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(review)

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***Goya's Caprichos: Aesthetics, Perception, and the Body***

Cambridge University Press, 2005

By Andrew Schulz

Goya was struck by a severe illness in 1792 at the age of forty-five. It may have been botulism, meningitis, polio, hepatitis, syphilis or an inflammation of nerves in the inner ear. The symptoms ranged from nausea to vertigo, partial blindness and deafness, hallucinations and roaring sounds in his head. The disease nearly killed Goya and left him functionally deaf. Like Van Gogh's madness, it remains one of the puzzles of art's medical history. Most painters would have folded up their easels. Instead Goya responded with a vigorous series of cabinet pictures, oil on tinplate, portraying disasters, the interior of a prison, the yard of a lunatic asylum and some bloody bullfight scenes—hardly the subject matter that might have cheered a man who was ravaged by disease and depression. Then, still in convalescence, the artist experienced one of his greatest bursts of creativity in a long, prolific life: the series of eighty prints entitled *Los Caprichos*, published in 1799.

Andrew Schulz notes that these aquatint etchings have “failed to lodge themselves in the consciousness of the modern era to the same degree as have other works by Goya” (1)—like the official portraits, *El tres de mayo* and the *Pinturas negras*, for example. The only exception is the *capricho* that shows a Goya-like gentleman asleep at his desk, surrounded by owls, bats and a wide-eyed lynx: *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*. The caption is famously ambiguous, like the Spanish word *sueño* itself: does it mean that the mind engenders such creatures when reason slumbers, or that reason itself is a kind of dream? If the question—and its possible answer—had not been at the crux of his *Caprichos*, Goya would not have intended this etching to be the original title page. Eventually he stuck it almost dead-center in the series and used another self-portrait as the opening print—the haughty artist in a top hat (*Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, Pintor*). These two plates, the first representing

vision and the second observation, one the spirit of fantasy and the other satire, embody the tension in the *Caprichos* and in most of Goya's later art. The two etchings could also stand for the new romanticism and the old neoclassicism that were butting heads and bouncing around the artist's mind at the century's turn. As art critic Robert Hughes has said recently, he was “the last Old Master and the first Modernist.”

Schulz argues that the passage of time has rendered the *Caprichos* inaccessible: “layers of meaning have slipped away and are no longer recoverable” (3). The etchings have been predominantly studied from thematic and literary perspectives; critics have “textualized” the works by favoring written evidence over visual analysis. The author proposes to correct this tendency by examining “the artistic principles that animate these etchings and to consider the complex ways in which these principles relate to the particular historical moment in which the prints were created and first received” (11). Although Schulz concentrates on visual elements in his early chapters, he concludes his analysis of the *Caprichos* by recurring to literary critics. Following Bakhtin, the author sees the reemergence of the grotesque around 1800 as the most important artistic principle behind Goya's mature art. The Spaniard's distortion of the body, use of inversion, “downward movement,” and carnivalesque imagery might seem to embody Bakhtin's theory of grotesque realism. However, Schulz argues that Goya lacked the Russian thinker's faith in the people and popular consciousness. The crowds in the *Caprichos* and later works are not a source of regenerative power but of brutality and ignorance. This outlook separates Goya from his enlightened contemporaries and places him squarely in the line of romanticism and modernity.

Andrew Schulz's book ends with a brief look at the *Caprichos*' reception among French Romantics and Symbolists, for whom the etchings' ambiguity and uncertainty provided an important precedent for their own work. Some readers might wish the author had carried his argument deeper and farther by tracing the influence of Goya's graphic work on artists in

the Hispanic world, which is overlooked once more in favor of the central European tradition. Posada, Gutiérrez Solana, Valle-Inclán, Picasso, Buñuel, Saura... Goya lives.

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***Memory, Oblivian, and Jewish Culture  
 in Latin America***

**University of Texas Press, 2005**

**Edited by Marjorie Agosín**

Marjorie Agosín's well conceived anthology brings together a wide range of writing on Latin American Jewish experience. Together these essays—some funny and warm, some intense and disturbing—help the reader to understand the richness and variety of Latin America's diverse Jewish communities.

"Jews are storytellers", writes Agosín in her introduction. At her childhood home in Chile, Jews who arrived from all parts of the world gathered around her family's table and told their stories. Their tales evoked faraway places—Russia, Europe, and ancient Sepharad—and expressed their struggle to build new lives for themselves in the Americas. "Judaism meant not only belonging to a religion but also to an intense culture of vibrant voices," she writes. This anthology represents Agosín's effort to capture this multiplicity of voices and share with readers the collective history of a people.

The book is divided into five sections. Section I, "Sephardim in Our Memory," focuses on the expulsion of Jews from Spain and its consequences. In her essay, "Remembering Sepharad," Reyes Coll-Tellechea provides an overview of the thriving Jewish culture of medieval Spain, the felicitous result of cooperation among Jews, Christians and Muslims, and of the virulent anti-Semitism that brought it to an end. Just as Jews enriched Spanish culture through their poetry, philosophy, science, and linguistic skills, they contributed to the creation of a new Latin American society. But, Coll-Tellechea shows,

the same misguided politics and blind prejudice that destroyed Sepharad are still at work in Latin America. "The Sephardic Legacy," by Angelina Muñiz Huberman, focuses on the importance of the Sephardic language to the preservation of ethnic Spanish-Jewish identity. The *lengua florida* nurtured artistic, intellectual and spiritual traditions such as cabbalism, which traveled to the far ends of the earth after the Diaspora. The essay concludes with a brief exploration of the situation of Sephardim in colonial Mexico and the challenge for today's researchers wishing to unearth Mexico's rich Sephardic history. Unfortunately, the author packs this essay with too much inadequately developed material. She includes a long quote from *Don Quijote*, in which Cervantes exposes the human consequences of Philip III's expulsion of the *moriscos* (Christianized Moors) in 1609. However, she does not mention the *morisco* revolts or the economic conditions that made the regime of Philip III different from the one that expelled the Jews more than a century before. A parallel could be drawn between the expulsion of the *moriscos* and that of the Jews, but the author leaves this task to the reader.

Part II, "Journeys," deals with the constant voyages to uncertain destinations intrinsic to Jewish history. In "Tuesday Is a Good Day," David Brailovsky tells a fascinating story of leaving Shanghai, where foreigners fear a Communist takeover for Chile. As a non-Chinese, he has always felt like an alien in Shanghai and is determined to integrate perfectly into Chilean society. However, once in Santiago, his Jewishness takes on a fresh importance. Through contacts with Jewish friends he gains a new sense of self and community. "My Panama," by Murray Baumgarten, captures beautifully through a kaleidoscope of images and memories the confusion of lives cast asunder by war and rebuilt time and again in diverse places. Fleeing Nazi Germany, Baumgarten's family settles in Panama, then New York, while some relatives seek refuge in Israel. The Jewish identity that holds them all together and his love of Panama are two of Baumgarten's salient themes. In "A Journey through My Life and Latin Ameri-