

Contributions to an aesthetic of intimacy in Paula Rego

Eroticism and Carnality

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This essay seeks to analyze the pictorial work of Paula Rego on the basis of two central concepts, namely eroticism and carnality, and thereby establish what one calls an aesthetic of intimacy. With this hermeneutical and critical task in mind, the essay does not fail to define the concept of intimacy, contrary to the frequent analyzes of essayists who use it without defining it and giving it its meaning as acquired, and performing the same task for the central concepts, amplifying their meaning and framing them in the general architecture of this essay.

1. Introduction with a short but necessary definition of intimacy. Some remarks on theories of art and on Heidegger's world

Paula Rego's painting, rather than a simple presentation of figures and forms, full of eroticism and sensuality, introduces us into the heart of intimacy – a primordial intimacy if one may say so – that occurs in the immediate recognition of the ontological *corpus*-graphy of the characters who live pictorially in the painter's stories. So, the narrative that is seen in the pictures is not a mere exposition of characters, situated in any scenario, but rather a clear deviation to the center of the dialectic of the real that secretly fills the mind of the beholder. It is, therefore, a painting full of tension and poetry, but at the same time, at one time, the materialization of a relational structure that exists and is presented in the phenomenon of intimacy. This means that the intimacy that is seen



Fig. 1. The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child before Three Witnesses (1926), Max Ernst.
Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany

in the paintings of Paula Rego dwells on a horizon where the visible is composed over the unspeakable and the invisible is aligned as a theme, thus exposing the human being in an antonymic transparency, in his unrepeatable miracle of originality and individuality, as it happen in life. With such an interpretation, it will not be surprising that Paula Rego's painting often refers to situations of destabilization of intimacy such as it is surprising that one of the artist's favorite works (fig.1) is *The Virgin spanking the Christ Child before Three Witnesses* (1926) by Max Ernst, because in there are manifested the elements that will come to characterize Paula Rego's painting, such as rupture, subversion, ambivalence, complicity, just to mention a few.¹

1. «Paula Rego's favorite painting is *The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child in front of Three Witnesses*, 1926, by Max Ernst. Picture of a large woman with a halo sitting on a walled patio, her arm raised in fury over the tail of her naked son, expressly without a halo, the picture was made in the context of surrealist anticlericalism and within the framework of an earlier painting, *The Madonna of the Long Neck* of the Mannerist Parmigianino. [...] Paula Rego likes this image for many reasons. In sympathy with the central aspiration of Surrealism of wanting to understand and communicate the most intimate dreams and desires, and impressed by its determination to eliminate all barriers and break all taboos in this process, she is familiarized with the pictorial techniques and conceptual strategies of the movement». Fiona Bradley, *Paula Rego*

With this philosophical and poetic background (if one do not want to use the word strategy) , one could see in Paula Rego a kind of re-process (reuse) of the strategy used by Max Ernst when he disorganized and parodies the image of *The Madonna of the Long Neck* of the Mannerist Parmigianino, including even some remaining surrealism.² For this reason, perhaps, many of the narratives of Paula Rego's painting show life in its unpredictable contradiction between dreaming (awaked) and reality, assuming the body a primacy – not only for its spatiality, disposition or sensuality – an affirmation of existence in the ontological tissue of the world. Like Alexandre Melo states

the fundamental energy of Paula Rego lies perhaps in her ability to destabilize the evidence and peace of images, to disrupt the conveniences of representation. [...] The situations, plastic and or narrative, of Paula Rego's painting are always insinuations of secrets, intelligent provocations and bets on a game of passions. Also, therefore, decidedly alive.³

Thus, in this conceptual framework, something profoundly abysmal is played out: the existence of a latent erotic-metaphysical tension, mediated by dialectic between the affect and being affected that occurs in a violent limbo claiming for identities. Such tension puts the body in struggle with itself, in struggle with others, in search of an affirmation of identity, in search of a *corpus*-graphic that evokes carnality. One can only understand such a concept kipping in mind the importance of the framework of an aesthetic of intimacy. In fact, the elucidation of the concept of intimacy need to be done not only to enrich the structure of critical analysis but to provide a way of getting into the heart or essence of Paula Rego's painting.

According to this need one can keep in mind intimacy as a state of being intimate with someone or something. but because intimacy requires an even more precise definition, it must be added that it is characterized as a potential affective relationship (whatever the type involved). In this sense, art should be recognizable by intimacy which everyone has with (the world of) art. Let us explain better this concept.

(Lisboa: Quetzal, n.d.), p. 6.

2. Max Ernst's picture works so well because it's part of a well-known situation. As observers, we understand what he did to the virgin and boy because we know what he should have done with them. Although he claims the invention of the boy inverted and punished as his own, ostensibly signing the name inside the missing halo, Max Ernst attributes the real blasphemy of the picture to the mind of the observer and not to himself. In recognizing the prevaricating mother as the Holy Virgin, it is the observer who commits the cardinal sin». *Ibid.*, 6.

3. Alexandre Melo, *Paula Rego*, (Porto: Galeria Nasoni, 1992), p. 12.

Since ever trying to answer the question ‘what is art?’, different theories that have been formulated throughout History and the Philosophy of Art have not always properly appreciated the fundamental issue that connects creator, creation and spectator, which is given in the horizon of intimacy that connects them.

The mystical or religious dimensions that opened with the first traces are proof of this intimacy of the human being with the known universe. However, the different criticisms that have been drawn to the theories of art, especially the essentialist theories of art and psychologists (for instance, one can remember the Jerome Stolnitz’s psychologism as a criticism of Clive Bell’s essentialism), have disregarded the merit of a true demand that seeks the spirit of art and its maker. In fact, it seems that they base their strategy on an escape from the question of art or reformulate it, thereby avoiding the obligation to fulfill this greater objective.⁴ Although it is not intended here to retake any form of subjectivism or essentialism of art, the manifestation of intimacy as the founding structure of the *Homo Intimus* suggests the inevitability of a near dimension since art is a human creation.⁵ One are not defending here any of these theories (essentialism or psychologism) neither a theory such one as from Beardsley about the aesthetics interest or the art-making intention of the artist or even in more radical terms such as Morris Weitz had done about the impossibility of defining art,⁶ but showing the conditions in which art can become understandable and therefore getting close to a possible definition, by posing intimacy as a necessary postulate for that task.

In the contemporary horizon of the construction of an science of

4. Carmo D’Orey refers the dialogue established in the first half of the twentieth century on the definition of art: «another line of contestation of essentialist definitions had already been imposed in the analytical milieu in the 1950s. Some authors had taken the most radical skeptical position on the problem. It was a turning point in aesthetic theory. For the first time a meta-aesthetic problem is posed. The question “What is art?” has been replaced by this other: “the question What is art? does it makes sense?”. And the answer was no. The central thesis of these authors is that art cannot be defined. Not because of a difficulty of facts, because of its complexity, as previously thought, but because of a logical impossibility that has to do with the rules of application of “work of art” and which can be verified by analyzing these rules. What they reveal, when scrutinized, is that there is no property that is common to all objects to which we apply the expression “work of art”». Carmo D’Orey, *O Que é a Arte? A Perspectiva Analítica* (Lisboa: Dinalivro, 2007), 17.

5. Note: the term *Homo Intimus* was coined by us in the doctoral thesis that is in the library of the University of Minho and in the National Library of Portugal.

6. See: Monroe C. Beardsley, “On the Generality of Critical Reasons”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, 59:18 (1962), pp. 477-486; Beardsley, Monroe. *The Aesthetic Point of View*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982; Morris Weitz, “The role of theorie in Aesthetics”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 15: 1 (1956), pp. 27-35.

intimacy arts could be characterized (at least in this special context) of profane arts, they play a double role: on the one hand, they seem to want to ground the world again, dissociating the mythical unity that the image of the world possessed;⁷ on the other hand, they appear as a kind of critical presentation that, however, is driven by the blindness of an always new age or aesthetic pseudo-vanguard that generates in itself and for itself a kind of discursive autism that does not seem to lead to anywhere. However, the strange paradox of an endless chatter is often generated, which in no way contributes to the clarification of either to the art produced or to the criticism or philosophy of art.

Modern approaches to contemporary art, such as techno-art, bioart, the digital arts, and the ever-growing publication of works that warn of the dangers of this dehumanization in art, are a clear sign of the uneasiness of the days ahead. The selection of private, intimate or socially marginal themes expresses precisely the public exposure of life at once intimate and empty, which is only legitimized by mass media, cultural immediacy and individualism.⁸ So, how can be understood intimacy in this context or putting in other words, how can intimacy help to define art or aesthetic, and then, how can help specifically to understand the art-works of Paula Rego?

If one recover Heidegger, who proposes to a certain extent a look at the work of art (although the ambiguity of his position is evident), as opening of worlds, then it may be possible to foresee how intimacy is represented. Putting in another way, if the work of art opens and founds a world, as Heidegger says in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, then surely intimacy perspective will be found, once it is always a relational element between man and the world he creates. This is what is said when the work of art (for instance the poem), by the foundational (establishment) of a “world”, allows us to return to the origin of the truth of being, that is, allows us to expose the truth of the intimacy that is hidden in Man, or, if one prefers, allows to descry the project that is projected into the future of humanity.⁹ This is why the German philosopher says that the work of art is one of the ways, if not The way,

7. Cf. Ernesto Grassi, *Arte e Mito*, (Lisboa: Livros do Brasil, n.d.), 141 e segs.

8. Cf. Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Ephemeral Era*.

9. «On the contrary, the truth is projected in the work for those who, in the future, will safeguard it, that is, for a historical humanity. What is thus launched is never arbitrarily required. The truly poetic project is the opening of what the being-there, as historical, is already launched. This is the land, and for a historic people, its land, the fund that closes on itself, on which it rests, with all that, even for itself hidden, already is. But it is his world that, from the relation of being-there, reigns as the unveiling of being. That is why everything that was given to man must, in the project, bring to light the fund that closes, expressly placed in it». Martin Heidegger, *A Origem da Obra de Arte*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2002), 80-81.

how truths happens.¹⁰ It is not a question of saying that the concept of “world” means in any way the crystallization of a moment in the historical life of *Dasein* as a testimony of an epoch and so we must follow Vattimo’s suggestion when he says:

It is true that reaching the work always implies to put in relation to a world. However, as this cannot be the historical world that originated in the work of art (...) we must admit that the work of art contains its own world, a world that founds and establishes itself, so that in order to be understood it does not need to be historically placed in a world environment.¹¹

This truth that happens through the work is, however, a hard struggle as Heidegger says, a necessary battle between the clearing and concealment,¹² between world and earth,¹³ and thus the truth that happens in the work of art realizes the unity between the two, or as Marlene Zarader points out, «Letting the world be a world, and the earth being earth, is therefore to keep them in their living confrontation, which is the only one to allow them to be each for themselves and to be for each other. Instigator of the combat of the world and the earth, the work is the space of realization of its unity».¹⁴

Note how this combat for the unlearning of “truth” is present in the meditation of the work of art and at the same time in the problem of technique, and how the Heideggerian concepts intersect in the same order of ideas. Effective combat is always between φύσις (earth) and πράξις around the construction of a world that the *Dasein* wants to erect as reality, that is, from its original relationship of being-there, being-with and being already launched in the world.

The shoes on the board and the poem are thus not only an opening to the being but the establishment of the being of these beings into a world. And so the poetic discourse appears as “Sagan” (show) and saga of being. Art is, according to Heidegger, a continuous sprouting of truth as a show or exhibition of being of entities, that is, it shows the truth of the being in the work.¹⁵ What most of the readers of Heidegger did not see in his book (*The origin of the work of art*) was one subtle con-

10. *Ibid.*, 56.

11. Gianni Vattimo, *Introdução a Heidegger*, trad. João Gama (Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, 1998), 125.

12. *Ibid.*, 47.

13. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

14. Marlène Zarader, *Heidegger e as Palavras da Origem*, trad. João Duarte (Lisboa: Instituto Piaget, n.d.), 252.

15. Martin Heidegger, *A Origem da Obra de Arte*, (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2002), 76-77.

ception about the properties of this truth; it is no longer the truth provided by the creator, the artist, neither the truth presented by the work of art but instead the truth given to the world where artist and beholder live and give meanings to things, including art objects. One may say that art in his essence is (poetic) intimacy since it collides throughout the meetings of intimacies in the world (from the creator, through the work of art and the beholder). Art can only exist with intimacy in the horizon where entangled minds see objects as art.

2. What you get is not (exactly) what you see or Paula Rego reinventing art and aesthetics through intimacy

It is not known whether Paula Rego will have read Heidegger, but one can guess the dialogue between them, to the extent that through this exhibition an ontological access to the truth of the entities is given. According to this framework of understanding, the exhibition given in the work of art will enable the ontological reflection that is contained in the intimacy. In Paula Rego's painting one can find a truth dialogue between figures and forms that are in erotic tension on his owns and with the world around them. In this perspective the observer goes deeply into the heart of that primordial intimacy that relies in each one of us, identifying the essence of being in the world with the essence of being part of the truth presented by the work of art. One can remember the french phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty: such is the comparison of the "body" with the work of art: in both the expression and the expressed, the senses of one and the other are only accessible from themselves, that is, they are only perceived in the intentional structure of living significations, in the "chiasma" of the world.¹⁶

Paula Rego's painting plays on the edge of the perception of intimacy, meaning by this that the painter knows, senses, feels that intimacy is a structuring theme of human nature. Thus, eroticism is never just eroticism, that is, it is never fantasy but reality, reality established by *Homo Intimus* in the world.

This means that the intimacy offered, seen and let it be seen in the painting of Paula Rego, is of the order of an in-visible that populate reality; but also something that is given (donation) in a sort of dialectic game between what is shown and what is in the mind of the beholder. Note that Paula Rego is one of these nonconformist artists who shows the human being in his absolute transparency, in his unrepeatable miracle of originality and individuality, but also is one the artist that wants

16. Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 176.



Fig. 2 Girl with a White Dog (1952), Lucian Freud. Tate Modern, London, UK



Fig. 3. Zoologia (1928), Cagnaccio di San Pietro

to create a rupture.

Something is played in Paula Rego's painting that is mostly abysmal: a latent metaphysical tension, a dialectic of disjointed affections, a continual dilemma, a violent limbo and a claim to identity. The characters bodies seem to be struggling all the time, with his own presence, with his own minds: it is the body struggling with itself, struggling with others, seeking an affirmation, seeking the affirmation of its own intimacy, in the search for a designation for itself, for its space, for its time, for its place, in the background for its ex-position, that is, for the exposition of its position in the world in this dialectic between inner self and exterior one (intimate and extimo).

One can even say that the figures found in his paintings seem to stop the duel between being or thinking to be, between living in the fullness of ecstasy or surviving in surrender to (Kantian) morality, be-



Fig. 4. Guitar lesson (1934), Balthus



Fig. 5. Nude with Cat (1949), Balthus, NationalGallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia

tween the diagnosis of feeling and the symptom of the already felt, between love and fear of feeling,¹⁷ thus configuring the intimacy of the being that is in the world. Paula Rego's painting is this expression of the metaphysical tension in which the human being lives in his intricate intimacy.

17. We can see how Kristeva makes us think about this: «corps soufflé, présent dans tous ses membres par une absence délicieuse – voix tremblante, gorge sèche, œil flou de lueur, peau rosée ou moite, cœur palpitant... Les symptômes de l'amour seraient les symptômes de la peur ?» Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), 13.

In this dialogue, it should be noted that in spite of the numerous works that have arisen on the human body, on naked, on female bodies, as for example the feminine models of Philip Pearlstein, despite their extreme realism, do not lead to disturbing thinking of a manifest tension of intimacy. Already with the paintings of Paula Rego the observer is entangled in simultaneity of latent provocations in relation to the human condition. It would seem, therefore, that the painter approaches more of a Lucien Freud, for example like in *Girl with a White Dog* (fig. 2) or of a Cagnaccio di San Pietro in the work *Zoologia* (fig. 3).

However, the approach that seems undeniable is given with Balthus in which one can review many of the artist's pictorial approaches. There is in Balthus something provocatively intimate, one seeing the works as representations of innocence, and for that reason he meant that one could "be realistic from the unreal and figurative to the invisible". Some examples of this intimacy that lie beneath the cloak of a naiveté or a subtle latent provocation that appeals to some sort of intimacy can be seen in Balthus' works such as in *Guitar Lesson* (fig. 4), or *Nude with Cat* (fig. 5).

It must be said that in Paula Rego's paintings there is no exhibition (reading as an illustration or show) of an eroticized or even declared sexuality, as can be seen portrayed in the works of Pierre Subleyras (1699-1749), for example in the work *A Scene of an Artist Painting a*



Fig. 6. The Family (1988), Paula Rego

Seal of Chastity on his Wife, from a Tale by Jean de la Fontaine, 1732 (Hermitage Museum). Nor is it what would be considered an erotic art, as in Eric Fischl's *Bad Boy* (1981), in which a boy is observing a woman in the room who seems to masturbate in bed under the interrupted light of the blinds. For Paula Rego, the human body is assumed as pictorial matter and form, but it is mainly from the work that positions the body spatially that it will read much of the language of intimacy. It should be noted that intimacy in the context of Paula Rego's painting means above all the externalization of latent (a non declared) sexuality or the eroticism of bodies (living in intimacy). The multiple meanings we extract and the perspectives we create are undoubtedly derived from the first and material language that the human body manifests in its giving itself to see and be seen, and in Paula Rego's work this is elevated to the category of essential condition for the transmission of the in-visible, real or imagined, which bodies manifest.¹⁸ As Jean-Luc

18. «Dans *Caritas*, c'est le corps maternel qui apporte confortait nourriture par la succion et le toucher; [...] la position du corps est capitale dans les significations qu'il transmet, une recherche qui a permis d'aboutir aux dessins de la *Femme-chien* et aux peintures et dessins récents». Memory Holloway e Ruth Rosengarten, *Secrets dévoilés – Dessins et gravures de Paula Rego* (Paris: Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, 1999), 9.



Fig. 7. Celestina's House (2000-2001), Paula Rego

Nancy says,

to see bodies is not to unveil a mystery, it is to see what is offered in the sight, the image, the myriad images that is the body, the naked image, exposing the nakedness the areallity. (...) The sight of bodies does not penetrate anything invisible: it is an accomplice of the visible, the ostension and the extension that the visible is. Complicity, consent: he who sees appears with what he sees.¹⁹

The embodied subject that is involved with the world is so to the extent that he lives precisely through the structure of intimacy. In Paula Rego's painting, however, the subject seems to give his structure of intimacy as a point of contact with the observers; it is as if, seeing his eroticized intimacy, it would allow seeing all of the other ones.

Following a phrase well known in Merleau-Ponty's *The Eye and the Spirit*, the body, like things, seems to shuffle the distinction between subject and object. It is recalled that in this work the approach to the reflexivity of the body, the approach to the sensible is made by comparison with the painting, so the emphasis is given and is even put in the way we look, in the eye, in a few words, in the enigmas of the vision. In fact, there is a kind of "chiasma" in painting as in reality that

19. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Lisboa : Edições Vega, 2000), p. 46.



Fig. 8. The Betrothal: Lessons: The Shipwreck, after 'Marriage a la Mode' by Hogarth, 1999, Tate, London, UK



Fig. 9. Dog-Woman (1994), Paula Rego

fulfills minds in intimacy.

The theme of intimacy is thus dignified in its different formulations, whether in exploration, subjugation, submission of the horizons associated with it (all the possible themes connected with human nature), but it is apparently even broader, if not more directly invoked in works where she can destabilized any kind of order or normality that should exist like for example, *The Family* (fig. 6) or *Celestina's House* (fig. 7).

Intimacy is here no longer in a latency ready to reveal itself, but in an exposition (albeit somewhat disguised), which demands of the observer the role of judge, and therefore a certain brutality, rudeness of reality, one may even say that is given as appetizer, stimulating the interplay of inter-subjective intimacies.

It is the lives that, not being there, intersect with the horizons that even not being presented in the background, merge, that images that did not happen are foreshadowed. It should be noted however that already in the series *Untitled* of 1998 and 1999, many of the elements of mixture that came from the series *Dog-Woman* (1994), as the sensuality and the provocation, the aggressiveness and the lack, the urgency of the escape and the experience of the moment, etc., are already shown. That is why Fiona Bradley is referring to the *Invited to Marriage*:

the strangeness of her pose and treatment at the paint level are in keeping with the precariousness of her situation and possibly the blurring of her vision - we first imagine that she is drunk, full of desire to go to the

bathroom, unable to stop herself from urinating in the washbasin for an elegant party. However, why would she unbutton the blouse? Perhaps its proximity to the lavatory has more to do with a desperate attempt to regain its decency and dignity and what we are seeing is the repetition or in fact the long-delayed result of the betrothal violation scene.²⁰

This is certainly a possible interpretation among others; in this work can be guessed the effective realization of an overflowing coquettish, like it also happens in *The Betrothal*, (fig. 8) consummated in a dangerous erotic game that is pure animal manifestation.

We can therefore say that Paula Rego's art is an art of intimacy that goes beyond mere reality. Look at Georg Simmel's words: «what separates surely the intimate (we might say transcendental) from the coquettishness of the intimate being of art, is that art stands out beyond reality and is released by a glance that strays from it absolutely; Coquetry, surely, does nothing but play with reality, but plays with it».²¹

The engagement between what is seen and what could be seen creates the expectation that only can be revealed with intimacy. The relational structure of intimacy can expose what is on our own minds, and therefore, to reveal possibilities of the world in which Paula Rego live (as we also live). There is no mystery, it cannot exist any mystery to minds that understand the meaning and the importance of intimacy (whether is with the world, with others or with oneself).

The *Woman-Dog* series, in particular, there is a combination of absolutely disturbing elements that slip into a violent, animalistic eroticism, as Bataille suggests.²² In the world of eroticism, things gain different meanings and tonalities, and the announced sexuality assumes the character of transgression, of rupture, of unconcern.

There is, in this series by Paula Rego, a latent sexuality that wants to be seen as a profound transgression of social rules, in the absolute and capricious dissipation of taboos, at the limit of almost public obscenity. This is probably the series where the meaning of carnality comes to the top: here the flesh becomes *topoi* of the aesthetics of intimacy. the flesh is not only biological matter, organic, it is not only a figure occupying space and making itself exposed but instead an ero-

20. Fiona Bradley, *op. cit.*, 104.

21. Georg Simmel, *Filosofia do Amor*, trad. Eduardo Brandão (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001), p. 104.

22. Cf. Georges Bataille, *O Erotismo*, (Lisboa: Antígona, 1988). See, for example, the novel of Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, as this eroticism assumes full vitality in the continuous transgression of times and spaces, of any kind of rules and norms of morality or ethic, creating sado-masochistic atmospheres, going in favor of Sade's theories.

ticized body that appeals to the sense of intimate vision provided by intimacy. The carnality that figures expose is in consonance with the real world of people, a world where exists violence, animalistic desire, aggression, provocation; the same world where fetishism exist (of all sorts) because of these appeal of carnality, that is because in the intimacy of the mind the fetishist sees nothing but the erotic revelation of the bodies and no obscenity. Eroticism in its relation to obscenity, as Bataille reminds us, is a desecration, a shattering, an aggressive departure from daily life, a reduction of the human to the animal, or, as Alberoni says, interpreting Bataille in this matter, there is a shredding «of the socialized individual, dissolving his consciousness, and [that] releases the flesh and its blind convulsion. Whoever is taken by the erotic frenzy is no longer human, becoming, in the manner of beasts, unbridled blind».²³

3. In conclusion: the aesthetic of intimacy or the need of eroticism experience in art

One may say that there is an immanent eroticism or resident provocation of an almost obscenity that the viewer's eyes discover in the works of Paula Rego that live in the collective imagination. In some works of the artist there is an eroticism that touches a mystical horizon, a horizon where the rational of intelligence and the animalism of instincts could easily be supplemented.

The Woman-Dog series (also here) is a good example of this incursion in a mysterious horizon where the intimacy is given by the multiple and possible interpretations that it arouses of that animalistic eroticism that still resides in the confines of the human brain. It is as if the primary instincts were saying: intimacy is also latent violence, intimacy is also the animal inside me. Ultimately, that is why intimacy is a struggle with yourself and with the world we create.

In Paula Rego's painting much of what is implicit in the dimensions of the human world is played. From animalistic desire to unfathomable solitude, from incisive vanity to seeking affections, her painting exposes the existence of the universe of intimacy in its different configurations. In this sense it can be said that it is also a painting that awakens a magical world, a world that is as if were latent and that populate the collective imagination, without ever losing in the background to the bond of reality, sometimes transiting, sometimes awakening, sometimes enticing a vision of a human order that extends beyond simple

23. Francesco Alberoni, *Sexo e Amor* (Lisboa: Bertrand, 2006), 21.

daily living, and which is probably only likely to be compared to that achieved by faith.²⁴

The artist who sees and allows seeing, realizes the dream of art, the absolute altruism of human communication, the place that illuminates the way. Any kind of obscene is in the hands of the artist a revelation that reveals in his/our intimate and true nature, as Henry Miller points out, a “desire to convert”, that is,

he hurt, hit, impressed with a single sense: that of stimulating, reanimating, awakening. One thing is certain – it has nothing to do with the world of sleep. Now he walks in the light, and as if he were a mirror, he projects and reflects his intimate enlightenment over all his years.²⁵

Paula Rego’s art exposes intimacy as an eroticized experience of sexuality, but not pure and raw sexuality, an explicit sexuality, but sexuality that lies in the intimacy encounter of the subjects who fantasize and desire. It is the tensional eroticism of intimacy that dialectically lives in the mind and bodies of all and that Paula Rego gives us to see. Paula Rego knows of the need we have to see and feel eroticism in art as in life, once it can awaken us to a more graceful and vivid experience of feeling ourselves alive in harmony with others. The art produced by the painter shows the meeting place of what the human is made of: the intimacy of the mind and the intimacy of humans with the world they make.

24. Take the words of Henry Miller, for example, about the artist as a writer, but they serve the same purpose: «when [the artist] uses his extraordinary powers - and I am thinking precisely of employing obscenity in its magical terms - it inevitably taken and stuck in the flow of forces that propel him. In the first instance, he assumes himself as someone who would be able to awaken the readers, but, as a matter of fact, he himself moves to another dimension of reality, and such is this dimension that leaves forever to feel any need to bring about an enlightened awakening. The revolt experienced against the prevailing inertia that surrounds it transmutes and reconverts itself, while its vision develops tending to the acceptance and understanding of a human order and of a harmony far beyond both, of the human conception, and only likely to be attained by faith. The vision of the artist is enriched at the same time as his powers are developed, since the creation is rooted in the vision and to a single domain is forced: that of the imagination». Henry Miller, *Obscenidade e Reflexão*, trad. Pedro Alvim (Lisboa: Vega, 2004), pp. 52-53.

25. *Ibid.*, 53.

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