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Goya's grotesque : abjection in los Caprichos, Desastres de la Guerra, and los Disparates

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Chapter Eleven
Abjection by Rape and Public Execution

IN WAR, IT NEED hardly be said, fairness, humanity and respect are dismissed; almost any available option to subdue or destroy the enemy is fair game. Social restrictions are undone by war and acts that in a peacetime society would be intolerable and criminal are taken on as additional agents in the struggle. Among the invading and the invaded temperaments are heated and, for the most part, convinced only by binary oppositions. One is either for or against the cause. Those who show traces of collaboration with the other side are themselves turned into the enemy and dealt with mercilessly. In this chapter I look at rape as a means the invader employs to extend influence, and at public execution as a means the invaded employ to snuff the threat of being weakened from within by traitors. Rape is meant to subdue, execution of traitors to destroy, but both can be understood as processes of abjection that aim to extend influence: that of the invader in the case of rape, that of the invaded (a kind of reclamation of tainted space) in the case of execution for treason.

1. Rape

Goya returns, in *Desastres* 9, 10, 11, 14 and 19, to the theme of rape that had previously caught his attention in *Los Caprichos*. In the earlier etchings, chiefly represented by Capricho 8, *They carried Her off!* [Fig.72], discrepancies between the image and the commentaries make it difficult to be sure whether Goya sympathises with the plight of the women or sees their fate as merited; in *Los Desastres*, however, all of the rape etchings clearly side with the women – they are, after all, Spanish women being molested by Napoleon's soldiers; and in war the molestation of the defender's women is tantamount to raping the land itself.

War, rape and conquest are mingled in these etchings, and their conflation ren-

ders each as abject as the next: all is rape, and rape is an abject act[1]. Moreover, the invading rapists come across as abjection in their own right, in the sense that they represent unwanted foreign matter – matter literally out of place since they come from elsewhere. The invading army, I would argue, is like a localised infection or pollution on a grand scale. It is an irruption into a stable, known system (the nation), and is therefore structurally similar to the returning repressed in its most terrifying, undermining and disintegrative sense. The army is also structurally similar to the other, or to the position the other fills in the specular relationship, and therefore carries all the threats of mastery that this relationship implies. Abjection comes across the border and seizes a place of mastery by abjecting through rape. Here abjection of the invaded land is a corollary to mastery and involves not exclusion but surrender: the forced assumption of a place under the invader's heel.

For the invader the opposite is true: rape affirms, integrates and elevates him to a position of mastery. Since an invading soldier is also the representative of a nation, his rapine activity serves to extend the influence of his nation; forcing the women of the invaded nation into a position of submission, he attempts to further establish the dominion of his country. In the process he opens a route for the introduction of an alien Symbolic into the social organisation of the invaded land. Occupation of another land involves the takeover of that land's Symbolic and its replacement by a Symbolic more suited to the occupier's needs. Acts of abjection thus have the unexpected effect of paving the way for the invader's Symbolic. It becomes evident that much abjection is imposed and effected in the name of the Symbolic and through it (e.g., by means of a new language, a new government, new laws). Rape would seem

1 I label rape an abject act for at least two reasons: (1) Kristeva defines the 'shameless rapist' (1982:4) as abject, (2) it is an act that has been consensually viewed, since biblical times – especially where rape of women and rape of land coincide – as socially unacceptable. What society mutually decries has no Symbolic sanction and can only be abject. The reader needs to bear in mind, however, that in wartime, when other abject acts (e.g., murder) lose their abject, criminal status and become sanctioned, rape emerges as a form of conquest, and becomes less socially taboo. During war rape can function to affirm and extend the Symbolic of the fighting side doing the raping (that is, the invading side).

to form part of this process.

The most emphatic of the rape etchings is *Desastre* 11, *Nor for These* (*Ni por Esas*)[2] [Fig.98], in which soldiers seize women in the street of a quiet town and cart them into what appears to be a tunnel system to satisfy their impulses in private.

Nor for These is the first etching in the series (as it is generally arranged today) in which Goya situates violent action inside a tunnel or cavern-like setting. Other works that do this include *One cannot look* [Fig.129], *Bitter Presence* [Fig.99], *The Same in Other Areas* [Fig.100] and an etching that was cut from the series, *Infamous Gain* [Fig.101]. The implication of similar tunnel-like interiors, structures and conjunctions appears in other etchings, including *And there is no Remedy* [Fig.124], *They do not agree* (*No se convienen*) [Fig.102], *Cure Them and onto the Next* [Fig.103], *He gets Something out of It* [Fig.149] and *This is Bad* (*Esto es Malo*) [Fig.104]. In some of these works (e.g., *And there is no Remedy*) the division between an illuminated arc shape and a patch of darkness is clearly nothing but a pictorial device, but in others (e.g., *He gets Something out of It*) it may well indicate a tunnel or cave. Still other works depict actual interiors (*These too* [Fig.105], *Ravages of War* [Fig.106], *It happened this way* [*Así sucedió*] [Fig.107] and, possibly, *It will be the Same* [*Será lo Mismo*] [Fig.108]) in which one loses, in part or entirely, the sense of a transition from outside to inside (and vice versa).

An interest in the potential of tunnels and caves to act emotively and to connote a particular state of body and mind had already emerged in Goya's art prior to the *Desastres* images I have just listed. In a number of paintings produced at the turn of the century[3] Goya drew a connection between enclosed spaces and violence or

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2 Plates 9, 10 and 11 follow one another in a precise way, and their titles only make sense in relation to each other. Hence: 9, *They do not want to*, 10, *Neither (do they)*, 11, *Nor for these*. The title for plate 11 breaks the sequence a little (which explains why it has traditionally been translated as *Nor* do *these*), but should, I think, be understood as a truncation from a fuller sentence, which could run as follows: *Nor for these men would the women be willing to submit.*

3 In Goya, El Capricho y La Invención, Wilson-Bareau dates all of these works to 1798–1800 (1993:279–83; for an alternative, more conventional, dating of these paintings, see Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal, 1994:263).



Fig.98 Nor for These (*Ni por Esas*)



Fig.99 Bitter Presence (*Amarga Presencia*)



Fig.100 The Same in Other Areas (*Lo Mismo en Otras Partes*)

Fig.101 Infamous Gain (*Infame Provecho*)





Fig.102 They do not agree (*No se convienen*)



Fig.103 Cure Them and on to the Next (*Curarlos y a Otra*)



Fig.104 This is Bad (*Esto es Malo*)



Fig.105 These too (*También Estos*)

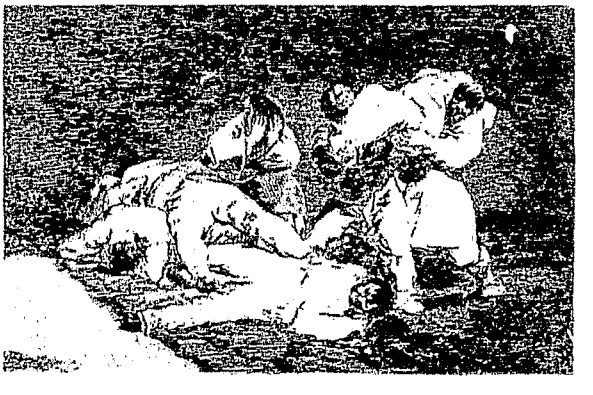


Fig.106 Ravages of War (*Estragos de la Guerra*)



Fig.107 It happened this Way (*Así sucedió*)

Fig.108 It will be the Same (*Será lo Mismo*)



death. These include: *Bandits shooting their prisoners* [Fig.109], in which men and women are executed by bandits in a light-filled cave; *Bandit undressing a Woman* [Fig.110], which depicts a woman being denuded by a bandit in a vast rocky cavern; and *Bandit murdering a Woman* [Fig.111], also set in a spacious cave, through which light enters to reveal a bandit preparing to plunge his knife into an already-bleeding naked woman. The paintings indicate two things: (1) Goya had a relatively constant conception of the appearance of mountain caverns; (2) he saw such secluded places as sites where bandits – social rebels and marginals – maltreated, raped and murdered women. The caves read as those interstices where the unstructured denizens of society hide out and threaten the structured, pure and law-abiding civil body with homicide and other anti-social acts. The women raped and murdered in these spaces have been removed from their place of safety, from their known world, and set apart in environs beyond the reaches of the Symbolic – environs fraught with the spectre of death simply by their ambiguous position in discourse as sites of both danger and mystery, fear and fascination. As places that signify death, dark recesses that could as easily be voids, they are creepy, affecting and macabre, and are thus ideal emotive locales for scenes of violence and murder. This disturbing affinity in Goya's mind between enclosures and abuse/murder informs many of the *Desastres* etchings I have mentioned, although with these Goya tends more frequently to suggest than to depict actual caverns and tunnels.

Such a tunnel, it seems to me, is the one we see in *Nor for These*. While it may be part of a sewer system or possibly a bridge, the tunnel-like form in this etching strikes me primarily as an emblem of darkness, a sign for a place and a moment of repulsive lust and intolerable abuse; it cues the viewer to interpret the behaviour of the men as so abominable that, even when it appears to unfold in a public space, it can only be duly represented within a precinct, a grotto, where night abides. Rape is a crepuscular activity.

The gloom of the tunnel (s)mothers the figures to the extreme right of the image,







Fig.109 (above left) *Bandits shooting Their Prisoners*

Fig.110 (above right) *Bandits undressing a Woman*

Fig.111 (right) *Bandit murdering a Woman*

while the treatment of the ground as a dense, almost tacky, substance (which is taken up in the soldiers' clothing) evokes not only a cloying lutulent surface but also congealing blood. To the tactile shadows and viscid ground Goya opposes the unblemished clothing and impermeable naked skin of the foreground woman. Resolutely white, she symbolises purity. But she will not remain white and unsullied for long: a soldier drags her into the darkness of the tunnel, where he will impose his violent desire, along with his foreignness, contagion and corruption, on her. For him this will be a positive thing, an affirmation of both himself and his nation; but for her it will be a boundary-shattering nightmare, an invasion of the self by the other.

The soldier's action of dragging the woman into the tunnel signifies for me not only the penetration currently dominating his desire, but also the at once dislocating, muddling and pulverising consequences of rape for the woman, marked in the transition from clarity, resolute limits and a unified sense of self (all symbolised by the arc of light and the church steeple to the left of the print) to a state of confusion (again only for her, not for him) where violence obliterates the self and dissipates the subject's hold over her identity (all symbolised by the blackness of the tunnel). This passage can be charted in the contrast between the well-illuminated front woman and the mixed up, obscure combination figure – part male/part female – that barely stands out from the matrix of shadows to the extreme right of the print. In brief, rape can be understood here as something that jolts the female subject from a place of secure differentiation to one of abject non-differentiation.

If one reads the image in this way, one's sense of horror stems from three factors: (1) the dissolution of self for the woman, who is mastered by the other in a way violent enough to cause a collapse of the ego; (2) the fact that the other uses aggressive, imperialist rape to affirm his national Symbolic and thereby to infiltrate it by force into the target nation; and (3) the depiction of a dark and violent place that might arouse fears of the repressed (here definitely cast as terrifying by its association with rape), fears of material the ego has abjected to centralise and sustain itself

– fears of one's own dissolution. Anger gives the viewer a means to overcome these fears, for in turning on the rapist and the invader, in allowing rage to flow outwards toward him, one can achieve a degree of liberation.

In *They do not want to* (*No quieren*) [Fig.112] one might well find an Imaginary solution to the problem of whatever anger *Nor for These* might arouse, since in this image – unusual in the series – women fight back and are poised to destroy their would-be rapist. While the enemy soldier tackles with a young woman who claws at his face, an older woman moves toward him from behind with a knife in her hand. The juxtaposition of the woman's white dress with the soldier's dark, concealing uniform makes it all too clear that this is a meeting between goodness/innocence and evil in the form of libidinous and imperialist impurity. Thus a clash between the destructive insanity of a pleasure principle suddenly unleashed from its restraints and the preservative defence of the reality-seeking ego: between the abject and the Symbolic.

Goya heightens the viewer's contact with the action of the print, and with the enemy soldier in particular, by depicting the young woman from behind, in a position similar to that in which the viewer stands to the image. This rather conventional compositional ploy gives the viewer a pictorial surrogate within which to embody him/herself and so facilitate a fantasmatic merger with the image that would allow him or her to do battle with the enemy[4]. At the level of the image, at

[4] In using terms such as pictorial "surrogate" and "merger" I have in mind Michael Fried's extensive work on absorption and quasi-bodily merger (e.g., 'The Beholder in Courbet: His early Self-Portraits and their place in His Art' [1978], Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot [1980], 'Painter into Painting: On Courbet's *After Dinner at Ornans* and *Stone-breakers*' [1982], 'The Structure of Beholding in Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*' [1983], and Courbet's Realism [1990]; his discussion of 'Courbet's femininity' in Courbet's Realism [also to be found, in different form, in Faunce, S., and Nochlin, L., Courbet Reconsidered, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988] is perhaps his most provocative use of the absorption theory, for he alleges that Courbet's desire for incorporation within those of his images that include female protagonists associates him so closely with them that he, like them, becomes the object of the [male] viewer's gaze: he thus adopts the subordinate position that much feminist writing claims to be the place allotted to images of women in the history of art). I do not believe that the case Fried makes for Courbet can also be made for Goya, even though figures seen from behind are common enough in Goya's art, but in



Fig.112 They do not want to (*No quieren*)

least, the viewer is offered a place to work out (abject) the anger that such warmongering rape is bound to inspire – once transplanted, fantasmatically, into the body of the young woman, the viewer is given the opportunity to claw the soldier's face and feel him go slack as the old woman's knife sinks into his back. The viewer can affirm the women's resistance to their abductor, reinforce the young woman in her exertions, and even – if only in a highly removed somatic manner – experience the repulsion of being violated by a 'shameless rapist' (Kristeva, 1982:4).

Aiding the young woman's struggle against the soldier is the older woman with the knife. Vega (in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:193) makes the interesting observation that this woman 'seems to emerge from the earth'. The lines that demarcate the hem of her dress from the ground establish a transition, but there is scarcely a shift to mark the change in material from soil to fabric; hence, she seems to twist out of the ground like an old tree[5]. Such an identification between the old woman and the ground emphasises the procreativity of the earth and may even suggest that the old woman is a *representative* of the earth, something sprouted from its humus to defend the young woman. It is as if the soldier, in trying to rape the woman, has incurred the wrath of the earth itself, or, more precisely, the wrath of the Spanish motherland. That the old woman may depict Spain itself casts her in a celebratory allegorical role. Spain is a resistant, tenacious country that will not surrender to the rampant desires of the invader. Instead she raises herself up, a living mass capable

describing the potential surrogacy of the young woman in *They do not want to* I find Fried's terms useful.

5 This observation gains credibility when one recalls images from *Los Caprichos* that collapse the distance between human beings and trees for symbolic purposes. In *What a Tailor can do!* [Fig.65] a habit-cloaked tree literally becomes a person for those sufficiently gullible; in *Is there None who can untie Us?* [Fig.4 and Fig.164] man and woman are not only bound to a tree but their bodies begin to ape the form – witness the woman's branch-like arms – and the material – witness the man's right leg, which is composed of the identical dense etching marks as the section of tree limb on which the giant owl rests its right leg – of the tree. Most significantly, in *Hush* [Fig.113] an old procuress is visually aligned with a background tree to emphasise her ancient knowledge of evil social practices. I will also in due course draw attention to etchings in the *Desastres* in which Goya associates men with trees.

of taking on retaliatory shapes, to destroy those who would dare rape her.

The invader comes to stand, in this reading, for all manner of matter out of place – for all objects and acts that insinuate themselves into an otherwise uninterrupted order and so, within the normal regulatory function of the Symbolic, get sidelined to the category of abjection. His menace is, however, an exacerbated form of such volatile matter – it is violent, conquering, mastering, and mere psychological processes (e.g., projection) are unequal to the task of abjecting him.



Fig.113 Hush (*Chitón*)

Aggression, the desire to master what threatens to master, is the only possible solution. A struggle for selfhood waged in everyday society at a level automatic enough to be ignored is, during war, transformed into a dramatic life and death tussle, the object for abjection (the enemy) taking on the full load of horror, disgust and loathing that attends all successfully repressed objects of (r)ejection. Self/other hostility is fine-tuned in this confrontation because in the form of the enemy other abjection takes on a concrete form – a form that can, and must, be destroyed. The desire to destroy the other which the civilising process represses, and which can normally only be acted out in fantasy (play, representation, day-dreaming. etc.), is suddenly turned into a social function. In war the abject (the invader) must be repelled for the good of the collective, national Symbolic, even if it carries as a consequence the death of individuals. I read the women in *They do not want to* as committed to this task as much as to the one of preserving the ego against an as-

sault that could fragment it.

Wartime rape thus emerges, for the invader, as a process of asserting mastery over the enemy other and as an excuse to indulge in behaviour that society otherwise prohibits; while for the defending women it emerges as a struggle to maintain at one and the same time the integrity of the individual ego and the resistant uniformity of the nation. Whether invading or defending, the issue is one of abjecting the other – for the invader, by using rape to humiliate women and make them submissive; for the women, by murdering those who have come from afar and who have no rightful claim on the land in which they are out of place.

2. *Public execution*

The invaded can also use violence to subdue its enemy, particularly when that enemy is the other within. The etching *Mob* and the one that follows it, *He deserved it*, form a distinct couplet in the series, since they are the only ones that, so the literature has shown to some degree of certainty, deal with Spanish attacks on Spaniards. In both works Spaniards use execution in a manner similar to rape, to render the enemy within abject, and thereby to (re)exert their influence, to (re)-claim corrupted space in the name of the national Symbolic they are protecting from dissolution or substitution.

Mob (*Populacho*) [Fig.114] offers a chilling scene of human cruelty. In a hilly outdoor setting a man and a woman use clubs to beat a man who has been dragged by a rope (pulled either by people or horses) till the ground has almost peeled his clothes off him. A crowd mills behind; included within it, to the left of the image, is a priest wearing the distinctive bean-shaped hat of his occupation. Over the whole scene tent-shaped structures, summed up pictorially by the large four-pillared turret on the horizon, brood like incursions from a different world.

Isadora Rose relates this image and its companion piece, *He deserved it* (*Lo merecia*) [Fig.115], to a contemporary incident, which occurred in 1808 after the French



Fig.114 Mob (*Populacho*)

abandoned Madrid for a few months and the people of the city rose against those *Madrileños* who had shown support for the French during the occupation:

> [Of the attacks against those] who had adhered to the French cause . . . the most notable and vituperable was the barbarous murder of the ex-intendant of the Havanna, Luis Viguri, supposedly a great friend of Godoy, who was dragged inhumanely through the streets of Madrid, establishing a precedent that the perverse people took pleasure in calling "La Viguriana", threatening with the same fate all those who qualified as traitors.[6]



Fig.115 He deserved It (*Lo Merecia*)

That Goya depicted this event in Disasters 28 and 29 is questionable. Despite the obvious correspondences between the account and the two etchings, it is likely,

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6 Translated from Rose, 1977:714. The original she provides:

> . . . se habian adherido á la causa francesa: entre ellas la más señalada y vituperable fué el bárbaro asesinato en la persona del ex-intendente de La Habana D. Luis Viguri, grande amigo que suponían de Godoy, á quien arrastraron inhumanamente por las calles de Madrid, estableciendo un precedente que la gente aviesa se complacia en llamar La Viguriana, amenazando con igual suerte á todos los que calificaba de traidores.

In her discussion of the print, Sayre (1974:170) provides quotes from Southey and Ferrari that offer other potential historical precedents for the scene in Goya's etching.

as Rose claims, that the prints are less direct transcriptions of a specific event than the result of Goya borrowing 'certain elements of content from the popular occurrences of his day, and recreat[ing] them in order to express his own more universal concepts of ignorance, irrationality, brutality, cruelty and hatred' (1977:714).

I would argue that Goya's interest in these etchings lies in mob psychology and the distortion of the body under the influence of murderous passion. The body of the club-wielding woman is exemplary in this regard: Goya infuses her actions with a beating rhythm that seems capable of infinite protraction. It seems unlikely that she will tire of her efforts, or be jolted away from them by the unexpected return of humanity and reason. The man's deed, conveyed in his more active, angular body, shows greater savagery than the woman's: a hungry, sadistic look contorts his face, his mouth hangs open salaciously, and he seems poised to ram his stick into the beaten man's anus. While she merely wants to reduce the victim to a pulp, the man wants to inflict pain by way of the tabooed openings into the body. The woman and man thus stand in a special relationship, the former set on destroying the victim's exterior, while the latter works on his interior.

These two ordinary citizens are led to kill this man in this extremely brutal manner because he is a traitor – an especially heinous traitor: an *afrancesado*: a French-supporting Spaniard, a dissembling two-timing boundary hopper who ought to be on one side, but shows allegiance for the other. In short, the enemy Other within. In my reading, this makes him both liminal or transitional (dubious, unreliable, matter out of place) and an object of loathing, i.e., abject. He has turned his back on his own nation, the people who have given him place and self, on his Symbolic, his Other. He is a threat to the self that is the Spanish nation, an impure, alloyed menace to the integrity of this social formation. The Spaniards must react if they are to keep the formation intact, if they are to keep the collective body uninterrupted, coherent, unidirectional in terms of its desire of the Other (hence of its Symbolic).

The traitor is both a disturbance to the socius that causes aggression among

those who have stayed loyal, and a real danger to the foundations of the socius, for if one person can turn traitor, many can – the traitor is treated, patently in the print, as something that must be destroyed, *stopped*, as if he is a contaminant, a disease, something that can infiltrate other subjects within the social order and corrupt them, turn them, render them obeisant to the foreign master, the French Other. It is only by turning the traitor into the utmost of abjection, by degrading him to the level of the cadaver – more, a bruised, bloody, split and pulpy cadaver, as far from the pure, unspotted, uniform perfection of the ideal classical body as one could get – that those who have stayed loyal to their (Spanish) Symbolic can forestall the possibility of him introducing a new dominion into their existence. The action may seem extreme, since he is only one man, but it is what he *represents* that matters. He is the *objet a*, one could argue, of a polluting, swamping enemy Other, and in erasing him from the realm of material reality, the Spaniards metaphorically and psychologically erase the enemy itself. An erasure of one of their own is possible because, in classifying him as a traitor, the Spaniards exsect him from their collective body, turning him into nothing more than a reject organ, an appendix, a piece of matter that can be cast away without pause for reconsideration because it is foreign to the body, an internal enemy to an otherwise healthy system: an abject. In abjecting him the adhering Spaniards reclaim the territory he has corrupted, plug the gap he has opened in the social weave, and so reinstate the condition of unity that is essential to an effective campaign against the foreign invader.

The reading of this etching is complicated, however, by the very ferocity of the man and woman, which turns them into uncertain characters toward whom the viewer may well feel disgust and loathing. It is likely, given Goya's curt and less than sympathetic title, *Mob*, that he intended the viewer to identify with the plight of the *afrancesado*. That the etching makes such an appeal does not mean that Goya sided with the French – we have already seen some images that would deny such a perspective on his sympathies, and we will see many more – but, rather, that he

was capable of looking at situations from two or more angles at the same time (a point already evident in the *Caprichos*: revisit the chapter on "Equivocation"). The psychology of the mob and the behaviour of a traitor both interest him, and I have a sense that he never resolved his feelings toward these two subject positions[7].

In *Mob*, however, he does seem a lot closer to criticising the mass than the man. A last aspect of the image I will use to support this reading – however tenuously and metaphorically – is the mysterious turret structure in the background. Partially dissolved by a heat haze or some other phenomenon, it is nevertheless, for me, a kind of Symbolic presence in the landscape, a witness to this scene of frenetic cruelty. As a stout, four-pillared edifice, I take it into my interpretation as a representation of culture, society, order, law, the Name-of-the-Father. It sits mute and vaporizes in a terrain crammed with individuals who have abandoned the principles it stands for. Its dissolution into the whiteness of the air conveys a sense of dissolving values, laws, national progress, humanity. The empty sky is engulfing, corrosive, consuming – a white void[8] that suitably represents the mindless motives

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7 It would seem that Goya himself, if not a French supporter, was in the earlier stages of the war – before the rapacity of Napoleon became unmistakable – something of an *afrancesado* (see, for example, Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal, 1994:213–14). As such, *Mob* might depict his pity for those who were killed for their anti-Spanish convictions, or his fear that the "mob" would turn on him and beat him mercilessly. *He deserved it*, which repeats the theme of *Mob*, is interesting in this regard. I suspect that the man in a curious white fleece or hide, who turns to look at the man he helps to drag through the countryside, is a surrogate for Goya. Is it not possible that Goya embodies himself in this individual to vicariously affirm his own loyalty to the Spanish nation and, thereby, to fortify his own psychical boundaries? It seems likely that it is this man who thinks the words that form the etching's title, and if Goya takes him as his pictorial representative, could one not make a case that such words act to reassure Goya that savage actions against *afrancesados* are warranted and should be endorsed? In this reading, then, Goya swears allegiance to mob justice and attempts to realign his sympathies, to put an end to his transitional, hybrid status, by embracing a single, albeit ruthless, ideology. The realignment is not a complete success, however: witness the grief on the face of the fleece-cloaked man.

8 Goya's use of blankness, which, given the colour of paper, transmutes to *whiteness*, bears out the fascinating discourse on this topic Herman Melville offers in chapter 42 of *Moby Dick*. The following passage, which I extract from the longer quote that prefaces this Part, is especially evocative:

> Is it that by its indefiniteness [whiteness] shadows forth the heartless voids and immensities of the universe, and thus stabs us from behind with the thought of annihilation,

that currently dominate the mob, and the place to which civilisation has excluded such barbaric behaviour – the place of the abject. Thus, in the turret's fading I find a metaphor for the swamping return of abjection, of repressed aggression, and I conclude that *Mob* is close to satire in the rigour with which it compels viewers to abject the mass. The mob's purpose, reclamation of the invaded national Symbolic, is positive enough, but their means for achieving it do not convince Goya.

In the next chapter I look at situations of execution on the battlefield, in which the invader uses the sanctioned murder of war to enforce mastery and so subjugate the conquered to an inescapably abject position.

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when beholding the white depths of the milky way?

Melville's association of voids with annihilation closely echoes the obliterating formlessness I perceive in the sky of *Mob* and in many other *Desastres*. His concept of "white depths" is also expansive in its implications: it is not only darkness that fosters fear of indefinite boundaries and empty spaces – we must remember, after all, that it was the uncharted areas of old maps that became the locations for monsters and other figments of the grotesque imagination (see Paulson, 1983:178, 180). It is also worth noting here that Jackson associates the environments of fantasy literature with 'relatively bleak, empty, indeterminate landscapes, which are less definable as places than as spaces, as white, grey, or shady blanknesses' (1981:42).

Chapter Twelve
Abjection by Sanctioned Murder

SCENES OF EXECUTION ARE common in *Los Desastres*, and are repetitive in terms of composition and iconography. Goya depicted two broad types of executions: those undertaken in desolate places in the landscape (*And there is no Remedy, One cannot look, Barbarians!* [*¡Bárbaros!*] [Fig.116], *It is a strong Thing* [*Fuerte Cosa es*] [Fig.117], *Why?* [*¿Por Qué?*] [Fig.118], *Neither*), and those undertaken in public, with an attendant audience (*Hard is the Way* [*¡Duro es el Paso!*] [Fig.119], *For a Knife* [Fig.120], *One cannot understand why* [*No se puede saber por qué*] [Fig.121]). Other images, most notably *With Reason or Without* (*Con Razón o sin Ella*) [Fig.122], although not portrayals of execution, pick up on the execution characteristic of the close-ranked firing squad. In this chapter I look only at examples of executions, carried out by the French against Spaniards, in empty environments. I also look at images, such as *What more is there to do?*, that depict mutilation as an adjunct to execution.

Underlying all of these execution images is what can be interpreted as the operation to abject, put into effect in the most excluding way human social organisation knows: by murder – the sanctioned murder of war. The purpose is the affirmation of a collective identity at the expense of the enemy, that is, the *other* – an aggression aimed at destroying the other, and quickening the self's own fullness by imbibing the identity of the counterpart.

As I have noted before, most emphatically in my discussion of *Love and Death* in Chapter Eight of Part Two, Lacan contends that the mirror relation institutes a powerful loathing in the self for the other, which expresses itself in an aggressive "either him or me" dichotomy:

> In every relationship with the other, even an erotic one, there is some echo of this relation of exclusion, *it's either him or me*, because on the imaginary plane, the human subject is so constituted that the other is always on the point of re-adopting the place of mastery in relation to him, because there is an ego in him that is always in part foreign to him . . . (1993:93)



Fig.116 Barbarians! (*¡Bárbaros!*)



Fig.117 It is a Strong Thing! (*¡Fuerte Cosa es!*)



Fig.118 Why? (*¿Por qué?*)

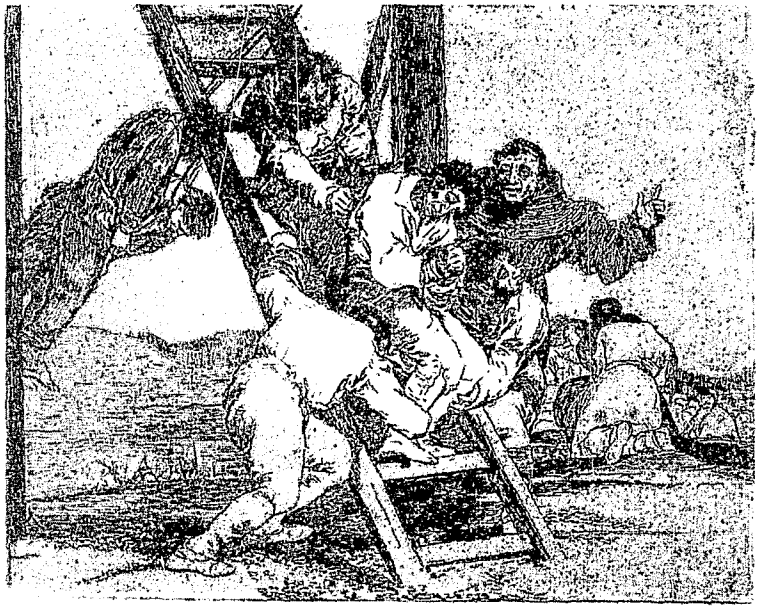


Fig.119 Hard is the Way! (*¡Duro es el Paso!*)



Fig.120 For a Knife (*Por una Navaja*)



Fig.121 One cannct understand Why (*No se puede saber por qué*)



Fig.122 With Reason or Without (*Con Razón o sin Ella*)

According to Lacan, the alienation that accompanies the subject's assertion of self during the mirror phase – in which the child recognises itself in and founds itself on an image-other rather than in or on its own body – dooms the subject to an existence in which the relationship between self and other is in permanent oscillation, flux and alternation, and the alienating other becomes, for the subject, the focus of a hatred that rises to counter the destabilising threat the other represents to the boundaries of the subject's self[1]. Only in the other does the self find an emblem of unity that can organise his or her sense of bodily fragmentation; but this very founding means that the self's unity is dependent on the other, and alterations in the other can both undermine the integrity of the self's illusion of unity (e.g., if the other were to die) and fire the self to destroy the other (if the self feels that the other is trying to seize the place of unity within the self, that is, to take over the self). In war it is the latter alteration that applies: the invasion of the foreigner presents a direct threat, first, to the individual self, and, second, to the collective self (i.e., the nation). To prevent the foreign other from usurping the individual and collective self, the individual fights, wages war, even dies in the attempt to keep the private ego and the general Symbolic intact.

The impulse to protect a fragile identity (ego/nation) translates into the impulse to survive by killing. Dead, the enemy/other can no longer test the barriers of subject or nation; instead, by taking in the other, the subject restores and fortifies his or her barriers[2] and also reclaims the barriers of the nation. This is clearly a process of

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1 This point is best expressed in Lacan's discussion of the see-saw of desire in Seminar I (1988*a*:169–72). In this discussion he uses the example of a girl who throws a stone at the head of a neighbouring playmate, only to announce triumphantly: *'Me break Francis head'* (172). He then writes: 'I still don't predict a criminal future for her. She simply displayed the most fundamental structure of the human being on the imaginary plane – to destroy the person who is the site of alienation' (172).

2 No image can be more fruitfully related to the relationship between the aggressivity of war and the tensions of the mirror phase than *Neither* (*Tampoco*) [Fig.123], in which a French-supporting soldier gazes at his alter ego hanging on a gibbet. They mirror each other, but the *it's either you or me* hazards of the mirror phase have been altered. The soldier's other is dead, mastered. The soldier has successfully conquered the Spaniard, and has seized his place



Fig.123 Neither (*Tampoco*)

abjection, however temporary and inadequate, whereby the fighting self remains intact by ridding the battlefield of an unwanted, foreign presence, and by introject-

by erasing him (both in the sense of ingesting his ego and in the more literal sense of taking the Symbolic place he formerly inhabited – one way to overwhelm the enemy is by substitution). But what the etching dramatises, for me, is the poor gain secured by eradicating the enemy other. The French supporter can rest so easy because, in hanging his threatening other, he has affirmed his boundaries and consolidated his Imaginary. No decay or flow for him. Yet, has this given him anything concrete – other than a corpse? Has it led him home to the place where desire ceases? No, all it appears to have precipitated is a state of dullness. The other is dead; there he hangs, nothing but a disposable piece of abjection, a thing of flesh and fabric, inanimate, unthreatening at this point prior to decomposition. The challenge is gone, the dialectic in which the enemy other represents a necessary but also unwanted threat is broken. It seems the very lack of opposition might cause a descent into formlessness. *Neither*, when interpreted this way, goes to show that as menacing and dangerous as the abject can be (the deadly enemy in this case), it is as much needed as feared. Once it has been destroyed and the strange relation of compulsion and repulsion is dissolved, the enemy abject loses its capacity to interest and becomes nothing more than a discardable object. It is the operation to abject that sustains the Symbolic. In the French supporter's slack body and abstracted expression one sees the crumbling into inertia and ultimately the descent into the void that will occur when the operation to abject, and thus the mechanisms of the Imaginary relation – the relation between self and other – is suspended. The individual feeds on the ego of the other, and in war this feeding is both more unavoidable and more literal; halt this process, and the individual is as much at risk from inward collapse as he is threatened by the destruction the other represents. The only option is to keep on abjecting, and to keep feeding on the others that fall by your hand. The other *Desastres* do not go as far as *Neither*; most are concerned with the act of execution or the mutilation that follows it, and do not play up the question of what the other means once dead. My text, then, concerns itself more with the fight to rid the field of the polluting other than with the inactivity and vapidness Goya, at least in *Neither*, associates with the moment beyond eradication.

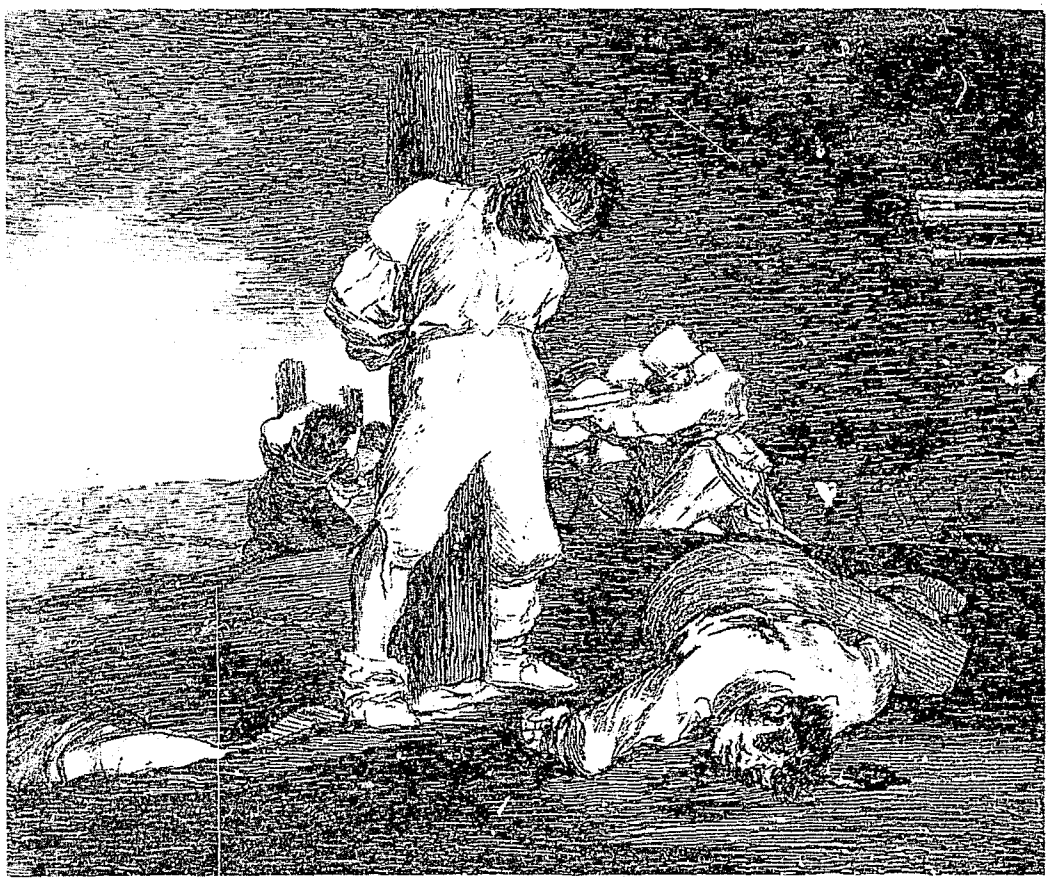


Fig.124 And there is no Remedy (*Y no hay Remedio*)

ing within the self the image of an absolutely and irreversibly humbled, because dead, other. It is a maintenance of territory, the stand against the invader being braced by the full aggression of the fighter's stand against an outside that threatens to abject him, to kill him, cast him into the abyss of non-differentiation.

At this level, too, the fighter's struggle becomes one, in Kristeva's terms, to 'ward off the . . . fear of his very own identity sinking irretrievably into the mother' (1982:64). Here I would argue that mother and death become one and the same peril in the taxed mind of defender and invader alike: a place of seamless flow, without ego, without differentiation; and to sink into death would be the same as to return to the abject(ed) mother. The fighter's homicidal abjection of the enemy other can thus also be understood as a repetition of the abjection of the mother, and therefore as an assertion of Symbolic mastery. The enemy (m)other becomes an object whose destruction maintains Symbolic law and the supremacy of the nation.

In *And there is no Remedy* (*Y no hay Remedio*) [Fig.124] one finds the operation to abject put into effect by a death squad. A compact field of horizontal hatchings floods across at least seventy percent of the print's background, creating an appropriate screen to isolate and emphasise the savage executions for which there is apparently "no remedy". Two Spaniards have already been executed and lie on the ground; the remaining three are bound to execution posts evocative of the three crosses of Calvary. Goya represents in full clarity and detail at least one of the French firing squads – a self-quotation from the artist's painting *The Third of May, 1808, in Madrid: The Executions on Príncipe Pío Hill*



Fig.125 Detail of *The Third of May*, showing firing squad

[Fig.125] – that dog the staggered line of Spanish victims. A second firing squad is evoked by the cluster of gun barrels spearing in from the right-hand framing edge, while a third might be found in the gloom of the print's background. Goya's treatment of the gun barrels is particularly striking as an example of metonymy. Since the purpose of the firing squad can be captured in the guns that fulfil the execution, there is no need to depict the men who hold them[3]. The viewer is left to embody those weapons, should s/he so choose, with reference to the more completely represented firing squad, but what matters to Goya, it seems to me, is a concept of elision in which flesh-and-blood human being and cold steel weapon cease to be separate. Both are simply mechanisms of murder.

Goya displays death in the form of the two Spaniards who have already been killed, the one clearly visible in the right foreground of the print, the other almost out of sight to the left. Goya's treatment of the man on the right gives him an awk-

[3] Goya probably came to this etching equipped with what he had learned from his previous depictions of firing squads, such as those in the paintings *The Third of May* and *Execution : a Military Camp* [Fig.126]. If one accepts Wilson-Bareau's unorthodox dating for the latter image, in the exhibition catalogue for *Goya, El (. cho y La Invención* (1993:286-87), it precedes the etching by a good fourteen years. It was his familiarity with the subject that enabled him to reduce it so drastically without losing – instead, gaining – impact.



Fig.126 *Execution in a Military Camp*

wardness one feels in every joint, especially in the right arm, which appears at first glance to be bent back unnaturally, and the head, which seems to have been wrung off its neck. Blood leaks from this mutilated head and pools on the ground. Goya contrasts the relatively firm and solid shape of the blood pool on the man's left side with the more profuse puddle on the other side, which only maintains its shape in part and elsewhere dissipates into the ground. This dissipation, a sense of soaking, Goya deliberately achieves by fading the hatchings describing the blood into the finer hatchings of the ground. For now it is the man's blood that seeps into the soil, but in time his body will follow. This progression is foretold in the state of the other dead Spaniard, who lies, half-invisible, in the folds of the hill to the left of the blindfolded Spaniard. The creases of the ground do more than enclose this man, they engulf him; he sinks[4]: he is devoured. His exceptionally transitional status is signalled by his scarcely-recognisable form: already his human identity has attenuated to the point where he could as easily be something pushed up by the earth as a body lying in a hollow[5]. The three Spaniards form a progression from the living body to the dead body to the body in decay and dissolution – a movement from wholeness to disintegration, form to formlessness, individual to amalgam, bounded ego-centred subject to corpse, body to mass – the mass of the earth, the eternal grave.

Opposed to these dissolving identities is the homogeneity of the French soldiers, who, in the automatised act of murder, fuse into a unity that stands erect, consoli-

4 In later life it seems that Goya was drawn more and more to sinking as a theme. It is frequently present in *Los Desastres*, if not obviously so, and becomes something of a feature in the "Black paintings", both in the darkness that threatens to overwhelm many of these paintings and, more importantly, in separate images that specifically treat the ground as an unstable swampy substance, viz., *Fight with Clubs* [Fig.127], in which two men sunk in mud to their knees bludgeon each other bloody – Goya's ultimate comment on the do-or-die aggression I have argued to stem from the mirror relation – and *Dog* [Fig.128], which depicts a dog submerged up to its neck in a quagmire.

5 He is entering a state where, to quote Thieweleit, 'everything is the same, inextricably mixed together, and no one will be able to tell what it is that's flowing down there' (1987:428).



Fig.127 *Fight with Clubs*



Fig.128 *Dog*

dated and living. The print juxtaposes this strength in unity and the weakness of fragmentation, enhancing the difference between a Symbolic (and its representatives) in a state of mastery and a Symbolic (and its representatives) that is being mastered. This is the purpose of war writ large, so to speak: invader kills invaded to claim possession of the land, and the process is one by which the former strengthens his cause by feeding on the latter. By displacing certain numbers of the invaded into the realm of irreversible abjection (death), the invader seeks to abject (humble, bring into submission) the rest of the invaded communities, and so gain the position where he can put his Symbolic in the place of his enemy's.

Even ordinary citizens, women and children, can fall prey to this replacement, as we learn from *Desastre* 26, *One cannot look* (*No se puede mirar*) [Fig.129].

The Spanish citizens, arranged like a frieze inside what I take to be a tunnel-like cave, are shown in various states of emotion as they surrender to their dismal fate. This fate comes in the form of gun barrels fitted with bayonets, which penetrate the image (and the tunnel) from the right framing edge, in echo of the barrels in *And there is no Remedy*. Soldiers are thus again represented by their weapons; this is metonymy at its most eloquent and inexorable: the part standing for the whole[6], gun standing for soldier and death.

Now, although this image provides the framework for a fruitful discourse on the phallus as weapon – the congenerous gun barrels with their knives can be understood as metaphorical of the unified French phallus, the national phallus penetrating another nation and, through war, bringing it under French suzerainty – what I want to concentrate on is the cave, which retains the dark, engulfing qualities of the grotto in *Sad Presentiments* and the rape tunnel in *Nor for These*.

Goya's decision to use a cave motif may have been dictated by accounts he might have heard of citizens fleeing their towns to hide from the French invaders in the

6 For another fine example of metonymy, the thirty sails for thirty ships introduced by Roman Jakobson and expanded by Lacan, see Écrits, 1977:156.

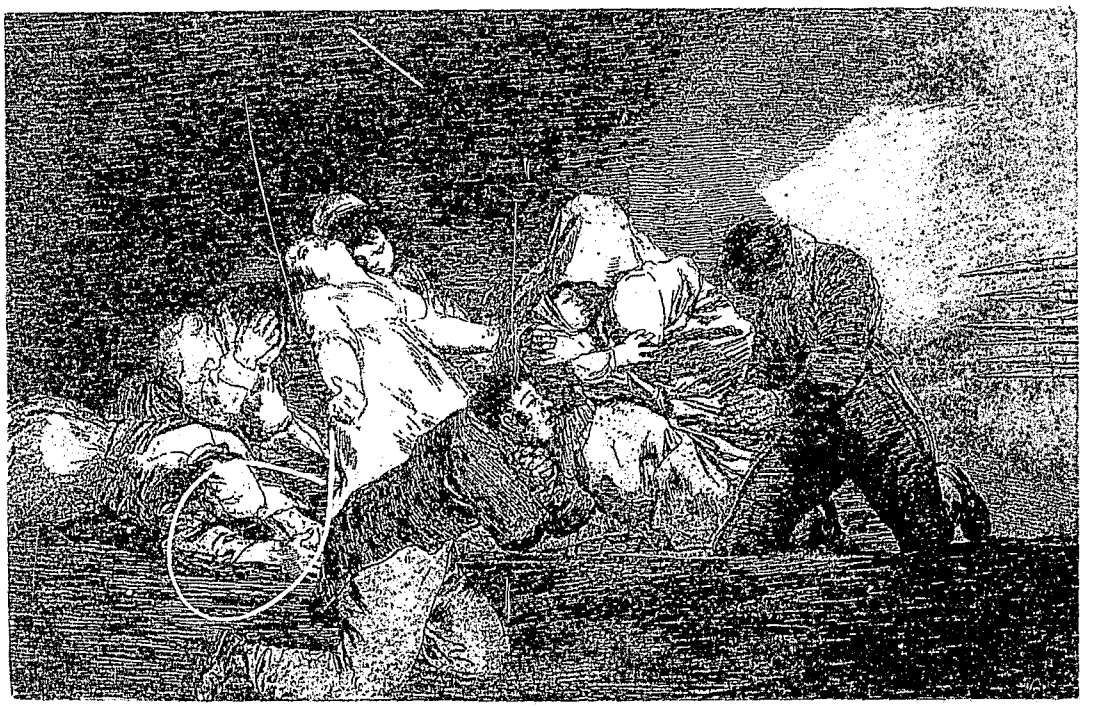


Fig.129 One cannot look (*No se puede mirar*)

mountains, only to be tracked down and trapped within their source of shelter; but I have already suggested that caves were special places for Goya, places of violence and violation, places where the female body becomes an object of abuse. The dominant figure in the etching itself is, unsurprisingly, a woman, who spreads her arms as she awaits the penetration of the bullets, and in this sense the etching is akin to the paintings of rape I mentioned in the previous chapter. What can one infer from this conjunction of woman and cave? In Lecture Ten of his Introductory lectures, Freud offers the starting point for a possible interpretation:

> The female genitals are symbolically represented by all such objects as share their characteristic of enclosing a hollow space which can take something into itself: by *pits, cavities* and *hollows*, for instance . . . (1976:189)[7]

Tunnels and caves would rank among the clearest symbols of the female genitals, and of coitus (Freud, 1991*a*:521–22). From this I would argue for an exegesis that views the tunnel-like cave in the etching as metaphoric of a genital-like opening or cavity in the earth; thus, one that views the earth as a body. The connection one could draw between the earth as a reproductive but also consuming female principle and a cavity that, in psychoanalytic symbolism, would be coded as female allows us to view Goya's cave as a female interior. It does not have to be a genital interior, of course; we could see it just as easily as procreative (womb-like), digestive (intestinal) or even excretory (rectal). As genital, the cave is subject to rapine penetration; as wombic, it is both haven and grave; as digestive, it is a place of disintegration; as excretory, it is a place of abject matter. All of these organs and processes can inform the way we read the fate of the Spanish citizens. They are first penetrated in their place of sanctuary, their womb-like haven in the hills, and theirs is a rape that ends in death. Abject matter already to the foreign invaders whose act of war is the first step toward enforcing a new Symbolic (that of the French nation), they become still more abject as their murder converts them into corpses. As harbour for

7 Also consult The Interpretation of Dreams, 1991*a*:462–63, 471–74, 521–22, 524–27.

dead bodies, the cave becomes a graveyard, a dumping zone for the remainders of death set aside in the mountains, beyond the contact of the living invaders who would want nothing more to do with objects as defiling as the cadavers of foreigners. Over time the corpses will decay and disintegrate, and so fulfil the cave's latent digestive, consuming role. In this sense it is again a womb – the womb reversed into a place of burial, withholding all promise of rebirth.

Murdering civilians in a cave may satisfy that genus of desires and impulses that, thanks to the nature of the Imaginary relation, is a common human inheritance, but which socialisation suppresses, and it may answer to war's call to erase the other in the name of generalised surrender, but it is not necessarily the most effective way of dealing with the enemy other, for what is left behind in a cave, possibly not to be seen again until after the cessation of conflict, cannot continue to serve the war effort. A body mutilated after execution and left in the battlefield, on the other hand, may be very useful indeed, and it is to works that display such bodies that I now turn.

In *What more is there to do?* (*¿Qué hay que hacer más?*) [Fig.130], soldiers of various nationalities, united by their allegiance to the French cause, rest a dead Spaniard head- and shoulders-first on the ground and spread his legs to allow one of their comrades to castrate him with a sabre. This act of amputation is suggestively repeated in Goya's treatment of the man's legs: the right leg, which is held by a single soldier, ends at the knee – we see nothing of the calf and foot that, presumably, extend somewhere behind that joint. We see even less of the left leg, which disappears behind the sabre-wielding soldier, and does not emerge again, except by implication, in the posture of the soldier to the extreme left of the print[8].

I read the soldiers' act of castration as both a last degrading and desecratory assault on a once-threatening foreign other and, more broadly – given that the Span-

8 He holds his arms in front of him and, firmly planting his feet in one spot, leans back, clearly using the victim's leg – which must be what his outreached hands grasp – for support.



Fig.130 What more is there to do? (*¿Qué hay que hacer mas?*)

iard's body is not an isolated incident in the field of war, but part of a collective – a metaphoric blow against the society, social organisation, identity and oneness of the Spanish nation. Amputation of one man's organ of potency – in a reproductive sense – registers on a different level as an extraction of the enemy Other's phallus – the Symbolic signifier of wholeness, mass, waves of united troops.

It is no wonder Goya asks, 'What more is there to do?' What act could be more destructive of the integrity of the individual, or effect a more final abstraction from the body, than castration? There are more atomising things one could do to a body, to be sure (and we will shortly see works in which mutilation goes beyond what we find in *What more is there to do?*); but removal of the penis, at least when considered psychoanalytically, is the ultimate deletion of both the individual and the collective. For one thing, extraction of the penis means a loss of reproductive potency, which symbolises the invader's desire to rob the Spanish nation of its ability to regenerate its numbers. For another, if the penis in the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan is the organ on which society is founded in an Oedipal moment, and if it is inscribed as the supreme signifier of desire – and here I have to sideline questions of the genital privileging that such theory encourages – then its removal signifies the destruction of the singular object that allegedly determines the relations between the sexes and all relations of desire. The penis, as representative of the phallus, is a kind of ganglion or nucleus in the complex networks that compose the Symbolic, and its excision from the body is metaphoric of the excision of the phallus from the Symbolic – of the uprooting of the Other's phallus. Such an uprooting, if not spelling the end of the Symbolic, nevertheless puts it in a precarious and vulnerable position.

This, I want to argue, is a useful way to read the action of the soldiers in the print. They are not merely desecrating an object made venerable by its death, but are using the body as a sign. Left in the battlefield, a mutilated cadaver of this sort must surely act as a reassurance of triumph to the invaders who chance upon it,

and as a warning of impending defeat to those Spaniards who see it. As warning, such dismemberment might even induce a recurrence of childhood castration fears in those who encounter it[9]. The body's threat would be particularly disturbing for such individuals since, as their ego boundaries would already have been placed in a tenuous state by the intensification of self-other relations that occurs during combat, they would feel acutely the possibility of being mastered by an other. The anxiety would play out internally as an emergence of repression, and the subject would be menaced from without and within. It is interesting to note in this regard that Freud drew a strong connection between castration anxiety and fear of death. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety,* for instance, we read:

> I am . . . inclined to adhere to the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analogous to the fear of castration and that the situation to which the ego is reacting is one of being abandoned by the protecting super-ego . . . so that it has no longer any safeguard against all the dangers that surround it. (1993:285–86)

It is in this sense that one should understand the terror a castrated corpse could hold for any already shaken Spanish fighter that might come across it. The super-ego in Freud's reading is a shield for the ego, which protects the ego from all the dangers that threaten to divide or dissolve it; it is a principle of organisation, one that determines behaviour. Confronted by an object upon which castration has been carried out, the ego may feel that the super-ego has failed in its task of warding off such hazards to mental existence. Anxiety results. The dismembered corpse

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9 Castration threats and anxiety in Freud's system rest on two contentions: (1) that the male child, on seeing the female child's genitals, develops through fantasy a fear of being castrated, and (2) that parents menace children with the threat of castration to keep them from manipulating their genitals. In the case of the male child, Freud argues, the female child's lack of a penis is evidence of such parental castration. (For Freud on the castration complex, see, for example, 1991c:316–21, 341–42, 352–57; 1991o:119–21, 158–64; 1993:178–86). The fear that results from such threats has no basis in fact, and the terror of castration unfolds almost entirely at the level of fantasy. It is nonetheless a threat that causes great anxiety for the male child, and it would seem that even for the adult an encounter with a corpse from which the penis has been removed could cause a recurrence of castration fear. This fear might even resurrect the spectre of the phallic mother – the woman for whom the male child invents a phallus through his assumption that she has one – and repeat the shattering disclosure of her "mutilated" genitals.

shows that castration is not just a fantasy, that it *can* happen for real; consequently, the given subject will feel abandoned by the super-ego function which, if I may extrapolate further, will seem relocated to another *outside* place – the place occupied, in the etching, by the foreign enemy. Thus the subject will feel that the super-ego has turned against him, become an other, before which the ego has no shield.

In short, I am presuming, within the conjectural framework of this reading, that it would be more difficult to wage war when castration and its result, a body gored and streaming, constantly weighs on the mind. It might induce such fear in the fighter that he would willingly choose surrender or even suicide over the potential horror of being killed and dismembered in the same way. At least by accepting the dominion of the other the fighter can re-establish his super-ego, even if it is now wired into a new Symbolic and delimited by the foreign Other. A master means clearly-articulated limits, a specific place and role, order, a Symbolic – in short, an integrated collective in which the subject can assert himself in relation to an assertive Other. In this way he can re-inhabit a place where *he* determines the category of abjection, instead of finding himself in a position of abjection. Any master, even a foreign one, will do if it grants such a degree of certainty.

An abject object that can shake the defender's ego into conformity with the invader's Symbolic, the butchered corpse also signifies a social system in collapse. Castration of the dead, like rape, would be intolerable and probably outlawed during peace time; thus by desecrating the corpse in this way the French invaders break what would otherwise be a prohibition, subvert the civilising process and, metaphorically, dismember the Spanish Symbolic itself. In so doing, they create the impression that the battlefield is a place free of restrictions, a drifting terrain where laws are optional or non-existent, where anything goes, where borders are meant to be broken, where blood is meant to flow, where bodily appendages are meant to be excised. In short, a mutilated body can function to signify a Symbolic order in the process of disintegration. Spaniards moving through such a terrain would be

threatened at every turn by this absence of familiar limits; the apparent lack of a Symbolic and of a prohibitive super-ego (Thou shalt not kill) would leave them feeling abandoned, rootless, afraid, and less capable of maintaining their mental armour and modelling their ego boundaries on the idyllic image of the unified nation. If one feels one's own ego is under real threat of dissolution, one surely cannot continue to summon reassurance or stability from such super-ego ideals as patriotism and nationhood.

In *This is Worse* and *Great feats! With the dead!* Goya returns to the theme of castrated corpses, but in these images the bodies have also been dismembered. *This is Worse* depicts a figure impaled on a tree stump, its right arm chopped off, while *Great Feats! With the Dead!* (*¡Grande hazaña! ¡Con Muertos!*) [Fig.131], which I do not examine, presents the gruesome spectacle of two castrated bodies juxtaposed with one that has been cut into sections and hung on or attached to a tree, a jumble sale of body parts in which it is easy to find a correlation between bodily fragmentation and the fragmentation of the ego and of the Spanish collective body, its Symbolic.



Fig.131 Great Feats! With the Dead! (*¡Grande Hazaña! ¡Con Muertos!*)

To the motif of castration – not depicted, but implied in other truncations, e.g., that of the arm – *This is Worse* (*Esto es Peor*) [Fig.132] adds those of penetration and rupture: the sharp point that breaks the surface of the skin between the shoulder blades to release a bifurcating stream of blood, could be read as the end of the branch that penetrates the man's rectum, which has run through the length of the man's interior. This intimate relationship between tree and corpse collapses the borders between wood, flesh and, ultimately, the earth that continues to nourish the stump.

The corpse has the sense of a warning and a means employed by the invader to figuratively dismember the Spanish nation, but it also qualifies as a sacrificial object – an offering to the earth, an appeasement. It returns the abject – a disfigured cadaver – to the territory where abjection prospers: the all-devouring land itself. In a space entirely outside culture, in direct communication with nature, the corpse will succumb to processes of decay that will transform it from clinically dead matter into the organic material the earth needs to flourish. This process of the other's decay will serve the invader as a demonstration to those who think they possess the land of Spain, the Spaniards, that the land is indifferent, that it consumes invader and inhabitant alike, and that it matters not who rules the land: all are equally subject to its processes.

Goya's etching also implicates the viewer in a disquieting relationship with the image. Since the corpse is seen from behind, and since the stump emerges almost from the bottom framing edge, the distance between the viewer and pictorial space is elided. This encourages the viewer into a close relationship with the image; but, unlike in *They do not want to*, nearness to the image here attains a level of horror. Invited in this way, the viewer has the opportunity to fantasmatically embody him/herself in the tree or in the figure itself – an embodiment that brings him or her into close interaction with stump, truncation, rupture, blood, dead flesh.

Goya's dismembered corpse is antithetical to the Symbolic and weakens the integrity of signification. It is an object that no-one – save those who have already

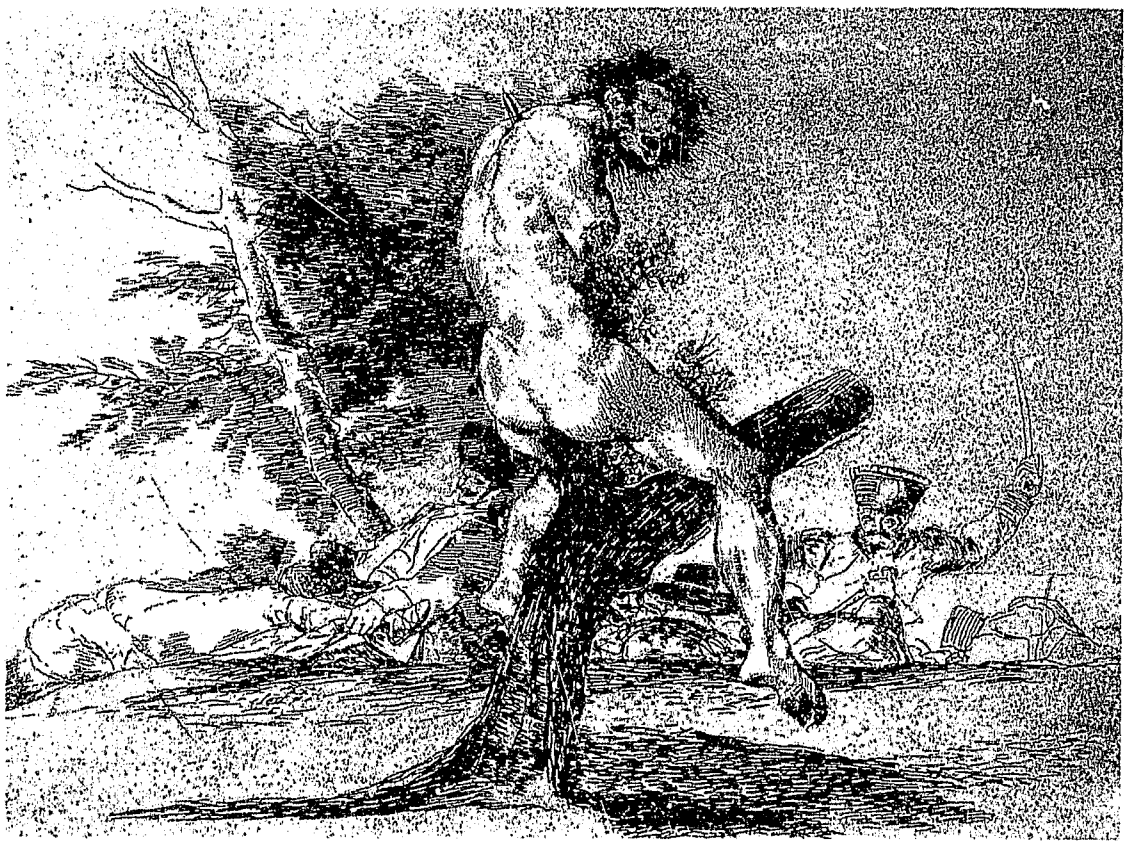


Fig.132 This is Worse (*Esto es Peor*)

up-ended the pursuits of the social formation to indulge in pleasures to which the Symbolic affixes terms like perversion, barbarism, sadism and satanism – seeks to acknowledge or have contact with. But at the same time it is clearly inscribed in a framework compounded to elicit the viewer's sympathy. This is a body that has been shockingly and shamelessly brutalised: it is not the abject thing here; those who have reduced it to this are. Goya obviously wants the corpse to stimulate our outrage and promote a kind of convulsion by which we detach ourselves from any involvement with the mangling invader. It is by evoking the super-ego's dictates against homicide and corpse-desecration that the image bypasses the offensiveness of its central object and leads the viewer to repel the mutilators. Whether this act of repelling is successful, whether it eases the viewer's anxiety by clearly demarcating what the true abjection in the image is, is a matter for the individual beholder.

Through the etchings in this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that execution is not a simple matter of one group of people killing another; fundamental issues of preserving and even extending the self are involved, and the individual fighter in this process cannot be considered apart from his collective role as weapon of the national self. Invasion is a process of destruction that, in the case of execution on the battlefield, has to do primarily with the reduction of numbers – the erasure of the other. Execution emerges as a means of abjecting the enemy other by means of the finality of murder, with the intention of forcing the entire invaded nation into a position of abject submission.

The dismemberment images I have looked at in this chapter, meanwhile, seem to posit that for the soldier who watches the hanged man in *Neither* there is a last act to perform on the corpse: mutilation. This is a savage, sadistic, mastering act against an unresisting, utterly and already abject(ed) foe; but it is by no means without purpose. As I have tried to show, Goya's images can give us information about the psychological stakes at work in such brutalities of war, and they can show us that the disfigurement of corpses can function as a warning and a threat to

the living. Mutilated bodies exhibited in the landscape mark territory that has been possessed by the invader, announce defeat, superstitiously appease and bribe the personified forces of the invaded land, and, above all, act to whittle away the defender's sense of selfhood, to the point where he or she might feel that his or her Symbolic order has collapsed, taking with it the super-ego that guards the ego from attrition and erasure by forces both in the psyche and in the external world. The danger of such a failure of self is exemplified in the abattoir treatment meted out to the dead. Fragmentation of the body will always imply fragmentation of the person, and, ultimately, fragmentation of the civil body. Lop off a penis and you lop off a phallus and you cut down an Other, leaving a blank space in which to enthrone a new Other. Such is the interconnectedness of the signifiers that construct the Symbolic: the manipulation of one means the manipulation of many, to the point where chain reactions and domino effects can destabilise the entire complex and introduce the real possibility of collapse into a rubble of signs.

Chapter Thirteen
Abject Remains

THE BATTLEFIELD SWEPT BY conflict is marked by a particular breed of object, the corpse, which is deposited behind to form the abject remains of war.

Goya tends to portray the dead not singly or in widely-scattered groups, but in mounds, accretions and piles that Paulson, for one, associates with 'an almost casual heap', the result of 'a sort of defecation by some vicious colossus' (1983:377). Though what he depicts may well be corpses gathered together to facilitate easier removal on carts, the sense of defecation remains, giving the additional impression that Goya felt he could best do justice to the equalising and levelling effect of death by representing the dead in clumps.

'Throughout the country,' write Sánchez and Gállego (1995:106), 'the bodies of the dead accumulate in heaps, testifying to the pointlessness of violence and suffering.' They are right: Goya's repetition of the theme of amassed corpses reduces war to a meaningless exercise. The effect is cumulative, just as the bodies are accumulative: the more bodies we see, the more they cancel each other out and become, in their excess, hollow and nonsensical. Why do nations wage war for *this*? The production of war is death, its disposable object – its consumer object – is the corpse, and since all become equal in death every corpse is the same object. It is the ultimate expression of non-creativity, non-(re)production, cutting against every constructive, positive impulse that civilisation rigs itself to pursue.

Yet, on the level of Goya's artistic production, this repetition has the hallmarks of a reconstitutive process, laying blocks and bricks to build an edifice, and one, I would like to suggest, that Goya employed, probably on an entirely unconscious level, to rebuild himself in the face of all the horror and abjection that had swamped his land. For me, his immersion in the subject, the obsessive repetition, betokens more than a desire to stir the outrage in his viewer or to record the brutalities of war; there seems,

rather, a decided effort to mend the self, to use the fragment like sutures, each image another stitch across the gaping wound of his subjectivity.

The residual product of this almost numerical process is a corpus of images that can, in particular, increase the depth of our comprehension of the condition to be abject. It is to select works from this corpus that I now turn.

In *For this you were Born* (*Para eso habeis nacido*) [Fig.133] corpses lie in a heap on a barren bank. A man walks among them, vomiting what may well be blood. The sky behind the man is marked by a broad, tornado-like column that seems to rise from the corpses like smoke or a reek so strong it has become visual. The actual identity of this column is in doubt since its sharp left-hand edge makes it read like a stretch of dark sky behind a mass of white cloud. It is thus both negative and positive, open sky and smoke column, an undecided, liminal thing that has affinities with the corpses in which its pictorial origin may lie.

The predominant term in the print is the corpse mass; some individuals in this mass are quite distinct, but, levelled by death, they share the same cadaverous identity as the less discrete forms in the accumulation. The bodies near the centre of the heap are more interfused and darker than those on its fringes, suggesting a glutinous mass most consolidated at its core, where it flows, molasses-like, into a single entity. Tellingly, it is onto this area of greater concretion that the man vomits, adding another form of flow to the current toward formlessness that seems to have run the bodies into one another.

The man walks as if in sleep, his arms spread at his sides like antennae testing for nearby objects. This, his seemingly stumbling steps, the emptiness in his eyes, and the purely reflexive nature of his vomiting signals, more than blindness, a failure of all physical, and perhaps mental, senses, and a loss of the ability to receive stimuli from exterior or interior. His mouth opens under its own volition and convulsively voids the contents of his interior. There is an unshakeable sense that, though we see the man losing control of only one orifice, the others have likewise



Fig.133 For This You were Born (*Para Eso habeis Nacido*)

escaped his will. Vomiting turns the man inside out, breaks the boundary between internal and external, and ruptures the outline of his body. Such an expulsion is, in the words of Douglas, 'marginal stuff of the most obvious kind' (1984:121), that is, abjection. Faced with the cardinal object of abjection, the corpse, the man reacts bodily, producing his own abjection.

There is, however, a decisive difference between the abjection that has mastered the man and the abjection that has become the condition of the dead: his abjection is that which permits life through, in the words of Walter Benjamin, 'processes of elimination and purification [by which] everything corpse-like falls away from the body piece by piece' (1977:217–18; cf. Kristeva's 'wastes [that] drop so that I might live' [1982:3]), whereas theirs is the state of *cadere*: they have fallen beyond the limit of life (Kristeva:3). Quoting further from Kristeva:

> The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (4)

The corpse is a stain on life, a pollution of the living, which constantly threatens the subject with all-devouring mortality. The man vomiting on the dead breaks the barriers of his body in an attempt to expel the horror of the corpse, to subdue the psychological threat it poses to his ego, to repress it, so to speak, beneath a layer of vomit. He does not want to lose his subjectivity in that swamp of limbs, blood, unseeing eyes and unbreathing mouths. To preserve himself, to (re)locate his body and its all-important defensive boundaries, he turns to vomit as a defence. Kristeva helps us understand how vomit can function in this way:

> The spasms and vomiting that protect me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. (1982:2)

> "I" want none of that element . . . "I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. . . . I expel *myself*. I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself* . . . During that course in which "I" become, I give birth to

> myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit. (3)[1]

Rebirth is founded on an abjection of one's interior for the sake of affirming a sense of "I". In my interpretation of Goya's etching the process is more precisely one of extruding the interior to engulf what threatens "I". To avoid being engulfed, the man engulfs the corpse hazard in his own regurgitation[2].

Meanwhile, the dead have already been *in*gurgitated. Death has consumed them and they have slipped permanently from the Symbolic order they had formerly helped to constitute and promulgate. Their identity and place now lies in the formlessness evoked in the blood that flows from their bodies into the ground, and which is echoed in the vaporous column that crosses the sky, capable at any moment of either dissipating (if it is smoke) or being engulfed (if it is sky glimpsed between cloud).

In *To bury and be quiet* (*Enterrar y callar*) [Fig.134] Goya again juxtaposes the living with the dead, although in this case the living defend themselves from the dead not by extruding inner contents but by sealing off the orifices to prevent the effluvia of the corpses from penetrating them.

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1 Purely by way of observation, it is interesting that Kristeva, at this early stage of her essay on abjection, moves straight from food-loathing and vomiting to death and the corpse: the two forms of abjection coupled so precisely in Goya's etching.

2 One could alternatively argue that the man's self-preservative vomiting serves the purpose of breaking the container of his body to allow him to make a new container for himself. The 'Case of Robert', which Lacan and his students investigated in Seminar I (1988*a*:91–100), provides a full description of this means of defence. The following passage, in which the narrator of the account of the young boy Robert relates the climactic moment of the biography, is sufficient for my limited purposes here:

> When I returned, he emptied out, as if to destroy them, the milk, his pee, his pooh, then took off his smock and threw it in the water. He thus destroyed his old contents and his old container [i.e., his body image] . . . The next day, overwhelmed by his psychological reaction, Robert expressed himself on the somatic plane – profuse diarrhoea, vomiting, fainting. He emptied himself completely of his past image . . . a new birth. (Lefort in Lacan, 1988*a*:99–100)

In short, the theory is, by voiding the excretable contents of one's body one can also void an image of one's self that has become intolerable, thereby emptying the container of the body to make it receptive to an intake of new, (re)constructive contents on which to establish a new self.



Fig.134 To bury and be quiet (*Enterrar y callar*)

Although this etching has been related to precedents in book illustrations of Dante's Inferno[3], it does not draw on any antecedent for its emotive impact, and Goya's composition is distinctively his. By filling half the image with a field of bodies, which plays off nothing but a vaguely-clouded sky and the two living figures silhouetted against it, Goya enhances the stark, irreversible horror of his subject matter. The elevation of the land and the placement of the figures act to situate viewers at a particular eye level that makes them feel as if they are also walking through the field of the dead. Goya uses the two wanderers among the corpses as guides, who show us by the way they cover their faces what our reaction to the corpses should be. Sayre describes this reaction as 'nausea' (1974:153), but it could as easily simply be a defensive blocking of the organs of smell and breathing to parry the aroma of rot. This prevention of wind-born contamination reminds me of

3 Victor Chan (1981), and Sarah Symmons (1971), in particular, have connected Goya to such artists as John Flaxman and William Blake. In places this link seems fragile, in others it is almost incontrovertible: note, for example, the similarities between *To Bury and be quiet* and Flaxman's illustration for Dante's *The Pit of Disease* [Fig.135] (see Symmons, 1971:512; also Symmons in Bindman, 1979). Werner Hofmann has also drawn attention to several works from all of Goya's etching series that may betray the influence of Flaxman (see Hofmann in Bindman, 1979:17–20).

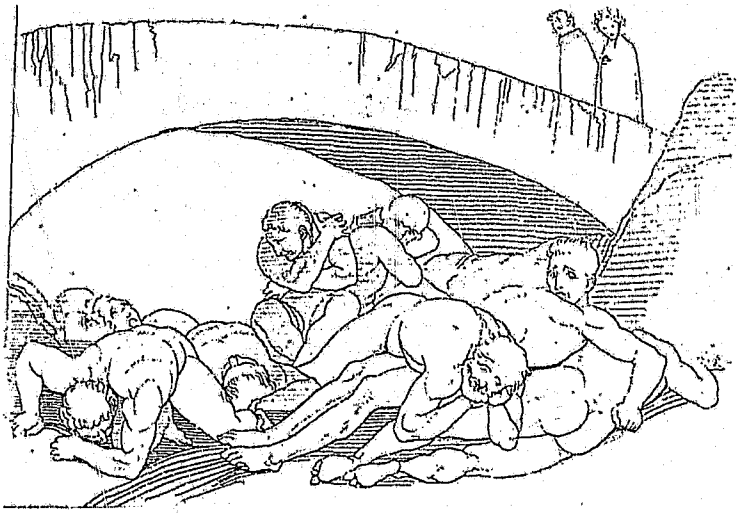


Fig.135 Flaxman, *The Pit of Disease*

Kristeva's claim that by turning aside from abjection we distance ourselves from the capacity for "treachery":

> The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck. The shame of compromise, of being in the middle of treachery. The fascinated start that leads me toward and separates me from them. (1982:2)

As spectators we are drawn to this death, this frank image of mortality, this field of fleshy, bloody, decomposite aromas; but as subjects we are inclined to turn away, deny and detach, for not to do so would be treason against the Symbolic.

Goya's treatment of the dead almost encourages such treason, for he depicts them naked and renders each one according to (Neo)classical canons, which ennoble in the ancient tradition of Greek statuary, and thus makes them seem like icons we are meant to admire. The presence of this aggrandising tradition jars with the image of these dead men, whose celebratory nudity is undone by the blood that visibly flows from some, by the evidence of castration, and by the odd remnants of clothing (such as the shoes in the bottom right section of the print) which testify that the men are naked because they were heartlessly sacked by their killers. These men have been *stripped* naked, and have had their genitals removed – an observation confirmed by the blood leaking from the lowest figure in the bottom right section of the print, which pools most thickly at the end of a flow whose source is clearly (if one follows the stem of that pool under the man's right thigh to his absent genitals) between his legs.

Because the figures are between beauty and mutilation, they split and muddle the viewer's response: we want to admire the classical contours and musculature of the figures, but then we note the damage, the castration, the blood, and we recall that these are corpses; at this point the men cease to be aesthetic objects, and, as if the mere expression of admiration is sufficient to force contact with the dead, we gag and put our hands over our mouths. This response expresses the compulsion/repulsion complex so typical of encounters with abjection.

Goya positions his ambivalent figures on a stretch of ground that heaves, rolls and humps like a sheet billowed and buoyed by air, sinking some of the dead partially or entirely out of view, while swelling others into clear sight. Like many of the grounds Goya etches in *Los Desastres*, this one is variegated between patches of dense, dark etching and areas of relatively light needle work. Although this treatment of the ground is sometimes descriptive of shadow, it is more often than not simply a pictorial device by means of which Goya makes the ground more visually interesting. In many instances, however, it also begins to read as maculation, blotching and soaking caused by the penetration of blood into the soil. The dark patches in *To bury and be quiet* seem to me like sections of coagulated, caked gore – a perception supported by the evident delta of blood that spreads from the body of the man to the right of the etching, and by the hard, and in places grainy, edge to the darkness beneath the man left of centre, which makes me think of a blood-flow slowly creeping across the ground, staining it pebble by pebble. The abjection of the men has invaded the ground itself, turning the land into a territory of corrupted matter. It is as much pulp as solid ground, and it is really no surprise, reading it this way, that some of the bodies, particularly those in the humps behind the front hill, seem to be sinking into it. The manner in which the bodies have already conformed to the topography – especially noticeable in the corpses on the hill immediately behind the front one, which snugly interweave their substrate – speaks of a dissolution as decisive as the leaching of vital organics into soil. The identity of these corpses is already almost inextricable from that of the earth into which they will decay if they are left to lie where they have fallen.

I read *To bury and be quiet* as a straightforward image of the condition to be abject. In *Charity* (*Caridad*) [Fig.136], however, we return the discussion to a work in which this condition has becomes so intolerable to the living that, to be free of it, they institute an abjecting operation: they toss the dead into a hole in the earth.

One presumes that their act of "charity" lies in their effort to give the dead a sem-



Fig.136 Charity (*Caridad*)

blance of burial, but it is quite possible that Goya is being ironic: there seems to be little altruism in discarding corpses in a convenient crack in the ground. We can easily read their act as one that puts into practice an abjecting operation that helps them to strengthen their tottering Symbolic order.

What I want to concentrate on first is the 'grave' itself. It strikes me as a close analogue for the female genitals. The cavity in the earth forms an undulant cut – truly a cut, since the ground, for a change, has a hard and resistant quality – that broadens into a chasm at the right of the image (or, alternatively, narrows to the left of the image). Goya's articulation of the cut's rim is particularly striking. Instead of simply etching a vent dropping away to unknown depths, Goya carefully describes a slab-like overhang that runs like a pelmet across almost the full length of the abyss. Although the etching marks describing this "pelmet" are predominantly vertical and are clearly meant to flatten its face, Goya thatches them in groups of short upright marks that, in places, begin to describe volume, giving the rim an almost convex appearance. The strong undercutting beneath the rim (emphasised by the curved strokes of the chasm and the clearly-defined line separating the rim from the chasm) enhances the independence of the rim, giving it the sense of a *fold*. That this fold will bear comparison with the human body, more particularly, the labia of the female body, is affirmed by the narrow section of the crevice to the left of the image; here the etching marks are softer and give the rocky ground a puffy, fleshy appearance. As a last point, the curved strokes that define the convex face of the chasm below the rim go a long way toward describing not a wall of earth or rock but a wall of tissue, part of a tubular structure seen in cross section. In this way Goya's chasm suggests, at least for me, both the external and the internal structure of the female genitals. The earth becomes a female body and its genital opening is the entrance to a grave. Could there be a closer analogy between the grave, the female body and the earth? Whether Goya intended it or not, his chasm is all three, feeding more surely than any other image in the *Desastres* into my con-

tention that we can find a connection in Goya's art between the feminine interior and a dumping zone for abjection.

Once lost from view in the womb (or even the stomach or bowels) of this literal earth mother, the corpses cease, as *corpse threat*, to exist in symbolicity. Though the earth's vaginal cavity will remain dehiscent, the Symbolic will sew it shut at the signifying level[4], forever excluding the dead bodies, although not necessarily the memory of the men they were in life, from the realm of the living.

The corpse, because it has crossed the ultimate margin, comes to stand for everything associated with abjection: blood, excrement, maculation, putrefaction, flow, pulp, contamination, disease, feculence, debris – in other words, for the entire genus of cast-down and cast-off matter, and for everything that threatens the purity of the Symbolic. The living turf these figures into the abyss to protect themselves from the horror of mortality, from engulfment in human decomposition, from the real danger of sickness sparked by contact with rotting flesh. Charity is something only the living are capable of, and only the living need. For only in directing such generosity at themselves can the living, at least temporarily or at the level of immediate perception, rid the Symbolic field of all hazardous excrescences, mucilaginous heaps and stark carrion, by confining the dead to the tomb below, the inside of "mother" earth[5].

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4 I derive this image of Symbolic suturing from the following passage in The Kristeva Reader, where Kristeva describes the relationship between Semiotic and Symbolic in terms perfectly captured in the inside/outside dichotomy of Goya's abyss:

> The [symbolic] includes part of the [semiotic] and their scission is . . . marked by the break between signifier and signified. *Symbolic* would seem an appropriate term for this always split unification that is produced by a rupture and is impossible without it. Its etymology makes it particularly pertinent. The *σύμβολον* is a sign of recognition: an "object" split in two and the parts separated, but, as eyelids do, *σύμβολον* brings together the two edges of that fissure. As a result, the "symbol" is any joining, any bringing together that is a contract . . . (1986:102)

5 Any discussion of the maternal body as grave, as feminine abyss, as void where identity is consumed, can be enriched by Creed's concept of the 'monstrous-feminine' (e.g., 1986:58–65). In particular, her articulation of the hybrid monster of the mother, both attracting and repelling, dovetails with my earlier examination – in Part One, Chapter Two – of the way the

In this sense *Charity* can even demonstrate the manner in which repression and abjection work: by casting unwanted and reject things into a place that, in its secondary position, reads as *beneath* the Symbolic. The surface of the Symbolic must be kept clean, clear and undisturbed, and this can only be done by burying, i.e., repressing, what may threaten to wrinkle that surface or cause it to cave in. In actual practice, however, the Symbolic can never be truly incorruptible, and will always exist shoulder to shoulder, so to speak, with abjection. Even if in *Charity*, to recall Bakhtin, '[e]arth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb)' (1968:21), the fall from top to bottom has regenerative qualities. Disposal of the dead re-seals the Symbolic and paves the way, now that the corpse threat has been dealt with, for the living to remember the dead in ways that redeem them from the horror of their death and makes it possible for them to remain in the Symbolic at a different, symbolic and mnemonic, register.

The abject remains of war are lost objects, to be sure, and are a cause of both desire and loathing, but, like the original lost object of the mother, they must be jettisoned for the good of the collective social formation. It is a question of importance, and, as Bryson writes, '[t]he concept of importance can arise only by separating itself from what it declares to be trivial and insignificant; "importance" generates "waste", what is sometimes called the preterite, that which is excluded or passed

female womb is inverted or reversed in the process of repression from a place of undifferentiated pleasure to one of loss, separation, death. 'The monster,' writes Creed, 'represents both the subject's fears of being alone, of being separate from the mother, and the threat of annihilation – often through re-incorporation.' (65) Creed, to sidestep the problem of defining the mother only in terms of the Oedipal relationship, that is, in terms of the 'masculine', posits a 'more archaic dimension to the mother' (63) and so upholds the importance of the womb as a site of procreation that asserts sexual difference – a difference which, perhaps because of a kind of womb-envy, is seized on in horror film s to make the maternal body still more abject. Hence images associated with 'the dread of the generative mother seen only as abyss, the monstrous vagina, the origin of all life threatening to re-absorb what it once birthed' (62). As we have seen, in *Charity* the shape and treatment of the burial chasm yokes it to the 'voracious maw, the mysterious black hole' (63) of the womb, and can thus be read as an image of devouring and reincorporation. It is unambivalently the place of annihilation, the deadly face of the mother which the subject seeks to avoid. One might even pose on this basis that the bodies thrown into the crack are a kind of appeasement, a way of maintaining the status quo in which the engulfing place is kept at bay.

over' (1990:61). In the wake of war, importance accrues to what remains alive, not to what merely remains. The heartening aspect, if we must find it, is that the living never truly exclude, eradicate or repress the dead. Remembrance can fill the living with intense loss, pose its own threat to psychic integrity, and in this way what has been abjected can continue to act on us. Remembrance can also be rejuvenatory, and fill the living with dreams of a truly pure and incorruptible Symbolic beyond mortality.

Section Two: Scenes from an Occupied City

The war effort had significant repercussions on the civilian population of Spanish towns. Because so many men joined the struggle against Napoleon, agricultural production was seriously curtailed. This, coupled with the ineluctable disruptions to the movement of produce across war-ravaged lands, and the breakdown of communications, trade, and basic industry, led to a dire shortage of food for the populace. The problem was exacerbated by the fact that the warring factions snapped up most of the available food (Vega in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:204). Larger cities such as Madrid were particularly affected by the war shortages, because their populations, already sizeable, were swelled by the influx of rural people, who came to the cities hoping to find more adequate food supplies and facilities. The May 8th edition of the *Gaceta de Madrid* bears this point out:

> A consequence of the isolation of each province has been that of each town, and a consequence of the isolation of each town that of each individual: thus, this capital, residence of the Spanish monarchs, which owed all of its splendor to the affluence of the powerful in the court and to the treasures the towns gave as tribute to the sovereign, no longer receives any visitors but the unfortunate who come in search either of the bread they cannot obtain in the provinces or the justice and the protection they expect only from their monarch. (Quoted by Vega, in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:204)

As a *Madrileño*, Goya would have been well acquainted with this situation. If there is any section of *Los Desastres* that almost certainly contains representations of scenes the artist physically witnessed, it is this one. Since Goya, as a court painter, would have been wealthy enough to buy what food was available at exorbitant prices, he would not have endured the starvation and sickness he committed to his copper plates, but he would have had first-hand experience of how his fellow citizens were suffering in the streets. Yet, even within the documentary emphasis of these images, Goya appears as a precise and deliberate decision-maker: few of the scenes merely record a witnessed sight; instead, most comment on human nature, and mark a return to the satirical bent that dominates Goya's graphic work, al-

through with an edge that cuts deeper than satire: all implication of a comic flip-side, so frequently present in *Los Caprichos*, is absent here. Goya's depictions of men, women and children expiring under conditions of extreme abjection petition the viewer's pity and sympathy, and may even encourage the viewer to censure those who move smugly through the famished streets, assured of their bodily boundaries by their access to food and their semblance of social placing. At this level some of the famine scenes might incite the operation to abject; chiefly, however, they can be interpreted in terms of the condition to be abject and the politics underlying this condition.

To facilitate my discussion, I divide the famine scenes into two groups. The first, *The Healthy and the Sick, the Fed and the Famished*, deals with the ill, the starving and the dying and their attempts to survive in the streets of Madrid by attracting the succour of those less devastated by the famine. The second, *Cartloads to the Cemetery*, looks at works depicting those victims of the famine that have died and are now being collected and dumped in makeshift mortuaries and burial sites.

Chapter Fourteen
The Healthy and the Sick, the Fed and the Famished

THE VICTIMS OF FAMINE languish under the twin threats of illness and hunger and their appeals for help are largely ignored. A few images do indeed depict people giving aid, but I do not consider these here.

Goya's depictions of the ill and the starving are characteristic: he groups them together in one part of the print and juxtaposes them with figures representing the more well-to-do members of Madrid society who walk or stand at a safe distance from their social others. In some prints (e.g., *Clamours in vain* [*Clamores en vano*] [Fig.137]) Goya sets the famished in shadow and the fed in the sun, emphasising their spatial and social division by means of contrasting light conditions. He also implies that while the fed have the privilege of walking the streets, the famished



Fig.137 Clamours in vain (*Clamores en vano*)

are unable to step out of the fringes, the alleys and the ground between the courseways.

This separation draws attention to social processes. The community of Madrid, reeling from the devastation of war and trying to reconstitute itself, closes ranks to marginalise the malodorous parts of the social body. The healthy/fed must not mingle with the sick/starving; without the maintenance of discreet distance illness would spread, placing an already-vulnerable society at risk of dissolution into a morass of disease. The sick become the anathema of society, the lowest form of social entity, the most repulsive and untouchable type of abjection. They become a mire within, an inclusive or enclaved other that maculates and discolours the features of the social body and compels a redrawing of boundaries according to a conception of the city as a territory with no-go zones.

The Healthy and the Sick (*Sanos y Enfermos*) [Fig.138] provides a sterling image of the way society partitions itself in times of crises: the structured (healthy, fed and possessed of homes) in the open street, an artery of the civil body; the unstructured and anomalous (unhealthy, unfed, homeless) cramped into the shadows of a tunnel-like structure, a forgotten branch of the civil body's venous system.

The healthy fold their faces into the overhangs of their capes in what I read as an attempt to shield themselves from the bodily corruption in the foreground of the etching. They do not want to see or acknowledge the presence of the malnourished and diseased.

Those who inhabit the tunnel or arch (which recalls the caves and niches of the battlefield scenes) are emaciated and clothed in rags. In the centre stands a woman whose more complete clothing indicates that she may be volunteering to help the less fortunate; a boy leans stiffly against her and cries. In the middleground of the etching a woman sits and holds a skeletal baby in her lap, possibly making a vain attempt to nurse it. To the extreme left of the image sits a man whose upper body has withered to the extent where no flesh intervenes between bones and skin,



Fig.138 The Healthy and the Sick (*Sanos y Enfermos*)

while his forelegs rest heavily on the ground, bloat with dropsy[1].

To me, Goya is not simply being the good documenter here, and certainly not the good realist – his graphic art is hardly a catalogue of impartially transcriptive approaches and devices – rather, he is selecting his subject matter and exaggerating it into a more forcible, even exhortational, register. The only other image in his graphic art in which he uses dropsy is *Where is Mama going?* [Fig.54], where the disease magnifies the grotesque nature of the already-obese "mama" witch; and it strikes me that in *The Healthy and the Sick* he uses it for a similar reason: to make the one suffering from it both more disturbing and more riveting (My God, the viewer exclaims, can the human body really get to such a state and still cling to life?). In this way, the man acts to lure the viewer into a complicitous interaction with the image; Goya forces his viewers to confront aberration and so turns their passivity status before the image into an active one. Faced with the spectacle of a body grossly distorted by a horrific combination of starvation and illness, do we say *Eugh!* and turn away, do we bury our faces as the healthy women in the image do, or do we feel sympathetic and altruistic?

Goya's image turns us into hybrids by splitting our position, by giving us options, and the result is a lack of resolution, a gap. Those who find this gap intolerable can always judge the healthy and fed, condemn them for their callousness,

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1 Vega (in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:206) attributes the condition of the man's legs to poisoning from eating a bread substitute called blue (or purple) vetch. During the famine, the destitute people used grains and legumes to make substitute bread flours; some of these ingredients, noticeably blue vetch, were harmful. Vega explains:

> Lathyrism [which could result from blue vetch poisoning] is a disease caused by the consumption of large quantities of certain species of legumes or their seeds during a more or less prolonged period. The disease is characterised by spastic paraplegia. (207*n*.7)

The child being comforted by the cloaked woman to the right of the man with oedemic legs indeed appears to be suffering from paraplegia of the limbs, but the man's condition is different. I am no medical expert, but it strikes me that the turgescence of his forelegs indicates another disorder. I choose to call it dropsy because Goya formerly made use of this disease in *Where is Mama going?* [Fig.54], although it may well be diagnosed differently. One could also argue that Goya depicts no particular disease, but is simply intent on emphasising the presence of illness among the starving, and such marked swelling carries obvious dramatic value.

and so achieve mastery both over the stark contrast between the foreground and background groups, and over the sick themselves, for in condemning the one a place is found for the other. Goya's image undoubtedly questions the regulations of the Symbolic, asks whether this is really the best way to deal with an urban dilemma; in this manner it gestures toward social criticism and puts the viewer in the position where abjection of the indifferently secure is a possibility. The depiction of a severely abject condition seizes a large share of Goya's and the viewer's interest, however, and it is equally possible to meet the image at that level alone.

The beggarly condition to which the starving are reduced further marginalises and abjects them[2]. Like beggars in any society, the ones Goya depicts have a sense of dispossession, homelessness, itinerancy and dependency. They can find no point of insertion into a social fabric that recognises such variables as home and work as determinants of identity, but at the same time they are entirely reliant for their measly existence on those whose identity is circumscribed in these ways. It is no wonder, then, that Michael Camille, in his Image on the Edge, associates beggars with matter out of place, and therefore with a transgressive threat (1992:137). They are like dirt, in the sense Douglas describes it (see my discussion of the grotesque body in Part One, Chapter One). Their lack of a fixed abode makes them mobile, nomadic – above all, rootless and ostensibly at the discretion of their will alone. For those interpolated in the Symbolic, this freedom seems sinister. Mindless as the wind, beggars, under the compression of society's fears, are distorted to take on the qualities of disease or disease-carrying organisms, capable of spreading contagion far and wide by all manner of dispersions and contacts, and of committing criminal acts without fear – provided they get away with it – of being traced by the law. Much

2 It is an interesting point that when the word 'abject' appears in the English language in its conventional, non-psychoanalytic guise, it is almost always used as an adjective for nouns such as 'poverty' and 'misery'. This use of 'abject' has become axiomatic, as commonplace a saying as 'dire straits'; in many writers, past and present, one finds it employed without a second thought. This alone indicates that social consciousness associates poverty with a cast down or out condition.

of the menace the structured areas of society feel emanating from the unstructured areas is, of course, fantasy – the fantasy life of the upper echelons of society requires and feeds on the potential and unlikely threats the lower echelons collectively offer.

In Goya's etchings the manner in which the more Symbolically secure members of society avoid those who beg in the streets suggests an act on their part to prevent their fantasies from coming true.

In *As if They are of Another Race* (*Si son de otro linaje*) [Fig.139], for example, Goya portrays two well-off 'gentlemen' who, to keep the beggars at bay, classify them as forming "another race".

Typically, Goya collects the beggars into a single group in which it is difficult to make out the limits of the separate bodies. This suggests, within the bounds of my reading, the kind of collapse into formlessness I drew attention to in the scenes from the battlefield. The central beggar, a bald-headed man in a simple garment, spreads his arms in an appeal to those who can prevent this collapse; but the appeal is already in vain: to the left of him a woman appears to hold a limp, possibly deceased, body over her lap, while below and to the right of him a child lies dead. Goya's treatment of the shadows and substance of the ground again, whether intentional or not, makes one think of blood and other vital fluids draining into the earth. Though no doubt simply a compositional convention that focuses attention on the figures, the blank white sky operates metaphorically as a representation of the void beyond death, as a place without identity, uniqueness or heterogeneity in which the subject loses all outlines and ceases to exist.

The narrative underlying *As if They are of Another Race* is unclear. Vega (in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:209) sees the two 'gentlemen' on the right as members of the new upper class that developed in wartime Madrid through its shrewd ability to exploit the domestic face of the battle. She rightly notes that the man in the bicorn hat is of higher social elevation than his companion – a point substantiated both by differences in dress and the bicorn-hatted man's position on a higher ground level



Fig.139 As if They are of Another Race (*Si son de Otro Linaje*)

than his companion (209–10). But is there more to the image? The title suggests so – "as if they are of another race" seems to me like an edited piece of direct speech; and, indeed, Vega assigns the words of the title to the gent accompanying the man in the bicorn hat, whom she terms 'the speaker' (209). But since either of the fashionably-dressed men could be considered the originator of the words in the title, I would argue that "the speaker" is the man in the bicorn hat. Having established this, let me go further and point to the almost exact duplication of the heights of the bicorn-hatted man and the balding, starving man – a duplication achieved at the expense of the expected laws of perspectival recession – and the equally close duplication of the slight side-on posture in each of their bodies; both of which duplications suggest to me that the bicorn-hatted man is *imitating* the starving man.

This explains the theatrical position in which the upper-class man holds his left hand, and relates him to a child using mimicry to identify with the other[3]. But his identification is limited: he imitates to separate himself from his begging other, copying actions that he dramatises as completely foreign to his body to degrade and mock them. Smiling – for, after all, his boundaries are now stronger than ever – he turns to his companion, his mirror image, and announces, 'I cannot mimic their actions. It's as if they are of another race'. The prosperous men, in sum, use burlesque and lampoon – which rely on imitation to ridicule and degrade – to abject the other object. They use laughter to displace abjection from themselves, from their egos and from their Symbolic topography, and so affirm their personal cohesion. Finally, to bolster their act of expulsion – at the core of which, to quote Theweleit, 'stands the prohibition against any kind of mixing (of men and women, of inner self and outside world)' (1987:405) – they class the starving as (an)other "race", another type of people, thus adding an exotic otherness to bodies that, prior to the famine, were part of the set. Dispossession, hunger and an existence in the presence of death makes the famished

3 Note that his companion then imitates *him*, but now not to mock him but, for the sake of staying in his favour, to support his mockery of the starving other.

not simply different, but alien, foreign, extrinsic; this in turn appears to define them as outsiders, tresspassers, outlanders, uncivilised dejects, savages. An ethnographic distinction conclusively decides their place as the utterly unassimilable.

Perhaps there is something of the arrogant self-satisfied coloniser and entrepreneur in the bicorn-hatted man, for, if we accept Vega's reading, has he not turned the war to his advantage, while countless others have merely acquiesced to degeneration into misery and starvation? He affirms his triumph of the self by vigorously spurning those who have surrendered their selves to the black tide of famine, that is, to death. In this way he also prevents the fantasy of the consuming, illimitable, contagious beggarly threat from attaining the status of reality.

Goya, however, does not appear to praise the achievements of the wealthy men; instead, he criticises their supreme indifference, which in this print reaches a brutal level. Instead of helping the famished, these men make fun of them and try to lower their condition still further by associating them with another race. In the process they themselves must become another race: a breed of cruel, self-serving monsters which the viewer is encouraged to mock and degrade. Again, abjection emerges as an attitude, a position or excluding conviction, not as an innate condition of the body, and it is this that makes the viewer capable of abjecting the wealthy men to a level far more abject than the one occupied by the starving. Here depiction of the condition of abjection encourages the operation to abject.

In *As if They are of Another Race* Goya contrasts the dignity and reserve of the bald beggar with the arrogance and display of the bicorn-hatted man. In *The worst is to Beg* (*Lo peor es pedir*) [Fig.140] he again appears to suggest that there can be self-pride even among those reduced to the beggarly condition.

Individuals representing three different social niches meet in one image, but the overwhelming impression one takes from the etching is that of carved, insular space. The threat of intermixture hardly exists; it is an image of an unstable society that has nevertheless successfully partitioned its terrain.



Fig.140 The Worst is to beg (*Lo Peor es pedir*)



Fig.141 Preparatory drawing for *The Worst is to beg*

Goya removes all trace of the urban environment one would expect to find in the scene, situating the figures on a low hill below an unbroken expanse of sky or cloud. The starving occupy the right side of the hillock. One of them is supine and may well be dead; another – the emaciated child right of centre – raises and spreads his hands in the direction of the viewer, as if asking him or her to explain how he, the child, could go unheeded; a third individual, at the apex of the group, sits meditatively with his bony legs in front of him and his hands clasped. The more well-to-do, represented by the young woman, whose back is to the viewer, and the lightly-etched soldier in the background, walk or stand to the left of or behind the hillock.

The woman is in close proximity to the unfed – she crosses the same patch of dark ground on which they have established themselves – implying that she has more in common with them than the soldier does. Her erect posture, her neat clothes and her well-nourished figure, however, reveal that she is not to be mistaken for one of them. Her position on the edge between the dark, swampy, collapsing, coalescing zone of the starving and the immaculate whiteness of the left-hand wedge, proclaims her hybridity: she is a *Madrileña*, but not a beggar. The title, *The worst is to Beg*, may tell us what she is. If the worst thing is to beg there must be an alterna-

tive, and it is to this alternative that the *Madrileña* has turned. Prostitution, in brief – a conclusion encouraged by the soldier in the background and supported by the etching's preparatory drawing [Fig.141] (for further confirmation, see Vega in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:204).

Is begging so abject an act that even prostitution is a better choice? It is difficult to confirm or deny such a question. On the one hand Goya's title might be ironic and sarcastic, meaning the exact opposite of what it is saying: the worst is not to beg but to prostitute yourself. In this reading Goya attacks the woman's choice in the struggle for survival, and the etching veers toward satire. I would tend to follow this route, but from a different angle.

The word *pedir* in Goya's title, which is normally translated in the literature as "to beg", primarily means *to ask*. By using *pedir* might Goya not be stressing that the restrained behaviour of the starving group, their nobility in not openly *asking* for hand-outs, is better than vocal, grasping begging? To be sure, they display themselves in ways intended to elicit money or food from passersby, but they do not evidently plead – no hands or hats held out, or any other obvious signs of begging (as we see, for example, in *One must not cry out* [*No hay que dar voces*] [Fig.142]).



Fig.142 One must not cry out (*No hay que dar voces*)

Is it not such brazen verbal scrounging that, for Goya, is "the worst"? I would consider this quite possible, for by ennobling the starving in this way Goya enhances his questioning of those who reject their appeals. Dignity and moderation can exist even among those who have been forced into the most dire circumstances, and Goya seems to be asking his viewers to respect and reward such strength of character. The woman who walks past with head downcast is their foil, and the implication is that it is better to beg with nobility than to prostitute yourself in shame. There are different degrees of abjection, and even those who, from the physical point of view, appear to be as abject(ed) as you can get might still emerge as more elevated and admirable, at the ontological level, than those who choose, in the name of a hale and fed body, to prostitute themselves, even to the enemy occupier.

In this chapter I have highlighted ways in which Goya's etchings illuminate the social divisions and exclusions Madrid society applied to maintain its Symbolic integrity during the French occupation. These focused, by disregard, dispossession and denial, on abjecting the poverty-stricken, malnourished and diseased into the margins of the city, in which their threats to the health, well-being and functioning of the civil body were mitigated. In the next chapter I take up those etchings marked by the conclusive result of such territorialisation: corpses.

Chapter Fifteen
Cartloads to the Cemetery

AMONG THE ETCHINGS THAT begin the unstoppable movement to the cemetery are *They do not arrive in Time* (*No llegan a Tiempo*) [Fig.143] and *He died without Aid.* Both depict acts of charity exercised too late to stave off death. I will look only at *He died without Aid* (*Espiró sin Remedio*) [Fig.144].



Fig.143 They do not arrive in Time (*No llegan a Tiempo*)

In an indeterminate setting obscured by a heavy, sparse-grained aquatint that reads as a dense fog, two figures – a broad-hatted man squatting to the left as he braces himself for the effort, and a figure in black on the right, possibly a priest, who adopts a similar position – heft a corpse clear of the ground. Arranged around these bearers are a man in a cloak, a boy, and three women, who for reasons of their o wn watch the corpse being lifted. The boy's fascination gets the better of him and he is restrained by the man in the cloak as he tries to get closer to the corpse.

In the obscurity beyond the central group one can make out clumps of figures. Judging by Goya's other famine scenes, it seems likely that these figures are to be



Fig.144 He died Without Aid (*Espiró sin Remedio*)

counted among the starving. We thus have yet another image in which the fed and the famished are juxtaposed, but in this instance the fed are in the foreground.

What interests me about this print is the implication that the fed are seeing to the removal of a corpse while the starving hang back and do not approach the scene. Why would they leave the corpse of their fellow man – which he would have to be since only the famished and ill are shown as dying in Goya's famine scenes – in the open for more socially-secure people to pick up?

The answer I want to pose lies in their abjection. Their fall to a position of malnourished abandonment has detached them from the social formation's system of rules and prohibitions – the domain of the phallus, of signification, signs, edges, borders: in short, the Symbolic – and has caused them to shed the imperatives that, in prewar times, would have made the disposal of a corpse an essential, utterly irrepressible, act. An inevitable result of their being cast down and out from the set, from acceptable society, would be a breakdown and loss of the commandments of the super-ego, hence a dissolution of the ego into a less-differentiated, edgeless, principleless, formless state.

The dead would merely become a feature of this psychosocial terrain, minor blemishes requiring no attention or effort, which could feasibly be left out in the open for as long as they require to decompose. For the dying, the corpse would no longer represent so radical an *other* side or margin, it would no longer be a piece of matter threatening to elude the straight-jacket of taxonomy or to drag the Symbolic field into a state of disorder; it would merely be an aspect of the familiar as far as this category of object is constituted in this degraded environment. Not only would the corpse cease to be the terrifying sign of total chaos and disunity, but since illness and lack of food would shave the distinction between death and life so thin that the point of transition would either go unnoticed or fail to encourage defensive reactions, the destitute would no longer have need of a category of waste, of abjection. But what about those who are better off? According to Kristeva,

> [Psychoanalysis] has . . . deciphered, in that very rejection [of faecal wastes from the body] the mastered *repetition* of a more archaic separation (from the maternal body) as well as the condition of *division* (high-low), of discretion, of difference, of recurrence, in short the condition of the processes that underpin symbolicity. (1982:108)

Thus symbolicity depends on those "mastered repetitions" that create a class of abject matter, which includes the primary abject(ed) object, the mother, and all types of disposable objects. We need to acknowledge that the decision the passers-by make to withdraw the corpse from the open is motivated by Kristeva's "condition of division", i.e., by the human subject's need to master the traumas of separation – separation from the mother, from others, from bodily wastes – which assault her or him on a continual basis from the moment s/he is first divided during the mirror phase. The subject's capacity for scission and loss determines his or her ability to discriminate self from other – the single most important act of division in the subject's ascent to the domain of language, the Symbolic order. The passersby, who have not been cast down to a condition barely discernible from death, still bring to this situation – a corpse stranded in the open – the discriminating principles established on the groundwork of primary dissociations: those dissociations initiated by drives during what Kristeva calls the semiotic phase and ultimately taken on and fixed within Symbolic systems, and incorporated within the subject in the form of the super-ego. The passersby *must* act. They *must* remove the object that threatens them; they must detach it from the public arena and set it apart [1]. The solidarity of their Symbolic system will remain at risk so long as the corpse stays in sight *as corpse threat*, for the corpse is the opposite of diorism and disjunction: it signals the return to formlessness, the moment when individuality is lost and the subject is

[1] My claim that Symbolically-invested subjects need to remove the corpse to a place apart is foreshadowed in the following passage from Lacan: 'whenever we find a skeleton we call it human if it has been placed in a grave. What reason can there be for placing this debris within a stone enclosure? For this to be possible a whole symbolic order must have already been instituted' (1993:96). In short, seclusion of the dead is a requirement only because it is a ritual inscribed into the Symbolic.

mastered finally and inescapably by the Symbolic's other side[2].

Having infringed on those etchings that depict the eradication of corpses from the streets, it is only fitting that I now give them my full attention.

In Goya's etchings of the mass removal and disposal of bodies from the streets of Madrid we never see a conventional cemetery; either the burial ground is merely implied or it takes the form of an improvisational crypt. Such a crypt is on view in *Desastre* 64, *Cartloads to the Cemetery* (*Carretadas al Cementerio*) [Fig.145]. In her mention of the 1809 siege of Zaragoza, Sayre writes that '[t]he cemeteries could no longer afford room for the dead; huge pits were dug to receive them in the streets and in the courts of the public buildings' (1974:165). Goya's print reveals that the citizens of Madrid implemented similar plans to deal with famine victims, for the grave here is evidently the basement of a building. The viewer is made witness to a scene in which men carry corpses from a cart to the building's subterranean vault, where the bodies will, presumably, be left to rot.

The basement-grave is, I want to argue, equivalent to the fissure of *Charity* and the tunnel-like cave of *One cannot look*. Such enclosures in Goya's art are inextricable from violence and death, and it is not difficult to find in the image of the basement a cavernous maw that evokes any number of bodily interiors. Where the determining variable is death, all such interiors, whether digestive, excretory or reproductive, intersect at the body of the abject(ed) mother. Her body is the object from which the subject emerges, and it is the incipient jettisoned object, the first abject; therefore it is the first corpse. Death, the impossible state that straddles and fattens all discourse from the most popular to the most intellectual, cannot be conveyed except in terms that, knowingly or unknowingly, describe the abject(ed) mother.

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2 The corpse is also hazardous because it is such a stark reminder of the fact that the only thing standing in the way of the subject and death is the signifying system; the corpse creates a hole in signification – there is nothing (other than the [maternal] void) that can signify death (allegorical figures can, but only as allegories, not as signs of what the condition of death means) – and if the subject is to maintain the illusion of (comm)unity s/he must deny this lack, this absence, this castration, of signifiers.



Fig.145 Cartloads to the Cemetery (*Carretadas al Cementerio*)

The basement in Goya's etching easily bears comparison with her body, and death in this reading becomes a return to the mother, the corpse being a defiling and loathsome reminder of mortality that, buried in the womb-like receptacle of the basement, is equally buried in the place the social formation deposits all of its unwanted, precarious and inauspicious matter: the abject.

Cartloads to the Cemetery provides a narrative explanation for the settings of two etchings that precede it in the series, *The Beds of the Dead* and *Harvested Corpses*, to which I now turn.

The Beds of the Dead (*Las Camas de la Muerte*) [Fig.146] is gruesomely simple in its subject: in a bare interior, which has all the feel of an underground space, and thus bears being read as a view of the inside of the vault-like basement in *Cartloads to the Cemetery*, a woman wanders among shrouded corpses, holding the ends of her cape to her face.

The image of that single living figure in this oppressive environment for the dead creates a mind-skewing effect. It is not surprising that Licht interprets this figure as one of the dead who has arisen like a 'zombie' to wander 'blindly off into the night' in an 'allegory' where '[l]ife is converted into mere locomotion' (1980:154). Licht's reading is fanciful – it is more likely that the woman is searching among the dead for a missing loved one, holding her cloak to her face to staunch her tears as well as to block out the sight and stench of decay – but it vividly describes her sense of mute incapacity. In spirit, she is a few slender degrees removed from the shrouded dead; erect, animated, still clinging to the Symbolic formation in which she has a tenuous place, she is nevertheless shrouded, like *them*, and is close to what, in my reading, I would term dissolution.

I find in this lone woman a sense of abandonment, as if she feels her super-ego has deserted her and left her ego exposed to all the terrors of disintegration, loss and death that the war has dramatised. She seems horribly vulnerable to the dense, intractable darkness that frames her, like a child covering its eyes to check the influx of



Fig.146 The Beds of the Dead (*Las Camas de la Muerte*)

nightmarish monsters and visions that lurk in the gloom. One can see in her that perilous state I have associated with the reception of the Grotesque, in which the unconscious and its repressed, abject contents flood back with a sense of the uncanny as the barriers erected around the conscious by prohibitions, censorship, codes and conventions rust, fail and collapse. The best defence she can offer to ward off these menacing externalised forces, crystallised in the repeated object of the corpse, is to smother her senses beneath her cape.

Harvested Corpses (*Muertos recogidos*) [Fig.147], the last image I look at in this section, repeats the chamber of death theme of the previous etching, but this time no living figure moves in the space to reassure the viewer that death has not claimed a full victory over life.

The bodies of *Harvested Corpses* are neither laid out neatly nor shrouded, but rest in a chaotic heap, as if they have been dumped through a trapdoor in a hidden ceiling. In death these bodies are one: an interlarded, confused morass of limbs, torsos and extremities; they have lost all claim to individuality: merely the almost random result of a gathering – a harvesting – of the hundreds of bodies in the streets. Against the interflow and commingling of the cadavers, the two coffins Goya includes in the space seem unlikely containers. Coffins are last-ditch attempts to preserve the boundaries of the body from decay into the earth, thus to preserve individuality, but Goya's coffins are inadequate to the demands of mass burial, and read more as totemic presences that insinuate the requirements of the Symbolic into a space entirely beyond the social formation, than as practical burial caskets. Only one receptacle is large enough for these amassed bodies: the offscreen earth, itself, in its subterranean depths, a suitable representative for the category of abjection.

The bodies in *Harvested Corpses* have not made it to the earth yet, but the space they inhabit is already uncanny and engulfing: a spacious cavern, possibly a basement, with the capacity to hoard an incalculable volume of corpses, in which they compact like faeces in a rectum. They have been separated from life, sundered from



Fig.147 Harvested Corpses (*Muertos Recogidos*)

the Symbolic, and in their otiosity have become subject to the midden.

Both *Harvested Corpses* and *The Beds of the Dead* have important implications for the viewer, who in confronting these repositories of the dead may feel a similar abandonment and dissolution to the one I have associated with the living figure in *The Beds of the Dead.* These dark oppressive spaces, which withhold the hope of re-kindled life or re-attachment and reconnection to the circuits of love and desire, speak of primal losses, among which the most telling is the final disunion from the mother (as object). The darkness, silence and inescapability of Goya's interiors have the potential, I feel, to re-stage the viewer's childhood anxieties over that essential division, and so fray the boundaries of his or her subjectivity, rendering them more fragile and assailable. As I argued in Part One, Chapter Two, it is in the splitting from the mother that repression inverts the womb into something as much monstrous and devouring as reproductive and nurturing, and it is with the monstrous, Gorgonian face of the mother's womb – a life-giving bodily cavity that has become an indifferent, bleak, eternal grave – that Goya's etchings could menace the viewer. All that the spectator has undergone to become an individual would come under threat: the uncanny dark would hover before his or her eyes, dramatising either the subject's horror at the irreversible loss of the mother, or the fear that the primary separation is about to be undone, taking the subject back to the preSymbolic world of formlessness. The rigour of the super-ego might waver, the structural comforts of the Symbolic might shift and creak, the ego, unsure how to mediate this influx of the alien, might feel threatened in its normally buttressed cocoon in the psyche.

Since the abject is almost always both compelling and repelling, useful and harmful, it is possible that the ego will find a way to assimilate the disturbance. If it cannot – and this is quite possible in the case of these images since their subject matter is unlikely to favour regressive desires that would draw the subject toward the abject as a source of abundance ad jouissance – the super-ego will need to perform an act of abjection. This act may take various forms, e.g., an assertion of tax-

onomy (the corpse is waste: begone!), or an imaginative reading that couches the anxiety in a new pattern of reality (Licht's pessimistic but nevertheless rejuvenatory concept of the zombie, for instance).

With the thought of consuming spaces in mind, it is time to draw my examination of *Los Desastres* to a close by looking at an image that summarises the entire series, *Fierce Monster*. From Goya's etchings one extracts the picture of war as an invasive, destructive force that swamps battlefields and cities alike, mowing down soldiers, guerrillas and citizens; men, women and children. War is a personified deity of death, without limits, restrictions or weaknesses; it moves equally well through any kind of terrain, and disrupts all forms of human endeavour with the same lack of equivocation. In the field or in the city it leaves the same remainder as a testimony to its passing: the corpse. As a consuming agent that turns one's known world into a giant amorphous, expandable bubble of demolition, execution, mutilation, gore, dispossession, starvation and extinction, it could not be better represented than as an insatiable digestive organ or, as Goya represents it, as a rapacious monster. And in this monster, as one might expect, one will find a representation of the terrifying absorptive abject(ed) mother whose origins lie in the inversion through repression of the non-differentiated state that characterises her province – an inversion that takes the unbounded, abundant mother-child fusion of the pre-objectal stage and distorts it into a narrative of dreadful fragmentation, mastication, atomisation and ingurgitation into a place without identity, a place that can only be alikened to death, to which it is inseparably conjoined.

Close Bracket: *Fierce Monster*

It seems only fitting that I close my discussion of *Los Desastres de la Guerra* with an image that seems an attempt on Goya's part to describe the entire concept, theme and reality of war in a single print: *Fierce Monster* (*Fiero Monstruo*) [Fig.148][1].

In this print Goya locates the grottoes, tunnels, caves, crevices, basements and pits of *Los Desastres* in the body of a giant beast. It is a fictional, polygeneric creature, although clearly modelled on natural prototypes – the product, in short, of the selective process Goya used to create a "single fantastic personage"[2]. From the tapir-like mouth of the beast spill naked corpses. One may safely assume that its interior is stuffed with more corpses, and the visible ones only fall out because the internal space is used up. In explaining the monster and the bodies, Heckes is no doubt accurate in claiming that

> [i]ts placement near the end of the *Desastres*, where it is presented as the visual and symbolic antithesis of Truth, suggests that it is actually a monstrous incarnation of the combined forces of war, oppression, and injustice which had devoured so many Spaniards between 1808 and 1820. (1985:256)

In other words, it is a monstrous devouring mechanism, an allegory of all the forces that physically, mentally, economically and financially consumed the bodies, minds, lives and spirits of the Spanish people in the course of the war. This monster lies not dead but satiated, stuffed, glutted. It has collapsed under the enormous burden of the bodies it has consumed.

Beyond its association with the war, it can also be taken to symbolise all those

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1 It should be noted, incidentally, that the etching was included in the Ceán Bermúdez album but not in the collection published by the Royal Academy of San Fernando.

2 The beast might be a reworking of the smaller monster Goya depicted in *He gets Something out of It* (*Algún partido saca*) [Fig.149], which may deal in a universalising sense with conflict, combat, aggression and opposition. I draw attention to the print because, while space prohibits me from looking at it, it could serve a conjectural argument that reads the fighting man as a surrogate for Goya and the beast as a representation of the abject. In this exegesis Goya does battle with the abject: a conflict which is certainly to his advantage, inasmuch as it brings him into contact with the compelling forbidden and gives him an opportunity to affirm his ideal moral self in opposition to it.

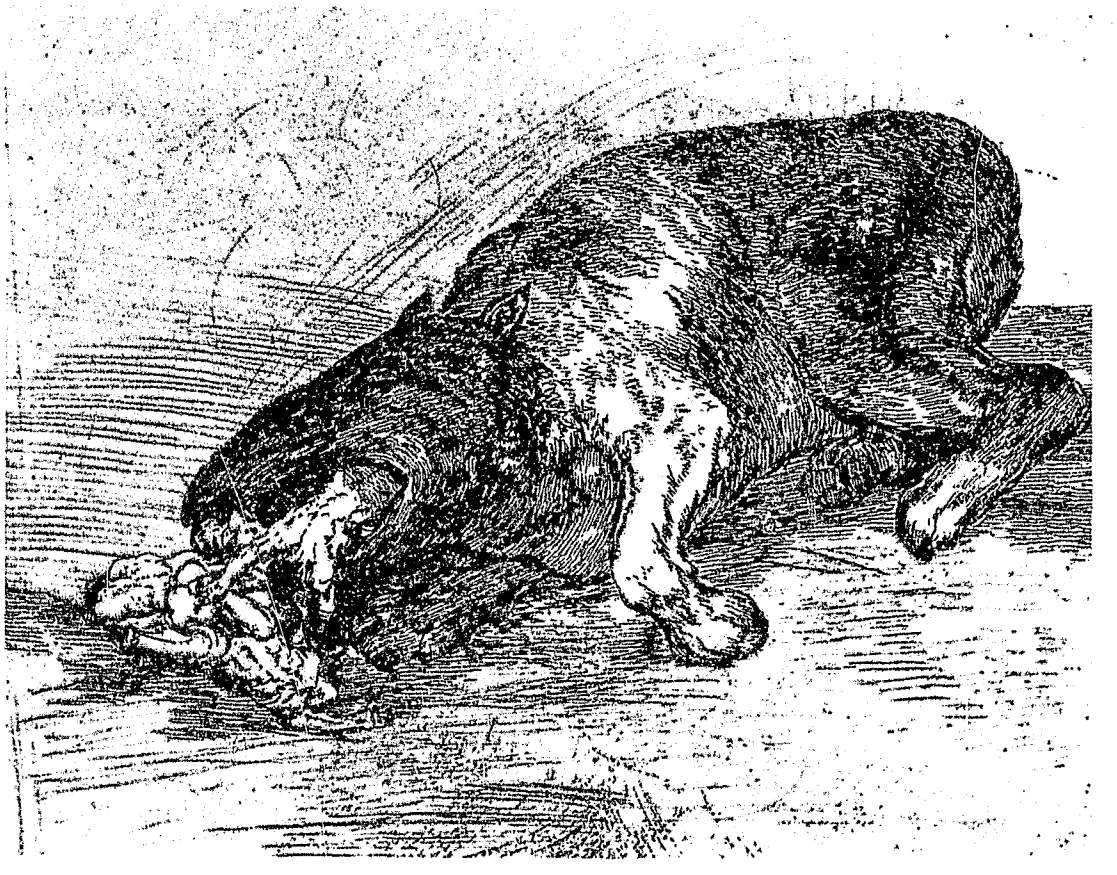


Fig.148 Fierce Monster (*Fiero Monstruo*)

forces, from psychic to physical, from internal to external, that threaten the integrity and individuality of the human subject. It might embody all concepts of terrifying engulfment, and is a creatural concretisation of the anxieties of being eaten that, during the subject's oral stage of development, adjoin the desire to eat, and which repression of the oral phase makes nightmarish. The beast in this role incarnates the bad, ferocious side to the abject(ed) mother: a monster that rises out of the depths of abjection to take revenge, like Saturn in Goya's famous painting [Fig. 150], on her sons.

This, ultimately, is the view of war that I have, with the help of Goya's etchings, presented in this Part. War kills with extraordinary aggression and without humanity; its code of conduct, flying in the face of every labour of culture, technology, science, religion, industry, etc., that guides peacetime activity, can only be classified as bestial. It could not be represented better than as a huge eating machine, for in it one finds the most lucid personification possible of the rogue Imaginary other that threatens to take the place of the subject's ego – a voracious, uncaring, colonising, toothed grotesque that thinks nothing of committing subject after subject to the zone of non-differentiation in its quest to sustain its own bodily existence and to dilate and consolidate its selfhood. A grotesque that the psychoanalysis of Kristeva allows us to affiliate with the most radical other of all: the repressed abject, abode of death, the devouring womb and the primary lost object of the mother, distorted by censorship into any and every monster the imagination has the potential to conceive.



Fig.149 He gets Something out of It (*Algún partido saca*)



Fig.150 *Saturn devouring His Sons*

Part Four
Abjection in *Los Disparates*

I looked at the walls of my native place,
if at one time strong, now ruined,
wearied by the course of the years,
through which their grandness has become decrepit.

I went into the fields, saw that the sun drank
the rivulets of thawed ice,
and that the cattle complained of the mountain,
which, with its shadows, robbed them of daylight.

I went into my house: saw that, stained,
it was but the remains of an elderly dwelling;
my walking stick, more crooked and less strong.

I felt my sword had been conquered by the years,
and I found nothing on which to set my eyes
that was not a reminder of death.

Miré los muros de la patria mía,
si un tiempo fuertes, ya desmoronados,
de la carrera de la edad cansados,
por quien caduca ya su valentía.

Salíme al campo, vi que el sol bebía
los arroyos del yelo desatados,
y el monte quejosos los ganados,
que con sombras hurtó su luz al día.

Entré en mi casa: vi que, amancillada,
de anciana habitación era despojos;
mi báculo, más corvo y menos fuerte.

Vencida de la edad sentí mi espada,
y no hallé cosa en que poner los ojos
que no fuese recuerdo de la muerte.

(Francisco de Quevedo, *Soneto*, in *Seventeenth-Century Spanish Poetry: The Power of Artifice* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993] pp.174–75. In the translation above I deliberately make no attempt to reproduce Quevedo's sonnet structure.)

Chapter Sixteen
First Words

MOST, IF NOT ALL, scholars of Goya's work would agree that *Los Disparates* form his most perplexing graphic series. Many claim that the ambiguities of these etchings make them inexplicable[1]. To remedy this problem they either claim that Goya deliberately imported doubt into his subject matter to defuse possibly volatile references and allusions, or they associate the prints with dreams and the hidden levels of the artist's psyche. Examples of the former view include:

> *Pierre Gassier*:
> [In *Los Disparates*] there is a kind of systematic obfuscation that makes them almost impossible to interpret. Times had changed, and the prudence of the *Caprices* was succeeded by a fear that completely obscured the meaning of the *caprichos enfáticos* and the *Disparates*. He has something to say, but his language is so full of circumlocutions and metonymies that we can no longer understand it. (1983:258)

> *Gwyn Williams*:
> The *Disparates* are perhaps the most impenetrable of his works. Goya seems to have cultivated a vision which is incommunicable. (1976:134–35)

Examples of the latter include:

> *Enrique Lafuente Ferrari*:
> Goya, torch in hand, has brought to light the caves of man's dreams and desires; he plumbed in advance of his time the heart of man and the mysterious depths of the human spirit . . . Goya is aware of his inner life, his subconscious imagination, the world of dreams, and dares to give them artistic status . . . In his etchings, in his drawings, and in many of his paintings of the late period, dream imagery enters the realm of Goya's work with a surprising vigour. (Quoted in Glendinning, 1977:161)

> *Pierre Gassier and Juliet Wilson*:
> [I]t is through their purely artistic qualities and their powerful suggestion of mood that these prints make their impression, evoking deep, intuitive responses

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1 For example, August Mayer: 'It would be useless to try to explain the meaning of the different plates. It is part of the character of these visions that they cannot be interpreted with exactitude . . .' (quoted in Glendinning, 1977:149) Also Aldous Huxley: 'What is the meaning of these things? And perhaps the answer to that question is that they have no meaning in any ordinary sense of the word . . .' (quoted in Glendinning, 1977:157)

. . . (Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal, 1994:310)

Aldous Huxley:

For us who look at [*Los Disparates*], it may be that their real point and significance consist precisely in the fact that they image forth so vividly and yet, of necessity, so darkly and incomprehensibly, some at least of the unknown qualities that exist at the heart of every personality. (Quoted in Glendinning, 1977:157)

Fred Licht:

Some part of our being resonates to the menace and the loneliness of the *Disparates* . . . [They] are the quintessence of that part of our life that forever defies understanding. (1980:217)

Earlier Goya literature was by and large unkind to *Los Disparates*, relating them negatively to dreams and irrationality. C. W. Chilton, the translator of Malraux, for one, rendered the noun *disparates* as "madnesses" in the English edition of Saturne. Essai sur Goya. Modern Goya scholarship has moved away from this association of the images with madness, as Wilson-Bareau exemplifies: '[a]lthough the *Disparates*, like the "black paintings", will probably always remain obscure, their powerful and mysterious images can no longer be regarded as irrational visions' (1996:83).

Licht echoes these sentiments when he writes: '[t]o call [*Los Disparates*] dream images short-circuits the issue' (1980:217). In suggesting a better approach to the etchings, Licht nevertheless introduces those bodies of investigation credited with turning the analysis of dreams into something of a science, namely, clinical psychology and psychiatry (217). He is not the only one who has advocated such a direction. In 1957, Hans Sedlmayr expressed confidence that '[p]sychoanalysis will one day attempt to write [the] "iconography" [of *Los Disparates*]' (quoted in Glendinning, 1977:163). As recently as 1995 Sánchez and Gállego have also shown support for an interdisciplinary approach that would harness psychoanalysis in a bid to 'lay bare the innermost workings of the artist's mind' (1995:176). The psychologists, however, have never risen to the challenge[2], and it is, for me, an ongoing puzzle

2 With the exception of a few early stutterings, e.g., Reitman's chapter on Goya in his Psychotic Art (1950), and Frederick Wight's 1946 article, in which he attempted to find "subconscious communications" in Goya's etchings.

that Goya's art remains so ensconced within the domain of art history. This is especially puzzling since scholars who one would associate with the art-historical discipline are precisely the ones who have given the nod to psychoanalysis. In the following lengthy passage from Goya: His Complete Etchings, Aquatints and Lithographs, for example, Lafuente Ferrari draws on psychoanalysis to explicate the enigmas of *Los Disparates*:

> In a way, the [*Disparates*] are really a continuation of the *Caprices*, but they show that the fantastic and the mysterious are now uppermost in the artist's mind. But as his powerful imagination draws inspiration from these dreams, he casts further light into the shadowy regions of the human mind. In studying the psychic function of dreams, modern science tells us that their fundamental purpose is to dramatize ideas until they take on the appearance of reality. This, in fact, is what Goya does. Strumpel, a dream analyst, has put it concisely: "When the mind is awake it uses verbal images for its thoughts and impressions, but when it dreams it uses sensory images that have the appearance of reality." This is the way the imagination of any graphic artist should work. Freud has pointed out that dreaming is a creative rather than a repetitive activity, for the imagination is obliged "to paint what it has to say pictorially, and, since there are no concepts to exercise an attenuating influence, it makes full and powerful use of the pictorial form. Thus, however clear its speech may be, it is diffuse, clumsy, and awkward." This is true because the hallucinated mind refuses to express objects by their literal images and instead finds symbolic substitutes which interpreters of dreams have been trying to decipher ever since remote antiquity. In the [*Disparates*] we can find examples of the phenomena studied by psychoanalysts, such as the appearance of gigantic figures who are usually interpreted as the vestiges of infantile experiences. Similarly, we find grotesque beings with deformed faces, and visions of animals and monsters. In these dreams, associations are made arbitrarily, for, as Fechner has observed, it is as if the brain of a sane man had turned into that of a madman when the former is asleep – an observation which can well apply to the [*Disparates*]. (1963:XXIV)

Such explanations have not caught on in art-historical circles, in my view, because they assume that psychoanalysis can be adopted willy-nilly to give a name or text to images otherwise "impossible" to decipher, in a way analogous to reading from a manual the meaning of a spread of tarot cards or the hexagrams formed in using the I-Ching. They assume that the world of dreams can somehow flow, unmediated by consciousness or the delays and vagaries of the printing process (not to mention a host of physiological factors that might intervene), into the finished work as displayed in a gallery. But dream symbolism is only one, admittedly limited, application of psychoanalysis to the analysis of art work; I think my thesis has by

now demonstrated that there are other applications that are closer to the historiographic motivations of art history or the interdisciplinary approaches of art theory, and it is *such* approaches that need to be employed if psychoanalysis is to benefit art appreciation.

Where the likes of Licht, Ferrari and Huxley are, to my thinking, correct is in their claim that *Los Disparates* communicate with a deeper level of the self, beyond language and definition. But one is likelier to find elucidations for this communication in theories of repression than in systems of dream symbols. Such a theory is provided by Kristeva's concept of abjection. I believe it fully suffices to explain why, as Licht puts it, '[s]ome part of our being resonates to the menace and the loneliness of the *Disparates*' (1980:217). It will not necessarily, however, suffice to illuminate Goya's complex symbology, which is more readily apprehensible at the iconographic level (to the extent that this, in the case of most of the *Disparates*, can be reconstituted from previous thematic treatments in *Los Caprichos* and elsewhere).

As I hope I demonstrated in my examination of *Los Caprichos*, the abjection model helps us understand what Goya's images do – how they work (e.g., through satire and the Grotesque) – more than it helps us penetrate veils of symbolism or uncover the intentions and motivations of the artist – all of which, we must remember, was fomented under very particular and intricate conditions through a blending of historical situation, historically-specific artistic codes and conventions, and the complex that results from a personal digestion, translation and transformation of the signifying field. I am confident in claiming that Goya's works were informed by his unconscious, both structurally and materially, and that the hybridising and defamiliarising language of his grotesque owes at least something to the processes of condensation and displacement that occur in dreams and in the metaphorical operations of the unconscious; but to treat the works as nothing more than unconscious outpourings or dream transcriptions is to completely overlook their teleology.

Having established this, I now proceed to a brief discussion of the term *disparate*

and what it might tell us about Goya's framework for the etchings; then, via a few more prefatory comments on the problems that this incomplete series poses to the interpreter, I will lay out the format in which I apply my methodology to the prints, and commence analysis.

* * *

In common Spanish parlance the noun *disparate* connotes foolishness, nonsense, absurdity, the puzzling and the ridiculous. It is reminiscent of, but not identical to, *capricho*. In Goya's time the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana* defined it as: 'something said or done without order or reason; stupidity, madness, foolishness, something said or done in a stupid way' (translated in Holo, 1976:5). It can also be identified with a particular mode of expression dating back to the late fifteenth century. This mode, if not exactly initiated, was at least brought to light by Juan del Encina, whose *Cancionero* of 1496 included poems which he titled *Disparates*[3]. According to Francisco Márquez Villanueva, '[t]he world of the *disparate* tends to separate language and thought, launching the latter through fields of intense conflict and dark allusions' (1985-86:509)[4]. In this '[r]ealm of folly . . . animals, people and things are made topsy-turvy in a most peculiar way'[5] (508). Márquez Villanueva even adds that '[t]he *disparate* will be, up till Goya, the quintessence of the theme of buffoonish folly'[6] (509).

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3 See Márquez Villanueva, 'Literatura Bufonesca o del "Loco"', 1985-86:509, for earlier precedents for the *disparate*, including *fatrasie* in thirteenth-century France, the *adynata* and *impossibilia* of Latin-Medieval poetry, and the later works of Juan Alfonso de Baena and Antón de Montoro.

4 The original Spanish text is as follows: '[e]l mundo del *disparate* tiende a separar lenguaje y pensamiento, lanzando a éste por campos de intenso conflicto y sombrías alusiones'.

5 The original Spanish reads: '[r]eino de la locura . . . animales, personajes y cosas se revuelven de la manera más extraña'.

6 The original Spanish reads: '[e]l *disparate* va a ser, hasta Goya, una quintaesencia del tema de la locura bufonesca'.

As a principle playing out in "fields of intense conflict and dark allusions" where everything is "made topsy-turvy in a most peculiar way", *disparate* seems ideal as a term to describe a graphic series devoted to the criticism of a social order fallen into decay and vice. It is in this sense that one must understand Goya's choice of term, not that of madness and absurdity (which led Tomás Harris, for example, to reject Goya's own title, *Disparates*, in favour of the implausible alternative *Proverbios* [*Proverbs*], which the Royal Academy of San Fernando adopted, erroneously in my view, when it published the first edition of the series in 1864[7]).

As much as one can clarify the meaning and use value of the title, *Los Disparates* remain a dark and forbidding continent, a critical abject. The series is a fragment; it was never completed (Wilson-Bareau, 1996:78). It was never published by Goya (Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal, 1994:309), nor did he title all of the etchings; some of the titles currently in circulation were supplied posthumously. Curators of exhibitions and authors of books generally arrange their displays and reproductions of the series according to the sequence the Academy of San Fernando fabricated for the first edition (Tomlinson, 1989:47). What the Academy based its organisation on is unclear (but see Sayre in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:CXVIII, for one possible source), but one thing is certain: it was not suggested by Goya. *Los Disparates* have no established sequence (Sayre:CXVIII), and even the numbers found on some of the prints help

[7] In recent times virtually all suggestion that there is a link between Goya's etchings and contemporary proverbs has disappeared; most, if not all, Goya scholars use the word that Goya himself used – *disparate* – to title the series. The noun *disparate* continues, however, to raise questions at the level of translation. By and large the word *folly* has received favour as the best English equivalent for the Spanish term – a rendering advocated by Tomás Harris even though he still preferred to call the etchings *proverbios*. Sánchez and Gállego (1995:176) are among those who reject "folly" as adequate; instead, they choose, depending on the nature of each etching, to define the *Disparates* as "riddles", "nightmares", "dreams", "nonsenses" or "fantasies" (for example, in their system, *Matrimonial Folly* becomes *Matrimonial Nightmare*). While the authors believe this taxonomic device brings greater precision to the translation of the titles, I find their nomenclature limiting and overly definitive. *Matrimonial Folly* may be nightmarish – it may possess the qualities of a bad dream – but surely it is more? – surely it is just as easily 'defined' as a "nonsense", a "fantasy" or a "riddle"? The categories are too flimsy to withstand the polysemy of the prints; they pose more questions than they 'answer', and one has to wonder whether the questions (Is this a "riddle" or a "nonsense"?) have any value in the exploration of these, Goya's most cryptic etchings.

little to predict the sequence as Goya intended it, since, on the evidence of both *Los Caprichos* and *Desastres de la Guerra*, he tended to change, shuffle and complicate his arrangements, thereby introducing asymmetry, luxation and doubt into what might otherwise have been a more exoteric chronological order.

In my discussion of the series, as I did with *Los Caprichos* and *Los Desastres*, I adopt my own form of categorisation. Keeping with the format of these previous investigations, I set my discussion in a parenthesis, opened by *Folly of the Mass*, in which Goya creates what might well be his ultimate statement on the opposition between the individual and the mindless collective, and closed – so to speak, although here again I fear a gaping bracket – by a perusal of *Man wandering among Phantoms*, which, in its gloomy, near-formless environment, its proliferation of phantoms and hybrids, and its implication that Goya himself is the man wandering in this netherworld, seems a fitting 'conclusion' not only to my study of the series but to the entire analytic procedure of this dissertation.

Within the parenthesis, I divide my material into chapters that follow a simple classificatory directive: noting that most of the *Disparates*, save such works as *Folly of Merriness* [*Disparate Alegre*] [Fig.151], take as either their main theme or as a sub-



Fig.151 Folly of Merriness (*Disparate Alegre*)

theme in a broader composition the rivalry between two parties, I have collocated the images under the following titles: *Aggressive Imposition, Taming, Betwixt and Between,* and *Division within Masses.*

The *Disparates* form a mysterious and disturbing set of frames from an imaginary landscape in which antagonistic or heterogeneous groups use open aggression, sham decoys, or vocal persuasion to enforce their interests and ideologies on others. Goya's attitude toward these groups is a highly mobile and at times ambiguous one. Far more so than in *Los Caprichos* he vacillates between positions where he sides with the morality of the Symbolic to criticise the depraved behaviour of groups, and positions where he criticises the Symbolic of his time and place, censuring facets of it that, for him, do not accord with a more ideal form of conscience. The ambivalence of such images as Capricho 24, *There was no Remedy* [Fig.85], also becomes a far more stated in-betweenness in which Goya seems content to depict non-resolution as a state valuable in itself. Much of the need to criticise society, perhaps even to reform it, remains in the *Disparates,* but Goya's view of his subject matter is marked by a greater uncertainty. He can be both more combative than he was in the *Caprichos* and far less so, as if he was no longer convinced that the subjects he criticised were as detachable from his own self as he apparently felt they were when he produced the *Caprichos.* Perhaps, if I might offer a piece of unadulterated conjecture, as he aged his super-ego became less of a determinant in his relationship to the world, and as it faded so he was able to draw from his subject matter a range of possibilities and permutations of experience that were more beneficial to his ego than a rigid system of exclusions and inclusions. His contact with abjection may have shifted to the point where he drew a greater yield of pleasure from contact with the *condition of abjection* than from the *operation to abject.* Evidently this shift was a cause for anxiety as much as for pleasure, hence the concomitant images of rigorous opposition between individual and mass, and the result is that *Los Disparates* are characterised by a pendulum motion swinging between the demand for differentiation and the desire for non-differentiation.

Open Bracket: *Folly of the Mass*

Folly of the Mass (*Disparate General*) [Fig.152][1] has proved to be one of the most elusive of *Los Disparates*, yet within my model it can be readily and constructively interpreted. Its import centres on the interaction between the solitary dwarfish figure to the left of the print and the large vaguely triangular condensed mass of people in the foreground of the print, which Holo calls a 'mound of humanity' (1976:41; also see 5).

The dwarfish figure approaches with a dagger in one hand and what might be a shield in the other. He wears what appears to be a bicorn hat, and his surly features are reminiscent of Goya's own. The man has been interpreted as Napoleon (see Ferrari, 1963:XXIX, and Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:184) striding forward to wage war on a Spain lost in its own dark and distracting foibles; but, while I accept the aggression such readings assign to him, I don't view the print as a political allegory or, indeed, as a criticism of courtly intrigue. A stronger case can be made if one claims that the dwarfish man depicts Goya advancing on a mass of Spain's harmful beliefs, superstitions and customs – the very vulgar or common (i.e., "general") errors and vices he set out to denounce in *Los Caprichos*.

What are these general follies which the Spanish mass is heir to? The compact mob is illuminatory on this score, and therefore needs to be described in some detail. Numerous figures of great interest feature in it, interspersed with others that uphold Goya's satirical motives simply by virtue of being caricatures.

To the left of the image we see a man, his back to the viewer, who, while conversing with an odd-looking, possibly female, figure who towers a head above him and regards him from beneath a brow-like hood with eyes swelling like the suckers on an octopod tentacle, points to the upper left-hand corner of the image, where

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1 I translate *Disparate General* as *Folly of the Mass* because it seems that the "general" referred to in the title is a principle of universalism and collectivity that the dense throng dominating the print concretises.



Fig.152 Folly of the Mass (*Disparate General*)

smoke drifts in a spectral manner. Perhaps he is superstitious and sees in this phantasmic substance a bad omen or some kind of supernatural manifestation.

To the right and below these two, an old man sits placidly reading a book. Rembrandtian light carves his equally Rembrandtian features into high relief. If anything, he seems to represent the folly of bookish knowledge and a monastial or intellectual withdrawal from the world. This, in Goya's eyes, does not set him apart from the mass but melds him with it; this is a hotch-potch of follies, not a diorama of occupational diversity, and all are rendered equal by folly.

To the right and in front of the old man two figures, male and female (the male aged to the point where his simian face has shrivelled to almost expose his skull), kneel and extend their hands to an ape-faced nanny or midwife wearing the kind of petticoat Goya associated before with prostitutes (e.g., in *They already have a Seat* [Fig.90]), who holds a litter of agitated kittens. (There might be implications of witchcraft in Goya's use of the cats, although these creatures look frankly terrified of the man and woman into whose care they are being entrusted). Another nanny appears behind the one with the kittens, but we cannot see what she carries. The kneeling figures certainly constitute a couple; both are so outrageously stupid that they reach out with adoring – no: obsessed, insane – arms for an animal litter, carried by a chimerical nanny, probably a prostitute in her spare time. These "parents" seem to have lost sight of the tabulative difference between the human and animal genera.

Continuing the rotation from left to right, we now ascend to the large-bodied figure of a mother wearing some kind of sun-hat, who with her right hand holds an infant to her breast, while with her left she strokes the styled head of a full-grown podgy-faced man who adheres to her side. Behind the woman is at least one other figure, apparently female, who seems to be screaming into the mother's ear. This mother, carried aloft or somehow floating at a height above the other members of the mob, strikes me as a paraphrase of the obese mother witch and her nanny's boys in the Capricho *Where is Mama going?* [Fig.54], and I suspect that the group

conveys much the same satirical message, although its attack on the mother is not as flagrant. She emerges here less as a monstrous incestuous, abject(ed) mother than as a body reduced by external alimental demands to a maternal, nutritional machine, a queen termite of the human world.

Goya's human heap is thus a degenerate farrago of people who have strayed so far from a system of morality and pragmatic knowledge that they have become irredeemably fixed in a quagmire of aberrant behaviour. As a compacted group, a selection and condensation aimed to convey a great deal of information with an economy of means, the mass reminds us of Ruskin's comment that '[a] fine grotesque is the expression, in a moment, by a series of symbols thrown together in bold and fearless connection, of truths which it would have taken a long time to express in any verbal way' (1907:91). The turbid amalgamation of the group, the sense that it is a morass where all vices and follies, however distinct, fold into each other so that the individual is determined solely in relation to the mass, speaks, however, of a combination that is more than expedient to the purpose of symbolism. I find in it an expression of reduction to a non-differentiated state where matter, whatever the differences in its compounds, mingles in a dense and indiscriminate flow. At one level what we have is a general degradation that blankets the specific degenerate behaviour and condition of the constituents of the mass; at another we are presented with a view of a social formation – or at least parts of it – corrupt, adulterated and ailing; the rabble in Goya's print have defiled the values of purified conscience and, whether they are corrupt representatives of the historical Symbolic or simply detractors from it, they have fallen into an abject condition where they are blended with each other. As such they are an amassed threat, a danger to the dioristic impulses of the ideal Symbolic – the one created in the satirical or moral Imaginary, if we can specify it thus without too much confusion – and it is with the intent to break them apart that the little man I have associated with Goya approaches them.

What chance this reforming figure stands against the depraved collective is a

matter for conjecture. Despite all the determination and focus on his face, he seems inadequately equipped and his diminutive, bow-legged, almost deformed, stature weakens his cause. Society tends to apply certain labels to people who look the way he does – to people whose frames record a debt to nature, a failure to assume the tall and perfectly-formed bodies that become the emblems of culture and civilised refinement. One such label, among the most brutal, is *freak*. Is this the label most viewers would consider affixing to the dwarfish man? And if they do affix it, where does this leave him in his solitary fight against the forces undermining the integrity of his social order? Does he not, in the eyes of the viewer, become a hazard to his or her (the viewer's) Symbolic, and thereby a candidate for displacement into the abject concretion he is supposedly challenging? In an order that holds out for the immaculate, he is very maculate indeed; how many viewers can honestly claim that they look at that figure and see no irregularity of form, and feel no awkwardness about his appearance? There seems a chance, then, that his encounter with the coagulated lump will result merely in his own ingestion and engulfment in the pulp. Of course, the measurement of distance from abjection is largely in the eye of the beholder, and there is no aetiological or germinal reason to assume that an individual who himself troubles the indivisibility of the civil body cannot act as its redeemer. Here it is the condition of differentiation that gives the dwarfish man his power, just as it is this same condition that empowers the subject as s/he is compelled to make the transition from the formless inarticulate preSymbolic to the constructed land of language and the Symbolic.

By opening my discussion with an image I find unambivalent in its depiction of a contest situation between the representative of an ideal or projected Symbolic – the soldier of a private morality – and an abject representative, I run the risk of downplaying Goya's personal ambivalence. None of the *Disparates* I discuss below persuade in the way of *Folly of the Mass* and in these same works abjection is not necessarily posed as something depraved and untouchable. When it is posed in

such terms it is to criticise the artist's historical Symbolic itself, his social order and its unjust formations, its questionable deployments of power. Goya is seldom on the side of the Symbolic in these prints, since it is not always consistent with his own moral principles and expectations.

As I deal with each selected image I will point out deviations from the satirical type established by *Folly of the Mass*. Goya's relationship to his subject matter is a complex, vitiated one, and bears generalisation poorly. Even *Folly of the Mass*, after all, is sabotaged by Goya's decision to depict what I have read as the mass's bane as a figure whose deformity would classify him on the far side of the Symbolic, close to the margin of abjection. A quality of corruption mingles with all of these prints, threatening to undermine, like the flavour of the *capricho* (as defined by John Dowling; see p.79 of the thesis), their ostensible purpose. It seems plausible to assume that Goya found such equivocal images more suitable to his needs than ones that followed a pattern of structuring as rigorous or more rigorous than the *Caprichos*, for example, tend to divulge, and we must therefore be prepared in the analyses for much vacillation and liminality of position.

Chapter Seventeen
Aggressive Imposition

IN THIS CHAPTER I look at those etchings in which one group or individual attempts to impose his or their authority on others in a spirit of aggression.

The most aggressive imposition of all is rapine abduction, which Goya treats in two visually similar, but thematically different, *Disparates*: *Flying Folly* and *The Abducting Horse*. In *Flying Folly* (*Disparate Volante*) [Fig.153] he treats rape as an act so anti-social that its perpetrator is in consort with a hybridised monster – a large flying creature that combines the attributes of horses, birds of prey and, perhaps, even dogs (in the face). This suitably grotesque "fantastic personage" conveys its rapist master and his victim into a space that suggests a limitless twilight. Monsters, formless space and an act of forced domination that cuts against the grain of the Symbolic: all of this makes the image a riveting portrayal of a flight into abjection itself. In this sense it springs from that part of Goya that was devoted to conscience, that part of him that was offended by acts committed outside of the law and wished to degrade them, marginalise them, through images. Goya probably enjoyed inventing his monster and may even have felt something for the velvety non-differentiation of his aquatinted space, but the etching shows no manifest ambivalence in his attitude toward its subject.

Understandably, then, it gives one quite a pause when one turns from *Flying Folly* to *The Abducting Horse*[1] [Fig.154], in which Goya no longer deals with rape as a one-sided act of coercion and violence. The etching, which is close in spirit to the Capricho *Don't shout, Stupid* [Fig.71], is dominated by a stoutly-built horse that rears and bends its head back to seize a woman in its powerful jaws and lift her off

1 *El Caballo Raptor* – the title, which is the generally utilised one, was supplied by Aureliano de Beruete y Moret.



Fig.153 Flying Folly (*Disparate Volante*)



Fig.154 *The Abducting Horse*

the ground. In the background two aberrant monsters, a mixture of dog and rodent, stand like shadowy outcrops in the landscape; the one on the horizon beyond the horse appears to be ambling in search of something, while the other, to the left of the print, opens its mouth as wide as its long-lashed staring eye will allow to consume a second woman.

The comparison with *Don't shout, Stupid* holds up at the level of the woman's ambiguous response to her abduction: although she throws up her hands in a similar fashion to the woman in *Flying Folly*, the expression on her mouth and fleshy cheeks is close to a smile, as if, despite its apparent violence, the horse is a source of pleasure to her[2]. Her surrender to it is echoed in the background woman, who puts her head into the mouth of the monster on what seems to be her own initiative.

The theme of the print debouches when one examines the preparatory drawing [Fig.155], which contains information not carried through to the final etching. Here Sánchez and Gállego are useful:

> The preparatory drawing . . . helps to identify its subject-matter, which is based on the old tale of a man who has been turned into a horse and falls in love with a woman, whom he abducts after killing her husband. This is made quite explicit in the drawing, which shows the husband lying dead at the horse's feet. (1995:185)

In crossing from preparatory drawing to etching Goya again declines literalness in favour of a more complex and provocative scene. The addition of the monsters shifts the print to a different dimension, one that will always remain something of a mystery. Exactly what role Goya intended the monsters to play is irrecoverable, but they are not likely to be arbitrary transcriptions from a dream.

Since Goya uses sequences, or narratives of fragmentation, in both *Los Caprichos* and *Desastres de la Guerra*, there is reason to suspect that this print was devised with a sequence in mind. Thus, the three different events: abduction, devouring,

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2 In this respect, the 'paradoxical coexistence of repulsion and attraction' that Tomlinson (1989*a*:20) finds in the Capricho *They carried Her off!* [Fig.72] can also be associated with the Disparate.

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