Goya's Grotesque: Abjection in *Los Caprichos, Desastres de la Guerra,* and *Los Disparates*

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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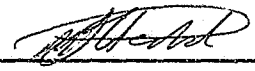
Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own (un)aided work. I am submitting it to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination at another university.



Michael Herbst, on this 24th day of NOVEMBER 1999

Abstract

My basic premise in this study is, if abjection is a psychosocial phenomenon, even a kind of waste category and mechanism, it should be discernible and analysable as an underlying structure in the form, iconography and purpose of works of art. Certain modes of art will manifest or express it more lucidly and abundantly than others. Satire and the Grotesque, which Goya adopts in his graphic work, are especially fruitful in this regard. In both, one can find processes and states of degradation and vitiation that accord with the two facets of abjection Hal Foster (1996) so pragmatically terms the *operation to abject* and the *condition to be abject*. Satire, with its inclination to criticise political, social and ecclesiastical figures, can chiefly be interpreted in terms of the operation to abject (to lower, cast down, depose, sideline), while the Grotesque, displaying the distorted, monstrous, 'freakish', hybrid, impossible, relates more to the condition to be abject.

This conjunction between satire/the Grotesque and abjection guides my interpretation of *Los Caprichos* and *Los Disparates*. *Los Caprichos*, in which Goya took it upon himself to "censure" and "ridicule" "human errors and vices", are marked by a quite strict use of satire to criticise, mock and marginalise certain social groups (prostitutes, nobles and corrupt clerics, in particular). Since society, or the Symbolic that undergirds it, cannot do without the abject, either in its role as midden or as oppositional determinant or defining other, the satirical project cannot banish or destroy the abject; it can, however, bid and lobby for some degree of social reclamation and rejuvenation. The satirist depicts the grotesque, sordid, obscene, deviant, abandoned and licentious to indicate to the viewer/reader what s/he must laugh off to live a decent, obedient, constructive and law-fearing life. Goya takes this approach in *Los Caprichos*. After all, in at least one letter to his friend Martín Zapater he hinted that he feared the "witches, goblins, phantoms, arrogant giants, knaves" and "scoundrels" of his society, and evidently felt a need to part from them. How deep this need ran one cannot say; many of his images suggest a degree of equivocation (he vacillates between being on the side of the law and on the side of his own more incorruptible conscience, from which he upbraids the law) and ambivalence (on the one hand, he scolds his objects of attack and appears to be repelled by them; on the other, he seems to relish depicting them in grotesque and blighted shapes, as if the satirical purpose is secondary to the opportunity his art provides to invent forms and get close to the forbidden, the anti-social, the rotten, the abject).

In *Los Disparates* equivocation and ambivalence come more to the fore. Goya often appears most aggressively satirical in the *Disparates* when he questions corruption in social institutions such as the Church and the law. Some images, notably *Folly of the Mass*, juxtapose a wrathful figure with a mass of social ills, foibles and depravities, and seem characteristically satirical, but the majority of the etchings are striking in their lack of closure, as if a "state of unresolved tension", to quote Michael Steig, adequately rewarded Goya for the labour of production. *Man wandering among Phantoms*, for example, is ambiguous and seems to sum up Goya's relationship to the abject toward the end of his life: through the surrogate of an old man, Goya appears to have struck a deal with the abject; submerged in it, corrupted by it, impure, but nevertheless sufficiently single-minded to find an identity separate from it. Complicit, but differentiated: all subjects stand in this way to the abject.

In *Los Desastres*, especially given that I do not deal with the *Caprichos Enfáticos* section of the series, my interpretation is determined less by satire than by the

question of how an antagonistic nation uses war as a mechanism of conclusive abjection to extend military, political and, ultimately, Symbolic influence – by means of sanctioned murder, execution, even rape – over another nation, with the aim of making that nation succumb to the abjection of surrender and the imposition of a foreign Symbolic. War also produces heaps of corpses and, in the occupied cities, ill and starving destitutes: those reduced to conditions of permanent or near-permanent abjection by war's ballistic exacerbation of the operation to abject.

Contact with abjection through art strengthens, weakens and expands the self. It carries the threat of immersion in the repressed and the promise of risqué pleasure – both from the diminution of unpleasure through the making or viewing of art, and the more positive pleasure of jouissance. Contact with abjection allows, further, for the complicated experience of being liminal, grotesque and abject oneself while caught between the poles of the Symbolic and the abject. Whether we, as makers and/or viewers, criticise or joy in it, abjection holds out the alluring prospect of catharsis and temporary relief both from its own hazards and the rigours and inhibitions of social life. Goya, it would appear, found this intervenient condition compelling enough to return to it – if he ever truly left it – over a period of almost three decades through the medium of the three graphic series I explore in this dissertation.

Acknowledgements

I extend my thanks to my supervisor, Professor Colin Richards, who proved helpful, encouraging and insightful – sometimes *too* insightful – throughout the years of this difficult project. I especially thank him for not showing me the door when I presented him with the first draft of this admittedly long manuscript. My thanks also to my co-supervisor, Professor Penny Siopis, for her support, criticism, suggestions and assistance, which extended to buying a copy of Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* from a London bookshop on my behalf at a time when I most needed it, but was unable to find it locally. It was a strange road we travelled, blasted by acts of God, snarled by heavy workloads and impossible schedules, blocked by one unexpected obstacle after another – including a malignant garage door – but, hey, we made it in the end.

Given the paucity of Goya material in this country, especially the deficiency in Spanish literature on Goya, I owe a great debt to the interlibrary loans department of the Wartenweiler library, especially to Jill Turner, who managed to track down and apprehend many of the international books and articles I needed to complete this thesis. Several texts, alas, I could not acquire in time, and I must hope that they would have made little difference to my primary arguments.

A special word of thanks is due to Teresa Lorenzo de Márquez of Harvard University, who, on my request, was prepared to supply me, at her own cost, with texts by herself and her husband Francisco Márquez Villanueva, which proved informative and constructive. I thank her also for the opportunity to communicate in Spanish, even though I suspect my Spanish looked to her like Plutospeak.

The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. (Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.) Staying with the subject of shekels, I want to also thank the University of the Witwatersrand for all their support in the form of bursaries and scholarships. Such funding made this dissertation financially viable, and allowed me to undertake research in Madrid, which gave me the unforgettable opportunity to view much of Goya's work, including the prints and the silver-coated etching plates at the Calcografía Nacional.

Lastly, thank you's are due to my father for his support, to my mother for her encouragement, and to my brother for his computer expertise, his internet facility, and the numerous sacrifices he made to ensure that my PC remained operational despite lightning strikes, insufficient memory and a host of mysterious glitches and gremlins that threatened – usually at the most inopportune times – to delay the completion of this project.

Contents

List of Illustrations

I first scanned all of my images into my computer document and then printed them out on a laser-printer; all illustrations are thus derived from reproductions in books and journals. I provide a bibliography of these sources at the end of the list of illustrations. Additionally, by name, date and page number, I note the origin of each image in the list itself.

As regards providing information on the physical locations of the images, I adopt a policy of withholding locations for graphic works, whether by Goya or not, since, as these are not unique works but prints, they exist in several collections, both public and private, distributed across the world (although chiefly, where Goya is concerned, in Spain and North America). Those readers who might want to know which specific collections were drawn on for the original reproductions I use, should consult the sources listed in the illustrations bibliography. As regards unique works such as paintings and drawings, for these I have provided locations, which I draw predominantly from Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal (1994).

All images are by Goya, unless otherwise noted.

1. Sueño 1. *Universal Language* (*Idioma Universal*). 1797. Pen and sepia drawing. 24.8x 17.2 cm. Madrid, Prado. (Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:113)

2. Capricho 11, *Boys at the Ready* (*Muchachos al Avío*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. 21.9x15.4 cm. (Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:40)

3. Capricho 33, *To the Count Palatine* (*Al Conde Palatino*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. 21.9x15.2 cm. (Ferrari, 1963:33)

4. Capricho 75, *Is there None Who can untie Us?* (*¿No hay Quien Nos desate?*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. 21.8x15.2 cm. (Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:79)

5. Capricho 12, *Hunt for Teeth* (*A caza de Dientes*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. 21.9x15.3 cm. (Ferrari, 1963:12)

6. Capricho 14, *What a Sacrifice!* (*¡Qué Sacrificio!*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. 20.3x15.2 cm. (Ferrari, 1963:14)

7. Desastre 68, *What Madness!* (*¡Qué Locura!*). *ca.* 1815-20. Etching and lavis. 16x 22.2 cm. (Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:132)

8. Capricho 69, *Blow* (*Sopla*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. Detail of Fig.74. (Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:75)

9. Capricho 48, *Blowers* (*Soplones*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint. Detail of Fig.73. (Ferrari, 1963:48)

10. Desastre 12, *For This You were Born* (*Para Eso habeis Nacido*). *ca.* 1810-12. Etching and lavis. Detail of Fig.136. (Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:99)

11. Capricho 4, *That of the Nurse* (*El de la Rollona*). 1797-98. Etching and aquatint.

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Note on Translations

Unless otherwise specified in the thesis, all translations from original Spanish and French texts are my own. Although I cannot make any claims for fluency in these languages, either in the spoken or written form, owing to my general discontent with available translations of, for example, the titles to Goya's etchings and the commentaries to *Los Caprichos*, I have translated all such material to my own satisfaction. I have also adopted a policy of adapting the original titles and commentaries into Modern Spanish. By and large, I have avoided altering the original punctuation. I try as far as possible to translate directly, to avoid the trappings of colonising the text.

Is what is in the cellar always truer than what is in the attic?

(Jacques Lacan, *Seminar I*, 1988*a*:267)

FAUST. Mothers?
MEPHISTOPHELES. Stand you daunted?
FAUST.
The Mothers! Mothers – sound with wonder haunted.
MEPHISTOPHELES.
True, goddesses unknown to mortal mind,
And named indeed with dread among our kind.
To reach them, delve below earth's deepest floors;
And that we need them, all the blame is yours.
FAUST. Where lies the way?
MEPHISTOPHELES.
There *is* none. Way to the Unreachable,
Never for treading, to those Unbeseechable,
Never besought! Is your soul then ready?
Not locks or bolts are there, no barrier crude,
But lonely drift, far, lone estrangement's eddy.
What sense have you of waste and solitude?
[. . .]
MEPHISTOPHELES.
[. . .]
But blank is that eternal void afar:
There eyes avail not, even your step is dumb,
No substance there, whe your rest you come.
FAUST.
[. . .]
Well, let us on! We'll plumb your deepest ground,
For in your Nothing may the All be found.
[. . .]
FAUST (*shuddering*).
The Mothers – still I feel the shock of fear.
What is this Word, that I must dread to hear?
[. . .]
MEPHISTOPHELES.
Then to the deep! – I could as well say height:
All's one . . .

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust, Part Two* [Translated by Philip Wayne] [London: Penguin, 1959] pp.76–78)

Introduction

I. Proleptical Matters

FRANCISCO DE GOYA Y LUCIENTES (1746–1828) is among a small number of artists – the so-called 'great masters' – whose work, personality, and historical situation have constituted rich subjects for myriad forms of subsequent research and analysis[1]. His work invites a breadth of possibilities both challenging and intimidating: if they are to make serious contributions to the field, those who approach this much-explored artist must dredge a deep channel, in which the scholarship lies metres deep. In this thesis I attempt such a contribution, and because my dredging turned up very little precedent for my study, I must establish the nature of my methodology at the outset. Simply put, I use psychoanalysis to comment on the graphic work of Goya. The choice of such a methodology instantly poses questions, and I will now address those I consider important since they will clarify my position and thereby help my readers to find theirs.

1. The question of intention

The intentionality debate has raged for some time now, and it continues to divide opinion. Some argue that the intentions of a producer of cultural objects are irrelevant since all interpretation is a (re)fabrication from the interpreter's perspective. Others argue that the producer cannot be removed from the equation, and that research should be anchored in historical reconstructions of the time in which the producer lived. Still others are flexible enough to allow for both views or to try meld them in a way that, instead of sacrificing the merits of either approach, bene-

[1] Much of this research and analysis, crossing frameworks from the Romantic to the psychological, can be found summed up in Nigel Glendinning's classic Goya and His Critics (1977).

fits and enhances both.

As early as 1946 William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley claimed that an artist's intentions were, according to Gene Blocker, '*not* relevant to critical judgments about works of art (1978:246. Emphasis in original). They argued that what the artist intends to elucidate in an artwork is extraneous to the work, which, they claimed, itself contains the information required for its comprehension (246–7). Less dogmatically, Richard Wollheim, in his 1968 book Art and Its Objects, writes: 'the value of art . . . does not exist exclusively, or even primarily, for the artist. It is shared equally between the artist and his audience' (1992:86). He quotes Paul Valéry, who defines a creator, i.e., a producer of cultural objects, as '"one who makes others create"' (87). The "others" in this instance being the artist's audience, which "creates" narratives, readings and interpretations. In the same year that Wol'heim's book appeared, Roland Barthes published his article 'La mort de l'auteur' ('The Death of the Author'), in which he suggested that in interpreting a text emphasis should be placed on the site of consumption (the reader), not production (the author):

> a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author . . . the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (1977:148)

Barthes believed, further, that '[t]o give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text . . . to close the writing' (147). Now, while Barthes had writing, not image-making in mind, similarities between the reading of texts and the 'reading' of images allow one to consider his concerns in relation to the interpretation of art. One of the biggest problems with Barthes' essay on hermeneutic authority is that it offers no strategy to the reader (or viewer) who interprets texts (or images) made hundreds of years before, when different historical and cultural circumstances to those of the reader/viewer pertained. What of a viewer like myself, who lacks that historico-cultural access to the work (Goya's in this instance) Barthes takes for granted? Do I, (1) treat the intentions of the maker as sovereign because they are so remote, or (2)

dismiss the intentions because, being remote, they are irrelevant to the interpretative act, and so expose the maker's work to any reading I can conceive?

Neither option is useful, the first because to privilege the maker's intentions when they cannot be recovered in anything but an extremely partial and reconstructive sense, seems a futile exercise; and the second because, as Wollheim rightly states, 'art is an intentional activity' (1992:90) – it is teleological; its object is produced for some purpose, be it moral, cathartic, aesthetic, narrative, mythologising, mimetic, anti-mimetic, or even unknown to the artist. This means that, at least initially, the producer delimits meaning, making it impossible for certain interpretations to elucidate certain works. It does not then follow that an interpretation can only be taken seriously if it adheres to the producer's initial meanings, but it does mean that, since the humanities are, in my view, suspicious of potentially anachronistic interpretations (e.g., any psychoanalytic reading of an artwork made prior to Freud), the scholar who works with such material needs to strike a balance in his or her account between the producer's intentions, as far as these are known, and the anachronistic framework, demonstrating how the latter can, not explain, but cast new light on, the former.

To establish my position, let me say that I agree with Barthes: the reader is vital in unravelling texts, and an attitude that only the Author is important does, indeed, foreclose the act of interpretation; but at the same time every text is 'a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture' (Barthes, 1977:146) *within* a historical moment, and I will admit that to altogether ignore that moment, and the combinations of influences that shaped the artist *within* that moment, is to open the act of interpretation out so far that the activity of those who read it is likely to become a rootless, anxious one.

In my thesis I use an admittedly anachronistic methodology not to draw a causal connection between the methodology and the maker's (Goya's) intentions, which would make his work an expression of the methodology – a nexus I recognise as

impossible – but to demonstrate ways in which the theory can enrich our comprehension of Goya's graphic production.

In looking at Goya I feel I have chosen wisely, for even during the artist's lifetime at least one critic, Gregorio Gonzálex Azaola, proposed that his etchings (Azaola was referring to *Los Caprichos*) could be interpreted in a variety of ways in the light of the interpreter's personal perspective. As viewers divine 'the subtle concepts concealed in each satire,' claimed Azaola, they make 'in their own way and according to their sphere of knowledge, more-or-less successful interpretations'[2]. What matters here is the licence Azaola grants viewers to interpret Goya's etchings "in their own way" and, in a phrase reminiscent of Barthes, "according to their sphere of knowledge". My chosen "sphere of knowledge" is psychoanalysis, of which it behoves me to make some comment.

2. *Psychoanalysis as a methodology*

'[O]ne cannot learn the secrets of, nor psychoanalyze, a great artist dead nearly a century and a half.' (Hofer, 1967:3) Nevertheless, in the words of another scholar, Ronald Paulson: '[t]here is no inconsistency in arguing that a scientifically valid theory of modern behaviour might (even should) be applied historically as a hypothesis to respect the otherness of historical events and works created in the past' (1983:9).

Hofer is correct: one cannot "psychoanalyze" an artist no longer among the living. Nor, indeed, can one psychoanalyse the man through his art work – at least, not if we treat him as a patient. But we should avoid reducing psychoanalysis to a clinical practice involving patient, analyst and an interindividual plenum of complex transference; it is also a theory of the subject, and even if only challengingly and controversially, this theory can help us to perceive in the cultural objects of long-

2 los finos conceptos envueltos en cada satira . . . cada cual a su modo y segun la esfera de sus conocimientos, más o menos felices aplicaciones. (Adapted from Enriqueta Harris, 1964:42; also see Glendinning, 1977:60)

dead producers the presence of more-or-less timeless and universal psychosocial structures of human behaviour and organisation. More: to perceive the manner in which these structures played out at the level of both the idiosyncratic producer and, more broadly, the historically-particular social formation of which the producer was a member. Such is my preface and premise.

Psychoanalytic investigations of Goya's art are rare; those we have are weakened by their treatment of Goya as a patient recoverable through his work[3]. However, a number of scholars have suggested that psychoanalysis might hold a key to the mysteries of many of Goya's works, most notably *Los Disparates*. In 1957 Hans Sedlmayr claimed that 'Psychoanalysis will one day attempt to write [the] "iconography" [of *Los Disparates*]' (in Glendinning, 1977:163). History has not fulfilled his expectation. As recently as 1995, in their Goya: The Complete Etchings and Lithographs, Pérez Sánchez and Gállego muse: 'Perhaps a psychoanalytic approach could, as has often been suggested, explain the strange subject matter of the etchings' (176).

I firmly believe that, in their diversity and scope, psychoanalytic methods have much to offer the analysis of visual art; but their greatest danger lies in their application: to be informative to viewers, they cannot be applied in ways that unreflexively ape clinical practice. In psychoanalytically-grounded writing, the line between psychoanalysis as cultural model of interpretation and psychoanalysis as clinical practice is hard to assert, define or remain perpetually cognisant of[4],

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3 Goya has been diagnosed for more than psychological illness; there are also more physiologically-based arguments, one of the more interesting being John Moffitt's 'Painters "Born under Saturn": The Physiological Explanation' (1988). Developing a suggestion of William G. Niederland's (see Glendinning, 1977:173), Moffitt proposes that many of the attributes of Goya's 1792-93 illness could have been due to lead poisoning.

4 Both psychologists and cultural theorists are prey to this problem. As an example of the former, see Reitman's Psychotic Art (1950:143-52), which offers a superb illustration of how *not* to interpret an artist psychologically. As an example of the latter, see Ronald Paulson's treatment of Goya's art in Representations of Revolution (1983). Paulson's approach is far subtler than Reitman's, but he errs in assuming uncritically that revolutionary art can be distinctly divided according to whether the work displays affinities with an 'Oedipal' or an 'oral-anal' subject position. Such a division has merits, to be sure, but Paulson treats the categories as given in his analyses, thereby both eliminating other potential – less clinical – divi-

primarily because psychoanalysis is a science of the subject; therefore a psychoanalytic model without a subject is a contradiction in terms. When used to examine works of culture, a psychoanalytic model will *always* delineate a subject, and, given that this subject *is* the maker of the works under study, the reader will understandably conflate this subject with the maker. In the process a theory of the subject gets mapped onto a historical individual, creating a tension that many scholars are unprepared to accept. I believe, however, that the method must be granted leeway, for its concerns are intentionally speculative and interpretative; like quantum physics, it operates on informed assumptions; its purpose is not to unearth previously concealed data[5], but to propose new perspectives based on admittedly ideal hypotheses. Furthermore, while psychoanalysis must often concern itself with individuals, its purpose, especially in cultural studies, is often broader: it seeks to demonstrate how objects of culture reveal a subject mediated by power relations, social limitations, socially-determined psychic formations, and unconscious factors.

Scholars who use psychoanalysis to investigate dead artists have no patients, only works of art; therefore, they cannot draw direct links between their interpretations and the intentions of the dead artists they are studying. They cannot claim that their interpretations reveal, or speak for, the unique subjectivities of the dead. I

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sions permissible within the psychoanalytic model, and creating the impression that psychoanalytical insights dominate all others, i.e., he essentialises his categories.

[5] That is, not physical data – the leavings of history – although historical material can play a role in the interpretative process. One of the assumptions of clinical psychoanalysis is, nevertheless, that human beings possess an unconscious mind which can be accessed by means of certain techniques (e.g., hypnosis) and used to 'recall' the raw data of past experiences that may be contributing to the current psychological illness of the patient. One should recognise that the 'recall' of this data can never be complete or even entirely factual and reliable. Moreover, there is no question that the analyst further distorts the material when s/he sets about interpreting it in accordance with the general theories of the system. Such vagaries do not, in my opinion, undermine the entire worth of the system, however.

In the domain of psychoanalysis as a cultural model, the uncovering of concealed information is limited to revisitations of previous texts (e.g., Kristeva's re-reading of Freud's case of 'Little Hans' [1982:33–44]), and this application of the model is even more conjectural.

believe they can, however, (1) interpret their selected works in a way that illuminates psychoanalytic theory, (2) use psychoanalysis to extend the iconographic understanding of these works, opening new angles on old themes by establishing connections between the images and the generalised subject(s) of psychoanalysis, and (3) *speculate*, with recourse to conjectural evidence, on the possibility that the dead artist's work reveals specific attributes of his or her subjectivity, and then relate these attributes to the subject(s) of psychoanalysis.

In the first and second instances the maker is more-or-less irrelevant, and the scholar utilises his or her works to comment more panoramically on the maker's historical and cultural period (or a feature of that period), or to reinterpret the works in a way that reframes their terms of reference and makes them active in a more a-historical, more decontextualised and discursive space. In the third instance the maker is relevant, but the scholar's motivation is not to draw a psychological profile of the dead artist but to argue for the potential of images to encapsulate and preserve certain relatively constant tenets of subjectivity as proposed by the psychoanalytic discipline[6]. My thesis combines the above approaches. As a result I open myself to questioning on two counts: (1) my assumption that a work of art can be enriched by a theory not in place during the lifetime of its maker; (2) my assumption that it is possible to associate a historical figure with the generalised subject of psychoanalysis. No justifications I could offer in support of these two assumptions will please or satisfy every reader, but I need nonetheless to make my position clear.

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6 An example of such a "relatively constant tenet" is the Oedipus complex, which Freud seemed to believe held true for Western society in general, regardless of historical parameters. Another would be the alienated or divided subject as postulated in Lacan's theory of the mirror phase. It is not my intention to debate the validity of such universalising tendencies. Anyone who uses a psychoanalytic method must to some extent believe that subjectivity can be determined by patterns of psychic development that exceed the limits of society, economy, race, gender, history – patterns which, in fact, play a role in shaping such limits (thus while some feminisms, to take one example, will leave their explanation of patriarchy at the evident socio-historic level, a psychoanalytically-cognisant feminism will look deeper, to the primary relationships between subjects and the part these may play in *producing* patriarchal power relations).

Where the issue of using anachronistic theory is concerned, my justification is simple enough: artworks remain for centuries, even millennia, after the passing of their makers; later generations become the custodians of these works, which alone makes them prone to constantly-renewing interpretations. Objects move through history and become connotational in new contexts. In assessing such objects there is room to consider their origins, the significations they have acquired over time, and their potential relevance and meanings for us at present.

What of the maker? Can one associate him or her with a subjectivity generated by a universalising theory? I think one can, but theories come in various forms, some of which, if not worthless, are nonetheless untenable (e.g., Freud's psychosexual study of Leonardo da Vinci). These tend to be untenable because they try to apply general theory too particularly. To my mind, the tenable theories are those that show how the general is manifested in the particular. In my thesis, for instance, I look at the way Goya used and/or portrayed processes of degradation, ridicule and division, to comment on his society; and argue that this kind of procedure (not just in the case of Goya, mind) can be placed in a larger project, spanning the centuries of human existence, that of abjection. In other words, I claim that there is this (non)thing/process we might call abjection, which, even though it has only been psychoanalytically defined recently (1980[7]), has been around, in one form or another, as a psychosocial function since the beginning of civilisation, and can be discerned in the historical texts and objects of almost every epoch and society that has ever existed. When we take on Goya's work in such a framework, we do so to uncover some of the ways in which abjection manifested in his time, place and society. In the debasing project of satire, for example, I find a principle of abjection at work, and this guides my approach to *Los Caprichos*. Goya's depictions of the sick and dying in *Desastres de la Guerra*, to take another example, easily allow for re-

7 By Julia Kristeva in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*. The English translation by Leon Roudiez, Powers of Horror, was published in 1982. This is the edition I refer to in the thesis.

interpretation from the perspective of abjection, since, as I will argue in due course, there is nothing more abject than the corpse, and from century to century the corpse, as the definitive symbol of mortality, has proven to be a supreme object of repulsion and attraction. In such work we find the procedures and objects, or the iconography, perhaps, of abjection as if in a fossilised condition.

Language, cumbersome as it is, and requiring so many circumlocutions, qualifications, justifications, vindications, rationalisations, moderations, caveats, apologies, glosses, establishments of position and voice, etc. – especially at the doctoral and post-doctoral level of discourse – will inevitably prove inadequate to the task of extrapolation and conjecture. At points in my argument it will no doubt seem as if I am using Goya as a mouthpiece for my interpretations; it might also seem that I am claiming Goya worked deliberately and consciously with processes of abjection. He did not. He worked with satire, the Grotesque, masquerade, the corpse, the diseased, and other subjects and themes that interested him. *I* am the one drawing links between his work and the larger terrain of psychoanalytic abjection theory. This seems an obvious point to make, but I need to make it if I am to circumvent the conclusions some readers might jump to. At the same time, I apologise beforehand for any overlooked instances in which the manner of my writing so attenuates the line between Goya's works and my interpretations that I appear to be psychobiographying Goya; but I also encourage the reader to read with due caution and tolerance, allowing that the perception of where that thin line lies, or of how thin it truly is, will sometimes be in his or her own eyes, not in the text itself.

In my thesis I adopt a specific facet of psychoanalytic investigation, namely, Julia Kristeva's abjection theory[8], and use it to interpret certain psychosocial cur-

[8] I must point out that, as a field, psychoanalysis is not unidirectional. While all forms of psychoanalysis and all psychoanalysts must ultimately pay due homage to Freud, the discipline has given rise to various bifurcations, branches and lineages, many of which are at loggerheads with each other. The lineage I draw on in the thesis has Freud as its root, Lacan as its trunk, and Kristeva as its branches. However, since psychoanalytic lines of investigation intermingle it means, as one would expect, that I do at times refer to analysts from dif-

rents I infer from Goya's work[9]. I do my best to avoid transposing my interpretations onto the artist's intentions, as I have stated. But a problem arises because, beyond relating Goya's work to the larger scheme of abjection, I also speculate in my thesis that Goya used his satirical art to gain a measure of release from his personal anxieties and concerns.

Here, any reader will agree, I cannot but, to some degree, psychobiographise Goya. I do not take this route easily, and, indeed, if I didn't think it essential to the completion of the dissertation I would not take it at all. I should add, however, that I do not view the etcher whose portrait emerges in the course of my speculation as Goya-the-historical-individual, but rather as an incomplete and provisional figure pieced together by processes of interpretation and inference: a fraction, or set of fractions, rather than an integer. Unfortunately, the analytic procedure is susceptible to creating what *appears* to be an entity (name alone is a powerful factor), and some readers will struggle to discern any difference between a suggestive psychical impression and a biographical profile. I must insist on the speculatory nature of the reading process that gives rise to this impression, and ask the reader to treat it as a proposition. Again, if I did not feel it was a proposition that rounds off the picture of abjection I develop in the analyses of individual works, I would not pose it.

3. *Different series, different approach*

The three etching series differ significantly in their satellite material – both original

ferent lineages – Melanie Klein, for example. Incidentally, for a synopsis of the interpenetration of the various psychoanalytic concepts borrowed from Freud, Lacan and Kristeva see my mapping in Appendix One.

9 By 'work' I mean Goya's three etching series. These seem the obvious choice for such a dissertation, and, indeed, I cannot deny that among the reasons I selected them was their popularity (near-sensationalism, frankly, in the case of the much-studied *Caprichos*). However, I should note that Goya's drawings provide an equally fruitful subject for a study of this nature – in many cases they are even more propitious than the etchings. Suffice to say that I am reserving investigation of the drawings for future projects.

material and material accumulated over the years under the auspices of scholarship – and I want to underscore that I have taken a different approach to each one. For *Los Caprichos*, the most studied of all Goya's graphic series, I draw on several sources to inform my reading, viz., the etching titles, composed by Goya; the many commentaries to the etchings (one of which, that in the Prado Museum, may have been written by Goya[10]); and the wealth of information, drawn chiefly from eighteenth-century Spanish literature, art historians have contributed to outline the historico-cultural context within which Goya worked.

Though this volume of reference exists, I must caution the reader against assuming that it is available for each of the prints I discuss; sometimes there are emblematic sources or sources in proverbial lore and in Spanish literature and art, that help to inform the iconography of the works; but not always. When such sources are at hand I generally make use of them; but one must bear in mind that the makers of art history have always preferred certain works above others, with the inevitable result that some (e.g., the Capricho *The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters*) have been buoyed up by a large volume of research, while others (e.g., the Disparate *Loyalty*)

10 In my discussion of *Los Caprichos* I use the Prado manuscript as the standard source for commentary on the etchings. This is the only commentary that may have been written by Goya himself, and, although this fact does not necessarily carry weight, since Goya may have simply copied out in his own hand a set of comments made by others, the Prado's manuscript is the one I regard as closest in spirit to the etchings themselves. Whereas most of the other manuscripts are largely explanatory, the Prado commentary often manifests the same trend toward deepening mystification and extending ambiguity that we see in the prints themselves. In this sense the commentary adds kinks and knots to the threads of meaning used in weaving the images, so that image and text, rather than the latter supplementing and elucidating the former, interact with each other to form what one might describe as a multimedia work.

The other important manuscripts are the one in the Biblioteca Nacional and the one originally owned by López de Ayala. There are additional commentaries, most of which are closely modelled on the three main ones. For discussion of the commentaries see Glendinning, 'Goya and England in the Nineteenth Century', 1964, Sayre in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:CI–CIII, and, especially, René Andioc, 'Al Margen de los *Caprichos*: Las "Explicaciones" Manuscritas', 1984; also see Tomás Harris, 1964:95–97, for a discussion of the possibility that the Prado manuscript was written by Goya's scribe.

It bears mentioning that none of the commentaries should be treated as a manual permitting the complete and incontrovertible decoding of the images, and even though it has become standard practice for those who study *Los Caprichos* to draw on the commentaries for support, they are better treated as guides than as Gospel.

have been almost ignored.

In the case of *Desastres de la Guerra*, discounting books, texts and documents on the history of the war, all I had to work with were Goya's titles. No then-contemporary commentaries attend this series. Moreover, art historians and other scholars have not interpreted the individual etchings to anywhere near the extent that they have interpreted *Los Caprichos*, with the result that, in the literature I consulted, many of the prints are scarcely even mentioned. This lack of discourse is partly due, I suspect, to the fact that many of the etchings are repetitive and, in historical, descriptive and iconographic approaches, can be lumped together and covered adequately in single sentences or paragraphs. Such handling of the material does, however, bypass important details that other readings, grounded in different methodologies, would make central. The result is that I have been forced to interpret the etchings without the benefit of recourse to a comprehensive corpus of data. My focus on abjection further restricts the applicability of my sources and requires that I rely heavily on the images in making my arguments. Some readers might think that, in so doing, I am simply reading off the images; unfortunately, if I fail to convince them that the images bring abjection theory to life (and vice versa) – embody it, so to speak – there is nothing more I can do at present to relieve their scepticism since this thesis is in many ways the plan for a second, larger, thesis, or at least the programme for several years of further study. Through such study I would seek further, more concrete, correspondences between abjection theory and eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Spanish understandings of those objects, things, states, and representations I include under the banner of abjection: death, the corpse, decay, the grave, earth and its substances (everything from marsh to lava), the body and its flows (urine, excrement, etc.) the mother, and so on. Financially, physically, mentally, pragmatically, this extended compass for my research area was simply beyond the scope of this dissertation. In short, the reader should note that I consider this study provisional and incomplete; further s/he should note that its shortfalls are omissions and par-

tial developments due not to ignorance or indifference on my part, but to the real limitations – space being one of them – of this project.

Lastly, *Los Disparates*. This series, too, has no commentaries and suffers from a paucity of scholarly attention. Moreover, some of the etchings have no titles. On the positive side, many of the subjects Goya tackles in the *Disparates* appear to be translations of themes he dealt with earlier, particularly in *Los Caprichos*. In this instance, then, Goya himself is often the only available reference and guide. For my treatment of this series I must make the same apologies as before, but will add that, given the current extent of available research – still more shrunken in my case by the difficulty of accessing texts only attainable outside of the country – I could not have interpreted the images any more inclusively within the aegis of my chosen model.

With each etching series, then, the degree of speculation and removal from historical sources grows in my account, but I ask the reader to observe that this is due not to an increasing unconcern on my part for such sources, but the increasing deficit in the available literature.

4. Issues of selection

I have considered it necessary to look at all three of Goya's main etching series because each one, methodologically, offers a different perspective on abjection. *Los Caprichos* are essential because they are satirical, and satire can be constructively reconceptualised in terms of the *process* of abjection. *Los Desastres de la Guerra* are likewise important because, in their emphasis on death and illness, they offer an iconography, if you will, in which one can perceive the kinds of bodies and situations that help construct the *category* of abjection. As for *Los Disparates*, while in the main satirical like *Los Caprichos*, I look at the series for two reasons: (1) it has received little productive critical attention, and (2) it has led scholars (e.g., Sedlmayr and Sánchez and Gállego; see p.5 of the introduction) to call on psychoanalysis for 'answers', and I want to make some kind of reply to this call. Abjection theory gives one a model

that, to my mind, is rewarding and helpful, and even if it can only tell us more about Goya's intentions at the speculative level, it does help us, in a general sense, to understand societal functioning and the role norms and abnorms play in determining the form and limits of the subject.

Now, as regards my selection of works. There are 182 etchings all told in *Los Caprichos, Desastres de la Guerra* and *Los Disparates,* without taking excluded plates, preparatory drawings, earlier etching states and other additional material into account. In the earlier stages of my dissertation I dealt with almost all of them, and the result, as one might expect, was a text considerably longer than the current one in which I lost a lot of focus as works that illustrated my concepts less well than others, or which repeated the themes of others, competed for attention with more primary examples. My concern that these less productive works would undermine the cohesion of the thesis, taken with my concern that the reader would tire of the volume of examples and pages, led me to cut the discussions of several images either completely or partially from the text. The *Caprichos Enfáticos* of *Los Desastres de la Guerra,* for example, I have omitted on the assumption that my treatment of satire in *Los Caprichos* will equip readers sufficiently to undertake their own analyses of these works, should they feel so inclined. Other works I have cut because their concerns reappear elsewhere in their parent series. Still others I have cut because, while they can be interpreted according to my model, they are not fruitful enough to warrant space in the confines of a doctoral thesis. The reader may safely assume that the works I have retained are those I consider best suited to a comprehension of my chosen area of psychoanalytically-motivated study.

With these proleptical concerns out the way, I will now introduce the reader to the concerns of my dissertation. First, I lay out the concept of abjection and indicate how I will make use of it; second, I outline my parts and chapters in some detail, giving the reader a clear picture of the shape the thesis will take.

II. Briefly, the Abject and its Intersection with Satire and the Grotesque

> **Abject** . . . Cast off, rejected –1614 . . . Cast down, brought low in condition, low-lying 1520 . . . Low in regard, mean-spirited, despicable 1548.
>
> **Abjection** . . . The action of casting down –1653 . . . The condition of one cast down, degradation, low estate . . . The action of casting off; rejection –1655 . . . That which is cast off; refuse . . . (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1964:4)

In the above quotations I have included the dates when different definitions of 'abject' and 'abjection' came into currency; what they reveal is the advanced age of the term[11]. It is a word whose primary meaning has changed little in five centuries[12].

Nor is it likely to alter dramatically in the future. Even Kristeva's complex theorisation of the term in Powers of Horror does not so much rewrite its familiar definition as develop its applicability. Degradation, as state and process, lies at the core of the term 'abject' and is a constant in human experience, which can be investigated with the help of a variety of discourses, including psychoanalysis.

Albeit with reservations, we can relate Kristeva's theory of abjection to a simple understanding of society as a three-term complex consisting of two polarities with a threshold between them. The one polarity, the Symbolic[13], is characterised by classificatory mechanisms that assert laws, prohibitions, regulations, etc., which the social majority considers right and proper. The second polarity, the abject – an ocean of chaos and disorder where no classifications exist to halt and place the flux of material – is considered wrong and improper. When the subject crosses the

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11 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary includes a second definition of abject, now considered obsolete – although its meaning does not differ from that of its present-day counterpart – which dates back to 1475.

12 Five centuries, that is, in the *English* language. Since it derives from Latin (*abjectus [abicio]* – to cast away), its full pedigree would have an even longer tail.

13 When I use the term "Symbolic", i.e., with an upper-case S, I have Lacan's topology in mind. When I use it in discussing Kristeva I retain the upper-case S since Kristeva's work is Lacanian, at least in its origins, and when she talks of the Symbolic it is generally the Symbolic as defined by Lacan.

threshold from the proper (that is, the Symbolic) to the improper, s/he becomes abject. Abjection is everything that lies on the *other* side of what society establishes as proper and acceptable under the rubric of law and order. Although these polarities form a classic dyad of good and bad, light and dark, clean and unclean, pure and impure, sinless and sinful, they are dependent on each other, and appear less as austere, divided and isolated binaries than as intermingled tendencies or imbricated sets, where the most diagnostic attributes of their relation appear at the point of overlap, in the threshold. The abject needs the Symbolic to manifest as a series of things, for it is only through the classificatory and nominative, taxonomic structures and operations of signification that it can take form. The Symbolic needs the abject to define its own limits, establish principles and to maintain its purity by using the abject as a dumping ground for everything in and out of signification that threatens the properness of the Symbolic order.

I must stress at the outset that abjection has two facets, which Hal Foster, in The Return of the Real, defines as 'the operation *to abject* and the condition *to be abject*' (1996:156). I use this coupled distinction to structure and direct my argument throughout the thesis. The process of abject*ing* (operation to abject) is an active one in which one party rejects, banishes, degrades or in some other way denigrates another party; the state of *being* abject (condition to be abject) is what follows an act of abjection: it is a disposition, a place of exclusion. There is, thus, a politics and a power play to abjection. Without exception, the party that does the abjecting is the one in a position of power – even if that power resides purely in the rhetoric of the abjecting process and does not reflect society's formations of power – while the one degraded is robbed of power and the right to societal inclusion.

In the field of the arts, few modes of expression work more emphatically with this politics than satire, although satire is not always the mouthpiece of dominant social units. Excluded, included; majority, minority; favoured, disfavoured, all can use satire as a politics. Satire, given its most recognisable form – caricature in the

case of the visual arts – always establishes its target, leaving the viewer in little doubt as to who bears the brunt of the satirist's attack. The viewer then either sides with the satirist (supporting his or her cause) or the target (in which case the satire fails to influence public opinion).

In the germination of this thesis, I initially took the Grotesque to be the expressive mode that most evidently degraded its subject by making it unfamiliar, unsettling, possibly even monstrous; but in time I realised that, though the Grotesque is the most productive mode in any search for examples to back an argument that art has always expressed the concerns Kristeva groups under the term abjection, it was *satire* that offered a workable operational framework. To put it another way: satire emerged as the form of expression that best employed the *abjecting* function of abjection, while the Grotesque appeared, to me, as both an instrument of this function and a means of depicting its results. Thus there is nothing satirical about the war scenes in *Desastres de la Guerra*, but there is plenty that one might call grotesque; here the abjecting principle comes into play only as a consequence of the depiction of abject states (such as death and mutilation), which encourages the viewer to abject, for example, the French invaders, or war in general.

Satire's mocking, discrediting and degrading function is simple to understand, so I do not spend much time explaining the mechanisms of satire. Goya's prints – especially in the case of *Los Caprichos* – adequately display satire in action. The Grotesque, however, is a more complex phenomenon; vague and elusive at times, it can also be garish and overt. It can leave viewers teetering on the brink of indeterminacy just as easily as it can lambaste them with an image as obvious as it is monstrous. Like satire, its function can shift from the playful to the demonic; it can induce laughter and disgust; but where satire so often aggravates extremes of response, the Grotesque is seldom only fascinating or only repulsive – it confuses response, making one ever wary of one's interpretations. In this way, as I will flesh out, it teases desire and brings unconscious drives to the forefront of the interpreta-

tive process, closing the 'space' between the viewer's observing function and his or her own repressed contents, his or her own domain of abject(ed) things and pleasures. Such links between the Grotesque and the abject I develop in the first Part of the thesis to demonstrate how the Grotesque, which has had long tenure in the history of art, can be seen anew as a mode capable of expressing and disclosing the kinds of issues Kristeva raises in her "essay on abjection".

III. Parts and Chapters

In Part One of the thesis I introduce satire and briefly indicate how it functions as a process of abjection – how satire's ridiculing, mocking purpose accords with what I have already described as the "operation to abject". I bring in Goya's advertisement for *Los Caprichos* and, by drawing attention to its typically satirical emphasis on the censure and banishment of social ills, argue that its purpose can reinterpreted in terms of the operation to abject.

Next, I focus on the Grotesque, both on its general history – its growth from the Renaissance decorative style *grottesche* to a category of expression devoted to more subjective realms of the mind – and its specific history in Spain. I argue that the Grotesque was both sidelined by the dominant Neo-classical art mode and brought into being by it as an oppositional category that could represent what mimetically-orientated artists should avoid in their artmaking. In this way I point to the relationship in which the abject stands to the Symbolic in society, the abject being to the social formation what the Grotesque is to Neo-classicism or mimesis in general.

In the subsequent stage of Chapter One I examine those writers who have done the most to define and characterise the Grotesque: John Ruskin, Wolfgang Kayser, Mikhail Bakhtin and Philip Thomson. I flesh out Ruskin's separation between the "sportive" and "terrible" Grotesque and emphasise his claim that the use value of the Grotesque depends on the nature of its maker; further, his claim that

"masters of the noble or terrible grotesque" can use the mode for transcendence. In discussing Kayser I highlight his point that the Grotesque works by surprise and only appears estranged so long as we do not recognise it, and I draw attention to his suggestion that the Grotesque both constitutes a psychological threat to the viewer and is the means to end that threat. Bakhtin I look at primarily for his principle of grotesque excess and his conviction that the up-down circulation in what he calls "grotesque realism" leads to the kind of rejuvenation or transcendence implicit in Ruskin and Kayser. All three writers, tentatively in the case of Ruskin and Kayser, wholeheartedly in the case of Bakhtin, see laughter as instrumental to the function of the Grotesque; like the mode itself, laughter can enslave or liberate and contains within itself the means to effect liberation from concerns and fears.

Having brought the discussion to an intersection between the Grotesque and satire on the issue of the operation to abject – executed through laughter, or mocking in general – I then look at the Grotesque's chief object: the grotesque body, the supreme representation of the condition to be abject (to be excluded, marginalised, but by no means inert). The grotesque body is a hybrid confuser of categories that, as matter out of place, must be classified if society is to maintain the Symbolic order that best suits its collective ideals. Acts of classification, i.e., naming, tame what is otherwise a potentially limitless threat by associating it with dirt and refuse, and so repel the grotesque body into a category of exclusion, the abject. Though excluded, its exorbitancy, from the fringes, attracts and compels, inviting corruption.

Next I look at the second part of Goya's advertisement for *Los Caprichos*, in which he places a premium on acts of selection whereby the artist, instead of merely copying nature, combines separate elements from nature into imaginary forms and scenes. In this act of combination I find an equivalent for the dream process of condensation, and it is at this level that I make a more-or-less figurative leap from grotesque combination to the hybridising, amalgamating processes of the unconscious. In the last section of Chapter One I strengthen this link between the Gro-

tesque and the unconscious by arguing that the ambiguity and indeterminacy of the Grotesque open gaps in recognition that, if not closed by avoidance, classification or imaginative leaps that make sense of the gaps in new patterns of reality – where closure is desired – allow for the emergence of the repressed unconscious, and with it the abject.

I conclude Chapter One by stressing that satire and the Grotesque are complicitous in maintaining the Symbolic order. Though they involve the viewer with works that, by depicting distortions, aberrations, monstrosities and horrors (both imagined and distorted from actual individuals and real environments), encourage the emergence of the repressed, they do so to justify the further repression of the abject.

Part One, Chapter Two, is devoted to the theory of abjection itself. I begin by linking the ambivalence and indeterminacy of the Grotesque to the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny, which I read as a feeling of familiarity that arises in that pre-expurgatory gap of indeterminacy which grants the unconscious access to consciousness, and which becomes reversed or inverted into a feeling of unfamiliarity, even horror, should consciousness, with its arsenal of laws and repressions, again seize control of the (re)cognitive process. After some discussion of inversion and taboo, I lay out the theory of abjection. I first situate the emergence of abjection in relation to what Kristeva terms the Semiotic – a pre-objectal environment in which the child exists in an illimitable fusion with its mother – which becomes the first and primary environment to be repressed (i.e., made abject) in the process of the subject's concatenation to the Symbolic.

With this background in place, I spend some time defining the abject in relation to at least four primary concerns: (1) its lack of an objective existence except through the objects that represent it (e.g., excrement), (2) its relation to the limits, margins or boundaries of the Symbolic order, which define it as a thing that must be excluded if the integrity of the Symbolic and the cohesion of the subject are to be maintained, (3) its relation to the super-ego – what one could describe as the Symbolic personal-

ised in each individual – which again distinguishes the included from the excluded, (4) the abject's ability to both attract and repel, to pull desire and push it back. Having defined the term, in Section II of Chapter Two I examine three facets of the abject crucial to my analyses of Goya's images: (1) satirical degradation as an abjection of the subject, (2) the abjection of the mother, which helps us to interpret Goya's images of grotesque mothers and grotesque offspring, and (3) the non-differentiated, formless disposition that characterises subjectivity prior to the subject's entry into the excluding and classificatory imperatives of the Symbolic, which cast everything that preceded the Symbolic into abjection.

In the last section of Chapter Two I look at ways in which the abject can be subdued. I preface this section by pointing out that the abject can be used profitably to satisfy the ego, and that pleasure can come through contact with abjection. I also note that Goya's ambiguous and ambivalent relationship with his grotesque, rhyparographic and sometimes obscene subjects and themes may indicate that he took them up because, while the satirical imperative to banish vulgarities was important to him, he was as rewarded by the Imaginary contact with abjection through art as he was by his efforts to classify, resolve and exclude what compelled and repulsed him. Kristeva assigns writing, and, I argue, art in general, a role in "purifying" abjection by bringing the abject into being a second time through representation. She notes that this form of catharsis is inherently impure, which helps us to understand how one can, even while trying to exclude or gain release from the abject, be immersed in it – joying in it. For the viewer/reader, whose labour lies in the field of interpretation, cathartic relief comes through exercising prohibition or classification, taking leaps of the imagination and, chiefly, through laughter.

Part Two is devoted to analyses of select works from *Los Caprichos*. I briefly chart the development of the etching series from a set of cabinet paintings Goya produced in 1794, through two albums of drawings (the Sanlúcar and Cadiz-Madrid albums) and the *Sueño* designs, to the series itself, emphasising the influence of sat-

ire and caricature in this (terato)genesis. I make brief mention of the series' reception on publication, then move on to the analyses of separate works. I bracket my discussion between two central images, *The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters* and *And still They do not go!*, which for me sum up the play with conscious and unconscious (Symbolic and abject) forces that characterises much of the series. I analyse select images in chapters: Women of questionable morals, The Nobility, The Clergy, The Law, Struggles for Supremacy, and Ambivalence. Throughout, I lay emphasis on the way Goya sets up as satirical targets and scapegoats denizens from his private closet of objectionable social individuals to facilitate the viewer's dissociation from them by means of mocking laughter – a dissociation in the name of reason, to influence society in the direction of reformation. There is ambivalence here, too, and I do allow that Goya may have used satire almost as an excuse to get close to what was otherwise forbidden or at least dubious in terms of social sanctions.

In Part Three I focus on *Desastres de la Guerra*. After briefly introducing the circumstances under which the Napoleonic war between Spain and France flared, I open the parenthesis within which I cradle my examination of the series with a discussion of *Sad Presentiments of what is to come*. I analyse select etchings within chapters dealing with rape, execution, mutilation, famished begging, death, and the removal of corpses from the streets of Madrid. I close my parenthesis and my investigation of the etchings with an image that sums up the series, *Fierce Monster*. My interest in *Los Desastres* lies in Goya's treatment of conflict and the results of conflict (corpses, often gathered into indiscriminate mounds) and of famine, and its results (a partitioned society and more piled-up corpses), all of which can be interpreted in terms of the condition to be abject, but also of the operation to abject, where the sanctioned murder of war is understood as the most decisive form of abjection. My interpretative strategy for *Los Desastres* differs from the strategies I use for *Los Caprichos* and *Los Disparates* in that I analyse the war images not so much to reveal something about what war meant for Goya, but to make general

connections between war and abjection. I do bring Goya into the discussion where he is essential to the argument, and I also at times take up the satirical issues that dominate the other two etching series, but otherwise, by and large, I interpret the images in a certain isolation from their maker, concerned to flesh out the way in which the principles, procedures and dispositions of abjection underlie, or can be tracked in, the pictorial narrative.

As for *Los Disparates*, I again set my analyses between two crucial works, *Folly of the Mass* and *Man wandering among Phantoms*, which vacillate between a position of resolution – the mass as a separate integrated phenomenon that can be broken apart by a single determined individual – and irresolution: the mass as something in which one is engulfed, something inescapable that one can keep at arm's length but never quite dispel. This balance between conflict with and complicity with the abject runs throughout the *Disparates*. The series, which often treats Goya's historical Symbolic as a disfiguring, teratogenetic influence on pleasure, is indeed more about in-betweenness than closure. It marks a return to the satirical impetus of *Los Caprichos*, but the rigour of the former series has disappeared, and Goya seems content in the *Disparates* to censure and to indulge, to opt for individuality and for collectivity, for purity and corruption, reason and unreason, Symbolic and abject.

In the epilogue I look at Goya's use of the Grotesque to promote the cause of reason – a use of a mode otherwise subordinate or dissonant to the leading mimetic trends of Goya's day which resulted in Goya becoming grotesque himself: a hybrid caught in the liminal, corrupted interval between reason and unreason.

I also focus on the question of catharsis and what role this might have played in Goya's art production. Establishing with the help of two of his letters that Goya understood the idea of tension reduction and saw in art a means to effect this reduction, I proceed to discuss catharsis from an Imaginary and economic point of view, and stress in particular the possibility for catharsis inherent in repetition.

Part One
Grotesque into Abject

The Grotesque

. . . horror more horrible from being vague, and terror more terrible from ambiguity.

(Edgar Allan Poe, *Berenice*, in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, vol. 9 [New York: Standard Book Company, 1933] p.10)

Satire

'What's that rumbling sound, Sancho?'

'I don't know, sir,' he replied. [. . .]

[Sancho] tried his luck again, and succeeded so well that, without making more noise or hubbub than before, he found himself free of the load that had given him such grief. But as Don Quixote had a sense of smell as lively as his sense of hearing, and since Sancho was so close to him that the vapours rose in almost a straight line, he could not be spared some of them reaching his nostrils; and hardly had they arrived than he went to the aid of his own nose by pressing it shut with two fingers. [. . .]

'Retire three or four steps over there, friend,' Don Quixote said (without taking his fingers away from his nose all the while), 'and in future take more account of your person and of that which you owe mine; it is the amount of conversation I have with you that has engendered this contempt.'

'I wager,' Sancho replied, 'that your honour thinks I have done, with my person . . . something that should not be done.'

'Stirring only makes it worse, Sancho my friend,' Don Quixote responded.

—¿Qué rumor es ese, [illegible]?

—No sé, señor—respor[illegible]

[Sancho] [t]ornó otra [illegible] p[illegible]r ventura, y sucedióle tan bien, que, sin más ruid[illegible] alb[illegible]to que el pasado, se halló libre de la carga que tai[illegible]sadumbre le había dado. Mas como Don Quijote tenía el [illegible]ido del olfato tan vivo como el de los oídos, y Sancho estaba tan junto y cosido con él, que casi por línea recta subían los vapores hacia arriba, no se pudo excusar de que algunos no llegasen a sus narices; y apenas hubieron llegado, cuando él fue al socorro, apretándolas entre los dos dedos [. . .]

—Retírate tres o cuatro allá, amigo—dijo Don Quijote (todo esto sin quitarse los dedos de los narices)—, y desde aquí en adelante ten más cuenta con tu persona y con lo que debes a la mía, que la mucha conversación que tengo contigo ha engendrado este menosprecio.

—Apostaré—replicó Sancho—que piensa vuestra merced que yo he hecho de mi persona . . . alguna cosa que no deba.

—Peor es meneallo, amigo Sancho—respondió Don Quijote.

(Miguel de Cervantes, *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Obras Completas, Tomo II [Madrid: Aguilar, 1970] [Part I, Chapter 20] pp.1294–95. *El Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* was published between 1605 and 1615)

Chapter One
Satire, The Grotesque, and Other Precedents for Abjection

IN THIS CHAPTER I investigate those recognisable artistic modes that Goya employed in his graphic art which can be understood as visual precedents for the themes, convictions and observations that Julia Kristeva crowds around the notion of "abjection" and its 'object', the "abject". These include the Grotesque and satire. I establish connections between these historical forms of expression and modern abjection theory to demonstrate not only the fruitfulness of considering Goya's art within this framework but also the interconnectedness of longstanding modes, practices, tropes and recent rearticulations of the human individual as a subject within a regulated, partitioned, territorialised society.

I begin by looking briefly at satire. As I pointed out in the introduction, satire's function is largely a rejecting, excluding one, in which an individual or group of individuals – normally of elevated socio-political status – is ridiculed, mocked and denigrated with the intention of casting him or her down in the eyes of his or her contemporaries. A rejecting function is one of the two core characteristics of abjection, what Foster defines as 'the operation *to abject*' (1996:156), and I pose it to the reader that satire's function can be understood and placed in this context. Thereafter I take an in-depth look at the Grotesque, its rise and development, its leading features, etc., to argue that the mode can be framed, among other things, in terms of the second core characteristic of abjection, 'the condition *to be abject*' (Foster, 1996: 156). The pictorial aspects of the mode, its interest in the grotesque body, for instance, as well as its ability to influence viewer response – chiefly through its indeterminacy, which, I suggest, permits the emergence of the unconscious – involve the viewer in a subject position that is abject in relation to the norms and expectations of his or her society. I use the Grotesque as a discursive bridge to the theory

of abjection, which I advance in Chapter Two. Owing to the amount of ground I cover, my procedure is somewhat convoluted, and I must ask the reader to bear with me as I lay it out, especially when I leave points dangling because they relate to other points not yet made. Rest assured, by the end of the chapter I do draw all the strings together.

Now, a few words about satire.

I. The Operation to Abject: Satire

The characteristics of satire I would consider primary are:

1) *A critical, often belligerent, stance.* Satire is always used to attack. It always has an object, whether a single individual, a nation or humanity in general. This object is more than a simple target: the satirist takes it to task for a purpose, to undermine and exclude it.
2) *A degree of impunity in censuring society,* permitting the satirist to invert and subvert existing structures and authority figures without immediate fear of retaliations[1].

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[1] In this sense the satirist's function is simply a more formalised version of the role played by the 'fool' in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century court society. The 'fool' was not constrained by the same rules as ordinary people; his role was deliberately subversive and disruptive, for, as Francisco Márquez Villanueva notes in his article 'Literatura Bufonesca o del "loco"',

> The court needed the corporeal presence of folly to liberate itself from the truly maddening tyranny of a life penetrated from top to bottom by reason, objectivised in the implacable cogs of politics. To his surroundings the court "fool" restored flexibility and the healing and most beneficent laws of nature. (in Echavarría, 1985-86:617*n*.11) (La corte necesitaba de esta presencia corpórea de la Locura para liberarse de la tiranía verdaderamente enloquecedora de una vida penetrada de arriba a abajo por la razón, objetivada en el implacable engranaje de la política. El "loco" de corte restaura a su alrededor la flexibilidad y los derechos de la sana y más benéfica naturaleza.)

The following quote from Anton Zijderveld's *Reality in the Looking Glass* reveals that this function exceeded the bounds of the court's need for a little timely insanity:

> Traditional fools played erratic games with the primary foundations of human existence, with the basic structures of the lifeworld, with the essential criteria by which human beings manage to experience meaning at all. Turning reality upside-down, they rendered it, for the duration of their performances, to chaos, to the forces of unstructured primeval energy. (in Echavarría:616)

3) *An intention to correct a world the satirist views as cancerous*:

> The purpose of satire is, through laughter and invective, to cure folly and to punish evil . . . satire wishes to expose and criticise and shame human life . . . it pretends to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. (Highet, 1962:56, 58)

The use of 'truth' as a weapon against vice is another feature of satire's reconstructive role. As Mary Randolphe writes in her article 'The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire':

> this positive side of satire toward which the whole exegetical and rhetorical procedure is pointed is usually a dogma of a rationalistic philosophy since *the essential function of satire is ever by Ridicule to recall Man from the by-ways of Unreason to the base line of Reason, that is, to present Rational Man as the norm or standard.* (in Paulson, 1971*b*:175; emphases added.)

This emphasis on reason as the means to keep humanity from floundering in the grottoes of unreason introduces the fourth characteristic of satire:

4) *A reliance on conceptions of morality.* In 1693, in his *Discourse Concerning Satire*, the much-discussed early-English satirist John Dryden claimed that satirical verse obliged '[t]he poet . . . to give his reader some one precept of moral virtue, and to caution him against some one particular vice or folly' (quoted by Spacks, in Paulson:361). 'For effective attack,' Northrop Frye states, 'we must reach some kind of impersonal level, and that commits the attacker if only by implication, to a moral standard. The satirist commonly takes a high moral line.' (in Paulson:235)

The power the court invested in the fool gave him transcendence over ordinary restrictions of class and rank, and placed him in a virtually unpunishable position. As William Willeford so aptly puts it in *The Fool and His Scepter*:

> Fools are characteristically unperturbed by the ignominy that comes from being irresponsible. They have a magical affinity to chaos that might allow them to serve as scapegoats on behalf of order; yet they elude the sacrifice or the banishment that would affirm order at their expense. (in Echavarría:617)

The fool's invulnerable position transformed him, as Arturo Echavarría notes, 'into a figure particularly apt to criticise not only political and social, but . . . even intellectual nature' (617) ('en personaje particularmente apto para la crítica no solamente de índole política y social, sino . . . también la de índole intelectual'). If we take this in conjunction with the following quote from Robert Klein – 'the fool humiliates the sages of this world, comprised, naturally, of doctors and theologians' (in Echavarría:618) ('le fou humilie les sages de ce monde, y comprit naturellement les docteurs et les théologiens') – it is not difficult to recognise the position the fool was able to assume as a satirical one. Goya, of course, often mocked doctors and, in particular, theologians in his satirical prints.

What, one wonders, validates the satirist's assumption of this high moral line; what gives him or her the right to what Kernan (in Paulson, 1971:263–64) describes as a 'monolithic certainty'? It would appear to depend on communal morals, ethics and principles, some of which are regulated by state apparatuses such as the law, while others rely on self-surveillance and self-supervision to maintain the social body within reliable and 'upstanding' perimeters. Satire falls midway between state regulation and self-surveillance. On the one hand, because it has to operate in public forums to have a voice, satire appears in the media in one form or another and hence accrues the aura of a collective censuring body – the satirist's (frequently personal) attacks gain a shimmer of authority because they have been sanctioned by a social organ (a publishing house, a newspaper), and what the satirist says appears to be what the establishment in general says. This is where satire's power resides; speaking from a position associated with authority, it has the ability to sway behaviour. The satirist may be the most ambivalent and incoherent of people, but the images s/he creates will form a sovereign tissue of moralistic exhortations. Satirists can comment on the most corrupt of human propensities, become so immersed in them that they appear to take sadistic delight in denigrating their subject matter[2], yet still rise above them and appear to be paragons of rectitude by virtue of the almost godlike position from which they speak. On the other hand, however, satire can only effect change within the individual, and this can only occur through self-surveillance as individuals correct their behaviour by making it conform to

2 There is something of a debate around this notion of the thin line satirists walk between censuring the objects of their attack and, in getting too close to the subject matter, plunging over the brink of reason into an abyss of sadistic relish. See, for instance, Kernan (in Paulson, 1971:266–69). In Chapter Two I argue that this immersion in his or her subject matter is essential to the satirist's rectifying or purifying procedure. I should also draw attention to the possibility that this necessary contamination may account for much of the ambivalence in Goya's own satire, particularly in *Los Disparates*, where Goya often depicts situations that seem to involve his own confluence with, and at the same time desire to extract himself from, the maculating material of his satire.

the image presented by the satirist[3]. This image, 'norm or standard', let me remind the reader, is 'Rational Man' (Randolph in Paulson, 1971*b*:175). Satire is thus a social mode of artistic production in which the satirist adopts as rigid a moral position as possible – even one that supersedes the social formation's primary regulatory body, the law, in the event of the satirist finding fault with it – to influence the behaviour of society. Since it can only be effective at its site of consumption, satire must take an exaggerated form and must utilise as its weapons those aspects of society most likely to meet with collective disapproval. In this sense every satirist is something of a rhyparographer[4], a dealer in 'mean or sordid subjects' (Oxford English Dictionary, 1964:1733), but one who uses obscenity to correct by example, showing the viewer/reader those immoderate pleasures of the flesh s/he must avoid to live a suitably and profitably moral, abstentious existence. I will return to satire's use of rhyparographic or obscene subject matter in my discussion of the grotesque body in Section III of this chapter.

5) *An adoption of fantasy as a framework for satirical comment.* Hodgart writes, '[a]ll good satire contains an element of aggressive attack and a fantastic vision of the world transformed . . . offering "imaginary gardens with real toads in them"' (1969:11–12)[5]. The security and impermeability of an artificial environment allows satirists to exercise irony, parody, allusion, allegory, wit, metaphor and symbol to degrade their object(s) of attack with virtual impunity.

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3 Edward and Lillian Bloom, in Satire's Persuasive Voice, which aims to demonstrate how satire is an instrument of *persuasion* rather than direct alteration, put this point succinctly:

> In censuring wrongdoing and foolishness, satire may set in motion the possibility of remedy . . . the innocent, forewarned and innately scrupulous, are equipped to face their obligations; the guilty, if capable of repentance, are moved to self-redemption. (1979:33)

4 A term normally associated with still-life painting or genre painting, which was considered lowly in relation to allegorical or history painting (see Bryson, 1990:61, 136–38), but which clearly has wider application, especially where satire is concerned.

5 Cf. Frye (in Paulson, 1971:234): 'Two things . . . are essential to satire; one is wit or humour founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack'. The reader should note the connection Frye draws between fantasy and the grotesque.

E. H. Gombrich, in his essay 'Imagery and Art in the Romantic Period' (1994*a*:120–26), suggests that the Romantic era, in which satire blossomed in the visual arts, with such artists as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and, of course, Goya, provided particularly fertile ground for this communion between satire and fantasy. The Romantic period saw a great interest in 'Gothic' literature (the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and parts of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, for example), in 'phantasmagoria' and other imagery of nightmares, dreams and witchcraft. The element of fantasy – especially horrific fantasy – was sought not only in popular prints but in high art as well (one thinks of Fuseli and, of course, of Goya). As Gombrich puts it:

> the weirdest combination of symbols, the most grotesque conglomerations of images, were no longer merely tolerated as the pardonable licence of a low medium of illustration. They could be attuned to the taste of the time if they were presented as phantoms, nightmares, and apparitions. (123)

According to Gombrich, Goya saw the value in this vogue for nightmarish fantasy as a means of obscuring his otherwise virulent satirical assaults on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish society:

> Goya sought social justification for his fantastic visions by pouring them into the pre-existing mould of satirical art . . . he was forced to exploit the twilight regions of the grotesque for camouflaging his political comments in the guise of mere *Caprichos* and dreams of a fevered brain. (124)[6]

He also cloaked his *Caprichos* and *Disparates* in terms and traditions that unmistakably would have associated them, in the minds of his audience, with dreams, absurdities and the irrational, that is, with a world in which unreason, at first glance, had free play. I will return to this when I take my second look at Goya's advertisement for *Los Caprichos*, but for now I would like to claim that

6 Goya's access to the "twilight regions of the grotesque" was facilitated by an interest in witchcraft that circulated within the aristocratic circles in which he moved. The Duke and Duchess of Osuna, for example, commissioned him to paint a series of works for their library which expressly depicted witchcraft subjects (see, for example, Heckes, 1985:124–78). These paintings strongly prefigure *Los Caprichos* and tend to suggest that Goya took imaginative liberties in his etchings because he thought he had a receptive audience to count on. On publishing the series, of course, that audience turned out to be smaller than it seemed.

Goya used such 'irrationalities' not for the sake of play or to forge a new (anti-mimetic) tradition, but to stress the need for 'Rational Man' to be upheld 'as the norm or standard' (Randolphe in Paulson, 1971*b*:175). Following a satirical norm, he used fantasy to comment on his historical reality.

6) *An interest in medical metaphors* that ultimately underline satire's *cathartic* role. '[M]edical metaphors,' Randolphe writes, '[represent] satire as having a cathartic, that is, a sanative and finally a healing or curative effect on the person satirised, as well as on the satirist himself' (in Paulson, 1971*a*:159). The Blooms suggest that this healing comes through laughing at a scapegoat:

> For many satirists . . . laughter is analogous to propitiatory sacrifice: a form of discovery and released emotion through which a scapegoat makes it possible for a community fragmented by shame and guilt to reintegrate itself. Society has always needed . . . ceremonial victims, upon whom man's aggregate sins are publicly and symbolically discharged. The scapegoat becomes the agent in whom is concentrated whatever threatens totemic well-being . . . His availability perhaps betokens man's sadistic instincts, but it also provides an illusory source of healing transference . . . the reader transfers his assumed inadequacy to a nearby satiric target. Then he feels better about himself . . . in judging others guilty, he can pretend that virtue accrues to him. Instead of being whipped, he places himself in the role of the superior, aggressive whipper . . . satiric laughter may become a source of both catharsis and redemption for satirist and reader alike. (1979:128–29)

Both Randolphe and the Blooms sketch a triangle of reception and 'cure' involving (1) the reader/viewer, (2) the person satirised (the object of the satiric attack, implicating, on occasion, the reader/viewer), (3) the satirist him/herself. In this triangle the apex occupied by the person satirised stands on its head, supporting the apices above it – it is a load-bearing site of exclusion, the place of the fool whose role is not to entertain but to be ribbed; while it gives release to others, it, the object of the satire, is not released. Those eased are the ones who are often, in the true scheme of things, subject to the one who is now mocked[7].

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[7] This is not always the case. Many satirical scapegoats are marginals – the poor, the diseased, the deformed – who are not in any sense politically empowered and oppressive. Their threat to the social fabric exists by implication or as a fantasy of the classes in power; it lies in their difference and their uncertain public place, which is often cause enough for their further denigration by those 'higher' on the social ladder.

By allying themselves with the "aggressive whipper", they shift from victims to aggressors, from passive to active, from slavery to mastery, asserting their selves by denigrating the threatening other and turning it into a sacrificial object - both an object of scorn and a receptacle for internal tensions released through projection onto the object. Of this, more later.

From the above six characteristics of satire - viz., its critical, undermining stance; its relative immunity or sanctioned criticism; its reliance on Reason and Truth to act correctively on its receivers; its foregrounding of morality as a norm of behaviour to be mimicked; its use of fantasy as a camouflage; and its adoption of medical analogies to metaphorise its prospective action on society - we can infer that satirists are individuals who take a dim view of their society and, in accordance with a high moral line that upholds "Rational Man" as its "norm or standard", desire to change it. They use art to effect change, trusting that people will reform their lives to suit the model behaviour which the satire creates as its desirable opposite. To persuade people the satirist plays off two things: an explicit *represented* target, rotten to the core, and an implied *unrepresented* norm, morally correct to the core. The latter is created as the solution for the former; even if we do not see this moral cure, we develop it in our own perception and thinking, because the satire is specifically orchestrated to rouse and promote one's personal moral sense. If you don't want to be like what I show you, the satirist says, you've got to be like its opposite. If I show you depravity, you must be upright; if I show you promiscuity, you must be discriminating; if I show you drunkenness, you must be sober. The target, then, is everything the satirist does not want you to be - everything you *must not* be. It is the scapegoat, the object of supreme denigration, the thing to laugh and scoff at. You don't want to be that, do you? No. You want to be the one who laughs. The one who spurns and rejects; the one who decides who is acceptable to society and

who must be banished from it. It is an active, powerful, determining position – who wouldn't want it? Only a fool[8].

At the root of the satirical function is this duality between what-you-don't-want-to-be and what-you-should-be, but since what-you-should-be is more implied than represented (especially in visual satire), the chief feature of the satirical terrain ends up being what-you-don't-want-to-be: the rejected satirical target. Hence, even though it functions in the name of an assumed common good, satire ends up looking principally like a process of rejection and casting down, of placing what the satirist considers undesirable elsewhere, in short, of abject*ing*.

At this point it seems essential for me to take the first of two looks (the second of which forms Section IV of Chapter One) at Goya's advertisement for *Los Caprichos*, both to demonstrate how it frames the etching series satirically and to reveal that Goya himself associated the satirical function with an act of condemnation and banishment, i.e., in my terms, with an operation to abject. In this discussion of the advertisement I focus only on its satirical emphasis; in Section IV I will look at the issues it raises in terms of fantasy and selection – issues that will prove essential to my linkage of the Grotesque to the unconscious and, thus, to abjection.

II. Goya's Advertisement for *Los Caprichos*

> Collection of prints of capricious subjects, invented and etched by Francisco Goya. The author, persuaded that censure of human errors and vices (although it seems peculiar to oratory and poetry) can also be the object of painting, has chosen such subjects proportionate for his work, among the multitude of eccentricities and errors that are common in every civil society, and among the preju-

[8] Not to be confused with the historical fool mentioned in footnote 1. By Goya's time the role of the historical fool had been assumed by the satirist, whose connection to the impunity of the fool and the fool's ability to disguise biting social comment in buffoonish behaviour remained in the satirist's use of fantasy to shift the parameters within which the satire would be received. The fool as object of the satirist's criticism is another matter entirely: such a fool is, in the opinion of the satirist, the supreme example of stupidity and deprivation – the kind of 'idiot' who would choose the margins of society over the morally-correct centre simply because the margins offer the pleasures and satisfactions of the flesh.

dices and common falsehoods authorised by habit, ignorance or interest, those that he has thought most suitable matter for ridicule, and to exercise at the same time the fantasy of the artificer.

As most of the objects represented in this work are ideals, it will not be foolhardy to believe that their defects will find, perhaps, many pardons among the intelligent, considering that the author has neither followed the examples of another, nor been able to copy much from nature. And if the imitation is as difficult as admirable when successful, he who has stood aside from nature will not fail to merit some esteem, having had to expose to the eyes forms and attitudes that have only existed until now in the human mind, obscured and confused for the lack of illustration or excited with uncontrolled passions.

It would suppose too much ignorance in the fine arts to advertise to the public that in none of the compositions that form this collection has the author proposed to ridicule the particular defects of one or another individual: that would in truth restrict the limits of talent too much and mistake the way in which one uses the arts of imitation to produce perfect works.

Painting (like poetry) selects from the universal that which it judges most appropriate for its ends: unites in a single fantastic personage circumstances and characters that nature presents distributed in many, and from this ingeniously arranged combination results that happy imitation by which a good artificer acquires the title of inventor and not of servile copyist. (*Diario de Madrid*, 6 February 1799)[9]

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9 The original Spanish text is as follows:

Coleccion de estampas de asuntos caprichosos, inventadas y grabadas al agua fuerte, por Don Francisco Goya. Persuadido el autor de que la censura de los errores y vicios humanos (aunque parece peculiar de la eloqüencia y la poesia) puede tambien ser objeto de la pintura; ha escogido como asuntos proporcionados para su obra, entre la multitud de extravagancias y desaciertos que son communes en toda sociedad civil, y entre las preocupaciones y embustes vulgares, autorizados por la costumbre, la ignorancia ó el interes, aquellos que ha creido mas aptos á subministrar materia para el ridiculo, y exercitar al mismo tiempo la fantasia del artifice.

Como la mayor parte de los objetos que en esta obra se representan son ideales, no será temeridad creer que sus defectos hallarán, tal vez, mucha disculpa entre los inteligentes: considerando que el autor, ni ha seguido los exemplos de otro, ni ha podido copiar tan poco de la naturaleza. Y si el imitarla es tan dificil, como admirable quando se logra; no dexará de merecer alguna estimacion el que apartandose enteramente de ella, ha tenido que exponer á los ojos formas y actitudes que solo han existido hasta ahora en la mente humana, obscurecida y confusa por la falta de ilustracion ó acalorada con el desentreno de las pasiones.

Seria suponer demasiada ignorancia en las bellas artes él advertir al público, que en ninguna de las composiciones que forman esta coleccion se ha propuesto el autor, para ridiculizar los defectos particulares á uno ú otro individuo: que seria en verdad, estrechar demasiado los limites al talento y equivocar los medios de que se valen las artes de imitacion para producir obras perfectas.

La pintura (como la poesia) escoge en lo universal lo que juzga mas á proposito para sus fines: reune en un solo personage fantastico, circunstancias y caracteres que la naturaleza presenta repartidos en muchos, y de esta convinacion, ingeniosamente dispuesta, resulta aquella feliz imitacion, por la cual adquiere un buen artifice el titulo de inventor y no de copiante servil.

For reproductions of the advertisement, from which the above has been transcribed, see Gassier, Wilson, Lachenal, 1994:129, and Harris, 1964:103; Harris also reproduces the second, abridged, advertisement from the February 19 edition of the *Gaceta de Madrid*.

A most interesting exercise is to compare this advertisement with the dedication Henry

In this advertisement, which Goya must have had editorial control over[10], the artist advances two principal motivations for his collection of prints: (1) "censure of human errors", with which ninety percent of the second sentence of his advertisement is concerned, and (2) the exercising of the artificer's, i.e., Goya's, "fantasy". As already stated, I deal only with the first point here, and take up the second in Section IV of this chapter.

As López-Rey notes (1970:80), Goya's second sentence, in which he lays out his intention to censure society's errors, prejudices and falsehoods, is an elaboration of

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Fielding wrote, in 1751, for his novel *Amelia*:

> The following book is sincerely designed to promote the cause of virtue, and to expose some of the most glaring evils, as well public as private, which at present infest the country; though there is scarce, as I remember, a single stroke of satire aimed at any one person throughout the whole . . . I will not trouble you with a preface concerning the work; nor endeavour to obviate any criticisms which can be made on it. The good-natured reader, if his heart should be here affected, will be inclined to pardon many faults for the pleasure he will receive from a tender sensation . . . (*1966:xv*)

The similarities between Fielding's dedication and Goya's advertisement – which lie in three areas: purpose (exposing vices), assertion (the works do not ridicule anyone in particular), and appeal (to the reader/viewer to pardon inherent faults in the respective works) – are striking enough to suggest that the artist had either seen Fielding's book (in translation, presumably), or that there was such a vogue in the eighteenth century for proclamations of this sort that by the time Goya came to write his own he had a commonplace means of address, imprinted in the mindset of authors and public alike, to draw from (on this matter see Askew, 1988:453–54*n*.37; she also notes that Goya's disclaimer against specific satirical intent 'was in fact a rather conventional disclaimer necessary during an era of bitter polemics and constant libel charges' [453; also see 33–34]). Not only does this imply that Goya's *Caprichos* project was more firmly situated in a satirical tradition than some scholars might like to think, but it confirms the degree to which influences had been traded between England and the continent in the course of the eighteenth century (cf. Reva Wolf's Ph.D., Francisco Goya and the Interest in British Art and Aesthetics in Late Eighteenth-Century Spain, 1987).

[10] For decades scholars have questioned whether Goya wrote the advertisement himself (Klingender, 1968:101, Ferrari, 1963:x, Gassier, Wilson and Lachenal, 1994:129, Sánchez and Gállego, 1995:32, Sayre in Sánchez and Sayre, 1989:xcix, López-Rey, 1970:79–80, Wolf, 1987: 99–100*n*.16, etc.; see also Askew, 1988:453–54*n*.37). It is possible that someone else wrote it under his supervision, or stood over his shoulder to guide him while he wrote it. Some scholars have claimed that the advertisement was written by Moratín, who is also argued to have been instrumental in introducing Goya to the English satirical print (see Xavier de Salas, 'Light on the Origin of the *Caprichos*', 1979, Wolf, 1987: 102–5, Wilson-Bareau, 1996:25, Askew, 1988:317–18. I briefly take up this point in Part Two). This may suggest – if we accept Moratín as author – a reason for the similarity between the advertisement and Fielding's dedication in *Amelia*. Whether the announcement flowed from Goya's hand or not is, however, immaterial to this thesis; it must have been reviewed and sanctioned by him, and I think it safe to assume that it is a fair indication of Goya's conception of *Los Caprichos*.

the words he scribbled on the *sueño* drawing [Fig.1] for his etching *The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters* (*El Sueño de la Razón produce Monstruos*) [Fig.34]:

> The author dreaming. His only intention is to banish harmful vulgarities, and to perpetuate with this work of caprices the solid testimony of truth.[11]

Goya jotted these words down long before the appearance of the etchings for public sale, indicating that he always intended to use his 'caprices'[12] to perpetuate truth - indeed the word "only" implies that Goya's *primary* concern was "to banish" "harmful vulgarities" in the quest for truth. The Spanish plural noun *vulgaridades*, which Goya uses, refers to something vulgar in the sense of ordinary or commonplace - by extension, something unrefined and susceptible to coarse ideas, e.g., superstitious beliefs. Goya saw his task as an illuminatory one: by means of his truthful caprices he intended to refine the qualities and beliefs of his viewers, 'to recall Man from the by-ways of Unreason to the base line of Reason' (Randolph in Paulson, 1971*b*:175). Given that Goya wrote the above-quoted

Fig.1 *Sueño* drawing, *Universal Language*

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11 The Spanish text is as follows: 'El autor soñando. Su intento sólo es desterrar vulgaridades perjudiciales y perpetuar con esta obra de caprichos el testimonio sólido de la verdad'.

12 I have put this word in inverted commas because at the time of this drawing Goya still planned to call his envisaged etchings *sueños*, that is, dreams. I will look at the concepts of capricho (caprice) and *sueño* when I look at the second part of the advertisement.

words on the drawing that immediately preceded *The Sleep of Reason produces Monsters,* it is no stretch of the imagination to assume that "truth" functions as a virtual synonym for reason. I need hardly draw attention to the word "banish" (*desterrar*) either, but I will nonetheless since it clearly reveals that Goya saw "vulgarities" as things that needed to be banished, i.e., in my terminology, *abjected.* There can be no question that Goya viewed a "work of caprices" – of imagination or fantasy – as a suitable framework for a truth-based satirical action geared to, let's use his word again, "banish" social ills, vulgarities, and irrational convictions.

In his advertisement, Goya uses the word "censure" (*censura*) not banish, but criticism, even when sympathetic and constructive, is always an act of permanent or provisional rejection, and censure is one degree up from criticism – as states the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, it is to 'criticize unfavourably' and to 'condemn' (1964:282). In brief, it is an act of rejection – banishment – in everything but name. And what is Goya censuring? He calls them "common" or "vulgar falsehoods" (*embustes vulgares*) – a close synonym for the "harmful vulgarities" (*vulgaridades perjudiciales*) of the drawing – and he mingles them with other epithets ("errors", "vices", "prejudices" and "eccentricities" [by which I understand him to mean irregular or abnormal conduct]) to declare the direction of his censuring action. He is the typical satirist, adopting both a belligerent stance and a high moral line to awaken and, ideally, reform a society he views as wayward by letting it look at what-it-does-not-want-to-be.

Goya robs his censuring action of its specificity by claiming that such errors occur "in every civil society" and by stating, in a delicate and ambiguous fashion, that he has not in *Los Caprichos* sought to ridicule particular individuals. But here he complicates matters by shifting attention away from himself onto the public, making it seem that he would be justified in finding his public *ignorant* if they thought for one minute that he had ridiculed particular individuals. He upholds one of satire's most characteristic principles: that its attack is never particular. If it

was, he implies, the artist would compromise his own talent (i.e., inventiveness) and give the public a false impression of the way imitation is used to produce "perfect" works – works, no doubt, that express the artist's fancy.

In all these respects, then, Goya's advertisement shows him to be a typical satirist. Further, it establishes that Goya believed art could function to banish (abject) harmful beliefs and all manner of social ills, errors and vices. I must, however, short-circuit the impulse to turn immediately to a visual analysis of his etchings to illuminate these points, since I still have to configure my methodology.

To continue the process of establishing a historical dimension for abjection, my next step is to introduce the Grotesque. I look at its development from paintings found during the Renaissance in the buried ruins of Rome, and its growth from a decorative style to a mode of intrapsychic expression. Then I briefly outline its evolution in Spain, emphasising its relational position to the dominant art mode of Neo-classicism, which permitted it to exist if only as an antithetical model through which Neo-classicism could strengthen its artistic hegemony. With this historical foundation in place, I turn to those writers (e.g., John Ruskin and Mikhail Bakhtin) who have investigated the mode both contextually and conceptually. I use Philip Thomson's work on the Grotesque to consolidate the discussion and to point out how the abjecting function of satire operates in the Grotesque. At this juncture satire and the Grotesque meet quite neatly, but since I have claimed that the Grotesque also usefully represents the "condition to be abject", I take my examination of the mode further by looking at the grotesque body, the primary abject(ed) object of satire and the Grotesque.

III. The Grotesque: More about the Operation to Abject; also the Condition to be Abject

The Grotesque[13] is a complex mode[14] in artistic expression; it has endured for centuries under a variety of guises, and, in the hands of twentieth-century artists, writers and theorists, continues to develop, transmute and diversify. It is a mode that has always been acknowledged in one way or another, although it has come a long way since the days when its range was restricted to the margins of manuscripts and maps, or the parapets of cathedrals[15]. History has shunted the Grotesque from

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13 At the outset I must expand a little on this term "the Grotesque". Throughout this section I use an upper-case letter to at least exaggerate the visual form of the noun to express its problematic nature. Of course, I may only entrench its stability. I must, therefore, make the obvious point that there is no such thing as *the* Grotesque. At most there are *grotesques*. The multivalency of the term cannot tolerate a linguistic construction that reeks of finality and authority. Language often fails to support and carry the subtleties of those complexes of impressions and feelings to which it affixes labels. Grammatical construction inhibits the freeplay the term requires, and some languages prohibit it more than others. English, with its invariable article – which sustains the totemism of the singular regardless of whether its subject is singular or plural – is a prime example. At the same time, this phallocentric article has its uses; still more clarity would be lost if one tried to form sentences on the topic without once referring to it in the singular. 'The Grotesque' specifies a quasi-tradition, a history and a concept in a way that no alternative can. For example, take the possible solution offered by the noun *grotesqueness*. Instead of saying, 'Goya's etchings demonstrate a distinct love of the Grotesque', one could say, 'Goya's etchings demonstrate a distinct love of grotesqueness'. The problem with this modification is obvious: whereas 'the Grotesque' immediately calls to mind a body of history and criticism, 'grotesqueness' simply denotes the relatively undefined attributes of an unspecified object; stranded outside both historical and critical discourse because it has not been used often enough within these precincts, it seems closer to everyday speech than theory.

These are some of the complications. A term taken for granted loses even the little precision it *might have* possessed; when a writer introduces examples into a text to elaborate a point grafted from a never-defined concept (e.g., the Grotesque), readers can hardly be expected to benefit deeply from the subsequent argument.

14 I use the word "mode" advisedly. There has been debate about what exactly the Grotesque *is* – a genre, a style, a movement, what? I understand it as a mode in the way Fredric Jameson describes the term in his essay 'Magical Narratives: Romance as genre':

> when we speak of a mode, what can we mean but that this particular type of literary discourse is not bound to the conventions of a given age, nor indissolubly linked to a given type of verbal artifact, but rather persists as a temptation and a mode of expression across a whole range of historical periods, seeming to offer itself, if only intermittently, as a formal possibility which can be revived and renewed. (Quoted in Jackson, 1981:7)

15 Of course, one can question whether the placement of the Grotesque in the margins in medieval times constituted as marginal, i.e., peripheral, a location as modern writers might initially assume. In this regard see Michael Camille's Image on the Edge, in which he argues

its peripheral locale into the centre of certain modern practices – notably the "trauma art" of which Hal Foster writes in The Return of the Real (1996) – where its relevance to our understanding of the darker, more arcane and symbolically backstage aspects of human thought and expression has emerged more fully. In Goya's day, however, the Grotesque was a marginal mode with a specific past and a questionable future. In its interstitiality one can already perceive its relevance for a methodology centred around a sociopsychological operation of exclusion serving the purpose of strengthening (or centralising) a society's system of order. I establish further nodes of relevance in the discussions below.

* * *

What is today recognised as the Grotesque first emerged as a style of embellishment in the years of imperial Rome. According to Geoffrey Harpham, in On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature (1982), the style

> appeared in Rome about 100 B.C. [It] consisted of graceful fantasies, symmetrical anatomical impossibilities, small beasts, human heads, and delicate, indeterminate vegetables, all presented as ornament with a faintly mythological character imparted by representations of fauns, nymphs, satyrs, and centaurs. (25–26)

The style proved popular; it lingered till the reign of Nero, when Fabullus adopted it to decorate Nero's Golden Palace (Harpham, 1982:23–25). After the fall of the Roman empire, however, it receded into oblivion.

It was not until the fifteenth century that this form of decoration was rediscovered, and since some of it was found in cavern-like spaces, it was given the name *grottesche* (from grotto, i.e., cave)[16]. Vasari, in his Lives, explains:

> Not long after, in digging near S. Pier ad Vincola among the ruins of the palace of Titus, they found some rooms roofed in, covered with grotesques, small fig-

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that while one shouldn't view the margins of medieval art as necessarily subversive, they were more than decorative, for '[t]he centre is . . . dependent upon the margins for its continued existence' (1992:10).

16 Most of these so-called grottoes were not truly grottoes, i.e., caves, of either natural or human manufacture, but buried ruins (see Harpham, 1982:27).

> ures and scenes in stucco . . . These grotesques, so called from being found in grottoes, [were] executed with design, variety and fancy . . . (1980, vol. 4:9)[17]

What Vasari calls the "Titus Baths" was actually the Golden Palace of Nero[18], one of the most influential 'grottoes' uncovered during the early Renaissance. Frances K. Barasch describes the Palace in her introduction to Thomas Wright's A History of Caricature and Grotesque in Literature and Art:

> The ceiling grotesques . . . were the fantastic designs which adorned compartments arranged in a variety of geometrical shapes. Within the compartments were landscapes of pagan divinities in pastoral settings. Surrounding the entire surface of these compartments were intricately patterned decorations of fantastic invention – satyrs, cupids, fruits, foliage, festoons, frets, knots, and bows. (1968: XXIII–XXIV)

Such elements as "satyrs, fruits, foliage, festoons, frets, knots and bows" soon became the stock-in-trade of Renaissance *grottesche*. Whimsical entities such as monsters, chimeras, masks, animals and allegorical figures were incorporated within designs that interwove sculptural forms with botanical elements. The nature of the style is manifest in the dense decorative panels the painter Pintoricchio used to embellish the borders and margins of the frescoes he produced in 1502 for the Piccolomini library of the Siena Cathedral[19].

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[17] In response to Vasari's statement that "grotesque" derives from "grotto", it is worth introducing Walter Benjamin's comment in his seminal The Origin of German Tragic Drama that the grotesque 'is not derived from *grotta* in the literal sense, but from the "burial" . . . which the cave or grotto expresses' (1977:171). In Benjamin's view the origin of the word 'grotesque' is inextricably trussed with sinister and underground connotations. This connection between grottoes and the object Kristeva views as the supreme form of abjection, viz., the corpse, should be noted for later application (in my examination of the *Desastres*).

[18] See Harpham (1982:23–25) for a brief explanation of how early explorers of the Roman 'grottoes' mistook the subterranean ruins of Nero's palace.

[19] For an image of Pintoricchio's grotesque pilasters see Frederick Hartt, 1994:357, colour-plate 68. Incidentally, the word *grottesche* was used for the first time in Pintoricchio's contract for the frescoes (see Barasch, 1971:20–21; and Murray & Murray, 1984:181).

For a somewhat offbeat view of the artist Pintoricchio see Dan Simmons' novel *Summer of Night* (1991). Simmons, quoting unspecified writings by Benvenuto Cellini, describes Pintoricchio as a 'deaf and undersized little artist' (197) who found inspiration for his decorations – '*grotesques*' (199) – in the Borgia apartments beneath the city of Rome, i.e., in the 'unholy subterranean caverns, or *grotte*' (199). In Simmons' mind – and this is the interesting part as far as this thesis is concerned – there is a direct link between Pintoricchio's grotesques and the vilest

The density, sophistication and volume of Pintoricchio's Siena *grottesche* informs us that, only a few years after its discovery, the decorative[20] Roman style – which offered a compelling and eccentric solution to the problems posed by the borders of frescoes and other wall spaces requiring adornment – had gained popularity and was being pursued by notable artists, including Luca Signorelli, Perino del Vaga[21] and, most notable of all, Raphael.

Raphael's adoption of *grottesche* for the Vatican marked a vertex in the evolution of "grotesque" ornament, triggering what Barasch, in The Grotesque: A Study in Meanings, characterises as 'a chain reaction all over Europe among students and patrons of Italian art' (1971:24). Elsewhere, Barasch describes the spread of the Grotesque to the point where 'all Europe's wealthy men adorned their stately homes in grotesques, some based on the ancients, some on Raphael's style, others entirely unique' (in Wright, 1968:xxv). Wolfgang Kayser, in his The Grotesque in Art and Literature, claims that grotesque decoration 'conquered all the artistic genres susceptible to the ornamental style' (1963:22).

Despite this evident interest in grotesque embellishment, there was a concurrent stream of opinion that frowned on the style and denounced it because it fell short of verisimilitude and depicted non-existent things. This view was braced and promoted with reference to the Roman architect, Vitruvius[22], who in his *De Archi-*

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evil, personified in his novel by the Borgia Bell. For the sake of the novel, Pintoricchio's grotesques are seen as 'designs' that 'served to contain the Stele's [i.e., the Bell's] evil while allowing the [Borgia] family to benefit from [its] power' (263). Such a conception of grotesque ornament may be fictional, but it demonstrates that even a writer of this modern age can still find something dark, subterranean, unholy and evil in the style.

20 *I use the term "decorative" primarily to signify the style's ornamental function, not to* define the style as light and frothy – the jury is still out on the question of whether this art was merely embellishment or did indeed have the sinister connotations Benjamin (footnote 17) and Simmons (footnote 19) associate with it. The fact that we have this paradox in itself shifts the Grotesque mode out of the 'merely' decorative and points to its ability to frustrate easy conclusions – an ability I will in due course make significant.

21 Vasari describes Perino del Vaga as a master of ornament, stucco and 'the arabesques in the caves' (1980, vol. 3:122; the life of Perino del Vaga covers pages 120 to 140).

22 See Barasch (in Wright, 1968:xxvii–xxix; also 1971:28–30) for a brief discussion of the

tectura, of ca. 27 B.C., demonstrated nothing but scorn for such ornamentation:

> On the stucco are monsters rather than definite representations taken from definite things. Instead of columns there rise up stalks; instead of gables, striped panels with curled leaves and volutes. Candelabra uphold pictured shrines and above the summits of these, clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random. Again, slender stalks with heads of men and animals attached to half the body.
>
> Such things neither are, nor can be, nor have been. On these lines the new fashions compel bad judges to condemn good craftsmanship for dullness. For how can a reed actually sustain a roof, or a candelabra the ornaments of a bagle, or a soft and slender stalk a seated statue, or how can flowers and half-statues rise alternatively from roots and stalks? Yet when people view these falsehoods, they approve rather than condemn. (Quoted in Harpham, 1982:26; also in Kayser, 1963:20)

To Vitruvius' mind, fanciful ornament detracted from nature by undoing such accepted laws of physical reality as weight, proportion and relationship. Yet there is more at work in the Vitruvian mind than first meets the eye, and I will use this undertone to make the shift from grotesque ornament to the Grotesque as a structure (and, hence, open a route to abjection).

The above passage informs us that, for Vitruvius, things that are not "definite representations taken from definite things" are "monsters" by definition. Such monsters – if one now looks at the second-last line of the second paragraph – are "falsehoods". What is not a mimetically accurate depiction of a real object or relation between objects is both untrue and monstrous. Thus we arrive at a fundamental characteristic of the Grotesque: its inclination toward environments of the rampant imagination, which places it, at least while under the scrutiny of a 'rational' mind, on the other side of the threshold between reality and fantasy, and thus between reason and unreason[23].

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change in the appreciation of *grottesche* after Renaissance scholars had read Vitruvius and discovered his less than congenial attitude to the Roman decorative style.

[23] It is worth noting that during the Renaissance the designs of *grottesche* were termed the *sogni dei pittori*, the "dreams of painters" (Kayser, 1963:21–22). They were thus viewed as dreams made visible. The style was firmly associated with an irrational or at least subliminal, but nevertheless fertile, process of the mind. In time this rather playful elision of the difference between dream and imagination would become a more rigorous emphasis on the realm of the irrational in general.

A second vital characteristic of the Grotesque, also established as a principle by grotesque ornament, which comes through descriptively in the passage from *De Architectura,* is that of impossible combination. Vitruvius bemoans what the style brings together: "candelabra uphold pictured shrines", "clusters of thin stalks rise from their roots in tendrils with little figures seated upon them at random". He also questions the relations between objects and their supports: "how can a reed actually sustain a roof?" Lastly, most significantly, he questions how two disparate things can share botanical origins: "how can flowers and half-statues rise alternatively from roots and stalks?" What bothers Vitruvius is the way grotesque ornament undoes recognised, rational and empirical relations between objects in the real world. He has no tolerance for a pictorial world that does not mimic visible reality[24].

I would infer from this that Vitruvius felt a little threatened by the ability of such ornament to establish an alternative world - a world of fantasy depicted in a fantasy mode which played by different rules to that of the rational, mimetic set which Vitruvius championed. If it was outside this presumably dominant set, then the style can be seen to have flourished in a margin. From there it would have challenged the central area not only of paintings undertaken according to a different, more culturally favoured and promoted aesthetic, but of a particular dominant culture[25]. The grotesque, even as a Roman style without name, already offered a

[24] For him, those who support the decorative style and "condemn good craftsmanship" (i.e., mimesis) for "dullness" are "bad judges". In this regard his stance is antithetical to Goya's: the reader will remember - and this is a point I return to in Section IV of this chapter - that, in his advertisement for *Los Caprichos,* Goya upheld "artifice" and "fancy" (imagination) above the "servile" copying of nature. Vitruvius would undoubtedly have frowned on Goya for this reason, but I will remind the reader that I have already claimed, and will claim again, that Goya used imagination to champion reason.

[25] Harpham perceives such a threat within the spatial distribution of *grottesche,* that is, in the claim it makes from the embellishing margins on the centre occupied by mythological and history painting: 'The ambivalent presence of meaning within the ostensibly meaningless form constitutes the real threat, and the real revolution, of *grottesche*' (1982:31). More generally, this stance is supported by Ronald Paulson in Representations of Revolution: 'All the categories that transcend the beautiful - the picturesque, grotesque, even sublime - tend to

world of impossible intermixture, volatile combination and anarchic dissolution; it was already a hazardous muddler of categories, orders and systems, a force whose capacity to overturn known and accepted ways of understanding the world comes to the fore in the vitriolic tone Vitruvius had to assume to squash (abject) it.

This capacity of the grotesque to challenge norms and standard perceptions would in time become a primary characteristic of the mode. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries the term already dilated considerably in both an adjectival and a noun sense to describe subject and object, feelings in the apprehending subject, and configurations in the changing art object[26]. It took on the properties of a psychological, bodily formation that could be engaged by images; it became a category of response and feeling, and in the territory of the art object the Grotesque element in the ornamental style came more to the fore, and what was once considered a mere support for more serious compositions or a light visual stimulus to ease the mind and eye[27], became a subject matter in itself[28]. Before, it was

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invoke energy as opposition, as something that breaks through rules or barriers' (1983:175).

26 For Barasch, this shift in the signifying boundaries of the Grotesque began with Vasari:

> When "grotesque" was used by Vasari in connection with Michelangelo's new composite style, its meaning was extended from a specific designation for the architectural and ornamental paintings of the ancients and for the Renaissance imitations to a conceptual term for *irrational* or *irregular* inventions. (in Wright, 1968:XXVI–XXVII; emphases added; also see 1971:30)

There can be no question that the shift to viewing grotesques as "irrational or irregular inventions" charts a movement from stylistic concerns to psychological ones, extending the decoration from the wall to its maker and the maker's conception of a world in which reason and regularity are of minimal interest. The view is not, however, Vitruvian, for here anti-nature seems to be favoured – a view that history would moderate.

27 See Harpham (1982:30–43) for a discussion of the functions of ornament, where he argues that *grottesche* became so engaging to the eye that it threatened the centrality of the major compositions it was there merely to enhance. In this one can already foresee the future elevation of such subject matter to a non-supporting role. Also revisit footnote 25 above.

28 Although it seems to me that it remained somewhat on the fringes, for example, in the graphic arts (e.g., the etchings of Callot and, later, Goya himself). In painting after Bruegel it is relatively rare; despite the outbreak of works dealing with the supernatural and the sublime among the Romantics – and even supposedly Neo-classical painters such as Ingres – images in the nature of Fuseli's *Nightmare* are not met with often, nor, of course, are paintings like Goya's witchcraft scenes and the later "Black Paintings". My reference here is, need-

the visual matrix of the decoration that mattered – its ability to fill marginal spaces – not what it potentially connoted. Today, even in this era that so contorts questions of interpretative authority, connotation is essential and it is as much the *idea* of grotesqueness as the look of a visual image that will generate the Grotesque (in its modified ambivalent and disjunctive sense).

It is important to recognise that the teleological shift from decoration to expression marks a change in the Grotesque from a 'style' to a 'mode'.

The thesis has already reached some important terrain, and we can already foresee how the Grotesque's connection with the monstrous and the challenge it offers to a dominant (mimetic) tradition might relate positionally and interrelationally to the place of abjection in society. Now, before discussing the theorists who have contributed most to our understanding of this Grotesque terrain, I need – given that Goya was a Spaniard – to briefly outline the development of the Grotesque in Spain.

* * *

According to Andrew Schulz, in his doctoral thesis, Perception, Satire, and the Grotesque Body in Goya's 'Caprichos', *grottesche* 'first appeared in Spain in the 1530s, in the decoration of the royal apartments in the Alhambra' (1996:145), and was still favoured in Goya's time, when José del Castillo was commissioned to design tapestry panels for the *Sala Pompeyana* (Pompeian Room) in Carlos IV's royal apartments (147). Nor was Castillo's task the only one of its kind executed towards the end of the eighteenth century; Schulz informs us that grotesques

> also were present in the decorations of the two *casitas* built on the Escorial grounds during these years, particularly in the ceilings by the Valencian artist Vincente Gómez, who described these works as "imitating the grotesque style of the celebrated Raphael of Urbino." (147)

In his article 'Concepts of the Grotesque before Goya', Paul Ilie adds a further

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less to say, to 'high' art, not to that of popular culture, which more often than not has a decidedly different face, particularly since it endorses material that would never be admitted (at least, not unchanged) into the domain of history painting or moral prints.

dimension to the conception of the Grotesque in eighteenth-century Spain. Limiting his framework for the Grotesque to the 'imagistic phenomenology of deformation' (1976*a*:186), he finds elements of the trope in four specific categories of activity: (1) 'the semi-folkloric creations of mass entertainment', involving carnivalesque practices such as masked street parades; (2) moralistic caricature in literature; (3) lexical devices that concentrate the 'rationale of deformation'[29] in words (e.g., "bufón" [buffoon or fool]) or phrases (e.g., "hospital de locos" [insane asylum]); (4) literature that is not grotesque but nevertheless 'manifests a sensibility running counter to the neoclassical values of moderation and order' (188)[30]. Ilie argues that while '[t]he retentive strength of neoclassical values held these grotesque impulses in check' (191), the Grotesque continued to exist and – primarily owing to the attention paid to it, even in Neo-classical treatises, where it was frequently used as the model against which to contrast 'collectively approved rules of taste and imitation' (198) – found a place in a variety of discourses, from 'low' to 'high'. What is important to note is Ilie's contention that the Grotesque was in opposition to the orderly norms and standards of Neo-classicism, and that Neo-classicists used it in the sense of an antithesis – as the thing to judge "collectively approved rules" against. I will pick up this point in a moment.

The emergence of the grotesque in discourse, Ilie asserts, can be traced in the development of the word 'grotesco' in the Spanish language: '[a]t the beginning of the century, lexicographers barely recognized that "grotesco" had currency' (192) beyond an association with the "extravagant" and "ridiculous"[31], and by 1734 it was

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29 I derive the phrase from Rudolph Arnheim's article in the special issue on caricature edited by Judith Wechsler and published in the Winter 1983 edition of Art Journal.

30 Discussion of the four categories covers pages 187 to 189 of Ilie's article.

31 Its repertory of forms was, however, clearly defined: so much is obvious in the following quote from Palomino's 1717 book *El Museo Pictórico y Escala Óptica*, in which he refers to

> grotesques [consisting] of various shoots, leaves, stems, and brackets, composed with artifice and wit, and other different adornments, with griffins, satyrs, fauns, sylphs, cen-

only understood as a 'strictly limited category of visual elements compounded artificially but patterned on the natural world' (Ilie, 1976*a*:192)[32] – a perspective on the mode's combinatory procedure that smacks of Vitruvius, without his strict division between ornament and the visible world. The 1787 *Diccionario Castellano . . . de Ciencias y Artes* extended the term, describing it as 'that which pertains to grottoes, and, in painting, engraving and sculpture, what is called grotesque is that which brings with it a type of fantasy and caprice . . . Also . . . that which is extravagant and ridiculous'[33] (quoted in Ilie:193). The following year Rejón de Silva provided this definition of the grotesque (under "Foliage" [foliage]) in his *Diccionario de las Nobles Artes*:

> Adornment consisting of shoots, tattered leaves, satyrs, grubs and other insects. The style is called Grotesque because it was found in the grottoes and underground passages of Rome; it is also called "Brutesco" because of the brutish animals that appear in it[34]. (quoted in Ilie:193).

The Spanish conception of the Grotesque had reached basically this point by the time Goya began work on *Los Caprichos*, but, as Ilie points out (193–94), it was

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> taurs, grubs and other diverse and exquisite insects, whose reflection cannot be found *in rerum Natura* but only in the imagination of the artificer (los grotescos de varios cogollos, hojas, tallos, y cartelas, artificiosa y galanamente compuestas, y otros diferentes adornos, con grifos, sátiros, faunos, silvanos, centauros, bichas y otras varias y exquisitas sabandijas, cuya semejanza no hay *in rerum Natura* sino solamente en la idea del artífice) (quoted in Ilie:195).

This repertory is conspicuously similar to the one I listed in my earlier discussion of the emergence of grotesque ornament in Renaissance Italy. One should also note the sovereignty Palomino grants to the imagination of the artist, and the word he uses to describe an artist who does not follow "*Natura*": "artificer". Goya, as we have seen and will see again in due course, uses the same term to describe the imaginative artist in his newspaper advertisement for *Los Caprichos*.

32 The entry in the 1734 *Diccionario de Autoridades* defines grotesco as the 'imitation of crude and uncultivated things, such as brambles and grottoes . . . a type of ornament . . . comprised of various leaves, rocks, and other things, such as snails and other insects' ('imitación de cosas toscas, e incultas, como breñas y grutas . . . especie de adorno . . . compuesto de varias hojas, peñascos y otras cosas, como caracoles y otros insectos') (quoted in Ilie:192).

33 The original Spanish text reads: 'lo que pertenece a gruta, y en la Pintura, Talladura, y Escultura se llama grotesco aquello que trae consigo una especie de fantasía y capricho . . . También . . . lo que es extravagante y ridículo'.

34 Adorno de cogollos, hojas harapadas, sátiros, bichas y otras sabandijas. Llámanse Grutescos, por haberse hallado esta moda en las grutas y subterráneas de Roma; como también Brutescos, por los animales brutos que en él se introducen.

one term in a trio that included *fantasía* and *capricho*[35], all of which referred to 'the phenomenology of irrational expression' (194). For Ilie, let me emphasise again, the Grotesque was a mode that 'ran counter to the neoclassical values of moderation and order' (188), and was therefore irrational *in contrast to* the dominant Neo-classical mode.

Irrationality is not innate to the Grotesque; it emerges in this light solely as a result of the mode's contrariness to the mimetic (Neo-classical and Rococo) values that held sway in Goya's time. These upheld the natural world (as the subject of still life and portraiture) and religious or mythologising narratives as primary, whereas the Grotesque found its stock-in-trade in the kinds of sources Ilie lists, three of which I will repeat here: (1) "the semi-folkloric creations of mass entertainment", involving carnivalesque practices such as masked street parades; (2) moralistic caricature in literature; (3) lexical devices that concentrate the "rationale of deformation" in words (e.g., "bufón" [buffoon]) or phrases (e.g., "hospital de locos" [insane asylum]). Goya uses all of these sources in his own satirical prints, but for the sake of bolstering reason, not whimsy. In the process he cuts against lingering Neo-classical "moderation and order", but only at the level of art. At the level of moral purpose, I would claim he presents himself as moderate and orderly.

To sum up: the Spanish conception of the term 'grotesque' incorporated all aspects of the Grotesque that emerged in my dissection of the passage from Vitruvius: an emphasis on impossible combinations of animals, plants and fantasy creatures – satyrs, sylphs and griffins sharing leaves, shoots and rocks with snails, grubs and other insects – and a stress on the irrational and irregular, evident in such adjectives as "uncultivated", "brutish" and "ridiculous". Other associations, incorporating caprice, fantasy, deformation and the monstrous, join this list, creat-

35 Terms that the 1787 *Diccionario Castellano* had used to describe the Grotesque, and which Goya would employ in the course of the 1790s; both appear, in one form or another, in the advertisement for *Los Caprichos*. I will examine the terms and the significance of Goya's use of them in Section IV of this chapter.

ing the impression of an underground, subterranean form of production that, by definition, exists *below* the high watermark of Reason, cultivation, rationality and all the other refinements of the Enlightenment. The Grotesque is a thing of grottoes and caves; it flourishes beneath the strata formed by ilustración (enlightenment) and Neo-classical values. It is the foil, the model of instruction, the example against which Neo-classicism defines itself. This (the Grotesque) *is everything* that Neo-classicism is not – everything that it must exclude from its sources, formulations and aspirations. The Grotesque is necessary to the dominant artistic mode, but only to mark this mode's limits – the point beyond which it must not pass if it is to remain true to itself. In this sense, as *form*, the Grotesque is used instructively, but as *content* it is shunted aside and repressed as a legitimate form of expression – as Ilie puts it: '[t]he retentive strength of neoclassical values held . . . grotesque impulses in check' (*1976a*:191). But a forfeited, underground existence of this sort is still an existence, and the Grotesque continued to develop (for example, through the fashionable interest in witchcraft) in Goya's Spain, despite its passive, comparative status. As a possibly furtive, possibly rootless, possibly duplicitous artificer, it scurried in the walls of the larger structure of Neo-classicism[36].

Goya, I would contend, understood that, as marginal and repressed, the Grotesque appeared, in its radical alterity to the dominant mimetic mode, as a source of fascination, as a lure that could capture the viewer's attention long enough for him or her to penetrate the veil of fantasy and discern the moral beneath. As I have already suggested, Goya used the Grotesque's barrier-breaking energy to champion a cause of morality that, while not wholeheartedly enlightened or reactionary, was nevertheless in the pocket of Reason, and was thus not underground in relation to dominant thinking. This is a point I will stress throughout the visual analyses in

36 It is impossible for me to clarify this connection here, but I want the reader to note that the relationship in which the Grotesque stands to Neo-classicism is structurally the same as the relationship in which the abject stands to society, the latter needing the former to define and restrict its own form and purpose, while at the same time denying and excluding it.

the forthcoming parts, and which I consolidate in the epilogue.

The brief history of the Grotesque I have offered over the last few pages is the best I can do for now as far as historiography is concerned, and all I believe to be required for this current project. It situates the trope and demonstrates that its form and iconography were derived from what were considered to be irregular and irrational, even unconscious (dream), sources. Thus I have already established, if only rhetorically, a connection between the form in which the Grotesque was expressed and the repressed, i.e., abject, areas of mental activity.

What I want to do now is look at a select group of critics – Ruskin, Kayser, Bakhtin and others – who have attempted to define the term 'grotesque' itself. By means of this examination I hope to clarify and develop those aspects of the Grotesque that have already emerged. In the process I will flush out more connections between the Grotesque and the abject and move the discussion closer to consolidation.

* * *

No-one (other than Vitruvius, perhaps) has argued about the merits and demerits of the Grotesque with more fire than John Ruskin, the nineteenth-century English critic. His position on the matter gleams through the following quotes from his Lectures on Art (where he clearly uses the word "burlesque" as a synonym for grotesque):

> there is one strange, but quite essential, character in us: . . . a delight in the forms of burlesque which are connected in some degree with the foulness of evil. (1910:18)
>
> in connection with our simplicity and good humour, and partly with that very love of the grotesque which debases our ideal, we have a sympathy with the lower animals which is peculiarly our own. (21)
>
> And yet you will find that whenever Englishmen are wholly without this instinct [of burlesque], their genius is comparatively weak and restricted. (18)

Ruskin is something of a curiosity: in the history of criticism one would be hard pressed to find a critic more prepared to use the principles of his religious belief system as the standard to judge the success or failure of works of art. Yet his name

is synonymous with the Grotesque. He is constantly referred to. As recently as 1989, Bernard McElroy, author of Fiction of the Modern Grotesque, claimed Ruskin's theories of the Grotesque to be more "valuable" than those of Kayser and Bakhtin (2). What is the reason for Ruskin's enduring interest? The above quotations from his Lectures On Art point to an answer.

Despite the directives of his faith, Ruskin felt ambivalent about the Grotesque. Even when he mentioned it as briefly as he does in the Lectures, he could not obfuscate that it pulled him in opposing directions. On the one hand, he saw it as an aberration that (mis)led artists to overly excite their imaginations, so denying his ideal of a good English Christian art; on the other hand, he freely admitted that it contributed to the "genius" of the artist[37]. In The Stones of Venice he went as far as to write:

> I believe that there is no test of greatness in periods, nations, or men, more sure than the development, among them or in them, of a noble grotesque; and no test of comparative smallness or limitation . . . more sure than the absence of grotesque invention, or incapability of understanding it. (1886:158)

With this statement Ruskin claims the Grotesque as a means of measuring the "greatness" or "smallness" of an artistic age. But it is important to be clear on the issue: Ruskin's appreciation of the Grotesque is not holistic; true to his dialectical approach to the subject, he demarcates it into "noble" and "ignoble" forms (1886:*passim*). In The Stones of Venice he reproduces drawings of two sculpted heads to demonstrate the difference between the two types, and adopts the same strategy in Modern Painters (1907:97–103) to compare two griffins. In the latter instance, he employs the terms "true" and "false" to discriminate between the noble and ignoble.

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[37] Harpham provides an interesting explanation for Ruskin's ambivalence to the Grotesque:

> *Grotesque* is the name Ruskin gives to a "monotheistic" art that, although it takes many forms, issues from a single source. Because of this comprehensive unity, it stands, even in its most debased forms, close to some originating creative power that might be called divine. This proximity to a unified source compelled Ruskin always to be if not respectful at least humble before the awesome power of the grotesque, which was capable of bringing mankind near to God or to bestial cretinism. (1982:185)

This agonistic relation, with "genius" on the one hand and utter "debasement" on the other, discloses Ruskin's most important dialectic, that between the *fearful* (*terrible*) and the *ludicrous* (*sportive*) grotesque. In The Stones of Venice he writes:

> it seems to me that the grotesque is . . . composed of two elements, one *ludicrous*, the other *fearful*: that, as one or other of these elements prevails, the grotesque falls into two branches, *sportive* grotesque and *terrible* grotesque; but that we cannot legitimately consider it under these two aspects, because there are hardly any examples which do not in some degree combine both elements: there are few grotesques so utterly *playful* as to be overcast with no shade of fearfulness, and few so fearful as absolutely to exclude all ideas of *jest*. But although we cannot separate the grotesque itself into two branches, we may easily examine separately the two conditions of mind which it seems to combine; and consider successively what are the kinds of jest, and what the kinds of fearfulness, which may be legitimately expressed in the various walks of art . . . (1886:126; emphases added.)

This key paragraph contains perceptions that almost all subsequent writers on the Grotesque have taken up in one way or another. Ruskin himself went on to relate the ludicrous ("sportive") and fearful ("terrible") forms of the Grotesque to the types of *play* undertaken by four classes of "men": (1) "those who play wisely", (2) those "who play necessarily", (3) those "who play inordinately", and (4) those "who do not play at all" (127–30). Of these classes, one and four were the only ones whom he believed capable of "noble" play (and, hence, capable of creating the "terrible" grotesque); the other two classes were, in his view, close to degenerate, since they played with their imaginations for the sake of financial survival or simply to gratify their own frivolous taste for the bizarre[38]. As McElroy states, Ruskin's dialectic hereby ended in 'obscur[ing] the original point by morally dividing the noble play of a mind at rest . . . from the ignominious play of the hedonist indulging himself' (1989:12–13).

Despite the stranglehold Ruskin's faith had on his concept of the Grotesque, the above passage shows that he viewed the fearful and sportive grotesque as inseparably combined; their individual appearance depended not on instability or bifurca-

[38] Ruskin's most glamorous example of this last type of man – the type who plays inordinately – is none other than Raphael. Ruskin describes Raphael's grotesques in the Vatican loggias as 'an elaborate and luscious form of nonsense' (1886:136).

tion within the category itself but on the *use* to which the human mind put the category. The integrity of the *creative producer* determined the expressive character of Grotesque subject matter.

This much is apparent, for example, in Ruskin's investigation of the state of mind that produces the "terrible" grotesque (1886:136–58). At this point his theory tangles with a theological relation opposing the love of God to the fear of sin and death. This concept of fear informs his distinction between the "noble" play with terror and the "ignoble" play with terror. He associates the former with "men" who are so close to God that "noble" terror can enter their "play" even in moments of repose – what he terms 'involuntary or pre-determined apathy' (140). By contrast, "men" whose minds are not directed by God, and who thus have little perspective on sin, cannot produce anything but "ignoble" forms of the Grotesque since, in the absence of the correct relationship to God – no matter how intensely they may exercise their faculties – their goal is, in Ruskin's words, 'frivolous' (143)[39].

This sermonistic interpretation of Grotesque forms is interesting for two reasons: (1) it induces Ruskin to hold an appealing modern attitude that favours the coarsely expressive Grotesque over the over-refined[40], and (2) it establishes a relation in which those who cannot "play" to the glory of God are themselves debased

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39 This affects the way different "men" play with terror and the grotesque in the following manner:

> the master of the noble grotesque knows the depth of all at which he seems to mock, and would feel it at another time, or feel it in a certain undercurrent of thought even while he jests with it; but the workman of the ignoble grotesque can feel and understand nothing, and mocks at all things with the laughter of the idiot and the cretin. (1886:140)

What Ruskin opposes here are two types of mockery. That of the "master of the noble grotesque" does not appear to involve laughter; it is mockery in the name of an understanding of his subject and a definite "noble" goal. That of the "workman of the ignoble grotesque" is mockery for the sake of laughter – a laughter not subversive or uplifting, but which merely degrades its maker, turning him into a "cretin".

40 Ruskin's analysis of two griffins in Modern Painters (1907:97–103) is wonderfully subtle, and utterly persuasive as he argues for the merits of the more crudely carved griffin over those of the more polished, but ultimately stylised, version. While one cannot agree with the terms behind Ruskin's distinctions ("true" and "false"), the manner in which he promotes conviction over style is truly impressive.

to a sinful, grotesque position. In a curious way Ruskin uses the Grotesque – itself a marginal product of the human imagination – as a means to determine the value of the artistic products of "men". Those who use the Grotesque properly come under the favour not only of Ruskin but, in his opinion, of God; those who abuse and manipulate it to ends that do not instil fear of the Almighty are no better than Adam: sinners in need of the swiftest possible ejection from paradise.

This ability of the Grotesque to both uplift and degrade, which no-one stresses as much as Ruskin, is important for an understanding of Goya's use of the Grotesque. Some writers (e.g., Rosen, 1988, and Schulz, 1996) suggest that Goya's willingness to embrace the Grotesque positioned him on the other side of mimesis and the Enlightenment. In doing so they, to a variable extent, display a certain unwitting allegiance with Ruskin, whose opinion of Goya needs to be interjected now. Ruskin evidently considered Goya's grotesque "ignoble" – so much so that in a (in)famous move he burnt a whole edition of *Los Caprichos*. Cook and Wedderburn, editors of the definitive Works of John Ruskin, elaborate:

> Ruskin saw in Mr. Ellis's possession [– Mr Ellis was Ruskin's bookseller –] a fine copy of *Capriccios de Goya*, and commented on its hideousness, adding that "it was only fit to be burnt." Mr. Ellis agreed with him; and putting the volume into the empty grate . . . he and Ruskin set light to it, and the book was burned to ashes. (1909:53*n*.3)

Ruskin overlooked the obvious moral purpose behind Goya's satirical prints, reading them simply as the overly-productive nonsense of a frivolous imagination. He saw in Goya's mockery not the laughter of a "master of the noble grotesque", but that of a "cretin" and an "idiot" – a fool, in short: one better suited to *being* mocked than to *mocking* (cf. my footnote 39). This represents an extraordinary oversight on Ruskin's part, no doubt made possible by Goya's apparent atheism and his ability to create a fictional demonic world so convincing in its own right that it smothered – at least for Ruskin – all evidence of an underlying moral purpose – the kind of purpose Ruskin saw as essential to the production of a genuinely pure 'noble' and 'terrible' grotesque. For Ruskin Goya's satire was so unredeemed it

could only be purged by fire. This view notwithstanding, however, if we peel away the layers of Christian belief and extract Ruskin's dialectic between the noble and ignoble Grotesque, we have the makings of an interpretation that, for the purposes of opposition, comparison and divarication, would pair Goya's satirical Grotesque with the ideal of reformulative Reason.

Before leaving Ruskin, I will take another quote from him, this time from Modern Painters, and request, since I cannot deal with the passage now, that the reader make a note of it, for it provides an impressionistic sketch of the terms in which a bridge may be built from the Grotesque to the concept of abjection:

> 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, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character. (1907:91)

Possibly the only other writers to have had as much influence as Ruskin on modern theorisation of the Grotesque are Wolfgang Kayser and Mikhail Bakhtin. In his book on the Grotesque, Harpham writes: 'A fledgling grotesquer unaccustomed to ambivalence might be given pause by the juxtaposition of Kayser's study and Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*' (1982:71). The reason for this is simple: Kayser and Bakhtin approach the Grotesque from different points of view. In brief, where Kayser finds ominous powers arising from an alienated world, Bakhtin finds corporeal, all-devouring laughter.

Bakhtin and Kayser, with no apparent recognition of the fact, slot into the two categories of Grotesque propounded by Ruskin: Bakhtin's grotesque is "sportive", Kayser's "terrible". The difference is orientation: Bakhtin passes no value judgements on the moral integrity of the "sportive" grotesque, while Kayser's "terrible" grotesque is more of a battlefield between good and evil than a site at which, from Ruskin's perspective, 'noble souls' might aspire to the sublime.

I will commence my survey of Kayser with the following instructive passage

from the preface to his The Grotesque in Art and Literature:

> Fifteen years ago, during my first visit to the Prado, my curiosity was aroused, although I did not as yet foresee where my future explorations would lead me. The same confusing and irritating features appeared over and over again in the pictures of Velasquez and Goya as well as in those of Bosch and Bruegel, which were collected as early as the sixteenth century [. . .] With that mixed feeling in which the pleasure of seeing one's own observations confirmed is mingled with regret caused by the realization that one's discovery has been anticipated, I subsequently came upon the passage in the *Vorschule der Asthetik* . . . in which Jean Paul, without using the word, ascribes a special gift for the grotesque to the Spaniards and the English. (1963:9–10)

This reveals that certain works of art in the Prado – including Goya's – were the *starting point* for Kayser's investigation of the Grotesque. Furthermore, Kayser concludes his introductory chapter ("The Problem") with a 'mini-tour' of the Prado Museum, where, as he claims, 'the phenomenon of the grotesque can be experienced . . . far more strikingly than in Keller's novellas or Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*' (17). Although he ends his 'tour' on the work of Bosch and Bruegel, it is in reference to Goya that he offers his decisive comments on the "problem" of the Grotesque:

> Much in Goya's etchings is caricatural, satiric, or topical, but none of these categories provides a fully satisfactory explanation. These etchings contain distinctly ominous, nocturnal, and abysmal features that frighten and puzzle us and make us feel as if the ground beneath our feet were about to give way. (1963:18)[41]

Significant as the words "ominous", "nocturnal" and "abysmal" are, what strikes me as the most distinctive feature of this passage is the comment that, while viewing a Goya etching, one feels that the ground might give way beneath one's feet. The notion of removing stability, solidity – the *known* – is vital not only to any understanding of the Grotesque but specifically to the one I am developing, and readers would do well to keep Kayser's image of shifting ground in mind.

Kayser sees the Grotesque as a 'comprehensive structural principle of works of art' (180) and offers the following comments and definitions:

> The grotesque is a structure. Its nature could be summed up in a phrase . . . THE

[41] Kayser is indeed correct that Goya's etchings exceed the satirical or caricatural, but one should not overlook the point that Goya introduces this (grotesque) excess to enhance the impact of his satire. It is satire that leads him to excess, hence the Grotesque.

> GROTESQUE IS THE ESTRANGED WORLD . . . Suddenness and surprise are essential elements of the grotesque . . . We are so strongly affected and terrified because it is our world which ceases to be reliable, and we feel that we would be unable to live in this changed world. The grotesque instils fear of life rather than fear of death . . . Apocalyptic beasts emerge from the abyss; demons intrude upon us. If we were able to name these powers and relate them to the cosmic order, the grotesque would lose its essential quality . . . THE GROTESQUE IS A PLAY WITH THE ABSURD. It may begin in a gay and carefree manner – as Raphael wanted to play in his grotesques. But it may also carry the player away, deprive him of his freedom, and make him afraid of the ghosts which he so frivolously invoked . . . The darkness has been sighted, the ominous powers discovered, the incomprehensible forces challenged. And thus we arrive at a final interpretation of the grotesque: AN ATTEMPT TO INVOKE AND SUBDUE THE DEMONIC ASPECTS OF THE WORLD. (184–88. Emphases in the original.)[42]

The Grotesque, Kayser believes, springs from unknown and not freely admitted areas of experience[43] which, when expressed in art and literature, generate the picture of an estranged world profoundly alienating to humanity. Precisely because these areas of experience are obscured, surprise and suddenness are needed to access them. The viewing subject needs to be caught unawares, so that s/he does not have time to prevent the (visual or textual) stimulus touching her or his subjectivity.

The Grotesque thus requires some degree of indeterminacy – as soon as it is clearly revealed and defined it ceases to be estranged and can no longer be consi-

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[42] Cf. Paulson:

> [the grotesque deals with] a normal world under the influence of demonic forces, with familiar elements suddenly transformed into the strange and ominous. But both gothic and grotesque focus on the moment of estrangement, the transition between this world and that, when plant and human are in metamorphosis and in the process of growing indistinguishable. (1983:237)

While most of this passage is heavily influenced by Kayser, the emphasis on metamorphosis is Paulson's personal interjection. It is a point that needs to be born in mind; the early writers on the Grotesque by and large did not make much of it, but, in the sense of flux, combination, admixture and ambiguity, it will emerge as significant in this thesis.

[43] Michael Steig believes much the same thing of Ruskin: 'what emerges from his discussion is that the grotesque is an imaginative playing with the forbidden or the inexpressible (and perhaps that which is inexpressible is so because it is forbidden?)' (1970:255). I agree that Ruskin's examination of the Grotesque hinges around a play between two aspects (the "ludicrous"/"ignoble" and the "fearful"/"noble"), but did not in my reading discern a play with the "forbidden" and "inexpressible" – two extremely suggestive terms, not only for Steig's interest in the interface between the Grotesque and the uncanny (which unquestionably motivates his perception of these terms in Ruskin's "discussion"), but also for my interest in the confluence of the Grotesque and abjection.

dered Grotesque. Naming tames, defuses and determines it. The reader/viewer must be taken from behind, robbed of the information s/he needs to develop a cognitive map to domesticate the image or text by naming. Thus in Goya's *Folly of Fear* [Fig. 160], for example, to understand the image it is not enough simply to identify its elements: large anthropomorphic figure in a loose-fitting habit-like tunic, fleeing army, tree, etc.; one also needs to define the relationships between the objects, but such things as distortion of scale and the equivocal nature of the cloaked figure – is it a real ghost or a manufactured sham? – makes interpretation difficult and uncertain: there is a discrepancy between what the image shows and what it potentially connotes, creating a zone of obscurity and ambiguity. I will revisit this issue deeper into the chapter when I establish the continuity between the Grotesque and abjection. Also, in Chapter Two I will define Kayser's "estrangement" in terms of the uncanny, and the uncanny in terms of abjection.

A final aspect of the above passage worth highlighting is Kayser's notion that one can use the Grotesque to invoke 'the demonic aspects of the world' to subdue them (1963:188). Kayser views the comic and the absurd in the Grotesque as bitter and mocking, not a mirthful but 'satanic' (187) laughter. Yet even he could not deny that it might serve another, more uplifting purpose:

> In many grotesques, little is felt of . . . freedom and gaiety. But where the artistic creation has succeeded, a faint smile seems to pass rapidly across the scene or picture, and slight traces of the playful frivolity of the *capriccio* appear to be present. And there, but only there, another kind of feeling arises within us. In spite of all the helplessness and horror inspired by the dark forces which lurk in and behind our world and have power to estrange it, the truly artistic portrayal effects a secret liberation. (188)

The passage is confusing because it is difficult to decide whether "frivolity" or the "truly artistic portrayal" is what functions to liberate. Manifestly, the two are closely aligned and have equal power, and perhaps that is sufficient in itself. In *combination*, in the service of the Grotesque, they act to subdue "demonic forces". The

Grotesque, then, is both threat and the means to control that threat[44]. It can be used, in the creative process, to tame those forces of alienation and darkness Kayser locates in the human psyche. Regrettably, Kayser does not elaborate on *how* the Grotesque can be a "secret" liberator. But one should not dismiss his point too hastily; in fact, I ask the reader to keep it in mind, for its importance will emerge in due time, and when it does I will be better equipped to argue that it is in naming and repetition that the Grotesque can be "subdued" and domesticated.

Kayser's apparent alter ego, Mikhail Bakhtin, has been the focus of much attention in recent years[45], ever since the publication of his seminal work, Rabelais and His World (1968). Among other things, Bakhtin used this book to 'correct' what he clearly saw as a mistake in the then-current literature on medieval and Renaissance expression – particularly as it related to folk culture. This mistake, as he perceived it, lay in the way other critics had interpreted laughter, Carnival and what he terms "grotesque realism" in the cultural activity of the aforementioned periods; and he took it upon himself to use Rabelais, that singular literary figure of the sixteenth century, as the pillar around which to construct his own perspective on Renaissance folk humour.

I will concern myself solely with Bakhtin's understanding of the Grotesque, which can be deduced from the following quote:

> It is usually pointed out that in Rabelais' work the material bodily principle, that is, images of the human body with its food, drink, defecation, and sexual life, plays a predominant role [. . .] [T]he images of the material bodily principle in the work of Rabelais . . . are the heritage, only somewhat modified by the Renaissance, of the culture of folk humor [. . .] In grotesque realism . . . the bodily element is deeply positive . . . The material bodily principle is contained not in the biological individual, not in the bourgeois ego, but in the people, a people who are continually growing and renewed [. . .] The leading themes of these images

44 In Ruskin's conviction that, in suitably noble hands, the Grotesque can service the glory of God, one finds a similar structural operation to the one Kayser notes here. The gross matter of the Grotesque is tricky to work with, but it is potentially rejuvenatory.

45 For an extensive bibliography of work that engages in one way or another with Bakhtin's wide range of ideas – which extends beyond the carnivalesque focus I adopt here – see Hirschkop and Shepherd, 1989:195–212.

> of bodily life are fertility, growth, and a brimming-over abundance . . . The material bodily principle is a triumphant, festive principle, it is a "banquet for all the world." [. . .] The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity. (18–20)

The focus of Bakhtin's writing is sixteenth-century popular culture, which, he claims, derived its character from the folk culture of the Middle Ages. In his view the Renaissance was not a rebirth in which the Middle Ages expired, but a culmination of trends that were already rooted in the popular culture of the previous epoch. From this perduring culture of The People (i.e., those of the servile classes) sprang several manifestations of folk culture, including a particular language that emphasised the body in all its *material* aspects. Bakhtin terms this focus on the material body "grotesque realism". He asserts the positive character of the material body and argues that the people of Rabelais' time did not separate the individual body from the collective "ancestral" body constituted by communities. "Grotesque realism", he claims, *degraded* things of a – to use a Ruskinian term – "noble" nature by plunging them to the level of the material body. One needs to understand this act of casting down in Bakhtin's terms, because if one misinterprets it one is liable to overlook its centrality in Bakhtin's argument for the *positivity* of the material body, grotesque realism and laughter. Quoting further:

> Degradation and debasement of the higher do not have a formal and relative character in grotesque realism. "Upward" and "downward" have here an absolute and strictly topographical meaning. "Downward" is earth, "upward" is heaven. Earth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth, of renascence (the maternal breasts) . . . Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time [. . .] To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. (1968:21)

I want to stress the last line of the passage: that degradation has both a destructive and a regenerative aspect. This is not the first time a dialectic has reared its head in a deliberation on the Grotesque. In Bakhtin's case, this dialectic is the all-important one, since it 'corrects' those interpretations he takes to task in his text. For him, at

least at the symbolic level, all forms of destruction, of casting down, of death, are merely a prelude to rebirth; the degradation afforded by the material bodily principle transforms the lofty, the spiritual, the dead into the tissues of a living communal body. And this process occurs not in a void, but in an abundance of – in comparison to Ruskin – unqualified laughter.

To develop a thesis that so celebrates the rejuvenatory power of laughter, Carnival and the material body, Bakhtin is forced to resolve into a conviction what is really an unstable, speculative and presumptive proposition, which Harpham has, I think correctly, criticised as arising (in the words of Derrida) from '"[a] Rousseauist . . . nostalgia for origins"' (1982:72–73). To overturn social hierarchies and political domination, to tweak the nose of death and give the lie to God and the devil, the answer, for Bakhtin, *is* the feast, the Carnival, the uncrowning, the "world-upside-down" – killing the fatted calf in the name of regeneration through the body. The problem is, he believes Carnival to be a cure *for* rather than a symptom *of* the means people in the sixteenth century adopted to cope with their social, political, religious and physical difficulties. As will eventually be seen, Goya's treatment of the "world-upside-down", because of its ultimate complicity with the cause of Reason, presents a more pessimistic interpretation of carnivalesque excess, one that exposes such 'merriment' as a form – to borrow loosely from Marx – of false consciousness serving the interests of the oppressors[46].

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[46] The readiness of such critics as Bakhtin to treat carnivalesque inversion as a means of vanquishing state controls has been criticised in the literature (for overviews of such criticism, see Stallybrass and White, The Politics and Poetics of Transgression, 1986:13–16, Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction, 1986:88–90, and Barbara Babcock, The Reversible World: Symbolic Inversion in Art and Society, 1978:22–24). Initially, critics (e.g., Terry Eagleton [see Stallybrass and White:13]) responded to the optimistic view of inversion by pointing out that such reversals of the social status quo could only be a temporary form of blowing off steam (the concept of inversion as ventilation was given exemplary treatment in the 1960s by the anthropologist Max Gluckman, who asserted that ritual practices were simply a means of strengthening the established order [see Stallybrass and White:13, Castle:88–89, Burke, 1988:201–2, and, especially, Babcock:22–23]); in essence they had no power to alter political imbalances in society (Helen Grant, in her article 'The World Upside-Down', held the same view of Spanish world-upside-down prints known as *aleluyas* – '[t]hey acted as a safety-valve

From the foregoing it is no surprise that Bakhtin had a negative reaction to Kayser's analysis of the Grotesque. Kayser does not appear to admit excess and joy – the laughing body – into his definitions. Yet Bakhtin reveres laughter as one of the core principles of the Grotesque:

> Kayser's theory cannot be applied to the thousand-year-long development of the pre-Romantic era: that is, the archaic and antique grotesque . . . and the medieval and Renaissance grotesque, linked to the culture of folk humor [. . .] [Kayser] bases his deductions and generalizations on the analysis of Romantic and modernist forms [of the grotesque] . . . The true nature of the grotesque, which cannot be separated from the culture of folk humor and the carnival spirit, remains unexplained. (1968:46–47)

In stressing his perception that Kayser's notion of the Grotesque can only be applied to 'clarify certain aspects of the Romantic grotesque' (51), Bakhtin overlooked Kayser's abstruse reference to frivolity, to which I drew attention earlier. While only the original German text might specify whether it is "frivolity" or the "truly artistic portrayal" that Kayser related to liberation from the abysmal, the chance that it might be the former indicates that Kayser was not as distant from Bakhtin as Bakhtin himself thought[47]. In fact, one could view the Russian scholar's entire theory of grotesque realism as an extension of Kayser's unformulated suggestion. The issue, ultimately, is that, like Ruskin, Kayser and Bakhtin grant a place in their comprehensions of the Grotesque for both laughter and the ominous, the

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rather than as a stimulus to change' [1973:113]); even Freud, in Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious, strikes a negative chord: 'A festival is a permitted, or rather obligatory, excess, a solemn breach of a prohibition' (1991*b*:201). Later critics (e.g., Burke in his Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1988:203–4), while not openly embracing the Bakhtinian perspective, have opposed this view, arguing essentially that carnivalesque practices are too complex and too historically specific to be treated in such clearcut terms as the oppression of the 'low' by the 'high', or as simply a means of letting off steam. Stallybrass and White sum things up in a way that all investigators of the subject would applaud: 'the politics of carnival cannot be resolved outside of a close historical examination of particular conjunctures' (16). I need only add that my study of Goya's prints, particularly *Los Disparates*, indicates that within his 'historical conjuncture' Carnival had become a tool which the ruling groups utilised to control the lower classes.

47 And not just on the matter of humour are they closer than one would initially suspect; as Andrew Schulz argues, 'the two writers are largely in agreement in viewing the Romantic grotesque as characterized by alienation' (1996:166; for corroboration, see Bakhtin, 1968:47–51, especially 48).

"sportive" and the "terrible", and the fact that the entire structure of Bakhtin's ludic grotesque realism depends on descent to the abysmal and ascent to some heavenly rebirth – thus on passage from top to bottom and back again – demonstrates that, even though Bakhtin does not view *below* as a monster-spawning abyss (as Kayser does), he cannot do without it in his grand scheme. Of course, neither could Ruskin, whose understanding of the Grotesque, once stripped of its theologism, is extremely close to Bakhtin's. Whether viewed in a chiefly positive (Bakhtin), chiefly negative (Kayser) or ambivalent (Ruskin) light, the Grotesque is understood by all three of these writers as a volatile mode of expression that can enslave or liberate, and which contains within itself the means to effect at least temporary liberation.

Philip Thomson, the last writer I look at here, holds the same view. In The Grotesque he suggests that the Grotesque raises the 'horrifying and disgusting aspects of existence to the surface' (1972:59) to destroy them in the crucible of laughter, or, alternatively, to control the "uncanny" by means of the comic (60–61)[48]. Thomson thus unites the positions of Bakhtin and Kayser, and, with his understanding that laughter can be both serious and joyful (50–56), has no trouble seeing them as a synthesis. Where he differs from his more illustrious precursors is in his view that disharmony is the Grotesque's chief feature:

> The most consistently distinguished characteristic of the grotesque has been the fundamental element of disharmony, whether this is referred to as conflict, clash, mixture of the heterogeneous, or conflation of disparates. It is important that this disharmony has been seen, not merely in the work of art as such, but also in the reaction it produces and (speculatively) in the creative temperament and psychological make-up of the artist. (20)

Disharmony emerges here as something that can be located in three places: (1) the art work, (2) the reader/viewer, (3) the artist. In short, the Grotesque manifests

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[48] Thomson bases this notion of using the comic to control the uncanny on Michael Steig's important article, 'Defining the Grotesque: An Attempt at Synthesis' (1970), in which Steig draws a close connection between the Grotesque and the uncanny. I will look at this connection, and at Steig's thought on the matter, in the next chapter, where I will also emphasise laughter's role in managing the menace of the abject.

its split and asyndetic character in all areas of contention, and not merely as a visible lack of unity, but as the expression of psychological ambivalence. The art work conveys the oscillating perspective the artist holds of his or her subject, and the receiver responds to that uncertainty with personal anxiety. Thus, through the circuit opened by the art work, the reader/viewer receives similar conflicting emotions to those that guided the artist. In this way, via the agency of (re)cognitive dislocation, art gains the potential to lead the spectator toward some kind of liberation – if, that is, the cause or object of the anxiety can also function extricatively. To put it another way: if an artist creates an image, either partly or expressly, for the purpose of working through and resolving his or her tensions and fears, the image will probably contain representations of the cause(s) of anxiety at the iconographic level or impressions of disquiet in the artistic form itself; many viewers seeing such an image might be roused to similar levels of anguish (as that of the artist, which culminated in the image), and might then be able to use the image to attain relief from the very problems it has stirred up. They cannot do so in the same way as the producer (unless they are motivated to make cathartic works of their own), but, depending on the nature of the work they are regarding, they can find other means. For example, satire, which encourages degradation of the object of attack, gives the viewer the capacity to use laughter to disengage for a short while from whatever anxiety the satire may have prompted. This is a point I will return to in Section III of Chapter Two, and again in the epilogue.

Thomson looks at the way the Grotesque balances precariously between the familiar and the unfamiliar and, using the illustration of a child watching the facial distortions of an adult, demonstrates that it is the viewer who determines in which direction the balance shifts:

> [take] the example of very small children . . . to whom one makes grimaces which increasingly distort the face. The child will laugh at the face pulled only up to a certain point (presumably, while it is still sure of the face as a familiar thing); once this point is passed, once the face becomes so distorted that the child feels threatened, it cries in fear. (1972:25)

In this example the child cries at the point where the distortion becomes too much – where it perceives that the familiar face has become unfamiliar and sinister. What Thomson describes is a moment of *inversion*, where something initially amusing (or at least attractive because of its playfulness) turns into a repulsive and fearsome hazard. The playful is stood on its head, and becomes terrible.

Needless to say, this is familiar territory. Ruskin laid foundations here almost a century before Thomson, and Kayser cut at least a path or two across it at the end of the 1950s. There are hints of this understanding in Bakhtin, and it is clearly stated again in the writings of Harpham (e.g., 1982:7–10). Thomson's articulation of the point is, however, the most lucid in demonstrating that the gap between the "sportive" and "terrible" is collapsed by an inversion, a metamorphic reversal, or a descent from top to bottom. Thomson helps us to see, possibly more clearly than Bakhtin or Ruskin, since he operates outside of their polemical frameworks, the manner in which the shift from one stool to another occurs through an internal relation dependent on the subject's ability to keep the object under scrutiny within the bounds of the familiar. It is when the divide is perforated and the unfamiliar sweeps in that laughter changes to fear, and the ominous intrudes. This, for Thomson and Kayser, is the point at which the Grotesque most clearly manifests itself.

What the reader needs to note, further, is that while it is familiar the Grotesque produces playful laughter; when it becomes unfamiliar the result is fear. Why should this happen? Because when the Grotesque is familiar we laugh at *it*; when it is unfamiliar we feel it is laughing at – mocking – us. The reversal is one in which we suddenly find we are no longer *abjecting*, but being *abjected*. This question of position is the one, to my mind, that determines the cathartic capacity of the Grotesque (and, for that matter, of satire). When we laugh at the Grotesque, we liberate ourselves from the tensions threaded out by confrontation with the ambivalent, slightly alien, slightly unfamiliar forms, fields and ramifications of the Grotesque. When we can no longer laugh at it because suddenly it seems that *we* are the scape-

goats, the grotesques, it becomes purely a source of anxiety.

In Goya's art it is often difficult to tell whether a subject is a caricature, thus a distortion from the real world, or a representative of a whole other world of the Grotesque that the artist has depicted for the eyes of his coevals. We can claim that all of his figures, even the most distorted or bestial, are caricatures serving the artist's satiric purpose, but this does not entirely rob them of their power to disturb – it does not make them altogether familiar. Thus there are caricatures in Goya that a mere glance will situate as objects to be mocked, and others we will struggle to laugh at because they are so difficult to classify and detach from. In the latter case we might even feel that we have become the subject of the artist's laughter as he mocks our inability to comprehend his work. In short, where the viewer is concerned, the discomfort index of the Grotesque is measured in the degree to which, being familiar (recognisable), it moves us to laughter and relief or liberation, or, being unfamiliar (unrecognisable in any known taxonomy), pulverises us.

Thomson has brought this discussion to the point where satire and the Grotesque intersect – the point at which at least one facet of the abject, its potential for deliverance, could now be introduced. Unfortunately, I need to consider a few more matters before I can introduce the abject in all its Gorgonian theoretical detail.

One such matter is the hybridity of the Grotesque, which Thomson, even though he views it as a disjunctive clash rather than an integrated combination, alludes to in his use of phrases such as "mixture of the heterogeneous" and "conflation of disparates". He grasps that the Grotesque is polymorphous, an amalgam, by definition. It unsettles precisely because it combines qualities that one would normally expect to see in separation[49]. The impossible farrago of discrepant elements (foliage, ornamental structures, creatures themselves hybrid in nature) found in *grottesche*

[49] Cf. Harpham in his article 'The Grotesque: First Principles': '[the Grotesque] opens into a realm of contradiction and ambiguity, frequently through the *fusion of forms or realms we know to be separate*' (1976:464; emphases added).

becomes symptomatic of the category of the Grotesque as a whole. It therefore stands to reason that it is also symptomatic of the object Bakhtin places at the centre of his understanding of grotesque realism: the obscene, material, grotesque body. It is to this body that I now turn, because no understanding of this troubled landscape of cast-out things would be complete without a separate examination of its core wanderer, the one whose condition is abject.

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> [T]he grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world. This means that the emphasis is on the apertures or the convexities, or on various ramifications and offshoots: the open mouth, the genital organs, the breasts, the phallus, the potbelly, the nose. The body discloses its essence as a principle of growth which exceeds its own limits only in copulation, pregnancy, child-birth, the throes of death, eating, drinking, or defecation . . . The unfinished and open body (dying, bringing forth and being born) is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects. It is cosmic, it represents the entire material bodily world in all its elements. (Bakhtin, 1968:26–27)

Stallybrass and White condense Bakhtin's description of the grotesque body into a set of "discursive norms" which, as will be seen, can all be found in Goya's etchings:

> impurity (both in the sense of dirt and mixed categories), heterogeneity, masking, protuberant distension, disproportion, exorbitancy, clamour, decentred or eccentric arrangements, a focus upon gaps, orifices and symbolic filth . . . physical needs and pleasures of the "lower bodily stratum," materiality and parody' (1986:23).

For Bakhtin, the mobility and flexibility of the grotesque body make it a positive regenerating force, the supreme symbol of medieval folk culture's obsession with procreation[50]. However, from a different perspective, notably that of modern western society, this body is anathema, an abomination whose abundance must be limited, a pollution that must be repelled, cast down.

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[50] Bakhtin treats the grotesque body in such positive terms that he has often been taken to task for his optimism; for a review of such criticism see Stallybrass and White, 1986:9–16.

The grotesque body, because it has no "clearly defined boundaries", is intractably associated with those external margins and boundaries that it interacts with and has the potential to reconfigure. It teeters on brinks and partakes of the qualities of supposedly oppositional extremes (e.g., life and death, birth and decay, youth and age, health and disease). It is an amalgam by definition: it "is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries" but "is blended with the world", and is therefore a hybrid, a conglomerate. It is defined in relation to structures and limits operating in the world, and so bears out the principle that social boundaries should always be considered in conjunction with the body itself, the primary unit of the social system (and vice versa). So writes Mary Douglas in Purity and Danger, a book that must be acknowledged as instrumental in Kristeva's development of abjection theory:

> The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious . . . [One has] to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body. (1984:115)[51]

This interconnection between individual body and social body has serious implications for the individual body that does not accord with the limits society establishes as its ideals. What does not conform is often treated as filthy, as dirt, and therefore as a potentially sullying presence in the social formation. Dirt's capacity to spread and soil others gives the begrimed individual body its sense of threat. It should be recognised, however, that this threat is not necessarily constituted on hygienic grounds. As Douglas claims:

> If we abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two contradictions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in

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51 Cf. Stallybrass and White:

> the body cannot be thought separately from the social formation, symbolic topography and the constitution of the subject . . . the body is actively produced by the junction and disjunction of symbolic domains and can never be legitimately evaluated "in itself". (1986:192)

> so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. (1984:35)

Thus, for Douglas, elements within society that (directly or indirectly) defy or challenge the organisation of that society – elements that transgress the boundaries set up to regulate the behaviour of individuals and their social and private functions – are precisely those that, in society's eyes, must be relegated to the realms of filth, i.e., (r)ejected from the socius. '[I]f uncleanness is matter out of place,' writes Douglas, 'we must approach it through order. Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained.' (40) If we now reconsider the link between the individual body and the social body it is clear that the status society forces on the grotesque body is equivalent to processes of excretion and their products. In other words, society places the grotesque body in the class of waste and refuse. This metaphorical relation suits society since, as Douglas points out,

> Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins. We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolise its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, faeces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat. (121)[52]

Just as excrement crosses the margin of the body's skin, so the grotesque body crosses the margin of the social body, becoming effluvium, faecal matter, by-product, unwanted foulness. As dirt, disorderly elements such as the grotesque body are classified, named and tamed. They remain grotesque, but at least those members of society who show more respect for, or who are more closely aligned with, consensual ideals need no longer fear or feel intimidated by them. This is a cardinal point. If something cannot be classified because it exceeds those ideals and models so-

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[52] In her book On Longing, Susan Stewart closely echoes Douglas's view of the marginal status of disposable body matter:

> The body presents the paradox of contained and container at once. Thus our attention is continually focused upon the boundaries or limits of the body . . . Those products which cross such boundaries thereby become products of great cultural attention. What is both inside and outside the body (feces, spittle, urine, menstrual blood, etc.) tends to become taboo because of its ambiguous and anomalous status. (1984:104)

ciety has set up as its norms and standards, it becomes "matter out of place", i.e., matter without limits, an unbounded, potentially infinite substance. Such a substance, impure by definition because it has no evident taxonomic place, can easily cause anxiety in those members of society who fit the norm, because they will endow it with the ability to swamp and engulf matter that has a place. Placelessness here becomes synonymous with a mass oceanic and even apocalyptic in its lack of barriers. Absence of identity generates the threat of the nameless thing, the *out there*, the faceless mob, the rising tide and cresting tidal wave. But if the one-who-meets-the-norm suddenly says, 'It isn't matter out of place, it's dirt', then the endless, inexhaustible thing shrinks in a trice within the circle of a cluster of clearly-understood terms – dirt, filth, refuse, garbage, dross, scourings, scraps, pollution, effluent, excrement, vomit – all of which can be dealt with in a single activity: throwing out. Those in society who fail to make The Grade, all of whom are often treated as grotesque in representation – the smelly, toothless beggar rummaging through rubbish; the heavily-scarred criminal; the ill-tempered dwarf ranting at the world; the drunk woman with dark rings around her eyes battering her child in a pokey apartment; the aged sitting indifferently before a television – are cast out, and while they cannot be scooped into a bin, flushed down a toilet or pumped into a river, they are clearly positioned, through representation, in places – alleys, backwoods and backwaters, niches, gutters, dark spaces, squatter camps, cardboard villages, mental hospitals, old-age homes – that literally, as spaces that receive those who no longer match society's criteria for inclusion, are the sewers for the places where the normal and standardised live.

The representation of an abject condition cannot, however, be non-partisan; when represented, the grotesque, abject body will always function in one way or another, sometimes to wring sympathy out of the viewer/reader, more often to affirm the identity of the one who fits society's mould. To return to the nexus between satire and the Grotesque: when it serves the interests of the emplaced, the grotesque

body tends to be used satirically. It appears as the central object in a satirically-undermining portrayal of a world where obscenity has run riot.

In Satire's Persuasive Voice Edward and Lillian Bloom claim that 'for almost every major satirist the language of obscenity is inevitable' (1979:157). This is understandable if Alvin B. Kernan is correct in claiming that '[e]verywhere the satirist turns he finds idiocy, foolishness, depravity and dirt' (in Paulson, 1971:254). Satirical perception hones in on the darker dirtier side of life; it is receptive to all forms of human aberrance and delights in using the body's socially-excluded properties to expose moral infirmity. As Kernan writes,

> The author of satire always portrays the grotesque and distorted, and concentrates to an obsessive degree on the flesh . . . man is caught in his animal functions of eating, drinking, lusting, displaying his body, copulating, evacuating, scratching . . . Gross, sodden, rotting matter is the substance of the satiric scene and any trace of the beautiful or the spiritual is always in danger of being destroyed by the weight of this mere "stuff". (in Paulson:256)

One should note the consuming quality Kernan associates with the "mere stuff" – "gross, sodden, rotting matter" – of satirical obscenity. He sees the "beautiful or the spiritual" – humanity's standards and ideals, in short – as threatened by the "substance of the satiric scene" – the substance I have just associated with a limitlessness that arises since, tabulatively, it exceeds the established social order.

The satirist uses the corporeal and diseased aspects of the world to degrade all that is only human to something like Bakhtin's "bodily lower stratum". In the process the objects of satirical attack are denuded and devalued. As the Blooms write,

> The business of the satirist causes him to reveal human beings in their public roles, and this means that some people are stripped of jealously guarded privacy, that they are exposed in actions generally withheld from polite observation. The satirist becomes a leveler with a prerogative to exploit even man's physiological needs – excretory or sexual – until he is reduced "to a bodily democracy paralleling the democracy of death in the *danse macabre*." Obscenity in this context warns us that we often seem no better than our fellow naked apes, unclean, lecherous, brutal. (1979:157. The quote about "bodily democracy" is from Frye [in Paulson, 1971:244–45])

The satirist would, however, probably side with Bakhtin's claim (1968:19–21, *passim*) that degradation is not a negative but positive process – a regenerative pro-

cess. Mary Randolphe writes, 'paradoxically, in the very act of presenting the negative or destructive side of human behaviour the satirist is establishing a positive foundation on which he can base his specific recommendation to virtue' (in Paulson, 1971*a*:175). With this prime elucidation of the way satire encourages virtue through displaying vice, we return to the junction where satire and the Grotesque meet: the issue of deliverance. And what we can see is that satirists portray the condition of being abject (in my terms) to abject those wallowing in abjection (vice), and so redeem those among their audience willing to tow the satire's high moral line by reaffirming their blameless, well-(em)placed ethical reason.

The grotesque, obscene, rhyparographic, ominous aspects of the world are both the cause of anxiety and the means to alleviate anxiety. It is a mudbath theory: to clean off, bathe in liquid dirt. But only to affirm that dirt is precisely what you *don't* want. The satirist's receiver must look placeless matter in the face and personally decide whether to mock it into the repressed (abject it) or submit to it and become its fool (become abject). To encourage the desired response – the abjecting one – the satirist makes this matter as hideous and undesirable as possible[53]. This dialectic, in which the Grotesque is both the threat and the means to control it, I will relate directly to abjection and laughter in the final section of Chapter Two.

I can now sum up what has emerged over the course of this chapter: the Grotesque, in depicting the anti-social body whose condition is abject (cast down), gives those well placed in society an object to abject (cast out) and thereby secure provisional release from the threat with which the cast-down sectors of society men-

[53] In her impressive book on fantasy Rosemary Jackson uses Tolkein to demonstrate precisely the point I am making here: 'Tolkein's orcs, the dark hairy creatures of *The Lord of the Rings*, are imaged as repulsively sensual, as embodiments of absolute evil, whereas for Blake they are instruments of revolution' (1981:156). The orcs of satirists are always "embodiments of evil", threats and monsters; their boundary-breaking energy is a force that must be, if not destroyed, at least contained and tamed. By making them as obscene and grotesque – therefore as repulsive and anti-social – as possible, the satirist has a better chance of reaching this goal. In due course it will become apparent that Goya's approach to his subject matter in his graphic series is manifestly satirical in this regard. His objects of attack are almost always orcs, and his objective is almost always their pacification.

ace them – the threat of losing their identity in a limitless mass of placeless matter. This release is secured on the basis of classifying matter. Another way of understanding this is in terms of Thomson's familiar/unfamiliar dialectic: matter in place, classified matter, is familiar, and even when one encounters it in an excessive form (in a highly scatological novel or film, for example), it presents only a minor, slightly ambivalent, anxiety which one can laugh off. Unclassified matter, however, is completely unfamiliar, lacking in points of reference, not tabulated, and is therefore illimitable. It causes terror. Again, it is up to the consumer – the reader or viewer – to classify the matter. It is his or her choice that will put the threatening grotesque body in a genus – that of impurity and dirt – and so bring it under control.

In the next section I recall Goya's *Los Caprichos* advertisement to link the Grotesque to dreams and the unconscious, so as to explain more fully why matter out of place should be so threatening. Then, in the following, and final, section of this chapter, I lay the bridge that will take the discussion from the Grotesque to abjection theory.

IV. Goya's Advertisement for *Los Caprichos*, Continued

> As most of the objects represented in this work are ideals, it will not be foolhardy to believe that their defects will find, perhaps, many pardons among the intelligent, considering that the author has neither followed the examples of another, nor been able to copy much from nature. And if the imitation is as difficult as admirable when successful, he who has stood aside from nature will not fail to merit some esteem, having had to expose to the eyes forms and attitudes that have only existed until now in the human mind, obscured and confused for the lack of illustration or excited with uncontrolled passions.
>
> It would suppose too much ignorance in the fine arts to advertise to the public that in none of the compositions that form this collection has the author proposed to ridicule the particular defects of one or another individual: that would in truth restrict the limits of talent too much and mistake the way in which one uses the arts of imitation to produce perfect works.
>
> Painting (like poetry) selects from the universal that which it judges most appropriate for its ends: unites in a single fantastic personage circumstances and characters that nature presents distributed in many, and from this ingeniously arranged combination results that happy imitation by which a good artificer acquires the title of inventor and not of servile copyist.

I want to concentrate now on the second reason Goya offers for producing *Los*

Caprichos: the exercise of *fantasía*. Like its English equivalent, the Spanish noun *fantasía*[54] can be variously interpreted; but Goya evidently employs it in the sense of *fancy* – the licence his subject matter grants him to exercise his imagination. He takes pride in his possession of an imagination that can create images that have no counterparts in nature and which have not existed previously except "in the human mind", implying that this sets him apart from other artists who, as mere reproducers of nature, cannot qualify as anything more than "servile copyists".

To protect his brazenly unnatural, invented forms from the ridicule of a public schooled in mimesis, Goya builds an *apologia*[55] into his text – the cunning suggestion that the "intelligent" will not find his images defective because they ought to understand the problems he had to counteract, not being able to copy from nature or borrow from previous artists. In other words, only the *un*intelligent will fail to understand and excuse the "defects" in his prints, and they, after all, are not to be judged critical members of society.

But there is more to this issue of invention than artistic licence, pride or capacity. In the last paragraph of his advertisement, Goya describes painting as a selective process subservient to the ends envisioned by the painter: an important point since it is this that distinguishes the "inventor" from the "servile copyist"[56]. Goya's

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54 I briefly elucidate this term as an aesthetic category below.

55 Satirists use *apologias* to demonstrate that they are not as high and mighty as their work would suggest, and to explain why they are writing what they are writing, thereby providing beforehand a justification for the invective to follow. See Bloom & Bloom, 1979:85–90; and Elliott, 1972:113–15, 230–31, 265–66. Goya's need to shift the locus of belief away from himself onto his viewers (so that they, not him, become responsible for the correct reception of the work) is a different matter, but it illustrates equally well the precariousness of the satirist – while in danger of offending the object of attack, s/he must also guard against disbelief in his or her transports of "fantasy".

56 The separation between "inventor" and "servile copyist", although not unique to the period (see Kris and Gombrich, 1974:198–99, who argue that the quest to 'assert the priority of imagination over slavish imitation' [199] began in the sixteenth century), was nonetheless intensified in the Romantic era. According to Hugh Honour, in his book Romanticism, the imaginative came more to the fore

> as the qualities of wild scenery came to be more sensitively appreciated and, especially,

use of the words "invented" and "inventor" shows that he regarded the art of selecting from "the universal" (to assemble new inventions unique to the artist's production) as more significant than that of merely copying nature. Now, in Goya's time there were five aesthetic categories within the ambit of which the artist was permitted to exercise his imagination: *capricho, sueño, fantasía, disparate* and *grotesco*[57]. Of *grotesco*, which I raised in my earlier tour through the development of the Grotesque in Spain, nothing more need be said for now; and as for *disparate*, this I will treat in Part Four. That leaves three terms, which I will briefly consider.

Probably the least investigated of these terms is *fantasía*. Schulz, who derives his information from the *Diccionario de la Lengua Castellana*, suggests that the term was synonymous with *capricho* (1996:140–41). Ilie, in his glossary of eighteenth-century uses of the word (1976*b*:241), firmly distinguishes the two terms, although in his article on the Grotesque he notes that both formed part of a 'countermode' that gained in prominence 'as concepts of imagination liberate[d] the artist and his subjective impulse to create without regard to rational precepts' (1976*a*:194; cf. my footnote 57). I think if one conceives of *fantasía* as a utilisation of the imagination for predominantly – or at least manifestly – fanciful ends, one has a fair sense of

> as the words *wild, improbable, false* and *fanciful* were opposed not to *civilized, historical, true* and *logical* so much as to *constrained, superficially apparent, dogmatic* and *unimaginative* . . . (1986:24)

The opposed sets ("wild, improbable, false and fanciful" vs "constrained, superficially apparent, dogmatic and unimaginative") are precisely crystallised in Goya's terms "inventor" and "servile copyist".

57 These formed part of what Ilie calls the 'the phenomenology of irrational expression' (1976*a*:194) in eighteenth-century Spanish culture, and while they were not considered mainstream, they were allowed, not persecuted, because their evident embracing of unreason would have made them almost decorative to the enlightened upper classes, therefore no threat to bourgeois values. On the other hand, their embracing of the irrational and supernatural may well have made them objects of anxiety for the lower classes, who were still superstitious, and in this sense they might have been tolerated as objects that the ruling class could use to keep the lower classes subservient to, for example, the Church. Whatever the politics, such forms of imaginative expression were allowed, chiefly because they did not, on the surface, pretend to be anything more than fantastical. They were also allowed, of course, because they helped to set the limits of mimetic painting, creating a category of excess against which Neo-classical painters could judge their own artmaking.

what the word implied in Goya's time.

In contrast to *fantasía,* the term *capricho* has been the subject of quite extensive study, most notably by Paul Ilie ('*Capricho/Caprichoso*: A Glossary of Eighteenth-Century Usages', 1976*b*) and John Dowling ('*Capricho* as Style in Life, Literature and Art from Zamora to Goya', 1977). Ilie's contribution is a compilation of several quotations from various eighteenth-century Spanish texts which mention the word. He lists these usages under six headings, in which *capricho* is defined as (1) "an aspect of the psychology of creative activity", (2) "a concept governing design", (3) "an aesthetic quality of art", (4) "a synonym for general irrationality and extravagance", (5) "whim, fancy, quirk", (6) "emotional tonality" (1976*b*:242–43). Ilie lists Goya's advertisement under the fifth category, linking Goya's use of the adjective "caprichosos" (capricious) to the 'irrational and extravagant' (252)[58]. The fact that this listing fails to exhaust the possible implications of Goya's usage brings out the problem in Ilie's glossary as a whole: in his effort to be overly precise, he restricts meaning. Most of his categories are too open to contain the word *capricho* with any rigour; each defining characteristic has the potential to fold in on the other. What seem, to Ilie, to be distinctions are, to my mind, no more than subtle shifts in the deployment of the word. Moreover, despite all the usages he gathers, one still has the sense that the full r[illegible]e of the term is broader and more ductile than a glossary could allow[59].

[58] For the sake of throwing a [illegible]nner in the works, it should be pointed out that the use of the word *capricho,* in its various forms, was not uncommon in newspaper advertisements generally. Edith Helman notes in her article '*Caprichos* and *Monstruos* of Cadalso and Goya' that advertisements for *costumbrista* prints sometimes made use of the word (1958:202–3*n*.6). In the light of this, one might even surmise that the adjective 'caprichosos' was added by the *Gaceta de Madrid* in a bid to help Madrid citizens understand what kind of prints were being offered for sale. *Costumbrista* prints were highly popular in Goya's day, since they were concerned with everyday subjects and people, the *majos, majas, petimetres* and *petimetras* that intoxicated even Queen Maria Luisa; some even toyed with world-upside-down subjects and invited purchasers to hybridise forms (see Askew, 1988:82–92, for a useful discussion of *costumbrista* prints). Such prints can almost certainly be counted among the influences that helped Goya to shape his *Caprichos.*

[59] Ilie also impedes his own cause by trying too hard to distinguish *capricho* from *fantasía* –

For Dowling the matter is simpler and comes down to this: 'the *capricho* style . . . makes use of odd or antic elements which usurp a significant, sometimes even central, place in a work of art' (1977:433). Thus it relates to a concept of supplementarity and marginality such as we have already encountered in the Grotesque, and refers to collateral elements in an image which have the power to withdraw the viewer's interest from those aspects that should be central. In this sense it is subversive, but in the same playful manner as grotesque ornament. It is a [illegible], a presence that undermines while still existing within normative confines – a licensed excess. Whether this helps us understand Goya's use of the term *capricho* is debatable, since the capricious in his etchings *is* central. Certainly one could say that the density and believability of his fantastical world draws attention away from his satirical purpose[60], a displacement that probably comes from a mixture of design and accident[61]. To more fully understand Goya's use of *capricho* one has to look at

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he is harsh in his treatment of Edith Helman's efforts to link the two terms (1976*b*:241) – and by shrugging off possible connections between *capricho* and grotesque (240). Simply because Ilie did not find precise evidence of such links in the literature he used to compile the glossary cannot discount the possibility that these terms were closely related in the minds of eighteenth-century writers and artists.

60 Cf. Charles Baudelaire's famous comment on Goya's *Caprichos*:

> The chief merit of Goya lies in his ability to create credible monstrosities. His monsters are viable, harmoniously proportioned. No one has dared to go further than he in the direction of grotesque reality. All these contortions, bestial faces, and diabolical grimaces, are profoundly human. Even from the technical point of view of natural history, it would be hard to fault them, every inch of them is so well-knit and so carefully integrated into the whole. In a word, it is difficult to say precisely at what point reality and fantasy are knitted together and joined. (Cited and translated in Glendinning, 1977:295)

This point can be reconfigured thus: in many of Goya's prints his depiction of the *condition to be abject* overwhelms his satirical *operation to abject*. Instead of banishing his witches, for example, we stand and allow ourselves to be fascinated by them. Riveted more by what they are than by what Goya intended them to do, we do not act against them. Resubmitting claims I made earlier on the basis of my reading of Thomson, one might even feel that *they* banish *us*. Goya's text – his satirical message – is here jeopardised by the truth effect of the image: its ability to persuade, to take the viewer in and make him or her believe in the existence of monsters, witches and goblins. In the process the image's power to disturb, the impact of its Grotesque language, must increase, with a concomitant increase of fascination or anxiety in the viewer.

61 Here I make deliberate reference to the psychoanalytic concept of "displacement". Dis-

his *Caprichos*. Suffice it to say that the category of the *capricho* gave Goya a framework within which to develop an artistic project that combined social comment and imagination.

Sueño is similar to *fantasía* in that it refers primarily to a state of mind: *sueño* means 'dream'. Dreams have long been used as allegorical devices, and Goya, as he worked on the preparatory studies for the etching series he originally intended to

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placement is one among three functions of what Freud calls the "dream-work" – the process whereby dreams transform latent dream-thoughts into the manifest content of the dream (for definitions of the terms "latent dream-thoughts" and "manifest dream-content" see Freud, 1991*a*, chapter six and *passim*; also see Freud, 1976:143–56, 204–18) – namely: (1) condensation, in which latent material is condensed into singular unified images and dream passages (see Freud, 1991*a*:383–413; 1976:205–7); (2) representation, the process whereby mental activity such as thought is converted into dream images (see Freud, 1991*a*:420–53; 1976:209–12); and (3) displacement, in which latent material is displaced to different and unexpected parts of the manifest dream (see Freud, 1991*a*:414–19; 1976:208–9). Condensation is a principle of combination and fusion, representation one of conversion, displacement one of (de)centring and shifting. All these functions of the dream-work, understood outside the dream context as structures of mental functioning that have the potential to emerge even during consciousness to influence the way one composes images, can be perceived in Goya's etchings. Here I will concern myself only with displacement, which the following quote from Freud's Introductory Lectures puts in perspective:

> [Displacement] manifests itself in two ways: in the first, a latent element is replaced not by a component part of itself but by something more remote – that is, by an allusion; and in the second, the physical accent is shifted from an important element on to another which is unimportant, so that the dream appears differently centred and strange. (1976:208)

Displacement thus emerges as a means whereby latent elements of a dream are manifested by association and allusion, i.e., not literally. It also emerges as a process of alienation: that which is displaced is removed further and further from its original content. Increasing alienation can lead to a detachment from the content, and it is therefore no surprise that displacement is a term that has also been used in examinations of obsessional neurosis, where it appears as a form of defence. Defence against the material itself, but also against censorship, that is, repression. In Écrits, Lacan writes that displacement is 'the most appropriate means used by the unconscious to foil censorship' (1977:160). By displacing manifest content onto a set of allusions that appear unrelated to the dream-thoughts, the unconscious can, so to speak, slip otherwise repressed material into the mind via a back door.

Displacements of various kinds can be found in Goya's etchings in three respects: (1) an unintentional displacement of the satirical message into the background by the blanketing cohesion of the image; (2) an intentional displacement of the satirical message into the register of connotation by setting the image in a fantasy setting, thereby foiling external forms of censorship: not necessarily the Inquisitional threat some scholars claim he had to be conscious of, but certainly that of libel (were some public figures to think he had ridiculed them), and also, to a lesser extent, the ever-present limitations enforced on his subject matter by society's category of right and proper, permissible and impermissible; (3) an unconscious use of satire and the Grotesque to displace the latent content of his repressed self onto images – that is, bypassing the censoring conscious in the process, to relocate unconscious tension from his psyche to outside objects. Of these three forms of displacement only the third one is strictly psychoanalytic, and is therefore to be treated as speculative.

call *Sueños* (and which subsequently became *Los Caprichos*), had both the recent *Visiones y Visitas de Torres con Don Francisco de Quevedo por la Corte* (1727–1728) by the satirist Torres Villarroel and the earlier *Sueños* of Francisco de Quevedo (reprinted in 1791) to draw on[62]. The authors of these works used dreams to camouflage satirical enterprises. Dreams, being unreal nocturnal phenomena by definition, allowed such authors, as Sayre claims in her article on Goya's drawings, to 'indict with impunity various evils which had found indulgence or official protection in their society' (1964: 23).

The categories I have discussed above all gave Goya a loophole in the façade of what was otherwise a close-bricked art establishment that upheld nature and the ancients as the supreme models for artists. Excess, fancy, imagination and caprice were not favoured, but, so long as they conformed to a classifiable category of production, they were permitted. Goya – or the editors of the *Diario de Madrid* – used words like "caprichosos" and "fantasía" in the advertisement because these words clearly established the context within which the work was to be received. Viewers lacking a sense of irony and naïve to cloaked messages would simply have taken the images to be dreams and irrationalities, meaningless baubles. Those in the know would have seen the use of fantasy for what it was: a means of displacing the actual satirical and censuring content of the etchings into the background.

In the remainder of this section I will show that a capricious context gave Goya licence to (re)invent a traditional principle – that of selection and combination.

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62 For a useful discussion of the similarities and differences between Goya's *Caprichos* and Quevedo's *Sueños*, see López-Rey, 1970:99–101.

1. *"A single fantastic personage"*

In his advertisement Goya writes,

> Painting (like poetry) selects from the universal that which it judges most appropriate for its ends: unites in a single fantastic personage circumstances and characters that nature presents distributed in many, and from this ingeniously arranged combination results that happy imitation by which a good artificer acquires the title of inventor and not of servile copyist.

The concept of selection in the fine arts was a common and highly valued one in eighteenth-century Spain. In his *Reflections on the Beauty and Taste in Painting*, Anton Raphael Mengs, the Neo-classical first painter to King Carlos III, writes:

> In its productions, Nature is subject . . . to many accidents. Art works freely, using entirely flexible materials that offer no resistance. Painting can select the most beautiful of all Nature's spectacles, gathering and joining parts from different places and the beauty of different people. On the contrary, in forming man Nature is forced to take materials solely from the parents, and to accommodate all accidents; for this reason it can easily happen that painted men are more beautiful than real ones[63].

Here the artist uses selection to improve nature and install a vision of the world in which ideal beauty holds sway – the familiar goal of Neo-classicism. Other theorists of the period expressed congenerous sentiments (see Schulz, 1996:126-36). Selection in this case was constrained by a mimetic project; when it was not, when it simply combined disparate elements and created impossible "false" figures, it was spurned, *à la* Vitruvius, by most leading theorists[64].

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[63] The original text, which I have borrowed from Schulz (1996:125-26), reads:

> La Naturaleza en sus producciones está sujeta . . . á muchos accidentes. El Arte obra libremente sirviendose de materiales enteramente flexibles, y que no hacen resistencia alguna. La Pintura puede escoger lo mas hermoso de todo el espectáculo de la Naturaleza, recogiendo y juntando las partes de diversos lugares, y las bellezas de distintas personas. La Naturaleza al contrario, para la formacion del hombre está precisada á tomar la materia solamente de los padres, y á acomodarse con todos los accidentes; y por esto con facilidad puede suceder que los hombres pintados sean mas bellos que los verdaderos.

[64] Capmany, for example, whose "complaint", according to Ilie, 'was not against imaginative activity altogether, only against the failure to distinguish between "la bella imaginación siempre natural" [the fine imagination always true to nature] and "la falsa, la que amontona cosas incompatibles" [the false, which shelters incompatible things]' (1976*a*:196). Like Vitruvius, Capmany simply cannot accept that "incompatible things" can be "sheltered" together. Unnatural combination is thus again seen as simply creating falsehoods.

Now, although Goya's sentiments in the advertisement clearly follow the Neo-classical dictum of Mengs, the selective process he adopts in *Los Caprichos* is of a different order – signposted by the adjective "fantastic". If we now recall Ruskin's claim 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) – a description, one can now see, of a combinatory process – and then turn to a crucial passage in Paulson's Representations of Revolution, a thread I have been running ever since I noted Vitruvius's discomfort with the Roman decorative style's principle of amalgamation, will finally form a workable pattern:

> When [Goya] claims that "the majority of the objects represented in [*Los Caprichos*] are ideal," he is parodying the platonic "ideal" as perfection and a striving toward the "Idea." *His* prints are "ideal" in the sense that they have "so far existed only in the human mind, obscured and confused by lack of precedence." The traditional association of the "ideal" with the beautiful is no longer valid, whether politically, historically, or aesthetically.
>
> Thus the *Caprichos*, as "invention" and not as the work of an "artist copier," are unbounded by the traditional provinces of poetry and painting. The grotesque is therefore the appropriate mode into which he launches his art. The old meaning of grotesque, "visual elements compounded artificially but patterned on the natural world," remained. The French sense of the word, however, with the synonyms *ridicule, bizarre,* and *extravagant,* was also current, and by the mid-century Spanish writers were joining the idea of a strange hybrid with the aim to ridicule . . . [T]he grotesque could function as satire. (1983:330–31)

In his brief delimitation of the Spanish grotesque Paulson incorporates all those aspects of it I listed earlier, presumably because his primary source, like mine, appears to have been Ilie. This leads him to (1) associate Goya's act of selection with the hybridising and agglomerating principle of the Grotesque, (2) point out that by Goya's time the Grotesque had melded several meanings to become a "strange hybrid" itself, and (3) claim a satirical purpose for the Grotesque. Goya's "single fantastic personage" is the quintessence of the satirical Grotesque: a hybrid creature fashioned according to the artist's powers of selection. To reconfigure according to my terms, this polygener is, in fact, the mutation generated by the meeting of the abjecting principle of satire and the abject condition represented by the Grotesque: a

familiar and unfamiliar figure that must be mocked and ridiculed if it is not, itself, to mock and ridicule. The selective principle that creates this unstable, yet-to-be-classified matter (because it is only classified in the site of its 'consumption', by the viewer) is no longer a principle of beauty or imitation, but one of caricature: the artist chooses those elements of natural deformation that will best convey his satirical design, then combines them into a single figure, which (1) condenses the full complexity of his comment and censure, and (2) calls on the viewer to define and so tame the hybrid and all that it represents.

I choose the word "condenses" advisedly: it leads me to the final point I want to make here, that the Grotesque as a mode of expression derives its *modus operandi* from the condensing processes of dreams, i.e., the metaphorical functioning of the unconscious[65].

Kris and Gombrich, who believe that the growth of the Grotesque reflects the increasing freedom of artists from the sixteenth century on, have noted the following: '[t]he affinity of [grotesque] creations with the dream was recognized. "He who wants to create dreamwork," says Albrecht Dürer, "must make a mixture of all things"' (1974:199). The two scholars, psychoanalyst and art historian – a marvellous hybrid combination in its own right – believe that dreams and the creative play of grotesque ornament share a principle, that of mixture.

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[65] By the word "dreams" I am referring strictly to mental processes that occur during sleep (i.e., not day-dreams, fantasies, etc.; although these do, of course, display some of the characteristics of unconscious dreams). Freud's work on dreams in The Interpretation of Dreams (1991*a*) and Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1976) remains the most important psychoanalytical examination of dreams, and it is from him, unless otherwise specified, that I draw the terminology for this discussion. Condensation, as noted earlier, is one of the functions of the dream-work.

My phrase "the metaphorical functioning of the unconscious" is derived from Lacan's remodelling of Freud's dream-work terms. In his Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1993:221, Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis, 1994:XXVIII, 247, and Écrits, 1977:160, Lacan conceives of displacement as the metonymic and condensation as the metaphoric function of the unconscious. Displacement is luxative, fissile, mobile; it depends on a relation between two separate units. Condensation is unifying, combinatory and amalgamating: separate units come together to express their meaning, as opposed to creating meaning in relation to another, external unit.

Schulz reaches the same conclusion:

> the grotesque depiction of the human figure in *Los Caprichos* is analogous to dream imagery, a connection made plain in the Renaissance description of grotesque decoration as *sogni dei pittori*. Indeed, the strange and impossible combinations that occur in dreams provide a paradigm for the joining of disparate elements in the grotesque, suggesting how deeply rooted such imagery is in the human psyche. (1996:174–75)

What these writers do not pick up on is the fact that in Freudian dream terminology the word that covers the ability of the unconscious to combine, mix, agglomerate and reformulate objects and people into a "single fantastic personage" is condensation. In Lecture eleven of his Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis Freud describes the results of condensation in the following manner:

> You will have no difficulty in recalling instances from your own dreams of different people being condensed into a single one. A composite figure of this kind may look like A perhaps, but may be dressed like B, may do something that we remember C doing, and at the same time we know that he is D. This composite structure is of course emphasizing something that the four people have in common. It is possible, naturally, to make a composite structure out of things or places in the same way as out of people . . . The process is like constructing a new and transitory concept which has this common element as its nucleus. (1976:205–6)

Not surprisingly, a little further on in the lecture Freud himself bridges the gap between condensation and the workings of the imagination:

> It is true that counterparts to the construction of these composite figures are to be found in some creations of our imagination, which is ready to combine into a unity components of things that do not belong together in our experience – in the centaurs, for instance, and the fabulous beasts which appear in ancient mythology . . . (206)

He adds, '[t]he "creative" imagination, indeed, is quite incapable of *inventing* anything; it can only combine components that are strange to one another' (206–7). Freud may not use the word grotesque, but his concept of combination is directly applicable to the intermixture that has emerged as a core characteristic of the Grotesque[66], and it adequately explains Goya's own synthetic process of invention.

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66 Incidentally, there is nothing exactly radical about my connection between condensation and art, nor between combined figures and the Grotesque. John Walker, in his 1983 article 'Dream-work and Art-work', takes a comprehensive look at the way art processes reflect dream processes. The following point about caricature is particularly apt: 'Pictorial equi-

This is not to claim that the Grotesque is solely explicable within the bounds of unconscious processes, but it seems to me that our understanding of the roots of representational hybridity is extended and enriched by relating it to the psychoanalytic concept of dream-work. If we shift our understanding in this direction it becomes easier to accept that the Grotesque as an artistic mode is closely bound to both the operations and contents of the unconscious. It uses similar processes of allusion, metaphor, metonymy and combination, and has the potential to image objects, non-objects, environments and situations not normally depicted in, i.e., repressed from, hegemonic forms of representation.

Goya even allows, as far as his own grotesque is concerned, for such a connection between image and unconscious, for, as he claims in his advertisement, his *Caprichos* "expose to the eyes forms and attitudes that have only existed until now in the human mind, obscured and confused for the lack of illustration or excited with uncontrolled passions". Can we not find in this, even if only emblematically, a description of unconscious "forms and attitudes" and repressed "passions"?

In the course of this chapter I have argued that the Grotesque is (1) the mode that depicts the condition of *being* abject, and is used in satire *to abject* members of society whom the satirist considers to be undesirable; (2) characterised by a principle of free selection and fanciful synthesis (often resulting in impossible conjunctions of real flora and fauna and monstrous creatures) which finds its vertex in the "fantastic personage" of the grotesque body, a potentially unstable conglomerate of unclassifiable matter; (3) that it is mutable and can quickly invert from something familiar to something unfamiliar, even terrifying, depending on how the viewer receives and classifies it; (4) that it is capable of inducing satirical, mocking laughter, which functions to abject, and of making the viewer feel that s/he is being laughed

valents to collective figures are commonly found in caricatures . . . [they] are disturbing because the creatures produced by the work of condensation are grotesque hybrids in which the head is that of a human being while the body is that of an animal' (110).

at, made abject, by either the protagonists in the image or by the artist; (5) that it is motile and capable of shifting between the extremes of low (configured as a place of degradation, alienation and filth) and high (configured as a place where classification is complete, incontrovertible, and all anxiety is eschewed) in a curious relationship where to temporarily spare oneself from the terror of losing one's own identity one must confront, dip into, the place of degradation and unclassified, limitless matter; and (6) that it is irrational, irregular, anti-Reason, anti-mimesis, therefore subterranean and suppressed or at least marginal to a predominantly mimetic enterprise that allowed it a place in the establishment only so that it could serve as an example to mimetic artists of what not to do with the imagination, and only if it was couched in categories that were deliberately, even theatrically, artificial or otherworldly (e.g., dreams – themselves considered irrational and dependent on the absence of consciousness).

Now it is time to look more closely at Ruskin's conception of the Grotesque as something that emerges in the "gaps", for, as Lacan has claimed (1994), the unconscious also emerges through gaps, and so, therefore, would unconscious material.

The abject, for example.

V. Grotesque to Abject

> 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, and of which the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character. (Ruskin, 1907:91)

> Much in Goya's etchings is caricatural, satiric, or topical, but none of these categories provides a fully satisfactory explanation. These etchings contain distinctly ominous, nocturnal, and abysmal features that frighten and puzzle us and make us feel as if the ground beneath our feet were about to give way. (Kayser, 1963:18)

These quotes suggest that when a reader/viewer encounters the Grotesque, s/he feels that the ground weakens beneath his or her feet, creating if not a hermeneutic gap at least a zone of precariousness and uncertainty. The result, according to Harp-

ham, is that 'Grotesqueries confront us as a corrupt or fragmented text in search of a master principle' (1982:43)[67]. He adds: 'Looking at ourselves looking at the grotesque, we can observe our own projections, catching ourselves, as it were, in the act of perception' (43). Recalling Kayser's point that the Grotesque feels estranged because it takes us by surprise, I could sum up by proposing that the mode startles viewers out of their complacency and makes them aware of their own agency in making the perceived object(s) signify. McElroy, for one, is dissatisfied with this understanding of the Grotesque since, he claims, 'it has little to do with the immediacy of our response to [for example] one of Bosch's hell-scapes' (1989:8). "Immediacy" is a strong noun, but not strong enough to stand alone in this context – one might easily argue that what accounts for this "immediacy" is precisely the lack of a "master principle" or a direct reference to physical reality. As I have already argued, the Grotesque offers images of matter out of place, and as such presents the viewer with something that has to be defined, named and put in a known category. In my hypothesis, then, the Grotesque is indeterminate by definition, and will remain so until the interpreting subject (re)cognises and classifies it.

Generally speaking, the Grotesque offers narratives of the unfamiliar, but always with a purpose, and never without a degree of familiarity. The Grotesque works by veiling a familiar message and familiar worlds beneath an artificially-compounded iconography and a particular range of forms. Only if the interpreting subject finds the familiar within the unfamiliar can s/he overcome the Grotesque's indeterminacy and root back into the known. I have already argued that this re-rooting occurs through an act of classification, naming. But what happens when the interpreting subject faces something that s/he simply cannot recognise or classify, or something that, even after it has been named, continues to leave gaps in his or her comprehen-

[67] Thomson expresses much the same idea when he states: 'The shock-effect of the grotesque may also be used to bewilder and disorient, to bring the reader up short, jolt him out of accustomed ways of perceiving the world and confront him with a radically different, disturbing perspective' (1972:58).

sion (contemplation of dead bodies would be a classic example of such indeterminacy, since even though we know what death is, it is impossible for the living to understand it: there are no conclusive points of reference to relate it to)?

Ruskin writes: 'the connection is left for the beholder to work out for himself; the gaps, left or overleaped by the haste of the imagination, forming the grotesque character' (1907:91). Ruskin is clear: the beholder is the one who must work out the connections between the symbols the artist has condensed to form a Grotesque image, i.e., s/he is the one who must recognise, decipher, categorise; but after the symbols have been fathomed, gaps still remain which, for him, are the essence of the "grotesque character". To negotiate those gaps, the beholder must either leave them alone or "overleap" them with help from the imagination.

Patricia Spacks, in her article 'Some Reflections on Satire', offers the same choice in dealing with gaping satirical texts:

> The satiric plot . . . does not provide the satisfaction of completion. The reader is left insecure, unanchored . . . To resolve the insecurity, the revealed tension between *is* and *ought*, the reader must take – or plan, imagine, speculate about – action. (In Paulson, 1971:364)

For Spacks it is the *absence of closure* that makes viewers feel *unanchored*, and she understands this as an exhortation, addressed to the reader/viewer, to at least plan, speculate about or – in direct echo of Ruskin – *imagine* means of enforcing completion through action.

Mary Douglas recalls Ruskin's separations even more closely than Spacks. Discussing the ambiguous and the anomalous in cultural systems, Douglas states:

> There are several ways of treating anomalies. Negatively, we can ignore, just not perceive them, or perceiving we can condemn. Positively we can deliberately confront the anomaly and try to create a new pattern of reality in which it has a place. (1984:38)

In a confrontation with the anomalous (thus, by extension, the Grotesque[68])

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68 Susan Stewart indicates the way in which anomalies and ambiguities can express the Grotesque when she claims: 'The anomalous stands between the categories of an existing classification system [while] [t]he ambiguous is that which cannot be defined in terms of any

Douglas allows for three, not two, forms of action: (1) ignore the anomaly – simply avoid confrontation, (2) condemn it (i.e., banish or abject it), or (3) tackle the anomaly head on and attempt to reconfigure it according to one's personal experience[69]. Choice one is the course of least resistance, but also the one least likely to be fruitful in the long term; choice two is the one the satirist expects his audience to make – the one which classifies the anomalous matter and so places it, tames it, defuses it; choice three is the one that overlaps with Ruskin and Spacks. Although Douglas does not use the word imagination, it seems to me that a "new pattern of reality" could easily be an imaginative or fantastical one that does not accord with known reality, especially when one considers that of the five methods she claims 'primitive' cultures use to deal with anomalies (see footnote 69), only one of them (number five) is not avoiding or condemning, and this one involves "ambiguous symbols" used in much the same way as symbols are used in "poetry and mythology" – both which cultural manifestations are dependent on the imagination – to point to other "levels of existence" (i.e., "patterns of reality") that make sense of the anomaly in new, different, but nonetheless fantasised, contexts. In short, it is possible to argue that Douglas also

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given category' (in Harpham, 1982:4). The Grotesque likewise both straddles and evades classificatory paradigms.

[69] Douglas (1984:39–40) lists at least five methods 'primitive' cultures adopt to deal with ambiguous and/or anomalous events: most are condemning and require the exercising of some form of control:

> (1) 'by settling for one or other interpretation, ambiguity is often reduced.' (39)
>
> (2) 'the existence of anomaly can be physically controlled.' (39)
>
> (3) 'a rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform.' (39)
>
> (4) 'anomalous events may be labelled dangerous . . . Attributing danger is one way of putting a subject above dispute.' (1984:40)
>
> (5) 'ambiguous symbols can be used in ritual for the same ends as they are used in poetry and mythology, to enrich meaning or to call attention to other levels of existence.' (40)

Although Douglas writes with "primitive" societies and ritual in mind, all of the above methods of displacing the anomalous are used by so-called 'civilised' or 'modern' cultures as well. While atavistic rituals may not be involved, exclusions and taboos most certainly are, and they conform to the above means of control, both oppressive (2, 3, 4) and sublimating (5).

admits the imagination into processes aimed at placing things that have no immediately recognisable place in visible reality.

An art depicting invented and fantastical forms and situations could provide exactly the kind of "overleap" Ruskin calls for, or the "new pattern of reality" Douglas suggests. When Goya uses fantasy, witches chiefly, to depict '"imaginary gardens with real toads in them"' (Hodgart, 1969:11–12), he is himself creating an unreal place for those aspects of society that strike him as grotesque and anomalous. In doing this he turns something familiar into something sufficiently unfamiliar to place his audience in a precarious situation, one they must now deal with if they are to make sense of the anomaly he has presented. At the same time, one could argue, he finds a place for the things that make him anxious, and so achieves a measure of control over them. In other words, his imagination gives him the power to reconfigure his world, to overleap the grotesque gaps that he either cannot classify or which appear within the process of categorisation.

What Ruskin, Spacks and Douglas – and Goya, for that matter – offer are not means to explain the gaps or anomalies, but ways to deal with them. They offer displacement: a way of putting the anxieties of the gap elsewhere, in a whole new world of the imagination. This begs the question, Why must the gaps be dealt with, overleaped? Why can they not remain open doorways? Because the human mind cannot deal with a vacuum? Because '[t]here is nothing more dangerous than approaching a void' (Lacan, 1993:201)? Because '[a]pocalyptic beasts [will] emerge from the abyss [and] demons intrude upon us' (Kayser, 1963:185)?

If the answer to these questions is yes, one returns to the prefatory question, Why? The answer I want to pose is this: just as there is no such thing as a vacuum in nature or any element of nature – where one system fails, another takes over (where a depression forms, pressure exits from an area of high concentration to fill the area of low concentration; after blood clots on a wound a scab forms; at death the body decays) – so there is no such thing as a vacuum in mental functioning.

Hence: where the conscious fades the unconscious emerges.

The gaps are only gaps for so long. If the viewer/reader does not instate a conscious process (of avoidance, classification, or of the imagination) to reduce the indeterminacy, the unconscious itself will fill the gap. And with it will come "non-things" – *non-objects* – that cannot be recognised or understood by the conscious, these creating the ambiguity, polymorphism, indeterminacy, limitlessness, unreason, irrationality, unease, anxiety, and even terror characteristic of the state of mind ushered in by the Grotesque.

Harpham – even in his apparently unrecognised link between gaps and the unconscious – accords with this perspective in the following important passage:

> The anthropologist Edmund Leach . . . argues that the physical and social environment of a young child does not contain any intrinsically separate "things" but is perceived as a seamless fabric, a flow. With training the child develops and imposes on the world a discriminatory grid that isolates a large number of separate things, each with its own name. Inevitably, the grid fails to account for or identify a certain segment of reality, which therefore appears as a series of "non-things." Our suppression of the objects in the interstices of consciousness takes the form of taboo, so that the sacred flourishes only in the gaps, where we find incarnate deities, virgin mothers, supernatural monsters that are half-man and half-beast [. . .] Primitives worship the taboo, but modern secular adults are so indebted to and dependent upon their discriminatory grids that they find the taboo mostly a source of anxiety, horror, astonishment, laughter, or revulsion. Witness, for example, our strong but ambivalent feelings toward those exudations of the human body that mediate between self and non-self, the magical outcast ingredients of witch's brews such as feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, nail parings, and spittle. (1982:4)

This is a particularly dense passage for close reading, as it encapsulates much of what my thesis has explored so far, and prefigures what is yet to come.

One can find parallels for Leach's concept of the child's initial inability to distinguish itself from the things in its environment in the psychoanalysis of Freud and several analysts that have followed him (including Melanie Klein and Julia Kristeva); furthermore, the idea of nameable categories that enable the infant to emerge from a "seamless" world of "flow" into one controlled by identifications and names (i.e., language) is mirrored and taken further in the psychoanalytic system of Jacques

Lacan[70], to which I want to pay some attention now.

Lacan gathers language, nomination and symbolism under the all-important concept of the Symbolic – a concept he arrived at via a combination of influences, including Saussure and Lévi-Strauss[71]. The Symbolic order is coterminous with, even synonymous for, the linguistic structures that regulate society, and for the law that underlies societal functioning, determining what is permissible and impermissible for the subject. It is articulated and administered through symbolism, in its broadest sense: the fact that humanity orders the visible world through words. In Lacan's Seminar, Book III we read:

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70 Leach makes no reference to psychoanalytic theory; his influences are primarily anthropological: Lévi-Strauss, Douglas and Radcliffe-Brown (see Leach in Lessa and Vogt, 1979: 157). Anthropology has for many years, however, turned to psychoanalysis for fresh perspectives, and vice versa, so it is no surprise that similar conceptions of the human subject have arisen in either discourse.

71 Lacan was indebted to Saussure's linguistic theory that signifiers (words, symbols) have no intrinsic connection to their signifieds (in visible reality). While Saussure's influence was important for a range of ideas, including Lacan's complex theorisation of desire, Lacan's debt to Lévi-Strauss was probably larger than his debt to Saussure. A reading of two seminal essays in Lévi-Strauss's Structural Anthropology – 'Language and the Analysis of Social Laws' (1968:55–66) and 'The Effectiveness of Symbols' (1968:186–205) – published at a formative stage in Lacan's thinking, appear to have determined the psychoanalyst's conception of the unconscious as a language (see the introduction to Muller and Richardson, 1994:6–10, for a brief discussion of these two essays and how they may have influenced Lacan). Lévi-Strauss's impression of language as a process that occurs as if without the involvement of the subject is clearly present in the following passage from Lacan's Seminar, Book II:

> There is a symbolic circuit external to the subject, tied to a certain group of supports, of human agents, in which the subject . . . is indeterminately included . . . A certain exchange of relations, both external and internal, takes place which has to be represented as a speech that is recited. With a recording machine, one could isolate it, preserve it. For the most part, it escapes the subject, who doesn't possess the recording machines in question, and continues, comes back, always ready to re-enter the dance of the inner speech. (1988*b*:98)

Beyond this, Lévi-Strauss's extensive investigations of marriage rules, kinship structures, incest taboos and the interface between symbolic exchange and systems of order also had a marked influence on Lacan. As an example, the relationship in which subjects are argued by Lacan to stand to speech – a relationship in which subjects are circulated with and as signifiers – is reminiscent of Lévi-Strauss's work around the symbolic exchange of women. 'Now,' Lacan says in his Seminar (Book II), 'Lévi-Strauss shows that, in the structure of alliance, the woman is the exchange object, just as speech, which is in effect the original object of exchange, is.' (1988*b*:261; see also The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 1994:150. I should add that Lacan gives Lévi-Strauss's ideas a fair amount of attention in book two of his Seminar: 1988*b*:27–30, 32–35, 52, 189; also see Seminar, Book VII, 1992:75–76, and Écrits, 1977:73)

> it seems that the symbolic is what yields us the entire world system. It's because man has words that he has knowledge of things. And the number of things he has knowledge of corresponds to the number of things he is able to name. (1993:177)

What is known is what is classified, and the Symbolic order is the sum total of these lists and tables of named "things". The order, we learn elsewhere, is not dependent on "man" for its existence; indeed, for Lacan, the opposite is true: 'the symbolic is what is most elevated in man and what isn't in man, but elsewhere' (1988*b*:116). And in book one of the Seminar one finds the following:

> All human beings share in the universe of symbols. They are included in it and submit to it, much more than they constitute it. They are much more its supports than its agents. (1988*a*:157)

Lacan grants subjects a stake in the constitution of the Symbolic, but views them essentially as its vassals – the servants of a master who is "elsewhere"[72].

To return to Leach and Harpham: the "discriminatory grid" of which they write can be understood as Lacan's Symbolic. But at this point of intersection, Leach drifts out of the picture; only Harpham and Lacan continue to share, at least in part, a joint perspective. Their commonality turns around the issue of what fails to fit the discriminatory grid and therefore appears as a "non-thing". Lacan does not use this Harphamian term[73], but I briefly want to indicate how he suggests or approaches it in his discourse on lack and desire.

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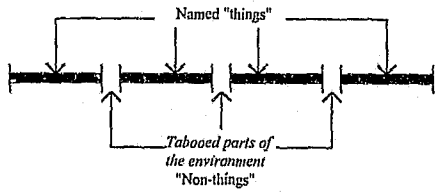
[72] Virtually the same view is expressed by Stallybrass and White, neither of whom, I suspect, would claim to be disciples of Lacan:

> Traversed by regulative forces quite beyond its conscious control, the body is territorialised in accordance with hierarchies and topographical rules which it enacts automatically, which come from elsewhere and which make it a point of intersection and flow within the elaborate symbolic systems of the socius. (1986:90)

[73] In fact, it is a term borrowed from Leach (in Lessa and Vogt, 1979:157). Leach uses a diagram to illustrate this relationship, which is worth reproducing here:



For Lacan signifiers are primary, even though they are only signifiers of other signifiers (therefore of a meaning that always exists 'elsewhere'). Desire is, essentially, the quest to re-find 'true' objecthood or 'the object', which, so the subject believes, was once an aspect of his or her existence (see Lacan, 1993:84–85, 150). The problem is 'he never does find it . . . [t]he subject never refinds . . . anything but another object that answers more or less satisfactorily to the needs in question' (85)[74]. But sometimes, it would seem, the subject instead finds nothing but an object of Real [75] anxiety:

> [T]here's an anxiety-provoking apparition of an image which summarises what we can call the revelation of that which is least penetrable in the real, of the real lacking any possible mediation, of the ultimate real, of the essential object which isn't an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety *par excellence*. (1988*b*:164)[76]

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[74] Lacan, I suspect, in part derives this concept of having to *refind* the object from Freud's discussion of reality testing in his essay on 'Negation'. There Freud writes: '[t]he first and immediate aim, therefore, of reality-testing is, not to *find* an object in real perception which corresponds to the one presented, but to *refind* such an object, to convince oneself that it is still there' (1991*l*:440). In essay three of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* Freud makes a similar observation: '[t]he finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it' (1991*c*:145) – in this case he expressly relates the object to the mother's breast, which is often cited in psychoanalytic literature as one of the original lost objects; e.g., Lacan: '[t]he breast . . . certainly represents that part of himself that the individual loses at birth, and which may serve to symbolize the most profound lost object' (1994:198).

[75] Early in his thought Lacan primarily conceived of the Real as a principle of constancy – as 'something one always finds in the same place, whether or not one has been there' (Lacan, 1988*b*:297). He also understood it as that which 'resists symbolisation absolutely' (1988*a*:66). In time this view of the Real as something resistant to symbolism led Lacan to what seems to be his ultimate, yet also most incomplete, comprehension of the term, which is well explained by Alan Sheridan, his translator:

> The "real" . . . stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its "raw" state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic *x*. (in Lacan, 1994:280)

The Real is thus big enough to contain all "non-things", including Kristeva's abject (cf. my discussion of the Real and the abject in the introduction, where I look at convergences between Freudian, Lacanian and Kristevian psychoanalysis).

[76] Incidentally, the "apparition" Lacan refers to in this passage is 'the abyss of the feminine organ . . . this gulf of the mouth, in which everything is swallowed up' (1988*b*:164). Is there anything more 'grotesque' than a corporeal abyss, especially one situated in a female body, the ultimate signifier, it would appear, of a devouring container? Not in the terrain of male fan-

Now, Lacan never defined this object – its nature, topography, locale, or its relation to the subject[77] – and I am not certain that he would have agreed, but it seems to me that it can be understood in the same sense as Harpham's "non-things". These "non-things" emerge when 'the [discriminatory] grid fails to account for or identify a certain segment of reality' (1982:4). What is this "segment of reality" which Harpham locates in the "interstices of consciousness" – in the "gaps"?

Here Lacan can again be of assistance: '[the unconscious is situated] in the gaps that the distribution of the signifying investments sets up in the subject' (1994: 181). These are the gaps formed by the metonymic relationship between signifiers – since there is no signified, there is no base, and the unconscious lurks in this abysmal locale in the subject's constitution. That Lacan thought of this unconscious space as a monstrous domain is clear in the following passage, in which he closely echoes Wolfgang Kayser:

> Since Freud himself, the development of the analytic experience has shown nothing but disdain for what appears in the gap. We have not . . . *fed with blood* the shades that have emerged from it. (1994:32)

He, of course, also echoes Harpham – so closely, in fact, that I feel comfortable in claiming that they have a congruent understanding of "the gap": 'the sacred flourishes only in the gaps, where we find incarnate deities, virgin mothers, supernatural monsters that are half-man and half-beast' (Harpham, 1982:4). It is only fitting that the subterranean level of our minds should end up equated with a margin or gap filled with threatening hybrid creatures, gods and superhumans. The unconscious is our psychic grotto, and its products – as we know only too well from our dreams, in

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tasies and terrors.

77 Although I suspect that, since he relates the object of anxiety to an apparition that he associates with the female throat, he may have had in mind the radical Otherness of women within the phallocentric order, and might therefore have viewed the object – the woman – as beyond all categorisation because he could not situate her, name her, in the Symbolic. This is just a thought, however, and not the one I follow in the text. Its result would be the same, however: woman as non-thing.

which nothing is impossible and anthropomorphism is virtually inextricable from metamorphosis and combination – are grotesque and fantastical.

But, as I indicated in the previous section, the link between the Grotesque and the unconscious is deeper. For one thing, I am not claiming that the unconscious is what creates the Grotesque; rather, I am suggesting that when artists make use of the Grotesque mode they take on a set of structures, repertoires and methods that are paralleled by processes in the unconscious (e.g., condensation), and which therefore may originate in the unconscious. For another, it is what is *in* the unconscious – the material it harbours – that to some extent feeds the concerns, subjects and themes, or dictates the shape, of works of art and literature that adopt the Grotesque mode. As an example, the unclassifiable matter the social formation tames by giving it the names 'dirt' or 'refuse' is paralleled in the unconscious by the substance of the pre-objectal environment, which, having arisen prior to the formation of the Imaginary[78] and all that entails for Symbolic collocation, also exceeds classification. The threat of this unconscious material has the potential to exaggerate the threat of matter that fluctuates in the social sphere, creating nodes of psychosocial crisis and anxiety. Here, exclusion of worrying matter is equal to the civilising process of repression; both processes are aimed at managing whatever ripples the Symbolic and the ego.

Such management is not easy. As Freud claims (e.g., 1991*g*:191, 1991*i*:299), the unconscious knows no time. This lack of past and present means that infantile experiences can be accessed – amongst other things, through a regressive procedure such as hypnosis – by an adult who has long since lost the capacity to recall such experiences consciously. Thus even the subject's earliest preverbal experiences remain in the unconscious. One of the consequences of repression, itself a consequence of the civilising process, is the inversion of the preSymbolic into something shady,

[78] The reader should note that, throughout this thesis, when I use the term 'Imaginary' with an upper-case 'I' I am referring to Lacan's Imaginary.

abysmal and grotesque. Defined in this way, what precedes the signifying order thus becomes a danger to the Symbolic, and mental functioning acts to control its irruption into consciousness by continually abjecting it back into the domain of repression.

Satire and the Grotesque are complicit in this process, but in a complex way. To start with – and this is a key point – what satire and the Grotesque depict tends to be a world that plays according to different rules, where things normally abhorred, prohibited and feared by law-abiding society are put on display (adultery, drunkenness, prostitution, murder, disease, criminals, death). Confronted by things not normally encountered in daily life, or even things that cannot be encountered (the supernatural), the viewer is compelled into worlds too nightmarish or even too real for mainstream representation, and even worlds of fantasy that s/he needs to make sense of. As I have argued, if s/he fails to make sense of such worlds, the unconscious will arise to make its own sense of them. Why? Because if what the Grotesque depicts cannot be understood in terms of the Symbolic, it will appeal to other, less immediate, parts of the viewer's subjectivity, i.e., the unconscious.

In short, satire and the Grotesque create situations favourable to the emergence of the unconscious. The unease, ambivalence, even fear, that this emergence can potentially create in the subject is essential to the success of the Grotesque, for therein lies its power to persuade. Persuade against what? Against the things that society pushes into its collective unconscious – against the horrors and aberrations of the human world that threaten the integrity of the social formation. Since a collective unconscious can only be created if the majority of a society's members share the same discriminatory grids and the same gaps, thus the same precepts for determining what they permit into their egos and what they deny from them, such artistic modes as satire and the Grotesque help to forge collective grids; they exhibit what, for the good of their community, the individual should push into his or her unconscious, i.e., what s/he should repress. Satire and the Grotesque, in word and

image, affix labels like 'dirt' and 'shit' to things or 'freak' and 'scum' to individuals that, by not easily fitting society's discriminatory grids, open hazardous gaps in the fabric of the Symbolic, and in so doing – in placing, for example, excrement with 'shit' or the deformed with 'freaks of nature'' – classify what potentially represents a threat to those comfortably inserted in the social order, and so (by pushing these threats into the collective unconscious) plug the taxonomic gaps and block out the unconscious. When this is not possible a last resort is the imagination, which can be used to serve not unconscious but conscious processes by (al)locating the matter out of place in a "new pattern of reality" where the individual can use Imaginary forces to destroy what s/he cannot name.

The unconscious and what it contains – the abject primarily, for my project – is the ultimate boogeyman. It contains not only all the material the subject has repressed since infancy, but all the objects, forms of behaviour and types of environments that threaten the subject here and now. Its emergence, for the sake of the Symbolic order which protects the subject against dissolution, must be kept to a manageable minimum. Satire and the Grotesque act conservatively by building into their images and texts the imperative not to embrace the repressed world of disorder or to feel subject to its menace, but to react against it: avoid it, laugh it off or put it in another, fantastical pattern of reality. The way I understand it, then, satire and the Grotesque lure the viewer/reader into encounters with the forbidden and repressed to shock him or her into a self-preserving posture that will induce the operation to abject. Abjecting, the viewer/reader maintains the unconscious and all its contents in a subterranean, grottoesque position.

Goya's images would appear to function in the above ways; but they also – and here I am speculating again – act as images of Imaginary contest (both within the image and synchronously at the level of fantasy – the interpenetrative conjunction between art work and mental functioning). The artist uses his imagination to construct fantasy worlds within which to contain and regulate the limitless, unclassi-

fiable anomalies of his unconscious, benefiting as much, perhaps, from the Imaginary contact with these anomalies as from the staging of situations in which he masters them.

In the analyses of individual works I take the tack that in *Los Caprichos* Goya's use of satire and the Grotesque seems chiefly geared to cast out the undesirables of his society by *placing* them (either through classification or through imagination) as objects to mock, not to be mocked by; in analysing *Los Disparates* I soften this stance since the works are marked by a vacillation between, on the one hand, an aggressive desire to fragment masses of undesirables, and on the other, a non-committal depiction of people in states of in-betweenness, all of which indicates that Goya was as intrigued in later life by ambivalence itself as he was earlier by a greater resolution of ambivalence. In interpreting the *Desastres* I look at how Goya's conflict and execution images might describe war as a process of abjection aimed at strengthening one faction by obliterating the other, and at the way in which the famine images illustrate society's tendency to partition space to protect against the diseased and dying.

All that later; for now I must examine abjection theory in some detail.

And just as some creatures are the last witnesses to a form of life that nature has jettisoned, I asked myself whether music might not be the unique example of what might have been – were it not for the invention of language, the formation of words, the analysis of ideas – the form of communication between souls. It is like a possibility that has not been followed up; humanity has engaged itself with other pursuits, those of spoken and written language. But this return to the unanalysed was so intoxicating that, on emerging from this paradise, contact with more or less intelligent people seemed to me of extraordinary insignificance.

Then the phrases faded, save one that I saw reappear as much as five or six times, without being able to perceive its aspect, but so caressing, so different . . . from what any woman had ever made me desire, that this phrase, which in a voice so sweet, offered me a happiness that would truly have been worth the trouble of obtaining, is perhaps – this invisible creature whose language I did not know and who I understood so well – the sole Unknown Woman* it has ever been given me to meet.

Et de même que certains êtres sont les derniers témoins d'une forme de vie que la nature a abandonnée, je me demandais si la Musique n'était pas l'exemple unique de ce qu'aurait pu être – s'il n'y avait pas eu l'invention du langage, la formation des mots, l'analyse des idées – la communication des âmes. Elle est comme une possibilité qui n'a pas eu de suites; l'humanité s'est engagée dans d'autres voies, celle du langage parlé et écrit. Mais ce retour à l'inanalysé était si enivrant, qu'au sortir de ce paradis le contact des êtres plus ou moins intelligents me semblait d'une insignifiance extraordinaire.

(Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* [Belgium: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1954] Tome 3 pp.258-59)

Puis [les phrases] s'éloignèrent, sauf une que je vis repasser jusqu'à cinq et six fois, sans que je pusse apercevoir son visage, mais si caressante, si différente . . . de ce qu'aucune femme n'avait jamais fait désirer, que cette phrase-là, qui m'ofrait d'une voix si douce un bonheur qu'il eût vraiment valu la peine d'obtenir, c'est peut-être – cette créature invisible dont je ne connaissais pas le langage et que je comprenais si bien – la seule Inconnue qu'il m'ait jamais été donné de rencontrer.

(Marcel Proust, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* [Belgium: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1954] Tome 3 p.260)

* Terence Kilmartin, in his 3-volume translation of the novel (London: Penguin, 1989, Vol. 3, p.262), translates Proust's original "Inconnue" as "Unknown Woman", a decision I follow here. The French noun "inconnue" identifies an unknown quality, a stranger or unknown person, but since the noun is of the feminine gender and since Proust's alter ego is here comparing music with women, it is no stretch of the translator's license to render it as "Unknown Woman".

Chapter Two
Abjection

TO DEFINE AT THE outset the moment, let's say, of the abject, the best way forward is to place it in relation to the well-known Freudian concept[1] of the uncanny – that eerie feeling like déjà vu with a twist of fear that can catch us unawares and give our entire understanding of the world new terms of reference.

Freud relates the uncanny to 'what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror' (1990*d*:339), and locates its source in two primary events: (1) the *surmounting* of certain tendencies in primitive thought, for example, animism and the efficacy of magic, and (2) the repression of the contents of infantile experience. To the first category Freud assigns 'the omnipotence of thoughts . . . the prompt fulfilment of wishes . . . secret injurious powers and . . . the return of the dead' (370). This category revolves around "reality testing": the uncanny arises when an event questions our concept of reality, creating the impression that what we thought we had surmounted and left in the obscure realms of our primitive forebears, reappears – or seems to reappear – within our material experience[2]. For example, if one wished somebody dead and, a few days later, the said person did indeed die, one might view this as due to magical powers that the progress of civilisation has rejected as the superstition of our naive forebears, and this would generate the impression of uncanniness.

The second category has little to do with reality testing, for what reappears in

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1 I must interject as early as possible to point out that in this chapter, as with the previous one (to a lesser degree), I make use of a number of concepts from the different systems of Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva. To gain an impression of how they relate to each other, the reader is advised to consult Appendix One.

2 Cf. Wilhelm Wundt: 'It is . . . a general law of mythology that a stage which has been passed, for the very reason that it has been overcome and driven under by a superior stage, persists in an inferior form alongside the later one, so that the objects of its veneration turn into objects of horror' (in Freud, 1990*c*:79).

the psyche in this instance is largely forgotten and inaccessible infantile material derived from repressed realms of the unconscious. To this category Freud assigns: 'repressed infantile complexes . . . the castration complex, womb phantasies, etc.' (1990*d*:371). The castration complex offers a quick and ubiquitous example: one can trace an event that triggers a sense of uncanniness back to the castration complex if its features demonstrate affinities with the act of castration[3]. But womb phantasies, which include feelings of homesickness and fears of being buried alive, are more promising for my endeavours.

According to Freud, homesickness is an uncanniness 'which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar' (340), i.e., the oldest home of all: the womb:

> It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that "Love is homesickness"; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: "this place is familiar to me, I've been here before", we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar; the prefix "*un*" ["un"] is the token of repression. (368)

This homesickness has its drawbacks, however:

> To some people the idea of being buried alive by mistake is the most uncanny thing of all. And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying phantasy is only a transformation of another phantasy which had originally nothing terrifying about it at all, but was qualified by a certain lasciviousness – the phantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence. (366–67)

It is here that Freud begins to shine a light down the path Kristeva would take several decades later. The crucial issue is how something "long familiar", "homely"[4] and lasciviously pleasant can become unfamiliar, unhomely and terrifying – how the safe environment of the womb can end up associated with the nightmare

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3 Freud's example is E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale *The Sand-Man*, in which he sees the Sand-Man's act of throwing sand into the eyes of children, causing the organs of sight to pop out, as an allusion to castration (1990*d*:348–55).

4 See Freud, 1990*d*:339*n*.1, for a brief comment on the translation of the German word *unheimlich*, which, directly translated, means 'unhomely'.

of being buried alive. Freud noted that one of the aspects of the dream-work was its potential for what has been translated as "reversal", but which I prefer to define as 'inversion': the ability of dreams to reverse signification so that what appears in the dream is actually the converse of what it ought to be (1991*a*:391–94, 439–41, and 525–26, where Freud relates reversal to dreams involving water, which he interprets as womb phantasies). That this concept of reversal has greater application than Freud allowed is clear from the following passage in Lecture 11 of his Introductory Lectures: 'we find in dreams reversals of situation, of the relation between two people – a "topsy-turvy" world. Quite often in dreams it is the hare that shoots the sportsman' (1976:214–15). Here it is evident that inversion captures more precisely than reversal the ability of the dream-work to alter relations in the visible world and create a world-upside-down that is an obvious unconscious precedent for the inversions found in carnivalesque literature and art, where hares indeed chase hunters, women in pants beat men, donkeys mount their riders, and kings polish the shoes of servants[5]. A similar principle of inversion upends the relationship in which the subject originally stood to the intra-uterine environment, so that what was once a site of desire and pleasure becomes emblematic of all things unpleasurable.

In dreams, reversals or inversions frequently occur because the content of the dream is inadmissible to the precincts of consciousness; the pre-conscious and conscious systems impose a "censorship" that distorts the original dream[6]. The same censorship, which is carried out by the super-ego in accordance with the demands

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5 See Grant, 1973, Kunzle, 1978, Zemon Davis, 1978, and Burke, 1988:88–89 for images and/or descriptions of the kinds of inversions one finds in world-upside-down broadsheets.

6 Such terms as "censorship" and "admissibility to consciousness" are derived from Freud's extensive investigations, in The Interpretation of Dreams and Introductory Lectures, of the relations between dreams, dream distortion and the three systems of consciousness: unconscious, preconscious and conscious. The term "censorship" dates from Freud's first topography. It was later superseded by the term super-ego, and later still by the ego (see Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988:66). Despite changes in topography, however, Freud never reformulated the essential concept that dreams were censored by a conscience-orientated psychological system.

of civilisation[7], operates more generally, but now under the name of repression, to muddle and reconfigure those contents of the unconscious that are inadmissible to consciousness. In the process all elements of the unconscious that are incompatible with the Symbolic are inverted from sites of pleasure into sites of anxiety[8]. These are the elements that create the feeling of uncanniness and give rise to the terrifying estrangement Wolfgang Kayser places at the core of his definition of the Grotesque. They are also the elements that constitute the abject or excluded component of subjectivity. Thus, in my argument, I define the uncanny as an emotional adjunct to the emergence into consciousness of repressed unconscious material. It is not a *category* of repressed material, but an often unsettling sense of familiarity that appears when repressed material manages to slip into consciousness.

The ambivalence between the familiar and the unfamiliar which came to light in my discussion of the Grotesque can thus be understood as this feeling of uncanniness. The Grotesque (re)presents an estranged, unfamiliar world that evades the immediate recognition effected by appellation. For a moment of varying length and intensity the viewing subject plunges into a recognitive gap, soon to be overleaped either by avoidance, classification or an act of the imagination; but while s/he is in that gap s/he might well experience the uncanny as the repressed unconscious slips into the gap, both as part of a 'natural' psychological migration (from an area of high psychic energy concentration to one from which cathexis has suddenly been withdrawn) and in response to something in the Grotesque image that appeals to the repressed. This feeling may be like déjà vu or it might give one 'the creeps', but it is always both familiar *and* unfamiliar. It lasts only as long as it takes

7 'Civilisation' is Freud's term, which I adopt with the kind of meanings I believe Freud ascribed to it. It is not to be understood in opposition to another term (e.g., primitive) – although it could be – but as a word that designates the productive pursuits (e.g., economic, technological, medical, cultural) of a given society. The opposites of Freudian civilisation are the instinctual or drive-oriented pursuits of the psyche.

8 Note again the quote from Wundt in footnote 2 of this chapter.

the conscious to process it. The degree of the uncanny's familiarity probably determines its reception. If it is predominantly familiar, it will be classified, understood and utilised by the ego; predominantly unfamiliar, and it will be treated as a danger to the ego, which the super-ego will neutralise by means of censorship and repression. There is always that flickering moment, however, when familiarity and unfamiliarity coexist, producing an inexplicable sensation in which one is both attracted to some thing (now undefined) and indifferent to it, or even repulsed by it. Long before one can trace the object of the original familiar response, the gap has closed.

Equivocal response, involving attraction and repulsion, is not unique to the uncanny. It emerged in the previous chapter, particularly in my discussion of Thomson's work on the Grotesque, where I introduced the following quote:

> [take] the example of very small children . . . to whom one makes grimaces which increasingly distort the face. The child will laugh at the face pulled only up to a certain point (presumably, while it is still sure of the face as a familiar thing); once this point is passed, once the face becomes so distorted that the child feels threatened, it cries in fear. (1972:25)

A little distortion delights the comical side of the child, causing fascination. Too much distortion makes the face too unfamiliar for the child to cope with, causing fear. A familiar face becomes monstrous, illustrating an inversion that begins to look more and more like an integral feature of human subjectivity. Thus, the same object can create two apparently opposed reactions in the viewer, depending on how the viewer feels s/he is situated in relation to it. For an adult, of course, a man pulling a face is simply funny, because such antics have long since become familiar and are instantly classifiable to the adult. To the child, however, distortion is still a scarcely-explored territory, and it has the power to create emotional ambivalence because, for the child, there are still many things to classify, and since the imaginative faculty is at this stage less in service of the Symbolic, it is more likely to enhance Imaginary threats (hence the terror of dark spaces, boogeymen, and so on) than rationalise them by situating them in a separate realm of fantasy.

Harpham also had something to say about the ambivalence of attraction and

repulsion in the quote I provided near the end of the last chapter:

> modern secular adults are so indebted to and dependent upon their discriminatory grids that they find the taboo mostly a source of anxiety, horror, astonishment, laughter, or revulsion. Witness, for example, our strong but ambivalent feelings toward those exudations of the human body that mediate between self and non-self, the magical outcast ingredients of witch's brews such as feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, nail parings, and spittle. (1982:4)

Harpham introduces another important term, taboo. I will come back to it – again briefly – later in this chapter, but for now I offer this quote from Freud's Totem and Taboo:

> To us [taboo] means, on the one hand, "sacred", "consecrated", and on the other "uncanny", "dangerous", "forbidden", "unclean" . . . Thus "taboo" has about it a sense of something unapproachable, and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions. (1990c:71)

Freud associates the taboo with the uncanny and the forbidden – uncanny because forbidden. The taboo has a sacred dimension to it, but in modern Western society it has become primarily a category of objects, exudations and things excluded in a separate class either by actual or implied prohibitions. Most of what is forbidden is, in fact, only so as far as human subjects police themselves – for example, it is generally considered taboo to play with corpses, and because for most of us the idea of doing so instantly causes disgust, even shame at finding such an idea in our heads, we do not do it. The same is true of eating a dog's excrement or drinking human blood[9]. None of these things carries a death penalty; we do not partake of them because, to a greater or lesser degree, they are consensually condemned. To put it another way, they are objects or forms of behaviour that the Law of the Symbolic – that is, the codes of conduct entrenched in the social order by the Symbolic's symbols and languages – prohibits. They exist in signification and discourse, they have names, classifications, places; but they are not permitted in the communal Law.

Now, back to Harpham's set of reactions to the taboo, which are four: *fear*

9 Certainly in modern Western society as I experience it. In other societies, other historical junctures, other cultural and class junctures, one can talk about different sets of taboos. I am simply taking a few examples from my juncture, again as I see it, to help make a point.

("anxiety", "horror"); *awe and fascination* ("astonishment"); *mirth* ("laughter"); and *disgust* ("repulsion"). Fear and disgust can be coupled under the general term *repulsion*; laughter and astonishment can be coupled under the general term *attraction* (inasmuch as astonishment admits the possibility of wonder; and laughter, while potentially complicated – if irony, parody or sarcasm happen to be at work – requires some vested interest or complicity on the part of the viewer/reader). In short, taboos cause emotional vacillation: repulsion and attraction[10].

This couplet of reactions has also been found in satire. Highet writes: 'ultimately it is [the] ferment of repulsion and attraction, disgust and delight, love and loathing, which is the secret of [the satirist's] misery and his power' (1962:238). The Blooms locate this duality in satirical obscenity, its paradox being 'that it compels while it repels' (1979:157). What they claim next provides a useful bridge to Kristeva's abjection theory:

> Appealing to man's most submerged feelings, [obscenity] vicariously breaks through his inhibitions, and yet it fills him with detestation and shame toward what was hitherto unmentionable [. . .] In a discussion of the concealed recesses of truth, goodness, and meaning, Jung acknowledges that sometimes they must be sought out even in filth. (1979:157)

The Blooms claim that obscenity – which could serve as a taxonomic container for all of the "exudations" Harpham lists in his quote ("feces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, nail parings, and spittle") – appeals to deeply submerged aspects of the self, i.e., to the contents of the unconscious. The Blooms describe this submerged material as "unmentionable" and, for this reason, endow it with the capacity to cause embarrassment and "detestation". It is unmentionable because, within the Symbolic, it has an ambivalent status: neither fully classified[11] nor altogether accepted; it will

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[10] It is worth noting that Freud found a great deal of emotional ambivalence in taboos; indeed, he devotes an entire section of his essay Totem and Taboo to this issue (1990c:71–131). It strikes me that Freud, although he understood it primarily as a dialectic between affection and hostility, had already put his finger on the compulsion/repulsion complex that Kristeva would later find in abjection. Taboo is ambivalent because it is prohibited, yet appears as an unduly justified ban on pleasure.

[11] This question of classification is a complex one. Few things are truly 'unnameable', al-

cause shame in the subject because the subject's mention of it indicates complicity with it, and therefore a dissatisfaction with the nominative systems of the Symbolic. But, with reference to Jung, the Blooms claim that such ambivalent material, or "filth", may well hold what is most true and meaningful in the world. What we regard as obscene, in short, may well provide important clues to the constitution of our subjectivity. Why are excretions obscene? More importantly, why should the Blooms associate obscenity with our "most submerged feelings"? What is the link between the obscene – a genus of things cast out of, made taboo in, many of society's discourses in the name of manners, breeding, civilisation – and the unconscious?

Kristeva's theory of abjection offers a persuasive reply to such questions.

* * *

In Kristeva's theory, abjection arises in a specific context, as the result of a recognisable confluence of factors, and, most importantly, in the juncture between two distinct registers of subjectivity, the Symbolic and the Semiotic[12], where the former is the active, conscious, law-based, language-founded domain into which the subject is interpolated and the latter is an element of the repressed, preverbal unconscious.

When the subject falls under the controls of civilisation, takes on language and a super-ego steered by a law-abiding conscience, the *before* – everything associated with the pre-objectal relationship the subject used to enjoy freely and exclusively with his or her mother – is negated[13] and repressed. Kristeva identifies this *before* as a

though many are 'unmentionable' within certain situations, certain types of company, or even in relation to one's own moral system. Excrement, for example, is named and fully classified as disposable waste, but it is still in many social conjunctures 'unmentionable' because it refers to things considered foul, low, insignificant, degrading, irredeemable. An unclassified thing – again a rarity, and more likely to be a temporarily unrecognised thing – is more ambivalent, hence more daunting, than a classified one, but classification in itself is no guarantee of purity. At best it is a system of ordering, but order only places – even though this is often enough in itself to spark rejuvenation – it does not obliterate or *un*name.

12 For clarity's sake, I should specify that the Symbolic is Lacan's term and the Semiotic is Kristeva's.

13 Negation is, essentially, a mechanism of repression which, ironically, is the most exact

'receptacle' (1982:14) and terms it, after Plato, the *chora* or semiotic *chora*[14]. She describes it as follows:

> We are dealing with imprecise boundaries in that place . . . Inside and outside are not precisely differentiated here, nor is language an active practice or the subject separated from the other. (1982:60) [. . .] There would be a "beginning" preceding the word . . . In that anteriority to language, the outside is elaborated by means of a projection from within, of which the only experience we have is one of pleasure and pain . . . The non-distinctiveness of inside and outside would thus be unnamable, a border passable in both directions by pleasure and pain. Naming the latter, hence differentiating them, amounts to introducing language, which, just as it distinguishes pleasure from pain as it does all other oppositions, founds the separation inside/outside. (61)

In sum, the *chora* is an undifferentiated space where self and other, along with inside and outside, do not exist for the subject since his or her condition predates language. The only distinction Kristeva allows the subject is that between pleasure and pain. From the very beginning, incapable of naming them, the subject nevertheless can distinguish pleasure from unpleasure – a duality that will become the pattern for the subject's discriminations between what it wants (and keeps) and what it does not want (and rejects, i.e., abjects). This ability to discriminate is not language, but it is a somatic articulation of sorts. Kristeva calls it *semiotic*. Now although "semiotic" at first appears to be synonymous with "signification" – a state after the introduction of language – since in English "semiosis" and "semiotics" refer to the science of signs, Kristeva clearly distinguishes the two terms.

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means the analyst has to spot the return of repressed contents (which helps explain why Lacan referred to 'repressed' and the 'return of the repressed' as the same thing [e.g., 1993: 86]). See Freud, 1991*l*:437–42 for more on negation.

[14] See Kristeva (1986:93–98) for a definitive discussion of the Semiotic and, specifically, the *chora*. Alternatively, see Kristeva, 1984:25–28. The terms semiotic and *chora* are often used interchangeably in literature that makes use of Kristeva and in Kristeva's writings themselves. It bears pointing out, however, that *chora* distinguishes a space – the receptacle in which child and mother are almost indivisible – while semiotic refers to a *quality* of that space (its lack of Symbolicity but not of all language, as I discuss in the text). I use Semiotic (with an upper-case S) to specify the semiotic space as a register equivalent in importance to Lacan's Symbolic. I find it useful, even though this is a distinction Kristeva does not make herself, to view the *chora* exclusively as a (preverbal) place in the time of the subject, and to view the Semiotic – given that it is an element of the timeless unconscious – as the mode of subjectivity that has the capacity to irrupt into consciousness at any point in the subject's life. I look at this issue of irruption in the text.

On the one hand, the language of the Symbolic is always-already there[15]; the child is immersed in it because it is spoken by its mother and the other people that cross its environment. However, prior to the formation of the ego and the subsequent Oedipal relationship, it exists *passively* within the subject (see Kristeva, 1982: 62–63). It becomes *active* only once the child 'separates from his fusion with the mother . . . and transfers semiotic motility on to the symbolic order' (Kristeva, 1986: 101), so becoming a user of words and a producer of culture[16].

Yet the Semiotic also has an active "language" of its own: 'an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation' dependent on drives and '[d]iscrete quantities of energy [that] move through the body of the subject' (Kristeva, 1986:93). This "provisional articulation" is regulated from the beginning by 'social organization, [which] always already symbolic, imprints its constraint in a mediated form which organizes the *chora* not according to a *law* (a term we reserve for the symbolic) but through an ordering' (94). This ordering is not one the child understands and therefore knowingly determines; instead it arises through the adjustments the child makes to the mother's actions on the basis of drive reactions. These drives, Kristeva main-

15 As Lacan puts it: 'language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it' (1977:148).

16 The difference is akin to that between active and passive voice: 'I am using language' vs 'language is being used'. In the first case, the active one, the subject is present and is the fount of the object (language); in the second case, the subject is absent: there is this thing (which is not even *out there* yet, since "out there" depends on differentiation) that is being used (by who, the missing subject cannot say). In short, language precedes the formation of the ego, but as a passive entity; with the genesis of the ego in the mirror phase, and the subsequent acquiring of language, thus of differentiation, signification becomes active.

This is also the place to note, again, that the Semiotic is itself unknowable without the significations permitted by the Symbolic: 'the semiotic that "precedes" symbolization is only a *theoretical supposition* justified by the need for description. It exists in practice only within the symbolic and requires the symbolic break to obtain the complex articulation we associate with it in musical and poetic practices' (Kristeva, 1986:118). Kristeva goes on to qualify that the Semiotic is not purely theoretical, that it *does* exist, but can only manifest through the signifying practices of the Symbolic. Elsewhere she writes: 'one can situate the *chora* and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form' (1986:94). By "axiomatic form" I would interpret that Kristeva means a form self-evident, discrete and unchanging to perception – a visible, empirically and molecularly testable form that nonetheless requires no proof of its existence.

tains, cannot be aimless, but serve a primary act of separation that will later, through the transformation of self into sign during the mirror phase[17], result in an ego. Within the *chora*, however, the drives do little more than respond and vacillate according to the touch, smell, sound, taste of the mother, and posit an early separation experienced as a "seeming" narcissism, for although it is not apparent to the subject at this stage where one body (the child's) ends and (an)other(s) (mother's, father's, outside objects of the environment) begins, the ego has begun its process of settling 'as center of a solar system of objects' (Kristeva, 1982:14). When true separation occurs through the 'thetic break' (see Kristeva, 1986:98–100) and the ego crystallises, the Semiotic undergoes repression, is superseded by the Symbolic. But it does not cease to play any role whatsoever in the human subject, for Kristeva claims that its repression is incomplete, which gives it the potential to surface in the conscious life of the Symbolic subject[18]. Grosz, in Wright's Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary, articulates this situation concisely:

> Although it is necessary for the Symbolic, the semiotic . . . threatens to undermine and de-stabilize the rule-governed operations of the Symbolic, resisting its rules and norms. Governed by the primary processes, which seek immediate gratification of what may be anti-social impulses, the semiotic is the raw data of corporeal forces and energies organized by the law-abiding and rule-governed secondary-process activities of the Symbolic. The maternally defined semiotic is the prop or support of, as well as the site for, the disruptive transgression of the paternal, patriarchally regulated Symbolic. It remains incompletely contained by the Symbolic, and is manifested in the "physicality" or "materiality" of textual production: it is a materiality that, like the primary processes or the repressed, threatens to return, disrupting signifying conventions. The semiotic must be renounced and transcended in order for the pre-oedipal child to acquire a stable social or Symbolic position as a unified (masculine or feminine) subject. But this subsumption of the semiotic in the Symbolic is never complete or finalized. (1992:195–96)

In short, the Semiotic is a constant threat to the uniformity and sovereignty of the Symbolic. Although it is normally repressed in the unconscious, there is always

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17 I discuss this term a little later in the chapter.

18 For Kristeva's discussion of the oscillating and potentially revolutionary nature of the Semiotic, see 1986:103–123.

the possibility that an event, a change in psychic condition, or even creative practices will re-activate the Semiotic and, if only for a time, reinstate a preverbal state of subjectivity. Kristeva stresses the role of creative activity in this reinstitution:

> Though absolutely necessary, the [Symbolic] is not exclusive: the semiotic, which also precedes it, constantly tears it open, and this transgression brings about all the various transformations of the signifying practice that are called "creation". Whether in the realm of metalanguage (mathematics, for example) or literature, what remodels the symbolic order is always the influx of the semiotic . . . [F]or there to be a transgression of the symbolic, there must be an irruption of the drives in the universal signifying order. (1986:113)

Kristeva tends to be visual-art-blind in such arguments[19], but since she does generalise in others, for example, when she asks 'isn't art the fetish *par excellence* . . .?' (1986:115), and since she writes of "creation", one must assume that art in general, and not only poetic language, has the power to subsume the Symbolic and uphold another signifying system. And if artists have the capacity to remobilize the Semiotic, do they not also have the ability to access the unconscious, to utilise the repressed as a source for subject matter and compositional strategy – not necessarily consciously but, if you like, intuitively? I would argue that it is possible, and will claim further that just as the Semiotic may irrupt, so may the abject. Much that society treats as abject originates in the time and the space of the maternal semiotic *chora*. Hence, the irruption of the Semiotic may cause the coterminous emergence of the abject. After all, the Semiotic *becomes* abject when it appears in the signifying systems of the Symbolic[20].

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19 The arguments, that is, which I have just presented. Kristeva has, however, written about art (see, for example, her discussions of Giotto and Giovanni Bellini in chapters 8 and 9 of her Desire in Language, 1989), and in an art-centred interview with Catherine Francblin in Flash Art she has discussed the interface between art and psychoanalysis in a way that indicates she attributes to art a potential to reintroduce aspects of the preverbal or Semiotic disposition. For instance: '[T]he imagination can permit one to dig up buried archaic preverbal representations by socializing them' (1986:45). And of abstract art she says:

> I believe that abstraction corresponds, in the individual, to the psychic economy of a noncoherent self, it is therefore anterior to narcissistic integration . . . This is a means the imaginary has of opening up to an archaic economy and to the traumatisms that are linked to it. (45)

20 And, to relate it to previous points, it also becomes uncanny, unfamiliar, and taboo.

It is to an exposition of abjection that I now turn.

I. Defining the Abject

To give the reader as lucid a comprehension of abjection as possible, I begin by defining the term in some detail, focusing on five primary issues: (1) the non-objective or absent nature of the abject, (2) the appearance of the abject within the subject, (3) the appearance of abjection at the limit, margin or boundary of the Symbolic order, (4) the relation of the abject to the super-ego, and (5) the abject's ability to both attract and repel. Having defined the term, in Section II I examine three facets of the abject that are crucial to my analyses of Goya's images: (1) degradation and the abject subject, (2) the mother as abject, and (3) non-differentiation and formlessness.

1. The abject has no intrinsic objecthood

Kristeva associates abjection with "filth":

> Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. 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)

However, she does not posit a causative link – in either direction – between abjection and filth. As Toril Moi explains, the abject 'can be represented by any kind of transgressive, ambiguous or intermediary state' (Kristeva, 1986:239). Dirt and putrefaction can *image* the abject, but they are not *the* abject. They signify a vaster, hidden terrain; they help to constitute the category, but are not innately abject. Nothing that appears as abjection in Symbolic space is abject *in essence*, for, as Kristeva asserts, '[it] is . . . not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order' (1982:4). The transgression of *structure* is abject, not dirt and putrefaction *per se*. Before Kristeva, Mary Douglas had stressed this point: '[d]efilement is never an isolated event. It cannot occur except in view of a systematic ordering of ideas' (1984:41). Kristeva elaborates:

> Defilement is what is jettisoned from the "*symbolic system.*" It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a *classification system* or a *structure.* (1982:65)

That is, defilement – one of the faces of the abject – cannot arise unless order, more precisely, the Symbolic order, is contravened. This point must be grasped even though I have made it before: a person or a thing is abjected (the operation) to the abject (the condition) because s/he or it runs counter to society's ideals, norms and standards. To go further: to keep this person or thing from threatening the constitution of society, prohibitions and taboos enforced by general consent make society's subjects the very policemen who prevent such interruptions. Hence the marginalisation from the Symbolic and the socius of a whole range of signs (excrement, pus, visible sores, bodily growths, sewerage), and individuals (the infectious, the ill, the mentally unsound, the deformed, the overweight, the jobless, beggars, the homeless, and so on) that represent the *objets a*[21] of abjection. All objects that defile need to be excluded. Abjection is based on exclusion. What is excluded is abject. And it is

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21 In Lacan the *objet a* or *objet petit a* '[symbolises] the central lack of desire' (1994:10[illegible] and has the quality of 'something from which the subject, in order to constitute itself, has separated itself off as organ' (103). To be more clear: 'The subject is an apparatus. This apparatus is something lacunary, and it is in the lacuna that the subject establishes the function of a certain object, *qua* lost object. It is the status of the *objet a* in so far as it is present in the drive' (185). It is in the capacity of being the lost object that my use of the *objet a* clarifies, and to fix the point I will refer once more to Lacan. After a passionate discursus on the libido as 'pure life instinct', Lacan goes on to say:

> [Libido] is precisely what is subtracted from the living being by virtue of the fact that it is subject to the cycle of sexed reproduction. And it is of this that all the forms of the *objet a* that can be enumerated are the representatives, the equivalents. The *objets a* are merely its representatives, its figures. (198)

Lacan lists 'the breasts, the faeces, the gaze, the voice' as *objets a* (242). What needs to be stressed is the character of *objets a* as representatives, equivalents or substitutes. The *a* here carries the connotation of something primary (the first letter of the alphabet – the first lost object) and closest to a focal centre (the Other or the abjected [m]other), as well as implying the preposition 'to' (à in French), and so establishing a conjunction between the *objet* and whatever it represents. All objects of desire, which the *objets a* are, stand in relation to an Other, 'normatively', the Symbolic Other, although it can, in my putation, also be the radical other of the abject. In this sense they are receptacles of desire – images that cause libido to stream – contingent on the Other, and to desire them is to desire what they substitute for. In the case of the abject, since the abject has no objectal form and is not a thing, only its *objets a* can act, by drive and libidinal excitation, to lure the viewer.

through prohibition, which is a function of the Symbolic, that defilement is excluded – '[t]he logic of prohibition . . . founds the abject', writes Kristeva (1982:64).

But there is a problem. Prohibition cannot control what it founds, and the class of the abject, once established, is impossible to destroy. You can exclude it, but you cannot erase it. Moreover, the abject does not bend to prohibitions. So claims Kristeva: 'The abject is perverse because it neither gives up nor assumes a prohibition, a rule, or a law; but turns them aside, misleads, corrupts; uses them, takes advantage of them, the better to deny them' (1982:15). This means that prohibited things, abject things, have a certain revolutionary power, whether real or imagined (here one recalls Blake's subversive orcs of footnote 53, Chapter One), and as such they challenge the ordering formation. This challenge comes chiefly from their ambiguity and lack of a completely containing classification. Their names do not entirely place them, and as a result they do not conform to the aspirations of the social formation. They are cast aside, treated as filth and dirt, since this is the only category to contain what falls beneath the watermark of civilised society (for what ascends above it there are other categories: the sublime and the divine, chiefly). Dirt is, however, a volatile class of matter, and, in the eyes of those who have set themselves apart from it, its continued lack of integration into the social formation is expressed as a fear that it will spread and introduce contamination, i.e., pollution and disease, into previously ordered areas of the socius. For such threats there is no antidote; if the process of exclusion fails, nothing can keep the abject back. When the Symbolic fails the abject streams in, liberated from repression.

What it brings is an entirely *other* form of structure: non-structure, the loss of identity in a timeless, undelimitable space.

This lack of structure is the second reason – other than the unreliability of prohibition, that is – why abject things remain ambiguous and precariously classified, forever on the brink of appearing as limitlessness. The representatives, or *objets a*, of the unconscious terrain of abjection always carry this undioristic, unbounded

territory as, so to speak, their subtext. No-one from the other side of abjection (from the Symbolic) who encounters such representatives can overlook the unspoken, unmentionable second text below the named, surface one.

This "second text", which is the abject, is impossible to classify or contextualise precisely because *it is not an object*[22]. And it is not an object, in short, because (1) it is nothing in essence, and only materialises through its *objets a*: its signifiers, (2) it is excluded from the Symbolic on the basis of the threat its *objets a*, considered taboo and 'polluting', pose to the integrity of the socius. In regard to point two I am, of course, speaking baldly, since the objecthood of the abject's representatives cannot be questioned, and the exclusion involved is exclusion of objects; however, the inhuming act of exclusion so marginalises and suppresses many of these objects that their objecthood and their presence in discourse is attenuated close to the point of annihilation. Actual annihilation is, however, impossible since the Symbolic is caught in a double bind where it cannot help but produce and find a fringe place for unwanted objects and non-things. It needs its excluded objects to provide an antithetical model and to maintain the purity of its own limits.

2. *The abject within*

There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed

22 In Freudian discourse, an *object* can be one of at least three things: (1) the object of love (e.g., the mother in the Oedipal triangle of the heterosexual male subject), (2) the object familiar from theories of perception, that is, an exterior item with its own inherent qualities which distinguish it from the perceiving subject, and (3) the object of an instinct, viz., an object that can satisfy an instinctual aim – and in this respect the object of an instinct overlaps with the object of love (I derive this discussion of the three objects from Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988:273–76).

All of the above objects are, in the end, concrete physical objects, either inanimate (definition two) or animate (definitions three and four). In this sense the abject can decidedly not be defined as an object. However, if incorporated imagoes can also be termed objects, that means that psychoanalysis allows for the possibility of objects not in themselves concrete, although they might only become objects of cathexis once projected onto concrete objects. This is the nature, really, of all other objects of the psychic terrain, including the Imaginary and Symbolic Other. The difference with the abject is that it only comes into existence as a garbage disposal category to the Symbolic, and though it has many objects that represent it, both animate and inanimate, it is still in itself no thing.

> against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. (Kristeva, 1982:1)

This is a confusing but important passage. The confusion arises, to my mind, because Kristeva combines both the operation to abject and the condition of abjection in the same sentence. The "abjection" she speaks of is an act of *abjecting*, of ejecting, and the thing being abjected is "a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside". This thing is the abject itself, the result of processes of ejection. Kristeva writes that its threat can be perceived as arising both from an outside and an inside, described in either case as "exorbitant". This is important, for it reveals that, in her conception of it, the abject can be perceived outside of the subject – in other subjects and objects, presumably – and within the subject. The subject can find the abject both without and within him/herself; and, without or within, for the sake of maintaining both the Law and subjectivity itself, it must be "ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable".

At least, this is so for the Symbolically-instituted subject. But what of the borderline patient, for whom the Symbolic has failed? According to Kristeva, such a subject goes to the abject within and takes it as his or her source of plenitude. The reaction of the borderline patient is not important for this thesis – unless one chooses to see Goya as a borderline psychotic, who really used his art to confirm his reliance on the abject[23] – but it holds a significant place in Kristeva's theory and

[23] Of course, one could argue that 'borderline' is a more flexible term and can be viewed as a position or modality, a desired gravitation to a place of alleged instability in the quest for the chalice beyond desire. This is a regression that serves the ego, that holds out the hope of finding unity, or at least a more tolerable state of subjectivity, on the borderline. Such an argument could potentially be made for Goya, particularly the Goya of *Los Disparates*, although in my own analyses I do not go that far. What I do want to acknowledge here is that Goya's adoption of the grotesque, monstrous and obscene puts him on a borderline of sorts. He wades into mess and anarchy to create an antithesis that will lead others to reject what he has portrayed, and, as I have claimed and will claim again, to gain cathartic relief from this mess. This is a willing interaction with the rejected, but it has little or nothing to do with the true borderliner who drifts to the border because s/he feels that the Symbolic has failed. I would have to argue that, for Goya, while it might be corruptible, the Symbolic is still the essential model on which human behaviour must be patterned. Goya goes to the border less to find an alternative disposition than to strengthen the Symbolic.

merits a quick mention.

In Kristeva's analogy of crusted milk (1982:2–3) I find a useful illustration of the process whereby the subject loses faith in the Symbolic and so takes to the abject as a more promising source of fullness. In offering milk with a skin on it, Kristeva claims that her (textual) parents separate her from them, just as the skin separates the dried milk crust above from the fluid milk below and the milk as a whole from the outside environment. Although the milk offering signifies the desire of the parents, what Kristeva feels in response is nausea – a nausea that leads her to reject the milk[24]. In rejecting it, Kristeva rejects her parents, representative, as a unit, of the paternal formation, of symbolicity, of the Other[25], of the law. By rejecting the signi-

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[24] Kristeva might have derived her milk analogy from a similar discussion in Lecture 23 of Freud's Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis:

> What was once a satisfaction to the subject is, indeed, bound to arouse his resistance or his disgust today . . . The same child who once eagerly sucked the milk from his mother's breast is likely a few years later to display a strong dislike to drinking milk, which his upbringing has difficulties in overcoming. This dislike increases to disgust if a skin forms on the milk or the drink containing it. We cannot exclude the possibility, perhaps, that the skin conjures up a memory of the mother's breast, once so ardently desired. (1976:412–13)

Freud relates the loss of desire for the mother's breast and her milk to weaning, but in the Kristevian model the issue is more complicated. For one thing – and here I regrettably preempt later discussion – milk represents a flow from the mother's body, and since society, to uphold the integrity of the (paternal) Symbolic, requires that the subject turn from the mother, the child rejects all that is associated with her body.

[25] Lacan ubiquitously discusses the Other in texts such as Écrits: A Selection (1977); The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1994); and The Seminar of Jacques Lacan (1988, Books I, II, III and VII). John Muller and William Richardson try to make the concept more accessible in Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to Écrits (1994). For a brief outline of the topos of the Other, see Marie-Claire Boons-Grafé's entry in Wright's Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary (1992:296–99). Volumes could be written about the Other in Lacan, but at this juncture I will consider only two aspects of it: its locale and its relation to the subject. Firstly, its locale. It exists 'outside' or 'elsewhere', but at the same time interpenetrates the subject at the level of the unconscious; Lacan frequently claimed that '*the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*' (1994:131, 1977:312; also compare 'the Other is the locus of that memory that [Freud] discovered and called the unconscious' [1977:215]). As closely as his own elusiveness allowed him, Lacan lays out the relationship between unconscious and Other in this passage: '[I represent the unconscious] to you as that which is inside the subject, but which can be realized only outside, that is to say, in that locus of the Other in which alone it may assume its status' (1994:147). Here Lacan clearly has the analytical situation in mind: the operations and contents of the patient's unconscious can only emerge and become workable material in the hands, so to speak, of the analyst, who is here in the place of the Other – the one who speaks and whose speech is the truth. The unconscious can only unfold in the space opened by the analyst – the space where speech is

fying realm that, through the "mirror phase", gave rise to her ego, she rejects 'I', herself, her ego. This causes a convulsion in which Kristeva turns inside out, 'guts sprawling' (1982:3). In this death of 'I' a new self arises in the nausea and vomit, which is radically other to the parents, a self that emerges within the Symbolic system but is nevertheless incapable and unwanting of integration into the Symbolic[26]. Here, the abject impulse of food loathing functions not to repel the abject but to make the Symbolic abject. For Kristeva, crusted milk is a sign that the Symbolic is corrupt – abject: it has a wrinkled scabby skin – so she turns elsewhere to find a locale that will function as a container for her sprawling guts. At this moment, the subject 'finds the impossible within' (5), and takes the abject as her Other:

> Urine, blood, sperm, excrement then show up in order to reassure a subject that is lacking its "own and clean self." The abjection of those flows from within suddenly become the sole "object" of sexual desire – a true "abject" where man, frightened, crosses over the horrors of maternal bowels and, in an immersion that enables him to avoid coming face to face with an other, spares himself the risk of castration. But at the same time that immersion gives him the full power of possessing, if not being, the bad object that inhabits the maternal body. Abjection then takes the place of the other, to the extent of affording him jouissance, often the only one for the borderline patient who, on that account, transforms the abject into the site of the Other. (53–54)

This internal space brings the subject who has rejected its Symbolic self face to

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expected, heard, weighed and responded to.

Moving to the second aspect of the Other, its relationship to the subject: 'the subject [is] determined by language and speech[;] it follows that the subject . . . begins in the locus of the Other, in so far as it is there that the first signifier emerges' (1994:198). In other words: 'in so far as we are the subject who thinks, we are implicated . . . in as much as we depend on the field of the Other, which was there long before we came into the world, and whose circulating structures determine us as subjects' (246). Lacan sees the Other as the ultimate source of signification, and since human subjects are themselves only signifiers ('[t]he subject is born in so far as the signifier emerges in the field of the Other . . . by this very fact, this subject . . . solidifies into a signifier' [199]), our place in the signifying chain is assured, and our "master", as the point of all nominative origination, is the Other.

26 To be perfectly blunt, this new self is shit. What Kristeva is saying is that in expelling herself she becomes shit to her parents, for excrement is a marginal object that becomes 'other' once voided from the body. Not only has Kristeva expelled herself and so become an abject for her parents, but she has also expelled herself from the parental couple, becoming a sign of her rejection of their desire. Lastly, she has exceeded the law, and so become matter out of place – shit – within the Symbolic order. While she cannot be handily flushed down a toilet, there are potentially other places for her: a mental institution, for example.

face with the lack of an object, which makes being itself abject: a gap in signification that, when asserted as primary (as Other)[27], can only stand in opposition to the Symbolic (Other) as abject. The realisation of the abject nature of the self is a profound confrontation with the otherness, lack and loss at the centre of being[28]. But here the abyss appears as saviour, and for the borderline patient any

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27 Can the abject be the Other? Lacan on occasion defined the woman as the Other (e.g., in Mitchell and Rose, 1985:94; 141–59). In that the female sex is absolutely other to the male and the phallocentric system, it is *the* Other. The following passage from 'Feminine Sexuality in Psychoanalytic Doctrine', written by Moustafa Safouan, a pupil of Lacan's, can now take us further: 'the question of what she wants is as much the question of the girl herself as it is that of the Other, whether this be Freud, ourselves, or again and in the first instance, the Mother' (in Mitchell and Rose:131). The Other is, in short, a flexible term that may be embodied by any number of people of either gender. In Lacan's thought it is closely associated with a paternal figure, but only in so far as society is currently structured along patriarchal lines, and only in the sense of a paternal *authority* – and women have as much power to wield this authority as men do. The Other is essentially 'the locus of speech and, potentially, the locus of truth' (Lacan, 1994:129). Anyone may, thus, represent the Other. There is a difference, however, between the Other one addresses beyond the specular other, which is strictly a relational position, and the radical Other that the other sex can represent (which is a fixed rather than mobile relation, more oppositional than dialectical). To finally make my point, it is now evident that the abject can represent the Other if it stands in the position in which the woman is fixed in the phallocentric system. The difference is that, whereas the woman can still also represent the relational Other, the abject can only be, as I understand it, the absolute Other of the Other – the thing that Lacan both did (1992:66) and did not (1977:311; Mitchell and Rose, 1985:151) grant a place in his thought. One should also bear in mind that in Lacan's system the Other of the Other would have to be an Other that stands to the Symbolic Other in the same way that the Symbolic Other stands to the human subject, and this is admittedly inconceivable. What is conceivable, however, is the parallel operation of two different systems, where the core principle of the one system is radically opposed to the core principle of the other. In such a setup the abject can only be Other to the Symbolic Other, and vice versa.

28 The reason for this lack of being lies in the alienation intrinsic to the mirror phase (which causes being to be formed in relation to an other), and in the subject's relation to language and the eternal slide of signifiers – a point that Lacan never stated better than in this passage from his Sem' 'ook III:

> the signifier is a sign that doesn't refer to any object, not even to one in the form of a trace, even though the trace nevertheless heralds the signifier's essential feature. It, too, is the sign of an absence . . . the signifier is a sign which refers to another sign, which is as such structured to signify the absence of another sign . . . (1993:167)

Caught in a system like this, where everything merely refers to (an)other, what chance does the subject have of being?

I should point out that all of the above relates to secondary loss – the lack caused by Symbolic castration. On the matter of primary or original loss, Lacan is more vague: '[t]he human object always constitutes itself through the intermediary of a first loss . . . the subject has to reconstitute the [lost] object, he tries to find its totality again starting from I know not what unity lost at the origin' (1988*b*:136).

Other, even one that has no objecthood, either real or hallucinated, is better than none. For such a subject, however, the abject as a relation to a border ceases to exist, and so, too, does the operation to abject.

3. *The abject as exorbitant outside*

Considered as an exorbitant outside, however, the abject is defined solely by the operation to abject. The abject without is determined in relation to a border or periphery which one can label the limit of the Symbolic system. All that exceeds this limit is excluded in the margin beyond it. This margin is so undesirable to the central "inside" that it is impossible and unthinkable – "unmentionable", to use the Blooms' term (1979:157). It is everything considered abject, taboo, prohibited, undesirable, unclean, impure, improper *within* the Symbolic. It is a ready-made category for everything that at first appears without category, for all matter out of place. The Symbolic is a territory, and the people who exist within it defend it like a territory; they guard its frontiers, erect and maintain fences, and they drive off all invaders. Only great vigilance – a vigilance that can only be ingrained to the point of automation by years of obedience to the law – keeps the territory safe and intact.

The problem is, the abject is an *exorbitant* outside that can neither be truly set aside from the subject within nor be banished once and for all. It is a toiling, troubled, volatile mass of ejected and banned matter, desire and thought that constantly threatens and impinges on the subject from its provisionally-excluded outside, and '[a]n unshakable adherence to Prohibition and Law is necessary if that perverse interspace of abjection is to be hemmed in and thrust aside' (Kristeva, 1982:16). The subject who cannot maintain at least a vestige of the separation outside/inside will fall into abjection, lose his or her identity in the no thing. To control the abject one must maintain one's boundaries by holding on to what one wants (keeping it inside) while rejecting what one does not want (pushing it outside). This relation between outside and inside is governed by the super-ego, to which I now turn.

4. The abject is opposed to "I"

Kristeva claims that the abject is 'opposed to *I*' (1982:1 Emphasis in original). This "I", the subject, self or ego[29], is founded during what Lacan calls the mirror phase (see 1977:1–7; 1988*a*:74, 79, 81–2, 115, 125, 146–47, 168–72; 1988*b*:50, 166). Lacan uses the mirror as a metaphor for a realisation of *difference*. The "mirror phase" splits the subject. Whereas before, in the preOedipal environment of the Semiotic, the infant subject took everything forming its experience as an extension of itself, confrontation with the "mirror" installs awareness of the uniqueness of the individual body in the world of objects constituting the space it inhabits. Everything outside the body of the subject becomes other, while the limits of the body also set the limits of "I". Everything that is "I" ends up related to the ego. Everything not "I" is related to the system of others, from which the subject will in its life draw many objects of desire through processes of identification and incorporation[30]. The most radical of

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29 For the sake of clarity I want to interject a short but pithy description of the Freudian ego, by Laplanche and Pontalis, which will help the reader, among other things, to grasp the relationship of the ego to the super-ego and the id:

> *Topographically*, the ego is as much in a dependent relation to the claims of the id as it is to the imperatives of the super-ego and the demands of external reality. Although it is allotted the role of mediator, responsible for the interests of the person as a whole, its autonomy is strictly relative . . . [*D*]*ynamically*, the ego is above all the expression of the defensive pole of the personality in neurotic conflict; it brings a set of defensive mechanisms into play which are motivated by the perception of an unpleasurable affect (signal of anxiety) . . . *Economically*, the ego appears as the "binding" factor in the psychical processes; in defensive operations, however, its attempts to bind instinctual energy are subverted by tendencies characteristic of the primary process, and these efforts take on a compulsive, repetitive and unrealistic aspect. (1988:130)

In Lacan the ego is an Imaginary function, and is patterned on the other the subject (mis)recognises in the speculum of the mirror phase. Though Imaginary, it is nevertheless an object (Lacan, 1988*b*:244), and it is subject to the manifesting action of the analytic situation, during which the subject's ego appears through the 'talking cure' and patterns itself on the analyst, who stands in the place of the Other (245). One might add the caveat that for Lacan the ego and the I (cf. the text) are not necessarily synonymous terms, but can come into conflict with one another (see Écrits, 1977:55). In his Seminar devoted to the ego Lacan even states categorically: 'the ego isn't the *I*' but 'something else', an 'object which fills . . . the imaginary function' (1988*b*:44). The ego must, however, be understood as a major constituent of this thing called "I", of the subject as a complex compound of agencies, mediators and repositories, part conscious, part unconscious.

30 In my thesis I have avoided using the terms incorporation (and introjection) and its op-

others for the subject are those it classes in the category Kristeva terms abject. These are in opposition to "I", and therefore understandably need to be controlled. The super-ego is chiefly responsible for the task of opposing whatever opposes "I" and which has emerged as irreconcilable to the ego. The super-ego is the subject's personal Symbolic representative and it contains the prohibitions that circulate in the social formation[31]; it is the psychic structure that, to shield the ego, carries out

posite, projection, because, while useful in elucidating the mechanics whereby the ego takes in or spits out intrusions from the external world, they are not strictly necessary to my argument – that is, the argument works well enough without them. I should point out, however, that incorporation is the process whereby the ego takes into itself, in an Imaginary fashion – that is, as images, speculi, reflections, substitutes, others – objects from the external world that it feels are necessary to its constitution. (I do, in fact, make a little of this process later in relation to oral-sadistic fantasies involving the mouth as an organ of incorporation.) Projection, on the other hand, is the expulsion of emotions, affects and partly-internalised objects from the ego for the purposes of defining the limits of the ego in relation to the outside world. Normally the expelled 'objects' are relocated in outside objects or people. There is an evident tie between this and the concept of abjection, but one need not understand the psychological process to understand the operation to abject, nor should the reader assume that abjection and projection are interchangeable or synonymous terms. Projection is a process that services abjection, but not all abjection is projection, and vice versa.

31 Freud introduced the super-ego in his paper on narcissism (1914), under the term "ego ideal", which he linked in that instance to an ideal of aspiration (to perfection) instituted to counteract the loss of the self as ego ideal after the dissolution of narcissism (1991*e*:88–9). Later, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud clarified this issue by converting the ego ideal into a self-critical faculty serving to regulate the behaviour of the ego. The super-ego was a radical breakthrough for Freud since it enabled him to specify a faculty capable of mediating between the external world (itself mediated by the ego) and the internal world of the drives (mediated by the id); furthermore, it was crucial in elucidating the dissolution of the Oedipus complex. According to Freud (1991*j*:374), the child incorporates the paternal figure of the Oedipal conflict within the super-ego; the prohibitive and judging qualities of the father are thus taken over by the super-ego. As the child develops, this paternal element within the psyche is bolstered by individuals in positions of authority and judgement; as Freud writes, 'their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship' (376–77). It is significant that Freud associates the super-ego function with all forms of morality and religion, which clearly exercise such a critical agency in the extreme. From this one can perceive why Kristeva places the abject on the other side of the super-ego, for the abject is that element of the hidden self that has the most potential to offend the ideals instituted in the psyche by the self-judging super-ego.

Lacan views the super-ego as the faculty in the psychic apparatus that enables the subject to master the order of the signifier, and so become a fully-fledged Symbolic agent: [t]he subject . . . has to acquire, conquer, the order of the signifier, be given his place in a relationship of implication that attains his being, which results in the formation of what in our language we call the superego' (1993:189–90). Acting in this capacity, the super-ego is the exact opposite of the abject. The latter only has signification within the Symbolic because language needs terms in which to specify and reject its representatives; outside of this, the abject is an absolute and terrifying void in which signifiers cannot prosper.

the operation to abject in the individual subject.

For Kristeva, the super-ego is the abject's exact alter ego: 'To each ego its object, to each superego its abject' (1982:2). The super-ego determines and protects the limits of one's identity, of the thing called 'I'.

One has to recognise, however, that even though it is not "I", the abject is a fundamental component of subjectivity. The abject, as Kristeva puts it, is '[n]ot me. Not that. But not nothing, either' (1982:2). After all, it 'preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be' (10), and is only peeled away from the subjectivity of the developing subject as a result of exclusions and prohibitions set in place by others – the mother and father in particular. Kristeva writes: 'if I am affected by what does not yet appear to me as a thing, it is because laws, connections, and even structures of meaning govern and condition me' (10). If they did not, "I" would take the preOedipal forward as subjectivity and would never abject it, leave it behind, outside. But as detachment from the preOedipal is part of 'normal' subject formation, the abject becomes essential to the subject as the category that shows him or her what s/he must not *do* and must not *be*. The abject gives the subject a point of reference – a norm, in fact, but a norm of bad behaviour and bad things (and in this regard is like the obscenity of satire and the Grotesque). No subject can exist 'sanely' in the Symbolic without this category of unwanted, reject matter, this 'Not me. Not that' (Kristeva, 1982:2).

Operating at both the individual and collective level, the super-ego retains what Freud terms the '*injunctions and prohibitions*' of parents and other authority figures, and so continues 'in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship' (1991*i*: 376-77). The super-ego is thus a repository of morality, and prohibitions are geared to uphold morality. A most satirical enterprise indeed. Its ideal is to permanently disconnect the subject from the abject and to remove the possibility that the subject will be tempted by the otherness of the abject.

For just about all of us this is an impossible ideal. Tempt us the abject will, for even though it 'lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game' (Kristeva, 1982:2) – the "set" being the signifying chain, the Symbolic – 'from its place of banishment, [it] does not cease challenging its master.' (2) The master she refers to is the super-ego. As much as it is the little policeman in every individual, the conscience-driven, morality-based super-ego is not always equal to the challenge. Why? What makes the abject so tempting, and therefore so capable of challenging the super-ego? It is to this question that I devote the next section.

5. *Repression makes the abject both compelling and repelling*

> [The abject] lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced. Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects. A certainty protects it from the shameful – a certainty of which it is proud holds on to it. But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself. (Kristeva, 1982:1)

Elsewhere Kristeva writes: 'the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject' (1982:5). Part of the reason for this simultaneous effect has to do with the familiar/unfamiliar complex we experience as uncanny: '[the abject is a] massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome' (2). This point deserves to be re-established. The abject – as repressed pre-objectal material and the pleasure-giving drives of pure libido – is among the elements of the unconscious that we experience as uncanny when it emerges in the gaps of recognition, and it this repressed material that Kristeva describes as "familiar". The reversing action of repression (which I discussed earlier in connection with womb phantasies), is here the thing that makes this material and unbridled pleasure from "an opaque and forgotten life" – i.e., an earlier stage of subject development – "loathsome" and

in need of radical relocation to the category of the abject. It stands to reason, then, that if the unconscious can extrude such archaic material and formless pleasure into consciousness, we as subjects can occasionally be confronted with long-forgotten aspects of our past, whether these be actual memories or currents of feeling and experience linked to drives and instincts long since prohibited by the super-ego (itself honouring the requirements of the Symbolic). What we once desired and loved, we can desire and love again – or such is the premise of narcissistic regression – and so, for that instant before prohibition kicks in, we do desire again[32], and we feel the familiarity and the promise of that desire, and this accounts for the attraction we can feel for unconscious or excluded things. The loathing takes over as soon as the super-ego realises what this flaring into consciousness is, and denies it.

The trouble is, desire is immensely mobile and nomadic; it constantly journeys in search of an object that will satisfy it, even if only provisionally and partially,

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[32] To put it another, Freudian, way, at this point the pleasure principle begins to usurp and replace the reality principle. Freud argued that the subject was split between allegiance to, on the one hand, civilisation (the reality principle, rooted in the external world and mediated by the ego) and, on the other, sexual life (the pleasure principle, rooted in the primary processes of the unconscious). The latter is largely the result of libidinous drives, which promulgate a search for pleasure, whereas the former is the principle that humanity must follow if society is to maintain civilisation. (For more on these principles see Freud, 1991*d*:36–41, 1991*i*:278–79; 1976:402–3; also see 1991*a*:757–66, where the pleasure principle, in accordance with Freud's early thought, is called the 'unpleasure principle' and the impulses of the reality principle are simply deemed part of the 'secondary process' of mental functioning.) These principles are not, in fact, opposed, but it is Freud's view that, if civilisation is to succeed, humanity must find satisfaction in pursuits other than those of the libido, which offers the rawest, most direct and immediate means of pleasure. These pursuits, which also give pleasure, but not of the drives, are those regulated by the reality principle. Regardless of Freud's phrasing of the relation between the two principles, the following passage from *Civilization and its Discontents* indicates that he viewed the reality principle's mediation and sublimation – that is, readers must note, *repression* – of the pleasure principle as a supreme frustration:

> what decides the purpose of life is simply the programme of the pleasure principle. This principle dominates the operation of the mental apparatus from the start. There can be no doubt about its efficacy, and yet its programme is at loggerheads with the whole world, with the macrocosm as much as with the microcosm. There is no possibility at all of its being carried through; all the regulations of the universe run counter to it. One feels inclined to say that the intention that man should be 'happy' is not included in the plan of "Creation". (1991*m*:263–64)

The abject falls within the precinct of the pleasure principle. To move it from the outskirts to the centre of psychic life would be to install the pleasure principle over the reality principle, a shift of focus that would select drives and the libido over civilisation.

and this means that desire will persistently venture within, into the excluded (repressed) parts of subjectivity, and reach out for the excluded objects and unqualified pleasures jumbled into the category of the abject. In this sense we are all like Kristeva's borderline subject, the one for whom the Symbolic Other has collapsed, the one she calls a "deject", who, she argues (1982:7-18), must constantly *stray* in search of an object that will stabilise his or her world (8)[33].

The quest for the object is futile, as Kristeva implies: '[the deject] has a sense of the danger, of the loss that the pseudo-object attracting him represents for him, but he cannot help taking the risk' (8). And, indeed, sometimes the risk is rewarded, for it is only by questing that the deject can experience, in a flash of ungrasped realisation that cracks like thunder (8–9), the *jouissance*[34] which is the sole means of accessing the place into which the Other has 'parachuted' (9) the pseudo-object[35]. '[J]ouissance alone,' writes Kristeva, 'causes the abject to exist.' (9) This existence, as I understand it, is not to be confused with the abject as created by classification and prohibition, but is one apart from signification, a 'passion' (9) which appears to be associated with the safe haven of primary narcissism[36] – one of the original, most 'archaic' stages of

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[33] Kristeva's notion of straying echoes Lacan's thoughts on the human subject's need to (re)find the object of primary loss: '[t]o the extent that what appears to him corresponds only partially with what has already gained him satisfaction, the subject engages in a quest, and repeats his quest indefinitely until he rediscovers this object' (1988*b*:100). In both primary and secondary loss there is probably only one object in question: the breast or the mother in general, and since the mother, as will emerge shortly, is the definitive abject, the lost object is abject by definition. The quest for the lost object becomes a quest for the abject.

[34] The easiest way to understand this complex term – other than as orgasm (see Lacan in Heath, Difference, 1978:51) – is as an eruption of pleasure unlike any known pleasure, which can only happen when the subject somehow achieves the impossible: when s/he refinds the object of all desire. Where this object exists – in the abject, in the Real – is immaterial; the issue is that it is the site of the original unity of which Lacan knows nothing (cf. footnote 28); it is the true object of being which we assume exists somewhere.

[35] Ultimately it is a case of 'the more [the deject] strays, the more he is saved . . . For it is out of such straying on excluded ground that he draws his jouissance' (1982:8).

[36] Narcissism is, strictly speaking, not vital to my approach in this thesis, but just by virtue of the fact that Kristeva defines abjection as a "narcissistic crisis" (1982:14) it merits brief comment. Primary narcissism is a somewhat murky term in psychoanalytic literature. Freud him-

subject formation, and among the first to undergo repression. Jouissance can recreate what the subject has repressed, cause it to exist again. It is this dream of jouissance that compels the subject to continue a quest that, according to all available evidence, will never achieve primary objecthood. And this quest will always be undertaken with a sense of fear, anxiety, even guilt, for its route runs counter to that of the Symbolic, and is constantly plagued by prohibitions. It is this friction between the Symbolic and a desire whose goal is to re-instate everything the Symbolic has repressed and denied that causes the fundamental ambivalence characteristic of our response to the abject. Kristeva puts it thus:

> And, as in jouissance where the object of desire, known as object *a* (in Lacan's terminology), bursts with the shattered mirror where the ego gives up its image in order to contemplate itself in the Other, there is nothing either objective or objectal to the abject. It is simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence. Hence a jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant. One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones. (1982:9)

The mirror is the active metaphor in the primary separation between self and

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self never used it consistently. In The Language of Psychoanalysis (1988:337-38), Laplanche and Pontalis provide an excellent overview of Freud's various meanings of the term, and also offer more general understandings of it, before criticising its viability. Particularly relevant here is their observation: 'the term is invariably taken to mean a strictly "objectless" – or at any rate "undifferentiated" – state, implying no split between subject and external world' (338). This state is, however, regarded as a fantasy which the subject indulges in during what is known as secondary narcissism – narcissism *after* differentiation, where desire is ordinarily focused on the self, not on the undifferentiated preOedipal environment and the child/mother unity that characterises primary narcissism. The object of primary narcissism is undecided. It only assumes a 'reality' *after* the ego has formed, at which point it appears as 'a regression to a position set back from the other, a return to a self-contemplative, conservative, self-sufficient haven' (Kristeva, 1982:14). It thus becomes a fantasy or plenitude, fullness and being – of undivided existence and absolute pleasure. According to Kristeva, indulgence in such a fantasy 'takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away – it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death.' (15). When abjection erupts in the subject it produces a "narcissistic crisis" that compels the subject away from the Other, and takes the ego which, through the super-ego, is regulated by the Other, back to the alternative self, the not-one/not-two former "I" that never was an "I" but which is represented as such in the fantasy of primary narcissism. Desire thus shifts from the realm of others to the realm of the self, from the outside to the inside, where the only relationship is with a self that, while partially separated at the level of drive, was never set apart from the predominant term in its preOedipal environment, the mother.

other, between ego and other – the separation that provides the model for the relationship with the fount of language, the ultimate Other of the subject. The Other, at least for the subject secure in the Symbolic, is, as axle of the collective signifying field and source of all Symbolic Law, the external super-ego, which, installed as the ultimate signifier of unity and plenitude, is an object of desire and the object from which desire is most *wanted*[37]. The ego is prepared to surrender its boundaries in return for the love desired from the Other, i.e., to accept the limits of the Other as the limits of the ego. This is the subject's sign of obedience to the Other. The Other's response is to do away with the danger of the subject's slippage to the other side of the boundary, into the jouissance of abjection, by rejecting abjection as if it was some kind of repulsive gift. 'I don't want this part of you,' the Other says, and abjects it from its system, making it radically *other* to the subject. 'This is not the part of you that will make me desire you,' the Other says. And "drops" it like faeces. The obedient subject then continues to treat it as ordure.

Despite its debasement, the abject remains fascinating because (1) it is other, (2) it is invested with an abundance the Symbolic subject feels s/he has lost, (3) it promises libidinal pleasures that society has curtailed within strict regulations of desire, as well as jouissance: the supreme triumph of the pleasure principle, (4) it is the locale of the incipient object of desire, the (abject[ed]) mother, (5) it is the place where unity is assured, for the subject can "disappear" into it: it has the potential to "swallow" the subject, to engulf him or her in its own essential identity. But, as much as the subject may want it, the Other does not, and prohibits the subject from abandoning his or her super-ego for the sake of losing the ego in the abject. But prohibition, repression,

[37] Lacan frequently claims that "the desire of man is the desire of the Other" (see, for example, 1977:263–64, 312; 1988*a*:177; 1994:38). I interpret this in three ways: (1) that subjects desire what the Other desires, (2) that, in accordance with the mirror stage, which fixes the Other as the site of unity, subjects desire (and want to possess) the Other's desire because it must be better than theirs if the Other, as they assume, is unified whereas they are fragmented, (3) that they desire to be the thing the Other desires: the object of its desire. (See also 1988*a*:176–77, for the response Lacan made to a member of his seminar audience when asked to define the axiomatic *man's desire is the desire of the Other*.)

cannot stop desire, and the subject's relationship to the Other and the abject remains in a tense and potentially psychotic ambivalence[38].

Earlier I asked what the link between obscenity and the unconscious was. Some answers lie here. The things that are obscene are generally things that society represses and whose appearance it tries to limit. What is repressed in the social field is pushed into the unconscious in the psychological field, becoming the abject. But these things are not *a priori* obscene or bad: they are things (e.g., excrement, genitals, mucous) that the subject in his or her earlier years, when s/he was still learning the social ropes, accepted openly, even took a great deal of pleasure in. As things once considered to be extensions or even characteristics of subjectivity, they continue to exert a powerful influence on the subject and, as the outside within – the unmentionable within the accepted – they fascinate desire by virtue of their uncanny ambivalence. Through the gaps in repression and prohibition, one continues to feel drawn to them, even desires to experience them with the senses and to invest them with the libidinal energy of the drives that first mapped them. It is because they are the familiar-yet-unwanted that one almost transcendentalises them into objects promising jouissance. Their plenitude – the impression that they would reward the subject's quest for the object if only society was reformed so that every subject was once again allowed to openly fraternise with, and extract pleasure from, the rejected – is, however, itself an illusion. It is only because it is abject that shit produces laughter when

38 Which engenders a number of dialectical relationships, for example: order/disorder, Semiotic/Symbolic (in Kristeva), abject/Other, unfamiliar/familiar (re the uncanny), non-differentiation/nomination, formlessness/form, unclean/clean, impure/pure, improper/proper, dirt/system, non-separation/identity, fragmentation/unity, flow/containment, open form/closed form, grotesque body/classical body, abject/super-ego, space/place, ignoble/noble, mocked/mocking, terror/indifference, pleasure/reality. None of these (op)positions is securely and consistently binary; each is capable of collapse. To take one example, that between fragmentation and unity: as much as there is unity of sorts in the Symbolic, the subject remains fragmented, for s/he locates identity, hence unity, in the alienating image of the other. Unity comes secondhand to the subject, via the assumed unity of the other. At least in the primal relationship with the mother fragmentation only exists because the drives begin to map the body of the child in parts, zones and extremities: this is fragmentation because the body has not been reconnoitred yet; but in the postmirror-phase subject fragmentation stems from a castrating misrecognition that leaves the subject forever lacking before the other.

it is spoken of in certain societies or circles, only because it is refuse(d) that it seems a symbol of rebellion. It gives pleasure to write about excretion or to frolic in mud, but such practices are merely sad gestures toward the ultimate unknowable jouissance associated with the mother, the lost object that can never be (re)found.

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The above defining features of the abject present a general picture of this essential part of subjectivity, but before I can proceed to look at methods an individual might employ to maintain the abject in repression, I need to raise a few issues that are directly pertinent to my interpretation of Goya's work. These issues are three: (1) the question of how the social formation categorises the human subject – how, for example, deformity, ugliness or illness, on the one hand, and inappropriate or maladjusted behaviour, on the other, can function to make the body grotesque, and thereby mark it for rejection and alienation (i.e., abjection); (2) the consequences of the interpolation of the subject into the Symbolic for the figure of the mother, who is devalued in signification to the supreme, earliest *objet a* of the repressed abject – this has obvious bearing on my interpretation of, for example, Goya's images of women as witches; (3) the notion of non-differentiation, and the limitless, unclassifiable substance this is associated with, a substance in which subjects whose desire for the abject leads them to strive from the Symbolic might lose their ego-centred selves; or, alternatively, a substance which might represent a pre-eminent threat to the subject, against which s/he will do just about anything to affirm the limits of his or her subjectivity – both of which possibilities have a bearing on my reading of Goya's *Desastres de la Guerra* and, as it pertains to the mindless mass, his *Disparates*.

II. The Abject as it pertains to Goya

1. *The subject made abject*

Order is contravened by crossing limits, borders, margins. Regulations shape experience into precincts[39], where jurisdiction is carefully n .i by both self-surveillance and the tissue of exhortations transmitted to the human subject via all forms of representation, from verbal to visual. The subject is moulded into a creature of habit, for habit, routine, is the surest way to automate the subject – an automation that will uphold the boundaries erected by social ordering. It is liberating to break out of routine and habit because this can entail a rupture of both individual restrictions and wider social prohibitions. Subjects who rupture such prohibitions, e.g., criminals, bohemians, activists, mavericks, are viewed as dangerous because they not only challenge law and order but on a more suppressed level issue the threat of reinstating a form of existence radically antithetical to the life lived in signifying chains. Such individuals are as abject as dirt and putrefaction because they disturb the social plan. They must be separated from the more ideal citizens (often through incarceration) if society is to maintain its ideal purity.

Many subjects, of course, do not need to be openly, physically rebellious to be marked for abjection, but are degraded to the level of filth by virtue of social station, occupation and physical appearance. In his graphic work such individuals form Goya's leading targets. He does, extremely rarely, explore the domain of absolute outsiders, who exist on the fringes of society and prey on that society to maintain their separate existence (the best example being *Boys at the Ready* [*Muchachos al avío*] [Fig.2], a depiction of highwaymen preparing to stage a robbery).

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39 Cf. Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, I: 'Certain parts of our bodies and certain bodily effluvia are colonial territories, colonized phenomena (defined by the authority of the state, our parents, the gods, the CIA of our muscular contractions). They are occupied territories that we drag around with us' (1987:416).

Otherwise, his satirical subjects fall into three categories: (1) individuals who make a living through unlawful but covertly sanctioned practices (prostitutes, whom Goya depicts frequently, being the foremost example); (2) individuals expected to be the shining lights of the society, but who fail dismally to fulfil such expectations (the nobility and the clergy are exemplary here - Goya degrades them by revealing how idle and parasitical [in the case of the nobility] and how hypocritical [in the case of the clergy] they are); (3) individuals who neglect morality to practice highly skilled occupations falsely (the quack doctor of *To the Count Palatine* [*Al Conde Palatino*] [Fig. 3] springs to mind), contract loveless marriages of convenience (e.g., *Is there None Who can untie Us?* [Fig.4]), or promulgate superstition (*Hunt for Teeth* [*A cazu de Dientes*] [Fig.5]) - individuals, in short, who advocate actions and conviction that, in Goya's eyes, can only be taken on with a consequent relaxation of social responsibility and ethical standard.

All of the above individuals fall short, in Goya's estimation, of society's expectations of the citizen, and for this reason deserve to be exposed, ridiculed and cast out. In many instances Goya uses deformity - the grotesque body - to mark individuals as unsavoury and thereby set them up as objects for mocking laughter. The humpbacked, bow-legged man in *What a Sacrifice!* [Fig.6] and the obese mother in *Where is Mama going?* [Fig.12 and Fig.54] are obvious examples of this. To leave his viewers in no doubt as to the response he requires of them, Goya frequently turns his subjects into

Fig.6 What a Sacrifice! (*¡Qué Sacrificio!*)

Fig.2 Boys at the Ready (*Muchachos al Avío*)

Fig.3 To the Count Palatine (*Al Conde Palatino*)

Fig.4 Is there None Who can untie Us? (*¿No Hay Quien nos desate?*)

Fig.5 Hunt for Teeth (*A caza de Dientes*)

witches, many of whom he pushes to the limits of physical repulsiveness. Here the body is a transparent indicator of character, and the anti-social practice of witchcraft is a brace to the satirical message. In such works Goya degrades (his subject) to uplift (his audience). His procedure is consistently satirical, but not always shot from the same bow; using his moralistic super-ego as his measure, he is as willing to censure the law, when it falls into corruption, as he is take up society's prohibitions, taboos and judgements, when these accord with his own ideals, to ridicule (the operation to abject) his subject into a debased, downcast level (the condition to be abject). Thus, when interpreting Goya's use of satire and the Grotesque to degrade (chiefly a feature of the artist's procedure in *Los Caprichos*), I am most concerned to demonstrate how his subjects are transformed into abjects that the viewer can more easily and effectively deal with, by abjecting them.

2. *The mother as abject*

In Kristeva's system the mother is abject both as fragment and whole. As fragment it is her body, more particularly, its exudations, that make her undesirable within the Symbolic. As whole she is dangerous because of her potentially limitless 'femininity'.

2.1 The mother's abject fragments

As we have seen, society sets aside certain objects for consensual exclusion from the Symbolic order, among them the products of the body, everything from nail parings to breast milk to excrement. Some are considered unsightly but otherwise harmless (loose hairs, say) or only contrary to social norms when their production exceeds requirements (e.g., overabundant lactation); others are viewed as polluting and biohazardous. Few more so than blood – menstrual blood, in particular.

Kristeva identifies excremental and menstrual wastes as prohibited objects (1982: 71–2) and contends that society links both 'pollutions' to the maternal body. Menstrual blood for obvious reasons; excremental waste because, in her view, it is the