17 October 1987, unpaginated.
political commentary, art reviews and the like. And into this probing, questioning blender, a
great deal goes, and out of it arises insights, observations, ironies and absurdities. 25

Cleavin himself admits that he 'uses any source, it is all go', 26 however, while they certainly
cover a wide range of art practices, many of these sources do share similarities.

From these myriad sources, the works of the photographer Eadweard Muybridge have
provided Cleavin with a particularly sustained source of inspiration. Eadweard Muybridge
was a British photographer working in California, and is chiefly known for his work Animal
Locomotion, published in 1887 by his sponsor, the University of Pennsylvania. This is a
massive work containing 781 plates and 19,347 individual photographs, which Anita Ventura
Mozley has claimed still stands as 'the most exhaustive pictorial analysis of the subject ever
made, and [is] still the dictionary of form to be used in questions on the appearance of men
and animals in motion'. 27 Although Muybridge's work has provided a particularly fruitful
source of inspiration for Cleavin in recent years, his use of these images is not solely
restricted to the last decade, as shown by his prints Integrate, from 1971, and Muybridge to
Carroll, 1980. Muybridge to Carroll is based on the lower six photographs of the girl from
Child Running in Plate 469 of Muybridge's work, although in Cleavin's version etched limbs
are progressively substituted for embossed forms, until in the sixth frame the figure is
entirely embossed. 28 More recently Cleavin has directly incorporated a number of elements
from Muybridge's work into his series Eadweard's Worst Nightmares from 2003. In these

26 Barry Cleavin interviewed by Imogen de la Bere, cassette recording, 1983.
27 Anita Ventura Mozley, 'Introduction' in Muybridge's Complete Human and Animal Locomotion, 3 Volumes,
New York, 1979, p. vii. Muybridge was born Edward James Muggeridge in England in 1830, emigrating to the
United States c. 1852. Although Muybridge took up photography some time between 1861 and 1866, it was not
until 1872 that he began to work to prove the theory that a trotting horse at some point has all four legs off the
ground. In 1878 Muybridge made the first successful aerial photographs of fast motion, which he later
synthesised in his zoopraxiscope to be set in smooth and continuous motion. As well as his photographic
achievements, Muybridge also presents a fascinating character whose personal life was certainly eventful. He
suffered a serious stagecoach accident, and later shot his wife's lover dead after discovering their affair. He was
tried for murder in the first degree in 1875, and was declared not guilty.
28 The title is explained by Cleavin's claim that the individual photographs are strangely akin to Lewis Carroll's
submerged subplots, so that he says for him, the Muybridge 'Girl Running' is Lewis Carroll's 'Alice'.
works the theory of parody as a means to come to terms with the past again becomes relevant as Cleavin works to better understand why these images fascinate him. In the flyer for this exhibition, Cleavin wrote:

the photographs taken by Eadweard Muybridge have long been a source of pleasure to me. I return to them again and again trying to decode some inner relationship that I feel for the subjects, and the conditions that Muybridge orchestrated for them – quite outside the matter of data and technology. I am fascinated by whatever it is that seems to be beneath the obvious imagery.\textsuperscript{29}

In coming to terms with this fascination Cleavin has chosen to ‘visually reactivate the mysteries’ in these works by splicing some sequences with others. Thus, in the etching \textit{In which the lady gives up her seat to a gentleman}, 2003, \citefigure{3}, Cleavin has recombined Muybridge’s \textit{Ostrich Walking}, with the figure of Muybridge himself in \textit{Sitting Down},\textsuperscript{30} \citefigure{4}, and then provided it with a humorous title. Cleavin has also worked directly with many other images from Muybridge’s text, including the series \textit{The Harmonious Blacksmiths}, 2002, while the repeated bird in \textit{From Pillar to Post}, 1995, is reminiscent of Muybridge’s images of birds in flight in Volume 11 of his text.\textsuperscript{31}

However, as Cleavin’s comments indicate, in parodying Muybridge’s photographs he is cognisant of more than just their immediate outward appearance, and is acutely aware of something else in these works which fascinates him. I believe that the interest that Muybridge holds for Cleavin can be seen as similar to that which is generated by a number of other artists to be discussed below, who I have identified as ‘masters’ working with a single minded determination, to produce outstanding key texts within their fields. \textit{Animal}

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Eadweard’s Worst Nightmares}. Papergraphica, Christchurch, 2004, unpaginated.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ostrich Walking} is Plate 772, Volume 11, pp. 1564-5, \textit{Sitting Down} is from plate 490, Volume 2, pp. 248-249, both from the 1979 Dover edition.
\textsuperscript{31} Cleavin has also based works from his series \textit{Eadweard’s Worst Nightmares} on the plate of the \textit{Adjutant}, pp. 1570-1, while his print \textit{Integrate} from 1971, is, according to the \textit{Ewe and Eye} catalogue entry on this work, based upon Muybridge’s image of a woman walking throwing a scarf over her shoulders.
Locomotion is an amazingly exhaustive work, testament to the dedication of its author, but it is also more than this, as it stands as a record of a particularly determined attempt at a classificatory system through its exhaustive documentation of variations of movement. The absolute nature of this kind of classificatory system is something that Cleavin can be shown to be drawn to repeatedly, and yet at the same time he remains doubtful of these systems, in line with the theorist Leonard Feinberg’s claims that most of the great satirists are anti-intellectual, distrustful of logically reached generalisations, and sceptical about the value of all dogmas concerning men and institutions.\textsuperscript{32} In reviewing these works Sally Blundell wrote that the images are ‘so ponderous that you can almost hear the quiet coughs of a scientific demonstration in a gloomy Victorian lecture room’, and that ‘each activity carries the self-absorbed intensity of the scientific demonstration’.\textsuperscript{33} I believe that it is this intensity of belief in the value of scientific demonstration, and its meticulous recording in an imposing text, that is shared by many of the artists whom Cleavin has chosen to parody.

Just as Muybridge’s Animal Locomotion has served as the ultimate reference text for figures in motion, so the works of two great anatomists, Andreas Vesalius and George Stubbs have provided similarly important landmarks in the field of anatomical illustration. Indeed, these artists represent yet another example of the many individuals who have single-mindedly pursued excellence, and whose work has provided a source of inspiration for Cleavin. The British painter George Stubbs (1724-1806) was known in his day as a painter of horses and other wild animals, while his anatomical works were less well known. Stubbs’s most famous work in this field was his Anatomy of the Horse published in 1766, with eighteen ‘tables’ and eighteen corresponding diagrams.\textsuperscript{34} Just as Muybridge’s text provided the basis for the illustration of figures in motion, so Stubbs’s work provides a similarly important landmark.

\textsuperscript{33} Sally Blundell, Come up and see my etchings of a lunatic. The Listener, vol. 194, no. 3346, June 26 – July 2 2004, p. 54.
and point of renewal in the history of monographs on equine anatomy. In The Cart before the horse, 1981, (figure 5), Cleavin has drawn from the engraving of the first posterior view of the horse from Stubbs’s Table XI, (figure 6), while in Flogging a Dead Horse, 1981, he has drawn on the anterior view in Table IX, and combined each with the headless harness racing driver in his sulky in order to create works that demonstrate a visual rendering of common proverbs. They are, Cleavin says, ‘more or less “funniness” and also quite primitive in their own way’. It is this ‘primitive’ aspect which is one of the elements in Stubbs’s works that appeals to Cleavin; ‘the Stubbs horses on one side show this fantastic primitivism, and yet on the other side it was the same man who dismantled the flesh off the outside of beasts and pared away to the bone’.38

Stubbs never really fitted neatly into the art history of his time, but, as Basil Taylor cautions, ‘he cannot be presented as a rebel or a romantic outsider’. He had a long career that shows resilience, and in a way, this longevity and consistency is something shared by both Stubbs and Cleavin. Stubbs’s commitment to his own path is admired by Cleavin who says that he was ‘telling an immense amount of truth about things that he was quite passionate about and was very different to the other painters of his time’. What is undoubtedly clear when looking at Stubbs’s anatomical illustrations, especially compared to earlier anatomical works, is their pared-back quality. His objective and detached presentation freed the figures from the conventional dramatic poses of earlier prints. This clarity of structure is evident in Stubbs’s last anatomical series, from which Cleavin has also borrowed directly. In 1795,

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35 Basil Taylor, Stubbs. London, 1971, p. 25. Carlo Ruini’s monograph Dell’Anatomia et dell’Infermità del Cavallo, 1598, was the first work to be devoted entirely to an animal other than man. It was the source of almost all other illustrations on equine anatomy for nearly a century and a half, until the publication of Stubbs’s monograph.
36 Reproduced in Terence Doherty, The Anatomical Works of George Stubbs. London, 1974. The Cart before the horse draws on the engraving of the first of the posterior views of the horse (with tail added), Table XI, The Eleventh Anatomical Table, Posterior View, p. 106, while Flogging a Dead Horse draws on Table IX, The Ninth Anatomical Table, Anterior View, engraving, p. 104.
37 Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
38 Ibid.
39 Taylor, p. 7.
40 Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
Stubbs began his *Comparative Anatomical Exposition of the Structure of the Human Body with that of a Tiger and a Common Fowl*. He had projected six parts, but only three were published before his death, although all the drawings were completed.\textsuperscript{41} From Stubbs’s comparative exposition Cleavin has drawn many figures, including the standing male nude in *The man whose reflection is in harmony with his shadow*, 1976, and *The Shadow—after Stubbs*, 1976, and the lateral views of the running man in *Pursuit*, 1976. Of these works, Cleavin has written, ‘the series considering Stubbs’s Anatomy had only to be re-aligned with George Stubbs’s Progression in Dissection. So the evolution or decomposition of man to pursuing skeleton in ‘pursuit’ was already provided by Stubbs, but not within a one-frame context. In a sense Stubbs provided a ready-made’.\textsuperscript{42} This combination or ‘reactivating’ of different plates is also similar to Cleavin’s use of the photographs from Muybridge’s text. The method Cleavin has used to generate meaning in these works also shares similarities with *One of the ways*, 1981, where he has recombined different plates from Straus-Durckheim’s, *Anatomie descriptive et comparative du chat*, 1845.\textsuperscript{43} However, in this later print the intended effect is more in line with *The Cart before the Horse*, in its lightly humorous visual realisation of a cliché through its half-flayed feline.

While Cleavin’s use of the work of Muybridge and Stubbs represent examples of what is known as specific parody, that is, they refer to particular texts, his use of the work of Andreas Vesalius (1514-1564) can be considered as exemplifying specific and general parody, where they allude to both specific works and to a body of work, in this instance the traditions of anatomical illustration. Cleavin has spent much time looking at the works of Vesalius, and has said ‘I just like them. There is something fascinating about the look. I have pored over and through and through and through the books on Vesalius... sort of looking at it for secrets of some sort’.\textsuperscript{44} Vesalius’s great work, and surely the greatest anatomical work of the

\textsuperscript{43} *Ewe and Eye*, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{44} Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
sixteenth century, was his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica...*, 1543, and it is from this treatise that Cleavin has drawn images for many prints. The *Fabrica* is an extensive work containing over 300 woodblock illustrations, with the quality of the prints being exceptionally high, as Vesalius had ensured that each step of the process was carefully executed. On the strength of this work Vesalius is generally considered the founder of observational anatomy, and this text was widely distributed, plagiarised, copied, and debated, while most books on human anatomy published in the 150 years succeeding the *Fabrica*’s publication used modifications of Vesalian figures. So in drawing from the *Fabrica*, Cleavin is working with an enormously influential book, and is paying homage to one of the great exponents of this art form, as well as linking his own work back to the Renaissance and the beginnings of European printmaking and medical science in their modern form. Cleavin has drawn many specific images from Vesalius including the progressive dissections of the head from the seventh book, in *For the Executive Suite No. 4 – Executor*, 1974, and *Cameo – after Vesalius*, 1980. His print *Variation on a theme by Kalashnikov*, 1995, also draws specifically from figures one and two in the sixth book, while his later series of *Operational Profiles*, 1991, [figure 7], combines the outline forms of Vesalius’s écorchés (flayed muscle men), [figure 8], with a marbled effect reminiscent of earlier Peterdi works such as *Dreaming Dead*, 1963.

Cleavin has also directly derived elements from Vesalius’s works in order to play on the ‘authority’ of scientific illustration. In the series *For the True Anatomy*, 1975, Cleavin utilises the traditional ‘look’ of scientific illustration, including the carefully observed image

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45 The illustrations were probably by a pupil of Titian, but it is possible that more than one artist contributed, with Vesalius even executing some himself. The woodblocks were cut by Francesco Marcolini da Forli in Venice under Vesalius’s close supervision, with the blocks and text then sent to Basle and printed by Johannes Oporinus. Vesalius saw the works through the press, and the printer put much care into each page, including the considered use of type, page design, and illustration placement.


47 More specifically, *For the true anatomy* is drawn from book 7, figure 1, and *Cameo – After Vesalius* is drawn from book 7, figure 6.
conveyed by a neatly etched line and the aquatinted background that throws the subject into focus.⁴⁸ However, he then delights in using this style to create ‘alternative anatomies’ that are clearly not based on any conventional scientific reality. The print For the True Anatomy, [figure 9], uses the dissected head from the seventh book of Vesalius’s Fabrica, and combines it with an octopus. In this work a sense of irony is developed as we look back on the earlier misconceptions of previous systems of scientific thought, where, for all their authoritative ‘look’ the information contained in the prints is ill-founded. Cleavin’s concern is not with anatomical accuracy; he is far more interested in the historical images themselves, and because he copies Vesalius, for example, so closely, he is duplicating Vesalius’s mistakes, which were in fact founded on those of the Greek physician Galen before him.⁴⁹ So in this process the prints are becoming part of the tradition itself and functioning as a kind of comment on the validity of scientific ‘truth’.

Undoubtedly, Vesalius is an artist whom Cleavin holds in high esteem; he recognises the greatness of his text, and the high quality of the images. However, Cleavin is also acutely aware of the absurdities of the anatomical tradition, and has commented on these in his Cameo series from 1980. In this series Cleavin approaches that which Linda Hutcheon characterises as ‘parody satire’, where parody becomes the vehicle to achieve a satiric or corrective end, but it also has an element of that which she terms ‘satiric parody’ where the ‘target’ is another form of coded discourse (in this instance the absurdities of anatomical illustration traditions).⁵⁰ In And still she smiles – Cameo, 1980, [figure 10], Cleavin

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⁴⁸ Of course, etching itself was not a medium widely used within the field of anatomical illustration, as the great Renaissance anatomists used woodcuts, and a far clearer image could be achieved by the use of engraving. However, I would argue that Cleavin’s etched lines still appear to most of his viewers to have that same weight of scientific authority.

⁴⁹ From its beginnings in Greece, medical art had made its way to the Roman Empire, where the Greek physician Galen (c.129-199 A.D.), codified what was known of anatomy. Galen’s text was the first surviving treatise on anatomical procedure, and his views dominated Western medicine and anatomy. It was not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that anatomists began to question the accuracy of the information contained in Galen’s works. In his Fabrica, Vesalius replicates many of the mistakes of Galen, despite claiming to have corrected many of his errors.

represents 'the dangerously attractive woman who is not what she seems to be',\textsuperscript{51} while in \textit{Femme Fatale}, 1980, another woman is lifting her top and 'smiling the smile that goes with such a thing in such a magazine.' From there Cleavin says he 'wondered about the attraction of a lifted epidermis to reveal 'what lay beneath',\textsuperscript{52} so that these prints work against the posturing and assumed identities of centrefold images.\textsuperscript{53} In taking the unclothing notion to its extreme in the lifted skin, he is also showing that he can still take a certain delight in such absurdities. Which is of course how the satire works; by making the action itself appear ridiculous, the artist prompts the viewer to question and reflect upon the nature of a society which finds the paring away of such layers desirable.

These \textit{Cameo} prints also provide a parody of the absurd elements of early anatomical illustration. Cleavin is familiar with the European anatomical tradition, he owns Henry Gray's \textit{Anatomy} and many other relevant volumes but, he says, it is a browsing acquaintance with them, 'I just look at them, they fascinate me'.\textsuperscript{54} Given his familiarity with these works, and his acute sense of the ironic and the absurd, Cleavin would have certainly picked up on the tendency of early anatomical artists to depict dead figures posed as if alive, apparently unaware of the incongruity of holding open their own abdomens.\textsuperscript{55} In Vesalius's \textit{Fabrica}, dissected men stand posed as if alive; one skeleton from the first book has been posed as a weary grave-digger leaning on his spade, linking it to the personification of Death and the \textit{Danse Macabre}, while in another figure the skeleton stands as if weeping.\textsuperscript{56} The absurdities of these figures were taken further by Juan de Valverde de Amusco, in his Spanish version of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Eye and Eye}, p. 27.
\item\textsuperscript{52} Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 29 July 2004.
\item\textsuperscript{53} This notion of the discrepancy between our real and assumed identities represents one of the key elements of satire, which I shall return to in Chapter Two.
\item\textsuperscript{54} Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
\item\textsuperscript{55} This tradition was first called attention to by Robert Knox (1791-1862) who entreated his readers to draw the dead as dead and the living and living. See Robert Knox, \textit{Great Artists and Great Anatomists. A Biographical and Philosophical Study}. London, 1852, especially p. 166 and p. 203.
\item\textsuperscript{56} Although the poses in Vesalius's \textit{Fabrica} are dramatic, the focus is mostly on the presentation of the anatomy. In some of the works of Vesalius's contemporary, Charles Estienne, the pose and background is of paramount importance, and at times the actual 'anatomical parts' occupied 1/30 or less of the printed area of the illustration.
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Vesalius's text, *Historia*, 1556. In the *Historia*, the living poses given to Vesalius's figures are taken to dramatic extremes, as in Book Two where there is an *écorché* holding a dagger and the flayed skin of a bearded man (presumably his own), whilst in Book Three a man holds a dissected flap from his own abdomen in his teeth.⁵⁷ Examples of such absurdities abound within the anatomical tradition. In Berengario da Carpi's, 'Commentaria... super *anatomia Mundini*', 1521, there are six dramatic woodcuts of a man standing with legs apart, and in all but one the figures show us their own dissected parts by holding skin and muscle flaps away.⁵⁸ These historical figures that smile charmingly through their own dissection are, then, a kind of precursor to Cleavin's pin-up girls with their exposed abdomens and ribs, and so shed new light on the title 'and still she smiles'.

Despite Vesalius's immense historical significance, the individual illustrations themselves do not hold a great deal of familiarity for the general viewer, or even for those versed in traditional art history. This is at odds with the claim made by Linda Hutcheon that the most parodied paintings are the most familiar ones,⁵⁹ with many twentieth century artists choosing to parody masterpieces of modern art. But if we acknowledge that Cleavin can be esoteric in his choice of 'appropriated' material, then we must also consider the attendant problems that can arise when the viewer of these art works misses the parodic allusion intended by the artist. The viewer of a parodic work must first recognise that it is a parody, and should also be familiar with the text or conventions that are being parodied. This means that the viewer of Cleavin's works must share a certain amount of his knowledge, for it is they who must effect the decoding of the superimposed texts.⁶⁰ This of course can lead to difficulties when Cleavin's viewers do not necessarily possess this competence. In 1982 and 1983 Cleavin's major survey show, 'Ewe and Eye', travelled throughout New Zealand with the assistance of

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⁵⁷ Roberts and Tomlinson, pp. 210-214.
⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 71.
⁵⁹ Hutcheon, p. 9
⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 96. Margaret Rose also notes the complex system that occurs as the work to be parodied is decoded by the parodist and offered again (encoded) in a 'distorted' form to another decoder, the reader (or viewer), who having known and previously decoded the original is in a position to compare it to its new form in the parody.
the QEII Arts Council. Having travelled to a number of centres without incident, just prior to
the exhibition closing at the Suter Art Gallery in Nelson, two of Cleavin’s works met with
opposition. On 21 June 1983, the front page headline story in the Nelson Evening Mail
reported that Councillor Kerry Neal had described Cleavin’s etching *The Hare Stripped Bare
by his Bride Even*, 1980, [figure 11], as ‘a grotesque, distorted attempt to display the female
form’, and had unsuccessfully moved that the Nelson City Council’s $43,000 grant to the
Suter be deferred.61 On the 23 of June, the story again made front page headlines with
Councillor Geoff Wood quoted as saying ‘I cannot help but feel sorry for the artist as I am
sure he has a sick mind’.62 One day later a Nelson policewoman viewed the works in the
exhibition, and although it was not required that the works be removed, the director of the
Suter, Austin Davies, announced that he had withdrawn two of the works from the
exhibition, claiming he did not want to jeopardise council funding.63 All this media attention
of course increased exhibition attendance numbers, and for seven consecutive days the letters
to the editor were dominated by the issue, while on 29 June and 2 July all of the Nelson
Evening Mail’s letters to the editor were in response to the Cleavin exhibition. These letters
were split fairly evenly between those who were outraged at the censorship and felt that the
Councillors had overstepped their roles, and those who agreed with Councillors Neal and
Wood, with Cleavin’s work described as revolting, perverted, disgraceful, and one writer
asking ‘surely he could have kept those warped thoughts to himself’.64 Newspapers around
New Zealand noted the controversy, including the tabloid *Truth* with the headline ‘YUK’.65

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*Nelson Evening Mail*, 25 June 1983, p. 1. The director of the Suter, has since acknowledged that he had happily
exploited the controversy by offering to remove the works when it was not deemed necessary, and by publicly
hinting that the council grant might be threatened, although this was not the reality. For a further explanation of
Davies’ role in this controversy see Susan Butterworth, *The Suter: One Hundred Years in Nelson*. Nelson,
64 A letter to the editor from a Noeline Wells, on 25 June calls his work revolting, and suggests that ‘surely he
could have kept those warped thoughts to himself’, *Nelson Evening Mail*, 25 July 1983, p. 4. A letter from
Mary Dixon calls it ‘the most disgraceful exploitation of that fundamentally beautiful thing, the human body’,
65 YUK! Nelson won’t turn blind eye to ‘art’. *Truth*, 6 July 1983, Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry
Cleavin.
Cleavin’s defence of his show was published on 28 June, where he was quoted as saying that the two works involved puns on works by the artist Marcel Duchamp and were intended as jokes.\textsuperscript{66}

‘Ewe and Eye’ continued to tour New Zealand through 1983, meeting with little opposition, although it again made headlines when it showed in Hamilton in February 1984, when the work \textit{The Hare}... was again removed from exhibition.\textsuperscript{67} Part of the problem with these works was, of course, their ‘explicit’ content. \textit{The Hare}..., features a copulating woman and hare, while \textit{Are you about to sneeze Rose Selevay}? 1980, was derived from \textit{Fun House} magazine.\textsuperscript{68} The sexually explicit nature of Cleavin’s work had caused controversy on a previous occasion, when in 1973 three prints from Cleavin’s exhibition at the New Vision Gallery in Auckland were removed after a warning from the police that the works could be considered indecent.\textsuperscript{69} In defence of his controversial works, Cleavin claimed in 1985 that those concerned have confused the message with messenger, and shot him instead of the debasing images he picks up from his immediate world.\textsuperscript{70} But this confusion of the message and messenger highlights the risk that the parodist takes in making oblique references to works that their viewer may not be familiar with. Cleavin’s titles specifically refer to Marcel Duchamp’s \textit{The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even}, 1915-1923, and \textit{Why Not Sneeze}

\textsuperscript{66} Artist defends censored show. \textit{Nelson Evening Mail}, 28 June 1983, p. 1. On June 27 1983, the story again made the front page of the \textit{Nelson Evening Mail}, with the report that the Suter curator Tony Martin had resigned claiming that Councillors Kerry and Wood had sensationalised the art, and should have expressed their concerns through the two city councillors on the Suter trust board, not through the media. Martin’s resignation was finally withdrawn on 2 July, after a letter from the Nelson Mayor Peter Malone stating that in the future if councillors were concerned they should approach the Suter through the two councillors on the Suter Trust board, rather than raise the issue with the media.

\textsuperscript{67} The controversy in Hamilton had similarities with the Nelson incident. Councilor Ted Armstrong ordered that museum staff remove \textit{The Hare}..., describing it as ‘obscene’ and ‘degrading to women’, whilst also claiming that he had heard it described as ‘rude, crude and the work of a depraved person with a sick mind’. The work was initially removed by the Waikato Art Museum’s acting director Campbell Smith, and was placed on the floor facing the wall. It was later hung on a screen around a corner with a notice warning viewers of the potentially offensive nature of the work. See, Cr has etching removed from Gallery. \textit{The Waikato Times}, 2 February 1984, p. 1; Sheenagh Gleeson, Controversial Cleavin work put back. \textit{New Zealand Art News}, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1984, p. 7; \textit{When Art Hits the Headlines}, National Art Gallery, Wellington, 1987, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{Ewe and Eye}, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{69} Police object to prints. \textit{The Press}, unsourced newspaper article, Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.

\textsuperscript{70} Brett Riley, Printmaker on Target, \textit{The Christchurch Star}. 23 October 1985, p. 10.
Rose Selavy, 1921, while the Ewe and Eye catalogue claims that Cleavin was making a 'reference to Duchamp and the respectability acquired by works of art through the passage of time'.\textsuperscript{71} This may have been of particular importance to Cleavin who would have witnessed the controversy generated by the work of Marcel Duchamp in Christchurch in June 1967 when the works Fountain, 1917, and Please Touch, 1947, were removed by Councillor P. J. Skellerup from the 78 piece exhibition of Duchamp's work at the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, sparking a student protest march.\textsuperscript{72} Clearly Christchurch Councillors had been unimpressed with Duchamp in 1967, and Nelson Councillors in 1983 were no more impressed with Cleavin's reference to one of the leading artistic figures of the twentieth century. Looking back in 1991, Cleavin again claimed that they were art historical jokes, and probably my misdemeanour was miscalculating what the New Zealand public could take at the time... if I chose to put any of those works on the wall now they would probably go unnoticed. Everyone is more perceptive to what is acceptable behaviour.\textsuperscript{73}

Part of the difficulty for the New Zealand public in 1983 in interpreting Cleavin's work The Hare... is that it contained several layers of meaning and allusion which required a great deal of artistic competence from his viewers. It would seem that a primary obstacle to the public's successful interpretation of the prints was the mood in which the works were intended, Cleavin claiming that 'I was always amazed people took it that seriously', 'they were images of the mind, not events, and it is ludicrous to think anything I did could ever

\textsuperscript{71} Ewe and Eye, p. 27. Duchamp's title referred to Rose Selavy, although Cleavin quotes it as Rose Selevay.
\textsuperscript{72} Councillor Skellerup withdrew the two works on the ground that they were 'degrading to the gallery and offensive to the public'. Their removal was defended by the director of the McDougall, W. S. Baverstock, who described some of the works as 'uninspiring' and Fountain as better belonging to a display of plumbing. W. A. Sutton, who was then senior lecturer at the School of Fine Arts at Ilam called the removal a 'disgrace', and along with two hundred students staged a silent protest march. The two works were kept in the director's office where they could be viewed by artists on application. See, Mixed Feelings at Art Gallery. The Press, 27 July 1967, p. 14; Councillor Bans Two Works from Duchamp Exhibition. The Press, 28 July 1967, p. 1; and Procession in Protest. The Press, 29 July 1967, p. 1.
have happened, no matter how wide the imagination'.\textsuperscript{74} It would seem that the New Zealand public had not been prepared to see these works as humorous, nor had they necessarily been aware of the Duchamp works alluded to, or of Cleavin's use of appropriated images, including the flayed hare derived from an atlas of animal anatomy.

Cleavin's use of the work of Marcel Duchamp can also be seen to be indicative of his use of art historical traditions in general. Like the classificatory impulse which seems to hold a certain ambivalent pull over Cleavin, his relationship with art history, and more particularly art theory, also seems to be characterised by a combination of respect and distaste. While he obviously enjoys making his esoteric references to past artworks, he is, according to Rodney Wilson, simultaneously appalled and captured by the cut and thrust of arts' politics.\textsuperscript{75} Like his use of parody to overcome the weight of tradition, there is a sense that Cleavin must acknowledge the influence of art politics in his works in order for him to overcome and move beyond it. When Cleavin comments on contemporary art trends in his \textit{Study for a Minimal Equestrian Sculpture}, 1993, the parody has the paradoxical effect of preserving the very art that it seeks to destroy. This is because, as Hutcheon has pointed out, in its authorised transgression of norms, parody still posits the norms that it exists away from; 'the recognition of the inverted world still requires a knowledge of the order of the world which it inverts and, in a sense, incorporates'.\textsuperscript{76} Hutcheon claims that this paradox is characteristic of all parodic discourse, where 'even in mocking, parody reinforces; in formal terms it inscribes the mocked conventions onto itself, thereby guaranteeing their continued existence'.\textsuperscript{77} So like the ambivalence expressed in Cleavin's works where he both admires the great practitioners of medical illustration, and yet chooses to parody the absurdities of this tradition in his work,

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Rodney Wilson, lecture 18 September 2003.
\textsuperscript{76} Hutcheon, pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
when he refers to a minimalist aesthetic an ambivalence is set up between conservative repetition and revolutionary difference which is part of the very paradoxical essence of parody.\textsuperscript{78}

In his parodies of art politics, Cleavin has also considered the role of theoretical art writings. In the suite \textit{The Parable of the Parrot}, 1992, Cleavin considers what he has described as 'various posturings of the 1990s', with the print \textit{Thinking male thoughts and gazing male gazes} prompted by 'a particular book that talks about the licentious male gaze'.\textsuperscript{79} In commenting on the theories of Laura Mulvey, Cleavin again demonstrated his distrust of neat theoretical systems which tend to over-simplify the issues involved. Another work from this suite, \textit{The Critic Smiles – In True Parrot Fashion}, thrusts at art commentary, while the title and toothbrush refer back to Jasper John's \textit{The Critic Smiles}, 1969. This parody of art commentary has continued in Cleavin's ink jet prints. Elizabeth Rankin has noted that in his \textit{Re-Constructions and Constraints}, 2000, Cleavin parodies pretentious post-modern discourse to accompany a tongue-in-check series of eleven prints that purport to be the work of the younger siblings of famous artists, including Munch, Raoul, and Matisse, with images derived from 'girlie magazines', bent, warped, coloured, and twisted through the computer.\textsuperscript{80}

It is art writing's tendency to impose interpretations upon art works which also provoked Cleavin's suite of \textit{Sacred Cow} prints in 1974. In \textit{Sacred Cows} Cleavin parodies iconic images of New Zealand painting, with his 'target' being somewhere between coded discourse and wider society. In the 'Ewe and Eye' catalogue Cleavin wrote:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ibid, p. 77.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Cleavin Etching a Welcome Gift. \textit{Chronicle}, vol. 28, no. 1, 4 February 1993, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Elizabeth Rankin, A Word in Your Eye. Texts and Images in Barry Cleavin's Ink Jet Prints. \textit{Art New Zealand}, no. 99, Winter 2001, p. 69. This kind of parodic 'playing around' with the key aspects of an artist's stylistic traits also has a long history. The printmaker Hendrik Goltzius (1558-1617) who had revolutionised the technique of engraving and the business of print publishing, created a series of engravings that emulated the manner of six different artists, including one after Dürer that was mistakenly thought to be Dürer's own work. See, David Platzker and Elizabeth Wyckoff, \textit{Hard Pressed: 600 Years of Prints and Process}. New York, 2000, p. 20.
\end{itemize}
I can give no real motive for the (series) although "the quality of light evident in New Zealand painting" had, as a statement, disturbed me for some time and I think the series had something to do with refuting that published fact, as couldn't the paintings simply be paintings without the additional verbiage. The superimposed found images were meant to be as visually irresponsible as the written imposition.\textsuperscript{81}

So, as in *The Parable of the Parrot*, Cleavin is objecting to art writing's tendency to over-analyse, and conveys his meaning by replicating these iconic works in bright colours, and by providing a visual parallel between the imposition of the opinions of art writers and his irresponsible imposition of found elements on to these works. In *Sacred Cow* Trap – After Sutton, 1974,\textsuperscript{82} [figure 12], Cleavin has used a bright yellow for his linear version of William Sutton's iconic painting *Nor' Wester in the Cemetery*, 1950, and in the left corner he has superimposed an engraving of a trap. Through this series Cleavin demonstrated his opposition to attempts to impose an identity on New Zealand art, later claiming that he had no time for 'self-conscious kiwism' that acts as if the rest of the world does not exist; 'New Zealand again takes [art] astoundingly seriously. We try to make our own heroes and we have only got so much history to actually build our heroes in'.\textsuperscript{83} In this sense, Cleavin’s method is similar to the way in which Roy Lichtenstein’s *Rouen Cathedral*, Set IV, 1969, translates Claude Monet’s brushwork into a simulated four-colour-process reproduction, but is commenting not on Monet’s method but on schoolish theories about optical painting.\textsuperscript{84}

As the above examples demonstrate, Cleavin is not necessarily critical of the works which he has parodied, and often, as in his *Sacred Cows*, the parody is used to direct criticism, not at the target image, but outwards. However, in his commentary on the nature of art’s politics, Cleavin’s works also demonstrate their potential to comment upon the nature of art itself.

\textsuperscript{81} *Ewe and Eye*, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{82} According to the catalogue entry in the *Ewe and Eye* catalogue, this work was not originally included with the three prints from his *Sacred Cow* series. The other three works were; *Sacred Cow No. 1 (after Buchanan)*, *Sacred Cow No. 2 after Heaphy*, and *Sacred Cow No. 3 after Perkins*, all 1974.
\textsuperscript{83} Cleavin, interviewed by Imogen de la Bere, 1983.
The realisation of the potential for parody to act self-reflexively is arguably the most significant development in parody theory of the last century. In Richard Poirier’s essay from 1968 he noted that until now, parody had been almost entirely ‘other-directed’, by one writer against another or at the literary modes of a particular period. But against these, he identified another use, a literature of self parody that ‘makes fun of itself as it goes along, calling into question not any particular literary structure so much as the enterprise, the activity itself of creating any literary form, and of empowering an idea with a style.’\(^\text{85}\) This notion of parody which ‘makes fun of itself as it goes along’ was developed further in the writings of Margaret Rose and Linda Hutcheon, who noted that although most theorists go back to the etymological root of the term parody in the Greek noun *parodia* meaning ‘counter-song’, only one meaning of the prefix *para* is usually mentioned, that of ‘counter’ or ‘against’. However, they claim that *para* also means ‘beside’, and therefore can also suggest an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast.\(^\text{86}\) This realisation allowed for a move away from earlier definitions of parody with their emphasis on the contrastive and critical use of the parodied text, towards a development of the element first identified by Poirier. This basic theoretical development was made by Rose in her text *Parody // Metafiction*, 1979, where she argued that certain kinds of parody act as metafictions, where in parodying one text or kind of text, the parody holds up a mirror to its own fictional practices. Hutcheon, too has examined this new kind of parody which ‘self-consciously and self-critically recognises its own nature’.\(^\text{87}\)

As well as this recognition of parody’s metafictional quality, its reflexive potential has also been recognised as a significant element of twentieth century art practice. In 1978, the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York staged an exhibition called ‘Art about Art’, in which they identified a kind of art which calls into question not only its relations to other art, but its own identity. In combination with Hutcheon’s wider theory of parody, this

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\(^\text{85}\) Poirier, pp. 339-40.
\(^\text{87}\) Hutcheon, p. 27.
provides a basis from which to interpret the way in which reflexive parody functions in Cleavin’s work. In the catalogue which accompanied the Whitney’s exhibition, Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall noted that although artists throughout Western art history have borrowed from other art, unlike previous generation’s works, the recent borrowings are direct and undistinguished, with the artist boldly using the most recognisable quotations, and deliberately encouraging the viewer to participate in discovering the genesis of the work.\footnote{Lipman and Marshall, p. 7.}

One of the subgroups of art about art identified in this exhibition is that which was designated as art about the artist, which uses the materials and techniques of art as its subject.\footnote{Ibid. p. 33.} Although Cleavin does not fit strictly within this category in that he has not made images of the tools of printmaking or images of print workshops, the printmaking process is important in his work, especially given that printmaking can be seen to be peculiarly suited to this way of working. The detachment required of the printmaker has been identified by Frank and Dorothy Getlein who attribute it to the printmaking process of working in reverse and engaging the intellect,\footnote{Frank and Dorothy Getlein, The Bite of the Print. London, 1964, p. 14.} whilst Peter Cape thought along similar lines when he identified what he called a ‘me and not-me’ element in printmaking where the printmaker is always one step removed from the finished product.\footnote{Cape, p. 11.} It is not my aim to consider Cleavin’s printmaking process in this thesis, however, there is no doubt that Cleavin’s meticulous and skilled technique is integral to his works, and that beyond the widespread recognition of the skill involved in Cleavin’s work there is a further significance to his use of technique, where in some of his prints Cleavin chooses to make readily apparent to the viewer the ways in which the image they are viewing is an artistic construction. For instance, by incorporating found objects into the soft ground of his prints Cleavin is also able to remind his viewers of these object’s existence within ‘our’ world. In \textit{Wireworks I,} 1981, a hand print is combined with
an image of barbed wire pressed into the soft ground etching,\textsuperscript{92} thus calling into question the works' status as an artistic construction in a way that has parallels with the use of the devices and tools of drawing within an artwork.

Another way in which Cleavin draws his viewer's attention to the construction of the artwork is through his use of stencils. A favourite and recurring device has been his use of a standard school chemistry stencil, including in his print \textit{Chemistry Stencil}, 1980, where Wilson claims it acts as a guide to two chemistries, physical and bodily.\textsuperscript{93} Chemistry stencils were also used as part of Cleavin's series of \textit{Equine Nightmares}, 1999, which I shall return to in Chapter Two, and in \textit{The Apparatus Required to Cook your Own Goose}, 1995. Other stencilled numbers and letters were also part of the \textit{Marginalisation} series, 1990, whilst a range of stencilled forms appeared in Cleavin's works reproduced in Peter Cape's volume on New Zealand printmakers. The \textit{Equine Nightmares} also involved a stencil cut from a zinc plate with a jeweller's saw for the horse and donkey.\textsuperscript{94} In a number of etchings from the last ten years Cleavin has used the device of a stencilled shape evenly scratched in to repeat forms across his works, including for the geese and various stalking predators in his \textit{Gander Issues} series, 1993, the crows from \textit{The Umbrella}, 1998, and the dancing figures in his prints \textit{Ballroom Dancing with Hyenas}, 1999, and \textit{Pursuits}, 2002, [figure 13], from his \textit{Recycling} series. The lithographs from \textit{Recycling} also featured Cleavin's use of Japanese rubber stamps in the repeated cyclist and skeletal forms of fish and humans, which Wilson claims 'parallel the fibrous lines and rich tonalities of his etching'.\textsuperscript{95} Cleavin also used a stamp in his \textit{Series of Allegations} from 1988. In the final work from this series, the lithograph entitled

\textsuperscript{92} As a process, this has affinities with the aims of the playwright Bertold Brecht, who in 1926 adopted from the Russian formalist Victor Shklovsky the device of 'making strange' (\textit{priem osrorenie}) for his theory and practice of the theatre, his \textit{Verfremdungseffekt} or '\textit{V}-effekt'. \textit{V} effect approximately translates to defamiliarisation effect, and involved the playwright breaking the artistic illusion of realism in his works through such devices as actors suddenly breaking role.

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Eye and Eye}, p. 27.


\textsuperscript{95} Wilson, lecture 18 September 2003.
A host of Allegations some not fully substantiated, [figure 14], he has used the repeated image of the stamped alligator to convey the ideas of saturation and over-use implicit in the series as a whole.96

Another way in which Cleavin has drawn attention to the constructed nature of his works is through his parodic use of western systems of perspective construction. In his series Thirteen Lethal sentences + One, completed during his fellowship at Christchurch Polytechnic in 1993, Cleavin has used images drawn from a range of early perspective texts. Showing the Second Manner of Execution, uses René Gaultier’s, ‘Plate 6, showing the second manner of execution’, 1648,97 while in his print Apterxy and Vanishing Point, [figure 15], Cleavin has combined the skeletal form of a kiwi, with Paul Heinecken’s An eight-sided star with light source and cast shadows, 1727, [figure 16]. However, as well as drawing attention to their status as created objects through the inclusion of perspective construction lines, the prints in this series also have a satiric purpose, involving the notion of a vanishing point particular to the species depicted as each is faced with extinction. But just as with the anatomical works, Cleavin uses the parodied images for a range of more or less satiric ends, and in some examples he is simply enjoying the incongruous combination of the perspective drawings with other elements. In his lithograph Designed to Drive you up the Wall, 1983, [figure 17], Cleavin has used Thomas Malton’s, Representation of a staircase, internal; showing the descending stairs, direct, [figure 18], from the 1779 second edition of his A compleat treatise on perspective, in theory and practice...,98 and combined it with Straus-Durckheim’s Anatomie Descriptive et Comparative du Chat, from 1845. This work was shown as part of ‘A Litany of Lines’ at Gingko Gallery in 1983, and in his review of this show John Hurrell, interpreted it in the context of Cleavin’s recent visit to Alcatraz Island, writing that depending on how the print is positioned on the walls, one version can be interpreted as

98 Desargues, p. 156.
representing a prisoner ‘going up the wall’ the other can represent a guard up on a ‘cat-walk’, and ‘hence a stalking cat symbolises the violent under-currents found in both groups’.

In a related etching from 1983, *Calculated to send you round the twist*, Cleavin combined a geometrical spiral derived from Johannes Lencker’s instructive text, along with an alligator. Like the anatomical tradition, the history of texts concerned with perspective includes works of varying qualities. However, also like his use of the anatomical tradition, Cleavin invariably focuses on those which were outstanding in their time. The work of Heinecken mentioned above is one example, as Pierre Descargues has claimed that his *Lucidum prospectivae speculum*, 1727, Augsburg, was ‘one of the most beautiful, comprehensive, ‘monumental’ treatises written in the eighteenth century’.

The modern form of the geometrical technique of linear perspective dates back to the early Renaissance, and since then there has been much written on this subject. The earliest text to codify linear perspective was Alberti’s *De picture*, 1435-6, whilst the first printed volume on perspective in art was a Latin text by Jean Pélurin (Viator), 1505, which contained nearly the entire repertory of forms that would appear in similar collections for centuries to come. However, as it developed, perspective grew self-critical and began to incorporate elements seen from more than one angle, with anamorphic designs intriguing a number of artists. Daniele Barbaro’s *Pratica della Prospettiva*, 1569, was the first published work to give instructions in creating anamorphoses, although it was the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which were the golden age of anamorphoses. In the nineteenth century anamorphoses were relegated to children’s rooms, and today are more often seen as mere

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100 Lencker published *Perspectiva Literaria* in 1567 and *Perspectiva; hierinnen auffs kürzste beschrieben*... with engravings by Mathias Zyndt, was republished in 1595 and 1616. In his texts Lencker showed a variety of geometrical figures in perspective, including drawings of the letters of the alphabet in every imaginable position.
101 Descargues, p. 138.
103 Ibid., p. 61.
diversions in the field of optics. However, in recent years Jurgis Baltrušaitis has revived interest in the study of anamorphic art, although his volume *Anamorphoses* is still the only text to deal exclusively with the subject. In his print *It makes you mad*, 1975, Cleavin used an advertisement of a woman in a swim suit, who was saying 'it makes you mad' as the fabric had stretched, and combined it with the anamorphic skull from Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, 1533, claiming that he 'thought that an anamorphic presentation of the skull was an extension of this concern'. Rather exceptionally given the usually esoteric nature of Cleavin's sources, Holbein’s skull is probably the best known example of such anamorphic distortion.

A key aspect of anamorphoses identified by Descargues is that 'often artists chose the technique for its covert nature, as an artist could simultaneously reveal and conceal an image in his work, and only the initiated could unlock the secret.' The images that tended to be kept secret were often obscene or erotic, and this theme was taken up at an early stage, with 'classic' anamorphoses including scatological and genre scenes. Many of these erotic images positioned the viewer so that they experienced close up views of the 'secret' element of the work, and Cleavin's work *Anamorphic Drawing - New Zealand Day 6.2.1976* plays on this tradition through the spectator's viewing position in relation to the nude woman. It is this tendency of anamorphoses to contain 'hidden' or 'secret' images which is demonstrated in the etymological origin of the word in the Greek *ana* (again), and *morphē* (shape) - indicating that the spectator must play a part and re-form the picture himself.

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104 Fred Leeman, *Hidden Images. Games of Perception, Anamorphic Art, Illusion, From the Renaissance to the Present*. New York, 1976, p. 9. The oldest known examples of anamorphoses are the child's face and eye in Leonardo's Codex Atlanticus, 1483-1518, although the term anamorphosis does not make its first appearance until the seventeenth century, though for a device already known.


106 Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 16 August 2004.

107 It may also be that the skull is an example of a rebus or picture puzzle, as the skull or hollow bone, (in German 'Hohle Bein') may be seen as a pictorial pun on the name of the artist.

108 Descargues, pp. 16-17.


these anamorphic works Cleavin is prompting his viewers to consider the art work’s status as a cultural construction, and he is also suggesting we consider the ways of seeing with which we approach an artwork. Of his use of anamorphic imagery Cleavin says it had to do with the specific nature of anamorphosis, where ‘a kind of involvement is set up for/with the viewer’ in terms of where the viewer stands, and the revised image that is recognisable if the viewer finds the place to unpick the distortion. In this sense, anamorphoses represent, as Fred Leeman has claimed, ‘an extreme example of the subjectivisation of the viewing process’.  

Despite the fact that ‘no way of looking at the world has gained as widespread acceptance as the one shaped by linear perspective’, Murray Morton has noted that the parodist causes us to see that no single way of doing things, is as obvious, or as habitual, as repeated encounters with it lull us into believing. A parody ‘shows that its original model is not a pure objective expression of a fact or situation but is an account filtered through the original author’s means of expressing himself’. Parody does not hold a mirror up to nature, rather to another work of art and thus becomes a reflection of the character of art itself. It is, claims G. D. Kiremidjian, ‘concerned less with reflecting metaphysical realities than with articulating epistemological processes’. So we can see that parody is able to include a critique of realism within itself, as when Cleavin exposes the construction lines on his models of linear perspective, or when he includes the Renaissance city scapes of Jan Vredeman de Vries, with the amusing addition of golfer Gary Player exhorting us to Try Blinkers, 1978. In these works Cleavin is inviting his viewers to reconsider what it is that they are looking at, and to engage anew with the systems that order our ways of seeing. Professor Anthony Green has written that he sees Cleavin as ‘parodying all possible masks.

111 Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 16 August 2004.  
112 Leeman, p. 9.  
113 Descargues, p. 25.  
114 Morton, p. 33.  
115 Kiremidjian, p. 233.
through which reality has been portrayed\textsuperscript{116} and perspective systems are just one example of such a mask. However, by moving towards a consideration of ways of seeing, the parody again becomes self-reflexive, and the artwork may function as that which W. J. T. Mitchell has called metapictures, that is, pictures that refer to themselves or other pictures, and are therefore used to show what a picture is.\textsuperscript{117} Mitchell divides his analysis into three kinds of metapictures; the self-referential image that refers to its own making in a strict or formal self-reference,\textsuperscript{118} his second kind are those which are generically self-referential, the sort of pictures that represent pictures as a class,\textsuperscript{119} while the third involves discursive or contextual self-reference, its reflexivity depending upon its insertion into a reflection on the nature of visual representation. This third category includes ambiguous drawings and diagrams such as the ‘Duck-rabbit’, and the Necker Cube, where the ‘ambiguity of their referentiality produces a kind of secondary effect of auto-reference to the drawing as drawing’.\textsuperscript{120} In his series \textit{Popular Illusions: A Print Cycle for M. Duchamp}, 1986, Cleavin has included parodied elements drawn from a number of Mitchell’s third order metapictures. In \textit{Marcel notices that the evenings are very much more drawn in now}, Cleavin is referring to the Muller-Lyer illusion, and in \textit{M. Duchamp passing Schroeder’s staircase on his bicycle.} and \textit{M. Duchamp gives Cubism a passing thought (the Necker Cube).} [figure 19], Cleavin refers to metapictures which are text book examples for drawing attention to the subjectivity of seeing. In each of the instances from this series, Cleavin cleverly provides a visual rendering of the nature of each illusion; in \textit{M. Duchamp considers the Ponzo Illusion}, he uses the nature of the projection system designed by architect and theorist Andrea Pozzo, to transfer a flat projection to a curved vault, to double the image of the plastic cyclists in a parodic reduction of this system. Like the great works of Vesalius, Muybridge and others, Pozzo’s frescoes

\textsuperscript{116} Anthony Green, Reports and Reviews: Barry Cleavin. \textit{Arts and Community}, vol. 7, no. 12, December 1971, p. 13.


\textsuperscript{118} Mitchell, pp. 40-42, and p. 56. Mitchell gives as an example, Saul Steinberg’s work, \textit{The Spiral}, 1964.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 56.

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 48.
which seemed to extend the actual architecture into infinity, represented a high point in their field of *quadratura* painting.¹²¹ This series of *Popular Illusions* stands as a particularly strong example of the many layers of parodic illusion in Cleavin’s prints. There is a tilt at Duchamp’s use of the readymade (itself a critique of the mimetic principle) through the inclusion of the plastic cyclist bought at a local supermarket,¹²² and there is a reference to Duchamp’s great work *Nude Descending a staircase*, 1912, in the two works of Duchamp ascending and descending his staircase on his bicycle. This is all combined with ‘laying bare’ the devices of artistic representation from within the prints themselves, in a strong example of Rose’s parody as a higher order action which ‘shows how’ as well as ‘shows that’¹²³.

Finally in this chapter, I will consider Cleavin’s use of artist’s manuals as both another example of his parodic borrowing from an influential text, and as a commentary on the nature of the artistic process. Like Muybridge’s *Animal Locomotion*, Vesalius’s *Fabrica*, and various perspective treatises, W. Ellenberger, H. Baum and H. Dittrich’s work *An Atlas of Animal Anatomy for Artists*, 1901, provides another example of an influential text which has inspired Cleavin. In directly utilising artist’s manuals Cleavin is positioning himself within a framework of textual imitation and appropriation that includes the Classical and Renaissance belief in the value of imitation as a means of instruction. From Ellenberger, Cleavin has drawn a number of images, including the skeletal frame from *The Cow and Bull*, Plates 3, 4 and 14, [figure 20], which appeared in his prints *Nada – Next to Nothing*, 1981, *Alter piece 1*, and *Alter piece 2*, [figure 21], both 1983. Ellenberger’s *Goat* Plates 1 and 2, are also combined in Cleavin’s *Ecological Balance*, 1981, in a way reminiscent of the recombinations of figures from Stubbs and Muybridge, while his *Paper fossil – Lioness*, 1976, uses *The Lion*.

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¹²¹ See, Descargues, p. 23, and Leeman, pp. 45-51. Pozzo was a clergyman, architect, theorist, and painter of trompe l’oeil paintings, his best known being those for S. Ignazio in Rome. These included his *Entrance of Saint Ignatius into Paradise*, 1691-1694, fresco, of a painted dome capping the crossing, and the corridor to the apartments of Saint Ignatius, begun 1682, which represent an amazing feat of illusionistic perspective.

¹²² *The Bitter Suites*. University of Tasmanian, Centre for the Arts Gallery, Hobart, 1987, unpaginated.

¹²³ Rose, 1979, p. 86.
Plate 3 but replaces the original outline form showing the skeleton’s relationship to surface anatomy with an emboss which comments on the frailty of life through its ambiguous existence/non-existence.

Another artist’s text which Cleavin has worked from is William Rimmer’s *Art Anatomy*. William Rimmer (1816-1879) was a sculptor, painter and art anatomist, who played a key part in the development of life drawing in nineteenth century America. His *Art Anatomy. Eighty-One Plates*, 1877, is a compilation of his anatomy lessons and is arguably one of the greatest art educational works ever produced in the United States. In his text, Rimmer reflected both the then current interest in physiognomy, and developments in natural science as published by Charles Darwin in the *Descent of Man*, 1871, and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, 1872. In Rimmer’s text the varying facial angles of the skull from ape to human are presented in terms of ‘high’ and ‘low’ types of man, thereby implying progressive evolution and reflecting Darwin’s conclusions. As a system of classificatory thought, Darwinism stands as perhaps the biggest influence of recent times, and as such it represents exactly that sort of ordered system which Cleavin tends to explore in his work. In his print *Never mind*, 1973, Cleavin depicts the skull of a rhesus monkey within an embossed ‘classical European’ profile, calling to mind Rimmer’s descending profiles, which depicted Europeans as the highest intellectual profile down through the ‘lower’ human types (usually conveyed by a Negroid profile) to the ape. By recombining these images in the one plate Cleavin is providing a parodic commentary on these art and science systems, and is also making a satiric point about the nature of modern man. Darwinism has also been explored

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124 See for instance his series of *Veterans* from 1970.
126 Physiognomy had developed in France and England during the eighteenth century. France had a strong tradition of interest in the theory that facial characteristics and gestures revealed character. J.C. Lavater’s immensely popular treatise was on the art of interpreting men by their physiognomy, and claimed to demonstrate how external appearances revealed character. See R. E. Shikes & S. Heller, *The Art of Satire. Painters as Caricaturists and Cartoonists from Delacroix to Picasso.* New York, 1984, p. 11.
127 Bostwick Davis, pp. 351-3.
by Cleavin in his print *Relative Obscurities*, 1989, in which a skewer passes through the eye sockets of skulls that proceed from Cro-Magnon through to Homo sapiens, providing a link from the past to the present.\(^{129}\)

One extension of the systems of thought which predated Darwinism involves the notion of comparative anatomies. Cleavin's works often show an awareness of how comparative anatomies and image recombinations can generate new meanings, with elements directly drawn from Stubbs's *Comparative Anatomical Exposition* being just one example. Like anatomical illustration in general, comparative anatomy dates back to Aristotle, although it is Pierre Belon who is credited with the first printed attempt at a demonstration of the fact that man and animals are formed upon one plan. His *L'Histoire de la Nature des Oyseaux*, 1555, included a plate placing the skeleton of a bird beside that of a man, with the intention of showing how they resembled and how they differed. Just like the combination of 'high' and 'low' profile in *Nevermind*, Cleavin's *Early Bird*, [figure 22], also plays on the tradition of comparative anatomies, especially in their relation to the concept of evolution. In a finished but unpublished study for his exposition, Stubbs adopted a pronograde pose for the human skeleton (the earliest example of such a drawing by any artist),\(^{130}\) his intention being to aid comparison with the frame of the tiger and fowl. Cleavin has taken this comparison to its absurd conclusion by combining the lateral view of the fowl skeleton in *Table V*, with the skull from the running human skeleton in *Table III* from the published section of Stubbs’s *Anatomical Exposition*,\(^{131}\) thereby playing on Darwin's theory of evolution, but also linking it to the satirical tradition of depicting humans as animals to expose their folly.\(^{132}\) Before the

\(^{129}\) Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 5 November 2002.

\(^{130}\) Doherty, p. 116.

\(^{131}\) Reproduced in Doherty, the skull is drawn from *Table III* of the engravings, of the human skeleton lateral view, stipple engraving, p. 254, and the fowl from *Table V*, fowl skeleton lateral view, stipple engraving, p. 258. Although working many years prior to Charles Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, some early concept of such ideas may be involved in Stubbs's exposition. Stubbs had painted the portrait of Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, with whom he may have discussed such ideas.

\(^{132}\) The use of the chicken in particular is not unprecedented, one example occurring in Francisco de Goya's print *Yo van desplumados*, 'There they go, plucked', from *Los Caprichos*, published 1799.
theory of evolution, similarities between structures (particularly vertebrate animals) might be established without the inference being drawn that they were historically related. Instead such similarities were interpreted as evidence of design in the sublime scheme of creation, the so-called great plan of Unity of Organisation. In his work *Anatomie Comparée*, 1980, [figure 23], Cleavin has worked from the anatomical drawing tradition and the notion of comparative anatomies in a number of ways. The pose, of arm lifted and outstretched to the side, is relatively common in anatomical illustration as it allows for the display of the pectoral region, axilla and upper arm, neck and lower face. Yet the very awkwardness of such a gesture when combined with the woman’s smiling face links it to his *Cameo* series where the women smile despite displaying their partially dissected bodies. In substituting the arm for a bat wing, the work relates to a claim that dates back to Aristotle, that the arms and forelimbs of mammals, the wings of birds and the pectoral fins of fish are comparable organs. Finally this work also takes an element specifically drawn from the anatomical tradition through Cleavin’s use of the bat wing derived from the anatomical illustrations of Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), whose *Leçons d’Anatomie Comparée*, 1800, Cleavin has also referenced in the title of his etching. Cleavin has expressed his interest in apprehending a parallel existence or alternative world, and in prints like *Anatomie Comparée*, and *Early Bird*, we also see his absurdist play on the fragility of our species and the possibility that our world may have turned out very differently indeed.

The importance of visual relationships between pictorial elements is a key aspect of Cleavin’s work, as was identified by Leonard Bell, who wrote that ‘Cleavin’s usual method in his prints is a surrealist-in-origin juxtaposition or synthesis in the one image of ‘incompatible’ elements – elements that do not in the normal course of events go together’. This fits Feinberg’s claim that ‘the satirist sees an incongruous relationship between objects

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133 See for example, Scarpa's Table V in *Sull'aneurisma riflessioni ed osservazioni anatomico chirurgiche*, 1804, reproduced in Roberts and Tomlinson, p. 380.
which to most people seem totally unrelated... the satirist's peculiar perspective discloses unobserved similarities in the world of men.'¹³⁶ Unlike authoritative quotations, this kind of parody connects humorously unlike subjects to make ironic or startling comments on them, which has the effect of both making the quoted text 'strange' and of associating it with the work of the parodist.¹³⁷ This is very much in evidence in the examples of Cleavin's works discussed in this chapter where he is prompting his viewers to look anew at some of the great works of western art history by paying oblique homage to their status, while at the same time making them 'strange' by questioning the very basis on which they have achieved that status. Although it is part of a larger system of 'general irony', I believe that this distrust of classificatory systems also relates to a general tendency to parody excessive language, including highly elaborate and Latinate English, and I suggest that these kinds of highly ordered visual systems, where the scientific thought is imposed upon the images, may well represent a visual equivalent to this excessive language. So again, when Feinberg claimed that most of the great satirists are distrustful of logically reached generalisations and dogmas concerning men and institutions,¹³⁸ we can see that Cleavin is not accepting without consideration the value of these great works, but rather is questioning in which ways they may be great, in which ways they may fail, and in which ways they may be of use to him in developing his own art works, both in terms of their specific imagery, and as a means to an end in helping generate meaning. In his use of parody Cleavin's work is inextricably tied in with traditions of Western art; not just because it is using images from art history, but because Cleavin is also commenting on the nature of these works, and the art fields and thought systems that they belong to.

¹³⁶ Feinberg, pp. 130-131.
¹³⁷ Rose, 1979, p. 50.
¹³⁸ Feinberg, p. 5.
CHAPTER 2: Satire

Just as Cleavin’s use of parody involves art historical traditions and a questioning of our ways of seeing, so too, his use of satire involves these same elements. In Chapter One I discussed the importance of Cleavin’s parodic use of images derived from art history, while in this chapter I will demonstrate that Cleavin also uses the traditional ‘language’ of the satirical print in order to generate meaning in his works, and to expose that which is seen as habitual and expected, making his viewers look at our society anew. In this chapter I intend to focus on Cleavin’s works which fit under the broad heading of satire, where their subjects or themes are based on content or issues derived from the ‘real’ world. I will first give a brief overview of some of satire’s chief characteristics, followed by an examination of the importance of tradition in understanding Cleavin’s satirical works, particularly in relation to both the techniques of satire, and the way in which Cleavin has utilised elements of what might be called a traditional satirical ‘language’. Finally, I will consider some of the principal traditional themes of satire which Cleavin has addressed in his work, including his commentary on politics, war, nuclear weapons and environmental concerns, along with a consideration of the ways in which these works function to ‘rattle complacencies’ and to confront the viewer with that which they may not, or choose not to see.¹

In choosing the term satire, I wish to apply it in its broadest sense, so that these theories lead to a better understanding of how Cleavin’s works function. Most of the theory that deals with the differences between parody and satire acknowledges that in practise the two often overlap, although frequently parody is described as one strategy of many

¹ Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 17 February 2005.
employed by the satirist. In his attempt to clearly differentiate between satire and parody Joseph Dane claims that the target of parody is a system of expression (which he calls \textit{signa}), while satire has as its referent a state of things (physical or conceptual), or a system of content (which he calls \textit{res}). However, the difficulty in differentiating between satire and parody based around Dane’s definition is that as I have shown in Chapter One, the parodied text may not always be the target of the work, but may in fact become the satirical tool. One example was Cleavin’s \textit{Cameo} series, 1980, where there was clearly an element of satire in their comment upon social values, however their ethos and system of meaning generation was primarily parodic. Despite the difficulty in separating the two theoretically, in Chapter One I considered works which included or directly referred to ‘appropriated’ elements, whereas in this chapter it is my intention to focus instead on other methods which Cleavin employs to generate commentary about the ‘real world’.

Like parody, satire has no generally agreed definition, with few scholars defining it the same. Whilst there has been an increase in recent writings on the subject of parody, satire has not witnessed the same interest; instead there is almost a tendency to dismiss it as an outdated art form. This shortage of attention to satire is also compounded by the lack of writings which differentiate, or even seem to acknowledge the possibility of a difference between satire and social commentary, with writers on literature tending to refer to texts as satire, while writers on the visual arts more frequently employ the term social commentary. In his Master’s thesis on social comment in New Zealand art, Jonathan Smart defines social comment as artists assuming political, moralising or polemical stances by responding to social problems and concerns. He says this response can be

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2} See for example, Margaret Rose, \textit{Parody // Metafiction.} London, 1979, p. 44.\textsuperscript{3} Joseph A. Dane, Parody and Satire: A Theoretical Model. \textit{Genre}, vol. 13, no. 2, 1980, pp. 145-150. Dane does however, define his category of expression or \textit{signa} rather broadly, including literary texts, literary conventions, concepts, and systems of thought.}
challenging, or it can affirm and accept the status quo. In allowing that social comment can be used to reinforce accepted ideas, some social commentary can be differentiated from satire, which both David Worcester and Leonard Feinberg claim is united by a censorious or critical element. The term satire is said to have derived from the Latin satura, meaning primarily ‘full’, but also designating a mixture full of different things. Worcester claims that satire’s significations have steadily multiplied, with its meaning changing from a narrow to an abstract broad one, while Ralph Shikes claims that he has identified a continuum of satire from Egyptian papyrus to The New Yorker, although he acknowledges that for him, the terms satire, caricature, and cartoon are flexible. It would seem that often when the term satire is used in art historical writings it is because the writer has a broad sense that the works contain either an element of humour or exaggeration. This lack of attention to what is meant when a work of art is designated as satire is frequently reflected in the writings on the prints of Barry Cleavin, where his work has often been described as satirical, but with no acknowledgement of what this may mean, and what this is able to tell us further about his works.

The element of satire which is, perhaps, the most difficult to define is that of humour. In his work The Anatomy of Satire, Gilbert Higet claims that satire must always contain some trace of laughter, although it is not solely amusing, as its central method consists of a varying combination of jest and earnest. In the introduction to the Ewe and Eye

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7 Worcester, p. 3.
8 R. E. Shikes and S. Heller, The Art of Satire. Painters as Caricaturists and Cartoonists from Delacroix to Picasso. New York, 1984, p. 8. Shikes notes that his concern is with protest art that generates social or political criticism of specific ways of life, institutions, conditions, or circumstances, not of man’s general spiritual malaise, fate or discontentment with his own psyche which I shall return to in Chapter Three.
9 Higet, p. 22 and p. 233.
catalogue in 1982, Wilson claimed that ‘Cleavin’s sense of humour is the unifying element’, and that it is seldom absent from his work, while Cleavin himself has said that he uses humour in an attempt to be ‘good humoured about a world that is often pretentious, untenable and uncomfortable’. However, as Rodney Wilson acknowledged, Cleavin’s sense of humour has also been seen as offbeat and even distasteful, as was evidenced by the response to The Hare Stripped Bare by his Bride Even, 1980, discussed in Chapter One. In her review of ‘Ewe and Eye’, Cheryll Sotheran disputed Wilson’s claims that Cleavin’s works are made acceptable by the humour, also claiming that the catalogue does not seem to allow a serious reading of his work. Sotheran maintained that Cleavin is depicting a very personal world, and while she says his works are all capable of raising a smirk, it disappears as ‘one moves on to the next grisly corpse, raped woman or skeletal form’. She then goes on to claim ‘one is put frequently in mind of Goya’s grim commentaries. But with Goya no one was being invited to laugh’. While the differences in Sotheran’s and Wilson’s interpretations point to the subjectivity which complicates efforts to identify humour, I also believe that her comments regarding Goya are telling.

One of the greatest artists of all time, Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) has repeatedly been referred to as a satirist, and yet many of his prints are too awful, too bleak and too condemnatory to allow for a humorous interpretation. However, if we allow that they are satirical even without overt humour, what then are the elements of these works which make them classifiable as satire? I would suggest that in the work of Goya we can see a parallel with the kinds of satirical devices employed in Cleavin’s works, including distortion, an engagement with the theme of pretence and reality, and the notion of asking the viewer to look anew. Like Cleavin, Goya’s work owed much to the satirical prints of his forebears. Reva Wolf has demonstrated the substantial influence which English

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10 Ewe and Eye. Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1982, pp. 6-7.
satirical prints had upon Goya's works, noting that he was 'well versed in the sign
language of the satirical print', including his use of stock settings and characters, as well
as certain poses, gestures, and facial expressions. However, Goya's prints are primarily
satirical in their concern with the revelation of a greater truth. Leonard Feinberg has
claimed that 'the essence of satire is the revelation of the contrast between reality and
pretense', and that satire 'ridicules man's naif acceptance of individuals and institutions
at face value'. In looking anew at familiar conditions, satire has to fight propaganda
and indifference as it struggles to point out the affectations of orthodoxy. As a result of
this struggle, satire displays a tendency towards exaggeration as it uses every method
possible to compel the reader or viewer to look at what they had missed. However, in its
use of distortion, theorists have noted that satire still pretends to be presenting a realistic
portrayal of the world. As Worcester claims, contrary to popular belief, satire is seldom
'honest' in the sense of forthright expression of emotion or opinion, instead aiming to
instil a given set of emotions or opinions, requiring that it 'practise the art of
persuasion'.

In order to understand these basic requirements of satire, I will first consider an example
of Cleavin's work which exemplifies the key elements of satire which even strict
definitions of the term require. Cleavin's series The Executive Suite, 1974, can be shown
to fit the formal requirements of satire as enumerated by both Gilbert Hight and William
Haas. Haas claims that satire's chief characteristics are; one, an attack or censure of man

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13 Reva Wolf, Goya and the Satirical Print in England and on the Continent. Boston,
1991, p. 69. See also Susan E. Hosking, The Literary and Visual Sources of Goya's Etchings.
Unpublished research paper B.A. (Hons.), School of Humanities, Flinders University of
South Australia, 1979. In this paper, Hosking argued that the most significant aspect of Goya's
work is his imaginative borrowing. George Levitine has also considered Goya's use of symbols
derived from contemporary Spanish Emblemática. See, Some Emblematic Sources of Goya.
14 Feinberg, p. 3.
16 See for instance Feinberg, p. 4, and Hight p. 5.
17 Worcester, pp. 8-9. Gilbert Hight has also noted that satire claims to be realistic, although it is usually
exaggerated or distorted. See Hight, pp. 158-171.
or his follies; two, an essential meaning which is not consistent with the strictly literal interpretation; three, a distortion either by understatement or overstatement; four, an approach to a problem which is witty, audacious or grotesque; and five, a diminishing effect on the object of the satire. Hight also notes a number of tests, about which he says if some or most apply, it is likely to be satire, including when a pedigree is mentioned, and a choice of method or theme used by earlier satirists. I believe that all of these requirements are present in The Executive Suite, and I wish to consider just how each contributes to the series’ meaning. When Hight notes that a satirist can signal their satirical intention by mentioning a pedigree, and a choice of theme or method used by earlier satirists, it becomes clear that art historical traditions again become important in establishing the work’s meaning. In The Executive Suite, Cleavin is referencing the art historical tradition of the illustrated animal fable, which has long been used as a device for criticising man. This tradition can be seen in satirical sketches of animals from Ancient Egypt, and later in the writings of Aesop and La Fontaine. This tradition continued through to the use of animals in political and social satire in eighteenth century England, while later in the century Goya used this device in Los Caprichos, published 1799, to comment on the aristocracy’s obsession with heraldry and genealogy in the aquatint And so was his grandfather, where the ass proudly displays his family tree. In For the Executive Suite No. 1, Cleavin has shown the executive’s shadow as a goat by substituting the figure’s head for hands forming shadow puppets. In this series Cleavin

18 William E. Haas, Some Characteristics of Satire. Satire Newsletter, vol. 3, no. 1, Fall, 1965, pp. 1-3. Haas also lists a sixth requirement which he describes as a domination of the work by the techniques of satire, which he says is necessary to exclude works which contain satire but which are not properly classified as satire. I believe though that this requirement is more necessary in literature than in the visual arts, which do not have the same capacity for the inclusion of satiric passages, or chapters within an otherwise non-satirical text.

19 Hight, pp. 15-17.


21 Wolf, p. 42. See also Richard Godfrey, English Caricature 1620 to the Present. Caricaturists and Satirists, their art, their purpose and influence. London, 1984, p. 32. One example from 1761, by the caricaturist Thomas Patch, The Golden Asses, 1761, oil on canvas, shows 37 men conversing in Florence with a punch bowl, as apparently at this time the English in Italy were often referred to as the ‘golden asses’ because of their riches and their foolish behaviour.

has drawn the hands from Henry Bursill’s book of hand shadows, in a manner which is reminiscent of his parodic use of artist’s manuals, but which also has parallels with the use of shadows as a means to reveal hidden natures in the work of the artist J. J. Grandville (1803-1846). In Grandville’s *Projected Shadows*, 1830, [figure 24], the shadows cast by parading politicians and clerks betray their sinister animal equivalents, including a bird, pig and a devil. Grandville stands as yet another example of an artist whom Cleavin admires who was extraordinarily prolific, and dedicated to his own peculiar vision of the world.

*The Executive Suite* uses the tradition of the beast fable to add weight to Cleavin’s comments on certain members of our society, but it is also clearly satirical in other ways. If we return to Haas’s third, fourth and fifth requirements that a satirical work is a distortion, is witty and that it produces a diminishing effect, we can see that these elements are usually associated with the portrayal of humans as animals. Haas’s first and second requirements also fit this series as it comments upon what has been seen as the essential element of satire; its revelation of the discrepancy between reality and pretence. In Cleavin’s work the posing figures are at odds with the ‘reality’ of their projected animal counterparts; in *For the Executive Suite No. 4*, the dancing couple in the foreground contrast with the projected image where the man’s bear shadow menaces the woman’s dog shadow. In *For the Executive Suite No. 2*, [figure 25], the notion of

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23 Elva Butt Gallery, Newsletter No. 16, October 1979. Henry Bursill’s *Hand Shadows to be Thrown Upon the Wall*, and *Hand Shadows Second Series* were originally published in 1859.


25 Grandville was born Jean-Ignace-Isidore Gérard, in 1803 in Nancy, and began his career as a fierce political cartoonist committed to the Republican cause. He fought on the barricades during the revolution of 1830, and his cartoons appeared in Charles Philippon’s *Le Charivari* and *Le Caricature*. In 1835 when the journals were suppressed by Louis-Philippe he became a book-illustrator, producing approximately 3000 prints, lithographs and engravings. In his animal-human analogies, including the illustrations to the works of La Fontaine, he greatly extended the traditional range of characterological traits associated with animals. However, unlike his contemporary Honoré Daumier, Grandville has not achieved widespread recognition by art writers, although a large number of artists have considered his work to be a major influence, most notably many of the Surrealists. See Weschler pp. 79-103, and Michel Melot’s entry on ‘Grandville’ in *The Dictionary of Art*, Jane Turner (ed.), New York, 1996, vol. 13, pp. 306-307.
pretence is taken further, as Cleavin also includes a sideswipe at modern consumerism, especially as it relates to the ‘executive lifestyle’. The couple are drawn from a Sears Roebuck catalogue, and stand as a symbol of rampant consumerism. This association is not unprecedented in the satirical tradition, as evidenced by Aldous Huxley’s novel, Island, set on the utopian island of Pala, where Marugan is given a Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue as a symbol of a modern consumer society.

Animals are a regular feature of Cleavin’s work, and often function, as they do in The Executive Suite to point to the discrepancy between our real and our desired selves. But they are also used to point out our true natures in a way that comments on the masks that people wear. In Cleavin’s print, A Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing, 2002, [figure 26], he reverses the conventional cliché and provides it with a visual equivalent, which is amusing, but also satirically points to the revelation of pretence. This print again has a precedent in the work of Grandville. In Un Autre Monde, 1844, Chapter VIII, Puff gets the idea of selling neo-carnival costumes that will reveal the true character of the wearer, while in Chapter VII at the undersea ball a male lamb dances with an ageing female panther, each wearing the disguise of the other animal. Feinberg suggests that one of the reasons for the use of the animal fable in satire is that we accept unpleasant truths through animals more easily that we would about ourselves, and in Cleavin’s work the element of humour in the animal’s costume makes the reality of the way in which people put on similar disguises more palatable to the viewer.

27 Marugan, the heir to the throne of the island utopia of Pala, is seduced by the catalogue’s 1358 pages; he marvels at the range of goods for sale, and becomes convinced of the worth and desirability of every item. See Aldous Huxley, Island. Harmondsworth, 1973, pp. 138-139, originally published 1962.
28 The figures here have been drawn from Ernest Thompson’s Anatomy of Animals. New York, 1990, originally published 1896. I believe, though, that this work is better described as satire than parody. Thompson’s text is not one that Cleavin admires to the same extent that he does the works of Stubbs or Vesalius, but he notes that it does provide him with a handy source of images for his prints.
30 Feinberg, pp. 51-55.
The graphic arts have long been recognised as having a traditional association with social commentary and satire. In their book *The Bite of the Print*, Frank and Dorothy Getlein claim that the two are inextricably linked, and that 'a highly critical attitude toward men and society came into being with the making of the first prints in Europe and has remained a central part of printmaking in Europe and America ever since'. The Getleins consider etymological links (including the double meanings of needle, acid, mordant and bite), in a way which has been echoed in writing on Cleavin's works, as when Adrienne Rewi wrote that 'just as the acid bites into the etching plate, so he bites into what he finds difficult to countenance in society'. For the Getleins printmaking needs to be about more than 'lovely textures' as an end in themselves, sentiments which Cleavin has echoed saying 'I became tired of the passive façade of art and post-modernist polemic'. Cleavin claims 'you can say so much in just a rectangle, it's your idea... even if the idea is a stupid one, it must deal with something of an idea, it can't just exist just because you want to irresponsibly fill the world up with yet another art work'.

Visual satire has a long history which Ralph Shikes claims goes back to some Greek and Roman paintings which had burlesqued the gods, while the Egyptians often ridiculed the more pretentious actions of men by portraying them as animals, as did monks in early illuminated Medieval manuscripts. Shikes notes that in the fifteenth century, when paper for printing became readily available, the first whisperings of social and political graphic comment were seen, although he claims that socially critical art did not reach its full flowering until eighteenth century England. Shikes writes that 'for five hundred

32 Ibid., p. 12.
34 Getlein, p. 260.
35 Exploded Views. Lecture given by Barry Cleavin at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, October 1997. The transcript of this lecture is held in the artist file at the University of Canterbury.
36 Barry Cleavin interviewed by Imogen de la Bere, cassette recording, for an article in the New Zealand Listener, 1983.
38 Ibid., p. 63.
years artists have taken up burin or needle or pen to portray justice or inequity’ which he
calls the ‘honourable tradition of the indignant eye’. The print has been claimed as the
ideal medium for communicating messages, since multiple copies can reach
comparatively wide audiences, with broadsides representing a major medium of political
expression from the sixteenth till the nineteenth centuries. Within this long history
though, Robert Philippe claims that the spirit and general tendency of this medium has
remained the same for 500 years; ‘the print is a mass medium – universal, direct,
immediate, and pithy’. In his analysis of this tradition, Philippe asks whether the
language of political graphics can be said to have its own cadences, rules, tropes, and
syntax, or rather is it distinctive more by its subject matter. Philippe claims that the
satirical form of the allegory is now almost non-existent as it presupposes the currency of
a symbolic language that he says is no longer in circulation.

However, while this ‘vocabulary’ has certainly diminished in scope over the twentieth
century, Cleavin’s works can be seen to use a symbolic language derived chiefly from the
traditions of satire and social commentary in prints. As Stephen Heller notes, ‘the
success of any given political cartoon is predicated on an intelligent manipulation of
symbols that are at the same time unique yet understandable to the widest possible
audience’. So it becomes a matter of striking the right balance between understandable
clichés, and esoteric original symbolism. A number of critics have commented on
Cleavin’s success in addressing this balance; in 1971 Hamish Keith wrote that ‘Cleavin

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40 Ibid., p. xxiv. I believe though, that it is important to take a balanced approach to the emphasis on the
print’s history as a mass art form. While the print undoubtedly has a long tradition of inexpensive works
aimed at the general public, there is also an equally strong tradition, emphasized in the printed works of
artists like Andreas Vesalius, where the print was promoted as a rarefied object to a select group of print
connoisseurs. Whilst the former tradition usually found its expression in works on wood, engraving was
more costly and so it remained in the service of the rich and powerful. Because these prints were financed
by social groups, all the chief exponents of this medium held official positions; so there are few expressions
of popular cries for justice. See Robert Philippe, Political Graphics. Art as a Weapon. Translated by
41 Philippe, p. 9.
has established a vocabulary which he could exploit endlessly – and refreshingly none of it is coy, with-it, witty or any of the other bandwagon clichés of modern graphics’. One example of Cleavin’s use of this traditional vocabulary can be seen in his print *Events effecting global equalisation*, 2003, [figure 27]. In this work Cleavin uses the metaphor of balance to convey the precarious global situation, here showing how many lives will be affected by the political manoeuvres of the United States. In political graphics the notion of balance has a long history, with images of stilts and figures balancing on tightropes often used to signal political agility. In one example of such political symbolism, Honoré Daumier (1808-1879) showed a personified Europe trying to balance on a globe in his work *European Equilibrium*, 1866, [figure 28]. Cleavin generates meaning in his work in a similar way, by personifying the United States through the form of the Statue of Liberty, however, he adds to the traditional associations, by suggesting that it is not the politicians themselves who will suffer, but the precariously balanced figures who have no control over the political outcome. In this print the iconography itself is visually simple, and yet through its associations with the traditions of social commentary is capable of yielding complex meanings.

Similar to the precariously balanced figure, another key element of the ‘language’ of satire involves the use of puppets or doll-like figures. This usage is one that fits in with the conventional notion of satire in many ways; there is a diminishing effect caused by robbing the characters of free will, there is a humorous effect as we see others acting in a manner which is beyond their control (while we assume ourselves to be free agents), and it allows for the expression of the discrepancy between reality and pretence. The portrayal of the world as a puppet show has a long history which Feinberg claims is as

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45 Feinberg, p. 199.
46 Wexchler, p. 168.
47 Another example of Cleavin’s use of this language can be seen in his painting *The Exact Folly*, 2002. This work was inspired by Goya’s *Disparate Puntual*, from *Los Disparates*, 1816-1824, published 1864, in which a woman stands on the back of a horse standing on a tightrope. However in Goya’s work the tightrope rests on the ground, and therefore renders the act without risk and thus without significance. See Selma Holo, *Goya: Los Disparates*. Washington, 1976, p. 27.
old as the satiric tradition and dates back to Lucian.\textsuperscript{48} In his series of \textit{Puppets} from 1976, Cleavin shows that he is aware of this satirical tradition, however, in these works rather than commenting on a particular social problem, Cleavin is making a generalised comment on the human condition in a way which I shall return to in Chapter Three. In a later print though, \textit{Dolly Dingle with Maxime Merivale – and her daughter Sarah –}, 1981, \textsuperscript{[figure 29]}, Cleavin does use doll imagery to satirical ends, portraying the figures with large eyes and mouths, short round legs and arms, combining bright colour with Gary Tricker-like acid splotches in the background. In his social caricature (here based on socio-economic traits) Cleavin’s work is almost textbook satire in its diminishing effect on its subject, its humorous effect, and its commentary upon the way in which we play out our social roles without individual personality or thought.

Another example of Cleavin’s use of the ‘language’ of satire occurs through his use of masks as a visual equivalent to satire’s key theme of the discrepancy between our real and projected selves. While in written satire the author often adopts a mask persona to provide protection from possible attack,\textsuperscript{49} in the visual arts the use of the mask has taken a more literal form. In the prints and paintings of James Ensor (1860-1949), for instance, the mask is a recurring symbol, as he believed that most people played out the folly of life behind masks of pomposity, foolishness and corruption.\textsuperscript{50} Cleavin’s use of masks finds particularly strong expression in his work \textit{Self-portrait, 1973, 1973}, \textsuperscript{[figure 30]}, where he depicts a mask face strapped on to a bared skull.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, Cleavin’s series of ink jet prints \textit{Memento Mori}, 2004, digitally manipulate photographs of Cleavin holding a skull-mask over his face. In these examples the mask is not so much referring

\textsuperscript{48} Feinberg, pp. 46-48. One particularly effective example of this tradition can be seen in Gillray’s classic \textit{Tiddy-Doll}, 1806, which shows Napoleon baking new puppet kings out of gingerbread. This work was repeated throughout Europe, and was imitated for generations.

\textsuperscript{49} Feinberg, p. 194.

\textsuperscript{50} Shikes, 1969, p. 238.

\textsuperscript{51} This print has been variously interpreted as a mask strapped over a skull, and as a skull cap. In her review Helen Hayes describes it as ‘a grotesque and misshapen head wrenched neatly into place with steel bands’, however, the \textit{Ewe and Eye} catalogue entry describes it as ‘a rubber face, based upon a bathing cap, pulled over the skull’. See Helen Hayes, High Anxiety. \textit{Agenda}, 15 – 28 February 1985, p. 14, and \textit{Ewe and Eye}, p. 20.
to hypocrisy and pretence in terms of assumed characters, as passing comment on the way in which we live our lives in denial of the knowledge of our certain death, a phenomenon I shall consider further in Chapter Three.

Although not strictly part of the ‘language’ of satire in the same way as puppets and masks, the use of the ‘authoritative look’, is also of importance in determining the way in which meaning is conveyed in satirical works. Gilbert Highet has noted that satire claims to be realistic, although it is usually exaggerated or distorted,\(^{52}\) while Feinberg says in the pretence that the scene which he describes is an accurate representation of life the satirist uses an abundance of specific details.\(^{53}\) I believe that when author-satirists fill their works with facts and figures to add veracity and an air of authenticity to their arguments, they are utilising satire’s claim to realism in a similar way to Cleavin’s meticulous accuracy and clarity of line. This clarity and careful observation in Cleavin’s drawing implies the kind of detachment from the work which has also been seen to be a key component of the satirist’s temperament.\(^{54}\) However, in replicating the naturalist’s or the anatomist’s style, Cleavin is also commenting on the nature of scientific ‘truth’ as conveyed through illustration. Whilst Cleavin’s careful drawing style certainly allows him to generate a satirical pretence at truth, reviewers have also noted that it limits their capacity to convey an emotional element. In his review of ‘Ewe and Eye’, John Hurrell argued that ‘the precision of his drafting prevents them from being disturbing… they are too well controlled, slickly illustrative, and mannered to convey any substantial emotional intensity’.\(^{55}\) However, I believe that it is exactly this element of control and distance which ties Cleavin to the satirical tradition. The satiric impulse is said to be motivated by both hatred and amusement,\(^{56}\) and so it becomes important for Cleavin to

\(^{52}\) Highet, p. 5.
\(^{53}\) Feinberg, p. 61.
\(^{54}\) Feinberg, p. 95.
\(^{56}\) Highet, p. 146.
maintain a certain detachment from his works to prevent the anger from overly
influencing his condemnation of society to the extent that he is not also able to derive
humour from the absurdity of it all.\textsuperscript{57}

The carefully drawn images which characterise Cleavin’s work are also important in
terms of Cleavin’s belief in the value of drawing well. Cleavin has been quoted as saying
‘if you do craft badly enough you can call it art. That is cynical but at times one feels
obliged to hit for such overkill in order to redress the balance that seems to be to the
detract of doing things well and properly’.\textsuperscript{58} For Cleavin, an extension of his belief
that one can not just irresponsibly fill the world with more meaningless paintings, is his
belief in the responsibility of the artist for the quality of their work, and he has said ‘I’ve
learned to do something properly and well and if there is any impediment to getting the
message across it’s just about inexcusable’.\textsuperscript{59} Since Wilson’s observations on Cleavin’s
drawing in the \textit{Ewe and Eye} catalogue in 1982, Cleavin’s careful style has played an
important part in writings on his work; Warwick Brown noting that etching techniques
when used with such mastery by Cleavin ‘give his prints a satisfying ‘rightness’ – the
sense that the medium is being exploited to the full and that the image could not possibly
be improved’.\textsuperscript{60}

Aside from satire’s visual ‘language’, one of the chief elements of this long tradition has
been the use of caricature, which has often been seen as the ultimate expression of satire
in the visual arts. Whilst of enormous importance in the history of satire in the graphic

\textsuperscript{57} However, this is not to imply that all of Cleavin’s works utilise this meticulous style, rather that it is more
common in his satirical works. In, for instance, \textit{Somnolence}, 1966, and \textit{The Knot}, 1977, the drawing is
characterised by a loose expressive line. I also do not wish to imply that the exercise of drawing in
Cleavin’s work is a purely objective and detached activity. Cleavin says that after a drawing is started he
gets in some sort of struggle with it, and ‘I think it is the struggle that actually activates it’. It becomes
more and more complex as he goes along, and as he draws the ideas change in his head so that it does not
stay the way it was, and he thinks that the works that he prefers most have the greatest struggle.
\textsuperscript{58} Charmian Smith, Printmaker brings his craft to Fluxus. \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 21 July 1994, in The
Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa; artist file, Barry Cleavin.
\textsuperscript{59} Adrienne Rewi, Printmaker seduces viewer in an eerie and shadowed alliance. \textit{Sunday Star Times}, 15
\textsuperscript{60} Warwick Brown, \textit{Another 100 New Zealand Artists}. Auckland, 1996, unpaginated, entry 14.
arts, caricature is not a tradition that Cleavin specifically uses in his work, although his work has often been compared to two of its chief proponents; William Hogarth and Honoré Daumier. Caricature is principally concerned with describing people from without, although Feinberg claims that the satirist tends to use types because he is usually concerned with man rather than men, institutions rather than personalities, or, as Hogarth expressed it in the text below his famous print *A Midnight Modern Conversation*, 1733; ‘Think not to find one meant Resemblance there. We lash the *Vices but the Persons* spare.’ Cleavin’s prints mostly look at the behaviour of man, however, *Taylor’s Dummy*, 1969, [figure 31], provides a rare exception. Rodney Wilson has explained how this work is about Tom Taylor, one of the more influential teachers at the University of Canterbury Art School, and that Cleavin has chosen to comment on Taylor’s reputation as a ‘ladies man’, for instance through the inclusion of the goat’s legs at the top of the work. I believe that the efficacy of the comment in this work relies on the viewer’s knowledge of Taylor, however, as Peter Cape has claimed it ‘contains a good deal more in terms of imagery, free-association and wit, than appears on the surface. But you have to sit back and let your eyes do the work of discovery.’ Wilson has noted that Cleavin’s criticism is usually levelled at the collective rather than the individual, while Cleavin himself has said ‘if I’m drawing a person it is because I have got an empathy with the person... but generally I am drawing a universal’.

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61 Caricature has played a major part in the development of graphic satire, having been first practised by Annibale and Agostini Carracci in Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. Caricature spread to England through copies and developed to be at its most vigorous and original in the works of Hogarth through until the 1770s to 1810s. Annibale Carracci is purported to have argued ‘is not the caricaturist’s task exactly the same as that of the classical artist? Both see the lasting truth beneath the surface of mere outward appearance’. See Weschler, and Godfrey.

62 See for instance, *Eye and Eye*.

63 Feinberg, p. 232.

64 Wolf, p. 18.

65 Wilson, interview with the author, 1 December 2004.


67 Wilson, interview with the author, 1 December 2004.

68 Cleavin, interviewed by de la Berc. However, I do not believe that we should allow this to overshadow the fact that Cleavin has drawn some extraordinary figure studies and portraits of individuals, most notably his series of works of the dancer Jeanette from 1976.
In dealing with the behaviour of men, one approach has seen satire traditionally break its analysis of society down into ‘types’. European printed satire has often included ‘galleries of types’, as evidenced by the work of Hogarth and Daumier. In his print *A Pillar of Male society*, 2003, [figure 32], Cleavin is similarly considering a stereotype of our times through his overly masculinised figures. Cassandra Fusco has noted that ‘much of Cleavin’s imagery draws upon and alters items from Western “civilisation” and iconography, such as grandiose, phallic pillars’, and in this work Cleavin utilises the pillar/phallus association, whilst he further enhances the satirical thrust at the suit-wearing men with the notion of ‘squirreling money’ through the squirrel on the pillar’s capital (also a potential double entendre). The fifteen suited men standing on the top of the capital also make an oblique reference to the ever-present masculinity of New Zealand’s rugby-mad society.

While historically this kind of social satire had a relatively long life, many political prints often dated rapidly. However, satire and caricature have still long been associated with strong opposition to the government. Politics dominated the works of Hogarth, while Godfrey claims that many satirical prints in England in the second half of the eighteenth century were characterised by an aggressive opposition to the government. In France Charles Philipon waged editorial war for thirty years against the French government, chiefly through his political weeklies *La Caricature*, and *Le Charivari*, launched in 1830 and 1832 respectively. Perhaps the most famous and effective single political emblem from these newspapers was Philipon’s woodcut, *The Pears*, 1832, representing Louis-Philippe. Consisting of a pear head in a pear body, the pertinence came from the linguistic hint (in French slang poire means fat-head), while the image was extended from

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70 Godfrey, p. 58.
71 Ibid., p. 40.
72 Shikes, 1969, p. 150.
a symbol of the king himself, to the speculators who profited under his regime. Like Hogarth and Daumier before him, Cleavin has produced works which are a direct response to the Government of the day. One example of Cleavin’s work that is overtly political, is his Political Portrait, 1980, [figure 33]. Cleavin has added red eyes to the flayed and displayed stomach of a dissected rat (probably derived from the works of Georges Cuvier, the source for Anatomie Comparée, 1980), which Cleavin felt bore a certain resemblance to the then Prime Minister Robert Muldoon after a night out. This work follows in the tradition of the French caricaturists who likened Louis-Philippe to a pear, as well as countless other prints that caricature and generally deride the physiognomy of political personalities; although here, of course, the blatant insult contained within the comparison is a long way from Philipon’s and Daumier’s subtle word play. I believe that this work also shares similarities with José Guadalupe Posada’s Calavera Huertista, 1913, which shows President Victoriano Huerta as a revolting spider clutching the bones of his victims. Cleavin greatly admires the works of the Mexican artist Posada (1851-1913) ‘for what he did to depict things for the common people... [they] would have been shocked and jarred by Posada’s little calaveras’. Like many of the artists Cleavin admires, Posada was enormously prolific, producing over 15,000

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73 Weschler, p. 71. As a result of his depiction of Louis-Philippe, Philipon was sent to jail, and Le Chartier was fined 6000 francs.
74 Cassandra Fusco has claimed that ‘like Goya, Rembrandt, Hogarth and Daumier, Cleavin prints against misgovernment’, claiming that The Hungry Sheep Look Up, 1, 2 and 3, draw ‘upon the kudos and social concerns of Milton’s pastoral, Lycidas’. Lines 125-127 of John Milton’s pastoral Lycidas. 1638, read ‘The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed;/ But, swoll’n with the wind and the rank mist they draw./ Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread’. Fusco suggests that Cleavin’s works can be interpreted as reflections of the same world worries troubling John Milton, although she notes that Lycidas ultimately affirms that life, despite misgovernment goes on. In English political cartoons quotes from John Milton’s Paradise Lost were often appended to the etchings to lend them respectability. However, I believe that despite the link with Milton’s work Cleavin was perhaps less concerned with the reference to bad governance, and more interested in the poetic qualities of the phrase, what he describes as the ‘amazing image and euphony’. Fusco, p. 38, and Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 16 August 2004.
75 Barry Cleavin email to the author, 29 June 2004. Of this print, Elva Bett has written that ‘from within the autopsied carcass of a rat with the innards stated in depth, glared two iridescent red spots (and colour is rare in the work) which translated into a pulsating heartbeat at one look but then came two piercing, bloodshot eyes’. See Elva Bett, Libertine reflections avoid wantonness. The Dominion, 5 December 1983, p. 8.
76 Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
popular prints, including his calaveras (literally skeletons and skulls) comprised of skeletal figures who ‘acted out’ his satirical tableaux.\textsuperscript{77}

Another etching by Cleavin with a similar theme to his Political Portrait is the work He Speaks, c. 1970, [figure 34], about which Cape has written it ‘is, in the main, a political joke. The talking head... is a direct copy of a newspaper photograph of the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr Kirk. It isn’t difficult to work out the other associations which were in Cleavin’s mind when the plate was prepared’.\textsuperscript{78} So we see Cleavin condemning politicians, both National and Labour, in a manner reminiscent of the eighteenth century satirists who moved from one political side to the other, showing their willingness to look at each given personality on their own terms. In 1998 Cleavin also made prints which dealt in a more light-hearted manner with contemporary political issues associated with the Clinton Administration, including his ‘two blueprints for the president’; The President in a Condom and Proposed Erection to the Conen.\textsuperscript{79}

In his use of the print to generate political social comment, Cleavin is responding to one of the key ‘themes’ of satirical works. Despite claims by Philippe that ‘satirical iconography is sustained by its topicality’,\textsuperscript{80} there are nonetheless, recurring ‘themes’ or issues which have provided the subject matter for satirical works for centuries. From amongst these enduring concerns I will focus on the ways in which Cleavin has treated three broad ‘themes’ considered by satirists; war and weaponry, the nuclear threat, and environmental or ecological concerns. Of the many themes taken up by satirists, Shikes claims that the boldest and most persistent cry is against the horrors of war.\textsuperscript{81} Certainly

\textsuperscript{77} Shikes, 1969, p. 374. While Posada’s Calaveras appear similar to the Medieval Dance of Death, they were based upon a quite different ethos. In Mexico, death did not inspire fear, but was observed with a resigned curiosity as an inevitable, accepted part of everyday life. Posada’s enormously popular drawings appeared everywhere, expressing dissent on political posters and in newspapers, opposition reviews and calendars. See Philippe, p. 216, and Shikes, 1969, pp. 375-376.

\textsuperscript{78} Cape, p. 46.


\textsuperscript{80} Philippe, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{81} Shikes, 1969, p. xxvi.
within Cleavin’s oeuvre war has provided a sustained source of subject matter, including both responses to specific conflicts as well as comments on arms proliferation in general. One way that artists have chosen to comment on the atrocities of war is through the form of the ‘war cycle’. In his *Los Desastres de la Guerra*, 1810-1820, published 1863, Goya produced a series of 80 works prompted by the horrors he saw in the Peninsular War (1808-12).\textsuperscript{82} Indeed, in the history of the graphic arts the notion of a ‘war cycle’ has had numerous precedents including Jacques Callot’s *The Miseries of War*, 1633, while Georges Rouault’s *Miserere et Guerre*, 1916-1918 and 1922-1927, can be seen as a successor to Callot’s and Goya’s war cycles.\textsuperscript{83} I believe that Cleavin’s series *As the Crow Flew* and *The Umbrella*, belong to this tradition in their similarly sustained consideration of war in our time. These two series arose after Cleavin’s visits to Japan in 1997 and 1998, and represent his response to the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. In his response to this bombing, Cleavin has chosen to focus on the *Karas*, or crows, which are seen as *Hirakusha*, a term used for the survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Cleavin believes that in the skies *Karas* Crow rules, but on the ground people are at the top of the pyramid, and has written, ‘in Hiroshima, *Karas* experienced the intrusion of the *Gaijin* from above its pyramid. *Karas* was a victim. *Karas* was murdered’.\textsuperscript{84} In his works *The Umbrella 1*, [figure 35], and *The Umbrella 2*, both 1998, the stencilled forms of the crows are shown flying upwards, startled by the blast, while his series of prints, *Where The Crow Flew*, 1998, progresses from an embossed umbrella above a crow’s skull in *The Fallout*, to a series of variants on this form in *The Blackness*, and *The Heat*, and finally to the bird skull below a black semi-circle in the fourth print *The Tar*. The range of images in the works is surprisingly limited, with repeats and echoes in the shapes used; a fan, sun, umbrella, and mushroom cloud.\textsuperscript{85} Rodney Wilson has noted that

\textsuperscript{82} *The Disasters of War*, consists of 82 plates; plates 2-47 are of guerrilla warfare, plates 46-64 are of the famine, while the final 18 plates are symbolic fantasies. Goya had been in Madrid at the outbreak of the uprising in 1808, and he also saw the siege of Saragossa and the guerrilla warfare first hand, as well as the famine in Madrid 1811-12.

\textsuperscript{83} Shikes, 1969, p. 295.

\textsuperscript{84} 'The Murder and Resurrection of Crows', in the Christchurch Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.

in these works complexity and simplicity coalesce in the most extraordinary way, and that 'not one single predictable symbol or object is needed'. Cleavin has similarly claimed that 'wherever I send them, whatever country, it is unlikely that their message will be misunderstood. Such is the common language of Crow'. The visual language in these works is strikingly pared back, and as Esther Venning has noted, they use suggestion rather than overt didacticism. In their use of suggestion these works function in a similar way to Gabor Peterdi's prints Massacre of the Innocents, 1952, and The Vision of Fear, 1953. Peterdi claims that The Vision of Fear, was probably the most complex plate he ever made, but his basic idea was to 'create an oppressive, enervating image haunted by the fearful symbols of destruction. I tried to express a composite feeling of flying with deadly birds and of watching them from below', a feeling which he says began in 1945, and has since been added to by the blinding flash of atomic explosions. While Peterdi created an abstracted vision of war, and 'the withering destruction that accompanies man's mounting ability to destroy life', Cleavin shifts his focus from the images of destruction to the innocents that were destroyed, evoking the viewer's sympathy for the crows, but also allowing them to stand as a metaphor for the human suffering. The use of the crow also removed the risk of any overly-theatrical and didactic element that could have arisen from considering the behaviour of humans during the nuclear blast. John Gordon has written that 'Peterdi works from the particular truth to the general', and I believe that in Cleavin's Karas works he is dealing with the specifics of the Hiroshima blast, but is using the suffering in a way which comes to stand for the victims of the horrors of any war.

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89 Gabor Peterdi, Printmaking. Methods Old and New. New York, 1959, p. 212. The work is a combination of etching, engraving, four colour intaglio, and surface colour printed from rubber casts.
Another suite which stemmed from a response to a particular conflict is Cleavin’s *Gulf War Series*, 1991. These prints were completed as a response to media information on the Gulf war, and featured extinct skeletal forms in combination with weaponry. In his masters thesis on images of war in New Zealand art, Kenneth Laraman has interpreted the print *Once upon a Time*, in which a tank leads a dinosaur across the bleak landscape, as both a straightforward reproduction of the newspaper coverage of oil fields burning in Kuwait, but also as a metaphor forewarning us of our frailty, with the inference that the machines of war will also eventually end up as a layer of sedimentary rock. In these prints the skeletal forms become important as part of the process of generating meaning, as the skeleton has of course long been tied in with the *memento mori* tradition, and as such it functions as a reminder of our temporal existence on earth. Within Cleavin’s works which deal with the theme of war the skeletal form has been particularly prevalent.

In his print *Soldier*, 1980, a skeleton is shown within the form of a coloured silhouette in a manner historically used in anatomical illustration to show the relationship of the skeleton to surface anatomy. Here the skeletal form functions to prompt the viewer to look anew at what it is that they think they see when contemplating images of soldiers. It points to the frailty of the human form in the face of war, but it also utilises the skeleton’s traditional association with death to comment on the reality of war.

This use of skeletal forms to comment on death as a result of war was also used in two recent lithographs completed for Papergraphica’s ‘Warshow’, 2003, as a response to the American-led ‘War on Terror’.

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95 In George Grosz’s pen and brush drawing from 1918, *Fit for Active Service*, (the title in German was originally ‘K.V.’ or *Kriegs verwendungsfähig*), a doctor pronounces a decaying skeleton fit for service, in a way which, like Cleavin’s work, emphasises the absurdities of war, although here Grosz’s work also made a specific comment on the military’s practices during World War I. See Shikes, 1969, pp. 286-287.
96 Warshow, held at Papergraphica in April 2003, included works by six New Zealand artists; Barry Cleavin, Nigel Buxton, Ralph Hotere, Marian Maguire, John Pule, and John Reynolds. The flyer claimed
shown within the outline of an inked plastic zip-lock bag, so that each figure is compartmentalised and separated from the other forms, in a sterile treatment of the dead. In *Body Bags*, as in other works, Cleavin has also combined his skeletal forms with quotes derived from Carl von Clausewitz’s treatise *On War*, 1832.\textsuperscript{97} Like the classificatory treatises considered in Chapter One, *On War*, is an exhaustive work which sought to schematise and understand the nature of war. In *Body Bags* Cleavin quotes Clausewitz’s second condition that ‘war does not consist of a single instantaneous blow’, and then renders the reality of war as comprised of many individual deaths. In this print Cleavin parodies a famous classificatory treatise, he makes a satiric comment on the nature of war by showing us the reality of the individual deaths beyond the wider façade, and he highlights the difference between an ostensible and underlying meaning through the way in which Clausewitz’s quote is acknowledged as a universal truth but then shown to be applicable at a very individual level through each skeletal figure.\textsuperscript{98}

While *Body Bags* represents one response to the American led war on terror, Cleavin also responded to the war in Iraq through a number of ink jet prints in 2004. In these works Cleavin included the faces of the political figures behind this conflict including President George W. Bush, and Vice President Dick Cheney, both of whom also appear in distorted form in his series of *Global Conflict* ink jet prints from 2004-2005. In *The Secretary of War or Donald’s Nightmare*, 2004, Cleavin ‘pokes fun at the U.S. Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, and his blitzkrieg of the so-called axis of evil’,\textsuperscript{99} while in *The Dream* the artists were aiming to ‘discuss through their art their response to the war in Iraq’. Marian Maguire said ‘within a democracy we have a belief that individual opinion matters and that it is our civic duty to develop opinion on a whole range of issues’. See also, Anna Dunbar, *Telling war stories*. *The Press*, 16 April 2003, p. C1.

\textsuperscript{97} Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (transl. and eds.), London, 1993, the treatise was originally published in German in 1832.

\textsuperscript{98} Cleavin has also drawn from Clausewitz in his inkjet print series *Thirteen Lethal Sentences + One*, 2000, where in the twelfth print he has provided a visual equivalent of von Clausewitz’s dictum ‘If our opponent is to be made to comply with our will we must place him in a situation which is more oppressive to him that the sacrifice which we demand’, by showing a pair of disembodied feet amongst a variety of tools, which through the density of their placement conveys the notion of Clausewitz’s oppressive situation.

of *Mickey Produces Monsters*, 2003, he looks at the association between American capitalism, and the motivations for that country's intervention in Iraq. In producing these works Cleavin is assuming that the viewer will have the requisite knowledge, presumably courtesy of extensive media coverage, to recognise these political figures, even in their distorted form, and that the viewer will bring to the works an understanding or at least a willingness to accept the possibility that this is a war which is about more than it is openly claimed to be.\(^{100}\)

Another recurring theme in Cleavin's prints which extends his consideration of war is the idea of weaponry and arms proliferation. Cleavin's suite *Offensive Weapons*, 1976, represents a key example of his engagement with contemporary issues in his satirical works. In this series Cleavin uses anatomically influenced stylistic elements with clear-wiped plates displaying the image like a kind of scientific specimen. The meticulously drawn skeletons are carefully and seamlessly linked to the offensive weapons of the title, as with the fusion of bone and Navy Colt pistol in *Firearm*, [figure 37], and *Handgun*.\(^{101}\) The message in these works is clear, as was identified by Alexa Johnston when they were exhibited in 'Anxious Images'; 'the image is a pun on the title of the work; this one [*Firearm*] comments on the truism that it is people who kill people, guns cannot do it on their own. There is an additional implication that if we own guns they can become part of us'.\(^{102}\) Just as parody can make us realise that our habitual ways of seeing are not absolute, so satire, as in this series, shocks the viewer to new ways of seeing, or to a recognition of the truth which they habitually ignore. Whilst the word and image play is important to the creation of meaning in this series, these works also utilise a satirical device known as the *reductio ad absurdum*, in which the satirist may magnify one fault of

\(^{100}\) Whilst also fitting into the context of the tradition of prints which condemn politicians, these works also function in a similar way to works by Ralph Hotere. In May 1973 Hotere staged an exhibition at Barry Lett Gallery which centred on the Watergate scandal. In one series Hotere used a Xerox machine to produce portraits of President Richard Nixon in which he exaggerated his facial features so that the contortions were calculated to lead the spectator to a reassessment of Nixon. See Smart, pp. 133-4.

\(^{101}\) *Ewe and Eye*, p. 23.

\(^{102}\) *Anxious Images*. Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, 1984, p. 16.
a character to the exclusion of all others, or may carry to a logical and ridiculous conclusion a popularly accepted concept. By taking the idea that we are increasingly using guns, and then exaggerating it to the point where guns are literally part of ourselves, Cleavin is using this traditional satirical device, which in combination with the word play, and the choice of anatomically influenced careful observation, generates a particularly successful series.

If *Offensive Weapons* utilised an element of shock value, then Cleavin’s later series, *Childsplay*, 1984, represents a particularly shocking set of works. In *Childsplay 5* Cleavin depicts a submachine gun with children in the magazine, while in *Childsplay 2*, [figure 38], a Stuka divebomber drops babies instead of bombs. Of these works Brett Riley has written that ‘the barbarity of the image is the point: bombs and rockets kill people. By eliminating the intermediary device, the association of the aircraft and its consequence (dead people) is brought home graphically’. Cleavin himself has explained this series by saying ‘if you were going to bomb a city, you might as well throw babies out of aircraft, it’s a quicker way to the end result’. So Cleavin shocks his viewers into rethinking their concept of war by exaggerating the notion of expediency. The imagery is presented without softening details, while the weaponry is described with a scientific accuracy which generates a reasoned and logical tone which belies the shocking truth of their content. However, in presenting his idea of a more expedient way to eliminate humanity in such detailed terms, Cleavin’s suggestion is really a sustained betrayal which has its precedent in the written satire of Jonathan Swift. In his *Modest Proposal*, 1729, Swift utilises the traditional satirical device of blame by

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103 Feinberg, p. 112. An historic printed example of this device occurs in an eighteenth century engraving *Robespierre guillotining the Executioner*, 1794, where many guillotines are shown each reserved for a category of victim, with the final pyramid labelled ‘Here lies all France’.
praise (also known as the ironic defence) by making outrageously inhuman proposals with a great show of ordinary gentlemanly good sense and an affected certainty that we will find them acceptable. In his ‘proposal’ Swift suggests that the children of the Irish poor could be sold back to the English as a delicacy, writing "I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled". Swift had lived in Ireland and seen the worsening conditions from 1714-1720, and so wrote his proposal as a means of urging reform of the English system of dealing with the Irish poor. Like Cleavin’s scientific and detached drawing style, Swift used many calculations to add an air of veracity to his proposal, calculating the exact costs, and listing the benefits in a very orderly manner. Both Cleavin’s Childsplay series and Swift’s ‘proposal’ represent unequivocal indictments, and like Swift’s horrific suggestions, Cleavin’s work fits with his claim that he ‘would rather, than make pretty printed images... would like to be in people’s faces with them’. This of course is not a universally popular stance, and just as Swift was said to be ‘admired but never loved’, Cleavin’s works too have been criticised, David Eggleton writing in 1983 that looking at a lot of the works is ‘like being slapped in the face with a wet fish. Stinging and vicious’. The Childsplay prints represented just one series of a larger body of work known as the Bitter Suites, in which Cleavin explored notions associated with the proliferation of weaponry. In another series from the Bitter Suites, the Birds of a Feather, 1984, Cleavin

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107 A. E. Dyson, *The Crazy Fabric. Essays in Irony*. London, 1965, pp. 3-4. Swift’s full title for this work was a *Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents or Country, and for making them Beneficial to the Publick*.
111 Swift, p. xix.
112 David Eggleton, unsourced newspaper article, Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.
has explored these concerns further. In *Anatomy of A(NZUS) Predator*, Cleavin has shown the skeleton of a bird within the outline of a fighter plane, so that ‘human military technology is depicted as the ultimate predator’. In both this work, and the other prints from the *Bitter Suites*, the depiction of the weaponry is important, as the carefully detailed drawing provides a parallel to the sophistication of the weaponry, and also highlights just what importance is placed on such weapons. These works contrast stencilled aircraft and missiles from injection-moulded plastic kit set toys with the precision of the skeletal animals. In his use of plastic kit set toys, Cleavin was also exploring a theme key to his work; the notion of ‘war toys’. Satirical prints have long used the comparison between weaponry and children’s toys; the end of the eighteenth century saw satiric prints of generals with child’s toys as weapons, while the artist Louis Marcoussis, in his work *Le Palais de la Paix*, 1908, depicted a young girl labelled ‘Europe’ building a ‘Peace Palace’ out of cards; her toys are shells, her models for construction are weapons. Like Cleavin’s *Bitter Suites*, Marcoussis’s work contrasted the inexperience of youth with the nature of war. However, part of Cleavin’s message was also that these weapons can be attractive in themselves; as Brett Riley noted ‘the attraction of the hardware is part of the problem his prints tangle with’. In his concern with the violent nature of children’s toys, Cleavin has said that it is ‘all about people not registering between fact and fantasy... You go into Wizards and you can do anything with no consequences’. By using the direct impression of toys which are make-believe, and pairing it with skeletons as symbols of death, Cleavin calls on his viewers to make the connection between fantasy and fact. This concern with the negative effects

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114 Philippe, p. 130.
115 Shikes and Heller, pp. 61-62. Louis Markous was originally from Warsaw, but worked in Paris where, at Apollinaire’s suggestion he changed his name to Marcoussis when he started a career as a Cubist. His work, *Le Palais de la Paix*, was reproduced in *Le Rire*, October 31 1908.
116 Riley, p. 10. It is interesting to note that in his print *Allegation of Aggression*, 1988, Cleavin felt that he had moved too close to an obsession with ‘boys’ toys’ in his depiction of the tank, and so in 2002 he reworked this plate in colour, using the outline toy forms of the *Adversities* series, where the hazy outlines lessen their aesthetic attractiveness.
117 ‘Wizards’ was a video game arcade on Gloucester Street in Christchurch.
118 Riley, 23 October 1985, p. 10.
of toy weaponry has also been considered by the New Zealand painter Michael Smither in his series *Paintings for the Revolution*, 1975-1979. In his paintings *Boys Fighting over Pink Plastic Gun*, 1978, and *Gifts*, 1978, Smither has suggested the link between toy weaponry and destructive behaviour in our society, not the least of which is represented through the image of Prime Minister Robert Muldoon on the television screen. Smither intended these paintings to be read as allegories of human corruption and aggression, however, while he endowed his works with a local specificity, which in turn implied that something might be done to overcome the problem, Cleavin’s prints on the same subject recognise the universal nature of the issue, and present the visual equivalent in such terms.

In 1982 Jonathan Smart claimed that the number of artists in New Zealand making art about social and political issues was increasing. From this range of socially committed art, Laraman believes that it was the nuclear threat which galvanised the New Zealand artistic community, as ‘the body of national opinion was turning against, not only nuclear weapons, but also the dangers of accidents from ships with nuclear reactors’. The New Zealand Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had been formed in 1960, and there was a growing awareness of the destructive violence of the atomic bomb, with Pat Hanly, Colin McCahon and Ralph Hotere all producing series of paintings relating to the Cold War. In 1963 France had begun nuclear testing on Mururoa Atoll, refusing to sign a partial

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120 Smither’s works provide problematic examples in terms of his belief in the ability of the artist or their work to effect change. In 1977 Smither is quoted as saying ‘as far as I’m concerned the artist’s place is to take part in society’, however, in 1982 Smart quotes Smither saying that artists have been protesting for a long time and nothing has happened, so he is now trying more positive action to raise people’s consciousness, as he feels that painting is not an efficient medium to do this. Damian Skinner has interpreted Smither’s realisation that he was unable to achieve his purpose as representing the dissolution of the Modernist basis of Nationalism. See Skinner, *The Environment and the Crisis of the Nationalist Discourse*, *Art New Zealand*, no. 76, 1995, pp. 66-69 and 91. See also Smart, pp. 122-123, and Patricia Saar & Tom Turner, *Artists and the Environment*. *Art New Zealand*, no. 7, August/September/October 1977, pp. 38-45.
121 See Smart, pp. 13-53 and p. 84.
122 Laraman, p. 94.
123 Martin, p. 105.
Test-Ban Treaty with the Soviet Union and the United States despite New Zealand protests.\textsuperscript{124} Many New Zealand artists responded to the nuclear testing, including Tony Fomison and Hanly, while two works by Cleavin and Stanley Palmer were distributed around Paris in poster form by supporters of the Nuclear-free Pacific cause.\textsuperscript{125} Cleavin’s work was entitled \textit{A Nightmare Mururoa 1972?}, 1972, [figure 39], and showed a mutated three-legged figure, wearing a ridiculous ‘umbrella’ sunhat. She holds an enormous key, the top end of which evokes a trefoil, while at her left is a symbolic Pandora’s box, hinting at the potentially disastrous consequences of the nuclear testing.\textsuperscript{126} Cleavin has also used the title of this work to add to the satirical thrust; in many versions the title is given in French as \textit{Un Cauchemar Mururoa}, while the date followed by a question mark was included, Cleavin says because ‘I was sure the French would repeat the nuclear testing in succeeding years – and I was right’.\textsuperscript{127}

In 1972 the newly elected Labour government took France to the International Court of Justice to try to stop nuclear testing in the French Pacific territories, and in 1973 France announced that the 1974 tests would be the last above ground.\textsuperscript{128} After the French ceased testing on Mururoa, much of the concern moved to the issue of a nuclear free zone in New Zealand waters. In 1975 the new National Government led by Muldoon invited nuclear warships into New Zealand ports, with the U.S.S. Long Beach and the U.S.S. Truxton visiting, along with the submarine U.S.S. Pintado in 1978. In July 1984 Labour won Muldoon’s snap election and declared a strict nuclear-free policy, although it was not until 4 June 1987 that Parliament passed the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament and Arms Control Act, the first of its kind in the world.\textsuperscript{129} It was around this time that Cleavin produced many of his works from \textit{The Adversities} (part of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} Laraman, p. 101.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Pat Unger, Barry Cleavin. \textit{Art New Zealand}, no. 64, Autumn 1992, p. 51.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Interview with the author, 17 February 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Laraman, p. 74.
\item \textsuperscript{128} Ibid., p. 103.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Laraman, pp. 109-111.
\end{itemize}
Bitter Suites) which consider the nuclear theme. In U.S.S. Nimitz and perca Fluviatilis, 1984, [figure 40], Cleavin has depicted a perch skeleton along with the blurred outline of the nuclear powered aircraft carrier U.S.S. Nimitz, again using the skeletal form’s capacity to signify death to comment on the potential result of nuclear powered ships in New Zealand waters.\textsuperscript{130}

Another theme which has provided a focus for social commentary in the visual arts, especially in New Zealand, has been that which deals with environmental or ecological concerns.\textsuperscript{131} A key aspect of this concern has been a focus on the potential extinction of various species, which can be seen in the work of both Don Binney and Denise Copland. In his work, Binney has repeatedly focused on birds, although Richard Wolfe has claimed that ‘while birds have been his obvious subjects, Binney is more concerned for their natural habitat, the landscape... He is mindful of the threatened species of the world, pointing out that all species are threatened’.\textsuperscript{132} Like Binney, Copland considers the extinction of bird species in combination with the degradation of the landscape; her Implantations exhibition included four suites which expressed her concern about the survival of New Zealand flora and fauna. Three of these four suites used the tree as a way of exploring affinities between the human and natural worlds, while Pat Unger claims that the Indigenous suite, 1992, explored the tree’s majestic qualities, ‘and an impending mortality through flaying bark and pressing undergrowth’.\textsuperscript{133} In the fourth Implantations suite, Avifauna, 1991, Copland’s mission ‘was to highlight the near-death

\textsuperscript{130} While perca fluviatilis is predominantly a fresh water fish, it may have also been chosen for its status as an ‘invasive species’.


\textsuperscript{132} Wolfe, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{133} Pat Unger, Exhibitions, Christchurch. Art New Zealand, no. 63, Winter 1992, p. 42. The trees in the Indigenous suite were drawn from pockets of bush at Trotters Gorge and Herbert Forrest near Hampden in Otago, where Copland shared a bach with Cleavin.
of the kakapo and the loss of native forest due to colonisation, exploitation and the introduction of predators'. In Copland's *Avifauna III*, 1991, 'the skulls of the bird's dead ancestors reside near the creature, radiating a deathly glow, linking the bird with its dead ancestors and signifying its doubtful future due to predators and loss of habitat'. In her inclusion of the kakapo skulls, Copland's works share similarities with Cleavin's prints which fall under the broad heading of the *Elements of Doubt*. In both Copland's and Cleavin's works the skeletal bird forms drawn from New Zealand museum collections link their works to notions of death associated with the *memento mori* tradition, but they also play another important role in removing any facile charm which the animals might have for the viewer. However, despite the similar appearance of Cleavin's and Copland's works, Cleavin's focus is more directed at frailty in general:

> I would be pushing a false bandwagon if I pushed an ecology thrust. Personally I'd love species such as the kiwi and kaka to survive, but personally I don't think I can stop [what is happening to endanger them]. This show is more about frailty in general. If we like to think about it, we're all on the way out.

In this sense, Cleavin's concern is closer to Binney's observation that all species are threatened, than Copland's message that living in harmony with nature holds out the possibility for ecological and spiritual integration.

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134 Unger, 1992, p. 42.
136 Copland's work has been criticised for looking like Cleavin's, which she has found frustrating, claiming that it has not been a deliberate action. However, Copland's *Avifauna* series predates Cleavin's *Elements of Doubt* works, and as I will show, although their works may share stylistic similarities they are motivated by different concerns.
137 Julie King has written that in these works 'Copland negotiated her relationship with past artistic traditions - carefully avoiding cliches left over from landscape painting - as well as referencing and relocating historical conventions', where her sharp detailed line is reminiscent of the nineteenth century view books of wonders of the colonised landscape set out for Victorian viewers. See Julie King, *Implantations. An Installation by Denise Copland*. *Art New Zealand*, no. 68, Spring 1993, p.54.
138 I believe that in the inclusion of animals in socially committed art there is the possibility of the animals appearing as 'cute', a danger which Grandville overcame through his preference for the world of insects and reptiles, and which Binney overcomes through his pared down abstracted bird forms.
140 King, p. 54.
One specific work from the *Elements of Doubt* that demonstrates this concern with the transience of species is *The Kakapo and Caesar*, 1997, [figure 41]. While in Copland’s works, the fact that it is the kakapo is of great importance, Cleavin claims that his work could represent any bird.\(^{141}\) The subject for *The Kakapo and Caesar* was discovered when Cleavin was drawing from works in the collection of the Auckland Museum. He discovered that not only did the Museum have skeletons of many native birds, it also had the skull of the hunting dog belonging to the Austrian museum worker and writer Andreas Reischek. As Cassandra Fusco has explained in her article ‘Grammar of Caution’, in the 1880s Reischek and his dog Caesar were responsible for the collection of over 14,000 specimens for the Canterbury and Auckland Museums and for museums throughout Europe.\(^{142}\) Cleavin was struck by the fact that the Museum held the bones of both Caesar and birds that he may well have caught; ‘and so therefore I affected a meeting… and it was a kind of metaphysical meeting of some sort going on when you start doing that sort of thing, joining people in death, and it could well be that Caesar did catch that bird’.\(^{143}\) So in this print the skeleton is documented with the care and attention devoted to a scientific subject, but also, like his use of Stubbs or Vesalius, another layer of meaning results from the combination of two disparate elements.\(^{144}\)

However, if the species depicted in *The Elements of Doubt*, 1995, are in danger of extinction, then Cleavin has also recognised that the museum skeletons themselves were endangered. The prints from these series were mostly drawn directly from skeletons in

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\(^{142}\) Fusco, Grammar of Caution, p. 38. See also, Andreas Reischek, *Yesterdays in Maoriland. New Zealand in the ‘Eighties*. Transl. and ed. by H. E. L. Friday, London and Toronto, 1930. In his book Reischek recounts how he trained his dog Caesar, who ‘developed qualities quite out of the ordinary, so that he became the companion of all my expeditions, faithful and clever as any human being. Caesar served me for eleven years, and what a wonder of sagacity, faithfulness, and self-sacrifice he was, passes the measure of all belief’. Amongst many accounts of Caesar’s ability, Reischek tells of a Maori chief exclaiming ‘Nahore te kuri, nga tangata, nga riri te kuri!’, ‘you are no dog, but the spirit of a man in the skin of a dog!’. See Reischek, pp. 44, 155 and 158.

\(^{143}\) Cleavin, interview with the author, 2003.

\(^{144}\) More recently Cleavin has returned to the idea of metaphysical meetings in a series of lithographs from 2004, which I shall discuss in Chapter Three; *And They’re off now, Neck and Neck and Stride for Stride, And the winner is*...
the collections of the Canterbury, Otago and Auckland museums. In drawing these actual skeletons, Cleavin was taking on some of the classificatory role traditionally associated with scientific drawing which he has so often parodied. This tradition is evoked through a grid system behind many of the works, his inclusion of museological tags on the skeletons, and the arch-headed shaped plates that Wilson believes are suggestive of bell jars. This documentary role became important as the skeletons in the museum collection were themselves in danger of extinction. Cleavin describes the Patagonian Emperor Penguin drawn in the Otago Museum, and shown in *With a Shadow of Doubt* 4, 1995, as ‘sort of staggering along and falling to bits’. The use of shadows also asserts a sense of space, and these works achieve a certain realism not found in Cleavin’s previous borrowings of skeletal forms. In this realism these works share a visual similarity with the anatomical illustrations by Stubbs. Many art historians have praised the way in which Stubbs managed to reanimate his skeletal forms by lifting them from their reality as suspended corpses, and yet always doing so without giving them the false expression of Vesalius’s weeping or contemplative figures. Both Stubbs’s and Cleavin’s prints share a lively poise and a sense of re-animation, as in *Everything has its price* #2, 1995, where the skeleton of a rhesus monkey (drawn from the collection of the Auckland Museum) engages the viewer as it cocks its head and stares out from its crouched pose. The notion of our fragile existence is also conveyed through the use of shadows, particularly in the series of avian works. Cleavin has written that he has presented these works as shadows of their present selves, ‘structural memories accompanied by shadow ghosts – reminders of our personal, temporary, endangered position on Earth.’

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146 Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003. This is clearly an issue which Cleavin is concerned about, as in 1993 *The Press* reported that Cleavin had donated $350 towards the start of a ‘save the whale’ fund for the Canterbury Museum blue whale skeleton, quoting him as saying that he felt responsible for keeping such ancestral treasures intact for other generations. Unsourced article from *The Press*, The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa; artist file, Barry Cleavin.
for the conceptual notion of our brief existence. The method of generating the work’s meaning then, is similar to some of Cleavin’s earlier etchings from the suite *Trying to get everything into its proper perspective*, 1993, which use vanishing points as a visual equivalent for the idea of the potential extinction of the kiwi and the South Island Saddleback.\(^{149}\)

If Cleavin’s works which consider the environmental theme share a common thread, it is their call to the viewer to act in a responsible manner. This call to responsibility was noted by American reviewer Jamie Gorbet, who wrote that Cleavin ‘shows the similarities between the impact of human immigration upon New Zealand’s precious ecosystems and animal populations and the impact of bad leadership upon human relationships’.\(^{150}\) It is this concern with the impact of irresponsible leadership on the environment which again found expression in Cleavin’s works in the late 1990s which comment on the potential side effects of genetic modification.\(^{151}\) Cleavin has indicated his position in the GE debate saying that ‘until things are properly resolved I see immense danger in anything that hasn’t been contemplated, both usefully and thoughtfully before it is let loose on us.’\(^{152}\) Of Cleavin’s series of *Equine Nightmares*, 1999, David Eggleton writes that he confronts ‘the post-human future conjured up by unscrupulous biotech and pharmaceutical corporations with their genetically engineered impact on New Zealand farm livestock’.\(^{153}\) In his four sequential prints from this suite Cleavin has utilised art historical traditions in order to generate his satirical commentary.

*I beheld a pale horse...* [figure 42], takes as the models for the horse and rider a

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\(^{151}\) In his installation for the series ‘Contemporary New Zealand Prints’ at the Wellington City Art Gallery in 1989, Cleavin included 17 aquatints printed on Gladfoil aluminium wrap, dealing with his concerns regarding environmental pollution. These prints read as a list of the many toxins we encounter in our lives today. The choice of aluminium foil was particularly relevant in the 1980s, as a there had been various expressions of protest in New Zealand art after a consortium including multi-national Alusuisse and Fletcher Challenge had announced their intention to build an aluminium smelter at Aromona at the head of the Otago harbour. See Jill McIntosh (ed.), *Contemporary New Zealand Prints*. Wellington, 1989, p. 14.

\(^{152}\) The Artwork Revealed Vol. I.

combination of Verrocchio's *Bronze of Colleoni*, c. 1480s, and Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Knight, Death and the Devil*, 1513. Other works from this series reference Dürer's *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, c. 1497-1498, and thus, Cleavin claims, fuse theology with ideas of pestilence and plague 'and in a way become one of the most potent symbols of something advancing that is inexorable, something that is not going to be easily stopped'. 154 So again, Cleavin has taken an image that functioned symbolically in European art history and has used this 'language' as the means to convey his ideas. In these works the stencilled beakers stand in for the notion of alchemist's manipulations of the nature of life, while the silhouetted ass pursuing the suspended carrot stands as a symbol of an inability to see 'the wider picture'. 155

As well as this satirical use of the donkey to stand in for human folly, in these works the use of colour is important in conveying Cleavin's message. Cleavin has explained that for him works in colour are happier events which let him off the hook, but 'then I go back on to the hook, showing the people of the world being cruel to the world. Or revealing to the world where it has gone wrong through my eyes'. 156 Whilst this claim is true of many of Cleavin's series, for example his *Gander Issues*, 1996, where the lightly aquatinted background fits the bright colours and gently mocking tone, in the *Equine Nightmares*, the bright colours do not indicate that this is a less socially committed series, but rather colour has become part of the work's meaning. In these prints Cleavin is following Peterdi's dictum that colour needs to be an integrated part of the graphic expression, 157 so that the gaudy, acid bright colours reflect the false and genetically enhanced version of reality which prompted Cleavin's concern. 158 Genetic modification is also given a visual

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154 The Artwork Revealed Vol. I.
155 This was a symbol that reappeared in Cleavin's 53 page ink jet folio, *The Journey*, 2001, which also expressed his concerns about the effects of environmental toxins on various species.
157 Peterdi, p. 171.
158 In one instance, Cleavin chanced upon the potential for colour to add to the meaning of the work. In his print *Yours – Until the Cows Come Home*, 2001, Cleavin has shown a stencilled herd of cows, which had emerged prior to the widespread outbreak of mad cow disease in England, but which took on this character through the addition of the garish red colour.
parallel in Cleavin’s ink jet prints. In *The Effects of Globalisation on the Kiwi*, 2001, Cleavin shows how men and machines have destroyed nature, while Bridie Lonie has written that ‘digital modification stands in for genetic, and so the animals are lengthened, spiralled or moved across the picture plane as if a magnetic force – an exterior one – operated’. 159

Finally in this chapter I wish to briefly consider Cleavin’s purpose in generating his satirical works. For Linda Hutcheon satire is ameliorative in its aim to hold up to ridicule the vices and follies of mankind with an eye to their correction.160 A. E. Dyson similarly claims that satire measures human conduct not against a norm but against an ideal, and that its intention is reformative.161 Yet, if satire posits an ideal, or at least a sense of prioritised beliefs, then it is also necessarily assuming shared social norms, or a cultural homogeneity which provides the framework for these beliefs. Whilst Cleavin has claimed ‘mostly I reduce the world to absurdity, in that form it is manageable’, I believe that his works are not absurdist reductions (which would not posit any shared beliefs), but rather they approach the absurd in terms of satire’s exaggeration, but do so without ever entirely loosing hope of a better alternative. However, whilst I believe that Cleavin’s works appear to adhere to a notion of a ‘better’ option, they do not do so in a manner which is reductive, as Cleavin also recognises that the reality is usually more complex than a ‘black and white’ framework would suggest. Cleavin shares Goya’s realisation that the simplistic formula of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ is often inapplicable to the complex reality of a given situation, and while he ridicules absurd behaviour, he also recognises that it is basic to human nature.162

161 Dyson, p. 2.
162 Wolf, p. 3.
However, this recognition of universal fallibility is combined with Cleavin's use of his works as a kind of cathartic expression; quoting Franz Kafka, Cleavin claims 'things being as they are one must take one's revenge somehow'.\textsuperscript{163} This catharsis though is a multi-directed process. Cleavin has said that 'I give the world back its noise and sadness, and hope that it will take notice of its own behaviour by what I show it'.\textsuperscript{164} This indicates an element of 'getting back' at a society which shocks and provokes him; as Hamish Keith has written 'Cleavin is using the print as a weapon to bludgeon the world'.\textsuperscript{165} Also though, there is another sense in which Cleavin's works provide an outlet for him, showing 'how, on a day-to-day basis, we can live, with a view to tomorrow'.\textsuperscript{166} The view of the satirical print's function as an outlet for the sensitive artist is not peculiar to Cleavin, as many writers have suggested that \textit{Los Caprichos} acted as a purgative, freeing Goya from his personal depression.\textsuperscript{167} This cathartic response is tied in with satire's use of humour as a kind of defence mechanism. Byron expressed this as 'And if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'Tis that I may not weep' while Cleavin has called it an 'attempt to be good humoured about a world that is often pretentious, untenable and uncomfortable'.\textsuperscript{168} In using humour with a basically serious purpose Cleavin is trying to show something which can not be seen in other ways. By revealing the truth beneath the superficial layers of society and conditioning, Cleavin provides his viewers with 'cautionary tales' in the hope 'they can take some sort of notice and change their behaviour'.\textsuperscript{169} By 'dragging his viewers in to alternative worlds', Cleavin's works function more as 'don't do's rather than do's',\textsuperscript{170} providing new perspectives without necessarily offering an alternative to

\textsuperscript{163} Hidden Agendas.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Ewe and Eye}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{165} Keith, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{166} Fusco, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{167} Shikes, 1969, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{169} Adrienne Rewi, 9 August 1991, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{170} Sheenagh Glessson, Controversial Cleavin work put back. \textit{New Zealand Art News}, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1984, p. 7.
the problems they criticise. This hope to re-evaluate and reform societal evils is very much a part of the history of printmaking in the West, as Cleavin recognised in 1994 when he said ‘the etchings I hope ultimately insist upon their unique position historically of acerbically pointing out society’s foibles’. It is this social criticism and the call for the viewer to look anew, that in combination with the traditions of satire is so important to understanding how Cleavin generates meaning in his prints.

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172 Arthur, p. 15.
CHAPTER 3: Irony

Irony, like satire’s call to the viewer to look anew, and like parody’s reflexive qualities that question our basis for seeing, also involves an intention to disrupt complacencies. In employing irony Barry Cleavin is prompting his viewers to reconsider the meanings that are assigned to both words and images, pointing out that they are less fixed than we may wish to believe. As in Chapters One and Two, many of the sources I have based this chapter on are also derived from literary theory, again owing to the scarcity of appropriate writings related to art, but also owing to the emphasis that will be placed on the particularly ‘literary’ side to Cleavin’s work. Beginning with an analysis of the ways in which Cleavin employs simple irony, I will then consider the importance of visual and verbal relationships in Cleavin’s work. This will include his use of titles and word play, as well as analysing the way in which Cleavin’s works often utilise irony heuristically to prompt the viewer to reflect upon and question the wider use of words and images. In Cleavin’s use of irony I shall also examine the relationship between viewer and artist, including the active role required of Cleavin’s viewers. In the second half of this chapter I will focus on examples in which Cleavin presents irony in his work to comment upon the world, not like satire’s call for reform, but rather to point to the incongruities evident in the human condition by considering themes which fit under the heading of general irony, including the ironies of inevitable ignorance, and the vanity of human wishes.

Like parody, irony has a long history, with its etymology traceable back to the Greek words eironeia and eiron. The term eiron first appeared in the work of Aristophanes, who used it to describe one versed in every kind of unscrupulous trickery, although the first significant instances of the word eironeia occur in the dialogues of Plato with reference to Socrates.¹ In

Plato’s writing *eironelia* no longer denoted straightforward lying, but referred to an intended simulation which the audience or reader was meant to recognise, and so from its beginning irony was associated with concealment.\(^2\) Despite this early meaning, prior to the nineteenth century irony was still principally a recognised but minor part of speech, defined by Dr Johnson in 1775 as that of ‘a mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words’.\(^3\) It was not until the early nineteenth century that the term widened its application through the works of the German Romantics, who claimed irony as a ‘recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality’,\(^4\) while through the writing of Connop Thirlwall in 1833 it came also to include instances of what might now be called general irony.

From this historically varied range of meanings, it becomes clear that irony does not refer to only one thing, and in the works of Barry Cleavin we can see that it too functions in a number of ways. As in Chapters One and Two it is not my intention to provide a strict definition of irony, indeed the irony theorist D. C. Muecke suggests that ‘the forms and functions of irony are so diverse as to seem scarcely amenable to a single definition’.\(^5\) Rather I will consider elements of the way in which irony functions to provide a starting point for my consideration of the importance of the verbal and visual relationships in Cleavin’s work, and to provide an entry to some of the over-riding concerns in Cleavin’s prints. In her article on the identification of irony, Eleanor Hutchens begins by noting the three principle definitions included in the Oxford English Dictionary. The first of these defines it as a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of that

\(^2\) Claire Colebrook, *Irony*. London and New York, 2004, pp. 2-6. In the comedies of Aristophanes the figure of the *eiron* is understood through his relation to the figure of the *alazon*, where the *alazon* professes to be something more, the *eiron* something less than he really is. In these plays the sense of irony derives from the viewer’s knowledge that the eiron will be stripped of his pretence even though he continues to move towards this fate with boundless self-assurance. See Thomson, pp. 7-18.

\(^3\) D. C. Muecke, *Irony*. Fakenham, 1970, pp. 15-16. While this form of irony was virtually absent from Medieval and Renaissance works on irony and rhetoric, during the Renaissance the term again extended from a figure of speech to a figure that could describe an entire personality. See Colebrook, pp. 7-8.


expressed by the words used; the second refers more broadly to a condition of affairs or events, where there is a contradictory outcome as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things; while the third definition relates back to irony’s classical origins and refers in an etymological sense to dissimulation and pretence, especially as in the manner of Socrates as a means of confronting an adversary. It is irony where the intended meaning is the opposite of that expressed which is probably the most commonly understood of these three and on which I intend to focus first. Taken at its most basic level, this kind of irony is ‘the art of saying something without really saying it’. This means that the real or intended meaning presented or evoked is intentionally other than, and incompatible with, the ostensible or pretended meaning. Irony, in this form often functions as one device of many employed by the satirist, as in the satiric/ironic device known as ‘blame by praise’ or the ironical defence. In Chapter Two I considered how Cleavin’s series Childsplay, 1984, functioned in a similar manner to Jonathan Swift’s Modest Proposal, 1729, where in ostensibly claiming to present the expediency of dropping babies out of planes, Cleavin was actually presenting an underlying meaning regarding the role of war in bringing about death. However, the meaning of Cleavin’s Childsplay works does not lie simply in a straightforward reversal of his proposition, but rather, as both Katharina Barbe and A. E. Dyson note, opposition is not a factor in all instances of irony, so that the ironist’s point may instead ‘exist somewhere between the literal meaning and its logical opposite, in a no-mans land where we feel our way delicately and sensitively. In Cleavin’s prints this notion of an ostensible and underlying meaning is often conveyed through the relationship between title and image. Like Cleavin’s use of satire and parody, his use of ironic titles functions to generate meaning in a way which has links with art historical

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6 Muecke, 1980, p. 5.
8 While identified as the favorite weapon of Jonathan Swift, Thomson notes that the ironical defense is part of a much older tradition that dates back Lucian.
traditions. Reva Wolf has noted how the notion of a text that parallels the image reflects an association between satirical imagery and literature that had been established by William Hogarth, and which Goya adapted to suit his own ends.\textsuperscript{11} Cleavin has shown his awareness of this tradition in his article ‘Words and Images’ written for \textit{Takahe}, in which he notes that it was at the point of ‘graphic development’ of Goya, Blake and Piranesi, ‘that the enigmatic title appeared as a lateral unification between the verbal and the visual – at times apparently abandoning the images that the titles purported to represent’.\textsuperscript{12} It is by ‘abandoning the image’ that the title and image can function as an ironic reversal. In several works from Francisco de Goya’s \textit{Los Caprichos}, published 1799, the ostensible meaning is given in the title, but this is then contrasted with the image contained within the plate. In \textit{Capricho 29}, \textit{Eso si que es leer (This is certainly being able to read)}, the title contrasts with the image of a seated man who acts as if he is reading a newspaper even though his eyes are taped shut.\textsuperscript{13} This use of ironic titles which are contrasted with an alternative truth presented in the image was also a key element of graphic commentary in nineteenth century France, as evidenced by Honoré Daumier’s lithograph \textit{Louis Philippe rides among his eager subjects}, 1834, where the title is contrasted with the corpses scattered across the scene.\textsuperscript{14} This same ironic interplay between title and image can be seen in a print from Cleavin’s \textit{Cameo} series, \textit{Straight from the heart – Cameo}, 1980. In this work Cleavin has employed the exposed ribcage seen in the other prints in this series to provide a kind of visual play on the notion of a bird cage. In Cleavin’s skeletal ribcage, he depicts a bird, in this case a budgerigar, chosen, Cleavin says, because ‘they talk without understanding’.\textsuperscript{15} However, the title of this image \textit{Straight from the heart}, prompts the viewer to recall the meaning of the phrase as denoting ‘intensity of

\begin{itemize}
\item Barry Cleavin, \textit{Words and Images}. \textit{Takahe}, no. 27, Winter 1996, p. 54.
\item Wolf, p. 41.
\item Ralph E. Shikes, \textit{The Indignant Eye. The Artist as Social Critic in Prints and Drawings from the Fifteenth Century to Picasso}. Boston, 1969, p. 167. This ironic use of title and image can also be seen in the work of another New Zealand printmaker, Robin White. Her woodcut \textit{The food is very delicious}, 1985, is built around an ‘Ox and Palm’ label, and so ‘it is a biting commentary on the effect of western culture on Pacific Island economies’. See Jill McIntosh (ed.), \textit{Contemporary New Zealand Prints}. Wellington, 1989, p. x.
\item Barry Cleavin, email to the author, 29 June 2004.
\end{itemize}
declaration', and so in combination with the image of the budgerigar provides an ironic contrast, and what Cleavin considers to be a paradox and a cautionary tale.

This traditional use of the ironic potential inherent in the relationship between titles and images provides evidence of Margaret Rose's claim that both parody and irony complicate the normal process of communication of a message from addresser to addressee; parody by combining two codes, and irony by juxtaposing at least two messages in one code.

Moreover, Rose claims that in complicating this process of communication, parody and irony can reflect on the communicative function of language as a vehicle for the transmission of messages, and therefore offer a form of meta-critique of languages.16 This ability to offer a meta-critique from within the work itself can be seen in Cleavin's use of parody to prompt the viewer to reconsider the ways in which they look at artwork, and it can also been seen to represent an important element of his use of irony to make us question the meanings which we attach to words. Claire Colebrook has noted how Socrates used irony to challenge received knowledge and wisdom, 'by demanding a definition from those who presented themselves as masters of wisdom, Socrates showed how some terms were less self-evident and definitive than everyday meaning would seem to suggest'.17 In this sense Socratic irony is not just saying one thing and meaning another, it insists that we cannot just offer wisdoms and definitions as rhetorical strategies without commitment to what they mean.18 I believe that irony in this form is of importance in Cleavin's work, as he uses ironical strategies not to search for answers through an alternative and 'better' reality, but rather to suggest that there are always alternative ways of looking and understanding, and it is the process of searching for these alternatives that is worthwhile.

16 Margaret Rose, Parody // Metafiction. London, 1979, p. 61. In a similar claim to that made by Rose, Linda Hutcheon believes that parody functions intertextually as irony does intratextually, as both mark difference and not similarity. Hutcheon claims that in irony's use of one signifier and two signifieds, it functions at the semantic level in the same way that parody's marking of difference by means of superimposition functions on a textual level, as in both instances there is more than one message to be decoded by the reader. See Linda Hutcheon, A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth Century Art Forms. New York and London, 1985, pp. 51-64.
17 Colebrook, p. 37.
In his consideration of the element of cliché, Cleavin’s prints can be seen to function in a similar way to the Socratic sense of irony, as he too aims to provoke his viewers into reconsidering the meanings which they attribute to words. Like Socratic irony’s insistence that we cannot just offer wisdoms and definitions as rhetorical strategies without commitment to what they mean, in commenting on the use of cliché, Cleavin is targeting those who use language as an empty device to confidently present themselves without giving the requisite thought to the words’ meanings. Cleavin has acknowledged his interest in the way in which words are used, noting that ‘you’ve got a cliché for everything you do now, and I suppose over the last few years I’ve actually hinged everything on just about every conceivable piece of idiot cliché and then provided a picture to go with it’.  

This usage can be seen in Cleavin’s Marginisation series from 1991, which Pat Unger claimed dealt with an interest in ‘various group’s preoccupation with their marginalised role in society, through animal farm riddles and innuendos’. In an earlier suite, A Series of Allegations, 1988, [figure 43], Cleavin developed a number of his concerns regarding the use of words. This suite represented a particular response to the media’s overuse of the term, as he ‘became aware that the word allegation kept on arriving, so it was my own survival response’. It was the way that ‘buzz words’ functioned without meaning that Cleavin was particularly concerned to express, noting that ‘when people use systems of buzz words, we don’t get information, we only get an oblique reference to something we don’t get a full frontal confrontation of what it is that people are asking in order to be answered’. This lack of meaning through empty posturing was also tied to the specific use of allegations as a legal term which refers to an unproven fact. In this series Cleavin puns on the terms allegation and alligator so that his prints are ‘based on the visual equivalents of words as cut-and-dried absolutes alongside their ambiguous and particular meanings’. In prompting his viewers to reflect upon the way in which words function, Cleavin is provoking a response which is

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19 Barry Cleavin interviewed by Imogen de la Bere, cassette recording, 1983.
21 Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 18 October 2002.
22 Ibid.
considered, rather than bound by convention, and so the works function similarly to parody’s call to consider our ways of seeing.

Like *A Series of Allegations*, Cleavin’s prints frequently develop the verbal associations of the title through their ironic representation in image form. One example of this in Cleavin’s work occurs through his specific word play on the language of art. In his choice of the title *The Bitter Suites*, Cleavin is punning on the homophones suite and sweet, in a way which both extends his concerns with the richness of language, but as an oxymoron suggests that in this series he will not be providing the viewer with any easy answers.\(^{24}\) This word play also occurred in *The Executive Suite*, 1974, where he used the homonyms of suite as a series of prints, and suite as in a set of rooms in a hotel, so that he further developed his concern with presenting the trappings of the executive lifestyle in a similar way to the Sears Roebuck reference discussed in Chapter Two. In his *Chemical Still Lives*, 2001, Cleavin developed the possible meanings in relation to both art and wider usage, as a still life denotes both a particular kind of painting of inanimate objects, and can function as a verb that refers to life that has been stilled, and in doing so he expressed his concerns with chemical pollution and genetic modification and their adverse effects. This use of the title to convey both an art-specific and a general meaning can be seen to have its precedents in the prints of Goya.

Selma Holo notes that in *Los Caprichos*, Goya used a title with parallel intrinsic and extrinsic meanings, as it refers to both the foolish actions of the people satirised in the prints, and to the accepted meaning of *capricho* as a work born of creative invention which breaks away from the traditional rules of art.\(^{25}\) Cleavin’s use of these double-directed titles can also be seen in the title to his 1992 exhibition ‘Insights and Laminations Over Lost Feathers’. Here

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\(^{24}\) Homonyms are words that are spelled and sound the same but have different meanings, while homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings.  
Cleavin puns on lamentations and laminations, where the second term refers to his treatment of the images which included a repeated pair of bird skulls along with laminated birds’ feathers.26

While in the above examples Cleavin used his titles to comment upon his works from outside the frame of the image, in many of his recent ink jet prints the title has become an integral element of the print itself. Again though, this exploration of the boundary between written and pictorial forms can be seen to have a precedent in the work of an artist whom Cleavin greatly admires, William Blake, (1757-1827). In his book on picture theory W. J. T. Mitchell claims that ‘image-text conjunction matters a great deal in the work of Blake’, and that he deliberately violates the boundary between written and pictorial forms – his letters often sprout appendages that are decipherable only in pictorial terms.27 In her article on Cleavin’s ink jet prints, Elizabeth Rankin is making a similar claim for Cleavin’s ink jet works. Rankin notes that the computer facilitates the use of text in Cleavin’s digital works,28 as it can import words without problems of reversal, also allowing him to manipulate the text to better reflect the work’s content. These lettered images create interesting visual forms in their own right, and she cites Cleavin’s ink jet print As the Crow Flew, 2000, as an example where the words create a kind of pictorial imagery, as they fuse with representational elements to form a bloody overlay tracing a message of death and destruction.29

For Cleavin the relationship between words and images is of enormous importance, especially in its potential to prompt the viewer to actively consider the relations between them. In his article in Takahe Cleavin wrote that, ‘it interests me that language can so

26 This title’s effectiveness as a pun is shown by the fact that in his review of this exhibition, William McAloon quotes the title as ‘Insights and Lamentations Over Lost Feathers’ showing that he ‘read’ the pun that Cleavin intended. See William McAloon, Barry Cleavin etchings, tints. The Press, 15 July 1992, p. 23.
29 Ibid., pp. 67-68.
instantly be converted into a currency of images, and just how pictorial those notions are... [they are] capable of accelerating perceptions well beyond the pedestrian anecdote into a lateral, flexible world of alternative possibilities'. Cleavin describes this as ‘blending, mixing, matching: words from images, images from words. Finding the collisions and unifications between the pictorial and the verbal. Using word and image as a malleable, poetic substance’.

In his prints Cleavin often provides a visual equivalent for a verbal notion. In the series *Gander Issues*, from 1996, verbal elements are often considered in terms of their pictorial equivalent. In the print *There’s two sides to every story*, [figure 44], we can see these verbal and visual concerns expressed through the notion of reflection, which is expressed pictorially through the translated image, but also verbally in terms of its meaning as a call to reflect or think upon the image itself. In order to prompt the viewer to recognise alternative possibilities, Cleavin presents an image of the goose before and after attack by the stalking predators at the right. In other works from the *Gander Issues*, Cleavin explores ideas of word and image further through his use of literary devices. Cleavin has claimed that ‘there are also secrets contained in words, anagrams, palindromes, simile and metaphor that beg to be extended as visual matter, and so be visually decoded’. In the work *Give us a Gander – or – Peril by Anagram*, 1997, Cleavin develops this notion through an anagram on gander and danger, coupled with a goose sitting on a golden egg with the word gander in reverse at the bottom of the plate, while on the right the predatory animals move forward, with the word danger written in reverse below.

Another key way in which Cleavin explores words and images can be seen in his use of puns and plays on words. In Cleavin’s works puns function in a number of ways which vary from those which are more firmly based in the verbal pun, to those which deal with associations

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31 Ibid.
possible through visual connections. Like simple irony which includes two meanings within
the one utterance, the pun, as Walter Redfern has claimed, always presents ‘two or more
levels, manifest and latent, in some kind of coexistence, sequence, alternation or tension’. 32
In his series Obscurities, from 1989, Cleavin puns on the words obscure and skewer; the term
obscure appears in the title, while the skewer appears in the image through the metal stake
pinning the animals in each plate. In Thoughts of crosses, for New York, 1986, and Thoughts
of horses, 2004, [figure 45], Cleavin puns on the titles’ similarity to ‘noughts and crosses’.
In the latter work Cleavin develops this through the image where the noughts and crosses
themselves become horses, whilst in the former they become guns and key rings, where the
game is ‘won’ by the guns, adding to the implications of the title through the cross’s role as
funerary symbols of death. In a series of ink jet prints from 2000, Cleavin also used the pun
in combination with word and image. In the print Disarmament, [figure 46], Cleavin refers
to the word’s denotation as the action of disarming by abandoning a state of military
preparedness for war. However, in his image Cleavin utilises the homonym of arm as both a
weapon and a limb to visually render his figure ‘armless’. This combination of verbal pun
and visual expression can also be seen in Cleavin’s work Hindsight. 1981. This print
provided the title for his exhibition at the Gingko Gallery in Christchurch in 1982, and as
reviewer Brett Riley noted, it showed the hind quarters of an animal, as well as providing an
appropriate title for a look back over recent work, while the animal shown also happened to
be a hind, a female deer. 33 In another work from that exhibition, Hindquarters, 1981, [figure
47], we can see that Cleavin’s prints fit Heather Curnow’s claim that the basis for much of
Cleavin’s work is the rebus, which is a kind of picture writing based on conjunctions between
words and images to be decoded by the viewer. 34 I believe that when the viewer is presented

Cleavin’s print Hindquarters also provides a good example of the inter-relations within Cleavin’s prints as not
only does it function ironically, but like other works discussed in Chapter One, the image has been drawn from
In this work Cleavin has combined the The Stag Roe Goat, Plates 4 and 5, in a similar manner to his
reactivating of Stubbs’s and Muybridge’s works.
with a work like *Hindquarters*, they would be able to piece together the visual clues to form the word presented in the title in the same way that a rebus would function. So in the presentation of the deer, the viewer reads ‘hind’, and then in conjunction with the quartered divisions the viewer sees the print as a rebus for ‘hind quarters’.

In their analysis of the pun in both its verbal and visual forms, Paul Hammond and Patrick Hughes differentiate between the pun and the play on words based upon the fact that the pun utilises homophones, while the play on words uses homonyms. To Hammond and Hughes the pun has a capricious quality as it delights in chance coincidence, whereas the play on words has a rational, erudite quality, as it is often based on etymological links between words.\(^\text{35}\) However, this distinction is complicated in Cleavin’s prints as his works are often neither purely verbal, nor purely visual, puns or plays on word. Cleavin’s print *Euphoria*, 1974, functions as part verbal play on words, through euphoria and euphonium’s shared Greek prefix *eup-* meaning chiefly well or good, however, the whole word itself is not close enough in sound to be a verbal pun, so instead it relies on the visual rendering of a couple achieving their own ‘euphoria’ within a euphonium. In such a work Cleavin is delighting in the ambiguities possible in the relation of word and image; however such plays on words have not been universally appreciated. In his review of the show ‘Ewe and Eye’, John Hurrell wrote ‘often the image combinations are based on language, on puns in the titles so atrocious that not only does one groan, but one wonders why he bothered in the first place. This linguistic basis is often irritatingly shallow with no further layers of meaning to be discovered underneath’. In his criticism Hurrell considers the example of the title work *Ewe and Eye*, 1982, which he says tells us nothing about the artist and viewer relationship.\(^\text{36}\) However, the problem with Hurrell’s comments is that they suggest that the pun is necessarily about a revelation of a deeper truth beyond a surface reading, without acknowledging that it may function instead to suggest the possibilities for illuminating the


nature of language in general.\textsuperscript{37} Cleavin has said ‘I like the richness that comes from constantly redefining language,’\textsuperscript{38} further claiming that ‘words and images are terribly important to me. There’s often interplay with things that are not necessarily immediately evident. What I tend to do is find imagery that has verbal equivalents’.\textsuperscript{39} In these comments Cleavin indicates that he does not use the pun to find answers, so much as to express the value in forming questions and exploring possibilities. In his article Hurrell further claimed of the work \textit{Ewe and Eye}, that the image without the title has little interest. However, I would suggest that to remove the title from the image is to ignore Cleavin’s essential concern with the interplay between the two.

In analysing the pun in both its verbal and visual forms, Hammond and Hughes consider various sub-groups of verbal puns and claim that they may also be seen to have their visual equivalents. One such sub-group is that which is known as chiasmus, which involves a crossing of two phrases, where the order of words in one phrase is crossed in the second. This can be seen in the titles of Cleavin’s works \textit{Ships that pass in the night}, and \textit{The Knight that passes the ships}. both 1994, although Cleavin also develops a standard pun through the homophones night and knight. In visual chiasmus images are transposed in order to give new meanings, as in René Magritte’s painting \textit{Collective Invention}, 1934, [figure 48], in which he reversed the usual arrangement of a mermaid, by depicting a woman’s legs with a fish’s head and torso. Cleavin’s print \textit{The Tribute}, 1974, [figure 49], makes a direct reference back to Magritte’s visual chiasmus, indicating that he is aware of such methods of visual punning. Cleavin’s concern with visual punning can also be seen in his print \textit{A Comparative Anatomy}, 1994, [figure 50]. In this work Cleavin is comparing two separate objects on a visual level. Hammond and Hughes claim that a visual pun plays on two things having a similar appearance, while a visual double meaning plays on two things having a similar function.

\textsuperscript{37} Redfern, pp. 9-10.
However, I believe that Cleavin’s print fits somewhere between these two definitions as he identifies both the visual similarity and the similar function between the jaw mechanism on a fossilised archaeopteryx and a pair of secateurs. Cleavin has said that in the ‘likeness’ we understand that two things are not the same,\textsuperscript{40} and in this print we see that he is using visual similarities in order to provoke his viewers into a consideration of just how it is that we attribute associations and connections between things.

In presenting such combinations of word and image, Cleavin is prompting the viewer to an active involvement in the process of meaning making. As mentioned above, Cleavin’s works can function like a rebus or picture puzzle, where the viewer is encouraged to make the associative links. The printed image has long been associated with images which have to be ‘read’; William Hogarth had commentaries written about his prints, whilst Wolf claims that there was a sense amongst Goya’s contemporaries that his works required the active participation of the viewer in their interpretation.\textsuperscript{41} In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries prints could be rented and were used to entertain guests by providing material for interpretation and discussion.\textsuperscript{42} It is this active participation on the part of the viewer which Cleavin has acknowledged as a key element in his prints, as he has expressed his intention for the viewer to participate and extend a meaning or formulate an idea themselves.\textsuperscript{43} For Cleavin the democracy of the participation is also important; ‘people can most certainly form their own opinions. My work is according to the way I see things and I don’t expect everyone to come to the party’.\textsuperscript{44} Cleavin has said he hopes that he has ‘provided an alternative view of things. Viewers will create their own variants and there are as many variants as there are people’,\textsuperscript{45} but that hopefully he will be getting his viewers ‘to think

\textsuperscript{40} Barry Cleavin, Exploded Views. Lecture given by Barry Cleavin at the University of Tasmania, Hobart, October 1987.
\textsuperscript{41} Wolf, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 15.
\textsuperscript{43} Cleavin, Exploded Views.
\textsuperscript{44} Adrienne Rewi, Barry Cleavin’s skeletons portray frailty. \textit{The Press}, 9 August 1991, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{45} Adrienne Rewi, Cleavin bares his uncertainty. \textit{The Press}, 25 August 1997, p. 16.
about certain things that may otherwise never be considered.\textsuperscript{46} So like his questioning of systems of representation in his use of parody, and his questioning of social conditions in his use of satire, Cleavin’s works which employ irony are also concerned with the value of the act of looking anew.

The element of detection is a recognised part of irony’s structure which Muecke divides into three grades; private irony is for the ironist’s amusement alone; overt irony is meant to be seen through at once, as in sarcasm; while his third grade is that of covert irony which he says is ‘meant rather to be detected; the half-concealment is part of the ironist’s artistic purpose and the detection and appreciation of the camouflage is a large part of the reader’s pleasure’.\textsuperscript{47} It is this pleasure which has often been seen to be responsible for the ability of Cleavin’s works to convey messages that the viewer may not otherwise wish to see.

Although Cleavin believes that it is the beauty of the print which ‘serves the unpalatable in a palatable way’,\textsuperscript{48} the viewer’s complicity in terms of the pleasure of detection is also of importance. David Worcester claims that the distinction between the world of uninitiated, ‘common souls’ and the select few who share some special knowledge underlies every form of irony,\textsuperscript{49} while for Wayne Booth, this pleasure plays directly to the viewer’s belief in their own role in the meaning-making process, as he claims that the ‘author I infer behind the false words is my kind of man, because he enjoys playing with irony, because he assumes my capacity for dealing with it, and ... because he grants me a kind of wisdom’.\textsuperscript{50} However, because the viewer does not have to acknowledge the possibility of the ironic element, irony

\textsuperscript{46} Miranda James, Rejoicing in Paradox. \textit{Nelson Evening Mail}, 11 August 1995, Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.

\textsuperscript{47} Muecke, 1970, pp. 50-53, also see Muecke, 1980, pp. 53-56.

\textsuperscript{48} Lee Mathews, Prints designed to disturb. Un sourced newspaper article, Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.

\textsuperscript{49} David Worcester, \textit{The Art of Satire}. New York, 1960, p. 111. This potential for irony to include some viewers at the expense of others has been explored by a number of writers. Barbe notes that there are prejudices associated with irony, with it being connected with sophistication and wit, and that these prejudices can be geographical too, as it is often thought that only urbanites possess sophistication and ironic ability. Also because the ability to detect irony is frequently attributed to intelligence and sophistication it can be used to send messages of control to isolate some or it can be used inclusively to reinforce solidarity. See Barbe pp. 3-4.

\textsuperscript{50} Wayne Booth, \textit{A Rhetoric of Irony}. Chicago and London, 1974, p. 28.
can then become what Barbe calls a ‘face-saving off record utterance’.\textsuperscript{51} This relates to the claim that irony is not found in the text or image itself, but is ascribed to it by the viewer or audience,\textsuperscript{52} and so she claims that verbal irony prevents the hearer from making a quick repartee, precisely because a negative comeback would show that the hearer assumes negative intentions, and therefore it would be the hearer who appears impolite.\textsuperscript{53} So in reading Cleavin’s works as ironical, it would seem that his viewers must also take some responsibility for understanding his point, and in doing so must face up to the implications of what it is that he is saying.

In the examples that I have noted above, Cleavin’s use of irony fell broadly under the categories of simple or Socratic irony. However, Cleavin’s works also exhibit that which is known as general irony, which relates to a concern with the fundamental contradictions inherent in the human condition. The key text in identifying this third kind of irony was Connop Thirlwall’s essay ‘On the Irony of Sophocles’, which first appeared in 1833. In this work Thirlwall begins by noting the more ordinary use of the term irony, which he describes as ‘a figure which enables the speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of contrast between... the thought which he evidently designs to express, and that which his words properly signify’.\textsuperscript{54} Thirlwall then identifies that which he calls dialectic irony, in which ‘the writer effects his purpose by placing the opinion of his adversary in the foreground, and saluting it with every demonstration of respect, while he is busied in withdrawing one by one all the supports on which it rests... until he has completely undermined it, when he leaves it to sink by the weight of its own absurdity’.\textsuperscript{55} This kind of irony is essentially that used by Socrates in Plato’s dialogues, but also characterises Swift’s ironic defence, and Cleavin’s Childsplay series. It was however, Thirlwall’s third kind of irony which became essential in widening definitions of the term, as he also noted a practical

\textsuperscript{51} Barbe, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 15. Also see Muecke, 1980, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{53} Barbe, p. 92.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 484.
irony, which is independent of all forms of speech, and which life provides us with examples of.\footnote{Ibid., p. 485.} For Thirlwall this kind of irony was related to the feeling that occurred when men reflected on 'how little the good and ill of their lot has corresponded with their hopes and fears', so that when 'we review such instances of the mockery of fate, we can scarcely refrain from a melancholy smile'; which he says is exactly the look a superior intelligence separated from us would give.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 486-487.} For Thirlwall 'the contrast between man with his hopes, fears, wishes, and undertakings, and a dark, inflexible fate, affords abundant room for the exhibition of tragic irony'.\footnote{Ibid., p. 493.} It is this basic realisation of man’s fate as identified by Thirlwall, in conjunction with Muecke’s exploration of the themes in which this is commonly expressed that allows for a demonstration of Cleavin’s expression of general irony.

In his explanation of the nature of general irony, Muecke has claimed that it recognises that the human experience is open to multiple interpretations, of which no one is simply right, and that this co-existence of incongruities is part of the structure of existence.\footnote{Muecke, 1970, pp. 21-22.} According to Muecke, general irony is ‘life itself, or any general aspect of life seen as fundamentally and inescapably an ironic state of affairs; it is no longer a case of isolated victims, we are all victims of impossible situations, of universal ironies of dilemma’.\footnote{Muecke, 1980, pp. 119-120.} While in satire images of vanity are always deflated at the end, the ‘vanity of vanities’ that informs the world’s irony is beyond liquidation.\footnote{Ibid., p. 27.} Muecke has written that

the basis for General irony lies in those contradictions, apparently fundamental and irresolvable, that confront men when they speculate upon such topics as the origin and purpose of the universe, the certainty of death, the eventual extinction of all life, the
impenetrability of the future, the conflicts between reason, emotion, and instinct, free will and determinism, the objective and the subjective, society and the individual, the absolute and the relative, the humane and the scientific. 62

However, from these many topics, Muecke claims that most of these are able to be reduced into one great incongruity, 'the appearance of self-valued and subjectively free but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien, utterly purposeless, completely deterministic, and incomprehensively vast'. 63 As a result of this perception of conflict, Muecke believes that there are certain situations, which from their nature as dualities, tend to function as ready-made containers for irony. These include the dualities of god and man or heaven and earth, audience and play, puppet master and puppet, artist and work of art, man and animal, rich and poor, present and past, and waking and dreaming, but he notes that these dualities produce similar sets of ironic polarities; disengaged/involved, critical/credulous, meaningful/absurd. 64 From these polarities Muecke identifies some of general irony's key themes, several of which can be seen to parallel Cleavin's concerns.

The first of Muecke's themes which can be seen in Cleavin's work is that based loosely on general dramatic irony. General dramatic irony sees man as always and necessarily ignorant of the real state of affairs, including the self-deception he practises upon himself. In Chapter Two I explored Cleavin's use of the presentation of appearance and reality, where in his satirical works Cleavin was calling for an awareness of the social roles which people play. However, in other prints this awareness is given a wider application in terms of the 'vanity of vanities' which characterises man's condition. In his exploration of man's general vanity, Cleavin can be seen to utilise several recurring images. In a number of his prints Cleavin has developed the idea of man as a kind of puppet or unthinking figure directed by elements beyond his control. In many of his prints from the 1970s Cleavin featured posed figures in

62 Muecke, 1970, p. 68.
63 Ibid.
64 Muecke, 1980, pp. 220-221.
which he had removed the faces or the heads. *Dunedin Wedding (my grandparents)*, 1970, [figure 51], is based upon a photograph, however, Cleavin has removed the faces of all the figures, creating what Hamish Keith described as ‘depersonalised personal mementoes’, which undermine the viewer’s expectations of what a portrait should include. This denial of the viewer’s expectations was also noted by Michael Dunn with regard to Cleavin’s print *Girl with no head leaning on parallel bars*, 1971, [figure 52]. Dunn wrote that ‘our anticipations of normality are thwarted and we are left to ponder why’, also noting that ‘the actions of this slender body are unguided by mind and purpose. Is this a telling comment on the divorce between physical and mental exercise in this age of specialisation? There is no single answer or interpretation.’ So in this work Cleavin’s irony operates by playing with the viewer’s expectations associated with portraiture, but it also comments on man as an unthinking being, controlled by elements beyond his will.

This view of the world can also be tied in to Muecke’s observations that there is irony when one believes that the instincts lead the mind a dance, the emotions deceive the reason, and the unconscious plays tricks upon the conscious. Worcester has noted that ‘the ironist looks more deeply than most men into the laws of cause and effect and of unconscious motivation. Men and women, in his view, tend to become puppets, jerked about by their passions’, and so the ironist therefore finds ways to extricate himself from the normal, or vulgar, point of view. This claim certainly applies to Cleavin’s *Puppets* series, 1977, where both men and women are shown suspended from strings guided by elements beyond their control. In his print *Puppet III*, Cleavin has shown a nude female who holds the strings to a small headless

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67 Muecke, 1980, p. 139. One aspect of the manner in which man is seen as victim of his instincts relates to the element of sexuality. It is not my intention to consider this element in this thesis however, as I believe that it constitutes such a major element of Cleavin’s works, and that it has been perhaps the most hotly contested aspect of his prints, that it warrants a much wider consideration than the scope of thesis allows. For a further consideration of Cleavin’s view of male and female relations and his attitude towards women, see Alexa Johnston’s analysis of the predominantly male critical response to Cleavin’s work in *Anxious Images*, and also see Cheryl Sotheran’s article for a consideration of the ways in which Cleavin’s treatment of female sexuality has been associated with the element of humour.
68 Worcester, p. 137.
man. While at first glance this work might be considered part of Cleavin’s allegedly misogynistic view, on closer consideration it can be seen that the woman is controlled by strings that extend out beyond the picture plane, suggesting that she too is manipulated by events beyond her control. In another work from this series, *Puppet I*, Cleavin shows a smiling nude woman strung like a puppet with a canon directed at her so that she is made to dance.

This inclusion of dancing couples relates to a number of Cleavin’s other works which can be seen to deal with the general irony of man’s limited knowledge of his own existence. As an act, dancing naturally lends itself to notions of futility and folly, as recognised by Cleavin in his *Dance* series, 1975. Rodney Wilson notes that the prints in this series were developed from Maurice Jay’s book *Ballroom Dancing*,\(^69\) and Cleavin uses both images of dancing figures (again the details of their faces have been removed) as well as diagrammatic presentations of dance steps. In the print *The Dance – the steps to be taken to finish up in exactly the same place as you started*, 1975, Cleavin contrasts the serious classificatory impulse which led to the systematic presentation of the dance moves with the title which comments on the futility of it all. As an expression of a kind of irony in which man, despite his struggles, can be seen to move in only a tightly set pattern of moves, the *Dance* series also has parallels with Cleavin’s print *A Tango for Western Europe*, 1995, [figure 53]. In this work Cleavin shows a silhouetted dancing couple moving within the limited space provided by the top of a classical capital. Cassandra Fusco believes that in this work ‘the question is, are these dancers on top of their world or are they about to topple from its dizzy heights?’,\(^70\) and so in this sense it can also be seen as an ironic comment on the fragility of human existence. These ideas have found frequent expression in Cleavin’s prints as in his etching

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Ballroom Dancing with Hyenas, 1999, and his lithograph Pursuits, 2002, in which ‘humans dance with death as they tango along the seabed, while the fish circle menacingly above’.  

In these works of dancing figures, Cleavin has repeatedly shown a silhouetted figure against a minimal background. Cleavin’s prints are often divided into two areas whose existence as three-dimensional space is negated by the use of soft ground to draw attention to the two-dimensionality of the work, as in the crushed paper in Early Bird, 1976, and The Sheep in Wolf’s Clothing, 2002, or the textured wallpaper that appears in the background of The Executive Suite, 1974. Cleavin frequently divides the picture plane by placing the horizon line towards the bottom of the plate, and this, along with the lack of pictorial depth, shares something of the quality of Goya’s prints, which have invited comparisons with a stage set. I believe that the element of ‘theatre’ implicit in this representation is part of Cleavin’s purpose, and may also partly explain the attraction that the works of Eadweard Muybridge hold for Cleavin, with their ‘staged’ appearance and lack of pictorial depth. In presenting his subjects as if they were on the stage, Cleavin is able to develop the kind of detachment which is so integral to general irony’s perception of man. In Papergraphica’s exhibition ‘Theatre’ in 2004, Cleavin’s The Theatres of War, 2004, [figure 54], included various images derived from art history, as well as recombinations of elements derived from his own earlier work.

Cleavin then presented each of these digital prints within the three dimensional frame of a classical portico, referring to the standard separation of stage and reality in the theatre by the proscenium arch, but also demonstrating that these works were concerned with problems of Western society. The flyer to this exhibition notes that ‘there is no limit to the posturing, the backstage manipulations, the staging left and right of bit part players. Are the actors symbols, are they pawns/props with no chance to deviate from the hurriedly scripted plot?’

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73 For the importance of the element of detachment in irony see, Muecke, 1980, p. 216, and Worcester, p. 136.
Cleavin has adopted the ironist’s detached stance in these works by reducing key contemporary political figures, including George W. Bush and Colin Powell, to minor figures on a stage surrounded by fictional Disney characters including Mickey Mouse.

By presenting his figures within a stage set Cleavin is also linking his works with irony’s interest in the role of the artist as creator. In what he terms cosmic irony, Muecke notes that some writers specifically call the author of our being an ironist while the world is an ironical show.\(^{75}\) This may take the form of ironists setting up a parallel between some ultimately ironical figure in control of man’s fate, and the artist as the puppeteer, in control of his characters or image within the framework of the artwork itself. Since the German Romantics realised irony’s potential for self-awareness, the artist’s role in relation to their work has been an important element of ironic creation. In recognising the impossibility of comprehending the vastness of the world, the Romantic ironists thought that the work itself should acknowledge its limitations, and in so doing take on the dynamic quality of life.\(^{76}\) This meant that the work of art should represent and be conscious of itself,\(^{77}\) and that in this self-awareness lay the possibility of ‘transcending the artist’s predicament, not actually yet intellectually and imaginatively’.\(^{78}\) While these realisations represent a particular response to irony that is very much tied to the cultural climate of nineteenth century Germany, Muecke notes that something like romantic irony may be found in all ages by bringing readers unexpectedly into a work, or on stage by getting actors to drop roles.\(^{79}\) In Chapter One I demonstrated the self-reflexive nature of parody in Cleavin’s works where he drew attention to the print’s position as an artistic construct, however, the potential for self-reflexivity is also of importance to Cleavin’s use of irony. In *The Artwork Revealed*, Cleavin considered his role in the creation of his prints by noting that being able to repeat/reverse and rearrange

\(^{75}\) Muecke, 1980, pp. 150-151.  
\(^{76}\) ibid., p. 196.  
\(^{77}\) ibid., p. 197.  
\(^{78}\) Ibid., p. 215. Muecke claims that Romantic irony is ‘the irony of a writer conscious that literature can no longer be simply naïve and unreflective’, so that ‘the author’s “presence of mind” must now be a principle element in his work, alongside the equally necessary but “blind” driving force of enthusiasm or inspiration’.  
\(^{79}\) Muecke, 1979, p. 79.
parts of figures allows him to recast them as though they were in a play, as he also takes delight in the way in which as a printmaker he is able to effect things in his work which would otherwise not be possible. Cleavin considers his print *The Kakapo and Caesar*, 1995, as effecting some kind of 'metaphysical meeting', and it is this element of the artist’s control over the work which was also important in his work *Somnolence*, 1966, which he has described as

>a rearrangement of two ‘Life Drawings’ produced at Art School in my last year there. I fused the male and female model into the same situation. Certainly, the life drawing would not have countenanced the two occupying the one podium together. So, I gave them an unkempt bed, a title, and each other. In real life they disliked each other immensely – there was a certain irony concerning what it was that I could do… and what nature and their disposition towards each other could not.81

Another aspect of general irony identified by Muecke is that involving ironies of inevitable ignorance, which stem from the desire and self-imposed obligation to know, which is countered by the impossibility of knowing everything.82 In line with my belief that Cleavin is not so much providing answers as asserting the value of searching for alternative possibilities, Wright has claimed that,

>no ironist can be doctrinaire… none of them sees a clear and present answer. There is vigour, there is humility, there is sympathy, in the ironist’s search, there is judgement finally – but never serene certainty. Irony comes as the result of the quest for meaning in the universe.83

As discussed in Chapter One, this concern with human knowledge was seen in Cleavin’s parodic presentation of classificatory systems which sought to impose a structured meaning onto the world. While most of the texts that Cleavin has parodied have involved the use of

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81 Auckland City Art Gallery; artist file, Barry Cleavin.
images, he has also made prints which work to highlight the absurdity of written texts. Cleavin parodies the mundane in his Sampler – Handy household hint, 1981, and Coffee table etching, 1981, [figure 55], with his ridiculous images which accompany the well-meant, but simple advice of Aunt Daisy.84 These prints probably come closer than most of Cleavin’s works to directing their irony at a ‘victim’, although the victim is only implied as those whose ‘innocent unawareness’ prevents them from also seeing the absurdity of man’s desire to classify and order his thoughts to the extent of producing books of such mundanity.

Finally in this chapter I wish to consider the relevance of general irony as it relates to Cleavin’s ongoing engagement with the theme of mortality. Muecke has noted that there is general irony in the fact that the future is essentially unknowable and therefore there can be no confident anticipations, however, in order to actively live our lives we must trust in the possibility of a future. Muecke extends this observation to claim general irony in our knowledge that we must die, but not knowing when, and that we must live our lives not expecting it, even though it is inevitable.85 As Muecke notes ‘the irony of death is not simply that our objective conviction that we shall die is in radical opposition to our subjective refusal to believe it can really happen to us… there is a deeper irony in the view that it is precisely our absurd, indefensible rejection of death that enables us to go on living out our lives’.86 It is this ironic understanding of death which Cleavin considers in his etching Death and the Young Man, 1979, [figure 56]. This print uses an image of David Bowie (although he has been relieved of his head), leaning against the railings of a ship, and a skull taken from a ‘life room’ skeleton.87 The enormous hook used to suspend the skull is reminiscent of the many hooks and pulleys used to suspend cadavers for anatomical illustration, whilst Cleavin positions the giant skull to read as kind of sword of Damocles that, like death, hovers over us all. The skull, though, is also clearly tied in to the tradition of showing youth with death to

84 Ewe and Eye, p. 29. Here the advice given concerns a system to prevent ants crawling up table legs by standing them in water, or, as the dancing female has done by tying fur around her legs.
85 Muecke, 1980, pp. 132-133.
87 Ewe and Eye, p. 26.
bring home to the viewer the sense of the impermanence of the physical body and all earthly things. An early example of this can be seen in the Housebook Master’s *Death and the Youth*, c. 1485-90, in which a ‘foppish youth’ is shown alongside a corpse of equal size indicating that which he will become. This work also considers similar themes to Cleavin’s *Upon Reflection*, 1977, [figure 57], which similarly draws upon what Alexa Johnston has called an extreme version of the mirror mirror on the wall story, while it echoes European paintings of naked women looking into mirrors, epitomising the sin of vanity.

Another tradition associated with notions of mortality can be seen in relation to the arbitrary nature of death’s visitation, especially as it relates to the ‘Dance of Death’. The terms ‘Dance of Death’ and *Danse macabre* have been in use for over five centuries, and are used to designate a procession or dance, in which both the living and dead take part; the dead portrayed by either a number of figures or a single individual personification of death, and the living ranked in order of their status on earth. Perhaps the most famous example in this tradition is Hans Holbein’s set of 41 woodcuts dating from 1538, which like other sixteenth century versions, stressed death’s didactic application in the tradition of the *memento mori*, where it was ready to strike anywhere at a moment’s notice. Death’s lack of respect for social degree, and his indiscriminate behaviour was seen as especially terrifying, and in the

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91 Clark, p. 1.

92 First published in book form at Lyons in 1538 under the title *Les Simulachres and Historias Faces de la Mort*, Holbein’s works became a popular success with eleven editions published before 1562. The title ‘Dance of Death’ however was given to these works by posterity, as these works do not actually present a pure dance of death, but also draw on the tradition of the *memento mori*, where a single person appears with a skeleton, skull or other symbol of mortality. See Hans Holbein, *The Dance of Death. A Complete Facsimile of the Original 1538 Edition of Les Simulachres and Historias Faces de la Mort*. New York, 1971, p. x.

93 This element of chance was explored by Cleavin in his series of *Die Shots*, 1989, shown at Gingko Gallery in Christchurch in 1989. Reviewing this show, Pat Unger wrote that these works depend upon the cast of a die, ‘but here, although the initial impact is of beautiful random marbling, there is an additional implication of threat. This innocent game of marble stockpiling through the fall of a dice, suggests that our glowing planet, with its swirling cloud-patterns, is menaced by a black-holed dice poised above’. See Pat Unger, *The Press*, Cleavin etchings, aquatints. 17 March 1989, p. 30.
sixteenth century the notion that all men regardless of earthly status were equal before death was taken seriously, so that it provided an exhortation to maintain a state of readiness to die gracefully.\footnote{Holbein, p. xi. See Nigel Llewellyn, The Art of Death – Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual. London, 1991, pp. 19-26.} Cleavin has specifically located his work within this tradition, as when describing his drawing of a ram’s skull titled That Which Was and Which is to Come, 1999, he claimed that ‘the message here, is be good today because tomorrow we die’.\footnote{Anonymous article, Awards for Student and Teacher. The Christchurch Star, 2 July 1994, p. B4. Cleavin’s ram’s skull came from Moeraki where he found him with his head sticking up out of the sand, looking very much like Goya’s painting The Dog, 1820-1823. So he cut his head off, and Cleavin says that he has accompanied him ever since ‘as a reminder of mortality’, against which he is able to measure his ascending and descending drawing skills.} Thus Cleavin shows us that much of our lives are based upon folly if we choose to ignore the inescapable reality of death. Man’s folly in denying this fact has also found expression in his series of Monuments from 1971, about which Trevor Moffit has claimed ‘not since Shelley wrote Ozymandias has man’s foibles in this direction been so thoroughly revealed’.\footnote{G. Trevor Moffitt, Printmaker shows work. The Press, 1 October 1971, p. 23.} The notion of man’s folly in constructing pointless structures was also developed in Cleavin’s series of works From Moeraki – A place to rest (by day), 1991, [figure 58]. Cleavin has explained that these works were drawn from the old iron wharf at Moeraki, in Otago, which was built in the nineteenth century when it was thought Moeraki was going to be a port. However, when that proved impossible the wharf became a kind of folly.\footnote{Anonymous article, Printmaker retires to make prints. Chronicle, vol. 26, no. 1, 7 February 1991, p. 7.} In these works Pat Unger has noted that ‘through sharp perception and technical virtuosity, Barry Cleavin has perfected the skill to condense larger-than-life views on the human condition into small format etchings which negate their modest size’.\footnote{Pat Unger, Barry Cleavin at Brooke-Gifford. The Press, 8 August 1991, p. 13.} Following a heart attack in 1991, Cleavin had to deal in a more personal way with his own mortality. An increased focus on frailty was identified in Cleavin’s works by Adrienne Rewi, who wrote ‘looking at his latest works one could be forgiven for thinking Cleavin has an obsessional hangover after his brush with death’.\footnote{Adrienne Rewi, 1991, p. 9.} As for Cleavin, he had said, being on
the brink of death 'must make a huge and crucial difference, nothing can be the same from that moment on. You realise suddenly that you are a very vulnerable part in the scheme of things, and... it does tend to sharpen up your focus on life'. While Cleavin's heart attack did result in works like his Vesalian Profiles, 1991, notions of mortality have provided a sustained theme for Cleavin as evidenced by his print Pursuit, 1976, [figure 59], where the lateral view of the man before dissection from George Stubbs's anatomical exposition is combined with the skeletal figure from the same treatise, so that the work comments on our inevitable mortality as the skeletal figure of death follows the man like a shadow which he cannot loose. Cleavin returned to this idea in a recent series of three lithographs; And They're off now, Neck and Neck and Stride for Stride, And the winner is..., 2004, [figure 60]. In these works Cleavin has combined his own drawing of the skeleton of the horse Traducer from the collection at the Canterbury Museum, and has shown it 'being pursued by the galloping horseman, a man riding a horse called Daisy, that is in Muybridge's book'. As Traducer and Daisy pursue each other through the series, they repeat the idea first developed in Pursuit, however, in And the winner is..., the implication of the earlier work is made clear, and it is death that is finally triumphant.

Cleavin has actively pursued the theme of mortality in many of his prints in a number of ways. Many critics have commented on Cleavin's concern with the human condition, and often this is considered in terms of the frailty of human life. As noted, this meaning was evoked in A Tango for Western Europe through the figure's precarious position, and this symbolism is similar to that used in his earlier print Living on a Knife Edge, 1995, [figure 61]. In this print the geese balanced on the knife's blade can be read as a visual metaphor for the general fragility of human existence. Another device which Cleavin has used to express

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100 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
this idea can be seen in his use of embossing, which is usually employed in conjunction with skeletal forms, as in Paper Fossil, 1976, and Soldier, 1980, which engender associations with the fragility of life.\textsuperscript{104}

Of Cleavin's many reminders of frailty, it is his use of skeletons that is the most readily identifiable element in his works. Cleavin dates his use of the skeletal form back to his final year at art school when he became interested in the works of Goya. Cleavin notes that he could see that Goya was 'paring off the regalia', ultimately leading to the works Y aun no se van, from Los Caprichos, where a skeletal figure holds up a huge block, and the profoundly disturbing Nada. Ello dirá from Los Desastres de la Guerra, 1810-1820, published 1863.

Cleavin has said that 'I was really taken by Los Caprichos and the way that he was unclothing things and I suppose that the logical unclothing is really the skeleton, it is the ultimate'.\textsuperscript{105} Of all the writing on Barry Cleavin, perhaps the most repeated ideas are those regarding this notion of stripping back the layers to reveal hidden truths. The metaphor of exposed skeleton representing exposed social mores is frequently cited as if it is the only key to interpreting Cleavin's prints; as though this in itself can fully explain the way that his works function. This is not to deny the validity of comments such as those from art critic Pat Unger who has written that 'he relies on stripping away the layers – of history, of the unnecessary and the polite – to reveal the skeleton as the ultimate and irreducible object of existence. With clinical logic and needle-fine scribe, he presents this bare-bones emblem as a final solution to life's paradoxes and random misfortunes'.\textsuperscript{106} Whilst the idea of Cleavin working like an anatomist to unmask and reveal provides a splendid metaphor for interpreting his prints, the fact remains that in many instances it is not the anatomical subject itself that is responded to, so much as examples drawn from the anatomical tradition that he

\textsuperscript{104} Barry Cleavin, Hidden Agendas.
\textsuperscript{105} Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
\textsuperscript{106} Unger, Barry Cleavin, p. 52. Also see Fusco, Grammar of Caution, p. 37, while Brett Riley similarly wrote in 1982 'whenever he picks up his needle to draw on the plate, he is not scratching the surface but peeling back layer after layer of the veneer of everyday external life, probing deeper into an underground of fantasy and imagination and fear and, hopefully, underlying human truths. The shucking of clothes, then skin, then flesh itself, is Cleavin's visual metaphor for that probing.' Riley, 1982, p. 9.
then works from. In their use of skeletal forms, anatomical illustrations have inevitably been
long tied in with traditions surrounding notions of mortality, and Cleavin considers himself to
be part of a moralising tradition often associated with these ideas. Since at least as far back
as Berengario in 1521, intimations of mortality have often been included in illustrations of
anatomy, including skulls and skeletons with moral sermons on the omnipresence of death
and the inevitable judgement that follows. These ideas can be seen in Vesalius’s Fabrica,
where in the second book, a skeleton contemplates a skull as he leans on a tomb with the
engraved message ‘Vivitur ingenio, caetera mortis erunt’, (‘Genius lives on, all else is
mortal’).108

In looking at skeletal forms Cleavin claims that ‘it is such a massive question and there are
all these tangible items around that have been here and have departed and there has got to be
a sensible way to treat it all’.109 For Cleavin, his use of skeletons, like his use of irony,
allows him to explore the ways in which he can respond to the world and its inevitable
contradictions. Cleavin claims that the artist’s life is neither profound, nor difficult, nor
something people should pay a particular homage to, it is a way of doing and a way of
living.110 It is this potential for art to function as a ‘way through’, which is the key to
Cleavin’s use of irony. Many critics have noted that irony can function as ‘a mode of escape

108 Roberts and Tomlinson, p. 146. However, since Bernhard Siegfried Albinus in the eighteenth century, few
anatomists have placed their figures in landscapes, instead drawing their figures against an unencumbered page,
which of course, played down the importance of the memento mori theme. So, ironically, the point in
anatomical history where illustrations began to acquire the visually pared-back quality that characterises
Cleavin’s skeletal prints, is also the point at which they had lost the didactic element. However, Cleavin’s
works exist very much in the realm of the fine-art print, and so he is not producing pared back works for
anatomical inspection, but rather historically influenced works where this didactic element is still very much in
evidence.
109 While they certainly play a key role in Cleavin’s explorations of the themes of mortality and man’s vanity,
for Cleavin skeletons also represent something which he responds to on a visual level. Put simply, Cleavin likes
the ‘look’ of skeletal forms and the visual aesthetic that results from this ‘bare bones approach’. However, the
potential problems of this repetition are not unrecognised by Cleavin who notes ‘it is very dangerous using
skeletal forms, it can become fantastically mundane and it can become a very easy [way] out, and I didn’t want
to slide into it as a kind of an easy manner.’ Cleavin has admirably avoided this trap though through the range
of ends to which he has put the skeletal forms, namely his parody of anatomical illustrations, his active
engagement with the anatomical tradition and his use of these elements to achieve social satire and comments
on mortality.
110 Cleavin, interviewed by Imogen de la Bere.
from the fundamental problems and responsibilities of life',\textsuperscript{111} while Muecke has noted that for the ironist who sees no possibility of reconciling the contradictions of our condition, a sense of irony 'will not make him any the less a victim of these predicaments but will enable him in some degree to transcend them'.\textsuperscript{112} For Cleavin, the peace he gets from exorcising his ideas in print form does function as a shield, but he says 'it's not quite catharsis because I know I have the next one to do'.\textsuperscript{113} I believe that it is Cleavin's continued searching and prompting his viewers to reflect and to formulate their own ideas which fits the claim that 'the ironist's virtue is mental alertness and agility', whose business is to keep an open house for ideas and to keep on asking questions.\textsuperscript{114} In creating works which foreground the nature of verbal and visual associations, and which engage with the fundamental contradictions of the human condition, Cleavin is again asserting the value of formulating questions in order to disrupt complacency and provoke a recognition of alternative possibilities.

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\textsuperscript{111} Wright, p. 113, see also Dyson, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{112} Muecke, 1970, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{113} Mathews, unsourced article.
\textsuperscript{114} Muecke, 1980, p. 247.
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CONCLUSION

For Barry Cleavin, both art and life require a multi-faceted approach involving a willingness to look beyond that which is immediately apparent. Cleavin realises that things are not absolute, rather there are always complications,¹ and by presenting this in his art he both opens up possibilities for extending meanings, and encourages his viewers to actively participate in the forming of questions. In his art, this questioning drive finds its expression through Cleavin’s use of art historical traditions, and in the complex inter-relationships of the three key elements of parody, satire and irony. In considering these three aspects of Cleavin’s works it has become evident that they are not simply separate devices employed only occasionally, but rather that all three are inter-related and inextricably linked to Cleavin’s methods of generating meaning in his prints.

In Chapter One I focused on the varied ways in which Cleavin uses parody in his art work. By considering the influence of Gabor Peterdi and wider Western art history, it became clear that parody functioned to help Cleavin come to terms with the weight of art historical traditions, as well as providing him with particular sources for his imagery. In looking at the ways in which Cleavin parodied the works of Eadweard Muybridge, George Stubbs and Andreas Vesalious, I demonstrated that while Cleavin’s use of art historical sources is undoubtedly eclectic, he often parodies the work of artists who are ‘masters’ of their field, and whose works are based upon systems of classificatory thought. In considering works which seek to assert an ordered structure on the world, Cleavin develops his concern with the ways in which we apprehend and generate meanings. Cleavin’s work The Hare Stripped Bare by his Bride Even, 1980, also demonstrated the importance of the role of the viewer in interpreting parodic works. In discussing the ‘paradox of parody’ Cleavin’s

¹ Rodney Wilson, interview with the author, 1 December 2004.
ambivalent attitude towards much contemporary art analysis was also seen in terms of his unwillingness to accept externally imposed definitions or explanations. Finally in Chapter One, recent theories regarding parody’s ability to function self-reflexively showed that Cleavin also used parody in order to generate a questioning response to art itself, including through his parodic use of systems of image production.

Chapter Two demonstrated that like his use of parody, Cleavin’s use of satire also has its basis in art historical traditions. Tradition plays a key role in understanding Cleavin’s satirical works, especially through their art historical precedents in the works of J. J. Grandville, Honoré Daumier and Francisco de Goya. By analysing Cleavin’s use of the ‘language’ of satire, including variants on the animal fable, the character type and the political portrait, it became clear that his concern with ‘graphic literacy’ allowed him to utilise his familiarity with a wide range of visual stimuli as a starting point from which to generate satirical meaning in his prints. The traditional satirical techniques of the reductio ad absurdum and the ironic defence also relates to Cleavin’s consideration of alternative realities as in his series Offensive Weapons, 1976, and Childsplay, 1984, where he presented his viewers with works that prompted a reflection upon our society. In Chapter Two I also noted some of the ways in which Cleavin engaged with the enduring themes of satire to express his concerns relating to war, the nuclear threat, genetic modification and the transience of species.

In the third chapter, by focusing on irony, it again became clear that Cleavin was concerned with prompting a questioning response towards our systems of understanding. Cleavin’s use of irony was seen in terms of his concern with the inter-relationships of the verbal and the visual including through his use of titles, puns and plays on words, and his use of rebus puzzles. It also became clear that irony functioned to prompt the viewer to consider how it is that we attribute meaning in cultural exchanges. In the second half of this chapter it became evident that irony in Cleavin’s prints also occurred on the general level, as he
engaged with some of the themes associated with general irony, including the ironies of inevitable ignorance in his use of puppets and dancing figures, and his use of the *memento mori* tradition to comment upon the irony of man's vanity. In his use of these forms of general irony, however, Cleavin's works do not relate to any absurdist notions of the meaningless nature of all existence, rather they consider the incongruities in the human condition as a call to formulate questions and to find value in the process of seeking to reconsider without attaching fixed meanings.

Cleavin has indicated his desire to return the print 'to its historical position concerning image and content aside from boutique frippery', ² rather claiming that 'I actually believe art has taken too many liberties and has gone outside people and outside communication and become relevant only to itself'. ³ For Cleavin, the printed image is not something that stands apart from a work's content, rather he uses parody, satire and irony in order to focus his understanding of artistic traditions into his own visual language which prompts reflection upon the printed image and its possible meanings. It is this awareness of art traditions and the way in which he may use these to develop his own works which Trevor Moffitt has noted allows Cleavin to generate 'graphic images capable of being universally read that makes him an artist of great importance to a country whose artists have too often become slaves to style and little else'. ⁴

Cleavin's works involve a search for meaning; in using parody he contemplates his role as an artist and the traditions of art history; never just using them unquestioningly, he investigates the element of appearance and reality not necessarily expecting to find a 'deeper truth', but to acknowledge that things are not simply readable on one level. Cleavin uses satire to investigate society and asks that his viewers reflect upon what they see and what he presents, so that in the process of reflection they may realise that there are

other possible worlds and other possible understandings. Irony is similarly used both as a device to heighten the sense of appearance and reality in Cleavin’s work, and to consider a wider meaning, in terms of systems of understanding and existence. For Cleavin it is the potential of what can be conveyed by the visual image that is of importance. Citing Goya’s print ‘Fools’ Fantasy’, from Los Disparates, 1864, of a bull fight in the air, he says that as an image it will still defy explanation in another one hundred years time, and people will continue to ‘look at it with the same sense of questioning because it won’t ever be resolved and that is quite good for people’. \(^5\) Cleavin’s interest is in ‘images with imbedded stories’ and works that present visual mysteries, incongruities, inferences, outrage, and anomalies; he says ‘I don’t want answers. I relate to items that ask me questions, so that I may, in turn, formulate questions to others’. \(^6\) It is in the search to provoke questions, disturb complacencies, and present alternative realities, that Cleavin’s prints represent an art form that is worthy of our attention, and deserving of further reflection.

\(^5\) Barry Cleavin, interview with the author, 7 October 2003.
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Figure 2. Gabor Peterdi. *Adam and Eve*. 1947.
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Figure 3. Barry Cleavin. *In which the lady gives up her seat to a gentleman*. 2003. Etching. Plate 63 x 80 mm; paper 265 x 195 mm. Edition of 15.

Figure 4. Eadweard Muybridge. *Plate 490. A, B: Sitting Down*. 1887.

Figure 6. George Stubbs. *Table XI, The Eleventh Anatomical Table, Posterior View*. 1766. Engraving. 374 x 476 mm.

Figure 8. Andreas Vesalius. *Plate 36, The Thirteenth Plate of the Muscles*. 1545. Wood engraving. 336 x 205 mm.
Figure 11. Barry Cleavin. The Hare Stripped Bare by his Bride Even. 1980. Etching. Plate 250 x 301 mm. Edition of 40.


Figure 16. Paul Heinecken. *An eight-sided star with light source and cast shadows*. 1727.
Figure 17. Barry Cleavin. *Designed to Drive you up the wall*. 1983. Lithograph. Image 400 x 600 mm. Edition of 30.

Figure 18. Thomas Malton. *Representation of a staircase; internal, showing the descending stairs direct*. 1779.
Figure 20. W. Ellenberger, H. Baum and H. Dittrich. The Cow and Bull, Plate 14. 1901.

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Figure 34. Barry Cleavin. *He Speaks*. 1970.
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Figure 38. Barry Cleavin. *Childsplay 2*. 1984.
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Figure 45. Barry Cleavin. *Thoughts of Horses*. 2004. Lithograph. Image 242 x 252 mm; paper 460 x 380 mm. Edition of 32.

Figure 47. Barry Cleavin. *Hindquarters*. 1981.
Figure 48. René Magritte. *L'invention collective (Collective Invention)*. 1935. Oil painting. 735 x 975 mm.

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Figure 56. Barry Cleavin. *Death and the young man*. 1979.
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Figure 57. Barry Cleavin. *Upon Reflection*. 1977.
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**Figure 59.** Barry Cleavin. *Pursuit*. 1976.

**Figure 60.** Barry Cleavin. *And the winner is...* 2004.
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