

Hanged, Drawn and Quartered or Goya after the Chapman's

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Abstract

I was asked to write about the work of the Chapman brothers just as a large Chapman show opened at London's Saatchi gallery in 2003. I knew and admired the work and this timing was a pure gift. As I returned again and again to confront the enigma of Hell, my responses fluctuated to and fro – between the lightening thought that this was comedy (though it did not make one laugh) and the negation of this thought. The alternative for me was never tragedy – something in the work does not permit such a hypothesis even in the absence of a stable reading. And to say that we are confronted by a scene of violence simply doesn't match one's experience. I am not sure, even today, just what to say about Hell. But perhaps I have made some headway by working with the idea of comedy in relation to two other works by the Chapmans, works whose effects rely entirely on the relations established to two sets of etchings by the eighteenth century Spanish artist Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. This relation to Goya is a totally explicit one as you will see. It is this relation that allows me to understand the Chapman's work in terms of the structure of comedy.

Keywords: Hanged, Drawn, Quartered, Goya Chapman's

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In this context something emerges that is relevant to the theme of the representation of violence. It is possible to see how the Chapmans have deflected both moralism and the *jouissance* that it opposes. Goya, of course, produces both effects. His work is permeated by that enjoyment which goes beyond the limits set by the pleasure principle. He represents violence and obscenity at the same time as he denounces it. At a more general level one might say that the Enlightenment unleashed the forces of reason only to strengthen the forces of unreason – thereby setting up the conditions of a considerable violence. It is not surprising then that this violence of oppositions inhabits Goya's etchings. What interests me is how the Chapmans avoid this violence.

...the element in comedy that satisfies us, the element that makes us laugh, that makes us appreciate it in its full human dimension, not excluding the unconscious, is not so much the triumph of life as its flight, the fact that life slips away, runs off, escapes all those barriers that oppose it, including precisely those that are the most essential, those that are constituted by the agency of the signifier.
(Lacan, VII, 313-14)

In Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* an initial confusion of persons spirals out of control. There is something unbearable in this. Something in us wants to call out that it is the husband, the good husband, the real husband who is at the door. Is this pain intensified or alleviated by watching a look-a-like who now comes to dinner in his place? Both. The pain is increased because of the flouting of the symbolic order. And it is alleviated because of the flouting of the symbolic order. This double register finds its elementary projection in narratives concerning siblings. These may be about identical twins since it overlays the question of kinship with that of the identity of appearance. But the narratives do not have to be about identical twins; the issue of being siblings is ultimately the identity which is crucial. At a structural level the aspect of brothers or sisters is that they produce a dangerous concession to disordered narratives. Brothers always suggest an arithmetic of halving and doubling. The brothers are both two appearances of one position (the son of...) and at the same time they are two positions of one appearance. Indeed it runs beyond the formal question of siblings. The very supposed 'family resemblance' between kin is a sort of *monstrosity*. Insofar as a family unit is considered from the point of view of sexual prohibition, the operation of the incest taboo has the paradoxical effect of setting up relations of resemblance where the situation calls for quite the opposite – differentiation. We may think of this as a dimension of monstrosity which runs through kinship.

Normally and certainly in the *Comedy of Errors* the pain caused by the flouting of the symbolic order is too overwhelming to offset its alleviation through laughter. The narrative ends with the inevitable resolution of all misunderstandings and misidentifications. Anxiety is dispelled and the audience is reconfirmed in its identification with the law. Of course there is a cost; the contented subject can now no longer grasp the virtue of holding to his previous irresolution. The world in which subjects and positions are routinely confused or travestied, a world in which there is a systematic multiplication and division in the subject's enjoyment of the world, has now gone. The subject now makes the mistake of confusing life with the law. But what the *Comedy* showed, before its own self-censorship, is that the vivacity of the staged confusion is nothing less than life slipping away from the law as Lacan might put it.

My argument is that the work of the Chapmans follows this structure of comedy. The Chapmans produce two appearances of the same. To put it in another way, they produce a gap between two appearances. As in the case of narrative, identity and appearance, sameness and splitting is the artist's production. The Chapmans don't do this through the theme of brothers as the subject matter of their work. Of course they collaborate as artists and they are in fact brothers. However, the way in which they produce two appearances of the same is a separate if related matter. The monstrosity they produce has more to do with the work and less to do with being brothers. [The sameness is the oneness of their own work with that of the 18th century Spanish artist, Francisco Goya. At the same time the work remains separate and thus more than one.]

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Chapmans have cited Goya in various forms for over a decade. From the early 1990s until 2004 their interest was focused on the series of etchings known as *The Disasters of War*. The 1993 *Disasters* is a work exhibited at waist height, made up of over 83 separate roughly made miniature models in a roughly circular space, each with a reference to an etching from the series. In the following year, 1994, the Chapmans converted an etching from this series, '*Great deeds against the dead*' into a large-scale sculpture with the same title (which was shown at the Royal Academy in the *Sensation* exhibition). They have produced other variously named works that relate to *Disasters*. There is the 1999 (2001?) eponymous series of Chapman etchings. These bear a loose relation to the originals and the brothers have run riot with swastikas, dirty jokes, skulls, phalluses, monsters, and anal smoke. Then, still focused on *Disasters*, there is *From Insult to Injury*, a title indicative of a new move which is the culmination of previous work. The Chapmans are now intruding directly onto an *original* set of Goya's *Disasters*. In 2005 they go further still when they paint over another set of Goya's etchings, *Los Caprichos*, transformed into *Like A Dog Returns to its Vomit*. This time the repetitions with a difference resonate in all directions. It is hard to sort out the two appearances of the one and the one appearance of the two. It is as though Goya was working on the Chapmans' work even as they worked on his. No one was ever going to sort this out.

What is it that the Chapman Brothers do and to what effect? My answer to the first question is that they reverse the relation of influence that usually holds in artistic traditions. Art historians are fond of tracing influences but they would be hard put to use their framework to explain the Chapmans' relation to Goya's *Disasters of War* - what they took from it, what they developed, etc. This is because there is a *reverse* influence. There is a retrospective projection onto Goya with paint. It opens up a new dimension of the intermediate – not now a *measure* of distance or proximity, more an autonomous *substance*. But this is a substance so strange that the object loses its defining characteristics. I call this new type of object the intermediate object. This new object establishes the inseparability of two bodies of work. It is not a question of a third object such as the hybrid. Nor is it a question of the convergence of two trajectories in a common object. It is a question of the gap between objects. What is important is that, paradoxically, this bringing together of objects generates a gap.

What is revealed in *From Insult to Injury* and in *Like A Dog Returns to Its Vomit* is the absence of the everyday object of fantasy. Here it is not a question of the object masking that which lies behind it. In comedy nothing is hidden; we have instead two appearances of the same that form a gap in representation – there is nothing beyond, only this gap. Across the work of Goya and the Chapman brothers there is this gap forged through the two appearances of one position and the two positions of one appearance that describes the relation between brothers. In this case the appearances also refer to the works. The clear separation between two distinct physical objects blurs as the Chapmans' intervention gorges on meaning, only to emit vomit. What is left in play is life that runs off and escapes signifying barriers. The structure of comedy insists.

3.0 ANALYSIS

I have said that the Chapmans produce an object of a special kind and I have also said that they produce a gap. What has an object to do with a gap? In Freudian and Lacanian analysis – everything and nothing. For the object at stake in psychoanalysis is the lost object which necessarily leaves a gap there where it once was. Normally this gap is filled with substitute objects. The Chapmans *undermine the characteristics of this substitute object and reveal the gap*. Their objects no longer have determinate characteristics. They are no longer stable and autonomous.

It is not accidental that comedy opens up a gap. For comedy knows about the lost object. The rest of us, of course, try to deny the loss by toying with an unsuccessful succession of substitute objects. The Chapmans seem to reverse this process of covering loss with substitute objects. They *reveal* the gap. But where comedy ends by restoring objects to their place, the Chapmans do no such thing. Their work is made possible and sustained through the gap they open up between Goya and themselves; there is no question of closing it. The objects they produce are neither the lost objects nor their substitutes; their objects are endlessly malleable.

We could say that we are before or beyond signification because although language opens up a gap, we usually cover over the loss of our objects with substitute objects. When the Chapmans reveal the gap they alter our relation to language and the *jouissance* it gives rise to. What this means is that the work inhabits a space which is not a space of representation. This space is *real*. In this space we experience ourselves and the world differently. We are caught up in a field of indistinguishable objects whose mutual relations remain obscure.¹

If the Chapmans' work has the structure of comedy, what of Goya's? The repetition with a difference that produces the two appearances of the same does not, of course, have to be a repetition of something that itself has the structure of comedy. Indeed I think there is nothing in Goya that fits our definition of comedy and nothing that suggests that Goya produced intermediate objects. We have to look elsewhere for an explanation of the effects of the Chapmans' interventions in these two sets of etchings. A moment ago I claimed that the Chapmans' work allows us a fleeting retreat from the body and its *jouissance*. Let us take what is, at first sight, a surprising example of such a claim. In 1994 the Chapmans made the life-size sculpture 'Great Deeds against the Dead 2' with a direct reference to Goya's etching no. 39. The Chapmans say that they wanted to make Goya's world 'devoid of expression'. Interviewed by Damianovic in 1997 they said 'We are interested in making a dead sculpture. Dead in content and dead – or inert – in materiality'² What do we see? Figures and their castrated and decapitated parts stuck on trees which are 'dead'. There is also the deadness of the inert, bland material from which they are made; there is nothing *human* about them. The Chapmans pit flesh against fibreglass. They oppose the human, the living, the suffering - to the inert, 'Dead in content and dead...in materiality.' It is often said that we *enjoy* Goya's 'Disasters of War', that we *enjoy* the horror of it. This is what Lacan called *jouissance*. It is what Freud noted on the face of his famous patient, The Rat Man, as the latter told him the story of the torture where rats were introduced into the anus. Freud writes, 'I could only interpret it as one of *horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware*' (X, 167). The Chapmans' sculpture is horrifying but they have got rid of this element of enjoyment. Philip Shaw (in a 2003 article on the Chapmans and Goya, 490) argues that via the total deadness of *Great Deeds 2* 'the effect of the Chapmans' plasticized wounds is to nullify the gaze'. We go beyond the object gaze and confront the Real. I agree that this is a direct relation to the Real but I attribute this to the gap that the Chapmans open up between what Shaw calls the 'obscene vitality' of the etching, and the inertness of the sculpture. Or rather, to the gap opened up between two appearances of Goya. If I am right about the intertwined opposition of language and *jouissance*, then this gap would indeed empty Goya's original image of the effects of *jouissance* of which it is often accused.

You may want to protest that I am talking nonsense and that the sculpture is both violent and monstrous. I would agree that you are right but also say that you are wrong. At a descriptive level one does indeed use these words. But neither horror nor suffering is subject matter for the Chapmans. The shock/horror that there is, is best explained in terms of the operation of the intermediate object – the blurring of the boundaries of works, the de-familiarisation of the object. Added to which is the shock/horror of the non-origin of the intermediate artist, the result of the collaboration between brothers. Audiences will have to go beyond the question of the ostensible subject matter. In this case the Chapmans' work is about the *relation* both to Goya and to each other. It is this relation that yields the Chapman effect. They shock you out of horror. What is there about the way in which Goya worked that allows the Chapmans to succeed in what they have done? How do they relate to his motifs? Victor Stoichita in his book *Goya: The Last Carnival* has emphasised the tradition that is important for *Disasters*³ We can say schematically that Carnival was traditionally a temporary reversal of values, a de-structuring of societal mores, a disorder, 'joy in the face of relative chaos' as Stoichita puts it. The idea of the book is that although Carnival ceased to be a popular and joyful period of release, there was a permanent 'carnivalisation' in Goya's work. He used the forces of disorder, the underbelly of things, through the themes of human/animal, 'low' sexuality and violence to characterise, not Carnival, but the world. Tragedy does not strictly belong to Carnival. Yet within Goya's 'carnivalisation' of the world Stoichita detects a growing tendency toward tragedy, at least in the *Disasters*. (There are carnival motifs in *Los Caprichos* but as we shall see it is primarily satirical in a way that allows the Chapmans to gorge on it.)

¹ Many artists today work within what I have called real space. See my 'Out of Sight, Out of Body: The Demand/Sugimoto Effect', *Grey Room* (MIT 2006)

² (Damianovic interview 1997 www.jca-online.com/chapman.html) Note that the Chapmans had previously claimed of 'Zygotic acceleration biogenetic, de-sublimated libidinal model (enlarged by 1000)' (1995) that 'the mannequins aren't children, they're fibreglass' (Saatchis).

³ Victor Stoichita, *Goya: The Last Carnival* (Reaktion, 1999).

What is it that Goya is doing in Etching 37 of *Disasters*? [It is an etching in the category of those ‘*We cannot look at this*’, the title that Goya gave to Drawing C. 101 1814-24 ⁴] Etching 37 is titled ‘*This is worse*’ – it shows a mutilated human figure pierced from anus to shoulder. It is interesting that Stoichita relates this image to the work of another artist – he who made the classical Belvedere torso of Hercules which Goya had seen and drawn in *The Italian Notebook*. Being just a torso this Hercules is mutilated. Stoichita says that for Goya ‘it characterised the distorted classical form, a hyperbolised and at the same time denigrated human body’⁵. By impaling the Belvedere Torso on a dead tree’ Goya produces ‘a link between the degradation of the notion of the human and that of classical form’.⁶ Goya comments on the original image by transforming it. His etching goes against everything that the torso once stood for. This etching represents the movement in Goya whereby the carnivalesque moves into something else, where violence takes over as a depiction of the world. Stoichita shows how the reversals that Carnival entails, high/low, human/animal and the emphasis on sexuality, continue to be used by Goya, now in his depiction of the world, in his exposure of it. The degradation of the notion of the human that is allowable in Carnival, takes on a different meaning when the temporary reversal entrenches itself as a permanent feature of a lawless world. Stoichita seems to see this as a move into tragedy, but listen to what Philip Shaw has this to say about Goya’s *Great Deeds against the Dead* (no 39), one of the best known of the Disaster series: Three figures echoing the crucifixion...The tableau convulses the taboo that offers the loathsome corpse as a counterbalance to sacrifice; instead of differentiating the abject and the sacred, Goya succeeds in a kind of violent yoking, suffusing the abject with sacrificial meaning whilst subjecting the sacred to sadomasochistic defilement. (488)

If this is true, how does the Chapmans’ intervention make a difference? The difference is made because they both alter and at the same time stay true to Goya. It would be wrong to overlook what we learn about Goya from the Chapmans’ interventions. For their changes make us attend to aspects of Goya’s own moves that we have so far overlooked. Let’s take the Chapmans’ over-painted version of *Great Deeds*... There was a distinction in my childhood between a chest of drawers and what was called a hanging cupboard. In *Great Deeds*...it is not clothes but human parts that we see hanging on the branches of the rail, and in one corner we see a head hung up like a hat. The body is distributed as clothes might be - a piece here and a piece there. But of course that is already in Goya. The horror is in the fact that the body can be thought of in this way – as something that can be taken apart - there are all the parts as though they might indeed be put together again. Other etchings show us hung bodies, like puppets in pain. The Chapmans pick out the faces on such bodies and turn them into astonished or terrified animals and clowns. In Goya’s number 32, *Por qué?* (no slide) OMIT – a man is being hanged – he has slipped down the tree, the rope tight around his neck. His face is white and his hair stands on end round his face. In the Chapmans’ version the shock is registered by ginger hair standing on end and the face has been transformed into a red-eyed mask with large ears and a large red mouth with tiny teeth. There is another example where the face is already picked out for the Chapmans – number 37 *Esto es peor* – the face of final agony is white and the hair stands upright and sideways. Again the Chapmans have painted over the face. They take their cue from Goya. They elaborate on these important moments and alter them *in keeping with the thrust of the original*. While being astonished at the intervention of colour and the children’s world of animals and clowns we dimly perceive the resonance with the original.

In etching number 75 *Farándula de Charlatanes*, there is a central kneeling figure with the grinning face of a bear complete with red nose, large round ears and a wide mouth stuffed with small teeth. That is the Chapman version. But that face was picked out already by Goya in the form of the face of a beaked bird on the shoulders of a human figure. The inter-changeability of parts is as important as the theme of fragmentation. Off with one head! Put another head on! The Chapmans have always been interested in the taking apart and putting together of parts. Jake Chapman, apropos of *Zygotic Acceleration* says ‘In leaving intact the lines between the arms and the torso, you divide the body into sections that are removable’. Goya, too, knows about the changing of parts and the Chapmans play with this. The Chapmans introduce the world of the cartoon and the rhythm of illustrations from children’s books– look at the horse’s purple head and rolling, surprised human eyes in number 17, *Ne se Convienen*. They have cartoonised the animal, anthropomorphised it. *That always happens* (8). The purple head with long rabbit ears on a human figure belongs to the same world (40). At times there is a startling direct appeal to the viewer, for example the substitute horse (donkey) face on whose back is a uniformed figure with outstretched sword (17) ‘They do not agree’. How does this “something” that looks out of the picture work? Cartoons and clowns are, of themselves, the other side of savagery. Yet by over-painting the etchings in the way they do, the Chapmans avoid the *jouissance* of the originals.

⁴ Goya, Drawing C. 101 1814-24.

⁵ Stoichita, p 95.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp 95-6.

I have now put together materials for a preliminary answer to my earlier question about Goya, the Chapmans and the structure of comedy. The work of the Chapmans shares the structure of comedy because of the way it relates to the Goya etchings at the level of motif. It is at that level that the Chapmans can produce the splitting of the one into two - the gap that *is* the Real. Goya's original etchings open onto the Real in a different way – not through the minimum distance that comedy can employ but through the palpitations of an obscene suffering. We move to the question of what there is about the way in which Goya worked that allows the Chapmans to succeed with *Like a Dog Returns to Its Vomit*. This time they have gorged on Goya's *Los Caprichos*. This time I will be able to make a stronger case. Andrew Schulz⁷ has written about *Los Caprichos* as satire. He stresses the importance of the senses, especially vision and hearing, for Enlightenment theories of knowledge. He claims 'that Goya's depiction of the sense organs – particularly eyes and mouths – is a central...component of the mechanics of satire in *'Los Caprichos'*.'⁸ Take *Los Chinchillas* Pl 50, 1799 – these noblemen have their eyes closed, and their ears padlocked. They can't observe or experience, but rely on tradition. Here the satirical marks the absence of connection between sense perception and knowledge. By contrast with the theme of blindness or visual insufficiency through the depiction of closed eyes, mouths remain open wide in *Los Caprichos*. The series also has many 'images and captions containing allusions to swallowing, blowing, vomiting, sucking, yawning, shouting, snoring, and most commonly, eating and drinking'. *Los Caprichos* portrays beasts, not humans. *Los Chinchillas* are precisely such monstrous figures. Schultz argues that there are many examples of the overturning of the Enlightenment architecture of the body. A particularly striking example is the drawing 'Merry Caricature' 1796-97 from Album B (p 170 in Schulz) - there is a huge phallic nose on a figure in monk's clothes, seated at table, shovelling food into his mouth. 'Blasts of wind' *Los Caprichos* 48, 1799, inverts mouth and anus.

If Goya has produced a bestial world, the Chapmans, working directly on the images of *Los Caprichos*, play with the same motifs. In so doing they intervene in the world that Goya depicts. Clearly, the two sets of motifs do not cancel each other out to return us to square one; but neither do they add up. The Chapmans do not underscore Goya's Enlightenment judgement of the world. In one sense they are repeating what Goya did – they use very similar bestial motifs. But what they are doing on Goya's own images is not quite identical to what Goya did on paper in the first place. Goya was using well-known eighteenth-century ways of representing bestiality in the age of reason. His images are satirical and play on the gap between the ideals and the reality of the Enlightenment. When the Chapmans come along and do what *looks like* more of the same, they do so with no such intent. What is the effect? The Chapmans intervene, not to repeat Goya or add to him, but to intensify Goya beyond the limits of *Los Caprichos*. In turn this means breaking the very links which Goya had maintained within satire. For to satirise, to point out the gap between the ideal and the reality, is still to connect the two. The difference of what the Chapmans do and what Goya does can be marked through the treatment of eyes in the images. In Goya's work the eyes are increasingly subordinated to the human organs of mouths and anuses. Gluttony seems the function of all organs, including the sexual organs. Knowledge and enlightenment, the sphere of the ideals, is subordinated to what is gross and debased. The Chapmans intervene within this, at the level of the eyes. In *'The Sleep of Reason...'* one does indeed find many eyes but they belong to the monstrous birds. What can we say about the very many eyes in the Chapmans' reworking of *Los Caprichos* - dozens of eyes as rounded spheres, miniscule multiple elements of other eyes, or eyes protruding on the end of stalks. We can say that these are not human eyes and the form of the eye is certainly not that of the *oculus* of the Enlightenment. They are obscene organs no longer related to knowledge and no longer in harmony with a knowable world. The Chapmans are not satirical either in their intent or in their effect. There are now eyes and mouths and tongues and masks and humans with animal heads everywhere. And now the features, the motifs that were tied to systems of meaning have torn loose from their moorings and overrun the scene. Many people who saw *Like A Dog* were uncertain to whom a particular detail should be attributed. One almost thinks that Goya is involved in a repetition of the Chapmans... With the over-painting of this set of etchings the Chapmans almost literally take the path that Goya took. They add impossibly long noses, large ears. Animals, monsters and birds abound. This is more of *Los Caprichos*. They lay on - death, sex, maggots, cruelty. These additions are effective, but not because of the sheer weight of content. This intervention does not indulge *jouissance* with the bribe of morality as Goya does. Instead, it underscores life in its slipping away from the grasp of the signifier. No judgement is made. The Chapmans offer Goya a collaboration at the level of line, with the supplement of their graffiti. But at the level of effect they have transformed Goya. This can be followed through at the level of obscenity. Goya has already made an obscene world to support his satire. Its rapacity is organised around human organs which have been divested of all ideality. But even here one must notice that obscenity is a difficult economy to control. In order to work it requires that it convey to a spectator a

⁷ Andrew Schulz', *Art History*, Vol. 23, no 2, (June 2000), (pp 153-181).

⁸ *Ibid.* p 155

minimum level of 'reality'. Partly this is conveyed by the drawing, partly in some sense as being the violation of a taboo. This constraint is familiar to the graffiti artist of the lavatory mural. You can draw a sketch of a penis and you can seek to intensify it by making it bigger, but beyond a certain point it just looks silly, or rather its relation to its owner begins to look silly. Obscenity can tolerate exaggeration, but not absurdity. Now the exaggeration obviously refers to other dimensions than size. One might consider the eyes that the Chapmans have added to the etchings. The 'eyes' have here achieved a quasi-autonomous status; they do not exist as an exaggeration. They are eyes projected onto another space and function. Their stalks are often literalised into an eye plant. To say that they do not result from exaggeration is to say that they do not have their origin in a naturalistic representation. The Chapmans have collaborated with Goya to head the pictures off from the rhetorical elision of disgust and 'exaggeration', the field of the obscene, into an intermediate path.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Despite opinion to the contrary, the subject enjoys obscenity. It is true that at a conscious level, the subject may protest and squeal and demand that the thing is banned, but an unconscious level it is enjoying it. In the case of Goya, unconscious enjoyment of obscenity bribes its way past censorship by giving consciousness the excuse that these representations are all somehow in the service of morality. Enjoyment of obscenity certainly forces consciousness to adopt some curious alibis. But to turn the question round – we have seen that in the case of obscene graffiti there are conditions which have to be met by obscenity in order to mobilise enjoyment. The most obvious of these is that, however crudely or extravagantly the object represented is, it must nevertheless bet the level of fantasy an object which is the body. Indeed it is this relation that stands as the limit of the sexual. (*Jouissance* is tied to the body.) Enjoyment might tolerate and to a certain extent even encourage pictorial exaggeration but at a certain point representation takes its revenge on graffiti. The object is detached from any possible body and finds itself relegated to the spatial equivalent of nonsense. Put one way, the Chapmans have taken obscenity too far. By 'too far' we do not mean the usual sense of making work that is too scandalous, but rather in the other sense of having gone further than obscenity can tolerate.

However one puts it, the effect is to have harnessed Goya in a direction that lies beyond obscenity. One could even say that the gap between Goya's work and the Chapmans is the gap between obscenity and the very specific sense of 'beyond obscenity' used here. (It follows that this 'beyond obscenity' is quite different from obscenity and can only be reached through obscenity.) 'Beyond obscenity' describes not a type of representation but rather a pathway through obscenity. Indeed, it can never be an independent form of representation. One can only draw, paint or sculpt 'beyond obscenity' by altering the relation to sexuality and the body of the existing field of representation. This particular field of art always takes the form of an intervention within what exists. It is appropriate that the exit from the obscene, the production of a certain kind of graffiti takes the same form as many original attempts to transform a representation *into* the domain of obscenity, that is, through the addition to the body of naked cocks, breasts etc.

At a formal level we would have to say that the resulting images betray a representational gap, just as they betray two (or three) hands. This gap is intensified by the fact that while we have described Goya's work as obscene, we have described the Chapmans work as post obscene. At a graphic level, the styles are different. Initially registering the gap seems to predominate as an effect. But if we reread the image after its supplementation then as they say, the picture looks different. Here we trace a line from obscenity to post obscenity, from sexuality to libido (life). However, this raises the question of what the Chapmans are doing in this move. Normally the obscene, if we are thinking in terms of art and sublimation, is thought to be a form of de-sublimation. If that is the case how do we characterise going beyond obscenity? Is it a renewed sublimation? Or is it (and this is my view) a de-de-sublimation which empties out of pictorial representation any manifold and necessary relations between organs and bodies?

Let us now see what the artists themselves say about their work and their joint relation to it. An interview with Douglas Foght in 1995⁹ is a rich source of material. Two quotations:

DF Why did you start working together as a team?

JC: Actually Dinos had a great answer for it: he said, 'Because our own work is crap.' And then he said... We're only good enough to make one person's work.' What is separate, Jake and Dinos, comes to be fused in the non-origin of the work. Does this not make them 'intermediate artists' who, not accidentally, produce intermediate objects?

I will now develop some thoughts about the relation between the Chapmans as artists and their objects. Artistic collaboration can raise extreme anxieties in critics. At a preliminary level it relates to the question of who did what. But behind this is the problem that inheres in the condition that an art work is the product of an artist. And more – it is the product of a single artist. What is the singularity of the artist? Normally the empirical answer is that a single

⁹ Interview with Douglas Foght (<http://www.vpro.nl/data/laat/materiaal/chapman-bros-interview.shtml>) Feb 27, 1995

artwork requires a single artist. Only to such a single figure can we attribute complex thoughts and modifications of them into the ultimate coherent synthesis of a single guiding intelligence. The thought of collaborative work raises a more awkward ratio. The (at least two) collaborators unify into one artist. The relations are different before and after completion of the art work – before there are two collaborators each of whom have different relations to different objects. After completion, they are one artist whose relation to objects is singular. Having two collaborating artists introduces a problem of doubling which is then further compounded at the symbolic level, of this couple being brothers. The question of the double is, as it were, both redoubled and halved. Twice there is the multiplication of their artistic identity; once through their collaboration and then again through their fraternity. But this last figure might also argue for a certain division at the heart of this multiplication – that they are less than two.

Whatever artistic personality this is – doubled, doubled and halved – it's clearly of the order of monstrosity that the Chapmans bring forth in the work. (*multiple girls*). Consider Dinos' answer to another question in the Foght interview:

DF The question is, what kind of objects are you producing?

DC: Our activity is like the production of a skin rather than the production of a set of objects. It's a skin that seems to weld and suffocate whole territories.

We are dealing with *singularities*. Singularity abolishes the normal representational assumptions that the artist is representing a figure or an individual. The singularity is not so much a representation as a point in a field of multiplicities. It is as if the field could be thought of as a skin. It is true that the object is always mediated by the skin, but at the same time the skin contains all its objects. There is always another object in another place. So there is no unity. The object has become unstable. Singularities demonstrate the truth that the object as we usually think of it, doesn't exist. In effect, the skin referred to here, is equivalent to the way in which the Chapman Brothers work when they paint over Goya's etchings. This skin is the body of their work. This skin is the body through which the Chapmans participate in the Goya and make Goya their brother (whose brother?). You can see that the monstrosity of the work is inextricably tied to the monstrosity of its non-origin. The Chapmans introduce monstrosity into their work through the intermediate status of the artist subject *and* the intermediate status of the object. It is this monstrosity that is linked to life. Goya had lowered the status of Lacan's 'life' and the Chapmans triumphantly reinstate it. They reinstate what Goya had satirised, via Goya. So in the one case, monstrosity is denigrated life and in the other, it is the reinstatement of life. This new monstrosity is misunderstood and is denigrated in its turn by the viewing public. They are shocked. They think that painting over Goya originals is vandalism. They think that the Chapmans posture and try to shock. Even the Chapmans themselves think that they can't escape transgression. But in their work they do that rare thing – they defer judgement. The order, or rather disorder of comedy is not about the random; it is about the mistaking of identities. Now it is just the question of identity that is at issue in the Chapmans' work. From the point of view of the artist it is the form of the artist's work which provides materials for constructing an identity. But the form of the Chapmans work does just the opposite; it dissolves any sense of identity. This applies on the side of the artist - Jake, Dinos, Goya (?) It also applies on the side of the cultural object – *Los Caprichos, As a Dog Returns to its Vomit; Disasters of War, Insult to Injury*.

IMAGES

Key

Goya D Goya's Disasters of War series + number

II *Insult to Injury* numbers refer to numbering of Goya's images

Goya C Goya's Caprichos series + number

Dog *As a Dog Returns to its Vomit* – numbers here do not correspond to Goya's originals

Ch Chapmans other work with individual titles

II 39 *Great Deeds Against the Dead*

Ch *Disasters* (1993 miniature models)

Ch *Gigantic Fun* (double-headed figure)

Dog 65 *Where is mother going?*

Ch *Great Deeds 2* (sculpture)

Goya D39 *Great deeds*

II 37	<i>This is Worse</i>	
Ch	<i>Zygotic Acceleration</i>	(1995)
Goya C69	<i>Blow</i>	
Dog C69	<i>Blow</i>	
Goya C43	<i>El Sueno de la Razon...</i>	
Dog C43	<i>The sleep of reason produces monsters</i>	
Dog C48	<i>Blasts of wind</i>	
Dog C19	<i>All will fall</i>	
Dog C75	<i>Can't anyone untie us?</i>	
Dog C61	<i>They have flown</i>	

If illustrations are going into the text then the last six images should be in the section that discusses 'eyes' in the Chapmans' work.

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