The Chapman Brothers: Great deeds with Goya’s dead?
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**Introduction**

The purpose of a scarecrow is to frighten birds from the field where it is planted, but the most terrifying painting is there to attract visitors [...] Torture [...] differs little from that of the scarecrow: unlike art, it is offered to sight in order to repel us from the horror it puts on display. The painted torture, conversely, does not attempt to reform us. Art never takes on itself the work of the judge [...] When horror is subject to the transfiguration of an authentic art, it becomes a pleasure, an intense pleasure [...] Art may have finally liberated itself from the service of religion, but it maintains its servitude with regard to horror. It remains open to the representation of that which repulses.

George Bataille (1949) *The Cruel Practice of Art*

The twentieth century French philosopher George Bataille’s essay considers elements of challenging art which at times can be difficult to look at, and even harder to truly contemplate. This dissertation investigates the reoccurring re-use of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes' *The Disasters of War*¹ (1809-15) by Jake & Dinos Chapman, whose adaptations and re-creations have brought a masterpiece depicting the cruellest acts of man to a new audience, shocking both those familiar with Goya's work and newcomers alike.

The study will examine the effects of their rework and consider the intentions the Chapmans. Concentrating on related works in two of the Chapmans' exhibitions: a solo show at the Victoria Miro Gallery called *Great Deeds Against the Dead* (1994), and their Turner Prize nomination which was presented at the Tate Britain (2003).

This analysis will be underpinned with supporting appropriation theory from philosophers such as Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Walter Benjamin. Abject theorist Georges Bataille will be drawn upon as one of the Chapmans' main influences, as will the nihilist Friedrich Nietzsche. The Chapmans' application of artistic techniques described by Guy Debord and Viktor Shklovsky will also be investigated.

The dissertation focuses on the Chapmans' intentions with respect to their re-making, and subsequent alteration of Goya's *The Disasters*; in a search for a profoundness beyond the salvo of shock and revulsion which their work is known for.

¹ To be referred to in this text as *The Disasters.*
Chapter One: Victoria Miro Gallery (1994)

In 1994 two brothers from Cheltenham, Jake Chapman (b. 1966) and Dinos Chapman (b. 1962), exhibited *The Great Deeds Against the Dead* (1994, illus. 1) at the Victoria Miro Gallery in London. It was shown alongside two earlier works by the Chapmans which were also inspired by Goya’s work.

*The Great Deeds Against the Dead* is a life-sized three dimensional simulacra comprised of three naked figures appearing to be made from shopfront mannequins adorning a fibreglass tree. One is hanging upside down, the second is lashed to the trunk and the third one has been dismembered and decapitated; his body parts are arranged on the branch. Blood runs from the dummies’ groins (known for their lack of anatomical accuracy) illustrating their...
castration. The sculpture’s fabrication exhibits no marks to give away the artists’ hand. The plastic dummies are wearing polyester wigs and moustaches maintaining the mannequin aesthetic, the artists selection of inert manmade materials dehumanises and cleanses the characters. The fibreglass base reinforces the overall look of an enlarged tableau.

Those familiar with Goya’s catalogue would recognise the scene of torture as being appropriated from *The Disasters*. A critical body of work depicting atrocities from the Peninsular War (1808-1814). A series famed for its manifesto which blows the whistle on the inhumanity of man, it is arguably one of the first journalistic war art collections, and considers the suffering on both sides of a conflict instead of simply celebrating a victory.

The Chapmans’ remake of Goya’s black and white prints introduces colour and they incorporate figures that are selected to look like everyday objects normally used to show-off fashion wear. They selected materials with “the intention of detracting from the expressionist qualities of a Goya drawing and tried to find the most neurotic medium possible” (J. Chapman in Maloney, 1996, p.64). To the viewer the materials are incongruous with the scene, provoking a realisation that the plastic dummies represent real people. The Chapmans described the sculpture as “a dead work of art, a morally ambivalent focus for consumption” (Jake Chapman in Walker, 1999, p. 199), questioning modern societies materiality in the face of inhumanity.

The sculpture is allegorical in nature, a generally outmoded technique in contemporary art, but it is by definition essential to appropriated art. The art historian Craig Owens stated that “allegory occurs whenever one text is doubled by another” (1992, pp.53-54). It enables one image to have two or more interpretations, the Chapmans use of materials to re-contextualise the work creates additional meaning. Although as stated in *The Death of the Author* by Roland Barthes (1977) once an artist completes a work their hold on it is no more, the author dies and the viewer is born, who is responsible for interpreting the meaning of the artwork based on their own context, prior knowledge and understanding (Barthes, 1977, p.147). Therefore to appreciate this sculpture as the Chapmans had intended certain knowledge is required. Those seeing the Chapmans’ composition without prior experience of Goya’s *The Disasters* were shocked and horrified. When the work was first shown at the Victoria Miro Gallery the police arrived answering a call from a member of the public claiming that the work was obscene, although the police were satisfied that there was no such charge when they learnt of the inspiration for the work, “Jake Chapman recalls ‘so it was historical authenticity that gave us licence’” (Chapman in Turner, 2006, n.p.).

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2 From “to speak figuratively, from *allos* other + *agoreuein* to make a speech in public” Makins, M. (1993, p.31)
Francisco Goya was a court painter to the Spanish House of Bourbon at the turn of the nineteenth century; he was famous, respected and wealthy. However, in 1808 Napoléon Bonaparte’s plan to spread the ‘enlightenment’ throughout Europe resulted in the annexation of Spain. The Bourbon royal family went into exile, the poorly equipped Spanish forces were initially crushed by Napoléon’s ‘Grande Armée’ in what became the Peninsular War, which evolved into a war of attrition coining the phrase ‘Guerrilla Warfare’.

During the Madrid uprising (2nd May, 1808) when Madrileños took up arms against the French, Goya lived in the city, and he would have witnessed the aftermath (but probably not the action). He was 62 years old, and the art historian Robert Hughes wrote that Goya was "too deaf to hear a gunshot" (Hughes, 2003, p.272) therefore incapable of war journalism. Nonetheless in October 1808 General Palafox invited Goya to the besieged city of Zaragoza to witness and record the stoicism of the Spanish. Hughes (2003, p.275-6) claims that this visit was the trigger for Goya’s passion to sketch for record the atrocities of the conflict. He made the images immutable through acid etching and aquatint on copper plates, thus creating The Disasters, however Goya titled it Fatales consecuencias de la sangrienta guerra en España con Buonaparte. Y otros caprichos enfáticos (Hughes, 2003, p.272).

Only a few of the plates in Goya’s series are individually dated, but it is widely accepted that they are made up (broadly speaking) of three groups collectively depicting: the horrors of war, the Madrid famine, and the Caprichos enfáticos (allegorical commentary on the main protagonists).

One image that best depicts the senseless inhumanity of war is plate 39 titled, Grande hazaña! Con muertos! (illus. 2). This is the image that inspired the Chapmans’ The Great Deeds Against the Dead (1994). The scene bears a war battered oak tree, decorated with 

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3 The diminutive form of “war” in Spanish, describing small bands of soldiers and resistance fighters who use non-standard military tactics against superior forces (Makins, 1994, p.503).

4 The Citizens of Madrid

5 Translation: Saragossa - Goya’s hometown.

6 The artist melts rosin dust on to a metal plate, rosin resists acid, unprotected areas of the plate are eroded, and the pitted metal retains ink, thus providing tone and shade (Hughes, 2003, pp. 177-179)

7 Translation: Fatal consequences of the bloody war against Bonaparte in Spain. And other emphatic caprices.

8 Translation: Emphatic caprices

9 See Appendix i

10 Translation: Great feat! With dead men! or A heroic feat! With dead men!
the stripped and castrated body parts of three men, the arrangement is fashioned to act as a
warning sign to others. However, as in many of the plates the perpetrators are not shown,
the absence of the victims’ clothing and aggressors (who would certainly be wearing clothes)
adds to the viewers’ uncertainty as to the side of the dead men. This highlights that it was not
created to apportion blame but to denigrate the act; whomever was responsible.

Jake Chapman has repeated in interviews and VLOGS (Tate 2015, Collings 2003) that
Goya’s “interest gravitates towards the areas of laceration and castration and cutting and so,
in a way, they [the prints] undermine the moral framework that it seems framed by” (Tate,
2015, 01:58-02:12). At face value it appears as if Jake Chapman is criticising Goya on this
point, suggesting that whilst referring to the representation of inhumanity, Goya exceeds
moral boundaries in the works gruesome depiction, alluding to nihilistic intentions, and a
libidinal celebration of cruelty. It seems apparent from Goya’s later ‘black paintings’\(^\text{11}\) that he

\(^{11}\) A series of paintings (1820-24) discovered in Goya’s home after his death, depicting dark
images born of isolation, and depression, ‘protest[ing] against a failing and unjust absolutism’
(Hughes, 2003, p.382). An image that best depicts this is his painting *Saturn Devouring His
Son* (Goya, F (1820-23) *Saturn Devouring His Son* [Online image]. Available at: https://
www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/saturn/18110a75-b0e7-430c-bc73-2a4d55893bd6
(Accessed 10 December 2015)).
found this interest hard to cast aside. This concept is commonplace in art today, transgression is an element of the Chapmans’ own repertoire, which they have aligned to the writings of George Bataille, the Marquis de Sade et al, thinkers who discuss transgression in their work in order to highlight immorality. This idea is central to the Chapmans’ adoptions and re-presentation of Goya’s The Disasters. In the time of the creation of The Disasters the idea of the existence of God and the moral framework created by the bible was unquestionable, and reinforced by totalitarian practises enforced by the church such as the inquisition. Murder, rape, torture and other such inhumane acts transgress these morals absolutely, Jake Chapman says that the depiction of “absolute transgression of the ethics” (Baker, 2003, p.3) toggles a switch in the viewer between a sense of disgust and one of voyeuristic curiosity, causing them to linger and consider the art further. Chapman further suggests that the increasingly secular culture we live in today and the prevalence of violence in the news and in video, lessens the immediate effects of Goya’s original etching, as Chapman terms it the ‘prestitial’ reaction to the work.

Goya completed the series of 83 prints\(^\text{12}\) in 1815 but they were never published in his lifetime. According to the art critic Jonathan Jones (2003) the folio of prints were considered too controversial, whether too critical of the actions of Spanish guerrillas\(^\text{13}\), too horrific, insufficiently condemnatory of the French, or (as Hughes suggests) due to the overtly challenging nature of the caprices. Its publication would have insulted King Fernando VII\(^\text{14}\), almost certainly resulting in a death sentence for Goya (Hughes, 2003, p.304). For example one of the caprices titled *Las resultas*\(^\text{15}\) (1810-15, illus. 3) shows a winged beast, a hybrid

\[\text{Illustration 3:} \]
\[
\text{Fransisco Goya (1814-5)}
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\[
\text{*Las resultas*}
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\[
[Etching - plate 72]
\]
\[
\text{The British Museum, London}
\]

\(^{12}\) Although only 80 remain

\(^{13}\) Who in part added to the severity and continuation of the Madrid famine, a large number of the prints deal with this period (Hughes, 2003, p.297)

\(^{14}\) Who died in 1833

\(^{15}\) Translation - *The consequences*
with bat wings with seemingly two ravens heads pecking at the chest of a corpse wrapped in white. Hughes suggests that the feeding beast is a metaphor for the returning monarch “descending on prostrate Spain” (2003, p.301-2).

Whilst the horror in the series is inescapable, showing acts of brutality by both sides. In *Esto es peor*\(^{16}\) (1810-14, plate 37, illus. 4) the French grenadiers are shown slaughtering and displaying the dismembered corpses of the Spanish resistance, whilst in *Populacho*\(^{17}\) (1809-14, plate 28, illus. 5) Spanish villagers are pictured inserting a median-luna (a sharp bullfighting weapon) into the anus of a naked man (who could be French, or a fraterniser).

The uncertainty about who is the killer and who is the victim in some of Goya’s prints creates a further departure from the established creation of war art (Hughes, 2003, pp.293-4). Goya is not celebrating the patriotic hero, neither is he always deploring the invaders actions. Instead, Goya is challenging a fresh perspective that during war, it is humanity that suffers.

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\(^{16}\) Translation: *This is Worse*

\(^{17}\) Translation: *Rabble*
Goya’s series was first published 35 years after his death in 1863 by the Real Academia de Bella Artes de San Fernando, who printed six further editions between 1892-1937 totalling 1325 sets (Harris, 1983 pp.172-304).

A further work in the Chapmans’ Victoria Miro Exhibition was the brothers’ first major work in response to The Disasters, which they titled The Disasters of War (1993, illus. 6 & 7). A collection of dioramas, the miniature 3D embodiment of Goya’s prints, the work was a parody constructed from plastic and the figures appeared like ‘toy soldiers’. Each of Goya’s plates is represented individually, with its own set of characters on a patch of model-train-set grass, yet the work is seen as a whole; the complete series is displayed together and taken in by the viewer concurrently. This provides the viewer with a panorama, drawing them into the minutiae of the detailed tableaux. Unlike the etchings the scenes are not monochromatic, the palette the brothers select is muted, with flashes of pigment coming from the plastic pink of the naked flesh and the poster pain red used to represent blood. Any changes to the content or composition of The Disasters in the Chapmans’ re-creations is unintentional, their parody

Illustration 6:
Jake & Dinos Chapman (1993)
The Disasters of War
[Plastic, polyester resin, synthetic fibres, wood and guitar strings]
The Tate Collection, London

Illustration 7:
Jake & Dinos Chapman (1993)
The Disasters of War (detail)
[Mixed media]
The Tate Collection, London
relies upon recontextualising recognisable scenes from the iconic source, only changing material, colour and scale, they even utilise the original titles.

It is important to note that the Chapman brothers’ parody of Goya, although at times playful (in an interview with Christopher Turner, (in Tate Etc., 2006) Dinos Chapman stated, that he’d “like to have stepped on Goya’s toes, shouted in his ears and punched him in the face”) is however born out of a deep respect. The two brothers have been obsessed with Goya since art college, so much so that in the same interview with Turner they admitted to nearly changing their surnames to Goya.

The last of the works in the exhibition *Great Deeds - Against the Dead!* (1994, illus. 8) combines elements of the first two, returning to plate 39 the brothers have created a diminutive, table top version, similar to *The Disasters of War* only this time they’ve repeated the same piece many times.

The replication of the miniatures in *Great Deeds - Against the Dead!* is perhaps akin to the serial art of Eva Hesse who once said that her conceptual serialisation of objects were “another way of repeating absurdity” (Tate Gallery, 1981) by absurdity Hesse meant “extreme feeling” (Nixon, 2002, p.49) and she explained that when something is repeated its absurdity is disproportionately exaggerated with each additional copy. Nina Heydemann investigates the replication of art work in her PhD theses *The Art of Quotation* (2015) where she suggests that replication provides a means and source of disseminating concepts and imagery, the multiplicity of an image can heighten it, potentially elevating its status to iconic through its omnipresence.

The German literary critic Peter Bürger (1984, p.52) wrote in his account on avant-garde theory that “provocation cannot be repeated indefinitely” since with each repetition the ability to shock becomes weaker. Dave Beech (in Grunberg & Barson, 2006) states that “familiarity
and repetition drain all power from it”. Similarly the German philosopher, Walter Benjamin asserts in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) that with each extra edition something is lost. Yet this is not the Chapmans’ intention, quite the opposite. Jake Chapman writes in the foreword to the *Insult to Injury* catalogue that ‘[w]e cannot hear Goya’s words and cannot learn from our mistakes – we can only denounce the violence we are condemned to repeat… cruel repetition is given as the elemental condition of human nature but not as the fundamental condition of hegemonic morality’ (Chapman, 2003, n.p.). Chapman is claiming that inhumanity is unavoidable and barbarism is bound to be repeated indefinitely.

Repetition for repetition’s sake can create tension, as the philosopher Rodolphe Gasché (2012, p.266) writes on Bataille “repetition emerges as the negativity unmastered by absolute knowledge to which it remains exposed forever” suggesting that the German philosopher Georg Hegel’s (1770-1831) notion of ‘absolute knowledge’ will not be suppressed, and it will reemerge through uncertainty and be laid bare, like one ruminating on a thorny issue. This notion might suggest that the Chapmans’ intention is to reiterate Goya’s manifesto against inhumanity.

In 1917 the Russian theorist, Viktor Shklovsky, also discussed repetition in his paper on ‘Art as Technique’, Shklovsky suggested that objects and images can become “habitual” (Richter, 2006 p.778) through the viewers’ familiarity, causing them to stop analysing the work. As Jake Chapman describes of his intention to disrupt the ‘prestitial’ (Baker, 2003, n.p.) reciprocation, Shklovsky writes about “removing the automatism of perception” (Richter, 2006 p.779). The concept is that when these ‘habitual’ images and signs are adapted slightly this defamiliarisation reinvigorates the viewers interest, encouraging them to reassess an image and spend longer contemplating it; which is the artists primary objective. Whilst both versions of the Chapmans’ re-creation of *The Disasters* plate 39 achieves a sense of defamiliarisation through the manipulation of scale, materiality and the addition of colour, the repetition of the scene in the *Great Deeds - Against the Dead!* (1994) further adds to the effect.

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18 Absolute Knowledge: ‘in the form of the complete self-consciousness and self-possession of spirit, is only available at the end-point of the think process.’ Spencer & Krauze (2013, p.88)
Chapter Two: The Tate Britain (2003)

In 2003 the Chapman brothers were nominated for the Turner Prize, their entry included two works which appropriated Goya’s *The Disasters*, demonstrating a shift from re-enacting to reworking. The first was highly controversial, titled *Insult to Injury* (2003); it consisted of an original set of Goya’s *The Disasters* which the brothers defaced.

In 2001 the Chapman brothers purchased a copy of *The Disasters*, a 7th edition\(^{19}\) which was printed in 1937 for the Spanish government and used as Civil War propaganda against the fascists. The Chapmans spent many months considering how they might alter the work, however the brothers had dreamt about this opportunity for years.

In an earlier set of prints by the Chapmans comprised of 80 etchings titled the *Disasters of War* (1999) they appropriated scenes from Goya’s *The Disasters*, and placed them alongside images depicting earlier works by the brothers, such as *Mummy and Daddy Chapman* (1993), and *Hell* (1999-2000). Four of the images in the series, *Untitled* (1999, illus. 9-12)

Illustration 9 - 12:
Jake & Dinos Chapman (1999)
*Untitled* - 4 prints for the Disaster of War Series
[Etching] Private Collection

\(^{19}\) 1 of 150 copies
focus on each of the corners of Goya’s print *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* (1809-14). The prints examine the pins fixing the original etching to the wall, tape repairing tears, adjacent staples, and fingerprints bearing witness to their handmade creation. One of the prints shows a hand poised with a pencil either redrawing or altering Goya’s original. Each of the prints is a mirror image of the print they depict e.g. the decapitated head mounted on the branch is in the top righthand corner of Goya’s image, but here it is shown top left. Also the hand is drawn wearing a digital watch which seems to read “0-1” but the digits are mirrored. Regarding the hand, it is represented in a childish fashion, the digits on the watch do not show a time but possibly display a score, showing the Chapman brothers one up against the home side, that of Goya. On closer examination it appears as if the Chapmans have drawn Goya’s character wearing joke glasses, with the eyeballs dangling on springs whilst he sticks his tongue out. This is almost certainly a manifestation of the Chapmans’ wish to get their hands on a set of Goya’s prints.

The *Insult to Injury* (2003) series comprises 80 individual prints; each has been carefully and skilfully overpainted, unlike some of their own prints from the 1999 edition which appear like childish doodles, these are all delicately painted. The paint is limited in its application retaining the essence of the originals which are easily recognisable, the Chapmans have only painted the faces of the main protagonists in the scenes. The faces range from skeletons to puppies, from clowns to anthropomorphic boars and rabbits. Most have red noses, a few are brandished with swastikas, many seem to resemble Ronald McDonald - the burger chain McDonalds’ clown mascot (a running Chapman motif, illus. 13 & 14), a couple resemble the early cinematic character Nosferatu, the bald headed vampire. Most have enlarged ears, either rodent like or similar to those of rabbits. One of the plates, number 62, consists of no faces therefore the viewer spends time looking for the alterations penned by the Chapmans until they realise that it doesn’t have any faces and therefore no new additions. The skill is so high that without the change of medium it is difficult to tell where Goya finishes and the Chapmans take over. In *Esto es lo peor!* (1808-14, illus. 13) one of the background characters appears to be edited by the Chapmans but not painted, leaving the viewer unsure and double checking the originals for large ears.

Whilst the purpose of changing the faces is intriguing, Hughes discusses Goya’s faceless perpetrators in his book, “Most of the victims have faces. Their killers do not” (2003, p.316) Unnamed, faceless killing was born, soldiers committing war crimes went unpunished, war remained un-policed until 1864 when the Geneva Convention was ratified; a year after the Los Desastres de la Guerra was first published (Hughes, 2003, p.304). But by changing the visible faces, masking them, are they literally defacing the prints, vandalising them as suggested by the journalist Laura Cummings, who writes that the Chapmans’ *Insult to Injury*

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20 Translation - *This is the [absolute] worst!*
is an “insult to the spirit of Goya” (2003, p.9) and injury carried out to some genuine Goyas. Chapmans’ central theme - art as commodity fetishism, is supported by the four fold increase in the images value due to their ‘rectification’ by the brothers. Cummings argues that the masks added by the brothers attempt to simplify Goya but only result in concealing what the art viewing public have seen many times “the incomparable depth and complexity of Goya”, she brandishes the Chapmans’ art “fatuous” (2003, p.9) constructed from lazily juxtaposed ideas. Tom Lubbock agrees that the images lack depth:-

What makes Goya so good and scary is that both views are true: the blank horror is always intimate with the humane pity. And what the defacements offer is the pleasure of simplification. The effect is not Goya insulted, but Goya made simple. Yet if Goya was really that straightforward then nobody, including the Chapmans, would be so interested in him.


It is noteworthy that both Lubbock and Cummings fail to read the Chapmans’ work beyond its shock value. Lubbock thinks that the Chapmans provide a simplicity which re-engages the public with art that has both a meaningful message around the inhumanity of man when it was first etched and remains pertinent today. What has changed is time, the cause and the
individuals involved. In order to recontextualise the prints, the Chapmans replace the faces with those familiar through modern culture, cartoons and film, they dehumanise them and by doing so they open up Goya’s story to any conflict, any time.

The art critic Dr Brian Dillon writes in his essay *The revelation of erasure* (2006) about palimpsest in art, he specifically deals with the disfigurement of faces:

> In his book *Defaced: The Visual Culture of Violence in the Late Middle Ages* 2004, the Swiss historian Valentin Groebner links this double valence of the disfigured face to the term ungestalt: a word used to describe the literally formless features of those lying dead on battlefields: ‘Violence was shown in and with pictures, but the pictures showed only a terrifying void.’


When the body remains and the face is made unrecognisable this further attacks the figure, taking away their identity and suggesting the eradication of the individual. However the Chapmans go even further, by replacing the face with a comic mask which arguably ridicules the dead.

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21 Historically the erasure of text from old scrolls to make space for new text
In the preface to the Chapman brothers’ *Insult to Injury* catalogue Jake Chapman asks “[h]ow far do the commissioners of avant-garde iconoclasm wish their clowns to go?” referring to the art establishment and gallery glitterati as the commissioners and the clowns as themselves, suggesting that their actions are not vandalism as suggested by many tabloids following the opening of the exhibition but iconoclasm. In the eyes of the law the Chapmans have not vandalised the prints, crucially they had purchased Goya’s work, and ownership allows them to treat their property as they wish. Unlike the numerous art vandals who have thrown paint and slashed paintings in galleries and museums over the last 100 years; from suffragette’s hatcheting Velazquez paintings to political protestors jumping up and down on Tracey Emin’s *My Bed* (2000) (Shinn, 2003). Yet Baker (2005) writes that the Chapmans’ relationship with Goya is neither vandalism nor iconoclasm but one of collaboration (albeit a one sided one, given that Goya has no choice nor opportunity for rebuttal). Baker goes on to suggest that the Chapmans haven’t destroyed the prints but applied ‘a process of sign transformation’ through addition: -

> It has recently been argued that it is precisely art history’s redemption of Goya as the original humanist (where ‘Disasters of War’ represents the triumph of moral outrage over technical sophistication) that made a re-evaluation of the Goya’s ‘irrational supplement’, the indigestible aspect of his work, inevitable. In the face of this same logic, Bataille linked Goya with the Marquis de Sade, suggesting that they share a response to horror that ‘takes the form of a sudden leap into humour, and means nothing but just this leap into humour’. It is this Goya: irrational, expendable and hilarious, with whom the Chapmans collaborate.


Baker deals with both the point on collaboration and the Chapmans’ use of the abject to instigate humour, which will be dealt with more thoroughly later in this chapter. Furthermore this raises the question of whose work it is, who is the author of appropriated artwork, Baker advocates that it is a collaboration, whilst Rosalind Krauss might argue that the Chapmans had ripped off Goya as Sherrie Levine had ‘stolen’ art from others during the 1980’s. Levine had rephotographed images originally taken by the modernist photographer Edward Weston, such as in *Untitled (After Edward Weston, 1925 c.)* (1981) changing nothing in the composition. As with the Chapmans, Levine openly promoted the fact that the art was ‘an act of theft’ (Welchman, 2001, Loc. 296) as Barthes wrote:

> “The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.”

Barthes (1977) p.146

The Chapmans have a tendency to blend numerous influences including Goya, tribal art, Bataille, their earlier creations and popular culture.

When discussing *Insult to Injury* (2003) the brothers use the term ‘rectified’, suggesting that they’ve improved the images, a term that draws on the canonical past of Marcel Duchamp,
who labelled several of his works ‘rectified readymades’ including *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919, illus. 15) which took a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* and adds a moustache and a small goatee beard to the woman. The title *L.H.O.O.Q.* when read in phonetically in French proclaims “she has a hot arse” (Jones, 2001). The work was a response to Sigmund Freud who published a book on *Leonardo di Vinci* (1916) detailing his psychoanalysis of the artist. This suggests that the artist was both homosexual and remarkably slow at completing his work, a trait which Freud associates with the artists ability to divert his libido so completely into his work that he exudes an asexual nature. This all stems from a fatherless childhood feeding his ‘infantile sexual investigation’ 22 (Freud, 1916, Ch. I para. 25-9) and his love of his mother, whom formed his first sensual memory. The ready-made took high art and made it silly.

22 A child’s unanswered interest in where babies come from.
This has obvious parallels with the Chapmans’ rectification of Goya’s prints; however the Chapman brothers recall a different influence in their interview with Jonathan Jones:

“We had it [their copy of The Disasters] sitting around for a couple of years, every so often taking it out and having a look at it,” says Dinos, until they were quite sure what they wanted to do. "We always had the intention of rectifying it, to take that nice word from The Shining, when the butler’s trying to encourage Jack Nicholson to kill his family - to rectify the situation," interrupts Jake.

Jones (2003)

This explanation is curious; it is unclear as to why Jake Chapman goes out of his way to purport that ‘to rectify’ the images, means anything other than the Duchampian definition, other than it is often shown that the brothers’ art is evasive, the first impression, although beguiling is often the debased version, other meanings, more thoughtful ones remain unspoken, lurking for the delight of the more inquisitive.

*Insult to Injury* (2003) is a possible example of Debord’s (1956) notion of détournement. The situationists, Guy Debord and Gil Wolman, outlined in a *User’s guide to Détournement*, a method artists could use to supplant existing imagery with a secondary message. Here the Chapmans have taken Goya’s prints and altered them.

Debord describes two-forms of détournement: ‘minor’ and ‘deceptive’, the distinction refers to the original image which has been appropriated. Minor détournement uses commonplace meaningless pictures and the artist adds text or imagery to bring a different, deeper meaning to the work. Conversely ‘deceptive’ détournement takes “intrinsically significant” images, and recontextualises them in a similar way to generate new meaning. The détournement of Goya’s *The Disasters* would be considered ‘deceptive’ which Debord also calls ‘premonitory-proposition détournement’, highlighting that the original already holds a wealth of meaning. Debord lists four general rules:

[1] It is the most distant détourned element which contributes most sharply to the overall impression and not the elements that directly determine the nature of the impression […] 2] The distortions introduced […] must be [as] simplified as possible, since the main impact of a détournement is directly related to the conscious or semi-conscious recollection of the original context or the elements. […] 3] Détournement is less effective the more it approaches a rational reply. […] 4] Détournement by simple reversal is always the most direct and the least effective.

Debord & Wolman (1956, n.p.)

Firstly the Chapmans took Goya’s war scenes and painted over the faces with cartoon puppies, bunnies, monsters and skulls, which are all (apart from their use of Nazi motifs) very distant from Goya’s imagery. Secondly the changes the Chapmans make are crisp, they stick to an agenda to just change the faces, the rest of the print they leave untouched therefore the original is easily recognisable after the Chapmans’ additions. Thirdly Debord suggests that the détournement is more impactful when it’s less obvious, less
straightforward, in the case or *Insult to Injury* (2003) the logic is unclear, no text provides any hints only the painted faces and interviews with the Chapmans.

Johann Hari writes in *The Independent* (2011) that the brothers’ objective is to subvert the enlightenment:

“Goya’s the artist who represents the kind of expressionistic struggle of the Enlightenment with the ancien régime” Jake Chapman explained, “so it's kind of nice to kick its underbelly.” Goya famously said “the sleep of reason produces monsters”. The Chapmans say the opposite: it is when reason is wide awake that it produces monsters.

Hari accepts the Chapmans’ provocations at face value, and suggests that Jake Chapman half-admires the Taliban’s destruction of ancient religious statues quoting him as saying that the Taliban have a “live, vital religious opposition to something that has a direct and local meaning to them”. Yet in the article from which Hari quotes, Jake Chapman goes on to state:-

“[T]here's something quite interesting in the fact that the war of the Peninsula saw Napoleonic forces bringing rationality and enlightenment to a region that was presumed Catholic and marked by superstition and irrationality. And here's Goya, who's very cut free from the Church, who embodies this autonomous enlightened being, embodied as a gelatinous dead mass without redemption - then you hear George Bush and Tony Blair talking about democracy as though it has some kind of natural harmony with nature, as though it's not an ideology.”

Chapman draws parallels between Spain in the nineteenth century, and the Middle East today, with the Western administrations taking the place of Napoleon, and the ideology of democracy replacing the enlightenment. Their overpainting of Goya re-asserts his manifesto, suggesting that the faces change but the inhumanity remains. It is a protest against torture which is still prevalent in the world today, and continues to be perpetrated by both sides in conflict. Whether it is the Taliban’s videos of ritualistic decapitation, or the US forces perpetrating acts of extreme cruelty, from detention without charge and psychological torture to drone attacks.

This also addresses Debord’s last rule regarding détournement, the Chapmans aren’t reversing Goya's intent in the original images, they’re hijacking them and as Christopher Turner (2006) wrote “they have adapted Goya’s example for contemporary impact”. Not only have they updated the horror through the concept of breaking a taboo by overpainting Goya’s seminal work, which many suggest is the last shock technique available to artists (Jones, 2003). In interviews, the Chapmans suggest that *The Disasters* can be brought into the present with a new set of protagonists and ideals. But whether this détournement is successful is debatable, the Chapmans’ subversion of the imagery to capture the attention of
the viewer can be too extreme, switching off the viewer before the intent of their détournement is made obvious. The philosophical content of their work often requires explanation by the artists, and even then their default attitude is equivocatory, creating further apprehension over their truthfulness.

The second work in the Turner Prize entry which directly references *The Disasters* is titled *Sex I* (2003, illus. 16). *Sex I* returns to *Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* (1809-14). This time although the scene is recognisable as a depiction of the print, it has changed, the Chapmans have taken their mannequins and represented them in a state of decomposition, with insects devouring their dead flesh and reproducing in the rotting remains. The brothers have also added a skull on the floor (illus.17, possibly representing the burial of Goya), an overseeing crow and they have adorned the decapitated head (illus. 18) with horns, a red clown’s nose and Spock ears (which Christopher Turner likens to a caricature of Tony Blair (Grunenberg,
According to Julia Kristeva “laughing is a way of placing or displacing abjection” (1982, p. 8) a coping mechanism, the laughter Jake and Dinos Chapman would like to hear is one in accordance with Bataille’s philosophies. An insuppressible snigger that boils up and erupts without warning caused by the sight and idea of something so repelling that it switches from revolution to momentary hilarity, in an unavoidable lifting of inhibition. Jake Chapman associates this oscillation between revulsion and humour with a gestalt switch (in Baker, 2003, n.p.), demonstrated in the Duck-Rabbit (1953, Illus. 19) illustration where the viewer can see both animals in the image, and their brain ponders the puzzle toggling between the two interpretations. The concept of laughter in Chapmans’ art is investigated in Tanya Barson’s essay Powers of Laughter (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, pp.67-98). She discusses a laughter which is associated with the medieval carnival, a laughter which is inherently
ambivalent and has multiple aspects or heteroglossia. This enables things to be "seen anew, no less (and perhaps more) profoundly the when seen from the serious standpoint… Certain essential aspects of the world are accessible only to laughter." (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.69)

Barson quotes the sociologist John Lechte, "ambivalence is the key to the structure of carnival… Not be true or false quantitative and causal logic of science and seriousness, but the qualitative logic of ambivalence, where the actor is also the spectator, destruction gives rise to creativity, and death is equivalent to rebirth" (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.69). Barson ascribes the Chapmans' work with a sense of schadenfreude (the joy of watching another’s suffering), which she connects to the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche who described laughter as schadenfreude with a clear conscience. Nietzsche also wrote that it is vital that people can laugh at themselves since it enables us to 'stand above morality' (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.74). Whilst Bataille who toed a similar line to Nietzsche, only a darker one, wrote in On Nietzsche that "I'm moved from nameless horror to mindless laughter" (Bataille, 2004, p.58), suggesting an involuntary response.

Barson further cites Lechte's assertion that Bataille’s central premise is that: -

“blindness is an essential element in knowledge – that the great heights of enlightenment are the correlate of the depths of non-knowledge and obscene laughter. Seeing – theory – cannot grasp its other…”23 Thus Bataille’s laughter represents the means by which to refute the illusion and hypocrisy of 'enlightenment', and is adopted by the Chapmans towards this end.

Bataille suggests that enlightenment is on a spectrum and is dependent on a vacuum of knowledge, without darkness a light cannot illuminate. The Chapmans' lampooning of Goya’s great work with the adornment of joke shop humour and the masks in Insult to Injury (2003) series encourages the idea of carnival laughter. This enables the viewer to invoke the ‘pleasure principle’24 when dealing with the ‘shock or revulsion’ in the work, laughter as a means of response has a cancelling effect, a therapeutic coping mechanism the observer employs (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.79). When this impulse laughter is witnessed by other viewers it heightens their distaste. Barson suggests that the Chapmans use laughter “to disrupt or evade predictable, anaemic critical frameworks”, providing them with a tool to “underline their assault on art, morality and society” (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.85).

The shocking nature of the Chapmans' work has a purpose beyond laughter, according to Jake Chapman it is a means of “shocking the viewer from the edifice of comfort” (Grunberg & Barson, 2006, p.42) it is intended to instigate action.

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23 Lechte (1994, p.100)

24 Freud's mechanism to avoid pain and seek out pleasure from all experiences
One of the victims in *Sex I* has a scar in his skull (illus. 20) which Grunenberg assigns to Bataille’s idea of the ‘pineal eye’ which has erupted out of the top of the head of the tortured man. Bataille wrote about the pineal eye in his essay *Visions of Excess* (1927-39), where he attributes its eruption from the forehead upon witnessing a fantasy, a blinding vision where the subject experiences both ‘pure’ and ‘impure’, instantly becoming aware of:

> [N]ot only life but with the loss of life - with degradation and death. Starting from the being who bore it, it is not at all an external product, but the form that this being takes in his lubricious avatars, in the ecstatic gift he makes of himself as obscene and nude victim - and a victim not before an obscure and immaterial force, but before great howls of prostitutes’ laughter.

> Existence no longer resembles a neatly defined itinerary from one practical sign to another, but a sickly incandescence, a durable orgasm.

Bataille (1985, p.82)

Bataille’s vision is commandeered by the Chapmans in their sculpture, where Goya’s scene of torture meets their scavenging creatures writhing over, and devouring the naked bodies.

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25 The pineal gland is part of the brain, during the middle ages the ‘pineal eye’ was thought to contain one’s destiny, the philosopher Réne Descartes (1596-1640) wrote that it was where the body and the ‘minds’ eye combined.
The sculpture provides the body of horror with which the vision, the awareness of man's inhumanity is disseminated, and after witnessing the vision nothing is the same again.

The German art historian Benjamin Buchloh wrote on the subject of parody and appropriation that:

In aesthetic practice, appropriation may result from an authentic desire to question the historical validity of a local, contemporary code by linking it to a different set of codes, such as previous styles, heterogeneous iconic sources, or to different modes of production and reception. Appropriation of historical models may be motivated by a desire to establish continuity and tradition and a fiction of identity, as well as originating from a wish to attain universal mastery of all codification systems.

Buchloh in Evans (2009, p.178)

Certain points can be made in the application of this logic to the Chapmans' work, from early research outlined in this dissertation particularly that of Barson's interpretation of Bataille it is possible to surmise that the 'historical' code which the Chapmans wish to accentuate is the ideology used to justify war, in Goya's case it was 'the enlightenment', and by their assertion and Buchloh's logic, its modern day equivalent is 'democracy'.

In the 2003 Turner prize the Chapmans were runners up to Grayson Perry.
**Conclusion**

It is easy to label the Chapman brothers as vandals, iconoclasts and shock-and-awe artists, as they encourage outrage as ‘les enfants terribles’, but they are as multitudinous in their innovation of Goya’s *The Disasters* as they are multifaceted in their creativity. Some critics have claimed that the brothers simplify Goya, but there is far more to their work than the first impression; which tends to be both jarring and skilfully crafted to capture the viewer’s attention. When delving deeper into their esoteric imagery through a web of oscillating sensations (gestalt switches comprised of disgust/laughter and revulsion/libidinal pleasure), détournement, and defamiliarisation, a central premise is identified, which is dependent upon the philosophies of Bataille, Nietzsche, and the Marquis de Sade - relating to transgression and morality. The Chapmans are realists who recognise that whilst it should be policed, inhumanity will not be abolished, it is part of human nature, and extremes will continue to be explored providing a comparative measure correlate to acts of great humanity.

The Chapmans’ artwork commemorates the ongoing immorality in the world by re-contextualising Goya’s *The Disasters*, using modern references like store mannequins to allude to art as commodity, and by codification satirising Tony Blair in an intimation that Blair replaces Goya’s Napoleon in a contemporary parallel. This is further corroborated during an interview by Jake Chapman, who adds the protagonist George W Bush as another of Napoleon’s substitutes. Chapman goes on to align the ideology of the enlightenment with democracy and Spain with the Middle East.

The Chapman brothers’ evolution of plate 39 in *Sex I* establishes their authorship unequivocally, they are no longer in Goya’s shadow; after all they buried him in the tree’s roots. It is no longer “a dead work of art” (Jake Chapman in Walker, 1999, p.199) it has been resurrected through the scavenging creatures that devour, deface, and regurgitate it. The incorporation of Bataille’s concept of the pineal eye reminds the viewer that they are witnessing true horrors.

As Walter Benjamin wrote “every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably” (Benjamin cited in Owens, 1992, p.52). From the Chapmans’ tableau figures both in repetitious form and ensemble, to their mannequins, from the overpainted originals, to the transmogrified *Sex I* the Chapmans’ work has revitalised Goya’s *The Disasters of War* print series; bringing the work to a new audience and bolstering its original anti-war manifesto.

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26 The former prime minister of the UK, 1997-2007

27 The former President of the US 1995-2000
Although the plates of Goya's series are not individually dated, it is widely accepted that they are made up broadly speaking of three groups collectively depicting:

**Plate 1**  The introduction

**Plates 2 - 47**  Represent the guerrilla warfare and bloody reprisals.

**Plates 48-65**  Depict the great famine of Madrid 1811-12 (he would have witnessed these images being a resident of the city).

**Plates 66-80**  These are the emphatic caprices, "allegorical and satirical images, editorial cartoons" (Hughes, 2003, p.273) showing the aftermath of war, the return of the establishment including king Fernando VII, the scrapping of the 1812 Constitution and the installation of a new, strict regime, a tyrannical rule of law that repressed and censored the people (Hughes, 2003, p.273).
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Other


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