Goya’s Prints: “To tell men forever that they should not be barbarians”

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Francisco Goya y Lucientes is often viewed as a heroic figure in the history of art. He is remembered as an independent and brave moralist—sarcastic, indignant, critical of vice, superstition, religion, and authority. Even after the development of the atom bomb, machine guns, tanks, and other modern nightmares, Goya’s series of prints about Spain’s war with Napoleon—etched 200 years ago—are still the most potent and moving condemnation of the horrors of war western art has produced. It’s fitting that Robert Hughes in his authoritative biography characterizes Goya as a “true hinge figure, the last of what was going and the first of what was to come: the last of the Old Masters and the first Modernist.”¹ The Spanish artist is in many ways responsible for introducing the art of ideas and the modern social function of the artist is a social critic unbound by convention as opposed to a decorator following the whims of kings and popes.

Goya’s printed work is a small fraction of his total artistic output. However, his reputation as “the indignant ironist, the protester against death and injustice”² appears to originate almost exclusively from his work in prints. This paper will examine Goya’s relationship to various functions of the multiple print. I argue that Goya combined two previously separate functions of the print—a commercial endeavor and a means to inconspicuously circulate potentially subversive information to the masses—and in so doing fundamentally changed the function of art. While there has always been a populist, anti-authoritarian quality to prints,³ Goya transformed what had been an undercurrent the core characteristic of the medium.

To understand Goya’s relationship to his printed work it is helpful to know some about the world he lived in. Spain in the 18th and 19th centuries was, compared to the rest of Europe, backwards. Spain was ruled by a monarch with absolute power and a top-heavy, ridged system of social stratification that crippled the economy. In Spain, the Catholic Church held a power over the minute details of peoples’ lives that it had lost in most of the rest of Europe and its Holy Order, the

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² Hughes, *Goya*, 20.
infamous Inquisition, violently and mercilessly suppressed any and all heresy, indecency, or ideas that threatened the power and wealth of the Church. A common theme that can be drawn from the travel accounts of visitors to Spain in this time is their collective shock at “the widespread poverty and misery of the Spanish peasant laborers.”

Aside from a very small group of enlightened and educated liberals, *ilustrados*, who sought to reform and enlighten Spain and *aficionados* who idolized and consumed French philosophies and styles, the Spanish people were devoutly religious, superstitious, illiterate, prude, and hyper-nationalistic. Technologies and ideas that were developed elsewhere in Europe took decades to be accepted in Spain—the people had a deep distrust of anything coming from across the Pyrenees by virtue of it not being Spanish.

*First Prints*

Spain was behind Europe in terms of printmaking in the 18th century. At the time, prints were mainly reproduced artworks for sale and distribution. Travel was expensive and time consuming. Prints made after paintings were therefore the primary means for artists to share their accomplishments across wide distances with large audiences. However, printmaking took a long time to find a place in Spanish art, and was in its infancy when Goya stated his career as an artist. As late as 1773, Antonio Ponz Piquer lamented in his account of his travels across Spain,

“Europe knows very vaguely that there are wonderful works in Madrid[…]but few people have any idea of what they are because they have scarcely seen one miserable print of them[…]What is there, good or mediocre in France and Italy, and in a thousand other places, which has not been made known to the world through prints?”

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In response to this variance with other European nations, King Carlos III, himself an amateur engraver⁶, established the Royal Calcography at Madrid “with the motivating idea of disseminating prints which supported officially sanctioned value codes amidst a wider public”⁷ and to bolster the reputation of Spanish art abroad.

Although there were subversive images circulated among trusted groups of friends outside of systems of commerce (and therefore censorship), as a young artist Goya would have been most familiar with prints as a means of reproducing other artworks. Much of what Goya knew about art he learned through studying prints. He was extremely lucky that his first mentor, José Luzán, had a large collection of prints, which Goya copied and studied for years.⁸ After moving to Madrid Goya’s brother-in-law, a painter with membership in the Royal Academy was able to secure work for him painting designs for tapestries that would decorate the palace. While this was not considered a prestigious position, it did allow Goya access to the palace, and therefore the artwork inside, which the vast majority of his countrymen would never be allowed to see.

It was while he was working on the tapestry designs that he also began to etch reproductions after Velázquez. For Goya, it seems that the effort was primarily a commercial endeavor. In 1778, the prints were advertised for sale in the *Gazeta de Madrid*, with descriptions of which artworks were available, which two bookstores were selling them, and how much they cost.⁹ While there is nothing subversive about these early etchings, there is certainly an element of populist sentiment involved in their creation. Goya was working for the king and looking to generate income—and no doubt to bolster his own reputation—but the etchings also reflect an effort to bring art out of the palaces and put it into the hands of the people.

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⁸ Hughes, *Goya*, 33.
By 1799 Goya had scraped his way to the top of his profession. He had been appointed the first painter to the court of king Carlos IV, and was a leading member of Spain’s royal arts academy. He had achieved everything a painter in 18th Spain could dream of achieving. No one can know for sure exactly why he made the choice at this time to print and publish *Los Caprichos*, a series of 80 etchings that “mercilessly [lash] out at human follies and vices as deviations from the path of reason, justice and enlightenment.”

The radical change in Goya’s artwork is almost certainly at least partially related to the severe sickness he suffered from in 1792 which nearly killed him. For months he was totally incapacitated, unable to walk and suffering from severe and frequent hallucinations. He recovered but the disease, whatever it was, left him stone deaf for the remainder of his life. He was effectively cut off from the world he had worked his entire life to conquer, communicating only by writing on a tablet he carried around. Some have suggested that the sea change in Goya’s work that occurred after 1792 originating from his new disability “enhanced

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his sensitivity to those who live in misery[...and] produced an increasing alienation from the elite world into which he had, by virtue of his talent, graduated from his peasant origins.”

This is certainly a romantic idea, but is only half-true. Goya was not born to an elite status, but he was never a peasant either. He was the son of a gilder and privileged enough to learn to read and write—his only way to communicate after losing his hearing. Goya was totally cut off from “those who live in misery” as the majority of poor Spaniards were illiterate. His elite ilustrado friends were the only people left that he could communicate with. Still, deafness must have imposed a terrible loneliness on the artist that may in part explain the pessimistic view of society expressed in the Caprichos.

However, to attribute Los Caprichos only to Goya’s personal suffering misses the point and power of the etchings entirely. If Goya’s deafness did anything to his artistic career it enhanced his ability to see. “Deafness,” Hughes remarks reflecting on the change in Goya’s portraiture after his illness, “makes you more aware of gesture, physical expression, body language. You learn to ‘read’ signs beyond words to perceive the minute particulars of how faces and bodies reveal themselves.”

Another factor associated with Goya’s illness was important to the development of the Caprichos. He spent several months recovering at his friend Gaspar de Jovellanos’s home. Jovellano, the quintessential ilustrado, was an important Spanish politician and liberal reformer whose ideas almost certainly influenced Goya’s views on Spanish society. More importantly perhaps, during his long recovery Goya studied the print cabinets of his enlightened and influential friends and saw the satirical etchings of British artist such as William Hogarth and others. The characteristic titles that accompany each image of Los Caprichos first appeared in Goya’s drawings after he studied the English caricatures owned by his friends during this long period of recovery.

The Caprichos were Goya’s way to address the people he was now alienated from. He wanted to

11 Anwer, “Goya’s Engravings,” 45.
12 Hughes, Goya, 165.
13 Hughes, Goya, 23.
14 Hughes, Goya, 173.
reflect to the public what he now saw clearly as an outsider in the world he had spend the first half of his life conquering. A Capricho is a work of fantasy, something imagined rather than observed. To the art academies of the day “‘capricho’ is a dirty word” Goya took the “low art” of the masses and transformed it into something new. He was to be the “first artists to use the word capricho to denote images that had some critical purpose.”

In terms of content, what is revolutionarily modern about the prints is that they moved artwork into the realm of theater and poetry—that is into the realm of ideas. Goya stated as much in the advertisement he wrote to promote the sale of the prints; “the censure of human errors and vices that is the proper domain not only of theater and poetry, but also of art.” Historians, critics and psychologists have argued about the meaning of Goya’s Caprichos for a long time but the artist’s own words written on the preparatory drawing of the 43rd image offer the clearest summary of the series intentions: “The author dreaming. His one intention is to banish harmful beliefs commonly held, and with this work of caprichos to perpetuate the solid testimony of truth.” The 80 prints are divided into three sections. The title plate shows the artist in profile, looking down with judgment and scorn, at us, the viewers. Plates 1-36 show the “ follies of society,” women subduing and abusing men, men mistreating and abusing women, prostitution, arranged marriage, corporal punishment in childrearing, superstition, and abuses by religious officials. The second section, plates 37-42, depict donkeys personifying the leaders of society. Plates 43-80 introduced by the famous El sueño de la razón produce monstruos. (The sleep of reason produces monsters) repeats the ideas of the first section using fantastic and frightening images of monsters, deformed creatures and especially witches. (That witches were real was an accepted fact for most Spaniards, but in the Caprichos they mostly stand in for monks and clergy.

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16 Hughes, Goya, 180.
19 Hults, Print in the West, 398.
Francisco Goya y Lucientes, pintor (Francisco Goya y Lucientes, painter), title plate from the series Los Caprichos. Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

El si pronuncian y la mano alargan Al primero que llega. (They say “yes” and give their hand to the first who comes.), plate 2 from the series Los Caprichos. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Todos Caerán. (All will fall); plate 19 from the series Los Caprichos. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

¿Qué la descañenan! (How They Pluck Her!), plate 21 from the series Los Caprichos. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco Collection.
Asta su abuelo (And So Was his Grandfather); plate 39 from the series Los Caprichos. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco Collection.

Tu que no puedes. (You who cannot); plate 42 from the series Los Caprichos. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

El sueño de la razón produce monstrous. (The sleep/dream of reason produces monsters); plate 43 from the series Los Caprichos. Berlin State Museum.

¿Que pico de Oro! (What a golden beak); plate 53 from the series Los Caprichos. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.
It was not only Goya’s decision to use the established format of the capricho that made the works populous in nature, nor his appropriations and twisting of common sayings which replaced “pedantic codes” of high art with “the many-layered wisdom of the common people.” The populous nature of the work comes largely from his decision to create and distribute them as prints. Printing an initial run of 300 sets of 80 prints was a huge effort—and expensive. Goya undertook the project with no patron or sponsor. (He seems to have included some expensive reams of paper on a invoice of supplies paid for by the king for a fresco he was working on at the same time so perhaps Carlos IV sponsored the project without realizing it.) His infamous advertisement published on the front page of the *Diario de Madrid* on February 6, 1799 announced to the public (or at least the public who could read) that the prints were for sale at the perfume and liquor shop at *Calle del Desengaño, 1*. The announcement declared that the purpose of the works was to critique society and was careful to point out that no satire of specific individuals was intended, although a survey of readings by Goya’s contemporaries shows that one did not have to be a genius to see through the partially obscured references in the etchings. Eleanoe Sayre notes that “the content of the *Caprichos* reflects what intelligent, enlightened Spaniards were thinking. What is surprising is that Goya took the risk of printing and selling his satires.” But Goya’s intention was not to make private statements, the prints, by the virtue of being prints, were always intended as a way for the artist to communicate with as large of an audience as possible.

Goya’s intentions in the use of the print medium seem to have been multifaceted: he sought to better Spanish society by critique, to make some money for himself, and perhaps, to create a message that could survive the censorship efforts of the Inquisition. It was only in the final goal that Goya succeeded (during his lifetime). His unusual choice to sell the prints in a perfume and liquor store rather than book stores (which were monitored by inquisitors) suggest that Goya knew these prints held the potential to get him into trouble. He only sold 27 sets before he pulled the

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prints because someone had brought them to the attention of the Inquisition. The prints failed to have the transformative effect on society Goya seemed to hope they would. Their sale was also a financial disaster for the artist. Despite this, their multiplicity ensured that tracking down and destroying the distributed prints would have been a much more difficult task for the censors than destroying or hiding a single painting. Once Goya’s message was out, the print medium made it impossible to fully contain; the cat was out of the bag.

A few years after their failed retail offering, Goya convinced the royal chalcography to purchase the remaining editions and the plates in exchange for a lifetime pension for his son, Javier. Goya’s letter exaggerated the series’ success, claiming he had sold 27 sets in 2 days (they were on sale for 15 days before being pulled,) and suggested that an additional five or six thousand sets should be printed and sold. The petition also evoked a sense of nationalism; Goya stated that he did not want the plates to fall into foreign hands after his death.24 In the end, preserving the Caprichos was about a legacy. Goya realized that the profitable sale of the prints was not possible in his lifetime, but the multiple nature of the print allowed him to ensure that his ideas would eventually reach a wide audience; whether or not he directly profited from it seems to have become a secondary concern.

*Los Desastres de la Guerra*

Goya never profited from what would become his most striking and famous effort in prints, *The Disasters of War*. The prints were never published during the artist’s lifetime and as a project represented a serious risk to his safety. Some scholars have suggested that the Disasters were intended to be private reflections but when one considers what producing the etchings would require of an aging, cash-strapped artist in wartime the argument makes no sense. The Disasters are prints because Goya intended for his ideas to reach a wide audience in a way that could thwart the efforts of anyone who would try to silence him. In response to one of his assistance who asked him why he worked to “‘paint these barbarities that men commit?’ Goya replied, ‘To tell men

forever that they should not be barbarians.”25

The 82 plates that make up the series were created between 1810-1820 in response to the war between Spain and Napoleon and the restoration of the Spanish monarchy that followed. After the regular Spanish army was quickly defeated, the Spanish fiercely resisted French occupation, employing for the first time guerrilla warfare. Napoleon’s frustrated and bewildered troops responded to the unconventional Spanish tactics with brutal repression and acts of revenge against the Spanish fighters (and suspected fighters) and the civilians who supported them (willingly or under threat of violence from the freedom fighters.) The guerrillas in turn responded with atrocities of their own, killing French prisoners as acts of revenge. For years the conflict spiraled into an ever worsening cycle of violence as each side tried to outdo the other in the horrors they inflicted.

When the war ended, Fernando VII claimed the throne, to the bitter disappointment of Spain’s enlightened liberals, and the delight of a populous Goya was coming to see less as a people in need of the light of reason and more of a monstrous and unruly mob. A vengeful, suspicious, cruel and inept tyrant, hellbent on securing his absolute power at any cost, Fernando did his best to undo any semblance of progress Spain had achieved since the time of Isabella and Fernando. The liberal constitution Spain’s intellectuals had crafted in 1812 was abolished, along with the limits on power it had placed on the monarch and the basic human rights it had ensured for the people. Apart from one-state run publication, the press was shut down, as were all universities, theaters or other symbols of learning or thought. The Inquisition was reinstated. Even as his allies threatened to pull their support, Fernando encouraged roaming mobs who were murdering Spaniards suspected of having supported the French or of having liberal beliefs. They defaced and destroyed monuments that had been erected to celebrate Spain’s constitution, all the while

“chanting imbecilic slogans in praise of Fernando and absolutism:

Vivan las cadenas,
Viva la oppression;
Viva el ray Fernando,
Muera la Nación!

(Long live our chains, long live oppression; long live king Fernando, death to the nation!)”

Like the earlier Caprichos, the Disasters can be understood in three sections. The first depicts general horrors and atrocities of the war. The second set of images describe the famine in Madrid Goya lived through. The final plates are caprichos dealing with Fernando’s restoration of the monarchy. Unlike the images Goya had put forward in 1799, there is no satire or humor in these images—only a bitter sense of rage.

No se puede mirar. (One can’t look); plate 26 from the series The Disasters of War. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Hughes, Goya, 325-326.
Si son de otro linaje. (But they are of another breed); plate 61 from the series The Disasters of War. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Que se rompe la cuerda (Let the rope break); plate 77 from the series The Disasters of War. ARTstor slide gallery.
The image of war, violence and human brutality that Goya etched were more than reportage or a personal catharsis. He “surely anticipated its moral impact on posterity.”

Goya knew from experience that paintings were far too easy for those who would silence him to destroy. He had been forced to paint over canvases he had been working on to hide them from French troops and was subsequently unable to restore them. Other canvases he was working on were slashed to pieces by soldiers. It seems that Goya intended to publish the first fifty-six plates in 1814, after Napoleon had been driven out but before Fernando had abolished the constitution. The plates were proofed, titled and numbered. However, that year the king abolished the constitution and “declared that the war be forgotten” which made publication impossible. Goya again seems to have intended to publish the series in 1820, when unrest caused by Fernando’s inept governance and the economic collapse that followed forced him to accept the constitution he had banned. Goya produced another volume of proofs with titles and numbed the plates. The 1820 version included additional images attacking the restoration of the absolute monarchy. Goya, perhaps wisely, decided not to publish the series at the time. In 1823 Fernando once again abolished the constitution he had been forced to accept. Once restored to absolute power, his vindictive rule reached new levels of paranoid cruelty.

The plates for the *Disasters* were left with Javier who later gave them to the Real Academia de nobles artes de San Fernando. When it was safe, the academy published an initial edition in 1864. The academy used a set of trial proofs Goya had entrusted to his friend Juan Augustín Ceán Bermúdez (he wanted help with spelling corrections on the titles) to correctly number the plates. The *Disasters* would eventually be published as many as 1000 times. Astoundingly, the prints that were too dangerous for Goya to publish while he was alive are now in nearly every printroom in the world.
Of all of Goya’s graphic work, the prints that have been come to be known as *Los Disparates* are the most enigmatic. Goya worked on the plates between 1816 and 1817, during and after the publication of *Tauromaquia* (see the following section) at the same time he was finishing the caprichos that would come to make up the final movement of the *Disasters*. Almost nothing is known about Goya’s intentions with these prints. The twenty-two completed plates were left in a chest at his home in Spain when Goya fled for France at the age of 78. (Goya lived to be 82, which was an remarkable at a time when the average life expectancy in Spain was between twenty-seven and thirty-two years. That he lived to eighty-two was lucky, that he did so and continued working till the end, losing none of his love of life, curiosity, or power of will “was well-nigh miraculous.”)

Spain was becoming increasingly dangerous for its liberals, or those suspected of being liberals. Many of Spain’s *ilustrados* and *aficionados* had initially welcomed Napoleon’s invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. He abolished the hated Inquisition, limited the power of the Church and the monarchy, and created a constitution that secured basic freedoms and economic reforms for the people. When Napoleon’s troops were expelled from Spain many of the nation’s best and brightest left too. Those who didn’t faced violent reprisals from the mob, whipped into a frenzy by Fernando VII. In 1824, Goya applied for permission to visit hot springs in France on the advice of his doctors, which was granted. He never visited the hot springs. Instead, he headed to Bordeaux to join a community of Spanish expatriates living there, spending time visiting Paris. He make one final brief trip to Madrid to receive his royal pension for his five decades of service as the first court painter. Fernando’s spies initially kept tabs on all of Goya’s activities in France, but eventually the king decided that the deaf old man was more or less harmless and left him to live out his final years in peace.

The etchings were initially published by the Academy of San Fernando in 1864 under the title *Los Proverbios* (The Proverbs). The 1864 edition only included 18 plates. Nine editions were
published between 1864 and 1937, but not until 1877 were the other four plates included in the edition. The title Los Disparates, which is used for the series today, is Goya’s. He used it to label at least fourteen of the trial proofs he printed. Goya may have intended there to be at least twenty-five plates (of the fourteen proofs he number titled the highest number is twenty-five. There are also eight drawings probably intended for the series of which no plates are known).

Despite what Linda Hults refers to as the “especially regrettable” and “checkered history of the publication of this series,” the unfinished Disparates, when viewed alongside Goya’s other images created as multiples can still tell us something about the artist’s intentions. Goya’s chosen title translates into English as folly. Hults notes that:

“Had Goya been able to complete the series, he would perhaps have provided some written explanation of purpose, like that provided for the Caprichos in the Diario de Madrid advertisement. The Disparates seem to condense several of the major themes of Goya’s graphic art: the follies and misrepresentations of male/female relationships, the abuse of the Spanish people by the Church and clergy, pretensions, fears, and impossible dreams. The Spanish people might be the main theme of these etchings. Ignorant and easily led, like the bulls blown about by the wind in Fool’s Folly.”

But the Disparates are notably darker in tone than the sarcastic, often tongue-in-cheek public admonitions of the Caprichos. Goya seems to be repeating himself 16 years or so on, this time having lost his patience. The content of the series may help explain why it was discovered unfinished. The stinging satire of the Caprichos may have held some appeal to the Spanish public, although its publication was dangerous. The Disparates harsh rebuke of the foolish mob had no

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32 Hults, Print in the West, 417.  
34 Hults, Print in the West, 417.  
35 Hults, Print in the West, 421.
chance of reaching a popular audience during the time the plates were etched and its publication would have likely been lethal for the artist. This is, of course, conjecture—Goya’s true intentions can never really be known.

Ridiculous Folly; plate 3 from Los Proverbios. ARTstoe slide gallery

Modo de Volar. (A Way of Flying); Plate 13 from Los Proverbios. Smith College Museum of Art
It is in comparing The Disasters and Los Caprichos to Tauromaquia that one can gain the clearest insight into Goya’s understanding of his use of print, and so, although the plates were made before Los Disparates, an examination of this series is the most appropriate conclusion to this essay. The Disasters and Tauromaquia were produced around the same time, but the tone and intention of the two series of etchings are drastically different; the first making full use of the power of the multiple image to make a powerful and lasting social impact, the later to appeal to the taste of consumers and generate income for the artist. Los Caprichos and Tauromaquia were the only sets of etchings that Goya published himself\(^{36}\). Examining the differences in the ways Goya chose to publish the two works seems to indicate that he saw the distribution of prints both as a method of earning income and as a way to spread ideas further than censorship could reach.

Tauromaquia (bullfighting) is a set of 33 etchings which were probably begun in 1815 when Fernando VII’s declaration that the war was to be forgotten made the publication of the Disasters Goya had been working on since 1810 impossible.\(^{37}\) The etchings of Tauromaquia can be read in two parts. The first set of images outline the history of bullfighting as Goya imagined it to be, from primitive hunts in the countryside, to a Moorish spectator event, to an activity of nobles and kings and finally to a highly stylized art form of the people. The second set of prints were contemporary images of the spectacle. Some of these images are generalized maneuvers, while others show specific famous fighters or well known-events, such as plate 21, The Dreadful Events in the Front Rows of the Ring at Madrid and the Death of the Mayor of Torrejón, which recounts an event from 1801 which Goya claims to have personally witnessed. “Salto el toro al tendido y mato à dos. Yo lo vi (The bull jumped into the bleachers and killed two. I saw it.)\(^{38}\)

\(^{36}\) Goya also published a series of four lithographs he made with the help of the French printer Gaulon collectively referred to as The Bulls of Bordeaux, which, like Tauromaquia, depict “Spanish entertainment.” The prints were made during Goya’s self imposed exile in France. Since they are similar in intention and content to his earlier series of etchings they are not mentioned specifically in the essay but everything said about Tauromaquia can be understood to apply to The Bulls of Bordeaux as well.


Several factors may have influenced Goya’s decision to create and publish this series of prints. First, the subject personally interested him. Goya, in contrast to the majority of his *ilustrado* friends who found the tradition barbaric, loved the tauromaquia. As a romantic and a Spaniard he seems to have found something inspiring about the brutality of the ancient conflict between man and wild nature,
in feats of bravery and heroism, and in the thrill of the spectacle. Goya participated in bullfights as a young man and was friends with his favorite bullfighters in Madrid. Secondly, there may have been some political considerations behind the series as well. Goya needed to prove himself to be a true and loyal Spaniard (he had painted portraits of some French officials before the outbreak of the war.) Both Carlos III and Carlos IV had abhorred the brutality of the spectacle and taken steps to limit the bullfights. However, Fernando VII “was all in favor of it, as a means of currying favor with the people whose tyrant he was.” Illustrating his affinity for an activity other liberals were opposed to may have helped him avoid the suspicions of those looking for any hints of disloyalty among the people of Spain.

Finally, Tauromaquia was intended to be a much needed financial success for Goya, albeit one with a populist bent. Goya’s career as a court painter was effectively finished in 1814. Fernando VII preferred the work of a now essentially forgotten painter, Vincent López. Just as well for Goya, who loathed Fernando. Goya would have been familiar with a set of fairly simple etchings published in 1790 which had been extremely popular in Spain and abroad. The designs were so popular they were adopted to decorate porcelain, furniture, fans, etc. By virtue of its subject matter the popularity of Tauromaquia

“at least in Spain, was more or less guaranteed: it is a ‘heroic’ narrative, with none of the sharp and biting ironies and occasional obscurities of the Caprichos. Its subject matter, though harsh and death-laded...is not terrifying like the Disasters of War. And anyone who has a minimal acquaintance with the history and vocabulary of bullfighting can understand it...Moreover it had an exotic appeal outside of Spain.”

However Tauromaquia never proved to be as popular as the simple engravings of earlier

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39 Hughes, Goya, 359.
41 Hughes, Goya, 364-365.
printmakers. Goya doesn’t seem to have been capable of making something kitsch enough to become easily digestible souvenirs or pottery designs. Even in the most straightforward of his print series Goya snuck in some social critique. The print, even in Goya’s most commercial application of the medium, was a way of speaking to the people. Sayre remarks that:

“if he could not, during Fernando VII’s oppressive reign, publish etchings of the stunning achievement of ordinary men during the war for the liberation of Spain, Goya could at and did publish the Tauromaquia. Here, plainly to be seen by anyone with sufficient knowledge, are commoners taking a pastime from the nobility and transforming it into a great art.”

Also present in the series is a further appeal to reason, as Goya shows how men are able to overcome terrifying and powerful beasts through skill, creativity and ingenuity.

The publishing of Tauromaquia was done in a fairly standard manner. Goya’s friend Juan Augstin Ceán Bermúdez was asked by the artist to edit the titles. Goya’s titles were short and pithy. For example, the plate published with the title The Moors, settled in Spain, disregarding the superstitions of the Koran, took over this hunt and skill and spear a bull in the countryside Goya had simply titled, Of the Moors. Ceán Bermúdez also rearranged Goya’s initial plate order in order to construct a more coherent historical narrative. Finally he recommended that Goya drop the image that had originally been included as the last image, A way of Flying, a work of imagination that shows a group of men suspended in the air by means of personal flying machines each of them is wearing. Had the image been included, it would have transformed the whole series from a celebration of bullfighting to an allegory of human mastery over nature through invention, while invoking Icarus and the disaster that may befall those who fly too close to the sun. Goya however, accepted all of the edits, and offered the 33 prints for sale in a print shop, advertised for 300 reales for the set or

10 reales for individual prints—a price “no more than the average price for any uncolored etching of comparable size then sold in Madrid.”

Goya’s publication of *Tauromaquia* makes the unusual aspects of the publication of the *Caprichos* more evident. There was nothing dangerous about *Tauromaquia*—the series, beautiful and moving as the images are, is essentially a populist commercial enterprise, marketed and sold in the conventional manner. Goya’s cryptic advertisement and his unusual choice to sell the *Caprichos* in a perfume and liquor store indicate that the artist was keenly aware that the content of the etchings was dangerous. Certainly, Goya had hoped to profit from the *Caprichos*. But commercial success or failure seems to have been a secondary consideration to the his primary goal: to use the qualities that print offered—multiplicity of images that were easily distributed to a mass audience—to make known to all of Spanish society the evils he saw while avoiding censorship as much as possible.

In the end, Goya’s prints did not free the Spanish people from their superstitions, vices or unquestioning loyalties to inept, corrupt and undeserving leaders. Neither did they turn Europe off of war. None of his prints made him much money either. Goya’s pioneering use of the multiple did, however, have a profound and lasting effect on the future of art in Europe. Goya transformed the print into an artwork meant to address the people with critical ideas without the mediation of church or state sponsorship. Years after his death, Goya’s prints were admired and studied in France and across Europe—Delacroix, for example, made copies after them. The effect his multiples had on art and the role of the artist in society artist is hard to overstate. Because of Goya’s prints, artists became conversant in ideas rather than in images alone. They traded the role of the skilled decorator for that of the prophetic moralist, the social critic.

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