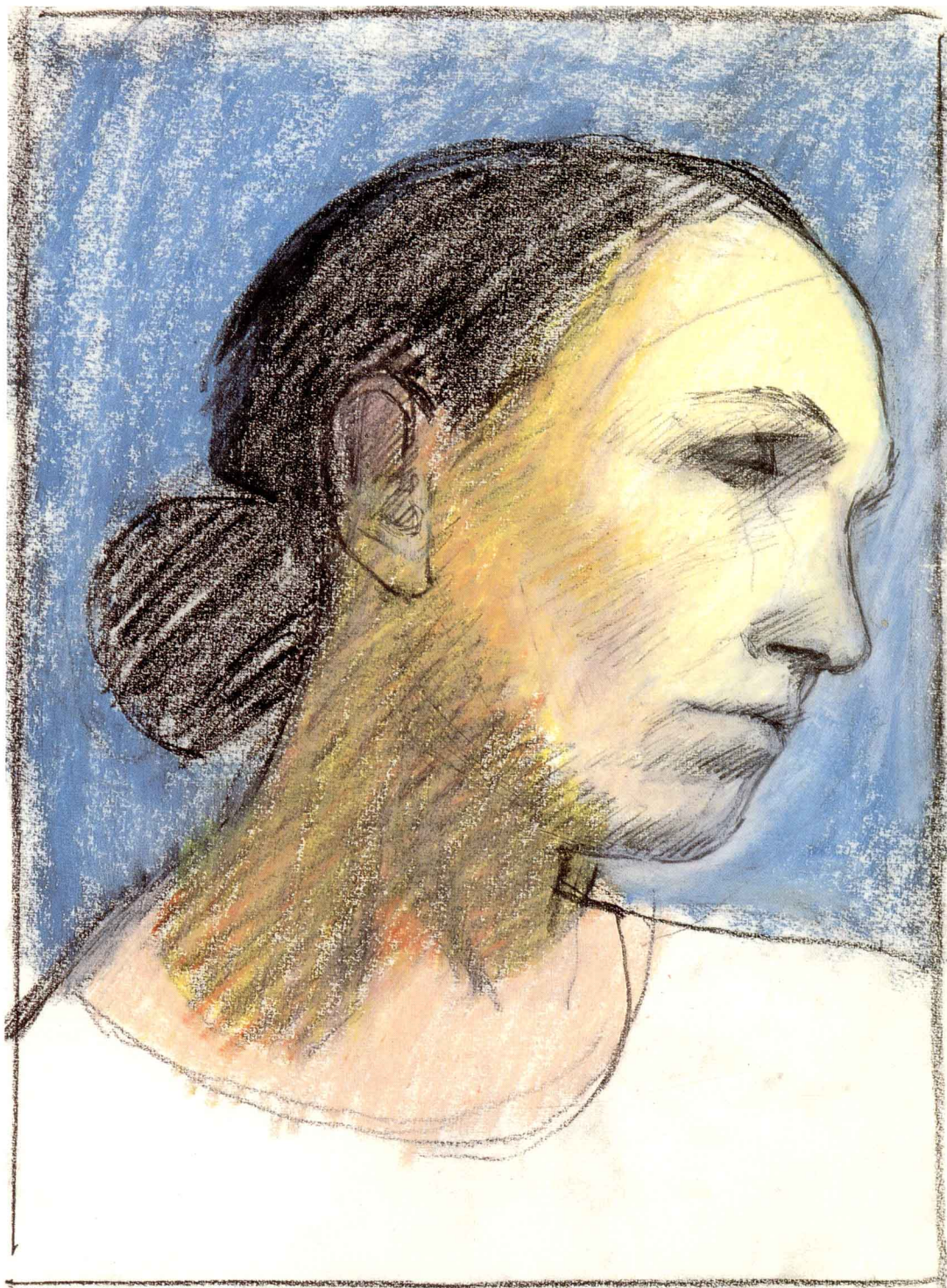


PAULA REGO

John McEwen

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PAULA REGO



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John McEwen

2nd EDITION



In memory of Victor Willing (1928–88)

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FRONTISPIECE

1 Victor Willing: *Portrait of Paula Rego*, 1975. Crayon and pencil on paper, 35.5 x 26 cm.

Text set in Monotype Garamond 11 on 15 pt
Printed in Hong Kong

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Prologue

THE BOGEYMAN

*A traditional Portuguese folk story
told by Paula Rego in her own words.*



Once upon a time there was an old man who lived in a cottage with his old wife and his granddaughter, who was a little girl, and a faithful old dog who was littler still.

One night a band of Bogeymen passed by and one of them said to the others: 'Brother Bogeymen, this is the house. Let us crash in through the roof, eat up the old man, eat up the old woman and carry away the little girl.'

But the faithful old dog heard them and barked so hard that the Bogeymen ran away. And the old man, suspecting nothing, turned to the old woman and said: 'Darned dog for waking me up. Tomorrow I shall cut off his tail!' And the next day the old man got up at dawn and cut off the old faithful dog's tail.

That night the Bogeymen returned and one of them said to the others: 'Brother Bogeymen, this is the house. Let us make a hole in the roof, climb in and eat up the old man, eat up the old woman and carry away the little girl.'

This went on every night until the old man got so exasperated he cut off the old faithful dog's head. So there was no more barking.

And on that night the Bogeymen came and they made a hole in the roof and they climbed into the house and they ate up the old man. They ate up the old woman. And they took away the little girl in a sack.

And when the Bogeymen arrived home they threw the sack on the floor and each one patted it and said 'We shall see to you later', then they went to bed to sleep until night-time, because Bogeymen only sleep by day.

The little girl heard them snoring and she screamed and screamed. She screamed so much that a man with a big dog came to her rescue. And she told him what had happened. The man put his dog in the sack and took the little girl away.

That night the Bogeymen woke up. They went to the sack and each one patted it, saying 'Let us get to work!' They opened the sack and the big dog jumped out and he ate up all the Bogeymen. And the little girl lived happily ever after.



2 Previous page: *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, 1989. Etching, 52 x 38 cm.

3 *The Baker's Wife*, 1989. Hand-coloured etching and aquatint, 11.5 x 16.6 cm.

4 *Little Miss Muffet (1)*, 1989. Etching, 52 x 38 cm.





5 *Hey Diddle Diddle*, 1989.
Etching, 52 x 38 cm.

6 *Aberystwyth*, 1987.
Etching, 25.5 x 37.9 cm.



7 *The Encampment*, 1989.
Etching and aquatint, 52 x 38 cm.





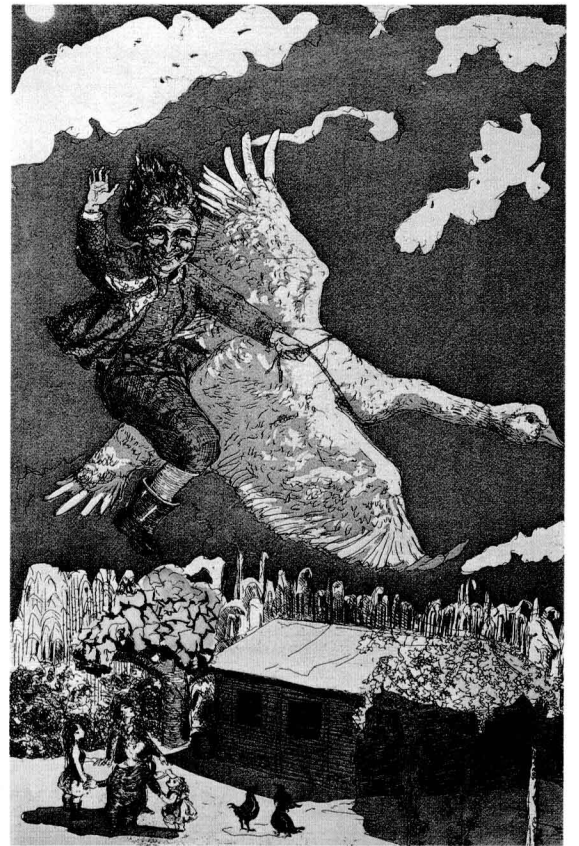
8 *Tilly in Kensington Gardens*, 1988. Etching.



9 *Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary*, 1989. Etching, 52 x 38 cm.



10 *Andromeda*, 1990.
Etching and aquatint, 29.5 x 24.5 cm.



11 (above left) *Girl sitting on a Dog*, 1987.
Etching, 25 x 25.1 cm.

12 (left) *Girl with a Little Man and Dog*, 1987.
Etching, 25 x 25 cm.

13 (above) *Old Mother Goose*, 1989. Etching and aquatint,
52 x 38 cm.

14 (opposite) *Polly Put the Kettle On*, 1989.
Etching and aquatint, 52 x 38 cm.



Chapter 1

ONCE UPON A TIME



To paint, Paula Rego must have a story; and her favourite way of telling a story is to paint. Storytelling is indeed a primal gift, integral to primal states of life – to the old world before books, to oral, non-literate societies today, and therefore to childhood forever.

Portugal during Paula's childhood was still in touch with this immemorial world; still rural enough to have a living folklore. To a large degree this lack of change had been artificially maintained and at some cost. António de Oliveira Salazar had become Prime Minister in 1932 and ruled as the self-appointed leader through four decades. His dictatorial hold on power demonstrates his political skill, a skill which stood his countrymen in good stead when he saved Portugal from involvement in the Spanish Civil War and preserved its neutrality throughout the Second World War. But there was a price to pay in economic and cultural terms for his puritanical rule. In matters of social and technological improvement the majority of the population benefited very little. Bestial poverty was still a way of life for many, even in the 1960s. Paula herself remembers visiting a remote village in the north of the country on a New Year holiday in 1966 and seeing men walking barefoot in the snow.¹ Religious prohibitions, class stratifications, sexual discrimination, bourgeois observances lay undisturbed. Television was almost unknown; Americanization would not begin until the 1960s. But this also meant that the rude variety of a more rustic way of life survived much longer than in other non-communist European countries, with the possible exception of Ireland.

Maria Paula Figueiroa Rego was born on 26 January 1935, the only child of José Fernandes and Maria de S. José Avanti Quaresma Paiva Figueiroa Rego. José Rego was an electronics engineer, who later had his own factory in Lisbon making precision instruments. He was an Anglophile, in marked contrast to the Government's sympathy with Hitler's Germany; while Maria, his wife, was brought up within Portugal's Francophile tradition. In 1936, the year after Paula was born, her parents moved to England for a year and a half, during which her father completed his training at the Marconi works in Chelmsford, Essex. Paula was left behind under the shared guardianship of her grandparents and an old aunt of her mother, her time divided between them in their respective Lisbon apartments week by alternate week. Her grandparents doted on her and were convivial company. They lived in

15 Previous page: Paula aged three.

16 Paula aged eighteen months.

