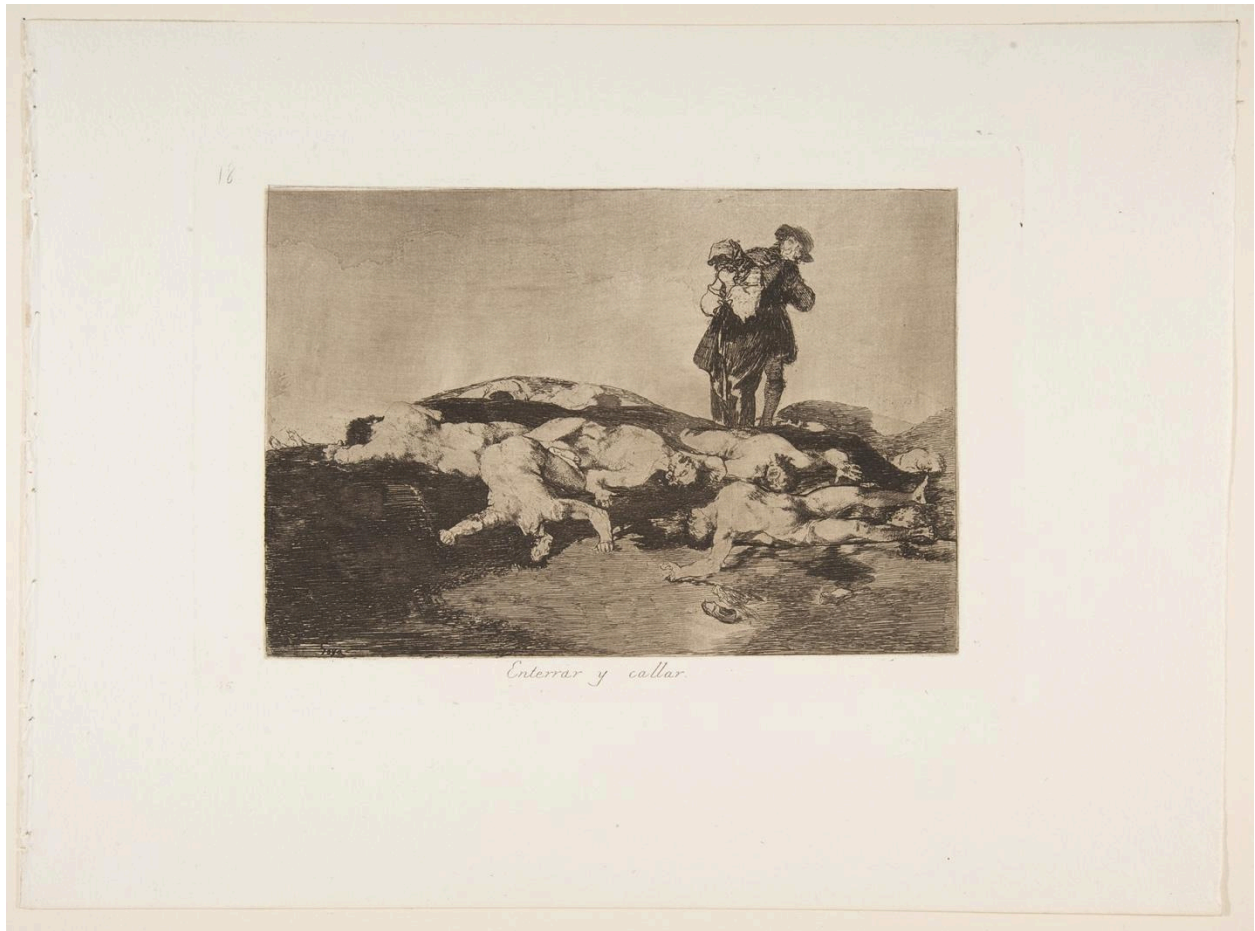


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Goya Seminar, Spring 2021
Revised Catalogue Entry



Bury Them and Keep Quiet

The Disasters of War, plate 18

1810 (published 1863)

Etching, burnished wash, drypoint and burin

Sheet 9 15/16 × 13 7/16 in. (25.2 × 34.1 cm); plate: 6 5/16 × 9 1/4 in. (16 × 23.5 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Purchase, Jacob H. Schiff Bequest, 1922 (22.60.25(18))

Provenance: Jacob H. Schiff

Francisco Goya's *Disasters of War*, a series of eighty-two etchings, is subdivided into three parts: the violence of the Peninsular War; the famine that devastated Madrid in 1811-12; and the social, religious and political turmoil ("emphatic caprices") in Spain.¹ Plate 18, as part of

¹ Hughes, 2003, p. 273.

the first of these sections, presents two onlookers standing above a mound of corpses. The corpses lie in confused disarray, forming an entangled mass, and with muscles stiffened through rigor mortis.

The Peninsular War (1808-14) claimed the lives of 350,000 Spanish inhabitants.² Within the *Disasters*, Goya depicts not only these victims but also those who witness death. They strip clothes from the corpses, mourn, or vomit in response. In Plate 18, the trauma of witnessing is underscored as an attack on their senses. The pair of onlookers plugs their noses to block out the foul smell of the decaying bodies, intensified through the summer heat.³ One looks at the scene before him with bulging eyes, transfixed through horror.

While the witnesses inwardly recoil, the corpses radiate with arms outstretched and mouths agape. The vulnerability of their bodies is a reminder of the continuing impact and cruelty of war. Unlike the standing pair that shields themselves from the terror by covering their faces, the corpses remain exposed before their grim surroundings. The bright white highlights on their skin reflect the harsh sunlight and their mouths appear parched in the heat. Their gaping mouths suggest cries of horror but are tragically silenced by death.

The victims' bodies are idealized, reflecting classical nudes through their beautifully modeled musculature. The articulation of the corpses is specifically created through drypoint and stippling. Drypoint, the process of scratching directly into the plate, creates velvety passages through the burr, the excess metal bordering the incised line. This raggedness creates a nuanced tone and softens the edges. Stippling, seen in the pattern of individual, minute dots, achieves delicate gradation and intricate details. Stippling is characteristic of the first group of prints in *Disasters* and absent in the later parts of the series. The softness of the corpses' modeling is

² Aguilera-Mellado 2019, p. 504.

³ Oman 1911, p. 557.

emphasized through contrast with the surrounding lines of the landscape. As opposed to directly carving into the plate, these etched lines form as acid eats at the plate. An acid resistant material is used to protect the remainder of the plate. Carving the design into this acid resist allows for spontaneous, sketchy lines with clean and crisp edges. By placing many of the darkest, deepest passages of etched lines alongside the nude bodies, the softness of modeling is accentuated even more.

Context counteracts the idealism of the victims' bodies. Between the preparatory drawing and etching, Goya adds a shoe, discarded in the foreground, as a reminder that these bodies have been stripped of their clothing (Fig. 1). As a result, the idealized nudity does not point to superhuman features, but rather feebleness as they are left exposed by the war. Also following the preliminary drawing, Goya adds details suggesting that this field of death continues. To the right, several mounds emerge in the background. Goya also adds an additional corpse, connecting background to foreground. To the other side, a pair of feet are visible just above the horizon line, further indicating that the scene goes on. Added to the etching, these details reinforce the widespread loss of war.

The working proof, pulled by Goya himself, contains a greater contrast between white and black passages, the harsh light of the blazing sun reflecting off the uncovered corpses below (Fig. 2). In the later print shown here, created posthumously, residual ink on the plate surface during printing creates a hazy tone across the surface that dulls the sharpness of white highlights intended by Goya.⁴ Even within this later print of Goya's image, the horizon line divides the image, echoed in the faint cloud-line above. These two zones are not distinctly separated in the preliminary drawing. Instead, an illuminated portion in the foreground mirrors the highlight in the sky that surrounds the witnesses (Fig 1). Similarly, portions of the sky are shaded, joining

⁴ Tomlinson 2011.

with darker sections of the mound below. These changes to how the space is articulated sharpen the contrast between the living and the dead. The witnesses stand uncomfortably out of place, protruding into the empty space of the sky.

The caption, “Bury them and keep quiet,” emphasizes an impulse to block out traces of the war and references instructions that any corpse found along the roads of Spain be buried immediately.⁵ In the preliminary drawing, the witness to the right is shown shouting, but in the etching remains quiet. Here, while the open mouths of the corpses draw our attention to sound, the scene remains eerily silent. As a whole, the image draws our attention to personal, bodily responses to a sensory overwhelming scene. The creation of *Disasters*, as a series recording the violence and cruelty of the war, suggests that these experiences should not simply be ignored or erased, and counteracts the admonition of the caption to “keep quiet.”

The site of the scene is unknown, and no figure is identified. This non-specificity allows the landscape to become representative of the entire conflict. Perhaps predicting the images of suffering would be an unwelcome reminder of the past, or in response to the authorities’ dislike for the subject, Goya never published the *Disasters* himself.⁶ When seen today, removed from the immediate context of the Peninsular War, this etching retains its poignance as a symbol of the trauma of war.

⁵ Aguilera-Mellado 2019, p. 504.

⁶ F.J.R. Chaparro in McDonald 2021, p. 136.



Fig. 1 *Bury Them and Keep Quiet* (*The Disasters of War*, 18), ca. 1810-1814. Pencil ground and red chalk on ivory laid paper, 7 1/4 x 9 1/4 in. (18.5 cm x 23.6 cm). Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, D003966.



Fig. 2 *Bury Them and Keep Quiet* (*The Disasters of War*, 18), 1810. Etching, burnished wash, drypoint and burin, Plate 6 5/16 x 9 1/4 in. (16 x 23.5 cm), sheet 9 1/8 x 12 1/2 in. (23.1 x 31.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1932 (32.62.12).

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