Francisco Goya's "A Butcher Counter"

How does Goya's "A Butcher Counter" represent death and the sorrow of war through the subject of still life?

Seminar

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The Gaze into the inevitable: Death in western culture

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Introduction: Unveiling Goya's "A Butcher's Counter"

In this seminary work, I wish to analyze Francisco Goya's work "A Butcher's Counter," (image 1) dated between 1808 and 1812. I'll try to understand the strong feelings portrayed in this seemingly simple still-life image through the historical and biographical circumstances of the work's creation. I first encountered this painting when I was 16 in a high-school art history class. Immediately, I was struck with awe by the strong emotion conveyed in it, contrasting with the seemingly little happening in the scene. Later, when I went to Paris, I knew I had to see it. Walking past the myriad of visitors struggling to get a glimpse of the Mona Lisa, I found this painting somewhat hidden in one of the many corridors of the enormous museum. I sat there for almost an hour in admiration, trying to examine the expressive brush strokes, the dark and restricted color pallet, the darkness surrounding this painting, and the infinite amount of sorrow it holds in it. From then on, I used this painting as a starting point for studying in my own works. I worked in this color pallet and painted similar compositions and subjects, trying to decipher the elements that make it so compelling and what had drawn me to it. In the course of the last four years, I chose to write several works on the depiction of meat in art. Now, I feel it is time to study this painting directly.

The painting "A Butcher's Counter" was painted by Goya during the time of the Spanish War of Independence from the Napolean conquering, also known as the Peninsular War, which occurred over the span of six years, from May 2nd, 1808, to April 17th, 1814[1]. In the course of the war, during which he remained in French-occupied Madrid, and in the subsequent years, Goya created many emotional works that describe the turbulence of death and suffering surrounding him, which have been subject to extensive research[2]. Most famously, "The 2nd of May 1808 " from 1814 (image 2) describes the panic of the civil uprising in Madrid early in the war, "The 3rd of May 1808" from 1814 (image 3) describes the execution of the Spanish rebels by French troops, and

[1] See Bertrand Dorleac, Laurence. Pour en finir avec la nature morte, Art Et Artists, Gillmard, 2020, P. 237.

[2] See Hughes ,Robert. "Goya.", Alfred Knopf, 2003, P. 261- 320.

"The Disasters of War" from 1810-1820 (images 4-8), a large series of prints showing horrific sights of men and women beaten, killed, tortured and raped[3]. These paintings were not only studied extensively as works of art or as parts of Goya's biography but have been of great importance as primary sources in the historical study of this war and its nature[4], a detrimental moment in the formation of Spanish identity[5]

Painted during these years of upheaval, "A Butcher's Counter," I argue, could be seen as an organ in the same collection of Goya's works commenting on the war. It was made as part of a series of still-life paintings painted throughout the war. These paintings of everyday subjects, painted in the slightly religious still-life style of Spanish Bodegón paintings. The intense emotion conveyed in "A Butcher's Counter," together with the fact of its creation in a time of great turmoil in Goya's personal life, leads to the suspicion of this painting being a touchingly elusive manner of addressing events beyond the mere still-life objects. Considering the choice of the lamb as a subject and its cultural significance and meaning, I would like to study the possibility that the work conveys Goya's attempt to allusively show his personal anguish and the collective sorrow of the Spanish people elucidated by the war. The disguise of this message in a seemingly unremarkable still-life painting allowed it to be displayed publicly rather than be hidden like his other more explicitly critical works. I believe this was Goya's way of expressing his grief and pain from the violence he witnessed and his discontent with the French rule in a manner he could exhibit without explicitly undermining the French authority.

In the following chapters, I will try to examine this painting through its several different aspects, attempting to provide a basis for the claim of its underlying message. I will start by describing the history of the work's ownership and where it was displayed, and later examine its technical characteristics such as the composition used, color palette, and the manner of the technique in which it was painted. I will then look at Goya's biography, trying to understand his personal circumstances surrounding the creation of the painting, his artistic interests, and his political motives. In later chapters,

[3] See Hughes. "Goya.", P. 288-304
[4] See Ibid
[5] See Esdaile, Charles. War and Politics in Spain, 1808–1814. The Historical Journal, 31(2), (1988) , P. 314

I will move to study the subject of the painting itself. I will briefly describe the context of the painting as part of the Spanish still-life genre, Bodegón, and the common use of the image of a slaughtered lamb as a symbol of the suffering of the innocent. I will then describe the historical occurrences surrounding the creation of the work and try to discuss Goya's involvement and artistic reaction to these events. I will examine the possible ways in which the French occupation and the war could have affected the subject of the painting and the placing of meat in the symbolism of national struggles.

The Artistic Analysis & the journey of the painting

The work "A Butcher's Counter" is an oil on canvas painting, 45X62 cm, painted between 1808 and 1812. It is commonly referred to by other names, such as "Pieces of Lamb" ("Trozos de Carnero"), "Still Life with Ribs, Loin and Head of a Lamb"," Lamb's Head and Ribs," "Head and Loin of a Sheep," and "Still Life of Pieces of Mutton" ("Nature morte à la tête de mouton")[6]. The history of the painting's whereabouts during the time of Goya's life is unclear, but following the artist's death in 1828, the painting, together with a series of 12 still life paintings, were inherited by Goya's only son from his marriage, Javier Goya. In 1845, to formalize the deal of marrying his own son, Javier sold the series to the father of his son's designated wife, Fransico Javier de Mariategui. The painting found its way back to the Goya family's grip when Mariano Goya inherited them from his father-in-law, de Mariategui, only to be lost again when the latter deposited them as collateral for a loan. Unable to repay, Mariano passed them as his payment to Francisco Antonio Narváez y Bordaez, Count of Yumuri. They were hung in the count's mansion's dining hall, deemed as great examples of Spanish still-life paintings, but as pieces of mundane artwork mainly functional in creating an ambiance one could comfortably eat in[7]. After the Count's passing, the paintings were sold

[6]See Bertrand Dorleac, Laurence. Pour en finir avec la nature morte, Art Et Artists, Gillmard, 2020, P. 237.
[7] See Louvre, department of painting. Nature morte à la tête de mouton, last updated 2023. https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010066557

separately and are now scattered between different museum and institutions around the world. This painting was acquired by Paul Rosenberg, a Parisian art dealer who sold it to the Louvre in 1937 [8]. Since then, it has been on display periodically at the Louvre, and at the time of writing this essay, it is displayed in the Goya Museum in Castres, France, as part of an exhibition comparing Goya and Picasso[9].

The painting describes the head of a lamb, positioned upright, looking towards the viewer. The lamb's face is portrayed in a relaxed expression, and his mouth is a little open. The placement of the eyelid, together with a white shimmer at the edge of the eye, resembling a teardrop, creates a weeping-like expression on the lamb's face. As if to hint that the lamb is crying, suggestive of the life still in it and the sorrow felt. In front of the head are two sides of lamb rib cages, displayed leaning on one another, allowing the viewer to see only the inner part of the piece of meat. This composition is situated in a neutral environment, with the objects placed on a white surface and with a black background, limiting the room's depth and creating a feeling of darkness. The painting is painted with quick and emotional brushstrokes. The extensive use of impasto enhances the physical presence of the paint on the canvas, which gives three-dimensional depth to the painting. This helps communicate to the viewers the appearance of the drawn carcass's actual physicality while also enhancing their awareness of the act of its painting, as the brushstrokes seem more evident over the masses of paint.

The scene is lit with warm lighting, maybe from a candle, coming from the bottom-left corner, allowing the viewers to see only the three objects and none of what is happening behind, and the objects cast dramatic shadows. It seems the work was painted at night or in a dark room. The color pallet of this painting is limited - only a few colors are used. In a brief observation, one could notice primarily the use of red (probably Venetian red), white, and burnt umber. A palette strict and minimal relative to the artist, which uses a much broader palette in other paintings of the same period. This

[8] See Louvre, Nature morte à la tête de mouton. https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010066557
[9] See ibid

brings the red colors to the fore, which helps enhance the grotesqueness of the painting, accentuating the representation of blood and flesh. The painting is signed, just under the lamb's head, with the word "Goya" in red, and traces of the letter X are seemingly found in the lower-left corner.

Other works of similar subjects, which accommodate similar features and are often grouped together in theoretical analysis of meat representations in art, are Rembrandts' "Slaughtered Ox" (image 9) from 1655 and Chaim Soutine's interpretation of the subject from 1925, "The Beef" (image 10)[10]. This linkage in art history writing could be attributed to the evident similarities in their way of portraying butchered carcasses as a single subject of still-life paintings. Rembrandt's painting, created within the context of the religious story of the Return of the Prodigal Son[11], shows an ox hung from its back legs in a manner resembling the crucifixion. The painting seems to be in the same color pallet as Goya's slaughtered lamb and has a similar dark ambiance. An evident difference is the slightly more complicated composition and detailed background, including a maid peeking in from the back door. Soutine's painting brings a much more expressive take on this subject. Soutine paints a carcass similar in its position to Rembrandt's but with a more abstract and less present background. The blurring and darkening of the background enhance the secluded feeling and add to the centering of the piece of meat. Soutine uses a more modern color palette in his painting, adding vibrant colors to the figure. As a modern artist, he is less confined to the realistic view of the other two. Soutine uses the knowledge acquired over the years of Rembrandt's painting as a base to convey emotions. Rembrandt made his painting primarily as a religious allegory, but by Soutine's time, the corpse's image is perceived differently – the pain and suffering of animals stopped being an exoneration from sin, and were now seen as real pain[12]. The three paintings, from three different eras and

[10] - See Bendiner, Kenneth. Food in painting: from the Renaissance to the present. Reaktion Books, 2004, P. 86.
- See Fundacion Goya En Aragon. Pieces of Lamb (Trozos de carnero) https://fundaciongoyaenaragon.es/eng/obra/trozos-de-carnero/547 ,
- See Bertrand. Pour en finir avec la nature morte, P. 238.
[11] M. Craig, Kenneth. "Rembrandt and The Slaughtered Ox", Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 1983, Vol. 46 (1983), pp. 235- 239, P. 235.
[12] see Eisenman, Stephen F. *The cry of nature: Art and the making of animal rights*. Reaktion Books, 2013.

backgrounds, are all perceived as attempts to use a similar subject matter – butchered meat – to portray human suffering[13]. They also use similar techniques to treat the subject – such as quick brushstrokes and impasto.

It is also thought that this painting inspired many other important artworks, such as Pablo Picasso's "Sheep's Skull" (image 11) from 1939. This work has a very similar composition to the one in Goya's painting - the head on the left of the painting and the ribs on the right. It differs, however, in how Picasso decided to remove the flesh from the sheep's head, depicting only the skull, showing it opening its mouth in what seems like a scream of pain. He also decided to paint only one part of the rib cage, cleaned and ready to be cooked, making it look more like food to be consumed than a piece of a dying animal[14].

The Biographical Lens

Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes, the son of a master gilder, was born on March 30, 1746, in Fuendetodos, a small village in Aragon, Sapin. At 14, he started taking painting lessons from Jose Luzan Y Martinez, a local religious painter who introduced him to the works of old masters such as Rembrandt and Velasquez[15]. Goya was taught by copying their paintings and, in doing so, learning their compositions and techniques. There, he met the 3 Bayeu brothers, Francisco, Manuel, and Ramon, who later became his connection to the royal court and his brothers-in-law[16]. From the age of 17, he began trying to carve his way into the San Fernando Royal Academy in Madrid, a predominant institution in Spanish art history, which would later count Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, and many other notable Spanish artists as its students. In this attempt, Goya did not gain a single vote in favor of his acceptance. Not much is written on this period of Goya's life, but it is assumed that he devoted most of his time to improving his technical

[13] See Bendiner. Food in painting, P. 43
[14] See Fundacion Goya En Aragon. https://fundaciongoyaenaragon.es/eng/obra/trozos-de-carnero/547
[15] See Carr-Gomm, Sarah. great masters: Francisco Goya, Parkstone International, 2005, P. 10.
[16] See ibid

abilities, traveling to Italy to study with the ambition of repeating his attempt to be accepted into the Academy, an effort which failed through numerous attempts[17].

In 1771, he received his first important commission, decorating the ceiling of the Basilica of El Pilar in Saragossa. At the age of 29, he decided to move to Madrid and married Josefa Bayeu. Francisco Bayeu was at this time employed in decorating the new Royal Palace in Madrid, and Goya might have made the decision to marry his sister with this important connection in mind[18]. His first royal commission was to design a series of cartoons for tapestries to hang in the personal dining room of the future King Charles IV in the Escorial Palace. Following this, he was employed to paint a larger series of cartoons for the Royal Tapestry Factory[19]. Finally, in 1780, at the age of 34, he was accepted to the Royal Academy and began his studies there. In 1785, he became the Assistant Director of painting in the Academy, leading to his position from 1786 onwards as the official court painter. [20]

From there, his career flourished, and he became a celebrated portrait painter. The admiration for his portraits arose from his ability to capture his subject's personality and character[21]. Goya painted many portraits of the royal family and aristocrats and of army officers, statesmen, liberal thinkers, his friends, and associates. Some of his most notable portraits are those of King Charles IV from 1789 (image 12), The Black Duchess from 1797 (image 13), and Sabasa Garcia from 1806-1811 (image 14), [22].

A son of humble parents, not accustomed to the splendors of the court, Goya never became a full participant in the courtier's life[23]. He kept his interest in the simpler working class and painted not only portraits of the elite but also images of artisans, laborers, and more, such as in his painting "Driving a Chair" or "The Work" from 1786 (image 15).

[17] See Carr-Gomm. great masters: Francisco Goya, P. 10
[18] See ibid
[19] See ibid
[20] See ibid. P. 10-13
[21] See ibid, P. 17
[22] See ibid
[23] See ibid, P. 14

In 1792, a fateful ear infection rendered Goya deaf, significantly isolating him from the external world and transforming him into a keen observer of his surroundings[24]. This sensory deprivation heightened his perception of the world, allowing him to capture its nuances with unparalleled depth. It is believed that this enhanced awareness played a pivotal role in his ability to depict the harrowing scenes from later in his life, including "The Disasters of War." from the time of the Peninsular War and its aftermath. Goya's unique vantage point allowed him to document these atrocities as he sketched them unfolding before him, later translating the raw depictions into haunting prints within the confines of his studio[25]. This personal transformation enabled Goya to witness the horrors of his time, from public executions to the brutalization of women, encapsulating the human tragedies of the era.

In 1808, when Goya was 62, the Spanish War of Independence had begun. Under French rule, Goya accepted the role of the painter to Joseph Bonaparte's occupying court, officially retaining his position from his time in the Spanish royal family's service and remained as the court painter throughout the war. During this time, he continued to paint royal portraits but reportedly made only one portrait of Joseph, which would later exonerate him from the Inquisition's inquiry regarding his loyalty to the French[26]. Goya claimed that the image of Bonaparte was based on an etching and not a real-life encounter, which helped alleviate the suspicion of treason[27]. It is under these circumstances of Bonaparte's court that he created many of the prints depicted in "The Disasters of War" and his series of Still-life, including "A Butcher's Counter."

Goya married Josefa Bayeu, probably for political reasons[28]. The couple had 7 children, but only one reached adulthood, Javier. In 1812, towards the end of the war, Josefa died from the Plague. Some researchers state this to be a source for the pain depicted in this work, making the painting a way of processing the grief over his wife's death [29]. Goya, painting the suffering of the lamb, reflects his wife's suffering from the

[24] See See Carr-Gomm. great masters: Francisco Goya, P. 13
[25] See ibid
[26] See ibid, P. 14
[27] See ibid
[28] See ibid, P. 10
[29] See Louvre, Nature morte à la tête de mouton. https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010066557

illness and his suffering of her death. After Josefa's death, Goya appealed to the crown in a request to move to France under the pretense of his need for medical help. He then settled in Bordeaux with other expatriate Spanish aristocrats and lived there until his death on April 16, 1828, at the age of 82[30].

Several details in Goya's biography undermine the idea of his wife's death being the source of profound sorrow depicted in this painting. One of which is the lack of evidence of their marriage being a loving one – there are no known letters between the two[31]. Goya painted Josefa only once in her lifetime, in a small sketch (image 16), and she was never presented with him in the court. Another divergence from this narrative is Goya's relations with his housekeeper, Leocadia Weiss, who, in 1812, gave birth to a daughter generally assumed to be Goya's child. Leocadia, together with her other children from her previous marriage, moved with Goya to Bordeaux in 1824.

Lamb Symbolism: Innocence and Sacrifice

"A Butcher's Counter" was created as part of a series of 12 or more still-life paintings Goya made in the style of Spanish Bodegón. Still-life painting is the painting of inanimate objects, usually characterized by closed composition – the scene is found entirely in-frame, the centering of the objects, and with dramatic and composed lighting. It is commonly considered a technical genre of painting, with a lesser focus on the selection of subjects[32]. The still-life painting is different from the others in that it opposes Alberti's ideals of painting, it fails to execute his idea of the canvas as a window to reality because it ignores the concept of creating great distances behind the painted, using the vanishing point[33]. Although it is usually made with great technical ability and uses the expertise of creating false three-dimensional spaces, in many cases trying to recreate the image on the canvas to a point of trompe l'oeiles, the vanishing point is

[30] See Hughes. "Goya.", P. 26
[31] See Carr-Gomm. great masters: Francisco Goya, P. 10
[32] See Bryson, Norman. Looking at the overlooked: Four essays on still life painting. Reaktion Books, 2013, P. 6
[33] See ibid, P. 10

always absent: there is no horizon. It proposes a much-closed space centered on the subjects' bodies[34].

Still-life paintings, especially artworks depicting food, were seen as a lesser type of painting by art critics and researchers from the sixteenth century onwards. This is because of the familiarity of the subject in our lives and the perceived lesser emphasis on the occurrences in the depicted scene. Most of us face food several times a day, and it could be seen as mundane, and unexceptional[35]. Even though food had great importance in religion and culture, this type of painting was always regarded as the lesser end of the artistic ladder of subject matter.

The Bodegón style of Spanish still-life paintings commonly describes pantry items, often arranged in simple compositions on a stone slab with a dark background. This type of painting can be seen from the Baroque onwards, but the genre peaked in popularity in the middle of the 17 century, inspired by the Dutch still-life[36]. Famous artworks in this style are Juan Sánchez Cotán's "Still-life with Fruits and Vegetables" from 1600 (image 17) and Francisco de Zurbarán's "Agnus Dei" from 1635 (image 18). This type of painting refers to low-life and everyday objects and usually has to do with the moral of Vanitas. Vanitas, Latin for vanity, was a popular motif in many still-life paintings from the 1600s to the middle of 1700s. These paintings were made with the religious objective of reminding the viewer of the futility of life and life's pleasures, as they are bound to end in the trial before God. The inclusion of this motif was done by reminding the viewers of their imminent end in this world in contrast to the eternity spent in the afterlife. These paintings usually portray symbols reminding the viewer of death and the place of man on earth, such as different skulls, dead flowers, and insects[37]. In Spain, as part of the catholic church's dominance in culture, this theme was highly present. By Goya's time, however, the theme of Vanitas in painting had dropped out of fashion with the loosening of the extreme catholic adherence that characterized the

[34] See Bryson. Looking at the overlooked, P. 71
[35] See Bendiner. Food in painting, P. 21
[36] See ibid, P. 71
[37] See ibid, P. 81

Spanish Golden Age[38]. Goya, like many of his contemporaries, had his artistic interests laid primarily in capturing the realist aspects of life in his painting - depicting daily, simpler situations. He showed relatively honest representations of his noble subjects, as well as subjects of lower social status[39].

The choice of raw meat as a subject for still-life painting, such as in "A Butcher's Counter," allows the viewer to wonder about the nature of the object: if the thing we are looking at is a living, suffering being or food. The animal carcasses or body parts occupy a liminal position between inanimate objects and living animals because of their recent transition between the two categories, which blurs the distinction:

"When the lamb becomes a lamb chop, we see a truthful transformation of life into dead matter;"[40].

This, in turn, leaves the painting of slaughtered animals at the border between still-life paintings and the depictions of violent deaths. The depiction of meat could also allude to the moment of transformation from wild and powerful beasts to small and manageable chunks of flesh. The consumption of meat reminds us of our superiority as a species, of our dominance over nature, and of our ownership of the land[41].

The depiction of lamb's meat, as in Goya's painting, also accompanies great symbolic meaning. The slaughtered lamb is often used as an allegory to Christ and his sacrifice. This is first seen in the New Testament, in the Gospel of John, when he refers to Jesus as The Lamb of God. Rabanus Maurus, a prominent 8th-century theologian, formulated in his writings the common explanation to this text in catholic theology: just as the lamb is killed in sacrificial rites in its purity, so does Christ was crucified without sin[42]. This meaning of the lamb's sacrifice was also extrapolated to allude to the sacrifice of saints and the death and torment of the innocent. In many paintings of the Last Supper, the lamb's head is painted as Jesus's meal, such as in Jacopo Bassano's "The Last Supper" from 1546-48 (image 19)[43]. The religious symbolism of this subject

[38] See Hughes. "Goya.", P. 256
[39] See ibid.
[40] Bendiner. Food in painting, P. 27
[41] see Avieli, Nir. "Grilled nationalism: Power, masculinity and space in Israeli barbeques." *Food, Culture & Society* 16.2 (2013), P. 303
[42] See Malaguzzi, Silvia. Food and feasting in art. Getty Publications, 2008, P. 150
[43] See ibid.

and its inherent connection to the suffering of Christ allowed Goya to paint this expressively. The vivid representation of the slaughtered lamb could be interpreted as an appropriate treatment of this subject.

For Goya, this subject withheld the opportunity to convey sorrow openly. The fact that still-life paintings drew less interest from the surrounding crowd could give Goya the opportunity to openly display representations of sorrow, horror, and grief without the fear of outside criticism. The inherent grotesqueness of meat imagery allowed his realist manner of portrayal to convey strong emotions in this still-life piece. Be it the animal's pain, the anguish of Christ, his personal grief, or the grief of the tormented Spanish people. Goya knew he could insert vulnerability and emotion into this scene with it not being noticed, such as with the lamb's single tear. Leaving the meaning of the evident emotion only implicit.

War, Occupation, and Goya's Silent Protest

The early 1800s were times of great uncertainty in Spanish politics. Following the long and disastrous maritime war effort against the British and the soaring inflation, the Spanish economy was debilitated and its military reputation in ruins. In addition, King Charles IV's authority was progressively undermined by forces within the Spanish nobility, who were aspiring to loosen the royal court's hold on power. These subversive forces were spearheaded by the heir to the throne himself – Prince Ferdinand VII. In 1807, the plans for a Coup d'état were discovered in the Proceso de El Escorial, a series of investigations that led to the arrest and imprisonment of Prince Ferdinand on a charge of high treason[44]. These political circumstances, together with a suspected attempt on behalf of the Spanish court to breach the 1796 alliance treaty with France, led Emperor Bonaparte's court to deem Spain as an unreliable ally. The French troops, which were already in Spain as part of a war effort against Portugal, were now ordered to advance to an attack on Madrid[45]. This external threat was the necessary trigger for a military coup,

[44] See Esdaile. War and Politics in Spain, P.300
[45]See ibid.

which instated Prince Ferdinand as the new monarch, backed by most of the Spanish nobility and the royal guard. This power transfer to Ferdinand did not help prevent the deposition of the Spanish royal family by the French empire, who crowned Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte, as the new King of Spain[46].

This political turmoil added more fuel to the already explosive settings of the Spanish society of the time. The famine and chronic unemployment that ravaged the lower classes added to a growing resentment between the different strata of Spanish society. The church's high status in Spanish governance and society gradually eroded, and a nascent middle class was eager to gain dominance[47]. The reappearance of a common enemy and the suddenly diminished presence of central governance led to a spark in patriotism and eventually to a popular uprising, which erupted in the spontaneous revolt against the French occupation of Madrid on May 2, 1808 (Dos De Mayo)[48]. This was followed by several other rebellious movements against the French or against the collaborating Spanish nobility, and in the following years, Spain descended into a full-blown civil war, with governance authority found primarily in the hands of provincial Juntas. The French army in the peninsula found itself incapable of restoring the central order to the region[49]. This left the country in chaos until the recovery of most of the Spanish peninsula by the allied Cortes of Cadiz and the Anglo-Portuguese army in 1812 and later the retaking of the throne by Ferdinand VII[50].

The war against Napoleon shook Spanish society, and Dos de Mayo is considered a pivotal moment in the formation of a singular Spanish national identity. Spanish heroism in the resistance to the French is depicted in novels and poetry throughout the 19th century[51]. The war itself had disastrous consequences for the Spanish civilian population, with the food often confiscated for the war effort, repeating

[46] See Esdaile. War and Politics in Spain, P.301
[47] See ibid P.301-302
[48] See ibid P.302
[49] See ibid P.304
[50] See ibid P.312-316
[51] See Lovett, Gabriel H. "The War of Independence (1808-1814) in 19th Century Spanish Poetry." Revista de Estudios Hispánicos 10.2 (1976), P. 217.

bouts of disease outbreaks, and strategic attacks of French troops against the non-combatant population in retaliation for acts of resistance[52].

Goya was in his early sixties by the time the war had begun and had a position as the painter of Charles IV's court. He kept this position during the transition of power to Joseph Bonaparte. He continued to produce portraits, now those of figures in the French government and nobility, such as the French general and governor of Seville, Nicholas Philippe Guye from 1810 (image 20), and the minister José Manuel Romero from 1810 (image 21). Another notable work he created for the French court is the "Allegory of the Town of Madrid" from 1810 (image 22), which celebrated Joseph Bonaparte's ascendence to the throne and had his image depicted in it (and later erased), and which probably gained the artist the honor of the Royal Order of Spain awarded by Bonaparte[53]. The low number of portraits of French nobility produced during this time, with reportedly only one depiction of Joseph Bonaparte himself, is what exonerated him from accusation of treason when inquired after the war[54]. This also meant he was allowed to retain his position as the courts' painter after Ferdinand VII reclaimed the throne in 1814.

Following the war, Goya created a number of artworks depicting the Spanish heroic resistance and the horrors of the war. One of the most famous of these, "The Second of May 1808" from 1814, also known as "The Charge of the Mamelukes" (image 2), shows a vivid portrayal of the uprising in Madrid. The chaotic scene depicts Spanish civilians rising against French soldiers, leading to fierce skirmishes across the city. Goya's brushwork captures the chaos and brutality of the events. "The Third of May 1808" from 1814 (image 3) delves deeper into the fell of defeat. It portrays the execution of Spanish citizens by French soldiers on the hill of Principe Pio. The central figure, a man with arms outstretched in horror, embodies the essence of human suffering and despair.

[52] See de la Escosura, Leandro Prados, and Carlos Santiago-Caballero. "The Napoleonic wars: A watershed in Spanish history." The Crucible of Revolutionary and Napoleonic Warfare and European Transitions to Modern Economic Growth. Brill, 2021. 171-204.
[53] See Cornelles, Víctor Mínguez. "Un Bonaparte en el trono de las Españas y de las Indias. Iconografía de José Napoleón I." Ars Longa. Cuadernos de arte 20 (2011).
[54] See Carr-Gomm. great masters: Francisco Goya, P. 14

These two examples, together with other artworks of similar themes, were created only after the end of the French rule. During the war, however, Goya only explicitly addressed the events from the standpoints of the Spanish people in artworks that weren't shown publicly, in which he emphasized the horrors endured. The series of 82 prints, "The Disasters of War" (1810-1820), wasn't published until after the artist's death. They depict graphic scenes of the horrors experienced in war: women raped, people hanged, dismembered bodies, starvation, and humiliation. The expressive depiction of the events, together with the grotesque and caricature-like features of the French soldiers, seems to convey Goya's sentiment towards the conqueror[55].

Representations of meat have historically been used to symbolize wealth, dominance, and power[56]. The predominance of animal meats as the centers of the Western meal course is regarded to be a result of such symbolism. Pierre Bourdieu defined consuming certain kinds of meat – veal, lamb, and mutton; as a symbolic act associated with cultural Distinction[57]. Moreover, the culture, slaughter, and consumption of animals are commonly regarded as symbols of sovereignty over land. Accordingly, eating spit-roasted pieces of meat has become a central custom in the celebrations of the Day of Independence in several different modern nations[58]. This linkage between meat consumption and sovereignty and political power is attributed to the large area and the amount of resources required for the farming of animals[59]. This sets the image of meat as a symbol of individual and national dominance, of sovereignty.

This aspect of the symbolic meaning of the slaughtered animal focuses on the viewpoint of the slaughterer, the lamb's owner. The other viewpoint – of the butchered subject, is occupied when addressing it as a symbol of sacrifice and torment and of the death of Christ. These two facets of the symbolic meaning of the slaughtered lamb, together with the historical circumstances of Goya's creation of the painting and the

[55] See Hughes. "Goya.", P. 312-313
[56]See Malaguzzi. Food and feasting in art, P. 132-139
[57] See Bourdieu, Pierre. "Distinction, a social critique of the judgement of taste." Inequality. Routledge, 2018. P. 177-193.
[58]see Avieli. "Grilled nationalism", P. 306
[59] See ibid

painterly manner of the work, suggest it is an implied representation of the suffering of the Spanish people during the war, and of resistance to foreign rule.

Goya painted his series of still-life paintings during the war. With them being painted in oil, which requires substantial space and equipment, Goya could not have exhibited in them the explicit horror and criticism he depicted in the printed "Disasters of War." They could not have been hidden as easily. These paintings, specifically "A Butcher's Counter," could have been made to convey the feeling of terror and discontent in a manner that would not seem subversive. The depiction of pieces of meat could have symbolized the Spanish people's desire for dominance over their land and fate. It can also be seen as an allegory to the conquering of Spain by France and the suffering of the lamb - the suffering of the suppressed and tormented Spanish people. Using lamb as the representation of the Spanish people renders them analogous to Christ. The Spanish civilians are the innocent being brought to their deaths. The French Empire is the heretic Romans. The dramatic portrayal of the lamb invites the viewer to identify with the slaughtered animal and resembles the horrors that are often encountered in daily wartime reality.

Conclusion: Deciphering Goya's Message - Death, Sorrow, and Survival

In this paper, I tried to show how Francisco Goya's painting "A Butcher's Counter" represents death and the sorrow of war through the subject of still life. Showing how this seemingly dull genre of still-life depictions of food could be used to convey deep emotional, even political messages within it.

Through the technical aspects of the painting – the composition, colors, and brushstrokes, we can track the intense emotion conveyed in it and how the lamb's suffering is manifested on the canvas. The selection of meat as the subject of still-life paintings, specifically the selection of lamb, allows for reference to its multitude of cultural meanings. In Christian iconography, the lamb is closely associated with Christ,

the ″Lamb of God,″ a symbol of purity and innocence and of the ultimate sacrificee to atone for the sins of humanity. Goya′s choice to portray this religious symbol in ″A Butcher's Counter″ afforded him some artistic freedom. During this period, religious still-life paintings were generally accepted and considered suitable subjects for artists. These paintings often adorned dining halls and were considered unremarkable or even mundane. By painting the lamb, a symbol with established religious connotations, Goya could convey his personal sorrow and political dissent without overtly challenging the French government′s authority. These paintings acted as a subtle form of protest, allowing Goya to share his pain with his fellow countrymen in a manner that escaped the notice of French authorities.

Goya's depictions of the war's brutality, graphicly expressed in prints during the war and in paint after it, could not have been portrayed explicitly in oil paintings during his time in Bonaparte's court. The lamb's symbolism of suffering, together with other meanings of meat, such as a symbol of dominance and control, create a possible complex meaning to the seemingly simple scene.

All of these taken to account show how Goya, through this subject of still life created a sensitive, emotional description of suffering and grief. How he might have used the act of painting as a way to cope with his pain, and by showing this grief that could not be spoken about, acknowledging a collective sense of sorrow. I believe this feeling of collective sorrow is what draws us to this painting, helping us feel understood of our own pain and helping us see that grief is universal.

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Appendices:

images:

image 1:

Francisco Goya, *A Butcher's Counter*, 1808-1812, oil on panel, 45 cm x 62 cm, Louvre, Paris.

Image 2:

Francisco Goya, *the 2 of May 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas, 266 cm × 345 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Image 3

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Francisco Goya, *The Third of may 1808*, 1814, oil on canvas, 268 cm × 347 cm, Museo Del Prado, Madrid.

Images 4-8: selected images from the series “the disasters of war”, 1810-1820.

Francisco Goya, Plate 10: *Nor do these*, 1810-1820, print, 1st edition, Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1863

Francisco Goya, Plate 9: *They do not want to*, 1810-1820, print, 1st edition, Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1863

Francisco Goya, Plate 1: *Sad forebodings of what must come to pass*, 1810-1820, print, 1st edition, Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1863

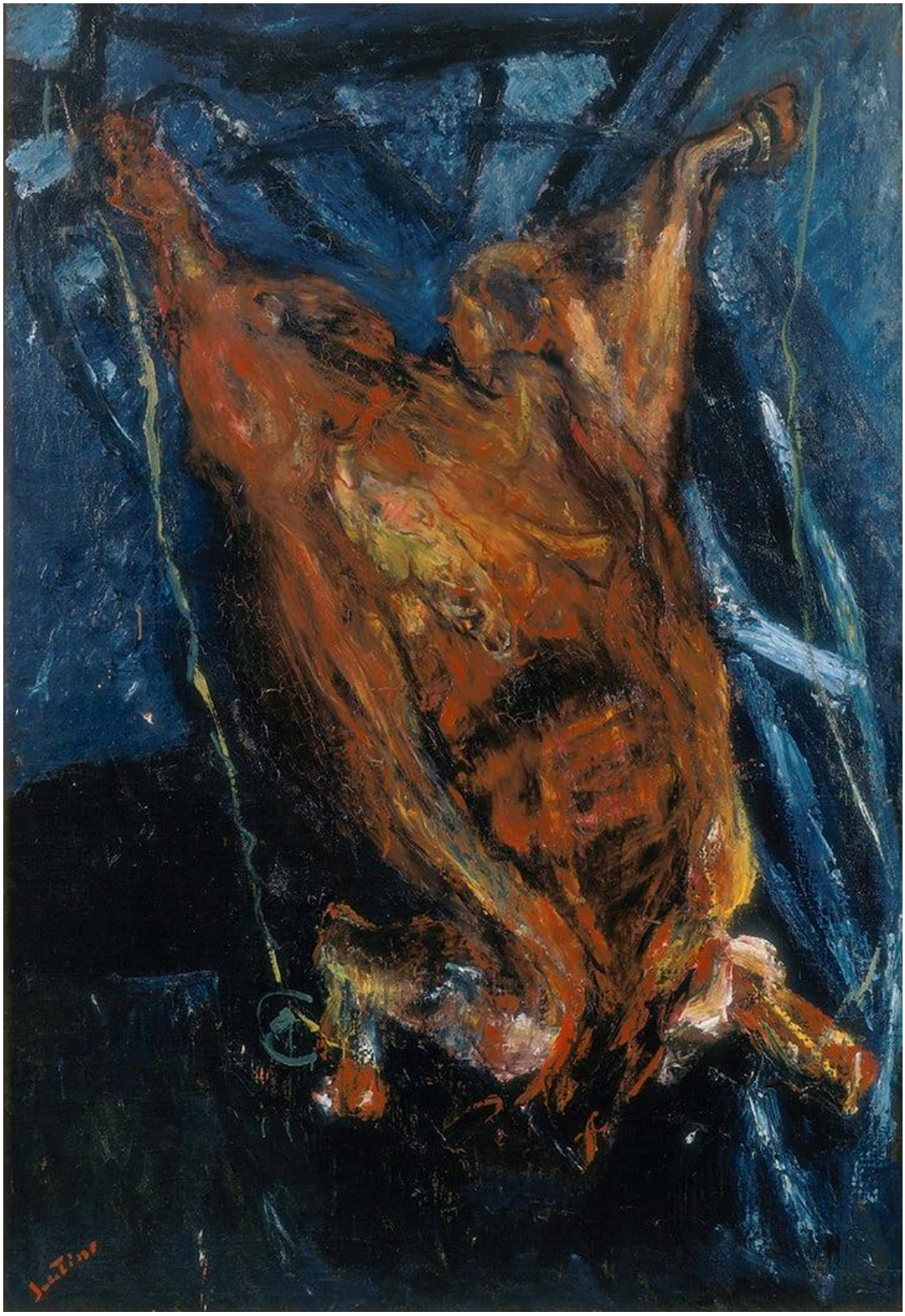
Francisco Goya, Plate 37: *This is Worse*, 1810-1820, print, 1st edition, Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1863

Francisco Goya, Plate 39: *A heroic feat! With dead men!*, 1810-1820, print, 1st edition, Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, 1863

Image 9:

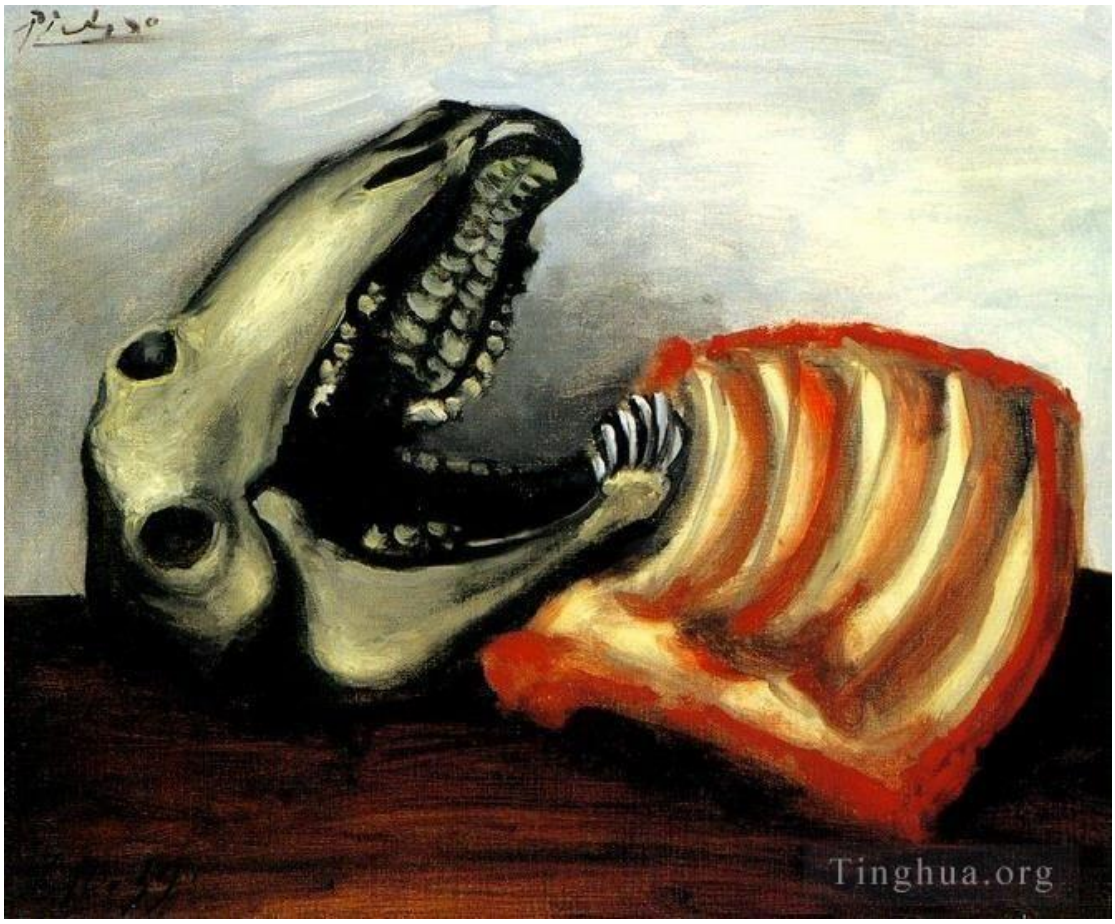
Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, *Slaughtered Ox*, 1655, Oil on panel. 95.5 x 68.8 cm. Louvre, Paris

Image 10:



Chaim Soutine, *The Beef*, 1925, oil on canvas, 140.3 x 107.6 cm, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Image 11:



Pablo Picasso, *still life with sheep's skull*, 1939, oil on canvas, 50.2 cm x 61 cm, private collection, Mexico Cit

Image 12:

Francisco Goya, *Charles IV in Red,* 1789, oil on canvas, 127.3 cm x 94.3 cm, Museo Del Prado, Madrid.

Image 13:

Francisco Goya, The Black Duchess, 1797, oil on canvas, 194 cm x 130 cm, New York Hispanic Society, new York

Image 14:

Francisco Goya, *Señora Sabasa Garcia,* 1806-1811, oil on canvas, 71 cm x 58 cm, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

Image 15:

Francisco goya, *Driving a chair* or *The work* , 1786-1787, oil on canvas, 169 cm x 127 cm, Planeta Corporación, Barcelona.

Image 16:

Francisco Goya, *Josefà Bayeu,* 1805, black chalk, 11.1 cm x 8.1 cm, Collection Marques de Casa Torres, Madrid.

Image 17:

Juan Sánchez Cotán, *Still Life with Fruits and Vegetables*, 1602, oil on canvas, 68 cm x 88 cm , Colección Abelló.

Image 18:

Francisco de Zurbarán, *Agnus Dei*, 1640, Oil on canvas, 38 cm × 62 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid

Image 19:

Jacopo Bassano, *Last Supper*, 1542,oil on canvas, 168 cm ×270 cm, Accademia Gallery, Venice

Image 20:

Francisco Goya, *General Nicolas Philippe Guye*, 1810, oil on canvas, 106 cm x 84.7 cm, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond Virginia

Image 21:

Francisco Goya, *Portrait of General Jose Manuel Romero*, circa 1810, oil on canvas, 105.5 cm x 87.7 cm, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.

Image 22:

Francisco Goya, *Allegory of the City of Madrid*, 1810, oil on canvas, 260 cm x 195 cm, Museo de Historia de Madrid, Madrid.