Essays on Paula Rego

Smile When You Think about Hell

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6. I Am Coming to Your Kingdom, Prince Horrendous: Scary Stories for Baby, Perfect Stranger and Me

You use folk tales — children do and we do — we interpret the world through stories; the Bible … this is it, stories, making sense of things — everybody makes in their own way sense of things, but if you have stories it helps.

Paula Rego

'Is it dark down there, Prince Horrendous?
Dark down there with Betsy Skull?
Is it dark down there
Where the grass grows through the hair?
Is it dark in the under-land of Null?'
'There is light down here, Perfect Stranger,
Light that frolics round my throne,
Light down here,
Past the horror and the fear.
There is light in the ultimate bone'.[…]
'I am coming to your kingdom, Prince Horrendous,
Coming late or soon to claim my own
Stolen bride, stolen bride.
I will snatch her from your side
By the red light that flickers in the bone'.[…]
'I will overthrow your kingdom, Prince Horrendous,
I will seize upon the lady of my bliss.
I will make your darling mine
Where the bones in splendour shine,

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Though warned of doom by all the bells of Dis'.
Helen Adam, 'The Bells of Dis'[1]

Vices, sickness, epidemics, sores,
Surely fermented in the rubbish,
What decay in creatures so brutish,
And what moonlight on your pinafores.
Cesário Verde, 'Childhood'

It's Fantastic

The genre of the fantastic is a broad church, which covers the areas of fantasy, the supernatural (including nursery rhymes, fairy tales, folk tales, horror), gothic literature, science fiction and the metaphysical (the latter including, of course, straightforward religion, which is the truth for believers and fantasy or horror for non-believers). In the abundant theoretical literature that has pondered the genre in its various permutations, a broad consensus prevails that sees the fantastic as a means of exploring the fearful, the forbidden, that which is censored, suppressed or elided from orthodoxy, social convention and the rules of the body politic. Thus for Frederic Jameson the fantastic involves 'the identification and naming of otherness [as] one of the litmus tests of a society's religious and political beliefs (Jameson, 1975, 52). Tzevetan Todorov sees the genre as masking forbidden and repressed desires (Todorov, 1977). For Jean-Paul Sartre (1947), the proper function of fantasy is to transform the world, *this* world, rather than to invent alternative ones. Maurice Lévy (1968) sees the fantastic as the compensation that man (*sic.*) provides for himself, at the level of the imagination, for what he has lost at the level of faith. And Rosemary Jackson (1981) argues that fantastic literature tells of the impossible attempt to realize desire, to make visible the invisible and to discover absence.

> Science fiction [is] the literary genre that embodies 'not only a reflecting *of*, but also *on* reality', a process [called] 'cognitive estrangement', such that the literary experience that links the author's and the reader's imaginations rests on elements common to the reality of both parties

1 I first came across a reference to this poem in Marina Warner, whose work is abundantly used in this chapter.

> […] distorted to make the familiar unfamiliar, thus introducing an observational distance that makes possible fresh insights into the present […]. The Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky['s term *ostranenie* [… indicates], 'defamiliarization, a making strange… of object, a renewal of perception', 'a forcing us to notice'. (Krabbenhoft, 2001, 123–36)

And of course the forbidden, the illicit, the terrifying, the *unheimlich* are where Paula Rego feels most at home.

Prince? Frog? Or Worse?

In Helen Adam's poem, Prince Horrendous, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, a hero worthy of a seat of honour in the Brothers Grimm's imaginarium, may represent Death. In a paradise of misogynistic fantasies where women know their place and the loveliest kind of woman, as Edgar Allan Poe opined, was a dead one (Poe, 1951, 982), there may be many ways to skin a cat, and all are fine, as long as, like Betsy Shull, she/it remains dead. But what if Perfect Stranger turned out to be not a knight in shining armour arriving like Orpheus to snatch his beloved Eurydice from the Kingdom of the Dead, but, as in Gluck's opera, a woman speaking in the male voice, and possibly out to rescue herself or a sister?[2]

Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, Andrea Dworkin, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Elizabeth Bronfen, Nina Auerbach and Annette Kolodny, to name but a few, understood the need to expose the parameters that defined the kingdom of Prince Horrendous. Women writers and artists, from early pioneers like Artemisia Gentileschi[3] to

2 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1B85UQT4AY

3 Art recapitulates life and then does it again. Artemisia Gentileschi's portrayals of bloody attacks on powerful men, for example (Holofernes, the Elders who defamed Susanna and endangered her life in the apocrypha to the Book of Daniel) may have been provoked by her rape in 1612 by Agostino Tassi. In the context of the Me Too movement, Fringe First and Total Theatre Award-winning theatre company Breach restaged Tassi's trial for the rape, in a piece entitled *It's True, It's True, It's True*. Nothing is ever really new under Heaven and on Earth. Interestingly, Gentileschi's work offers us another link to Paula Rego: both women drew upon an image almost always claimed by male artists as their sex's monopoly, namely an artists' self-portraits in the act of practicing their art. Gentileschi's *Self-Portrait as the Allegory of Painting* (1638–1639, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artemisia_Gentileschi#/media/File:Self-portrait_as_the_Allegory_of_Painting_(La_Pittura)_-_Artemisia_Gentileschi.jpg) finds an echo in Rego's *Joseph's Dream* of 1990 (fig. 3.10).

Paula Rego in our time, have focused not on skinned female cats but instead on those whose nine lives may be sufficient to enable the waging of bloody gender war in which significant victories can be won. The original Puss in Boots was female (Zipes, 2012), and it is high time for that stage light to be redirected back to where it belongs.

In the popular imagination the figure most readily identifiable with the idea of Prince Horrendous is surely that of Bluebeard, Perrault's arch-villain and serial wife-killer, so evil that although parents above a certain age know the story from childhood, their offspring will not find it now for sale in any bookshop. The real-life Bluebeard, however, unlike his dark facial hair, may not have been morally monochromatic: the infamous fifteenth-century nobleman who supposedly inspired the tale, Gilles, Baron de Rais, Lord of Brittany, Anjou and Poitou, is best known for two things: first, the murder between 1432 and 1440 of dozens or possibly hundreds of children; second, and more surprisingly, his alliance as joint military commander and comrade-in-arms of that great feminist icon, Joan of Arc. There is mad and there is mad: some of the voices in our heads sound worryingly like those in theirs. Or, as Hannibal Lecter famously said to FBI agent Clarice Starling, his nemesis, avatar and, in due course, lover, 'some of our stars are the same, Clarice' (Harris (a), 1991, 533). 'The reason you caught me is that we're *just alike* (ibid., 53); 'It takes one to catch one' (ibid., 71). A worrisome notion, but unavoidable too, when considering the influence not just of fairy tales, nursery rhymes and canonical literature but also of historical and political realities in the work of Paula Rego: someone who, like other women artists and writers, have been known to lose their rag when faced with the status quo's version of Bluebeard in societies defined by misogyny, open or otherwise. Some bearded ladies cast aside their role as freaks, run away from the circus, dye their facial hair blue and proceed to wreak havoc upon the world. More power to their elbow/wrist/hand/pen/brush.

Paula Rego is possibly the most narrative artist of her time. In an endlessly repeated tag attached to her work, every picture tells a story. Over the years these stories have included social and political narratives, archives of gender and national conflict, biblical narratives, folk tales, fairy tales, nursery rhymes, newspaper articles and images drawing on literary works from Portugal, Great Britain, France, Spain

and Germany, to name but a few. This chapter will consider three different groups of such images. First, those drawn from children's fairy tales and nursery rhymes. Second, images drawn from five different literary sources: the three sister-texts by Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys and Polly Teale, namely *Jane Eyre*, *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *After Mrs. Rochester;* and two Portuguese texts: Alexandre Herculano's novella, *The Lady with the Cloven Hoof* (*A Dama Pé de Cabra*) and Hélia Correia's follow-on short story, 'Enchantment' ('Fascinação').[4] And third, the picture *Inês de Castro*, based on a real-life historical event. Very different images from different periods, but all sharing the theme of violence in the name of love, and all casting a series of Princesses Horrendous.

Sweet Dreams, Scary Nightmares: Fairy Tales and Nursery Rhymes

In 'Nursery Rhymes: Mirrors of a Culture', Roberta Hawkins argues that 'careful reading [of nursery rhymes] will reveal that these nonsensical, ear-pleasing, seemingly innocent verses of childhood soberly reflect much of the world-view of a society and its unique features (Hawkins, 1971, 617) and that 'they can truly be said to mirror the culture that gave them life' (ibid., 620). Mirror it and help to survive it, as demonstrated by Robert Desnos' tales for children, *Chantefables* (Desnos, 2014), which outlived him following his arrest by the Gestapo in February 1944, and subsequently became standard fare for young readers in French Schools (Nunley, 2010). Desnos, an early member of André Breton's Surrealist group like Georges Bataille — who'd also previously written on children's tales (Bataille, *Documents*, n. 2, 1930) — had pondered the importance of children's literature and comic strips as expressions of resistance in times of war and under occupation (Nunley, 2010, 287):

4 My translations of the Herculano and Correia narratives are available in Appendices A and B as well as on academia.edu:
https://www.academia.edu/26151863/Translation_of_Alexandre_Herculanos_A_Dama_P%C3%A9_de_Cabra
https://www.academia.edu/26066522/Translation_of_H%C3%A9lia_Correias_Fascina%C3%A7%C3%A3o

> Unlike those texts Desnos wrote for the clandestine press that articulate in no uncertain terms a call to action against the Germans, *Chantefables* functions less as a primer on what constitutes appropriate behavior when France is at war than an invitation to embrace *the irrepressible urge to misbehave. Such behavior is, time and again, associated with freedom*. (Nunley, 2010, 288, italics added)

In *Cradle and All: A Cultural and Psychoanalytic Study of Nursery Rhymes*, Lucy Rollin argues that while folktales offer a way of thinking about the past, nursery rhymes describe reality as it is now and the future as we hope it might be (Rollin, 1992, 5). Or, as Marina Warner suggested, whilst fairy tales are not credible, they nevertheless 'face two ways: towards a past realm of belief on one side and towards a sceptical present on the other' (Warner 2014, 2). Like Desnos before her, Warner, too, understands the potential for dissidence inherent in what numerous statuses quo, perhaps unwittingly, offer young minds in the process of being formed: namely 'the pleasures of imaginative entry that does not have intellectual or religious authority […] and therefore do[es] not command belief or repudiation. The tongue can be very free when it is speaking outside the jurisdiction of religion' (Warner 2014, 2). For Warner, fairy tales may be 'addressing the future as well as the past [… but they] have a basis in history, in the lived experience of men and women' (Warner, 2014, 81–83). The grim brothers Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm, for example, were invited to compile their tales both as a form of distraction in the context their country's suffering during the Napoleonic invasions, and as a response to the hunger for cultural affirmation through the revival of national folk tales during a time of war.

Scholars of children's stories and fairy tales (Marina Warner, Maria Tatar, Bruno Bettelheim and Jack Zipes) broadly agree that these narratives address both personal and social anxieties: fear of violence, abandonment or death, familial troubles, sexual and existential anxiety and wariness about social turbulence. 'Snow White' addresses parental death and failure, sexual jealousy and fantasies of rescue; 'Cinderella' addresses bullying, envy and retribution; 'Bluebeard' addresses misogyny and marital violence; and they all, without exception, address the dangers of female ambition and curiosity, and the retribution that befalls a woman who disobeys the rules of the status quo (the nation),

as embodied in the figures of the king, the father and the husband. Curiously, however, and that is what has interested the scholars, writers, artists and film-makers who have followed in the footsteps of, and reinvented, the original tales of the likes of Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm is that, as is the case also with the large corpus of nursery rhymes passed down to generations immemorial of children, a common denominator links them all: namely, a brand of violence always on the brink of becoming unbridled, perpetrated largely by adults, but which it is assumed children will understand: 'Occupying [a] double register, the fairy tale invites adults to experience it knowingly, their experiences lying athwart the pleasure a child takes in the same material' (Warner, 2014, 147). Elsewhere Warner writes as follows:

> Fairy tales offer enigmatic, terrifying images of what the prospects are, of the darkest horrors life may bring. Yet the stories usually imagine ways of opposing this state of affairs, *or at worst, of having revenge on those who inflict suffering, of turning the status quo upside down, as well as defeating the natural course of events*; they dream of reprisals, and they sketch alternative plot lines. They are messages of hope arising from desperate, ordinary situations. (Warner, 2014, 95–96, italics added)

More of this when we come to Paula Rego.

The world of Fairy, then, is, one might argue, a world fit only for heroes. Or heroines. In *The Redundancy of Courage,* Timothy Mo's unforgettable Adolf Ng maintained that 'there's no such thing as a hero — only ordinary people asked extraordinary things in terrible circumstances — and delivering' (Mo, 2002, 407). In the midst of horror, Ng probably envisaged altruism rather than violence — even needs-must, self-defence violence — as the order of the day. But in the places where fairies live, only hardy heroes (and even more so heroines) with well-honed survival skills (with all that those entail) can hope to survive. Who would send their child there, unless s/he was armed to the teeth? Generations of children, pre-Disney and even pre-toned-down Disney, will remember the terror of reading 'Bluebeard'; of being subjected to the gory description of the pain endured by Andersen's little mermaid after she forsook her real self and her fish tail for love of a Prince (if not Horrendous, at least not very faithful); of being traumatized, in the original version of Bambi, by the spectacle of a mother's death. What

kind of parent tells a child such stories? A sadist? What kind of mother would send her daughter on an errand through a forest infested with wolves with no more than a casual warning about not speaking to strangers? Presumably a foolish mother, or else a scheming stepmother in maternal clothing. Both, however, can also serve a pedagogical purpose: violence may beget violence, but even at the risk of escalating hostilities, sometimes it is the only solution to a recurring problem.

Why Are You Glaring at Me?

Fig. 6.1 Paula Rego, *Red Riding Hood (Mother Takes Revenge)* (2003). Pastel on paper, 104 x 79 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

As Maria Tatar would have it, 'fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family conflicts, social fictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life' (Tatar, 1999, xi). But, more optimistically, fairy tales also 'taught mankind in olden times, and teach children to this day […] to

Fig. 6.2 Paula Rego, *Red Riding Hood (Mother Wears Wolf's Pelt)* (2003). Pastel on paper, 84 x 67 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

meet the forces of the mythical world with cunning and high spirits', and in them good always wins against the forces of evil (Benjamin, 1996, 157). Walter Benjamin may have been a little over-optimistic in this view. It might take a woman to be realistic:

> At childhood's end, the houses petered out
> into playing fields, the factory, allotments
> kept, like mistresses, by kneeling married men,
> the silent railway line, the hermit's caravan,
> till you came at last to the edge of the woods.
> It was there that I first clapped eyes on the wolf.
>
> He stood in a clearing, reading his verse out loud
> in his wolfy drawl, a paperback in his hairy paw,
> red wine staining his bearded jaw. What big ears
> he had! What big eyes he had! What teeth!
> In the interval, I made quite sure he spotted me,
> sweet sixteen, never been, babe, waif, and bought me a drink,
>
> […] I took an axe
> to a willow to see how it wept. I took an axe to a salmon

> to see how it leapt. I took an axe to the wolf
> as he slept, one chop, scrotum to throat, and saw
> the glistening, virgin white of my grandmother's bones.
> I filled his old belly with stones. I stitched him up.
> Out of the forest I come with my flowers, singing, all alone. (Carol Anne Duffy, 'Little Red Cap')

Of course to fight evil one must truly understand it, possibly even become a little bit like it. This would seem to be what happens in Carol Anne Duffy and in Angela Carter's 'The Company of Wolves', her re-telling of 'Red Riding Hood', which culminates in the wayward girl living a happily-ever-after with a twist: 'See! Sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf' (Carter, 1995, 118).

Is your blood curdling yet?

Gamekeepers turn into poachers more often than we like to think, sometimes because in trying to catch criminals the cop discovers he or she understands them all too well: *Hannibal*, Thomas Harris' third novel of the Hannibal Lecter series, ends with Clarice Starling catching the cannibal, Lecter, and he her. They fall in love (they are after all twin souls, that's why they succeeded in entrapping one another) and settle down to a troubling happiness (troubling for the reader) ever after. With no guarantees, admittedly, because at any given point the precarious balance may shatter, with either killing the other or both doing so: 'Someday […] somewhere Starling may hear a crossbow string and come to some unwilled awakening, if indeed she even sleeps. […] We can only learn so much and live' (Harris (b), 2000, 562). Twin souls, after all, are just that, and in Thomas Harris the wolf feels just as tender towards the girl as in Angela Carter, but both are natural-born killers even so.

Sara Maitland's beautiful and creepy *Gossip from the Forest: The Tangled Roots of Our Forests and Fairy Tales* is a composite of the biography of various forests and unsettling rewrites of traditional fairy tales. In one of its re-told tales, 'Little Red Riding Hood and the Big Bad Wolf', a mysterious identification between the woodcutter (here a forest ranger and game keeper) and the wolf sees the former attempting first to enable the latter's violence and then to save it from the encroaching forces of civilized society encapsulated in the figures of the forestry officials, the grandmother ('a hideous heap of blubber and peroxide blubbering') and Red Riding Hood herself (the 'stupid little brat') (Maitland, 213, 245,

248). But the game is up for unreconstructed beasts and the man knows it, so he euthanizes the wolf by shooting it and then hangs himself.

Depending on which way our sympathies incline, girls — whether silly, disobedient or stubborn — who persist in ignoring the warnings of mothers, dwarves, fairy godmothers and other do-gooders, may not really deserve happy endings, but no one ever said that life was fair, and sometimes (though not often) whether one likes it or not, they come out on top. This certainly seems to be the case in Paula Rego's work. And with any luck, in the battle against wolves, mothers who do their duty by their little girls may also get a nice fur wrap out of it. Some unintended consequences can turn out to be quite delightful. Depending on one's ideas of right and wrong.

In Theory Anyone Can Be a Fairy

Or at least that is the case if we are indulging in word games. But it may not be just word games. Early critical theory, and specifically the likes of Northrop Frye and his successors operating under the umbrella of Structuralism — Vladimir Propp, Julien Greimas — and, after them, others already mentioned, including Jack Zipes, Marina Warner, Lucy Rollin, Maria Tatar, all return to the basic principle that literature and art can be reduced to a finite number of narratives, streamlined into a limited number of categories, all beginning with the basic plots of children's narratives and fairy tales, grouped according to categories, themes, actors and actions. And beyond the original Structuralist formulation, other schools of theory also staked their claim in the consideration of fairy tales, the two principal ones, each differently but equally relevant when thinking about Paula Rego, being Psychoanalysis and Social/Political Theory: in each case with a particular though not exclusive focus on gender.

Freud & Daughters: A Family Concern

Fairy tales deal with magic, the supernatural, or, in Freudian terminology, the uncanny (*unheimlich*), which is always unnerving, scary, creepy. Just like certain artists one might mention. For Freud and his followers down the corridors of sorcerous abnormality, the uncanny, in its several

formulations, articulates anxieties about familial tension, oedipal conflict, castration anxiety, sibling rivalry, penis envy, and motherphobia: all brands of psychic anguish that, for Freud, in *Totem and Taboo* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, and for Bruno Bettelheim, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, are the *sine qua non* for developing the ethical mechanisms that render group dynamics and social interaction possible. It is not for nothing that dark, tangled forests loom large and menacing in children's literature ('Snow White', 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Red Riding Hood', 'Hansel and Gretel'): a genre which, like jokes and popular art, offers a home to the id's forbidden desires, and dominates in the study of the psyche.

> The fairy tale journey may look like an outward trek across plains and mountains, through castles and forests, but the actual movement is inward, into the lands of the soul. The dark path of the fairytale forest lies in the shadow of our imagination, the depths of our unconscious. To travel to the wood, to face its dangers, is to emerge transformed by this experience. (Terri Windling, 1993, 10)

For Lucy Rollin, as for other students of fantasy and the fantastic mentioned above, 'the products of a collective human effort, such as nursery rhymes, are the result of a culture's projection of the inner concerns of its people' (Rollin, 1992, 11), and, like the genres of the Fantastic and the Gothic, they, in turn, provide 'a socially sanctioned outlet for the expression of what cannot be articulated in the more usual, direct way' (Dundes, 1980, 36). And for Bettelheim, too, on the royal road to the unconscious, children's tales are the means of transport of choice, *en route* to resolving life's existential conundra.

Revolution in the Nursery

> As we read fairy tales, we simultaneously evoke the cultural experience of the past and allow it to work on our consciousness even as we reinterpret and reshape that experience. (Tatar, xii-xiii)

Marina Warner argues that even if the traditional premises of the fairy tale are reactionary (bad women die, good girls marry princes, happy-ever-afters mean home, marriage, children and continuity), they can also open the door to alternatives: in the hands of the likes of Angela Carter and Paula Rego, even 'in conditions of censorship […] writers have resorted to folk narrative as protective camouflage: fairy tales

open a door to political fable, the tyrants and ogres could be cast down, justice restored and equality achieved' (Warner, 2014, 153). Along the same lines, Maria Tatar acknowledges that while canonical fairy tales can be 'hopelessly retrograde' (Tatar, 1999, xiii), depending on the reader's slant they can also contain a liberating dimension, for example the granting of power, even if only temporarily, to undesirable women (the ugly sisters in 'Cinderella'), wicked women (the stepmother in 'Snow White') and old ones (the witch in 'Hansel and Gretel').

Marina Warner's suggestion of a revolutionary impetus with national/historical implications, quoted earlier, echoes Jack Zipes innovative readings of fairy tales:

> By the beginning of the nineteenth century […] the literary fairy tale had long since been institutionalized, and […] assumed different ideological and aesthetic positions within this institutionalization. […] The literary fairy tale's ascent corresponded to violent and progressive shifts in society and celebrated individualism, subjectivity, and reflection. It featured the narrative voice of the educated author and publisher over communal voices and set new guidelines for freedom of speech and expression. In addition, proprietary rights to a particular tale were established, and the literary tale became a commodity that paradoxically spoke out in the name of the unbridled imagination. Indeed, because it was born out of alienation, the literary fairy tale fostered a search for new 'magical' means to overcome the instrumentalization of the imagination. (Zipes, 2012 quoted in Tatar, 1999, 335–41)

In *Roots of German Nationalism*, Louis Snyder had argued that the Brothers Grimm's tales played a role in the development of modern German nationalism, emphasizing 'such social characteristics as respect for order, belief in the desirability of obedience, subservience to authority, respect for the leader and the hero, veneration of courage and the military spirit, acceptance without protest of cruelty, violence, and atrocity, fear of and hatred for the outsider, and virulent anti-Semitism' (Snyder, 1978, 51). No wonder Hitler liked them. And Jack Zipes follows Walter Benjamin in thinking beyond the written narrative to film (in particular Disney) and arguing that the latter medium's then-revolutionary technological nature 'could either bring about an aestheticization of politics leading to the violation of the masses through fascism, or a politicization of aesthetics that provides the necessary critical detachment for the masses to take charge of their own destiny' (Zipes, 2012 quoted in Tatar, 1999,

342). Elsewhere Zipes maintains that 'the fable speaks to unequal power relations and prompts those without power to speak in metaphoric codes that can emancipate both the teller and listener' (Zipes, 2013).

Fairy tales then, can both strengthen the power of those who already had it or, depending on the transformative nature of the hands into which they fall, they can give a voice to the wrath of those who until that point never did. It is true, as Zipes argues, that fairy tales can themselves be magical instruments for changing ourselves and our world in a way conducive to a more peaceful, happier life. It is just that definitions of peace and happiness depend both on the identity of the fairy godmother and of the kind of princess she sponsors. In Paula Rego's work, as we shall see, princesses are seldom sweet or even pretty, and their teeth would put the average wolf to shame.

Women Telling Tales

Although in fairy tales, as in all other genres, the entitlement to hold the pen, paraphrasing Jane Austen, has been traditionally claimed by men (the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Hans Christian Andersen, Oscar Wilde), Marina Warner, Jack Zipes, Maria Tatar, Karen E. Rowe and Lucy Rollin, to name but a few, have variously drawn attention to the fact that tale-telling, historically — if without acknowledgement — was the domain of mothers, and literarily (in private salons) by women such as Madame d'Aulnoy (Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Baroness d'Aulnoy), Mlle. L'Héritier (Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon), and Madame de Beaumont (Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont): precursors, assistants and enablers of the better-known men who later laid claim to the stories. The tales of Mother Goose were just that: the tales of *Mother* Goose. Later, under conditions more propitious for the recognition of female authorship, they turned into deviant but now also canonical renditions in the fiction, film and art of Angela Carter, Kiki Smith, Claire Prussian, Dina Goldstein, Catherine Breillat and, in Portugal, Paula Rego and Hélia Correia. All of them¸ to a woman, giving expression to wayward renditions of what, for those looking with eyes that could see, are undercover social critiques otherwise known as old *wives*' tales: 'we have noted already how insistently literary raconteurs, both male and

female, validated the authenticity of their folk stories by claiming to have heard them from young girls, nurses, gossips, townswomen, old crones, and wise women' (Tatar, 1999, 306). In Tatar, Marina Warner debates the female etymology of the word 'fairy' (Warner in Tatar 1999, 309–16). Fairies ('*Fées*') are female, and

> the female frame narrator, too, is a particularly significant indicator, because it converts into literary convention the belief in women as truth-sayers, those gifted with memory and voice to transmit the culture's wisdom — the silent matter of life itself. […] *Contes de fées* (fairy tales) are therefore not simply tales told about fairies; implicitly they are tales told by women. In these women's hands, literally and metaphorically, rests the power of birthing, dying, and tale-spinning. (Rowe in Tatar, 1999, 306–7)

It was from female precursors, the mothers and nurses by the hearth that the tales originated, even if they were subsequently handed down by male writers. 'So although male writers and collectors have dominated the production and dissemination of popular wonder tales, they often pass on women's stories from intimate or domestic milieux; their tale-spinners often figure as so many Scheherazades, using narrative to bring about a resolution of satisfaction and justice' (Warner in Tatar, 1999, 311). And Mesdames d'Aulnoy, Heritier and Beaumont, like Perrault, the Brothers Grimm and Oscar Wilde, all acknowledged that the narratives they transmitted were passed on to them by female relatives, governesses, nurses and maid servants (Warner in Tatar, 1999).

Stay by my Cradle till Morning is Nigh: The Nursery Rhymes

Paula Rego has said repeatedly in interviews that whatever the ostensible theme of her pictures, her work is always about Portugal. A statement that requires elaboration, regarding, as it does, a body of work that has drawn inspiration from literature from all over the world (Charlotte Brontë, Thomas Hardy, Jean Rhys, Jean Genet, Franz Kafka, Henry Darger, Blake Morrison, Fernando de Rojas) to opera (*Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Turandot*) not to mention popular culture and children's tales (the traditional fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, Charles Perrault, Hans

Christian Andersen, J. M. Barrie mentioned above), as well as nursery rhymes and film (Walt Disney):[5]

> As a literary species, nursery rhymes are as singularly British as any of its national institutions but, equally, they belong — together with fairy tales or children's games to a wider genus of lore which contributes to create our collective unconscious. (Miller, 1991, 53)

'All about Portugal', then, must surely refer to those tendencies Portugal has shared with other countries the world over at given points in their history: misogyny, repression of specific types of difference, and violence of various forms.

Rego's works inspired by children's tales and nursery rhymes do not eschew any of the violence of her other works, and arguably escalate it. The question for her viewers, however, must be whether her interpretations add a new dimension of horror to the originals or merely lay bare what was always already there.

Fans of horror stories, apocalyptic narratives and science fiction will know that those marketed for children and adolescents are in many ways more uncompromising than the adult versions of the genres:[6] just like the original, pre-Disney versions of the Grimms, Perrault and Hans Christian Andersen. The savagery directed at young minds may be grounded in one of three possibilities: that the young won't grasp the full horror of what they are reading; that they will and that understanding the full scale of possible evil will serve as a cautionary lesson; or that children will understand and enjoy it because, as per Freud, or Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, a child prior to the acquisition of social mores is anarchic, immoral, incestuous and violent. If so, we would argue, what Rego presents us with in what follows, as indeed in images discussed in previous chapters (the *Girl and Dog* series, *In the Wilderness* and some of the *Peter Pan* images (the latter not discussed

5 For an illuminating survey of these works see John McEwen, *Paula Rego* (London: Phaidon, 1992).

6 See for example narratives of apocalypse such as: Timothy Findley, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (Ontario: Penguin, 1987); William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (London: Faber & Faber, 2002); Judith Merrill, *The Shadow on the Hearth* (New York: Doubleday, 1950); Robert C. O'Brien, *Z for Zacchariah* (London: Puffin, 1998); Monique Peyrouton de Ladebat, *The Village that Slept*, trans. by Thelma Niklaus (London: The Bodley Head, 1963); Meg Rosoff, *How I Live Now* (London: Puffin, 2005); Robert E. Swindells, *Brother in the Land* (Oxford: Oxford Children's Modern Classics, 1999).

here), to name but a few) simply answers to the undoctored reality of uncontained child sexuality and violence. Just like the Grimms & Co.: although as any sensible child would say when caught out, 'they [grown-ups] started it':

> Rego's images […] suggest that the world is discombobulated, and that childhood is a period of abuse and danger for children, for adults take a sadistic sexual pleasure in administering punishment. […] Rego is a partisan artist. She takes sides — particularly for children and women — as she seeks to uncover the darkness of stories that we read and tell ourselves. But she does not depict people as helpless victims. Rather they are enmeshed in distorted social relations. […] Rego bores into the troubled psyches of the characters of her tales and is not afraid to spill blood and guts in her re-creations. (Zipes, 2013, 139–40)

What's It All About?

In the introduction to their encyclopaedic volume, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, Iona and Peter Opie state that nursery rhymes have been vested with a complex web of mystic symbolisms that link them to social and political events. Attempts to identify characters in the rhymes with real persons have led to multiple, sometimes contradictory theories, some easier to substantiate than others. Humpty Dumpty, for example, may or may not have been Richard III; 'Bah, Bah, Black Sheep' may refer to the export tax imposed on wool in Britain in 1275; 'Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary' may refer to Scottish unrest at the reinstatement of Roman Catholicism in Scotland under Mary, Queen of Scots; 'Who Killed Cock Robin' may allude to the downfall of Robert Walpole's ministry in 1742; and 'How Many Miles to Babylon' may allude to the progress of Christians towards Heaven.

Other critics have opted for a theoretical slant to the interpretation of nursery rhymes. Lucy Rollin, for example, has adopted a psychoanalytic approach that leads her to speculate that rhymes such as 'Peter Pumpkin' in the *Mother Goose* collection reveal a fear of women (milk maids, mermaids, castrating women) and the need to control them (Rollin, 1992, 41–47). She also argues that nursery rhymes define men against each other but women in relation to men (ibid., 510). Whereas in folk tales and fairy tales marriage is the end of the story, in nursery rhymes

marriage, and its ever-after, including children, *is* the story, and one often characterized by strife and violence (ibid., 65, 66). For her, then, old mother Hubbard is the phallic female *par excellence* (ibid., 71); 'Huck a bye baby' expresses controlled maternal hatred (ibid., 84); references to eating suggest the repressed desire to devour one's children (ibid., 88); and undisguised misogyny informs 'Tom married a wife on Sunday' (ibid., 107).

Other aspects of domestic life come under attack too, including pets. Rollin suggests that in nursery rhymes ambivalence towards animals (cruelty and bestiality, what animals 'give us and how they disgust us, our love and contempt for them: the way in which tenderness can co-exist with cruelty, […] the victimization of cats and dogs without regret because they have grown old and weak', ibid., 17–2,) all express the need for social control and self-control. 'Nursery rhymes play safe: the animals involved are always domestic, nature is tamed. The drives are there but can be controlled' (ibid., 17–2; 36–40). All, I would argue now, instincts with which Paula Rego has engaged in her work of a lifetime. Whether violence is controlled in her images is another matter. We would say not.

Rego's *Nursery Rhymes* were published by Marlborough Graphics in 1989 as a portfolio of 25 etchings and aquatints produced in an edition of 50. Portfolios number 1 to 15 were produced as a deluxe boxed version comprising 25 etchings (of which two were hand tinted) in an edition of 50, plus one untitled image from an edition of 15.

Black Sheep, Strange Creatures and Dangerous Rogues

> Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?
> Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full.
> One for the master,
> One for the dame,
> And one for the little boy
> Who lives down the lane.

Sexual innuendo is something in which Paula Rego has frequently indulged and she seldom pulls her punches. 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' is surely one of the most anodyne of all the nursery rhymes. As is the case with others, its origins are open to debate, although Peter and Iona

Fig. 6.3 Paula Rego, *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep* (1989). Etching and aquatint, plate size: 31.3 x 21.6 m; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Opie speculate that it refers to the a period in the Middle Ages when the weaving of wool was a cottage industry and England passed a law forbidding its export as the raw product. The one bag for the master was wool stretched as much as possible before being woven and passed on to the feudal lord as his due. The bag for the dame was the un-stretched, unwoven material that was fraudulently saved by the serfs for themselves. In 1275 an export tax was imposed on wool, and the bag for the little boy who lives down the lane may refer to the amount needed to pay the tax collector (Opie, Peter and Iona, 1997, 1142).

Rego's print, playing her usual game of disproportionality in scale, depicts a slender girl leaning suggestively between the fore and hind limbs of a massive black sheep. To the right stands a shelf holding three bags of wool and an unidentifiable object on the ground. To the left, seen through a window a short way up a lane, is a small male figure, presumably the little boy of the rhyme.

Sandra Miller discusses the striking blackness of the sheep:

> In the *Nursery Rhymes* we witness a return to the mixed cast, which this time also involves a complete reversal of scale: the gambolling creature in *Black Sheep* is a scary black ram seated on a stool, and about to engulf a smaller girl in its embrace. According to the artist, however, the reason for the ram's '*unheimlich*' appearance is due to a trivial incident: the print was left too long in the aquatint bath. It was precisely the incongruity of situations such as this that attracted Paula Rego when she undertook the project: 'I love the oddity and the unexpectedness of the *Baa Baa Black Sheep* — the whole thing of a sheep answering is wonderful … if you see the drawing he has quite a sweet expression on his face, the sheep; then he got so dark in the print; I thought, oh, my God! Doesn't he look like the Devil?' (Miller, 1991, 58)

The macabre darkness of the sheep may have come about by accident, but its size and pose did not, nor did the decision to preserve this version of the print, whose menace chimes with Rego's earlier illustrations of Portuguese folk tales for children: *Two Men Separated by a River of Blood*, *Girl Sitting on a Well With Heads in Foreground* and the better known *Branca Flor*. But equally significant in this image, bearing in mind Zipes' notion of a fable as something 'that speaks to unequal power relations and prompts those without power to speak in metaphoric codes that can emancipate both the teller and listener' (Zipes, 2013), what is striking in this image taken from a verse about serfs tricking their master is the noticeable absence of that master. Yes Sir becomes no Sir. There is no Sir here. Here, as ever, Rego gazes from the side of the disregarded:

> 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, has led her to Nursery Rhymes as a new source for her imagery. (Warner, 1994, 8)

The collusion here is between a creature who perhaps just this once will not be fleeced, and a girl who at least this time will unleash her most forbidden desires. The arrangement of the figures, moreover, echoes another that of another of Rego's most famous paintings, *The Family* (fig. 2.14) of 1988, the year before the *Nursery Rhymes* exhibition in 1989 (her first with Marlborough Fine Art, and which signalled her move into the big league in the visual arts, in Britain and worldwide). Nineteen eighty-eight was the year Rego's husband Victor Willing died, twenty

years after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Willing, himself an artist, was cruelly incapacitated by the disease, a condition alluded to in the earlier *Girl and Dog* images of the mid-eighties, which Rego stated were 'about Vic' (see chapter 1). The original title of *The Family* was *The Raising of Lazarus*. In it, the poses of the various figures are construable, as is the case of the *Girl and Dog* images (figs. 1.13; e-fig. 6; e-fig. 7; figs. 1.21; 1.22; 1.23; 1.26–1.33), as a combination of caring and attacking as well as indicating ambivalent (incestuous) family relations. A link can therefore be established between it and the quasi-erotic arrangement of the black sheep and girl in the etching. From incest to bestiality with an animal which might be a family pet is but one step along the spectrum of perversion.

Fig. 6.4 Paula Rego, *Ring-a-Ring o'Roses* (1989). Etching and aquatint, plate size: 21.2 x 21.6 cm; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Ring-a-ring o'roses,
A pocket full of posies,
A-tishoo! A-tishoo!
We all fall down.[4]

Peter and Iona Opie (Opie, P. and I. 1997, 1142–1143) trace the origins of this nursery rhyme to the time of the Black Death, the great plague that swept through Europe from central Asia in the fourteenth century and killed 30–60% of the population of Europe. A red rash on the cheeks (a ring of roses) was the first symptom, followed by sneezing (a-tishoo). The disease progressed quickly and death usually followed. In the absence of any treatment, people often carried a posey of medicinal herbs thought to ward off the disease.

Rego's etching of 1989 is a jolly depiction of a circle of dancers in the open air, with a strong echo of the painting *The Dance* (fig. 2.5) of 1988, for which her son Nick Willing posed. Painted the year Victor Willing died, *The Dance* has been described as 'saying goodbye to Vic'. The strong echoes of ambivalent love (when your lover turns into your patient and then dies), grief, bad omens and the reality of death in these four images (*Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*, *Ring-a-Ring o'Roses*, *The Family* (fig. 2.14) and *The Dance* (fig. 2.5) carry into other images from the nursery-rhymes cycle, all of the same period, foregrounding, I would insist, rather than introducing anew, a horror that was always already there in the originals.

> There was a man of double deed,
> Who sowed his garden full of seed;
> When the seed began to grow,
> 'Twas like a garden full of snow;
> When the snow began to melt,
> 'Twas like a ship without a belt;
> When the ship began to sail,
> 'Twas like a bird without a tail;
> When the bird began to fly,
> 'Twas like an eagle in the sky;
> When the sky began to roar,
> 'Twas like a lion at my door;
> When my door began to crack,
> 'Twas like a stick across my back;
> When my back began to smart,
> 'Twas like a penknife in my heart;
> And when my heart began to bleed,
> 'Twas death, and death, and death indeed.

This is possibly one of the least-explained and most haunting of the corpus of nursery rhymes. A not very persuasive link has been made

Fig. 6.5 Paula Rego, *There Was a Man of Double Deed* (1989). Etching and aquatint, plate size: 31.3 x 21.5 cm; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

with William Blake's 'A Poison Tree'. Whether or not the two are linked, it is undeniable that each poem, in itself, does resonate with many of the instincts that often reverberate from Rego's work: anger, revenge, destruction.

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.
And I watered it in fears.
Night and morning with my tears:
And I sunned it with smiles.
And with soft deceitful wiles.
And it grew both day and night.
Till it bore an apple bright.

> And my foe beheld it shine.
> And he knew that it was mine.
> And into my garden stole.
> When the night had veild the pole;
> In the morning glad I see;
> My foe outstretched beneath the tree. (Blake, 2001, 43)

Rego's version of the nursery rhyme, unusually for her, foregrounds a woman as the victim, on her knees, her back being beaten by a well-dressed man, the spectacle observed by a disproportionately large male figure peering over the roof of a building smaller than he is. This odd-one-out image does not lend itself to interpretation within Rego's catalogue of images of empowered women, other than possibly as a warning to her sex: might it be that when men get the upper hand it is death, and death indeed for women? We have been warned.

One Elizabeth, Two Marys and Assorted Royals

Given the unclear origins of most nursery rhymes, it is curious that a number of them have been linked to three female figures in Tudor and Stuart history in England and Scotland: Mary I and Elizabeth I, unsatisfactory offspring by virtue of their sex in the eyes their father, Henry VIII, himself a Bluebeard to five dead wives and one whose survival was a near miss;[7] and Mary Stuart, whose father, James V of Scotland felt much the same as Henry about his own daughter ('it came wi' a lass, it'll gang wi' a lass').[8] Both, as it turned out, were short-sighted monarchs needlessly obsessed with patrilinearity, and duly punished for it by begetting short-lived sons and historically-significant daughters who (two of them, counter-intuitively, by dying childless)

7 Henry VIII's six wives, Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Katherine Parr have been immortalized in the rhyme 'divorced, beheaded, dead, divorced, beheaded, survived'. Katherine Parr, the last wife, was nearly condemned to death for her Protestant sympathies, but at the last moment the king spared her and died shortly after.

8 Mary Stuart's father, dying without a male heir, mistakenly foresaw the end of the Stuart dynasty, which had begun with Marjorie Bruce. Henry VIII's only son died young, not long after his father; next in line to the throne was Mary, who married Philip II of Spain but died childless; she was succeeded by Elizabeth, who remained unmarried. After Elizabeth I died in 1603 without an heir, Mary's son, James VI of Scotland became James I of England. Although an official Act of Union did not come into full force until 1707, James called himself King of Great Britain.

brought into being the nation of Great Britain as the result of the union between England and Scotland. It may be an awareness of these epoch-making women who between them brought about a great age (the Elizabethan) and a powerful nation, that led Rego to link five of her twenty-five nursery rhyme etchings to these three women: *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary, Little Miss Muffett, Three Blind Mice, Rock-a-Bye Baby and A Frog He Would a-Wooing Go.*

Fig. 6.6 Paula Rego, *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary I*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.3 x 21.3 cm; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.

Fig. 6.7 Paula Rego, *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary II*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.2 x 22.1 cm; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, not included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

The Opies suggest that this rhyme refers to Mary Queen of Scots, who went to France when she was a young girl to obtain her education. While she was in France, Elizabeth I became Queen of England. Under her, the Church of England, already schismatic from the time of Elizabeth's father, Henry VIII's break from Rome, became officially Protestant. Scotland was torn by religious conflict between the old and new faiths, with Protestantism gaining the ascendancy towards the end of the life of James V of Scotland. When Mary returned to Scotland after the deaths of her father and her husband, the short-lived Francis II of France, her Catholic religion put her at odds with a large part of the Scottish nobility as well as with her powerful royal cousin to the south, setting in motion the complex events that would eventually lead to her execution. The reference to bells may have referred to the call to Mass; cockle shells, moreover, were the symbols worn by those going on pilgrimage. The pretty maids all in a row were probably the Four Marys: Mary Stuart

herself and Mary Beaton, Mary Fleming and Mary Livingston, the ladies in waiting who remained faithful to the Scottish queen until her death.[9]

Rego produced two images derived from this nursery rhyme. One (fig. 6.6) depicts three smaller figures suspended over a fourth larger-scale one, their relative sizes presumably alluding to their respective ranks as queen and ladies-in-waiting. The three smaller figures are either hovering in the air over the larger one (guardian angels) or entrapped in the railings or mesh behind, possibly indicating Mary's long imprisonment in England, prior to her execution by her cousin Elizabeth. The other image (fig. 6.7) shows a small, child-like Mary in the foreground, with an arch constructed of shells to her left, what might be either a flower bed or more shells to her right, and facing her, disproportionately large, dark and spectral like the sheep in *Baa Baa*, three female figures. The cockle shells included in the original nursery rhyme and image may also refer to Mary Stuart's French tastes, much criticized in Scotland, including her supposed love for exotic foods, acquired during her period in France. The silver bells, also featured in the second print, are possibly the bells that will toll for her death. Figure 6.6 includes unidentifiable shapes hanging from the rails or mesh, which may or may not be cockle shells, a horse-shoe on the ground to the left of the large female figure and, to her right, small and hovering by her skirt (apron strings), two small girls. In figure 6.7 the three Marys loom large and dark over a small, childlike little girl, possibly Mary Stuart now defeated by forces that the three Marys can only observe from a distance but not control. The cockle shells are either scattered on the ground or fossilized into a small structure, beside which a spade is dug upright into the soil, possibly in preparation for its demolition.

As argued previously, in her visual narratives, whether derived from historical events or fiction, Paula Rego has notably shown reluctance to depict women's deaths, even when the original script would dictate she ought. In *The Maids* (fig. 1.4), for example, of 1987, based on Jean Genet's play of the same title, inspired by the real-life murder of a woman by her maidservants (see chapter 1), Rego's image, as already discussed, depicts the murder about to be committed, but the victim is a man in drag. In *The Coop* (fig. 3.12) of 1987, based on Eça de Queirós'

9 There were in fact four Marys who accompanied Mary Stuart to France on the occasion of her marriage to te then-Dauphin, subsequently King Francis II: Mary Seton, Mary Beaton, Mary Fleming and Mary Livingston.

nineteenth-century novel, what in the novel is Amélia's lonely deathbed scene, in Rego becomes a merry hen party. And in *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary*, too, there may be darkness and foreboding, mainly emanating from the figures of the three attending Marys in each image, but that being the case, it is unlikely that the intended victim would be their royal mistress and friend, whom they would more likely seek to rescue. In Rego, of course, they might succeed: anything is possible, even the re-writing of history.

Fig. 6.8 Paula Rego, *Little Miss Muffet*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.9 x 21.2 cm; paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Little Miss Muffet
Sat on a tuffett,
Eating her curds and whey;
Along came a spider
Who sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away.

Some sources claim this rhyme was written by the sixteenth-century physician and entomologist Dr Thomas Muffet regarding his stepdaughter Patience (Opie, P. and I., 1997, 382); others claim it refers to

Mary, Queen of Scots' fear of John Knox, the Scottish religious reformer who was her staunch enemy. At first glance Paula Rego's image seems to take the rhyme at face value but on closer inspection three points stand out: first, the fact that the spider has a face, possibly female, and looks reasonably amiable; second, the disproportionality in size often found in Rego's work, the size of the spider being approximately the same as that of the girl; and third, the fact that, in a situation of such horror, the girl, rather than being frightened away is looking not at the spider but outwards towards the implied viewer, as indeed is the spider itself. Two of the spider's legs, not unlike those of the sheep in *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, are positioned in a way that could be construed as friendly rather than menacing. Two friends about to hug and both suspicious of possible onlookers? Female co-conspirators? Girls together against the world? With an enemy like this, Miss Muffett may not need a friend.

Fig. 6.9 Paula Rego, *Three Blind Mice I*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.1 x 21.6 cm; paper size: 52 x 37.6 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Three blind mice. Three blind mice.
See how they run. See how they run.
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife,

> Did you ever see such a sight in your life,
> As three blind mice?

Attempts to read historical significance into the words of this rhyme have led to the speculation that this musical round refers to Mary Tudor's execution of three Protestant Bishops, Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer and Thomas Cranmer, known as the Oxford Martyrs. If so, the mice's blindness might refer to their failure to return to Roman Catholicism in Mary's reign. Against this theory stand some points: first, that the earliest version of the rhyme makes no mention of harming the mice; and second — though that in itself does not necessarily invalidate the reading above — that the first known date of publication is 1609, long after Mary's death in 1558. Mary was succeeded by her half-sister, Elizabeth I, who was a Protestant. By the early seventeenth-century Protestantism was already well established in England, under the reign of James I of England (and VI of Scotland): a Protestant who in any case, unlike Elizabeth, did not encourage the persecution of Catholics. Even so, their persecution was still very much within living memory, whilst important members of the aristocracy, including the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Northumberland — whose dominions were of strategic importance regarding possible invasions from the continent and Scotland respectively — remained loyal to Rome. The Roman Catholic-Protestant divide was very much still a point of strife, and indeed remains so to the present, Scotland and Northern Ireland being cases in point.

Be that as it may, of the two possibilities, Rego's etching — if it does indeed carry a historical association — is likely to refer to the events relating to the fanatically Catholic Mary Tudor and the three bishops, coming as it does from the hands of an artist not known for her approval of Roman Catholicism. Rego was not overly enamoured of priests of any denomination (see for example her series on *The Sin of Father Amaro* and abortion discussed in chapters 3 and 4), so this narrative, damning of Christianity in general and particularly of priests destroyed because one of that religion's sects turned on the other, might be seen as killing three or four birds with one stone.

Other possibilities, however, run not quite in tandem with this interpretation. In this image, a woman (presumably the farmer's wife) wields a knife, wearing what might be Portuguese traditional dress but a head dress that confusingly could be either a maid servant's scarf

or a typical Tudor gable hood. As was the case with the Miss Muffett print, however, the delineation of adversaries is unclear. One of the mice stands by the woman, engaged in what looks like playfulness. The other two also stand on their hind legs, in what looks like confabulation rather than flight. No one is running, and all three mice still have their tails. If this is Mary Tudor, a queen all too prone to torture and murder Protestants, it is possibly not surprising that Paula Rego, a life-long anti-Papist, here withholds from this particular farmer's wife (who in any case is not much bigger in stature than the mice) her intended bloodbath and burning stakes.

Fig. 6.10 Paula Rego, *Rock-a-Bye Baby*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.1 x 21.6 cm; paper size: 52 x 37.6 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Rock-a-bye baby
On the tree top,
When the wind blows,
The cradle will rock
When the bough breaks,
The cradle will fall,
and down will come Baby,
Cradle and all.

According to the Opies, the wind that blows in this nursery rhyme may be the Protestant storm blowing from the Netherlands and bringing to England James II/VII's nephew and son-in-law, the Protestant William of Orange who would depose the Catholic monarch. Or it might be the Protestant wind that earlier, in the reign of Elizabeth, saved England from the Spanish Armada, sent to restore Roman Catholicism during the reign of Philip II of Spain. Either version would, once again, tally with Rego's hostility to the Roman Catholic Church. This image however, depicting a large woman crouching barefoot against a starry night sky and rocking a baby in a cradle by her feet, could equally address her life-long ambivalence about women's roles. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the word, and that rule is not necessarily benevolent.

A frog he would a-wooing go,
Heigho, says Rowley,
Whether his mother would let him or no.
With a rowley powley, gammon and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!
So off he set with his opera hat,
Heigho, says Rowley,
And on the road he met with a rat.
With a rowley powley, etc.
'Pray, Mr. Rat, will you go with me,
Heigho, says Rowley,
Kind Mistress Mousey for to see?'
With a rowley powley, etc.
And when they came to Mousey's hall,
Heigho, says Rowley,
They gave a loud knock, and they gave a loud call.
With a rowley powley, etc.
'Pray, Mistress Mouse, are you within?'
Heigho, says Rowley.
'Oh yes, kind sirs, I'm sitting to spin'.

Fig. 6.11 Paula Rego, *A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go*. Etching and aquatint. Plate size: 21.3 x 21.6 cm, Paper size: 52 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 signed and numbered, included in portfolio. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

With a rowley powley, etc.
'Pray, Mistress Mouse, will you give us some beer?
Heigho, says Rowley,
For Froggy and I are fond of good cheer'.
With a rowley powley, etc.
'Pray, Mr. Frog, will you give us a song?
Heigho, says Rowley,
But let it be something that's not very long'.
With a rowley powley, etc.
'Indeed, Mistress Mouse', replied Mr. Frog,
Heigho, says Rowley,
'A cold has made me as hoarse as a dog'.
With a rowley powley, etc.
'Since you have caught cold, Mr. Frog', Mousey said,
Heigho, says Rowley,
'I'll sing you a song that I have just made'.
With a rowley powley, etc.

But while they were all a merry-making,
Heigho, says Rowley,
A cat and her kittens came tumbling in.
With a rowley powley, etc.
The cat she seized the rat by the crown;
Heigho, says Rowley,
The kittens they pulled the little mouse down.
With a rowley powley, etc.
This put Mr. Frog in a terrible fright;
Heigho, says Rowley,
He took up his hat, and wished them goodnight.
With a rowley powley, etc.
But as Froggy was crossing over a brook,
Heigho, says Rowley,
A lily-white duck came and gobbled him up,
With a rowley powley, etc.
So there was an end of one, two, and three,
Heigho, says Rowley,
The rat, and the mouse, and the little froggee,
With a rowley powley, gammon and spinach,
Heigho, says Anthony Rowley!

This long nursery rhyme may refer to François, Duke of Anjou's courtship of Elizabeth I, although unanswered questions about its date make it more likely that it referred instead to Mary Stuart. The earliest known version of the song was published in 1549 as 'The Frog Came to the Myl Dur' in Robert Wedderburn's *Complaynt of Scotland*. Wedderburn states that in 1547 the Scottish Queen Consort, Mary of Guise, under attack from Henry VIII, brought about the marriage of her daughter Princess Mary (Mistress Mouse; later Mary Queen of Scots) to the young French Dauphin (the 'frog': later Francis II of France).

Many things may have appealed to Rego in this rhyme. In view of her ambivalence regarding the fate of women within the patriarchy and within marriage as its prime institution, the rhyme might have appealed to her whether it referred to Elizabeth, the famously unmarried queen, or her cousin Mary Stuart, whose husbands (Francis II of France, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley and James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell) all came to an early and in two cases violent end. Rego made two prints relating to this rhyme: in the first a well-dressed frog stands before a seated female mouse, begging for her hand. The second print features a female cat and her kittens which, in the rhyme, catch and kill the Frog

Prince's friend and companion, Mr. Rat. In the background we see the Frog Prince escaping through a door, overlooked by a white duck that presumably will soon gobble him up. Men, whether lovers, husbands or protagonists, do not tend to do well at the hands of Scottish Mary, English Elizabeth or Portuguese Paula.

Beautiful Princesses, Evil Stepmothers and Wicked Witches: Who is Dead Now?

Nobody loves a stepmother or a witch. That, of course, is in fact not true. Hence the fact that 'being bewitched' is a synonym for being in love, and that men with children from a first marriage find themselves second wives (their offspring's stepmothers) whom they presumably love. Let us say, then, that *some* people don't like witches (mainly those — priests, men of science, those who wield power in general — whose hegemony is threatened by a different school of thought). And possibly most children do not love their stepmothers, for all the reasons that psychoanalysis and other brands of (family) therapy have made it their business to elucidate. Both witches and stepmothers wield unfathomable power that threatens any manner of cherished beliefs: beliefs about knowledge; about love; about the irreplaceability of first love; about clear-cut definitions of truth and superstition; about right and wrong. Witches and stepmothers are wicked and dangerous, and threaten the natural order of things. Which makes it just as well that for all their mysterious powers, they are the ones who, in the land of happy-ever-after, usually end up dead.

As Bruno Bettelheim tells us, a witch created by a child's anxious fantasies will haunt him or her; but a witch whom that child can push into the witch's own oven, leaving her to burn to death ('Hansel and Gretel') is a witch who the child learns can be defeated (Bettelheim, 1991). In *The Uses of Enchantment* Bettelheim argues that the figure of the wicked stepmother/witch is a safe repository for a child's negative feelings about his or her real mother, that all-powerful being whom, as object relations theory persuasively argues, being the source of both all that is good and all that is bad in the infant's universe, becomes that which must be displaced as maturity replaces helplessness (Chodorow, 1979; Dinnerstein, 1987). It is possible that the long-lasting

appeal of the 'Snow White' narrative owes its enduring fascination to the very real complexities of mother-daughter relations. It is wrong and dangerous to hate one's mother, but it is right and proper to hate one's stepmother or a wicked witch (and the two, of course, may be one and the same). And even if they are not, whilst it may be true that not all witches are stepmothers, it is uncontestably true that all stepmothers are witches.

In 'Breaking the Disney Spell' Jack Zipes addresses himself to the unchallenging renditions of the original fairy tales provided by the Disney Corporation and its saccharine versions of the central characters in *Sleeping Beauty* (1959), *Cinderella* (1950) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989):

> However, despite their beauty and charm, these figures are pale and pathetic compared to the more active and demonic characters in the film. The witches are not only agents of evil but represent erotic and subversive forces that are more appealing both for the artists who drew them and the audiences. The young women are helpless ornaments in need of protection, and when it comes to the action of the film, they are omitted. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the film does not really become lively until the dwarfs enter the narrative. (Zipes, 'Breaking the Disney Spell', quoted in Tatar, 349)

Similar lines of thought inform Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's analysis of two related concerns: first, the antagonism of the woman writer or artist locked in battle against the monolith of a male-dominated canon within which women writers and artists had no place and no voice; and second, the dichotomy of the angel woman versus the monster woman/madwoman/whore, constrained within the confines of a mirror (or in Rego's case a canvas) where appearances (fairest or foulest) are everything.

Rego's series about Snow White has the eponymous heroine dressed in the iconic Disney gown, but the Disney influence stops there, in all possible respects. Not for Rego a lady-like death for Snow White, transformed into *objet d'art* on display in a glass coffin, for the delectation of passing voyeurs. Instead, this (e-fig. 12)[10] is the vision we would expect of a painful death by poisoning.

10 e-fig. 12 Paula Rego, *Swallows the Poisoned Apple* (1995). Pastel on board, 170 x 150 cm. Saatchi Gallery, all rights reserved, https://www.saatchigallery.com/artists/artpages/rego_paula_swallows_poisoned_apple.htm

For Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, the angel woman and the monster are merely two facets of problematic female lives lived out according to the limited options of established ontological definitions created by men (good because dead, bad because persistently alive). The monster woman, madwoman or whore are the mouthpieces and avatars for all that, in a male-dominated world, the angel woman dare not say. And in Rego's *Snow White* images too, as in others discussed previously, a worrying complicity (troubling from the point of view of the binary-inclined status quo) replaces the enmity of the original tale (e-fig. 13).[11]

In this image, it would appear, it is a case of 'you *shall* go to the ball, Cinderella/Snow White, with or without knickers (whichever will best secure the prince's attention)'. And in the women's brave new world of *Snow White Playing with Her Father's Trophies* (e-fig. 14)[12], a Snow White in deceptively virginal attire seems to be busy in ways that ill-become a fairy-tale princess, holding her father's butchered remains, under the gaze of a seemingly unconcerned stepmother.

Where Marcia Pointon (1996) and John McEwen (1997) see enmity between Snow White and her stepmother in these images, one can just as easily see complicity:

> As the legend of Lilith shows, and as psychoanalysts from Freud and Jung onward have observed, myths and fairy tales often both state and enforce culture's sentences with greater accuracy than more sophisticated literary texts. If Lilith's story summarizes the genesis of the female monster in a single useful parable, the Grimm tale of 'Little Snow White' dramatizes the essential but equivocal relationship between the angel-woman and the monster-woman […]. 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarves', should really be called 'Snow White and Her Wicked Stepmother', for the central action of the tale — indeed, its only real action — arises from the relationship between these two women. […] Both have been locked: a magic looking glass, an enchanted and enchanting glass coffin. […]

11 e-fig. 13 *Snow White and Her Stepmother* (1995). Posted by yigruzeltil, 28 February 2013, Wikiart, https://www.wikiart.org/en/paula-rego/snow-white-and-her-stepmother-1995

12 e-fig. 14 *Snow White Playing with Her Father's Trophies* (1995). Posted by yigruzeltil, 28 February 2013, Wikiart, https://www.wikiart.org/en/paula-rego/snow-white-playing-with-her-father-s-trophies-1995

> What does the future hold for Snow White, however? When her Prince becomes a King and she becomes a Queen, what will her life be like? Trained to domesticity by her dwarf instructors, will she sit in the window, gazing out on the wild forest of her past, and sigh, and sew, and prick her finger, and conceive a child white as snow, red as blood, black as ebony wood? Surely, fairest of them all, Snow White has exchanged one glass coffin for another, delivered from the prison where the Queen put her only to be imprisoned in the looking glass from which the King's voice speaks daily. There is, after all, no female model for her in this tale except the 'good' (dead) mother and her living avatar the 'bad' mother. […] *Her only escape from her second glass coffin, the imprisoning mirror, must evidently be through 'badness', through plots and stories, duplicitous schemes, wild dreams, fierce fictions, mad impersonations*. […] The female literary tradition we have been defining participates on all levels in the same duality or duplicity that necessitates the generation of such doubles as monster characters who shadow angelic authors and mad anti-heroines who complicate the lives of sane heroines. (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000, 36–80, italics added)

Gilbert and Gubar argue that under patriarchy women are set one against another and female solidarity is almost impossible to achieve. But not inevitably so. Let us look at Naomi Segal, in an essay titled 'Matrilinear and Patrilinear':

> [Woman is either] positioned in a patrilinear structure, giving a son to her father and husband, or she functions in a matrilinear chain, offering a daughter to her mother. […] Women who have children in male-authored fiction are a small enough group, commonly becoming pregnant — frequently as the result of a super-potent wedding night — in order that they can suffer obstetrical trauma. Women who give birth to daughters are an even smaller sub-group and a startlingly high number of them are adulteresses. […] There is something in women who are perceived as desiring which, it seems, deserves the punishment of reproducing themselves; they have disqualified themselves from the uniquely gratifying form of motherhood that Freud identifies in the birth of a son. (Segal, 1990: 136–37)

Segal identifies a further possibility: namely that of a powerful pact between mother and daughter, such that, beyond or outside the perceived act of narcissism and self-reproduction that, according to a male perspective, damns the mothers of daughters, we glimpse another world — clandestine and menacing — 'a potential other-world in which women speak of love' (Segal, 1990: 137), and, I would argue now,

specifically speak to and love one another: 'in the mother of daughters [the male author] incarnates a less readily available wish: to see in what occult manner she loves the child more exactly of her flesh, in whom no mark of the husband remains'. (Segal, 1990: 137–38). No mark remains or, if it does, only vestigially, in a spectral form haunted by the fear of erasure by women determined to overturn the rule of the husband/father whom they neither recognize nor resemble. When the king stag's head and antlers are severed and held on her lap by a little girl, nothing is as (or what) it used be.

Women Against the Canon: Who is Cannon Fodder Now?

All is fair in love and war, especially for those who draw up the rules of engagement: *O Rancor* (*Grudge*), a play of 2004 by Hélia Correia — from whose work Rego has also drawn inspiration — draws on themes from the ancient Greek tragedies as well as from Homer. In Correia's play, Aethra (Etra), Theseus' wife, is enslaved as a consequence of the vicissitudes of war. But in Correia, all her sufferings notwithstanding, Aethra never loses either her wit or her wits, and opines light-heartedly that 'the defeated, strangely, become accomplished liars, and their stories are remarkably devoid of accuracy' (Correia, 2000: 38). Mendacity is a character flaw, though arguably not without justification in the case of the vanquished, since, as is well known, History is rarely written either *by* or *for* them. And be it by means of lies, intrigue, betrayal, murder or unexpected alliances (Snow White and her stepmother, Jane Eyre and Bertha Antoinette Mason) for the conquered, revenge sometimes is not only forgivable but necessary. As are, indeed, revised scripts with disquieting undertones of violence and incest, as suggested by the positioning of bodies (or bodily remains) held between girlish knees in *Snow White Playing with her Father's Trophies* (e- fig. 15) and also in *The Family* (fig. 2.14) discussed previously. Maria Tatar maintains that 'another of the "conditions and relationships" that the Grimms seem to have found repugnant, or at least inappropriate as a theme in their collection, was incest and incestuous desire. […] When a tale was available in several versions, the Grimms invariably preferred one that camouflaged incestuous

desires and Oedipal entanglements. […] But lurid portrayals of child abuse, starvation, and exposure, like fastidious descriptions of cruel punishments, on the whole escaped censorship' (Tatar, 1999, 368–70). For Rego, it would appear, such niceties are entirely unnecessary. In a differently enchanted world, the future for Snow White may be more charming without a Prince who, in any case, on better acquaintance, might well turn out to be horrendous (e-fig. 15).[13]

Moreover, even in the original tales, there might have been a bit more to Cinderella and Snow White than met the eye. Those who read the original stories by Perrault, Andersen and the Brothers Grimm before Disney got to them will know that Snow White's stepmother arranges the murder of her stepdaughter, and that she herself will die an excruciating death wearing shoes that burn through her feet; that doves peck out the eyes of Cinderella's stepsisters; that Sleeping Beauty's suitors bleed to death in attempting to cross the hedge around her castle; that she, herself, in a sequel turns into a child killer; that a mad rage drives Rumpelstiltskin to tear himself in pieces; and that the Little Mermaid, minus her tongue, forsakes her tail in exchange for legs that feel as though they have red-hot spikes running through them. Pre-Disney, full graphic horror (murders, mutilations, cannibalism, infanticide, and incest) ruled bedtime stories for children. Not even Rego can do worse, and she does not: at her worst, all she does is reproduce in images the horror present in the original narratives.

The difference is that whilst, as Marina Warner would have it, in 'Snow White' the father's remarriage leads to the unbearable persecution of the heroine by the wicked stepmother, or, as Bettelheim argues, the perceived violence of the stepmother towards the child is in reality a projection of the child's jealousy of the mother figure, in Rego this psychodynamic is replaced by an iconoclastic alliance between (step)mother and daughter that reduces the Oedipal father figure to a decapitated stag head held between a rampant daughter's knees, prior to her stealing the prince's horse and galloping off to write a different story (e-fig. 15). Her own story. And in that brand new narrative, who is the hunter? Who is the prey? In Rego's world, did Bambi's mother

13 e-fig. 15 Paula Rego, *Snow White Riding the Prince's Horse* (1995). Pastel on paper. Posted by Artodyssey (scroll down to image no. 21), http://artodyssey1.blogspot.com/2009/08/paula-rego-paula-figueiroa-rego-born.html

actually call the shots, grab the gun and kill both the hunter and the king stag? More to the point, which version do we prefer and why?

Bad Wolves, Beastly Beasts and Bluebeard: They Had it Coming, M'Lud

The dangers courted by a curious woman are widely documented in myth and literature: Eve, Pandora, Psyche, Briar Rose, Bluebeard's nameless wife. It is the latter that concerns us here. 'Bluebeard', variously tackled by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm and later by others, and no longer available in the children's section of bookshops, may be either an encouragement for women to do as they are told by their husbands or it may be an exposé of marital violence and serial killing:

> The tale of Bluebeard 'touches upon areas of acute anxiety — about male sexuality in general and in extremis; about the rights of husbands — and the rights of wives; about money (Bluebeard is always vastly wealthy); about foreigners and Orientals; about the delinquency of curiosity and women's special propensity to be curious. The deaths of his wives one after another may offer a historical memory of the toll of childbirth. […] Bluebeard typifies the principal male antagonist in the sex wars, an enemy, a sadist, and a rapist — who can also be irresistibly alluring. (Warner, 2018, 91–92)

Whether or not Bluebeard had a real-life equivalent — cultural historians have variously suggested Cunmar of Brittany (Cunmar the Accursed), who decapitated his pregnant wife Triphine or Gilles de Rais, the Marshal of France, mentioned earlier — the tale serves as a cautionary warning to curious, disobedient wives. But even in Perrault and the Brothers Grimm it is also an edifying tale of female survival and sisterly solidarity: if you can't manage by yourself and you want not just rescuing but bloody revenge, call not on Prince Charming but on sister Anne; or sister Paula; or any of her mad precursors/followers/sisters (and occasionally the odd brother): Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys, Angela Carter, Kiki Smith, Winslow Homer, etc., etc., etc. Let us have a look, even when peeping might be done at great personal cost (fig. 6.12; fig. 6.13).

Fig. 6.12 Walter C. Kiedaisch, *Bluebeard Greets his Latest Wife* (1904). The Tacoma Times, 1 January 1904, p. 3. Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Miss_Bluebeard_1904.jpg

Fig. 6.13 Winslow Homer, *The Blue Beard Tableau: Fatima Enters the Forbidden Closet* (1868). Wood engraving, 11.4 x 11.7 cm. Boston Public Library, Print Department. Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blue_beard_tableau_(Boston_Public_Library).jpg

Size Does Matter: Angry Jane, Gothic Bertha

Charlotte Brontë, Jean Rhys, Fay Weldon, Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, Sara Maitland, Artemisia Gentileschi, Kiki Smith, Catherine Breillart and countless other women writers, artists and directors have made it their business to cut down to size murderous men and wolves in the popular imagination. None more literally than Paula Rego, in her *Jane Eyre* series based on two novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* published in 1847 and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* of 1966, a prequel to the *Jane Eyre* plot which imagines the life of Bertha Antoinette Mason, Mr. Rochester's first wife, from childhood till the moment when she dies in the flames she caused to engulf Thornfield Hall.

In Brontë's novel Jane Eyre becomes governess to Adéle, the ward of Mr. Edward Rochester, a rich man who is the owner of Thornfield Hall, a large manor house in Yorkshire. They fall in love and plan to marry but on the day of the wedding it is revealed that Mr. Rochester already has a wife, Bertha Antoinette Mason, a violent lunatic whom he had kept locked up in the upper storey of Thornfield Hall. Jane leaves Thornfield but will return at a later time to find that Bertha managed to escape from her keeper, set fire to the house, and despite Rochester's attempts to save her had died in the flames. Rochester himself was blinded by a falling beam and lost an arm. Charlotte Brontë understood that in view of Mr. Rochester's conjugal track record and of Bertha's fate — first an unloved wife married for her money, and then a lunatic driven to suicide — Jane's only chance of married happiness with her 'master' would require the implementation of strong checks and balances. So reader, she married him, but only after he had lost much of his wealth in the fire and had been blinded and crippled, thus needing to be led in perpetuity by the small but strong hand of his second wife and former employee. Jean Rhys, charting the cold-hearted calculation that had led Rochester to his first marriage to the unloved, defenceless Bertha, understood why he might have deserved that punishment.

When she published *Jane Eyre* under the pseudonym Currer Bell, Brontë was seemingly under no illusions as to the fact that Prince Charming can easily turn if not into Prince Horrendous, at least into Prince Mendacious or Prince Treacherous, and neither was her character, Jane. The latter only agrees to her happy-ever-after once Bertha, her evil

sidekick, has set fire to Rochester's house and rendered him (formerly tall, strong, rich and powerful whilst Bertha is mad and Jane herself is 'poor, obscure, plain and little', Brontë, 1978, 284) now crippled, blind and utterly dependent on Jane and his servants for survival.

> Her very fingers!' he cried; 'her small, slight fingers! If so there must be more of her. […] Hitherto I have hated to be helped — to be led: henceforth, I feel I shall hate it no more. I did not like to put my hand into a hireling's, but it is pleasant to feel it circled by Jane's little fingers. […] Jane's soft ministry will be a perpetual joy. Jane suits me: do I suit her? (Brontë, 1978, 482–94)

Hopefully yes, in the name of happy endings. But as we know (echoes of those Regoesque girls and their dogs (figs. 1.13; e-fig. 6; e-fig. 7; figs. 1.21; 1.22; 1.23; 1.26–1.33), even the most devoted carers can eventually become weary and turn on their charges.

Jean Rhys' novel of 1966, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, imagines the story of Bertha Antoinette Mason, the first Mrs. Rochester, who in Brontë's *Jane Eyre* became the archetypal madwoman in the attic. Rhys' novel takes us from Bertha' childhood and adolescence in Jamaica and the traumatic events of the bloody uprisings following the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, through her marriage to Edward Rochester — who in this novel remains nameless — to her descent into madness, their journey to England and her incarceration in the attic of Thornfield Hall, culminating in the dream-like events that lead to her setting fire to the house and herself burning to death.

Polly Teale's play and novel of 2003, *After Mrs. Rochester*, focuses on the life of Jean Rhys (born Ella Gwendolyn Rees Williams) and her fascination with the character of Bertha; like the fictional Bertha, Rhys was brought up in the West Indies and was brought to England at a young age. Once there she embarked on a turbulent life that included periods of poverty, numerous love affairs and three marriages. In the play, Jean has locked herself in a room in an isolated cottage in the countryside and is attempting to write a novel. Various characters from her life are featured, including her daughter Ella and the writer Ford Maddox Ford, in real life one of her lovers. Throughout the play Bertha crawls around on the floor around the stage and sometimes speaks to Jean, either soothing her or encouraging her or mocking her, or she simply lies on the floor, a visual echo of Brontë's mad heroine:

> In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face. (Brontë, 1978, 327–28)

Teale, who also directed the play, took her inspiration for the choreography of Bertha from Paula Rego's series, *Dog Women* (*Baying)*, fig. 1.12; *Bad Dog*, fig. 6.14).

Fig. 6.14 Paula Rego, *Bad Dog* (1994). Pastel on canvas, 120 x 160 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Charlotte, Jean and Polly: three women, three writers, three witches, three bitches, three (dis)graces, or, in Portuguese, *três da vida airada* (three loose women) setting out to hurt the men who sought to tame them. Why would Paula not join them? After all, the three musketeers were actually four, and that in the end, together, they defied both God and King.[14]

14 Throughout Alexander Dumas' trilogy, *The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years After* and *The Viscount of Bragelonne*, the four friends, D'Artagnan, Athos, Portos and Aramis follow paths that take them from initial unquestioning allegiance to King Louis XIII, to a weakening of their oath, to outright defiance of the monarch when Louis XIII is succeeded by his son, Louis XIV.

In Rego's *Jane Eyre* series, scale and size are subjected to her usual tricks. In Brontë's novel Bertha is described as a large, powerful woman, almost a match for her husband ('She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest — more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was', Brontë, 1978, 328); whilst Jane is small and elfin-like. In Rego's work, however, they swap *personae*. In *Biting*, a direct reference to the episode in the novel in which Bertha attacks and bites her brother, the model is possibly the prettiest and most feminine female figure ever portrayed by this artist; whilst in other images Jane (in the novel 'a little small thing, they say, almost like a child', Brontë, 1978, 474) appears as a bulky, dark, menacing figure.

Fig. 6.15 Paula Rego, *Biting* (2001–2002). Coloured lithograph, image size: 77 x 50.5 cm; paper size: 90 x 62 cm. Edition of 35 signed and numbered, printed on Somerset textured paper. Print 8 from *Jane Eyre — The Guardians*. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Fig. 6.16 Paula Rego, *Jane* (2001–2002). Lithograph, image size: 86 x 43.5 cm; paper size: 88 x 63.5 cm. Edition of 35 signed and numbered, printed on Somerset velvet paper. Print 1 from *Jane Eyre — The Guardians*. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Fig. 6.17 Paula Rego, *Jane Eyre* (2001–2002). Lithograph, image size: 86.0 x 44.5 cm; paper size: 88.0 x 64.5 cm. Edition of 35, signed and numbered, printed on Somerset velvet paper. Print 1 from *Jane Eyre — The Guardians*. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

And if, as the physical resemblance suggests, Jane is also the protagonist of *Come to Me* (fig. 6.18) it would appear that in Rego — in tune with Gilbert and Gubar's hypothesis that the two women are neither foes nor opposites but avatars — it is Jane, not Bertha, who sets a torch to Mr. Rochester's fiefdom, and all it represents:

> Bertha, in other words, is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead. For, as Claire Rosenfeld points out, 'the novelist who consciously or unconsciously exploits psychological Doubles' frequently juxtaposes 'two characters, the one representing the socially acceptable or conventional personality, the other externalizing the free, uninhibited, often criminal self'.
>
> […] It now begins to appear, if it did not earlier, that Bertha has functioned as Jane's dark double throughout the governess's stay at Thornfield. Specifically, every one of Bertha's appearances — or, more accurately, her manifestations — has been associated with an experience (or repression) of anger on Jane's part […]. Jane's apparently secure response to Rochester's apparently egalitarian sexual confidences was followed by Bertha's attempt to incinerate the master in his bed. Jane's unexpressed resentment at Rochester's manipulative gypsy-masquerade found expression in Bertha's terrible shriek and her even more terrible attack on Richard Mason. Jane's anxieties about her marriage, and in particular her fears of her own alien 'robed and veiled' bridal image, were objectified by the image of Bertha in a 'white and straight' dress, 'whether gown, sheet, or shroud I cannot tell'. Jane's profound desire to destroy Thornfield, the symbol of Rochester's mastery and of her own servitude, will be acted out by Bertha, who burns down the house and destroys herself in the process as if she were an agent of Jane's desire as well as her own. And finally, Jane's disguised hostility to Rochester, summarized in her terrifying prediction to herself that 'you shall, yourself, pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand' comes strangely true through the intervention of Bertha, whose melodramatic death causes Rochester to lose both eye and hand. (Gilbert and Gubar, 2000, 360)

And in contrast in *Edward* (fig. 6.19) whether he is Mr. Rochester himself or, in association with him, he becomes a representative of Mr. Brocklehurst, the sadistic school director of Jane's childhood (fig. 6.20), or even of St. John Rivers, Jane's glacial suitor, the male protagonist appears profoundly vulnerable. Having lost an arm and his eyesight in Brontë's novel, in Rego's work he looks to be in danger of losing his masculinity: no longer a potent patriarch but either a man with genitals

Fig. 6.18 Paula Rego, *Come to Me* (2001–2002). Coloured lithograph, image size: 88.5 x 59 cm; paper size: 99.5 x 67 cm. Edition of 35 signed and numbered, printed on Somerset textured paper. Print 9 from *Jane Eyre — The Guardians*. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

open to attack (as suggested by Rego herself, fig. 6.19), or a tiny, pathetic, polymorphously diminished, Bluebeard (*Dressing Him up as Bluebeard*, e-fig. 16):[15] in Brontë a man crippled by one wife and dependent for all his needs on another ('I will be your neighbour, your nurse, your housekeeper. I find you lonely: I will be your companion — to read to you, to walk with you, to sit with you, to wait on you, to be eyes and hands to you' (Brontë, 1978, 483); and in Rego an erstwhile deadly wife-killer now miniaturized into insignificance and being helped to get dressed like a child (or an invalid: like those dogs with those girls — figs. 1.13; e-fig. 6; e-fig. 7; figs. 1.21; 1.22; 1.23; 1.26–1.33 and other assorted invalids — *The Family*, fig. 2.14; *Dressing Him up as Bluebeard*, e-fig. 16).

15 e-fig. 16 *Dressing Him up as Bluebeard* (2002). Lithography on Somerset wove paper. Christies, https://pccdn.perfectchannel.com/christies/live/images/item/PaulaRego11105/5880026/large/CKS_11105_0048%20.jpg

Fig. 6.19 Paula Rego, *Edward* (2002). Pastel on paper mounted on aluminium, 100 x 80 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Fig. 6.20 Paula Rego, *Inspection* (2001). Lithograph on stone. Image size: 38 x 26 cm; paper size: 53 x 38 cm. Edition of 35 signed and numbered, printed on Somerset Book White paper. Print 2 from Jane Eyre — The Sensuality of the Stone. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Dearest Satan: The Lady with a Cloven Hoof[16]

In 1851, Alexandre Herculano, Portugal's prime historian and his generation's most successful author of historical novels penned in the style of High Romanticism, went rogue and published a hilarious novella, *A Dama Pé de Cabra* (*The Lady with a Cloven Hoof*, translated in Appendix A). Purporting to be a medieval retelling of an old tale ('as old as Portugal itself') it tells a story set at an unspecified time during the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the North African Moors who occupied it from 711 C.E. to 1492 C.E. In Herculano's story, Don Diogo Lopes, a medieval warlord, is out hunting when he hears a beautiful voice singing and stumbles upon a gorgeous woman. He proposes marriage there and then, and offers her all he possesses. She tells him she only wants the one thing that he will never give her, because it was a gift from his dead mother. When further pressed, this turns out to be nothing less than the safety of his immortal soul, which his mother left in the safekeeping of the religious faith she had instilled in him. The beautiful lady agrees to marry Don Diogo on condition that he will never cross himself again, and without further ado he strikes the deal, intending to atone for it later by the tried-and-tested method of bribery (giving the church a piece of land) and violence (the vigorous slaughter of Moors in the name of the Christian God). On his wedding night he discovers that his wife, albeit blessed with the face of an angel and a figure to match, has cloven hoofs instead of feet, but he is unfazed by this. All goes well for years: the cloven-hoofed lady is a perfect wife; and when first a son, Don Inigo, and then a daughter, Dona Sol, are born, she is a devoted mother. The family live in perfect harmony for many years until one night when, at family dinner, the wife's female puppy kills the husband's hunting hound in a ferocious attack. Faced with this bloody spectacle, Don Diogo crosses himself in terror, and at that moment his wife metamorphoses into a black fiend, clutches her daughter under her arm, tries and fails to grab her son, and flies out of the window taking the girl with her.

16 For a close reading of Alexandre Herculano's and Hélia Correia's stories please see Maria Manuel Lisboa, 'Mother/land: Complexities of Love and Loyalty in Alexandre Herculano, Eça de Queirós and Hélia Correia', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 47:1, 2010, 168–89.

To cheer himself up, as well as to atone for his sins, Don Diogo departs on a mission to kill Moors, something not irrelevant in a narrative in which in general, when things get tough, the tough go out and slaughter Muslims. He is however taken prisoner by the Infidel, and does not return. Some years later his pining son (whose only friend is his dog, interestingly named Tariq, the name of the Moorish king who led the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711) is advised to go and ask his absent mother (now described no longer as a damned soul but as '*uma grande fada*' — a great fairy) for help in releasing his father. He finds her, she agrees to help, and puts him to sleep for a year, following which an onager (a small hoofed mammal, which appears elsewhere in the narrative), takes him to Toledo, breaks through the Moorish defences, helps him rescue the father and takes them both to safety. Or so it would appear. On the way home, they come across a tumultuous river spanned by a bridge with a cross in the middle. At that moment, the cloven-hoofed Lady reappears. A struggle between elemental good and evil ensues, and Don Inigo has a vision of Hell, where his mother is now seen to be an inmate. Without much struggle, he chooses the mother and Evil over Good and God, and is allowed to proceed on his way. Father and son return home. The father dies shortly after, but Don Inigo, having vowed never to go to church or to attend confession again, lives to a grand old age, hunting, shooting, fishing and, with the help of his satanic mother, killing Moors in the name of the Christian God. The end of the tale returns to the narratorial voice, which tells us that what happened in the castle on the night of Don Inigo's death is so horrible that we, gentle readers, had better not be told. We never find out.

In a narrative within this narrative we also find out how the Lady came to be who she is. Some time before the events detailed above, the father of another warlord, Argimiro the Dark, dies without having time to tell his son something dreadful that in the past had happened to him. On his deathbed, however, he asks his son to swear that he will never kill a female in litter (a mother). Argimiro is called to war duties but beforehand goes hunting and accidentally kills an onager that has just given birth. He departs to war (the Christian reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries) where he successfully kills lots of Moors. In his absence, his wife dreams on three consecutive nights about a handsome knight. Far away, another knight,

Astrigildo the Fair dreams on three consecutive nights about a beautiful lady. An onager appears and takes him to her. They become lovers. Argimiro the Dark hears of it, returns home and kills them both. She becomes a damned soul who thenceforward will haunt that region. Her lover's body is taken away by the onager that had brought him to her. Argimiro the Dark learns that the onager was the animal whose mother he had killed. The Lady with the Cloven Hoof (the Dama Pé de Cabra) will turn out to be the incarnation of the murdered wife of Argimiro. This story will in due course be narrated to Don Diogo by an abbot to whom he goes for confession, and who, years later, will tell it to Don Inigo, as a narrative within the narrative.

In 2004 Herculano's tale was taken up by Hélia Correia, one of Portugal's most distinguished contemporary writers, whose work Paula Rego has also drawn upon on at least one other occasion. In this instance, Correia takes up Herculano's tale in a short story titled 'Fascinação' ('Enchantment', translation in Appendix B) and follows it down a different track, to imagine the fate of the devilish mother and the daughter she took with her when she metamorphosed into a fiend and flew out of the window, in one of the climactic episodes of the original narrative. In Correia, as in Herculano before her, there is no easy identification of good and evil. The Lady, the Devil's succubus, was a perfect wife and mother. As such — and presumably with the aid of her dark Master — she helps the father and son in their reconquest of the land from the grasp of Islam back to Christianity.

In Hélia Correia's 'Fascinação', Don Inigo's Oedipal love for his mother becomes an incestuous longing for his sister who, like him, resembles their mother. Inigo's love for his sister and hers for him preclude any other (Dona Sol marries a nobleman, Don Afonso, but she does not love him and the marriage fails; Don Inigo never marries at all). The outcome is a pair of siblings who will never perpetuate the bloodline, non-existent or broken dynasties and, by implication, non-viable communities and nations. Inigo continues to do his duty as good Christian and warrior by slaughtering Moors, but he will not beget a son to continue the good work, whilst Dona Sol's husband, Afonso Pena, increasingly wary of his unfathomable wife, fears to approach her in any way, much less sexually. Unhappy in love, he seeks solace in bellicose pursuits that, however, become ever more unproductive, resulting in the half-hearted slaughter of Moorish women and children.

> [Afonso] was just returning from the slaughter of ten [Moorish] innocents whom he had come upon on the way. They were women and children who tried to escape, shouting out and raising a dangerous alarm. Although they were no more than infidels in whose death the Lord gloried, at the moment of their deaths their eyes were so sad that he was moved and his will weakened. But then he killed them, dutifully. (Correia, Appendix B)

Faced with her children's misery, the cloven-hoofed Lady tries to bring them together in incestuous consummation but every attempt is foiled by a spoil-sport God. The story ends inconclusively with the Dama telling her daughter that the only way of being reunited with her brother is for she herself to become a cloven-hoofed fiend. Dona Sol appears to wish it, but somehow her desire is not fulfilled, and at the end it is suggested that she may have gone mad.

Both in Herculano and Correia the cloven-hoofed lady is a beautiful woman and, albeit the Devil's assistant, she is also a loving wife and exemplary mother (even when that devotion includes betraying her master, Satan, by participating in her male relatives' conquest of the land in the name of the Christian God). In these narratives, then, the Devil is an irresistible woman and God is a disagreeable party pooper. If you are Paula Rego, what is there not to like?[17]

The images inspired by Herculano's and Correia's narratives were created by Rego in the first instance for an exhibition held at the Paula Rego Museum, *Casa das Histórias* in Cascais, Lisbon in October 2011. For this event, unusually, she worked in conjunction with another artist, Adriana Molder. Each produced two independent sets of large-scale works. Rego's were six different pastels: *Undressing the Divine Lady*; *Singing on the Hill Side* (fig. 6.21); *Death of the Hunter's Dog* (fig. 6.22); *The Quest*; *Levitation* (fig. 6.23) and *Cast of Characters*. Two additional images (etchings) relating to these narratives and produced in the same two-year period between 2010 and 2012 were titled *Goat Girl I & II*. All are busy, complex images more or less directly relating to Herculano's (rather than necessarily Correia's) narrative. As ever in Rego, the titles given to the pictures are informative rather than adventitious. Thus calling the first image *Undressing the Divine Lady* immediately sets in motion the iconoclastic possibility that a devil woman (bad)

17 For a detailed analysis of the many historical and ethical contradictions in these two narratives, see Lisboa, 'Mother/land'.

Fig. 6.21 Paula Rego, *Dame with the Goat's Foot II (Singing on the Hill Side)* (2011–2012). Pastel on paper, 137 x 102 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Fig. 6.22 Paula Rego, *Dame with the Goat's Foot III (Death of the Hunter's Dog)* (2011–2012). Pastel on paper, 150 x 170 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

Fig. 6.23 Paula Rego, *Dame with the Goat's Foot V (Levitation)* (2011–2012). Pastel on paper, 242 x 120 cm. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved.

can be also be seen to be divine (good). In this image, moreover, the Lady sits cradling a small child. In *Singing on the Hill Side* (fig. 6.21), presumably the episode when Don Diogo first sees the Lady, different time dimensions are conflated, with two children (possibly Don Inigo and Dona Sol) already in existence. In the bottom-right-hand corner of this image, furthermore, seen as if in the background and at some distance, is a large white building with unspecified oriental (possibly Arab) characteristics, and, out of proportion in terms of scale and heading towards it, is what might be an onager. *Death of the Hunter's Dog* (fig. 6.22) depicts a scene of carnage but also, incongruously, of family harmony: the hunting dog lies dead on the ground and a large animal (possibly a fox) or at least its pelt, lies on a table. On a chair sits

Don Diogo playing a macabre flute that is actually an animal bone, and standing beside him in a mockery of a conventional family tableau are the wife and daughter, whilst under the table crouches an inanimate looking male doll, possibly Don Inigo, lovingly clutching a small dog, perhaps the fierce little bitch whose slaughter of the hunting hound unleashed the terrible events central to the narrative. In this image, however, no one seems to be on the brink of metamorphosis, suggesting that had it not been for certain social and religious strictures (making the sign of the cross), what was a happy family before the revelation of the Lady's true nature could have continued to be so after that dangerous knowledge was communicated. *The Quest* is less tangibly linked to any specific event in Herculano's narrative, although different figures, both adults and children, variously engaged each with another, in groups of two but never all together, bespeak the familial separation brought about by the harshness of religious mandates (here represented by the spectacle of a small, desolate-looking little girl kneeling on the floor in the right-hand corner, clutching a crucifix almost as large as herself). In *Levitation* (fig. 6.23), the family peace is broken. After the death of the dog, now lying on the ground, a red-haired lady hovers above her husband. In 'Enchantment', Correia emphasizes the hair colour the cloven-hoofed lady passed on to children who are more like her than their father ('from their mother they had inherited that glow which makes redheads in equal measure objects of desire and of wariness',[18] Correia, Appendix B). In *Levitation* the red-headed woman holds her daughter under her left arm and with her right hand clutches her son's left hand, whilst his right is held in his father's. The latter thus prevents the boy from being snatched by his mother on her way out of the window. Curiously, without knowledge of the narrative's events, were it not for what looks like a large animal suspended from the ceiling, the picture's composition again resembles a happy family portrait in which each of the four figures is holding the hand of one of the others, and the Lady holds both her children. The final picture, *Cast of Characters*, too, makes a mockery of a family whom God has sundered but is here reunited by this female demiurge.

18 Many myths have persisted about redheads, in particular redheaded women: that they are witches, that they don't have souls, that if burnt alive their ashes fertilize fields, that they were conceived during menstruation, that they are harder to sedate and that after they die they become vampires, to name but a few.

Lady, May I Kiss Your Hand? Inês de Castro

You lay, lovely Inês, in lone retreat,
Savouring the sweet fruit of your young years,
In that unwary and blind deceit,
Whose lasting joy Fortune begrudges and fears.
By the river Mondego's placid meadows,
Watered by your gentle tears and sorrows,
To the hills and soft grasses you murmured,
The beloved name that in your heart you nurtured.

Luís Vaz de Camões, *The Lusiads*, Canto III, stanza 120.

In 2014 Rego created *Inês de Castro* to offer to a collection of works by women artists at New Hall, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of that Cambridge college (now re-named Murray Edwards College).

The story of Inês de Castro is the most romantic and one of the most gruesome in Portugal's history. Inês was the illegitimate daughter of a Galician nobleman, Pero Fernandes de Castro, Lord of Lemos and Sarria, and of his Portuguese mistress Aldonça Lourenço de Valadares. Inês was thus descended from both the Galician and Portuguese nobilities as well as from the Castilian royal family, via another illegitimate line. In 1340 she travelled to Portugal as lady in waiting to the *Infanta* Constança of Castile, recently married to Pedro, later King Pedro I, the heir to the Portuguese throne. The prince fell in love with Inês and they began a love affair that was to last until her death fifteen years later. She bore him four children. Inês' links to the royal house of Castile and her brothers' influence on Pedro as heir apparent to the throne of Portugal were seen by his father, King Afonso IV, as a threat to the carefully cultivated but fragile relations between Portugal and Spain. Constança died in 1345 but although Inês was deemed ineligible as second wife to Pedro, the latter refused to take a more suitable bride. After Constança's death Afonso had Inês banished from the court, but the affair continued, posing an increasing threat to the relations between Castile and Portugal. In 1355 the king ordered her death. Three of his councillors, Pêro Coelho, Álvaro Gonçalves and Diogo Lopes Pacheco went to Coimbra where Inês was housed and decapitated her in front of her children. When Pedro succeeded to the throne upon Afonso's death two years later, he captured two of the councillors and executed them publicly, ripping their hearts out, one from the chest and one from the

back, an act which earned him the cognomen of 'Pedro o Cru', 'Peter the Cruel'. He announced that he had secretly married Inês at an undisclosed date, and that she was therefore his lawful wife, although no proof was ever produced of the marriage. Apocryphal sources maintain that after his coronation Pedro had Inês exhumed, sat her on the throne, had her crowned and forced the entire court to process before her, kissing her hand in homage (in *The Lusiads* Camões calls her '*aquela que depois de morta foi rainha*': 'the one who after death became a queen'). Pedro also ordered that upon his own death they should both be buried in the Monastery of Alcobaça, in ornate tombs engraved with the words '*Até ao fim do mundo*' ('until the end of the world), and positioned opposite one another so that when they sat up on the Day of Final Judgement the first thing each would see would be the beloved (fig. 6.24). To this day they lie there, an incongruous monument to adulterous love in one of Portugal's most renowned monasteries. Sometimes Prince Charming, Prince Horrendous and Perfect Stranger are not easy to tell apart, and irony is the thread that links them.

Fig. 6.24 Tombs of Pedro and Inês at the Monastery of Santa Maria, Alcobaça, Portugal. Photo by Mário Novais (c. 1954). Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mosteiro_de_Santa_Maria,_Alcoba%C3%A7a,_Portugal_(3598156818)_(2).jpg

As one would expect, Rego's image addresses all the awkward questions left unasked, let alone unanswered by the original narrative. If, as apocrypha would have it, Pedro had the dead Inês's body dug up and sat on the throne when she had already been dead two years, it is to be supposed that there would be not very much left of her, and what there was would have been feared as a frightening health hazard at a time when the Black Death was raging through Europe. The dead beloved so dear to the hearts of Dante, Petrarch, Camões, Shakespeare, Dickens, Poe, Rossetti and countless others, might, under the rose-tinted gaze of their male creators, have appeared in perpetuity as an icon of love from beyond the grave; but in the real world she would, in reality, more likely have sported the tufts of grass growing out of the remains of Betsy Skull, Helen Adam's more realistic heroine. And in depicting such a dark possibility, of course, there is no artist more pragmatic than Paula Rego, whose Inês, two years post-mortem, is a gruesome skeleton fully clothed in regal attire, removed from her iconic tomb and now reclining, or rather sliding down a battered sofa, dainty toe bones rather than feet peeping from under a dress whose sleeve seems to contain nothing, not even 'the ultimate bone' (Adam, 2007, 187–88) (e-fig. 17, *Inês de Castro*).[19] She is embraced by her grieving prince who, any minute now, may find that he is holding a garment with nothing inside it, its skeletal contents having long before turned to dust inside their precarious velvet sheath.

The thought of Inês dragged from the grave by another version of Prince Horrendous, her decomposing corpse sitting on a throne having her hand kissed by unwilling courtiers, turns a great love story into a horror tale about the beast that would not die. The beautiful dead princess leaps from the grave: Snow White and Sleeping Beauty awake from a deathly sleep, but in Rego's hands, instead of a happy ever after, their decomposed remains come back to haunt those who consigned them to their coffins in the first place. Especially if they are redheads. Or witches. Or if they defy God in any way, be it murder, suicide or sorcery:

19 e-fig. 17 Paula Rego, *Inês de Castro* (2014). Oil on canvas, 122 x 145 cm. Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, for the college's 60th anniversary. Photograph courtesy of Marlborough Fine Art, all rights reserved, https://www.cam.ac.uk/sites/www.cam.ac.uk/files/styles/content-885x432/public/news/news/regoinesdecastro.gif?itok=hxVuDC8h

> In 1869, to retrieve a poetry manuscript he had sentimentally buried with [his wife Lizzie Siddal, whose death was the result of suicide, Dante Gabriel Rossetti] had her coffin exhumed, and literary London buzzed with rumours that her hair 'had continued to grow after her death, to grow so long, so beautiful, so luxuriantly as to fill the coffin with its gold'. As if symbolizing the indomitable earthliness that no woman, however angelic, could entirely renounce, Lizzie Siddal Rossetti's hair leaps like a metaphor for monstrous female sexual energies from the literal and figurative coffins in which her artist-husband enclosed her. To Rossetti, its assertive radiance made the dead Lizzie seem terrifyingly physical and fiercely supernatural. (Gilber and Gubar, 2000, 27)

Dead princesses, sinful suicides and un-dead cloven-hoofed ladies all remind us that it is better never to trust a woman,especially one with red hair.