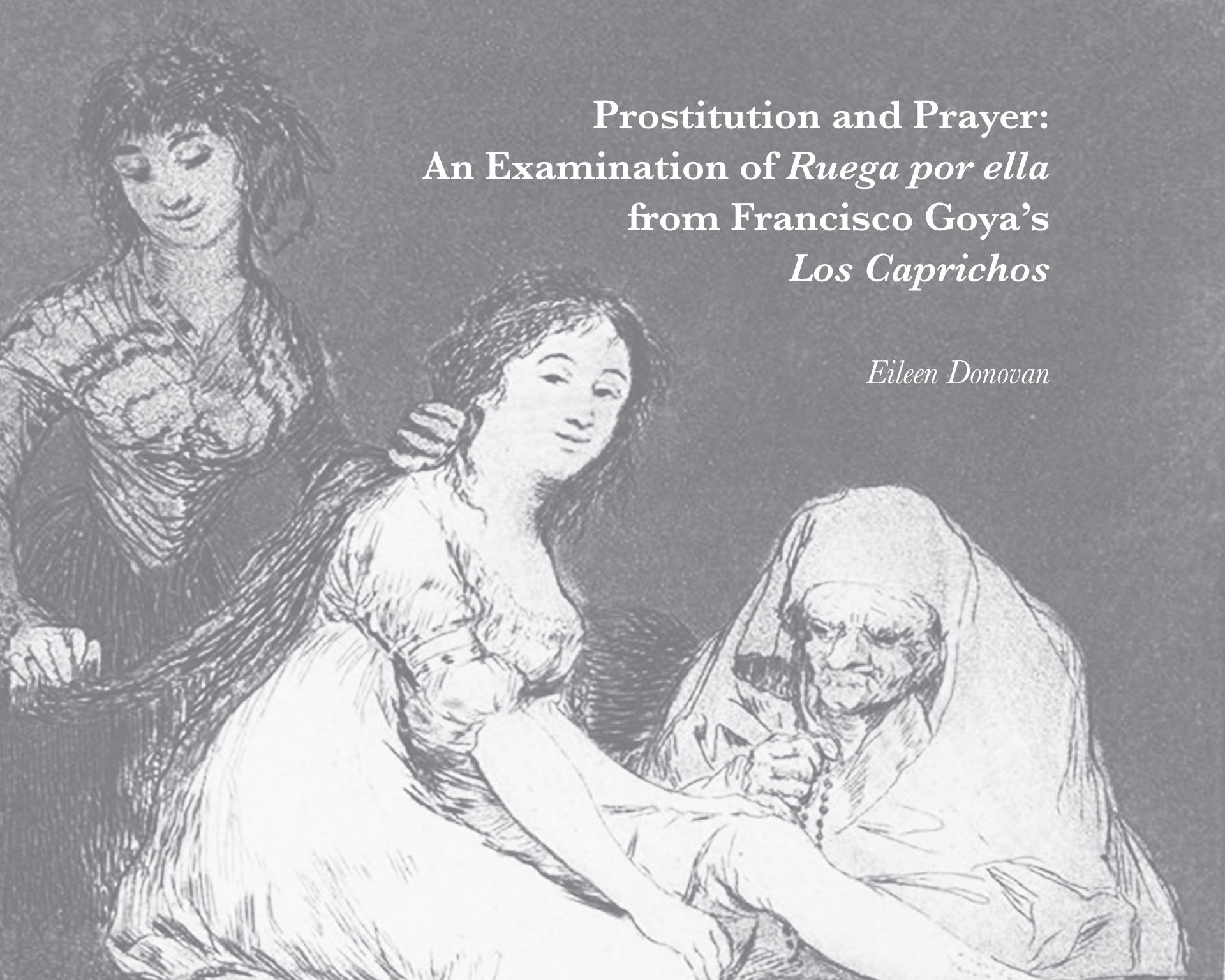

Prostitution and Prayer: An Examination of *Ruega por ella* from Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos*

Eileen Donovan

The groundbreaking nature of Francisco Goya's cultural criticism in his 1799 series *Los Caprichos* established it as one of the most important print series ever created. Goya's presentation of the many vices of his contemporary Spanish society through a combination of realistic and fantastical scenes epitomized Enlightenment attitudes in its scope and social commentary. The majority of the images in *Los Caprichos* can be categorized into broad genres of subject matter including bourgeois frivolity, exploitation of the opposite sexes, and hypocrisies of the Catholic Church. Art historians have focused on the generalities of these critiques, but because Goya has always been presented as an innovator in concept and in printmaking technique, less attention has been given to how Goya might have found inspiration for his images in established visual traditions. Plate 31of *Los Caprichos* (Figure 1) combines conventional toilette and prostitution genre scenes, but moves beyond these precedents in a surprising way, for it also connects to the visual tradition of Bathsheba. This combination of traditions reveals Goya's review in Plate 31 to encompass not just a social commentary on prostitution, but also a critique of the Catholic Church and certain commonplace religious customs.

The nature of Goya's criticism in *Los Caprichos* is complicated in its breadth, as it addresses social practices through a mixture of genre elements, fantasy, and historical subjects. The series has eighty prints that critique the immoral customs of eighteenth-century lower and upper Spanish classes.[1] Many of the prints can be grouped by the subject matter they address. The prints of Courtship often show how men and women are more interested in taking advantage of the opposite sex instead of forming true relationships. Prints of the Catholic Church often demonstrate the fallibility of Church officials and their hypocritical lifestyles.[2] The many prints of Prostitution show a mixture of prostitutes preparing for their profession, pimps and procuresses that sell the wares, and the patrons of the night. Scenes like Plate 17, titled *It is nicely stretched*, fit within the tradition of prostitution genre scenes as they present man and women encouraging and participating in situations of lust and sex. Throughout the eighty plates of *Los Caprichos* Goya offered a moralized critique of people, but did not present solutions or examples of good behavior. The series could be perceived as a mere dictionary of vices that eventually crosses between the realms of reality and fantasy.

Goya's endeavor is consonant with Enlightenment moral philosophy regarding social activities that loosened the Catholic Church's control and allowed capricious lifestyles to emerge. At this time, the Catholic Church's nearly 300-year-long Inquisition was waning with the growth of secular philosophies of the Enlightenment. While the original purposes of the Inquisition were intended to ensure the practice of Catholic doctrine with converts, it had transformed into a persecution of non-Catholics, censorship of "heretical" literature, and the suppression of certain gender expression and sexuality.[3] As the Church was very closely linked to the monarchy in Spain, the Church also had tight control over social and legal activities deemed immoral by Catholic standards.[4] Prostitution faced a drastic reinvention as brothels had been declared illegal in the seventeenth century. As they were forced to the streets, prostitutes became a more visible element of society. However, while the women were publicly visible, the church still censored portrayals of prostitutes in literature and art. As the Enlightenment movement emerged, people less often looked to the Church for guidance and rule and the Inquisition grew less effective as a means of controlling social norms.

Goya demonstrated his understanding of Enlightenment thought in *Los Caprichos* through his depiction of ridiculous Catholic Church characters.[5] Goya critiques both the feeble-minds of the common people, who were susceptible to such simple trickery and illusionary religion, and the Catholic Church, for taking advantage of those who did not know any better. Goya's series demonstrated the prevalence of Enlightenment theory through his moralization of the corrupt practices of the Catholic Church.

Though complex to a modern audience, the nuances of *Los Caprichos* would have been understood by the society it both presented and criticized. While a direct translation of "Caprichos" simply means whimsy, the forces behind the capricious life implied a more complicated change in social behavior and practices. Men and women saw a change in fashion that emulated and fantasized the dress of the lower class Majos and Majas.[6] The men's stylish broad hats hid their appearance while the female mantilla draped over their features. This allowed the upper class to sneak amongst the lower class in an anonymous manner.[7] However, true anonymity amongst the classes was not likely due to the inequality of the clothing fabric and general demeanor. Either way, the upper classes found a new boldness in their actions and activities. Men could visit places of ill repute without facing the same social repercussions as they would have had their identities been open. Behavioral "Caprichos" were also evident in the prominent literature of the time.[8] Books and plays featured fanciful and complicated love triangles crafted secret rendez-vous and unexpected interactions. Two of Goya's most prominent patrons, the Duke and Duchess Osuna, dubbed one of their palaces "El Capricho."[9] The title for Goya's series was likely in honor of his friends. The series of *Los Caprichos* would have been recognized and understood as part of a general social movement in eighteenth-century Spanish society.

The Church in Spain had long frowned upon visual representations of nudity or any sexual content, including prostitution, so Goya had no local tradition on which to draw from for *Los Caprichos*. He therefore looked to the artistic traditions of the Netherlands, France, and England for approaches to critical and moralizing genre subjects. Seventeenth century Netherlandish artists established a visual tradition of brothel and prostitute scenes, which were readily available to Spain as the Low Countries of Holland were subjects of the Spanish Crown.[10] Many of these scenes, like *The Procuress* by Dirck van Baburen and *A Merry Company at Table* (Figure 2) by Hendrick Pot, feature a mixture of figures including prostitutes, procuress, and male patrons. The procuress is featured for her ugly and elderly qualities as she encourages relations so that she may collect her coin. She is also presented as sexually lacking and undesirable compared to the other women. Later eighteenth-century English traditions varied in their methods of portraying prostitutes. William Hogarth created a series of prints and paintings that revealed the *Progress of a Harlot* (Figure 3) by the examination of a young woman who found herself destitute in London. Her progress included a rise in prosperity and fame before she was imprisoned and died suffering from venereal diseases. This plain presentation of the consequences of immorality leaves little room for interpretation. Hogarth also conversely presented the *Progress of a Rake* to show the penalties that can happen to men. Nudes from these three cultures were also often presented in historical and mythological situations like "Susanna and the Elders" and "Diana at her Bath." These recurring visual themes of prostitution and historical subjects in European art would have provided Goya plenty of fodder for him to follow.

Plate 31 of Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos* presents a central beauty who knowingly smiles as she glances out of the room at her voyeur. Her heavily lidded eyes bat slowly as she challenges the stares before she continues getting ready. She coyly arches her back, pushing her chest forward, as she raises her skirt and lifts her bare leg to wipe off the mess on her ankle. She is helped by another woman who shares in her smirk. The shaded assistant brushes the sitting woman's long hair, making sure everything is in place for later. Beside the two of them mutters a hunched hag who grips a rosary with her gnarled fingers. The ugliness of the hag temporarily distracts from the beauty, but one must go to the hag first before meeting the beauty for the night. The shadowed room provides the epitome and antithesis of sexual desire through the presence of the women inside. The scene differs from the Hogarth, van Baburen, and Pot works as Goya's image lacks a described narrative and male figures. To see how it diverged from these precedents it is necessary to examine the process of creation of Goya's composition.

The nature of the represented subject of Plate 31 of Francisco Goya's *Los Caprichos* went through a drastic evolution as composition and storyline changed leading to the final *Ruega por ella* in the series. Based on two preliminary drawings, a proof state of the etching, and the final version of the print, it is clear that Goya altered a seemingly simple bathing scene to make a larger commentary on prostitution and religion in late eighteenth-century Spanish society. The first drawing, part of his Madrid Album created before the official *Los Caprichos* series, presents a young beauty as she is dressed with the assistance of a maid (Figure 4). She tantalizes the viewer with her scantily clad body and glowing eyes. The composition and situation of the scene allows the work to be easily categorized into the toilette genre, which focuses on bathing and dressing women. Goya's first alteration of the image changed the genre away from toilette to prostitution (Figure 5). The addition of the hag in the first sketch for *Los Caprichos* changed the two initial characters of the woman and maid into a trio of prostitute, assistant, and procuress. The visual presence of the procuress immediately makes the scene more sinister because of her harsh visage and crouched body, even though the prostitute remains beautiful and coy like in the Madrid Album. From the sketch, Goya once again changed the scene to create a print proof (Figure 6). Goya darkened the lighting of the scene, placing the assistant and procuress in the shadows of the room, with light only placed on the upper half and leg of the central prostitute. By focusing on her body, and subsequently her sexuality, this change downplays the role and presence of the procuress, once again making the work appear to be more of a toilette scene. The final stage of the image places the hag and beauty more prominently together as they are both entirely lit up, once again placing it in prostitution genre.

The inclusion of the hag, not present initially, magnifies the aesthetic beauty of the younger women while emphasizing her own ugliness, thus placing emphasis on her actions and purpose in Plate 31. The hag symbolically opposes the beauty to become the procuress. The hag taken alone in other types of imagery was not seen as a procuress, instead, she represented the lower dregs of impoverished society. The hag was also often seen as a witch because of the stigmas surrounding old women.[11] While the prostitute is youthful, the procuress is the epitome of how the years cause wear and tear. The position of the hag foretells the future of the beauty, as beauty is lost with age. This visual tradition is seen most often in the Dutch art previously mentioned. However, continued focus on this image reveals details that were not realized from the earlier draft pieces that add to

the genre traditions. The detail of the procuress shows that she is holding a rosary. This object adds confusion to the prostitution scene, as it seems odd for a procuress to be praying.

The inclusion of the rosary, title of the plate, and text of the Prado manuscript, gives the subject a broader and more complex narrative. Plate 31, entitled *Ruega por ella*, translates to *She Prays for her*. This title places emphasis not on the prostitute, who is most prominent in the visual hierarchy, but on the procuress, and more particularly, on the rosary in her hand. As the title fails to provide complete explanation for the scene and rosary, the image requires more background. The Prado manuscript, released several years after *Los Caprichos*, was written as an accompanying text to the series to give each individual image more depth as to what it shows. It elaborated on the brief titles that were placed beneath each plate to clarify the subject and the direction of Goya's critique. The text from the Prado Manuscript for the *Ruega por ella* image says, "And she is quite right to do it, so that God may give her good fortune and spare her from the mischief of surgeons and constables, and that she may become as sharp and able on all accounts as her mother was, God rest her soul."[12] What is most notable from this text is that the hag does not pray that the young woman ceases to be a prostitute; she prays that the young woman is not caught. Her prayers are therefore words of encouragement to her companions. Therefore, the procuress demonstrates misplaced her piety as her prayers do not follow what is typical to Catholic doctrine. The texts of the title and Prado manuscript give complexity to Plate 31 as they focus on the procuress and rosary, deviating from the simple toilette and prostitution genres.

Goya's print *Ruega por ella* must be situated outside of conventional toilette and prostitution narratives to better identify and address his combination of prostitution characters with prayer and voyeurism. One possibility is that Goya was reflecting the story of La Celestina in this *Los Caprichos* print.[13] *La Celestina* was a novel written in 1499 Fernando de Rojas. This story follows Celestina, an old procuress in charge of two prostitutes in a brothel, as she stirs trouble amongst some courtly lovers. The male protagonist approaches her not for her role as a procuress, but because she is rumored to have magical powers. Celestina is noted to have held a rosary as she used it to count the lovers her employees took.[14] Goya would have certainly been aware of this story as it was one of most highly regarded pieces of Spanish literary works, raising the question of whether he was portraying the famed procuress.[15] However, even if it was part of his inspiration for Plate 31, there is not direct correlation as *Ruega por ella* follows different visual traditions than those of Celestina. Years after the printing of *Los Caprichos*, Goya made two works about Celestina in 1808 and 1824. The first work, *Maja and Celestina on a Balcony*, depicted the devious procuress and woman in an open environment (Figure 7). They are standing on the balcony in full view, and not as objects of secretive voyeurism. The Maja depicted is also not strictly one of Celestina's two prostitutes as she could be one of the other women in the tale. Goya's later *Maja and Celestina* was a miniature painting done on ivory (Figure 8). The forms of the women are slightly rougher than the prior painting. They are positioned more casually, and although the work is a detail of the top of the women, they appear to be leaning and looking out of a window like in the prior painting. So while the print *Ruega por ella* seems to follow the same storyline as the tale of Celestina, it is visually different from his other works. As Plate 31 does not fall in line with Goya's other depictions of Celestina is possible that the work can be placed in other visual traditions

of other female characters.

The same combination of characters of the beauty, hag, and assistant, coupled with the voyeuristic aspect of the conspicuously absent man, can be found in the visual tradition of Bathsheba. The narrative of Bathsheba derives from the second book of Samuel. The story revolves around the wise King David during a time of impropriety and cruelty. From the roof of his palace, David spied on the woman Bathsheba as she bathed. She became pregnant after he invited her over for relations. This brought much trouble to David in later years as it strained his relationship with God. While Bathsheba was not technically a prostitute, she was often shown as seducing David with her nudity, the ultimate sexual downfall of the revered king. She failed to save her husband from the conspiracies of King David and therefore was an accomplice to the crime. Although it was David's choice to summon Bathsheba and his decision to send her husband to his death, Bathsheba was held to blame.[16] Therefore, Bathsheba is remembered as a woman of ill repute who used her sexuality against the king.

Images of Bathsheba typically showed her at her bath with attendants who take care of her feet and hair. Her sexuality is highlighted as her body is often twisted with one leg raised. One of the attendants is often young while the other is old. While the old attendant is not strictly a motherly figure, she is the person who watches her mistress and is somewhat responsible for her behavior. This type of composition was first seen in the mid-to-late sixteenth-century. Some Bathsheba compositions include an image of King David spying upon the bathing Bathsheba, while others just show the woman. This was done to emphasize the voyeurism of the scene, as neither David, nor the viewer of the artwork are supposed to see Bathsheba in her otherwise private moment.

Among the many, many traditional depictions of Bathsheba, Goya's composition must have been directly influenced by Rembrandt's 1643 version of *The Toilet of Bathsheba* (Figure 9). While Goya may not have seen Rembrandt's original painting, a reproduction of Rembrandt's work was made in 1763 by Jean Michel Moreau the Younger, and printed copies would have been available to Goya in Spain (Figure 10). The two images seemingly mirror each other in composition with the placement of the characters and situation of the scene. Rembrandt's Bathsheba and Goya's prostitute are framed by the assistant brushing their hair, and old maid at their feet. Their body positions and hand placements emphasize their sexuality, which is contrasted with the covered women next to them. Most importantly, they stare out of the scene challenging the gaze of their voyeur. The voyeur is anyone who looks at the images, who seemingly adopts the roles of patrons of Goya's brothel and King David. The similarities between these two scenes point to a direct relationship moreso than any other representation of Bathsheba, and even the differences are easily accounted for. Goya focuses his work specifically on the characters he presents, as he did for all of the *Los Caprichos* prints, while Rembrandt gives more depth to the landscape as he was only creating a singular work. Rembrandt's Bathsheba is fully nude while Goya's prostitute is clothed. This is best explained by placing Goya within a historical timeframe. When he was printing *Los Caprichos* for public sale, the governors of the Spanish Inquisition would have not allowed him to present a nude female figure. Therefore, Goya covered up the chest of the woman for the final version of the print, even though the original woman seen in the sketch of the Madrid Album was partially bare. Finally, although Goya's handmaiden is not black like

Rembrandt's, she is darker as she is physically placed in the shadows of the scene. Despite their differences, Goya's work heavily reflects Rembrandt's image in its composition and in its voyeuristic quality.

The addition of prayer to the contemporary situation is what gives Goya's work religious purpose and context so it can be compared to biblical text and imagery. Goya's presentation of Bathsheba as a prostitute in contemporary society does not make the work lose its moral value. As previously noted, Bathsheba had been established as a symbol of lust and sin since the Old Testament was written. Prostitutes were viewed the same way in their contemporary societies. As it reflects a religious story, the whole piece can be taken as a greater metaphor against the dangers of adultery. David's relationship with Bathsheba caused a great many problems for his kingdom and his relationship with God. The King committed adultery against the already established Jewish doctrine of the Old Testament which forbade such things. He then conspired to commit murder and the break in his relationship with God caused the death of the son that he had had with Bathsheba. These consequences from the life of David would have been known to the religious and lay people of Goya's day. People of Spain could, in part, confer that relations with a prostitute outside of a blessed marriage would cause personal and public downfall. This concept relates back to Goya's image and the prayers of the procuress described in the Prado Manuscript. As the procuress prays that the prostitute is safe from the constables and surgeons, the she is in fact hoping that the prostitute and patrons will not have to face the same biblical-sized consequences as Bathsheba and David.

By alluding to the visual tradition of Bathsheba, Goya not only addressed the problems of prostitution, he also raised questions regarding a critique of popular faith and the efficacy of Catholic doctrine. King David's relationship with Bathsheba was fundamental in the development of Christian morality as he committed the sins against God of lust, pride, and adultery; sins that were later committed by contemporary Spaniards. Men of Goya's day were able to visit the brothels and view women because the growing trend of the capricious lifestyle—the concept in which the title of Goya's series is rooted—favored anonymity and secrets over personable relationships. What they had to look to was the Catholic Church, who still presented David as an inspirational figure because of his many other deeds and his typological connections to Christ. The Church's generally positive value given to David as an inspirational figure is problematic, to say the least. The sins of the common contemporary Spanish man are recognizable, yet also forgivable and easily overlooked because they are reflective of the sins of King David. *Ruega por ella* therefore emerges as an complex critique of society and religion through Goya's divergence from traditional toilette and prostitution scenes, and his innovative transposition of a biblical story to contemporary society.

Endnotes

[1] Jose Lopez-Rey, *Goya's Caprichos: Beauty, Reason & Caricature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970), 1-80.

[2] Eleanor A. Sayre, *The Changing Image: Prints by Francisco Goya* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1974), 20-40; Plate 79 of the series, titled "Nadie nos ha visto" or "No one has seen us," features several monks as they imbibe a barrel of wine and libations. The sheer size of one of the monks indicates a life full of gluttony. Goya demonstrated the hypocrisies of the clergy to show his critique of the Catholic Church.

[3] Helen Rawlings, *The Spanish Inquisition* (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2006). 91-112, and Licht, Fred, "Goya and David: Conflicting Paths to Enlightenment Morality" *Goya and the Spirit of the Enlightenment*, ed. Sanchez and Sayre (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1989). lxxvii-lxxxv.

[4] Sanchez, Alfonso E.P. and Eleanor A Sayre, *Goya and the Spirit of Enlightenment*, (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1989). xviii-l.

[5] For example, Plate 52 demonstrates how the corrupt clergy of Catholic Church led people astray in their piety and faith. The image shows a young woman praying on her knees to what appears to be a hooded monk. Close inspection reveals that the monk is just cloth that is swathed about a tree, and that the people are praying to a false icon. Several plates have similar scenes regarding impiety and corruption.

[6] Dorothy Noyes, "La Maja Vestida: Dress as Resistance to Enlightenment in Late-18th-Century Madrid," *The Journal of American Folklore* vol. 111, no. 440, 17th-20th Centuries (1998), 197-217.

[7] Ibid.

[8] John Dowling, "Capricho as Style in Life, Literature, and Art from Zamora to Goya," *Eighteenth Century Studies* vol. 10, no. 4 (1977), 413-433.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Museo del Prado, *Flemish Painting*. http://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/painting/flemish-painting/

[11] V. Holloway, "Goya's Caprichos, the Church, the Inquisition, Witchcraft, and Abjection," *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment* [serial online] (Spring 2012) 35(1): 21-48.

[12] Francisco Goya, *Los Caprichos* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969).

[13] Fernando De Rojas, *La Celestina: Tragicomedia De Calisto Y Melibea* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2000).

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

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Figure 1 Francisco Goya. "Ruega por ella (She prays for her)" in *Los Caprichos*. Aquatint print. 1799.

Figure 2 Hendrick Pot. *A Merry Company at Table*. Oil on canvas. 1630.

Figure 3 William Hogarth. *A Harlot's Progress*. Engraving. 1732.

Figure 4 Francisco Goya. *Madrid Album*. India Ink. 1796-1797.

Figure 5 Francisco Goya. *Drawing for Los Caprichos*. Pencil on paper. 1797.

Figure 6 Francisco Goya. Proof for "Ruega por ella (She prays for her)" in *Los Caprichos*. Aquatint print. 1799.

Figure 7 Francisco Goya. *Maja and Celestina on a Balcony*. Oil on canvas, 1808.

Figure 8 Francisco Goya. *Maja and Celestina*. Carbon black and watercolor on ivory. 1824-25.

Figure 9 Rembrandt van Rijn. T*he Toilet of Bathsheba*. Oil on wood. 1643.

Figure 10 Jean Michael Moreau the Younger, after Rembrandt. *The Toilet of Bathsheba.* Engraving. 1763.

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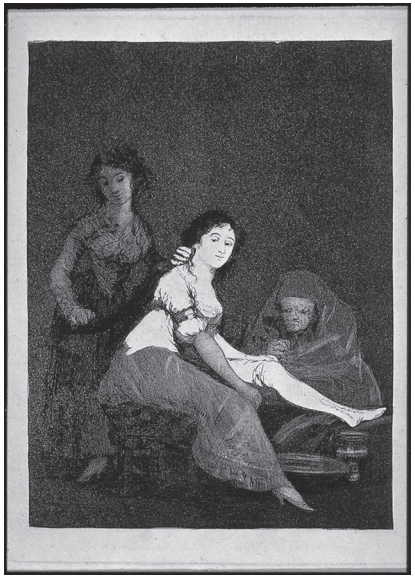

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