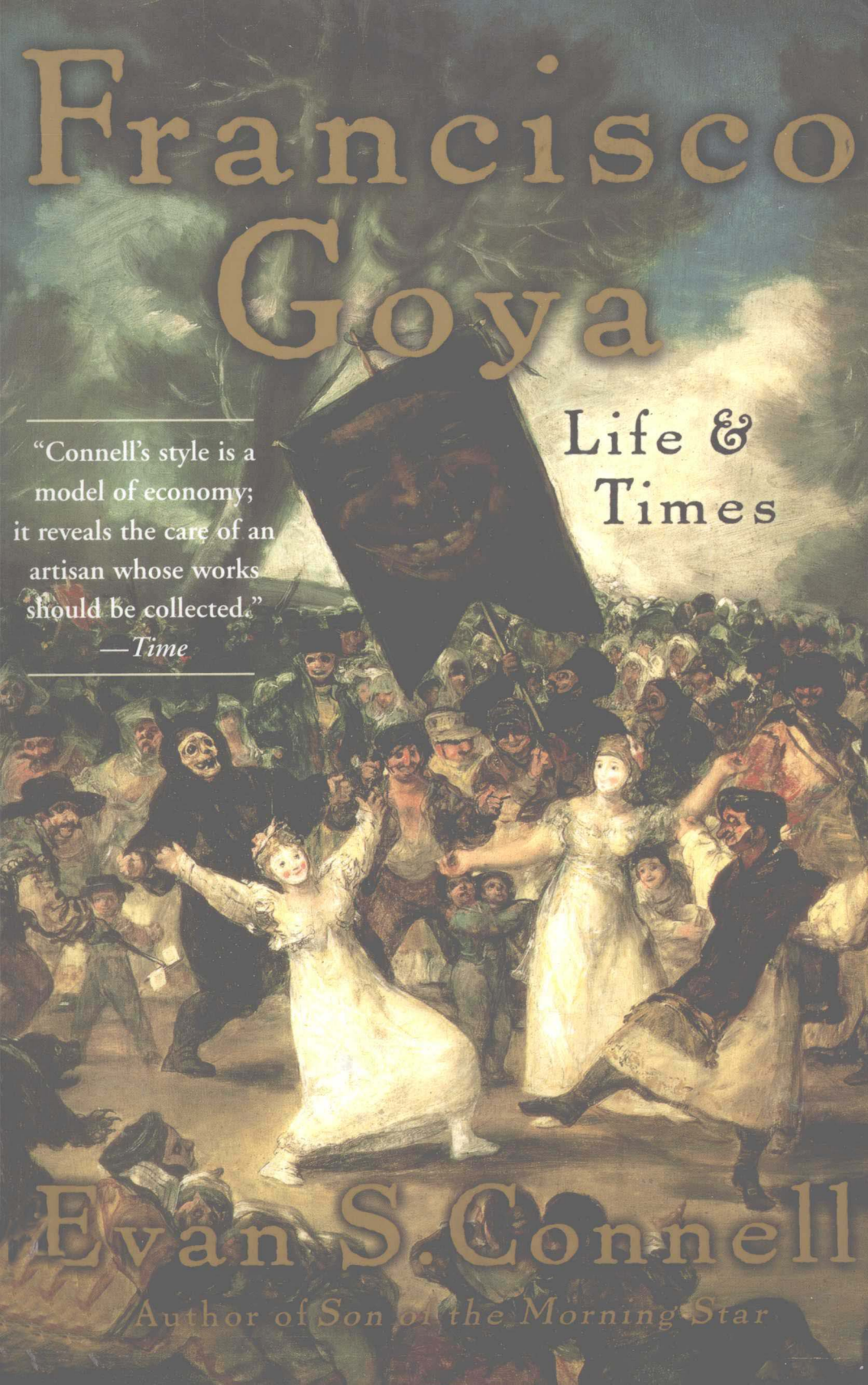
Francisco Goya
Life & Times
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—Time
Evan S. Connell
Author of Son of the Morning Star

Francisco Goya

EVAN S. CONNELL

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Frontispiece: *Portrait of Maria Theresa, Countess of Chinchon*, wife of the Spanish Prime Minister, Manuel de Godoy (1767–1851) by Francisco Jose de Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828). CREDIT: Private Collection/ Bridgeman Art Library.

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As in all the turbulent periods which have foreshadowed crucial and violent phases in the history of mankind, many writers and artists tended to translate into their own idiom the repugnance they felt for an established but tottering order from which they wanted to dissociate themselves at all costs.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS CHABRUN

I

Doña María Teresa Cayetana de Silva, thirteenth Duchess of Alba, was by every account a mankiller. We are told that when she rode through the streets of Madrid citizens peered from their windows, children paused at their games. A French tourist, Marquis Fleuriot de Langle, obviously numbed by what he saw, wrote that every hair of her head incites desire. Nor was Doña María Teresa Cayetana unaware of her crowning glory; she disliked wearing a wig, although she was not above using kohl, rouge, and eyebrow pencil.

Again, again, and again we are told of abundant black hair, sparkling eyes, provocative little mouth, tiny waist. If we believe Marquis Fleuriot, she is impossible to surpass, nothing on earth could be more lovely. Lady Elizabeth Holland, who visited Spain in 1802, mentions her beauty, grace, popularity, wealth, and exalted rank. Moreover, Lady Holland remarks that she did not wantonly violate public standards, either in conversation or deportment. Her wealth was immeasurable—seventeen palaces or mansions and such tracts of land that people thought she could walk the length of Spain without stepping off her estates.

As good students of female nature may have guessed by now, the Duchess was cruel, an essential trait of mankillers rich or poor. Certain biographers assert the opposite, that she was kindness itself. No doubt this could be just as true; after all, a woman isn't a bolt of cloth, identical in texture from thread to thread.

She loved, or seemed to love, earth's disinherited. In the Alba entourage she kept a stuttering old monk named Basil, not too bright, incapable of doing much. She provided him with a mule so that he might accompany the party when she and her friends went riding, which was considerate, yet they enjoyed playing tricks on Brother Basil. In those days, of course, the nobility maintained fools, dwarfs, midgets, parrots, monkeys, hunchbacks, etc. for amusement. Cynics might observe that nothing has changed. Anyway, during one of these excursions Brother Basil slipped off his mule, or was thrown off, and ended up in a ditch. When he climbed out, or was helped out, the Duchess smothered him with kisses.

I understand him, she told her husband. I knew from the beginning that he had a soul like mine.

And there was young Lusito, Luis Berganza, whose father supervised the Alba estates. Lusito's job was to carry perfume and cosmetics. He probably couldn't read but once in a while the Duchess sent him a letter, calling him her own dear son.

And the black-skinned child, María de la Luz. Album A of Goya's Sanlúcar drawings includes an India ink sketch of the Duchess holding La Negrita on her lap, affectionately cradling the child's head in one hand. Goya with his acute sensibility to fraud perceived nothing but tenderness, and nowhere in letters to his friend Zapater does he imply anything else. Still, one scholar remarked that La Negrita was treated like an exotic pet.

Consider the young seminarian: picked up, tantalized, mocked, discarded. A member of the Somoza family told historian Joaquín del Bayo that one day when the Duchess went for a stroll near her Madrid palace she was approached by a theological student who had no idea who she was. She suggested that while getting acquainted they might have a little snack. And once settled in a cafe she ordered expensive pastries, custards, ices. What happened next could have been lifted from an eighteenth-

century farce. The seminarian couldn't pay the bill so the cafe owner, acting upon her private instructions, insisted that he leave his trousers for security. You might think this humiliation would be enough. Not at all. When she invited him to visit her the following night he accepted, visions of paradise skipping through his head. One of her maids came to fetch him. And he, perhaps thinking the beautiful stranger must be another maid, followed his guide to the palace. There the Duchess received him in grand style before an assembly of guests, all of whom knew about him losing his trousers. The story may have been embellished over two centuries, but there's no doubt that she took what pleased or amused her, discarding it the instant her fancy turned. She loved to flirt, loved the game of seduction, which doesn't quite coincide with Lady Holland's remark about patrician deportment.

In those days Spain overflowed with women named María Teresa, just as today, and because we will meet a few the Duchess will be identified as María Cayetana—or La Alba, as Goya once called her in a letter to Martín Zapater.

Her father, Don Francisco, womanizer and gambler, died when she was seven.

Her mother, Doña Mariana de Silva y Sarmiento, Duchess of Huéscar, had a certain reputation as a painter and poet. Indeed, she had talent enough to be named honorary member of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, although the fact that she was who she was probably influenced the selection committee. A 1774 portrait by Anton Mengs shows a not unattractive woman, blondish, pleasant, with an expression that might be construed as melancholy. She is said to have been quite fond of "gilded Bohemianism, unfaithful lovers and French Encyclopaedists." One might assume, therefore, that she would know how to control a Bohemian daughter. Apparently not.

She was left mostly in the care of her grandfather, twelfth Duke of Alba, a famous art collector and music lover who had built a palace on the ruins of a medieval castle near Ávila. This stately aristocrat had been at one time Spanish ambassador to the court of France and he went about preceded by the dwarf Benito who wore his medals. He was known

to alternate between fits of rage and refined urbanity, between pride in the splendor of his name and terror at the thought that the great name of Alba might die with him. Painting, sculpture, music, books, such were his passions. It's doubtful that his library—the walls lined with silk—held a single page of trash. Montesquieu, St. Augustine, St. Teresa, Fray Luis de Granada, Molière, Calderón, Racine, and Maestro Juan de Ávila stood shoulder to shoulder. He admired Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He visited the celebrated Frenchman in Geneva and later requested his complete works, hang the expense. He especially liked *Émile* and brought up his willful granddaughter more or less according to the precepts of Rousseau. Mr. Wyndham Lewis refers to *Émile* as "a work of advanced lunacy," but goes on to say that such an education seems to have done the child no harm.

The elderly Duke was, of course, shocked and horrified by his son's premature death. It seemed imperative to get the little girl married and in a family way as soon as possible. Not only was the Alba name endangered, the Alba fortune approximated that of several European dynasties, including the Spanish Bourbons.

The designated husband, Don José Alvarez de Toledo Osorio Pérez de Guzman el Bueno, didn't object. Or if so, he didn't put up much of a fight. Goya painted him in 1795. He is not what we expect. Here is no Spanish gallant in rainbow uniform, sword unsheathed, galloping insanely toward a bank of enemy troops. No, he leans against a clavichord, in his graceful hands a score by Joseph Haydn, with whom he corresponded. From bottom to top he wears knee-length black boots, turquoise breeches, white waistcoat, and a swallowtail burgundy coat resembling a bathrobe. He enjoyed collecting clocks and he liked to play the knee-fiddle. He looks thoughtful, intelligent, exhausted. But of course Goya painted him after twenty years of marriage to María Cayetana. Now and again this must have been a picnic, at other times a fandango in hell.

She was not quite thirteen when they married. The ceremony was blessed by Father Ramón Pignatelli, canon of the Saragossa cathedral, and we will meet Father Pignatelli again.

As for her husband Don José, instead of retaining his title by inheritance, Marquis of Villafranca, he became Duke of Alba because the child

bride demanded that he assume her name. Maybe so, but the imperious features of Grandfather Alba are visible just off stage. Everything considered, we should not be surprised if Don José looks tired.

Goya painted María Cayetana for the first time in 1795. Most likely he got to know her during the previous year. He first mentions her in a letter to his friend Zapater, and there are at least a couple of very odd things about it. The letter is dated Londres 2 de Agosto 1800. Goya never in his life got to London and scholars have determined that it must have been written between July 1794 and August 1795. What's going on? Nobody knows, though biographers have been speculating since 1868 when much of the correspondence was published by Zapater's nephew.

Así estoy.

Here I am, Goya scribbled at the end of this cryptic letter, followed by a string of dots leading to a caricature of himself, jaw and lips grossly protruding. He resembles a crescent moon.

He wrote that the great lady thrust herself into his studio, or charged into the studio, although one translator merely states that she came to the studio. By this time he was rather famous. He knew María Cayetana's good friend and rival, the Duchess of Osuna. He knew the lecherous prime minister, Godoy. He knew the royal family.

It had been a long, dusty, bumpy road from the village of Fuendetodos where he was born. His parents moved there from Saragossa because one of his mother's relatives owned a house. Not much of a house. Roughly made of stone, thick walls for protection against blistering summer heat and brutal winters. Huge fireplace with stone benches to either side, stone-walled kitchen. Smoky, shadowy rooms. An alcove where sausages hung from a sloping roof. One visitor half a century ago said the house smelled of old wood and stored linen.

Fuendetodos, meaning the fountain that belongs to everybody, wasn't a place where you would care to spend your vacation. Rocky land, little water. The one attraction might be crumbling Roman and Moorish forts surmounting nearby hills. What money the villagers earned went mostly to priests and to the landlord, El Conde de Fuentes. Very few coaches lurched and swayed down the winding road from Saragossa six leagues

north. An English traveler who visited Fuendetodos less than a century after Goya died described it as a straggling hamlet with a few hundred people at the edge of a sluggish stream. Mountainsides black with pine trees poking through tangled underbrush. At times a breeze would bring the sound of church bells from Saragossa.

Goya's mother, Gracia Lucientes, claimed nobility of a sort. Her family was entitled to a coat-of-arms and this heraldic device clung to various doorways, but meant nothing. Spain was awash in titles. Spaniards joked about it. Anybody with a little extra cash might become an hidalgo—hijo de algo—the son of something or someone who lived not by the sweat of his body but thanks to income from property. In Goya's day, half a million low-level aristocrats, 5 percent of the population, strutted through villages cooked dry as bricks by the sun, each man pretending to live in the glorious past.

Goya's father had married above himself, though he too claimed distinction from days gone by. José Goya's ancestors lived at Cerain, near Cegama, deep in Basque territory. His boast wasn't unique. Just about everybody in Basque country claimed noble rank. However, nobility is unequal; a titled grandee would ignore a Fuendetodos hidalgo.

Consider this. The great Dukes of Alba and Infantado shared northern Andalusia. Southern Andalusia belonged to the Dukes of Alba, Medinaceli, Medina Sidonia, Arcos, and Osuna. J. F. Bourgoing, secretary to the French embassy at Madrid in those days, wrote that for ten leagues he crossed the Duchy of Medina Sidonia, which consisted entirely of pastures and cornfields. Not one orchard, garden, ditch, or tile. No vestige of human habitation. According to M. Bourgoing, the Duke reigned over this expanse like a lion of the forest and by his roaring drove away those who might approach. Eight million reales annually went into his pocket. How you equate that with today's money is academic; it amounted to wealth beyond understanding.

And how was life at the grubby end of the street? Beggars everywhere. During the late eighteenth century, nearly one fifth of the people in Madrid were maintained by charity. According to Martin Hume, Spaniards had succumbed to sloth and had grown to like it. The monar-

chy didn't help, imposing a 14 percent tax on merchandise of any sort whenever said merchandise changed hands. There were seventeen universities in Spain, all of them open to poor students, nine-tenths of whom registered as a mask for idleness, "living on the doles of food at the monastery gates—for which purpose they carried in their hat-brims the traditional wooden spoon—begging at the street corners on the pretence of a need to buy books. . . ."

The sixteenth-century Council of Trent, along with denouncing the Reformation, stressed the importance of mendicancy. In other words, those who were sick or starving ought to beg in public so that Christians might enjoy the privilege of giving. By Goya's time, mendicancy was a business. Aragón had a blind-beggars' guild, its statutes defining in fifty-three articles the rights of members and of novices.

What degree of prominence José Goya asserted for himself isn't known. Perhaps a Basque noble by heritage, he worked as a gilder, which rings of the Middle Ages: wheelwrights, tinkers, lackeys, minstrels, jousting. Francisco later would try to document his noble ancestry, not unlike Cervantes and Shakespeare. He even tried to reconstruct the ancient coat-of-arms.

One day after his birth he was taken to the parish church and the baptism carefully noted, which indicates that his parents were substantial members of the community.

> On the 31st day of March, 1746, I, the subscribing vicar, baptized a child born on the day immediately preceding, the legitimate son of Joséph Goya and of Gracia Lucientes, legally married, inhabitants of this parish, in the district of Zaragoza. He was named Francisco Joséph Goya, his godmother being Francisca de Grasa, of this parish, single, daughter of Miguel Lucientes and of Gracia María Salvador to whom I made known the spiritual kinship which she had contracted toward the baptized and the obligation to teach him the Christian doctrine should his parents fail to do so. By virtue of which, I have drawn up and signed this document, in Fuendetodos, on the date, month and year herein above mentioned.
>
> *Lic. Joseph Ximeno, Vicar.*

Who first realized that the child was unusual? A priest carrying a sack of wheat to the mill happened to notice him drawing a picture on a wall with a burnt stick. The boy was drawing a pig. Ah, very good! said the priest. Who taught you to draw? Nobody, said Goya. You have no teacher? No, Father. And so, thanks to the priest, Francisco went to drawing school in Saragossa. It sounds familiar. Cimabue was traveling from Florence to Vespignano when he chanced upon a young shepherd drawing a picture on a rock with a pointed stone. The boy was drawing a sheep. Cimabue stopped to watch, asked if the boy would like to come and live with him. The boy said yes, if his father would agree. And so, thanks to Cimabue, Giotto began to study art in Florence.

Similar stories have been told of other juvenile masters.

It is said, also, that the Count of Fuentes noticed Goya's talent and arranged for him to study in Saragossa, which sounds a bit more plausible. Or it may be that José Goya, being a gilder, a decorator, would naturally encourage his son to draw. Old people many years later would insist that they remembered him sketching all around town. Perhaps. More likely they wanted to touch the hem of the famous man's cloak.

An early biographer wrote that while other children played games, young Goya was covering the walls of his home with pictures. He listened to village elders reminisce: "These strange tales sank into the child's subconscious mind and, in later years, were to find an outlet in the fantastic dreams and visions. . . ." Goya's mature work does show traces of that bleak village and the Aragón landscape, but there's no proof that he drew on the walls.

Not much, if anything, can be found of his early work. Charles Poore states that while visiting Fuendetodos just before the Spanish civil war he saw a cabinet of relics in the parish church. The Virgin of Pilar had been painted on the retablo, and to each side were painted curtains. If he had seen this anywhere but in Goya's native village, he says, he would not have believed it was done by Goya. He calls the work extraordinarily inert and uninspired. In 1936 during the war this reliquary cabinet was burned or shot to pieces; nothing of it remains but photographs. The doors swung apart to show a Madonna and Child on the left, Saint Francisco de Paula on the right. Two cherubs appear to be holding the painted curtains aside.

Exactly when he painted this cabinet has not been determined. José Gudiol, Director of the Instituto Amattler de Arte Hispanico in Barcelona, dates it circa 1763, when Goya was about seventeen. Although stiff and uninspired, it does show a degree of technical skill that he could not have acquired much earlier. The use of light and shade, for instance, repeats the pictorial formula employed by a Saragossa painter of religious themes, José Luzán. Connoisseurs of Goya would be able to pick out several characteristic traits, but to the uninitiated what seems most obvious is one angelic face near the bottom; here one sees dark rolling eyes upturned, the whites exaggerated, a mannerism he called upon decades later to express lunacy. You see it in the witches' sabbat, the madhouse, the San Isidro pilgrims.

Goya himself looked around Fuendetodos in 1808 during the Napoleonic war and disavowed the retablo, exclaiming that he could not have done such a thing. What he seems to have meant is that it was dreadful. Some collectors have paintings which they believe he did in his adolescence; but if so, as one critic remarked, their only value would be that of relics.

Eugenio d'Ors spent quite a while in Fuendetodos before starting work on his biography of the artist and must have spent hours in the Goya house, which he compared to an Eskimo igloo. The kitchen had no window. The chimney didn't work very well because burning wood dispersed not only heat but a substantial cloud of smoke that hung from the low ceiling, as well as what d'Ors called the delightful odor of evaporating resin. He thought the kitchen had been hewn out of a cave. "If fat melts in the hearth it impregnates stone, brick, furniture. . . ."

Laurent Mathéron, a nineteenth-century biographer who never visited the place, seems to have raided encyclopedias for local color. He writes that the little river Huerva flows past Fuendetodos, pine-covered mountains surround it, the skyline is magnificent, remnants of a Moorish castle add a touch of historic richness. Well, not quite. Francisco Zapater y Gómez was the nephew of Goya's best friend; he knew Fuendetodos and didn't think much of Mathéron's purple description. Anybody familiar with the village could tell you there's no river, no valley, no pine-clad hills, no bewitching shepherdess to soothe a weary traveler's brow. The economy depended upon agriculture and a small industry of wells for storing

ice. The village takes on a yellowish hue at harvest time because of dust from threshed wheat. That must have been the place Goya knew, that and a house like a smoky igloo.

Because his uncle never married, Zapater y Gómez inherited—along with half a million pesetas and two Goya portraits of his affluent uncle—132 letters. He published excerpts from these letters in 1868. Romantic writers of that time presented the famous artist in their own image, or at least an image they projected of themselves: misfit, lecher, brawler, enemy of sanctimonious priests, victim of the Inquisition, friend of actresses and matadors. Zapater y Gómez did the same, except that he was a conservative gentleman. Thus, through selective editing, like a chicken plucking grains of corn from gravel, he showed us the good Catholic who began each letter with a cross, frequently invoked La Virgen del Pilar, and painted devotional scenes.

Casanova, perched on a mule, crossed the Pyrenees followed by his equipage on another mule. At Pampeluna, as he spells it, he obtained a coach and employed a guide. Whenever they met a priest carrying the viaticum, his guide would insist that he get out of the coach and kneel. There was no help for it, Casanova explains rather defensively. He spent a fortnight in Saragossa, amazed by the homage paid to Our Lady of the Pillar: "I have seen processions going along the streets in which wooden statues of gigantic proportions were carried. . . ." He observes that the Church of Nuestra Señora was built on the city's ramparts to protect Saragossa. No army could break through, so the people believed. We will come back to that.

At the close of the twentieth century an English novelist, Julia Blackburn, set out to visit Goya's home town. At a nearby village she found several thousand Aragonese crowding into the plaza. Nearly all of them carried drums and they were dressed in purple robes, prepared to celebrate the beginning of Easter week. At midnight on the Thursday before Good Friday a barrage of pounding drums opened the festival known as Tamboradas. Everything answered the drums. "The pillar against which my hand was leaning, pulsated. The door behind me trembled. . . ." Many of the drums had been decorated: bleeding heart, crown of thorns with

bloody spikes, Christ weeping. In another town she saw a little girl dressed as Salome carrying the severed head of John the Baptist, a mongoloid man wiping away tears while fiercely pounding a drum, children eating ice cream while wearing Inquisition costumes.

Bartolomé de las Casas, Bishop of Chiapas during the sixteenth century, knew the famous conquistadors: Pizarro, Alvarado, Pedrarias, and Cortez, among others. These Spaniards, he wrote, would string up their victims on gallows in lots of thirteen to glorify Our Redeemer and His twelve apostles. Las Casas saw half a dozen Indian nobles tied to grids, burning, whose cries so disturbed the captain's sleep that he ordered them strangled; but a constable, choosing to disobey this order, gagged the victims with sticks to keep them quiet, "and he stirred up the fire, but not too much, so that they roasted slowly, as he liked. I saw all these things. . . ."

On March 12, 1781, when Goya was thirty-four years old, Spaniards marched out of Cuzco to exterminate Peruvian Indians. The Inca, Tupuc Amaru, after seeing his wife, son, uncle, brother-in-law, and cousins executed, had his tongue torn out. Four horses pulled his body apart. Spaniards burned his corpse on the summit of Machu Picchu.

It might be noted that King Charles III didn't order such atrocities; in fact, he had little idea what his subjects in the New World were doing. Nevertheless, conquistadors were extensions of Spain, exemplars of zealous Christianity. Goya's subjects would be the degenerate inheritors of that murderous imperialism.

All nations have their barbarous times, wrote the eighteenth-century philosopher Jean François Marmontel. In our time, Hans Magnus Enzenberger wrote that Las Casas' book "has a penetratingly contemporaneous smell." Anyway, Blackburn went for a walk in the hills near Fuendetodos. She noticed the old mule track leading to Saragossa, signs of wild pig, a beautiful hoopoe with a powder pink face and a crest like a lady's fan. Overhead, solitary eagles circling and a crowd of vultures.

Just when the family returned to Saragossa is disputed. Scholarly guesses range from 1749 to 1759, so Francisco was anywhere from three to thirteen—a bit young to draw an excellent pig with a burnt stick, much less the Holy Virgin.

2

Saragossa has been around quite a while, nobody is sure just how long. Emperor Augustus named it for himself, Caesarea Augustus, now corrupted to Zaragoza or Saragossa. Goths took it during the fifth century. Three centuries later the Moors captured it, so it became Sarakostah. Charlemagne wanted it, but Moorish armies drove him back. And we might note that for a while Spain's great champion, El Cid, served the Moorish ruler. Alfonso I of Aragón seized control during the twelfth century and made it his capital. One historian states with considerable panache that in Aragón a dagger is always close at hand because the people do not forget that long ago their province was an independent kingdom. They boast that in their veins flows the blood of ancient Iberians, Berbers, and Goths.

José Goya enrolled his son at the Escuela Pía, a school for the poor directed by Father Joaquín. In those days Spain lagged a century behind the rest of Europe. Most of the teachers were monks who dispensed knowledge handed down by their predecessors, nothing new. Harsh punishment for recalcitrant students. What did Goya learn? Fragments of Latin, several