

THE MEMORY OF THE SHOOTING:  
GOYA AND THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN SPAIN

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Iconographic evidence of the violent upheaval associated with the revolutionary events at the turn of the nineteenth century very rarely reaches beyond immediate and obvious needs of propaganda, with consequent drastic stylization often verging on caricature. In particular, as soon as the shooting is over and Restoration begins, interest in celebrating the Revolution disappears, since there is no point in recalling facts and ideas which would be best forgotten.

Figurative arts, on the other hand, were still very far from the kind of realism that was to emerge after the 1850s. Still the portrayal of contemporary history was largely taboo and the whole weight of dominating academic mind-set prevented it. While Europe was swept from top to bottom by the winds of Revolution, from the very country which was most deeply rooted in the traditions of medieval conservatism, an artistic document, unique of its kind and incomparable in intensity, emerged: Goya's images linked to the historical events that shook Spain at the turn of the nineteenth century shed a bold light of unprecedented clarity on the tribulation of those years.

Spanish intellectuals in the second half of the eighteenth century experienced the same spiritual adventures that most other European nations went through, showing great receptiveness towards French culture. In spite of the prohibitions and strict controls imposed by the Inquisition - a progressively weakening institution, though, less and less supported by the royal house - new ideas spread and works of French authors (especially Voltaire, Rousseau, Condillac, Diderot and the *Encyclopaedia*) were eagerly looked for, secretly imported and came to be included in the libraries of the cultivated upper-class. Some personalities of the Spanish Enlightenment, among them the marquis De Miranda, subject of a controversial juvenile portrait by Goya, held private correspondance with Voltaire and Rousseau.<sup>1</sup> The depth of these relations with France determined the coining of the expression "*afrancesado*" (literally "enfrenched") and "*afrancesamiento*" as equivalents of "*ilustrado*" ("enlightened") and "*ilustración*" ("Enlightenment"), words which later, during the French occupation, would assume indeed a different meaning, as "collaborator with the foreigner" and, seen from the adversaries' side, as an equivalent of "sold to the French".

During the decades preceding the Revolution of 1789 the main concerns of Spanish enlightened circles were the economy of the country, in favour of a rational exploitation of land, which was poorly cultivated and unequally allotted, and for the suppression of abuses and social disparity. In the reign of Charles III (1759-1788) some of these very active supporters of the progress of the nation become ministers and councillors of the king; holding important public positions they tried to promote the

1. Cf. J. Sarrailh, *La España ilustrada de la segunda mitad de siglo XVIII*, Madrid, 1957.

modernization of their country : men as renowned as Campomanes, Floridablanca, Cabarrùs, Aranda, Bernardo Iriarte, Francisco de Saavedra, as well as writers such as Meléndez Valdés, Jovellanos, Cadalso, Cavanilles, Céan Bermúdez etc.

This is precisely the circle of intellectuals in which Goya moved, where he found his most affectionate friends, his most generous patrons and his life-long protectors. Goya left admirable portraits to us of many of these eminent representatives of the Spanish Enlightenment. The mastery of his brush always manages to emphasize the high moral and spiritual qualities of the subjects, towards whose ideas Goya felt explicit kinship. In 1783 he painted the portrait of Count Floridablanca, at that time prime minister of the kingdom. This work was one of the painter's first commissioned portraits, where Goya did not hesitate to insert himself, though in a somewhat servile position. It may be regarded as an allegory of good government : the minister is surrounded by attributes that describe his function, with the clock - traditional symbol of wise government - in a very conspicuous position. Floridablanca distinguished himself especially in addressing the problems of agriculture and irrigation and undertook important hydraulic works, such as commissioning the building of dams and canals, but he also intervened effectively in the expulsion of the Society of Jesus from Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, one of the leading personalities of the Spanish Enlightenment, was also one of the most intimate of Goya's friends, who portrayed him when he was at the height of his public career, in 1798, as the recently appointed minister of Justice. In spite of the official character of the surroundings, what strikes us most of all is Jovellanos' meditative and melancholic expression. Such a countenance probably reflects the contradictions emerging between his intellectual, humanistic spirit and the practice of power management, that soon would become evident and cause him a long and bitter exile.

Greater intimacy distinguishes the portraits of Goya's friends Juan Antonio Meléndez Valdés - a socially highly committed poet and magistrate - and Leandro Fernández de Moratín - audacious playwright and critic of traditional customs -, both *afrancesados*, culturally and politically, who were obliged to emigrate to France at the moment of the Restoration and died in exile. Deep sympathy and intelligence emanate from the portrait of Goya's friend Juan Antonio Llorente, painted in 1810-1812, a key intellectual in the attempts of the Spanish Enlightenment to reform or suppress the Inquisition. Named commissary of the Holy Office, he first planned its reform and later contributed to its liquidation under the French king Joseph Bonaparte. The same Joseph entrusted Llorente with organizing the existing documents to write the history of the Inquisition in Spain. The portrait dates back to the publication of this remarkable work -*Historia crítica de la Inquisición en España* - before Llorente the task became an exile in France.<sup>3</sup>

Among Goya's aristocratic patrons we also find outstanding protagonists of the Spanish Enlightenment, like the Dukes of Osuna, who, fond of culture and progress, used their position and wealth to support the work of scientists, artists and writers. Particularly impressive is the portrait of the duchess, in a self-confident attitude, dressed according to French fashion; a painting where Goya stresses the intelligence

2. Cf. Catalogue of exhibition: *Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*, Boston, 1989, pp.8-11.

3. *Ibidem*, pp.164-166.



Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Aquellos polbos*, *Caprichos*, plate n. 23

in Madrid during his tenure. Guillemardet brought to France a copy of this work, which was destined to profoundly influence French Romanticism. In fact this very copy was later owned by Eugène Delacroix, godson of Guillemardet.

To understand Goya's marked partiality towards the Enlightenment, we need only set up a quick comparison with the ruthless portraits of members of the Royal House, where Goya does nothing to conceal the intolerance, frivolity and arrogance which characteristically affected the court of Charles IV (1788-1808) or later the spiritual poverty of Ferdinand VII, the champion of the Restoration and of the crude repression which followed the Peninsular War.

Many of Goya's most recurrent themes take root in the social criticism expressed by the enlightened circles that the artist, as we have seen, frequented. In particular, anticlerical satire stands out: a subject that in Spanish literature culminates with the *Historia del famoso predicador fray Gerundio*, published by Padre Isla in 1758; in the last years of the century Goya's friend Leandro Moratín had prepared a second edition of this work, which was blocked by the Inquisition's veto. In his *Caprichos* Goya explicitly attacks the greed and voracity of the monks - with allusions to the illicit economic privileges enjoyed by monasteries (plates n.13 "*Estàn calientes*", n.49 "*Duendecitos*",

and liveliness that distinguished the lady, one of the first women admitted to the Madrid Economic Society (*Sociedad Económica Madrileña*) when it was established. Later, when the Women's Council of the Society was founded - for the first time women participated in public life in Spain - she was named president for several years. Until her death, at 82 years of age, this very cultivated noblewoman continued to receive French books from the French bookseller Pougens.<sup>4</sup>

The first portrait of a foreigner by Goya, in 1798, represented the French ambassador in Spain Ferdinand Guillemardet, known as a regicide. It is of some interest to know that the *Caprichos* were printed in the palace of the French embassy

4. *Ibidem*, p.14.

n.78 "*Despacha, que despiertan*", n.79 "*Nadie nos ha visto*") -, the attachment to money of the clergy (plates n.30 "*Porque esconderlos?*" and again n.49 "*Duendecitos*"), its lust (plate n.47 "*Obsequio à el maestro*", n.58 "*Tràgala perro*" and again n.78 "*Despacha, que despiertan*"), its hypocrisy (plate n.48 "*Soplones*", n.78 e n.79), its pedantic ignorance (plate n.53 "*Que pico de oro!*"), the substantially parasitic nature of this category, still so powerful within the social hierarchy of *ancien régime* (plate n.80 "*Ya es ora*"). The position taken by Goya against the obscurantism of the Inquisition is then very clear, and accords with the most advanced opinions expressed by exponents of the Spanish Enlightenment.<sup>5</sup> Besides, in many of his drawings and watercolors of expressionistic vehemence, he takes up the subject again explicitly and courageously - at a time when being influenced by revolutionary ideas coming from France was enough to be arrested and undergo a trial, charged with "philosophism" or "jansenism". In two oil paintings on canvas<sup>6</sup> and two etchings of the *Caprichos* series (plate n.23 "*Aquellos polbos*" and n.24 "*No hubo remedio*") Goya illustrates the barbarity of the Inquisition. Especially in Goya's graphics, criticism of social inequalities finds ample scope, in particular the scandal aroused by the parasitism of the nobles, often represented in *Caprichos* plates as donkeys: quite a strong metaphor of the immoral habits of indolence and ignorance established at that time within a social group which seemed incapable of renewal.<sup>7</sup> Always in the *Caprichos* we find other themes held particularly dear by the Enlightenment, like education (plate n.3 "*Que viene el coco*", n.4 "*El de la rollona*" and n.37 "*Si sabrà mas el discipulo?*") and the inhumanity of prisons (plate n.32 "*Por que fue sensible*" and n.34 "*Las rinde el sueno*").

Goya's intensive and active involvement in the reality of his time led the artist to go beyond the inheritance of Rococo still present in his early works, as well as the restrictive canons of academic precepts, to look for a new, personal language, which could be defined with some approximation as "expressionist realism", appropriate to bear witness to the upheaval of his contemporary world, beyond every mystified idealization or aestheticism.

Led by his very vivid sensitivity, Goya does not step back in front of the wretchedness and misfortunes of the humble, in front of the suffering of humanity. When he paints for himself, without commission, his attention is often drawn to scenes of prisons, asylums for the insane, hospitals, whose deterioration he shows. Goya does not withdraw from reality, but carefully describes how, according to all reports of the period, the insane were crowded like animals in filthy places, abandoned by their families and cruelly treated by their guardians. Depicting prisoners he especially concentrates on the denunciation against torture, a crucial point in XVIIIth century debate on penal matters.

5. Cf. E. Helman, *Trasmundo de Goya*, Madrid, 1981, (2nd ed.).

6. One painting is part of a famous series donated to the Academy of San Fernando, executed in the same years as the *Desastres de la guerra* (P. Gassier, J. Wilson, *Vie et oeuvre de Francisco Goya*, Fribourg 1970, cat.n.966) and the other is in a private collection in Vienna (J. Camon Aznar, *Francisco Goya*, Zaragoza 1981, vol.III, p.189).

7. Within the series of *Caprichos*, the so-called "asnerias" ("donkey-stories") develop a sequence of very explicit criticism towards various social categories. Nobles are charged with parasitism in *Capricho* n.42 ("*Tu que no puedes*") and with foolish vainglory in n.39 ("*Asta su abuelo*"). Here may also recall the tremendous caricature of "*Chichillas*" (plate n.30), thoroughly analyzed by Edith Helman (*Goya's "Chinchillas"*, in: AA.VV., *Goya "alle werden fallen"*, Frankfurt am Main, 1981, pp.71-92).

At the outbreak of the long and painful Peninsular War (1808-1814), a conflict full of contrasting aspects and extremely important for understanding the influence of the French Revolution on Spanish reality, at a moment when war-time disorder certainly reduces artistic commissions, Goya paints on his own initiative a series of oils dealing with the subject of violence.<sup>8</sup> His approach is an absolute historic innovation, precisely in the need felt by the artist, to create a language suitable for expressing as effectively and directly as possible the most dramatic aspects of the conflicts resulting from the diffusion of revolutionary ideas. Apart from every formal consideration, here emerges in its whole incisiveness a clear critical intention, not always understood by historiography.<sup>9</sup>

The images of history left to posterity by Goya culminate in the series of etchings known as "*Desastres de la guerra*" ("Disasters of the war") and in the two very famous and strong paintings dedicated to the popular uprising of the 2nd of May 1808 and its repression. They were executed in 1814 for the celebration of the anniversary of these events, which took place on the Pardo hill on the 2nd of May 1814, a short time before king Ferdinand VII's return to Madrid, that was to mark the beginning of a very harsh Restoration, where there would not be any space for such hymns to freedom.

Goya in these works carries out a research of expression towards realism also, taking his way in a direction opposite to rhetorical and static celebration. This genre also largely characterized the neoclassical art of French Revolution - very often bound to a superabundant use of historical metaphors and allegorical figures with reference to antiquity.

The allegorical discourse brings no formal innovation, drawing from a repertoire consolidated through the centuries, lacking specificity, and lends itself to decorate, as ornamental array, whatever ruling ideology might be current. Emblematic are, indeed, the curious adventures of an allegorical painting by Goya himself, since they illuminate the ambiguity and growing emptiness of the celebrative language based on allegory, which permeates so many historical paintings well into the second half of the XIXth century. The painting commissioned to Goya in 1808 by the French government in Madrid bears the name "*Allegory of the city of Madrid*": a woman of fair appearance, with a dog - a symbol of loyalty - sitting at her feet, leans softly with her right arm against a coat of arms bearing the emblem of the Spanish capital. With the forefinger of her other hand she points towards an oval medallion, framed in gold, indicated also by two angels with trumpet and laurel, allegories of Fame. Inside the oval Goya originally painted the portrait of king Joseph I Bonaparte. Meanwhile the

8. I am referring both to the series of paintings in the collection of *marquises de la Romana* (partly quoted in the inventory of 1812 as "Horrors of the war") and to the paintings very near to the etchings of the *Desastres* series, cat. Cassier and Wilson n.936-944.

9. A tendency towards an apolitical interpretation, ready at the most to recognize in the work of Goya the values of patriotism, met understandably particular success in the time of Franco, starting especially with the study of E. Lafuente Ferraris, *Antecedentes, coincidencias e influencias del arte de Goya*, Madrid, 1947 (cf. Jutta Held, *Goya: Die Rezeptionsgeschichte*, in: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* n.195, 1991, pp.61-62).

For a wide review of the range of interpretations given to Goya's art, see: N. Glendinning, *Goya and his critics*, New Haven and London, 1977. More recently, J. Tomlinson (*Goya in the Twilight of Enlightenment*, Yale, 1992 and *Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828)*, Oxford, 1994) gives a very reductive role to the importance of the Enlightenment and its ideas for understanding Goya's art.

Peninsular War raged on. After the battle of Arapiles (1812), the French army evacuated Madrid, together with the king. Here the liberal Spanish patriots caused the portrait of Bonaparte to be covered with the word "Constitución", referring to the constitution of Cadiz, recently promulgated. Still, in November of the same year, 1812, following an overturning of the course of war, Joseph I returned to Madrid and ordered the restoration of his portrait in the painting. Goya entrusted this thankless task to an assistant - Felipe Abbas -, but as soon as the French army was definitely defeated, on the 23rd of June 1813, Goya was requested again to erase the hated effigy and cover it with the word "Constitución" - a job then performed by a certain Dionisio Gomez. Once king Ferdinand VII returned - in 1814 - an unknown artist was charged to paint in the vexed medallion the portrait of the new king, the sworn enemy of Joseph Bonaparte - who nevertheless did not hesitate to be portrayed within the same frame, surrounded by the very same allegories as his rival. Later, in 1826, when Goya already lived in his voluntary French exile, the city of Madrid charged the court painter Vicente Lopez to remake the portrait of Ferdinand, judged to be too coarse. The inconstant vicissitudes of this canvas did not finish here; in 1843 the Liberal party had the image of the king erased and ordered his replacement with the book of the constitution; and finally in 1872, after an unfruitful attempt to bring back to light the original portrait by Goya, the mayor of Madrid ordered - and up to now his will has remained definitive - that all the prior repainting be removed and replaced by the writing "*Dos de Mayo*" ("Second of May") in memory of a "neutral, pure" historical fact.

Regarding the entangled events of the Peninsular War, Goya's position has often been taxed with opportunism and a certain perplexity has risen among historians because of a supposed lack of consistency on the part of the artist.<sup>10</sup> Goya had been appointed in 1789 First painter of the court and certainly maintained his prestigious charge until 1824, in spite of every political change. At that moment, with a pretext, he asks the king for permission to leave for France: a "temporary" stay that will turn into voluntary exile in the face of the disheartening retaliations of Ferdinand's Restoration. However, considering the continuous readjustments of the fronts and the chances of war, it shouldn't be difficult to understand his conduct within a military and political context marked by such fragmentation and instability. On the other hand, it wouldn't be correct to ignore the fact that he did expose himself to personal risks owing to the content of his works. In 1815 he was summoned to appear before a court of the Inquisition to answer questions about the famous paintings of the *Majas* and the *Caprichos* etchings.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, in the middle of the Peninsular War, other artists who had tried like Goya to keep graphic evidence of the siege of Saragoza, had to give up and destroy the plates of their etchings after having been discovered by the French government on their return to Madrid.<sup>12</sup> The delicacy of such a

10. See, for example, Enrique Lafuente Ferraris, Introduction to the catalogue "*Goya en las colecciones madrilenas*", Madrid 1983, pp.101-102.

11. Goya himself refers to the accusations of the Inquisition against the *Caprichos* etchings in a letter of December 20th 1825, written from Bordeaux to Joaquin Maria Ferrer in Paris (*Diplomatario*, Saragoza, 1981, pp.389-90).

12. These artists were two members of the Royal Academy of San Fernando, named Juan Gálvez e Fernando Brambila. The episode is related by E.Sayre in the catalogue "*Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*", *op. cit.*

changeable situation has to be considered to understand Goya's caution and reserve towards the burning series of etchings named *Desastres*, one part of which was executed in the years of the war itself, while the final section dates from the years of Ferdinand's repression.

Certainly the vicissitudes of the Peninsular War placed enlightened Spaniards, who were Liberal and francophile, in front of a terrible reality. Right from France, whose Revolution had fostered so many hopes and illusions of freedom, came the violent aggression of the Napoleonic army, bearer of reforms, certainly, but also of a declared tyranny. The upset that Goya expresses with such force in his images of the *Desastres* brings to light without any euphemism all the contradictions of a Revolution when ripened and condensed in forms of power that used violence as a principal means to express themselves and spread - during the Terror and again during the "exportation" phase of Revolution represented by Napoleonic campaigns. In the face of the atrocities of war and all its contradictions, Goya's circle of Liberal friends split up: many of them collaborated with the French government set up in Madrid in 1808, while others fought against the foreign invasion. Thanks however to the relative freedom of the press allowed by the French regime, Spain went through an important cultural ferment with a crop of pamphlets and magazines. Many *afrancesados*, and not only the Jacobine faction among them, railed from the pages of their press organ "*El Robespierre español*" against the Empire, seen as a perversion of revolutionary ideals and against Napoleon, despotic traitor of the cause of the sovereignty of the people.<sup>13</sup> Through the sequence of etchings of the *Desastres* Goya's position emerges unmistakable and coherent: he witnesses the valiant struggle of the people against an organized army, underlining its heroism, without trying for this reason to hide the brutality and barbarity into which it not less than the nemy falls.

In view of an eventual publication of the series of eighty-five etchings (actually published only in 1863, 35 years after the death of the artist, by the Academy of San Fernando and omitting the last five) Goya gave them a precise order, preparing a numbered set that he handed over to his friend Ceàn Bermúdez<sup>14</sup> so that he could correct the spelling of the captions, this very peculiar element of Goya's etchings, unveiling the irrepressibility of his effort at communication at least as much as his didactic spirit, so typical of the eighteenth century.

The sequence opens with an image of eloquent symbolism: humanity, exhausted and imploring, kneels shrouded in the gloomiest shadows in whose density one senses disquieting presences.<sup>15</sup>

Immediately following are two very strong scenes of slaughter (pl.2 and 3), where the protagonists facing each other - Napoleon's soldiers on one side and Spanish peasants/guerrillas on the other - are caught in the two opposite, though indissolubly linked, roles of victims and persecutors. In plate n.2 the terror of death is written on the face of Spanish guerrillas armed with knives and rudimental spears in the moment

13. Cf. Aandrè Stoll, *La Spagna e la Rivoluzione Francese*, in: "Napoli tra due rivoluzioni 1789-1799", Special number of *Rivista dell'Amministrazione Provinciale di Napoli*, Naples, December, 1990, p.207.

14. Juan Agustín Ceàn Bermúdez (1749-1829), a friend of Goya, member of the Academy of San Fernando and of the circle of Jovellanos, was an esteemed intellectual and one of the outstanding art historians of his time.

15. Plate n.1 surely belongs to the last plates of the series, executed around 1820, some 10 years later than the first ones, where Goya develops a different style and a more symbolical approach.

when they are going to be shot by a firing squad, exalted in its cold anonymity by the back view. The caption reads "With reason or without it" ("*Con razòn o sin ella*") and in plate n.3, where roles invert and peasants ferociously assault a group of soldiers, probably caught asleep, with axe and knives, the caption says "The same" ("*Lo*



Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Con razòn o sin ella*, Desaster de la guerra, plate n. 2

*mismo*"). The face of the peasant brandishing the axe has nothing heroic, rather in his expression, like the other guerrilla who savagely thrusts his teeth into the flesh of his enemy, folly would seem to gleam. So, from the beginning, the concept emerges that the actual protagonist of this war has been brutality on both sides, sparing no blow; in fact, even if scenes of martyrdom of Spanish people prevail, Goya inserts throughout the whole series scenes where Frenchmen also are pitiable victims of the atrocities of a war without quarter.<sup>16</sup> As a matter of fact, all excesses of violence and most cruel inhumanity that Goya has the courage to record on his plates (the summary and anonymous executions of pl.15, 26 and 38, the looting of corpses of pl.16, the use of the garrote of pl.34 and 35, the horrible mutilations of pl.33, 37 and 39) correspond to the historical witnesses of the time and it would be wrong to see in them the fruit of a too lively imagination or even Goya's delight at the most violent subjects.<sup>17</sup> However,

16. Goya's condemnation of the action of the Spanish people is especially clear in plates 14 (probably alluding to the ferocious executions of French civilians in Valencia, instigated by Canonico Calvo) and 28 ("*Populacho*") says the caption about Spaniards who rage against the corpse of a Frenchman or of an *afrancesado*), but also in plate 39, where the horribly mutilated victims aren't as such clearly recognizable as belonging to one side or the other.

17. For the historical foundation of even the most brutal episodes represented by Goya, see: P. Lecaldano,



Goya doesn't aim at providing a faithful narrative account of events; even in his captions he never specifies places or dates - still less is he interested in illustrating battles or particular moments of war that possibly marked a turning point in the conflict. He rather catches from the point of view of an eye-witness - as he actually was for many of the illustrated scenes - the dimension of the everyday experience, even in the monotonous repetition, people have to go through in a war that lasts for years. Only one plate (pl.n.7) seems to refer to a precise historical personage (Agustina de Aragón) and to a specific episode which occurred in the course of the siege of Saragoza. During one of the longest and hardest sieges of the whole Peninsular War, the heroine was transporting food for the resistants, when she saw that a breach was opening: right where her beloved was fighting everyone had fallen and nobody was defending the city. So she took the smoking match from the hands of her lover and all alone fired the next cannon, managing to move the enemy back.<sup>18</sup> The episode is celebrated with a very classical composition, where the elegance and lightness of the female figure contrast with the heaviness of the cannon and the corpses lying on the earth. The episode was so renowned that the allusion was clear, but in this case, Goya prefers to give universal value to the scene and shows the heroine from the back rather than providing a portrait of her.<sup>19</sup>

The plate joins and completes the extensive series of episodes in the *Desastres* where women are the protagonists. Among the plates of the first section, more properly centred on war, a good half illustrate the involvement of women in war and their valour, that leads them to face with knives, swords, spears, stones, and improvised weapons the soldiers of the Napoleonic army, not lagging behind men, but in fact encouraging their struggle and arousing the admiration of the artist, who comments "*Qué valor*" ("What valour!"), "*Las mujeres dan valor*" ("Women show valour"), (see particularly pl.4, 5, 7). Women are also shown bravely defending themselves from rape, which was often extensively and systematically performed as a means of retaliation and revenge for other brutalities perpetrated against soldiers (see pl.9, 10, 11, 13 and 19). Besides illustrating the tortures and brutal executions that characterized this exasperated conflict, Goya repeatedly proposes the disheartening sights appearing to the eyes of the survivors, almost the dominant note of the entire cycle and certainly a call to reflect upon the really definitive and tangible results of this weary and intricate conflict: shapeless heaps of corpses, tangles of dead bodies thrown on the bare earth waiting in vain to be buried (pl.12, 18, 22, 23, 27, 30, 62, 63, 64). No less blood-curdling are the scenes of the first-aid and the poor hospitals improvised for sheltering the wounded (pl.20, 21, 24, 25). One of the most animated and dramatic images (pl.41) illustrates the burning of an hospital and the desperate flight of the survivors in the night illuminated by the glare of the flames.<sup>20</sup>

*Goya. I disastri della guerra*, Milano 1975. I think that Alfredo De Paz, *Goya, Arte e condizione umana*, Napoli, 1990, pp.23-25), is completely wrong in his theory of Goya having "sadistic pulsions" and "a taste for violence".

18. The heroic deeds of Agustina de Aragón (also known as the "Maid of Spain") are praised by three stanzas of Lord Byron's "*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*" (quoted in F. Klingender, *Goya in the Democratic Tradition*, London, 1948, p.147, n.1).

19. The recent catalogue *Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*, p.90, denies any reference of the plate to Agustina de Aragón, but doesn't explain the reasons for this view.

20. Plate n.41 probably refers to the historical burning of the hospital of Saragoza (F. Klingender, *Goya in the Democratic Tradition*, London, 1948, p.149).

From September 1811 till August 1812 (the year remembered as "*ano del hambre*" - "year of hunger") Madrid experienced a catastrophic famine, resulting from the plans of British army and Spanish juntas to reduce the French in the capital to starvation, by burning thousands of hectares of crops, blocking every transport of victuals on the roads and manoeuvring the purchase of stocks through secret agents.<sup>21</sup> It turned out to be a tragedy of enormous proportions: that year 20.000 people died in Madrid. Goya dedicated to this aspect of war the central section of *Desastres* - from pl.48 to pl.65 - not neglecting to leave space, near the images of death and despair, to gestures of charity, particularly feminine (pl.49, 51, 52, 59), but also to underline the aspect of social discrimination in such difficult circumstances (see especially pl.49, 54, 55, 58). This approach to the theme of indigence suffered by the poorest and the lack of solidarity among the affluent classes culminates in the couple of plates n.60 e 61. The first, disconsolate, with a desolated scene of death and despair, bears the title "*No hay quien los socorra*" ("There is no one to save them") and the second, following on with the conditional caption "*Si son da otro linage*" ("If they are of another breed"), shows a bitter contrast between a family on the verge of death, their hands outstretched in search of help, and the distant attitude of the rich on the right of the composition, wearing a grim smile. Reaching with these images a peak in the expression of his social sensitivity, Goya ends this unique series of prints giving shape to his feelings towards the very harsh political repression that awaited Spain after all the struggles and the hope of change ended with the return of king Ferdinand VII. Here Goya's language is more symbolic, but no less pregnant. In some of these plates, to better convey the idea of the bestiality of the regime, Goya resorts to animal symbolism. Here a monstrous representative of authority and bureaucracy (pl.71) bears big and black bat or vampire wings in place of ears, while predatory fingernails appear on his hands and feet: an unequivocal index of greed. He sits absorbed in writing into a heavy tome ("*Contra el bien general*" or "Against the Common Good" says the caption), isolated on top of a mountain, far from the prostrated and imploring crowd; without interrupting his job he lifts his left hand towards the sky, meaning that he merely carries out the divine will. Extremely striking, then, is the scene of the following plate (pl.72, with the title "*Las resultas*", "The consequences"), where in the foreground a winged monster, followed by swarms of flying analogues, is intent on physically devouring, even sucking a poor corpse supine on the floor: Spain defeated in the war is devoured by the greed, the corruption, the abuse of power and the violence of the monsters who have come back to life along with the cruel Ferdinand VII. The wolf of plate n.74 ("*Esto es lo peor*", "This is the worst") on the other hand refers to the ruthlessness of the Inquisition, re-established by the same Ferdinand VII.<sup>22</sup> In front of the beast a kneeling friar, also wearing a terrified look, holds the bottle of ink for it, while the wolf, leaving aside on the floor the book of law, writes sarcastic maxims ("Miserable humanity, yours is the blame") and the people in chains wind their way in front of it. Nigel Glendinning has first noticed that the cited maxims are in fact quotations from a poem of the Italian writer Giambattista Casti (1724-1803), called

21. Cf. P.Lecaldano, *cit.* n.14, pp.171-172.

22. The Catalogue "*Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*", p.358 ff. reports that it was a common image in texts of Goya's time to compare the members of the Inquisition with a pack of wolves.



Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *Que se rompa la cuerda*, *Desaster de la guerra*, plate n. 77

*Gli animali parlanti* ("The talking animals").<sup>23</sup> Casti's fablelike poem describes the abuses of monarchic power through animal metaphors; in this context, the she-wolf is a central character representing a corrupt queen who comes to power after the death of the king. Also cats and owls, very frequent in Goya's plates, have negative symbolic value in Casti's poem.<sup>24</sup>

The role of the Church in the Restoration is underlined in its various aspects by Goya, who repeatedly treats the subject with different images and approaches. At first he proposes two caricatures of religious fanaticism, one where the resumption of anachronistic rites reintroduced by Ferdinand VII is manifestly associated with ignorance (pl.66). The Old Regime's rituality revived by the king is performed by a donkey and its force is based on the veneration of ignorance. In the image immediately following, (pl.67) more stress is put on the close connivance between the revival of popular rites like processions (the devotional statues show here a little indecorously their wooden core and their heavy materiality) and the return into play of the most reactionary aristocracy with all its hereditary privileges. This is represented by decrepit personages, precariously bent by the weight of different statues of the Virgin (*Nuestra Senora de la Soledad* or the famous *Virgen de Atocha*) and dressed in an absolutely

23. Nigel Glending, "A Solution to the Enigma of Goya's *Emphatic Caprices*", in: *Apollo*, 1978, n.107, pp.186-191 quotes and translates the entire passage: "But so long as there are people in the world who can sacrifice // thousands of victims and spill other men's blood just how // and when, and in what quantity they please, without running // any risk themselves, enslaved humanity, do not complain of // their barbarity, for the blame is yours."

24. J. Tomlinson, *Graphic Evolutions: the Print Series of Francisco Goya*, New York, 1989, p.32.

obsolete fashion, corresponding to the backwardness of their mentality.<sup>25</sup> A very fitting metaphor of the opportunism and responsibilities of the Church in the context of the Restoration, when the Inquisition was devoted above all to carrying out political trials against Liberals and whoever had taken part in the pro-French government, has been invented by Goya with the figure of a prelate walking on a rope stretched across a public place, over the heads of the crowd (pl.77). The tightrope walker keeps himself up with dexterity, wearing an impassible face, but as the caption says "The rope is going to break" ("*Que se rompe la cuerda*"). In another plate, of less immediate iconographic evidence (pl.68), the artist shows sharp criticism of the hypocrisy and indecency of the clergy, by portraying a monk sitting on the ground in a vulgar pose, surrounded by heaps of votive objects, paintings and relics piled up on the floor in grotesque disorder; some of these objects, among which waxen masks and other *ex-voto*, imply heavy allusions to the moral vices often imputed to the monks in anticlerical texts coeval with Goya.<sup>26</sup>



Francisco Goya y Lucientes, *No saben el camino*, Desaster de la guerra, plate n. 70

A disconsolate evaluation of the political situation which had arisen after the vanishing of every hope of renewal in the direction of a constitutional system, finds expression in an image of emblematic suggestiveness (pl.70): monks, prelates and high dignitaries loyal to Ferdinand, labeled in their conservatism by hats, clothes and wigs belonging to an out-dated fashion, move tied to each other by the neck, with their eyes lowered to the floor, in a procession lacking any apparent destination, that winds around across desolate ravines. The caption says eloquently "They don't

25. See Catalogue "*Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*", p. 343 ff.

26. *Ibidem*, pp.346-348.

know the way" ("*No saben el camino*"). Recent literature explains this plate by referring to paintings of Bosch and Brueghel related to the proverb "the blind lead the blind", current in Netherlandish art.<sup>27</sup> I rather suggest that in this image Goya made a reference to apocalyptic imagery, to the very traditional iconography, known and popular since the great sculptural and pictorial decorations of the Middle Ages, where the damned go to Hell tied to each other by a rope around the neck. The dramatic destiny of Spain is transposed in an apocalyptic dimension.

In some of the very last plates of the series, then, Goya synthesizes his thought and his feelings as a convinced follower of the Enlightenment movement, who had burnt with enthusiasm for the revolutionary ideals, for the up-surge in the Spanish people of the will to fight for freedom, finding himself later forced to square accounts with the bitter realities of a blindly rampant violence and the Restoration of a regime more narrow-minded than in the past.

In this sense we should read the macabre image of a skeletal corpse supine on the floor (pl.69), upon which obscure, monstrous, figures loom while in a last effort he writes on a piece of paper the word "*Nada*" ("Nothing"). The caption clinches "*Nada. Ello lo dice*" ("Nothing. It speaks by itself"): all the horrors of war and fighting have only provoked obscurantism and absolutism to react and finally cancel every hope and illusion.

At the very end of the series, though, Goya expresses the re-emergence of hope in a couple of plates probably executed during the constitutional parenthesis of 1820-23. First he shows the death of Truth ("*Murió la verdad*", pl.79), a young woman lying on the floor, still radiating light around, mourned only by Justice with her scales folded in one hand, but promptly "blessed" and buried by members of the clergy; among these it has been attempted to identify historical personalities, protagonists of the most aggressive and intransigent reaction.<sup>28</sup> In the following plate - the last one in the edition printed by the *Academia de San Fernando* - new hope seems to arise, at least in interrogative form. Although frightful monsters threaten her with clubs and heavy old books, Truth continues to radiate light, the tombstone that covers her is already removed and the caption asks: "*Si resuscitará?*" ("And if she resuscitates?"). So, after viewing all the burden of horror brought by indiscriminate violence and repression of the people, a triumph of the truth is still seen as possible.

As for what Goya meant with "Truth", we should consider a plate which was included in the original set of *Desastres* given by the artist to his friend Ceán Bermúdez, but left out by the edition of the *Academia* and most present-day publications, possibly because of its minor aesthetic qualities. With the title "*Esto es lo verdadero*" ("This is the truth") we see Truth with her arm on the shoulder of an old peasant with a heavy hoe. Truth sheds light on the whole environment: a rural setting full of crops and trees loaded with fruits. As a conclusion, when all the shooting and fighting is over, Goya seems to propose a withdrawal to nature, to more solid values, maybe inspired by the famous and disenchanting end of Voltaire's *Candide*: "...il faut cultiver notre jardin."

27. See the Catalogue of D. Schaar, *Los desastres de la guerra*, Frankfurt, 1992, p.148 and J. Tomlinson, *Goya y Lucientes*, Oxford, 1994, p.200.

28. Cf. Catalogue "*Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*", pp.361-363.