

AFZAL AHMAD SYED

ROCOCO AND OTHER WORLDS

Elias Canetti wrote:
Goya was a partisan.

Naked Maja
Maja Clothed
the painter of Majas on the Balcony

His rococo world
ended, May third, in a dark Madrid alley

He put aside
the parasoled maidens who adorned his canvases
and his bed.

His canvas is illumined by the lantern set
on the ground:
Soldiers, their faces indistinct,
fire on defenseless citizens
Everyone faces death in his own way
One, wearing a shirt of white,
stands chest out-thrust, defiant

Future painters
will revisit the subject
again and again

The subject of his final painting
The Milkmaid of Bordeaux
was killed in a revolution, one presumes

By the way
Goya
supported the Spanish rebels
against Napoleon.

—*Translated by Muhammad Umar Memon*