

International 3, Manchester  
January 2009

Essay commissioned by The International 3 to accompany *they never run, only call*  
author Angela Kingston

There is much that is strange and inimical - but compelling - in what and how Rachel Goodyear draws. The sensation I have is of pushing two magnets together, but so that they resist each other, never touching.

The scenes in her drawings are often curious and alien. Two squatting women clasping the same stick in their teeth. A seated girl toying with a jellyfish. In stark isolation on the whiteness of the paper, her characters have no context or history. But we know them, don't we? Like characters in fairy tales, also described only schematically (The Ugly Sisters, Little Red Riding Hood), they embody the compulsions we all share; competitiveness, greed, curiosity. But in the drawings it is all too abject and raw, save for the fact that they are often darkly funny.

The apparent accessibility of Goodyear's drawings is deceptive. Consider the areas in which the graphite has been densely worked, layer after layer, such that a figure's hair or clothing disappears into blackness, into a void.<sup>(i)</sup> Yet we perceive, nevertheless, the volumes and textures of hair and cloth, reading in what we expect to find. And by contrast, a meticulously drawn hand or twig in the same drawing will be on such a miniature scale that it's impossible to really see it (at least with the naked eye). There's a teasing kind of seeing-and-yet-not-seeing in the work.

In this vein, 'Cave that Coughed' involves thickly rendered graphite to suggest a void or chasm, and minutely intricate pencil-work. Goodyear has taken this first way of drawing to its logical extent - by depicting, literally, a cave. Just inside the mouth of the cave, there's a marked loss of detail - a darkness that evokes mysterious depths.

The analyst C.G. Jung famously had a dream that involved entering a cave. He wrote:

The deeper I went, the more alien and the darker the scene became. In the cave, I discovered ... the world of the primitive man within myself - a world which can scarcely be reached or illuminated by consciousness.

Jung interpreted the cave in his dream as a passage to the unconscious. Goodyear, for her part, talks about her interest in the unconscious, and particularly dream states and hypnosis, and also 'lapses in coherence' and being 'taken by surprise'.<sup>(ii)</sup>

At a particular point in the darkness of Goodyear's cave, we see a tangle of branches that's been ejected from the depths, presumably by the 'cough' of the title. And looking closely, there are tiny snakes coiled around the branches, next to some small birds. This combination of creatures seems odd - for surely birds and snakes could not co-exist, at least not for long? Yet Goodyear thinks of her cave creatures as having incubated there for many generations; their eyes are albino pink. How will the snakes and birds that have adapted so curiously survive? (There's one falling, already). And what about the hybrid sheep-wolf that's balancing precariously on the highest perch? What ravishment does this creature represent? What does this sheep-wolf portend?

Fortunately for us (and unconnected to his own cave dream), Jung continued with this idea:

The primitive psyche of man borders on the life of the animal soul, just as the caves of prehistoric times were usually inhabited by animals before men laid claim to them.<sup>(iii)</sup>

If there are 'animal souls' within our contemporary psyche, then Goodyear's drawing conjectures a nightmarish hybrid and etiolated birds and reptiles. It's certainly a dark and enigmatic artwork.

'Cave that Coughed' serves as a model of the unconscious that rings utterly true. How its contents, hidden in the depths, slowly multiply and mutate. How what lurks there will begin to act as an irritant, and force its expulsion into consciousness. And how such manifestations of the unconscious are difficult to countenance, in the stark light of consciousness.

'Girl who Smiles at Dogs' is something of a sister piece. A woman has her back to us (in other words, we are invited to occupy her place). In front of her, four hyenas are grimacing and howling. The woman's shoulders are slightly hunched forward as if there is some kind of conspiracy between her and the creatures. I imagine she has a look of ghastly, twisted satisfaction on her face. And after a while I begin to wonder if the hyenas are emanations of her imagination, and not really 'present' at all. But wait, this could be my fantasy, and something that belongs to me alone. Suddenly, I feel implicated in this.

I am holding the magnets towards each other and I can feel the resistance. But as they grow closer, and as I embrace the ambiguities of this artist's work, the magnets slip away from my fingers, and flip right around. And connect.

Angela Kingston, January 2009

notes:

- (i) This effect seems to be lost in photographs of the work. Perhaps it's because the sheen of the graphite disappears? So it's essential to see the actual drawings.
- (ii) From a conversation with the artist, January 2009.
- (iii) C.G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, 1961 (Fontana Press, London, 1995, p.184, trans. Richard and Clara Winston)