PAULA REGO, a prospective retrospective:

Bodies, Visuality, Becoming

Love, 1995
Paper mounted on aluminium, 120 x 160 cm

Vera Fonseca

Promotor:
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This thesis was accomplished with financial support from the **Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia** (**FCT-Portugal**), co-financed by **POPH/FSE**.

VERA FONSECA

PAULA REGO, a prospective retrospective: Bodies, Visuality, Becoming

PAULA REGO, een prospectief retrospectief: Lichamen, Visualiteit, 'Becoming'

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Dit onderzoek analyseert het visuele werk van Paula Rego, een Portugese kunstenares die in Londen woonachtig is. Het visuele corpus dat genomen was als onderzoeksmateriaal bestaat uit haar creaties sinds de jaren tachtig tot het heden. Toch is in de jaren tachtig, namelijk met haar series G*irl and Dog* (1986), dat de vrouwelijke subjectiviteit het middelpunt van haar creatieve activiteit wordt.

Dit project beweegt zich in twee richtingen. De ene laat ons specifieke en essentiële momenten in het werk van Paula Rego herleiden. Deze richting levert ons ook een gereedschap om haar werk met een kritische blik aan te kunnen nemen. De tweede richting reveleert verschillende andere richtingen van haar werk ten opzichte van de visuele herformulering van de vrouwelijke subjectiviteit.

Het voornaamste argument van dit onderzoek is dat het Rego's werk functioneert als een visueel lichaam van feministische theorie. Zonder de expliciete intentie om te illustreren, en de determinisme van een invloedrijk mechanisme, het werk van Rego stelt essentiële vragen ten opzichte van een definitie van de vrouwelijke subjectiviteit in het terrein van het visueel. Haar werk traceert specifieke wijzen en momenten waardoor deze kunstenares een bijzonder en gevarieerde visuele representatie van de vrouwelijke subjectiviteit herleidt. Rego gaat van het belemmeren van de mechanismen van representatie, door het ontmaskering van onderwerping en mogelijkheden van weerstand naar het transformeren van het concept van subjectiviteit. Via deze route maakt Paula Rego de macht relaties zichtbaar tussen het beeld en de spectator. Zij formuleert andere mogelijkheden binnen het scopische regime.

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Utrecht op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. G.J. van der Zwaan, ingevolge het besluit van het college voor promoties in het openbaar te verdedigen op vrijdag 31 augustus 2012 des ochtends te 10.30 uur

door

Vera Fonseca

geboren op 12 december 1980 te Setúbal, Portugal

"Somos o quê? Mulheres recíprocas, mínimas e extensas,
escutando o tempo enquanto a carne se torna flácida.
Estamos num atalho entre obscuridades e fitamo-nos porque,
com mais ou menos peso nos transformamos."

"What are we? Recyprocal women, minimal and extensive,
listening to time while flesh becomes flacid.
We are in a shortcut between obscurities and we eye each other because,
with more or less weight we transform ourselves."

Ana Marques Gastão, *25 poemas sobre Paula Rego*

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Acknowledgments

During the four years of this project, many have been the connections between me and other segments and individualities. Such connections are wide and intricate; they are spatial, chronological, academic but also affective. They are rooted in several circumstances: I am a Portuguese scholar who conducted her research in The Netherlands about the work of an artist with whom I share geographical origins and the circumstance of displacement. And I have traversed distinct areas of knowledge throughout my academic life – Classical Studies, the Philosophy of Art and Aesthetics, Gender and Visual Studies.

It has been a journey of intellectual and emotional enrichment; a privileged one, for looking at images which generate an embodied and material reflection about female subjectivity has necessarily and quite positively influenced the fluxes and metamorphosis of my own subjectivity. This project has multiplied the stories that are contained inside me and has helped me to solidify the lucidity, agency and empathy that I wished to extend to Others – places, people, animals, bodies, nature. Even if my journey has not always been logical and linear, I will continue to pursue the gesture of carrying something that is glittering and radical in my hands.

Several 'others' have made this project possible. I would like to express my gratitude to the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT-Portugal) for the financial support of the entire project; to The Research Institute of History and Culture (OGC-Utrecht) for its support; to the Graduate Gender Programme and Portuguese Studies at Utrecht University; to Marborough Gallery, Mary Miller in particular, and of course Paula Rego for kindly allowing me to include the images which have been the Mater of this project; to Casa das Histórias for the interest in this project.

I would like to thank both my supervisors for their commitment and support. Professor Rosi Braidotti's work is a great inspiration and I would like to thank her for her enthusiasm and guidance. Professor Paulo de Medeiros combines knowledge and insight in a motivating way. I want to express my sincere appreciation for his constant support, from the moment I arrived in the Netherlands almost seven years ago. Their professionalism, knowledge, enthusiasm and kindness have been of great value. It is reassuring to verify how practice can accompany theoretical models through knowledge and affect.

My deepest thanks to several people who have been involved in this project: José van Aelst for her professionalism and genuine kindness in listening to my doubts and questions; to Christien Franken, the best editor I could possibly have found, for her professionalism and dedication. Revising the text became a pleasure. To Lurdes Meijer, Marian Schoenmakers and Paula Jordão, who will always remain 'my great colleagues'; to the Atgender board for having shared with me their desire to install good practices in the field of women's rights, gender equality and diversity across different generations and spaces within Europe.

The different layers that constitute me and were present when I wrote these pages have different identities, all cherished. I am grateful to my family for the roots that still live inside me and to my grandparents who, without ever having learned how to read and write, have taught *me* long lasting and immaterial "characters".

To Cynthia for sharing with me this experience of being a researcher with its challenges, uncertainties and ambitions. To Cristina for showing me how distance does not constitute an obstacle to a friendship that is celebrated daily. To Karina for her constant smile, friendship and determination. Meeting you has been a true blessing. To Nico for the friendship which continues across the globe.

To Ulisses, Diana, Dani and Jari for having made me embrace a cause and for growing along with me.

To my wonderful friends Nivard, Catherine, Hans, Max and Alex, who have become my family. My days in The Netherlands were filled with your laughter, words and gestures. I am certain that our paths will keep on crossing.

To São for her sensibility and generosity; for truly listening with compassion and wisdom; Vanda with whom I share the love for the Homeric light and the Latin language. Your cool with the unexpected surprises of image formatting was reassuring. To Francisco for his cheerful spirit and wit. To Miguel Tomás and D. Maria for having shared many good moments with me. My suitcases and my individuality were filled and well-nourished with good memories.

To Carlos, my good and solid friend, who has danced and walked with me across the here and there, then and now, always with reassuring words and endless dedication. This journey will continue.

To *Cyber Bach* for sharing with me a special path of an ethereal substance; where stars, philosophy, poems and notes fluctuate in harmony; with whom I have read, seen and listened to some of the most beautiful figurations of art. *Per aspera ad astra*…

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Introduction

Ana Marques Gastão's poem about Paula Rego, as quoted on the first page of this dissertation, hints at what will be pursued in this research project:

> "We are in a shortcut between obscurities and we eye each other because,
> With more or less weight we transform ourselves."

This shifting between obscurity and light serves as a metaphor for a process of transformation; it refers to my own route as a researcher, to this project and to its subject(s). I will start with the last one.

It is important to clarify which elements I will take into account in my analysis of Paula Rego's work. The title of this project - "a prospective retrospective" – aims to make explicit the construction or structure I will use. At first glance, the terms 'prospective' and 'retrospective' might seem contradictory. However, their juxtaposition reflects two approaches and movements which intermingle. Firstly, the term 'retrospective' refers to my attempt to provide an overview of what has been the development of Paula Rego's work until now. It is important to clarify, though, that this is not my central aim nor do I follow a chronological approach. For this reason, readers of this work will have to engage with some shifts in themselves if they are to trace this development. The retrospective dynamic will also be apparent in the first chapter which contains an overview of the critical reception of Rego's work. This will enable other researchers to position themselves before pursuing their own trajectory. It served me well; in fact, in a fundamental way it allowed me to determine the background against and along which I conducted my own research.

The term 'prospective' might seem to undermine and unsettle what could well be, mistakenly, taken for a linear analysis. Its peculiarity comes from the fact that, unlike 'retrospective', which essentially derives from the position of a researcher facing his/her material and the way he/she chooses to undertake it, 'prospective' is derived from the subject matter of this research project. Let me formulate this in order to provide some clarity.

In front of Rego's imagery, I concluded that her work implies a transformation of female subjectivity. In other words, Rego's images visually put in motion a process which can be paralleled with the questioning of female subjectivity in feminist theory and criticism. In that sense, revisiting her work from the eighties until the current day allows us to trace the critical moments and

movements of her images towards the visual formulation of a more embodied, material and fluid female subjectivity. By the end of this project, one will still be able to encounter or be faced with a 'prospective' flux, in the sense that the conclusions to be established will leave an open space for what Rego's work can become.

Due to this intricate dual structure and the subject matter of this analysis, "bodies, visuality and becoming", the theoretical material to be used gained an extra relevance. I became aware that my disposal and management of theory could not be just a matter of finding a suitable methodology for analyzing visual art images under a feminist scope. Its selection had to depart from the images; in other words, if images work as theoretical visual objects, I had to find a suitable methodology which could serve to problematize what images said about and did to female subjectivity. If these images prompt a reflection regarding bodies, visuality and becoming, I had to find a diversified and yet specific theoretical corpus which could explain what Rego's images do in terms of women's bodies, their representation in the visual art field and society, their position in the visual, their relation with spectators and their sexual identity (of the subjects depicted and the spectators); what they do in terms of what a female subjectivity can be and become.

I will turn from images to theory to images again. After having broadly traced what it is that Rego's images produce, I went back to them in order to select a corpus which I could analyze in more detail. In this way I would be able to provide an in-depth analysis of the processes used visually which ultimately result in the unfixing and renewing of female subjectivity. And this is how I came to define my corpus: images with a wide time-frame (the 1980s until now); images with a wide scope in terms of the artistic technique used. The reason for choosing this time frame has to do with the fact that during the eighties Rego's paintings increasingly focused on female subjects. The preceding period has been thoroughly analyzed by other critics such as Maria Manuel Lisboa and Ruth Rosengarten, namely the pictorial representation of Portugal's fascist and colonial past.

It is important also to position myself as a researcher in the field of visual arts, since this has an obvious connection with how I have developed this project, starting with the choice of its subject matter. I would argue that visual art, specifically art history and criticism, has for a long time remained trapped in the rigid format of monographs. The privileged topics of monographs is, frequently, the formal aspects of images or the lives of artists. If an intersection between the artist's biographical data and his/her work is a practice often chosen in a visual

studies approach, in Rego's case it seems to be the common option. In fact, the interest in her work is almost as considerable as the attention given to her life story. Perhaps this peculiar fact comes from the intimate connection between her Portuguese nationality and her British residency and her produced work; perhaps from the way her personal life has always intermingled with her images, most of which depict people who are or have been part of her life, in her circle of friends and family. I would add to this the painter's active participation in the narrative constructions surrounding her and her work. The best example is, in my view, her collaboration with Ana Gabriela Macedo's analysis, which demonstrates a mutually enriching bond between artist and scholar, resulting in a work which combines an attention to the images and to their author.

A natural path to follow would be, thus, to privilege Rego's own understanding of her work. Nevertheless, I have chosen to give primacy to the images and the impact they have on the spectator, without completely dismissing the artist's body. I share Grosz's premises of a "discursive positioning", which simultaneously takes into account the corporeality of the author, the materiality of the text and the productivity of the readers[1]. Accordingly, I suggest that visual art studies must be faced with the bodies of the subjects within the images and outside of them. In this way images will no longer be confined to a golden cage without communicating with other spheres of social structures. Images have the power of showing how different subjects occupy different positions in social structures; how certain subjects are effaced from visibility; how certain features are valorized instead of others. They can also allow us to critically reevaluate traditional configurations and open up other possibilities; where other subjects, other bodies can become visible and speak; where, as in Rego's case, art will cease dealing with being and will instead open ways for becoming: a becoming Other.

I share Marsha Meskimmon's argument that a dialogue with women making art enables "us to ask how female subjectivity was and is articulated in visual and material form, what meanings might have been signaled by the making of art by women in diverse historical circumstances and what such works might permit us to think and know now" (Meskimmon, 2003: 6).

Following a 'Deleuzian cultural studies', as proposed by Buchanan (Buchanan, 1999), the issue of subjectivity should be rephrased into 'how does one become a subject' so that one can move beyond the economy of the same

[1] "...discursive positioning," a complex relation between the corporeality of the author, that is, the author's textual residues or traces, the text's materiality, and its effects in marking the bodies of the author and the readers, and the corporeality and productivity of the readers" (Grosz, 1995: 18).

and already-known. Denoting, thus, a shift from an ontology of being into one of becoming. As Rosi Braidotti argues, feminism can be used as a strategy to unfix and open up alternative representations of women (Braidotti, 1999).

When analyzing Rego's work, critics have identified or traced an evolution in terms of style and technique used and topics addressed; highlighting, as I have previously mentioned, themes which cross them, such as the depiction of infancy, the critique of Portugal's fascist and colonial past and its repercussions in contemporary society, women's placement in a patriarchal society. However, what remains to be addressed is a certain movement which, I argue, is very much identifiable in terms of a project for female subjectivity. It is no longer a matter of considering images to represent women in a certain way, but of arguing that these images, Rego's images, 'do' female subjectivity. Somehow we got used to the idea of images speaking to us, of provoking certain emotions and or conveying a certain message, which was there to be decoded. My research is based on the central claim that the work of Paula Rego functions as a visual body of feminist theory. Her images are "speaking images"[2] or "theoretical objects". In her most recent study about Paula Rego's work, Ana Gabriela Macedo quotes António Rodrigues (the art critic and collector), who argued in 1988 that Rego's paintings "only show, without philosophical or metaphysical questions, alternating between theatrical magic, the pleasure of experimentation and a irrepressible desire for freedom[3]" (Macedo, 2011: 143). Even though I do recognize these features, I disagree with the idea that there are no philosophical components to it. On the contrary, Rego's work has the peculiar characteristic of elaborating, through images, fundamental philosophical questions, namely questions which are specific to feminist theory. I argue that it parallels the development of a certain body of theory, deeply rooted in a materialistic

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2 I am using Mieke Bal's concept as presented here:

"In order to find out what images "say," I have advocated "close looking" as a practice to learn from and engage with the artefacts of visual culture, instead of merely regarding them as illustrations of what we already know. Developing this conviction further, I have proposed that images can perform an equivalent of speech acts; that they can respond ("speak back") to the look cast onto them, and that they can entice viewers to theorize. These tentative ideas are congenial to W.J.T. Mitchell's suggestive question "What do pictures want?" (2005) Hence, when we study and analyze images, they are not so much case studies, subjected to the scholar's scalpel, as dialogical partners. I call such "speaking images", which speak back and make me think, "theoretical objects" *in* http://www.nomadikon.net/ContentItem.aspx?ci=172#2fot

3 My translation.

philosophy[4], refusing a negative dialectic and the dichotomy mind/body, which has relegated woman and the body to outcasts or secondary terms. In fact, I claim that one of its main and strongest achievements is precisely to, visually, question issues such as the distribution of power in a phallogocentric society, the consequent formulation of subjectivity within it and the representation of subjectivity in art.

In other words, I argue that her work asks fundamental questions about female subjectivity and its representation within the visual. I will argue that it is possible to trace specific modes and moments in which Rego revisits a certain visual representation of female subjectivity, allowing for degrees of difference to be installed in the work itself. She goes from jamming the mechanisms of representation (Irigaray, 1990) to the exposure of subjection and possibilities of resistance; to, finally, transforming the concept of subjectivity itself. Inevitably, in taking this path Rego makes visible the power relations between image and spectator and formulates other possibilities within the scopic regime.

These moments are addressed in the following chapters. I have ordered them in such a way as to be able to signal the movement that I detect in Rego's work; from an exposure and subversion of phallogocentric models of subjectivity and scopic regimes to the formulation of an embodied, material and dynamic subjectivity.

In order to map this movement, I will use a methodology which combines feminist theory and visual studies. In this way I will be able to examine how female subjectivity is visually articulated, how image and spectator are configured and how a patriarchal visual and social structure is challenged. The main concepts used will be developed in each chapter; always intimately connected with the images under scrutiny. These concepts are 'productive look', 'productive mimesis', 'power' and 'resistance', 'becoming'.

The structure of this thesis can be summarized in the following manner:

1. State of the art;
2. Visual displacement of subjects: the productive-look;
3. Fake it until you unmake it: productive mimesis;
4. Making a spectacle: power, violence and female subjects;
5. Female subjectivity and becoming Other.

[4] "Philosophical materialism is the view that all that exists is material or is wholly dependent upon matter for its existence. This view comprises a) the general, metaphysical thesis that there is only one fundamental kind of reality and that this is material, and b) the more specific thesis that human beings and other living creatures are not dual beings composed of a material body and an immaterial soul, but are fundamentally bodily in nature" (Urmson and Ree (eds.), 1989: 194-5).

In the first chapter, I will present an overview of the critical reception of Rego's work by Portuguese and British art critics and scholars. It is a selective overview, that is, it is not my intention to devalue contributions absent from this chapter. I have selected publications which range from a biographical and monographic approach to a focus on nationalism, post-colonialism and sexual difference. It is relevant to highlight the past decade as a productive period in terms of the critical attention given to Paula Rego's work. Moving from the most recent to relatively older studies, I single out the publications bellow.

In 2010, Ruth Rosengarten published *Love and authority in the work of Paula Rego*. Rosengarten analyzes Rego's work from a psychoanalytic and social history perspective, focusing on Portugal's colonial and Catholic past and women's position in the family structure. In the same year, Ana Gabriela Macedo published *Paula Rego e o Poder da Visão*, which assembles interviews with Paula Rego and articles exploring the intertextuality of the artist's work. It also focuses on Rego's representation of women. In 2008, John McEwen published the monograph *Paula Rego: behind the scenes,* analyzing Rego's work since 1994, namely her work practice in her studio in Camden, London. In 2004, British art critic T.G. Rosenthal published *Paula Rego, the complete graphic work*, focusing on all the graphic work Rego produced from 1954 to 2003, interpreting her graphic series and placing them in an art historical context. 2003 saw the publication of *Paula Rego's map of memory* by Maria Manuel Lisboa, which, as the title suggests, maps out the intricate connections between Rego's aesthetics and Portugal's political, socio-cultural and religious configurations, tracing its understructures to its colonial past and history of fascism. John McEwen's monograph, titled Paula Rego, was published in 1992 (second edition: 1998) and in 1991, *Tales from the National Gallery was published,* with contributions by Germaine Greer and others.

I also have to mention two studies by fellow researchers: the master theses of Portuguese scholars Márcia de Oliveira and Ana Nolasco. The first one was defended in 2007, titled *Aproximação à obra de Paula Rego a partir dos conceitos de Devir e de Diferença* (*Approximation to Paula Rego's work from the concepts of becoming and difference*). It uses Deleuze's work on becoming and difference and applies it to Rego's work. I will refer to it in more detail in chapter five. The second thesis came out in 2005, and analysed the presence of irony and the grotesque in Rego's work (the title of the thesis is *Ironia e Grotesco na obra de Paula Rego)*.

The scope of these publications is a broad one. In fact, they seem to cover Rego's work in terms of its structure and subjects. For instance, John McEwen gives us

an overview of Rego's work evolution, in terms of the technique used and the connections she has established with art history's legacy. The themes of politics and women also play a central role in the critical reception of Rego's work. Critics take into account Portugal's colonial and fascist past when analyzing works dated from the 1960s and 70s but also more recent ones. This theme is enmeshed with the representation of women in her work. As a colonizing country under a fascist regime, Portugal suffered from a strict configuration of state and family, largely determined by Catholicism. For a long time the dismissal of the Other remained an unproblematic, unquestioned structuring mechanism in Portuguese society; the Other was the colonized, or women. The role assigned to women in society was overlooked for a long time and so was the connection between their role and the establishment of a national identity (Medeiros[5], 1996). In a recent interview with a Portuguese channel[6] Rego mentions how her father, when she was around 16, made her leave Portugal because "it was not a country for women".

In the second chapter, "visual displacement of subjects: the productive-look", the visual will be taken as an event that occurs between that which is seen (framing of the object) and seer (framing of the subject). I will give special attention to the latter, in opposition to the primacy devoted to the object in art history. I will examine how the formal aspects of Rego's work undermine patriarchal scopic regimes and allow other regimes to be installed.

I will map the displacement of the subject, within the image, away from traditional scopic regimes; as well as the displacement of the spectators, in front of the image, away from traditional scopic regimes.

The visual encounter between image and spectator becomes mobile. The clear-cut separation between women-as-spectacle and men-as-look is displaced.

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5 "Outro aspecto ainda que não pode deixar de ser mencionado é o da investigação sobre as interrelações entre condições sexuais e Identidade Nacional. Duas vertentes em especial são de mencionar. Por um lado, a análise das configurações dos diversos papéis atribuídos às mulheres na sociedade e de como essas configurações determinam a imagem da Identidade Nacional. Como exemplo, note-se que não é por acaso que uma das antologias mais frequentemente usadas para introduzir estudantes estrangeiros na cultura portuguesa tem por título Portugal: a terra e o homem (1978)" (Medeiros, 1996: 19).

6 http://www.tvi24.iol.pt/sociedade/entrevista-a-paula-rego-paula-rego-artista-paulo-magalhaes-pintura/1232582-4071.html

In the third chapter, "fake it until you unmake it: productive mimesis", I will analyse how Rego's work confronts traditional representations of femininity in art discourse. By doing so, I will put forward arguments which enable me to consider Rego's confrontation with traditional *facies* of femininity as one of productive mimesis and not of deconstruction. As Buikema and Zarzycka argue,

> "we need first and foremost to cut through the proliferating representations of women in art and media and to realise that the universal character they assume frequently makes us relapse into forms of essentialism and homogeneity" (Buikema and Zarzycka, 2011: 129).

In the fourth chapter, "making a spectacle: power, violence and female subjects", I will analyze images of power and violence; images in which we encounter women in situations of distress and physical violence; images which by rendering visible such situations could turn women into a spectacle. I will take power to be a system of differences, which can introduce divisions within a subject or separate certain subjects from others (Foucault, 2000). I will examine whether - in situations of extreme violence, experiencing power asymmetries in their own bodies - women are able to enact some kind of resistance and, if so, through which means.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, entitled "female subjectivity and becoming Other", I will present and examine images which defy representations of subjectivity as male, western, disembodied subjects; images combining live human models, animals and objects. As McEwen argues (McEwen, 2008), Rego's most recent work brings forth something different; something radically different I would add. In fact, when Rego creates sculptures in papier-mâché, turning them, on a second stage, into images, she is doing more than creating a new composition process or adding a new technique. She is creating assemblages which integrate human, animal, non-human, and non-animal components. I will analyse what these assemblages produce in terms of the project of visually formulating female subjectivity.

With the structure outlined above, I aim to cover the range of visual mechanisms used by Paula Rego to question female subjectivity. It is not, as I have pointed out before, a matter of merely selecting a set of theoretical tools and applying them to a previously selected visual *corpus*. It is instead a matter of taking Rego's images as theoretical objects; that is, as simultaneously opening up a theoretical reflection and providing the means for it:

"A theoretical object is something that obliges one to do theory; we could start there. Second, it's an object that obliges you to do theory but also furnishes you with the means of doing it. Thus, if you agree to accept it on theoretical terms, it will produce effects around itself. While I worked on perspective I began to have apercus with regard to the history of science that are not at all traditional; I began, that is, to produce theory. Third, it's a theoretical object because it forces us to ask ourselves what theory is. It is posed in theoretical terms; it produces theory; and it necessitates a reflection on theory" (Damisch, 1998:8).

Chapter 1: State of the Art

This chapter aims to provide a critical review of the more relevant studies about Paula Rego's work. For the purposes of this review, I will select important examples from a number of critical approaches to Rego's work. I will focus both on the methodological aspects of these approaches and on their identification of central themes and questions in Rego's work. My aim is to situate my own study within this critical context.

If one is to explore the work on Paula Rego that has already been done, one has to start with Victor Willing. A painter himself, he met Paula Rego at the Slade School of Fine Art in London, where he studied between 1949 and 1954. In 1957, they moved to Portugal where they married in 1959. During his stay in Portugal, he did not produce many paintings and destroyed a significant number of finished paintings. In 1975, just one year after the Portuguese revolution, Victor Willing and Paula Rego returned to London. His recognition as an important and established painter did come about eventually (in 1980) but, because of his poor health, he was unable to develop his work further. In fact, in 1988 he passed away due to his illness.

Apart from having the same profession as Rego, he was a profound, if not the most profound, connoisseur of Rego's work. In 1971, he published an article in *Colóquio Artes*, (April, 2nd series), titled "The Imagiconography of Paula Rego". In 1983, he wrote the foreword to the catalogue of Rego's exhibition in the Edward Totah Gallery, in London. Victor Willing chose to place us inside a specific and peculiar scenario, the Theater of São Carlos, in Lisbon, during the years of the regime:

> "The São Carlos Opera House in Lisbon, before the Revolution, was a stage on both sides of the footlights, as an opera house should be".

Willing describes an environment dominated by vanity and moral hypocrisy. It was the perfect situation for irony:

> "This appealed to the national sense of the ridiculous. The Portuguese are keenly aware of the fragilities of hierarchies and the comedy which derives from their disruption[7]".

[7] Article reproduced in McEwen, John: *Paula Rego*. London: Phaidon Press. 1992: 226.

This theatre was, and still is, highly popular among a certain élite. The drama oozed from every corner of the building, particularly in that period before the revolution. Thus, the action was not only limited to the stage. It also took place among the upper class audience with its intricate political and moral ambivalences and backstage. Indeed, as Willing put it, Rego was attracted to the fragilities of these apparently stable and imposed hierarchies. Her interaction with them was filtered by a strong desire for transgression.

Through her father's influence Paula Rego had become fascinated with the Italian Opera, the Commedia dell'Arte. She particularly admired the solid humanity of its 'stories of love and villany'. Another source for Rego was the popular tale or fairy tale (with its display of 'masked characters'). These tales "transcend the banal and sentimental by evoking images which are universally recognized."[8] Rego's childhood was populated by images from the storytelling within her family, of a great-aunt in particular. As Willing points out, illustrations also inspired Rego, for instance the work of Benjamin Rabier, the nineteenth-century illustrator and comics author, as well as the caricatures of *Pluma y Lapis.* They point to universal misbehaviour and vices, such as hypocrisy, avarice and pomposity. Nevertheless, as Willing argues:

> "Deliberate cruelty can have its tender moments while on the other hand, in spite of good intentions lovers are sometimes clumsy. All the time, in Paula's pictorial dramas things are going wrong. The accumulating disasters add up to a somehow survival. If that sounds like a soap opera, the difference is one of style, the pictorial style that is the visual equivalent to those words that become substance in the mouth. Because it is not, after all, the stories that arouse our curiosity (however important they are to the artist), it's the way she has transmuted them visually; the object has become a line, and this line records her fluctuating hope and dismay; her amusement or rage. Perhaps it's more true to say that the line becomes an object[9]".

This is a highly relevant statement. Firstly, because Victor Willing subtly uses the term 'pictorial dramas' as a way of redefining Rego's work. If one considers the line as a departure and impelling point for the transformation into an object, one might face the misperceptions of Rego's work as merely the

8 ibidem
9 ibidem

illustration of a story, through a graphic description. There is, though, an intricate interaction between mark (the written or oral support) and gesture (this mark that becomes a visual act) in her work.

> "More simply marks are floated, or seem to float themselves across the paper and particular gestures are formed because their appearance lends itself to the mark. They are suggested by the marks and found appropriate. The desire to make sense makes these creatures engage before long in a game of consequences which shape their actions[10]".

In these 'pictorial dramas' animals are referred to as "masks of the artist's graphic drama's, the drama of events and the marks in turn taking the lead as the picture evolves." In other words, Rego's animal characters are considered to be masks of the painter herself. The marks, intertwined with the objects, then take the lead. I will present a somewhat different understanding of the role of animals in Rego's work. In fact, this subject will be addressed at length in chapter five.
Later, in 1988, Victor Willing wrote "Inevitable Prohibitions", an essay for the catalogue of the Rego retrospective at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon[11]. In this essay, he discusses the representation of childhood as a container for innocence externally ascribed and a disguised guilt. He invokes Max Ernst's painting *The Virgin spanking the Infant Jesus* and its articulation in Italian Mannerism. "Ernst' own unease (real or assumed) is apparent in style which reminds us of the Roman Mannerists, their snooping perspective, sinuous silhouettes, air of menace and always, through disrupted hierarchies, the rumour of plots[12]".

1.1. *Two girls and a Dog* (1987)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

One must keep in mind that the 1980's were a pivotal moment; they marked the creation of Rego's the *Girl with the Dog series* (figure 1.1). Their main character is a little girl who is not the regular image of how a little girl should be or behave, though; she is a mix of

10 ibidem
11 Reproduced in McEwen, John: *Paula Rego*. London: Phaidon Press. 1992: 227.
12 ibidem

tenderness and cruelty, of mother and lover. She feeds the dog, seduces him or poses a threat to his integrity. The relevance of this series is due to the fact that Rego, moved by a strong desire to disrupt established social conventions, rewrites society and the history of art and the representational modes of certain agents:

> "Rego's little girls contain already the adults that they will become, in a sort of pronounce. She also draws attention to the way childhood relates to adulthood. What happens when children are confronted with adults and what roles do they play in relation to each other. Later in life, the child's games/mimicry are bent to adult purposes, but maturity never obliterates our childhood. The image of the child can be that of the 'father of the man' or it may presage as a yet unrealized possibility within us. Paula's girls are both a memory and presentiment[13]".

According to Victor Willing, "childhood was full of moments when adult behaviour was perplexing. Were we witnesses to an act of love or murder? As witness, and not participant, we felt excluded and therefore suspicious. The Mannerist's vision evokes the child's worst fears – looming menace, incomprehensible events, isolation, falling, sudden clamour and broken rules". One can read in the gaze of some of these girls traces of guilt. Which event might have taken place prior to the present scene that caused the reprehensible behaviour of these girls? Willing talks to us about guilt formed upon curiosity. A curiosity that originates from a lack of knowledge:

> "However strong our means of outrage in the face of unfairness we knew we were guilty of something – probably curiosity. Innocence is an adult's attribution and refers, surely, to the child's lack of knowledge not its lack of guilt. So, just as curiosity may have been the first sin, so forbidden knowledge was the most avidly acquired and difficult to forget. We longed to lose that innocence. Secrets and prying were wrapped in excitement[14]".

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13 ibidem

14 ibidem

Victor Willing also discusses another important feature of Rego's work: her use of humour. Nevertheless, as Willing warns us, we should not mistake Rego's irony and mordacity for gratuitous humour. In fact, her disposal of irony influences situations and characters in such a way that we are confronted with important universal questions, such as the disposal of power and some disposable truths:

> "Regarding humour she disappointed some admirers who wanted more, when she decided that some things are not a laughing matter. Wit handles serious matters with a light of touch – from a certain fastidiousness perhaps – but that is in tone of voice, the heart of the matter may be heavy and though nothing can be improved by a long face, even so, to insist always on finding reasons to laugh should betray embarrassment about life's dark side. She has none.
> (…) This more shady truth is complicated by our need to make sense of what we perceive – to give it a form which we ourselves are satisfied is true, which form in turn may even make sense to others – that would be a bonus, but the priority is always our own understanding[15]".

Despite his intimate connection with Paula Rego, which could have given him a privileged insight into her work via her biography, Victor Willing did not fall into the trap of turning his articles into a recollection of memories and biographical data. Moreover, he was very cautious when it came to the knowledge painters can have of their work. To Victor Willing,

> "what he (the painter) really means, by a painting, his answer, if he made one, might still leaves us unsatisfied. His understanding is unlikely to have reached an explicable form – in so many words, and may never do so, but a sense of unease has been confronted, which the image has encapsulated, leaving him or her with the feeling that the matter has been settled[16]".

Judging from the above, one can identify the main guidelines of Willing's reading. The painter singles out "domination, or rebellion and domination; or freedom and repression; suffocation and escape" in Rego's work; her emotional,

15 ibidem
16 ibidem

political and aesthetical disposal of these forces, through the agents that she elected as vehicles.

John McEwen's work on Paula Rego is an inevitable source for anyone interested in the work of the Portuguese painter. In fact, it is the first extensive and critical study about this work, describing the artistic periods that she went through, from the 1960's until the late 1990's. McEwen's *Paula Rego* was first published in 1992 but, because Paula Rego has since continued to produce significant pieces of work such as the *Peter Pan* etchings (1992), the *Dog Woman series* (1994) and *The Ostriches* (1995), this book was re-edited in 1997. John McEwen's methodological approach is a biographical and chronological one: his study contains testimonies from the painter herself, documentary pictures, paintings and prints and a very useful list of exhibitions.

1.2. *The Fitting* (1990)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 183 x 132 cm

I will examine a number of fragments of McEwen's analysis in order to achieve an overall view of the guidelines of his critical work. First, I will take into account his analysis of the painting *The Fitting* (1990) (figure 1.2.)[17]. His reading of this piece is a fair example of how the interpretation of Paula Rego's work is also related to the location occupied by the critics, both in a geographical and a methodological sense. In fact, in his analysis John

[17] John McEwen argues: "In England, until 1959, it was the custom for the season's debutantes to be presented at Court. Subsequently their marital credentials would be displayed at a 'coming-out' ball. Although replete with poignancy as any good party is, there is no disguising the marketing aspect of the debutante ritual. Daughters, as Jane Austen so wittily wrote, 'are capital'. The debutante in the Fitting – 'a socking great girl, being dolled-up for the meat market' – is truly like a fatted calf for the slaughter, an offering to be sacrificed on the altar of marriage. Her waspish mother eyes the result like a calculating butcher with a prime piece of beef. But for Paula The Fitting has a redemptive message too. In that she sees the dress as a chrysalis from which the young girl emerges into the butterfly freedom of adult life. The dressmaker, by contrast, is socially disadvantaged: her daughter will never rise in the world. At first, Paula intended to make this a literal disablement by locking the girl's legs in iron braces, but she decided this would look melodramatic and eventually chose to cast her as a doll-like Petrushka figure'" (McEwen, 1997: 183).

McEwen adds another layer to the interpretation of the painting: he associates it with the ceremonial of the season's debutantes. He argues that Paula Rego's work deals, among other subjects, with the female role in society, particularly her integration (or disintegration) as a secondary or supporting actor in a patriarchal system. It is interesting to see that these added layers originate from the place of the painting's production. This may throw a new light on her work since it takes into account the location and the cultural and geographical context in which Rego lives and works.

1.3. *Time: Past and Present* (1990-91)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 183 x 183 cm

The painting *Time – Past and Present* (1990, figure 1.3) occupies a central place in Rego's oeuvre. It was analysed in *Tales of the National Gallery* (1991) Again John McEwen adds a new layer to the analysis of this painting. He explains how it depicts a female artist and a male model which distorts the traditional roles attributed to women and men. I will develop this topic in chapter 3.

On the basis of his access to relevant biographical details, McEwen also argues for the existence of an 'intense sub-plot' (1997: 189): he writes about the real identity of the male figure represented in the painting. Keith Sutton was a friend of Paula Rego and Victor Willing. Like them, he was a painter (and art critic). Indeed, in 1966 he wrote the first article about Paula Rego to be published in the British press. We also learn from McEwen that Sutton had been in the navy. This gives us, then, external information about the confrontation between the old male and the young female as an act of transition, as a testimony of 'new talent, new life'. Keith Sutton died in 1991. This fact allows us to read this painting as a gesture of recognition of his activity as a talented painter and writer, as some of Sutton's friends have done. What McEwen does is to explore the self-portrait contained in *Time – Past and Present*:

> "The obvious interference is that this is a self-portrait, by association if not in appearance, an interpretation supported by the fact that in *Time – Past and Present*, Luzia plays the part of the servant at the door; Paula is the little girl; and the curved frame of the picture

recalls the line of the roof of the villa at Ericeira" (McEwen, 1997: 194).

1.4. *First Mass in Brazil* (1993)
Acrylic on paper laid on canvas, 130 x 180 cm

Finally, it is also relevant to take into account how John McEwen deals with the Portuguese context of Paula Rego's paintings. In *The First Mass in Brazil* (1993) (figure 1.4), the plot is inspired by the historical context of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. Behind the female figure, we encounter another image: the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil. The latter image provides a physical and contextual background for the spectator. We are faced with the poignancy of a girl on a bed who "ponders her unwanted pregnancy". What strikes us, immediately, is that there are blood stains upon her apron. There is also a tiny figure above the china turkey-cock that seems to be either in flames or also covered with blood. McEwen's reading of this painting is one of powerful images which convey a sacrifice.

1.5. *Caritas* (1993-94)
Acrylic on canvas, 200 x 240 cm

Caritas (1993-94; figure 1.5) is another painting that can be interpreted in the Portuguese context, according to McEwen. Here we find "a barren Portuguese scrubland (which) is peopled with fecund images of love, not least in the persons of Paula Rego's children and growing family of grandchildren. An older man is suckling at the breast of a young woman in a traditional symbol of charity – mother's milk is here seen as an elixir of youth fed to wealthy men as a panacea. The message is one of redemption" (McEwen, 1997:204).

This interpretation does seem to leave something out. How can one ignore the subversion of the juxtaposition of an old man suckling at the breast of a young woman? This young woman seems to be pregnant, as the man also caresses her wound. The way in which the woman looks at the man shows us

signs of her domination and control over him. In contrast, his behaviour seems pitiful. I would argue that this work could provide considerable material for an analysis of the way Rego represents women as subjects who embody control and resistance.

To sum up, John McEwen's biographical and chronological approach is a great instrument to clearly distinguish transitional moments in Rego's work, to relate each finished painting to a biographical and historical background. Not only Paula Rego's constant revisitation of her childhood in Ericeira, her intimate experience of the fascist period, but also, and this seems quite significant, her perception of her Portuguese past from the departure point of her UK context. It is also significant that this contextualization is achieved in art history. Paula Rego does not recognize an absolute legitimacy of painting to overrule and exclude other visual artistic manifestations. Her relation to the great masters is one of seduction and rejection. However, as pointed out by Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, although monographs are a useful tool to obtain information about the lives and works of women artists, "if they follow the model of the "great artist" monographs, even with a feminist perspective, they will only reinforce the circumscribed, Romantic concept of greatness and genius. To force art of women into a male tradition can result only in an uneasy fit at best" (1987: 356).

One must also mention John McEwen's most recent publication about Paula Rego, *Paula Rego, Behind the Scenes*[18]. It is the first study dedicated to Rego's work from the perspective of her studio practice. It covers her production in the period 1994-2008. It gives us an overview of the stages involved in Rego's creation, covering her ideas, sketches and models. Rego once said she painted to "give terror a face" and mentioned her fear of "having an empty studio". This is highly significant since Rego's studio is a stage and playroom inhabited and enriched by costumes, a myriad of objects and the presence of life models. In Rego's own words,"Tony dresses up as Rochester, my daughter as the Virgin Mary. They all act out things, stand in for other things[19]." This means that one must explore the ramifications of applying theatricality to Rego's aesthetics. Regarding Rego and her connection to the theatre, Polly Teale of Shared Experience has said that Rego's *Jane Eyre series* demonstrate a "tremendous theatricality, but the sets are rooms of the unconscious; there's something secret and buried"[20].

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18 McEwen, John. *Paula Rego: Behind the Scenes*. Phaidon: London, 2008.

19 http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/paula_rego_articles_secret_histories.htm

20 Teale was directly inspired by Rego's version of Jane Eyre as can be read in the following article: http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2004/jul/17/art.art.

Other critical material that I wish to consider in this chapter is *Tales from the National Gallery* edited by Colin Wiggins[21]. It was published on the occasion of the exhibition that took place in 1991-1992. This exhibition travelled to several locations in the UK and, finally, to The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The book contains two important essays; one of them by Colin Wiggins, an art historian at the Education Department of the National Gallery and curator of some of Rego's exhibitions.

In his approach to Rego's work, Wiggins focuses on the paintings and their parallels with the old masters revisited by the Portuguese painter. He intends, simultaneously, to grasp the aesthetical, historical and religious background of some of the paintings in the National Gallery Collection in London and the specificity of Rego's transformation of this material.

The writer, journalist, scholar and feminist Germaine Greer has also paid attention to Paula Rego's work. Greer has provided a critique of Western attitudes toward sexuality, fertility, the nuclear family, and the imposition of those attitudes by a patriarchal society. Greer's article on Rego was published in *Modern Painters* (*Autumn* 1988). Greer argued, at that time, that "It is not often given to women to recognize themselves in painting, still less to see their private world, their dreams, the insides of their heads, projected on such a scale and so immodestly, with such depth and colour". Thus, Rego shows how a reduction of women's universe can be counteracted by political and visual empowerment.

In another article titled "On Viewing Paula Rego", published in *Tales from the National Gallery,* Greer states that "What we observe, in whatever medium, is the drama that results when she has created her scene and filled it with an action of her own devising" (Greer, 1991: 31). According to Greer, the word 'character' originally meant and still means 'a sign'. Paula Rego's painted characters signify as written characters do. They first exist as calligraphy, showing the impress of her imagination and personality in the rhythm of their movement on the picture plane, and then as hieroglyphs that we can read. Some of them are ideograms, which carry within their shape a reminder of shapes connected with their primary meaning; others are pictograms as well. All these signs function on more than one level (Greer, 1991).

Greer uses the concept of 'character' and, by applying it to Rego's images, argues that they can function as a vehicle for the painter's imagination and individuality, but also as conveyers of a meaning that we can read. It is the

[21] Wiggins, Collin (ed.). *Tales from the National Gallery*, London: National Gallery.1991.

tension between the functions on different levels that creates Paula Rego's irony. Greer adds:

> "Though we feel that within the picture we recognise shapes and motifs, at the same time we are obliged to register their strangeness (…) The representational language has been subverted; the picture frame itself is undermined" (Greer, 1991: 33).

Germaine Greer also focuses on the fact that Rego is inscribed into a tradition, the art history tradition, from which women have been mainly excluded. Her following statement is one of great power:

> "Historically the vast mass of female graphic and plastic production was biodegradable (Greer, 1991: 33).

Indeed, women have been assigned a position of considerable inactivity and have been confused with stereotypical imageries. Women have been framed with an idealized and mono coloured mask. The question then becomes how Rego has interacted with this tradition. To obliterate or deny it would ignore the conditions that validated this pattern of representation. Greer argues that

> "It is not possible to paint and to reject painting. What the greatest women painters have done when they dared to commander a flat framed space for themselves is to suggest their otherness by acts of creative subversion (…) Paula Rego is working now in an environment which should begin to grasp the nature of the female commentary upon the male tradition. We should now realise that the unsentimental is not bitter, strident or unfemale" (Greer, 1991: 34).

Another important contribution to the study of Paula Rego's work comes from Marina Warner. In fact, in 1994 she wrote the introduction to Rego's *Nursery Rhymes*. Later she also wrote the introduction to the *Jane Eyre* edition by Enitharmon and published several review articles on Paula Rego in journals and magazines.

In comparison with the previous critics, Warner takes a different theoretical track. She introduces a "post-Freudian mordancy" to the reading of Rego's work. The figure of the little girl is at the core of Warner's reading. She argues: "They're beyond morality; she's more interested in the power of feeling

than in good conduct. She sees sexuality everywhere." For Rego, "there is adulthood in childhood; children have uncommonly strong desires and fears; they're very aware of their own bodies and sexual feelings. We only put a name to it later." Rego is sometimes compared to Balthus yet for Warner, "Balthus is voyeuristic, looking at little girls who are unaware of their sexuality. But Paula's children are in possession of their own feelings, which we're invited to feel too.[22]"
I will now focus on Marina Warner's analysis of Rego's nursery rhymes. The latter are intricate and humorous displays of daily and common experiences mixed with a considerable amount of mystery. Nursery rhymes originated from an oral tradition; they now live on through the fixed word. What is interesting in Warner's introduction is the way she brings us back to the point of encounter between Rego and this oral tradition. She was introduced to nursery rhymes at the age of 10, so at a relatively young age. Much later she would recognize that her grandmother had introduced her to these rhymes. There is an obvious time gap here of course. And it also important that nursery rhymes are not a Portuguese tradition. However, one might establish some kind of parallel between this oral tradition and the terrific stories that Rego heard during her childhood. In both,

> "the very ordinariness of the verse attaches it to daily, general experience, brings it into everyone's back garden, as it were, where it flips over the oracular. To be uncanny – unheimlich – there has to be an idea of home – heimlich – in the first place – but a home that's become odd, prickly with desire, and echoing with someone's laughter" (Warner,1994: 7).

One must stress that Rego's *Nursery Rhymes* portray the little girls as heroines. Can we incorporate this fact in a more remote genealogy? Here Warner returns to art history and the place inside it given to little girls. One can notice echoes from the surrealist's cult of the femme-enfant (Max Ernst) and Balthus' revelation or exposure of a young girl's intimacy. However, a substantial distinction comes from the position occupied by the painter's own perspective on the scene. As Marina Warner emphasizes "Paula Rego doesn't come as an outsider to the scene; nor as a seducer. She has said of her work that 'suddenly it's as if a dog were to tell its own story', for she is speaking from inside, she is telling tales she knows, from a place – a home base – generally overlooked, the female child's. She not only hears the 'dog', she becomes it. Nursery rhymes are

[22] Warner, Marina. "Introduction to Paula Rego's Nursery Rhymes", Thames and Hudson: London. 1994.

populated with fabulous, talking creatures, with wooing frogs and laughing dogs, for children and animals have always liked on another, and even been confused by their elders, subjected alike to maltreatment on the one hand, petting and spoiling on the other. The universe of children is subject to adult's authority, and brimful of the potency ascribed to instinct, to irrationality, to presocial (antisocial) behaviour" (Warner, 1994: 9).

Here, Marina Warner indirectly refers to Freud's concept of the child's id, the most basic identity of the psyche and personality. According to Freud, it is erroneous to consider the child as an innocent and naive being. Instead, this innocence is replaced by passion and a reckless sense of necessity. The child's submission does not come as natural nor does the child want it. Children's compliance to parental authority is not based upon an act of respect or love, but comes from their fear of punishment.

As I mentioned before, Paula's husband, the artist Victor Willing, singled out the characteristic themes of her work: 'domination and rebellion, suffocation and escape'. Rego experienced them during her childhood and girlhood under Salazar's regime. Warner argues that "Paula Rego has always identified with the least, not the mighty, taken the child's eye view, and counted herself among the commonplace and the disregarded, by the side of the beast, not the beauty (…) Her sympathy with naiveté, her love of its double character, its weakness and its force, led her to nursery rhymes as a new source for her imagery" (Warner,1994: 8).

Why did Paula Rego deliberately chose to bring to the category of art this 'minor form'? Warner accurately points out that Rego intended to challenge the canon and pay tribute to Victorian artists. What comes next in Warner's analysis is significant, since it highlights some of the processes used by Rego:

> "Like them (Victorian artists), she treats the fantastic realistically, dresses animals in human costume, and introduces dream-like dislocations of scale. The rhymes attracted her too because she's a specialist in using humour as means of confronting terror" (Warner, 1994:9).

However, with regard to the links between the animal and the human, it seems to me that something different from the Victorian tradition occurs. In my research, attention will be paid to the construction of realistically improbable scenes through the display of both humans and animals.

At this point, I will attempt a critical analysis of Maria Manuela Lisboa's work about Paula Rego[23]. She wrote the second full-length monograph about Rego's work (John McEwen's was the first). According to Ana Paula Ferreira,

> "(…) it complements in some respects John McEwen's biographically inspired approach while, also, productively engaging the extant critical bibliography on Paula Rego. Lisboa, however, dares to consistently plunge into what others have only partially skimmed" (Ferreira, 2005: 235).

I will examine this study extensively: I will discuss Lisboa's theoretical framework and the line of research proposed in her study.

She overtly assumes a position that inscribes her analysis under the guidelines of new historicism by opposing it to postmodernism and post-structuralism. One can describe new historicism as a method based on the simultaneous reading of literary and non-literary texts. Indeed, new historicism is interested both in the textuality of history and the historicity of texts (Montrose, 1989). There is no privilege of the literary over the non-literary. Instead of taking a text and the context in which this text was produced, it is more relevant to use the terms text and co-text, since new historicism rejects any secondary role for the latter. The difference between new historicism and old historicism consists precisely in this practice of giving equal weight to literary and non-literary texts. In other words, there is a relevant difference between both, as the former sets itself as a historicist movement and the latter as an historical movement.

The debate proceeds Derrida's claim that there is nothing outside of the text[24] (Derrida, 1976). New historicism objects to the idea that there is no history outside of the text and that history itself is a text. In other words, new historicism is against the relativization of history. In an effort to pre-empt criticism of her position, Lisboa acknowledges that the textualist position should not be charged with political disconnection or irrelevance. Indeed, authors such as Derrida and Foucault argue for a political force that grounds or pre-instates their position.

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[23] Lisboa, Maria Manuel. *Paula Rego's map of memory: national and sexual politics*. Hampshire: Ashgate, 2003.

[24] Derrida has argued that this statement has been erroneously interpreted. Indeed, it refers to the extension of textuality but not to the absence of a reality outside the text in a narrow sense. (Derrida, 1994).

Lisboa presents us with the problems that new historicism has to face. The first is related to what has been mentioned before, that is, the inability to have full access to historical truth and, therefore, the inability to accurately reframe a text in history. The second problem is that history itself, as an institutionalized discipline, has set strict boundaries to the definition of what constitutes a historical text. Literature and the arts, in general, have been excluded from the category of historical texts for a lack of objectivity (objectivity having been established as a precondition for the making of history, however controversial that feature is).

Using this theoretical approach as a tool to analyse Paula Rego's work is not without its problems. First of all, one has to question some of the issues that have been singled out in the (internal) debate about new historicism. Louis Montrose (1993) has pointed to the lack of a clear methodology in this movement and Stephen Greenblatt (1988) has admitted to a certain cultural determinism. This leads us then to the type of criticism that can be elaborated in the context of a concrete case of art (in all its forms). Let us remember that new historicism wanted to rescue literature and art, and reconnect them to the historical context in which they were produced or that they interacted with.

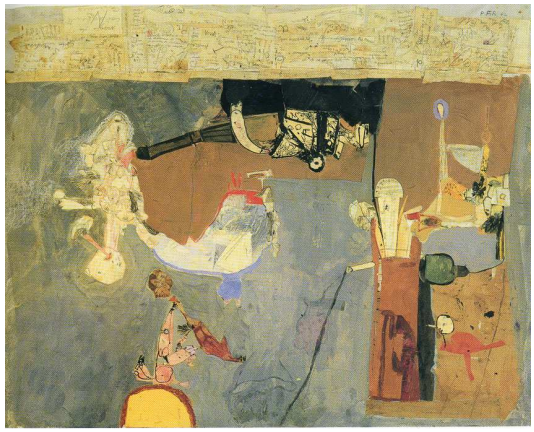
How and why does Paula Rego's work invoke some aspects of her past as valid artistic material? How do we take into account the physical, geographical and chronological gap between her past and her present. In other words, I consider the articulation between text and co-text in Rego's work to be more complex: even when she revisits moments of Portugal's national past, she is, in most cases, visiting and questioning them from another time, space and place.

I will now address Maria Manuel Lisboa's analysis. In order to do so, I will follow the chapters of Lisboa's study: "Past history and deaths foretold: nation, self and other from the 1960s to the 1980s"; "(He)art history or a death in the family: the late 1980s"; "The sins of the fathers: mother and land revisited in the 1990s", "An interesting condition: the abortion pastels", "Artist and model: let me count the ways I love you".

Looking carefully at the first chapter of Lisboa's book, I would argue that her criteria for putting together certain paintings are, simultaneously, chronological and thematic. The first part of the title of this chapter draws our attention to works created in the 60s that are dedicated to a specific theme: Portuguese fascism and its colonial policy. We are faced with paintings such as *Salazar Vomiting the Homeland* (1960) (figure 1.6) and *Iberian Dawn* (1962) (figure 1.7). Lisboa's analysis seems to be in agreement with new historicism' guidelines, for it uses contextual (co-textual) elements to explain the paintings

and singles out the ways a painting can provide alternative histories. For instance, the painting *Salazar vomiting the Homeland* shows us that the relation between Salazar, as the leader and creator of the homeland, and the Portugal that he constructed is not as "healthy" as portrayed in the official propaganda.

1.6. *Salazar Vomiting the Homeland* (1960)
Oil on canvas, 94 x 120 cm



1.7. *Iberian Dawn* (1962)
Collage and oil on canvas, 72.5 x 92 cm

Lisboa describes the 1980's as pivotal because Rego's work changed significantly in this period. According to Lisboa, it denotes a naturalistic turn, figurative, in which there is a "foregrounding of the personal over the political (…) retaining, through allusion, a national-political content beyond the family and sexual politics" (Lisboa: 2003: 26). *Deaths foretold* is a series of threat and menace embodied by the servant towards the mistress, the girl towards the dog. One would expect Lisboa to pay attention to the *Girl and a Dog series* of the 80's. However, instead she chose to analyse paintings such as *The Fitting* (1990), *The Maids* (1987), *Time: Past and Present* (1990,1991). What these series have in common is an ambivalent and menacing relation between the actors. However, by trying to adhere to the guidelines of new historicism, Lisboa uses an interpretation that necessarily connects several compositional elements to an imperial past. Such is the case of the Spanish figure in *The Fitting,* the maid in *The Maids* or the nautic elements in *Time: Past and Present.*

I would like to argue that the connection to the works from the 1960s is not as obvious as it might seem and that the transitional moment as examined by Lisboa seems to point to more than a formal difference or even an extra layer to the political one. Indeed, it marks the moment at which Rego directs close attention to power relations between women, woman/and man, child/mother; a questioning of the traditional roles and the rephrasing of the domestic space as a dangerous one; subverting a broader patriarchal system and not only a fascist and Portuguese context.

Although the political and national past, and even present, of Portugal, have a prominent role in Rego's work, I argue that this should be articulated within a broader project. In the following chapters, using a wider scope, I will attempt to connect history, art history and its reinvention to issues of female subjectivity. It will be my main aim to analyse the ways in which Rego scrutinizes and disrupts a definition of the female subject in monolithic terms. I will focus on the ways in which Rego politically and aesthetically foregrounds the visual established masks of the discourse of femininity, in the private and the public, the aesthetical and the political sphere, to formulate a non-fixed and radical other subjectivity.

In such an analysis one has to take the aesthetic into consideration. New historicism places art on the same level as any other texts that were produced within history and against it. Lisboa claims that she does not pay particular attention to its specific nature, processes or reception. That no attention will be given to the way in which the aesthetical validity of visual texts positions them within not only history, but also art history. The following quote illustrates this point:

> "What follows is a reading of pictures ranging over forty years, from a perspective which makes no attempt at engaging with formal or painterly aspects of this artist's work. Two caveats become necessary at this point. First, what is attempted here is in no sense art history, in the traditional understanding or methodology of that discipline. That is an approach which, as a student of literature and history, I am not equipped to undertake. Instead, the argument to be developed seeks the inscription of art, this art, within the history that informs and motivates it. Or to put it another way, the restoration of historical meaning to the works, such that history is made central to the art" (Lisboa: 2003: 19).

However, her use of iconography and iconology in her analysis in an overt disagreement with the previous position. According to Panofsky (Panofsky, 1939), iconography takes place at three different stages: a "pre-iconographical description", an "iconographical analysis" and an "iconographical interpretation" (in 1955 he changed its name to "iconological analysis"). If the first phase is concerned with the enumeration of what can be seen in the painting without establishing any further judgements, the second and third phases address a deeper meaning. Indeed, the second stage is formed by the theme or subject

depicted (identifying the relations between what can be seen) and the third stage is the deeper meaning or content of the work as intended by the artist. If new historicism is set against any theory of meaning inherent to the text, how can the use of iconography be combined with this assumption? This occurs, for example, in Lisboa's analysis of *The Maids* (1987) (figure 1.8). Iconography is a system or type of images used by an artist in order to create particular meanings within his/her compositions. There is an abundance of material specially linked to religious, and Christian, art. Lisboa selects, from the broad reading of symbols available, interpretations that connect with religion and, more particularly, that might be used as a form of criticism of Portuguese Catholicism. This needs further development, for the criteria that are at the core of this selection are far from clear.

1.8. *The Maids* (1987)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 213.4 x 243.9 cm

Another important moment in Lisboa's analysis is the chapter dedicated to the famous abortion series. Here Lisboa provides us with a considerable amount of information about the context, or the background against which, this series was produced – the 1998 referendum to legalise abortion in Portugal. And also the highly conservative, religious and condemnatory religious practice against it, that originates from the period of fascism. This information seems to be better suited to the new historicist methodology Lisboa sets out at the beginning of her work.

Moreover, she also gives us a very important insight into the uses of the theme, not only in Catholicism (and the official and fixed conceptions surrounding birth) but also in art history. In her opinion, the pictures evoke three distinct concepts punished in "any biblical wish-list of desirability". The first would be the "emphasis on the post-lapsarian labour(ious) childbirth of Eve in place of the blessed one of Mary which ideally overrode it"; another, giving birth to a "fruitless travail with no child at the end, rather than redemptory birth"; and, finally, "the issue (…) of the abortion crime (blood and gore) rather than a sacred issue (the fruit of divinely anointed loins, namely a Holy child" (Lisboa:2003: 147-148).

This series presents us with women in adverse circumstances. They face a degree of pain that they can barely deal with. Lisboa's analysis of these paintings is based on the claim that these figures are girls ("They aren't women but girls, and their posture is not one of sensual invitation but overwhelming pain"), which brings complexity to the theme of abortion. Among the abortion series are, indeed, compositions with girls and girls only. However, other paintings show us adult women (*Untitled 1*, for instance). Lisboa also mentions an indifference and/or hostility from these women/girls to the viewer. They are alone and refuse to look at us. They exclude us from what is going on, but at the same time they include us for they are brought to us as 'what we acknowledge to exist but don't want to deal with'. I would reject a full victimization of such figures, also to enhance a certain 'hybris' that underlines their postures and regards (or disregards). They have done something courageous and illicit, a punishable crime, something that overcomes their condition of agents in a given society that considers their act a crime. They know that what they might encounter in the gaze of the spectator is not compassion but condemnation. Indeed, in this series, women make themselves visible in the ambiguity of being acted upon/acting upon: subjects who embody control and resistance.

In this analysis there is another relevant aspect that should be taken into account. On the one hand, these compositions do not carry the weight of superfluous 'onomastic vests' (no titles). On the other hand, these bodies are hiding, with dresses, clothing, the process that they have undergone. Even the product of this process is hiding from the frame, for it is inside domestic paraphernalia (one could say 'what happens at home stays at home'). It is not by any means irrelevant that, in a series dealing with abortion, all the figures are covered with clothes. Analysing the costumes of these figures would be of great interest for they convey (or dissimulate) an identity. Are they dressed up in accordance to their identity, age and social role or have they dressed up for the viewer (as a provocative act)? When stating the singularity of the way Rego works upon this theme, Lisboa makes an important remark. The difference between other female artists who have dealt with themes of traditional iconography such as the Immaculate Conception and Paula Rego is defined by the representation of not becoming a mother. What the abortion series ultimately challenge is the male/god power of creation.

1.9. *Untitled 9* (1998-99)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 111 x 100 cm

A last reference will be made to a work from this series, *Untitled nº9* (figure 1.9). Here you see an older woman, a representation of what could be a conventional Portuguese mother, aunt or housekeeper. She has performed an abortion on some girl/woman who has been erased from the image. We do not know the exact connection between both women (maybe mother and daughter, as suggested by Maria Manuel Lisboa?). What we are aware of is that this figure has a dubious or double function, as Lisboa accurately points out. On the one hand, she challenges a patriarchal society, ruled by silent but strong religious norms, because they are deeply entrenched in people's consciousness and in the social structures they inhabit. On the other hand, she takes care of what society cannot, since she solves a problem that one knows exists but cannot publicly acknowledge. Hence, she does not fit easily into either of the available and antagonistic paradigms of "good woman/bad woman, mother/abortionist, life-giver/life-taker, madonna/whore, mater dolorosa/fallen woman".

I would suggest that Lisboa's analysis of the *Untitled Series* is one of her strongest chapters. It singles out a number of aspects which determine this series: the Portuguese political and religious context; the relation with art history's iconography of the Immaculate Conception; the complex bounds established between women; the connection to the spectator. I will develop some of these aspects in the following chapters, namely the scopic regimes and the display of power and violence (chapters two and four).

Finally, in her conclusion Maria Manuel Lisboa places Paula Rego in a philosophical and aesthetic tradition that dates back to Plato and his rejection of the artist within the parameters of the perfect society. According to Lisboa, Rego's work embodies an excess of emotions that even Greek drama representations avoided to bring to the stage. She subsequently connects Rego's work to a particular tradition that dates back to the eighteenth century, which attempted to bring art to the public sphere:

> "Her paintings abound in sex, politics and religion, much like outbursts of bad manners in the midst of polite dinner-party conversation. And it is that rudeness which transposes what I would like to argue are sui generis History paintings into the genre of Civic painting or Art for the public good as developed in the eighteenth century. As John Barrel puts it, in his book[25], in the early decades of the eighteenth century in England, the most influential attempts to provide the practice of painting with a theory were those which adopted the terms of value of the discourse we now describe as civic humanism. The republic of the fine arts was understood to be structured as political republic; the most dignified function to which painting could aspire was the promotion of the public virtues; and the genres of painting were ranked according to their tendency to promote them. As only the free citizen members of the political republic could exhibit those virtues, the highest genre, history-painting, was primarily addressed to them and it addressed them rhetorically, as an orator addresses an audience of citizens who are his equals, and persuades them to act in the interests of the public. (Barrel, 1986, 1)".

One would have to further investigate this line of artistic interpretation. Nevertheless, several questions might be posed. The combination of Plato and these theories of civic art immediately presents us with a problem. There is an immense chronological, geographical and philosophical gap that leaves out more modern discussions about (modern) art. Then, once Lisboa has associated Paula Rego with this tradition, other issues need to be addressed. Firstly, Rego gives us a counter-discourse, or at least challenges what seems to be the phallologocentrism of admitting only one valid language for the enunciation of a public discourse with a certain set of values. We must keep in mind that these features of this civic humanism in the eighteenth-century painting served to distinguish which virtues were considered public. How were women placed inside the public sphere and which virtues were attributed to them? In the fine arts, how did women painters represent this society, these virtues? Through the lens of a patriarchal structure or in a different manner? These questions are fundamental because they invoke, precisely, the singularity of Paula Rego's work. Does she

[25] Barrell, John. *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: The Body of the Public*. Yale University Press, 1995.

also act in the interests of the public? These questions seem to be answered by the same source, John Barrel:

> "That theory assumes that, as Shaftsbury had put it, 'Ladies hate the great manner'; that women cannot understand history-paintings, which are public and idealised works, the comprehension of which demands an understanding of public virtue, an ability to generalise, and 'an acquaintance with the grand outline of human nature' which (whether by nature or nurture) is denied to women, who are obliged to remain 'satisfied with common nature'. If the 'ladies' cannot discuss history-paintings, that is because it has been presumed impossible for them to learn how to do so. Portraits, however, work in terms of 'personal ideas'; they aim to present particular likenesses: where they represent virtue, they favour the private virtues; and they gratify the vanity of those who sit for them, and so of women especially, who are known to be especially vain. That women are happy to discuss portraits only confirms their inability to comprehend the higher, the public genre of art. (Barrel, 1986: 68)."

Maria Manuela Lisboa acknowledges the limitations to civic humanism, which, nevertheless, do not stop her from pursuing this connection:

> "The common good, of course, is only ever that from a limited, inevitably narrow, point of view. One man's meat is almost invariably another man's poison (...) Paula Rego's work of the last decade, conveniently from the point of view of linking it chronologically to the civic humanist theory of art, has included some works deriving inspiration from the eighteenth-century painter Hogarth, possibly British art's best-known social commentator and moralist as well as lampooner of the status quo. Not coincidentally, the theme she selected from his work was that of marriage (à la mode, his and her versions respectively). In her rendition, as might be expected, mothers rather than fathers broker marriage and money deals, and husbands rather than wives languish or die untimely deaths" (Lisboa: 2003: 189).

In my view, it is precisely because Paula Rego is more interested in 'the mothers' that makes for an awkward connection between her work and the straightjacket of the civic art movement in the eighteen century in England. But let us look at the comparison established between the works of Hogarth and Paula Rego, based on a "trait common to both, namely the propensity for morality with wit and also very much with a twist" (Lisboa, 2003: 189). Although they both fit a civic art style or typology, Paula Rego introduces women into the picture and hence a "triple twist" occurs:

> "First, simply by virtue of being the work of a woman engaged, albeit largely antagonistically, in a dialogue with the master narratives of her country or countries – Portugal and Britain – in different periods. Second, because the civic message her paintings offer, and the public service they seek to render – albeit very much out of step with certain conventional moral principles, religious or otherwise – is, nonetheless, and undeniably, the promotion of areas of ethical and political debate, in which, whatever the final position adopted, it seems likely that a series of paradigmatic shifts in the attribution of guilt (…) And third, because, as these images are reintroduced to the specific historical referents that underpin them, the very fabric of human freedom is revealed to be fragile" (Lisboa: 2003: 191).

What has to be questioned is whether Paula Rego aims at providing a public service with her paintings, one that used to be unavailable in Portuguese society, or whether she is drawing precisely on and against claims of truth for society's moral values. I would argue that she plays precisely with the fallacy of a determined set of values that rule out women and legitimise oppression, violence under a socially accepted sense of what is valid, true and accepted in society.

I will now move to Ruth Rosengarten's book *Contrariar, Esmagar, Amar. A Família e o Estado Novo na obra de Paula Rego* (published in Portuguese in 2009 and in English in 2011). At first glance this work seems to be similar to Maria Manuel Lisboa's *Map of Memory*. In fact, both authors choose to combine psychoanalytic theory and social history as critical tools to analyse Paula Rego's work. However, there are also quite substantial differences between them. I will

present what I consider to be Rosengarten's main guidelines, what her reading has to offer and what are, in my view, its challenges.

Rosengarten selects as her case studies paintings dating from different moments; *The Policeman's Daughter* (1987), *The Interrogator's Garden* (2000), and *The First Mass in Brazil* (1993). As I have mentioned above, she combines social history and psychoanalytic theory. Regarding the former, Rosengarten focuses on the fascist period of Portugal's history, following Lisboa in this respect. She provides an in-depth contextualization of Portugal's political and social configuration during the twentieth century, from the unstable period of the first republic to the years of Salazar's ruling and Marcelo Caetano's government to the Carnation Revolution of 25 April, 1974. This focus highlights the specificity of the Portuguese fascist regime, with its rural and isolationist character; its colonial policy which had to adapt to the changes occuring in Europe after the second World War; its intimate connection with or depence on Catholic ideology. The family structure was clearly patriarchal. In fact, in Salazar's ideology, being a good housewife was the biggest achievement for every woman and whenever a married woman 'competed' with men in the work sphere, it was thought that the family would be damaged to its very core (Rosengarten, 2009).

I will turn now to Rosengarten's use of psychoanalytic theory, namely the specific combination of the Freudian Oedipus complex and the castration complex. In taking Oedipus[26], the central character of Sophocles play *Oedipus the King*,

[26] "Oedipus, King of Thebes begins the play by determining to find and eradicate the cause of the pollution in his city that is killing his crops and people. To find the source of the pollution and save the city, an oracle tells him, he must discover who killed the last King, Laius, whose murder has gone unsolved and unpunished. At the beginning of the play Oedipus appears to be an assured and powerful leader; he assumed his crown by solving the riddle of the Sphinx, the exotic, lion-headed beast which had kept Thebes under its spell. By solving the riddle of the Sphinx, he freed the city from enslavement. He then married Laius's widow, Jocasta, and became King himself. The confident Oedipus initially pictures himself as a master reader, an expert at solving puzzles; he is one who uncovers truth and leads the way to knowledge. During the course of the play Oedipus discovers that he himself is the criminal whom he seeks; he murdered Laius unknowingly in a fight before he first arrived in Thebes. But, worse, Oedipus also discovers that Laius and Jocasta were his parents, who abandoned him as a child because of a prophecy which warned them that their son would kill his father and marry his mother. Through no fault of his own Oedipus is the source of the poison in the city. It is the riddle of his own birth – his unknowing murder of his father and incestuous marriage to his mother – that has brought the gods' curse upon his city. He is the answer for which he seeks: specifically his mysterious (murderous and incestuous) origins are what is at issue. At the end of the play Jocasta hangs

dated from the fifth century B.C., as a symbolic figure, Freud put forward a theory according to which "the child will develop an erotic love for the parent of the opposite sex and a rivalrous hatred for the parent of the same sex who seems to monopolise the other, desired parent" (Thurschwell, 2000: 46). The development of sexuality and the differentiation between male and female sexuality is to be explained, according to Freud, through the castration complex. This marks the third fase of the child's sexual development, when he/she begins exploring his/her own body. When a boy realizes that the girl does not possess a penis, the anxiety of castration hits him; he fears that what 'happened' to the girl, will 'happen' to him also. Castration is seen as a menace hanging over the boy's head; a consequence of bad behaviour. Later on, this anxiety is dissolved and the boy "submits to the father's rule, agreeing to grow up to resemble his father and find a substitute for his mother" (Thurschwell, 2000: 58). Instead the little girl, according to Freud, sees her lack of a penis as the evidence of a castration which has already taken place. She blames her mother for her castration and believes that her father can give her a baby to replace her lack of a penis (Freud, 2000) .

Feminist scholars have criticized this segment of Freud's theory. I would like to briefly point out its drawbacks, which, consequently, undermine Rosengarten's interpretation. I order to do so, I will be using Toril Moi's "From Femininity to Finitude: Freud, Lacan, and Feminism, Again[27]". Moi does not dismiss Freud's psychoanalytical model out of hand. On the contrary, she gives him credit for "being concerned with the phenomenological, concrete body[28]" (Moi, 2004: 856). Moi uses Freud's own theory to refute the correlation between femininity and castration:

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herself, and Oedipus blinds himself so that he will no longer have to see the results of his incest and murder" (Thurschwell: 2000: 46-47).

[27] "The task I have set for myself here is simply this: to work out a critique of two major psychoanalytic concepts, namely, femininity and castration, through a rereading of some fundamental texts by Freud and Lacan. I bring to bear on these texts a perspective informed by Beauvoir and Wittgenstein" (Moi, 2004: 846).

[28] "Lacan's understanding of the *relationship* between the body and sexed subjectivity, then, is neither better nor worse than Freud's; it's the same. Feminists who choose Lacan over Freud because they believe that Lacan's theory is less essentialist are mistaken. Neither Freud nor Lacan is an essentialist. They both consider the relationship between the body and the psyche to be contingent. The difference, as I have already stressed, is in their understanding of the *body*. Freud always remained concerned with the concrete, phenomenological body, whereas Lacan turns the body into an entirely abstract and idealist concept" (Moi, 2004: 856).

> "The human and ideological effects of conflating castration with femininity are distressing. Moreover, the conflation could be avoided. For what Freud describes as the "repudiation of femininity" in both sexes is the human reluctance to accept the reality principle, to give up the dream of being all, of living forever, of narcissistic omnipotence, of living in a world that never frustrates our desires. Why not call this a reluctance to accept our human condition? What exactly has this got to do with femininity, let alone with women? Freud's own text shows that to call this general repudiation of lack "femininity" or "castration" is to place women in an impossible position: "The female's wish for a penis . . . is the source of outbreaks of severe depression in her, owing to an internal conviction that the analysis will be of no use and that nothing can be done to help her. (1937, 252). Given his conviction that to be a woman is to be castrated, Freud can only conclude that his depressed female patients are right to mourn the penis they will never have. For women who strive in vain to accept their so-called femininity, Freud counsels despair; to women who try to claw their way out of depression by doing something productive in the world, all he has to say is that they are phallic and suffer from penis envy. Lacan's theory does not lead to different conclusions" (869).

According to Moi, castration has three different significations[29], a lack which is a general characteristic of human beings; sexual difference or femininity and, finally, an acknowledgement of the necessary reduction to one body and one sex. Rosengarten, in her analysis, has collapsed all three meanings and

[29] In Freudian and Lacanian theory, *castration* is used in three different senses, namely, (1) to signify *lack* as a general human condition, (2) to signify *sexual difference* or *femininity*, and (3) to signify the discovery of our own "one-sexedness," that is to say, the discovery that we can only ever be one sex, in the sense that we can only ever have one body. (Desire remains as polymorphous and infinite as it ever was, but it is now confronted with the traumatic discovery of sexual finitude. I shall return to this.) Meaning 1 encourages us to believe that as soon as something can be called "lack" it can also be theorized as castration. It is difficult to understand why this is considered a sign of theoretical sophistication. Meaning 2 is the clearly sexist theory of femininity this article has been concerned with. Meaning 3, however, is just fine, but probably not very successfully conveyed by the word *castration"* (Moi, 2004: 870).

highlighted the sexual difference element; thus leaving no way out for women except for depression or the entrapment inside a phallic desire[30].

I will now turn to one of her specific readings of Rego's work. Rosengarten acknowledges the fact that a significant number of critical essays published about Paula Rego argue that her images disrupt a patriarchal established order. Such is Maria Manuel Lisboa's position. However, Rosengarten's position is utterly different from Lisboa's. As mentioned before, Rosengarten uses psychoanalysis to develop her analysis, more specifically Freud's Oedipus complex and how it is articulated in "family Romances" in 1909[31]. The Oedipus complex is deeply rooted

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30 "Meaning 2 is the clearly sexist theory of femininity this article has been concerned with. Meaning 3, however, is just fine, but probably not very successfully conveyed by the word *castration*. The indiscriminate use of *castration* encourages us to roam freely between the three meanings, collapsing them into each other as we please. The resulting confusion of categories is responsible for a distinctly (hetero) sexist "oversexualizing" or "overgendering" of human existence. It also has a tendency to generate a lot of empty language. Imagine a cultural theorist who observes something that resembles a cut (a blank screen? A black screen? a sudden hiatus? a pause?) and starts the theory machine. A cut evokes castration, which evokes lack, which conjures up the woman's sex, and from there we go to nothing, death, the real, the beyond, psychosis, madness—nothing can stop the machine. This is language on holiday. Such language produces far more problems than it solves, and the biggest problem of all is that it projects a deeply sexist notion of sexual difference onto every human phenomenon. What we need, then, is a psychoanalytic theory that truly seeks to understand the consequences of human "one-sexedness" without thinking in terms of either castration or femininity but also without denying the fact that male and female bodies are different. Many different kinds of analysts are producing such theories. This article is not trying to say that we don't need psychoanalysis; it is trying to say that psychoanalysis does not need a femininity theory" (Moi, 2004: 870-871).

31 "The later stage in the development of the neurotic's estrangement from his parents, begun in this manner, might be described as 'the neurotic's family romance'. It is seldom remembered consciously but can almost always be revealed by psycho-analysis. For a quite peculiarly marked imaginative activity is one of the essential characteristics of neurotics and also of all comparatively highly gifted people. This activity emerges first in children's play, and then, starting roughly from the period before puberty, takes over the topic of family relations. A characteristic example of this peculiar imaginative activity is to be seen in the familiar day-dreaming which persists far beyond puberty. If these day-dreams are carefully examined, they are found to serve as the fulfilment of wishes and as a correction of actual life. They have two principal aims, an erotic and an ambitious one—though an erotic aim is usually concealed behind the latter too. At about the period I have mentioned, then, the child's imagination becomes engaged in the task of getting free from the parents of whom he now has a low opinion and of replacing them by others, who, as a rule, are of higher social standing. He will make

in Paula Rego's work. She strikingly argues that Rego's work flaunts an ambiguity towards patriarchy and women's position inside it.[32] (Rosengarten, 2009).

One of the images analysed by Rosengarten is *First Mass in Brazil*. Her display of social history when analysing this work is quite far-reaching and complete. In effect, she establishes connections with the historical background of this image, extending them to Portugal's colonial policy during the dictatorship. I will present the composition, historical and artistic background to this work. Afterwards, I will analyse Rosengarten's use of Freudian theory in her reading of this painting.

In *First Mass in Brazil* (1993), the main image is at the front of the canvas. Behind it there is a scene which takes place in the exterior and could, therefore, serve to open up the space. However, we can see that this scene is confined to

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use in this connection of any opportune coincidences from his actual experience, such as his becoming acquainted with the Lord of the Manor or some landed proprietor if he lives in the country or with some member of the aristocracy if he lives in town. Chance occurences of this kind arouse the child's envy, which finds expression in a phantasy in which both his parents are replaced by others of better birth. The technique used in developing phantasies like this (which are, of course, conscious at this period) depends upon the ingenuity and the material which the child has at his disposal. There is also the question of whether the phantasies are worked out with greater or less effort to obtain verisimilitude. This stage is reached at a time at which the child is still in ignorance of the sexual determinants of procreation.

When presently the child comes to know the difference in the parts played by fathers and mothers in their sexual relations, and realizes that 'pater *semper incertus est',* while the mother is 'certissima', the family romance undergoes a curious curtailment: it contents itself with exalting the child's father, but no longer casts any doubts on his maternal origin, which is regarded as something unalterable. This second (sexual) stage of the family romance is actuated by another motive as well, which is absent in the first (asexual) stage. The child, having learnt about sexual processes, tends to picture to himself erotic situations and relations, the motive force behind this being his desire to bring his mother (who is the subject of the most intense sexual curiosity) into situations of secret infidelity and into secret love-affairs. In this way the child's phantasies, which started by being, as it were, asexual, are brought up to the level of his later knowledge" (Freud, 1909: 237-238).

[32] "In the following chapters I will defend that, more than a pure subversion, Paula Rego's work shows an ambiguity about patriarchy's implications and the position taken by the female subject in it. With a mix of compliance and rebellion, the subjects in Rego's work, expose the originin of their desire as something that exists in a symbolic field invested by paternal authority (...) She discloses, however, a recognition that to occupy a power position - and, in reality, possess a voice that can resonate in the social sphere - does not mean to challenge, but to negotiate with the Symbolic Order" (my translation from Rosengarten, 2009: 15).

the limits of a frame. It is not an aperture in the space, but a frame that is hanging on the wall. What is behind the woman in the center of the image may seem to have a secondary role in the construction of meaning. However, this scene comes to pictorially materialize the hunted presence of the female. In Ruth Rosengarten's words, this work, which displays a painting within a painting, creates a different spacial and chronological order, following in the steps of Vermeer, Velásquez, Manet and Matisse. The top limit of the painting is eliminated by the frame of Rego's own picture, which contains it (Rosengarten, 2009). This painting on the wall is Rego's version of *A Primeira Missa no Brasil (First Mass in Brazil*) from the Brazilian artist Victor Meireles (1860). Rego had seen a copy of this painting on the walls of Luzia's house, her nanny in Ericeira. It depicts the arrival of the Portuguese in Brazil, specifically in Porto Seguro, a moment which was considered a divine gift by the Portuguese colonizers.On 26 April 1500, Easter Sunday, the first mass was celebrated. The indigenous, curious about the arrival of the Portuguese, were to be converted to the Christian faith.

In Rego's painting, everything takes place inside Luzia's cottage, in one room only. The proximity between the woman lying in front of us and the painting behind her make both of them almost indistinguishable. That is, it visually suggests that this woman still belongs to the painting behind her or that the scene behind her takes place within this room. In any case, the spectator is made aware that these historical images are, in fact, a representation. The painting depicts a priest raising the chalice for the holiest moment of the Mass, the consecration. This has a particular strength, connected to the image of the woman. It is as if the truthfulness of this mission is unmasked by frames that delimit this scene and its purity through the woman's presence. Indeed, she embodies the sacrifice and violence that the 'painting inside the painting' obliterates. She is fully dressed and pregnant; one could say that she embodies the results of a conversion. The borders of her subjectivity and body are transgressed. The red colour which haunts the image (in the sheets and walls) is a visual sign of this transgression. As far as the spectator is concerned, we are faced with the uncomfortable proximity of this woman. She keeps her eyes wide open. However, her gaze is empty.

Looking now at Rosengarten's display and her use of some Freudian premisses, I would like to point to some problems. For her, this woman's autonomy is ambivalent and restrained. She is not able to ensure her subjectivity, because she is caught between a melancholy towards a lost object and her hope of an independent agency (Rosengarten, 2009). Rosengarten's argument to support this position is that, on the one hand, this woman is pregnant and single,

which challenges patriarchy's grounds; on the other hand, though, she manifests "a depressive recognition of gender as destiny" (Rosengarten, 2009: 157). First of all, I do not consider this woman's pregnancy a replacement for a lost object, as Rosengarten argues in her Freudian psychoanalytic framework, or a connection to a male object. Consequently, I do not agree with the idea that melancholy is an inevitable aspect of woman's destiny. As I have already pointed out, to view castration as the road to depression, melancholy or a phallic desire, is to reduce the amplitude Freudian and Lacanian castration can assume, to one of its possible readings.

Secondly, I consider this image and this woman's pregnancy, as Macedo suggested, as "the representation of a colonised body offering a palimpsestic revision of Portuguese colonial history powerfully allegorised in the image of the pregnant (raped?) woman's body, itself a metonymy for the pregnant/raped colonised land" (Macedo, 2005: 182). And, furthermore, despite agreeing that this woman's position is prostrate, I would argue that this image still provides room for women's agency, since it serves to expose and materialize what remains outside the traditional historical and artistic renderings of the encounter between the male-white-western subject and the other-colonized body; the violence that it implies and generates.

As I have already explained, I think that Rosengarten's publication has the merit of providing an in-depth analysis of Rego's work in terms of its revisitation of Portugal's social history. However, this visual appropriation of national politics is related to a broader project, the visual critique of phallocentric redenderings of female subjectivity and its reformulation. And this is where my position is in disagreement with Rosengarten's. I will attempt to give a clear account of this disagreement.

Rosengarten argues that Paula Rego's work dated from the 1960's is characterised by the formless, the abject. According to her, these visual modes refuse a phallocentric and phallocratic Symbolic Order; a gesture in line with a feminist project. After that, says Rosengarten, Paula Rego turned to a 'mimetical figuration', which seems to 'ventrilocate' the historical references which she criticises (Rosengarten, 2009: 171). This, in Rosengarten's understanding, pulls Rego away from a feminist project capable of finding other signifiers for the feminine; a project which is exemplified by 'écriture féminine' in literature and deconstruction or the abject in the visual arts (Rosengarten, 2009: 171). Later on, she adds that Rego's work "follows a feminist impulse" by exploring the specificity of women (Rosengarten, 2009: 172), but not as a celebration of

women's power, nor an open transgression of social norms; nor a new femininity or language.

Aesthetically, this interpretation fractures Rego's work in almost non-communicating segments that are either non-figurative, 'formless', and 'abject' in Rosengarten's terms or figurative, 'mimetic'. This analysis does not account for the images that Rego has created more recently, which, although figurative, can also be characterised as formless and abject. I am referring to Rego's images in which she uses grotesque assemblages, which she first creates in papier maché, using textiles, objects and then draws or paints.

It also traps Rego's images, her women, in the gesture of longing for a lost object; when, in fact, Rego's women embody ways of denouncing and giving way to other forms of desire and female subjectivity which are not imprisoned in a phallic castration complex. I claim that social history, ideology and psychoanalysis can be useful tools to analyse Rego's work and her feminist visual project. Indeed, they can help us to better understand the project of undermining scopic regimes, jamming the mechanism of representation, questioning power and resistance and opening a fluid subjectivity, which can account and assemble the Other (Irigaray, 1990).

I will now analyse Ana Gabriela Macedo's work. Macedo has been one of Rego's most active critics in Portugal. In 2010 she published a monograph entitled *Paula Rego e o Poder da Visão: Re-Visão, Reescrita, Intertextualidade* (ed. Cotovia). This volume contains interviews, articles, most of which derived from papers presented at conferences in the period 1999-2009. Macedo explains, in her introduction, that her interviews with Rego are taken as "critical material, and not just meta-critic" (Macedo, 2010: 20). In fact, she takes Rego's own words about her work, its contexts, the connections to other art forms, to popular culture and society, as a source for her research. As I already wrote in my own introduction, I do acknowledge the importance of what Paula Rego, the artist, has to say about her own work, but I will not privilege these words over the materiality of the text and the productivity of the readers.

Macedo's theoretical and methodological framework is informed by a considerable and relevant corpus of feminist theory. This is important because Rego herself has pointed out in interviews (about her abortion series) that the presence and role of women in her work have not been addressed with the necessary critical insight. In her analysis Macedo uses three concepts that I will examine in the next section: "power games", "re-visions" and "the female body".
As for the first term, Macedo argues that Rego unsettles hierarchical structures and reverses the agents and object of domination. Macedo points to Rego's use of

memory in this respect; Rego revisits Portugal's past and undermines the representation of family, which is turned into or exposed as a "perverse institution" (Macedo, 2001).

In March 2001, Macedo published "Through the looking glass: Paula Rego visual's rethoric, an aesthetics of danger"[33]. This article is divided in several parts; the first of them is entitled "Satire and political memory". In this part Macedo pays attention to the power games present in Rego's works and the artist's revisitation of the gloomy and oppressive past of Portugal's dictatorship period. The Portuguese scholar selects some of Rego's compositions from the 1960's in which this reaction against political power and oppression is more visible. Macedo mentions that Rego chose a collage technique for these compositions. By definition, this technique is a gesture of provoking or re-producing violence through the physical act of cutting images in pieces (Macedo, 2001).

As for the later periods, Ana Gabriela Macedo mentions the psychological violence of the representation of the family as a perverse institution, the subversion of the fairy-tales and nursery rhymes, the representation of violence against women and children. According to Macedo, the whole of Paula Rego's work denounces a world of hidden truths and hypocrisy. Her space in art, thus, becomes her 'ideological strategic terrain'. In "Tradition through the looking glass – the space of womanhood", Macedo, accurately explains that these 're-visions' of classical literature, art masterpieces and oral tradition are produced in order to re-insert a woman's vision of them. Macedo mentions that Rego's images of childhood are the central force of her aesthetics. That is why they have been extensively analysed by other critics. There is an overtly unconventional and subversive aspect to them that needs to be regarded and has, in fact, been highlighted by critics such as Victor Willing and Marina Warner. A girl is not just a girl, it is a woman-girl, and, as such, a distorted image of innocence empowered by a threat of menace. Moreover, one also has to follow the trace of the genealogy among these women, in their several subjectivities, inside and on the outskirts of tradition, ages and morphologies.

Macedo then presents us with her central theme - women's role - and defines Rego's relation with tradition as an 'aesthetics of danger'. Here she refers to Rego's disturbing representation of childhood: "….an uncanny blending of innocence with the perverse, affection and abuse, the awesome, the subterranean and the silenced, all disturbingly staged in a self-conscious parody that relativizes all that is 'stable, set and ready-made'" (Macedo, 2001).

[33] Macedo, Ana Gabriela."Through the looking-glass: Paula Rego's visual rhetoric: an 'aesthetic of danger'", *Textual Practice* 15 (1). Brighton. 2001. pp. 67-85.

The second important concept in Macedo's analysis is "re-visions". She focuses on the work Rego produced as the first artist-in-residence at the National Gallery in London. She takes the lead from McEwen in focusing on the ways in which this material appropriates art history itself and its reversal by means of its agents. In fact, the role reversal of painter and model in a painting such as *Joseph's Dream* (1990) cannot be ignored. There is also a reference to the 'blurring of boundaries' between the sacred and the profane. According to Macedo, Rego uses the parody to re-visit and twist tradition. It is her understanding that parody and satire allow the painter to subvert themes and motifs in art history and, at the same time, implode the barriers that enclose women inside the pictorial and societal space:

> "Rego herself claims that her art relates to woman's experience, and that this relationship is a matter of focus and perspective: My pictures are pictures that are done by a woman artist. The stories I tell are the stories that women tell. If art becomes genderless, what is it? No, you've got to have everything at your disposal to be in touch with everything, that includes sex as well... As a woman artist, Rego assumes her own participation in shaping a new politics of representation of gender and gender roles[34]."

Linda Hutcheon defines parody as "a form of imitation, but imitation characterised by ironic inversion, not always at the expense of the parodied text" (Hutcheon, 1998: 87). In other words, Hutcheon argues that parody is a "repetition with critical distance, which marks difference rather than similarity" (Hutcheon, 1998: 88). It can involve the mechanisms of "revising, replaying, inverting, and "trans-contextualizing" previous works of art" (Hutcheon, 1998: 93). I consider, though, that in Rego's work it is not only the themes, the style and the artistic models which are revised, replayed or inverted and trans-contextualized. The work does more than include and add women and change their place in representation. I argue that a process of jamming the representational system takes place, which opens up the possibility of changing and installing a different female subjectivity (Irigaray, 1990). I will develop this argument in the third chapter of this thesis.

Finally, the third central term in Macedo's analysis is "the female body". In the article "Material Girls: Feminism and Body Matters[35]" (2001), she argues that

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34 ibidem

35 http://web.letras.up.pt/ilc/i_info_texts_on_line_Material_Girls.htm

her "aim in this paper is to reflect on the form this very questioning has assumed today, specifically when we concentrate on the poetics of representation of the female body, by simultaneously paying attention to modes of inscription of identity on the female body, and the construction and deconstruction of subjectivity at stake there".

Once again, the work of Elizabeth Grosz is taken as the main theoretical frame. What is at stake is the need to counter an excessive 'discursivization' or 'theorization' of the body, in which its materiality has been somehow relegated to a secondary plane or merely obliterated. The necessity to operate such transformation comes from wanting to deal with the oppression that, traditionally, the body has suffered.

Macedo selects three contemporary artists that have, in one way or another, faced such an intricate issue. The terms used to describe this process is the "remapping of the woman's body in the social". This, according to Macedo, is achieved through a simultaneous process of "constructing and deconstructing preconceived gender categories, models and stereotypes, while challenging notions of woman as an object of representation, as well as woman as viewer of herself represented" (Macedo, 2010). I share the idea that Rego's work wants to "remap the woman's body". Nevertheless, I also want to argue that something other than deconstruction takes place as I will show in chapter three.

First we need to situate, both historically and aesthetically, the decisive impetus of contemporary women artists in challenging the tradition of representation. This goes back to the woman's emancipation movement of the 1970s and the development of a counter-culture which privileged the female body as a subject. It could be argued, though, that the visual tradition had already been inhabited by the female body. However, in this new counter-culture the transgression was formed through the material and the perspective which scrutinizes this material. To rephrase, bodies drop their masks of passive object of seduction. As Grosz puts it, they become:

> "sites of struggle and resistance" (…) Bodies speak, without necessarily talking, because they become coded with and as signs. They speak social codes. They become intertextuated, narrativized; simultaneously, social codes, laws, norms, and ideals become incarnated. If bodies are traversed and infiltrated by knowledges, meanings, and power, they can also, under certain circumstances, become sites of struggle and resistance, actively inscribing themselves on social practices (Grosz, 1995: 35-6).

Later on in the same article, Macedo comes to terms with postmodernism:

> "I believe it is essential to contextualize our observation of these images within the theoretical framework of Postmodernism, so that we can inquire into the ways Feminism has appropriated or subverted postmodern strategies or indeed added a new, more radical and political perspective to the postmodern questioning of art, through its particular usage of the tropes of irony and parody (…)
>
> Essentially, my purpose is to explore the "double wedge" of Postmodernism, or its "paradoxical essence", as Linda Hutcheon writes (Hutcheon, 1988b: 300), based on the intrinsic tension that grows from its simultaneous relation of complicity with and criticism of History. And, furthermore, to consider postmodernism's oblique relation with feminism and vice-versa, i.e., the nature and the quality of the feminist intervention in art, and how that has been affecting the redefinition of the concept of the postmodern itself. Thus, understanding feminism both as a political instance (an action or intervention) and a critique of representation, could one say, quoting Susan Suleiman, that "if there existed a genuinely feminist postmodernist practice, then postmodernism could no longer be seen as the expression of a fragmented, exhausted culture steeped in nostalgia for a lost centre"(…) (Macedo, 2010).

For obvious reasons I will focus on Macedo's account of Rego's work in relation to this frame of feminist theories and postmodernism. She argues that Rego's work is recognised for its notoriously "gendered quality", i.e., for bearing the inscription of a female commentary upon the male tradition. Macedo also points out that "her art comes from "being a woman", and having a "woman's experience", but is also informed by the study of Art History and the Great Masters tradition, which she transgressively appropriates (or "poaches" as Macedo says). Furthermore, I would argue that Rego's work is deeply imbued in the postmodern usage of irony and re-vision." To sum up, what is being argued is that Rego's relation with postmodernism comes from her display of irony and re-vision and her feminist background is related to her work as the result of a woman's experience. At this point I would also like to refer again to Tina Chanter's vision of "Postmodern subjectivity" and her account of what she

considered to be an absence of the body from feminist theory during the 1970's and 80's:

> "A number of diverse factors converge on present bodies – resistant as they undoubtedly are to analyses – as urgent topics of enquiry to feminist theorists. Among these factors is the truculent absence of bodies from the feminist rhetoric of the gendered 1970s and 1980s, which disposed feminists to debate at length the acquiescence of female bodies to masculine paradigms, effectively obliterating not only the specificity of bodies, but almost incidentally rendering invisible bodies themselves (Chanter, 1998:266)".

At this point in my argument it is necessary to clarify again the theoretical grounds of my own research and my position within the vast field of feminist theory. Despite also using feminist theory as a methodological tool, my position is somewhat different. I would argue that Paula Rego's work cannot only be analysed from a feminist theory perspective, but that it also functions as a visual corpus of feminist theory. In other words, it does not illustrate concepts or theories but maps out ways of reformulating female subjectivity by means of the visual.

Ana Gabriela Macedo's work is, indeed, a valuable instrument, particularly her analysis of the "the disruptive invasion of the personal into the political". Also, her examination of the sources used by Rego and the latter's satirical commentary on these sources through art is of great relevance. Her most recent focus on the "Portuguese Love Bonds in Paula Rego's Work. The cases of Alberto de Lacerda e Menez" foregrounds a connection which used to be almost invisible. It maps Rego's "affinities, both aesthetic and emotional, with the Portuguese artists, painters and writers, and largely with the Portuguese culture and History which is so pervasively, even obsessively, inscribed in her art"[36]. In terms of methodology, Macedo uses a great deal of information collected from Paula Rego. Indeed, through the use of interviews with the painter, Macedo combines biographical data with Rego's own interpretation. The mere juxtaposition of autobiographical or historical data to a work does not, by itself, explain its complexities and specificities. However, rejecting any kind of articulation between author, context and work would leave out a significant amount of information. Paula Rego's relation to her work is not irrelevant by any means. In interviews

[36] Paper presented at the Colloquium "Mapping the Feminine" in Utrecht, 21 May 2008.

she has provided, relevant insights into her own work (her collaboration with some critics of her work is considerable). At the same time, she has publicly acknowledged that she is not and does not want to be a solipsistic voice that somehow provides the solution to reading her work. In fact, her work is able to surprise even its maker (McEwen, 2008). Given the above, I will situate this research within a framework that considers both the corporeality and sexuality of the subject as leaving their marks on the text. In its turn, the text and its processes, also leave their traces on the body of the writer (Grosz, 1995).

In summary, research on Paula Rego's work has made significant progress in recent years. The contributions of John McEwen, Maria Manuel Lisboa and Ana Gabriela Macedo, among others, have provided a wider scope on the artist's production since the sixties until now. In fact, they have provided an overview of the artist's evolution in terms of techniques and topics. They have also drawn attention to the importance of Portugal's past in her work, as well as the centrality of women.

Some research has focused on issues of female representation, power and resistance in Paula Rego's work. Especially the issue of resistance has been interpreted as a rejection of the available models of representation within a patriarchal system, the subversion of the stereotypes that range from virgin, mother, and muse to whore, monster and witch, that have stood for signifiers in the male-dominated discourse of national politics and art history. Such stereotypes have played a "positive-perscriptive" and a "negative-proscriptive role[37]" (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, 1987:338). Instead I will refer to sexual difference as a strategy of empowerment by subjects who, albeit in the margins of a phallogocentric system, are related to it by opposing it. This implies an active and critical awareness and the desire to undermine it.

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37 "The nature of female imagery in art has been an important issue for feminist art history. As art historians began to think of art as "a purposeful, active, and vital shaper of culture," in Larry Silver's words, images of women in art were seen to embody different and more complex meanings (…) The great variety of female stereotypes, ranging from virgin, mother, and muse to whore, monster, and witch, have been shown to be signifiers for a male-dominated culture, signifying what is desirable (virgins and mothers) and what needs to be repressed and civilized (harlots, monsters, and witches). Such images are thus seen as playing a positive-prescriptive and a negative-proscriptive role. Virginia Woolf has aptly described the relation between female image and cultural sign as woman's "delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (*A Room of One's Own*)" (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, 1987: 338).

Moreover, I will attempt to analyse how difference is forged within the category Woman, not only by taking a distance from "positive-perscriptive" and "negative-proscriptive models", but also through the affirmative process of a reformulation of female subjectivity based in multiplicity, otherness and fluidity. This research will, thus, be articulated within the main discussions taking place in the second generation of feminist art criticism which sees woman as an unfixed category and constantly in process. As pointed out by Tickner[38] (1984),

> "the most important contribution of the feminism under consideration here is the recognition between representation and sexed subjectivity. The aim is to unfix the feminine instead of revealing its determinants based in male institutions and structures (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews, 1987:347).

[38] Tickner, "Sexuality and/in Representation: Five British Artists," *Difference. On Representation and Sexuality*, exh.cat., New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York: 1984, 23. Accessed via Gouma-Peterson and Mathews (1987).

Chapter 2

Visual displacement of subjects: the productive look

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I have established an overview of the critical reception of Paula Rego's work. In this overview I identified how these studies examine a number of central themes in her paintings. Although they are valid and important contributions to the understanding of this artist's work, I would like to take a detour from these studies. Or, to rephrase, I am suggesting a different critical retrospective of her work: a prospective retrospective. What does this term mean? I am suggesting that we revisit Rego's work through a number of specific modes of female subjectivity's visual representation. Such modes allow us to establish a critique of female subjectivity through the visual. In this chapter, I will focus on the visual project of jamming the mechanisms of representation, as Irigaray puts it, specifically its scopic regime. My goal is to inquire how Paula Rego's images disclose the power relations between image and spectator and female and male subjects.

Some of Paula Rego's paintings create connections with a specific body of female theory, which addresses the implications of representation in terms of power structures within the visual, specifically the place assigned to both women and men. Humanism installed a regime of vision which implied a subject surveying "the external, objectified world from an assumed point of view. The gender neutralization of such a 'subject' rests on the assumption that what is represented following the regime's instructions does not correspond to an individual's particular vision, but rather coincides with what is seen from a specific point"[39]. Following the rules of perspective, an image is constructed in such a way that it is supposed to stand against the real and replace it, producing the effect of

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[39] "Today we see the art of the past as nobody saw it before. We actually perceive it in a different way. This difference can be illustrated in terms of what was though of as perspective. The convention of perspective, which is unique to European art and which was first established in the early Renaissance, centers everything on the eye of the beholder. It is like a beam from a lighthouse - only instead of light traveling outwards, appearances travel in. The conventions called those appearances reality. Perspective makes the single eye the centre of the visible world. Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity. The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God.

According to the convention of perspective there is no visual reciprocity. There is no need for God to situate himself in relation to others: he is himself the situation. The inherent contradiction in perspective was that it structured all images of reality to address a single spectator who, unlike God, could only be in one place at a time" (Berger, 1982:16).

a window open onto the world (Berdini, 1998). In this regime, women are repeatedly placed as objects visible to male eyes. A set of standards regarding their features came to be consolidated and turned, even if silently, into a set of rules.

I will examine some of these models, the problems they pose and indicate which model seems to me more suitable to an analysis of Rego's work on this specific matter. I will, subsequently, examine Rego's images in terms of the visual dialectic between female and male subjects, singling out the mechanisms she uses to reformulate art history's traditional model. I will, thus, select images, created by Paula Rego, which visually embody a resistance to this tradition. I would like to claim that Rego uses the visual as a mechanism to expose and subvert sexual asymmetries.

As pointed out by Berger (1982), traditionally women, in the visual arts, have been assigned the position of merely appearing, in opposition to men's acting out:

> "One might simplify this by saying: *men act* and *women appear*. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object -and most particularly an object of vision: a sight.
> In one category of European oil painting women were the principal, ever-recurring subject. That category is the nude[40]. This tradition was decisive for the institutionalization of "women as sights" (Berger: 1982: 47).

In fact, women have been turned into an object of the male gaze both in religious traditions, which have often depicted them as objects of a divine vision,

[40] The distinction between the nude and the naked body is relevant. According to Linda Nead (1992), Kenneth Clark's *The Nude*, first published in 1956, was determinant in fixing this opposition: "For Clark, the category of the nude always holds within it a theory of representation. The nude is precisely the body in representation, the body produced by culture. But this formulation is achieved by positing, at the same time, the notion of a naked body that is somehow outside of representation and an unmediated residuum of anatomy and physiology. The dualistic construction of the naked and the nude is therefore problematic not only because of the evaluative judgments that it promotes, but also because it sets in place the possibility of an unmediated body" (Nead, 1992: 15).

and in secular traditions. Their appearance and gestures were made to fit male's expectations and desires.

Aiming to reevaluate the naked/nude dichotomy, Berger elevates the naked. In his understanding, "To be naked is to be without disguise" (Berger, 1982: 54). In contrast, 'the nude' is caught in the conventions of art history:

> "They are no longer nudes – they break the norms of the art form; they are paintings of loved women, more or less naked. Among the hundreds of thousands of nudes which make up the tradition there are perhaps a hundred of these exceptions. In each case the painter's personal vision of the particular woman he is painting is so strong that it makes no allowance for the spectator … The spectator can witness their relationship – but he can do no more; he is forced to recognize himself as the outsider he is. He cannot deceive himself into believing that she is naked for him. He cannot turn her into a nude" (Berger, 1982: 57-58)

Thus, according to Berger, the public turns the naked into the nude. Private relations secure that the naked remains so; that the spectator does not establish a voyeuristic relationship with it.

Despite Berger's acknowledgement of the power relationship that can be established between the image of a female nude and the spectator, I would argue that there is a problematic side to his analysis. In fact, his reading assumes that the naked female body is deprived of any cultural factors, when the mere preference for a female body is already culturally determined. As Nead points out, the female body is already inside representation:

> "… even at the most basic levels the body is always produced through representation. Within social, cultural and psychic formations, the body is rendered dense with meaning and significance, and the claim that the body can ever be outside of representation is itself inscribed with symbolic value. There can be no naked 'other' to the nude, for the body is always already in representation. And since there is no recourse to a semiotically innocent and unmediated body, we must be content to investigate the diverse ways in which women's bodies are represented and to promote new bodily images and identities" (Nead, 1992: 16).

Clothes, somehow, hinder or obstruct the control that is offered by female nudity. Although it is not directly connected to scopic regimes, the element of clothing does seem to me of relevance with regard to Rego's work, because it is related to the way in which the female subject presents herself to the outside. In other words, I argue that the painter already assumes a position regarding sexual power within the visual through clothing. In her article "Fashioning Subversion", Sandra Miller points to the role clothes have in Rego's work; how the painter keeps a considerable stock, which she has gathered from her own and her family's collection, from second-hand shops, fleamarkets and theatrical suppliers.

2.1 *The Interrogator's Garden* (2000)
Pastel on paper, mounted on aluminium, 120 x 110 cm

2.2 *Olga* (2003)
Pastel on paper, mounted on aluminium, 160 x 120 cm

Miller[41] looks at the clothing of characters in two particular paintings and examines the ways in which they disturb a clear-cut sexual identity: *The Interrogator's Garden* (2000) (figure 2.1) and *Olga* (2003) (figure 2.2). In both cases, two aspects are of particular significance. First of all, clothes obstruct the

41 "In neither instance is there any attempt at hiding the true sexual identity of the characters; thus the clothes are transmuted into pantomime costumes. The flaxen wig worn by 'Olga', whose features are recognizably those of Anthony Rudolf, contributes to her racial 'alienness'. Seated on a stool and staring out at the viewer with a benign smile, Olga is holding a tiny guitar, but what is the girl doing? She is seen from the back wearing a check skirt – as modelled by the little mannequin on the cover – and a red pullover, kneeling with her head buried between Olga's accommodating thighs" (Miller, 2006).

control that the spectator might take by assuming a voyeuristic look. Secondly, in both cases, clothes are clearly in dissonance with the subject who wears them; in fact, they are not used as perfect disguises. In what ways do they destabilize the relationship between what is seen and who sees it?

Olga could well be the traditional image of a female subject: she has long blond hair, wears a dress and plays a musical instrument. Reading this description, without the image, one could easily assume that *Olga* repeats art history's stereotypes, displaying a woman to be looked at by, preferably, a man. Perhaps the only feature missing would be the depiction of Olga as a naked woman. However, the painting does nothing of the kind: she is not naked; she is not the image of female beauty; actually, she is not even a 'she'. In fact, *Olga* is the image of a man (Tony Rudolf, Rego's friend, who posed as a model), dressed as a woman, wearing a black dress and a wig. In my view, these accessories do not attempt to hide the fact that this is a man. On the contrary, they are used to provoke some resistance; some disturbance in this character's looked-at-ness, which becomes less transparent and immediate. As Mick Brown[42] put it, Rego

> "is not interested in conventional ideas of beauty, or in conventional ideas of art. Art, she says, is 'disgusting and to be avoided', by which I think she means art that aims to please in a safe and seemly manner. What she is really interested in, she says, is 'the beautiful grotesque'" (Brown, 2009).

Clothes and the wig are accessories which confront the spectator with the fact that the subject to be viewed is not a fragile, passive subject, displaying all the requirements to be consumed as the accomplished example of female beauty. Man is taken to occupy the place of the object, the viewed. Masculinity is, thus, challenged in two ways. The male spectator is deceived, that is, there is a huge discrepancy between what was expected and what he will face. At the same time, occupying now the place of the object and displaying exaggerated and fake items associated with femininity, he is deprived of his power.

The only element that is correct in the previous description is the fact that Olga plays a guitar. She is not alone. A young girl, whose face we cannot see, has her head "buried between the figure's parted legs" (Brown, 2009). Rego's own explanation of this posture is as strong as the image itself:

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42 Interview with Paula Rego on 4 November 2009, published in *The Telegraph*, available here: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/6469383/Paula-Rego-interview.html

> "The model for Olga, Rego explains, is a friend of hers, Tony. Olga is a character from her childhood, one of the many German refugees who turned up in Portugal after the war, and who were hired as nannies or teachers by wealthy families, and whose pasts were never to be discussed. A clue to Olga's background is, perhaps, to be found in the plume of black smoke, disappearing off the right edge of the picture. 'That's the Auschwitz train,' Rego says. 'It was during those days.'
>
> And the child?
>
> 'The child is a well-brought-up little girl.'
>
> And why is her head between Olga's legs?
>
> 'She's giving him a – what do you call it? – a sucking job.'
>
> Isn't she a little young to be doing that?
>
> Rego laughs. 'Well, you've got to learn young!'
>
> So you have a picture of a man posing as a woman with a young girl performing a sexual act while a train goes to Auschwitz…
>
> 'It's how I remember it.' Rego shrugs. 'But I don't remember sucking jobs'" (Brown, 2009).

I will now move to another case in which clothes are used to destabilize the traditional role assigned to women within the visual, challenging the relation between viewed and viewer: *the Interrogator's Garden*. In this case, it is a woman disguised as a man. First, let me present this work. In 2000, the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, based in London, invited Paula Rego to donate one of her works for their cause. Although Rego offered this institution another painting, the idea for *The Interrogator's Garden* came to her in the aftermath of this invitation. In fact, it was at this time that Rego came across the story of an imprisoned young woman who managed to escape from torture and death, by hiding herself in a plastic bag and being dumped as garbage (McEwen, 2008).

In terms of the depiction of female characters and the link with the tradition of representing women as nudes, some important remarks need to be

made here. As I already discussed, representing nude female subjects (or naked subjects, since I would argue that the same structure is at stake in both cases) is intimately connected with the relation established with the spectator. In fact, it implies that the spectator is male and will take control over the image in front of him. *The Interrogator's Garden* challenges this tradition in two different ways. First of all, although the painting does present a female figure in the background that is partly naked, the painting creates a completely different relation with the spectator. This woman is undressed and is getting 'dressed', but not in clothing. Instead, she is stepping inside a plastic bag; a bag used for garbage. She is closer to turning herself into an object of repulsion than attraction. Nevertheless, this image may generate a response from the spectator that is different from repulsion; given the situation she is in and her disguise into a piece of garbage, the image might generate an attitude of commiseration.

When we enter the image as it were, we are confronted with another character, one with a rather defiant posture:

> "Lila, sporting a false moustache, plays the role of the guard. It is a reminder that of contemporary artists Paula is most obviously comparable with the play-acting American Cindy Sherman (…) Lila is pictured as a gardener with heavy-duty rubber gloves, a fork and pile of garden-waste bags, and she also acts the girl making her escape via the bag. The boots and belt were Paula's but she bought everything else. It is a disquietingly ambiguous image. The interrogator's eyes and eyebrows seem emphasized by make-up. Is he a man in drag or is she a male impersonator? Everything in the picture sustains this unease" (McEwen, 2008: 80).

The interrogator is a symbol of authority and often one of violence. His function is not to obtain the truth from those he interrogates, but to obtain their confession. This means that what he will accept as the truth can be a forged and forced truth. In a patriarchal system, the interrogator is a token of power. By making him a woman, Rego undermines the idea or assumption of the image of female subjects being produced for male consumption. In fact, a male spectator, in front of this image, may feel deceived and ridiculed, while this image may give a female spectator the sense of 'getting even'.

In *Four Fundamental Concepts*, Lacan[43] argues that, concerning the subject-as-spectacle, he/she has the possibility of manipulating the screen "for purposes of intimidation, camouflage, and travesty". He also maintains that it is through the "mediation" of the screen, or "mask," that the "masculine and the feminine meet in the most acute, most intense way" (Silverman, 1992: 107). *Olga* and *The Interrogator's Garden* depict subjects who wear clothes of the opposite sex. Despite seemingly wanting to "appear what they are not" (Harari, 2004: 126), I would argue that they do not want to hide the wearer, the mask or the disguise. In fact, by using "resources that allow the visive affirmation that one has or is different from what one shows" (Harari, 2004: 127), Rego aims to displace the spectator from what he/she sees; in order to destabilize his/her power.

I will return now to the analysis of the type of relationship a spectator can establish vis-à-vis an image. In order to do so, I will present a few theoretical models which propose ways of seeing images and, at the same time, take a stance regarding the power of female and male subjects within the visual. My aim is to find a suitable model to analyze Rego's images, a model which can serve as a tool to examine the specificity of the visual in establishing and unsettling power asymmetries.

Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting & Beholder in the Age of Diderot* reflects on scopic regimes in visual art, specifically painting. The structure of his analysis comprises a confrontation between two central concepts, theatricality and absorption in French painting and criticism of the 1750s. Diderot's art critique constitutes the main source of Fried's analysis, more specifically his *Salons*, *critique d'art* (1759–1781) and his *Discours sur la poesie dramatique* (1758).

Absorption is related to a rejection of Rococo as exquisite, sensuous, intimately decorative painting. What started as the promotion of the high morality and timeless aesthetic principles of the canonical paintings of the sixteenth and

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[43] "On the other hand, Caillois brings out the three headings that are in effect the major dimensions in which the mimetic activity is deployed—travesty, camouflage, intimidation (…) In the case of travesty, a certain sexual finality is intended. Nature shows us that this sexual aim is produced by all kinds of effects that are essentially disguise, masquerade. A level is constituted here quite distinct from the sexual aim itself; which is found to play an essential role in it, and which must not be distinguished too hastily as being that of deception. The function of the lure, in this instance, is something else, something before which we should suspend judgment before we have properly measured its effects" (Lacan, 1998: 99-100).

seventeenth centuries, such as the works of Caravaggio, Velázquez (albeit some of his paintings) and Vermeer. These compositions present figures who give their full attention to the actions that are being performed; taking a considerable amount of time. Absorptive themes and effects comprise, therefore, the notions of solitude and silence, absolute concentration, reflection and obliviousness. An important aspect of absorption is the relation between the painter, the work and the audience. For Diderot, the painter's main task is to connect with the beholder's soul through his/her eyes. In order to accomplish this effect, a painting has to attract, detain and enthrall the beholder. Chardin is presented as an example of the process of secularization of the absorptive tradition, a process that began in the Low Countries[44]. In Fried's words,

> "a new, unmoralized vision of distraction becomes a vehicle for absorption; or perhaps one should say that vision that it distills, from the most ordinary states and activities, an unofficial morality according to which absorption emerges as good in and of itself, without regard to its occasion" (Fried, 1980: 51).

Diderot, in his *Entretiens sur le Fils naturel* and *Discours de la poésie dramatique,* established a parallel between theater and painting. He insisted on the necessity of both author and actor to forget the beholder, in order for absorption to be achieved. According to Diderot, in terms of the action or plot in a dramatic text, a "coup de théâtre" is in opposition to "a tableau". The former deals with a sudden change in the situation and the latter with a natural and realistic arrangement of characters on stage. The first one occurs within the action and the second one outside the action. As long as the characters remain unaware of its existence and its effect on the audience, absorption will be reached. The aim is, thus, to neutralize the theatricality of the visual. A particular physical gesture and facial expression that he would call 'grimace', a sincere suffering, is preferred to any form of exaggeration and caricature.

The theatrical – taken as an artificial construction elaborated to impress the beholder - is in direct antagonism to absorption. According to Diderot, theatricality opposes drama (Bleeker, 2008). In fact, while the first results from the awareness of being looked at, and, therefore, has the connotation of

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[44] Svetlana Alpers' essay titled "Describe or Narrate. A Problem in Realistic Representation", *New Literary History*, 8 (1976-77), argues for the existence of a realistic, representational mode in seventeenth-century Dutch painting which combines an "attention to imitation or description with a suspension of narrative action". Fried identifies this suspension of narrative action with the representation of absorption.

falseness, the second term is considered to be a form that avoids theatricality. In other words,

> "drama for Diderot is a means of de-theatricalizing beholding and to guarantee the absoluteness of the picture or representation on stage relative to the seer. Drama does so by constituting internal unity among the elements seen with regard to one single point of view" (Bleeker, 2008:34).

According to this framework, establishing a relationship between what is seen and the beholder necessarily leads to theatricality. As long, though, as this link is obscured, absorption is generated. Fried gives us an example of paintings in which the main figure or subject is looked at by another figure. In these compositions, the painter provides the beholder with a single and defined point of view, one that coincides with the figure in the painting. Drama will, then, convince the beholder that what he/she is observing is an image created according to the laws of nature and not by human invention.

Although the concept of 'drama' has been further developed in the field of theatre studies, the relation between images, particularly art images, drama and theatricality can also be equated with perspective. In this sense, there is a parallel between drama and perspective. As is the case in drama, perspective is a mechanism that provides a position for the beholder granting him/her an objective view of how things really are. In fact, although perspective 'theatricalizes' the field of vision, in the sense that it creates a 'scenographic stage' in which the visible is staged for a beholder, this staging aims to achieve the effect of directness and immediacy. And these are precisely attributes that oppose theatricality. According to Lehman[45],

> "dramatic theatre presents its audiences with a perspective on fictional world on stage (…) This invisible logic is *teleological*. The dramatic frame provides unity and coherence in view of purpose and reason and shows the world according to invisible beliefs about world order, history and reality" (Bleeker, 2008: 41).

[45] Accessed via Bleeker (2008)

The beholder will always have a point of view available, from which he/she can place his/her gaze. At stake is absorption's quest for depicting truth, independent of a particular point of view.

If the Renaissance conception of a *finestra aperta* on the world historically was set up to provide representations of 'how reality really is', its modern use has evolved to a means of deconstructing visual images. Perspective can be used as a model for a re-theatricalization of the field of vision, allowing for an understanding of what remains unseen within the visible, a blind spot that has to remain blind in order to produce the illusion of visual plenitude (Bleeker, 2008). Howard Fox argues that

> "a broader notion of theatricality seems to be required here. Theatricality may be considered that propensity in the visual arts for a work to reveal itself within the mind of the beholder as something other than what it is known empirically to be. This is precisely antithetical to the Modern ideal of the wholly manifest, self-sufficient object; and theatricality may be the single most pervasive property of post-Modern art"[46].

Fried (1980) argued that characters who gaze directly at the beholder would theatricalize representation, and therefore, misrepresent painting.

Can this model be used to analyze Paula Rego's work, in particular its connection between depicted figures and beholder? Do these images, in fact, establish an interaction definable in terms of absorption or theatricality? Do they advocate one instead of the other? In which compositions do Rego's characters gaze at the beholder directly and which effects are, subsequently, produced? And is there a return to a state of absorption in those paintings where the characters do not gaze at the beholder directly? How do these two modes interact in her work? I will not attempt to answer these questions at this point in my argument. At a later stage I will return to them when I analyze a set of images which might be divided along the antagonistic set 'absorption-theatricality' to see if, in fact, they echo these models.

Another theoretical model that focuses on the relationship between image and spectator comes from film studies. With a feminist bite to it, film studies has provided a relevant critique of visual culture, film specifically, when it comes to the relationship that film installs between a subject that regards and a subject

[46] Acessed via http://www.labforculture.org/en/users/site-users/site-members/illya-szilak/reconstructing-mayakovsky/after-the-fall-theatricality-in-art

that is regarded and is, in this way, transformed into an object of and within representation. Authors such as Laura Mulvey, with her famous article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", endorsed the view that the visual carries with it a power bias. One cannot dismiss the fact that, for several centuries and throughout distinctive media, the visual has largely contributed to the establishment of a gender marked asymmetry. This can be summarized in two distinct and antagonistic poles: on the one side, there is 'the female', who occupies a position of considerable passivity, the object of vision, and, on the other side, we have 'the male' who, embodying the subject, carries with him a desire for control.

Where the previous model of absorption worked, not so much as a critical tool, but as a set of recommended rules leaving unexplored the power relationship between image and beholder, the voyeurism model focuses precisely on this aspect. Nevertheless, and this is its downfall, it also tends to oversimplify it:

> "Feminist inquiries into the power relations that obtain in the domain of visual culture yielded a model, namely voyeurism, in which visual communication is represented as a counterpart to the linguistic idealistic model. While the linguistic model tends to obscure the operations of power in communication, the visual model tends to reduce looking to power only, to an absolute subject-object relation, wherein the viewer/receiver has total power and the object of the look does not even participate in the communication. This model is based on non-communication.
> Between these two models, the difference is irreducible, and both pose serious drawbacks to any complex, historical, and politically aware analysis of images" (Bal, 1996: 262).

2.2. Scopic displacements: the productive look

According to Silverman (1996), once the spectator has aligned his/her look with the apparatus of vision, a primary identification occurs through which the spectator looks outside the spectacle, outside time and space, from an epistemologically privileged position. Laura Mulvey's analysis of the voyeuristic model is based on this concept of primary identification. She claims that Hollywood cinema, has given primacy to certain subjects in this process of identification (Mulvey, 1975). In other words, she argues that women are caught

up in the spectacle as equivalent terms (that is, women are the spectacle), and the camera and eye are male gendered.

I will dismiss the model of a dualistic approach that opposes theatricality to absorption, or an approach which opposes object (female) and subject (male), without taking into account the specificity and the operating modes of the visual. Because this model does not notice the possibilities of transformation or the challenges the image itself can pose to this asymmetry. I argue that certain images open up to a self-reflexive mode, in which a different look is possible, and also necessary, in order to rescue female subjectivity from scopic domination, providing her with agency; and, at the same time, building up a renewed ethic for the subject-who-looks. My argument is that, in fact, the spectator can be challenged to adopt other positions apart from voyeurism. I am not suggesting that, all of sudden, art must erase the materiality, the sexual roots of female subjects and spectators in order to challenge voyeurism. Instead, I would like to argue that certain images, such as the ones here presented from Rego's repertoire, are able to point out and invite other ways of occupying the visual as spectators. They work as visual critical renderings or possibilities for renewing the spectator's look.

I will adopt Silverman's framework, as presented in her work *The Threshold of the Visible World*. It is important to clarify that, although the gaze and the look seem inter-relatable terms, they are, in fact, distinct. According to Lacan, the gaze is

> "the presence of others as such" (…) it is by no means coterminous with any individual viewer, or group of viewers (Silverman, 1992: 130)[47].

[47] "*Four Fundamental Concepts* stresses not only the otherness of the gaze, but its distinctness from what Lacan calls the "eye," or what I have been calling the "look." Although the gaze might be said to be "the presence of others as such," it is by no means coterminous with any individual viewer, or group of viewers. It issues "from all sides," whereas the eye "[sees] only from one point." The gaze, moreover, is unapprehensible," i.e. impossible to seize or get hold of. The relationship between eye and gaze is thus analogous in certain ways to that which links penis and phallus; the former can stand in for the latter, but can never approximate it. Lacan makes this point with particular force when he situates the gaze outside the voyeuristic transaction, a transaction within which the eye would seem most to aspire to a transcendental status, and which has consequently provided the basis, within feminist film theory, for an equation of the male voyeur with the gaze. *Four Fundamental Concepts* suggests, on the contrary, that it is at precisely that moment when the eye is placed to the keyhole that it is likeliest to find itself subordinated to the gaze. At this moment, observes Lacan, ''a gaze surprises [the subject] in

Mieke Bal has summarized Silverman's framework, namely her distinction between 'look', 'gaze' and 'screen', in the following terms:

> "Very briefly, the gaze is the ungraspable mechanism or structure, almost a power, "through which we are socially ratified or negated as spectacle" [Threshold 133]. The gaze has this confining effect because "it would seem to 'look' back at us from precisely the site of those others whom we attempt to subordinate to our visual scrutiny-to always be where we are not" [133]. It is comparable to a source of light, but it does not have a shape itself; it is formless. The gaze is independent of the individual look; it is situated outside the subject in its subject-constituting effect; hence, it is trans-historical. There will always be such a visual outer world. The look is limited, embodied (as in the model of the stereoscope), situated within the visual field or "spectacle," and thus both psychic and visual. In its psychic quality the look is marked by lack and hence propelled by desire. It is vulnerable to the lures of the imaginary. The screen, finally, stands between the gaze and the look, shaping the diffuse source of light that is the gaze into forms. The screen makes the stereotypical, prefabricated images and ideal images available for the look; it makes visible what the culture admits, and blocks out the rest. It is the place where historical and social differences are preinterpreted and articulated" (Bal, 1997: 65).

Albeit influenced by Lacan's work, namely his *Four Fundamental Concepts* (Lacan, 1971), Silverman considers that by placing "so much more emphasis on the given-to-be-seen than on the look's creative capacities" (Silverman, 175) Lacan fails, in the first place, to explain how the look turns the subject into a spectacle and, I would add, how female subjects become privileged subjects-as-spectacle. Silverman reworks the screen, departing from Lacan's ideas, by assigning it an ideological status

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the function of voyeur, disturbs him, overwhelms him, and reduces him to shame". The subject who thus "feels himself surprised," Lacan adds, is the subject who is "sustaining himself in a function of desire". What this crucial passage from *Four Fundamental Concepts* suggests is that if the gaze always exceeds the look, the look might also be said to exceed the gaze, to carry a libidinal supplement which subordinates it, in turn, to a scopic subordination. The gaze, in other words, remains outside desire, the look stubbornly within" (Silverman, 1992: 129-130).

> "as that culturally generated image or repertoire of images through which subjects are not only constituted, but differentiated in relation to class, race, sexuality, age, and nationality" (Silverman, 1996: 135).

This model suggests that we focus on the viewer or spectator's look, who can be challenged by the object. As stated in Berdini's article, "Women under the gaze: A Renaissance genealogy",

> "We may recall the paradigm of the window open onto the world and the status of the subject of seeing as one that surveys the outside world following the rules of perspective. We may call that agency of viewing the subject as look. As we acknowledge the subject as look we also recognize that symmetrically opposed to the look, and also complementary, is the status of the subject as spectacle located in the field of vision and determined by its visibility - that is, the subject as being looked at. In the first condition, generally associated with the triangle of vision and familiar from perspectival constructions (...) a subject is shown looking at an object from a marked position. The second condition not surprisingly reverses the terms of construction of the first, and locates the subject where before was the object, so that the subject of the look becomes now the object of the gaze" (Berdini, 1998).

I will now continue to use the terminology 'subject-as-look' and 'spectator' instead of 'beholder' or 'viewer'[48]. Such concepts help to clearly distinguish which roles or positions are usually assigned both to female and male subjects. This terminology also highlights the role that the visible and the visual occupy in this process. In fact, the objectification of a subject occurs within or through the

[48] I do not share Crary's position who rejects the term "spectator" and choses "observer" with the argument that "unlike *spectare*, the Latin root for "spectator", the root for "observe" does not literally mean "to look at." Spectator also carries specific connotations, especially in the context of nineteenth-century culture, that I prefer to avoid – namely, of one who is a passive onlooker at a spectacle, as at an art gallery or theater" (Crary, 1990: 5). By using the term "spectator", I am moving from the idea of an ideal subject, male, white, western, who reduces the subjects within an image, female, to objects.

visible and the visual in this case. It is not only that this subject has become somehow related to the Other and possessed, through representation. Instead, she has become assigned to a permanent visibility in relation to an exterior subject. What kind of effects do images produce in the subject-as-look? How can they undermine the expected control a subject-as-look is to have on the image? The productive look is a process which operates not only at a conscious, but also at an unconscious level and translates into a radical transformation in the subject-as-look's response to an image[49] (Silverman, 1996).

In a substantial corpus of visual art, women are turned into subjects-as-spectacle, that is, as subjects to be apprehended in a normative vision, by white, male, disembodied subjects, who are to occupy the position of a geometrical point, to control the image[50]. Some female artists add to the aesthetic dimension of their work a sexually engaged process of undermining precisely this reduction of women to subjects-as-spectacle. Even if visual art is not, per se, politics; an image fixates a certain representation of power:

> "Visual art, however, is not politics. At first glance, images of any sort aimed at display in museums and galleries may seem far removed from issues of power—until, that is, one remembers how images exercise their own kind of power. It is not the power of the ballot box to determine political leaders, or the power of a gun to determine which country wins a war. But it is a substantial sort of power in its own right that can convince minds and sway emotions, the kind of power that gives rise to sayings like "A picture is worth a thousand words." And it can have its own effects on politics and history" (Strong, 2002: 310).

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49 "Productive looking necessarily requires a constant conscious reworking of the terms under which we unconsciously look at the objects that people our visual landscape. It necessitates the struggle, first, to recognize our involuntary acts of incorporation or repudiation, and our implicit affirmation of the dominant elements of the screen, and, then, to see again, differently. However, productive looking necessarily entails, as well, the opening up of the unconscious to otherness" (Silverman, 1996: 184).

50 "(...) when we occupy that point, everything seems to radiate from our look, any painting organized in relation to it encourages us to enact that form of *méconnaissance* which is, for Lacan, the visual equivalent of the *cogito*- to equate our look with the gaze and to impute to it a mastering relation to the world" (Silverman, 1996: 177).

Adding to the process of undermining the representation of women as subjects-as-spectacle, some female artists, such as Paula Rego, put forward a project which questions the position of the subject-as-look; problematizing it and opening the way for a subject who becomes embodied, challenged.

I will analyze how, in her work, the look is challenged to give way to a renewed and productive look. I argue that an image can, formally, provide other ways of looking, by displacing it (the look) from the geometral point, by undermining the visual interaction between the image and the spectator. The path I will follow has two directions. The first one leads me to images which, as has been suggested, displace the spectator from a geometral point. The second moment or direction refers to the way images provoke a displacement in the spectator, not from a certain position, but from him/herself through memory (Silverman, 1996).

When looking at Rego's work, one can conclude that the figuration of the interaction between female subject and spectator is not homogenous. Judging from Frier's framework, this would mean that Paula Rego uses both modes of interaction between image and viewer or figure and beholder, absorption and theatricality; modes which supposedly oppose each other. Taking into account the groups of Rego's works which, apparently, depict absorption, one must ask if they, in fact, suggest a separation between female subject and subject-as-look. If absorptive themes imply the presence of figures disposed of any company and solely concentrated on their own presence, could this mean that images which, apparently, fit this condition, necessarily depict absorption? Contrary to Frier's assumptions, I contend that, in Rego's case, the visual attributes that would constitute absorption, of not acknowledging the "beholder's" presence, are in fact still related (and provoke an effect/affect in) to the spectator. I will select those works of Paula Rego in which the female subject represented does not seem to acknowledge the spectator's presence. My aim is to expose the frailties of a clear-cut opposition between absorption and theatricality and register alternative interactions. In doing so, I will necessarily address the participation of the subject-as-look as well as the role the image has in undermining phallologocentric scopic regimes.

2.3. 'No sleeping beauty' or resistance to the subject-as-spectacle

The first set that I have chosen to analyze comprises compositions in which a female figure is sleeping or unconscious. *Sleeper* (1994) (figure 2.3) belongs to the *Dog Woman Series* and, according to John McEwen (1997), works

2.3. *Sleeper* (1994)
Pastel on canvas, 120 x 160 cm

as a transitional moment, marking the end of the *Dog Woman Series* and the beginning of a new series. According to McEwen, Rego chooses to display women on their own, assuming a certain position in the frame and within society or the familial unit. In fact, McEwen argues that the woman in *Sleeper* can be seen as a dog woman sleeping, but also as a devoted wife sleeping on top of her husband's jacket. Despite the fact that she is alone and asleep - an absorptive state - I would argue that she still confronts the spectator. Two elements are crucial in this confrontation. Firstly, this woman is, physically or formally, close enough to the spectator to cause discomfort. Her body is on the verge of touching the limits of the image, its front; her knees are pointing to whomever will come near her.

Secondly, although this woman is alone, the scene is not only about her; in other words, it is not only about a woman who has fallen asleep. By introducing the element of the male jacket, Rego has introduced in the scene another dynamic, the relationship between this woman and a man, who is absent. Is this woman someone who is so submissive as to resemble a dog's submission to its owner? Or does she choose to discard his authority by putting this jacket on the ground? If one is to confront a male spectator with this image, the introduction of the jacket, certainly disturbs the visual appropriation of this female character. The spectator is close enough (maybe even too close) to the image, but, paradoxically, is not given a linear or fixed understating of it. By taking a supposedly devotion to a male figure to its extreme, a devotion that is metonymically represented through the jacket, Rego plays with the ambiguity of exacerbating an ideal of devotion and submission and dismisses it. Ambiguity is, in my view, a way to undermine an, apparently, unproblematic depiction of absorption.

Another image which displays female figures sleeping is precisely *Sleeping* (1986) (figure 2.4) from the *Girl and Dog* series. Once again, this image presents a disturbing approximation to the subject-as-look. In fact, even though the construction of its narrative creates several receding layers, oddly enough it manages to keep a claustrophobic proximity to the spectator. All the figures are

2.4. *Sleeping* (1986)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

2.5. *Looking Back* (1987)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

women. Two of the young girls are sleeping and the other two, behind them, have their back turned at us. In other words, they seem to be unaware of the spectator's presence or even seem to dismiss it. However, these figures still manage to create a tense connection with the spectator. This is materialized in a far from innocent or trivial object, a garden fork. It is so close that the spectator can almost reach it, but so can the young girl next to it. Rego's little girls, as we know from other images of this series, mix innocence with danger; they are capable of carrying out violence. In *Looking Back* (1987) (figure 2.5), for instance:

> "One of the women lounges on a rather uncomfortable bed with a look of contentment on her face, as if lost in pleasant reverie. She is covered by a fur blanket. 'The women have killed the dog' explains Paula. But this vestige of a dead animal might be more sinister – a symbol of one of their male victims, a lover perhaps, who has paid the price, either with his life or by loosing all self-respect. The other woman dances on one leg, her dress riding up to expose her stocking'd thigh, while she appears to be clutching her groin. She has a sly look. The little girl who plays at her feet is 'looking back' at us with a knowing smile on her face – subversion personified" (McEwen, 1997: 145-146).

In *Two Girls and a Dog* (1987), once again an object that is supposedly forgotten poses some threat in the scene:

"(…) the fragility of the sick dog is equated with a pitcher threatened by a hammer" (McEwen, 1997: 146).

2.6. *Lush* (2004)
Pastel on canvas, 120 x 160 cm

Lush (2004) (figure 2.6.) is another example of a figure in an 'absorptive' state. This woman is in a room, sleeping in a strange or uncommon position at least. The word "lush" can also refer to a state of drunkenness. She is seating against a couch, supporting her hand with a pillow, the other hand is on her waist, both fists closed. Underneath one of her legs is what seems to be a dark piece of clothing. She is wearing a slip and does not have any shoes on. In which space of the house does she find herself? And is she alone? Once again, we are made to feel uncomfortable. We are entering a private sphere. She is positioned in front of us with her head pending in our direction. She could wake up or regain her senses at any minute. The position of her body also hints in that direction, since it still maintains a certain movement. Another question concerns her state. Is she really sleeping or unconscious? And, if so, why? The title *Lush* points in the direction of excess. Perhaps *Lush* is the result of an excess carried out by this woman. Once again, a woman is exposed to the spectator. Although apparently unconscious and offering no resistance to being looked at, this woman is not entirely compliant. I would argue that the way she closes her fist and positions it in her pelvis is some kind of reaction and an obstruction to a reduction to subject-as-spectacle. As a matter of fact, it challenges the expected view of a woman

restating, in her body, femininity's discourse. Her body is not constrained or limited[51]. It is not fragile or weak[52].

2.4. No turning back

I will now analyze images of women who refuse to be looked at. In Rego's own words, 'People love figures from the back. If they can't see their faces they love them.' (McEwen, 2008:46). Would this be sufficient to argue that these images depict figures in absorptive states? These figures do not embrace any action. They are just there, in front of us, but refuse visibility. This refusal produces a theatrical acting out. But in what way does it affect the spectator's look? I will analyze a few works where this happens and attempt to connect this formal feature to the content of the images.

2.7 *Looking out* (1997)
Pastel on paper on aluminium,
180 x 130 cm

The first work that I have selected is *Looking out* (1997) (figure 2.7). This belongs to the *Amaro series* in which Rego reworks a novel by the nineteenth- century Portuguese writer Eça de Queiroz. The theme of both book and visual series is the moral corruption in society, namely in a religiously dominated society. However, Rego dedicates more attention to the female figure, Amélia, a young girl who falls in love with father Amaro and is manipulated, leading to her own social and physical banishment from society. This composition presents us with a pictorial space that has been contracted and pulled to the front.

51 "There are significant gender differences in gesture, posture, movement, and general bodily comportment: women are far more restricted than men in their movement and in their spatiality. In her classic paper on the subject, Iris Young observes that a space seems to surround women in imagination that they are hesitant to move beyond: this manifests itself both in a reluctance to reach, stretch, and extend the body to meet resistances of matter in motion- as in sport or in the performance of physical tasks- and in typically constricted posture and general style of movement. Woman's space is not a field in which her bodily intentionality can be freely realized but an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined" (Bartky, 1988: 66).

52 "An aesthetic of femininity, for example, that mandates fragility and a lack of muscular strength produces female bodies that can offer little resistance to physical abuse (…) a woman may by no means develop more muscular strength than her partner (...)" (Bartky, 1988: 73).

Although there is an overture in the scene, materialized by the small window on the wall, it does not offer a way out for the spectator. The female figure, simultaneously, refuses to look at us and points our gaze in a certain direction. In fact, we can look out of that small window, but what are we going to see? The canvas is emptied; this body has evaded its space (even if only mentally).

Amélia knows her fate. She is pregnant, but we cannot see it. This pregnancy is an illicit one, since it results from her forbidden relationship with Father Amaro. She is urged by her illicit lover to move into this room until she gives birth, precisely to hide this fact from the condemnation of others. We find ourselves in the position of the subject-as-look, whom she avoids and denies a full acknowledgement of her condition. We are retrieved from visibility and, therefore, left with an, apparently, relaxed posture of someone who does not even notice our presence and, consequently, has nothing to hide from us. But we know that this is not the case. In fact, although disavowing our presence, Amélia's placement in the scene is both determined by an interior and an exterior look. Once we have positioned ourselves in front of this scene, we are immediately subtracted from full visibility. Moreover, if someone would pass this room, looking inside through the window, her pregnancy would not be unveiled either. She is looking out and refraining other people from looking in. Although alone and apparently absorbed in her thoughts, Amelia is aware of the spectators who look at her. By simultaneously turning her back at us, she is able to subvert this look, regaining power and, thus, refusing to be a subject-as-spectacle. Her placement on the scene and its construction obstruct her full rendering as a visible object. We are forced to pursue some kind of mobility and still we will not be able to capture Amelia, who has literally turned her back to us.

I will examine now another work in which we are faced with a female character on her back, *Target* (1995) (figure 2.8). The first question that needs to be answered is generated by the title: who is the target? And whose target is it? Given the woman's position, the direction of her body, and the angle of the painting, one could assume that someone is standing on the right, avoiding being framed. This painting comes in a series with several female figures standing alone in the frame, the male character, implicit in the action (or inaction) is gone from the scene but still left a trace. Is this woman the target of the subject-as-look? Is she the target of a look which will turn her into a subject-as-spectacle? She is the target of someone else's regard; someone who can stand either in front of her or behind her. But we are also the target of her disavowal of vision. According to John McEwen (1997), this is an example of women depicted in humiliating positions, taking off their clothes. This reading is in agreement with what he

suggests in his analysis of *Sleeper*. It focuses on the female figure and the accessories visible on the scene. I suggest, though, that we take the look, namely the look of the depicted figure and its connection with the spectator as elements of analysis.

2.8 *Target* (1995)
Pastel on canvas, 160 x 120 cm

She is undressing for someone, but we see a small surface of her body, undressed. At the same time, we are not granted the possibility to look at this woman's face. In fact, no possible position that we may occupy will allow a full vision of this subject. I would argue that this image apparently displays a female subject who is dominated through vision, by another subject who, most likely, is male. It seems to be an image of voyeurism; a female subject being displayed for a male subject. However, when taking a closer look, we see that this is not the case. Once again the painter places a woman in an awkward position, zooming in on her gesture of undressing for someone, but obstructing a complete view of the scene and her body.

Another work presenting us with a female figure that avoids visual contact with us is *Jane Eyre* (2001-2002) (figure 2.9). This lithograph is part of a series that takes Charlotte Brönte's novel as a source of inspiration. Rego became

2.9. *Jane Eyre* (2001-2)
Lithograph, 86 x 45.5 cm

especially interested in Jane's character, representing it as strong and audacious. In this particular work, Jane Eyre's proportions almost occupy the entire visible surface. She is standing with her back to us. The entire figure was painted in an immense dark tone, with the exception of her (lighter) neck. This image is one of the nine lithographies entitled *The Guardians*[53]. According to Rosenthal, despite seeming subjugated and submissive, this image displays Brontë's fire and is a figure of determination; of Jane, who resists, denies and, finally, saves Rochester (Rosenthal, 1998). The spectator is detained in the expectation that this head will turn around, uncovering her face and expression. Once again, although not directing her look to the spectator, the position of Jane is directly related to the configuration of a subject who resists a complete subjugation, not only, and sticking to the plot, Rochester's but also to those who stand behind her. It is as if she chose to subtract the spectator from the immensity and density of her interior world.

The images previously analyzed display ways of undermining the spectator's look, displacing it and challenging its complete domination. In fact, by refusing to be looked at, these women refuse to be turned into objects subsumed through one exterior look.

I will now analyze a number of Rego's paintings which represent female subjects that look back at the spectator directly. If a female figure looks back at us, spectators, will we be caught in our own look? Will our power be put into jeopardy? Will she become a subject-as-spectacle?

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53 "In the Port houses, when we have a panel of tiles, we normally have, among them, some tiles with a larger figure, standing. Usually, they are maids, or women, a sort of guardians of the house. They are larger than the others. They are cut-off figures, made in tiles, which stand out in the middle of a painted wall and they always have a particular presence" (my own translation, Rego in Rosenthal, 2003: 51)

2.5. 'Are you looking at me?'

I have already explained that in the tradition of female nudes, the female subject was depicted to be seen and she was aware of it. Even in Rembrandt's *Seated Female Nude* (c.1632), although removed from the Renaissance's ideal style[54], the female figure gazes directly at the spectator. Despite being naked, she does not show signs of shame or vulnerability (Lang, 2007). Compositions, such as this one, do not present any challenge to the spectator concerning the look itself. I will pay attention to selected compositions that seem to challenge the spectator. The *Untitled Series* is, perhaps, the most striking. This series has been sufficiently analyzed, which is hardly surprising since it provoked a strong reaction among the public, especially in Portugal. It brought to the fore a very specific situation which was known but had not been legally addressed in Portugal, namely illegal abortion. Maria Manuel Lisboa's analysis of this series is one of the most extensive (2003). She starts her chapter "An interesting condition: the abortion pastels" with an all-important contextualization:

> "… fourteen sketches over a period of approximately six months, between July 1998 and February 1999 (…) The motivation behind these particular works was a political event in Portugal, namely the referendum on abortion which took place on 28 June 1998, in the aftermath of legislation seeking to liberalize the existing abortion law. The effect of the referendum (…) was to bring about the suspension of the law[55] for the purpose of its subsequent reconsideration by Parliament" (Lisboa, 2003: 139).

According to Miguel Oliveira da Silva,

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54 Rembrandt's image is far removed from the classical images of Renaissance. It presents an older woman, with a bloated belly and a more textured skin. She gazes directly at the spectator and smiles.

55 "Induced abortion up to ten completed weeks has been legal in Portugal since April 2007. In 1984 and 1997, two laws decriminalised abortion in three different situations: (1) For maternal indications (up to 12 completed weeks); (2) For fetal indications (up to 16 completed weeks since 1984, and up to 24 completed weeks since 1997); (3) In case of rape, renamed since 1997 'crime against sexual freedom' (up to 12 completed weeks between 1984 and 1997, up to 16 completed weeks since then)" (da Silva, 2009).

> "Ethical discussions, occasionally quite emotional, involving the media, the Catholic Church, law specialists, journalists and medical practitioners were frequent since the early 1980s. Many arguments went back and forth but, ultimately, a change occurred in the public opinion between the two national referendums. The latter, which took place in June 1998 and February 2007, had divergent outcomes (Table 1). Neither reached the quorum of 50% of electors participating in the vote needed for a legally binding result. As, at the last referendum, 59.2% of the voters accepted legal abortion up to ten completed weeks, Parliament amended the abortion law accordingly in April 2007. The new law came fully into effect in July 2007" (Oliveira da Silva, 2009: 245).

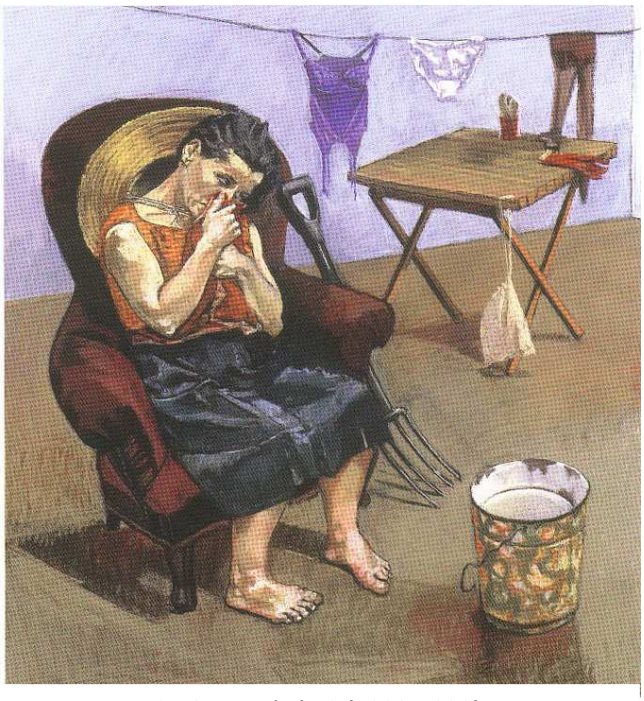
Rego's series was a reaction to the outcome of the first referendum, which asked voters whether or not they agreed with the decriminalization of abortion performed up to 10 weeks, based on women's right to choose and not on medical and social justifications. The result was an abstention rate of 68 percent. With a mere difference of one percent, the 'no' sayers won[56].

Lisboa's analysis addresses art history's tradition of representing women, as well as the characteristics of Portugal as a Catholic country with a recent history of fascism. At a certain point, Lisboa focuses on the look of the women portrayed in the *Untitled* series, and the relative lack of homogeneity regarding the relation between female figure and spectator. In fact, this series presents both images of female subjects who avoid the spectator and images of women who gaze directly at the spectator:

> "The effect, however, may copy the averted gaze of other images in establishing the emotional rejection of the spectator. In these cases, the direct gaze emanating from the picture plane establishes a mood of active control rather than passive self-exposure to external contemplation. In either case, it does not collude in any form of audience complicity. Instead, this declaration on the part of the protagonist of what must be seen, at the very least, as awareness of a voyeuristic eye focused on her can be extended to an act of defiance" (Lisboa, 2003: 149).

[56] More information available here: http://www.cne.pt/index.cfm?sec=0306000000&EleicaoID=49&Eleicao2ID=0

I propose to develop Lisboa's arguments by analyzing the patterns that can be detected in the interaction with the spectator. If it is accurate to say that these images challenge and dismiss a voyeuristic eye, what can one say about the effect, if any, on the subject-as-look? What kind of look do they install?



2.10. *Untitled 10* (1998-1999)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

2.11. *Untitled 3* (1998)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

First of all, in all images we encounter enclosed spaces (the only image which, perhaps, takes place outside is *Untitled 10* (figure 2.10), which depicts a seated woman. She has washed her clothes and puts them out to dry, covering her nose to avoid the smell. This feeling of being trapped inside them, is the excessive approximation of the image to the frame and, consequently, to the spectator. Other than that, in some cases even these zoomed in images are cut off and a segment is amplified.

In *Untitled nº3* (1998) (figure 2.11), the figure does not look at us. She is alone in a room, half dressed, with a small piece of white fabric covering her lower waist. On the ground is a piece of clothing which has blood on it. She shows some signs of distress. Perhaps she was alone throughout the process of abortion; perhaps there is someone there, whom we cannot see. In any case, this is an intimate space, a painfully intimate space. Given the scene the spectator is confronted with, voyeurism is transformed into

something that is too uncomfortable. This is not an event, a scene, the spectator will want to stay in for very long. *Untitled 4* shows us a young girl on a couch, extremely close to us, the spectators. There is little room between the borders of this figure's body and the limits of the frame. She chooses, nevertheless, to simply dismiss whoever moves in front of her.

2.12 *Untitled 1* (1998)
Pastelon paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

In *Untitled nº1* (1998) (figure 2.12), on the other hand, the female figure does look at us directly. The whole image is an overt challenge to and confrontation with the spectator. Our look is aligned with the center of the image, in which a woman is seating on a bed, grabbing her legs with her hands, which are spread widely in front of us. A part of her dress covers her vagina, but this does not diminish the strong physical confrontation with the spectator. Any remaining doubts are removed by the expression on this woman's face. To intensify all this, a bucket stained with blood can be seen underneath the bed. It is as if this woman is saying to us that any attempt to hide abortion will at some point blow up in our face.

An even clearer example of how the *Untitled* series varies in terms of these women's connection with the spectator is the triptych *Untitled* (1998) (figure 2.13). Each of these three figures is shown in different positions and wearing different clothes. The image on the left is lying down, with her face almost entirely turned to the ground. However, she is still able to look at us

obliquely. Her face is hardened, as her mouth shows. This impression is enhanced by the closed fist and the compressed legs. The spectator is faced with this figure in a room, with the circumstances experienced by her (even though they are not directly visible); but also, and most importantly, with his/her own presence. At once any possible hint of voyeurism is questioned: is the spectator entitled to be here? Who is being challenged? Who is, in fact, the spectacle, this woman or the spectator?

2.13 *Triptych* (left) (1998)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

Triptych (middle) (1998)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

Triptych (right) (1998)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 110 x 100 cm

In the image in the middle, the woman is lying down, but her body still presents some desire to move. Her legs are still in a position to give birth or carry on an abortion. Her arms and hands hold her legs. Her head is lifted as if she has just become of aware of someone else's presence. For this reason, her look carries a more explicitly defiant tone. We are left without even knowing which position to take. Should we direct our look to her legs? Or should we face her look? And, after that, the same question arises: are we entitled to be here; to remain here?

Following this crescendo, the image on the right presents us with a younger girl in school uniform. She is seated on a bucket, expelling her fetus. We do not see any of this, but the bucket and its red borders suggest this reading. She has her arms crossed over and grabs the bucket. We are not given any chance to glimpse at what is inside this bucket. As is the case with the image in the middle, she does not look straight at us, but here she is even more defiant. Her limbs embody antipathy and rejection. There is a transgression here that we are witnessing, but our look itself is another transgression. In one 'coup', the subject-as-spectacle and subject-as-look are challenged. We do not know any longer who is who; perhaps we are the ones who have been turned into a spectacle; being submitted to a scrutiny carried out by these women.

An example of how a female subject facing the spectator can bring more complexity than the one announced by Fried is Jenny Saville's *Rubens's Flap* (1999). The unconventional English artist portrays a foreshortened image where a female figure is displayed in large bodily masses. This figure unequivocally violates the classical standards of beauty and assumes defiance towards the spectator (Lang, 2007).

2.14 *Vanitas* (triptych, left) (2006)
Pastel on paper on board, 110 x 130 cm

Vanitas (triptych, middle) (2006)
Pastel on paper on board, 130 x 120 cm

Vanitas (triptych, right) (2006)
Pastel on paper on board, 110 x 130 cm

Going back to Rego's depiction of the encounter between a female figure within an image and the spectator, I will at this point analyze her *Vanitas* triptych (figure 2.14), which was commissioned by the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in 2005 to celebrate its Golden Jubilee. It started with a short story by Almeida Faria, a Portuguese writer, entitled *Vanitas, 51, Avenue d'Iéna*. In this short story the main character encounters the ghost of the art collector Calouste Gulbenkian. Although having acquired several paintings, he does not have any *Vanitas* in his collection. This genre is part of the larger group of *Still Leven* paintings (Natureza Morta in Portuguese). The main elements of the Vanitas sub genre are the scull, the flowers and the clock, symbols of death and time, as can be seen in Philippe de Champaigne's *Vanité*, dating from the seventeenth century. These elements are displayed to show the spectator that he/she too is perishable. Some also contain elements that refer back to humanist activities, such as books and scientific instruments. Frequently, these two set of elements are put in opposition in order to outline the fact that, regardless of all the pleasures and knowledge that human beings can acquire, death will overcome them in the end[57]. We can

[57] "There are few art traditions that can match the complex symbolism presented in these still-lives, for the Vanitas is, simply stated, a collection of disguised references and emblems, representing human transience and worldly vanities, piled on a table top. The paintings include symbols of nearly every earthly vice and vanity, though the particular items chosen depend upon the individual preferences of the artist" (Sonnema, 1983).

also find a considerable number of *Vanitas*, dating from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the form of diptychs and triptychs.

Looking now at the presence of woman within this genre, a note is necessary. This genre is different from the allegory of *Vanitas*, which is often represented by a woman with a mirror (Hans Memling's *Vanity*, 1485, and Jan-Miense Molenaer's *Woman at her Toilette*, 1633, are good examples). Within the artistic genre of the *Vanitas*, a considerable number portray a contemplative woman, holding a scull and disregarding all the other pictorial objects, such as a book, a globe and even a dog. Everyting is in vain when faced with death.

The presence of women in the Vanitas genre is, thus, not uncommon. How does Rego's *Vanitas* relate to this tradition ? What sort of effect does it create in the spectator ? What is women's role in it ? In the first panel of Rego's *Vanitas* triptych, a woman in a yellow dress leans on a table. Surrounding her are, among other objects, a vase containing roses with thorns, a skeleton; elements traditionally associated, as pointed out before, with the *Vanitas* genre. She seems to be sleeping with her hands interlocked. She could, however, be merely closing her eyes while thinking or even praying.

On the middle panel, is the same woman, but now awake. She is still seated, but crossing her arms, in front of us, and directing her gaze to her left; waiting or warning the spectator not to step any closer. All the previous accessories are gone; there is only this imposing figure in the room. The first image was, apparently, a peaceful one, the only possible menace of disruption coming from the presented dysphoric elements. Here, the woman alone embodies such menace. A curtain (or the table cloth) was placed in the center of the room, denying a possible extension of the scenario; standing simultaneously as an obstacle to the spectator and a threat of what it might conceal.

Finally, on the right panel, the image is again filled with objects. The table, what is on top of it, and the woman who stands next to it have approached the pictorial surface. Visible are the proper elements of *Vanitas* namely, a skull, a rose and a clock; but also other less conventional ones such as a guitar, a mask, a snake, puppets. This woman is now occupying the left position of the canvas, which was previously only occupied by her look. Her facial features are harsher; her menace is stronger than ever. On top of this, she is holding a scythe.

This image, although introducing a genre with a history, is significantly different from traditional representations. Jan Jolis', a Dutch artist, and his *A Vanitas: A Young Woman Holding a Skull*, dating from circa 1610, is a good example of the role traditionally occupied by women in this genre. Holding a skull, a female subject displays a serene expression, not acknowledging the presence of

the spectator: her body and eyes are directed to her left. She looks at the superior right corner. To the spectator this woman is the representation of frailty and temporality. In fact, in the tradition of *Vanitas* women are yet another element, of world's transience. Rego's *Vanitas*, although keeping some of this genre's traditional elements, makes woman a focal point, no longer as an accessory, but an element, 'the' element, which the spectator will have to confront. First of all, let me highlight this woman's physiognomy. She does not possess delicate features; she is not young. Instead, she is a mature woman, with a harsh expression. She seems to react strongly against the spectator. If from left to right, the triptych's progression displays a physical approximation to the spectator, so does the menace this woman carries.

We are, thus, faced with a gradual process of building up a particular acknowledgement of the spectator's presence. Even the physicality of the painting leads to this approximation. In fact, in this scenario there are no windows or vanishing points. If traditionally, a realistic depiction of a scene or figures, allied with physical proximity, serves to increase the intimacy between image and spectator, here it generates a feeling of discomfort due to precisely such proximity.

2.6. The role of focalizers

I will now address another way of obtaining a productive look, a look which no longer translates into the spectator's control and power over the image, namely focalization. Focalization deals with the question of what the look of the depicted figure does to the subject-as-look. It deals with the movement of the look. If the gaze imposes limitations on the figure, the focalizer has to negotiate its position within such limits. What is at stake here is an analysis of the articulation between these limitations of the gaze to the figure and the figure's impact on the subject-as-look. Such framework refuses both an irreducible dependence of the subject to the gaze and an independent subject who determines semiosis (Bal, 2002).

2.15 *The Family* (1988)
Acrylic on canvas backed paper, 213 x 213 cm

The focalizer is the subject of the point of view. He/she is an agent, within the visual work, who provides the real spectator a place from where to look; standing between the poles of sender-receiver, in the communicational model of language, and subject and object, in the voyeuristic model (Bal, 1996)[58]. In Rego's picture *The Family* (1988) (figure 2.15), for instance, as Suzie Mackenzie has noticed, one element addresses the spectator, providing perhaps a place from where to look and, at the same time, making him/her question his/her own look:

"(…) in her great picture, "The Family", 1988, is the apparently helpless man being tormented by the maid and his wife, or are they merely helping him undress? Has his home become his prison? And why is the maid looking out at us with such a grin? Why, if the man is being hurt,

[58] "In keeping with my view of narrative and in order to break away from an unexamined positivist conception of sight, I will use the term focalizer, which refers to the narrative agent who is the subject of the "point of view". The focalizer is an agent *in* the work who represents various modes of attention, including the visual, and who thereby offers positions of viewing to the real viewer. As such, this agent is a possible mediator between the two poles of the linguistic communication model, and between the two opposed models of language and voyeurism. Moreover, attention to this agent enables a relation to the image that recalls the mirror while displacing it.

What is mirrored, and hence offered for identification, is not the represented body but the (bodily) present agent of vision. The engagement of that agent with the represented body makes it harder to unproblematically sustain misogynistic representations, but also, misogynistic assessment of images that may be just so "ugly". Reading a work by analyzing the focalization that marks its representation is a double mediation. First of all, such a reading mediates between sender and receiver by pausing at the sites of available viewing positions and giving the real viewer the freedom to choose, hence, to act. But, second, such a reading mediates between discourse and image, because the narrativization of the viewing process that it entails introduces the mobility, the instability, and the sequential temporality of the process of reading. Reading the focalizer involves undermining the asymmetrical gaze, and blocking the attractions of voyeurism which could otherwise be facilitated by exposing." (Bal, 1996: 265)

is the little girl, observing, standing with her hands clasped as if in prayer? And, of course, since we, the viewer, cannot escape our own subjective view - perhaps the maid is looking out at us because she can read what is on our minds" (Mackenzie, 2002[59]).

Two elements will be given special attention, since, in my view, they operate in a significant manner in Rego's destabilization of the spectator's look. These elements are the mirror and memory.

2.7. Mirrors

The presence of mirrors in a canvas can serve to destabilize the spectator's position and his/her perception of the image. In fact, when a mirror is placed in the background of an image facing the spectator, logically the reflection should be occupied by him/her. Either, then, the reflection would be emptied out in order to allow the spectator to 'step in' or it would be filled with a figure who serves as the spectator's pictorial double.

Which position to occupy? In front of the mirror, the spectator is urged to be confronted with the fact that what he/she sees is not an independent reality or depiction of reality, but his/her version of what is presented. The spectator's position is, thus, brought to the fore. By receding into the background, the spectator's subjectivity can be destabilized, for it is merged with a character in the picture.

2.16 *Convulsion* (2000)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium , 180 x 150 cm

In *Convulsion* (2000) (figure 2.16), the reflection does not parallel exactly what is presented to us in this scene. The mirror reflects only segments of the visible, the back of the chair, leaving out what is depicted as the main scene, an older woman lying on the floor. She is suffering from what seems to be a convulsion. The other woman is seated at an imposing high chair; so imposing that it is

59 Mackenzie, Suzie. "Don't flinch, don't hide" in http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2002/nov/30/art.artsfeatures

too big for her. She does not want to meddle with what is taking place. In fact, her face denotes some disdain and disgust.

The mirror further complicates this scene. Here, as in Velazquez famous painting Las Meninas[60], the mirror restores visibility of what is outside (Foucault, 2001). The reflection is, thus, questioned. By placing a character in the mirror's reflection, Rego brings ambiguity to who is, indeed, the spectator in this image. Are we the spectators? Is it this woman? Are we to be conflated with this woman? She is holding a grotesque dol. Can she be another figuration for the daughter?

The mirror, thus, displaces the attribution of reality to either the reflected image or the image in front of us. Is the woman holding the doll an imaginary presence or is the woman on the floor the one that does not have a real existence? Rego opens up the possibilities of interpretation by saying that this doll can be "the monster from the fit" (McEwen, 2008: 84). It could offer us a way of visualizing what does not happen in the front scene, the daughter taking care of the fit, but how she sees it, grotesque and reducing someone to complete loss of control and will.

I would argue that this image fractures and multiplies the role and position of the spectator. In fact, it displays three female figures who can occupy this position, functioning as spectators of each other. The woman who is seated on a chair, as previously mentioned, looks at the older woman on the ground with some arrogance and disdain. These two women, in my view, embody the roles of subject-as-look and subject-as-spectacle.

Another focalizer, meanwhile, enters the scene discretely. In the left corner, a woman in a black dress pulls the curtain to see what is happening. She has a haughty look. By doing so, she turns the woman on the chair into an object of her look, thus subtracting her power. The spectator can, thus, also assume the position offered by this character; a relatively safe position, or, at least, less complex than the one in front of the image. But assuming that position, the spectator would then be able to, not only look at the scene, in its dual and ambiguous depiction of 'reality', but also be confronted, this time with an exterior look, to the dangers of pictorial interferences in his/her own subjectivity and autonomy.

In 1999, Rego created a triptych based on William Hogarth's satirical series "Marriages à la Mode" (figure 2.17). Hogarth's compositions are dominated

[60] According to Bernardo Pinto de Almeida, in *Las Meninas*, the spectator distances him/herself from what he/she sees; he/she is aware that what is seen is a representation; he/she can see how that representation is constructed and made to be seen (Almeida, 1996).

by male characters, well established in society, who are conducting a marriage arrangement. Earl Squander is negotiating the union between his son and the daughter of a rich, but mean, merchant. This young man, Viscount Squanderfield, shows signs of syphilis. The betrothal ends in disgrace, with the murder of the son and the suicide of the daughter[61]. I will analyze this series further in the next chapter.

2.17 *After 'Marriage a la Mode' by Hogarth*, *The Betrothal: Lessons*, *The Shipwreck* (1999)
Pastel on paper on aluminium, 1650 x 5000 mm

Rego's triptych is entitled *The Betrothal Lessons*. Two of the compositions depict a mirror. I will analyze how this feature serves to undermine what takes place in the image itself and the relation between spectator and image. The first panel deals with the "betrothal". The men (in Hogarth) have been replaced by women and are now the one's negotiating the contract. The center group is composed by two women and their respective children, a relatively young girl and a young man (who is older than the girl). She is taking no interest in what they are discussing. The young man is also looking somewhere else, but is leaning very closely to his mother. In fact, he seems to be hiding, or taking protection under her arms. When we follow both the young man and, specially, the girl's look, we can see that they point to the outside of the image; where the spectator could be placed. The identity of whom they are looking at is unveiled by an element contained in the scene, a mirror. In this mirror, we see a man seating on a red bench. He is looking at everything that is going on, without taking part in it. Given his age, he could be the father of the girl. In fact, this man and the girl seem to be exchanging looks, which just enhances the disturbance of his presence. His position and his bodily posture reaffirm his presence as a voyeur. If the spectator is to stand in front of the image, but then to the left side, he/she occupies precisely the position occupied by this man, whom we do not see. We only see his reflection. What can this mean? Rego acknowledges that one of the

61 For an extended analysis of each part of Hogarth's 'Marriage-à-la-Mode' see Egerton, Judy. *Hogarth's Marriage A-la-Mode*. London: National Gallery Publications, 1997.

possible positions the spectator can assume, when facing other subjects, is voyeurism; by merging the spectator with this male character.

On the right side, there is a violent scene of a man standing and observing a girl getting undressed. Given his posture, one can assume that he is ordering her to do so. What we do not know is whether this is another mirror on the wall or if it is an aperture leading to another room. In any case, this scene could be said to replace Hogarth's depiction of the construction of the Earl Squander's house and pose a threat as to what the future holds for this union.

Hence, the spectator can assume different positions, for the main scene is placed in the center of the image, leaning to the right. It denotes a possible entrance into the scene for the spectator. The look of one of the women, the mother's girl, suggests this direction to us. Another access is on the left side, precisely where the male figure is standing. Again, this would mean that the spectator would be identified with the character reflected in the mirror. There is a component of voyeurism, of a display of power over others, when directing a look to a scene. However, Rego does not limit the spectator's presence to this asymmetrical relation. Instead she allows for a certain mobility and possibility of choice.

The middle panel shows us *Lessons after 'Marriage A-la-Mode' by Hogarth*. A young school girl is seated next to her mother, while the last one is having her hair done. In front of the girl there is a mirror, she leans over and looks at it. She sees her mother through this mirror. In fact, the mother also looks at her own reflection. The mother looks up and the girl looks down. The former manifests self-assurance, while the latter manifests resignation. In the mirror's reflection, however, we can only see the girl; the field of the image is fragmented in the mirror. Once again, the events in the scene and the mirror's reflection do not coincide completely. What could this duality mean? Not everything is what it seems. The spectator is the only one who can see this lack of unity. He/she can, therefore, question, once again, the reality of the scene depicted and how it is projected in the mirror. He/she can also choose the position from where to look at, whether from the left inferior corner or from the mirror.

The previous paragraphs were an endeavor to examine the problems inherent to Frier's oppositional model of absorption and theatricality, along with the establishment of the former as the norm. Absorption validates natural and ideal images; the desired outcome is a representation of reality. The drawback of this formulation is the lack of an account of how these images are turned into ideal images; how sexual difference comes in; how a considerable part of art traditions presents a structure where women are placed as subjects-as-spectacle

and men as subjects-as-look; how this structure carries with it a power asymmetry. If, however, one is to dismiss the challenges the image can present to the spectator, by focusing exclusively on the power he/she can have over it, a similar process of reduction of the scopic regime to one of its elements takes place:

> "What the figure's self-willed orientation stands for is the construction of a masculine viewer whose visual potency is extremely problematic. While the ideal communication of a transparent message -female beauty -is disturbed by the woman's counteraction which specifies the status and possession of that beauty, the opposite model, voyeurism and subordination of the passive female object it entails, has been similarly disturbed. Thus the image dismisses both aesthetic/erotic appropriation and feminist protest as serving the same colonizing unification of viewing.
> The painting is an exposé about questioning the mastery of display: about manipulating and blocking, demonstrating and disturbing, both visual communication and the distribution of power between the genders" (Bal, 1996: 268).

If a representation of a female figure absorbed in her thoughts or gestures depicts a sense of naturalism and, consequently, an approximation to reality, what can an image which defies this praxis install? If a female figure who does not challenge the spectator and her own visibility replicates a procedure through which she is relegated to the position of the visible object, what occurs when she fractures this same procedure? I argue that in the corpus previously presented, Rego formulates ways to undermine scopic regimes which repeat this power asymmetry. How? By displaying female characters who are sleeping or unconscious; who turn their back at the spectators; who challenge the presence of the latter. By doing so, they reject being looked at. Focalization is also used by the artist as a mechanism which creates other possibilities for the spectator in terms of his/her placement in relation to the image. In fact, the focalizer can be a means to suggest other positions besides a fixed, central place, a geometrical point which correlates the spectator with a male, rational, disembodied subject.

2.8. Memory

I will now pay attention to an element that has great relevance to what the spectator can make of an image, namely memory. I will firstly examine the influence a character's memory has on what is given to be seen to the spectator. Secondly, I will address the role of the spectator's memory when confronted with an image.

2.18. *Possession* I (2004). Pastel on board, 150 × 100 cm

Possession IV (2004). Pastel on board, 150 × 100 cm

Possession VII (2004). Pastel on board, 150 × 100 cm

Memory can act as a special case of focalization originated from a character, an internal one. This means that, as an act of vision from the past that takes place in the present, a narrative act, loose elements are put together in order to form a coherent story that can be remembered and told. However, there can be a discrepancy between the story the person remembers and the story the person tells. This can occur in traumatic events, when the person can only remember fragments of what has taken place. The fragmentation of such an event can be reflected at the textual level, through the display of seemingly unarticulated images, working, thus, both at an occurrence and remembrance moment. Consequently, the spectator will not be given a full acknowledgment of what takes place within the visible (Bal, 1997). The *Possession series* (figure 2.1.18.), dating from 2004, presents us with seven panels in which the sole character is a female figure on a couch. There is no action, but the stillness of a female subject, whose body is contracted. There is no object that can help us formulate a circumstance for this inaction. In fact, this series, compared to others, is deprived of pictorial and scenic elements. We could, hence, gather that

one does not have access to the memories of this woman because, in reality, she does not bring them to the fore, not even fragmentarily.

In an article entitled "An impossible love: subjection and embodiment in Paula Rego's *Possession*", Ruth Rosengarten has provided a detailed analysis of this series. She argues that this figure embodies a subject coming into consciousness and manifests its relation to her corporeality (Rosengarten, 2007: 83). According to Bronfen,

> "Hysteric symptoms are overdetermined, excessive, exaggerated precisely because they weld together several syntagmatically unconnected, psychic moments. They are the derivatives (Abkömmlinge) of a chain of memory traces (Erinnerungsketten) that have to have remained present in the unconscious in order for them ultimately to be engendered (erzeugen)" (Bronfen, 1998: 33).

In that process there are several moments that add up to a certain effect. One can ask, first, if this woman can actually fully remember what has happened to her. And, accepting that she can, then go through what is presented and subtracted from us. I will examine the sequence of this series in order to investigate how memory can interfere in the relation between object of representation and spectator, or subject-as-spectacle and subject-as-look. At the beginning of the series, this figure is restlessly lying on the couch. She has lost her shoes, her socks are still on, but are coming loose. A part of her dress is open, leaving her bra exposed. The next panel, confirms the sequence that was previously suggested, the socks have come off and her dress is even more open, now uncovering a larger extent of flesh. The third panel, however, seems to introduce a cut in the image's progression. The woman crosses her arms and legs and lies neatly, but tense, on the couch. There is a contrast between her body position and the couch, with pillows arranged on the right side. Then, in panels four, five and six, this woman places herself on the edge of the couch, further accentuated by the metal bar. First, one limb, her leg; and then just a small extremity of her body; and, ultimately, she almost 'cuts her body in half'. She chooses to place herself in positions that visually fragment her body; counterbalancing her exposure. Finally, on the last panel, this woman sits upright, grabs one of the pillows, pointed towards the front, and looks at us directly.

Rosengarten follows Freud's guidelines by assuming that desire and love are set as the cause of this pathology[62]. She points out that in Rego's single-figure works it is the body, and no other elements, that carries the tension between the social and the psychic. Her reading connects this series with *The dog woman*, based on the argument that, in both cases, the female figure is, simultaneously, subjected by an object (social regulation) and passionately attached to regulation itself. Is Rosengarten right in suggesting this? Bronfen suggests a focus on the connection between trauma and hysteria:

> "To speak of a traumatic etiology to hysteria's symptoms thus means emphasizing the act of screening something out rather than recovering what is screened" (Bronfen, 1998:35).

She argues that a traumatic experience, not having been registered in the consciousness when it occurred, cannot, for that reason, be repressed, forgotten or translated into a narrative memory; only the body is able to serve as a surface where trauma can be inscribed" (Bronfen, 1998: 36).

As we will see, this reading will also determine the way the relation between female subject and spectator is analyzed. I share the idea that this female character suffers the effects of a traumatic event which leaves her in distress. She has repressed this event and its recollection is a painful exercise. Her fit is a way of staging this trauma and preventing the annihilation of her subjectivity.

According to Rosengarten, the spectator is to assume the role of the analyst or, at least, of the voyeur. The title *Possession* seems to confirm this reading, for "to be possessed" means "to be controlled by passion or the supernatural". Actually, in this reading "being possessed" could also mean "to be possessed by the spectator"; to be, visually, under his/her control, thus pointing to the dissymmetry between female subject and spectator. As I will demonstrate, *Possession* does not display such a requirement; in other words, the spectator is not to occupy, as a visual replacement, the role of the analyst. Firstly, I consider

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62 "According to Freud, in hysteria, the psychic energy embodied in a traumatic sexual memory which has been repressed is displaced onto a somatic site, that is, an hysteric converts repressed sexual impulses into physical symptoms. Freud also realized that "hysterical symptoms derive from a pre-oedipal longing for the mother" (…) If then hysteria is rooted in pre-Oedipal conflict, it is positioned at the site of the Imaginary, temporarily prior to separation from the mother, prior to difference, prior to language. Thus, by definition, actual hysterical "rethoric/speech", a dialogue outside of the Symbolic order, could not be directly translated into traditional discourse" (Dane, 1994: 232).

that the relation between female hysteric subjects and analysts is not one of domination resulting in a re-integration in a phallocentric society. She will not be possessed by an exterior, male, rational agent. As Gabrielle Dane put it:

> "Freud, who consider hysteria to be an exaggerated, if logical outcome of the "feminine" position in patriarchy, searched unsuccessfully for the key to reintegrate the hysteric into society. But, as Cixous notes, "there is no place for the hysteric [in a phallocentric order]; she cannot be placed or take place. Hysteria is necessarily an element that disturbs arrangements" (Newly Born 156) Insisting on enacting her desire, the hysteric threatens to disrupt an economy which demands her silence" (Dane, 1994: 235).

Secondly, the posture of this woman does not allow her to be in or become under the control of the spectator. In fact, although entirely exposed to the spectator, this woman shows tension and self-protection. This might be caused by the fact that she is not only in front of an "other", but also turns into an "other". In an article dealing with the moment of the pose in photography and the representation of the "self" in photographic portraiture, Ertem (2010) analyses the work of two contemporary Turkish photographers[63]. This author presents

[63] In 1998 two Turkish university students of photography, Süreyya Yilmaz Dernek and Ergün Turan, envisaged a project that would be their final one for their degree. They decided to shoot the portraits of the people living in Istanbul. Thus, carrying with them a black panel that would foreground the details of the posers and neutralize the environment, they launched themselves onto the streets of Istanbul, travelling from one district to another and asking the passers-by to stop their daily life for a few minutes to pose in front of the dark panel. Turan argues that the choice of the black panel is inspired from the old Turkish movies he had watched in his childhood. In those movies, people coming to İstanbul from the provinces had a custom of posing in front of a dark background on which was written "İstanbul Hatirasi" ("Souvenir of İstanbul"). Although the photographers started their project with the same phrase written on their black panel, thus re-creating the atmosphere of this specific type of photographic portraiture, they nevertheless decided to take it off later on, as they wanted the posers and the photographs to be free from any specific connotations. Their desire was, from the beginning, to connect the socio-cultural diversity existing in İstanbul and the black panel would serve as a visual aid for this purpose.

Their project, which started as a graduate degree project, later became a more extensive work, as they continued it after graduation. Fascinated with the potential of the metropolis to provide such a wide range of "characters", Dernek and Turan produced more than 400 photographs in two years" (Ertem, 2010: 69).

examples of images which, apparently, display people in the streets posing for a photographer. However, a more detailed analysis draws some important conclusions regarding their attitude and the relation they establish with the spectator:

> "We are seeing now a man whose body position seems very stiff so that it gives the impression that he is tense. What increases this effect is the way he holds the white object in his left hand. He seems to be frightened that the object will fall so he wants to hold it firmly and maybe also to feel himself more secure. This object, which is difficult to identify (maybe a yoghurt container), might symbolically signify something he does not want to give up: such as the identity he wants to protect. In addition to this, the way he gazes at the camera is also very self-protective. His facial muscles seem tense as he is frowning. His eyes are firmly and show traces of an anxiety mixed with anger. He also looks as if he is standing in the position of a guard.
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> Departing from this analysis, we can say at first sight that he seems both self-protective and anxious. Moreover, he looks as if he has been placed in front of the camera like a puppet (as he is standing stiffly, symmetrically and in a (self-)controlled way in front of the dark panel, without any room for chance encounters or uncontrolled gestures). This air of self-control increases the effect of being very tense and anxious and creates the impression that he does not want to lose his "self". However, this attempt at self-protection might also point to the presence of a tension or conflict within. As when one assumes a protective pose, one might not only imply the presence of the "other" outside himself but also he might be exposing the transformation of his "self" into an "other"" (Ertem, 2010: 78-81).

The aim of the current chapter is to analyze forms of undermining the spectator's look. The result would be a productive look; a look capable of dismissing domination and voyeurism, opening itself up to difference. A central role of the productive look is memory (Silverman, 1996). In fact, memory allows the subject to step back from the geometral point and see beyond the given-to-be-seen, beyond the mode of looking of the male-voyeur. It serves as mediation for a process of displacement instead of one of return. If the repressed object

cannot be obtained, either effectively or through memory, what one can only expect is to find a replacement, a metaphorical or metonymic term. With his term 'punctum' (Barthes, 1993: 27), Barthes had already singled out the possibility of looking from another point and giving attention to marginal elements of the screen. Facing an image, the spectator might be drawn into a determined element, apparently insignificant, which could make a connection with his/her mnemic reserve.

What is important to stress is that this is not simply a voluntary action or merely an involuntary or unconscious one. Nor is it a relatively stable process. On the contrary, productive looking involves an attention to our involuntary actions, so that we can identify what it is that we integrate and what we repudiate from the screen. How do its elements operate in us? What do we refuse as Other, and what, being Other, we claim as self (Silverman, 1996)? According to Lacan (1978), the screen determines visually how the subject is articulated (or represented). Silverman, on the contrary, argues that the screen not only acts between the gaze and the subject-as-spectacle, but also between the gaze and the subject-as-look and between the subject-as-look and the object (Silverman, 1996: 185). I will focus here on this last aspect.

I would argue that, instead of a dissymmetry between image and spectator, a poignant ethic of the process of looking is set in place. In front of an image the words, 'I am sorry for your pain', 'for your loss' become more than insufficient; they become inaccurate. Rego, in fact, invites the spectator to remember this woman's memories, to be wounded by her wounds' (Silverman, 1996:189). So what can the spectator do with these images that come from a character's memory? How can he/she make something out of it? As previously explained, my position is in disagreement with Rosengarten's interpretation, which considers voyeurism as the mode of looking for this series[64]. Instead I propose a close attention to the physicality of the image and marginal elements of the screen. Initially, the spectator seems to be given an analyzing position; from where he/she could analyze the woman's behavior, memories, her stories, her confidences. However, she is stepping back and away from it; she refuses any terms of a supposedly disinterested and objective reading, but also any terms of condemnation and compassion. One can see that, in this series, the largest part of the pictorial surface is occupied by the couch. Either the female subject steps

[64] "In the body of the protagonist of Possession, the twining of passivity and an inviting eroticism seems to play a traditional role in a gendered economy of vision in which 'woman' is constructed as both spectacle and symptom. The body lying on the couch extends itself to an empowered gaze, underlying the subject's earliest impressionability" (Rosengarten, 2007: 94)

back and occupies the superior border of the frame or she occupies the lateral border. Her regard also disavows any kind of contact, except for the last panel. According to Freud (1968), if the hysteric constantly transforms trauma in new symptoms, the analyst attempts to reproduce the past in order to establish closure. However, in the last panel of *Possession* the woman looks at us, showing a reassured smile. She is the one determining her own closure.

I claim that *Possession* enables the female subject to exercise her subjectivity. The spectator should parallel this process and become him/herself in possession of his/her subjectivity. This subject does not let herself be passively visible. Aesthetic texts, and the visual ones, are able to install in the spectator "synthetic memories", "libidinal saturated associative clusters which act like mnemic elements which, as a result of a psychic working over, have been made the vehicles for the expression of unconscious wishes" (Silverman, 1996: 185). Through them marginal elements of the cultural screen can be put in contact with the spectator's mnemic and libidinal reservoir, originating a possible validation of these elements. In this way, according to Silverman, the visual text is not only able to displace the spectator from the geometral point, but also from him/herself. It will make him/her include what is outside the given-to-be-seen, but also what is outside of him/her.

2.9. Conclusion

I have analyzed a group of images which visually challenge traditional representations in art history regarding scopic regimes. I argue that such images have a wider scope in terms of what they set to do or install. In fact, they work as visual-theoretical mechanisms which question the role assigned to female and male subjects within vision and the visual. They also provide new ways of seeing; ways which can acknowledge difference, be it sexual difference or difference within seeing. To sum up, what strikes me as a distinctive and powerful feature of Paula Rego's work is the way it opens up the spectrum of the process of looking, stepping away from the monolithic and patriarchal power of voyeurism. By doing so, her work can be seen as the visual manifestation of feminist theory's challenge to scopic regimes, namely their power bias. My selection does not attempt to cover all the images which confront phallocentric scopic regimes. Neither do I argue that the totality of Paula Rego's work pursues or installs such challenges. Instead, through the corpus presented in this chapter, I aimed to demonstrate how Rego's images are not only able to represent narratives or generate world views, but also to visually unsettle practices which tend to reduce

female subjectivity. This can, hopefully, provide a tool for yet (an)other way of seeing Paula Rego's images.

Chapter 3

Fake it until you unmake it: productive mimesis

3.1. Introduction

Paula Rego's images produce visual and critical renderings centered on the axis of subjectivity, representation and power. This occurs at two central points in her work: when she goes through the sedimented views and images of women and when she installs a radical subjectivity in her work. In chapters two, three and four, I examine material that is connected to the first point. In chapter five, I discuss paintings that are related to the second point.

After having focused on how certain images challenge traditional scopic regimes, namely by unfixing the spectator's position and displaying elements which confront him/her, thus unsettling the separation between subject-as-spectacle and subject-as-look, I will be examining, at this point, how Rego articulates her work with representational models of women available and rooted in society and the discourse of art.

The reason for my use of the concept of disguise in the title of this chapter is related to its aim, to explore the display of images, *facies* of femininity[65] in Rego's work. What do they disguise? How do they hide it and why? Do they disguise a pre-existing subject or do they convey the idea that it is through 'using these disguises' that female subjects become subjects? Judith Butler's work on masquerade and performativity claims that these processes of women acting out socially determined roles do not take place as the result of a conscious self. She argues instead that to participate in man's desire, women have to give up their own desire; thus, making a female subjectivity impossible (Buttler, 1990).

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65 The *Glossary of Feminist Theory* gives the following definition: "Moi (1989) makes a distinction whereby the feminine designates the set of cultural attributes assigned to the female sex which the political discourses of feminism seek to critique. For example, the feminist writer Virginia Woolf describes the constraints placed on women by the image of the 'angel in the house' produced by nineteenth-century domestic ideology (1977). Theories of the feminine tend to present it in one of two ways: as something basically imposed on women from the outside either through direct or indirect means (sociological), or as a psychosexual process involving the female unconscious (cf. psychoanalysis).

Historically, the relationship between feminists and femininity is an ambivalent one. Mary Wollstonecraft set the tone for the radical feminist impugning of femininity, viewing it as a form of romantic illusionism which prevented women exercising their reason. Thereafter femininity has been viewed as a form of false consciousness to be thrown off (Greer 1971). Many feminists, recognizing the theoretical and practical shortcomings of such a position, have turned to psychoanalysis in an attempt to relate theories of ideology to the formation of gendered subjectivities" (Andemahr, Lovell and Wolkowitz, 1997).

Joan Riviere, in 1929, argued that "women who wish for masculinity may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and the retribution feared from men". She named this process 'masquerade'. According to her, womanliness, the essence of what is to be a woman, and 'masquerade' are the same thing (Riviere, 1986). Irigaray, in her turn, considers masquerade to be the equivalent of Freud's 'femininity[66]', the idea that woman has to 'become a woman', a normal woman, by assuming the masquerade of femininity (Irigaray, 1985). What are woman's expectations; what are her aims when enrolling masquerade? Is it a way of participating in man's desire, with the condition of renouncing her own (Irigaray, 1985)?

3.2. Productive mimesis

Can we identify the presence of masquerade in Rego's work in any of the terms previously outlined? First of all, I would argue that "Rego's women" do not "fear a male retribution", as Riviere argued. Instead, they aim to disrupt gender biased expectations. To rephrase, Rego uses an available set of images from art history and societal configurations which portray women as the fixed element of a phallogocentric system and disrupts them[67]. My methodological reasons for not using Butler's understanding of 'masquerade' are two-fold. First of all, I do not think that Rego's images deny a biological component of female subjects. On the contrary, their materiality is, at times, visually exacerbated. These subjects are not merely 'texts' which are sexually marked and defined by cultural conventions.

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66 According to Freud, the little girl must abandon a phallic desire, marked by a desire which derives from the clitoris, as an equivalent to the boy's penis. During this stage the clitoris is the main erotogenic zone. The "Change to femininity" means changing her erotogenic zone and the object of her desire – from her mother (in her masculine phase) to her father, and later on, to another masculine replacement (her feminine phase) (Freud, 1989: 146-147). Once the little girl discovers that she is castrated, three possibilities of development open up for her: sexual inhibition and neurosis, change of character to a masculinity complex and normal femininity. This last possibility translates into replacing the wish for a penis for the wish for a baby (Freud, 1989: 156-157).

67 "This term refers simultaneously to the fact that, in the West, thinking and being coincide in such a way as to make consciousness coextensive with subjectivity: this is the logocentric trend. It also refers, however, to the persistent habit that consists in referring to subjectivity as to all other key attributes of the thinking subject in terms of masculinity or abstract virility (phallocentrism). The sum of the two results is the unpronounceable but highly effective phallogocentrism" (Braidotti, 2000: 299).

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Secondly, as Bordo argued, even 'subversion', 'masquerade', cannot be subtracted from social practices (Bordo, 1992):

> I want to make clear that my criticism of the abstract nature of Butler's argument does not entail a denial of the fact that subversive elements are continually at work (or at play) in our culture. My point is that subversion is contextual, historical, and above all social. No matter how exciting the "destabilizing" potential of texts, bodily or otherwise, whether those texts are subversive or recuperative or both or neither cannot be determined in abstraction from actual social practice (Bordo, 1992: 172).

The aim of Rego's images goes beyond disruption. I will, therefore, abandon the conceptual tool of masquerade and explore the use of another methodological tool, which allows me to examine the presence of disruptions and its effects in Rego's revisitation of femininity – productive mimesis as defined by Hillary Robinson (with reference to the work of the French philosopher and psychoanalyst Luce Irigaray):

> "in productive mimesis (…) the aim is to develop, add to or exceed a given situation that has been found insufficient for the articulation of subjectivity" (Robinson, 2006: 39-40).

In order to sustain my choice, I will now outline the premises of such a methodology. The premises of productive mimesis concentrate on the idea that negative views of women need to be exposed, made visible. According to Irigaray, this is a fundamental step, since if one is to simply dismiss the model of subjectivity based on the male, transcendental subject and merely replace it with a new form of subjectivity, one runs the risk of having this new form still repeating the male/white/western ideologies[68]. If one is to give a new identity to women and if identity is based on social and symbolic formations, changing the notion of identity also means changing these structures.

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[68] "For what is important is to disconcert the staging of representation according to exclusively "masculine" parameters, that is, according to a phallocratic order. It is not a matter of toppling that order so as to replace it - that amounts to the same thing in the end - but of disrupting and modifying it, starting from an "outside" that is exempt, in part, from phallocratic law" (Irigaray, 1990: 68).

Why this theoretical option? It is my understanding that, in a significant segment of her work, Rego exposes the negative views that overshadow women. If 'productive mimesis' contains a deconstructive impetus, it does not stop there. Such a methodology, as I mentioned earlier, has the benefit of making visible these phallogocentric representations, but it does more than that. It does not merely repeat this system of representation; it "also implies going beyond that system, exceeding its limits and norms, overburdening it with the ambiguity that consists in both reproducing and not reproducing it" (Grosz, 1987: 143). It means giving a new context and new purposes to the mimicked object (Grosz, 1987).

It is important to make explicit the difference between deconstruction, as formulated by Derrida, and 'productive mimesis' since both are often seen as identical practices. Their articulation of subjectivity is substantially different, though. An understanding of this difference will enable me to challenge the claim that Rego uses a deconstructive method. One can say that Irigaray is concerned with women's access to subjectivity, while Derrida, on the contrary, argues that this demand is still phallogocentric (Whitford, 1991). In fact, for Derrida, feminism is useful and necessary in a first moment of deconstruction, to dismantle the "European phallogocentric structure" (Derrida, 1987: 194). However, once this is achieved, one needs to "give up the opposition between women and men[69]" (Derrida, 1987: 194). According to Whitford, "deconstruction of metaphysical identity has had the effect of disconnecting the deconstructor from embodiment" (Whitford, 1991: 129). What does this mean? It means that, unlike Irigaray, who puts emphasis on "women", deconstruction is always focused on "Woman", leaving out difference and embodiment[70]. What this means is that

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69 "Women in the Beehive: A Seminar with Jacques Derrida" in *Men in Feminism* (edited by Alice Jardine & Paul Smith).

70 About the different positions of Irigaray and Kristeva on Derrida's difference: "Where, for example, Kristeva will rely upon the Derridean concept of *différance* in her attempts to dissolve the category of identity (both male and female). Irigaray will use the term as a mark of women's specificity, autonomy and independence from men. Irigaray's concern throughout all her works is the articulation of femininity, and identity or subjectivity which is women's. Kristeva sees feminism as one among many social ruptures and upheavals expressing a more general and diffuse crisis in Western culture; feminism, moreover, may not be seen as the most effective or far-reaching of the movements of social subversion, given its restriction to a politics of identity. Instead, the avant-garde experimentations, representational forms and signifying practices bring into doubt far more efficiently the principle of unity, or social cohesion. Irigaray, by contrast, is concerned above all with the positions, experiences, the exclusions and silencing of women effected by patrocentric cultural and theoretical norms" (Grosz, 1987: 134).

apart from wanting to deconstruct the phallogocentric system, Irigaray aims to explore different forms of representation, thus enabling "women to see and represent themselves in positive, self-defined and self-judging terms" (Grosz, 1987: 134). Why the need to make this distinction? Why not bring into play deconstruction when analyzing Rego's work? I would argue that some of her work exposes the phallogocentric structure which underlines and determines, as I have mentioned, the representation of women as opposed to men; however, I also claim that these compositions do not defend or suggest the dismissal of an identity altogether for women. They lay bare the artificiality and power structures which are determinants for such representations, leaving open the possibility for the introduction of changes in the social and symbolic structures. First of all, this creation 'by women for women as women', which Rego develops, is not outside the symbolic structure, as Kristeva argued when criticizing 'écriture féminine[71]'. As Macedo accurately puts it,

> "by analogy with the concept of écriture féminine, coined by the French feminists of the 70's, Paula Rego claims the social importance of an Art History where women are active and participating subjects, as artists, as critics and as art historians" (Macedo, 2011: 84).

I would add to this equation, also as subjects of and in a representation, and not merely as objects trapped in phallogocentrism. In this sense, her work formulates a project which does not take subversion as an aim in itself. Instead subversion is granted a larger ethical and political project which enables the introduction of multiplicity and agency for women. I argue that, in her work, women challenge the symbolic and are "powerful or effective agents in subverting" it (Grosz, 1989: 65), a distinct position from Kristeva's, who argued that only male avant-garde texts were capable of subverting the symbolic (Kristeva, 1984).

The process of productive mimesis contains an element of mimicry, which is an initial phase; the one historically assigned to the "feminine" (Irigaray, 1990). While hysteria, which is another strategy for resisting femininity, means taking to the extreme these models, mimicry means adapting to the virtual world

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71 "In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land; it is seen from the point of view of an asymbolic, spastic body (…) Estranged from language, women are visionaries, dancers who suffer as they speak" (Kristeva in Grosz, 1989: 64).

of femininity as it has been fixed by patriarchy. The hysteric wishes to become the best at it. Unlike what happens with 'productive mimesis', the hysteric allows herself to be reduced to femininity[72]. As Grosz puts it,

> "the hysteric is a proto-feminist, or at least an isolated individual who, if she had access to the experiences of other women, may locate the problem in cultural expectations of femininity rather than in femininity itself. The hysteric's defiance through excess, through overcompliance, is a parody of the expected" (Grosz, 1989: 135).

If women, on the other hand, assume the feminine role deliberately and convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, they are able to begin to "thwart it". Productive mimesis makes the "cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language" visible; it exposes the disguises of femininity (Irigaray, 1990: 76). Although mimicry implies adapting to "femininity", there is something which remains protected, something from where the woman mimes. As Irigaray explained, this does not mean creating a new theory in which woman is neither the subject nor the object; instead it means "jamming the theoretical machinery itself, (…) suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal" (Irigaray, 1990: 78). Mimicry is a way of exposing the way woman is identified, within discourse, "as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject" (Irigaray, 1990: 78). Mimicry allows for a disruptive excess of the feminine. In her article "Irigaray's Mimicry and the Problem of Essentialism" (1995), Ping Xu reminds us that, as Withford also explained (1991), the Irigarian term 'mimétisme' has its origin in animal ethology and designates the action of "camouflaging" or "protective coloring". Furthermore, mimicry has a double edge:

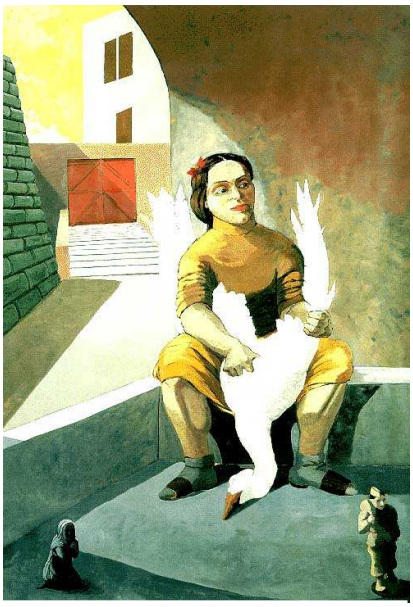
> "(it) has a function of protecting one from attack. But, nevertheless, mimetic resemblances are also used by numerous animals to facilitate their aggression. In biology, the former is called "defensive mimicry", the latter "aggressive mimicry" (Xu, 1995: 79).

[72] "Woman has no choice but to respond to these structures by enacting the masquerade. A renunciation of her desire is involved; so too is the fact that she is already elsewhere – she is neither lacking, nor subject either to the 'eternal feminine'. In what seems initially like a bleak scenario, the possibility for resistant strategies are in fact embedded within the structure – even if masked by the masquerade itself. For Irigaray, once again, the strategies for resistance can follow differing paths: hysterical mimicry, or productive mimesis." (Robinson, 2006: 35)

The idea that Rego's work is subversive has been recognized by earlier critics. Maria Manuel Lisboa, for instance, has analyzed the connections between a subversion of female stereotypes and its political dimension; specifically those parts of Rego's work which evoke Portuguese fascist and colonial reminiscences. She argues that paintings such as the *Red Monkey* series serve to denounce the political order of "Salazarismo", in which men were allowed to exercise violence over their wives. The 'paterfamilias' was even a legitimate function or title, 'blessed' by the church and the state's own ideology.

3.1. *Departure* (1988)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 213.4 x 152.4 cm

In her analysis of familiar and marital bounds, she maintains that in Rego's series which deal with this, the female characters attack the male: they should be "wretched at the loss of their men, but are not" (Lisboa, 2003: 28). In *Departure* (1988) (figure 3.1), for instance, the attack is denounced through an apparently inoffensive object, the comb, the position of the woman's left hand, the red stains on her apron "an echo of the *Girl and Dog* pictures, grooming and killing, love and murder (kin slaying), run over each other's boundaries…" (Lisboa, 2003: 75).



3.2. *The Soldier's Daughter* (1987)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 213.4 x 152.4 cm

Like Rosengarten (1999), Lisboa brings back the topic of incest to the discussion of Rego's work. However, for her, incest is taken as 'the behavior through which clearly defined rules of familial interaction are subverted within the very terms of their prescriptions, in order to deconstruct them" (Lisboa, 2003: 76). Another example provided is *The Soldier's daughter* (figure 3.2), a painting dating from 1987, which displays the image of a young woman busy plucking a goose. The female character displays apparent obedience, but the asymmetry of size between her and the little soldier in front of her, the flowers on her head and the way she holds the goose "blurs the boundaries of traditional

division of labour" (Lisboa, 2003: 82). As Maria Luísa Coelho notices[73], the soldier's daughter's "volume contrasts with the scale of the miniature soldier placed in the foreground (…) this daughter's toughness and stoicism proclaim that she will never surrender"(Coelho, 2009/2010: 13).

According to Lisboa, either we have domestic scenes which question patriarchal values or they are replaced by menacing gestures of destruction. I am interested in observing how we can find one through the other. I suggest that we take Lisboa's accurate analysis one step further; to look at the "productive mimesis" in Rego's work, that is, the exposure of traditional views on women, of femininity's traces. How does the playful shift occurs? What effect does it produce? These will be the guidelines of my analysis:

1. how are the configurations of femininity exposed;
2. what are the transgressive features introduced;
3. finally, which effects are created.

I will select works which question configurations of femininity as wife and mother, saint and object of representation. I share Gebauer and Wulf's view of mimesis as having a political dimension, as exposing who has the power to create symbolic worlds and who has the power to represent him/herself and the others (Gebauer and Wulf, 1995). It is important to point out that these sets under discussion here integrate works separated chronologically and in terms of the artistic technique which was used. The point of departure for their creation is also distinct; some of them have a literary background; others establish a dialogue with specific and well-known paintings from classical authors.

3.3. Woman as wife

I will discuss the first category of paintings with the following guidelines in mind: woman's representation as a wife and her association with the values of domesticity. This category consists of *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Marriage-A-la-Mode*. In these works, female characters do not fit either the role of man's equal or the requirements of femininity[74].

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73 "Domestic accounts in contemporary women's fiction and art" in http://ceh.ilch.uminho.pt/Pub_maria_luisa_coelho.pdf

74 "It seems that two possible roles are available to her, roles that are occasionally or frequently contradictory. Woman could be man's equal. In this case she would enjoy, in a more or less near future, the same economic, social, political rights as men. She would be a potential man. But on the exchange

In a new publication, Ana Gabriela Macedo pays attention to Rego's *Jane Eyre* series. In a very thorough analysis, she tracks down the literary origins of this series, by addressing the issue of the novel's authorial ambiguity and its markedly ideological and political nature. Regarding the latter aspect, as Macedo accurately points out, Bronthë's Eyre is a character in dissonance with the values of domesticity[75]:

> "And once again the words of Jane in the novel, full of autobiographical confessionalism, in a almost chirurgical analysis of the reasons of her nonconformity, the correctedness of her aspirations, in a tone which lifts a total freedom of spirit, intolerable in her time, and for that same reason punishable as rebellion and arrogance, unqualified flaws in a woman" (Macedo, 2011: 75).

Macedo evokes Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), and outlines which kind of interpretations critics adopt when analyzing *Jane Eyre*. According to Macedo, traditional interpretations singled out the dismissal of the rules of domestic fiction, by an "excess of subjectivity and a critical conscience" (Macedo, 2011: 79). A psychoanalytical reading, in its turn, sustained that, although Jane Eyre's discourse transgresses the norm, its final intention/proposal is to conform to the traditional forms of love and desire. Finally, a feminist reading has raised the issue of representation, by arguing that the novel makes visible the idea of feminine feeling which goes against the concept of woman and the feminine in a patriarchal society, but has no place in the systems of representation (Macedo, 2011).

When examining Rego's *Jane Eyre* series, I will be taking a feminist approach, because I would like to claim that the central issue of this series is

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market - especially, or exemplarily, the market of sexual exchange - woman would also have to preserve and maintain what is called femininity. The value of a woman would accrue to her from her maternal role, and, in addition, from her "femininity". But in fact that "femininity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman looses herself, and looses herself by playing on her femininity" (Irigaray, 1990: 84).

75 "And once again Jane's words in the novel, full of autobiographical confessionalism, in an almost chirurgical analysis of the reasons for her non-conformity, the justness of her aspirations, in a tone which denotes a total freedom of spirit, intolerable in her time, and for that same reason punishable as rebellion and arrogance – qualities in a man, flaws in a woman" (my own translation from Macedo, 2011: 75).

precisely the way in which the concept of woman and the feminine are re-worked. I would like to argue that a re-writing or *différance* of femininity can and is made within the core of the systems of representation. To rephrase, I claim that Rego's Eyre 'jams the machinery' of the systems of representation. How this is done will be demonstrated in the next paragraphs through an examination of specific works: *Inspection* (2001) (figure 3.3), *Jane Eyre* (figure 3.4), *Good Wife and Bad Wife* (2002) (figure 3.5).

3.3 *Inspection* (Jane Eyre Series) 2001
Lithograph on stone, 38 x 26 cm

In *Inspection*, the action takes place during Jane's education at Lowood School. She is submitted by another woman, who is older than her, to Mr.Brocklehurst's inspection, the clergyman who is in charge of running the school. In the novel, Jane, accidentally, breaks her slate when inspection is taking place. Mr. Brocklehurst calls her a liar in front of everyone.

Rego's *Inspection* displays a small Eyre being placed on top of a bench for inspection. Her clothes, a uniform, and hair fit the composure which is expected from an obedient and subservient young woman. The huge contrast between her and the two other figures in terms of dimensions, serves to expose the dissymmetry of power. The largest figure, which is also darker (taking, therefore, more space in the image in terms of its tonality) is Mr. Brocklehurst. Significantly, the posture of Jane's obedience is also taken to its extreme: her small proportion and the stiffness of her posture "transform" her into a puppet. The expression "to be a puppet" is, actually, very suitable to this image, since it means "to be under someone's control". Only as a puppet can Jane be placed on a pedestal, as the perfect and extreme example of obedience.

At a certain point, Brontë's Eyre says:

> "It was not my habit to be disregardful of appearance, or careless of the impression I made: on the contrary, I ever wished to look as well as I could, and to please as much as my want of beauty would permit. I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer: I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and a small

> cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked. And why had I these aspirations and these regrets? It would be difficult to say: I could not then distinctly say it to myself; yet I had a reason, and a logical, natural reason too. However, when I had brushed my hair very smooth, and put on my black frock – which, Quaker-like as it was, at least had the merit of fitting to a nicety – and adjusted my clean white tucker, I thought I should do respectably enough to appear before Mrs. Fairfax; and that my new pupil would not at least recoil from me with antipathy" (Bronthë, 2004: 34).

Marina Warner, when analyzing this work, highlighted the fact that "Jan standing on the stool, held up by Bessie, becomes a tiny, breakable puppet" (Warner, 2004: 10). At the same time, Warner argues that, in a faithful rendering of the novel, Rego keeps Jane's "plainness"[76]. However, even though Warner's perceptively singles out the odd proportions of Rego's Eyre, she does not notice the significant dissymmetry between this representation and Brontë's. At this point, I would like to draw attention to one very interesting aspect: Brontë's novel foregrounds Jane's desire to portray herself as elegant, with a delicate figure, fitting the regulated traces of femininity]. Jane is not able to provide a "logical, natural reason" for it; the wish to please her future pupil is pointed out, but this is not presented as a convincing and clear cause.

What strikes me immediately is the dissonance between the image and the text. In fact, the text reinforces the values of femininity, making the woman a commodity of a patriarchal structure that needs to be presented in a specific way: the facial features that Jane would like to possess and regrets not having are the one's that a male oriented society (especially in Victorian times), perceives as appropriate for a young woman; the physical attributes she possesses are distant from the ones she longs for; all pointing to delicacy and innocence. Jane, thus, becomes closer to an object of admiration. She pursues an aura of respectability.

Juxtaposing text and image in this way makes quite clear the difference of repeating traces of femininity with the result of reinforcing male-determined paradigms of beauty. In fact, Brontë's Eyre wants to have a "tall, finely defined

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[76] "Paula Rego's portrayals of Jane do not prettify her, as have done most of the jacket illustrations and films over the years, but remain faithful to the novel's insistence on her plainness of feature, that makes her 'such a little toad' in the eyes of the bitter lady's maid, Abbott" (Warner, 2004: 13).

figure"; Rego's Eyre, on the contrary, is so small that it makes her closer to a doll than to a human. I would argue that this is precisely the result of mimicry, a disruptive excess of the feminine. In other words, Rego works on an excess of the feminine, by turning Eyre into an obedient doll, under the scrutiny of a male figure, who is helped by a compliant woman. Here, the content is the same as in Brontë's scene; what happens is that Rego takes to the limit the traces of femininity, which were desired by Jane in the novel, making them abnormal and, therefore, disqualifies them.

3.4 *Jane Eyre* (2001-02)
Lithograph, 86 x 45.5 cm

It is time now to turn my attention to *Jane*. In chapter two, I have already addressed the fact that this figure has her back to the spectator. There I focused on the effects such bodily position have on the spectator. In this chapter I will focus on Jane herself. Jane does not unveil whether, in fact, she is able to dissimulate the lack of the attributes of femininity or disguise her lack of them. Once again, I would say that Rego uses the strategy of productive mimesis: the scenario (which is empty) and the costume are in tune with the sobriety of the recommendable behavior. Nevertheless, her position and even the density of her shaded dress and the aperture in the scene are far from embodying and conveying discretion. In Marina Warner's words,

> "Her sumptuous image of Jane Eyre from the back displays Rego's virtuoso skills: the play of light in the cloth, the contrast of shadows molding her head and body with the recessive darkness towards which she is moving, form a perfectly attuned rendering of the heroine's isolation, desperation and – determination to resist" (Warner, 2004: 14-15).

Ferreira's analysis also points out that "even though her delicate neck suggests a degree of innocent, childish vulnerability, Jane nevertheless presents a strong, unflinching back to the viewer" (Ferreira, 2007: 303). In fact, this figuration of Jane is almost, and apparently, opposed to *Inspection* in terms of

their dimensions. Also, in *Jane* there is a solitary figure who turns her back to the spectator, while in *Inspection* Jane is not alone, and is even under scrutiny. I argued that Rego, in making Jane small in such an exaggerated way, inserted a sense of resistance in the apparent repetition of femininity. In *Jane*, she also does so, but this time through the option of creating a Jane who is immense, visually, and who is moving away from us, from everyone. As Ferreira reminds us, the size of this figure, who dominates the entire space of the visible surface, shows that Eyre "is sure of what she wants, (…) knows how to keep her physical boundaries inviolate and (…) will never bend her will against what she considers as her moral integrity" (Ferreira, 2007: 303).

3.5 *Good Wife and Bad Wife*
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 80 x 100 cm

I would like to move to another work at this point, *The Good Wife and The Bad Wife*. This pastel depicts three actors: Jane, Bertha and the Reverend St John Rivers or Rochester[77], all played out by Lila Nunes. The Reverend St John Rivers is the clergyman who tries to conquer Jane. The male figure looks like a woman, disguised in large clothing. This has to do, as I have just explained, with the fact that Paula Rego chose to have Lila playing this part (McEwen, 2008: 114). It is, nevertheless, especially significant the fact that the painter did not attempt to erase this fact. She, thus, accentuates the impression of role playing, of the sole male character is deprived of any naturalized superiority and strength over the female characters.

According to Rego,

> "Jane and Bertha are represented by the same model: one is the extreme and destructive side of the other (…). They are complementary but contrasting figures, forming to certain extent a whole. Jane had a lot of anger inside, but through self-control, hard

[77] There is no consent among critics regarding the identity of the male figure in this work. I have chosen to mention both possibilities since my emphasis is on the way in which the male actor is portrayed.

work and obedience she managed to win, unlike Bertha, who was mad"[78].

Can one conclude that Jane is the good wife and Bertha Mason, Rochester's first wife, the bad wife? In this painting, Jane's features do not express obedience. In fact, it is the male figure who is obedient and submissive. Thus, one cannot ignore the irony that results from the combination of title and image. Ferreira defended the idea that, for Rego, Bertha is a victim and Jane, on the contrary, "is not susceptible of victimization" (Ferreira, 2007: 299). The title seems to refer to an image reproducing the traces of feminity. In fact, there seems to be an oppositional relation between a subject repeating or conforming to patriarchy's definition of a 'good wife' and another failing to do so. However, the opposition 'good wife'/ 'bad wife' does not explain Rego's image. I would argue that mimicry is initiated by the title and then displaced through the image giving way to a playful mimesis. In fact, through the juxtaposition of two female figures and a male figure who, actually, is disposed of a clear masculinity – Rego chooses to undermine its masculinity.

Apart from this procedure, the approximation of Jane to Bertha also undermines a representation of femininity (as mere repetition and reinforcement), by making their opposition less distinct than the title hinted at. Marina Warner singles out the idea that Rego brings Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason closer[79]. They are close to each other, first visually, since they have a similar image (the dress, its colour); secondly, because they seem to have established an alliance against Mr. Rochester. Jane is looking at him in a threatening way, or at least she seems to have some kind of power or superiority over him. His reaction is one of submission and despair. In the background, Bertha stares at the scene, in compliance with Jane. Her head is embellished with a substantial red flower, which can resonate with the image of Bertha on flames (in the attic). According to Laurent Bury, the

"way Bertha is represented in Rego's prints might be perceived as a misreading of the novel. Far from being a repulsive, nightmarish creature, Bertha is shown according to the feminist doxa, as Jane's "sister" (Lila modeled for both, and Jane's ugliness might well be a

78 In Ferreira, 2007: 299.

79 (…) Rego closes the distance between Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason, and illuminates the fate they could share, if Jane did not use her strength and originality of character to withstand society's sentence on genteel women" (Warner, 13).

way to bring her closer to Bertha, as Marina Warner has suggested). Rego says: "Bertha and Jane are two sides to the same woman. She can set fire to things". Together, they are trying to hang Rochester, in a crucifixion scene which was explained by the artist as something that Jane herself might have imagined. The union of Jane and Bertha against Rochester seems to be the subject of a painting entitled *The Good Wife and the Bad Wife*, where we see a prostrated Rochester being shouted at by Jane (or is it Bertha?), while Bertha appears as a very small figure at the far end of the room. Bertha is the subject of no less than four lithographs, which corresponds to her importance in the plot more than to her actual presence in the book, where she remains hidden in the wings for most of the time" (Bury, 2009).

One thing that I have not mentioned yet is the fact that Rego's decision to do this series came after her reading of Jean Rhys' postcolonial novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) which gives voice to Bertha Mason, once Antoinette Cosway[80]. I will examine how femininity is embodied by Bertha Mason in this novel. Then, I will examine how Rego takes the novel's depiction of femininity and Bertha's relation to it. In November 2002, she said "I came to Jane Eyre from Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*", which was confirmed in an interview in the same year: "She read the novel for the first time recently (she is in her sixties and Portuguese—the book did not come her way naturally)". This suggests that, contrary to most English-speakers, she only approached the book as an adult" (Bury, 2009).

In *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys gives voice to Bertha Mason, who does not have a relevant presence in Brontë's novel. In fact, her character is presented as Rochester's first wife, the 'madwoman in the attic'. She has a secondary role when compared to Jane Eyre. Rhys, thus, decided to tell the story of Bertha

[80] "The competing narrative frames, authorial voices, and shifting points of view that characterize *Wide Sargasso Sea* reenact the struggles over meaning that are embedded within the fictions of colonial identity and English imperial control. One of Rhys's early experiments with a title for the novel, "Sargasso Sea (The Wide) Crossing Across" (Letters 204), appropriately emphasizes this relentless movement. Antoinette's narrative is literally shaped by the uncertainties of a Creole vision that is fractured by the contradictory claims of British colonial history and the cultural residues of a dying West Indian plantation society. Her impossible task in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is to negotiate between the contradictory logics of British colonialism while also wending her way through the Creole culture and post-emancipation English society that continue to elude her" (Ciolkowski, 1997: 340).

Manson or Antoinette Cosway, her name before marrying Rochester, who would then, later on, rename her. The book covers her life since her childhood at Coulibri until her move to England and her life there. However, the novel does not contain a conventional, linear narrative at all. Mezei (1987) identifies the novel's threefold structure, with not only distinct narrators, but also different modes of narration, with a different embodiment of space and time.

The novel starts with Bertha as the narrator; then moves to Rochester and, finally, to Grace Poole, one of Rochester's servants. What is interesting in the first part is that Bertha attempts to contain herself; that is, tries to make herself an accepted and coherent speaking subject by keeping her narrative within the regulations of cohesion and linearity. As Mezei argues (1987), at this stage the act of narrating, for Bertha, means that she is able to hold on to her sanity; the moment this stops, she disintegrates:

> "As long as Antoinette can remember and order the events of her memories into a temporal or causal sequence and maintain a measured sense of space and time, then she can hold her life and self together. Her act of narration becomes an act of affirmation and cohesion, a nod to the world and its conventions, an attempt to prevent herself from dissolving" (Mezei, 1987: 297).

In the second part, Bertha listens to Rochester's narrative, which respects the qualities mentioned above. These conventions, nevertheless, become dissolved in part three, where Bertha's attempts are, irreversibly, turned into pieces: "linear chronology, sequence, narratorial lucidity, distance" (Mezei, 1987: 197) give way to simultaneity of time – she brings her past to the present and even mingles all of this with her future; disintegration, diffusion. From narrative, Bertha moves to monologue, from sanity to madness" (Mezei, 1987: 202).

The reason why I have given this brief analysis of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is because I would argue that Rego's composition works with a monological mode, marked by the disintegration of femininity. In my view, Rego's pastel creates a simultaneous visual disposition of different times in the canvas; it makes connections associative rather than linear or chronological. This can be seen through the different simultaneous segments which are co-present in this pastel, displaying different times (even the same characters in different times), places and actions. Bertha is no longer able to sustain any attempt at being a 'normal' or 'sane' subject. She is no longer able to 'speak' the feminine. The pastel *Wide*

Sargasso Sea (2000) (figure 3.6) divides into two inter-related parts: one that is chaotic, populated with different people from her past; the second (lower) one, with an older woman dressed as a bride and holding hands with her groom – a boy or a doll? In the right corner, the same woman is completely naked, lying half on the floor, half on a couch.

3.6 *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 2000
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium 180 x 244 cm and 59 x 244 cm (predella)

As Ferreira pointed out, the *predella* is a fundamental element in this piece:

> "The predella that goes with the work offers a commentary on the different stages of a woman's life, from child to school girl, from young woman to bride and finally old age represented, significantly, by a naked old woman. Rego thus defies the traditional aesthetic

canon that tends to show nudity mostly in young women, depicted as objects of male desire and concupiscence, by suggesting that older women can also be portrayed naked and remain aesthetically significant. Another subversive detail in this predella has to do with the bride who, again, challenges expectations, for instead of being young she is an old woman in a traditional bridal dress, holding by the hand a youthful bridegroom, who looks almost childish. Aesthetic and pictorial conventions are thus overthrown and rewritten" (Ferreira, 2007: 299).

In the centre of the upper part of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is an older woman in a yellow gold dress. Although she is not naked - as in the *predella* - this woman also challenges traditional conventions which associate seduction with youth. Her wide cleavage and the way she sits carry the marks of a poignant seduction. Is this a representation of femininity? Is this woman enacting a masquerade of femininity? I would suggest that, instead, she translates the process of hysterical mimicking of femininity. Irigaray's account of hysteria and hysterical miming is quite different from a Freudian understanding of this psychological process. According to Freud, the inability to repress unpleasant memories from one's conscious knowledge would provoke hysteria (Freud, 1974). For Irigaray, women can take hysteria, move away from it and turn it into a weapon against phallogocentrism[81]. Women can hysterically mime the feminine. In Robinson's words,

"If woman's adoption and adaption of 'femininity' is a mimetic process, in which women masquerade that which they are required to be, then hysteria is a strategic redoubling of that mime, taking it to the nth degree in order to attempt to wrest back some control over destiny, identity and sexuality. Hysteria can be understood as a calculated continuum of the masquerade 'femininity'" (Robinson, 2006: 36).

[81] Hysteria is also a strategy for resisting femininity: it means taking to the extreme the models of femininity; the hysteric wishes to become the best at it. Unlike what happens with 'playful' mimesis, the hysteric allows herself to be reduced to "femininity". As Robinson points out, while productive mimesis aims to overcome a situation which sets an obstacle for the articulation of subjectivity; hysteria is about wanting to exceed in controlling femininity, "becoming the best at it" (Robinson, 2006: 40).

By displacing the nudity and seduction attributes from the normal (here I am purposively attaching 'normal' to the idea of norm) to an ab-normal subject - an older woman, failing to fit the smooth, small proportioned body - Rego works within the structure and makes this woman wanting to be the best at at repeating the 'feminine'.

I would like to move to an examination of the series *Marriage A-la-Mode* (1999) (figure 3.7). Paula Rego used, once again, the structure of a triptych. However, departing from the traditional use of this structure, she focuses on the two lateral panels (Bradley, 2002). I have already analyzed the left panel in chapter two when dealing with the interactions between characters and spectator(s). In this chapter I will examine both lateral panels in the context of the roles taken by women and how they compare to traditional representations. First, I will look at Hogarth's *Marriage A-la Mode*, which constituted Rego's point of departure. My aim is not to 'explain' Rego's work through Hogarth, but to point out that, although Rego's 'version' presents some similarities, she does display some striking features.

3.7 *After 'Marriage a la Mode' by Hogarth*, *The Betrothal: Lessons*, *The Shipwreck* (1999)
Pastel on paper on aluminium 1650 x 5000 mm

Marriage A-la-Mode is considered Hogarth's most successful work. It depicts, in a series of six paintings, something common in London during the eighteenth century: arranged marriages between members of the high society. The characters are the Earl of Squander, a nobleman, and his son; the Alderman of the City of London, a rich plebeian, and his daughter. Both sides want to achieve a profitable arrangement, the Earl of Squander, an aristocrat in dire financial circumstances, wants to get some profit out of it; the rich Alderman who is without a title, wants to gain some status. Their children, however, seem to be less enthusiastic. In fact, as we can see in Hogarth's painting about the marriage settlement, both of them are seated away from the center where the transaction is taking place, with their back turned against each other.

Hogarth also denounces a situation common at the time: infidelity and sexually transmitted diseases, specifically syphilis. We can see how these symptoms are visible in every painting: first we see it in the Alderman's son in *The Marriage Settlement*[82]; again in the *Tête à Tête*,in *The Inspection* (not only on the Viscount but also on the woman near him, perhaps the doctor's assistant, or perhaps the woman who arranged his meeting with the young girl on the scene); and *in The Lady's Death*, on the Viscount's child.

In Rego's *Marriage A-la-Mode*, women take over the plot; they negotiate the marriage agreement. The social dissymmetry is still present: there is a separation between both central characters derived from their social status. As Fiona Bradley pointed out (Bradley 2002), one is an elegant, high society woman (highlighted by the way she is seated on top of the armchair, and her snobbish look), the other is an up-coming woman (her body is in a lower position; she has a rougher and more robust figure; nevertheless, she proudly wears a fur scarf). They are distant from one another and show no signs of familiarity or trust. The woman on the left simply dismisses the other one; and the woman on the right looks at her distrustfully. The young girl and the young man, as in Hogarth, show no interest in each other. What Rego did was to accentuate the age difference between both of them, making the girl much younger and, thus, giving an even stronger moral punch to the painting. Another important aspect is the way the young man is portrayed, greatly dependent on his mother, using her body to hide from the situation.

In the light of the aim of this chapter and my analysis of Rego's series, I want to examine its exposure of configurations of femininity. In my view, although Hogarth portrays a scene in which women have a significant role and although he explores class, he does not explore the dissymmetry derived from sexual difference. Rego, however, by turning the woman into a relatively young girl, problematizes the representation of women and their role in situations such as the one depicted. On the one hand, she seems to accentuate the traces of purity, delicacy, innocence, which often go hand in hand; on the other hand, she also exposes the fact that in a situation of arranged marriages (a practice that is not limited to the Victorian era), women are taken as commodities. They must

82 "But the Alderman, shrewd enough over money, has failed to take account of a large black spot on the Viscount's neck. It might just pass for a beauty spot; but the black spot is in fact Hogarth's symbol for those who are taking mercurial pills which at the time were the only known treatment for venereal disease. The black spot will continue to be the Viscount's most conspicuous attribute, though it will appear on others as well. It alerts us from the very start of Scene 1 to a dark motif which is to run throughout Marriage A-la-Mode" (Egerton, 1998: 17)

possess certain attributes – youth being one of them – in order to fully pass as an appropriate candidate. Paula Rego defined this series as a "modern love story" (Bumpus, 2000: 265). Her words contain an inescapable irony, given that "this is a tough tale in which the success or failure of 'love' is determined by the manoeuvres and strategies of the family, by cultural attitudes to women's position in society, and their relationship to men. Rego deals with social, political and emotional power" (Bumpus, 2000: 265).

Considering now the transgressive features present in this panel, it is noteworthy that women seem to be in charge of the situation. What can this mean? Can it be perceived as a way to empower women and disrupt the label of mere passive objects? When paying more attention *Betrothal*, one can see the authoritative presence of two men on the scene: one who looks at everything taking place from a semi-outside, semi-inside, position; the other one can be seen in the background on the opposite side, ordering a woman to get undressed. As Bumpus argued, these men exert psychological domination, more than physical violence and power (Bumpus, 2000). How does this domination relate to the fact that women negotiate the marriage arrangement? Women are not just the target or victims of male power; they can be accomplices; active agents of perpetuating social inequalities; they can also enroll in practices that are morally reprehensible. Are they de-essentialized and de-purified? Against an essentialized view which perceives women as negotiated without any say in the matter, of being 'just' victims of male domination, Rego presents us with an image of women taking an active part in the marriage arrangement. I share Bumpus' reading of *Betrothal* as ambiguous, which makes us question what ties women to men (Bumpus, 2000). What this means is that establishing a productive mimesis of femininity prompts a reformulation of 'women' as opposing 'men' ("the other of the same"), but also opposing the representation of the "the other of the same"; thus allowing to visually explore differences within Woman; as the "the other of the Other".

In *Wreck* some years have passed and the couple is now older. They are living in a messy space, with papers on the floor, drawers from a cabinet open and untidy. This is one of several works Rego created which pictures a woman holding a man as she would do a baby.

He is much too old to be in this position and much too big. He seems to be asleep – he even has a blanket and a pillow to make him more comfortable. After some years of marriage, she is the one picking up all the pieces. The little, frail, girl has given place to a strong woman. In the scene I discussed earlier, he is younger and hiding behind his mother; now, older, he is still clinging on to a

woman; this time to his wife. In Hogarth's equivalent to *Wreck*, *The Bagnio*, the Viscount has been attacked by the wife's lover, the lawyer Silvertongue. He is bleeding and his body is already starting to fade away. His wife is on her knees, either in distress for seeing her husband dying, or asking for forgiveness for her adultery. In any case, Hogarth's *Marriage A-la-Mode* ends in tragedy, with the murder of the Viscount, the later suicide of the wife and the evidence that their child is also infected by syphilis (the black spot, his legs; everything points in this direction). Rego turns this end into a more domestic scene, less tragic and with a twist to it. Rego explains that

"… what has happened is that he's spent all their money. There they are in the leftovers of what they own. They've had to sell the rest of the property. The accounts are strewn all over the floor. The creditors have gone through all the drawers of his travelling trunk, because he's been to Brazil, like many Portuguese men, to make his fortune. But he failed. He lost everything. You can tell he's been in Brazil because of the parrot he brought back. The little black doll suggests that he had a second family there, perhaps. Anyway, everything has been dissipated. But, despite the misfortune, she's holding him on her lap to comfort him" (Bumpus, 2000).

Instead of taking this 'explanation' or 'contextualization' as the only legitimate one, once again we go from a process of reduplicating the stereotype of woman as wife, confined to a passive domesticity, inserting a twist to it, which, at the same time, shakes the structure of a patriarchal representation and takes it one step further, by allowing to introduce in femininity the menace and unsettling feature of complicity.

3.4. Woman as saint

Apart from the representation of women as wives, a significant part of occidental art history tradition has positioned women inhabiting (or interacting with) the sphere of the sacred. As saints and angels, women are represented as ethereal and free of earthly *maculae*. However, a significant number of figures are, on the contrary, identified with sin and, therefore, excluded from the paradigm of spirituality (the prostitute, for example, was often positioned opposite to the saint). To sum up, there was a regulatory mechanism within the (visual or written) sacred texts which contributed to confirm and reaffirm

femininity as passivity and acceptance. Its dynamic was still one of dialectic, of an exclusionary dualism – woman as either a saint or a sinner.

I will be looking at series which revisit this tradition. The first series that I have selected is the *Virgin Mary's Life Cycle* (2002). I will first explain briefly the context in which this series was created. Then I will analyze what has been written about it, in order to examine the methodology used and the possibility and validity of articulating a strategy of 'productive mimesis' in this series.

The series *Virgin Mary's Life Cycle* is a peculiar case for several reasons. In 2002 the President of the Portuguese Republic at the time, Jorge Sampaio, invited Paula Rego to create this series which would occupy the Chapel of the Presidency Palace, in Belém, Lisbon. Himself agnostic, Jorge Sampaio stated that the eight pieces displayed a strange combination of mysticism and agnosticism[83]. His choice of artist was far from consensual. One must remember that Paula Rego had been an active voice, in 1998, in favour of a law which could legalize the practice of abortion, even creating a politically charged series which became iconic. Her series openly challenged the official position of the Catholic Church in Portugal and a conservative segment of the population. *The Cycle of the Virgin Mary* did not go unnoticed and some voices of the population thought it a sacrilege to present Mary in such a material manner.

According to Jorge Sampaio, the figures in this series "are not ethereal, but people like us (…) it was expected to find in these paintings a predominance of the vision of the feminine in the best sense of the term. The woman as subject[84]". This statement is very interesting to me. First of all, it makes me

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83 "E as oito telas ultrapassaram em muito as expectativas de Jorge Sampaio, que se «atreve» a dizer, empregando a palavra «cautelosamente», que existe um diálogo de Paula Rego com a religiosidade. *«Uma religiosidade mais ou menos agnóstica; porventura, estarei a dizer uma blasfémia. Mas toda a gente sabe que sou agnóstico. Sinto, no entanto, existir um misticismo nestes quadros.*» inhttp://www.dn.pt/especiais/interior.aspx?content_id=1053614&especial=Paula%20Rego&seccao=ARTES&page=2

84 "A imagem de Maria foi, ao longo dos tempos, interpretada como reacção tímida e passiva à palavra de Deus. Paula Rego pinta-a de uma forma activa e libertadora. O Presidente detém-se na Natividade, depois na Lamentação - que diz não lhe sair da cabeça -, comentando com veemência: *«As figuras não são etéreas, mas pessoas como nós», talvez porque só o humano é divino. *«Era esperável encontrar-se nestes quadros uma predominância da visão feminina no melhor sentido do termo. A mulher como sujeito. E isso aconteceu.*» in

wonder and question the meaning of the expression "the best sense of the term feminine". The statement might make us think that Rego's series reaffirms the qualities of the feminine; "the best sense" could mean the closest to what has been regulated by a patriarchal society as the feminine. Nevertheless, I see the ambiguity of the expression being dissolved by what comes afterwards, "the woman as subject". If traditional images of Mary, as I have pointed out, have reinforced the values of femininity; Rego's Mary, on the contrary, has done something utterly different. I will leave, for now, this idea of "the woman as subject" and see in what ways Rego does revisit the Mariology tradition.

One of the most important analyses of Rego's *Virgin Mary's Life Cycle* is Ana Gabriela Macedo's. In her article "Paula Rego's Sabotage of Tradition, "Visions of Femininity" (2008), Macedo, takes the idea of re-vision as a "re-vision" of tradition, by

> "looking back, (…) seeing with fresh eyes, (…) entering an old text from a new critical direction" and sustains that this "is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival ... We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently[85]..." (Rich, 1972) (...) In fact, Rego achieves more in her paintings than a mere reflection on the masterpieces of the Western artistic tradition. She proudly instills in them her own political and gendered commentary through a strategy of rhetorical appropriation and metonymic displacement which she ironically calls "poaching" (her word) the Great Masters tradition. Like Alice in Wonderland, she says "you've got to find your own doorway into things" "(Macedo, 2008:168).

Macedo, thus, singles out the idea that Rego revisits traditional views on femininity; installs in them the politically charged and gendered commentary of the artist. I agree with the idea that this "re-vision", "re-visitation", of tradition enables the painter Paula Rego to expose what are traditional and, commonly accepted, views of femininity. I also think that, looking at the depicted matter, it is possible to trace a transformation which enables women to be other than

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http://www.dn.pt/especiais/interior.aspx?content_id=1053614&especial=Paula%20Rego&seccao=ARTES&page=2

85 Adrienne Rich: When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision . In; *On Lies, Secrets and Silence*. New York: Norton, 1979.

depicted objects. As subjects, women can bring forward a different set of characteristics, which have been undervalued or even erased from traditional considerations of subjectivity.

3.8 *Annunciation* (2002)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 54 x 52 cm

Annunciation (2002) (figure 3.8) is the first of a series of eight small panels. It shows us a scene with only two women: one is an angel, with the traditional elements that characterize angels; she is dressed in white and has wings coming from her back; but she is far from traditionally angelical. We know that angels are said to be asexual. Even if they are traditionally represented as women, they possess features which erase any materiality. This angel, however, is robust and very much material. She is holding her womb thereby signalling a pregnancy, Mary's pregnancy. The character receiving the news is a young girl; she looks up to the angel in a combination of veneration and concern. She seems to be wearing a school uniform or religious uniform. Both women are in an interior space which cannot be easily identifiable. The background walls have gloomy colors and the floor is covered by autumn leaves. This scenario is clearly distinct from the canonical representations, which depict veneration in an ineffable radiance. Fra Angelico's *Annunciation* fresco, for instance, dating from the fifteenth century, covers the walls of a corridor in San Marco convent, in Florence, with soft tones and a distinct reverence and sobriety. Curiously enough,

Spain and Portugal have a worship tradition devoted to *Nossa Senhora do* Ó[86]. There is a statue of *Nossa Senhora do Ó* in the cathedral of Évora, for instance, in the South of Portugal. Her left hand is placed on top of her womb, signaling her pregnancy, and her right hand is raised. During the nineteenth century, this image was rejected because of its materiality and its lack of purity. In fact, it challenged the more consensual and respected iconography of the Immaculate Mary.

John McEwen (2008) stresses the fact that few women have painted the story of the Virgin Mary (or Our Lady) and the ones who have done so, have clearly been influenced by male conventions; even, Josefa de Óbidos, the Spanish-born Portuguese painter from the seventeenth century, who Rego points out as an exception. In fact, in Josefa de Óbidos' *Annunciation*, dating from 1676, has no visible or premonitory signs of a pregnancy, neither in the figure of the angel, nor in the figure of Mary. Unlike the angel in Rego's painting, this angel cannot be sexually identified. Both figures present an almost unmarked body, that is, a physicality which is submerged under their vests; their skin tone and facial expression mirror a transcendental serenity. The relationship that exists between them is of solemn awe. Behind them is a background peopled by small angels, opening up a golden sky centered by a dove.

According to Macedo (2008), the strategy used in Rego's *Virgin Mary's Life Cycle* consists of "a postmodern allegiance. Endowed with parodic distance"; the images in this series clearly select and critically transform sacred models with a cultural and political specific aim. Macedo argues that these images manage to keep a respect for their models and, simultaneously, "un-settle" stereotypes of womanhood. They unveil a vision of women deeply steeped in the canonical tradition, their social roles and prescribed duties, ironically (as Rego shows us) present in the realms of the sacred as in the profane (Macedo, 169). Morau (2001) questioned what happens during this process of what he names "re-writing":

> "what happens when a story is rewritten? What happens, I mean, to the rewritten and to the "rewrite" (…) The intensive-extensive rewriting sort I discuss designates a postmodern narrative, that without necessarily showing an "attachment to a single textual precedent" (Connor 80), *a) reworks in detail one or a few narratives and b) while doing so, puts forth a critical commentary* on the

86 "Nossa Senhora do Ó" means "Our Lady of Ó", "Ó" being the interjection of popular admiration.

> sociohistorical ambience – values, ideas, formations, cultural mythologies within which rewriting is undertaken or within which the reworked text was produced" (Moraru, 2001: xii)?

Rosengarten, in her turn, contends that "there is no carnivalesque reversal, no play of irony, no reign of the grotesque. The humor is gentle and it is, paradoxically, the real itself that acts as the agent of subversion of the ideologically correct" (Rosengarten, 2006: 73). Not only exposing, but critically unsettling fixed feminine stereotypes, but through this allowing or aiming at woman becoming a subject. Although this series presents segments from Mary's life – from the annunciation of her pregnancy until her ascension - Rego uses a new context and has new purposes. As we will see, she takes a visual economy which obliterates the body and equates women with maternity, trough the figure of Mary, and gives it a materialist context that can reintroduce the female body in the symbolic order.

To increase our understanding of the extent to which Rego gives a new context and purpose to this visual economy, I would like to analyze the implications of associating the figure of Mary with Rego's women. And examine how Mary's representation has served to dematerialize the female subject. I am using Perez-Gil's article "Mary and the Carnal Maternal Genealogy: Towards a Mariology of the Body" (2001), because this author scrutinizes a wide range of texts which contribute to a specific tradition inside Mariology, the canonical one. She also demonstrates how all biological and moral disorder has been removed from these texts, by emphasizing Mary's immaculate body and God's intervention (Perez-Gil, 2011: 3). Perez-Gil seeks to demonstrate how "a cultural genealogy fashioned on the values of sexual chastity and selfless motherhood comes into being through the Virgin, which she inculcates upon her daughters (or mothers upon daughters) as the pattern of virtue. Irigaray's sensible transcendental can be seen to challenge the mythification of these values as elements constitutive of female divinity. The sensible transcendental evokes an alternative universe where divinity exists 'among us, within us, as resurrection and transfiguration of blood, of flesh'" (Perez-Gil, 2011: 7).

As Perez-Gil points out, with reference to Jennifer Glancy's work (2010), traditionally Mary was not depicted suffering from pain of blood loss, disturbed by the efforts of giving birth. On the contrary,

> "the pictorial or written language that constructs Mary's body avoids the genital aspects of maternity. Her body is assumed into the

white, spiritual realm of the Father and is distanced from the red language of matter and human nature. She is not tainted with the original sin nor with sexual motherhood. The matrix of man's language translates her *red* blood into white, chaste and virgin blood" (Perez-Gil, 2011: 9).

3.9 *Nativity* (2002)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 54 x 52 cm

3.10 *Nativity* preparatory sketches (2002)
Pencil, ink and wash on paper, 29,5 x 42 cm

According to Perez-Gil, Rego is among those painters who inaugurate and celebrate a "carnal maternal genealogy"[87]. Rego entailis a bodily, non-dematerialized subject and connects Mary to other women through the body, through a sexualized maternity. In *Nativity* (2002) (figure 3.9), for instance, a panel in the series about the Virgin Mary's life cycle, depicts Mary giving birth. She is helped by the angel, who sits on the ground and supports her body. Once again, Rego unsettles the machinery of the system of representation. In what way? According to Glancy,

"in the second and early third centuries, Christians read competing stories in the body of Mary in childbirth. Some Christians claimed that Mary experienced no pain and that the birthing process did not split open her body. They implied that her hymen remained intact and that she was surprised to find a newborn infant in the room with her" (Glancy, 2010: 81).

87 "Some of the artworks by Helen Chadwick, Paula Rego and Kate Hansen accentuate the sense of corporeal homogeneity between Mary and women by inscribing into visual discourse the physicality of birth and the notion of biological reciprocity or relationality" (Perez-Gil, 2011: 9).

Although the tonalities of the scene, the background and the characters seem to repeat the tradition of a birth which was generated and took place without any male participation; however, Mary is here depicted in pain and her body is not intact. I would argue that the position of her legs visually materialize precisely the idea of a body split open; no newborn is visible. Furthermore, the brush of convenient immateriality is exposed by turning this scene into a real labour, with real bodies and pain marked on Mary's face. The position and the exposure of the body and the expression of pain are far from an Immaculate Conception and Birth. Blood and pain were deleted from traditional representations. Here, on the contrary, the shadows on the floor, with their ocher tone, closely resemble blood; maternity has regained the body. As Maria Mar Perez-Gil reminds us, the Fathers of the Church and posterior writers supported the belief that Mary's parturition was painless and purified of bodily fluids[88] (Perez-Gil: 2011). The setting of Rego's *Nativity* is utterly different.

Another relevant aspect in this context is the appearance of the angel: she is an "earthy woman (…) with the marks of a distinct corporeality: heavy breasts, delicate hands" (Rosengarten, 2006: 75). To sum up, both female figures are material bodies. I do not think that these figures, somehow, keep a mix of

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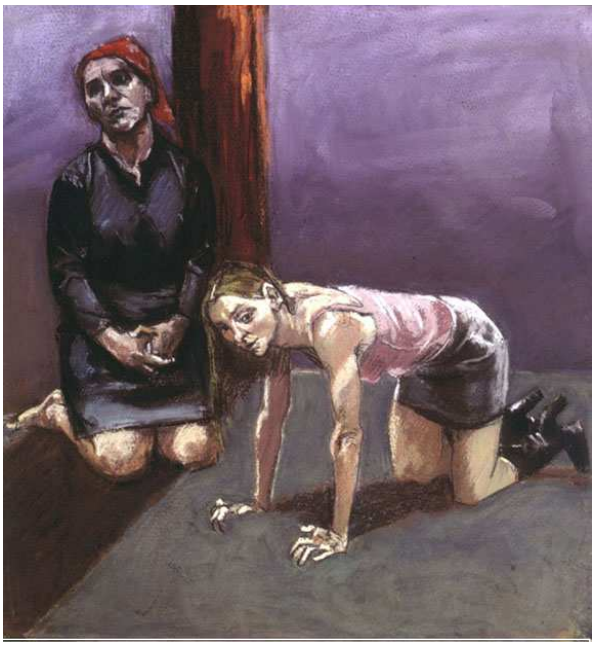
88 "However, except for the biological function of providing nourishment, Mary's blood appears to be removed from some of the main evidences that accompany maternity. For a start, she remained a virgin during parturition and did not suffer from labour pains. The Protevangelium of James in the second century states that Jesus miraculously comes into sight in a great beam of radiant light that fills the cave. In The Ascension of Isaiah, Mary 'straight-way look[s] with her eyes and [sees] a small babe, and she was astonished. And after she had been astonished, her womb was found as formerly before she had conceived'. Opinions among some of the Fathers of the Church and later writers favour the same belief, that Christ's birth was painless and bloodless. Hildegard of Bingen, for example, asserts that when the Virgin 'was a little weakened, as if drowsy with sleep, the infant came forth from her side—not from the opening of the womb—without her knowledge and without pain, corruption, or filth'. Hildegard even goes on to claim that 'no placenta covered the infant in the Virgin Mother's womb, in the manner of other infants, because he was not conceived from virile seed'. In her vision of Christ's nativity, the 14th-century mystic Bridget of Sweden takes notice that his 'flesh was most clean of all filth and uncleanness' and that Mary deftly catches her Son's umbilical cord with her fingers, cuts it off 'and from it no liquid or blood went out'. In the sixteenth century, The Catechism of the Council of Trent likewise maintains that Mary 'brought forth Jesus the Son of God without experiencing . . . any sense of pain': 'just as the rays of the sun penetrate without breaking or injuring in the least the solid substance of glass, so after a like but more exalted manner did Jesus Christ come forth from His mother's womb without injury to her maternal virginity'" (Perez-Gil, 2011:3)

transcendence and materiality in place. Instead, I think they are worked upon this traditional *substractum*, transcendence through a playful mimesis; that is, by giving them a new context and objectives. Their materiality is exposed, cracking open the layers of traditional representations.

Rego's *Nativity* is not only in dialogue with traditional religious representations. It also engages in a 'symbolic exchange' with preparatory sketches (figure 3.10). According to Rosengarten, in two ink and watercolour sketches the angel is given a clearer supremacy over the parturient; thus, undermining the idea of care with the introduction of danger (Rosengarten, 2006). Both sketches are unsettling, through their somber colouring. The angel dominates Mary (in one sketch holding her waist; in the other her head). Mary's womb is about to burst. The angel drags Mary and keeps her on the scene, controls her. This, naturally, would disintegrate the imagery of Mary as submissive and accomplice in the enterprise of a divine birth. It is my understanding that this version, by overtly confronting the idea of a benign divinity in the figure of the angel would reduce the effect of a playful mimesis. Its tour de force is not so much the introduction of clear cut images into traditional representations, but, instead, the undermining of these images with more subtle and effective subversions. There is a connection between this series and the *Untitled Series*. Gabriela Macedo refers to the fact that this scene is visually evocative of the abortion series, which makes it even more disruptive (Macedo, 2008). In a latent association, birth and its annulment, abortion, take place in the same bodily structure; both imply pain, both split open the female subject and generate, not white, immaterial blood, but human matter.



3.11 *Lamentation* (2002)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium,
54 x 52 cm

Lamentation (2002) (figure 3.11) is another panel which has the same gesture of extending a shared material genealogy through the figure of Mary. Although the title signals and, inevitably, creates associations with the iconography of the Lamentation of Christ, this panel does not concede any visibility to the body of Christ. The only identifiable element associated with him is a wood pole which may correspond to the lower part of the cross. Once again, the scene is

dominated by two female characters, Mary and Magdalene. Mary is a domestic wife and mother, kneeling barefoot at the cross. Sharing the space with her is Mary of Magdalene, dressed in a short skirt and top, wearing high heel leather boots. Her bodily position reminds us of the *Dog Women*. The shadow underneath her torso has a red tone, which implies the imagery of blood; in the absence of Christ's body, blood 'travelled' to another body, a female one. In fact, this ochre shadow resembles the one present in *Nativity*; the same ambiguity is kept. There is an apparent dichotomy between both female figures: one draws on the stereotype of the rural, maternal mother and the other one draws on the urban prostitute. They come from different social backgrounds, but are together on this one. Mary is now older. Blood has intruded the borders of another character, Magdalene. I would like to suggest that this is related, once again, to the connection between birth and dissimilar female bodily manifestations, in order to sexualize birth and create a material, bodily genealogy among women; even women who, traditionally, stood at opposite poles of signification.

3.12 *Pietà (*2002)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 54 x 52 cm.

I will be looking closely now to *Pietà* (2002) (figure 3.12) and *Assumption* (2002) (figure 3.13), two panels in which we do encounter a male character. In Catholic visual renderings of this *topos*, *Pietà* shows us Christ suffering and Mary manifesting her sorrow (Rosengarten, 2006). The rendering of this theme by Michelangelo in his well-known sculpture is a good example; a frontal sculpture,

whose structure is pyramidal, with the vertex coinciding with Mary's head. Whereas Christ's half naked body is exposed, Mary's body is concealed in an intricate outline of drapery. The signs of the *Crucifixion* come from small marks of nails. Michelangelo does not follow the tradition and chooses to depict a young Mary. According to Ascanio Condivi (1976), Michelangelo's intention was to reinforce Mary's chastity[89]. Turning my attention back to Rego's *Pietà,* what is most striking here is the age of both characters: Mary and Jesus are turned into two young teenagers, without a significant age difference between them. Rosengarten argued that "Rego's decision to render Christ as a small boy points, in the first instance, to the fact that for the mother, even the adult son remains always her child" (Rosengarten, 2006: 78). Something similar seems to take place in Michelangelo's sculpture. In fact, some of the interpreters of Michelangelo's work argue that this had to do with the fact that the scene was made to represent, at the same time, Mary holding her newborn and comforting her deceased son. And what about Rego's Mary? Why is she depicted as a young girl? And why do these figures have a similar age? Does this serve to reinforce Mary's chastity? In my view, Mary's age creates a feeling of 'disturbance' in the spectator. She is too young, even too young to fit the stereotype of chastity. She is as young as Christ. They are both young teenagers made to play out a role which they do not quite fit. Mary's face shows us that she does not know what to do, how to deal with this body that she is holding and dragging along. Their age also means that the younger they are, the more material they become, that is, the more distanced from the canonical representation of adults in consonance with the biblical text of Crucifixion. They are no longer mother and son connected by a miraculous maternal bond, but two young bodies stuck into a helpless situation.

Then, we arrive at the final stage of this path with *Assumption,* the culmination of Mary's sacralization. She will now cease her earthly existence and rise to the heavenly kingdom. According to Marina Warner, Mary's cult did not integrate the component of martyrdom, in opposition to most cults of saints in the early Christian Church. Without a record of her death, without a grave or a

89 "Do you not know that chaste women stay fresh much more than those who are not chaste? How much more in the case of the Virgin, who had never experienced the least lascivious desire that might change her body?" (Condivi, 1976).

body to venerate, Mary's cult was delayed and open to speculation[90] (Warner, 1976).

3.13 *Assumption* (2002)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 54 x 52 cm

This tradition holds that Mary, prior to her ascension, enters into Dormition or even dies, thus experiencing the suspension of her material existence[91]. In 1950, Pope Pius XII *officialized the version of Mary ascending to

90 "The disappearance of Mary's body delayed her cult, for there was no shrine, where she, in person, could be venerated. But it inspired the most fertile imaginings, for with the absence of historical data, free rein could be given to speculation along lines engraved in the symbolic fabric of Christianity. For the symbol of purity itself could not be given to the worms for pasture: the image of eternal spring could not rot in the grave. As the historian G.G.Coulton wrote: "If the world knew more about the Virgin Mary, the middle ages would have known far less." (Warner, 1976: 82).

91 "For in the west the parallel between the Virgin and Christ inspired a more active iconography of the Assumption. A sumptuous embroidery of the sixth or seventh century now preserved in the Treasury of Sens cathedral shows Mary moving towards heaven, and inscribed *Ascensio Sce Maria* - the ascension of the Blessed Mary. This image diverges completely from the Byzanthine Dormition scene, and in the early middle ages it was submerged by the Greek tradition of the supine Dormition (…) Manuscripts exist in France, Germany, and England, and although the French cathedral sculptures preserved the more tranquil and austere idea of Mary's sleep, the stronger image of her physical, wakeful ascension, body and soul, had taken a firm hold in Europe by the fourteenth century". (Warner, 1976: 89).

the 'glory of heaven', thus establishing a parallel between sex and death, both based in the purity of her body[92] (Warner, 1976). In the scriptures, the archangel Michael is said to be the one announcing to the Virgin Mary her imminent death. Rego however, depicts a trap; the angel grabs Mary's dress and makes her fall to the ground. So, she is not ascending to the sky. The lower part of the image dominates the upper one, with its darker tones. The entire action is condensed in this impetus or push towards the ground. Rosengarten argues that "if the dogma and traditional rendition of the Assumption mitigate the finality of death and appease the fear of mortality, Rego's *Assumption* does the opposite: it presents the moment of death as shock: a snatching away" (Rosengarten, 2006:77). I think that this outcome conforms to what stands behind it. Once again, superficially we seem to find a repetition of a canonical and sacred theme, the "Assumption". The characters – Mary and the angel - are in line with this tradition. However, we soon realize that several elements simultaneously undermine this tradition: the sobriety and harshness of the colors is in dissonance with the golden and brighter elements of a traditional "Assumption". Mary is impelled to the ground and not to the sky. The angel is a mean-looking young boy, sneaking and catching Mary completely off guard. As I argued before all of Rego's series about *the Cycle of the Virgin Mary* are imbued with a non-conventional materiality. Assumption fits this pattern: again Mary is tied to her bodily roots, to the ground. This last scene does not offer a way out of materiality; a way to overcome the corruption of the body. From the beginning, with *Nativity*, Mary experiences a life determined and fully operative in its materiality; now, at the end, there is no redemption that takes Mary away from it; that would annihilate this restitution of the body to the female subject.

In order to conclude this part of my discussion, I would like to revisit Ana Gabriela Macedo's words about the connection between the sacred and the profane in Rego's work. For the reception of Rego's work has highlighted the idea that she combines the presence of the sacred with the profane; that she refers to the tradition of art history's representation of the sacred, but at the same time transforms it. The question, then, is how both elements interact; what is the

[92] "Belief in the Assumption extends an idea fundamental to the virgin birth: that time itself belongs to the material world and is alien from the spiritual, from the supernatural. Death, like birth, belongs to time; freedom from death, like freedom from sex, overcomes it. The unchanged womb of the Virgin, that "closed gate", that "enclosed garden," which experiencing alteration is yet unaltered, is the mirror image of the unchanged body of the Virgin, which experiences death and does not decay" (Warner, 1976: 94).

nature and implications of such interaction, specifically in the articulation of female subjectivity. Macedo reasons that

> " (…) in most of her work there is a permanent dialogue between the sacred and the profane, a constant interrogation as to the ways and the means of religiosity, and a pervading even if unsettling mysticism. Notwithstanding, the sacred, the mystic, the religious exist in her work side by side with a powerful desacralizing, demystifying and decanonizing irreverence. And that is (…) what makes it unique, since it foregrounds that paradoxical coexistence and its disturbing ambivalence in the most unexpected contexts. Moreover, in images when the subject under focus is clearly religious, Rego's strategy of representation, her particular angle of vision, her commenting on the scene and arranging of its theatricality is enacted through a challenging displacement of acquired preconceptions and entrenched stereotypes" (Macedo, 2008: 166).

This is, in my view, a very accurate way of putting it; of explaining what takes place in Rego's work. I agree that both the sacred and the profane have a place in Rego's work. More than that, I would argue that Rego aimed at this transposition to another context, as a way of exposing the eliminations, determined by sexual identity, which the sacred hides. What happens when characters that should be representing undetermined time and space (transcendental scenario's) inhabit domestic spaces; spaces which are normally inhabited by women? This is the fundamental question of course.

Macedo also argues that

> "her visions of the sacred and the religious assume a new corporeality that usurps their ethereal or metaphysical essence without, however, trivializing them or making them profane. Somehow (…) their transcendence remains intact. Such is the disturbing ambivalence of Rego's paintings that I wish to comment on" (Macedo 2008: 166).

According to Fiona Bradley (2002), Rego's women, although represented according to tradition, with the attributes of sanctity, possess a reality and

solidity which are uncommon in religious painting[93]. In my opinion it is not the case that her visions manage to keep their phallogocentric transcendence. I would say that these terms become insufficient or inaccurate, since they still echo a system of thought that adheres to dichotomies. Or, to put it differently, the layer of materiality works on top of transcendence; neither as a sign of reverence or respect for the models nor as a mere or self-fulfilled exercise of destroying these same models. This series questions the attribution of certain subjects to one or the other sphere (material or transcendental) in a phallogocentric structure. Moreover, the series also creates an alternative which reformulates materiality, without precisely diminishing and demonizing the specter of transcendence's dichotomy.

Another important aspect has to do with what this articulation of sacred and profane opens up. Linda Hutcheon argues that a feminist postmodern parody allows for the creation of alternative female spectatorship positions, alternatives to male narcissism, masochism and voyeurism (Hutcheon, 2002):"Parody, rewriting, representing woman is one option which postmodernism offers feminist artists in general, but especially those who want to work within the visual arts, overtly contesting the male gaze" (Hutcheon, 2002: 151).

Subverting female stereotypes allows for the creation of difference in the scopic regime, which, as we know, is socially and politically charged. However, in terms of the mechanism and contents of representation, it does not go further than using the available stock of images and their associations, even if giving them an ironical twist. As Hutcheon admitted,

> "Part of the problem, perhaps, might stem from (…) a limitation of postmodernism – in itself and in its use by feminist artists: the postmodern may offer art as the site of political struggle by its posing of multiple and deconstructing questions, but it does not seem able to make the move into political agency. It asks questions that reveal art as the place where values, norms, beliefs, actions are produced; it deconstructs the processes of signification. But it never escapes its double encoding: it is always aware of the mutual

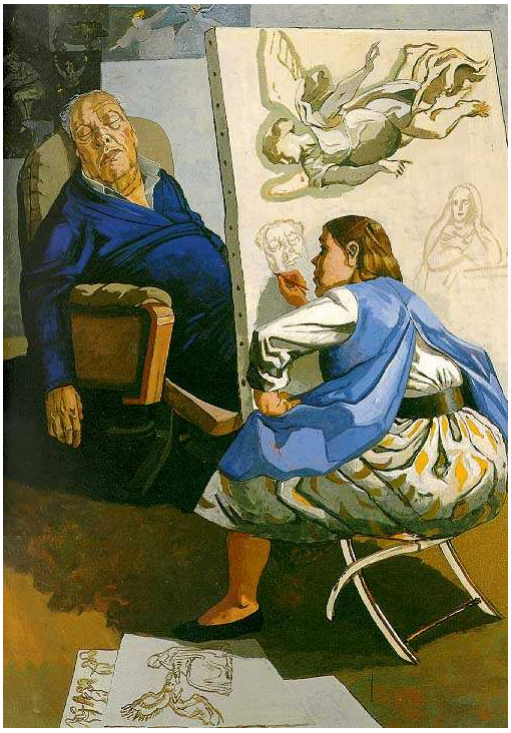
93 "O trabalho de Paula Rego sobre o tema clássico cristão da Virgem Maria rodeada por santas concentra-se na humanidade das mulheres. Maria e as santas eram pessoas reais e as personagens mitológicas que aparecem ao lado delas são as suas equivalentes ou antepassadas. As mulheres de Paula Rego, embora representadas, como exige a tradição, com os atributos que atestam a sua santidade, possuem nelas uma realidade e solidez que não é usual em pintura religiosa" (Bradley, 2002: 58).

interdependence of the dominant and the contestatory" (Hutcheon, 2002: 153).

When we compare the series that deal with figurations of femininity as wife to the figurations of woman as saint/mother, the role of mimicry is greater in the former. Because the emphasis is on the re-appropriation of femininity's models, there is already an emphasis on exposing the gendered and politically charged attributes of the feminine and a formulation of subjectivity; in the latter, subjectivity is radically installed in materiality. Here I would like to refer to the work of the British writer Angela Carter whose work has been compared to Rego's. Joanne Trevenna has argued that Simone de Beauvoir's idea that a woman is not born as such, but becomes a woman is more relevant to Carter's work than Judith Butler's concept of masquerade, performativity and subjectivity (Trevenna, 2002). Trevenna states that "Carter theatrically presents the process of gender acquisition as being like that of an actor playing a role and thereby suggests a subject position prior to gender acquisition and maintains a sex/gender division which is also rejected by Butler" (Trevenna, 2002: 269). I would argue that not only do Rego's disguised versions of femininity suppose a subject position, since the same idea of conscious role playing is present, but they also emphasize female subjectivity. There is a political and pedagogical dimension to this, since it is aimed at (re)constructing the structures of subjectivity, adding to or exceeding a given situation that has been found insufficient for its articulation of subjectivity (Robinson, 2006).

3.5. Woman as artist

If one is to analyze the displacement of femininity in Rego's work, the topos of the woman as artist is a central element to take into account, alongside woman as wife and woman as saint. This means that I wish to examine the idea of the artist associated with 'genius' and masculinity; the assignment of woman, in the plane of the visible, to the place of object; and, finally, how woman's replacement as a subject - as an artist and as subject within a representation by a woman – has further implications for the representation of female subjectivity. In order to deal with these aspects, I have selected a number of works which serve as visual embodiments of the re-location of women as subjects within the plane of the visual. These are *Joseph's Dream*, *The Artist in her Studio*, *Martha, Mary and Magdalene*, *After Zurbarán* and *Time, Past and Present*.



3.14 *Joseph's Dream* (1990)
Acrylic on paper on canvas, 183 x 122 cm

I will start this analysis with *Joseph's Dream* (1990) (figure 3.14). This work re-visits *The Dream of Saint Joseph*, by Philippe de Champaigne, dating from the seventeenth century. The Flemish painter depicts how Joseph, Jesus earthly father, is visited by an angel who lets him know that Mary's child is God's. Joseph is at the forefront of the image; Mary is at the back. Both figures have a tranquil and hallowed expression. Joseph wears a golden tunic, while Mary wears a blue one (these are iconic colours for both figures).

Rego's *Joseph's Dream* displays a profane and older version of Joseph: a robust old man, sleeping in an armchair. In front of him is a woman depicting him on a canvas. She is not the object of representation; she is not Mary, but the artist; as a depicted picture herself, she does not embody the traditional imagery of beauty, sensuality and immateriality. She is a profane, robust woman; very much a material women. We can see the traces of Joseph's head on the canvas, an angel above him, approaching him. An image of Mary is visible on the right side. The angel, who in the traditional version of this scene came to visit Joseph to announce the sacred pregnancy of Mary, is now part of this painting. This means that, instead of a painting about the "Annunciation", this is a painting about a painting with a different "Annunciation".

In the traditional version, this "Annunciation" was determined by the divine spirit. It was during Joseph's dream that an angel appeared to him announcing Mary's pregnancy. Here, however, the angel is inside the canvas that is painted by the female artist. This means that the sacredness which came from the male figure is now into this woman's hands. Moreover, the angel has ceased to integrate the biblical version about the origins of Jesus and occupies now a role in a visual representation, in the economy of the artist's canvas. This woman shows us how, in fact, she turns the Annunciation into a visual narrative, devoiding it of a transcendental and sacred truth. Traditionally, the painter, preferably male, would be a voice of the divinity; a representative who could make visible the invisible. Here the painting is about painting; and by a woman artist. The "Annunciation" is done by her; she takes elements of the real; the man

in front of her, and mixes them with imaginary figures. She is the determinant and decisive factor in this setting.

The man is deprived of any sacredness; he is significantly different from Joseph's canonical image; he is also completely under her control; he is sleeping and posing as a model for her. As Fiona Bradley put it, although the masculine model is completely dressed, contrary to traditional female models, he is asleep and, hence, does not control the representation in which he is an object[94].

John McEwen notices that *Joseph's Dream* takes the classic formula of the 'male artist painting a beautiful naked woman' and turns it around[95]. Ana Gabriela Macedo also refers to this circumstance and argues that this work is a parody, a role reversal. She takes the words of the painter herself, Paula Rego, to sustain the idea that the female figure is both a parody of Rego and Mary[96]. She adds that the painting also introduces a whole set of palimpsestic narratives and 'blurring of boundaries'. According to Macedo, these include time – past, present and future, the sacred and the profane; the real and fantasy (Macedo, 2010). Once again, I need to question whether or not this work adds something to or exceeds traditional visions of femininity.

On the one hand, the role reversal that takes place opens up different spectatorship positions. We, the spectators, are faced with this image of a woman, not a naked and beautiful woman, but a regular woman. She does not offer herself as a visible object, but gives us a partial (because incomplete) view of the product she is creating; a product which depicts an old man posing as her model. The reaction which is generated by this scene is utterly different from narcissism, masochism or voyeurism. Furthermore, due to the dissymmetry

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94 "Vingando'se talvez da esmagadora maioria de artistas masculinos na National Gallery, Paula Rego inverte o sexo dos papéis usuais de artista e modelo, tornando o homem em vez da mulher vulnerável ao olhar, quer da artista quer do observador. O modelo masculino pode estar completamente vestido, como as suas correspondentes femininas raramente estão, mas está a dormir e por isso não controla a representação da qual é objecto" (Bradley, 2002: 58).

95 "The classic 'Artist and Model' painting shows a man with a beautiful, naked woman; but in Joseph's Dream Paula reverses this archetypal relationship with positively feminist relish" (McEwen, 1997: 194-195).

96 "I wanted to do a girl drawing a man very much, because this role reversal is interesting. She's getting power from doing this, you see. And then I went upstairs and saw Philippe de Champaigne's picture, which I'd never seen before, and the two things fused in some peculiar manner. The picture is so solid, the angel is so solid, and Saint Joseph is so solid. It's wonderful" (Macedo, 2010)

between this woman and this man (active/passive, young/old), we are led to question, by extension (or contamination, I would say), our own place and embodiment; that is, the way our own body, our material roots, our sexuality, determines the way we perceive and interact with this image. This is the result of the role reversal that takes place.

On the other hand, does this image interfere with or present something directly related to female subjectivity? In order to answer this question, I would like to examine the female figure depicted here. In terms of her body materiality, she is not delicate or diaphanous; but there is roundness and a grounded feeling to her. She is seated and has her feet (we can only see one of them) firmly grounded, supporting her body; her skirt further accentuates her volume. Her posture is one of determined engagement in what she is doing. She also reappropriates the possibility of creation; that is, creation is no longer the divine germination taking place in Mary's womb. It is something which comes forth from this woman's fingers, something which results from, as I have mentioned, an interaction between the real and the imaginary. It is no longer a divinely inspired gesture, but the result of a bodily, material activity. Significantly enough, the traditional blue vest of Mary is now a cape the painter uses to avoid getting herself dirty. There is a trace of its origin, but although still associated with creation, it has a practical and functional use. While Mary's blue vest wraps her body with immateriality, separating her from a mundane presence and absorbing the divine attributes that were granted to her. this vest stands in the way of the painter confounding herself with the image she is painting. What she depicts (Joseph, the angel, Mary) comes from her - not the other way around - and she makes sure that her limits are preserved. Finally, *Joseph's Dream* integrates different spheres of activity, thus disentangling the body/mind dualism: what comes from woman's subjectivity, her manifestations, is not confined to a reproductive action; which, in tradition, has been devoid of its material aspect, since Mary became the iconic figure for it. Woman, the body, the object in art history's images is now the subject, the creative subject, who generates images.

3.15 *The Artist in her Studio* (1993) Acrylic on paper on canvas, 180 x 130 cm

Moving now to *The Artist in her Studio* (1993) (figure 3.15), according to McEwen, "the artist smokes a pipe in emulation of that

Victorian symbol of female independence, George Sand, and dreams, while her pupil (the diminutive size suggests she may be part of the dream – her younger self) confronts a still-life arrangement of cabbages" (McEwen, 1997: 207). George Sand was herself a nineteenth-century artist, a writer, who sometimes wore male clothing and smoked tobacco in public, which caused indignation. She wrote against social conventions which trapped women into domestic and matrimonial rulings.

Rego's painter/artist (a sculptress perhaps) is a woman; the object is not a man. The space displays a series of elements: two canvases, for instance, which depict the image of a dove and a woman picking up and collecting hay. Apart from the central figure, there are two other figures that are involved in artistic practice. The first one is standing close to the main subject and the second one occupies the right bottom corner of the canvas. An odd and obvious peculiarity is their size. They are small; so small that we cannot tell if, in fact, they are real or integrate the visual imagery of the artist.

We seem to have entered the inside of the painter's imaginary, more than a physical space; where visual memories and traditions (see the female statue, repeating precisely the female stereotypes that can be found throughout art history) cohabit with less common images, such as the young woman digging a hole; cabbages displayed on top of the table (a more prosaic *stilleben*), next to a miniature mouse who sings.

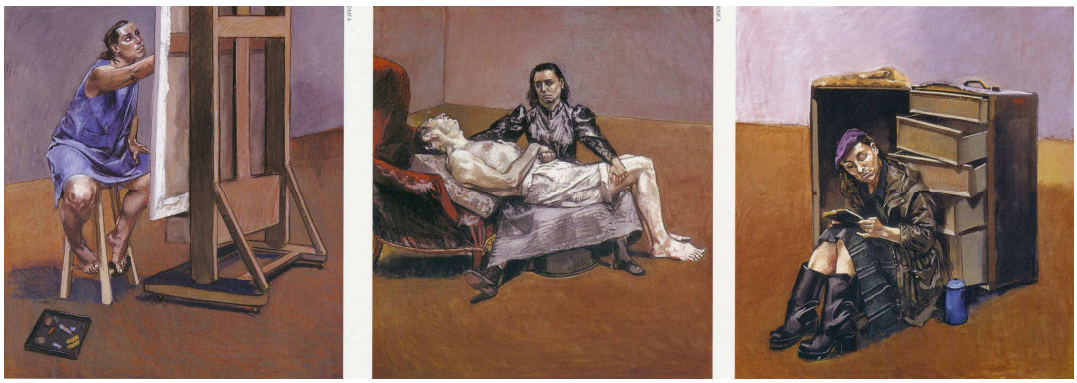
All of them wear painter's clothing; they are holding some kind of object related to this activity. The exception is the central figure who is smoking a pipe. The exaggerated attributes and poses of this character are normally associated with masculinity: although she is wearing a skirt, we can also see some very dark masculine boots. She is all but graceful in the way she places her body, challenging the norms of how "a proper lady" should present herself; she has her legs wide open, is not sitting straight and dismisses whoever may come in front of her.

Once again, the physical features of the woman artist are not in tune with the canonical representation of beauty. Here, as the object of the painting, in the sense that she is the central figure of Rego's painting, she adopts a stronger and a willful posture. One that basically reaffirms the idea that she is the one in charge of what is going on; she decides what to present to the spectator; we can look at her, but she is not looking at us; she refuses to be looked at.

The only way out (or in) for women in art history was as an object assimilated and subsumed under the binary opposition woman-saint/woman-prostitute. This means that either her body was, in fact, subtracted from

representation or it was depicted as the visual symbol for the body, thus standing in opposition to the male identification with the mind. In this case, however, the female figure is the one taking control of the creative process. It is not that she has ceased to inhabit her body; on the contrary, she is, as I have mentioned, very much present in her own body, but, and this is very important, she does not present the characteristics of a female body as a body of and for femininity. And, although, she is her body, she is also her mind. What she imagines and brings to the fore of visuality are also manifestations and extensions of her subjectivity.

An important aspect to consider is also the object of representation, not only in Rego's paintings but in the paintings within her paintings. In *Joseph's Dream*, we see how the female artist mixes iconic and imaginary elements with a life model who is posing for her. This model is a man, an old and robust man; he is not elegant, not young and, most significantly, not a woman. I would like to look at two other cases in which Rego presents us with female artists engaged in their creative activity – *Martha, Mary and Magdalene* (1998) (figure 3.16) and *After Zurbarán* (2007) (figure 3.17). What can we trace that is significant, other than a role reversal in representation?



3.16 *Martha, Mary and Magdalene* (1999)
Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium.

Martha was the sister of Mary Magdalene and Lazarus. According to *The Golden Legend*, there are no any records to show that she was married or "lived intimately with men" (Voragine, 1993: 23). She received Jesus in her house and witnessed the resurrection of her brother, Lazarus. In Rego's triptych Martha, Mary and Magdalene, the idea of woman as saint and woman as artist intertwine again. Although not in the centre panel, Martha does have a central role, since she registers everything that is taking place. Ana Gabriela Macedo, when analyzing this triptych, quotes from Rego's interview with Fiona Bradley:

> "I'd just got back from Spain, where I saw this amazing sculpture of Mary holding the dead Jesus and looking really cross, and I wanted

> to try and do something with it (...). Mary looking really cross and disgusted. I wanted to get that (…) She's not in disguise; she owns up to being a Magdalene. Like the others, she's outside, she's got her coat on, waiting for a train or something. But she's ok – she's over it all; she's a teacher now (…) [Martha] has nothing transgressive about her at all. She's the practical one, finishing it all off, putting it all in a painting - all the disgust, the hope and the eventual survival. The rhythm of the triptych starts with her and comes back to her. She contains it all, and together with her sister she buttresses all the strong emotion and the difficulty in the center" (Macedo, 2008:170).

According to Macedo, *Martha* can thus be read as an alter-ego of the artist herself; she is endowed with the responsibility of "putting it all in a painting". She is the focus of this narrative of "disgust, hope and eventual survival"; it all starts with her ability to see and tell the scene from her peculiar perspective. Such is the role of the painter for Rego, as metonymically represented in the picture of *Martha*: "she contains it all; she buttresses it all" (Macedo, 2008: 168). If, as Rego argues, Martha has nothing transgressive about her, the fact that she occupies the role of the painter is, itself, transgressive. The two other figures, Mary Magdalene and Mary, may be figurations of Martha's canvas. If so, the female artist has, thus, taken the power to introduce changes into the representation of women - Mary and Magdalene, perhaps two of the most most iconic representations of women, who have also been used to install the binary woman saint/woman prostitute. Nonetheless, in Rego's work Mary and Magdalene are quite different. As Rego put it, Mary is distanced from the traditional iconography. She is seating on top of a bucket, holding Jesus' body, a grown-up man. She shows no empathy, commiseration or suffering; instead, she has an expression which shows us that she does not enjoy being in this situation; she looks "crossed and disgusted"; those are Rego's specific words. Mary Magdalene, in her turn, is no longer the sinner or the redeemed prostitute. She is a self-assured young woman, engaged in her readings, showing no interest in who is watching her. In so doing, she does not offer herself to us for our condemnation or our absolution. In short, with the presence of the female artist, a figure created by Rego, woman is unbound from her objectification; a change in the visual and subjective paradigm takes place: women are turned into embodied subjects with agency.

3.17 *After Zurbarán* (2007)
Graphite and conté pencil on paper, 137 x 102 cm

After Zurbarán (2007) was inspired by a painting from Francisco de Zurbarán. St. Luke is depicting Christ, who is crucified. He directs his look to Jesus with admiration and compassion. He (St Luke) can be seen as a replacement for Zurbarán; thus illustrating that the painter can transmit the life of Christ and making visible the sacrifice He has made for mankind. At the same time, the painter's venerability becomes an example. This reinforces the idea of creation being associated with masculinity and divinity.

I will now look at Rego's work. Once again, we see a woman as artist and once again her physical and visual attributes are not feminized. This time the object is not male and not even human. Instead of Christ on the cross, we encounter a creature whose body resembles a skeleton. Replacing its head is a mask, without eyes. In Marco Livingstone's words,

> "Christ has been replaced, with no intentional blasphemy, by a bony elderly woman with sagging breasts and a diaper-like loin cloth; forlorn and humiliated, she is gazed at pityingly but also a dry-eyed curiosity, by a clothed and healthy younger woman who stands in both for St Luke the painter and for Rego herself" (Livingstone, 2008: 6).

We are faced, in this manner, with a deviation from masculinity and divinity. Although a masculine figure turned into an object, Christ departed from the confinement of earth into a non-material, non-perishable, non-sexualized body. This figure, however, 'fails' to pass as human or a divine figure. On the contrary, it comes close to the monstrous. It gives no sense of relief; nor does it inspire the admiration or compassion of the spectator, as in Zurbarán´s painting. This is a material and sexualized body. It does not fit into the perishable, non perishable dichotomy because it is un-human and non-divine.

If Zurbarán's painting portrays a situation which is the result of exterior circumstances: Christ's crucifixion, although chosen by the depicted male artist as his subject matter, was not the result of his direct action. The painter merely provided a testimonial. In Rego's version, it all seems staged, placed together there with a specific purpose. The artist is half-seated on a stool and the figure is supporting itself on the steps of some stairs and on an easel; framed from all sides. Another peculiar detail is the fact that the artist is not drawing or painting this picture on a canvas or paper, but, instead, seems to be drawing it; in other words, the figure, which is standing in front of the woman artist is, in fact, not the model but the represented subject itself. This woman has created a tridimensional figure; she is almost taking the role of God in being able to give life to another creature. And what creature? With her own hands, this woman was able to generate a subject which avoids the confinements of patriarchal discourse and which steps beyond the fixity of an essentialized subject. What she has created is a being in transformation, a subject which is on the verge of becoming.

3.18 *Time, Past and Present (1990-91)*
Acrylic on paper marouflé and canvas,
183 x 183 cm

Finally, *Time, Past and Present* (1990-91) (figure 3.18) was inspired by *St Jerome in his study* by Antonello da Messina[97]. Rego explained that she used a personal friend as a model, Keith Sutton. McEwen introduces us to this figure:

97 "St Jerome by Antonello is the most magical painting – a house within a church with St Jerome sitting there and, inside the church but not quite inside his house, a little lion, running towards you from the distance. It's a magical painting. Anyway, I wanted to do this old friend of mine, Keith, as the Saint, sitting in the room with all his memories. Some of his memories are taken from pictures in the National Gallery, and some of them are made up" (Rego in McEwen, 1997: 189).

"Keith had been in the Navy before he became a painter and art critic; in 1966 he was responsible for the first article about Paula in the British press. It is, therefore, singularly appropriate that he should sit in a room full of pictures, and preside at the birth of new talent, new life. Keith died in 1991, but not before he saw the finished picture. For Keith's friends *Time –Past and Present* will always be a fitting memorial to his own talents as a painter and a writer" (McEwen, 1997: 193-194).

The main character of this work is a small girl who is drawing on top of a small table, and an older man posing for her. It is more an informal situation than a solemn or 'professional' arrangement. The dissymmetry is caused by age, sex, situation and even the dimension of the characters. Once again, the roles are inverted, if we remember the art historical tradition of women as models and men as artists. On his side, or behind him, the walls are covered with paintings rendering nautical motives and religious iconography. Her side, though, is shortened; she is standing in the far corner of the frame. Her sheet is blank; she is beginning to draw something. We do not know if she is drawing the man or if he is just looking, interested in what she is drawing.

One of the ideas associated with 'the genius' of the artist is the discovery of his talents by an older artist. There are several myths which narrate the story of a young boy, often a shepherd, who, at some point, is inadvertently discovered by a renowned and respected older artist[98]. Rego adopts this idea and changes it: she paints a young girl and not a boy. The girl sits in front of the man and is busy drawing. The scopic regime in this painting has an interesting and complex structure. Not only does the role reversal have an impact on us as spectators; but also the lines that are crossed in terms of looks/gazes inside this frame. All of them redirect us to our bodily presence in front of the image.

[98] "The fairy tale of the discovery by an older artist or discerning patron of the Boy Wonder, usually in the guise of a lowly shepherd boy, has been a stock-in trade of artistic mythology ever since the great Cimabue while the lad was guarding his flocks, drawing sheep on a stone; Cimabue, overcome with admiration for the realism of the drawing, immediately invited the humble youth to be his pupil. Through some mysterious coincidence, later artists including Beccafumi, Andrea Sansovino, Andrea del Castagno, Mantegna, Zurbarán, and Goya were all discovered in similar pastoral circumstances" (Nochlin, 1988: 154).

3. 6. Conclusion

To conclude, somehow the female artist duplicates, as a mise-en-abime, the operation which takes place in terms of the re-formulation of female subjectivity in Rego's work. Woman ceases to be the object and becomes the subject. The woman artist becomes the privileged vehicle for representing this transformation: through a different style, a specific feminine style they create an alternative place for woman within the visual field with different attributes; an embodied subject.

In this chapter I have examined a selection of Paula Rego's images which visually address and question patriarchal parameters of femininity. By doing so, my aim was to analyze the nature of this revisitation, that is, to see what these images did to femininity's models. I have argued that they do not only dismiss these models, by deconstructing them, but they jam the mechanism of representation, by displacing them, putting them in new contexts and adding to them the possibility of portraying women as embodied subjects, different from the fixed images of patriarchy. I concluded that the mechanisms used are not deconstruction, but a hysterical mimicking of femininity. Rego takes femininity's traces to its very limit, and installs a productive mimesis, which allows her to overcome the obstacles to an articulation of female subjectivity. In this way Paula Rego's work adds to its aesthetic dimension the critical and political project of unsettling sedimented images of female subjectivity, and opening up a way for difference to become visible.

Chapter 4

Making a spectacle: power, violence and female subjects

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to demonstrate how certain works created by the female artist Paula Rego manage to visually formulate questions about female subjectivity and power relations in terms of subjection and resistance.

To address female subjectivity, it is necessary that one analyzes the power relations which can derive from sexual difference. I have mentioned previously that one way to look at power relationships is to focus on scopic regimes, that is, the connection between image and spectator. Another way is to analyze the subjects within a certain image; the situation they are in; their relation to other subjects who can be present in the visual scene.

Regarding subjection and resistance, one has to build on Foucault's understanding of power. However, one should also take into account that a feminist perspective on Foucault is not without its challenges, as Monique Devaux has argued (1994).[99]. For Foucault never thoroughly addresses the specificity of power exercised on women[100]. Nevertheless, one can summarize a Foucauldian concept of power as being "exercised rather than possessed", as "operating in a

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99 "Using Foucault in an analysis of rape is certainly not free of problems. Not only because he has not addressed the specificity of female subjects and their relation to power structures, but also due to his position about rape. Foucault argued that the punishment of rape should be exclusive of physical violence, leaving, thus, out sexual violence: "… and when rape is punished, it is exclusively the physical violence that should be punished (…) and to say that it is nothing but an assault, and nothing else (…) whether one punches his fist in someone's face, or his penis in the sexual organ makes no d i f f e r e n c e . . . (in Plaza, 1981: 27). Later on he admits though that: "For one ends by saying this: sexuality as such has, in the body, a preponderant place; the sexual organ is not a hand, it is not a hair, it is not the nose. It must be protected, surrounded, at all events, vested with legislation which will not be that which is valid for the rest of the body" (in Plaza, 1981: 31).

100 "Feminist scholars who take up this conceptualization of power treat the account of self-surveillance offered by the model of the Panopticon as a compelling explanatory paradigm for women's acquiescence to, and collusion with, patriarchal standards of femininity. However, it is an explanation which must be modified to fit feminist purposes. Sandra Bartky applauds Foucault's work on disciplinary practices in modernity and on the construction of docile bodies, but she cautions that his analysis "treats the body . . . as if bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life." Thus, Bartky asks: "Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? . . . [Foucault] is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine."[10]

capillary fashion from below", as being "produced at every moment and at every point; polymorphous, often and even primarily productive and positive rather than repressive or negative" (Andemahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz, 1997: 212).

The main question, for a feminist understanding of Foucault, remains the articulation of the idea of subjects who are controlled and submitted to control and the possibility of resistance. In my view, this question is also valid for a discussion of Rego's work. In fact, the painter places women in domestic situations related to the clinic and the prison, which according to Foucault serve to fabricate "docile bodies". This is how Rego renders visible the tension between power and resistance which is accentuated by violence and its connection with power. I will be using the idea of power as a system of differences, which can introduce divisions within a subject or separate certain subjects from others:

> "The objectivizing of the subject in what I shall call "dividing practices". The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from other. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the "good boys"" (Foucault, 2000: 326).

I will focus specifically on how power is exercised on women, through the oppositions she experiences by being placed in specific situations. These oppositions can, in my view, be summarized in the couplings mad/sane, sick/healthy and guilty/victim[101]. Intimately connected to this understanding of power is the definition of resistance as formed within the power relationships and not as something which precedes power or manifests itself outside power:

> "I am not positing a substance of power. I'm simply saying: as soon as there's a relation of power there's a possibility of resistance. We're never trapped by power: it's always possible to modify its hold, in determined conditions and following a precise strategy" (Foucault in Sawicki, 1991: 25).

Another aspect that needs to be addressed at this point, and before discussing the systems of differences between women and others, is the

[101] "Disciplinary power is exercised on the body and the soul of individuals at the same time as it renders them more docile (…) Disciplinary practices create the divisions healthy/ill, sane/mad, legal/delinquent, which, by virtue of their authoritative status, can be used as effective means of normalization and social control" (Sawicki, 1991: 22).

connection between power and violence, since both are present in Rego's series. Moreover, power and violence have disparate effects on subjects and, as such, generate distinct reactions.

According to Foucault, power is a mode of action which has an indirect impact on other actions; while violence, in its turn, has a direct and immediate effect: "A relationship of violence acts upon an action; it forces, it bends, it breaks, it destroys, or it closes all possibilities" (Foucault, 2000: 341). The response or the effect produced by power and violence is also divergent. Violence tends to have an overwhelming effect, in such a way that it generates passivity in the subject who is submitted to it; this passivity is precisely due to the fact that the subject's integrity is challenged. Power, on the other hand, opens up the possibility for the subject to respond; "the other (…) is recognized and maintained as a subject who acts; and (…) faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up" (Foucault, 2000: 341).

Deveaux (1994) argues that this formulation, which seemingly opposes power to violence, does not "look at the inner processes that condition women's sense of freedom or choice in addition to external manifestations of power and dominance (…) Women's "freedom" does not simply refer to objective possibilities for manoeuvring or resisting within a power dynamic but concerns whether a woman feels empowered in her specific context" (Deveaux, 1994: 234). Regarding the subject's response to power, Deveaux argues that it can not be simplified with solely objective reasons. This, however, denounces the idea that resistance, in fact, is an ulterior response to power, whereas, according to Foucault, whenever power structures are set in motion, resistance is also, and simultaneously, present, as a possibility to be enacted.

Furthermore, it is important to clarify that, according to Foucault, power and violence do not oppose each other. On the contrary, they can intermingle (Foucault, 2000), as will be made clear in the following paragraphs.

4.2. Women as spectacle

The title of this chapter, "women as spectacle", refers to the idea that the field of the visual becomes a display for women's objectification, that is, their transformation into an object inside the visual. In a considerable part of Rego's work, women are made into a spectacle, that is, into privileged figures of the visual. What are they a spectacle of? Of power and violence, I would argue. In fact, women are often inside a structure which sets them apart from other

subjects, namely, male subjects, due to an oppositional dynamic. They are also made to be seen dealing with violence.

In Rego's series dealing with bodily manifestations with a subjective and social impact – sexual relations and birth - most women are seen in situations which display power asymmetries. In some cases, they also carry in their bodies more or less explicit signs of violence. What remains to be analysed is, thus, the presence of power and violence in these works; the articulation between them; their distribution by the (male and female) agents involved; the answer given to them. To sum up, we need to ask whether, in these cases, they enact subversion and resistance and, if so, through which "instrumental modes" (Foucault, 2000). Are these women resisting power or are they stripped of any means to do so? I will analyse different works created by Rego where women are placed in situations of power and violence and then attempt to provide an answer to this question. In order to do so, I have divided these works into three different sets. The first one is concerned with the topic of abortion and birth; the second one with rape; and the third one with female mutilation. The reason for creating these sets, which do not follow a chronological order, is an attempt to cover, at the same time, the specificity of each event which takes place in women's bodies and relate it to a power/violence/resistance cluster.

4.3. Abortion and birth

I will begin with the set about abortion and birth, which has managed to gain much attention from the general public, due to Paula Rego's participation in the discussion about abortion, which took place during two referenda in Portugal (in 1998 and 2007). As will be demonstrated, in the case of abortion women converge with the criminal due to the regulatory practices that abortioin gives rise to; power comes from the institutionalization of the body. The clinical and the criminal intertwine and make these women's bodies a body of proof.

Agnete Strøm (2004) published an article devoted to Rego's "Untitled Series" in the journal *Reproductive Health Matters*. The curiosity of having a cultural product analysed in a publication on health matters highlights precisely the fact that power, in Rego's series, is connected to the clinical and the separation from the Other. Importantly, given the Portugese context, the abortion series also relates power to the institution of prison, since until recently abortion was considered a criminal practice, more than a clinical matter. It is necessary, though, to contextualize abortion in Portugal and its institutionalization in a time frame. Some historical changes are connected with transformations in the

Portuguese political context. In fact, although abortion has been a practice in which power structures intervene, namely sexual difference and class asymmetries, the way abortion has been legally and socially handled reflects some significant shifts. In any case, as will be seen, only quite recently has sexual difference been taken into account as the main factor in an analysis and discussion of this practice.

During the entire period of the dictatorship, contrary to what took place in other European countries with a fascist regime, and despite the legal concept of abortion as a crime, only a few cases ended in arrests. According to Ana Prata (2010), during this period institutionalization worked in a peculiar way; it disguised cases of illegal abortions. Even when women were rushed to the hospital due to complications, abortion was simply erased from public files. The regime's ideology supported natality through a complete dismissal of family planning and a condemnation of anti-conception methods. Despite the state's determination in protecting these values, a considerable number of women were familiar with abortion[102]. The reaction of the regime was to find ways to silence these cases. And they were, in most cases, successful, one must say. First of all, women themselves remained silent due to the condemnation of abortion by the state, the church and family structures. In other words, having an abortion was not something women would share. Moreover, the state found ways of institutionalizing silence. In cases of abortions with health complications and hospitalization, the general procedure dictated that these cases were not registered[103].

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102 "Decrying this fact, in 1944 a representative of the right-wing Mothers Work for National Education contended that more than one-third of Portuguese women had been involved in abortion procedures, and called on the regime to vigorously enforce the 1886 law (…) Women were, in fact, using their bodies to resist the pro-natalist ideology of church and state. For many women, this form of "bodily resistance"—expressed in the decision to have an illegal abortion—was an act of desperation conditioned by her family's lack of economic resources. But given that the practice was generalized among women from different social strata, one can argue that deciding on an abortion was, at least for some, an expression of agency and of the ability reclaim control over their own bodies and lives at a personal level (Prata, 2010: 582).

103 "Throughout the period of the dictatorship illegal abortions were mostly ignored and silenced in various ways. First, there were no official data on abortion, which served as an institutionalized means for silencing its impact. Even incidences of hospitalization and death due to complications from abortions, which could have been traced easily by doctors, were vastly underreported (…) At the same time, however, this also reinforced the invisibility of the issue. Moreover, by prosecuting so few cases

In the 1970s, abortion became public. Two particular cases triggered this development: the trials of Maria Antónia Palla and Conceição Massano. Abortion was made into a spectacle, but a spectacle which focused on class and personal freedom instead of women's experience of abortion. Both cases are reported by Prata:

> "The first trial was that of journalist and activist Maria Antónia Palla. In 1976, Palla aired an illegal abortion being done at a clinic in the outskirts of Lisbon on TV. Palla was accused of crimes relating to "moral offenses" and "incitation to crime," and she found herself on trial in 1979. During the interceding 3 years, a solidarity movement in defense of the journalist began to take shape. The second trial involved a young woman, Conceição Massano, who was on trial for having an illegal abortion. Beyond the prosecution itself, which was somewhat rare in Portugal, there were specific features that contributed to the salience of this trial within women's organizations and the news media. On the one hand, the investigation that led to Massano's arrest outraged activists and public opinion in general, since it was seen as an invasion of privacy and personal freedoms. Massano was denounced anonymously, and the police searched her personal diary for evidence. On the other hand, Massano was also an orphan who had grown up very poor and found herself pregnant at eighteen. Activists argued that Massano's case was representative of the women that illegal abortion afflicted

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criminally, Portugal's right-wing authoritarian regime dimmed the criminal visibility of illegal abortion. Institutionally, the regime opted to deny its existence, by neither prosecuting the practice, nor keeping any official records regarding the rate or impact of abortion (…) "Although there were formal mechanisms of punishment Portugal's right-wing authoritarian regime dimmed the criminal visibility of illegal abortion. Institutionally, the regime opted to deny its existence, by neither prosecuting the practice, nor keeping any official records regarding the rate or impact of abortion. Although there were formal mechanisms of punishment in place for illegal abortion, punishment was mostly of the informal sort. The threat or possibility of imprisonment and the clandestine nature of the situation acted as diffuse forms of punishment. The experience of clandestine abortion was often associated with humiliation, degrading conditions, and doctor's mistreatment of women" (Prata, 2010: 582).

> the most, as well as of those who were more vulnerable to the state's intrusion into a matter seen by activists as exclusively private (…).As in other trials, Massano's "class issues" emerged as the dominant interpretive framing of the trial's injustice. Women's organizations helped shape and reinforce views about how the criminalization of abortion was unjust and unfair, while defending the worthiness of its most frequent victims—poor and working class women. They selected social class and social justice, not gender, as their main injustice frame" (Prata, 2010: 585).

After these trials, the issue of abortion disappeared from public debate. It existed; it intersected sexual difference with social class; and it remained an illegal practice, with few exceptions[104]. Rego's work had a great relevance in bringing this subject into the public realm, in replacing silence with strong images.

In terms of tracing a genealogy for Rego's work on this subject matter, there is no art-historical tradition for the representation of abortion. Apart from Rego, there are only two other female artists who have portrayed this subject or a related subject– Tracey Emin and Frida Kahlo, as Strøm has pointed out. I will examine the way they have addressed this subject in order to establish a parallel with Rego's work and determine possible differences, if any.

Tracey Emin is a young British artist, who creates confessional art; a type of art which confronts the viewer with her intimate life and her personal space, in different material expressions. She often faces the viewer with her body and materiality, provoking some discomfort and uneasiness. In 1996, for instance, she created an unconventional and daring piece; she stayed inside a locked room in a gallery. She remained there during fourteen days, without any objects, except for painting material. Her intention was to come to terms with painting's tradition and

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104 "In 1984 and 1997, two laws decriminalised abortion in three different situations:

(1) For maternal indications (up to 12 completed weeks);

(2) For fetal indications (up to 16 completed weeks since 1984, and up to 24 completed weeks since 1997);

(3) In case of rape, renamed since 1997 'crime against sexual freedom' (up to 12 completed weeks between 1984 and 1997, up to 16 completed weeks since then)" (Da Silva, 2009: 245).

her own memories of it[105].

Terribly Wrong dates from 1997 and is a mono print displaying an inverted image. Emin created it by "drawing on a piece of glass and pressing it against paper to give a mirrored image. In that work, a scribbled, indistinct liquid mass discharges from between a pair of legs open in the same posture that we see in *Something's Wrong* (2002)[106]". This inverted image replicates the idea of Emin seeing herself as the viewers see her.

The sole character of Terribly Wrong is a woman who has no character or identifiable space around her. We do not see her face, just her body, and blood. She does not have any personality, as if turned into an assemblage of limbs. She is an anonymous body, faceless, completely exposed to the spectator. It is not clear what the title *Terribly Wrong* signals; if the negative attribute "wrong" is attached to society's condemnation of abortion, to its exposure or to women's degradation into a non-human body. As Rosemary Betterton (2006) pointed out,

> "(…) the mono print "Terribly Wrong" (1997), shows the artist's naked body arched back with legs apart, expelling "an abortive squiggly pile of blood, shit or semen" (...) The female body is rendered with crude forceful strokes and seen from a foreshortened frontal view that emphasizes its vulnerability. Its isolated placing on the blank page below the wobbly uncertain script, "Terribly Wrong" in reverse) and "SOMETHING'S WRONG," has an effect that both touches and distances. The technique of mono print—drawing an image directly onto the plate, which is then reversed in the printing process—conveys both the immediacy of the direct trace of Emin's hand and articulates a sense of otherness, of that which is familiar having become

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105 "In 1974, Joseph Beuys did a performance called *I Love America*, and *America Loves Me* where he lived in a gallery with a wild coyote for seven days as a symbolic act of reconciliation with nature. In 1996, Tracey Emin lived in a locked room in a gallery for fourteen days, with nothing but a lot of empty canvases and art materials, in an attempt to reconcile herself with paintings. Viewed through a series of wide-angle lenses embedded in the walls, Emin could be watched, stark naked, shaking off her painting demons. Starting by making images like the artists she really admired (i.e. Egon Schiele, Edvard Munch, Yves Klein), Emin's two-week art-therapy session resulted in a massive outpouring of autobiographical images, and the discovery of a style all her own. The room was extracted in its entirety, and now exists as an installation work" in http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/artists/tracey_emin.htm.

106 http://collection.britishcouncil.org/exhibition/future/11/15839/object/49047

strange. The intimacy and distance effected by the technical process mirrors the immediacy and time lag involved in its production" (Betterton, 2006: 90-91).

Frida Kahlo is another example of a female artist who has brought women's bodies, and her own lived and embodied memories, to the canvas. No doubt her work is one of the strongest examples of an autobiographical work. In fact, she has crated poignant images which depict her intimate experience of pain, caused by a tram accident she suffered in 1925, when she was only eighteen years old. Due to her injuries, she was no longer able to bear a child[107]. After realizing that her physical condition did not allow her to continue her first pregnancy, she was compelled to have an abortion. Some years later, when she

107 Her boyfriend at the time, Alex Gómez Arias, narrates the traumatic event: "The electric train [streetcar] with two cars approached the bus slowly. It hit the bus in the middle. Slowly the train pushed the bus. The bus had a strange elasticity. It bent more and more, but for a time it did not break. It was a bus with long benches on either side. I remember that at one moment my knees touched the knees of the person sitting opposite me. I was sitting next to Frida. When the bus reached its maximal flexibility it burst into a thousand pieces, and the train kept moving. It ran over many people.

I remained under the train. Not Frida. But among the iron rods of the train, the handrail broke and went through Frida from one side to the other at the level of the pelvis.

When I was able to stand up, I got out from under the train. I had no lesions, only contusions. Naturally the first thing that I did was to look for Frida.

Something strange had happened. Frida was totally nude. The collision had unfastened her clothes. Someone in the bus, probably a house painter, had been carrying a packet of powdered gold. This package broke, and the gold fell all over the bleeding body of Frida. When people saw her, they cried, 'La bailarina, la bailarina!' With the gold on her red, bloody body, they thought she was a dancer.

I picked her up….and then I noticed with horror that Frida had a piece of iron in her body. A man said, 'We have to take it out!' He put his knee on Frida's body and said, 'Let's take it out.' When he pulled it out, Frida screamed so loud that when the ambulance from the Red Cross arrived, her screaming was louder than the siren. Before the ambulance came, I picked up Frida and put her in the display window of a billiard room. I took off my coat and put it over her. I thought she was going to die. Two or three people did die at the scene….others died later" (Herrera, 2003: 48-49).

became pregnant again, she suffered a miscarriage[108]. Two particular images lay bare to us how Kahlo experienced the impossibility of conceiving a child: *Henry Hospital*, an oil painting dating from 1932, and *Frida and the miscarriage*, a lithograph also dating from 1932.

In *Henry Hospital*, the only mark which connects this scene to the hospital is the inscription on the bed. For the rest, Kahlo places the scene in an empty space, somewhere outside, with an industrial city in the background. This woman is outside the city, which is unfamiliar to her. Her body is attached (by means of an umbilical cord, one could say) to six different objects which relate to the miscarriage she suffered: most importantly a foetus, a machine which can represent the intervention of medicine, with its cold and impersonal feel; and segments of the female body[109].

Frida and the miscarriage is visually related to the previous work. It also displays a woman as its main character. In fact, both are self-portraits of Frida Kahlo. The image is divided into two parts, one lighter, the other darker; in one part we see a line (once again, the umbilical cord) descending like a spiral through her leg and attached to an embryo; the other part displays drops of blood or tears, which finally merge with the earth.

As I already mentioned, Frida's work is concerned with the impossibility of having children and not with the voluntary decision of putting an unwanted pregnancy to term, as is the case in Emin's work. The most significant difference, however, is not based on subject matter, but on the ideas that each artist stresses. One emphasizes a body torn apart, a subject who has been turned into a disassembled body; the other one the emotional suffering her loss has caused.If

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108 "Kahlo's inability to bear a child, after the injuries she suffered in a tram crash, was painfully close to her. She had had one abortion when it was clear that her health would not allow her to go through with the pregnancy. When she became pregnant again a couple of years later, she miscarried.

Twelve days after her miscarriage she wrote to Dr Eloesser: 'Doctorcito querido: I have wanted to write to you for a long time than you can imagine. I had so looked forward to having a little Dieguito that I cried a lot, but it's over, there is nothing else that can be done except to bear it.'" (Espinoza, 2007).

109 "The images of a foetus, a pelvic bone, a female abdomen, and an orchid that resembles a uterus are based on medical illustrations. The snail, she said, referred to the slowness of the miscarriage, while a sixth object, an autoclave, is an instrument used to sterilise medical utensils. The link to sterility probably relates to Kahlo's sense of her own infertility." in http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/kahlo/roomguide.shtm

we now examine the central theme of abortion in Rego's series, the issue of power, violence and resistance comes into play. I have previously argued that power can be an instrument at work in certain institutions, such as the clinical (Foucault used the term 'disciplinary institutions'). In Rego's case, however, abortion takes place inside the domestic place, that is, the nucleus of the family and the place most hidden from the outside look. For instance in the *Untitled Series* and *Girl with Foetus* (2006) (figure 4.1). These women occupy a place which is devoted to them in a patriarchal structure. Nevertheless, these walls do not enclose harmonious and populated places. Although the clinical is replaced by the domestic, the institution of prison is a menace to these women. It threatens them with punishment.

4.1. *Girl with Foetus* (2006)
Lithograph, 75 x 46.5 cm

Despite this circumstance, these women do not avoid contact; on the contrary, they show us their faces; they look at us. They do not display bleakness, which asks for commiseration; they are not totally shattered by the situation. This is, in fact, also Strøm's understanding:

> "Paintings that might fit Noonan's description of how abortion would likely be depicted in art are "Henry Ford Hospital" (1932) and "Frida and the miscarriage" (1932) by the Mexican painter Frida Kahlo as testimonies of how her body aborted every pregnancy she had. The long wished-for child with her husband, Diego Rivera, also an artist, was never to be. Untitled can also be seen in the light of Tracey Emin's graphic exploitations of a woman's experience of miscarriage and botched abortion in "Terrible wrong" (1997) and "Homage to Edvard Munch and all

> my dead children'' (1998). What Paula Rego is depicting is quite the opposite, however, as she is making us see that it is the woman's choice and decision to abort her pregnancy" (Strøm, 2004).

Indeed, as Fiona Bradley pointed out, ''Paula Rego's abortion pictures are images of revenge against social injustice, of the triumph of will over circumstance. The details – a discarded watch and pants, comforting woolly socks pulled on with a smart dress, a school uniform worn with the confident insouciance of the rebel – are heartbreaking, but the artist makes it clear that what is happening is the intention of each woman, who fully accepts her role as protagonist in the action. Crucially, they are doing this, they are not having it done to them: it is their right and their choice. Many of the women meet the viewer's gaze. Others are turned in on themselves, making it clear that what is happening is no one's business but their own. None of them accepts the role of victim'' (Bradley, 2002: 93).

As Fiona Bradley points out, these women reject the role of victims; they remain in the scene, in front of the spectator, showing us their disgust, their disavowal of any regard. Their faces succeed in expressing everything that Emin's fragmented bodies wanted to convey. The *Untitled Series* invites or instigates the spectator to focus on these women instead of on their foetuses; on their pain, but also on the challenge they pose to the morality of the Catholic Church:

> "The bloodshed of the abortion room appears to highlight their pain rather than the death of the discarded foetuses, bringing maternal rather than filial suffering to the fore. *Matres dolorosae* prioritised over deposed sons. Ultimately, however, none of these female is actually dead, and the depicted trauma becomes itself the encoded script for a moral battle fought and perhaps won. A battle (…) whose contenders may not after all be the obvious ones of unwilling mother versus aborted foetus, but instead a gallery of women, girls and unborn children pitted against the customary enemies of church and state in Rego's unquiet universe" (Lisboa, 2003: 140).

I will, at this point, move to Rego's *Girl With Foetus*. Dating from 2005, it can be considered a sort of conclusion to the *Untitled series* (McEwen, 2008). It takes its title from an unpublished story by Martin McDonagh:

> "In the story a young woman has an abortion and then goes on holiday with her boyfriend; but the holiday is ruined by a nightmare in which she finds herself in a forest of foetuses, wailing: 'Mummy, mummy, we want you.' She commits suicide and is reconciled with her baby in the foetus forest" (McEwen, 2008: 168).

If McDonagh's stories highlight the nightmarish torments of children and young women, which lead them to self-destruction[110], in my view, Rego concentrates on women's lived experiences and the possibility of creating alternative visions of difference. The title *Girl with Foetus*, by itself, can provoke some disturbance in the spectator, in the sense that it announces an unusual portrait, to say the least. It is a portrait that would certainly not be included in some art history pages. It is a bold and crude title, without disguises or embellishments. And the image is as rough as the title. A woman is seated next to a sink; she has an underdeveloped foetus on her lap. It is not a smooth creature, but a wrinkled, grotesque being. We cannot see its face, only a large red head. Both foetus and woman are attached (or tied to each other, I would say), through an umbilical cord.

As Betterton pointed out, the "category of fetal personhood that emerged with fetal imaging has been contested widely by feminist critics, who have argued that the woman as maternal subject is always erased from such representations" (Betterton, 2006: 92). Peggy Phelan's analysis of the visibility of the foetus within New Right anti-abortion campaigns focuses on the psychic dimensions of the debate. She notes the central failure of such discursive representations to represent the life and experiences of pregnant women, thus stressing "the illegibility of the materiality of a pregnant body within a visual economy that everywhere marks the boundary between self and other. Embodied in and by what is and is not one body, the visibly pregnant woman makes the possibility of a continuous subject/ivity real" (Phelan, 1993: 171). There is a fundamental contradiction in the representation of the maternal subject as both the embodiment of a lawful desire for reproduction within a patriarchal economy and as "the spectre of the monstrous, forever murdering/castrating, mother" (Phelan, 1993: 135).

In *Girl with a Foetus*, the woman, who is more mature and self-assured

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than the woman in McDonagh's story, is next to a sink, thus making us guess what her next step will be. Will she get rid of the foetus? In pro-life campaigns it is common to use images of foetuses either enclosed in an innocent and transcendent glow to convince the viewers of their near sacredness or in distressing images where mutilation and blood are used to shock the viewers. It is significant that in both cases the mother's body is left outside the image. What is the result of erasing women from these pictures? According to Phelan, it

> "has allowed the fetal form to become a token in a discourse of and about men. Cropped out of the picture, the pregnant women's life and reasoning are rendered both invisible and irrelevant (…) This literal ignore/ance of the pregnant woman limits sympathy for her situation and represses ethical uncertainty about her liberty (...)" (Phelan, 1993: 133).

Girl with Foetus at once presents significant differences from legitimate and sanctioned images of foetuses. First of all, it does not display a sanctified image nor does it present its reversal, a mutilated foetus. In fact, I would argue that it shows us an intact foetus which is not pleasant to look at. Secondly, and significantly enough, it does not exclude the mother from the picture[111]. Not only is she there, but the foetus is physically dependent on her. It proceeds from her. If in medical images, the foetus is inside the mother's body, centering all the attention on itself, here, on the contrary, it is already outside; the woman takes the spotlight. Can we, then, conclude that she is the target of the spectator's look? I would like to claim that, on the contrary, we, the spectators, are targeted by her. In fact, she directs her look to a possible spectator entering the scene, with a disregarding and challenging attitude; as if her looks ask this spectator 'what are you doing here' and 'what do you want from me'.

Another important detail that needs to be addressed is the space where the scene takes place. In medical visual discourses, the image of the foetus is produced in a clinic, a hospital, with all the necessary paraphernalia; the space where the foetus itself is located is the womb; which, as I have previously

111 "In fact, every image of a foetus we are shown, including The Silent Scream, is viewed from the standpoint neither of the foetus nor of the pregnant woman but of the camera. The foetus as we know it is a fetish. Barbara Katz Rothman observes that "the foetus in utero has become a metaphor for 'man' in space, floating free, attached only by the umbilical cord to the spaceship. But where is the mother in that metaphor? She has become empty space."' (Petchesky, 1987: 270)

highlighted, is detached from the woman, or vice-versa. The foetus has, thus, become a public presence; to rephrase, scientific visual renderings have made these images familiar to us. The context in which they are flaunted has a specific range, which comprises prolife activists in clinics, hospitals, and court rooms. In Rego's *Girl with Foetus*, though, the scene takes place inside a domestic space. It can either be a bedroom or a toilet. It is, in any case, an intimate place. There is no agent apart from the woman, no representative of the medical sphere, no technical devices to scrutinize the woman's womb. The foetus is already outside. The woman has taken matters in her own hands.

How are both types of images perceived, that is, images which share the same subject matter but have a different origin? Images which are derived from medicine and images which come from visual art (or in other words the "cultural representation versus medical evidence")? Images of foetuses tend to be seen in terms of medical evidence, but, as Petchesky argued, cultural assumptions still underlie them:

> "How do these assumptions both reflect and reinforce the larger culture of fetal images sketched above? Why has the impulse to "see inside" come to dominate ways of knowing about pregnancy and foetuses, and what are the consequences for women's consciousness and reproductive power relations?" (Petchesky, 1987: 275).

This impulse and necessity of visualization is related to the male desire of objectification. In other words, male power merges with a distanced, disembodied look. In this paradigm, "man (is) the viewer and woman the spectacle" (Petchesky, 1987: 275). The image is used as a controlling mechanism and a procedure to establish normative practices (Petchesky, 1987). Given the fact that, as has been pointed out, *Girl and the Foetus* does not represent medical evidence, but, on the contrary, displays an image inside a domestic space, one needs to address the nature of the look it implies in connection with the specificity of the domestic. If this is not a scientific rendering, it follows that this image does not imply a disembodied look (even if scientific renderings contain a disguised attempt of male domination, its mode of looking is presented as a disembodied one). The female subject in *Girl with Foetus* is no longer under the dominion of an invisible and legitimized discourse, which would dissolve her presence; she is the one with the power to subtract this body from her own body, determine its life or death. Ultimately, she is the one choosing what to show to

the spectator.

I will move now to a number of works that I consider to be related to the paintings I discussed above. These were created and exhibited in the Foundling Museum. The Foundling Hospital was established in eighteenth-century Bloomsbury by captain Thomas Coram. As the name suggests, it was created to shelter the high number of foundlings who were abandoned in the streets of London (Glover, 2010). It also accepted infants who were born from extramarital affairs and others who were born out of rape cases. Perhaps due to the destruction of this hospital, a Foundling Museum was created in 1930 (Glover, 2010). This museum had a "panelling from one of the great hospital's rooms, a replica of its picture gallery (complete with pictures), and fine paintings and objects donated by the hospital's many benefactors, among whom were Handel and Hogarth" (Glover, 2010). In 2010, the Marlborough Gallery organized a solo exhibition in which Rego presented works created for the Foundling Museum. This exhibition displayed conté works on paper and an uncommon triptych, *Oratorio* (figure 4.18). I will contextualize this exhibition, present its body of work, and finally, analyze Paula Rego's contribution. My aim is to determine whether or not violence and power are central factors and, if so, how women's participation is affirmed in the existing power structures.

In my view, these images introduce a certain sense of the unexpected. The Foundling Museum has an obvious social purpose, that is it wants to preserve the memory of the countless abandoned infants. So one would expect to find artists who create pieces that enhance this meritorious legacy. Even the title suggested this idea: "Tales of innocence and experience". What immediately strikes me is the fact that Rego's images expose anything but innocence. To rephrase, there is nothing innocent about the works which Rego created for the Foundling Museum. One might see innocence personified by the infant characters, but experience comes along and jeopardizes innocence.

As Tim Adams so well put it, Rego, along with Tracey Emin and Mat Collishaw, two other artists invited to create art pieces for the Foundling Museum, formed a "dysfunctional kind of family[112]" (Adams, 2010). I will, briefly, describe Emin and Collishaw's contributions to "Tales of innocence and experience". Tracey Emin collected objects, pieces of clothing belonging to children, which she found on the streets. Thus, she chose to work on lives which were left behind, turned

[112] "Mat Collishaw and Tracey Emin and Paula Rego have a history. Rego taught Emin for a while and was certainly an inspirational midwife to the violent angst of her art; Emin and Collishaw, meanwhile, were stormy lovers in the heyday of the YBAs, a six-year union that ended with Emin childless at 40" (Adams, 2010).

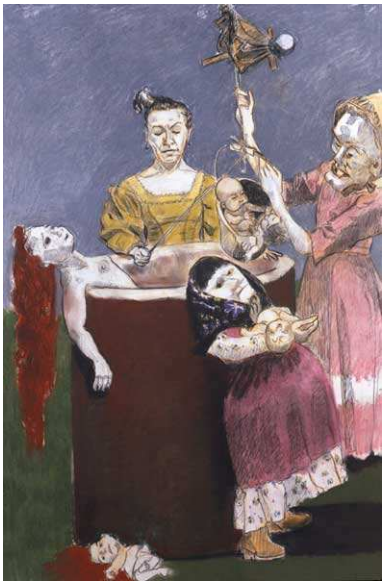
into anonymous artefacts; lives of children. Besides these artefacts, Emin displayed sketches made during her pregnancy in 1991 "that ended in a botched abortion: unknown hands clutching at her foetus, nightmares of labour and suckling, half-formed scribbles of a half-formed child who never was" (Adam, 2010). Matt Collishaw, in his turn, assembled objects, animals in settings which, as a whole, formed inappropriate environments for children to grow up in because of the menace of predatory creatures (the wild dogs and the blood stains are effective in creating this idea).

Rego, finally, did keep children in her visual settings, but also brought women to the fore, making visible the devastation which they also felt and took part in. Such is the case of a group of works which share common features: a well and women around it; foetuses, newborns, and children. Odd looking creatures dressed in women's clothing, with masks replacing their faces. They are part of Rego's counter argument to the canonical vision on *Nativity*; since they are material, embodied and, even, destructive. They show us what really takes place, not with labour, but with its later erasure.

Down the Well (2009) (figure 4.2) does not display foetuses, but children, young children, new-borns. Women are busy "dispatching unwanted infants down a well" (Kent, 2010). The well has become a means to the disintegration of these living bodies; it even resembles a large cooking barrel. *Down the Well II* (2009) (figure 4.3), which continues or parallels *Down the Well*, maintains the same characters involved in the annihilation of newborns. Two are inside a bucket: one is alive and waves; the other one we are uncertain about since only the head is visible. The rest of the bucket's interior is filled with a red ochre tone; inevitably creating visual associations with blood. The smaller figure, the one in front of the image and closest to us, is holding what seems to be a foetus.

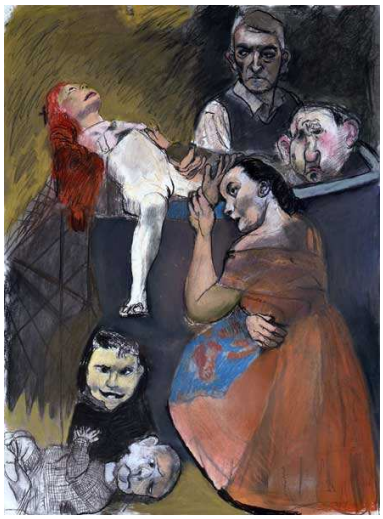
4.2. *Down the Well I* (2009) Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 123 x 81.3 cm

4.3. *Down the Well II* (2009) Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 122.5 x 81.3 cm



4.4 "Well" (2009) Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 122.5 x 81.3 cm

In *Well* (2009) (figure 4.4), we see half of the naked body of a young girl with red hair, the same tone which can be seen on the ground, next to a dead infant. Two other infants are visible, one in the arms of a strange figure; the other one in a bucket about to be disposed to the dark bottom of the well. A woman shares this endeavour. She has a concentrated and confident expression on her face, and is not baffled by anything, not even a possible regard from the spectator. Although *The Well* shows us children and women in atrocious circumstances and was created for an institution that provides assistance to abandoned children and, indirectly, to their mothers; the painting is neither about victimizing women nor does it turn these women into pitiful agents. In fact, they have an active role in disposing these bodies. We do not see what precedes this setting. What we do see are women taking matters into their own hands, on their own. They find a certain agency in the middle of power structures, which are manifest in the events prior to these scenes and pictorially absent, even if this agency is destructive.



4.5 *The Overseer* (2010) Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 136 x 102 cm

The Overseer (2010) (figure 4.5) is the only work in this series to depict male characters. One is clearly inside the well. The other could be outside, but this is not completely clear from the painting. He is looking at a young red headed girl who is already half way inside the well. She has no arms and looks like a lifeless creature. The woman next to her holds her severed hands. What is the male participation in this plot? Is he supervising what is taking place? His role is not self-evident. The answer can be inferred, in my view, from the position he occupies in the scene. He is, indeed, in the background, the darker segment of the image, in a relatively higher position. Given the fact that he has darker tonalities, his presence becomes almost indistinct, or phantasmagorical. The fact that he is an almost indistinct figure makes me conclude that he is still a figure who is in the background of the events, taking part in them, exercising power, but then leaving women to take action into their hands, to 'clean up the mess'. If the previous work displayed only

women, in what way does male presence interfere with female agency in this case? I would argue that it diminishes the intensity of women's participation, specifically the woman who is in the foreground of the image, who wears an orange dress. She adopts a (physically) lower position, which denounces her submission.

4.6. *Birth* (2009)
Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 125 x 85 cm. , 119.5 x 108 cm

In *Birth* (2009) (figure 4.6), we are faced with a woman who has just given birth; she still shows the traces of her pregnancy, in her womb, through the placement of her hands. Another woman is standing behind her, holding the newborn in her arms. Her presence is gruesome, as are her face and her clothes. We cannot determine whether the newborn is alive or dead; and if dead, which causes contributed to this death. Are these causes natural or the result of an intended human action? A smiling and odd looking nurse is also next to the parturient. Was she an accomplice in the birth or in getting rid of this baby?

There seem to be some similarities between this image, the *Girl with Foetus* and *Down the Well*. In fact, the topic of the woman and the newborn repeats itself. Once again, the scene takes place in an interior space, a space more likely to be domestic than belonging to a medical institution. This woman's attitude is different, though; her look is not an overtly challenging look, but it denounces, to a certain extent, an abandonment of the scene, of what is taking place behind her; at least, a distancing from it. The tension is not concentrated on

one figure, but is the result of the ambiguous network of intrigue among these three women. Another aspect which strikes me as important is the similarity between this image and others which depict a rape scene, such as *Rape*, which will be analyzed later on. The bodily position is considerably analogous: the painting depicts a woman on her back, with her legs apart. The established opposition between birth on the one hand and abortion and even rape on the other hand is shaken, through the commonality of the presence of pain and a transgression of woman's physical integrity and boundaries.

4.7. *Pregnant Girl Disposing of the Evidence*
Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 12.5 x 81.3 cm

In *Pregnant Girl Disposing of the Evidence* (2009) (figure 4.7), we are, once again, faced with the image of a woman and a newborn. And, once more, this woman embodies evident signs of a pregnancy. Perhaps this episode occurs immediately after she has given birth or perhaps she is pregnant again. She is assisted by two figures, whose faces are quite monstrous. In reality, their faces are nothing more than masks. Nevertheless, they display female features, namely their clothes. As the title suggests, they are getting rid of the newborn by making him descend into the well's depth. There is a second newborn baby, being hold by the small odd looking figure, perhaps the one next in line to be killed. The woman is pulling the cord down; she has a tough and determined expression. She is fully concentrated on this action.

It is a daunting scene. We see all the agents who took part in this episode. Only the male agent is absent which is significant. Women are alone with the outcome of unwanted pregnancies. However, they are not merely passive actors or victims. They take part in what it is happening; they are accomplices. According to Sarah Kent, "the women in Paula Rego's drawings and prints appear to go about their murderous business with a mixture of resignation and detachment. These things have to be done, their world-weary faces seem to say, let's expedite them with as little fuss as possible" (Kent, 2010). The power exercised over women is not visible here. It is what made them come here; it is the factor which deterred men from being there or from taking a more active role. These newborns, who are thrown into the well, can be born out of wedlock or after rape situations. Women, who are institutionalized in prisons, hospitals,

places such as the Foundling Hospital, do not express humiliation or inertia. On the contrary, they are determined and fully concentrated.

In terms of power and resistance, I would again repeat that these women do not occupy the pole of the victim. First of all, they are in contexts where power undoubtedly intervenes. Even if their bodies have generated other bodies, they are not confined to the impulse to create. Apart from creation, that is supposedly natural and a condition of their existence, they embody destruction; which undermines their reduction to passive agents. Secondly, I argue that resistance comes from their positionality, from their involvement and participation; their attitude.

Paula Rego has managed to expose the power structures and violence which are intermingled in birth matters, namely the way they strike female subjects. At the same time, she has decided to show us these women taking into their hands, or bodies, the gesture of obliterating birth. These images are far from pleasant to watch; they replicate the effect produced by a well, which is so deep and tenebrous that even to look at it causes vertigo. Nevertheless, we are still drawn into them, because their recesses, somehow say something about our own secret places; places which tend to remain hidden. In Kent's words, she "lifts the lid on the human psyche and, dredging the depths, discovers untold levels of brutishness that she makes palatable by clothing it in the colourful costume of the carnival grotesque" (Kent, 2010).

4.4. Rape

Another subject which, inevitably, invites a reflection of a sexually rooted power dissymmetry is rape. Although it seems a relatively unproblematic concept in terms of its definition, it is chronological, geographical and culturally determined as Bal shows[113] (Bal, 2006). Although not a new topic in art history, the way "rape" has been visually rendered by Paula Rego draws our attention to the specificity and sexually determined character of this practice.

Diane Wolfthal's *Images of Rape. The "Heroic" Tradition and its alternatives* gives us an in-depth view of art history's tradition of representing

113 "Rape - the action for which we use that term: that of sexually appropriating another subject without her consent – has different meanings in different times and cultures. Its meaning depends on the status of the individual subject in relation to the community and its juridical organization" (Bal, 2006: 156).

rape. Wolfthal examines the period 1200-1700 and notes that art history's representation of female subjects has turned rape into a "sanitized, aestheticized or eroticized" practice (Wolfthal, 1999). Wolfthal presents several examples of such practice, for instance Nicolas Poussin's *Rape of the Sabine Woman*[114]. First of all, I would like to remark that in the context of Rome, "rape" was, as Wolfthal points out, a crime of property:

> "In ancient Rome, *raptus* meant "carrying off by force;" it was a crime of property and included thefts of all kinds. If violence was a necessary component of this crime, sexual intercourse was not. Similarly, in Poussin's painting, although the sexual aspect is implied, intercourse is not explicitly depicted. Roman law did not view the crime from the woman's point of view. Rather *raptus* was a crime against the woman's husband or guardian. Poussin reflects this view of rape in the major figure group on the right, which shows a Sabine father struggling against a Roman abductor" (Wolfthal, 1999: 9).

It is important, nevertheless, to make clear that the aesthetization of rape in Poussin's painting is not exclusively determined by the Roman cultural and legal context. In fact, it is present in other paintings from this period, for instance in Boticelli's *Primavera*[115], which does not overtly display violence or sexual intercourse (Wolfthal, 1999).

Wolfthal also points to a second type of "heroic rape" images; this one is "constructed to appeal to the erotic tastes of the male viewer" (Wolfthal, 1999: 18). In this case, rape is seen or depicted as seduction and women are depicted

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[114] This painting, which dates from the seventeenth century, represents a famous episode of Roman history, the abduction, by Roman men, of Sabine women. According to Titus Livius, facing a problem of not having enough women to create families and after unsuccessfully trying to settle an agreement with the Sabines, Roman decided to abduct Sabine women (Livius, 1961).

[115] "From about 1465 to 1520, "heroic" rape themes adorned two types of art that were commissioned by leading Tuscan families on the occasion of a son's wedding (…) The most famous example of this type may well be Botticelli's Primavera, commissioned to commemorate the marriage of Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de'Medici to Semiramide d'Appiani in May 1482 (…) At the far right of this composition, the west wind Zephyrus tries to seize the nymph Chloris. Ovid's Fasti relates that Zephyrus raped Chloris, married her, and then transformed her into Flora, whom Boticelli depicts to the left of Chloris" (Wolfthal, 1999: 10).

as sexual desirable preys "by a disarray of clothing or hair, by discomfort and embarrassment, or by fear. For the rapists these are all aphrodisiacs" (Wolfthal, 1999:21).

Although most paintings of this period fit this category, the work of the female artist Artemisia Gentileschi is an exception. The Italian baroque painter has created images which do not delete or dilute sexual violence. In fact, images such as *Susannah* provide a radically different view of the same subject. In this painting, the artist focuses on the victim, on the impact sexual violence has on her:

> "Expressing a subversive voice, the artist sympathised with the victim, and movingly depicted her vulnerability and the anguish of sexual violence. Inverting the usual reading of such legends, she refused to show Susannah as a seductress or an object of sexual desire" (Wolfthal, 1999: 25).

Paula Rego decides to depict this subject. As we will see, though, she erases any sublimation and sense of relief, which the spectator could hold on to. Instead, she exposes it as a crude and painful experience, which is intimately connected with the definition of femininity in opposition to masculinity. As Rozee and Koss say in defence:

> "In a rape culture the sociocultural supports for rape are structurally integrated in all levels of society. This includes the institutionalization of patriarchal values; socialization practices that teach non-overlapping notions of masculinity and femininity with men viewed as tough, competitive, and aggressive and woman as tender, nurturant, and weak; social, familial, political, legal, media, educational, religious, and economic systems that favor men; and criminal justice and legal systems that fail to protect women" (Rozee and Koss, 2001: 296).

I would claim that, regardless of its intensity and extension, power is never an absolute and crushing experience for the subject. The question is whether in Paula Rego's works dealing with rape, women enact resistance or are they devoid of any agency. In order to provide an answer to this question, I will attempt to identify structures of power and resistance, through a closer look at the context the woman occupies, her relation with other figures present on the

scene and her body. I will, moreover, pay close attention to the subjects involved in these structures; who exercises power over whom and who counters it.

It is important to keep in mind that sexual violence is related to the stabilization of attributes of femininity. Cahill (2000) argued that, when dealing with the issue of rape, one must address the manifestation of power in women's bodies. Without wanting to convey the idea that women are always and necessarily placed in the position of victims and men in the position of rapists, she claims that the mere idea or possibility of being raped daunts female subjects. This is related to the definition, conveyed by cultural discourses, of women's body as weak, breakable and violable:

> "The role which this particular action plays within the context of a larger discourse of power would also be deemed legally irrelevant. Yet the horror and harms of rape are importantly linked to that privileged role. That is, a significant element of the woman victim's experience of rape is directly related to the constitutive element of a power discourse which produces her body as violable, weak, and alien to her subjectivity. To redefine the crime as primarily assault would mask these connections" (Cahill, 2000: 58).

Moreover, women's behaviour is frequently interpreted as a motor or cause for rape, thus serving to establish certain patterns of behaviour which are recommended and others which are socially condemned. This is just one of the many possible forms of power's manifestation on real subjects and real bodies, particularly female bodies. In fact, both the tradition of attributing certain qualities to women and women's bodies (passivity, for instance), and the disguised and almost anonymous (because pervasive) regulatory practices of validating certain dress and behaviour codes and condemning others, are extremely effective manifestations of power which, ultimately, result in the construction of femininity. I am, therefore, considering the body as a social construct, which possesses a biological constituent and is also a location for the exercise and manifestation of power. I share Grosz' concern with the limitations of trapping the body in a dualistic approach, opposing it to mind:

> " (…) instead of participating in- i.e., adhering to one side or the other of -a binary pair, these pairs can be more readily problematized by regarding the body as the threshold or

> borderline concept that hovers perilously and undecidably at the pivotal point of binary pairs. The body is neither -while also being both-the private or the public, self or other, natural or cultural, psychical or social, instinctive or learned, genetically or environmentally determined. In the face of social constructionism, the body's tangibility, its matter, its (quasi) nature may be invoked, but in opposition to essentialism, biologism and naturalism, it is the body as a cultural product that must be stressed. This indeterminable position enables it to be used as a particularly powerful strategic term to upset the frameworks by which these binary pairs are considered. In dissolving oppositional categories we cannot simply ignore them, vowing never to speak in their terms again. This is neither historically possible nor even desirable insofar as these categories must be engaged with in order to be superseded. But new terms and different conceptual frameworks must also be devised to be able to talk of the body outside or in excess of binary pairs" (Grosz, 1994: 24).

Thus, when analyzing Rego's work, I will focus on the representation of the female body, in order to determine how it relates to settled cultural discourses. I will also look at the behaviour of these women to see if they denounce the attempt to conform to the stereotypes of femininity, which are posed as an advisable procedure to avoid sexual violence.

Furthermore, the context which these women inhabit will be taken into account. I argue that power intertwines with the institutionalization of the female body in a context of matrimonial and familiar ties. Hence, the situation tends to become more complicated: the border between what are legitimate actions and legitimate intercourse between men and women gets more diffuse; even elements such as the space and the behaviour of women looses all its applicability in searching for condemnatory causes. The notions of family and domestic space, in Rego's work, are far from simple, for the artist discloses the power asymmetries and violence they hide.

Thus, the interior space where familiar bounds are established becomes undermined and fractured by violence and the power asymmetries between male and female subjects, which poignantly express themselves in their (women's) bodies. Rego's images undermine the ideology that Portugal with its fascist inheritance from Salazarismo, has cultivated during a considerable number of years (since 1928, when Salazar became Minister of Finances, until 1974). Ruth

Rosengarten (2009) analyzed visual propaganda material, which became iconic and representative of Salazar's ideology, namely *A Lição de Salazar*[116]. Rosengarten argues that these images serve to display the economy and organization of the familiar nucleus, which tacitly postulated women under the subservience of men:

> "Behind the illuminated door, the father – larger than any other figures – cheerfully crosses the threshold which separates the exterior world from the interior sanctuary, carrying the instruments of his rural activity. He is the only one to negotiate this threshold. The mother, whose place is by the stove, where a meal is being cooked, tries to keep the domestic economy's rhythm and to preserve the conditions necessary for man's agency in the public sphere[117]" (Rosengarten, 2009: 69).

At this point I will begin my analysis of selected works which deal with the topic of rape. Once again, it is not my aim to follow a chronological approach. I have selected those works which deal with this subject as a point of departure for my analysis.

4.8. *Stretched* (2009)
Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 137.2 x 101.6 cm

In *Stretched* (2009) (figure 4.8), the only figure who is entirely human is the woman in the armchair. The main interaction taking place is between this woman and the man. It is not hard to guess that this interaction will take a sexual nature, since this woman is half dressed, with her underwear exposed, and the man, in his turn, is taking off his pants. Although she has larger proportions than he has (which is accentuated by her proximity to the fore of the canvas), his attitude suggests some prepotence and dominance.

In terms of their location, some elements in

[116] "A Lição de Salazar" was created in 1938 to celebrate Salazar's rise to power as Minister of Finances. It was a series of seven paintings by Jaime Martins Barata, which aspired to give the impression, or believe, of a country where everything was going well, as planned; where people were pleased with the state and collaborative in its progress (Rosengarten, 2009).

[117] My translation.

this scene can help identify it as an interior space, namely an armchair and some curtains. There is, however, an antagonism between these two characters based on their clothes. The woman is wearing slippers; the man is wearing shoes. Her clothing is associated with a domestic setting; his with a more formal or business like activity. There is, thus, a separation between them, which couples difference based on bodies to a socially determined separation, apparently resulting in the reaffirmation of stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. The pieces of furniture and the presence of a domestic animal can make us trace this setting to the interior of a house. If this is the case, Rego undermines the domestic space, unveiling it as a space associated with the institutionalization of power and violence, especially involving women. What I mean is that, instead of having these power asymmetries occurring and being greatly determined by spaces constituted as confinement places for deviant beings, for beings that are in opposition to others and are considered qualitatively inferior, Rego concentrates on the house, the nucleus of family relationships. The domestic space is seen as a location where femininity is determined and set against masculinity.

The fact that this woman, despite being placed inside a house, is exposed to everyone in the scene is of particular relevance. She is exposed to the man but also to all the other figures who are watching her attentively. I will start by addressing the presence and participation of these other figures in relation both to the woman and to us, the spectators. All these characters are barely human. They are set in a way that creates a parallel between them and us. Are they seeing us seeing them and this woman? Are they, in fact, replacing us in the scene? They are not completely innocent, in the sense that, as observers of what is taking place, they are not merely observing. They are, by extension, taking a role in the events, even if it is a less active one. They are accomplices. So are we, the spectators, I would argue. At the same time, we are challenged; our activity of observers is questioned. Another aspect that requires questioning is the 'identity' of these figures. They are not human, but, instead an intricate compound of humanity and monstrosity. Even if not defined in terms of 'species', they are sexually marked. Belonging to different generations, these creatures range from young to older 'women'. Why are they looking at this scene? The older woman is holding two younger girls and all the others, although not physically connected to her, stand in her proximity and under her guidance. They may be next in line. In any case, it seems that they are submitted to some kind of initiation or pedagogical process, with a malicious twist to it. Supporting the idea of their compliance to the events, we can see one of the younger girls taking an active role, by assisting the man in getting rid of his belt, which, in its turn, can

be an accessory to be used in punishing the woman. This could explain the bodily position of the woman, who could be exposing her derriere to be whipped.

At this point I will focus my analysis on the woman who is, actually, the central figure of *Stretched*. I will take her body and posture as guiding elements to map out her response to the already described circumstances she is in. Her posture and clothing are far from decent (in the socially regulated sense). As I have pointed out, her underwear is exposed. It is unclear whether she undressed herself. If so, was this a deliberate action? Was she coerced? Was it the result of an indirect action? The claim that rape takes place as the result of a deviation from a prevailing definition of femininity cannot be applied here, given the fact that the image collapses the narrative which takes place and results in this setting. I would argue that this is precisely how Rego undermines straightforward and simplistic accounts of rape which are based on a causal determinism, morally charged against women.

There is, all in all, an impression of refusal which is simultaneously and oddly combined with and in dissonance with a setting of subjugation. She turns her back at us, the spectators, and her body position also creates some distance between her and the other actors present in the scene. She is not sitting properly; she does not look straight at us. In fact, we cannot even see her look. She is, altogether, refusing to be seen by us, the spectators, and by the other figures.

Does she enact any sort of agency? The title *Stretched* can refer to a physical gesture, but can also point to the idea of 'abuse', 'attack', which would fit the relationship between this woman and this man. Nevertheless, taking her position into account, one can conclude that a certain ambiguity is introduced into her response to the violence and power which are exercised over her, not only by the man, but also by the other figures present in the scene. If she is occupying this space as the object of a spectacle, her attitude reveals that she somehow refuses to be completely merged into such position.

4.9 *Small Rape* (2009)
Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 79.4 x 55.3 cm

Small Rape (2009) (figure 4.9) is a rather empty scene; with only two characters, a man and a woman. The man is taking control over the woman. There is a clear contrast between them: he has larger, darker tones, is more active, in the sense that he is taking full control of the action. She is

more delicate, suspended on the air almost, not being able to resist.

I would argue that this work draws its meaning from the set of oppositions previously signalled, merging violence and power and not granting any room for resistance to the woman. Why did Paula Rego chose this title? Does the title *Small rape* refers to its duration? To the young age of the female subject? To the moral impact of rape? Does it serve to legitimize it? If the image itself manages to avoid the ambiguity some other works have, the title, on the contrary, hinders a univocal legibility. Compared to other drawings dealing with the same themes, the focus of *Small Rape* is more on violence than on power, since the control exercised by the male subject is so overwhelming that it leaves out any possible reaction on the part of the woman.

4.10 *Rape* (2009)
Pastel, conté and charcoal on paper, 125 x 85.5 cm

Intimately connected to the previous work is *Rape* (2009) (figure 4.10). Going back to the idea that power and violence do not collapse into each other, but, frequently, occur together, I would like to focus on how the power structures are set. How does violence manifest itself and how does this woman position herself? Once again, power is interwoven with the domestic, which structures the connection between man and woman, by turning them into masculinity and femininity agents or models. Man as active, woman passive; man as taking control, woman as being controlled. Indeed, once again, the image draws on a visual antagonism between woman and man. The same attributes are used to convey this antagonism: the man is dressed, the woman is half-dressed, with her legs exposed and spread. He has darker tonalities; she has a yellow dress and light skin. What further complicates the power asymmetry is precisely the fact that the domestic interferes or is intermingled with sexual violence. If there are no familiar bounds, then it is easier to accept the condemnation and criminalization of sexual violence. However, when family, conjugal relations go hand in hand with sexual violence, the border between what is considered to be violence and a legitimate action becomes frail. In fact, the legitimization of rape has to do with institutions which can 'naturalize' it, such as the family. Why do I say this? The question has, essentially, to do with the legitimization of power asymmetries and violence, which can hinder, consequently, its identification and critical reading. For instance, in cases such as

the institutionalization of sexual and mental disorders, women were often associated with the pathological; thus, in these cases, power asymmetries and violence are regulated and legitimized by solid institutions, with a social effect and impact. Separated from the object of its experiments and action, the hospital, passed the idea of being an 'objective' institution which did not have an intimate, but a professional contact with the subjects they took in.

Despite the seeming control he has over her, this woman displays some signs of opposition; she tries to pull him away with her hands, specially her right hand. Is it an attempt to react to violence? I would say so; here Rego depicts the woman's response to violence: with the gesture of pushing the man away from her, which is a feeble attempt, almost a pointless gesture. Moreover, she turns her head to the other side. Hence, she resists a look which would turn her into a passive and resigned object of violence and a spectacle to the spectators' eyes.

4.11. *Penetration* (2009-10)
hand-cloured etching, 46.5 x 55.5 cm

Following a path of increasing detail and exposure, we are confronted with an image entitled *Penetration* (2009-2010) (figure 4.11). They are, in fact, two etchings with the same title. They present the same elements but with different colours:

> "(...) a group of etchings done in monochrome and printed in editions of 35. A group of proofs were then taken and hand-coloured by the artist, in varied colours. Such is Rego's mastery of this medium that, by altering only the colours but not the outline she can alter the mood of the subject and thus its contents. As she has said: "They become different parts of a different story. I don't know. Some of them are alike really; I just change the colours. The others have different kinds of brush strokes and things like that. They look quite different from each other, which is

> very important of course, because it's like having a different story altogether- Different colours are a different story."" (Rosenthal, 2010).

One is coloured in yellow and light peach, warmer tonalities; the other in blue and pale pink. The last one, with its colder colours, seems to create an effect of glumness. Other than its colours, it is mainly its characters that create an appalling feeling; five figures, all of them female but with different ages, whose facial features are monstrous.

The situation here depicted is in tune with the title. To put it differently, what is shown to us is an event of violence taking place through props used by an old lady, a phallic object, and by a young girl dressed as a bride in chains. The way the first is dressed, all in black, with her hair covered by a scarf, increases her scary image. She is holding a younger figure (whether or not this figure is a 'mere' puppet used as a mechanism to accomplish violent gestures on the other figures is not entirely clear). Regarding the chains, the girl on the right is the one holding them and seizing three other figures. She is, therefore, an accomplice. More than that, I would add, she is taking control of the action. In effect, the way she places herself in front of the spectator with a challenging smile on her face makes me think that the older woman is assisting her and not the other way around. Her clothes deserve some attention. She is wearing a bridal veil, a symbol of the admission to marriage. In other words, the scene presents some visual replacements for the male absence. The overall result is a strange, disturbing, ritual being performed.

There is a separation between these figures and the ones on the left side. They are chained through her feet and have, therefore, no way of escaping from the forthcoming actions. However, they also appear to be quietly waiting for it. The way they place their arms and hold their elbows denounces their submission; they are passively waiting their turn to be punished. And all this is being offered to us, spectators, on a platform, as a real spectacle. The surface under which they are standing resembles an improvised stage with three of the five characters addressing us directly.

Another important aspect needs to be singled out here and further analysed, because *Penetration* is also different from the previous etching. Even if monstrous, the female characters are placed in a dual position: they receive the direct impact of violence and they are its perpetrators. However, despite this fact, the objects being used to execute violence are connected with masculinity: the phallus to sexual violence and the chains to prison, confinement, an

institutionalized violence, often legitimized as 'punishment'.

I would argue that as a result violence becomes more explicit in this image. Power is present and it is articulated solely between female agents. However, as mentioned before, although there are no male figures here, there are elements related to power asymmetries based on sexual difference: the phallus, the chains and the bridal veil.

To conclude this point, according to Glover, the "terrible banality of rape is transformed – perhaps transfigured would be a better word – into a kind of grotesque, enforced public entertainment" (Glover, 2010). Now that I have analyzed Rego's treatment of this subject, some important conclusions can be drawn. Most etchings dealing with rape present both female and male characters. Sexual difference is highlighted in terms of power asymmetries which are visible through the way women and men are presented and the way they operate in the given contexts. It is, nevertheless, necessary to mention that, in some cases, as shown before, Rego places women also serving as accomplices, as replacing male agents, who are visually absent from the scene and who are only metonymically represented. In terms of women's resistance, in what way does the situation they are in determine their response to it? I would argue for the existence of two distinct configurations, in Rego's etchings, in terms of women's resistance. A group, which includes the etchings *Small Rape* and *Penetration*, forms a public spectacle of power display over female subjects. In this case, female subjects are a spectacle of complete submission. A second configuration, though, presents female subjects enacting some resistance, not to violence, but to their exposure. They resist being turned into a spectacle.

4.5. Female genital mutilation

I will now move to another group of works which continues, and perhaps intensifies, this 'turning into images' of women's experiences; their bodily manifestations, which certainly have a cultural background. After reportedly watching a documentary on British TV about female genital mutilation, Paula Rego decided, in 2009, to create a series of etchings about this topic, concentrating on the effects on the lives of young girls. In June 2011, The New Hall Art Collection (Cambridge) organized an exhibition in support of the London-based charity Womankind Worldwide. This exhibition included drawings by Siobhan Wall, a curator, art critic and artist, who, after travelling to the Festival Au Desert in Mali, became aware and impressed with the fact that FC/FGM/C is a common practice

in the country[118].

I will be analyzing Rego's series in order to determine the way it articulates the exposure of subjection and possibilities of resistance. In order to do so, I will start by contextualizing the practice FC/FGM/C and the current discussions around it. I will then analyze Rego's etchings and, finally, provide a conclusion in terms of the axis power/violence/resistance under discussion in this chapter.

Female circumcision, also known as "female genital mutilation" or just "cutting", is a practice which takes place on/in women's bodies, but has a cultural background and repercussion. It consists of cutting the female genitals for non-therapeutic reasons and it takes place, in most cases, in a specific time frame:

> "While FC/FGM/C is usually performed on girls anywhere between four and twelve years of age, in some cultures it is practiced as early as a few days after birth or later in a woman's life, such as just prior to marriage or after her first pregnancy" (Izett and Toubia, 2007: 404).

The reason for this time frame is intimately related to rites of passage, which mark the transformation of a girl into a woman; the admission to her tribe or ethnic group and her compliance with its social norms (Izett and Toubia, 2007). Although FC/FGM/C seems to be one specific practice, it comprises different procedures which depend upon the region, country and ethnic group where it takes place. The World Health Organization (WHO) proposed a classificatory system[119].

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118 "(…) Siobhan Wall travelled to the Festival Au Desert in Mali and during her stay was acutely troubled by the fact that FGM is widespread in the country. Wanting to support young girls at risk of FGM, she, too, started to make artworks about her concerns and decided to raise funds for organisations that support attempts to prevent this traumatic practice from taking place. She chose WOMANKIND Worldwide, a charity campaigning for the elimination of this extremely painful, often life-threatening and irreversible procedure. It is carried out in more than 28 African countries and parts of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East" in http://www.natracare.com/N72/28/en-GB/Precious-exhibition-for-Womankind-Worldwide.aspx

119 "Type I: Excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris (…). Type II: Excision of the prepuce and clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora (…). Type III: Excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation) (…). Type IV: Unclassified: includes pricking, piercing, or incising of the clitoris and/or

In terms of the locations where it is performed, FC/FGM/C is traceable in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. Due to migratory movements, cases also occur in America and Europe. The Netherlands, the UK and Portugal are among the European countries with a higher percentage of African Immigrants[120]. In 2009, a study was published by International Amnesty Portugal which denounced a significant number of cases of FC/FGM/C in Portugal. These cases were detected through inquiries conducted in public hospitals. In other words, the cases which were registered were only of women who had to go to hospital due to complications. All the other cases remained and still remain unregistered. According to this same report, the community of immigrants from Guiné, a former Portuguese colony, is the one with the highest percentage of cases[121].

The occurrence of FC/FGM/C in Europe, due to migration, leads to certain questions. One of them is the difference, in terms of public perception and legal acknowledgement, between FC/FGM/C and those chirurgical practices which also carry violence in the female body, but are viewed as an individual decision with the aim of enhancing the beauty of one's body. Why is the one considered a cultural practice and the other an individual one? Moreover, how to react to cases of defibulated women, who choose to be reinfibulated after childbirth (Dustin,

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labia; stretching of the clitoris and/or labia; cauterization by burning of the clitoris and surrounding tissues; scraping of tissue surrounding the vaginal orifice (angurya cuts) or cutting of the vagina (gishiri cuts); introduction of corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it; and any other procedure that falls under the definition of female genital mutilation" (Izett and Toubia, 2007: 404).

120 "The International Center for Reproductive Health of the University of Gent, Belgium recently completed a study on FC/FGM that included an assessment of the number of migrants from "FGM-risk" countries in European member states. These statistics are not completely representative. Only official immigrants and registered refugees were counted, not the considerable number of illegal immigrants. Findings revealed that the number of African migrants is the highest in the United Kingdom (303,545), France (180,997), Italy (133,847) and Germany (77,795). Other countries with significant numbers of African immigrants include: the Netherlands (56,634), Sweden (31,798), Belgium (14,797), Portugal (12,785), and Denmark (11,105). Austria, Greece, and Spain have smaller numbers of immigrants, ranging from 3,000 to 8,000 in total" (Izett and Toubia, 2007: 409-410).

121 "Estudo comprova práctica de mutilação genital feminina", press article available here http://jpn.icicom.up.pt/2009/02/10/estudo_comprova_pratica_de_mutilacao_genital_feminina_em_portugal.html

2010)? In the specific case of the UK, the "Prohibition of the Female Circumcision Act" was passed in 1985, but not without discussion though[122].

In 1989, FC/FGM/C was identified as child abuse in government guidance and in March 2003 "the Female Genital Mutilation Bill was introduced by Ann Clwyd MP as a Private Member's Bill in March 2003, won government backing and was passed in October 2003. The new law repealed and re-enacted the 1985 Act.

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122 "The delay in passing the 1985 Act was caused by disagreement over two sentences, one referring to 'mental health', the other to 'custom or ritual', and the relationship between the two. The Bill as originally introduced said that the operation of female circumcision must not be performed except where necessary for the physical health of the patient. This recognized that there are cancerous, pre-cancerous and other conditions that necessitate genital surgery and that the legislation needed to be defined tightly enough to allow those operations to be carried out legally. However, Lord Glenarthur for the (Conservative) government, was concerned that 'There are operations of what might be called a cosmetic nature, which may properly be undertaken but which are not required for the direct physical health of the woman', which would not be permitted under the original terms of the legislation. Therefore, the Bill would only have the government's blessing if it were amended to allow surgery where necessary for the physical or mental health of a person; in determining, however, whether there was a threat to physical or mental health, no account should be taken of beliefs based on ritual or custom (Prohibition of Female Circumcision HL Bill, 10 November 1983 and 23 January 1984) (…) The government amendment caused a lengthy debate at committee stage. Lord Kennet, who had introduced the Bill in the House of Lords, emphasized that it was 'a very great pity that the words "custom" and "ritual" should be making their first appearance in British law since the Catholic emancipation'; and the Commission for Racial Equality argued that it was discriminatory to allow doctors to differentiate between patients according to whether or not their state or mind was based on custom or ritual.7 It was suggested by Lord Kennet, with support from other peers, that if a girl with 'normal' genitalia mistakenly thought she was deformed (it was made explicit that the new law would not prevent surgery in cases of actual 'abnormality' or 'deformity') then she should receive counselling not surgery, but this argument was rejected. The final wording of the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 stated that it was an offence to excise, infibulate or otherwise mutilate the whole or any part of the labia majora or labia minora or clitoris with the exception of cases when:

2(1) (a) it is necessary for the physical or mental health of the person on whom it is performed and is performed by a registered medical practitioner. And 2(2) In determining for the purposes of this section whether an action is necessary for the mental health of a person, no account shall be taken of the effect on that person of any belief on the part of that or any other person that the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual" (Dustin, 2010: 14-15).

It received an unopposed third reading in the House of Commons with all parties united in support[123]" (Dustin, 2010: 17).

Although FC/FGM/C is a practice which takes place in the body, in women's bodies, it is much more than just a chirurgical procedure. First of all, there is, obviously, a reason why the female body is a privileged *locus* for this practice (somehow, the term 'privileged' seems to become highly ironical in this case). It is, once again, intimately connected with a configuration of femininity. In fact, it is a regulatory and inflicting practice, through which female bodies are shaped into a mutilated, yet recommended, anatomy. The premises for such practice vary from an idea of pollution and dirt associated with the clitoris to the fear of a curse. It can be also a way to control female desire[124].

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123 According to Dustin,"(…) debate was not seen as necessary for the main purpose of the new Act was to make two changes: the word 'Mutilation' replaced 'Circumcision' in the title, and it became illegal to take a girl or woman abroad to be excised or infibulated, even to countries where FGM/C is legal. The language and the terms of reference were taken wholesale from the earlier Act, even though it is unlikely that the suggestion that a girl who believes her genitals are abnormal should have surgery and not therapy would stand today. As a result, the caveat about mental health is retained in the new law accompanied by the clarification that 'For the purpose of determining whether an operation is necessary for the mental health of a girl it is immaterial whether she or any other person believes that the operation is required as a matter of custom or ritual' (clause 1(5)). In fact, in so far as it increases the sentence for those convicted to 14 years, and creates the offence of assisting a girl to mutilate her own genitalia, while adding that 'Girl includes woman' (the 1985 Act simply referred to 'persons' so did not infantilize women from FGM/C-practising communities in the same way), the new Act can be seen as more discriminatory than the earlier one. It takes a stronger stance against FGM/C, but only where this has a 'cultural' dimension. Even more clearly than the earlier law, the 2003 Act distinguishes between the illegal reinfibulation after childbirth of an adult woman of African origin, regardless of her own wishes, while permitting British women to have surgery to create 'designer vaginas'" (Dustin, 2010: 17).

124 "Some ethnic groups in Mali believe the clitoris can prick a man and harm him during intercourse, and in Nigeria it is thought that the clitoris can kill a child if it touches the head of a baby during delivery (…). These views also serve to justify the need to "control" women's sexuality. FC/FGM is meant to reduce sexual desire and curtail promiscuity, thus ensuring the fidelity of the wife or the virginity of the young woman and protecting the honor of a woman and her husband [26]. These notions ultimately perpetuate gender roles and stereotypes, where a woman is viewed as a vessel for reproduction while her role as a sexual being is denied. Overall, these views reflect patriarchal underpinnings that reinforce the secondary status of women. A recent study in Cairo noted a direct link between patriarchal views and favorable attitudes about FC/FGM" (Izett and Toubia, 2007: 407).

There are, however, as I already pointed out, risks attached to a simplification of the analysis of this practice, of perpetuating ethnocentrism. How is FC/FGM/C different from practices which are common and tolerated in western societies, such as cosmetic surgery? According to Moira Dustin,

> "(…) if there is a single factor that distinguishes FGM/C from practices or surgical interventions tolerated in the West, the answer is the attribution of a cultural imperative. FGM/C is perceived as beyond the pale because it is carried out for 'cultural' reasons, while male circumcision is carried out for religious reasons and cosmetic surgery is carried out by women to make themselves more attractive. The last may provoke contempt on the part of feminists but nothing like the horror that FGM/C inspires" (Dustin, 2010: 13).

4.12. *Lullaby* (2009)
Etching and aquatint, 119.5 x 108 cm

I will, at this point, focus on Rego's series. These etchings present scenes containing only women. These are women from different ages, ranging from young girls to older women. In five of them, FC/FGM/C is being performed on young girls. Such is the case in *Lullaby* (2009) (figure 4.12), for instance. The title, as is often the case with Rego's choice of title, creates a certain tension with the image. In fact, a lullaby is a song usually sung to children before they go to sleep, to make them calmer and fall asleep more easily. This effect is created through a simple and repetitive structure. Rego's image is far from calming though. It depicts a middle aged woman, sitting on an arm chair, having a girl on her legs. This girl seems to struggle. The woman, then, puts her hand on top of the young girl's eyes, forcing her to sleep or, at least, not to see what is taking place. And what is happening in this scene? A disturbing creature, naked, tall, is coming into the girl's direction, occupying the place between her legs. It has what seems to be a predatory small monster on its pelvis, which poses a menace to the young girl. Behind all this, in the background

of the setting is a horrific creature; it is, nothing more than a shadow; perhaps the shadow which hangs on the head of this young girl; a shadow which shows some signs of submission (she voluntarily lifts her skirt).

4.13 *Mother Loves You* (2009-10)
Hand-cloured etching, 64 x 50 cm

Mother Loves You (2009) (figure 4.13) can be compared to the previous etching. The title, once again, points in an apparently opposite direction from the image. It is as if, these images, with such titles, want to say that, despite all this violence, these women still care for the young girls. It shows how women can be participants in violence against other women; how in the case of FC/FGM/C family ties between women make this practice more complex in terms of dealing with it. According to Paula Rego, "It goes on everywhere; even in England they came here and snip off their little clitorises. And the mothers and the grandmothers are part of this. There's a tradition of cruelty towards women, by women, which is particularly intriguing and horrible"[125].

4.14 *Night Bride* (2009)
Etching and aquatint, 119.5 x 108 cm

Night Bride (2009) (figure 4.14) is the only case which presents an older woman, an adult woman's body that shows signs of having been under the procedure of FC/FGM/C. It is also a body which seems to have become a cadaver (its face and rib cage). This woman is holding her womb, which is slightly bloated, perhaps due to a pregnancy. This image is very much in line with known testimonies of pregnancies after an FC/FGM/C. Serious complications may occur, resulting in highly intense pain and

125 This is a statement from an interview conducted by Mick Brown and published in The Telegraph. This interview is available for reading here: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/6469383/Paula-Rego-interview.html

suffering for the women and even, sometimes, causing death to the woman and/or the newborn[126]. Her body is being covered by a young girl with a dark skin. There seems to be nothing left to do. A woman on the left lowers her eyes as a sign of resignation. The younger girl, on the contrary, faces the spectator directly.

4.15 *Circumcision* (2009)
Etching and aquatint, 119.5 x 108

To summarize this point, some common traces in these etchings can be identified. The figures that perform the FC/FGM/C are not human. They are naked creatures with breasts, in a dark shade tone, with a skeleton-like face. They are, in most cases, performing it on young girls. There are other mature women present on the scene who are actively participating. Their involvement is a mix of support, comfort and accessories in this violence. This can be seen in *Circumcision* (2009) (figure 4.15), with two women grabbing a young girl, while a monster-like creature examines the young girl's vagina, getting ready for a FC/FGM/C procedure.

4.16. *Stitched and Bound* (2009)
Etching and aquatint, 119.5 x 108 cm

Stitched and Bound (2009) (figure 4.16) and *Escape* (2009) (figure 4.17) are the only etchings which do not show the procedure of FC/FGM/C taking place or about to take place (*Night Bride*, as I have mentioned before, seems to show the immediate result or consequences). The first one presents us with a strange scenario; a pile of indistinct components is set against a dark background. Three figures are hanging, or

[126] During childbirth, the infibulated woman must be defibulated to allow the fetal head to crown. If an experienced attendant is not available to perform defibulation, labor may become obstructed (…) Prolonged obstructed labor can cause moderate to severe complications for the mother and the child.

Cases of ruptured vulval scar, perineal tears, fetal distress, and vesico-vaginal and vesico-rectal fistulae have been reported (…) There have also been reports of severe lacerations involving the anal musculature and injuries to the urinary tract (…) One case control study of mostly infibulated Sudanese women living in Saudi Arabia and delivering in a well-equipped hospital found significant delay in the second stage of labor, increased hemorrhage, and increased occurrence of severe fetal asphyxia" (Izett and Toubia, 2007: 411).

suspended on this pile, a young child, an older girl and an older woman. The two youngest characters have their vaginas stitched, making them look like dolls. The older one has her legs attached with a rope, stopping her from any possibility of escape. She is bound. There is still a new born, on the ground, perhaps dead already, as if some kind of prey. On the right, a woman is holding a girl on her lap. Behind them is, once again, a naked odd woman/skeleton. One cannot help but notice another bucket, an element which was present in the etching of the *Well* and the *Untitled series*; thus, a sign of cleansing and disposal.

4.17 *Escape* (2009-10)
Hand-cloured etching, 64 x 50 cm

Escape (2009-10) in its turn, is a powerful and, utterly different, image, which could well serve as the closing set of this series. A mature woman (perhaps the same one who was present in the other images, holding the young girl) is holding a young girl by her arms. Another child is sitting on the ground beside her feet. They are outside so this points out that an escape is possible. But escaping from what? From all the dreadful scenarios we have seen in the previously analyzed sketches.

I would claim that, once again, this series brings to the fore a reflection about power asymmetries and its consequences. In fact, the persistence of a focus on women's experience is intimate and inevitably connected with power structures which place women inside contexts of FC/FGM/C. Even if one is to acknowledge the fact that to address this practice is not as simple as it might seem (in the sense that it exposes the frailty of distinction between practices based on individual or cultural premises), it is significant that women's bodies are

the 'privileged' vehicle for its expression. In comparison with other series, which displayed the tension between power structures and resistance, in these series violence takes over the plane of the visible, bending these female subjects, these young girls. Only, as I have mentioned, the 'final' image, *Escape,* offers a way out. But it is a way out which, in fact, is not a direct confrontation with power structures. Instead, it is a way out of what continues to be there, even if not visible. In my view, the image also serves as an escape from the other images, in the sense that it avoids the representation of the violence of FC/FGM/C; and it is an escape for subjects who might have already suffered on their bodies and are now moving away from it.

Finally, to conclude this point, I would like to address the presence of women and their participation. They are involved in what is taking place, but, unlike what occurred in the series dealing with birth and abortion, namely the scenes at the well, these women share a mixture of empathy and caring

4.6. Conclusion

4.18. *Oratorio* (2008-9)
Wood, conte crayon, mixed media, 255 x 350 cm

I want to conclude this chapter with what is, in my view, a very special piece, *Oratorio* (2008-2009) (figure 4.18). It is special for several reasons, but mostly for its construction and content. In terms of its construction, it brings to modern art the tradition of the altar pieces in Portuguese houses. Rego's *Oratorio*

is a "three-dimensional object, a piece of furniture almost three meters high and an exact replica of these Portuguese oratories, with the same pair of shutters and an identical shape and volume"[127]. It contains images which establish a close dialogue with the previously analyzed works. I will inspect some of its features and the images it contains, in order to determine how they relate to female subjectivity and power.

The centre displays three-dimensional figures; sculptures of nurses, women, children and one man. This is, in my understanding, the part which is more closely connected to the Foundling Museum. In fact, it represents the agents involved in a shelter for children and the dynamics among them: a man seducing a woman and nurses taking care of abandoned children. On the left side, we can identify a rape attempt. Indeed, similar to what takes place in the *Rape* etching, we seen a man on top of a woman. However, here, and quite significantly, this woman's reaction is stronger. She holds a stick in her hand and is able to push him away and frighten him. I would also argue that her look draws a sharp response.

Other images focus exclusively on women. For instance, the one in the inferior part of the left panel depicts a pregnant woman,who is all alone. On the right we see a woman who is also alone and who grabs a new born by his/her foot, making his/her body hang upside down. Another image shows, once again, a scene at a well.

According to Nicola McCartney, "Rego has inverted the domestic altar, creating its evil 'altar-ego', to publicly criticise, with aesthetic rage and horror, various forms of domestic abuse" (McCartney, 2010). This is an analysis somewhat similar to Glover's:

> "Yes, these are terrible scenes and they speak, time and again, of the ritual humiliation of the female. The female is she who suffers in Rego's work, she who is preyed upon, victimised and probed by children, harpies, slavering, yawning-jawed dogs and bloated, swollen-faced kidults. The older women generally have a look of weary resignation about them, as if they are exhausted almost beyond the limits of their exhaustion, as if they are almost serenely beautiful in their utter spentness. There is a worn and

[127] Full text available here: http://www.casadashistoriaspaularego.com/en/exhibitions/current/orat%C3%B3rio.aspx

> taxed beauty in these faces – it is not that smooth and sophisticated kind of drawing-room ideal of beauty to which so many painters, male and female, have so often accustomed us. This is a much harsher world altogether. There is nothing soft or winningly feminine about Rego's women. These faces often have the look of strong, square peasant faces, pitilessly accustomed to the hardest of life's hard knocks. These are scenes of brutal rape, of female circumcision, and they are played out in an almost a matter-of-fact way, as if this terrible, unstoppable circus of brutish goings is on the very warp and weft of life in rooms like this when lots of people and dream-like, nightmarish approximations of people gather together. These rooms are too crowded to be comfortable. There is such a jumble of ritual going on here that it is almost a laboratory" (Glover, 2010).

I would argue that it is not accurate to say that Paula Rego depicts victimized women. In some cases, the painter shows us women who are overwhelmed by sexual violence; having no way to counteract this violence. In other cases, they do resist. It is important, though, to mention that this resistance is a resistance to them being a spectacle of power.

Paula Rego does not offer a way out of the suffering and distress women experience in their bodies. In fact, she does not want to continue the silencing of these subjects. She does not want to smooth things over by offering some recipe for success in terms of coping. I would like to claim that Rego's decision to do so, of devoting her attention, and consequently the spectator's attention, not to women's response to power and violence, but to the exercise of power and violence, is itself a sort of agency given to the figure of the artist. Abortion and birth, the suffering but also the decision of women to take part in them, was something that somehow remained eradicated from the field of the visual. I argue that *Oratorio* is a "museum-like piece" which works as a visual summary; an artefact which summarizes the axis power/violence/resistance in women's bodies. It is a shire to women's experience of power, all summarized in this wooden structure: birth, rape, violence.

Chapter 5: female subjectivity and becoming Other

5.1. Introduction

Paula Rego not only visually formulated interrogations regarding female subjectivity, she has also suggested ways to undermine traditional renderings of it. As I have demonstrated, images are revisited and destabilized throughout her work; layered images which often hide an attempt to efface the Other, or neutralize it as such. The Other are women, bodies, non-western, non-white, non-male subjects. Among the plurality of otherness, Rego has elected women as her privileged subject (I purposely avoid using the term 'object') in what seems to be an aesthetic but also an ethical and political project. The trajectory followed took us from addressing the structures of power in vision, to the subversion of femininity's discourse and the spectacularization of sexual violence. We arrive at this crossroad, where difference is taken one step further and otherness enhanced for the sake of building a project of positivity; no longer of denial, but of affirmation. In other words, after analysing the way Paula Rego's images jammed the mechanisms of representation; how they displayed subjection and possibilities of resistance; how phallocentric scopic regimes were undermined, I will now examine how they enable or produce a transformation of the concept of subjectivity itself.

I would like to suggest that Rego's latest work simultaneously marks a change in her creative process and a transformation in her visual rendering of subjectivity. In fact, by creating her own models, using and assembling different components from different kinds, making them the central characters of her images or interacting with human live models, Rego has opened up, in the visual, a critical reflection on the limits of subjectivity and the interplay between sameness and otherness. I will consider these assemblages, not as fixed entities, but as elements of a continual becoming. In the following paragraphs I will, therefore, analyze some of Rego's work in which she uses these visual assemblages in order to draw some conclusions regarding their implications for the formulation of subjectivity. In order to do so, I will be using the Deleuzian concept of becoming, one of the key themes of his work and which, along with 'difference, serves as an antidote to the western tradition of focusing on being and identity (Parr, 2005). This will allow me to scrutinize the implications of having anomalous elements as "phenomena of bordering[128]" (Deleuze and

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"If the anomalous is neither an individual nor a species, then what is it? It is a phenomenon, but a phenomenon of bordering. This is our hypothesis: a multiplicity is defined not by the elements that compose it in extension, not by the characteristics that compose it in comprehension, but by the

Guattari, 2005: 245). Firstly, I will present the theoretical framework used for this analysis. Subsequently, I will explore what I have termed as the "becoming-animal" and "becoming-monster" in Paula Rego's work.

According to Deleuze, the duality of Platonism needs to be overcome. In other words, he refuses the existence of an origin, a stable world, which exists outside history, outside time, serving as a model. In the real world, beings come into relation by a process of differentiation, which means that everything is connected in a dialectic process. Difference is based on a comparison between two terms based on negativity; for instance, woman as opposed to man, who lacks male signifiers such as the phallus (Deleuze).

Instead Deleuze proposes a flow of becoming. Outside history and time, what exists is a flow of becoming, the power of differentiation itself. When stable moments occur within this process, beings come into existence. Difference is, thus, taken as something positive, for it is the motor of this flux; it is difference that allows beings to become other than themselves.

Obviously, this dismisses the idea of a human subject who provides a stable point of view over the world. The human subject is neither a mere effect of a set of structures, social, political and linguistic (as structuralism argued); nor is he/she the regulator of the real world. On the contrary, the human subject also takes part in this continuous becoming, interacting with other beings. This translates into becoming imperceptible, leaving behind the idea of the subject as

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lines and dimensions it encompasses in "intension." If you change dimensions, if you add or subtract one, you change multiplicity. Thus there is a borderline for each multiplicity; it is in no way a center but rather the enveloping line or farthest dimension, as a function of which it is possible to count the others, all those lines or dimensions constitute the pack at a given moment (beyond the borderline, the multiplicity changes nature)" (Deluze and Guattari, 2005: 245).

detached from the world and organizing all he/she perceives, but becoming different through this perception (Braidotti, 2002).

Related to this new framework of thinking subjectivity is the concept of a minor literature. As Braidotti puts it, referring to Bensmaia (in Boundas et al. 1994),

> "the main traits of 'minor literature' are its deterritorialization force, or its potential for multiple becomings. This is related to the capacity of art to politicize every aspect of one's existence even and especially the most intimate aspects (memories, loves, etc.) and its intrinsically collective force. In all these respects, 'minor' literature, as Kafka's works incontestably are – is anti-Oedipal, in so far as it resists the colonizing force of the molar system[129] and the totalizing influence of narrative closure" (Braidotti, 2002: 127).

What are its main traits? It is not a literature written in a minor language; it is, instead, a literature of a minority written in a major language. This means that minor literature operates inside major literature and major language using its elements, in a different manner (O'Sullivan, 2005). Minor literature connects the individual to the political. In major literature the individual case is connected to other individual cases, the social serving merely as the background. In minor literature, on the contrary, everything acquires a collective value; there is a search for political, collective agency.

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129 "The molar line is the line of the 'binary machine', the line on which the world is divided into binary oppositions: man/woman/, adult/child, public/private, white/black. It is the line Deleuze identifies most with representational thinking, in which identity is always formed on the basis of molar oppositions." (Pisters, 2002: 11)

Could one, transposing this idea to the field of the visual arts, equate a minor art; an art that would, in fact, present multiple becomings; possessing exactly these features of being created in a major language; where the political would be related to the individual; where collective agency would be an aim; an art which would replace the primacy of identity and re-presentation with becoming and presentation (Parr, 2005)? O'Sullivan points out that feminist and postcolonial art practices and histories can be seen as minor, for they establish "a deterritorialization of, or stammering in, the 'international language of modernism'" (O'Sullivan, 2005:3). Looking specifically at Paula Rego's case, I would argue that she uses the available language from art, with its technical devices, its figures and motives and, simultaneously, positions her work as feminist art. I disagree with O'Sullivan's idea of considering all feminist art as minor-art. Instead, it is the fulfillment of the features described above through which a minority art materializes. Rego's minority art makes use of the available forms in major art and "pushes [them] up against the edges of representation; (…) bends it, forcing it to the limits and often to a certain kind of absurdity" (O'Sullivan, 2005: 4). It sets a process in motion, a becoming, in which the spectator will have a relevant place.

Therefore, in my view, it is fundamental to look at Rego's work not as a stable and fixed corpus, but instead to examine the processes which bring back difference as positivity. As I already mentioned, in the most recent stage of her work Rego displays figures of becomings. In fact, strange figures are brought into life, where human and animal interact in a more synthetic way than before; where human and non-human are merged into the same body; these are figures of becoming-animal and becoming-monster.

5.2. Becoming-animal

I will start this analysis of becoming-animal with a statement by Claire Colebrook in *Gilles Deleuze*:

> "One way to think becoming-other than the perceived image of 'man' is through becoming-animal. Becoming animal does not mean becoming like an animal, or being an animal and leaving the terrain of the human altogether. It is a *becoming*-animal and not a *being*-animal because this becoming is hybrid. We begin from what is not animal, neither animal nor human but 'transversal'" (Colebrook, 2002: 133).

As Braidotti (2002) argues, taking Borges[130] as her source, animals are grouped in three different categories; animals we eat, animals we share our domestic space with and, finally, those we associate with a radical alterity and violence, thus frightening us. From the start, Paula Rego has given animals an important place in her creations. In my view, it is possible to trace their presence and identify three different patterns in which Rego displays them; one in which animals are limited to pets, therefore sharing the domestic space with other human figures. This, however, is not a completely homogenous group. In fact, it covers pets being separated from and controlled by humans; but also pets possessing some human attributes. Then, another pattern comprises animals which are central elements in a metaphorical structure. Finally, a last pattern incorporates a process of metamorphosis. I will now draw the theoretical framework for my analysis. My intention is to make more evident the distinction between the use of animals as metaphors and metamorphosis. After this, I will be able to go through Rego's work with the above premises in mind.

For Deleuze animals are neither functional to teleological systems of classification, nor are they about metaphors. Instead, they are about metamorphoses (Braidotti, 2002). In *Kafka, toward a minor literature*, Deleuze argues that Kafka deliberately kills each metaphor, all symbolism. This example is given to reinstate the idea that metaphor is the opposite of metamorphosis. In

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130 In his "Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge Taxonomy*",* Borges includes a taxonomy, supposedly from an old Chinese encyclopedia, which divides animals in thirteen categories:(a) those that belong to the Emperor,

(1) embalmed ones,

(2) those that are trained,

(3) suckling pigs,

(4) mermaids,

(5) fabulous ones,

(6) stray dogs,

(7) those that are included in this classification,

(8) those that tremble as if they were mad,

(9) innumerable ones,

(10) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush,

(11) others,

(12) those that have just broken a flower vase,

(13) those that resemble flies from a distance" (Borges, 2000: 101-106).

Against representation (Colebrook, 2002) Claire Colebrook gives us a clear understanding of Deleuze's rejection of metaphor. According to him, to acknowledge metaphor would be to accept the existence of a literal and objective world which could then be represented. Instead he reverses the terms: firstly, there is the virtual, which stands for the power of imaging that can be represented through images or metaphors:

> "There are images, things are themselves images, because images aren't in our head, in our brain. The brain's just one image among others. Images are constantly acting and reacting to each other, producing and consuming. There is no difference at all between *images*, *things* and *motion*" (Deleuze, 1995: 42).

On the basis of these guidelines one has to leave behind the idea of animals serving as metaphors for human characters and their behaviour. What we have is mutual deterritorializations, a circuit of stages which forms a mutual becoming. It is no longer the relationship between subject and object, which still assumes a separation and hierarchy between components (human versus animal, human versus inhuman, male versus female, just to mention some of the possible segments) (Deleuze, 1984).

I will now analyze a selection of Rego's work in which animals seem to have a relevant role. My aim, as mentioned previously, is to determine what kind of role they have in the plot. As pointed out before, animals can occupy the position of pets or adornments, as we see in the series *The Betrothal: Lessons (figure 2.17). For instance,* Rego uses stuffed animals which look alive: the cat and the parrot in *Wreck*, the dog in *Betrothal*. She also uses small decorative or playful animals: a monkey toy in *The Shipwreck and a parrot in After 'Marriage a la Mode' by Hogarth.*

A different mode of interaction between humans and animals is to be found in compositions which depict a relation simultaneously maintaining and crossing these boundaries. The dog is a somehow regular presence in Rego's work. In the 1980s she created the *Girl and the Dog Series* (figure 1.1). One could say that we are still facing Oedipalized[131] presences; that is, the way in which animals are portrayed reaffirms the opposition between man and the

131 " 'Oedipalization' is a contemporary form of social repression that reduces the forms desires take – and thus the connections desires makes – to those that sustain the social formation of capitalism"(Parr, 190).

animal, as the Other. However, Rego was in the process of distancing herself from such opposition. The interaction between the girl and the dog is not a regular one. As already discussed in the introductory chapter, the dog is clearly presented as a domestic creature; a young girl is taking care of him. Nevertheless, the way she does it, is not by any means conventional.

First of all, the girl's relation to her pet is undermined by a sexual component, this way challenging the separation between human and animal and, at the same time, the practice of incest. The dog can, thus, replace a non-existent male lover. The girl pulling the skirt is an overt dare to the dog, an illicit act, one of inviting him to take part in her seductive gestures, crossing gender and species boundaries. As Marc Shell put it:

> "Somehow the family pet is, or is thought of, as being familiar enough to be both in the special family, or in humankind, and in the particular consanguineous family. If my pet animal is somehow human, or is thought of as being somehow human, and if my pet is also somehow in the family, or is thought of as being in the family, then might I not wonder whether I can love or marry my humanoid pet without somehow violating a basic taboo, or somehow thinking of violating one? For all its outlandishness, the preceding question suggests how, at some level, pet love traduces (or transcends) two practices we ordinarily think of as being taboo. One of these practices is bestiality, or interspecies lovemaking, which is an effect of traducing the ordinary interspecies distinctions between human and nonhuman beings, or between kind and non-kind. The other practice is incest, or intrafamilial lovemaking, which is an effect of traducing the ordinary distinction between kin and non-kin.
>
> Pet love thus toes the line between chaste, or socially sanctioned, attraction (between a human being and a being from inside his species and outside his family) and either bestial attraction (between a human being and an "animal" being from outside humankind) or incestuous attraction (between a human being and a being from inside the particular kinship family)" (Shell, 123-124).

Secondly, this girl is, dangerously, on the verge of pursuing some kind of violence against the dog, in such a way that she can either care for him or *take* care of him. Apart from the ambiguous relation between this girl and the dog of protection and destruction, there is a duality between protection and seduction or

seduction and destruction. Victor Willing's argument is that the animals' role here is of providing a visual replacement for what can be relationships between adults and children[132] (McEwen, 1998). It is as if the supposedly infantile innocence is undermined by visualizations of what they will become. In fact, Rego's children already contain the adults they will become; they are far from conveying the traditional attributes. Rego's interest lies precisely in exploring the traces of seduction and malice that lie underneath regular childhood images. In the engraving *Menina com a mãe e um cão* (*Girl with mother and a dog*) (figure 5.1), dating from 1987, we see a young girl lying on her bed; she is wearing a dress, which does not cover her panty garters. On top of her is a dog, in a dominant position, standing on four paws, with a stiff body. The mother is the figure with the smallest proportions. Either she is trying to calm him down or instigate him to do something. She seems to be holding something small in her hand; it could be a small piece of food or medicine. Once again, the ambiguity is strong and significant, the boundaries of species and gender, seduction and menace, are challenged.

5.1. *Girl with her Mother and Dog* (1987)
Etching and hand shaken aquatint, 25 x 25 cm

[132] The relationship between adults and children is not uniform. It has changed throughout history, determining its depiction in the visual arts, for instance. According to The Romantics, the child conveys innocence and a separation from adults. They do not possess adult desires. "According to Higonnet, the genre types that rose to popularity in late eighteenth-century England, including costumed children, children with pets, and fairy children derived from earlier cupid figures, babies with mothers, and children playing at adult gender roles, each depended on diminishing the actual child's corporeal body in favor of a sentimental pose: passive, feminized, and inviting the projection of adult fantasies both sexual and nostalgic" (Pace, 1999: 438). This will change in the beginning of the twentieth century: "Higonnet wants to emphasize the historical continuity of the visual representation of the child: the passive innocent child "inviting" adult stewardship in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century, develops into its twentieth-century counterpart, the Knowing Child, whose vulnerability as a sexual and a social being poses a special danger and requires a different sort of intervention by adults" (Page, 1999: 442).

5.2 *Loving Bewick* (2001)
Lithograph, 67 x 43 cm

Apart from the relation with dogs, we can trace in Rego's work female subjects who interact with birds in an unconventional manner. Such is the case of *Loving Bewick* (figure 5.2):

> "Woman and marabou" (1996), "Girl Swallowing Bird" (1996), "Love" (1999), "Love II" (1999) and "The Dybbuk" (1999), all of which portray women and birds in conspicuously erotic scenes, can be seen as prefigurations of "Loving Bewick", moving in a similar register to the many examples of dogs, in poses that can often be interpreted as sexual and erotic" (Ferreira, 2007: 301).

5.3 *Seduction of Prince Pig*
(2006)
Coloured lithograph
89,5 x 65 cm

Another series in which an animal interacts with a female character is *O Príncipe Porco* (*Seduction of Prince Pig*) (figure 5.3), 2006. Rego took her inspiration from the writer Gian Francesco Straparola. This fairy-tale narrates the story of a queen who is cursed and gives birth to a pig. When he becomes an adult, he marries the oldest daughter of a widow. Contrary to the pig's expectations, she agrees to a marriage. She has a hidden agenda; she wants to take his power and riches and kill him. However, he

kills her by craving his paws on her heart. The same thing happens with the second sister. Only his third wife accepts the pig and his secret. Due to her love he is able to gain a human form. In her study about what she names 'fairy-tale science', Suzanne Magnanini provides us with a genealogy of possible interpretations:

> "In the Uses of Enchantment, Bettelheim notes that in these tales 'the male's anxieties that his coarseness will turn off the female are juxtaposed with her anxieties about the bestial nature of sex (…) Lewis Seifert finds in Straparola's tale a hero who 'is always already a man waiting for a woman to assume her rightful submissive place beneath him so that he can assert his dominance' (Magnanini, 2008: 93). During the period in which Straparola wrote his fairy-tales, the sixteen century, it was common to find or hear about women giving birth to animals or prodigious creatures (Magnanini, 2008:94). According to Magnanini, the Pig is the focus of the narrator; Straparola uses this figure to "explore culturally specific concerns related to Venetian marriage law[133]. His story of the pig king serves to assuage the Venetians' fear that unmarried male patricians could destabilize civic order as they attempted to satisfy their sexual desires in a restricted marriage market" (Magnanini, 2008: 96).

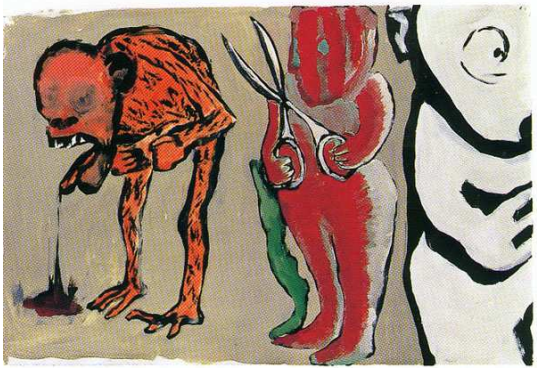
Rego's context is, obviously, different from the sixteenth-century Venetian one. I would argue that her *Pig Prince* is not the tale of a man wanting to find a woman who can occupy the role of the submissive wife. The pig is dressed, is less bestial and, therefore, more humanized. He seems to be more submissive than the woman. In fact, the position he occupies is one of passivity (the exception being *Prince Pig and his First Bride*). Either he is sitting next to the woman, or on her lap, or he is lying at her feet. As in other images created by Rego, the male character who has the function of the husband resembles a child, due to his bodily placement and his behavior. In *Seduction of Prince Pig*, who is seducing whom? The title allows me to interpret the pig as the seducer, but also as the seduced. In my view, the pig is transformed not into a human being, but into a domesticated animal. He has been turned into something between a pet and a lover; he can be fed and taken care as is the case in *The girl and the dog* series.

[133] It posed some strict rules concerning marriage between different class members.

He has found a place, but not one of assuming and taking control; he has found the "rightful submissive place beneath the women" (using Seifert's terms). To summarize, Paula Rego establishes a metaphorical structure, using the tradition of fairy-tales, but, contrary to the specific tradition of the "Prince Pig" tale, she overtly chooses to make the animal the metaphor of a disempowered character.

Another use is animals serving as symbols for humans, replacing them in the plot; in other words, animals as central elements in a metaphorical structure. Such is the case of the *Red Monkey* series. Dating from 1981, it presents a cast exclusively composed of animals. It was based on a theater toy which belonged to Victor Willing whose actors were a monkey, a bear and a dog. Another source of inspiration was Jorge Luis Borges's *The Book of Imaginary Beings*.

5.4. *Red Monkey Beats his Wife* (1981)
Acrylic on paper, 65 x 105 cm



5.5. *Wife Cuts off Red Monkey's Tail* (1981)
Acrylic on paper

According to Fiona Bradley (2002), the human agents in this series are disguised as animals. Her argument is that Rego uses the same process as children do, of making animals behave like humans. The actors are essentially three, a red monkey, a bear with a sneaky expression and a woman who is the central cause of the action taking place or about to take place (Bradley, 2002). The series has a narrative sequence which forms a visual interrogation about family bounds, love, betrayal and revenge. In one of the paintings, the woman is carrying a baby that resulted from her love affair with the bear. After this event, the Red Monkey beats his wife as a punishment for her betrayal (*Red Monkey Beats his Wife*) (figure 5.4). Then, the woman takes action in her hands and tries to cut the Red Monkey away from her (*Wife Cuts off Red Monkey's Tail*) (figure 5.5). She uses large scissors, making it less aseptic and more painful. It is a sort of castration, leading the monkey to a physical reaction, to vomiting. Besides, or along with being deprived from his masculinity – if one is to assume the tail as a

visual replacement for the animal's phallus[134], he is also deprived of power. I am using the conceptual term of power in its negativity, that is, as a force used to exercise violence over someone, threatening his or her physical integrity and suppressing his or her individual manifestation (Foucault, 1977). In fact, there is a transference of power from him to her, symbolized by her appropriation of the red colour. This transference translates, first, in the immediate action taking place. In other words, the action of cutting the monkey's tail or limb is both the cause and a manifestation of the woman's empowerment. In another painting, the woman and the bear are seen with their child, who is playing with a monkey (*Bear, Bear's wife and Son play with Red Monkey*). Thus, the power reduction, initiated in the previous painting, has led him to a complete deprivation. The monkey has become a mere toy at the disposal of this child. According to Paula Rego, the woman is transformed into a dove. The Red Monkey, finally, offers a poisoned dove, the symbolic and visual replacement for the Red Monkey's wife, to the bear (Bradley, 2002). Regardless of one's reading of the act of cutting, the main idea remains that the animals, the monkey and the bear, are visual replacements for humans. They convey the tension that exists between an oppressive male character and his female counterpart; such tension is being stressed by the meddling of a third character, the bear. There is a possibility for response to this male dominance, an extreme answer, but it is never a completely successful one, since it initiates a counterblow and self-harming consequences.

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134 Paula Rego provides two different readings of *"Wife Cuts off Red Monkey's Tail*". First, she argues that as a reaction to the monkey's violence over her, the woman cuts his tail and turns into a dove. As a revenge, the monkey poisons the dove and gives it to her lover, the bear, to kill him. Later on, Rego answers to the question of this series being an image of castration as the following terms:

"I could say that it is. I think that what it really is, is an image of separation, of incomplete separation. Look at that green limb that she has attached to her. It is not the monkey's tale, although people have thought that it was. She is trying to cut him away from her, but she can not do it completely – he leaves a small part of him connected to her, and he also vomits a part of him in the ground. He is too real for her- she can not get rid of him. The bear is just something that she uses to get rid of the monkey-another pair of scissors, if you want. It's an instrument of her liberation from the monkey, but this liberation is incomplete" (in Bradley, 2002: 27, my translation).

5.6. "The Proles Wall" detail (1984)
Acrylic paint on Carton, 244cm x 1220cm

I will now turn my attention to The Proles's Wall (1984) (figure 5.6), which, as will be demonstrated, presents animals replacing humans in the plot. This highly condensed piece was commissioned as part of an exhibition devoted to the work of George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty Four*. Less impressed with the political message of the book, Paula Rego decided to focus on its characters. According to McEwen, "she turned many of them into animal caricatures, but not with some reference to her personal life" (McEwen, 1998:124)". For instance, the two main characters of the book, Winston Smith and O'Brien, were turned into bears. However, the first one was transformed into a teddy bear and the last one into a real bear. This choice highlights the antagonism between both characters: on the one hand, we have Winston Smith trying, timidly and unsuccessfully, to pose a threat to the regime; and, on the other hand, O'Brien who, after dissimulating his character, reveals himself to be truly cruel and ruthless. One is a mere puppet in the regime's hands (Winston is also turned into a camel) and the other a real threat to any possible sign of resistance to it. Animals are also used to symbolize the atrocities humans inflict upon each other, what humans do to each other in the despotic regime of *Nineteen Eighty Four* (Orwell, 1997). In the eighth panel, on the bottom right corner, there is a scene depicting a wolf and a monkey completely controlling a girl and injecting into her some substance (McEwen, 1998). Hence, we are, still, inside a metaphorical structure.

I will now move to a set of Rego's work in which animals no longer serve as metaphors, but are part of metamorphosis. Before doing that, though, and in order to make more evident the distinction between both uses, I will pay attention to *Him* (1996) (figure 5.7), an etching from the *Pendle Witches* series. My goal is to show how metamorphosis is not defined merely in the terms of visually creating figures who have, simultaneously, both human and animal features.

5.7 *Him* (1996)
Etching and aquatint 16 x 19,2 cm
26,5 x 29,5 cm

Inspired by one of Blake Morrison's poems, it portrays a girl being attacked by a half-man, half-wolf creature. The upper part of this creature's body makes him closer to a wolf. However, instead of paws, he has long arms that support his weight. His lower body, although hairy, is more human than animal. All in all, he displays a strong physicality and aggressiveness. What is this figure's function in this etching's signifying economy? I share T.G. Rosenthal's interpretation according to which *Him* needs no gloss: its subject is the human male as predator. While Morrison is writing here of innocent school girls rather than Sutcliffe's[135] more usual victims, the prostitutes of Leeds, it is his archaic fox image that has fired Rego's imagination" (Rosenthal, 2003: 110). Although the girl is being attacked, as Rosenthal points out, this girl is not terrified; her face is serene. Her hand is not holding back, instead it seems to be stroking the beast (Rosenthal, 2003). The two etchings that Rego created before this final version are substantially different from *Him*. Not only is the beast absent – the menace is not overt (there are some hidden traces of it, such as the open door of the car) - but the girl's reaction is manifestly different. Her body position denotes less confidence and tranquility. It is as if she is trying to escape. Her wide open eyes also indicate that she is "fascinated and simultaneously repelled" (Rosenthal, 2003: 111). To conclude this point, this figure of the half-man, half-wolf is, visually, a great achievement. It is such a disturbing and strong figuration that

135 "Morrison published a poem inspired by Peter Sutcliffe called The Ballad of the Yorkshire Ripper in 1987 …" (Rosenthal, 2003: 110).

we hardly find a parallel in her other work. If one was to assume the idea that metamorphosis and becoming-animal is a mere visual representation of a hybrid body, containing both human and animal parts, this figure would fit these conditions perfectly. Nevertheless, this is not my understanding of metamorphosis and becoming-animal. In other words, it is not a matter of a visual and literal representation of what would be a half-human, half-animal. In fact, I maintain that, although crossing the borders of the animal-human distinction, this creature, *Him*, is still trapped in a metaphorical structure, working as a visual replacement of certain qualities or actions of men, namely an aggressiveness that turns him into a 'male predator'.

5.8 *Dog Woman* (1996)
Pastel on canvas, 120 x 160 cm

Apparently close to this etching is the next series I will analyze, *The Dog Woman* (1994) (figure 5.8). One can be fooled by superficial or apparent similarities with "*Him*, since both display figures crossing the boundaries between human and "canine" creatures. Taking a more careful look, though, shows us that the way in which human and animal segments intersect is substantially different.

The *Dog Woman* series has been extensively analyzed. However, the way in which it has been done still denounces the triptych structure as presented before (animals we eat, animals that inhabit our domestic space and animals we fear). In fact, the role of animals, in this particular case the dog, has been connected to the function they occupy in our lives, or, in other words, the relation we establish with them in our daily lives. McEwen, for instance, argues that the *Dog Woman* is about "the relationship between dog and master, translated into human terms" (McEwen, 2008: 215). My argument is that this series, in fact, inaugurates an important mark in the establishment of a new idea about subjectivity and female subjectivity in particular. The painter (see McEwen, 2008)

confesses that "When the *Dog Woman* appeared it was a great day" in her life (McEwen 2008: 213). Formally speaking, it was an important moment, because it inaugurated a new process of creation. Indeed, it was her first attempt to draw directly onto paper using pastel, backed up by canvas and laminated onto aluminum. However, what happened was more than a technical achievement. Ana Gabriela Macedo (2001) focuses on the representation of this woman. She argues that this work serves to reinstall a new figuration for woman and her desire, a bodily one; a figuration that resists the discursivization of the body and a site of regulated norms (Macedo, 2001). Maioli, in her analysis of Jenny Saville's work, argues that the hybridization of women with animalism is a way of denouncing femininity's attributes of animality and disgust. Simultaneously, she believes that by 'hosting' an animal component, woman' body has a potential for transformation and hybridity[136]. I would argue that, in the case of *Dog Woman*, the option for aligning a renewed female representation with an animalist figuration is, as in Saville's case, a form of denouncing the association of women's bodies with abjection. Despite this fact, I would like to claim that this is also a step in bringing forth a process of transformation in female subjectivity. If man is a rational being, disembodied, a fixed and well assembled entity; the alternative to this is Rego's figuration of a woman-dog; in other words, the creative act of assuming subjectivity, not as a fixed state, but instead as a continuous flux of transformation, in which different, apparently (and conventionally) unrelated entities exchange elements among each other. As Braidotti argues,

> "Becoming is the actualization of immanent encounter between subjects, entities and forces which are apt mutually to affect and exchange parts of each other in a creative and non-invidious manner (…) A force is a degree of affectivity or of intensity, in that

136 "Nomadic subject on canvas: Hibridity in Jenny Saville's paintings", analyses the way Saville depicts the animal qualities of women's bodies as a way of denouncing the association of femininity with animality and disgust: "(…) while men are free to follow their animal impulses and instincts, in a woman this is perceived as a definite animal-like quality which ends up turning the woman into an object of disgust and, ultimately, into an outcast. The woman, turned into a pig, can only be free after killing her mother, who is responsible for her first social education. As the title of the painting suggests, however, the woman's body was perhaps already "hosting" an animal side as an intrinsic potential for transformation and hybridity. This body, then, is in a sense "photographed" at the moment of transition from human to animal, the same way as Saville's surgical patients are depicted in the course of their transformation" (Maioli, 2011: 73)

> it is open and receptive to encountering other affects. The transformation that occurs in the process of becoming asserts the affirmative, joyful affects over and above the negative ones" (Braidotti: 2002: 68).

According to McEwen (2008), the *Dog Woman* series is based on a Portuguese fairy tale about an old lady living alone with her pets. The sound of the wind in her chimney assumes the daunting form of a child's cry encouraging her to eat her pets.

There is already a sense of disorder in this narrative, since the domestic animal is, oddly, confused with the edible one. Rego's version of it goes one step further. Nowhere are these woman's pets to be seen. She is alone in each image of this series. Of course, one can assume that they have already been eaten. However, I would argue that the morphology of the woman is of particular relevance here. It insinuates that something different than a 'mere' annihilation has occurred. I argue that this woman is in the process of becoming an animal. Her limbs are shortened and widened; her physique has become roughened. McEwen accurately points out that:

> "Animalism is emphasized in other ways, particularly by the foreshortening of legs and the swelling of knees and thighs, a device also used by Scottish painter Jenny Saville is similar to the emphasis on flesh in Lucian Freud's later paintings, in which weight and muscularity are exposed by positions of animal freedom like in the late work of Degas" (2008: 217).

Her posture is curved; she is vertical, closer to the ground. Then, we have her actions: howling (*Baying*, 1994), licking her arm (*Grooming*, 1994), closing her fists (*Waiting for Food*, 1994), lifting her leg against a blanket (*Bad Dog*, 1994), scratching dirt (*Scavengers*, 1994). Rego explains:

> "(…) I did it 'Bad Dog' picturing humiliation, love, loyalty, the tacit complicity of women, their silence, a certain masochism in love and betrayal…Marriage is a kind of shroud isn't it? It's the woman-animal, strong in her animality, her instinct, her endurance and her sense of honor (Macedo, 2001: 74)".

This woman takes some of the dog's attributes, namely, its submission and loyalty, its instinct and endurance; and, simultaneously, the dog appropriates the woman's affects.

Could one conclude that *Dog woman* is still trapped in a metaphorical structure? Is the animal a visual replacement for human actions or qualities? I would argue that, in this case, animals no longer provide a metaphor; instead, they inaugurate metamorphosis. This means that the woman is disposed of (or renounces to) a referentiality of her bodily organs to certain legitimate functions. Her body enters a process of mutation which makes her expand and intensify the material roots of her subjectivity. Limbs cease functioning in an operative mode and become manifestations of a liberated fury and desire.

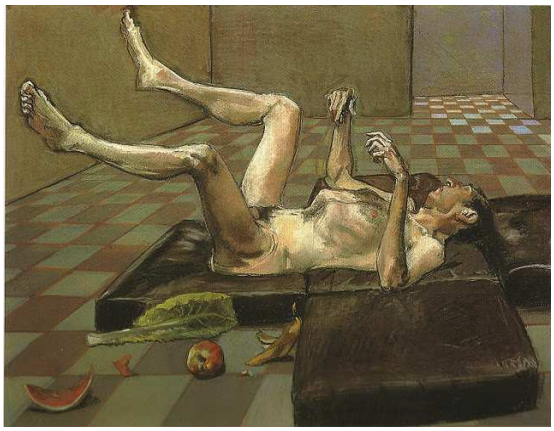
Rosi Braidotti has provided another relevant source in which a similar process occurs, the short story "The wolf's bride" by Estonian writer Aino Kallas:

> "The Estonian writer Aino Kallas, in her short story 'The wolf's bride' narrates the metamorphosis of a female werewolf. It describes in a moving manner the freedom and the exhilaration as well as the voluptuousness, of giving up the human form. The process of physical transformation marks also the shifts of consciousness of the woman, who gradually discovers her commonality or sameness with the leading wolf, the leader of the pack (…) As an emblem, the she-wolf represents therefore the monstrousness of liberated female sexual desire. That the expression of her desire cost her life does not detract from the intensity or value of it" (Braidotti, 2002: 129).

I will, at this point, examine cases in which metamorphosis is taken one step further; cases in which animals are intermingled with human components, forming assemblages of a becoming-animal. In order to do so, I have selected a group of compositions in which the assemblage of human and non-human, specifically animal, dispute the mind and body dualism, and the dominium of the former over the latter, which was the corner stone of anthropocentrism and phallogocentrism.

In 2002, Rego was invited to participate in 'Metamorphing', an exhibition curated by Marina Warner and Sarah Bakewell for the Science Museum in London. Her contribution to this exhibition was *Metamorphosing after Kafka* (figures 5.9 and 5.10), which was to be included in the section "Transfiguration, altered states". This section dealt with, in an already secular context, the use of substances that would alter conscience, enhancing the imaginary of artists.

5.9 *Metamorphosing after Kafka* (2002)
Pastel on paper, mounted on aluminium,
110 x 140 cm



5.10 *Metamorphosing after Kafka* (2002)
Pastel on paper, mounted on aluminium,
110 x 140 cm

Kafka's short story narrates a bizarre event which happens to Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman living with his parents and sister. He is the sole provider in the family. One day, he wakes up as a giant insect and this condition brings rupture to the familiar nucleus. In the beginning, Gregor's family, especially his sister, tries to take care of him, to adapt to the new situation.

However, gradually, the resentment against him increases; his family blames him for having thrown them into disgrace, for having shred any possibility of continuing their comfortable existence. He will end his days alone and neglected, with his family leaving, relieved after his death. In the text of the exhibition, Kafka's metamorphosis is referred to as an example of the use of animals and monsters in literature as metaphors for the human body and soul in transformation[137]. As I already pointed out, this idea of using animals as metaphors is substantially different from considering them an element in a process of metamorphosis. Becoming-animal in Kafka is a way of escaping from bureaucratic and oppressive triangles.

Metamorphosis contains two deterritorializations; one which the man imposes on the animal, making it run away or taking it under his control. When the animal points out and offers an escape to the man we speak of another type of deterritorialization. When the formerly implicit or virtual connection between man and animal is actualized, mutations take place and bodies increase their power of response and reaction (Lorraine, 2005). It is not the effect of a mistake or of guilt. It is a set of different states and intensities, attached to the man looking for a way out.

137 A selective tour of the exhibition is available at: http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/en/metamorphing/

Gregor's transformation into a bug is not caused by a mistake or guilt; it happens unexpectedly and no reason is provided for it. His mutation is not a matter of degradation of his soul or a punishment. Such a metamorphosis, albeit presenting him with several physical challenges and emotional anguish, forces Gregor to escape from the imprisonment of his daily life. According to Braidotti, the transformation of a human into an abject insect is a matter of testing one's ability to endure, one's sustainability. The human connects with the inhuman (Braidotti, 2002).

Once it takes place, it generates a whole series of different states and intensities, which manifest corporeally. Gregor becomes resistant to certain smells and flavours; but he also develops an almost hyper sensibility towards sounds. In Kafka's novel, even his voice becomes one of an animal:

> "Did you hear the way Gregor spoke just now?" That was the voice of an animal", said the chief clerk, with a calmness that was in contrast with his mother's screams" (Kafka, 2008: 18).

This textual passage reflects another relevant moment in the process of transition from human to animal. In fact, if the human voice is taken as "articulative, creative, recursive speech", the animal voice is "understood as instinctual code" (Calarco, 2008: 81). Gregor's metamorphosis is not a passage from animal to human, leading to euphoria; nor is it a passage from human to animal, since this would mean the end of one state and the beginning of another one. Gregor is caught in an in-between moment, in which his voice is no longer articulated and recognizable as such, not fully an "instinctual code". It is a hybrid sonorization of becoming-animal. For obvious reasons, Gregor's sounds are not present in Rego's work. However, the painter restates a disagreement with a metaphysical tradition which sets a binary relation between a subject defined along anthropocentric and phallocentric lines and the animal (as a representative of the others left outside the category of subject). In my view, this is done through the space and through the body. Gregor is inside a room deprived of objects. The floor 'patchwork' tiles seem to extend the space beyond the limits of the frame of the canvas. Rego opposes this feeling of extension, by cutting the visible space and making it smaller. Although Kafka's story has windows, Rego's painting only has a narrow door, which is also cut from the image. There are no objects which associate this space with the domestic and, thus, this room fails to qualify as a bedroom of a human subject. On the other hand, it does not possess any attributes which transform it into the habitat of an animal, or a beetle to be

more specific. Perhaps one might say that the space fails to depict an identifiable scenario; however, that would be inaccurate in my view. I would argue that this space, by not displaying elements associated with humans or animals, avoids any identification which could trouble precisely the idea of metamorphosis, by leading the process to be fixed into one or another state].

'Stepping inside' this room, we encounter a naked body, lying on his back, with his arms and legs up, like a bug on his back. Kafka's novel describes how Gregor struggles to step out of this position. What is interesting in Rego's depiction of Gregor's metamorphosis is the fact that she refrained from making this mutation too literal. She could have decided to include, for instance, elements that one could immediately associate with an insect. Instead, what we apparently have here is a human body. On closer inspection, though, we can see that Gregor is no longer a human being, nor an animal. He is both, an in-between figuration of a metamorphosis. As I pointed out, his legs and arms are in the same position the limbs of an insect or bug would be. His torso is also mutated; it has become hollow.

The apples that show up in another of the scenes can be either food that Gregor's sister has brought him, or apples used by his father during his rage against him. Another element that needs to be addressed is the bed that supports Gregor. It is some kind of daybed with the shape of a cross. There is, I think, a visual parallel with this image and figurations of Christ on the cross. Of course, this could be analyzed using iconography. However, this falls outside the scope of what I am interested in, namely the process of becoming-animal in Rego's work, her *Metamorphosis*. Comparable to what took place in Kafka, Gregor's metamorphosis is not a punishment resulting from some bad deed. In fact, Rego seems to reject this mind set, still trapped to a Catholic value system (in several instances she has exposed the hypocrisy and violence against women which originate from these values). As a matter of fact, what happens to Gregor enables him to get rid of the cumulative distress of his daily routine and familiar relationships, despite his physical discomfort (as can bee seen in the awkward position his naked body assumes) and the nasty reactions from his family (hinted at by the apples). The lines of escape are quite visible: they are traceable on the floor and on the body. On the body because they are no longer the lines of a domesticated, obedient and polished subject in a suit. The metamorphosis into a beetle is quite exposed; it is there to be seen. This is another significant aspect of Rego's version: it is as if we have passed the stage in which Gregor, still unsuccessfully, attempts to disguise and hide from his family what has happened to him. He is there, in front of us, in all its irreducible and confronting difference

(challenging the patterns of normality). Insects, as Shaviro points out, are an "alien presence that we can neither assimilate nor expel" (Shaviro, 1995:47). They are close to the monstrous; they are able to generate both admiration and disgust. Another very important feature, as Braidotti notes (2002), is the fact that they do not possess a relevant neurological reservoir and, therefore, are not controlled by memory or "the social sedimented memory, known as institutions. In Deleuze's terminology, they are multiple singularities without fixed identities" (Braidotti: 2002: 149).

5.11 *Turtle Hands* (2006)
Lithograph, 102.5 x 65.5 cm

5.12 *Camouflaged Hands* (2006)
Lithograph, 75 x 53.5 cm

I would like to look at another series in which a becoming-animal is presented, *Turtle Hands* (figure 5.11), consisting of two coloured lithographs. The explanation to its origin can be found in McEwen (2008). According to the art critic, it is based on an unpublished story by the playwright Martin McDonagh, "The Boy with Turtle Hands". Instead of hands a boy develops living turtles. Embarrassed by this, his mother kicks him out of the house. When in public he hides his turtle hands in plastic bags to avoid attention to them. This can be seen in *Camouflaged Hands* (2006) (figure 5.12). The boy is sitting with his hands inside green plastic bags, averting the spectator's look. Although his intention is to remain protected from reproachful and disgusted regards, visually he is unable to achieve this; the bags on his hands still draw attention. Even the colour of the bags is in dissonance with the rest of the composition, making them more visible,

and bandages are attached to the bags. All in all, the spectator knows that something odd is hidden from him/her.

One day, when he goes to the beach, wild turtles come and mate with his hands. As a result of this, eggs start to grow on his arms. When he dies and is buried, the eggs are still in incubation. Later, they will hatch, and the baby turtles will bring the boy's body out of the sea (McEwen, 2008).

In *Turtle hands*, the boy is lying on a divan or deck chair. There is a sense of lust in the painting, because the turtles go through his upper body, exposing it. Behind him is a woman, most likely his mother. We do not know whether she is hiding, in disgust, or admiring him. Once again, this kind of metamorphosis originates both repulsion and admiration from the spectator.

Reading this work, namely the presence of an animal, tortoises, and its articulation with the human, as a metaphor would keep human and animal in distinct and separate fields. We would be dismissing the evidence that Rego presents us with a body in which both elements interact and intermingle; contaminate each other. Instead of asking the question 'what do they symbolize', I would like to ask 'how do they act, and what effects do they generate?'

It is interesting that Paula Rego's *Turtle Hands* has something in common with D.H. Lawrence "Tortoise series" (D.H.Lawrence, 2008) even though Rego did not have this literary reference in mind. In fact, both sources give us artistic accounts of becoming-animal. These are neither domestic animals nor "animals with characteristics or attributes; genus, classification, or State animals"; they are, instead, "more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale" (Deleuze and Guatari, 2005: 240-241). Deleuze and Guattari give us a curious account about of D.H. Lawrence's tortoises:

> "Lawrence's becoming-tortoise has nothing to do with a sentimental or domestic relation. Lawrence is another of the writers who leave us troubled and filled with admiration because they were able to tie their writing to real and unheard-of becomings. But the objection is raised against Lawrence: "Your tortoises aren't real!" And he answers: Possibly, but my becoming is, my becoming is real, even and especially if you have no way of judging it, because you're just little house dogs." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005: 244).

Becoming-animal, having his hands turn into turtles, is once again not the effect of a mistake or of guilt. It is a set of different states, intensities, attached to the boy looking for a way out (Deleuze, 1984). As I pointed out earlier, metamorphosis contains two deterritorializations; firstly, the one which is the boy taking the animal into control. It is evident that the strange transformation occurred in his body and disturbs him and his mother: he tries to hide it and his mother also feels ashamed. But he somehow manages to control the animal segments present in/on his body: in a more superficial and temporary way, by hiding them inside plastic bags. The other deterritorialization is formed by the escape line pointed out by the animal and offered to the man. In McDonagh's story, the germination/contamination of eggs in his arms will ultimately set him free. One could ask of course why this segment of the story is not part of Rego's series? I would argue that the lithograph *Turtle Hands* condenses both the mother's reaction to the transformation and an aperture to the escape from it. His look and body, unlike *Camouflaged Hands*, do not make him feel ashamed. He is quite exposed: his legs are wide open, his belly is uncovered, his entire body is amplified by the position he occupies in relation to the spectator (in front of the spectator). He dismisses his mother's reaction; he has left her behind, literally and metaphorically speaking. The escape line seems to be immediately in front of him, in the chasm of the visible: the unframed foreground, which he almost reaches with his shoes.

To conclude this point, we have seen how the animal's presence in Rego's work is far from homogenous. In fact, we can trace different patterns in which animals have a specific role. One of these patterns sets forth processes of metamorphosis which make the human step away from the figuration of the centered and centering male-white-western, stable subject. These metamorphoses already verge on the abnormal and the outcast. Becoming-animal's force of resistance will, naturally, connect to a becoming-monster.

5.3. Becoming-monster

El sueño de la razón produce monstrous is the title of the 43rd plate of Goya's *Caprichos*. It depicts a human figure surrounded by menacing animals. Although "sueno" can mean either "sleep" or "dream", the latter term was chosen for the English translation. One can immediately question whether these monsters were generated by the absence of reason (sleeping and dreaming are states in which reason is inactive) or, instead, whether reason has its own

dreams, which, in their turn, can generate monsters. According to Canguilhem, Goya created his *Caprichos* during the "age of the experiences", which means that monsters were taken as results of the failure of reason[138]. The historical context of social and political disturbances in Spain[139], having the values of the Enlightenment present, can also help dissolve this ambiguity and certify this reading according to which it is the lack of reason which generates monsters.

My decision to start my analysis of what I name the "becoming-monster" in Rego with this image is not random. On the contrary, despite the fact that some of Rego's work presents visual similarities with Goya's *Caprichos*, the way Goya and Rego perceive what it is to be "within reason" and "outside it" is utterly different.

The definition of 'man as a rational animal' presumes the existence of a neatly, confined and well functioning body. In fact, all bodies that fail this condition are enclosed in the category of abnormality and monstrosity (Braidotti, 2002). Márcia Oliveira[140], in her study of Paula Rego's work, discusses the approximation between women's body and the body of monsters. Her purpose is to show that, for some centuries, in discourses such as the clinical and the artistic, women's body has been taken as the privileged material to exemplify abnormality. Mary Douglas's work is of particular relevance here, particularly the opposition between order-purity and disorder-pollution. The body of women, according to Douglas, is placed under the second term, for its manifestations such as menstruation, giving birth, having an abortion, are considered a menace to the confinement of each body. A body that leaks carries out the threat of infecting other bodies with its polluting fluids (Douglas, 2003).

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138 "A l´age dês fables, la monstruosité dénonçait le pouvoir monstrueux de l´imagination. A l´âge des expériences, le monstrueux est tenu pour symptôme de puérilité ou de maladie mentale ; il accuse la debilité ou la défaillance de la raison. On répète, après Goya : « Le sommeil de la raison enfante des monstres », sans se demander assez, compte tenu précisément de l´œuvre de Goya, si par enfanter on doit entendre engendrer des monstres ou bien en accoucher, autrement dit si le sommeil de la raison ne serait pas libérateur plutôt que générateur des monstres » (Canguilhem , 1975 : 178).

139 "It has become commonplace to attribute to Goya's illness in 1793 the deep change in his way of seeing the world that becomes obvious in the Caprichos. I wish to suggest a double hypothesis: to his illness we may owe the medium, that is, the etching, which he employed to project his vision of his world in the 1790s. To his disillusionment with Spanish society in the first years of the reign of Carlos IV and Maria Luisa we owe the subject matter of the Caprichos" (Dowling, 1985: 345-346) .

140 Unpublished work "Aproximação à obra de Paula Rego a partir dos conceitos de devir e de diferença", 2008.

Focusing on the representation of women in art history, Lynda Nead argues precisely that the female nude was presented as a well confined, organized and purified body. Only with modern art did abjection start to become "part of the picture"; especially with the contribution of female painters who aimed to disrupt centuries of aseptic and phallic representations (Nead, 1992).

When analyzing the presence of the monstrous body in Rego, Oliveira maintains that it offers an escape out of the possibilities given to the female body by art discourses. Nevertheless, she argues, that, due to the fact that the monstrous body carries with it an organ mutilation, it stands as an obstacle to a deterritorialization of the molar forces (Oliveira, 2008). Furthermore, she argues that deformation can be seen as multiplicity, as a non-stoppable series of movements which dilute the organs, making them indiscernible and, thus, monstrous (Oliveira, 2008). Oliveira, using José Gil's work on monsters[141], claims that there is no becoming in monstrosity. She explains that, considering the fact that the monstrous body is "characterized by a complex organicity (monsters are deformed bodies by the addition of non-human organs, or mutilated through subtracting some of these organs which build a body crossed by normality, which is, this way, denied), it annihilates also the identification of Paula Rego's bodies with the monstrous, but it makes them closer to a becoming-inhuman…[142]" (Oliveira, 2008: 147). In his book, *Monstros*, José Gil, argues that the becoming-animal is always present, even if non-manifested, in us as well as a becoming-vegetable and becoming-mineral, both less evident. According to him, these becomings include a becoming-other. Becoming-monster does not. Gil, thus, concludes that, given the fact that becoming-monster is not mediated, it is a becoming-itself; thus denying the idea of becoming (Gil, 2006). He claims that:

> "Simply, there is no real becoming through monstrosity; there is a chaotic movement all of a sudden paralysed, like a becoming which is started and is canceled, unfinished, mutilated. The traces of a big turmoil are exposed; bodily geology of sketched earthquakes, catastrophes in advanced stage and suddenly ended[143]" (Gil, 2006: 127).

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141 Gil, José. *Monstros*. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água, 2006.

142 My translation.

143 My translation.

It is important to mention the fact that José Gil is essentially analyzing two kinds of monsters; monsters which are nothing other than bodies subtracted from normality and monsters which are the physical and geographical Other from the western subject. This is summarized in a typology of monsters, or teratology: monsters which:

1. "miss a bodily element;
2. present a modification in the way the organs relate to each other;
3. have a abnormally large or small body;
4. have an odd element replacing a normal one (for instance, monsters with two holes instead of a mouth);
5. mix different kingdoms (animal, vegetable, mineral);
6. mix different sexes;
7. are hybrid;
8. are characterized by "a powerful animality" (Gil, 2006: 137).

My objection to Gil's idea that becoming-monster does not install a real becoming comes from the specificity of Rego's becoming-monster. First of all, Rego's monsters do not seem to fit in any of the categories proposed by Gil. In fact, as I will show they combine elements of all of the above groups and even exceed them. They integrate non-only animal and vegetable elements, but also inanimate ones. Secondly, they do neither fit the group of the creatures which have become monsters due to some physical abnormality; nor are they inhabitants of remote regions, unknown to the West. If these are objections which, essentially, derive from the category of monsters, I, consequently, have objections to Gil's refusal of a concept of becoming-monster.

I would argue that monstrosity in Rego, becoming-monster, allows her to draw lines of escape, since it opens up subjectivity beyond what it is to be human. I will develop this idea by dismissing mutilation as a requirement or defining factor of becoming-monster. I see a problem with the idea that monstrosity brings along, or is shaped, simply by mutilation; as if monstrosity is, necessarily, the result of a dysfunctional process of subtracting limbs and organs to one's body. Elaine Graham sustains that, although, monsters have bodily formations,

> "the issue at stake in the phenomenon of monstrosity is not physical, but moral. The Latin and French etymological roots of the idea, *monstrare* and *montrer* respectively, indicate that a monster is

something *shown forth*. The purpose of the monster is to reveal the divine will, specifically to embody the contours of moral order and disorder…" (Graham, 2002: 50).

In my view, monstrosity has an undeniable moral genealogy, since morality is, in a considerable number of literary and artistic sources, as its explanation (monstrosity, thus, resulting in a punishment for a bad deed or an unnatural event). Monsters are often made into *exempla* to advert, frighten and keep human action within a pre-established set of rules in accordance with public *mores*. In Portuguese literature, for instance, the fear of the unknown experienced during the discoveries enterprise was 'petrified' in the figure of Adamastor[144]. This is related precisely to Gil's idea of monsters being either abnormal bodies or bodies of the unknown.

Nevertheless, and this is what I will be focusing on, the discourse around monsters is also connected with what it is to be human. Monsters are set outside the boundaries of such a concept and, simultaneously, show their fragility and un-natural aspect. In fact, these boundaries are politically, religiously, gender and race biased:

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144 "In the fifth canto of *The Lusiadas*, Vasco da Gama is the guest of the African king of Melinde on the east coast of Africa. He narrates the story up to this point of his voyage from Portugal: Cam6es's obvious models are Odysseus telling his adventures to Alcinous in Phaiakia and Aeneas recounting his wan- derings to Dido in Carthage. Da Gama describes the moment when his fleet is about to approach the Cape of Good Hope. Suddenly, there appears a black cloud out of which, in turn, an enormous giant emerges, looming over them in the air. This menacing figure announces to the Portuguese the punishments that await them for their daring and presumption (atrevimento; 5.42.6) in opening up the new maritime route to the Indian Ocean. He briefly mentions (5.42.7-8) the arduous wars they will have to fight to subjugate the seas and lands of their empire. Then he foretells at length (5.43-48) the storms and mishaps that the cape itself has in store for future Portuguese fleets, culminating in the terrible Sepulveda shipwreck of 1552. The monster would continue this dire prophecy, but da Gama interrupts him to ask his identity. He replies that he is Adamastor, one of the earthborn Titans who, during their rebellion against the gods, led an assault against Neptune to gain control of the sea. He was stirred by his love for the sea nymph Thetis, who lured him out of battle only to deceive and spurn him. In his shame and disdain he fled to the Southern Hemisphere, where the gods punished him for his presumption (atrevimento; 5.58.8) by turning him into the land mass of the cape itself. There he is still erotically tantalized and frustrated, for Thetis still swims around him in the encircling sea (50-59). Having told his story, the giant disappears as the black cloud dissolves, and the Portuguese sail by the cape (61) without further incident and continue their voyage" (Quint, 1989: 125).

"That which is different becomes pathologized as 'monstrous' and thus inhuman, disposable and dangerous; the monster is personified as a threat to purity and homogeneity. So women, racial and sexual minorities, political radicals or those with physical or mental impairments are designated inhuman by virtue of their non-identity to the white, male reasoning able-bodied subject" (Graham, 2002: 53).

Haraway, in her turn, argues that

"Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations. The Centaurs and Amazons of ancient Greece established the limits of the centered polls of the Greek male human by their disruption of marriage and boundary pollutions of the warrior with animality and woman (…) Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman.
There are several consequences to taking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they. Up till now (once upon a time), female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; and female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions. Only by being out of place could we take intense pleasure in machines, and then with excuses that this was organic activity after all, appropriate to females. Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment" (Haraway, 1991: 181).

I will develop now the connection between the idea of the monstrous as a figure that allows an escape line from the molar representation of Man as a rational being (and with other attributes such as being male, white and western), in a organized body, and Deleuze's formulation of the body-without-organs (BwO). It is important to clarify that I am not suggesting that the monstrous and the Body-without-Organs (BwO) are the same thing. I see the monstrous, instead, as one of the possible figures of the BwO[145]. What does this mean? My argument is that becoming-monster is a figuration of the BwO; a way of stepping out of the understanding of subjectivity as a stable, confined, unitary organism.

What does this mean in terms of Rego's work? What happens when she chooses to create monsters and display them as actors on her canvas? What are the ontological and political implications of such representations? I argue that they are an alternative to the phallocentric representation of what it is to be human. How? Physically, given the fact that they are an assemblage of organs which renounces the univocity of organs and normal functions. And in terms of representation, since they are signifiers of a radical difference and go against what can be accepted as subjects of enunciation.

I suggest looking at some of her work in which monsters have a central place and examine their role regarding what Deleuze called 'mimic the strata'. According to the French philosopher, dismantling significance and subjectification implies "tearing the conscious away from the subject in order to make it a means of exploration, tearing the unconscious away from significance and interpretation in order to make it a veritable production" (Deleuze, 1987: 160). My analysis of

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145 Deleuze's model of the BwO goes against the idea that certain organs are connected with specific bodily functions; which, on their turn, connect with proper objects. Instead, the BwO explores disjunctions, unseen or unexplored connections, between them, that subtracts from the power of phallic referentiality. It is a model opposed to psychoanalysis' organs and functions. As Parr puts it, the body without organs is still inside "stratified fields of organization at the same time as it offers an alternative mode of being or experience" (Parr, 33). What this means is that the BwO doesn't dismiss organs, "the enemy is the organism (…) The BwO is opposed not to the organs but to that organization of the organs called the organism" (Deleuze, 1987: 158). Everything that is un-organized is considered to be "depraved".

Besides organism, significance and subjectification are two of the main strata which bind us (Deleuze, 1987: 159). This means that everything, everyone, must be either a signifier or a signified; otherwise it will be considered "deviant". Finally, one is expected to be the subject of enunciation. The BwO opposes these strata by disarticulation, experimentation and nomadism. Nevertheless, one has to keep a certain dosage of these three strata. Deleuze proposes to "Mimic the strata" (Deleuze, 1987).

Rego's work regarding the act of 'mimicking the strata' will be two-folded: firstly, I will determine how in *The Pillowman* (figure 5.13) and the *Fisherman* (figure 5.14) the conscious is separated from the subject and, afterwards, I will consider a series in which the unconscious is no longer signifiable and interpretable- the *Muses*.

5.13 *The Pillowman* (2004)
Triptych, 180 x 120 cm. c/u 180 x 360 cm

The creation of the *Pillowman* (2004) is a singular moment in Paula Rego's artistic and feminist visual theory/practice:

> "These triptychs, dominated by the giant doll pillowman, mark the full flowering of the scene-setting intrinsic to her play with three dimensions. As the props and dummies filled the studio it became strange and ghostly, a theater of memory indeed (…) I think we are witnessing a major turning point with her making these sculptures,' says Tony Rudolf, who has watched the evolution of the studio since the beginning. 'It's a truly radical change and I don't think it's going to go away (…) The difference between her studio and other artists' I've seen is that hers – because of the props – is like being back-stage at a theater" (McEwen, 2008: 150).

I share Tony Rudolf's opinion that Rego's most recent work, in which she creates her own sculptures, having them interact with live models or standing alone in the scene, is crucial. With these works, Rego further develops the theatricality that some of her other works already exhibit and, at the same time, creates extreme figurations which question subjectivity even more radically. My

procedure will be based on a first contextualization of these works, followed by a focus on the implications of having these un-human characters as main actors, as well as their specific role as figurations of a radical subjectivity.

In McDonagh's play, "'Katurian", a would-be writer who lives in a totalitarian regime, is taken, along with his brother Michal, by the police to be interrogated. He is accused of being the author of crimes that have been carried out against children. The accusation is based on the circumstance that the stories he writes describe these crimes. One of his stories, the only that, according to him is autobiographical, "The Writer and His Brother", narrates the life of two brothers, a disabled brother who was instigated by his parents to scream so that his brother could have material to write about. Another of his stories is "the Pillowman", an odd character who is able to travel back in time and visit people's childhood. His task is to convince them to commit suicide, thereby avoiding suffering they would later on encounter in their lives. In order to stop his own suffering, he visits his younger self, who decided to put an end to his life. From that moment on he is unable to save children from their sufferings. McDonagh's description of this character presents us with an odd figure with a gloomy function (McDonagh, 2003). The "Pillowman"'s story is, somewhat, autobiographical, since it describes a similar process which occurs in Katurian's own stories: his stories narrate how children get killed and are, therefore, 'spared' from possible sufferings in their childhood; somehow real crimes are committed against children, which replicate Katurian's stories. Besides, as Brian Cliff suggests, "the Pillowman's parallel to his own killing of Michal with a pillow suggests how he would like to see himself: as performing something between a punishment for what Michal has done and a mercy killing for what he has suffered" (Cliff, 2007: 141).

Paula Rego, instead of recruiting a life model, which was her regular 'procedure', decided to create this creature herself, by using eiderdown and pillows stuffed in stockings. She used different segments of Katurian's stories, mainly inserting some characters in her triptych. In all three panels, the *Pillowman* is never alone; in fact, he is surrounded by women of different ages.

In the left panel, the *Pillowman* is leaning into an armchair, covered by a golden cape[146]. It is as if he is acting out a role, of a superhero, but this supremacy is contradicted by the vulnerability of his posture. The girl holding a

[146] A detailed explanation about the elements present in the triptych can be found here: http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/rego/pillowman.shtm

staircase is the girl in the play who wanted to be like Christ. Her stepparents made her carry a heavy cross around the room until her legs gave in.

In the middle panel, the scene takes place outside. The *Pillowman* is lying on a day bed (in fact, it is a psychiatrist couch which has been used in other paintings). A young girl is sleeping next to him, holding him. Behind them, a woman is holding a child, with her hand surrounding the child's neck. We do not know whether this child is just sleeping or dead. In the background scene we can see the girl from the first panel carrying a heavy cross.

In the right panel, the couch is transformed into a living room couch, where a woman is sitting. The *Pillowman*, once again, is leaning, on her lap. She is comforting him. There is another girl on the edge of the couch, looking at the pair. Scattered on the floor are green apples. In McDonagh's s play, a little girl is treated badly by her father and, as a revenge, she carves little men out the apples with razor blades inside them. Despite saying to her father not to eat them, he does so and causes his own death (McDonagh, 2003). Behind, there is a woman holding a doll. This doll has a stock covering its head.

These are all disturbing figurations. So is the interaction between the human and the non-human. There is no superiority or more realness in the human characters than there is in the *Pillowman*. Why does Rego use these new constructions? My argument is that this needs to be regarded in a dual way. Firstly, it enables the disavowal of the representation of a world where a true reality exists and can be copied. There is no reality to which these images serve as a copy. The *Pillowman* has his own reality; in other words, he is a character who exists within a specific reality (fictional, pictorial), with its set of interactions, interpellations and causalities. It does not refer back to a pre-existent or pre-established state of things, which we can revisit. I am aware of the fact that other interpretations have been suggested, in which a connection with biographical data has been made. I am referring to Ana Gabriela Macedo's work, which highlights a commentary by Rego about the *Pillowman*[147]. Even tough there are visual elements which trace back to biographical segments of Rego's memories, the *Pillowman*, as depicted by Rego, is still a radically new figure, which acts in a certain way, specifically driven by the interactions taking place and made visible

147 "I think the play was wonderful! I understood everything so well, it was extraordinary! I asked his agency (McDonagh) if I could use the title The Pillowman for one of my works, and I was told 'No problem!' (…) I started to get more involved. He began to look like my father. I bought him a stripe shirt and sate him on the chair my father used to sit. The beach on the background is Estoril. He is dying of prostat cancer" (my own translation, Macedo, 2010: 140).

in this composition. Macedo also argues that neither McDonagh's stories nor Rego's images are a pure illustration of reality. "Both artists refuse this mimicry" (Macedo, 2010: 141). Her reading relates this refusal to a challenge to the established power. According to Macedo, the biggest perversion is caused by censorship, which forces the writer to a false confession (Macedo, 2010). In my view, this is a very important point; however, my attention is centered on an ontological plan, in which reality is challenged and, at the same time, new figurations of subjectivity are produced.

Secondly, the *Pillowman*'s stories do not form a copy of reality. Instead, reality is constructed within the stories. The *Pillowman* is able to foresee when a child's life will result into a miserable adult life. In order to prevent that from happening, he then visits these children and convinces them to commit suicide. If the Pillowman would not appear in these children's lives, they would extend them and face a future of suffering. It makes their lives momentarily unstable; for a few moments (the moments of their decisions), their lives balance between two opposed segments: an existence which is voluntarily interrupted or a continuity which will lead them to a dark scenario of a miserable adulthood. The images, thus, show this meeting taking place, their immediate future about to take place and another future being obliterated. These stories turn into reality: these children do actually die. Reality is originated within these stories not the other way around. One can even say that these create reality. Reality, one can say, can be manipulated; the *Pillowman* intervenes precisely to determine these children's future.

We also need to address the option and implications of the *Pillowman*'s non-humanity. According to Deleuze, "Difference can become thinkable only when tamed (...) when subject to the four iron collars of representation", which are identity, opposition, analogy and resemblance (Deleuze, 1994: 262). Opposition, analogy and resemblance are the relations that are considered to take place between a prior and outside reality and our own world, an imitation of it in platonic terms. The most obvious relations to be rejected are analogy and resemblance, since in no way is the *Pillowman* similar or replaces a determined element of reality. Nor is Rego's new construction opposed to it, since it has its own existence within a setting created by her. I argue that it is not a case of simply creating an imaginary world where an odd character serves as a metaphor of a particular human condition. On the contrary, it takes part in reality, which is questioned.

Identity is not applicable to these figurations or, to rephrase, these figurations materialize the rejection of an identity for the *Pillowman* (stable and

fixed). Firstly, the fact that he does not fit the attributes of being human, compromises the possibility of formulating an identity for him. Secondly, even if one was to adapt the concept of an identity based on the premise of a lack, of a separation between consciousness and unconsciousness, the *Pillowman* is a complex composition of both these elements. His thoughts and actions are inhabited by the dark and violent realms of one's unconscious. He is not a confidante to children's memories. He has access to blocks of these children's lives, allowing them to have a preview of the painful transformations they will undergo. A process somewhat similar to what Deleuze described for us:

> "The BwO is a childhood block, a becoming, the opposite of a childhood memory. It is not the child "before" the adult, or the mother "before" the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map" (Deleuze, 1987: 164).

Instead of identity, we have multiplicities. A body itself is no longer made as an homogenous, self-confined entity. It is instead a multiplicity of organs which are put into a relation with other bodies; multiplicities of bodies who interact with each other. Even the *Pillowman*'s body is a materialization of this multiplicity, in the sense that it aggregates a configuration of different segments. This configuration is not disguised and made into an apparent homogenous body; on the contrary, each element keeps visually its borders and, at the same time, the points of connection with other elements. The stocks, the lace used on his feet, are instruments to sustain, but they also denounce the fact that this body is made of different organs/materials, juxtaposed to each other. The *Pillowman*, I argue, is a figuration of a 'becoming-monster'; it forms an assemblage of components of different kind, providing a radical alternative to the confined human, male body; an alternative to a reason-able subject. It is a complex character; complex because it forms itself a non-linear reality – the present does not respond, as a consequence, to the past. I would like to look at another figuration of a 'becoming-monster', the *Fisherman* (2005).

According to Rego, the *Fisherman* is based on autobiographical material. It is composed of three panels, all centered on the *Fisherman*. The right panel invokes an episode which occurred with her parents during a fishing day trip in Cabo da Roca, Portugal. Her father, unexpectedly, caught a huge octopus. On the left panel, a woman is sitting beside the *Fisherman*, now dressed up in a suit, who

is reading her a book. Rego explains that this is a recollection of the moments spend with her father, when he used to read Dante's *Inferno* to her (Livingstone, 2007). The center panel has some religious connotations; it "is meant to be the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost" (Livingstone, 2007: 13). This is one face of this painting. I will also refer back to my analysis of the *Pillowman* in order to draw a conclusion regarding the uses of monstrous figures.

5.14 *The Fisherman* (2005)
Triptych (c. right panel), pastel on paper, 180 x 120 cm

One can tell that the *Fisherman* is, in fact, the *Pillowman* slightly rearranged. However, there are more than mere formal coincidences between both figures. According to Rego, there is a specific and peculiar interaction taking place between the fisherman and the woman sitting next to him[148]. "He is showing her what she will become, which is something burning (…) she is engrossed in it." (Rego about the *Fisherman* in "Human Cargo", 2008). Assuming that the *Fisherman* is, indeed, showing this woman what she will become, one can say he is, like the *Pillowman*, in fact a figure of becoming, in a material sense (due to his composition) and in the sense that he opens up becoming. A book, by definition, is a record of facts or fictions, situations, characters. However, a book that deals with becoming instead of beings is not a reservoir of accomplished facts and identities, but it is open to the present, thus, allowing difference to take place. Once again, the openness of what is to come takes over the fixity and certainty of the past. Similar to the *Pillowman*, the *Fisherman* has a special access

148 Left-hand panel.

to time; they allow for the human character to look at him/herself in the openness of his/her becoming. Once again, in my view, there is a dismissal of a transcendental subject who can own memory and, thus, be enabled for recollection. In other words, the human characters do not possess a memory of their subjectivity, simply because this is not closed and accomplished; either the past (the childhood in the *Pillowman*) can be re-defined, changed; or the future is unfolded as a present about to take place as different segments (the becoming as narrated by the book in the *Fisherman*) A false impression of a unified self is rejected. Instead, memory and knowledge of time and subjectivity (a subjectivity lined by becoming) is on the side of the non-human, of the monster.

As Braidotti notes, insects are close to the monstrous, since

> "they are able to generate both admiration and disgust". Another very important feature is the fact that insects do not possess a relevant neurological reservoir and, therefore, are not controlled by memory or "the social sedimented memory, known as institutions" (Braidotti, 2002: 149).

In Deleuze's terminology, there are multiple singularities without fixed identities" (Braidotti, 2002). It is a fact that, if the effect generated in the spectator is somehow similar, insects and monsters' mnemic component is different. Although possessing memory, monsters inhabit it quite differently from humans. In other words, monsters (and specifically these monsters) bring about more flexible forms of subjectivity, grounded in "matter" and "memory" but never fixed (Pisters, 2003: 141). Memory as reproductive and representational reaffirms the fiction of identity, due to its "role of establishing relations of resemblance and causation" (Parr, 2005: 160). Instead, these figures present us 'blocks of history' in association with the present, thus allowing for the past to take a new and different existence. In my view, the *Pillowman* and the *Fisherman* are figurations of this new, more flexible form of subjectivity, in which difference and becoming is the main motor.

5.15 *Muses Feeding* (2007)
Graphite on paper, 137 x 02 cm

In *Muses Feeding* (2007) (figure 5.15), we are confronted with seven figures inside a domestic space. The first or most obvious encounter between the spectator and these figures is made through a woman who is standing

in front, looking directly at us. She is holding a brush, pushing away a small animal; perhaps one of the preys of a voracious and atrocious banquet. In fact, when we direct our attention to the other figures, we can see that one is eating meat (in a bestial way), another is eating a huge pig's head (larger than her own head). The others seem to be eating each other: that is, in the background, a woman figure is directing her open mouth to a puppet like figure. In the foreground, a grotesque doll puts her open mouth on top of a woman's head.

5.16 *Discarded Muses* (2007)
graphite and conte pencil on paper, 137x102 cm

Looking now at *Discarded Muses* (2007) (figure 5.16), one's attention is drawn immediately to the fact that all these figures cross the boundaries of a simplistic separation between human, animal, vegetable and doll. They incorporate these components in their bodies as disarticulated organs experimenting with the limits of being a subject. Two buckets on the floor contain heads. One of these heads seems to be a mask of an older man. The second belongs to a woman-doll. We can still see the support where the head was attached.

In *Forest Muse* (2007) (figure 5.17), a long and strange figure stands out. Marco Livingstone claims that this figure is

> "a kind of fertility figure (…) (who) later undergoes a monstrous mutation, growing phallic protuberances in place of roots and branches: a female life force has become transgendered, and in acquiring sexually suggestive male attributes has been transformed into an ominous and threatening implement: one that might, it seems, come in hand for initiating innocent young girls into womanhood" (Livingstone, 2008:6).

It does have an odd shape and its identification is hard to guess, if not impossible, in terms of its category. Starting with its head, it is a grotesque inhuman figure. It also has some vegetable elements, such as a plant growing on its neck, or coming out from within its vest. Its arms seem to disintegrate into roots and along its body, some flowers pop up. Not only is its body an accumulation of different elements, but it is also barely able to sustain itself. In

fact, its vertical posture is unstable and, what is more relevant, what lies inside is beginning to spray out.

5.17 Forest Muse (2007)
Graphite and conte pencil on paper,
137x102 cm

In Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Muses are presented as the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne (Memory). They were considered to be water-spirits who could prophesy. They were able to inspire those who could write in a metrical form (Rose, 1989). This means that, according to mythology, the Muses provided humans with the ability to have access to the realms of what remained beyond the conscious. Hence, they simultaneously opened up the unconscious to interpretation. Given the fact that they could be reached by humans who would ask for their intervention in gaining inspiration, the realms of the unknown, inhabited by them, were made accessible. On the other hand, or as a consequence, the potential of creation would be brought to human's consciousness. These muses, however, seem dangerous and harmful as well. In *Muses Feeding* (2007) they make the spectator want to avoid them, instead of wanting to ask for their inspiration. They are busy with annihilating objects and subjects; instead of allowing for their subjectification; that is, instead of allowing them to be signified, they de-subjectify them.

In the case of *Discarded Muses*, a puppet like boy is sitting on a couch with an open notebook. He could be trying to write or draw; seeking inspiration from the Muses (he is directing his look to one of the Muses). We can only glimpse a line on the page; the rest of the space seems to be blank. Significantly, as pointed out previously, we encounter two heads inside two regular buckets. One of these belongs to a Muse, precisely the one the boy is looking at. The Muse in the center, the only one who has the expected traits of a woman, is grabbing her, holding her by the hands, upside down; I would say, pouring out all the inspiration and knowledge from her head. In other words, the body part which was able to convey consciousness and the unconscious has been dismantled from this Muse. Without the head, there is nothing left except a frail body. The Muse looses her self as such, thus annihilating any stream of inspiration. The other head, inside the left side bucket, could have been ripped out from one of the

other characters (perhaps the woman in the center?). This time, the fact that this head was covering another human head, in my view, perhaps insinuates the idea that the Muse's knowledge was merely a mask, which has now come off.

As pointed out before, in classical antiquity the muses were equated with creativity. In *Phaedrus*, Plato postulates the idea that the muses inspire divine madness and artists' creativity derives from it. This, however, did not extend to all artists. In fact, Plato drew a distinction between poets, influenced by this 'divine madness', and 'craftmen artists', moved by reason (Plato, 2011). Creativity was considered to be outside the self. In other words, creativity was believed to inhabit the unconscious (Nyenhuis, 2003). The title itself, *Discarded Muses*, suggests that these muses have become disposable. Perhaps the knowledge that they once possessed is gone. Perhaps they have renounced their ancient function and have become useless. They no longer make available the realms of the unknown. They have ceased to be an "interior local only able to be interpreted in its impotent and distorted formations"; their logic is now of assemble "anarchic connections" (Parr, 2005: 221).

Another way of mimicking the strata is by disassembling the organism. As argued before, in *Discarded Muses* and *Forest Muse*, we encounter assemblages of organs which cross boundaries and fail to fit the criteria of an organism. It is "a collectivity (assembling elements, things, plants, animals, tools, people, powers, and fragments of all of these)" (Deleuze, 1987: 161).

5.18 *Memory* (2007)
Graphite and conte pencil on paper,
137x102 cm

A final reference to the work entitled *Memory* (2007) (figure 5.18). It has been mentioned that Memory (Mnemosyne), in some traditions, is said to be the Muses' mother. In this drawing, she is the woman in the center, looking as if she is bored, having nothing to do. Behind her are some odd and disturbing looking figures (perhaps the muses, perhaps figurations of this figure's contents). Once again, it is as if the material of memory – facts, dreams, has ceased to be made signifiable. They are, "instead, colours and sounds, becomings and intensities (…) There is no longer a Self *[Moi]* that feels, acts, and recalls; there is "a glowing fog, a dark yellow mist" that has affects and experiences movements, speeds" (Deleuze, 1987: 162).

5.4. Conclusion

At this point I will draw a conclusion about the implications of applying the concept of 'becoming' to Paula Rego's work. Let me emphasize, first, that I am not defending the idea that Rego's work tends to a dissolution or extinction of the category 'women'. On the contrary, as important studies have already shown, this category is a driving force in her work. What I would like to sustain is that her work has arrived at a stage where female subjectivity and subjectivity, as defined by phallogocentric structures, are questioned. Her paintings become a visual procedure for dismissing the notion of fixed identities, organized in a hierarchical scheme, in which some of us are entitled to be included in the category of 'human', while others are cast away.

In what ways is this dismissal carried out? Through series which get rid of the 'collars of representation': identity, opposition and analogy; series in which what takes place on the canvas does not duplicate a previous reality; series in which odd characters interact with humans and expose the fact that they (humans) do not control their memories. Instead what takes place and what will take place is only accessible to them in a mediated open way. Through series which set out different modes, ruled not by organism, significance and subjectification, but based upon disarticulation, experimentation and nomadism; disarticulation of bodies, experimentation by creating new and complex assemblages which integrate elements from animals, humans, plants, inert objects. These are works which fix the immutable flux of nomadism, of becoming. They call

> "for a feminist ethics that would ask a different set of questions: [N]ot "what does this body mean- what is its intent, condition or genesis?" but "how does this body work?" in other words (…) a move towards thinking of the body, not as a condition for thought and subjectivity, but as a form of positive difference" (Colebrook, 2000: 124)

In an interview, which took place in 2007 and was conducted by Robert Ayers, Rego unexpectedly seems to find the perfect expression for this focus, "the bizarre nature of having a physical body":

"You call them propaganda, but those abortion pictures are quite in keeping with the rest of your work. One of your central themes has always been the bizarre nature of having a physical body …
[Laughs.] That's wonderful! Really wonderful! I've never heard anyone say that before! But yes, having a physical body. That's true[149]".

149 http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/24113/paula-rego/?page=2

Conclusion

Paula Rego has become a reference in contemporary artistic practice. In fact, over the past decade her work has been celebrated on many occasions. In Portugal and the UK, her popularity has greatly increased among the general public and a more specialised audience. She is a public figure now and has received a number of important tributes and prizes. In 2006, she was chosen to create the official portrait of Jorge Sampaio, the President of Republic. Since Rego had become known for her daring images, this caused some apprehension among some segments of the population and the political class. She created a number of versions, which were subsequently rejected[150]. João Gonçalves, the director of the Serralves Museum in Oporto at the time, considered both Jorge Sampaio and Paula Rego courageous; the former for choosing Rego, the latter for accepting this invitation. In 2009, the Association of Foreign Press in Portugal (AIEP) chose Paula Rego as "Person of the Year"[151].

In 2010, she received the title of "Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire" from the Queen of England. She was the fourth painter to be publicly and officially honoured in this way. In the aftermath Germaine Greer publicly criticised Rego's acceptance of this honour. [152] In 2011, Rego received the *Honoris Causa* from Lisbon University as the first artist ever. In terms of the general public, a good example of the attention lavished on Paula Rego is her museum "Casa das Histórias". It opened its doors on 18 September 2009 and within two weeks it received 20,000 visitors.[153].

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150 One depicted the President, the Portuguese flag and the artist herself. It was rejected by the President for 'containing too many elements" in http://www.dn.pt/inicio/interior.aspx?content_id=637027

151 Created in 1990, this price aims to celebrate the Portuguese person or institution that has promoted Portugal across the world.

152 This position is presented in an article published in June 2010 in The Guardian under the title ""Paula Rego is the fourth woman painter to be made a dame. I wish she'd refused". Full article available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/jun/20/paula-rego-dame-germaine-greer

153 Numbers provided by the National Information Agency, Lusa in http://www1.ionline.pt/conteudo/25609-casa-das-historias-paula-rego-recebeu-20-mil-visitantes-em-menos-2-semanas

How do we explain such interest? If one is to take into account the general view of Paula Rego as a challenging and subversive artist, how are we to explain the broad acknowledgment of her work? Why has she received such recognition from society's *substracta*, which she often challenges? How does her work relate to or interact with the artistic canon? Marking Griselda Pollock's suggestion that the canon is "politically 'in the masculine' as well as culturally 'of the masculine'" (Pollock, 1999: 24), how are we to position the work of Paula Rego in it?

A feminist approach to the canon might include a critique of its corpus based on the artistic techniques used. This approach has the merit of rescuing from memory's disintegration a considerable number of art works by female artists who used techniques such as quilting, weaving and embroidery. While such artistic practices have been dismissed from the artistic canon and associated with femininity and domesticity, feminist art critics have interpreted them as the "site of the production of meaning that traverse culture as a whole: religious, political, moral, ideological" (Pollock, 1999: 25). In the 1960s Paula Rego created some tapestries for hotels and other clients, partly to earn some money. One of these can be seen in "Casa das Histórias" (*Alcácer Quibir)*[154].

Nevertheless, I would like to argue that Rego's inclusion in the artistic canon is due to a different factor. Her work contributes to the renewal of the canon through a critique of art discourse's production of the universal subject as a masculine, rational, disembodied and consequently, the removal or reduction of female subjects to objects to be visually dominated. Such critique

> "implies a shift from the narrowly bounded spaces of art history as a disciplinary formation into an emergent and oppositional signifying space we call the women's movement which is not a place apart but a movement across the fields of discourse and its institutional bases, across the texts of culture and its psychic foundations" (Pollock, 1999: 26).

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[154] Battle fought in Northern Morocco on 4 August 1578. It opposed the army of Abu Abdallah Mohammed II Saadi, of the Saadi dynasty, with the support of King Sebastian of Portugal, and the new Sultan of Morocco (and uncle of Abu Abdallah Mohammed II Saadi) Abd Al-Malik. It ended with the defeat of the Portuguese and Abdu Abdallah Mohammed II Saadi; and with the disappearance of King Sebastian of Portugal. His disappearance gave rise to the cult of "Sebastianismo", founded on the belief that the national hero would return and give Portugal back its former glory, leading it to a new Empire.

Although I recognize the importance of the biography behind Rego's images, I decided to foreground what took place inside them and what they created on the outside through visibility and visuality. In this way I could analyze Rego's critique of phallogocentrism through the visual.

By putting forward "a prospective retrospective", I aimed to provide an overview of the development within Rego's work. At the same time, I have examined the way in which her images imply a transformation of female subjectivity – into an embodied, material and fluid female subjectivity. This intricate structure allowed me to reposition visual art as a discourse which can extend analytical procedures to the subjects within the images and outside them. Images can be not only aesthetically significant, but also critically and politically engaged. They can denounce the effacement of certain subjects from visibility; the valorization and hegemony of rationality, masculinity and sameness in the visual. They can create other possibilities, where other subjects can be seen. Even if imaginary, these images of otherness are able to inaugurate different spaces of reflexivity and critique. In that sense, I consider that visual art can be of great relevance when dealing with questions about scopic regimes, subjects and power. This project suggests precisely a way to reposition visual studies as a potential mechanism of a political and sexually engaged critique. As I pointed out in the first chapter, there is a considerable number of studies and articles on Paula Rego's work. Their authors are mainly connected to either the UK or Portugal and their approach can be divided into two groups. I would argue that the first one is 'biographical and monological'. The main figure in this group is John McEwen. His two monographs provide important information on Paula Rego's childhood, her experience of having lived in Portugal during the years of fascism, her view of all this from the UK and her artistic relation with the great masters. The second monograph is less conventional, I would say; exploring Rego's studio work, letting us see the process of creation in a moment when it became more and more relevant, with the creation of sculptures to serve as models, integrating, thus, paintings, sketches. Nevertheless, monographs already carry a structure which is associated with the idea of "greatness" and "genius", which, in its turn, is a masculine convention. My project, as I attempted to explain throughout these pages, has not followed a chronological structure, nor has it provided a great deal of autobiographical information. My interest was in processes rather than facts and events.

Another category consists of studies that do not follow a linear approach but focus on the echoes of Portugal's fascist and colonial past in Rego's work and the centrality of women. With regard to the politics of Rego's images, some

critics, such as Maria Manuel Lisboa, concentrate on works dating from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, which address more openly the authority, submission and domesticity of a patriarchal society. Women were expected to be the guardians of the house and respect the husband's authority as the representative of the state and catholic values inside the house. The token "Deus, Pátria, Família" ("God, Fatherland, Family") placed male power at the centre of society and women under its guard. The attention to the colonial and fascist background is not confined to works from this period. In fact, according to Maria Manuel Lisboa and Ruth Rosengarten, even when Rego does not deal directly with this historical period of fascism in her later work, she is still establishing some kind of connection with it, through visual associations and themes which disclose the ubiquity of catholic influence in Portuguese society.

Other critics have focused on Paula Rego's women; how they are portrayed, how they subvert the stereotypes, greatly solidified by art history's discourse, which places women as mere passive objects to be looked at, to be consumed by male viewers; how their bodies become the place for struggle. I consider this segment of critical readings fundamental to an understanding of Rego's work and, in some sense, accepted the invitation to dare. Rego's images invite such an approach. They are simultaneously admired and capable of causing discomfort: when analyzing the *Untitled Series*, with its blatant thematic, some critics privileged everything excepting the issue of abortion, which the artist herself regretted.

The studies in this second category do not give an account of the broader process which takes place in Rego's images. And this is what this project aimed to do; not to analyse all the available work in some kind of chronological approach or explain her work through her biographical record or focus exclusively on its main themes. I agree with the judgement that Paula Rego's images focus on women, which is utterly different from considering her work only of relevance to women. It was when determining the interaction established between images and the spectator that I came to realize that female subjectivity is a central topic across her work, especially since the 1980s, when women's presence became increasingly strong and more complex. Throughout these chapters, I aimed to determine what her work could tell us in terms of ways of thinking about female subjectivity; this under the premise that Rego's images endorse the aesthetical and ethical goal of finding new, alternative modes of thinking female subjectivity; which can shift away from the economy of the same and already-known towards a valorisation of difference, specifically sexual difference. This research was based on the central claim that the work of Paula Rego functions as a visual body of

feminist theory. Her images are "speaking images" or "theoretical objects". This led me to trace a certain movement identifiable in terms of a project for a female subjectivity. It was no longer a matter of considering images to represent women in a certain way, but of arguing that these images, Rego's images, 'do' female subjectivity". Such is the novelty of this project. Marsha Meskimmon, when analysing Christine Borland's, a Scottish artist, "Winter Garden[155]" argued that this piece:

> "like much contemporary women's art, engenders new perspectives on the complex relationship between female embodiment and creative agency. While informed by feminist theoretical work, it is neither a mere illustration of theoretical concepts nor an object awaiting an interpretive act of theory to bring it to life. Rather, the sophisticated imbrication of theory and practice within works such as Winter Garden suggests new ways of understanding the theory/practice relation itself, neither opposing the terms in a binary hierarchy nor assimilating one to the other in a reductive homogeneity. Instead, we might posit feminist art theory and contemporary women's art as mutually transformative practices, engaging in exchanges between and across difference to the benefit of both" (Meskimmon, 2003: 450-451).

155 "'Winter garden' was made in Australia for the 2001 Melbourne Festival exhibition 'Humid'. It incorporates many of the ideas that have come to be associated with Borland's work, such as medical and scientific research, museological display, and themes of body and spirit, life and death. This work has been a direct response to local research, for example the specimens pickled in the alcohol are a local plant that was apparently used medicinally by aboriginal people, specifically for birth control. The vessels themselves are based on the form of the human womb but also have the pragmatic appearance of scientific vessels or specimen jars with their foil-covered caps. There is also a faint echo of the medieval reliquary in these objects - traces of lost bodies awaiting reunion in the afterlife. The fragments of human anatomy are slumped on the floor as if they have fallen like fruits separated from the tree. In fulfilment of their purpose their contents are bleached plants that also speak of the cycle of life and death and what is more these specific plants have been used to intervene in the process of birth. Then again they are like tear drops shed over the parting of souls" *in* http://m.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/work/12.2002.a-l/.

Despite the obvious differences between Rego and Borland's artistic practices, I would claim that the Portuguese artist offers new ways of understanding the connection between feminist theory and visual practice, visually suggesting a critique of patriarchal renderings of female subjectivity and alternatives to it. By doing so, Paula Rego's work does not have to confined to Portugal and the UK in terms of the critical interest it may bring, since it can and should be seen not only in its artistic and aesthetical dimension but also as visual theory/practice on female subjectivity.

This, necessarily, produced changes in the methodology to follow. Theory ceased to be something detached and later applied to images, in order to analyze them. Indeed, it meant eluding from the assumption that images and theories are irreducibly of a different and non-interpenetrable nature. In order to register the fundamental and structuring process which takes place in Rego's work and which comprise an exposure and subversion of phallogocentric models of subjectivity and scopic regimes, as well as the formulation of an embodied, material and dynamic subjectivity, I took specific theoretical concepts used in feminist theory and feminist visual studies. These were 'productive look', 'productive mimesis', 'power' and 'resistance', 'becoming'. The selection of such concepts was highly and intimately determined in connection with images; images explained the concepts and the concepts served to explain these images. This is how I came to determine the structure of this project in:

- State of the art;
- Visual displacement of subjects: the productive-look.
- Fake it until you unmake it: productive mimesis.
- Making a spectacle: power, violence and female subjects.
- Female subjectivity and becoming Other.

In terms of the methodology used in this project, I have followed a discursive positioning (Grosz, 19995); in other words, I have neither assumed the artist as the exclusive holder of knowledge over her creations; neither have I considered the visual texts, the images, to be the sole element to be analyzed. Instead, I followed a triptych structure formed by the corpus of the author, the materiality of the text and the productivity of the readers.

Finally, in terms of what this project has accomplished and what remains to be done, I hope to have provided a departure point for a different approach to Rego's work; an approach that can, as I have argued before, disentangle her work from the geographical limitations of Portugal and the UK and from the

disciplinary confinement of art history. The chapters that have been created can serve as main guidelines or a compass to map out the wide scope of her work as a project of and for female subjectivity. Particularly, it can provide a certain guidance in terms of what we are facing in the latest stage of her work, with the expectation of what is coming in our way. Between shortcuts and obscurities we will continue to eye each other and transform ourselves, certainly through the visual.

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