

**IMAGES OF THE SELF:
A STUDY OF FLORBELA ESPANCA**

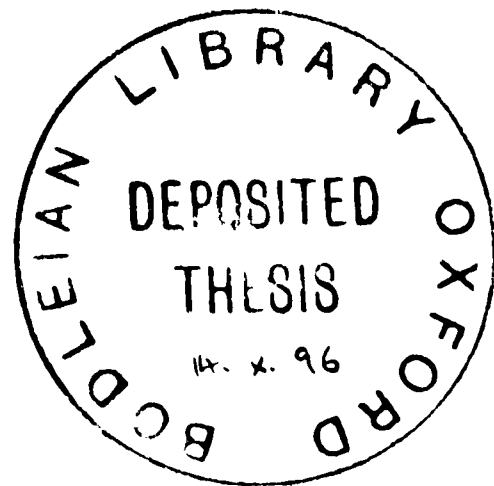
CLÁUDIA PAZOS ALONSO

D.PHIL. IN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN LANGUAGES (PORTUGUESE)

MAGDALEN COLLEGE

OXFORD

HILARY TERM 1994 ^{TT}



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The first part of the study provides the necessary background to understand the poet's early career. Chapter 1 examines the emergence of women's poetry in Portugal at the turn of the century, showing how it provided a favourable context for her aspirations to become a writer. Chapter 2 focuses on Florbela Espanca's poetic beginnings and her assimilation and reworking of male influences, while drawing attention to the problems facing a woman writer trying to emulate male authors.

The central part of the study is divided into three chapters. They deal in turn with each of her collections, *Livro de Mágoas* (1919), *Livro de Soror Saudade* (1923) and her most famous work, *Charneca em Flor* (1931, posthumous). The chronological order aims to throw into relief the evolution in her poetry. Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of the poet's treatment of her problematic identity as a woman and as a writer, and of love as a means to self-assertion, through which traditional sexual stereotypes can be subverted.

The final part of the thesis looks at the transformations which her image has undergone since her death. It shows how initially Florbela Espanca was viewed as a neglected romantic artist, forever seeking something more. It analyses how it then took a lengthy argument over the erection of her bust in Évora to reinforce the poet's place in the literary canon and to ensure that her stock image became that of a representative woman writer.

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The aim of this thesis is to explore the images of the self constructed by Florbela Espanca in her poetry, viewing the complexities of her work in the light of her difficult position as a woman writing in the early twentieth century and showing how this work challenges conventional ideas of womanhood.

The poetry of Florbela Espanca (1894-1930) is widely read, constantly included in literary anthologies and reprinted at regular intervals. But more than sixty years after her death there is still not, to the best of my knowledge, a single full length textual analysis of her poetry, let alone her prose writings. Indeed, with a few exceptions (amongst others Jorge de Sena's lecture and José Régio's preface¹), until quite recently much of what had been written about Florbela was biographical in orientation or else had more to do with taking sides for or against her in a political debate about art and (im)morality than with real scholarship.

When this thesis was first begun, viewing Florbela's problematic position as a woman writer as the underlying force shaping her poetry seemed to be a novel slant to adopt. It subsequently became apparent that, in Brazil, Professor Maria Lúcia Dal Farra had already recognized in her articles about Florbela that the problem of female identity was at the heart of her poetry (see Bibliography). Since then, thanks to the influence of the growing international interest in women's studies a few more articles, coming mainly from the United States and Brazil, have started to analyse the complexities of Florbela's poetry

¹Jorge de Sena, 'Florbela Espanca', *Da Poesia Portuguesa*, (Lisbon: Ática, [n.d.]), pp.115-143 and José Régio, 'Florbela' in Florbela Espanca, *Sonetos Completos*, 8th edition, (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1950), pp.7-27.

and short stories in this light (see articles by Anna Klobucka, Renata Soares Junqueira and Billie Maciumas in Bibliography). Such a revisionist approach had been lacking and these contributions constitute an invaluable departure-point for a more in-depth study. While much work still remains to be done, this thesis hopes to make a contribution by exploring in rather more detail than has previously been done, three main areas: firstly, some of the influences that shaped Florbela's early work; secondly, the gradual transformations in Florbela's perception of her own problematic identity and of the importance of love as a means to self-assertion, as illustrated in her three main collections (*Livro de Mágoas*, *Livro de Soror Saudade* and *Charneca em Flor*); thirdly, the changes Florbela's image has undergone in the last sixty years.

The stock image of this poet in standard histories of Portuguese literature is that of a precursor of twentieth century women writers but little is usually said about the social, historical and literary background in which she was writing. When one examines that context in greater detail, however, it becomes apparent that one of the distinguishing features of the period, although one to which relatively little importance has been attached up to now, is in fact the unprecedented success achieved by women's poetry. Indeed, it makes sense to recognize that an outstanding female poet like Florbela Espanca could not spring out of nowhere, even if her achievements distance her from her female contemporaries. Therefore Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the constraints facing women writers, examining first the situation of women writers in the nineteenth century, then describing the explosion of women poets in the first quarter of the twentieth century and some of the reactions their work elicited, and finally discussing representative examples of the female poetry of the period, in particular the poetry of the neglected poet Judite Teixeira with whose poetry Florbela's own poetry has points in common, a fact to which attention is drawn here for the first time.

But situating Florbela's poetry in the context of the emergence of women poets in Portugal at the turn of the century, though important, only gives part of the picture for it is clear that Florbela's poetry consciously began to shape itself against male reference-points. Some literary histories stressed the links of her poetry with symbolism, but all were

remarkably silent about any real 'literary group' she might have belonged to. This was puzzling, even if the fact that she was woman could in part account for it. But as research developed, other reasons why this should have been so slowly became apparent. Florbela Espanca spent the first twenty-two years of her life in the Alentejo, where there were few opportunities to mix with literary figures (although she made efforts to gain access to the Lisbon literary world as best as she could and this meant publishing in *Modas and Bordados*, corresponding with its assistant editor and even writing to Raul Proença, the brother of a friend of her father, asking for advice and help in her attempts to publish a collection of poetry). These formative years in the Alentejo are described in Chapter 2.

The chapter looks in more detail at Florbela's poetic beginnings, drawing attention to the problems facing a woman writer trying to emulate male authors. The first part discusses evidence of her determination to be a poet. In particular it reveals for the first time the full importance of *Modas e Bordados* as an early mentor in Florbela's poetry. The second part then attempts to trace the authors to whose writings Florbela was exposed during her formative years and the aspects of their work which she assimilated when, more than at any other time, she would naturally have been susceptible to external influences. It pays special attention to her attraction to the figure of the Romantic poet, described in her letters to Júlia Alves. One author in particular, António Nobre, helped her to crystallize her poetic vocation, and Florbela's interaction with his work is discussed in some detail. Finally, a third part considers signs of her identification with female suffering in the early poetry of *Trocando Olhares*.

If Florbela's awareness of herself as a poet began to shape itself against male reference-points in the poetry of the early exercise-book *Trocando Olhares*, mainly written in 1916-17, this continued in *Livro de Mágoas*, published in 1919. *Livro de Mágoas* was also shaped by one important event in Florbela's life: the fact that in 1917 she moved to Lisbon, enrolling at the University of Lisbon to read Law, a fact which enabled her for the first time in her life to share literary discussions with fellow poets, her colleagues at the University. Chapter 3, which focuses in more detail on *Livro de Mágoas*, discusses these and other literary influences in the collection (with the exclusion of Nobre who was dealt

with in Chapter 2). The influence of Américo Durão has been widely acknowledged, but this chapter also reveals the influence of two lesser known poets, João Boto de Carvalho and Vasco Camélier, on Florbela's poetic development. The second part of the chapter then provides an analysis of the main themes of the collection, to throw into relief the progressive emergence of two issues that feature prominently in Florbela's later works: the problematic identity of the female poet, a virtually unbearable source of suffering, and her contradictory attitudes towards love.

Chapter 4 is devoted to *Livro de Soror Saudade*. In this work, the characterization of the poet as a *female* poet becomes almost the norm, in contrast with *Livro de Mágoas*, where Florbela had felt her two identities as a woman and as a Romantic poet to be at odds with each other. At the same time, the expression of female suffering is increasingly linked to the absence of love. As a result, love becomes the main theme of the collection, a fact underlined by the presence of a substantial number of love poems which attempt to come to terms with conflicting erotic impulses, such as the tendency towards sublimation on the one hand and the tendency towards acceptance of sensuality on the other.

Chapter 5 focuses on Florbela's most outstanding collection, *Charneca em Flor*, which pursues some lines already present in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, but which can be distinguished from it by the boldness of its tone. In this collection, Florbela continues to portray herself as accursed, as in the earlier works. However, many poems now dwell on the fact that her suffering can be converted into a source of strength and greatness. Simultaneously, her poems about love become more and more daring. In this chapter, particular attention is paid to love as a means to self-assertion, through which traditional sexual stereotypes can be subverted. In particular, some poems in *Charneca em Flor* are conscious reworkings and negations of earlier images of the self. The poems 'Eu' and 'Charneca em Flor' are analysed in this light against their earlier counterparts 'Eu...' and 'Renúncia'. In *Charneca em Flor*, Florbela is at last able to free herself from society's expectations of women as demure, meek and silent, and thus becomes able not only to express her sensuality in a fashion that had never been publicly expressed before in Portugal by a woman, but also to articulate her dissatisfaction and voice her anger when a

relationship is not fulfilling. Last but not least, she is able to find meaning within her and not solely in function of relationships, leading to poems where she turns herself into a myth, a female goddess, with unique attributes.

The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 6, looks at the transformations which Florbela's image has undergone since her death. In the first instance, Florbela's recognition was triggered off by the fact that her tragic death virtually coincided with the publication of her most outstanding work, *Charneca em Flor*, causing critics to portray her as a neglected Romantic artist, an image that persists to this day. A subsequent argument over the erection of her bust in Évora, which set supporters of the conservative moral values propounded by Salazar's regime against various other groups, ensured that her stock image became that of a daring woman writer, ahead of her time. The role that this controversy over the bust played in the projection of Florbela into the literary mainstream is fully analysed here for the first time. The controversy, which raged until 1949, ensured Florbela's place in the literary canon, but if her name had by then started to feature regularly in literary histories and anthologies, still hardly any attention was devoted to the analysis of her work.

By the late sixties, Florbela was depicted as the poet of sensual love, but even this image has undergone some changes. In the last decade, leading women writers, such as Agustina Bessa-Luis and Hélia Correia, have highlighted Florbela's human limitations, depicting her as the product of a given socio-historical context. Unintentionally, this potentially increases readers' awareness of the difficulties faced by Florbela as a woman in the context of early twentieth century society. Consequently, the new image of Florbela that is emerging, which this thesis explores, is that of a woman who, while embodying in her poetry her divided sense of identity, nevertheless managed to challenge some prevailing stereotypes of femininity and put forward a strong image of women.

PREFACE

This thesis is entitled *Images of the Self: a Study of Florbela Espanca*. Its chief aim is to explore the images of the self constructed by Florbela as a writer and as a woman in her poetry, showing both how her work embodies the problems facing a woman writing in the early twentieth century and how it challenges conventional ideas of womanhood.

The first part of the study provides the necessary background to understand Florbela's¹ early career. The first chapter examines the emergence of women's poetry in Portugal at the turn of the century, showing how it provided a favourable context for her aspirations to become a writer. The second chapter focuses on Florbela's poetic beginnings and the assimilation and reworking of male influences in her early work, while drawing attention to the problems facing a woman writer trying to emulate male authors.

The central part of the study is divided into three chapters. They deal in turn with each of Florbela's collections, *Livro de Mágoas* (1919), *Livro de Soror Saudade* (1923) and her most famous work, *Charneca em Flor* (1931, posthumous). The chronological order aims to throw into relief the evolution in her poetry, making apparent the outstanding boldness and originality of the voice she progressively acquired, and which distanced her from all her female contemporaries. Each chapter provides a detailed analysis of Florbela's treatment of her problematic identity as a woman and as a writer, and of love as a means to self-assertion, through which traditional sexual stereotypes can be subverted. In order to bring out more clearly the evolution of those themes, the discussion of the poems will not follow the order in which they appear in each collection nor will every poem be discussed.

¹I shall use Florbela's Christian name throughout as equivalent to her full name. I disagree with Beth Miller's claim in *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) that the widespread Hispanic convention of referring to women writers by their first names is condescending (p.9). While it is true that, to this day, some Portuguese women writers are referred to by their Christian names, particularly Agustina [Bessa-Luis] and Sophia [de Mello Breyner Andresen], many are not. It must be noted that Christian names only seem to be used if they are unusual enough and that this also happens with male writers in similar circumstances (notably with the famous nineteenth century Camilo [Castelo Branco]).

It will be noted that *Reliquiae*, a compilation of Florbela's unpublished poetry, published posthumously by her editor Guido Battelli, will be excluded from this study, partly for reasons of space, partly because Florbela had no say in its preparation. In any case, it does not substantially alter our view of her poetry.

The final part of the thesis looks at the transformations which Florbela's image has undergone since her death. In the first instance, her recognition was triggered off by the fact that her tragic death virtually coincided with the publication of her most outstanding work, *Charneca em Flor*, causing critics to portray her as a neglected Romantic artist, an image that persists to this day. A subsequent argument over the erection of her bust in Évora, which set supporters of the conservative moral values propounded by the Salazar regime against various other groups, ensured that her stock image became that of a daring woman writer, ahead of her time. This controversy, which raged until 1949, reinforced Florbela's place in the literary canon, but if her name had by then started to feature regularly in literary histories and anthologies, still hardly any attention was devoted to the analysis of her work.

In recent years a few articles have started to give Florbela's work the attention it deserves, addressing the complexities of her poetry in the light of her problematic position as a woman writer (see for instance the articles by Maria Lúcia Dal Farra, Anna Klobucka, Renata Soares Junqueira and Billie Maciumas quoted in the bibliography). This revisionist approach is proving fruitful and I hope that the main body of this thesis will contribute to show that it enables a thoroughly new, meaningful and ultimately satisfying reading of a previously little studied author.

Quotations throughout come from Rui Guedes' edition of Florbela Espanca's *Obras Completas*, 6 vols (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1985-86). A few comments about this edition are necessary at this point. Up to 1983, Florbela's work had been published under the title *Sonetos Completos*. This was a compilation of *Livro de Mágoas*, *Livro de Soror Saudade*, *Charneca em Flor* and *Reliquiae*. In 1983, however, a number of previously unknown manuscripts (commonly referred to as Florbela's *espólio*) came to light and were purchased by the Biblioteca Nacional. The main items in this *espólio* are five exercise-books, two of

which (*Trocando Olhares* and *Primeiros Passos*) belong to Florbela's early poetic career and the remaining three (*Livro do Nosso Amor*, *Claustro das Quimeras* and *Livro de Soror Saudade*) to the period of the composition of *Livro de Soror Saudade*. In addition, the *espólio* also contains the proofs of *Livro de Soror Saudade*².

The non-academic Rui Guedes, who had purchased the *espólio* from a descendant of Florbela's second husband and subsequently sold it to the Biblioteca Nacional, undertook the project of publishing these previously unknown manuscripts and, in the process, also attempted to gather under one roof everything ever written by Florbela (poetry, short stories, her diary and her letters). The result was the six volumes which make up Florbela Espanca's *Obras Completas*. However, if Guedes' effort to make accessible isolated poems and letters which were hitherto of difficult access is praiseworthy, the way in which he published the manuscripts of Florbela's early poetry is deeply questionable³.

Furthermore, when it comes to Florbela's main collections, Guedes' editorial decisions are also problematic, not least of all because they are inconsistent. *Sonetos Completos* had reproduced the original first edition of each collection. *Obras Completas* only does so consistently in the case of *Livro de Mágoas*, where Rui Guedes sticks to the version of the first edition, as he considers that the seven poems for which there are known 'manuscript versions' (a draft or early version) may have been corrected by Florbela so that any changes could have been authorized by her.

In the case of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, Rui Guedes does not follow the first edition on the grounds that the typographical proofs were corrected by two different hands, one which is Florbela's and one which clearly is not. The version of the poems from *Livro de Soror Saudade* published in *Obras Completas* is thus that of the typographical proofs but only taking into account the changes which are in Florbela's handwriting. This is a controversial decision since, as Maria Lúcia Dal Farra points out, 'as primeiras edições,

²See the bibliography for a more complete description of the *espólio*.

³For a detailed criticism of the shortcomings of Rui Guedes' edition, see Maria Lúcia Dal Farra 'A Primeira Edição do Manuscrito de *Trocando Olhares*', *Cadernos de Teoria e Crítica Literária*, 15, (1988), 93-106.

com grahas ou sem, com interferências ou não nos originais, são de inteira competência e responsabilidade da poetisa que -- se há realmente hipótese de que, *à sua revelia*, lhe modificaram os versos -- consentiu nas alterações, visto que, sob o seu nome, *assim* os publicou. Aliás, é a essas edições que a Ecdótica chama de *princeps*⁴. It is of course of interest to know that there were changes made by a third party (which Rui Guedes identifies as the minor playwright Francisco Lage, although the reader is not informed of how such a conclusion was reached). The point is that Florbela took them on board or at least accepted to publish her work at the expense of these changes.

In the case of both *Livro de Mágoas* and *Livro de Soror Saudade*, Guedes at least makes his editorial decisions plain. But in the case of *Charneca em Flor* and *Reliquiae*, there is no longer any indication of what he is basing his edition on. Only after a careful reading of the notes placed at the end of vol.2 of *Obras Completas*, can the reader infer that Guedes only followed the first edition in the case of poems for which no manuscripts were available, choosing to publish the manuscript versions of the poems belonging the Biblioteca Pública de Évora and the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa in all other cases. It is not clear why in the case of *Livro de Mágoas*, the 'manuscript versions' of individual poems from the collection were deemed unsatisfactory for providing a basis for *Obras Completas* -- with the argument that Florbela could have altered them -- but this does not apply to the manuscript versions of poems from *Charneca em Flor* and *Reliquiae*.

While wishing to draw attention to the shortcomings of Rui Guedes' edition, I shall nevertheless be quoting from it, firstly because I shall be quoting from the other volumes of *Obras Completas* in the case of letters and early poetry and secondly because this will enable me, where this is relevant to the discussion, to draw attention to alternative versions of the same poem. It will be noted however that variants and changes, whether in Florbela's hand or Francisco Lage's (?) will only be discussed if relevant to the argument.

Last but not least, the spelling of all quotations from newspapers and poetry of the period has been modernized.

⁴Maria Lúcia Dal Farra. 'Contos. Contos e Diário. Fotobiografia', *Colóquio-Letras*, 92 (1986), 87-90, (p.88).

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CHAPTER 1

WOMEN WRITERS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The stock image of Florbela Espanca (1894-1930) in standard histories of Portuguese literature is that of a precursor of twentieth century women writers. This is the image put across in the well-known *História da Literatura Portuguesa* by Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva, for instance, and also seems to be the pattern in a number of other literary histories¹. But when one examines older works, closer in time therefore to her own day, a different pattern emerges, as it becomes clear that Florbela was initially viewed as part of a generation of female poets².

Indeed, it seems plain common sense to recognize that an outstanding female poet like Florbela Espanca could not spring out of nowhere, even if her achievements distance her from her female contemporaries. Therefore it is imperative to find out more about the social, historical and literary background in which she was writing. Chronologically, that context is the first thirty years of the twentieth century since her first two collections of poetry, *Livro de Mágoas* and *Livro de Soror Saudade* came out in 1919 and 1923 respectively, while her third collection, *Charneca em Flor* came out posthumously in 1931.

One of the distinguishing features of the period, although one to which relatively little importance has been thus far attached, is in fact the unprecedented success achieved by women's poetry. The full import of this success needs however to be placed in perspective against the difficulties facing women writers in the previous century. Thus, in order to explain the context in which Florbela was writing, this chapter will be divided in three main

¹ *História da Literatura Portuguesa* (Porto: Porto Editora, [1955]), p.873.

² See for instance João Ameal, *Panorama de la littérature portugaise* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1948), or Hernani Cidade, *Tendências do Lirismo Contemporâneo*, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Portugália, 1939). This view culminates in João Gaspar Simões' *História da Poesia Portuguesa do Século XX* (Lisbon: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1959), which devotes an entire section to women's poetry, pp.448-454.

parts: the first will examine the situation of women writers in the nineteenth century, the second will describe the explosion of women poets in the first quarter of the twentieth century, while the third will discuss representative examples of the female poetry of the period.

1.1. WOMEN WRITERS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It is usually accepted that, in the nineteenth century, Portugal did not have any 'great' woman writer, whether novelist or poet³. This contrasts strongly with the pattern of other European countries where, to quote Virginia Woolf: 'towards the end of the eighteenth century, a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write'⁴. Indeed, it is in the late eighteenth century / early nineteenth century, that middle class women began to write *en masse* in England, producing works that have become classics. And this happened not only in England, but also in France and in the United States⁵.

The asymmetry between Portugal and England or France, however, should not surprise us, for when one compares Portugal in the nineteenth century with France or England at the same time, what stands out is Portugal's backwardness in most areas of activity, a backwardness of which the leading intellectuals of the *Geração de 70* were painfully aware and which they attempted to expose to their contemporaries in a cycle of lectures, subsequently known as the *Conferências do Casino*: in 1870, Portugal was still a predominantly agricultural country, where a strict Catholicism prevailed and where eighty

³This contrasts with the fact that Portuguese male writers, like Eça de Queirós, were on a par with their European counterparts, as Isabel Allegro de Magalhães was right to point out in *O Tempo das Mulheres* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional. Casa da Moeda. 1987), p.171.

⁴ *A Room of One's Own* (London: Triad, 1977), p.71.

⁵For a detailed account of the emergence of women writers in those countries, see Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (London: The Women's Press, 1977). For a discussion of the case of neighbouring Spain, see Susan Kirkpatrick, *Las Románticas: Women Writers and Subjectivity in Spain 1835-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

percent of the population was illiterate. Given the direct correlation between a society's development and the appearance of women writers within that society, this state of affairs helps to explain why Portugal did not produce any nineteenth century female writer of the international stature of any of the French and English female writers.

Yet even in the more advanced countries where women novelists were flourishing, there seemed to be a comparative lack of women poets, as Elizabeth Barret-Browning mournfully commented in 1845: 'England has had many learned women... and yet where are the poetesses? I look everywhere for grandmothers and see none'⁶. Two American scholars, Gilbert and Gubar attempt to account for the difficulty of poetry as a genre for women with the following reasons: 'novel-writing is useful (because lucrative)'. By contrast, verse-writing not only had little economic value, but was of difficult access to women because historically it had been perceived as a holy vocation, (the poet as priest, in a culture where only men could be priests) and furthermore had presupposed knowledge of the traditional classics of Greek and Latin, a knowledge usually not accessible to women. But the most crucial obstacle that poetry as a genre presented for women was that: 'Whereas the novel allows just the self-effacing withdrawal society has traditionally fostered in women, the lyric poem is, in some sense, the utterance of a strong and assertive I'⁷.

These reasons convincingly put in perspective the difficulties facing women poets in the nineteenth century. But the apparent lack of women poets in the last century needs to be qualified further. In recent years, a few British and American feminists critics have attempted to show that the scarcity of nineteenth century women poets incorporated into the literary canon bears little relation to the quantity of female poets writing at the time. Pursuing that line of investigation, Alicia Ostriker's recent work *Stealing the Language* demonstrates that in the nineteenth century America witnessed in fact an unprecedented upsurge of women poets, but that it resulted in increased restrictions for the woman poet, arguably in an attempt to stifle the 'strong assertive "I" ' that poetry would ideally

⁶Quoted by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *Shakespeare's Sisters* (Bloomington: Yale University Press, 1979), p.XVI.

⁷S.Gilbert and S.Gubar. pp.XXI-XXII.

demand⁸. The result was a 'genteel' poetry, long since forgotten. Ostriker brings out vividly the crippling cultural limitations placed upon female poets and shows that the most lucid women at the time were themselves aware of these limitations, as revealed by comments such as the following, made around 1830 by Sarah Hale, a poetess and the editor of the *Ladies Magazine*: 'The path of poetry, like every other path in life for a woman, is exceedingly circumscribed. She may not revel in the luxuriance of fancies, images and thoughts or indulge in the license of choosing themes at will, like the lords of creation'⁹.

The proliferation of women poets in nineteenth century America described by Alicia Ostriker bears many resemblances to the explosion of women's poetry in Portugal, but given Portugal's state of backwardness in the nineteenth century, this explosion only occurred at the dawn of the twentieth century. Yet the phenomenon must have taken root in the course of the last century, with gradual changes in women's self-perception. This is what the coming section attempts to throw into relief.

1.1.1. THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

At the dawn of the nineteenth century when, according to Virginia Woolf, middle-class women began to write in England, in Portugal only aristocratic women could aspire to do so. One woman poet in particular stands out during that period: the Marquesa de Alorna, often referred to as the 'Portuguese Mme de Stael'¹⁰. Born in 1750 into aristocracy, but only dying in 1839, therefore well into the nineteenth century, her early life was unusual for, owing to political reasons -- her family had been involved in a failed coup against King José -- she was imprisoned in a convent at the early age of eight. There she

⁸ Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language* (London: The Women's Press, 1987).

⁹ Alicia Ostriker, p.30.

¹⁰ Relatively little has been written about nineteenth and early twentieth century Portuguese women writers. The following works do however give useful biographical and bibliographical details: Nuno Catarino Cardoso's anthology *Poetisas Portuguesas* (Lisbon: Livraria Científica, 1917); Teresa Leitão de Barros' historical survey *Escritoras de Portugal*, 2 vols (Lisbon: [n.pub], 1924) and A. Lopes de Oliveira's dictionary *Escritoras Brasileiras, Galegas e Portuguesas* (Braga; [n.pub.], 1983).

remained until her twenty-seventh birthday. This forced imprisonment allowed her to acquire a remarkable culture. After being freed, she married the Prussian Count of Oyenhausem, and spent several years at the Viennese court with her husband. Upon his death, she travelled to England in 1802, where she remained for a number of years (and where she met pre-romantics like Mme de Stael), returning to Portugal in 1814. Back in Lisbon, she opened a literary salon, introducing Romanticism, to which she had been exposed during her long stays abroad, and exercising great influence on younger writers.

But at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Portugal, a figure like the Marquesa de Alorna could not be but the exception that confirmed the rule. There were hardly any other women writers at the time and the few that existed also belonged to aristocratic circles. Given the situation, Virginia Woolf's striking description of early women writers in *A Room of One's Own*: 'the desire to stay veiled still possesses them' (p.56) could aptly be used to describe Portuguese women in the first half of the nineteenth century. Traditional female roles and images had been profoundly internalized: women remained in their traditional sphere of domesticity, and it was thought unseemly for a woman to write.

The single most revealing example of that metaphorical wish to remain veiled is the case of the poetess Maria Browne (1800-1861). 'Soror Dolores', as she was known, was married to an English merchant in Oporto and around 1850 held a literary salon frequented by the famous novelist Camilo then at the outset of his career. Despite the intellectual freedom which one would expect to find in a literary hostess, Maria Browne had the habit of writing by hand on her books (which were never put on the market, but offered to close friends) 'Para não passar a outra mão'¹¹.

Maria Browne's habit did not stem from excessive modesty, but rather showed her compliance with the predominant view that women should not be writers. The extent to which this view had been internalized in the first half of the nineteenth century becomes further apparent in a study by Ivone Leal which looks at the magazines published for a

¹¹Quoted by Nuno Catarino Cardoso, p.131.

specifically female audience in the course of the nineteenth century¹². The survey reveals that until the middle of the century all the contributors to these publications were men, or at least used male signatures (for theoretically they could have been women wishing to hide their sex)¹³. Ivone Leal stresses that only in 1843, for the first time, a woman dared to sign with her full name a sonnet in *O Correio das Damas* thus confirming that Maria Browne's wish of self-effacement was the norm rather than the exception at the time. Her name was Antónia Gertrudes Pusich¹⁴.

In a revised edition of her study, Ivone Leal, indirectly answering an article published in the meantime which demonstrated that there was actually a woman, Catarina de Andrada, directing a magazine in the first half of the nineteenth century¹⁵, explains that if Catarina de Andrada, who was French born and therefore perhaps less bound by Portuguese conventions, challenged tradition by directing her own magazine, *L'Abeille*, she was nevertheless concerned to retain the modest behaviour that was expected from her sex¹⁶. Indeed, a letter Andrada wrote to the *Correio*, in 1841, to protest about the fact that she had been cited as the director of *L'Abeille* in that newspaper, illustrates this concern: 'a menção que aí faz três vezes do meu nome, penaliza-me infinito [sic]; porque não pode agradar a uma senhora ver o público ocupar-se dela, e menos na ausência do seu marido'¹⁷.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, therefore, women submitted almost without any questioning to patriarchal assumptions that a woman's place was in the house,

¹²Ivone Leal, 'Os Papéis Tradicionais Femininos: Continuidade e Rupturas de Meados do Século XIX a Meados do Século XX' in *A Mulher na Sociedade Portuguesa*, 2 vols (Coimbra: Instituto de História Económica e Social, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1986), vol.2, pp.353-68.

¹³Ivone Leal, 'Os Papéis Tradicionais Femininos', p.355.

¹⁴Ivone Leal, 'Os Papéis Tradicionais Femininos', p.356.

¹⁵Rosa Esteves, 'Imprensa Periódica para Mulheres na Primeira Metade do Século XIX. Catarina de Andrada e o Jornal *L'Abeille* (1836 e 1840-1853), *Análise Social*, 92-93 (1986), 527-543.

¹⁶Ivone Leal, *Um Século de Periódicos Femininos*, Cadernos Condição Feminina, 35 (Lisbon: CIDM, 1992), p.55.

¹⁷Ivone Leal, *Um Século de Periódicos Femininos*, p.55. This is also quoted by Rosa Esteves, p.530.

and that she should not be seen or heard outside it. But in the second half of the century, gradual changes began to take place.

1.1.2. THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It is in the second half of the nineteenth century that there began to be, at first tentatively, controversy surrounding women's education and rights. This is reflected in the appearance of the first overtly 'feminist' women's magazines, rather tame by today's standards, but nevertheless explosive at the time in which they were written. The first of these is the *Assembleia Literária*, which had as a subtitle *Jornal de Instrução*. It was published between 1849 and 1851, and its director was a woman, Antónia Gertrudes Pusich, the very woman who a few years earlier had dared to publish a signed sonnet. It was followed in 1868 by *A Voz Feminina*, the first magazine to claim, in its first three issues, to be 'exclusivamente colaborado por Senhoras', although the claim was subsequently dropped¹⁸.

Simultaneously, a few female writers, both poets and prose writers, were making an appearance. The best known of these is Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho (1848-1921) who in 1867, at the age of nineteen, published her first work, a long poem in four 'cantos' entitled *Uma Primavera de Mulher*. According to Teresa Leitão de Barros, Vaz de Carvalho was *encouraged* to write and publish her first poetic productions by the well-known poet Tomás Ribeiro, while the title of her collection was provided by another important male poet, Castilho¹⁹. But Vaz de Carvalho did not confine herself to poetry: most of her subsequent writing took in fact the form of regular newspaper articles on a broad range of themes, from literary criticism to pedagogy and historiography, often published under the pseudonym Valentina de Lucena²⁰.

A second writer, Guiomar Torresão (1844-1898), was also a prominent figure during that period. As well as writing several novels, she left her imprint in journalism.

¹⁸Ivone Leal, *Um Século de Periódicos Femininos*, p.65.

¹⁹Teresa Leitão de Barros, vol.2, p.224.

²⁰Teresa Leitão de Barros, vol.2, p.224.

She made extensive use of pseudonyms (both female and male ones), a telling sign of the difficulty that women encountered in being accepted as intellectuals²¹. Torresão and Vaz de Carvalho stand out by the fact that they actively took part in the debates of their time and expressed their views publicly, as will be seen in a moment. A third woman writer, however, also stood out, although for somewhat different reasons: Ana Plácido (1831-1895), the lover and later the wife of Camilo Castelo Branco. Her best known work, *Luz Coada por Ferros* (Lisbon, 1863) is in part the account of her experiences in prison, where she spent a spell awaiting trial for having been unfaithful to her first husband, though she was later acquitted. Again she made extensive use of pseudonyms to conceal her identity²².

By contrast to these three exceptional women, most other contemporary women writers kept a much lower profile: on the whole, they circumscribed themselves to a 'genteel' type of poetry. Indeed, in Portugal during that period, women wrote poetry in preference to novels. This is no doubt because poetry was perceived to be more readily reconcilable with the private sphere than novels, as it was not destined for a large audience and was not in any way commercial. But perhaps an additional reason why women wrote poetry rather than novels is that the novel had not yet completely broken free of its associations with moral licence.

Teresa Leitão de Barros lists these poetesses in the fifth chapter of *Escritoras de Portugal*²³. Despite the misleading title given to that chapter, 'A Primeira Geração Romântica', which would suggest that Barros was dealing with the early part of the nineteenth century, it soon becomes clear to the reader that nearly all the poetesses included there belong in fact to the second half of the century, thus confirming that the slow change of mentalities, which led to the appearance of more women poets, only occurred in the second half of the century. Women's conditionings were such that it was virtually impossible for women poets to display much originality. But their timid writings were

²¹See Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, p.180.

²²For further details, see Fernanda D. Cabral, *Ana Plácido. Estudo, Cronologia, Antologia* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1991).

²³Teresa Leitão de Barros, vol. 2, pp.152-190.

sufficient to provoke derogatory reactions from male contemporaries, who were not willing to explain the conventionality of their poetry in terms of the constrictions placed upon women by society. In particular, Ramalho Ortigão, one of the members of the *Geração de 70*, wrote in September 1877 an article in *As Farpas* to discuss the discrepancy between the education middle class women were given and the role society (ie patriarchal society) expected them to fulfill, that is, running a house²⁴. Ortigão blamed women's education, which led them to the deplorable habit of writing poetry instead of devoting themselves to the proper business of women, which he defined as preparing the broth. This resulted in 'duas catástrofes: o estado da literatura feminina e o estado da cozinha nacional'. As an example of the poor quality of women's literary compositions, Ortigão pointed to a women's magazine, the *Almanaque das Mulheres*, whose director at the time was Guiomar Torresão. Ortigão concluded his article by voicing 'o grito aflitivo do país: menos odes e mais caldo'.

Such an indictment of women could not remain unanswered. In the *Diário da Manhã*, a woman writing under the pen name of 'Irmã de Caridade' argued for the right of women to be educated and defended the poetesses²⁵. In another newspaper, the director of the *Almanaque* herself, Guiomar Torresão, explained the poverty of female poetic compositions by the lack of education of which women were the victims²⁶.

Guiomar Torresão was of course right, and the education problem was perhaps the most pressing on the agenda for incipient feminism in Portugal. To contextualize the validity of Torresão's claims, a brief incursion into the question of female education in nineteenth century Portugal is necessary at this point.

²⁴*As Farpas*, 15 vols (Lisbon: Livraria Clássica Editora, 1944-46), vol.8, pp.149-166.

²⁵This article was reproduced, together with Ortigão's reply, in *As Farpas*, vol.8, pp.225-243.

²⁶This article was later included in her work *No Teatro e na Sala* (Lisbon, 1881) under the title '*As Farpas e o Almanaque das Senhoras*', pp.241-249.

1.1.3. FEMALE EDUCATION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The first primary schools for women were created in Lisbon at the very end of the eighteenth century, in 1790. In practice, they only started functioning twenty-five years later²⁷. After the liberal revolution of 1820, the Liberals attempted to encourage female education, still almost inexistent at that stage. But in 1845, after twenty five years of social and political unrest, there were still only 41 primary state schools for women: this only constituted 3,6% of the total²⁸. It is not known how many private schools (which in Portugal at the time took the form of convents) there were or indeed how many young girls learned how to read and write at home, but it is out of the question that their number could have been substantial enough to change the fact that the number of educated women was negligible. As Camilo wrote in 1858, by which time the situation was just beginning to change: 'Há cinquenta anos que as senhoras não liam romances, por uma razão cujo descobrimento me custou longas vigílias: -- não sabiam ler'²⁹. In the second half of the century, after political stabilization, figures slowly but steadily began to improve: in 1884, primary state schools had 59 393 female pupils and private schools 33 429 pupils. But still only one third of those who could read and write were women³⁰.

Of course, one must not lose sight of the fact that these numbers are about *primary* education. Turning to secondary education, the picture is even gloomier: provision for secondary schooling for women was only authorized officially in 1888 and in fact only came into effect in 1906 when the Maria Pia school officially became a 'liceu' (a secondary school)³¹. Until then, a few girls attended *boys'* secondary schools since there was no state provisions for female secondary schooling, but their number was negligible: in 1873-74, in the whole of the country, there were only 32 girls enrolled at official secondary day

²⁷In Joel Serrão, *Temas de Cultura Portuguesa*, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Horizonte, 1983), p.27.

²⁸These numbers are given by Rebelo da Silva in a report published in 1848 and are quoted by Helena Vilas-Boas e Alvim in 'Da Educação da Mulher no Portugal Oitocentista', *Revista de Ciências Históricas*, 5 (1990), 321-341, (p.323).

²⁹Quoted by Teresa Leitão de Barros, vol.2, p.171.

³⁰In Helena Vilas-Boas e Alvim, p.336.

³¹For a detailed account of the functioning of the Escola Maria Pia from 1885 until it became a 'liceu', see Cecília Barreira, *História das Nossas Avós* (Lisbon: Colibri, 1992), pp.39-45.

schools³². This scandalous number must be fairly close to the total, because private education, whether in convents or at home, was unlikely to cover secondary school subjects.

Indeed the aims of private education were far from academic. Too much study was considered irrelevant if not undesirable for women. Hence standard education for middle and upper class girls (the only ones who had access to education) was geared towards the acquisition of social skills:

At school or at home they learned a smattering of foreign languages, embroidery and especially the piano. This instrument became a status symbol. In the eighties, out of more than two hundred pupils in a girls' school only two did not play the piano. One had a heart condition and the other a father -- a leading University professor -- who saw no point in teaching music to a girl who did not like it. He was greatly blamed and very much criticized...³³

Only appropriately 'feminine' skills were thus taught to young girls.

Given the bleakness of the general picture, it is hardly surprising to find Guiomar Torresão expressing concern about the problem of female education in 1878. In fact, Torresão was not an isolated voice. Both male and female thinkers were beginning to address the question of female education often within the larger framework of women's rights. The three most important contributions by men on the subject were *A Mulher e a Vida ou a Mulher Considerada debaixo dos seus Principais Aspectos* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1872) by Joaquim Lopes Praça, a professor from the University of Coimbra; *A Mulher: sua Infância, Educação e Influência Social* (Pará: Tavares Cardoso e C^a, 1880) by Sanches de Frias and the posthumous work of D. António da Costa *A Mulher em Portugal* (Lisbon: [n.pub], 1892)³⁴.

Women's magazines, such as *A Mulher* in 1883, were increasingly publishing reports on feminist successes throughout Europe and America and addressing the question

³²In Joel Serrão, *Temas de Cultura Portuguesa*, p.58.

³³Elina Guimarães, *Portuguese Women, Past and Present*, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Comissão da Condição Feminina, 1987), p.14.

³⁴Regina Tavares da Silva, *Feminismo em Portugal na Voz de Mulheres Escritoras no Início do Século Vinte*, Cadernos Condição Feminina, 15 (Lisbon: Comissão da Condição Feminina, 1982), p.7.

of female education. Individual women too, following Torresão's pioneer example, were tackling the same burning issue. Amongst those was Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho who in 1886 published her *Cartas a Luísa* in which she defended the regeneration of the female sex through education³⁵.

But in the same way as women's poetry had attracted sarcasm from Ortigão, Vaz de Carvalho's book provoked a strong reaction from another of the leading male intellectuals of the *Geração de 70*, Oliveira Martins. In an article devoted to *Cartas a Luísa*, Oliveira Martins wrote that since women were 'doentes', they needed doctors:

[Dantes] Deus era o médico da mulher: hoje o seu médico e o tutor dessa pupila eterna é o homem: o pai, o marido, o filho. Ai da mulher que se não submeter, dócil e amavelmente, a cada um destes *médicos* nos períodos sucessivos da sua existência!³⁶

Such a view, though shocking to the modern reader, was common currency at the time. What is perhaps more shocking is that it could be upheld in all earnestness by a supposedly enlightened man.

Oliveira Martins' convictions about the intellectual inferiority of women were, however, to remain unchanged. In 1888, in an article about feminism, he commented in an apocalyptic tone 'é natural que daqui por pouco tenhamos as mulheres a pedirem voto, agora que já têm liceu'³⁷. This was a bitter reaction to the fact that the government had finally authorized the opening of secondary schools for girls in the three main Portuguese cities (Lisbon, Oporto and Coimbra). However, although the right had been granted, in practice the decree authorizing schools for girls only started to be implemented in 1906, and only in Lisbon at first, with the consequence that elsewhere some of the secondary schools for boys had to accept girls. This was certainly the case in Évora where as late as 1908-1909 Florbela started attending a boys' secondary school³⁸.

³⁵Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho, *Cartas a Luísa*, (Porto: Barros e Filha, 1886).

³⁶In Joel Serrão, *Da Situação da Mulher Portuguesa no XIX* (Lisbon: Horizonte, 1987), p.14.

³⁷In Joel Serrão, *Da Situação da Mulher em Portugal no Século XIX*, p.15.

³⁸For further details, see António Bartolomeu Gromicho's article 'Florbela Estudante Liceal', *Jornal de Évora*, 17 May 1964, pp.1-2.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, once the right for women to have secondary schools for their own sex had been established, in theory, if not in practice, an increasing number of women addressed the question of female education. Amongst the most prominent was Alice Pestana (Caiel). In an essay published in 1892, entitled *O Que Deve Ser a Instrução Secundária da Mulher*, Pestana argues for a reform in education, something continued in 1900 with a further essay, with the deceptively innocuous title *Comentários à Vida*. Another woman concerned with female education was Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcelos (a remarkable German born lady, who was to become the first female university professor in 1911). In 1902, in a series of newspaper articles on the subject of the feminist movement in Portugal, she called for the creation of more and better schools for women³⁹.

At the threshold of the twentieth century, therefore, the distance covered since the early days of the nineteenth century, when only the more liberated aristocratic women like the Marquesa de Alorna could be found writing poetry, is prodigious. By the late nineteenth century, the first women poets were tentatively appearing, even if the very fact of their existence, let alone the standard of their poetic productions, remained controversial. Furthermore, the fight for women's education was beginning to bear fruits, challenging the limitations of the roles traditionally available to women. And it is against this background of increased visibility of women and slow democratization of access to education that one must place the extraordinary explosion of women's poetry in the first quarter of the twentieth century, which the second part of this chapter will examine.

³⁹'O Movimento Feminista em Portugal', *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 18 September 1902.

1.2. WOMEN POETS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

1.2.1. THE EMERGENCE OF FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S VISIBILITY

In the early twentieth century, women's magazines became increasingly concerned to publicize feminist successes and debates in other countries. Furthermore, they were also concerned to encourage female achievements at home in all fields, and this included the production of women's poetry. This is particularly noteworthy given the opposition women poets had met with up to then.

Encouragement was given not only by publishing individual poems, but also by setting up literary competitions. In 1907, to give but one example, the magazine *Alma Feminina*, one of the most overtly feminist magazines at the time, set up a competition in an unexpected way: the magazine claimed that a reader had written in asking for help because she had composed the first two stanzas of a sonnet, but could not manage the two tercets. It matters little here whether the reader was real or fictional. The point is that other readers were invited to suggest an ending to the sonnet, and that a prize was to be attributed to the best ending⁴⁰. According to the magazine there were over forty entries, which was deemed a success, and the first three prizes were given to Alice Moderno, Domitilda de Carvalho and Branca de Gonta Colaço respectively⁴¹.

A few words about these three women will help to shed some light on the changes taking place at the turn of the century: Branca de Gonta Colaço (1880-1944), the daughter of the poet Tomás Ribeiro (the very same poet that had encouraged Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho's literary beginnings), following the footsteps of nineteenth century women with literary aspirations, held a literary salon⁴². In the first quarter of the twentieth century, this was frequented by some of the leading writers of her day. Alice Moderno and Domitilda de Carvalho, however, were pioneers of a new type of woman, the independent woman who

⁴⁰*Alma Feminina*, 27 May 1907.

⁴¹*Alma Feminina*, 3 October 1907.

⁴²For further details, see Maria Regina Tavares da Silva and Ana Vicente, *Mulheres Portuguesas* (Lisbon: CIDM, [1991]), pp.101-112.

relied on her intellectual merits alone to survive in a patriarchal society. Alice Moderno (1867-1946) lived in the Açores, where she was the first woman to attend the *liceu* in Ponta Delgada. A strong character, she was expelled from home after standing up to her father over a small financial fraud. She survived by giving lessons, and later created her own paper *A Folha*⁴³. Domitilda de Carvalho (1871-1966), one of the first women to go to University, held three degrees from the University of Coimbra, in Philosophy, in Mathematics and in Medicine. She went on to teach in Lisbon at the first girls' secondary school, the previously mentioned Liceu Maria Pia. Although all three have been largely forgotten as poets nowadays, in the first quarter of the twentieth century their importance as literary figures and moreover as role models for other women was undeniable. They were featured constantly in the press of the time as outstanding women.

As for the competition, which reflects the magazine *Alma Feminina's* underlying attitude of actively promoting women's poetry, it stands as an unmistakable sign that a new era for female writers was dawning⁴⁴. Simultaneously, the form chosen in the competition, the sonnet, while reflecting the favour the sonnet enjoyed at the time, also constituted a first indication of the fact that women poets were ready to appropriate it as their preferred form (in place of the odes criticized by Ramalho Ortigão in the previous century). And over the next two decades, poetesses increasingly entered public consciousness, reaching the apogee of their fame in the twenties.

Before describing more fully the extraordinary popularity of women poets in the twenties, it is important to note that the emergence of women writers was also, of course, the consequence of a wider phenomenon: the fight of women to be recognized as thinking beings and to be allowed to take an active part in public life. Indeed it is at the dawn of the twentieth century that the feminist movement in Portugal gathered strength, embodying in a politically committed form women's ambitions to play a greater role in society. 1905 is the

⁴³For further details, see Maria da Conceição Vilhena, *Alice Moderno, a Vida e a Obra* (Angra do Heroísmo: Direcção Regional dos Assuntos Culturais, 1987).

⁴⁴There were other competitions, too numerous to list here. To give just another example, in April 1915, the first two prizes of the competition organized by *Jornal da Mulher* were won by Alice Moderno and Elisa Toscano Batalha respectively (their sonnets were published in the following issue, May 1915).

date often given as its take off point, since it was then that Ana de Castro Osório published her feminist manifesto 'Às Mulheres Portuguesas'⁴⁵. The first feminist organization, the 'Liga Republicana das Mulheres Portuguesas', was created soon after, in 1909. The following year, in 1910, the advent of the Republic took place, bringing considerable changes in the law to improve the situation of women, in particular the most progressive divorce law in Europe. Even so, voting rights continued to be denied to women.

In 1914, the 'Conselho Nacional das Mulheres Portuguesas', the most long lasting organization to fight for women's rights, came into being. Soon after, the first world war gave women some chance of involvement in the outside world, when in 1917 the government appealed for women to train as nurses to treat Portuguese soldiers on the French battlefields. This, recalls Elina Guimarães, 'caused a scandal similar to the one caused by Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War', but clearly signalled that change was under way⁴⁶.

Both the changes in the conception of women's role and the diverse reactions such changes elicited were mirrored, during the first decades of the twentieth century, in the multiplication of publications and lectures on the subject of women. Some were prescriptive and predictably traditional in tone, but others expressed progressive views⁴⁷. More importantly, this general interest about women also led to an unprecedented number of publications and lectures on women writers, both past and contemporary ones.

1.2.2. THE POPULARITY OF WOMEN POETS

The first of a long series of anthologies, studies and public lectures on women poets is the anthology organized in 1917 by Nuno Catarino Cardoso entitled *Poetisas Portuguesas*. It featured bibliographical information on 106 poetesses and a selection of

⁴⁵For a more detailed survey of feminism in Portugal in the twentieth century, see the appendix by Darlene Sadlier 'Feminism in Portugal' in *The Question of How* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp.113-129.

⁴⁶Elina Guimarães, p.22.

⁴⁷For a sample of titles, see Tavares da Silva's bibliography, in *Feminismo em Portugal na Voz de Mulheres Escritoras no Início do Século Vinte*, pp.39-41.

poems by each. This may seem an astonishing number, considering what has just been said about the scarcity of women poets up to the late nineteenth century. But what is even more astonishing is that, given such scarcity, nearly all the poetesses included in this anthology were of necessity contemporary. In fact, not only were they contemporary, many of them were only at the outset of their literary career. This illustrates vividly the boom of women poets in a very short time span, as well as the unprecedented attention that they attracted.

From the biographical information given by Cardoso in his anthology, it becomes apparent that the majority of the poetesses were now middle-class. This would support the thesis that access to education gave women the ambition to write, because it represented symbolically an attempt to enter the public sphere. It also suggests that the category of 'poetess' was starting to be perceived by women as a desirable one, one to which educated women aspired, bringing a tide of women poets into the literary scene.

The clearest indication that it had become fashionable to be a poetess was the fact that women poets were much in demand in literary salons. In her book of memoirs, Fernanda de Castro recalls that in the twenties there were numerous literary salons in Lisbon and that it was normal practice at the time for guests and hosts alike to read out their latest compositions. Referring to the salon of Veva de Lima, she wrote: 'Como em todos os outros salões literários, poetas, incluindo a dona de casa, liam os seus últimos poemas, com muito agrado dos convidados, o que hoje me espanta profundamente'⁴⁸. These poets were not exclusively female. But a few lines later, Fernanda de Castro recalls that women poets were now the great attraction of these literary teas: both she and her friend Virgínia Vitorino (the most popular poetess of the period)⁴⁹ were constantly being invited to them, precisely because, as Virgínia Vitorino colourfully put it 'no fundo da xícara há sempre um soneto'⁵⁰.

⁴⁸*Ao Fim da Memória*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Verbo, 1986-87), vol.1, p.146.

⁴⁹In *Cartas Para Além do Tempo* (Odivelas: Europress, 1990), Fernanda de Castro describes her friendship with Virgínia Vitorino, recalling how they had met, typically enough, at a piano lesson; indeed playing the piano continued to be an indispensable social skill for women (p.71).

⁵⁰Fernanda de Castro, *Ao Fim da Memória*, p.146.

This social function of poetry described by Fernanda de Castro was a supremely important one, bearing in mind that in those days there was no television or radio, so that writing and reading poetry provided a diversion for middle-class women, the overwhelming majority of whom still did not work.

By the beginning of the twenties, 'poetesses' were at the height of their popularity, receiving enormous press coverage and publicity. In fact, although it is difficult to determine whether it was a cause or a consequence of such popularity, the most successful book of female poetry of the whole period, *Namorados* by Virgínia Vitorino, came out in 1920⁵¹. It was a phenomenal success, undergoing twelve successive editions, something quite unparalleled in the publishing scene of the time. *Namorados* embodies the contradictory feelings of a woman towards love and her loved one, couched in everyday language, which meant its women readers could easily identify with what they were reading. But more of that later.

Reflecting the vogue female poetry was enjoying, there were several lectures on women poets around that time. To give but one example Branca de Gonta Colaço's lecture entitled 'Nós Outras as Poetisas', held in the National Theatre D.Maria II, on 15 February 1923, a lecture widely advertised in the press⁵². Her choice of title suggests that she viewed poetesses as a literary group, endowed with distinguishing features, and moreover a group with which she (and presumably other women too) were proud to be associated, as seen in her identification with the group through the use of the word 'we'⁵³.

Further highlighting the interest that women poets were arousing is the fact that in January 1923 (one month before Colaço's lecture) the daily *Século da Noite* had started to publish a series of poems by women under the heading 'Antologia Luso-Brasileira do

⁵¹Gaspar Simões wrongly gives the date of 1918, in *História da Poesia do Século XX*, and so do many critics after him.

⁵²Unfortunately this lecture was not subsequently published and the articles in the press do not analyse its contents.

⁵³The vogue of women poets even spread outside Portugal. At an antiquarian in Lisbon I was recently able to purchase two thin publications, neither of which is available at the Biblioteca Nacional. They are the published versions of two lectures on female poetry: the first lecture was given in 1924 in Angola by Fernando Leiro, *Meias Azuis* (Luanda: [n.pub], 1925); the second in 1930 in Chile by Artur Vieira, *As Poetisas Portuguesas* (Santiago do Chile: Editorial Nascimento, 1931).

Lirismo Feminino "Poetisas do Amor" ⁵⁴. This anthology groups poetesses together by virtue of their sex, but narrowly defines female poetry (lirismo feminino), equating it exclusively with love poetry (Poetisas do Amor), an equation which would quickly become widespread.

A short unsigned article, drawing attention to the fact that the publication of the anthology was due to start the following day, came out on 6 January 1923. The article attempts to explain the reasons behind the publication of the anthology and, in so doing, brings out what was seen as the specificity of women's poetry: what the author of the article (in all likelihood the (male) organizer of the anthology) particularly highlighted was its novelty. According to him, an anthology of male poets writing on the subject of love would be 'vulgar, banal, trivialíssima, sem interesse algum. Mas o amor cantado pelas próprias mulheres é outra coisa, torna-se mais atraente e sugestivo, tem maior elevação e encanto'. Such a discourse shows that the author was fully aware that the voice of poetesses represented something new, breaking new ground, was a different thing altogether as he wrote: indeed up to then women had nearly always been the objects rather than the subjects of amorous discourse. However, it is equally clear that he had internalized a male view of women, that of the angelic woman, whose poetry must be by definition 'feminine', attractive, full of elevation and charm.

But not all those who came in contact with female poetry were its unconditional supporters, quite the contrary. In fact many male reviewers openly ridiculed poetesses and what they saw as the shortcomings of their work. This can be seen in the reviews of Florbela's work as well as in those about other women poets, but let us illustrate the point with Florbela.

⁵⁴This 'anthology' (subsequently advertised as published in book-form, although there is no record of it in the Biblioteca Nacional), featured the sonnet 'Amiga' by Florbela Espanca, whose second work *Livro de Soror Saudade* had come out at the beginning of that year. This confirms how closely critics followed the phenomenon of women poets. Another striking example of the attention which critics gave to female poetic productions is the case of Nuno Catarino Cardoso's anthology *Cancioneiro da Saudade e da Morte* (Lisbon, 1920). It featured, albeit with terrible typographical errors, the sonnet 'Dizeres Íntimos' by Florbela Espanca. The work in which this sonnet had first appeared, *Livro de Mágoas*, had only just come out the previous year.

1.2.3 MALE REVIEWS OF FLORBELA'S WORK

Florbela's first collection, *Livro de Mágoas* only attracted one review⁵⁵. Her second book, *Livro de Soror Saudade*, published in January 1923, precisely at the time when poetesses were at the height of their popularity, commanded slightly more attention. Of the six reviews I have been able to trace, all recognize Florbela's talent and, significantly, all place her against the background of female poetry⁵⁶. In fact, one of the reviews, from the *Ilustração Portuguesa*, not only placed Florbela against that background but went as far as accusing her of imitating the manner of Virgínia Vitorino, the most popular woman poet of the period⁵⁷. While all six reviews offer comments on female poetry, two are particularly revealing of male reactions to it and therefore deserve detailed attention.

The first of those comes from *Correio da Manhã*⁵⁸, and was written by Câmara Lima (whose daughter, Marta Mesquita da Câmara, was also a poetess):

Outra poetisa. O contingente das senhoras cresce dia a dia. Sejam sempre bemvindas quando, como esta, saibam versejar.

Mas, meu Deus, todas fazem sonetos. O soneto e a saia curta estão na moda. O pior é que todas ferem a mesma tecla, dizem a mesma coisa. O teu amor já não me serve. Vai-te embora. Vem depressa. Não posso passar sem ti. Aí tens as tuas cartas. Porque não me escreves? Nunca mais. Até amanhã. Que tortura. Que delícia. Dá cá um beijo. Some-te daqui para fora.

⁵⁵Florbela kept a file of press cuttings relating to her first two collections which, though incomplete, is helpful. The file belongs to the Biblioteca Nacional. It contains a review of *Livro de Mágoas*, under the heading 'Livros e Publicações', without indication of provenance (BN N10/31), and also three cuttings with poems from *Livro de Mágoas*, one from *O Azeitonense*, 8 February 1920, the other two without indication of provenance (BN N10/33, N10/22 and N10/23 respectively).

⁵⁶*Diário de Notícias*, 29 March 1923, p.4; *Jornal do Comércio e das Colónias*, 4 March 1923, p.2; *O Século da Noite*, 4 February 1923, p.7; *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 10 February 1923, p.190; *Correio da Manhã*, 20 February 1923, p.3 and *A Época*, 1 April 1923, p.1.

⁵⁷10 February 1923, p.190. This article provoked an angry reply in another newspaper by someone signing as B. de C. (almost certainly Boto de Carvalho, Florbela's colleague at the University of Lisbon, about whom more will be said in Chapter 3). B. de C.'s reply was kept by Florbela in her file of press cuttings (BN N10/36). Unfortunately, I have been unable to trace the newspaper in which it was published.

⁵⁸20 February 1923, p.3.

What is caricatured in this piece is the limited thematic range of poetesses, who seem to concentrate exclusively, if we are to believe Câmara Lima, on love. While the fact that love was the main theme of female poetry of the period is undoubtedly true, it needs to be qualified further, because, as shown by Simone de Beauvoir in *Le deuxième sexe*, and many other feminist writers after her, women have always been defined in relation to man, through whom they acquire value. Confined to the domestic sphere, women have only existed through love, through relationships which made them meaningful. It is small wonder therefore that relationships should be at the heart of their poetry: since they had little experience of public matters, love was something that belonged to their limited realm of experience.

Another aspect of women's poetry criticized in this article is the fact that all women write sonnets. But it could be argued that women's marked preference for the sonnet stems partly from the popularity it enjoyed at the time, and partly from their insecurity. Indeed, given that the sonnet had always been highly rated in the hierarchy of forms, it was only natural that women would want to prove they could write in a poetic form which was generally upheld as one of the most difficult ones. The association between women and sonnets is thus merely circumstantial, but it actually led male critics around that time to start regarding the sonnet, which in other countries was and continues to be perceived as a traditionally masculine genre⁵⁹, as a feminine form. For instance, in 1921, Júlio Dantas wrote in his letter entitled 'Como se faz um soneto': 'Há nele qualquer coisa de feminino que o torna tão predilecto das mulheres'⁶⁰. In 1935, Agostinho de Campos devoted an entire section of his academic work *Estudos sobre o Soneto*, to a discussion of 'O feminino do soneto'. Even after poetesses had started to use other forms, male critics continued to endorse the myth of the femininity of the sonnet when discussing sonnets written by women⁶¹.

⁵⁹For instance, back in 1863, the French Louise Ackermann wrote: 'Pour des sonnets, en fasse qui les aime / Chacun son goût, mais ce n'est pas le mien'. Quoted by Christine Planté, in *La petite soeur de Balzac* (Paris: Seuil, 1989), p.250.

⁶⁰In *Arte de Amar* (Lisbon: Portugal-Brasil Ltd, 1921), p.170.

⁶¹Even one of the finest critics of Florbela, Jorge de Sena, did not avoid this, commenting that Florbela 'descobriu totalmente o acabado, o fechado, o

Despite his reservations about some of the thematic and formal monotony of female poetry, Câmara Lima ended his article by praising Florbela for her poetic skill, and, as evidence, quoted in full the sonnet 'O Nosso Mundo'⁶².

The second review, from the pen of Nemo in *A Época*⁶³, has many similarities with Câmara Lima's. Nemo's piece has a title: 'Uma Legião de Poetisas'. The word legion suggests a military offensive, something which was already subliminally present in Câmara Lima's use of the word 'contingente'. Like his colleague, Nemo focuses on the limited thematic range of the poetesses and their over-reliance on the sonnet as a form:

Em menos de uma semana quatro volumes de versos, sem falar noutro vindo pouco antes! E todos cinco de poetisas, e todos menos um de sonetos da primeira à última página! [...]

Valeram-me os ócios forçados de uma viagem para ler esses cinco volumes. Verdadeiro feito de Hercules! Com a monotonia do rodar do comboio casava-se a uniformidade da métrica, o interminável desfilar dos sonetos (139! contei-os), conjugando quasi sem excepção o verbo *amar* na primeira e na segunda pessoa do singular e em todos os tempos e modos.

E não poucos sujeitam ao mesmo exercício gramatical o verbo *beijar* em voz activa e passiva nas mesmas pessoas, com o mais corajoso abandono de velhos prejuízos a que se chamava outrora pudor. Não vai mal com a arte generalizada de se despir em público inventada por *cocottes* para uso de senhoras honestas.

E à medida que lia e ficava besuntado por aquele melaço amavioso, escorrendo monotonamente de cada soneto, perguntava a mim mesmo: 'mas que estranha psicologia a de uma menina que, em vez de vistosos bordados ou de paciências, faz bonitos jogos malabares de palavras [...]'.

Both reviewers, thus, criticize the fact that poetesses exclusively wrote about love, both compare the fashion of writing poetry to the fashion of wearing short skirts. But Nemo, unlike Câmara Lima, used the comparison between sonnets and short skirts to comment on the unseemliness and the lack of decorum of both.

After these general comments on the phenomenon of female poetry, Nemo concentrates on Florbela's work. It soon becomes apparent, that, like Câmara Lima, he was not unaware of Florbela's talent but, unlike his colleague, Nemo refused to consider *Livro de Soror Saudade* a good work or indeed even to recommend its reading, on moral grounds. He commented with self-righteous indignation on the immorality of the

feminino do soneto. Com efeito, o soneto assemelha-se muito aos labores femininos', in *Da Poesia Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Ática, [n.d.]), p.124.

⁶²Florbela Espanca, *Obras Completas*, vol.2, p.129.

⁶³1 April 1923, p.1.

'revoltante terceto de "O Nosso Mundo" ', ironically a tercet from the very sonnet which Câmara Lima had chosen to give as an example of Florbela's worth, and quoted it so that the reader might judge for him or herself:

Que importa o mundo e as ilusões defuntas?
 Que importa o mundo e seus orgulhos vãos?
 O mundo, Amor!... As nossas bocas juntas!...

For Nemo, this sonnet was only the tip of the iceberg, since there were several others 'pior do que este, não podendo ser citados.' although he listed their titles ('A Noite Desce', 'Esfinge', 'Tarde Demais', 'Crepúsculo' and 'Horas Rubras'). He concluded by saying that Florbela should beg God's forgiveness 'do mau emprego que faz de suas incontestáveis aptidões poéticas', and lamenting having to say that the book was bad, as in so doing he might be publicizing it.

These two critics are more than enough to illustrate the 'catch 22' situation in which poetesses found themselves: if they limited themselves to topics and sentiments that were considered 'ladylike', they were dismissed for lack of originality. Yet as soon as poetesses showed any signs of departing from the norm, there would be an outcry from someone like Nemo to criticize them for their unseemliness, which was equated with immorality. It is ironic that Nemo was virtually the only reviewer of *Livro de Soror Saudade* who showed himself to be fully aware of the potentially explosive charge of sensuality in Florbela's poetry, and that instead of praising it, he rejected it with disgust.

It is important to clarify that Florbela did not acquire her reputation for immorality from Nemo's review. That label would only become widespread years later, after her death. In 1923, she was a little known poet, and what stood out in the mind of both her reviewers and those who knew her was her image as a spiritual and melancholic figure, encapsulated in the title *Soror Saudade*, with which the poet Américo Durão had christened her in a poem published in December 1919⁶⁴.

⁶⁴The relationship between Florbela Espanca and Durão will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

One more review of Florbela's work is relevant to a discussion of male reviewers' view of the phenomenon of female poetry: António Ferro's review of Florbela's third work, *Charneca em Flor*, a review which came out in February 1931. Its primary aim was to draw attention to the extraordinary quality of Florbela's poetry, which Ferro believed to be true poetry. It is significant however that this was done by contrasting Florbela's greatness with the shortcomings of the typical poetesses, whom Ferro relentlessly caricatured. Indeed, Ferro begins by explaining how he initially dismissed Florbela 'como uma das poetisas da colmeia, como uma das cigarras do nosso lirismo inofensivo, de "palcos e salas"...' , possibly similar to 'certas poetisas que encontram no casamento a rima difícil que procuram' but how, after reading *Charneca em Flor*, he completely altered his view:

Pois, foi possível o seu anonimato, a sua sombra, em face de certas consagrações vistosas, em face de certa poesia feminina de 'boas festas', reproduzida em série, ao infinito, como os cromos das 'pombinhas' e das 'mãos apertadas'? [...] Pois foi possível que deste coração jorrassem versos definitivos, eternos, perante o derramar infatigável do 'cansado chá que ferve' -- torradas e sonetos com manteiga das cinco às oito?

Ferro's grotesque portrayal of the swarm of poetesses and of the conventional poetry read at literary teas is quite extraordinary, given that he attended such gatherings and that he furthermore was intimately acquainted with some of the most popular poetesses of his time, not least of all Fernanda de Castro, to whom he was married. It shows clearly, however, how dismissive male critics were of poetesses.

Ferro was one of the leading critics of the day, and his article is widely credited for 'launching' Florbela. It is telling that it should have been with the argument that she was not like the other 'poetesses', not part of the crowd. In fact, early on in his review, he went so far as to qualify Florbela as 'uma grande poetisa, uma poetisa-poeta'. Ferro's appraisal of Florbela as a true poet, which entailed a recognition of her universality at the expense of her gender (since for him women were *poetesses* not *poets*) is striking, but perhaps even more extraordinary is the fact that throughout his article he describes her as a Romantic poet, forever aspiring to something more, something other, choosing to ignore the

daringness of the love poetry of *Charneca em Flor*. It would take many years, in fact, before this daringness would start to be recognized and praised.

1.3. THE FEMALE POETRY OF THE PERIOD

Having described the emergence of women poets at the turn of the twentieth century and their extraordinary popularity in the following decades, it is time to examine the work of some of the most popular women poets of the period. This will provide us with models of female poetry with which Florbela's own poetry can be compared and contrasted. Given the amount of works published by women poets in the first three decades of the twentieth century, selection was unavoidable, and I decided to concentrate on those by poetesses whose names have been most often mentioned by critics, since it soon became apparent that a few names kept recurring, namely those of Branca de Gonta Colaço, Maria de Carvalho, Laura Chaves, Oliva Guerra, Marta Mesquita da Cãmara, Virgínia Vitorino and Fernanda de Castro, alongside that of Florbela Espanca⁶⁵. A survey of the work of these poetesses helps us to throw into relief the 'horizon of expectations' of both readers and critics, to use the Jaussian term, enabling us to understand what constituted the merit of their poetry in the eyes of their contemporaries. But such a survey would be incomplete without taking into

⁶⁵The reference works used were:

Teresa Leitão de Barros, *Escritoras de Portugal*;

João Gaspar Simões, *História da Poesia Portuguesa do Século XX* (Lisbon: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1959);

Hernani Cidade, *Tendências do Lirismo Contemporâneo*, 2nd edn (Lisbon: Portugália, 1939);

João Ameal, *Panorama de la littérature portugaise* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1948);

Luisa Dacosta, 'Literatura de Autoria Feminina' in Óscar Lopes, *História Ilustrada das Grandes Literaturas*, 8 vols (Lisbon: Estúdios Cor, 1973), vol.2, pp.534-541;

Seabra Pereira, 'Perspectivas do Feminino na Literatura Neo-Romântica' in *A Mulher na Sociedade Portuguesa*, 2 vols (Coimbra: Instituto de História Económica e Social, Fac. de Letras da Univ. de Coimbra, 1986), vol.2, pp.73-85;

António Salvado, *Antologia das Mulheres-Poetas Portuguesas* (Lisbon: Delfos, 1962);

Albino Forjaz de Sampaio, *As Melhores Páginas de Literatura Feminina (Poesia)* (Lisbon: Livraria Popular de Francisco Franco, 1935).

account the work of those poetesses which critics neglected or even rejected, and therefore I will conclude this chapter by examining the work of one such poetess, Judite Teixeira, and comparing it to Florbela's later work.

1.3.1. THE FASHIONABLE POETESSES

Branca de Gonta Colaço (1880-1944) was nearly ten years older than the rest of the group. As previously stated, she seemed to have provided a positive role model for the women of the younger generation, alongside Alice Moderno (1867-1946) and Domitilda de Carvalho (1871-1966). The poetry of these three 'older' poetesses constantly expresses a self-abnegating stance. Colaço in particular (who of the three was the only one to be married) highlights her unconditional surrender to the loved one. In *Canções do Meio-Dia* (1912) and *Hora da Sesta* (1918), which Gaspar Simões considers her best works⁶⁶, the omnipresence of the loved one in her life is all-pervasive. *Hora da Sesta*, accordingly, opens (after two introductory poems) with a quotation from *Cartas de Amor* (the Portuguese translation of *Lettres Portugaises*), 'Consagrei-te a vida desde que em ti descansaram meus olhos'. Throughout the collection, various poems highlight the sacrifices that the poet is willing to make for her loved one:

Mas se esta adoração te importunasse...
Oh meu amor...
-- Gostava de não ser...
(*Amor, Amor...*, p.32)

The ending of this sonnet may strike the reader as successful but, unfortunately, the lines that precede it do not manage to express the poet's self-effacing attitude without resorting to stereotyped images such 'transparente céu do teu viver':

Quisera que o meu beijo adivinhasse
o instante em que o desejas esquecer,
por que nunca o fastio enevoasse

o transparente céu do teu viver...

⁶⁶João Gaspar Simões, *História da Poesia Portuguesa do Século XX*, p.453.

Love is not Colaço's only theme. Another theme in her work is the praise of all that is Portuguese, albeit in a fashion that will seem rather naive to today's readers, as in the poem entitled 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' (p.47), evoking the Brownings:

Sinto um orgulho enorme, quando penso [...]
 Para dar nome ao seu amor imenso,
 Só Portugal lhes pareceu bastante!...

Branca de Gonta Colaço also wrote poems empathizing with the suffering of others, but again she did not succeed in avoiding clichés, such as the worn-out comparison of a child to an angel, as in this poem from *Canção do Meio-Dia*:

Ele é tão triste ser criança abandonada!
 Ser anjo e não ter céu... Não ter luz, sendo aurora!
 ('Abandonadas', pp.49-50)

According to António Salvado, her strong point is that her poetry 'possui profundamente o sentido do fluir do tempo'⁶⁷. This gives it a ring of melancholy, vaguely reminiscent of Antero (whose poetry was still extremely influential during that period), as in the last but one poem of *Hora da Sesta*, 'Sic Transit' (p.67), in which she compares the coming of night to the obscurity to which human creatures are destined:

Assim ao cabo a treva tudo enlaça,
 e como fumo efémero que passa
 vão passando no Tempo as gerações...

Although the poetry of Colaço commanded the respect of her contemporaries, the modern reader cannot fail to notice that it not only has a limited range of themes, but also often lacks originality and dramatic intensity in the way it explores them. Her poetry is often poor in imagery and resorts to clichés, and this explains why it has been forgotten.

However one must not underestimate the impact that she -- together with Moderno and Domitilda de Carvalho -- had in their own day: by managing to combine writing with a

⁶⁷ António Salvado, p.119.

feminine stance, they won the admiration of both their male and female contemporaries, thus advancing, albeit imperceptibly, women's fight towards being recognized as intellectuals. Two examples of the way in which these two poets were praised might serve to illustrate the importance that was attached to their femininity. The first is the preface to Domitilda de Carvalho's collection *Versos*, by Afonso Lopes Vieira, her contemporary at the University of Coimbra:

E sobretudo, à minha lembrança acode que já então essa rapariga modesta, de uma formosura simpática e de uma gravidade risonha [...] me fazia entender perante a desordem actual do feminismo, o que aí há de verdadeiro e de proporcionado. [...] O encanto desta mulher está em que ela ficou a mais *feminina* das criaturas, depois da sua longa jornada através da ciência.⁶⁸

The second comes from the preface to Branca de Gonta Colaço's posthumous *Abençoada a Hora em que Nasci* by Maria de Carvalho, in 1945. This preface, again, praised the poet for qualities which are quintessentially feminine, namely beauty, modesty and altruism⁶⁹.

By the time Branca de Gonta Colaço published *Hora da Sesta*, however, a younger generation of poets was already starting to emerge. The first to win critical acclaim was Maria de Carvalho (1889-1973), the same who was later to preface Branca de Gonta Colaço's posthumous collection. She published *Sete Palavras* in 1915, *Sonetos* in 1916, *Pensamentos* in 1919 and *Folhas* in 1921. Her melancholic evocation of the passing of time and of the transitory nature of love gave a pseudo-philosophical stance to her poetry. A similar tone is also present in Laura Chaves' poetry (1888-1966), *Trovas Simples* (1919), *Do Amor* (1922) and *Vozes Perdidas* (1924)) and in some of Oliva Guerra's work (1898-1982), *Espirituais* (1922), *Encantamento* (1926).

The poetry of these three poetesses is not exclusively about love, as the reviews might lead one to believe, nor is their use of the sonnet-form universal. Although they made predominantly use of the sonnet, they also wrote pieces in more popular forms: Maria de Carvalho had a whole section of *Folhas* devoted to *vilancetes*, Laura Chaves was

⁶⁸*Versos* (Coimbra, 1909), pp.9-10.

⁶⁹*Abençoada a Hora em que Nasci*, (Lisbon:Parceria António Maria Pereira, 1945).

particularly fond of the popular *quadra*, while Oliva Guerra used longer compositions as well as sonnets. Amongst the poetesses of the earlier generation, Branca de Gonta Colaço too had made use of a number of 'popular' forms.

On the whole, however, it is fair to say that their work displays little originality in handling of the universal themes of love and the passing of time. In fact, by the early twenties, some of their contemporaries were already aware of their shortcomings, as is made plain in the following episode, narrated by Fernanda de Castro in *Cartas para Além do Tempo* and involving Teresa Leitão de Barros, Laura Chaves, Virgínia Vitorino and Fernanda de Castro herself. Teresa Leitão de Barros, completely drunk thanks to the mischievous Virgínia Vitorino, bluntly told Laura Chaves: 'Cuidado Laura, elas [Fernanda de Castro and Virgínia Vitorino] fazem-se muito tuas amigas, mas por trás dizem que os teus versos são bonitinhos, que não são mal feitos mas que são muito piegas, muito fora de moda'⁷⁰.

Virgínia Vitorino and Fernanda de Castro were right to think that Laura Chaves' poetry was 'muito piegas' (and the same could be said of that of Oliva Guerra and Maria de Carvalho). Given however that thematically Portuguese lyricism seems to be characterized by its sorrowful mood -- indeed Prado Coelho defines it as 'amoroso e dolente [...] é um lirismo saudoso ou magoado'⁷¹ --, the lamenting tone of these poetesses would in fact be in keeping with a hypothetical national propensity to sadness and, therefore, in itself cannot be held as the major defect of their poetry. What truly weakened their poetry rendering it merely sentimental, rather than great, was that they did not have enough skill to carry it off.

And the fact that it is possible to produce successful poetry in the traditional sorrowful vein, provided the poet is skilled enough, can be illustrated with the example of a contemporary of theirs, Marta Mesquita da Câmara (1894-1980). Her collection *Pó do teu Caminho* (1926) was published by Seara Nova (and prominently advertised in the review).

⁷⁰Fernanda de Castro, *Cartas para Além do Tempo*, p.153.

⁷¹Jacinto do Prado Coelho, *A Originalidade da Literatura Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Instituto de Cultura Portuguesa, 1977), p.44.

This was unusual, since as a norm poets paid for the publication of their own collections, and it suggests that her talent had been recognized.

Pó do teu Caminho is made up of fourteen fairly long poems in decasyllabic quatrains (of a length varying between eight and seventeen quatrains), followed by thirty sonnets. Love constitutes the almost exclusive theme of the collection, a love based on unconditional surrender to the loved one, albeit unrequited. Despite her lack of thematic spread, Mesquita da Câmara's poetry is deeply appealing and a close analysis of two of her most often anthologized sonnets, 'Meu Coração' (p.54) and 'Contrasenso' (p.56) may help us to understand why this is so:

Meu Coração

Quantas vezes o julgo arrependido
E fatigado, enfim, de relembrar-te,
Porque chama e não vem da tua parte
Nem a sombra dum eco ao seu gemido.

Quantas vezes o julgo arrependido
E começa de novo a procurar-te,
Chamando o teu desprezo de tal arte,
Como alguém que chamasse um bem perdido!

Esquecer-te não posso, já não tento...
És, amor, meu constante pensamento!
Para mim não há paz, já não há bem

Que não seja a tortura dos escolhos
Que eu encontro na noite dos teus olhos,
Que, enfim, não seja um mal que de ti vem!

The appeal of this sonnet hinges on its dramatic expressivity, achieved through several devices, both rhythmic and stylistic. Rhythmically, the poet makes skilful use of the heroic decasyllabic verse, the stress always falling on semantically important words (illustrating with the last tercet: tortura/escolhos, noite/olhos, mal/vem). This, however, was something that most of the poetesses were able to achieve. Where Mesquita da Câmara begins to distance herself from her contemporaries, is in her use of harmonious phonetic patterns and of alliteration, which contribute to the overall musicality of the poem, as in line 13 with the striking alliteration in [t]: 'Que eu encontro na noite dos teus olhos' taking up the word 'tortura' from the previous line.

But, furthermore, the striking dramatic intensity of the message is vividly brought out thanks to various other stylistic devices. The anaphora 'Quantas vezes o julgo arrependido', repeated at the beginning of both quatrains, highlights two different moments in the behaviour of the personified heart: in the first stanza, the heart is resigned 'E fatigado, enfim, de relembrar-te' while, in the second stanza, it seeks again the loved one 'E começa de novo a procurar-te' (a contrast furthermore foregrounded by the opposition of 'enfim'/'de novo', both in a stressed position, the sixth syllable).

Having highlighted the plight of the heart, and made clear in the second stanza that all it could aspire to was the disdain of the loved one, a notion rendered all the more forcefully by the fact that the word 'desprezo', in a stressed position (the sixth syllable), is paradoxically compared to 'um bem perdido' in the following line, the poet then moves on, in the tercets, to show that the loved one, despite his indifference, is her sole preoccupation. The insanity of such behaviour is conveyed through a gradation since, in the first tercet, line 9 states that she cannot forget him, while line 10 asserts that he is her only thought, to finally culminate in line 11, which sets the paradox, developed over the last stanza, that 'já não há bem [...] / Que, enfim, não seja um mal que de ti vem!'.

In 'Contrasenso' too we find a successful use of language:

Oh! meu amor, escuta, estou aqui,
 Pois o teu coração bem me conhece:
 Eu sou aquela voz que, em tanta prece,
 Endoideceu, chorou, gemeu por ti!

Sou eu, sou eu que ainda não morri
 -- Nem a morte me quer ao que parece --
 E vinha renovar, se inda pudesse,
 As horas dolorosas que vivi...

Oh! que insensato e louco é quem se ilude!
 Quis fugir, esquecer-te, mas não pude...
 -- Vê lá do que os teus olhos são capazes! --

Deitando a vista pelo mundo além,
 Desisto de encontrar na vida um bem
 Que valha todo o mal que tu me fazes!

This second sonnet also relies on a wealth of stylistic devices to heighten the poet's plight. In the first stanza, the metonymy 'Eu sou aquela voz' renders the fact that without

the love of the 'tu', the poet is no longer a person, but merely the shadow of one, a disembodied voice. Her suffering is conveyed through the accumulation of verbs denoting grief, 'endoideceu, chorou, gemeu'.

The second stanza continues to describe the poet as someone without a firm sense of identity, rejected even by death 'Nem a morte me quer ao que parece'. Her utter worthlessness makes her wonder, with bitter irony, whether she is even entitled to suffer: 'E vinha renovar, se inda pudesse'.

Finally, the last stanza takes up the paradox bem/mal of the sonnet 'Meu Coração': 'Desisto de encontrar na vida um bem / Que valha todo o mal que tu me fazes!'. Again, there is no doubt that phonetic patterns in the poem contribute to the overall harmony of the poet's lament. Illustrating with the last stanza, with its predominance of fricatives [v] and [f] and occlusives [t], [d] and [k] and, in the last line, the alliteration in [a] (valha, mal, fazes) :

Deitando a vista pelo mundo além,
[d][t] [d] [v] [t] [d]

Desisto de encontrar na vida um bem
[d] [t] [k][t] [v][d]

Que valha todo o mal que tu me fazes!
[k] [v] [t][d] [k] [t] [f]

These two sonnets by Marta Mesquita da Câmara show a degree of sophistication in their use of language which is lacking in many other poetesses, and it is perhaps with them in mind that Gaspar Simões asserted that 'Alguns dos seus sonetos, especialmente os do livro *Pó do Teu Caminho* [...] rivalizam de onde em onde, com os da própria Florbela Espanca' although, as Gaspar Simões himself recognized, not all Câmara's poems were of the same high standard: 'De grande fluência no decassílabo, compõe estrofes sobre estrofes, nem sempre com igual felicidade, mas, regra geral, com ritmo são e cadência certa'⁷².

Mesquita da Câmara was the poetess of the period who best succeeded in giving dramatic intensity to an old theme. But it seems that the public, while appreciating the self-

⁷²João Gaspar Simões, *História da Poesia Portuguesa do Século XX*, p.453.

effacing stance of the poetesses so far discussed, was now ready for poetry which did not just proclaim the unconditional allegiance of the angelic woman poet to the loved one, but also described her inner human contradictions. And it is to this that the success of the most popular poet of the period, Virgínia Vitorino (1898-1967), must be attributed.

In retrospect, it may seem difficult for today's reader to understand the astounding success that greeted Virgínia Vitorino's first collection *Namorados* (1920)⁷³. To the modern reader, her poetry is likely to appear rather banal. Yet, viewed in its historical context, there is no doubt that her collection brought noticeable thematic innovations. The collection's underlying conviction is still that love brings about suffering, at least for the woman, because love is her sole purpose in life ('À Janela' (pp.29-30) and 'Horas' (pp.63-4)). Only one poem in the entire collection, 'Alleluia' (pp.15-16), sings the joy and meaning that love has brought to the life of the poet. By contrast, many poems make explicit the link between love and grief, a link foregrounded in the two poems that open and end the collection. The opening poem 'Quando te vi' (pp.7-8) depicts the moment the female speaker fell in love as a moment of light, but like all moments of happiness, doomed to pass:

Deixou-me triste assim que se apagou.
Às vezes fecho os olhos; vejo-a ainda...

The poem that closes the collection, 'Toujours la même chose' (pp.95-6), recognizes the banality of the poet's love affair: 'Mas o que houve entre nós tudo acabou. / A nossa história é fácil de contar'. However it then highlights that the memory of this love affair will be cherished by the poet, tinging her life with sadness:

E tudo o que lá vai, o que nos deixa?

⁷³*Namorados* underwent twelve successive editions, but in terms of numbers this is less impressive than one might expect, since according to the copy of the twelfth edition available in the Biblioteca Nacional, it is only with that edition, in 1932, that the book reached its '2º milhar'. If this information is accurate, this also helps to put in perspective the success of the remaining poetesses. This must in turn be put into its wider context. According to Joel Serrão, writing in 1965, amongst the poets of the twentieth century, 'só Fernando Pessoa e José Régio chegam à casa dos três mil' in *Temas de Cultura Portuguesa II* (Lisbon: Portugália, 1965), p.113.

-- Um mistério de menos para ti.
 -- Uma saudade a mais na minha vida.

The tone of the poems so far mentioned does not differ much from that of other poetesses. But where Virgínia Vitorino was different from them was in her evocation of the contradictions experienced by the woman in love: the desire not to see the loved one rather than see him and then suffer because of his departure ('Nãõ' (pp.69-70)), the desire not to receive his letters, rather than be disappointed because of their shortness ('As tuas Cartas' (pp.53-4)), or the wish to talk to him pretending not to care, but being unable to face him when the moment comes ('Fraqueza' (pp.73-4)).

However, these psychological insights, with which other poets have made great poetry, sound uninspired in Virgínia Vitorino's verses, because the language she uses is extremely prosaic. It is also painfully obvious that she sometimes resorts to unnecessary words to comply with the metre or rhyme. See for example 'As Tuas Cartas':

Tãõ pequenas as cartas que me escreves!
 Demoram tanto tempo! Com certeza
 Nãõ sabes calcular esta tristeza
 que eu sinto, quando as vejo frias, breves. [...]

Tãõ diferentes somos! Eu, entãõ,
 mando-te em cada letra o coração,
 e tu, meu bem, tãõ pouco te revelas!

Sempre o mistério aonde o amor existe!
 Se eu te disser que fico às vezes triste
 Por nãõ levar mais tempo à espera delas?

For instance, line 3, 'nãõ sabes calcular esta tristeza', is clumsy: 'nãõ calculas a tristeza' would read far more naturally, while the word 'entãõ' in line 9 is too obviously there to rhyme with 'coração' in the next line.

The description of the contradictions of the woman in love was not, however, the only novelty of *Namorados*. Perhaps even more appealing to its readers was its description of love as a battle between two wills, where the woman must be deceitful and careful not to reveal the extent of her true feelings ('O Maior Mal' (p.57-8), 'Orgulho' (p.79-80), 'Interrogação' (p.21-2), 'Ao Telefone' (p.83-4)). One cannot emphasize too much how

this contrasted with the traditional long-suffering passivity of the woman in love that other female poets were still describing:

Ontem, quando nos vimos, frente a frente,
Fingiste bem esse ar indiferente,
E eu, desdenhosa, ri, sem descorar...

Mas que lágrimas devo àquele riso!
E quanto, quanto esforço foi preciso
Para, na tua frente, não chorar!
(Orgulho, pp.79-80)

The situations described in Vitorino's poetry were thus accessible to her female readers who could relate to them, firstly because they were everyday situations, and secondly because they were described in simple language, and this is what accounted for the success of her poetry at the time. As Teresa Leitão de Barros put it, the popularity of *Namorados* stemmed from the fact that it was:

Uma feliz adaptação do lirismo amoroso às ansiedades emotivas mais actuais. O cenário [...] já não é a paisagem: é a sala ou o gabinete de trabalho; o personagem que monologa já não é um pastorinho desiludido nem um sonhador olheirento: é uma rapariga moderna, feita à imagem e semelhança de todas as raparigas do seu tempo. Cada poesia já não é uma inténrina queixa [...] A ideia, que não é rebuscada, que é quasi banal [...] encontra, sem esforço, uma expressão lírica de absoluta simplicidade, recorrendo apenas, inconscientemente, a artifícios estilísticos – como a antítese e o contraste – que estão dentro das tradições da língua.⁷⁴

Leitão de Barros was praising Virgínia Vitorino, but the elements that she highlighted to explain the success of *Namorados*, were also the ones which prevented it from being great poetry: simplicity can make for great poetry but banality cannot.

Despite her weaknesses, Vitorino did bring something new into female poetry: a pseudo-realistic description of female feelings. But the woman poet who must be credited for making the transition between the generation of the 'poetisas de amor' (to which Florbela Espanca chronologically and thematically still belongs, despite intrinsic differences) and a new generation of poets such as Irene Lisboa, Sophia de Mello Breyner, Natércia Freire and Natália Correia is Fernanda de Castro (1900-still living), author during

⁷⁴Teresa Leitão de Barros, *Escritoras de Portugal*, vol.2, p.345-6.

that period of *Ante-Manhã* (1919), *Danças de Ronda* (1921), *Cidade em Flor* (1924) and *Jardim* (1928), the youngest of the poetesses to emerge in the twenties.

Although Fernanda de Castro's first collection was entirely made up of sonnets, and does not bring much new thematically, thereafter she abandoned the sonnet in favour of more modern, flowing forms including free verse, and tackled a wide range of themes (she was, for instance, the first to write about motherhood). Unlike her contemporaries, she sang the happiness of living, and paid attention to the real, outside world. As David Mourão-Ferreira put it, 'Ela foi a primeira, neste país de musas sorumbáticas e de poetas tristes, a demonstrar que o riso e a alegria também são formas de inspiração'⁷⁵. Suffice to quote to that effect the brilliant opening of her poem 'O Mercado' (pp.83-6) from *Cidade em Flor*:

-- Bem haja o sol! Parece uma laranja
a escorrer sumo!
-- disse a mulher da banca,
olhando o Sol de frente em linha recta.
E eu pensei: de que vale ser poeta?

A brief look at the poetry of the most popular poetesses of the period, reveals some of their thematic limitations and their literary shortcomings. But it also draws attention to the fact those who managed to stand out, be it because of their skill, like Marta Mesquita da Câmara, or because of their ability to overcome the generalized self-effacing, long-suffering image poetesses give of themselves, like Fernanda de Castro.

In the concluding section of *Escritoras de Portugal*, Teresa Leitão de Barros sums up the characteristics of women's poetry in the twenties:

As poetisas portuguesas, à parte excepções que nem contam, têm, por assim dizer, 'explorado' apenas o inesgotável filão sentimental, que é património rácico. Não temos uma poetisa vincadamente sensual, não temos talentos quasi exclusivamente evocativos de distantes visões ou apaixonadas idolatras da plasticidade verbal. Mas, por invejável privilégio, temos poesia da mais doce e tocante feminilidade [...] A nossa poesia feminina de hoje tem, em geral, um vago cunho de humildade e uma toada de prece: tem a religiosidade das orações que não

⁷⁵Quoted in Fernanda de Castro, *70 Anos de Poesia* (Porto: Fundação Eng^o António de Almeida, 1989), p.15.

vêm nos catecismos e sobem directamente do coração à boca, sem que a inteligência e a cultura queiram vesti-las de deslumbrantes ouropéis palavrosos.⁷⁶

Leitão de Barros' comment shows that she was fully aware of the thematic limitations of her contemporaries, but she managed to turn these limitations into a strength, by asserting that it made their poetry more feminine. What is noteworthy here is the underlying assumption on Barros' part that femininity is the ultimate source of value for women's poetry. Furthermore, not only does Leitão de Barros use femininity as a value to make up for the lack of breadth of subject-matter in women's poetry, she also uses it to praise the lack of sophistication of their poetry, which becomes viewed positively as natural rather than artificial (it is a sincere 'oração que sobe directamente do coração' rather than a contrived discourse made up of 'ouropéis palavrosos').

Indeed, however critically perceptive, it is clear that Leitão de Barros had internalized a male critical discourse which primarily praised poetesses for their *femininity*, even if she regretted in passing their lack of thematic spread. And one can only repeat once more at this point that femininity, and its corollary, modesty, were extolled as the supreme virtue which all women, including poetesses should strive for, and that the price to pay for departing too openly from the norm was extremely high.

The women poets so far examined are the ones who received critical acclaim, and it would not be unreasonable to think that the young Florbela would have been likely to have been influenced by some of their poetry. I have, however, been unable to trace any direct influences. This may partly be explained by the fact that until October 1917, unlike the poetesses discussed, she did not live in the capital, but in the remoteness of the Alentejo, and therefore had no opportunity to meet other female poets (or indeed male poets). The only contact she would have had with the poetry of her contemporaries would have been through a few isolated poems, published in newspapers. Under these circumstances, Florbela's early poetry, as the next chapter will show, was primarily shaped by authors belonging to the literary canon, and that meant male authors, such as António Nobre.

⁷⁶Teresa Leitão de Barros, vol.2, p.361.

Furthermore, after October 1917, once she went to live in Lisbon, her main influences, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, were her University colleagues, and once more these were men.

There are however thematic resemblances between Florbela's poetry and that of her female contemporaries: in particular, the idea of love as suffering and as the poet's sole reason for living, even if in her treatment of love Florbela was to distance herself from virtually all other female poets by exploring, from *Livro de Soror Saudade* onwards, the theme of sensual love. Another major difference between Florbela and her contemporaries was that she was able to project, thanks to various stylistic devices, a strong image of the self into her poetry, even when it remained the image of a passive sufferer, as in *Livro de Mágoas*.

In terms of form, Florbela's changing preferences mirror what was happening in women's poetry during those years. Her early poetry, that of *Trocando Olhares*, was influenced by popular forms, with many poems written in *quadrás* or *quintilhas*, and usually using a popular metre, the *redondilha maior*. Only in the later part of *Trocando Olhares* does the sonnet begin to be widely used, and even then Florbela still hesitates in terms of metre between the alexandrine and the decasyllable. Her initial adoption of popular rather than learned forms of inspiration is something that can be found in other female poetry of the period, particularly in its early days, as was stressed, although some male poets, such as Augusto Gil and António Correia de Oliveira, also favoured these popular forms. Florbela's subsequent predilection for the decasyllabic sonnet form echoes that of her female contemporaries, but it must be noted that sonnets were also firm favourites amongst all her (male) contemporaries at the University of Lisbon.

Although the best known contemporary women poets seem to have had little direct influence on Florbela, the indirect importance of their existence must not be underestimated, for it paved the way for her. And what Florbela did undoubtedly learn from her female contemporaries was that, as a woman, writing was one of the few means open to her to achieve intellectual recognition.

1.3.2. THE POETRY OF JUDITE TEIXEIRA

Having analysed the poetry of those poetesses of the first quarter of the twentieth century mentioned in literary histories, one must not lose sight of the fact that this only gives us an incomplete picture of the female poetry of the period. For, since the main measure of quality seemed to have been femininity, any poetry dealing with *unfeminine* or socially unacceptable, taboo subjects, would have been likely to be excluded from the mainstream. This did indeed happen, and it is possible to discover female poets who do not comply with a 'genteel', feminine poetry. Politically committed writers, such as the Republican Angelina Vidal (1853-1917) or writers talking openly about female desire, such as Judite Teixeira. Both these poets illustrate the fact that society could suppress the voice of women who did not conform with 'feminine' behaviour, and therefore deserve further analysis, but, for reasons of space, I shall only look at Judite Teixeira, with whom Florbela seems to have some points in common.

A closer look at Teixeira's poetry becomes doubly exciting when one realizes that Florbela collaborated in 1925 in the third issue of the magazine *Europa*, directed by Teixeira herself, with the sonnet 'Charneca em Flor'⁷⁷. This legitimizes the attempt to trace the possible influence of Judite Teixeira on Florbela's later poetry, since it confirms that Florbela had access to and, in all likelihood would have read, some of Teixeira's poetry.

Judite Teixeira published *Decadência* (1923) (which had two editions) *Castelo de Sombras* (1923) and *Nua* (1926). *Decadência* was apprehended by the Governo Civil de Lisboa on the grounds that it was immoral at the same time as Boto's *Canções* and Raul Leal's *Sodoma Divinizada*. This is hardly surprising when one becomes aware that in her poetry Teixeira, under the guise of Decadent poetry, makes clear references to sensual love, perverse attractions, including lesbian ones. In *Decadência*, several poems have lesbian undertones, for instance 'A Estátua' (pp.15-16), describing a female statue whose marble body makes the poet fantasize, or 'Perfis Decadentes' (pp.31-33), which describes the embrace of two 'corpos subtilizados, / femininos'.

⁷⁷*Europa*, nº3, 25 June 1925, p.31.

In these two poems, the encounters either take place in the imagination of the poet or are presented as a dreamlike vision, and therefore could pass off as a decadent literary attitude. By contrast, the poem 'A Minha Amante' (pp.61-62) is brutally direct in its very title and reads as a praise of a relationship with a female lover as the only remedy against the poet's all-pervasive suffering. Although the title of the poem immediately leads to such a reading, another interpretation of the poem is possible, if the quotation that follows the title is taken into account. The quotation, 'a dor / Só lhe perco o som, e a cor / em orgias de morfina!', comes from an earlier poem in the collection, 'Fim' (p.39), which is about drugs, and thus the female lover Teixeira had in mind might in fact have been drugs. This is the interpretation of the poem offered by António Manuel Couto Viana, in the only article about Teixeira that seems to exist⁷⁸.

Teixeira's second collection, *Castelo de Sombra*, is much more subdued in tone. But in her third work, *Nua*, Teixeira continues to write poems about her attraction to other women ('Ilusão' (pp.21-23), 'A Bailarina Vermelha' (p.29-31) and 'A infanta das mãos pálidas' (pp.49-50) and, perhaps significantly, chose as an epigraph for *Nua* a line from a French lesbian writer, Renée Vivien: 'Je rêve d'amour et je dors solitaire'⁷⁹. But in the majority of poems, she now appears to be addressing a male lover.

The most striking aspect of *Nua* is its constant references to sensuality. For instance, in the poem 'Rosas Pálidas' (pp.63-4) the poet challenges pale, virginal roses (a metaphor for virginal women), to allow themselves to live and love:

Deixai que o sol fecunde o vosso seio...
e que o vento vos beije
em convulsões brutais,

⁷⁸António Manuel Couto Viana, *Coração Arquivista* (Lisbon: Verbo, [1973?]), pp.198-208, p.202. Indeed, although there were a few reviews when Judite Teixeira's poetry first came out, her work has been almost completely ignored since, beginning with her frequent omission from anthologies of women's poetry. Of the four such anthologies that exist, two by Albino Forjaz de Sampaio and two by António Salvado, only one includes Judite Teixeira: it is Albino Forjaz de Sampaio's, *As Melhores Páginas da Literatura Feminina* (Lisbon: Livraria Popular de Francisco Franco, 1935). She is however mentioned in Cecília Barreira's recent doctoral thesis published under the title *Histórias das Nossas Avós*. (Lisbon: Colibri, 1992).

⁷⁹For further details about this poet, see Jeanine Moulin, *La poésie féminine* (Paris: Seghers, 1963), pp.120-122.

em convulsões pagãs!
 A luxúria, ó pálidas irmãs,
 é a maior força da vida!

This constitutes a progression in relation to the earlier collection, *Decadência*, where sensual love was still perceived as a derangement, a view that had been expressed particularly powerfully in the poem 'A Outra' (pp.41-42), where the poet had described another self, living within her, whose song tried to lure her to acknowledge:

A estridência da cor,
 a ânsia do momento...
 A rubra dor
 do sensualismo
 no ardor
 de cada paroxismo

But, to the poet, all that the other self sought was but an illusion:

E é sempre a mesma dor angustiada
 em cada sensação realizada...

In *Nua*, this self-division is left behind and sensuality is much more readily evoked, and female desire is openly expressed, with a vocabulary that brings to mind that used by Florbela in some of her later poems from *Charneca em Flor*, such as rubro, ardente, chama, ânsia, oiro, sangue, brasa. Teixeira, however, more so than Florbela, describes mutual desire and love scenes ('A Cor dos Sons', pp.33-35, 'As Tuas Mãos', pp.37-38, 'Sinfonia Hiberna', pp.47-48, 'Volúpia', pp.65-66, 'Schéhérazade', pp.67-8, 'Mais beijos', pp.69-70). Despite this obvious difference, there are several thematic convergences between the two poets.

A poem like 'A Vida' (pp.15-19), which opens *Nua*, in its praise of life and love and rejection of sadness, in its acknowledgment of the fact there can be more than one love in a woman's life, brings to mind Florbela's famous (and scandalous at the time) statement in 'Amar!'. Let us compare the two:

Acaba-se um amor...
 há outro, outro ainda,
 e outro e outro após!

(Teixeira)

Quem disser que se pode amar alguém
Durante a vida inteira é porque mente!

(Amar!, vol.2, p.189)

As well as describing moments of fulfilled love, Judite Teixeira acknowledges moments of sexual frustration ('Incoerência', pp.57-8), a theme with which Florbela also deals (for instance in 'Realidade', vol.2, p.169). Furthermore, Teixeira even evokes the excruciating pain of desiring an unresponsive male lover in a poem like 'Domínio' (pp.43-45), a theme to which Florbela too would devote a poem, 'Soneto III' (vol.2, p.216):

A chama do meu querer
tem a violência
da garra que se crava,
fere e despedaça [...]

— Lava escaldante
onde se não abrasa o teu amor!...

However, on the whole, what is highlighted in Teixeira's poetry is the power of the woman poet over her male lover (although, unlike Florbela, Teixeira never suggests that this power is partly derived from poetry). This power leads Judite Teixeira to claim in 'Podes ter os amores que quiseres...' (pp.89-90), that her lover will never be able to forget her, an assertion of her own worth, which brings to mind Florbela's 'Supremo Enleio' (vol.2, p.183), despite obvious differences:

Podes dizer que me não amas,
sim, podes dizê-lo,
e o mundo acreditar,
porque só eu saberei
que mentes!

Eu estou na tua alma
como a flama
que devora sob a cinza
as brasas dormentes...

On the whole, there are enormous stylistic and thematic differences between the two poets, but they have in common a theme which distinguishes them from virtually all other women poets of the period in Portugal, the acknowledgment of female sexuality. Since

Judite Teixeira's collections came out well before *Charneca em Flor*, and since Florbela had collaborated in a magazine directed by Teixeira, one may put forward the hypothesis that Florbela is likely to have come across Teixeira's poetry and to have been influenced by the daringness of her tone. Since, on the other hand, however, in Florbela's second book, *Livro de Soror Saudade*, which was published just before Teixeira's first collection, the theme of sensual love was already present, it may well be that the thematic convergences just highlighted are mere coincidences. But even if they are not, there is no doubt that the influence of Teixeira could only have taken place because Florbela was ready to absorb it.

Elaine Showalter called the early stage of female novelwriting the 'feminine' stage, for it was the most subdued one, in which women had internalized male assumptions about female nature⁸⁰. Perhaps this term can be appropriated here to say that, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, the first generation of women poets in Portugal were mostly at the 'feminine stage', for they too had internalized many male assumptions about female nature, adopting a 'feminine' style and 'feminine' themes. Yet their poetry should not be dismissed out of hand. Firstly, because at the very least it draws attention to the constrictions placed upon them. And secondly, because their poetry is not as homogeneous as male critics have tended to portray it: 'poetesses' did not just write the 'genteel' and conventional poetry which has come to be associated with that derogatory label, but were able to devise strategies to overcome the constrictions they faced. At its best, the female poetry of that period, particularly that of Judite Teixeira alongside that of Florbela Espanca, shows that it need not reflect the self-effacing stance that society had traditionally fostered in women, but could produce, to recall Gilbert and Gubar's statement, lyric poems which are 'in some sense, the utterance of a strong and assertive I'⁸¹.

⁸⁰Elaine Showalter, 'Towards a Feminist Poetics', in *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, edited by Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm., 1979), pp.22-41.

⁸¹S. Gilbert and S. Gubar, *Shakespeare's Sisters*, p.XXII.

CHAPTER 2

FLORBELA'S READINGS AND HER EARLY WORK

The last chapter outlined the emergence of women poets in Portugal at the turn of the century, against the background of which Florbela's poetry must be read. This chapter will look in more detail at Florbela's poetic beginnings. The first part will discuss evidence of her determination to be a poet. The second part will then attempt to trace the authors to whose writings Florbela was exposed during her formative years and the aspects of their work which she assimilated when, more than at any other time, she would naturally have been susceptible to external influences. One author in particular, António Nobre, helped her to crystallize her poetic vocation, and Florbela's interaction with his work will be discussed in some detail. Finally, the third part will consider signs of identification with female suffering in her early poetry.

Until 1983, only about two dozen of Florbela's early poems were known. They were the poems published by Guido Battelli in *Juventília*, by Costa Leão in *Poetas do Sul* and by Armando Gusmão in *A Cidade de Évora*¹. Needless to say, the poems were difficult to come by since the books and the review in which they had appeared were long since out of print. But in 1983, when Florbela Espanca's *espólio* came to light, valuable

¹Florbela Espanca, *Juventília*, ed. by Guido Battelli (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1931), Costa Leão *Poetas do Sul* (Lisbon: Portugália, [1947]) and Armando de Gusmão, 'Algumas Poesias Juvenis de Florbela Espanca', *A Cidade de Évora*, 45-46 (1962-63), 235-243. Regarding the provenance of these poems, Battelli tells us that the ten *Juventília* poems were given to him by Júlia Alves. This seems unlikely, however, in the case of one of them, 'Liberta', since the manuscript of the poem was in possession of Florbela's third husband who donated it to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa, suggesting that the poem belongs to a later period. The poems from *Poetas do Sul* were given to Costa Leão by someone who wished to remain anonymous. Finally Armando de Gusmão claimed that the poems transcribed in *A Cidade de Évora* had been published in *Notícias de Évora*, but I was unable to find in that newspaper any trace of the following four: 'A uma Saudade', 'Crepúsculo', 'Desdenhando' and 'O Meu Amor'.

new manuscripts were made available. The manuscripts concerning Florbela's early period are two exercise-books, entitled *Trocando Olhares* and *Primeiros Passos*, the first made up of one hundred and fifty-five poems and three short stories written between 1915 and 1917, the second consisting of a selection of eleven poems from the former. This new material has been published as vol.1 (poetry) and vol.3 (prose) of the recent edition of Florbela's collected works, already mentioned in the Introduction, *Obras Completas*, edited by the non-academic Rui Guedes². Maria Lúcia Dal Farra, in a critical review, has quite rightly drawn attention to the enormous shortcomings of this edition, particularly the fact that it alters the order in which the poems were originally to be found in *Trocando Olhares*³. Despite its many inaccuracies I shall be quoting from it since, for the time being, it is the only edition of *Trocando Olhares* available in print. A new edition of *Trocando Olhares* by Dal Farra is hopefully forthcoming this year. In the meantime, Appendix 1 lists the poems in the order in which they appeared in the manuscript.

2.1. THE MAKING OF A POET

2.1.1. FLORBELA'S EDUCATION

The last chapter traced women's fight to gain access to education at the turn of the century. Florbela was amongst those who benefited from the slow change of mentality which led to the admission of women to secondary schools, since she went to the Liceu de Évora from 1908/9 onwards. António Bartolomeu Gromicho, one of Florbela's fellow-students at the Liceu de Évora, reminds us that she was one of the first to do so, being 'uma das dez alunas que tiveram a coragem inaudita de se inscreverem num liceu de frequência tradicional masculina'. Indeed only three other women had ever enrolled

²Florbela Espanca, *Obras Completas*, edited by Rui Guedes, 6 vols (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1985-1986).

³Maria Lúcia Dal Farra, 'A Primeira Edição do Manuscrito de *Trocando Olhares*', *Cadernos de Teoria e Crítica Literária*, 15 (1988), 93-106.

previously. Gromicho also recounts the headmaster's unwillingness to let women in and one of his favourite depreciating comments: 'menina não tem bossa para os livros, vá para casa fazer meia e aprender a preparar uma açorda'⁴. Undeterred by such biased attitudes, Florbela carried on with her studies. But in June 1913, she failed the exam of the last year of secondary school, the 7^o ano and gave up her studies, marrying soon after, on 8 December 1913. Three years later, however, in September 1916, she resumed studying, completing her 7^o ano in July 1917.

In an attempt to establish what Florbela's readings had been during these school years, Celestino David, one of Florbela's first biographers, went through the borrowing register of the Biblioteca Pública de Évora, tracing the entries for the books that she had asked for⁵. When I went through the registers, however, it became apparent that the list David had drawn up was not exhaustive. The revised list is as follows:

História Trágico-Marítima, 12 January 1911,
 Guerra Junqueiro, *A Morte de D. João*, 11 February 1911 (and again 8 April 1911)
 Balzac, *O Lírio do Vale*, 15, 16 and 18 February 1911,
 Dumas, *Os Três Mosqueteiros*, 18 February 1911 (and again 4 March 1911)
 Dantas, *A Ceia dos Cardeais*, 4 March 1911,
 Camilo Castelo Branco, *Amor de Salvação*, 16 March 1911,
 Dumas, *A Dama das Camélias*, 1 April 1911,
História da Literatura, 30 November 1911,
Portugaliae Momumenta Historica, 15 April 1912,
 Gonçalves Crespo, *Miniaturas*, 27 February 1913,
 Teófilo Braga, *Garrett e o Romantismo*, 11 April 1913,
 Eça de Queirós, *Os Maias*, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9 May 1917.

This list, which in all likelihood only represents some of the books that Florbela would have read in adolescence, shows that she enjoyed reading⁶. Most of the titles from

⁴António Bartolomeu Gromicho, 'Florbela, Estudante Liceal', *Jornal de Évora*, 17 May 1964, pp.1-2.

⁵Celestino David, 'O Romance de Florbela', *A Cidade de Évora*, 15-16 (1948), 41-100 (p.59).

⁶Confirming this, Celestino David recounts that he often saw Florbela browsing through the books in the bookshop in Évora during those years, in 'O Romance de Florbela', 15-16 (1948), 41-100, (p.58). Florbela's taste for books is vividly captured in the photograph of her reading, featured on the cover of vol.1 of *Obras Completas*. The photograph was taken by her father around 1910.

1911 (when she was doing the 5^ª ano) indicate that Florbela was reading for pleasure and that her taste did not differ much from that of a typical adolescent: she chose predominantly Romantic love-stories. As for the later titles, read in 1913 and 1917 (both of these were the years when she was studying for the 7^ª ano), *Garrett e o Romantismo* was probably read to help her with her work at school, and *Os Maias* may have been a set text⁷.

2.1.2. FLORBELA'S ENDEAVOURS TO BECAME A POET

At the beginning of 1916 Florbela was 21 and had been married to Alberto Moutinho for two years. During that period they had been living in Redondo⁸, where they supported themselves by teaching and, according to Celestino David, 'nas horas de ócio formavam, com os intelectuais da terra, uma tertúlia em que se conversava, discutia, recitava'⁹. It was sometime towards the end of those two years that Florbela started to write poetry in all earnestness and decided she wanted to be a poet. By 1916 she had acquired a new poetic awareness and one can follow throughout that year her attempts to have her work printed in newspapers and magazines and even in book-form, the latter pointing to the fact that she had begun to think in terms of a poetic 'macrostructure'.

Right at the beginning of 1916, in January, Florbela wrote to the director of the *Suplemento Modas e Bordados* of *O Século*, Mme Carvalho, offering under the name of her godmother, Mariana Espanca, some of her poems for publication¹⁰. In the course of

⁷According to the *Programas para a Instrução Secundária (Aprovados por Decreto de 3 de Novembro de 1905)* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1914), the modern authors set for study for the 4^ª and 5^ª ano were Garrett, Herculano, Rebelo da Silva, Arnaldo Gama, Júlio Dinis, Camilo, João de Deus, Antero do Quental and Eça de Queirós. In the 7^ª ano, they were no prescribed authors or set texts as such. It was stated that 'o professor escolhe os autores e as obras, sem deixar de estudar os autores indicados para a 4^ª e 5^ª classe.' (pp.9-10).

⁸In *Acerca de Florbela* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1986), Rui Guedes states that in September 1915, Florbela and her husband had moved back to Évora (pp.38-9). This is a mistake on his part, since he uses as supporting evidence a letter from Florbela to Júlia Alves which was only written in September 1916.

⁹Celstino David. 'O Romance de Florbela', *A Cidade de Évora*, 15-16 (1948), 41-100 (p.66).

¹⁰This fact can be inferred from the existence of a letter by Mme Carvalho answering Mariana Espanca (alias Florbela), in *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.223. The letter is dated January 1915, but I subscribe to Guedes' view that 'O papel, como já tinha o ano impresso, foi utilizado em Janeiro sem se lembrarem de

1916, five of her poems did appear in *Modas e Bordados* but often with terrible alterations and misprints¹¹. This women's supplement, started in 1912, aimed to give all sorts of advice to its readers: predictably, beauty counselling and fashion hints, but perhaps less predictably, it also gave guidance to readers on how to improve their handwriting, and furthermore seemed to act as an advisory board for women with literary aspirations, suggesting changes, encouraging (or sometimes discouraging) aspiring young poets. Both in the columns of the paper itself and in private correspondence, Florbela was always encouraged to continue writing poetry. But more of that in a moment.

In all likelihood, it was also in early 1916 that Florbela began to copy out into *Trocando Olhares* the poems she had been writing since May 1915. The date on which she started this exercise-book is difficult to ascertain since the poems were not copied out in chronological order. Maria Lúcia Dal Farra suggests early May 1916 because, according to her, Florbela's primary aim in copying her poems into *Trocando Olhares* was to send a sample of her poetry to Mme Carvalho¹². Dal Farra bases her hypothesis on two arguments. The first is that up to the poem 'Os Meus Versos', the exercise-book is 'cunhado por caligrafia esmerada, sem borrões, sem rasuras' and has an internal unity, which Florbela achieved 'por meio da função de "cadre" que concede ao primeiro e ao último poema, que se comunicam e interagem', while subsequently the exercise-book acquired 'a feição de uma intimidade de oficina literária' (pp.99-101).

The second argument is based on Dal Farra's interpretation of two letters, one from Florbela to Mme Carvalho, the other from Mme Carvalho to Florbela. The first letter, dated 23 April 1916, shows Florbela asserting: 'a meu ver é uma indignidade revoltante firmar, com o próprio nome, versos alheios'¹³. Dal Farra reads this as an answer by Florbela to

alterar o ano' (*Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.258) and that the letter was in fact sent in January 1916. Indeed, the two poems submitted to Mme Carvalho, 'O teu Olhar' and 'Poetas' are only dated mid-1915 in *Trocando Olhares* and could not therefore have been discussed in early 1915.

¹¹For the titles and dates of the poems printed, please refer to Appendix 2. I have also transcribed one of the poems published in *Modas e Bordados* omitted by Rui Guedes from *Obras Completas*, in Appendix 3.

¹²Dal Farra, 'A Nascente Poética de Florbela Espanca', *Estudos Portugueses e Africanos*, 17 (1991), 97-108, (pp.99-101).

¹³This letter is published in *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.115-117.

accusations of plagiarism that Mme Carvalho might have levelled at her, accusations which would be explained by an understandable mistrust on Mme Carvalho's part, since Florbela's poetry had first been sent under the name of her godmother Mariana Espanca. Florbela's tone is so indignant that Dal Farra believes she sent *Trocando Olhares* to dispel Mme Carvalho's mistrust (pp.100-101). In evidence of that, Dal Farra cites a subsequent (although undated) letter by Mme Carvalho, where the director of *Modas e Bordados* gives her support to a 'book' Florbela had submitted to her appreciation, but without committing herself to helping her to publish it¹⁴.

Dal Farra's observation about the contrast between the presentation of *Trocando Olhares* up to 'Os Meus Versos' and thereafter is extremely pertinent, as is the suggestion that during the first part of *Trocando Olhares* Florbela would have been thinking in terms of a poetic macrostructure. However, while Dal Farra's hypothesis about the manuscript being submitted to Mme Carvalho makes sense in the light of the information available up to now, it has to be revised in the light of a completely new set of evidence, examined here for the first time: the advice that was given to Florbela in the columns of *Modas e Bordados* during that period.

In Appendix 2, I have attempted to reconstitute the dialogue between Florbela and Mme Carvalho, showing that Florbela's letters are replies to suggestions made in the pages of *Modas e Bordados*. These indicate that by May 1916 Florbela had indeed sent Mme Carvalho details of a project for which she was seeking publication. But a close reading of the columns in parallel with the available correspondence makes it absolutely clear that the book in question must have been a different literary project, that of *Alma de Portugal*.

The fact remains that Mme Carvalho's advice was of paramount importance in Florbela's poetic development. But Florbela also benefited from advice from other sources. In June 1916, the assistant editor of *Modas e Bordados*, Júlia Alves, took it upon herself to approach Florbela to seek her collaboration for a paper she wanted to start, giving rise to an epistolary friendship¹⁵. Florbela's twenty-six letters to Júlia Alves, which run from 16

¹⁴This letter is published in *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.225.

¹⁵This can be inferred from Florbela's first letter to Júlia Alves, *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.123-125.

June 1916 to 5 April 1917, provide priceless information to the critic, despite being incomplete¹⁶. They record Florbela's thoughts on literature, include some of her poetry¹⁷ and discuss her literary projects, in particular the elaboration of a project entitled *O Livro d'Ele*, following the loss of an earlier manuscript (probably that of *Alma de Portugal*). These letters will be examined in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.

It was also during the course of 1916 that Florbela discovered that one of her father's friends, Luís Proença, was the brother of the famous Raul Proença. Through this contact, she was able to send Raul Proença a sample of her poetry to which she gave the title 'Primeiros Passos', consisting of eleven poems selected from *Trocando Olhares*. Raul Proença's comments were favourable¹⁸ and it appears that it was with his help that she was able to publish *Livro de Mágoas* two and a half years later.

Further highlighting Florbela's urge to be published, Costa Leão refers to the existence of a later sample of her poetry, entitled 'Primeiros Versos', dating from 1917: 'organizou a Poetisa um caderninho com 16 sonetos e o poemeto *Rústica*, que entregou a pessoa amiga para lhe conseguir editor. Mas este não apareceu... e o manuscrito [...] ficou em poder dessa pessoa que ainda religiosamente o conserva'¹⁹. In his book, Costa Leão transcribed nine of these poems. They are all different from those included in 'Primeiros Passos', making it certain that 'Primeiros Versos' was indeed a different attempt on Florbela's part to establish contacts in the literary world with a view to publication.

In the meantime, the *Modas e Bordados* section of *O Século* was not the only paper to print Florbela's poetry in the course of 1916: she also contributed to two regional papers, *Notícias de Évora* and *A Voz Pública*, from July to September 1916, with

¹⁶Since there are no known manuscripts for them, Rui Guedes' edition is based on Carlos Sombrio's work *Florbela Espanca* (Figueira da Foz: Ed. Homo, 1948), where some letters appear to have been edited, with rows of dots separating unrelated sections. Sombrio explains that Júlia Alves gave him these letters (p.22), but it is not clear what subsequently happened to the originals.

¹⁷Most of the poems Florbela sent to Júlia Alves were published after her death by Guido Battelli in *Juvenilia*.

¹⁸*Obras Completas*, vol.1, pp.257-261.

¹⁹*Poetas do Sul: Bernardo de Passos e Florbela Espanca*, p.46.

respectively fifteen and ten poems²⁰. This must have been particularly important for Florbela, since both these were local newspapers, whose readers would almost certainly know of, and perhaps even know her. So much so that one of her poems in *Notícias de Évora*, 'Estudantes' (vol.1, p.61), was addressed to her former classroom friends.

From all that has been said, the importance of the year of 1916 as the central point of Florbela's early career will no doubt have become apparent. Two articles by Maria Lúcia Dal Farra draw attention to the exercise-book *Trocando Olhares*, which 'encerra, por assim dizer, uma verdadeira paleografia da poética de Florbela', yielding information about Florbela's elaboration of successive projects and about the shaping of her poetic style during that year²¹. To build a complete picture of Florbela's early poetic career, however, it is equally important to examine her own thoughts on the poetic *persona* and on literature and of course her own literary preferences, in order to assess to what extent her conception and perception of literature influenced some of the poetry of *Trocando Olhares*. Florbela's thoughts on these matters are recorded in her correspondence with Júlia Alves.

2.1.3. FLORBELA'S LITERARY PREFERENCES AND THE IMAGE OF THE ROMANTIC POET

Florbela's letters to Júlia Alves, in spite of their occasional literary affectation, are important on several counts: firstly because of their pledge to reveal a true image of the self and secondly because of Florbela's comments on literature. Both of these are subjects she promises to address in her very first letter to Júlia: 'Prometo para si despir a minha capa vermelha, farfalhante de guizos, com que me mostro ao mundo', and "'Preleccionaremos sobre poesia no próximo número". Dir-lhe-ei o meu modo de ver, as minhas tendências,

²⁰Although Rui Guedes mentions Florbela's collaboration in *Notícias de Évora* in *Acerca de Florbela*, p.120, he seems totally unaware that her poetry was also published in *A Voz Pública*. I have listed the poems published from both in Appendix 4.

²¹Dal Farra. 'A Nascente Poética de Florbela Espanca', p.98. See also 'Especulações em Torno da Reconstituição de um Projecto Inédito de Florbela Espanca', *Actas do Congresso da Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas* (Coimbra: Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas, 1992), pp.319-324.

os meus gostos sobre o assunto'²². One of the most interesting aspects of her correspondence, in fact, is to see how her thoughts and feelings on these two matters are interlinked, that is to say how her personality conditioned her literary preferences and, conversely, how her literary preferences influenced the way in which she perceived herself and the image of the self she sought to project.

2.1.3 a. Florbela's readings

In these letters, there are isolated references to a few foreign authors, usually cultural icons, like Goethe (vol.5, p.129) or Victor Hugo (vol.5, p.170), although Florbela also referred indirectly to Daudet, by describing herself as a dreaming Tartarin (vol.5, p.163). On the whole, however, it is Portuguese authors that are at the forefront of her mind. References to them and their work usually, though not exclusively, appear in a context where she is giving examples to Júlia of the authors she most admires.

To begin with non-poetic works, there are three (more or less faithful) quotations from Júlio Dantas: 'uma ternura casta, uma ternura sã' (vol.5, p.130), 'Esse amor que "em sendo triste, canta, e em sendo alegre, chora" ' (vol.5, p.130), 'Bonita não seria... Ah! não talvez não fosse! Mas que profundo olhar e que expressão tão doce!' (vol.5, pp.139-140). These were such well known lines at the time that Florbela assumed that Júlia would know their source: they come from the immensely popular play *A Ceia dos Cardeais*, a play which was written in 1902 and nine years later, in 1911, when Florbela read it, was already in its eleventh edition. The play constitutes an attempt to portray the characters of three different peoples, the Spanish, the French and the Portuguese, through the figures of three bishops, Rufo, Montmorency and Gonzaga, who tell each other a love episode of their youth. All three quotations come from Gonzaga's long tirade, where he describes his childhood love with intense feeling. Gonzaga, who embodies the Portuguese way of love (it is he who utters the line that subsequently became so famous 'Como é diferente o amor em Portugal'), is a dreamer, haunted by that particularly Portuguese feeling, *saudade*: he

²²*Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.124-125. In *Obras Completas*, 'com que me mostrou ao mundo' (sic).

becomes a priest after the death of his beloved cousin, a kind of Purinha, who was his childhood sweetheart.

The conception of love as a pure and ethereal feeling, which can survive all obstacles, even the death of the loved one, pervaded the poetry of the period in Portugal, and Florbela was not alien to it. Throughout *Trocando Olhares*, poems dwell on a similarly unconsummated love, often blended with death and *saudade*.

Florbela was responsive to the love and tragedy of Gonzaga described in *A Ceia dos Cardeais*. Her receptivity to romantic love and suffering is also revealed by her mention of Antero de Figueiredo's *Doida de Amor*, again a major literary success at the time²³. The narrative, in letter form, is a heart-breaking account of the story of Gabriela, a young married woman with a child, who has an affair. Gabriela gives herself for love but is then abandoned by her lover, Rui, who marries someone else. As a result of this, the distraught Gabriela is struck by madness. The author's style is rhetorical in the best romantic tradition if rather dated on occasions, but the book is redeemed by the fact that he is sympathetic to the heroine's predicament. This might unconsciously have struck a sensitive cord with Florbela for both her letters and some of her poetry, particularly the two sonnets entitled 'A Mulher', reveal what she saw as women's lot: a situation of constant vulnerability because society severely constrained the expression of inner feelings, punishing those who strayed²⁴.

More unexpectedly, the writer from whom she quoted at most length is a largely forgotten one, Silva Pinto, author of *Neste Vale de Lágrimas*, but mainly known nowadays as the editor of Cesário Verde's poetry²⁵. In a letter to Júlia, Florbela quoted, sometimes at length, from *Neste Vale de Lágrimas*. The book is made up of numerous short sections, mostly self-contained. Significantly, the passages that retained Florbela's attention come almost exclusively from three sections. The first passage comes from 'Os Suicidas', an apology of suicide cast in the form of an Indian parable, which Silva Pinto wrote following the reaction of dismay amongst the public at the suicides of two well-known novelists.

²³*Obras Completas*, vol.5, p.154. *Doida de Amor* (Lisbon, 1910).

²⁴These two sonnets will be analysed in the last part of this chapter.

²⁵*Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.151-156. *Neste Vale de Lágrimas* (Lisbon, 1896).

Camilo Castelo Branco and Júlio César Machado. The second passage quoted (from 'Per Umbras') consists of a romantic description of the death of a minor poet, Barros de Seixas: the hero dies, and following this, his loved one succumbs to tuberculosis, which enables them, following the example of the paradigmatic 'Noivado do Sepulcro', to meet in the grave: 'no dia seguinte contou ao Poeta como o procurara inutilmente, e ele contou-lhe como a tivera esperando' (vol.5, p.154). The third passage quoted, taken from the section entitled 'Cesário Verde', is an account of the grief of Cesário Verde's mother at the poet's death. It is telling that Florbela should have been drawn to these particular sections of *Neste Vale de Lágrimas*, for despite the ultra-romantic suggestions present in the title, most of the others sections that make up the book are quite different in tone, being much more picaresque.

These three works by Dantas, Antero de Figueiredo and Silva Pinto share important similarities: all three portray characters who suffer because they are immensely sensitive, they have souls of 'artists'. It may come as a surprise, therefore, that another non-poetic work for which Florbela expressed great admiration was *Os Gatos* by Fialho de Almeida (vol.5, pp.170-171). However, the terms in which she recommended its reading to Júlia explain how she reacted to him: 'Se não leste, lê... e extasia-te, e ri com ele, e enraivece-te com ele, e aprende a amar o simples e o complicado, o bom e o mau que há naquele peito heróico de lutador antigo' (vol.5, p.171). By describing Fialho as a 'peito heróico de lutador antigo', Florbela is suggesting that he was distanced from the society in which he lived, like a romantic hero; more importantly, he shared with the other writers she admired the ability to express intense feelings and bare his soul.

Feeling thus was of paramount importance for Florbela. Turning to poetry, the poets she mentions confirm this: Guerra Junqueiro, José Duro, Cesário Verde, Correia de Oliveira, Augusto Gil and, last but not least, António Nobre. Of Guerra Junqueiro, Florbela appears to have retained the romantic side, as we can see from what she quoted of him: 'o peito que o sente [o amor] é um sacrário estrelado' (vol.5, p.130). The lines she quoted from Augusto Gil, which come from his famous poem 'Noiva', are Gil's definition of his verses 'Tão pobres, tão ingénuos, tão sentidos, / que o povo humilde os acolheu e os

canta', which Florbela appropriated to qualify her own verses, in what could perhaps be described as an unconscious gesture on her part to glorify her poetry, by praising its sincerity and lack of sophistication (vol.5, p.156).

Correia de Oliveira's name comes up as a reply to Júlia who, we may infer, had asked Florbela whether she knew his work (vol.5, p.170). José Duro and Cesário Verde are mentioned in connection with their descriptions of 'dor' (vol.5, p.154). But the poet on whom Florbela bestows most attention is António Nobre (vol.5, pp.154, 170, 173, 177 and 186). He was by her own admission her favourite poet. It is therefore essential to look in detail at what she had to say about Nobre in order to find out how she read him and what it was about him that so appealed to her.

It is instructive first, however, to compare the names of the authors mentioned by Florbela against the entry 'Contemporâneos' in Jacinto Prado Coelho's *Dicionário das Literaturas Portuguesa, Galega e Brasileira*²⁶: the entry is an attempt to establish who were the most influential 'contemporary' authors, from the publication of *Orpheu* (1915) up to the time when the entry was written (around 1965). With reference to poetry, the article states that:

Ao redor de 1920, todos se mostram bastante enfeudados à *tradição*, quer pelas formas, quer pelos temas: navega-se muito nas águas de Junqueiro e de António Nobre, persegue-se de quando em quando o rasto de Cesário Verde, ensaiam-se voos à sombra de Pascoaes. Mas os poetas de maior audiência continuam a ser porventura António Correia de Oliveira e Augusto Gil. (p.198)

For prose the names that come up are, amongst others, that of Júlio Dantas and Antero de Figueiredo (p.198)²⁷.

The remarkable overlap between the names mentioned by Florbela and those featured in the entry shows that Florbela was a representative average reader, aware of the

²⁶*Dicionário das Literaturas Portuguesa, Galega e Brasileira*, 2 vols (Porto: Livraria Figueirinhas, 1968), vol.1, pp.197-203.

²⁷A survey published in the paper *ABC*, in 1928, listing the names of the ten most popular writers at the time, showed that at the end of the twenties Antero de Figueiredo, Júlio Dantas, and Augusto Gil were still widely read. Virgínia Vitorino, the female bestseller, also featured in the list. This survey is discussed by José-Augusto França in 'Sondagem nos Anos Vinte: Cultura, Sociedade, Cidade', in *Análise Social*, 19 (1983), 823-844.

main cultural references of her day. Yet she was conscious that the breadth of her culture was only average, at one point in the correspondence even describing herself to Júlia Alves in the following depreciative terms: 'sou uma criatura vulgarmente educada, vulgarmente inteligente e vulgarmente cultivada; tudo vulgar, querida, tudo!' (vol.5, p.186). One feels that she was perhaps being too hard on herself, for it was already an achievement, given the context, to have the (limited) culture she had.

Florbela was undoubtedly reflecting the taste of the period in her marked preference for Nobre, but it is still important to assess what it was about him that so struck her. The very first mention of his name occurs in her eleventh letter to Júlia, which is the first to discuss writers and their work in depth. There Florbela argued to her friend that 'a única coisa que consola os tristes é a tristeza; não te parece?' (vol.5, p.151). To back up her argument, she quoted extensively from *Neste Vale de Lágrimas*. But then, as if she needed more authority to make her point irrefutable, she told Júlia: 'Lê os versos de António Nobre, o meu santo poeta da Saudade. Lê o *Fel* de José Duro, o malgrado poeta esquecido e desprezado. Lê a *Doída de Amor* de Antero de Figueiredo, e depois dize-me se eles te irritam!...' (vol.5, p.154). According to Florbela, these works described such depths of suffering that, by comparison, the reader's own suffering becomes derisory: 'Esta dor, assim descrita, compara-a com a tua, se te queres rir do teu sofrer' (vol.5, p.154).

From this passage, it becomes clear that Florbela had a romantic conception of literature. Great literature for her was of a confessional nature, a pouring out of the naked soul into writing. Furthermore, she had a romantic conception of the poet (further seen in the fact that throughout these letters, more often than not, she capitalizes the word Poet): for her, the true poet is a superior personality, misunderstood, isolated, in other words, a figure endowed with romantic characteristics. While in this letter Florbela names several writers (or their characters, for she confuses the two) as examples of 'âmes sensibles', in a later letter she stressed that for her Nobre represented the Poet par excellence: 'Eu confesso que em matéria de versos o único que me faz chorar, o único que é para mim Poeta [notice the capital], é António Nobre' (vol.5, p.177).

Her theory that comfort can be found in the reading of sad works is repeated in letter 15, probably as a reply to Júlia's comments made in the intervening time on the passage just discussed. But in this later letter Florbela accepted that there might be two different reactions to sad works, as she contrasted her reaction to that of Júlia: 'a ti entristecem-te e a mim alegam-me. Para os verdadeiros desgraçados, é sempre motivo de felicidade a desgraça dos outros' (vol.5, p.165). By differentiating herself from her friend and including herself amongst the truly miserable, Florbela was implicitly viewing herself as an 'âme sensible', isolated from the crowd and only able to find solace in the company of kindred souls²⁸.

A pattern of contradiction thus emerges: on the one hand, Florbela claimed that she was consoled by reading sad works, particularly *Só*, because they made her aware of the insignificance of her own suffering, but on the other she insisted on associating herself with the truly miserable, thereby giving significance and greatness to that suffering. In fact, one of the most immediately striking facts about her correspondence to Júlia Alves is the way in which they attempted to convey an image of Florbela as a typically romantic figure, predestined to be unhappy, misunderstood by the world.

2.1.3 b. Florbela's portrayal as a Romantic Poet

In her very first letter to Júlia, Florbela claimed she had two defects, both of which would ensure her identification as a Romantic heroine: the first was sadness, 'sou triste, imensamente triste' (p.123) and the second a tendency to dreaminess, 'o sonhar, sonhar muito, olhar muito além' (p.124). Still in that first letter, her pledge to give Júlia an authentic image of the self, mentioned earlier, is laden with Romantic topoi: 'Prometo para si despir a minha capa vermelha, farfalhante de guizos, com que me mostrou [*sic*] ao mundo; prometo-lhe conversar muito, tagarelar muito consigo de todas as coisas onde nós, mulheres, possamos bordar a flor azul do sonho' (pp.124-125). Her outward social being ('capa vermelha farfalhante de guizos') is thus described in terms of the Romantic figure of

²⁸In spite of the contrast which she established in this letter between herself and Júlia, in other letters Júlia is included amongst the *élite* of the 'âmes sensibles'.

the fool, and then contrasted with her inner being, which dreams of the 'flor azul do sonho'. The blue flower itself is even more readily identifiable as a romantic topos, running from German Romanticism through to Nerval, representing dreams, ideals and poetry.

Many other letters convey the image of Florbela as a romantic being, predestined to unhappiness. Furthermore, the Romantic image of the self is also conveyed in the poetry and poetic prose included in the letters. For instance the sonnet 'O Espectro' (Florbela's first collaboration in the *Notícias de Évora*, dedicated to Júlia) describes the poet as someone constantly haunted by a ghost which in the last stanza discloses its identity:

Embora eu lhe suplique: "Faz-me a graça
De me deixares um' hora ser feliz!
Deixa-me em paz!" Mas ele sempre diz:
"Não te posso deixar, sou a Desgraça!" (vol.5, p.144)²⁹

Thus Florbela presents herself as chosen by destiny to suffer. More strikingly, in her piece of poetic prose, 'A Oferta do Destino' (vol.5, pp.149-150), sent to Júlia a few days after 'O Espectro', she described herself as being the victim of a ruthless Destiny, forced to wear iron shoes until they broke. Only then would her tribulations end and she would find 'os olhos perturbadores e profundos, a boca embriagante e fatal que há-de prender-te para todo o sempre', symbolizing at once love and death (p.149) ³⁰.

Although Florbela depicts herself as a victim of Destiny, the sense of superiority derived from it is always subliminally present, since suffering turns her into an exceptional being. Hence, in some passages, the pride she takes in her suffering and her cult of *spleen*: 'O *spleen* torna-nos criaturas à parte, de quem os outros se ririam se nos conhecessem um pouco mais do que nós consentimos que nos conheçam' (vol.5, p.174).

²⁹A slightly different version of this poem was copied into *Trocando Olhares*. It can be found in *Obras Completas*, vol.1, p.193.

³⁰A slightly different version of this piece was copied into *Trocando Olhares*. It can be found in *Obras Completas*, vol.3, pp. 27-8.

Throughout these letters, Florbela constantly portrays herself in the same way. Further highlighting her 'âme sensible', one occupation sets her apart: reading. In letter 21 for instance, Florbela, imagining herself and Júlia as kindred souls, constructs a Romantic image of them reading poetry together, an activity which would set them apart from the crowds: 'Havíamos de ler juntas, os nossos poetas queridos. Eu havia de ensinar-te a amar o mais suave de todos: o meu poeta da Saudade, o meu triste António Nobre!' (vol.5, p.186)³¹.

But the passage which most clearly reveals the importance of reading in the construction of a Romantic image of the self comes in letter 16. In this letter, Florbela contrasts herself with the female world at large, claiming that while other women found fulfilment in traditional female occupations such as needlework, she was in that respect 'unfeminine' as she was fascinated by books, something which those of her own sex (she implied) usually found tedious:

Que desconsolo ser assim, minha Júlia! Ter apenas paciência para penetrar os arcanos duma alma que se fecha nas páginas dum livro; ter apenas gosto em chorar com António Nobre, pensar com Vitor Hugo, troçar com Fialho de Almeida e rir suavemente, deliciosamente, com uma pontinha de ironia onde às vezes há lágrimas, com Júlio Dantas! Eu não devia ser assim, não é verdade? Mas sou... Tive os melhores professores de tudo na capital do Alentejo [...], de bordados, de pintura, de música, de canto, e afinal sou uma eterna curiosa de livros e alfarrábios, e mais nada. (vol.5, p.170)

By showing that she was by nature distanced from traditional female occupations (which in those days were still often perceived as incompatible with intellectual achievement) and by rejecting the traditional female education she received, Florbela was reworking the concept of the Romantic hero into a female version. The Romantic hero, feeling he could not fulfil the role society expected him to, isolated himself in reading and was therefore

³¹A similar image is present in various other letters, such as letter 14, where Florbela, wishing that Júlia was with her, builds up the following picture of them, ambling in the countryside: 'Seríamos enfim dois Tartarin....[....] um livro de belos versos debaixo do braço, um livro que nos fizesse sonhar, um livro que nos fizesse sorrir... (vol.5, pp.163-164).

misunderstood³². Likewise Florbela, unable to conform to what society expected women to be like, retreated into the world of books, proudly aware of her difference.

Yet to be a woman and to enter a traditionally masculine realm, poetry, (both as a reader and as a writer, for in her mind one led to the other) was full of pitfalls. In this connection it is important to stress that Florbela had internalized prevailing double standards in evaluating literary works, distinguishing between male and female achievements. Hence, she contrasted *Outrora*, the work of the poetess Virgínia Águas³³, sent to her by Júlia, with those of male authors:

Li o livro e não me desagradou, embora aquela poesia seja tudo quanto há de menos artístico e literário; é como a minha, talvez, e como a de dezenas de mulheres na nossa situação. Poetisas por instinto, sem mestres, sem escola, sem método, nem norte, podemos apenas cantar, sonhar e chorar, nunca fazer versos! Versos chamo eu aos de G. Junqueiro, aos do Augusto Gil, aos do António Nobre. São lá versos aquilo que nós escrevemos!... (vol.5, p.173)

As it turns out, *Outrora* was unremarkable, and it may be that Florbela was truly unable to quote a single first-class woman poet, in the league of Nobre and the other male poets she revered; hence the polarity she established between male and female poetry. Interestingly, the sentence beginning with 'Poetisas por instinto' was not entirely her own: she was making hers the words of the preface to *Outrora*, by Cândido de Figueiredo, where the sentence originally read 'Sem mestres, sem escola literária, poetisa por instinto, deixou nos seus versos a nota espontânea da simplicidade, da candura [...]'³⁴. It is telling that, while Cândido de Figueiredo had not made any direct comparison between male and female poetry, Florbela made the comparison explicit, showing that her points of reference were the great canonical (male) writers. Yet despite the fact she ostensibly regarded poetry by men as inherently superior, on a deeper level the sentence can also be read as a condemnation of women's limited access to the realm of culture 'sem mestres, sem escola',

³²See for instance António Nobre's description of his nanny, the old Carlota, not understanding his interest in books, in 'Viagens na Minha Terra' and 'Males d'Anto', *Só* (Porto: Livraria Civilização Editora, 1983) p.78 and p.186 respectively.

³³Florbela did not name the poetess, but her identity was easy to establish with the help of the title of the collection.

³⁴*Outrora* (Porto, 1913), p.9.

thus explaining the lack of sophistication of female poetry. Such lack of sophistication itself is less negative than might appear at first sight, since it is depicted as 'cantar, sonhar e chorar', suggesting that women's poetry is heartfelt, and, given the importance Florbela attached to sincerity, this subliminally redeems it³⁵.

Once more a pattern of contradiction emerges: although on the one hand, *as a reader*, Florbela regarded herself as an 'âme sensible', thereby indicating that she was on the same wavelength as Nobre (and other poets) and like them in essence, on the other, *as a writer*, Florbela emphasized her awareness of the distance between female poetry, including her own, and that of the greatest (male) poets, citing again Nobre as an example. But as had happened in the case of Nobre's sufferings, which she proclaimed so great as to render her own insignificant, while later attempting to put herself on the same level as him, her unconditional admiration of Nobre is coupled with the unspoken urge to emulate him as a writer. As a result her poetry during the period develops in dialogue with his, as she tries to find her own space and her own identity.

2.2. THE DIALOGUE WITH NOBRE AND OTHER MALE POETS

2.2.1. THE PRESENCE OF MALE POETS IN THE BACKGROUND OF *TROCANDO OLHARES*

In *Trocando Olhares*, there is a sonnet addressed to Nobre, entitled 'A Anto!' (vol.1, p.198). The whole poem is a cry of empathy, attempting to show how completely Florbela understood him. The first three stanzas dismiss Nobre's fear that his book could

³⁵An earlier comment, however, leaves no doubt as to her inability to see women as producers of great poetry: 'Mas a propósito de versos: visto que o seu jornal só com cem páginas por semana poderia conter a porção de coisas boas e más que metade das mulheres de Portugal para lá envia numa febre de escritoras, literatas, poetisas e cozinheiras, eu mandei publicar num jornal daqui uns sonetos' (vol.5, p.129). It is important to note, nevertheless, that in later years Florbela would alter her view of female poetry, expressing admiration in her correspondence to Guido Battelli for poets such as the Italians Ada Negri and Sibila Alerano (a name which Rui Guedes misreads and writes as Abramo in *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.147) and the Uruguayan Juana de Ibarbourou, to whose poetry she had been introduced by Guido Battelli.

have a harmful effect on his readers, a fear he had expressed in his second introductory 'Memória': 'Mas, tende cautela, não vos faça mal / Que é o livro mais triste que há em Portugal!' (p.20), by stressing that it had on the contrary been an unrivalled source of comfort for those readers who shared his sufferings:

Pensaste nos que liam esse teu Missal,
Tua Bíblia de dor, o teu chorar sentido,
Temeste que esse altar pudesse fazer mal
Aos que comungam nele a soluçar contigo! (vol.1, p.198)

Woven into this poem is the view expressed at various points in Florbela's letters that, for the truly wretched, the suffering of another person is a solace, not a further cause of distress. The religious imagery in this stanza 'missal', 'bíblia de dor', 'altar', 'comungar' shows the admiration and fervour Nobre's poetry roused in her: reading him was viewed as a quasi mystical experience. Although this is an extreme reaction to Nobre, it is an extreme reaction that many readers did display, justifying the plural 'aos que comungam'³⁶.

But in the concluding stanza. Florbela's love for Nobre becomes embodied in a totally unexpected necrophiliac image³⁷:

Amo-te como não te quis nunca ninguém
Como se eu fosse ó Anto a tua própria mãe
Beijando-te já frio no fundo do caixão! (vol.1, p.198)

This image indicates that Florbela had seen that the absence of a mother was one of the causes behind the distressing loneliness of Nobre in *Só*. On one level *Só* is indeed a quest for maternal love, from the introductory poem 'Memória' where Nobre laments the death of his mother to the concluding one, 'Males d'Anto', describing the warmth and protectiveness of the maternal womb found in the grave, where his mother is awaiting

³⁶This delirious admiration can be exemplified by a book such as the Visconde de Vilamoura's, *António Nobre* (Porto: Edição da Renascença Portuguesa, 1915).

³⁷I am using here the word 'necrophilia' as defined by Alfredo Margarido in his article 'Necrophilia in Portuguese Literature', in *Portuguese Studies*, 4 (1988), 100-106.

him³⁸. But on another level, the image of Florbela kissing Anto has wider implications as Anna Klobucka has shown in her perceptive analysis of 'A Anto!': the kiss given to a Nobre neutralized by death symbolically releases Florbela from the unequal relationship between admirer and poet into one which gives her a semblance of 'horizontalidade igualitária'. Firstly because of the possible catalytic effect that 'a elaboração artística do motivo da morte masculina [...] teria tido para o desenvolvimento da imaginação literária feminina', and secondly because the 'reversão genealógica (a "filha" poética transformada em mãe)' which takes place in the poem, dislodges the categories admirer / poet³⁹.

Florbela's need to find her own voice and identity against the background of male poetry is also woven into the fabric of other poems. In particular Anna Klobucka draws our attention to the sonnet 'Errante' (vol.1, p.204), which is a reworking of Antero do Quental's 'O Palácio da Ventura'. Klobucka convincingly shows that, while the speaker in Antero's poem 'consegue que se abram para ele as suas portas de ouro [do palácio encantado da Ventura], e só então depara com o vazio abissal', Florbela never even reaches the palace; instead her sonnet is built around her *desdobramento* into a (masculine) 'coração' that seeks the Paço da Ventura while the despondent (feminine) 'Eu' is aware of the difficulties inherent to the quest and unbelieving about it ever being successful. Thus the sonnet functions as an illustration 'da própria bifurcação (sexualmente polarizada) enquanto agente sonhador'⁴⁰ and as a commentary on the almost insurmountable problems facing an inexperienced female writer writing in a male literary tradition.

But 'A Anto!' and 'Errante' are not the only sonnets of that period where Florbela attempts to situate herself in relation to male poets. In two of the last sonnets of *Trocando Olhares*, 'A Um Livro' and 'Maior Tortura', later to be included in *Livro de Mágoas* with changes of varying degree of importance under the titles 'A Um Livro' and 'A Maior

³⁸The image of a grieving mother embracing her dying son may well have been suggested to Florbela by Silva Pinto's account of Cesário Verde's funeral, described in a letter to Júlia Alves and previously mentioned (vol.5, p.155). This letter, though undated, seems to have been written in July 1916, the very same month of the composition of 'A Anto', dated 21-7-1916.

³⁹'*On ne naît pas poétesse: a Aprendizagem Literária de Florbela Espanca*', *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 29 (1992), 51-61 (p.58).

⁴⁰Anna Klobucka, p.55.

Tortura', Florbela addresses herself to a male Poet, drawing a comparison between herself and him. Inexplicably, in his edition, Rui Guedes did not publish these two sonnets as part of *Trocando Olhares*, but only as draft versions of their counterparts in *Livro de Mágoas* (vol.2. pp.72-3 and 80-81 respectively).

In 'A Um Livro' Florbela addresses an unnamed Poet, describing her reaction to his poetry. She feels she can identify with it so completely that, metaphorically speaking, it is as if it had been given to her:

No silêncio de cinzas de meu Ser
 Agita-se uma sombra de cipreste,
 É uma sombra triste que ando a ler
 No livro cheio de mágoa que me deste! (vol.2, p.80)

Florbela's identification with the Poet's work is highlighted by one small detail: his was a 'livro cheio de mágoa' (line 4) and, as if to mirror it, Florbela was later to entitle her first collection *Livro de Mágoas*, while changing this line to make it read 'A esse *livro de mágoas* que me deste' (my italics), thus making the link between his work and hers even clearer.

However, if Florbela identifies herself with the Poet, like Bocage's famous sonnet drawing a comparison between himself and Camões, it is to throw into relief the fact that they differ in one important aspect: talent.

Poeta igual a mim, ai quem me dera
 Dizer o que tu dizes! Quem soubera
 Velar a minha Dor desse teu manto!

There can be no certainty as to the identity of the poet that so impressed Florbela. At first sight, one would be inclined to think that Florbela had Nobre in mind, since the unconditional admiration she displays for the Poet is similar to that she had expressed for him both in her letters to Júlia Alves and in 'A Anto!'. However, a close examination of *Trocando Olhares* yields another possibility, completely lost on the reader because of Rui Guedes' idiosyncratic editing. In *Trocando Olhares*, 'A Um Livro' comes almost at the

end, in a section entitled 'Sonetos' consisting of 'Desalento'⁴¹, 'A Um Livro', 'Maior Tortura', 'Cegueira Bendita' and the last sonnet of the manuscript 'Noivado Estranho'. 'Desalento' is addressed to 'Ao grande e estranho poeta A.Durão'. This lends some weight to the idea that the 'Poeta' in the two sonnets that immediately follow it -- and which are precisely 'A Um Livro' and 'Maior Tortura' -- might be Durão.

This however presents a problem. Américo Durão, who coined the name Soror Saudade subsequently adopted by Florbela in the title of her second collection, was her contemporary at the University of Lisbon. But Florbela only started as a first year Law student in October 1917, while the last poem of *Trocando Olhares*, 'Noivado Estranho' is dated 30 April 1917. The section entitled 'Sonetos' may of course have been copied into *Trocando Olhares* at a later date or the dedication may have been added later, but if not, one can only speculate about Florbela having read Durão before meeting him in person at the University of Lisbon⁴².

'Maior Tortura' is similar in theme to 'A Um Livro', but begins by drawing in the quatrains a picture of Florbela as a *poète maudit*, an outcast. Only in the tercets does she address the Poet, comparing her suffering to his:

Sou como tu um cardo desprezado,
A urze que se pisa sob os pés,
Sou como tu um riso desgraçado! (vol.2, p.72)

But, as in 'A Um Livro', the comparison is there to stress that if the two poets have similarly unhappy destinies, they differ in talent:

Mas a minha Tortura inda é maior:
Não ser Poeta assim como tu és
Para falar assim da minha Dor! (vol.2, p.72)

⁴¹Again Rui Guedes did not publish this sonnet as part of *Trocando Olhares*, choosing instead to include it in *Livro de Mágoas*, next to its reworked version entitled 'A Minha Tragédia' (vol.2, pp.90-1).

⁴²This idea was put to me by Maria Lúcia Dal Farra in a letter dated 4 June 1992. An article presenting the case for it is forthcoming in *Colóquio-Letras*. Florbela's relationship with Durão and his influence on the poetry of *Livro de Mágoas* will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Despite Florbela's recognition of her limitations, the ending of the sonnet is unobtrusively subversive because, while she is on the one hand humbling herself before the real Poet (notice the capital), on the other she is setting up herself as one, if not because of talent, at least because of suffering: 'Mas a minha Tortura *inda é maior*' (my italics). As in the correspondence with Júlia, then, Florbela is here looking up to a male poet as a model (whether Nobre or Durão, the argument remains the same), yet at the same time affirming that by virtue of her suffering, she too is an 'âme sensible', and consequently a Poet. In fact, here, going for the first time a stage further than in the letters, she claims supremacy for her suffering with the argument that she cannot even alleviate it by expressing it.

These two poems, although later included in *Livro de Mágoas*, originally belong in their primitive form to *Trocando Olhares*. The fact that they are relatively close in time to Florbela's letters to Júlia Alves may help to account for their exploration of the same contradiction that runs through the correspondence, where Florbela was simultaneously proclaiming her admiration for Nobre, her role model, and portraying herself a way that would ensure her recognition as an 'âme sensible'. But Florbela's need to think with reference to male poets was not to be over for some time. As a result, Nobre continues to be an important reference in *Livro de Mágoas*.

2.2.2. THE PRESENCE OF NOBRE IN *LIVRO DE MÁGOAS*

A structural analysis of the collection makes it apparent that, despite her ostensive claims to be unable to express herself, Florbela is in fact attempting to set herself on the same level as António Nobre.

The opening poem, 'Este Livro' (vol.2, p.59), constitutes a reflection about the collection. It takes up the theory, put forward by Florbela earlier in her letters to Júlia Alves and in 'A Anto!', about the power of a sad book to console those of its readers who are on the same wavelength as the author. But here, there is a reversal of roles, for Florbela formerly at the receiving end as a reader, has now become the author whose work

is invested with the power to soothe the suffering of those readers attuned to its message:

Bíblia de tristes... Ó Desventurados,
Que a vossa imensa dor se acalme ao vê-lo!

In her new role, Florbela is still unconsciously looking up to Nobre as her model, a fact apparent if we bear in mind that in the earlier sonnet 'A Anto!', one of the periphrases used to designate *Só* was 'Bíblia de dor', a periphrase now echoed in her description of her own collection as a sacred book, a 'Bíblia de tristes'.

By establishing a communion in suffering between reader and author, Florbela could then more readily acknowledge that her book might be lacking in other respects:

Este livro é pra vós. Abençoados
Os que o sentirem, sem ser bom nem belo!

'Bom' and 'belo' look back to the traditional Platonic concepts of the good and beautiful, with which works of art are often assessed. Florbela thought that her work could not meet these criteria, but placed the value of her book in its sincerity of feeling (hence the emphasis on verbs of feeling such as 'chorar' and 'sentir', both in this sonnet and throughout the collection). Her sincerity is forcefully conveyed through the metaphor of pregnancy:

Vai pelo mundo.... (Trouxe-o no meu seio...)

In this metaphor, Florbela was probably once more looking back to *Só* as a reference-point for there, Nobre's first introductory 'Memória' read as follows:

Trouxe-o dum ventre: não fiz mais do que o escrever...
(*Só*, p.19) (my italics)

If the shadow of Nobre is present in the opening poem of *Livro de Mágoas*, in the rest of the collection his presence becomes more diffuse: many sonnets have thematic affinities with Nobre's poetry, but it is almost impossible to ascertain whether Florbela was directly looking back to him or whether the obvious thematic echoes are better explained in terms of the fact that such themes pervaded all the poetry of the period, and not only

Nobre's⁴³. For example, both poets characterized themselves as 'poètes maudits', singled out by destiny to suffer. Thus, in 'Sem Remédio', Florbela evokes a personified figure, Grief, who takes her over and becomes almost an alter ego, as if she were possessed:

Não sabem, que passou, um dia, a Dor,
À minha porta e, nesse dia, entrou. (vol.2, p.92)

This personification of Grief brings to mind Nobre's poem 'António', in spite of the enormous difference of form between the two poems:

E António crescendo, sãozinho e perfeito,
Feliz que vivia!
(E a Dor, que morava com ele no peito,
Com ele crescia...) (Só, p.24)

As well as differences of form between these two poems, there are underlying thematic differences: 'António' dwells on one of Nobre's favourite themes, that of childhood as a Golden Age from which the poet is now forever exiled (a recurrent theme in *Só*, but expressed particularly forcefully in the limpid sonnet 'Menino e Moço'), a theme which did not find much echo in Florbela. Suffering for her seemed to have existed almost since time immemorial.

Livro de Mágoas has other thematic affinities with Nobre, although it is hard to determine whether they are more than just affinities. Nobre's name does however occur twice within the collection. In 'Languidez' (vol.2, p.86), Florbela conveys the spirituality of Portuguese afternoons by describing them as 'tardes d'Anto'. But the sonnet which crystallizes tangibly Nobre's direct presence in the book, is the one closing the collection, 'Impossível' (vol.2, p.96). This is significant for, as a result, the whole book is brought under the sign of the poet of *Só*, as his figure looms over the collection from beginning to end.

⁴³Seabra Pereira has established the characteristics of the style of the period immediately preceding Florbela's, in *Decadentismo e Simbolismo na Poesia Portuguesa* (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Românicos, 1975). More importantly for our purposes, he has shown how Florbela was influenced by the predominant turn-of-the-century styles, in his preface to vol.2 of *Obras Completas*. 'De Rastros, com Asas', pp.3-43.

'Impossível' starts by reporting a comment made to Florbela:

Disseram-me hoje, assim, ao ver-me triste:
"Parece Sexta-Feira de Paixão.

The image of 'Sexta-Feira de Paixão', used to designate Florbela herself, immediately links the poem with Nobre's famous sonnet (sonnet 1), ending:

Moços do meu País! vereis então
O que é esta Vida, o que é que vos espera...
Toda uma Sexta-Feira de Paixão! (Só, p.131)

Nobre's presence becomes even more direct in the last tercet of 'Impossível' where Florbela actually evokes his name, drawing a comparison between her sufferings and his. Unexpectedly, although she had extolled Nobre's suffering in her letters to Júlia Alves, arguing that by comparison with it all others (including her own) would pale into insignificance, now she bitterly complains that the aura that surrounds his name blinds people to her own very real agony:

Os males d'Anto toda a gente os sabe!
Os meus... ninguém... A minha Dor não cabe
Nos cem milhões de versos que eu fizera!...

It is clear that, above anything else, what attracted Florbela in Nobre's poetry is the fact that he turns himself into a myth. He is the Poet with a capital 'p', with whom she unconsciously identified, even if on a conscious level *Livro de Mágoas* dwells on her anguish before her inadequacy to verbalize her own feelings, an inadequacy expressed in the poems where she compares herself to the great Poet (whether Durão or Nobre, the argument remains the same) but also in others ('Vaidade', 'Tortura', 'Neurastenia').

But if Florbela used Nobre's mediation in an attempt to build up an image of herself as a poet, she was far less sensitive to many other aspects of *Só*, in particular its innovative technique. And even in the means which the two poets use to convey suffering, one finds marked differences: there is a wealth of images in Nobre, as he evokes a world of ruins, misery and hideous illnesses, consumptives, cripples, a world of death punctuated by the tolling of bells. None of this is present in Florbela's poetry. When she described the

suffering of others (and even then it was usually to draw a comparison with her own), it is as a rule that of Nature, often a personified Nature, like in the sonnets 'Noite de Saudade', 'Mais Triste', 'Alma Perdida', 'Desejos Vãos' and 'Ao Vento', a process which would reach its highest form in the justly famous 'Árvores do Alentejo', from *Charneca em Flor*.

Amongst the sonnets which draw a comparison between herself and Nature, 'Mais Triste' deserves special attention as it sets up a conventional pathetic fallacy in the two quatrains, only to emphasize that, however great Nature's suffering might be, Florbela's own suffering is on a greater scale:

É triste e dilacera o coração
Um poente do nosso Portugal!
E não vêem que eu sou... eu... afmal,
A coisa mais magoada das que o são! (vol.2, p.93)

This poem relies on an identical technique of comparison to that used by Nobre in 'Males d'Anto' when he compared himself with the most exalted mythological figures:

Ó Dor! Ó Dor! Ó Dor! Cala, ó Job, os teus ais,
Que os tem maiores este filho de seus Pais!
Ó Cristo! Cala os ais na tua ígnea garganta,
Ó Cristo! que outra dor mais alta se alevanta... (Só, p.176)

As he cries out that his suffering is greater than any other, Nobre reaches the borders of heresy, not only a religious one in his comparison with Christ, but also a literary one, so to speak, in the way he uses Camões' line from *Os Lusíadas*. Although it is impossible to ascertain whether Florbela was looking back to 'Males d'Anto' when writing 'Mais Triste', one thing remains certain: overall, it is precisely Nobre's attempt to establish himself as the most wretched person ever that struck such a sensitive cord with her, and through this mediation, she was able to build an unusually powerful image of the self, which differentiated her from nearly all other women poets of the period.

In *Livro de Mágoas*. Florbela is still testing her voice and her poetic persona against that of male poets. In her letters, on the whole, *as a reader*, Florbela's communion with male writers had enabled her to reach a semblance of equality, but when it came to poetic production, she was painfully aware of the asymmetry between herself and her male role

models. It is clear that she did not attribute this merely to the fact that she was a beginner and they were not, but that to a large extent her gender intervened in the process of trying to reach the poetic authority of her role models. This is because in the society in which she lived, there were almost insurmountable obstacles to a woman's poetic authority. Florbela's awareness of the limitations facing women poets is apparent from the passage where she contrasted the work of the poetess Virgínia Águas with that of male poets. The next chapter will discuss the tensions between gender and poetic persona in *Livro de Mágoas* in more detail, but first the last part of this chapter goes back to her correspondence and to the early poetry of *Trocando Olhares* to examine some passages where Florbela emphasizes the constraints women faced when they attempted to express themselves not only as poets but also as human beings.

2.3. FLORBELA'S IDENTIFICATION WITH FEMALE SUFFERING

Both in Florbela's correspondence and in her early poetry, there are some instances where she complains of society's accepted codes of behaviour which are oppressive to women. The poet's letter to her friend Beatriz Carvalho, dated 30-09-1916, is a point in case. In this letter, answering her friend's confidences about the fact that her marriage was breaking up because her husband had betrayed her, Florbela asserts that 'Ele não era para te compreender porque, digam o que disserem, minha querida, sobre os absolutos direitos dum homem nesse campo, o que é certo é que tanto pode sangrar a mágoa dum homem se ver traído como duma mulher se ver traída' (vol.5, p.179). Florbela thus supported her friend in her decision to leave her husband, unequivocally reacting against the prevalent view that made it acceptable for men to have extra-marital affairs while expecting women to put up with them.

In two sonnets entitled 'A Mulher' (vol.1, pp.160-1), written six months before this letter, on 13 March 1916, Florbela had already made clear that she viewed the behaviour patriarchy expected of women as oppressive and mutilating. 'A Mulher I'

describes women as 'Um ente de paixão e sacrifício', forced to repress their inner feelings, because of the high price of being considered a 'fallen' woman:

Esmaga o coração dentro do peito,
E não te doas coração, sequer!

The two tercets highlight the fatal consequences if women allow their feelings to become apparent. Firstly men take advantage of them: 'Essa brancura ideal de puro arminho / Eles deixam pra sempre maculada'. Secondly, although men are responsible from making women swerve from the path of virtue, they then distance themselves from the part they took in the woman's fall, and are singularly ready to condemn their victims:

E gritam então os vis: "Olhem, vejam
É aquela a infame!" e apedrejam
A pobrezita, a triste, a desgraçada!

While 'A Mulher I' highlights the plight of women who fail to keep a hold on their feelings and give themselves for love, 'A Mulher II' focuses on the plight of women who successfully manage to suffer in silence:

Como sabes fingir quando em teu peito
A tua alma se estorce amargurada!

Quantas morrem saudosas duma imagem
Adorada que amaram doidamente!
Quantas e quantas almas endoidecem
Enquanto a boca ri alegremente!

The predicament of women who have to silence their hearts is also vividly described in 'Cemitérios' (vol.1, pp.157-159), a poem written only three days before this pair of sonnets. The poem's departure point is Florbela's wish to rest in her village cemetery. She then describes the confidences of the inhabitants of the cemetery, who, significantly, are all women. They all died of 'dor', having suffered from loss, lack of understanding or loneliness. This again highlights society's stifling repressiveness, which drives women to literal death.

But whatever the costs of self-mutilation, in her early poetry Florbela advocates that it is safer to silence one's heart and pretend to be content. The most striking illustration of

this conviction is the sonnet 'Anseios', dedicated to Júlia and dated 26 June 1916 (vol.1, p.192). The poem consists of a dialogue between Florbela and her heart, with Florbela trying to convince the heart to give up its desire for freedom and its dreams:

Meu doido coração aonde vais,
 No teu imenso anseio de liberdade?
 Toma cautela com a realidade;
 Meu pobre coração olha que cais!

She uses the argument that dreams are mirages 'lindas quimeras irreais', and concludes by asking the heart to suffer in silence:

Não 'stendas tuas asas para o longe...
 Deixa-te estar quietinho, triste monge,
 Na paz da tua cela, a soluçar...

Her friend Júlia, obviously struck by the tone of sincerity of this sonnet, discussed these verses in her following letter, to which Florbela replied: 'A propósito dos meus 'Anseios', que impossível conselho o teu!... Deixar voar o coração!... Que sublime e doida utopia! (vol.5, p.145). And again in a later letter:

Porque é impossível o teu conselho acerca dos meus 'Anseios'? Porque é impossível!... Pois então não vês que é um sonho, uma mentira atroz a liberdade do coração? Não o sentes tu bater, enraivecido e louco, pelo cativo? E podes tu, por acaso, soltá-lo? Que irrisão! E se o soltasses, se lhe abriesses de par em par as portas do teu peito, que faria ele em liberdade, pobre leãozinho cego?... Como ele lastimaria o fofo e quente ninho do seu tristíssimo cativo! Um coração perdido pela lama do mundo, pelo pó dos atalhos... Que desgraçado coração seria esse! É bem melhor tê-lo como eu digo: 'Na paz da tua cela a soluçar...' (vol.5, p.158)

If in these letters Florbela showed herself profoundly wary of desire, fearful of straying from the narrow path of virtue, by the following year there had been a change in her thoughts. This is documented in 'Errante', dated 23 April 1917 (vol.1, p.204), a poem to which attention was drawn earlier because of its implications as a reworking of Antero's 'O Palácio da Ventura'. In 'Errante', while Florbela is still painfully aware of the potentially illusory nature of freedom and its pitfalls, she knows that her heart's need to escape is irrepressible. But significantly, by then, that to which the heart aspires is no longer primarily love, but a poetic quest: 'Meu coração o místico profeta, [...]/ Que sonha

ser um santo e um poeta'. It is as though Florbela was struggling on two fronts for self-expression: as an artist and as a woman. And only by finding self-expression as an artist would she then be able to also do so as a woman.

In the meantime, if in 'Anseios' Florbela attempted to convince herself of the dangers of unbridled passion, *Trocando Olhares* is to a large extent about love, with an overwhelming number of poems describing her unconditional allegiance to the loved one and revealing her willingness to suffer in order to prove her love (for instance 'Oração de Joelhos' (p.237) and 'Súplica' (III) (p.244)).

However, a few poems such as 'Súplica' (II) (pp.181-2) and 'Humildade' (p.236), while continuing to proclaim that allegiance, already exhibit hints of the sensuality that was to become the hallmark of the mature Florbela:

O meu colo é arminho imaculado
Duma brancura casta que entontece;
Tua linda cabeça loira e bela
Deita em meu colo, deita e adormece! [...]

Os meus braços são brancos como o linho
Quando os cerro de leve, docemente...
Oh! Deixa-me prender-te e enlear-te
Nessa cadeia assim eternamente!...

'Súplica' (II)

But at this early stage, sensuality is always defused, either by death ('Súplica' (II)), or by the lover's indifference ('Humildade'). Significantly, it appears that only in one instance can sensuality go unpunished: in girls close to nature ('O Meu Alentejo' (p.174) and 'Rústica' (p.241)) and in nature itself ('Noites da Minha Terra' (p.183) and 'Noivado Estranho' (p.207)).

The poetry of *Trocando Olhares* thus reveals Florbela's awareness of the dangers and problems of female self-expression, inscribing in her poetry both the problems of a female poet writing in a male tradition, and the inextricable links between love and suffering. In *Livro de Mágoas*, the question of female identity was to become a central motif.

CHAPTER 3

LIVRO DE MÁGOAS

The previous chapter examined Florbela's early poetic 'career'. It showed how Florbela's awareness of herself as a poet began to shape itself against male reference-points in the poetry of the early exercise-book *Trocando Olhares*, mainly written in 1916-17, and how this continued in *Livro de Mágoas*, published in 1919. This chapter focuses in more detail on *Livro de Mágoas*. In the first part, there is a discussion of the literary influences that shaped the collection (with the exclusion of Nobre who was dealt with in Chapter 2) and in the second part an analysis of the main themes of the collection, to throw into relief the progressive emergence of two issues that feature prominently in Florbela's later works: the problematic identity of the female poet and her contradictory attitudes towards love.

3.1. LITERARY FRIENDSHIPS AND LITERARY INFLUENCES

Livro de Mágoas was Florbela's first book of poetry to be published. It was also the first to be written exclusively in sonnet-form and had a thematic unity which made it quite different from the poetry of *Trocando Olhares*. The incipient poetic maturity that this collection reveals can be partly accounted for by the changes of circumstances in Florbela's life: in July 1917, she finished the 7^o Ano in the Liceu de Évora as an external student and three months later, in October, she moved to Lisbon, enrolling as a student of Law at the University of Lisbon¹. This enabled her to come into contact with several aspiring poets, her contemporaries at the University, who, to a greater or lesser extent, had some influence

¹Little is known about the background to that decision. However, in her letters to Júlia Alves, Florbela had expressed her wish to live in Lisbon and, on two occasions, had confided her dream to enrol in the 'Curso de Letras'.

on the poetry she was writing at the time. This must have been profoundly significant for her since, for the first time in her life, she had the opportunity to meet poets face to face.

Florbela progressed through the first three years of the course taking advantage of the 'Reforma de 1911', a reform which enabled students not to sit exams until their final year. According to various accounts, instead of attending classes, she was often to be found in the 'Jardim da Faculdade', with other fellow students, poets like her². But before looking more closely at these accounts, it is necessary to mention a few details about Florbela's life during those three years.

Half-way through her first year, in the spring of 1918, she was forced to interrupt her studies because of a serious illness, provoked by a miscarriage, from which she went to recover in the Algarve³. Although she was in convalescence, poetry was still at the forefront of her mind, as is clear from a letter she wrote to Raul Proença, which shows that she was still relying on his help to publish her poetry. The letter informs us that she had previously sent him thirty-five poems, and one may speculate that they may have constituted an early draft of *Livro de Mágoas* (the final version of the collection had thirty-two sonnets). This is all the more likely since in that same letter, dated May 1918, she included her two most recent compositions, 'Mais Triste' and 'Castelã', which were indeed to be incorporated into *Livro de Mágoas*⁴.

Florbela's overriding preoccupation with her poetry, her illness and her self-absorption, not to mention her new life at the University, must have been increasingly difficult for her husband to understand. By September 1918 the tensions in their marriage were such that a separation became irrevocable, as Florbela makes clear in two letters to Alberto Moutinho, the first dated 13 September 1918, the second without a date⁵. Florbela seems to have taken the estrangement in her stride. Years later, comparing her second break

² Florbela's lack of assiduity is recalled by a contemporary of hers, Dr. A de Magalhães Bastos: 'Era o tempo dos *curros livres* e poucos eram os estudantes que seguiam regularmente as aulas [...] Florbela, já com fama de *Poeta* e com *Lenda*, aparecia pouco na Faculdade', in Lopes Rodrigues, 'Nótulas Florbelianas'. *Boletim da Biblioteca Municipal de Matosinhos*, 3 (1956), 3-53 (p.20).

³ *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.211-212.

⁴ *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.207-209.

⁵ *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.217-218 and p.219.

up with the first, she was to say 'Da primeira [vez], nada me custou'⁶. She carried on with her life at the University, continuing to mix with fellow-poets. In June 1919, *Livro de Mágoas* came out⁷.

3.1.1. FLORBELA'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER POETS AT THE UNIVERSITY

Américo Durão, who was in the year above Florbela, is perhaps the fellow-student with whom she has been most often linked. There is an obvious reason for that since Florbela entitled her second collection, *Livro de Soror Saudade*, after a sonnet by Durão, a fact to which she herself drew attention by using a stanza from it as an epigraph to the collection⁸.

Durão evoked Florbela in an interview published in 1963, but revealed little about his relationship with her. He did inform us however that she mixed with a crowd of poets:

Andava quase sempre rodeada de um grupo de poetas de que, entre outros, faziam parte: Mário Alves Pereira, João Boto de Carvalho, José Schmidt Rau e, se não me engano, José Gomes Ferreira. A Faculdade nesse tempo era um viveiro de poetas. Do meu curso destacavam-se João Cabral do Nascimento, Alfredo Guisado e António Ferro.⁹

Although Durão was at that point very discreet about his relationship with Florbela, highlighting instead the attention that many of Florbela's colleagues bestowed on her, a year later, in 1964, he allowed her biographer Maria Alexandrina to publish a letter Florbela had written to him, which makes clear both the fact that they had had some sentimental involvement and the fact that Florbela felt that his collection of poetry (which she does not

⁶*Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.26.

⁷The Biblioteca Nacional does not have a copy of the first edition of *Livro de Mágoas*. There is therefore no 'depósito legal' date available to help ascertain when exactly in 1919 the book came out. I am putting forward the date of June 1919 because it is the one given by Boto de Carvalho, a University colleague and friend of Florbela about whom more will be said in the next section, in his article 'O Sr A. de A. e as Poetisas Portuguesas' (BN N10/36).

⁸Since Durão's poem is of difficult access, I have reproduced it in Appendix 5.

⁹Américo Durão, 'Florbela', *A Esfera*, 1, February 1963, pp.3, 4 and 27 (p.3).

name but which, for chronological reasons, must be *Vitral da Minha Dor* (Lisbon, 1917)) had influenced her *Livro de Mágoas*¹⁰.

While the influence of Durão has been acknowledged, no one has yet looked in detail at which aspects of his poetry found an echo in Florbela's¹¹. *Vitral da Minha Dor* has several poems expressing the poet's uncertainty about his identity which bear close resemblances to some of Florbela's sonnets. For instance, the ending of her sonnet 'Eu' shows affinities with the following stanza from a poem by Durão, also entitled 'Eu':

Mas não existo.
 -- Sonho errante de Alguém que muito amou,
 Sou a sombra nostálgica de Cristo,
 Sou tudo o que há-de vir, e já passou! (Durão)¹²

Sou talvez a visão que Alguém sonhou,
 Alguém que veio ao mundo pra me ver,
 E nunca na vida me encontrou! (*Livro de Mágoas*, p.61)

Likewise there is little doubt that Durão's opening sonnet, 'Existo?', in which he portrays himself as a lonely monk, inspired Florbela's compositions on the same theme, 'Castelã da Tristeza' and 'A Minha Dor':

No meu convento desolado e frio,
 Ecoa pelo claustro um som vazio:
 Apalpo-me... procuro-me... tasteio...

Alongo os olhos pela sombra fora...
 -- São os passos de Alguém que Se ignora,
 É sempre o mesmo nada, o mesmo anseio! (Durão)

Nesse triste convento aonde eu moro,
 Noites e dias rezo e grito e choro!
 E ninguém ouve.... ninguém vê... ninguém...
 (*Livro de Mágoas*, p.67)

¹⁰Maria Alexandrina, *A Vida Ignorada de Florbela Espanca* (Porto: [n.pub], 1964), pp.84-102. This letter is published in *Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.221-227.

¹¹As previously mentioned, an article by Maria Lúcia Dal Farra on this subject is forthcoming in *Colóquio-Letras*.

¹²As Durão's collection does not have any page numbers, it is only possible to refer to the poems by their titles.

But there are even affinities between poems from *Vitral da Minha Dor* and some of Florbela's later poetry. She may have had in mind Durão's sonnet, 'Da Água', which makes use of the anaphora 'Eu fui / Eu fui', when she was writing 'O Meu Mal' from *Livro de Soror Saudade*:

Eu fui a sombra a converter-se em luz,
E fui a névoa a transformar-se em cor,
E fui o pranto a consagrar a Dor,
Quando brilhei nos olhos de Jesus. (Durão)

Fui tudo o que no mundo há de maior:
Fui cisne, e lírio, e águia, e catedral!
E fui, talvez, um verso de Nerval,
Ou um cínico riso de Chamfort...
(*Livro de Soror Saudade*, p.125)

And Durão's sonnet 'Das Árvores', despite being set in the winter, may have inspired the famous 'Árvores do Alentejo' from *Charneca em Flor*.

Nuas, despidos os mirrados braços
Que erguem ao Céu em prece desvairada,
As árvores, nostálgicas de abraços,
Morbidamente enlaçam a geada... (Durão)

As árvores, sangrentas, revoltadas,
Gritam a Deus a bênção duma fonte! [...]

Esfíngicas, recortam desgrenhadas
Os trágicos perfis no horizonte! (*Charneca em Flor*, p.203)

Durão's influence on Florbela's poetry is undeniable. But other accounts of her time at the University suggest that it was far from being the only one. Durão himself had linked her with several other poets. Another of Florbela's contemporaries, Noberto Lopes, in an article published in *Diário de Notícias* claimed that Florbela had a deep emotional involvement with a fellow-student, José Schmidt Rau¹³. Noberto Lopes re-asserted his claim in a subsequent article, dismissing the importance of Durão's sentimental relationship

¹³'Florbela Escolar de Direito', *Diário de Notícias*, 14 November 1981, pp.2 and 9.

with Florbela¹⁴. This later article gives us in passing precious insights into what Noberto Lopes remembers as Florbela's circle of friends:

Florbela conviveu com Américo Durão (ignoro se já se tinham conhecido antes) numa tertúlia que se reunia no velho café Martinho do Largo de D.João da Câmara, de que faziam parte, além dela e de Américo Durão, José Gomes Ferreira, Vasco Camélier (também poeta), Chianca de Garcia, Humberto Pelágio, João Boto de Carvalho e eu próprio. Florbela manteve com Américo Durão aquilo a que se pode chamar um 'flirt' poético, que teria ido porventura mais longe se o Américo não estivesse, nessa altura, embeijado por uma conhecida poetisa que aparece na correspondência de Florbela designada pelas iniciais F.C.¹⁵

It is of course almost impossible to ascertain the truth of Noberto Lopes' claims about the involvement of Florbela with Schmidt Rau, nor it is relevant to do so here. What should instead retain our attention are two other details: firstly Florbela's presence in the *tertúlia* must be highlighted, since the presence of a woman in café literary discussions would have been exceedingly unusual at the time. Secondly, both Florbela's alleged emotional involvement with Schmidt Rau and her participation in the *tertúlia* beg the question of the possible influence of male University colleagues in her poetry¹⁶.

There are thematic affinities between *Livro de Mágoas* and the works of all the poets with whom she was in contact during those years: José Gomes Ferreira's *Longe* (Lisbon: [n.pub], 1920), João Boto de Carvalho's *Sol Poente* (Lisbon: [n.pub], 1919), José Schmidt Rau's *Iantha* (Lisbon: [n.pub], 1918) and *Rosas de Alnalar* (Lisbon: [n.pub], [n.d.]) and Vasco Camélier's *Livro de Horas das Princesas Doentes* (Lisbon:

¹⁴'Em Desagravo de Américo Durão', *O Expresso*, 10 August 1985, p.9. This article was a reply to an article by Clara Fereira Alves, who had suggested that Américo Durão's relationship with Florbela had ended because he was a homosexual, 'Florbela: o Espólio da Mulher Fatal', *O Expresso*, 27 July 1985, pp. 30R-32R.

¹⁵The 'conhecida poetisa' is Fernanda de Castro. In her recently published memoirs, Fernanda de Castro indirectly confirms the fact by recalling a proposal of marriage Durão made to her, *Ao Fim da Memória*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Verbo, 1986-7), vol.1, p.137.

¹⁶Florbela herself, in her *Diário*, made a brief reference to her circle of friends, and it is interesting to see that she omitted the names of both Américo Durão and José Schmidt Rau, and indeed most of the names with whom Durão and Noberto Lopes associated her: 'Como me lembra hoje o jardim da Faculdade! Maria Albertina, Tarroso, Regado, Camélier, Fontes, tantas, tantas sombras!' (*Obras Completas*, vol.4, p.129). Was it a case of deliberate omission, or did she only mention those who truly meant most to her?

[n.pub], 1919)¹⁷. All these collections adopt a characteristically pessimistic *fin de siècle* tone. But two of the poets, Camélier and Boto de Carvalho, deserve closer attention.

Camélier's collection seems to have affinities with Florbela's in its treatment of female figures. In *Livro de Horas das Princesas Doentes*, unlike the other collections which describe mainly angelical female figures, there appears the image of the aloof princess which is also to be found in Florbela's poetry. The existence of a close literary relationship between Camélier and Florbela is further supported by the existence of the manuscript of a sonnet dedicated by Camélier to Florbela in 1919, owned by the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa¹⁸.

João Boto de Carvalho dedicated a poem from his collection, *Sol Poente*, 'Para a Senhora Dona Florbela Dalma', a fact which I have never seen mentioned before anywhere, leading to the false impression Durão was the only poet to ever dedicate a poem to Florbela. Boto de Carvalho's poem is entitled 'A Princesa Incompreendida'¹⁹. It describes a princess 'Eternamente incompreendida e misteriosa': aloof, aristocratic, yet deeply melancholic, and there is no doubt that this is precisely the image of herself that Florbela sought to project in *Livro de Mágoas*.

The literary friendship between Boto de Carvalho and Florbela is further underlined by his supportive stance, discussed in Chapter 1, when in 1923 a reviewer of *Livro de Soror Saudade* accused her of imitating the manner of Virgínia Vitorino in *Ilustração Portuguesa*: Boto de Carvalho wrote an article, signed B. de C., dismissing such accusations as nonsense²⁰. This was not the only occasion where he recorded his conviction about Florbela's literary merits: the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa owns the manuscript of a piece, dated 1922 and signed Boto de Carvalho, in which he contrasts Florbela's talent in *Livro de Mágoas* with the mediocrity of some of the female poetry of

¹⁷Chianca de Garcia, Humberto Pelágio and Mário Alves Pereira, who are the other colleagues mentioned either by Américo Durão or by Noberto Lopes as belonging to her circle of friends, do not appear to have published any poetry, or, to be more precise, there is no record of any collections of poetry by them in the catalogues of the Biblioteca Nacional.

¹⁸I have reproduced this sonnet in Appendix 5.

¹⁹Since this poem is of difficult access, I have reproduced it in Appendix 5.

²⁰'O Sr. A. de A. e as Poetisas Portuguesas', BN N10/36.

the period²¹. There is no evidence as to whether they remained in contact after their University years, but this friendship stayed alive in Florbela's memory. Indeed her sonnet 'Panteísmo' from *Charneca em Flor* is dedicated to Boto de Carvalho.

There is no doubt therefore that Florbela's University colleagues were important in the shaping of her poetic consciousness through literary interchanges. But they were also most probably an important force in the shaping of her poetic *persona*. On an everyday level, she must have been made aware of being special, because she was one of the very few women reading law, and by all accounts she seemed to have been the only one who mixed with her male colleagues²². But her colleagues furthermore appear to have put her on a pedestal. Noberto Lopes recalls how, right from the first day of the course, the strangeness of her name, Florbela Dalma da Conceição Espanca, provoked curiosity, turning her into a poetic figure²³. José Gomes Ferreira, another of her contemporaries, recounts how, as a fresher, he was forced by his friend Boto de Carvalho to kneel before her and present her with a lock of his hair²⁴. This typical sign of allegiance from a male admirer to a remote idealized lady, devised as a joke, nevertheless encodes the way in which Florbela was perceived and worshipped as an inaccessible female figure by her male colleagues.

Nowhere is the projection of Florbela as a spiritualized and remote female figure more obvious than in the poems Boto de Carvalho and Durão dedicated to her. The first describes her as a princess, the second as a nun. Both these images appear in the poetry of *Livro de Mágoas* and subsequently in *Livro de Soror Saudade*. It is difficult to establish whether Florbela's portrayal as a nun or princess in *Livro de Mágoas* is the cause or the

²¹I have reproduced this piece in Appendix 6. I have been unable to discover whether it was ever published.

²²The *Anuário da Universidade de Lisboa* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1920) describes the composition of the years 1917-18. In 1917-18, amongst a total of 313 students of law spread over five years, there were only seven female students in all, an average of only one or two per year.

²³'Florbela Escolar de Direito', *Diário de Notícias*, 14 November 1981, pp.2 and 9 (p.2). There is no doubt that her unusual name struck her colleagues, so much so that both Boto de Carvalho and Vasco Camélier dedicated their poems to Florbela Dalma.

²⁴A *Memória das Palavras*, 3d edn (Lisbon: Portugália, 1972), p.76.

consequence of her colleagues' poems. But even if her portrayal of the self in *Livro de Mágoas* preceded her colleagues' poems (as seems likely at least in the case of Durão's, which was only published after the publication of *Livro de Mágoas*, though not in the case of Boto de Carvalho, since *Sol Poente* came out before Florbela's collection²⁵), her portrayal of the self, while inscribing the way in which she sought to present herself to the world, must at the same time have reflected the way in which her male colleagues saw her, that is to say as a poetic figure and poetic material.

3.1.2. FOREIGN INFLUENCES

While Florbela's years at the University provided her with an unique opportunity to come into contact with several young poets, and confirmed her awareness of being special, they also enabled her to discover new authors, particularly the French symbolists. José Gomes Ferreira, commenting on Florbela's poetry, stressed Durão's enormous impact on her poetic development. But he also suggested that three French poets had exerted some influence on her, namely Baudelaire, Verlaine and Samain, 'o preciosíssimo Samain de *Au jardin de l'Infante* e de *Le chariot d'or*, [...] o Samain de 'Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade'²⁶.

It is difficult to point to any direct similarities between Baudelaire and Florbela. By contrast, it is easy to see what Gomes Ferreira had in mind when he mentioned 'Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade', the opening poem of Samain's *Au jardin de l'Infante*²⁷. In this poem, Samain describes his soul as an aloof princess, who bears striking resemblances to Florbela's own portrayal of herself in *Livro de Mágoas*, and incidentally, also to the portrayal Boto de Carvalho gave us of Florbela in his poem 'A Princesa Incompreendida', a fact that should not surprise us since in all likelihood he too would have been familiar with Samain's poetry.

²⁵ *Sol Poente* came out in April, *Livro de Mágoas* in June 1919.

²⁶ José Gomes Ferreira, 'Encontro com Florbela', in *A Memória das Palavras*, pp.233-240. (p.237).

²⁷ Albert Samain, *Oeuvres. Au jardin de l'Infante (augmenté de plusieurs poèmes)* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1919), pp.7-10.

Of the three French poets evoked by Gomes Ferreira, however, Verlaine was the most influential in Portugal. It is known that Florbela had read him, because the Biblioteca Nacional owns two undated manuscripts in her own handwriting, consisting of three poems by Verlaine: 'Mon rêve familial', 'Lassitude' and 'N'est-ce pas, en dépit des sots et des méchants?' (the first two from *Poèmes saturniens* and the third from *La bonne chanson*)²⁸. Florbela must have been particularly struck by them to copy them out, and, moreover, to use a stanza from the last of these as an epigraph for *Livro de Mágoas*.

Of course in so doing she was partly reflecting the taste of the period, for Verlaine was perhaps the most popular of the French Symbolists in Portugal²⁹. His famous poem from *Romances sans paroles*, 'Il pleut dans mon coeur', whether overtly acknowledged as a source or not, inspired an entire generation of poets. Amongst others, Pessanha and Augusto Gil used it as epigraphs: Pessanha for 'Água Morrente' and Augusto Gil for his well-known 'Balada da Neve'. A decade later, Pessoa, for whom the influence of Verlaine was also important, made a wry reference to 'Il pleut dans mon coeur' in his sonnet 'Cai chuva do céu cinzento', almost as a retrospective *clin d'oeil*³⁰:

E a chuva cai levemente
(Porque Verlaine consente)
Dentro do meu coração.

It is interesting that Florbela did not choose a stanza from 'Il pleut dans mon coeur' as an epigraph for *Livro de Mágoas*, especially since on the surface it would appear to fit in better with the tone of the collection than the lines she did choose. But of course she was

²⁸'Mon Rêve Familier' and 'Lassitude' were copied on the front and the back of the same sheet. Although the manuscript bears no date, the sheet has the words *Livro de Mágoas* written in larger letters and in a different ink. This suggests that the Verlaine poems were copied during the period when Florbela was composing *Livro de Mágoas*, a hypothesis further confirmed by the fact that she used a stanza from 'N'est-ce pas, en dépit des sots et des méchants?' as an epigraph to the collection.

²⁹ See Maria de Lourdes Belchior, 'Verlaine e o Simbolismo Português', *Brotéria*, 90 (1970), 305-331. The article puts forward the hypothesis that Verlaine's popularity in Portugal stems from the fact that he is 'o poeta da passividade'.

³⁰ See Jacinto Prado Coelho's discussion of the influence of Verlaine's poem on Pessanha and Pessoa's poems in his article 'De Verlaine a Camilo Pessanha e a Fernando Pessoa', in *Ao Contrário de Penélope* (Amadora: Bertrand, 1976), pp.209-214.

fully aware that it had been emblematic for a whole generation of poets, as revealed in the sonnet written several years later 'A Voz da Tília' (p.199), from *Charneca em Flor*:

E à minha alma vibrante, posta a nu,
Diz a chuva sonetos de Verlaine..."

But because the poems by Verlaine she did copy were not 'emblematic', they indicate a personal preference and consequently are much more telling about her tastes: in 'Mon rêve familial' Verlaine describes an imaginary woman who would understand him completely, but is not of this world, thus stressing the difficulty for him to find a twin soul, a difficulty which Florbela also felt particularly acutely. As for 'Lassitude', the next chapter will discuss how its vision of what female love ought to be like presents many parallels with the love described in some poems from *Livro de Soror Saudade*.

3.2. LIVRO DE MÁGOAS

The first part of this chapter outlined how during her University years Florbela had the opportunity to move in student literary circles noting, firstly, that she absorbed many of the symbolist / decadent influences that were in the air and, secondly, that her male colleagues perceived her as a special female figure. Both are reflected in the poetry of *Livro de Mágoas*.

As its title suggests, the collection is pervaded from beginning to end by a *fin de siècle* pessimism. This pessimism is highlighted by the choice of Eugénio de Castro's famous lines as one of the epigraphs:

Procuramos somente a Beleza, que a vida
É um punhado infantil de areia ressequida,
Um som d'água ou de bronze e uma sombra que passa...

Throughout the collection, a key word recurs, 'Dor', present in eleven poems out of thirty-two, and nearly always capitalized. If one adds to that its recurrence through the

presence of its many semantic equivalents (*mágoa*, *tortura*, *amargura*, *lágrimas*), the overriding impression the collection gives is that Florbela's world is indeed a world inhabited by suffering, and by its by-products, darkness and solitude. The collection expresses the belief that the only reality is suffering: dreams and illusions are necessarily followed by disillusion as in 'Torre de Névoa' (p.66) and 'As Minhas Ilusões' (p.69). The passing illusion of love too soon desintegrates, as in 'Em Busca do Amor' (p.95) and 'Para Quê ?!' (p.87). Even nature, which on the surface appears to be devoid of feeling in fact suffers as well, as 'Desejos Vãos' (p.79) and 'Ao Vento' (p.88) illustrate. Other echoes of *fin de siècle* topoi present in *Livro de Mágoas* are the theme of premature ageing ('Velhinha' (p.94)), attraction to death ('Dizeres Íntimos' (p.68)) and the wish of being spared thought ('Angústia' (p.76))³¹.

There is, however, one sort of pessimism that does not seem to have been derived from *fin de siècle* poetry: Florbela's feeling of being unable to achieve the status of a great poet. This feeling of powerlessness accounts for an important nucleus of poems within *Livro de Mágoas*: 'Vaidade' (p.60), 'Tortura' (p.64), 'Neurastenia' (p.70), as well as the three poems discussed in the previous chapter, 'Maior Tortura' (p.72), 'A Um Livro' (p.80) and 'Impossível' (p.96). Given the number of poems where Florbela expressed this fear, there is no doubt that this was a very real preoccupation for her and it must be read as an expression of the poet's painful awareness of the difficulty of being a woman writer in a culture where traditionally women had no voice.

In *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela's awareness of the contradictions inherent to her peculiar position as a female poet manifests itself, even when she seeks to project herself as a poet, a superior being. The next three sections of this chapter will show how on the one hand she adopts an universal mask, that of the Romantic poet, choosing to be seen as a poet and accepting that she is a 'freak' in terms of a traditional image of women but how, on the other hand, her suffering is described in a way that makes her plight a singularly *female* plight, sometimes linked to love.

³¹For a detailed analysis of *fin de siècle* and neo-romantic traits in Florbela's poetry, see Seabra Perreira 'De Rastros, Com Asas', in *Obras Completas*, vol.2, pp.3-43.

3.2.1. POETRY, GENDER AND PREDESTINATION

3.2.1.a. The Myth of the Poet

In several poems Florbela portrays herself as a Romantic poet, something she had already done in her early poetry and in her correspondence to Júlia Alves, discussed in Chapter 2. The Romantic poet is misunderstood because of his heightened 'sensibilité', ostracized by the *vulgus*, and undergoes intense suffering. But he derives greatness from his suffering because of the certainty that his life is ruled by an omnipotent Fate: he was *predestined* to be a poet and to suffer³².

In line with this Romantic idea, Florbela attributes her isolation and unhappiness to an omnipotent Fate. The word 'destino' or its semantic equivalents often recur throughout the thirty-two sonnets that make up the collection:

Ó neve, que *destino* triste o nosso! (p.70)

O meu *Destino* disse-me a chorar: (p.95) (my italics)

Two poems in which Florbela describes Destiny taking over her life in ways that ensure her identification as a Romantic poet are 'A Flor do Sonho' (p.74) and 'Sem Remédio' (p.92). The first stanza of 'A Flor do Sonho' depicts the birth of a mysterious flower, the Flower of Dream, inside her:

A Flor do Sonho alvíssima, divina
 Miraculosamente abriu em mim,
 Como se uma magnólia de cetim
 Fosse florir num muro todo em ruína.

The flower described is an allegorical flower, something marked straightaway by the use of capitals. For the reader familiar with Romanticism, it is reminiscent of the blue flower of

³²The deliberate use of the masculine (the poet, *he*) here is intended to reflect a reality: up to then poets had nearly always been male. It is interesting to note, however, that the attributes of the Romantic poet (feeling as opposed to reason) are often associated with feminine qualities, making it arguably easier in practice for a woman like Florbela to identify herself with the figure of the Romantic poet.

dream evoked in an earlier letter to Júlia Alves and already discussed in the previous chapter, in spite of being 'alvíssima'. Such a flower effects the poet's initiation into the higher spiritual world and, in this poem, its divine nature is stressed by the adjectives qualifying it: 'alvíssima, divina'. But its birth is perceived as an utterly inexplicable event and this is emphasized by the adverb 'miraculosamente' and by the comparison that immediately follows: the flowering is like the blossoming of an exquisite flower 'magnólia de cetim' in sterile ground, 'muro todo em ruína', the unworthy poet.

In the second quatrain, the poet continues to marvel before the utterly inexplicable event:

Pende em meu seio a haste branda e fina.
E não posso entender como é que, enfim,
Essa tão rara flor abriu assim!...

leading her, in the last line of the stanza, to suggest several possible explanations, all beyond rational understanding:

Milagre.... fantasia... ou talvez, sina...

'Milagre' looks back to the 'miraculosamente' of the first stanza, where the blossoming of the flower was attributed to a miracle, in other words, to the work of Divine Providence. 'Fantasia' puts forth the hypothesis of it being chance or even an invention of the poet. But it is the third explanation, 'sina', which is thrown into relief, because it is left hanging at the end of both the line and the entire stanza, taking over and pervading the atmosphere with unspoken threat. 'Sina' evokes the workings of Fate; it is at the other end of the spectrum to 'milagre' and suggests a curse rather than a blessing.

In the two tercets, the poet addresses herself to the flower using a rhetorical question, making it apparent that the birth of the flower caused a total upheaval in her life, as though a curse was laid on her:

Ó Flor, que em mim nasceste sem abrolhos,
Que tem que sejam tristes os meus olhos
Se eles são tristes pelo amor de ti?!...

The poet does not condemn the flower for causing her sadness, indeed she challenges the idea that this sadness might be a cause for concern. In other words, what is suggested is that sadness is a valid stance given the nature of the loved object. We are reminded at this point of Antero de Quental's statement in his sonnet 'Tormento do Ideal': 'Vi a Beleza que não morre / E fiquei triste'. It is the same deep gloom in both cases originating in the contemplation of transcendental perfection. But although Florbela sees nothing wrong in being sad, she still dwells in the last stanza on the utter disruption the Flower has brought to her life:

Desde que em mim nasceste em noite calma,
Voou ao longe a asa da minh'alma
E nunca, nunca mais eu me entendi...

The Flower has created a schism within her 'E nunca, nunca mais eu me entendi...'. In this poem and throughout *Livro de Mágoas* the onus is clearly on the suffering poetry brings. The idea is not exclusive to Florbela, for it is characteristic of the Romantic and *fin de siècle* topos of the 'poète maudit'. But her description of poetry as responsible for lack of self-understanding and self-division is perhaps less commonplace, and it is tempting to wonder whether poetry is a curse for her because by being a poet she becomes automatically at odds with her female identity as defined by society.

In *Livro de Mágoas*, another sonnet, 'Sem Remédio' (p.92), describes her predicament. The poem narrates the experience of the young Florbela, invaded this time not by the Flower of Dream, but by the overpowering figure of Grief, 'Dor' (note the capitals). This poem was mentioned in Chapter 2 in connection with Nobre's poem 'António', because of their thematic affinities. What merits further comment here is the second quatrain:

E é desde então que eu sinto este pavor,
Este frio que anda em mim, e que gelou
O que de bom me deu Nosso Senhor!
Se eu nem sei por onde ando e onde vou!!

In this quatrain, the two main points of 'A Flor do Sonho' are reiterated: firstly the poem shows that the Fate (here personified as 'Dor') which haunts the poet is diametrically

opposed to everything good designed by a caring God (Nosso Senhor) and brings about the experience of the coldness of death ('pavor', 'frio', 'gelou'). Secondly, it indicates that this petrifying experience culminates in loss of identity: 'Se eu nem sei por onde ando e onde vou!!'. This points to the poet as an outlaw, a monster, a social outcast, and again one may wish to explain the self-division that poetry brings to Florbela partly by the fact that she is a woman.

At this point, it is necessary to wonder whether such a reading is overdetermined by our knowledge that the author of the poem is female. And it is worth noting that, should we have come to this sonnet or indeed the previous one without knowing the gender of their author, we would have no indications in the text as to the gender of their author. As a result, these poems would have had to be read as straightforward ('universal') glosses of the topos of the 'poète maudit' overcome by an overwhelming sense of alienation.

Of course, it could be argued that this is a spurious exercise because the poems in question form part of a collection authored by a female poet, and consequently it is impossible not to make use of this knowledge in our assessment of them. Even if in these particular poems Florbela thought she was portraying herself as an accursed Romantic poet and was not thinking of her plight as that of a *female* Romantic poet, read in the context of the collection as a whole, it is licit and perhaps necessary to interpret her sense of alienation as that of a woman poet. And this is because, in other poems, Florbela deliberately brings in the gender issue to give a twist to the idea of the poet as a social outcast, by painting herself both as a poet and as a woman, and conveying her feeling of being a 'freak' in terms of the traditional image of women. The poems in question are 'Pior Velhice' (p.82), 'Pequenina' (p.71) and 'Tédio' (p.89).

3.2.1.b. The Female Poet as Unfeminine

In 'Pior Velhice' (p.82), the first quatrain gives an image of the poet as utterly dejected, exiled from life:

Sou velha e triste. Nunca o alvorecer
Dum riso são andou na minha boca!
Gritando que me acudam, em voz rouca,

Eu, náufraga da Vida, ando a morrer!

The image of the poet exiled from life is rendered through the powerful metaphor 'náufraga da Vida'. The impact of this evocative metaphor is heightened by the fact that it stands as an apposition to the noun 'Eu', itself thrown into relief by the inversion of normal word order. The rest of the line builds on the sheer evocativeness of the metaphor of the shipwreck by highlighting the precarious equilibrium of not being part of life ('náufraga da Vida') and yet not being definitely dead either, but suffering an interminable agony ('ando a morrer').

In the second quatrain the plight of the poet is ascribed to the workings of Fate, here called 'a Vida':

A Vida que ao nascer enfeita e touca
D'alvas rosas, a fronte da mulher,
Na minha fronte mística de louca
Martírios só poisou a emurcheçar!

Florbela wistfully contrasts her destiny with that which 'a Vida' normally bestows upon women: whereas other women can expect gifts of youth and beauty (suggested in 'alvas rosas'), she has only received 'martírios', a word which in Portuguese means both passion-flower and martyrdom, thus stressing that the flower she has been given is a symbol of suffering. Consequently, her forehead (a metonymy for the face) bears the marks of the social outcast, outside social order; it is a 'fronte mística de louca'. The mad person and the mystic in literary tradition are often inspired poets and/or prophets and here Florbela by positing herself as a poet concomitantly has to stress her unfemininity, as if the two were mutually exclusive.

In this poem, particularly in the two tercets, what is thrown into relief is not that Florbela takes pride in wretchedness insofar as it is a symbol of genius, but rather that her wretchedness is something which an ineluctable Destiny has forced upon her. Taking pride in her plight is something which will only gradually emerge until, in *Charneca em Flor*, it becomes a mark of her superiority. But in *Livro de Mágoas* her extraordinary destiny is apprehended in utterly negative terms.

Thus in 'Pequenina' (p.71), Florbela describes the innocence, beauty and grace of a young girl, contrasting it in the last stanza with her own suffering:

Pequenina que a Mãe de Deus sonhou,
Que ela afaste de ti aquelas dores
Que fizeram de mim isto que sou!

In 'Tédio' (p.89), what is stressed is the stigma attached to the poet by others:

Passo pálida e triste. Oiço dizer
"Que branca que ela é! Parece morta!"

By describing Florbela as similar to a non-human, a seemingly dead person, others are intensifying the perception that she is the outsider, the unacceptable. But Florbela reacts with indifference to such comments, since she feels that no one can appreciate her plight:

Que diga o mundo e a gente o que quiser!
-- O que é que isso me faz?... O que me importa?...
O frio que trago dentro gela e corta
Tudo o que é sonho e graça na mulher!

The last two lines of this stanza reinforce the idea expressed in 'Pior Velhice' that she is not like other women, she is an aberration of Nature. The 'frio' which she carries within her kills off feminine attributes, suggests sterility (recalling the lines from 'Sem Remédio': 'Este frio que anda em mim e que gelou / O que de bom me deu Nosso Senhor'). At this point it is tempting to wonder to what extent Florbela had in mind (consciously? unconsciously?) the idea of sterility as the inability to give life, since she was never able to carry a child in her womb. Be that as it may, throughout *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela builds up a contrast between, on the one hand, light, grace and happiness and, on the other, darkness, sadness and coldness: the women she describes are associated with the former characteristics, she is always associated with the latter.

3.2.1.c. The Female Poet as Devoid of Identity

If Florbela shows Fate has consecrated her as a poet by making her life different to that of other women, in this collection it is always to stress that this is a source of

suffering, since it makes her an aberration. Furthermore, the very possibility of being a successful female poet is constantly called into question. A closer look at 'Vaidade' (p.60), the poem which comes right after the introductory 'Este Livro', and the only poem in the whole of Florbela's work in which she stages herself as a 'Poetisa', reveals how Florbela describes her (female) poetic power as a mirage. Over the first three stanzas, through the anaphora 'Sonho que', she evokes her dreams of being 'a Poetisa eleita', able to communicate her feelings and recognized by others, culminating in the third stanza where, in her visions, she sees herself as a powerful 'Alguém' in an image vaguely reminiscent of that of the crowned Virgin Mary with the moon under her feet:

Sonho que sou Alguém cá neste mundo...
 Aquela de saber vasto e profundo,
 Aos pés de quem a terra anda curvada!

But violently contrasting with her hopes, the last stanza evokes the sheer futility of her successive dreams:

E quando mais no céu eu vou sonhando,
 E quando mais no alto ando voando,
 Acordo do meu sonho... E não sou nada!...

The concluding observation 'E não sou nada', highlights her complete nothingness, bringing out her anguished feelings of being in a limbo, devoid of poetic identity. This seems to be the lot of the female poet.

3.2.2. DESCRIPTIONS OF SUFFERING

In the sonnets just examined, Florbela portrayed herself as Romantic poet, pledged to inhuman suffering by a malefic Fate, showing the contradictions inherent to her position as a female poet and her consequent misery. In other sonnets, Florbela presents herself as an unbearably forlorn figure, immersed in suffering, but without linking her suffering to her peculiar status as a female poet. Although some of the poems do not have gender marks,

more often than not, various features inscribed in their subtext point to the suffering of that figure as a specifically female suffering.

3.2.2.a. Suffering and inner dissolution

In 'Noite de Saudade' (p.75), 'Alma Perdida' (p.83) and 'Mais Triste' (p.93) Florbela gives seemingly universal images of her suffering. In 'Noite de Saudade' and 'Alma Perdida' she is plunged in the darkness of night and her misery is identified with that of Nature.

'Noite de Saudade' (p.75) begins by depicting Night:

A Noite vem poisando devagar
Sobre a terra que inunda de amargura...
E nem sequer a bênção do luar
A quis tornar divinamente pura...

The personified Night is described as lacking the 'bênção do luar'. This stresses the utter darkness of Night, but also brings to minds earlier descriptions of the poet as cursed, unblest: like the poet, night too is an outcast.

Using a construction similar to that of 'A Flor do Sonho', Florbela, after using the quatrains to describe the Night, addresses herself to it ('her' in Portuguese, since night is grammatically feminine) in the tercets:

Porque és assim tão 'scura, assim tão triste?!
É que, talvez, ó Noite, em ti existe
Uma Saudade igual à que eu contenho!

Saudade que eu nem sei donde me vem...
Talvez de ti, ó Noite!... Ou de ninguém!...
Que eu nunca sei quem sou, nem o que tenho!!

In the first tercet, thus, the poet suggests that the sadness of the night may be caused by *Saudade* (note the use of the capital) while, in the next tercet, she wonders whether her own *saudade* may be caused by night. This turns sadness into an all-pervading state of spirit which cannot be explained by any one element, it has no beginning and no end: like night itself, it is endless, and by being immersed in it, Florbela loses her sense of identity,

'Que eu nunca sei quem sou, nem o que tenho!!'. This recalls the lines from 'A Flor do Sonho' and 'Sem Remédio', where grief also caused her to lose her sense of identity.

The same feeling of all-pervading grief is also present in 'Alma Perdida' (p.83). In this sonnet, the sad song of a nightingale in the night makes the poet wonder whether the soul of the nightingale, conveyed by its heart-breaking song, could be the reincarnation of something else, the soul of someone who died, a dream, or even the soul 'doente / Dalguém que quis amar e nunca amou!'. The common denominator of these elements is that they all evoke things which died or did not materialize, but to which the voice of the nightingale can give expression.

In the tercets, Florbela identifies herself with the nightingale's sad song, in the same way as she had identified with the grief of night in the tercets of 'Noite de Saudade'. In so doing she illustrates her belief in the communion of sensitive souls through the act of weeping, which she had professed to share at the outset of the collection in 'Este Livro':

Toda a noite choraste...e eu chorei
Talvez porque, ao ouvir-te, adivinhei
Que ninguém é mais triste de que nós!

In the last tercet the identification goes even further, as the poet wonders whether the nightingale's song is not in fact a reimpodiment of her own soul, literally lost in grief:

Contaste tanta coisa à noite calma,
Que eu pensei que tu eras a minh'alma
Que chorasse perdida em tua voz!...

By so doing, Florbela is implicitly setting her soul on the same level as the ones she had described earlier in the poem as either dead or having failed to materialize and, in an unobtrusive but deeply suggestive way, conveying to her readers her profound sense of being unfulfilled.

Although neither of these poems has any overt signs of the gender of their author, Florbela's use of the image of the nightingale subliminally points to the femaleness of the poet. For, as Nicole Loraux stressed, in European Literature since the times of Greek tragedy, this image is associated with femininity: 'Le rossignol est le plus souvent évoqué

au sein d'une plainte féminine, et comme figure emblématique de celle-ci³³. In Portuguese literature, for instance, the association between nightingale and female grief is present in Bernardim Ribeiro's *Menina e Moça*. Furthermore, the 'plainte féminine' was often one of unhappy love. Unconsciously, therefore, although there is nothing in Florbela's poem that makes it explicitly about love, the reader is likely to think of the poet's grief as provoked by unrequited love.

In the context of *Livro de Mágoas*, 'Alma Perdida' may help to shed some light on Florbela's choice as an epigraph of the following stanza by Verlaine:

Isolés dans l'amour ainsi qu'en un bois noir,
Nos deux coeurs, exalant leur tendresse paisible,
Seront deux rossignols qui chantent dans le soir.

At first sight, there seems to be little in common between the sad song of the lone nightingale described in 'Alma Perdida' and the song of 'tendresse paisible' in Verlaine's poem. But, read in the context of the poem from which it is extracted ('N'est-ce pas? en dépit des sots et des méchants'), Verlaine's stanza takes on a different meaning: it conveys his wish to be reconciled with his wife Mathilde and, consequently, does not express a statement of fact but an aspiration. Florbela would have been well aware of this since she knew the whole poem. Therefore it is likely that by choosing this stanza as an epigraph, she was merely echoing Verlaine's longing to find the harmony in love that the two nightingales singing *together* symbolize.

'Noite de Saudade' and 'Alma Perdida' convey Florbela's merging, as she is buried in grief, into the night and into the nightingale's lament. In these poems Florbela uses the comparison with Nature to highlight her grief. By contrast, in 'Mais Triste' (p.93), the comparison with Nature is used to point to a crucial difference between its plight and hers: people can empathize with nature's suffering but they fail to recognize the poet's own suffering:

³³ Nicole Loraux, *Les Mères en deuil* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), p.90.

E não vêem que sou ... eu... afinal,
A coisa mais magoada das que o são!

Poentes d'agonia tenho-os eu
Dentro de mim, e tudo quanto é meu
É um triste poente d'amargura!

E a vastidão do Mar, toda essa água
Trago-a dentro de mim num Mar de Mágoa!
E a Noite sou eu própria, a Noite escura!

On one level, these three poems illustrate the plight of the poet in a universal way, for they do not overtly present the poet as female, although as was stressed in the case of 'Alma Perdida' the mourning of the nightingale is traditionally associated with female grief. Of course, in the overall context of the collection it is impossible not to link the suffering expressed in these poems with the poet's female identity. In that light, their emphasis on negative definitions of the self, either defined as a void (night) or as merging into nature, would point to the difficulty experienced by Florbela in apprehending her identity without reference to traditional female roles. Renata Soares Junqueira has analysed 'Mais Triste' in this light, suggesting firstly that the darkness which overwhelms Florbela ('E a Noite sou eu própria, a Noite escura!') is in fact representative of the darkness to which all women were ascribed at that time in Portugal; secondly that there is a link between the poet's grief and unhappy love, by pointing to the fact the word 'amargura' contains within it the word 'amar', linking suffering with love³⁴.

Turning our attention to the poems within the collection where the grieving poet is explicitly female, her lack of identity continues to be poignantly conveyed, and in some instances her grief becomes explicitly associated with lack of love.

3.2.2.b. Female Images of Grief: the lost soul, the nun / châtelaine

There are four poems where the poet's gender is clearly inscribed, 'Eu...' (p.61), 'Castelã da Tristeza' (p.63), 'A minha Dor' (p.67) and 'Lágrimas Ocultas' (p.65).

³⁴Renata Soares Junqueira, 'O Arquétipo do Herói na Poesia de Florbela Espanca', *Estudos Portugueses e Africanos*, 9 (1987), 27-41 (pp.31-38).

'Eu...' the third poem of the collection, portrays her as an ethereal essence, a soul forever adrift. The sonnet is, as Seabra Pereira puts it, 'fertilizado pela veia sombria de Nerval'³⁵, taking as a point of departure the famous opening line of Nerval's sonnet 'El Desdichado'. 'Je suis le ténébreux, le veuf, l'inconsolé':

Eu sou a que no mundo anda perdida,
Eu sou a que na vida não tem norte,

However, the poem then develops in a more personal direction, producing its own variations, underlined by the use of an anaphorical structure, on the theme of a self permanently exiled from happiness and subjected to loss. Florbela sees herself as 'a irmã do Sonho', that is to say as someone who, in a typically romantic fashion, is the twin soul of an ethereal essence. Dream, and who, therefore, is condemned to suffer in this world since she belongs by nature to a different realm:

Sou a irmã do Sonho, e desta sorte
Sou a crucificada... a dolorida...

The second stanza portrays her as someone immaterial, who is prey to a cruel Destiny. She is so frail that she is like the shadow of something already ethereal in itself, mist: 'sombra de névoa'. Her frailty is further underlined by the use of the two adjectives 'ténue' and 'esvaecida'. Contrasting strongly with her defencelessness, Destiny is depicted as brutal and impossible to resist:

Sombra de névoa ténue e esvaecida,
E que o destino amargo, triste e forte,
Impele brutalmente para a morte!
Alma de luto sempre incompreendida!...

The last line of that quatrain prolongs the idea that the poet is in exile, hence in mourning and misunderstood. But because throughout the two stanzas the poem has dwelt on the female identity of the speaker, it is difficult not to read into the fact that she is misunderstood, the fact that she is female, therefore powerless and dragged along by a brutal (male) destiny.

³⁵Seabra Pereira. 'De Rastros, Com Asas'. p.12.

In the third stanza, Florbela highlights her invisibility and the fact that others do not understand her, through the use of paradox:

Sou aquela que passa e ninguém vê...
 Sou a que chamam triste sem o ser...
 Sou a que chora sem saber porquê...

This tercet reveals that not only does the world not know her ('ninguém vê' , 'chamam triste sem o ser'), but she does not know herself, since she cannot pinpoint the reason for her grief: 'sou a que chora sem saber porquê'. This total alienation of the self, literally a shadow of itself, adrift in this world, culminates in the extraordinarily powerful last tercet, which attempts to account for her sad fate:

Sou talvez a visão que Alguém sonhou,
 Alguém que veio ao mundo pra me ver,
 E que nunca na vida me encontrou!

If her identity is condemned to remain incomplete and her knowledge of the self fragmentary, it may be (she postulates) because she is the embodiment of someone's dream ('visão que alguém sonhou'). But although this person was born to make her come true, to authenticate her as it were ('veio ao mundo pra me ver'), the fact that they failed to meet, meant, tragically, that she remained an ethereal 'visão' rather than becoming a fully-fledged reality.

If on one level this may be read simply as a fable of 'desencontro', a fairy tale gone wrong by failing to meet her Prince Charming, on another level it is an illustration the female condition because, as leading feminists from Simone de Beauvoir onwards have shown, males are a value in themselves while females are 'shadows', only acquiring meaning in relation to men. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was virtually impossible for women to perceive and define themselves other than by their relationships with men (ie in terms of love relations).

In this light it is striking that in *Livro de Mágoas* there are very few poems about love or addressed to her loved one, all the more so if one bears in mind the fact that love was the main theme in the collections of all the poetesses of the period, as was shown in

Chapter 1. The theme of love is however present in the background of the collection even if, more often than not, only in the form of absence of love. And the absence of love may be precisely the reason why Florbela can only apprehend her identity in problematic terms. The poems which make a more explicit link between grief, sense of incompleteness and absence of love are 'Castelã da Tristeza' (p.63) and 'Lágrimas Ocultas' (p.65), where Florbela describes her suffering by portraying herself as a nun or a châtelaine. In addition 'A minha Dor' (p.67), though not explicitly about love is closely linked to 'Castelã da Tristeza' through its imagery.

In 'Castelã da Tristeza' and 'A minha Dor', the poet is in a castle, or its semantic equivalent, a convent, to which it appears that she is confined. Both settings look back to the Romantic tradition as well as the *fin de siècle* one, where the misunderstood hero would isolate himself from the crowd by confining himself in an inaccessible space. To quote from the *Dictionnaire des symboles et des thèmes littéraires*, the castle from Romanticism onwards became 'la résidence de prédilection des héros tourmentés'³⁶. But in these poems, the castle or convent are not physical realities, they only exist as embodiments of an abstract space, to which Florbela is confined: Grief. Illustrating with 'Castelã da Tristeza':

Altiva e couraçada de desdém,
Vivo sozinha em meu castelo: a Dor!

Both sonnets describe experiences of utter loneliness. In 'Castelã da Tristeza', this is powerfully expressed in the second half of the first quatrain, by the contrast between the third and fourth line:

Passa por ele a luz de todo o amor...
E nunca em meu castelo entrou alguém!

Love, a light symbolizing warmth, communication and ultimately life, is close at hand but remains outside and out of reach. Consequently, the next three stanzas describe the feelings of the entrapped princess. They show her anguishly looking out into the open:

³⁶*Dictionnaire des symboles et des thèmes littéraires*, edited by Claude Aziza, Claude Oliviéri and Robert Sctrick (Paris: F.Nathan, 1978), p.56.

'Perscruto, ao longe, as sombras do sol-pôr...', 'À noite, debruçada pelas ameias'. Stylistically, her angst is powerfully rendered through an accumulation of unanswered questions, as in the second stanza:

Castelã da Tristeza, vês? ... A quem?!...
 -- E o meu olhar é interrogador --
 Perscruto, ao longe, as sombras do sol-pôr...
 Chora o silêncio... nada... ninguém vem...

This accumulation of unanswered questions conveys poignantly her solitude, until after the last question in the last stanza, also left unanswered, silence closes upon the frail figure:

À noite, debruçada pelas ameias,
 Porque rezas baixinho?... Porque anseias?...
 Que sonho afagam tuas mãos reais?...

'Castelã da Tristeza' introduces a new dimension to the collection: in this poem the poet's suffering and solitude are not caused by being misunderstood like a Romantic poet, but rather by the fact that love has eluded her. The poem uses a traditional fairy tale image, that of the maiden imprisoned in the castle, awaiting deliverance. Hence, it seems that her fate, which in other poems was described as an ineluctable predestination as a *poète maudit*, takes on here a different form, as if she were under a spell from which love could deliver her.

In the sonnet 'A Minha Dor' (p.67), which also describes an imprisoned female figure, there is no direct indication that Florbela's predicament is caused by the absence of love. But given the link in Portuguese Literature between convent and love (with the *Letres Portugaises* as a case in point), subliminally the reader is likely to attribute the plight of the nun walled in her grief to a love sorrow.

In this sonnet, an oppressive sense of solitude is created through a succession of details built into the first three stanzas, which bring out the close associations of the convent with suffering and death: the stones are 'em convulsões sombrias', the bells, the only noise that breaks the silence, further enhance a sepulchral space belonging to death, with their 'dobres d'agonias' and 'sons de funeral', while the lilies bear witness to

everpresent suffering in their 'roxo macerado de martírios'. The climax occurs in the last stanza, where the emphasis shifts from description of the lugubrious convent to the expression of the intimate feelings of the character trapped in it:

Nesse triste convento aonde eu moro,
Noites e dias rezo e grito e choro!
E ninguém ouve.... ninguém vê... ninguém...

In this last stanza, the suffering of the recluse is poignantly conveyed in the contrast between the dramatic portrayal of her grief, and the fact that no-one witnesses it. Stylistically, the fact that no-one is aware of her grief is masterfully rendered by the repetition of the phrase 'ninguém' + verb, with a progressive reduction of syllables in the verb, 'ninguém ouve' (two syllables), 'ninguém vê' (one syllable), until after the third 'ninguém', there is no verb at all, suggesting thus that the grieving figure is completely on her own. The rhythmic pattern of the line further supports this effect, since the main stresses fall precisely on the words 'ouve', 'vê' and the third 'ninguém'.

A third sonnet, 'Lágrimas Ocultas' (p.65), stages a nun figure. This sonnet is interesting because it is one of the few in the whole collection to contrast the poet's present grief with former moments of happiness (the other being 'A Minha Tragédia' (p.91)):

Se me ponho a cismar em outras eras
Em que ri e cantei, em que era q'rida,
Parece-me que foi noutras esferas,
Parece-me que foi numa outra vida...

Happiness, for Florbela, is defined in terms of songs and laughter but, even more revealingly, it is also defined in terms of being loved and wanted, of harmonious communication. Yet the moments of harmony she evokes seem so distant, so far removed from her present reality, that it is as though they had only existed in an altogether different life, in 'outras esferas', 'outra vida'. The sonnet 'A Minha Tragédia' in fact unequivocally states that such moments did take place in another time:

Ó minha vã, inútil mocidade
Trazes-me embriagada, entontecida!...
Duns *beijos* que me deste, *noutra vida*,
Trago em meus lábios roxos, a saudade!... (my italics)

Neither of these two poems explains why such happiness is presently denied to Florbela although, subliminally, the idea of happiness in a former life suggests a fairy tale setting: that of the princess under a spell. Once more the image of the poet as a victim of predestination unfolds into that of the fairy tale princess.

In both poems, former times of happiness are only recalled to be contrasted with Florbela's present isolation, described in the tercets. In 'A Minha Tragédia' (p.91), the poet actually chooses to isolate herself, fearing that people might read in her eyes her shameful secret:

Eu não gosto do sol, eu tenho medo
Que me leiam nos olhos o segredo
De não amar ninguém, de ser assim!

Gosto da Noite imensa, triste, preta,
Como esta estranha e doida borboleta
Que eu sinto sempre a voltejar em mim!...

Night here becomes a refuge in which the poet can hide her abnormality: she does not love anyone. This points to Florbela as a saturnian poet, lacking in something. But at the same time, given that the poet is female, by defining herself in terms of night, Florbela is also implicitly emphasizing the distance that mediates between her and the image of the ideal woman, since the ideal woman, carefree, gracious and loving, is opposed to Night with its connotations of sadness, sterility, death and loneliness.

In 'Lágrimas Ocultas' too, the tercets stress the female figure's isolation:

E fico, pensativa, olhando o vago...
Toma a brandura plácida dum lago
O meu rosto de monja de marfim...

E as lágrimas que choro, branca e calma,
Ninguém as vê brotar dentro da alma!
Ninguém as vê cair dentro de mim!

The image of the lake in line 10, 'Toma a brandura plácida dum lago', on the surface an image suggesting serenity, nevertheless already points to the grief of the female figure, which becomes apparent in the last stanza. Indeed, as Chevalier and Gheerbrant

recall, 'le marais [or lake] symbolise l'œil qui a trop pleuré'³⁷ and is furthermore associated with buried secrets, so that beneath the peaceful surface of the lake (the 'brandura plácida' of her face), real suffering occurs. And this is what the last stanza evokes, describing the recluse's tears as only having a subterranean existence: no one sees them as they spring and immediately sink inside her.

The poet's utter solitude is also highlighted through the anaphorical use of 'ninguém' in lines 13-14. The word 'ninguém', thrown into relief through devices of repetition or by being placed in a stressed position also recurs in other poems within the collection, emphasizing the loneliness of the poet, destined to remain unable to be recognized by others. It was present in 'A Minha Dor' and 'Castelã da Tristeza'. In the last but one sonnet of the collection, 'Em Busca do Amor' (p.95), the quest for love is doomed to failure, and the sonnet ends:

E eu paro a murmurar: *Ninguém* o viu!... (my italics)

And if love, which is the primary source of happiness fails, so does the attempt to find happiness through the empathy of similarly minded readers. This is highlighted in the poem closing the collection, 'Impossível' (p.96), where the very title stands as a gloomy admission of shattered hopes (hopes of empathy that had been expressed in the opening poem of the collection 'Este Livro', p.59):

Os males d'Anto toda a gente os sabe!
Os meus... *ninguém*... A minha Dor não cabe
Nos cem milhões de versos que eu fizera!... (my italics)

The same sense of isolation is also present in the dramatic undated poem 'A Lua ignóbil, informe' (vol.2, pp.19-23), published for the first time in 1981³⁸. The poem is divided into two parts. In the first, after calling up all the rejected, dejected souls (which,

³⁷Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 2nd edn (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1982), p.556.

³⁸In *Diário do Último Ano* (Amadora: Bertrand, 1981). The undated manuscript belongs to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa.

and this may not be a coincidence, although they belong to male characters are grammatically feminine in Portuguese) of this world, the poet identifies herself with them:

Vinde todas aqui à minha voz
Que o mundo é ermo
E estamos sós.

Vós todas que sois iguais a mim [...]

The second part evokes, by contrast, a procession of angelic creatures, endowed with attributes similar to those of the ideal women described by Florbela in the course of *Livro de Mágoas*. But when the mirage of this beautiful procession disappears without a trace, the poet is once more left with herself:

Silêncio! Nada! Ninguém!
Pasma de coisas mortas!
Alucinação!
E o meu coração
Põe-se a bater às portas...

E não abre ninguém!
Ninguém! Ninguém! Ninguém!...

3.2.3. LOVE

While in the poems discussed in the first section, Florbela's suffering seemed to stem from her poetic vocation as a Romantic poet, and moreover from the fact that this poetic vocation was in conflict with her internalized idea of what normal women should be like, prompting her to see herself as a 'freak', in the second section a different picture began to emerge. There, Florbela's suffering seemed increasingly to stem from the fact that, as a woman, if she failed to be illuminated by the light of love, she was no more than a shadow, engulfed by night and death.

Seabra Pereira, seeing the collection as fundamentally 'elaborando no feminino uma imagem de poeta maldito nobriano' highlights the fact that love is hardly mentioned as a cause for the poet's grief, only being explicitly present, according to him, in three poems:

'Amiga', 'De Joelhos' and 'Em Busca do Amor'³⁹. I hope that the previous section has gone some way towards showing that love (or rather lack of it) is in fact present in the background of poems other than those he mentions. This section examines four poems about love, 'Velhinha' (p.94), 'Amiga' (p.77) and 'De Joelhos' (p.85) and 'Languidez' (p.86). The first three have one important feature in common: they are the only three sonnets in the entire collection where Florbela addresses a 'tu', a male lover, but all three describe an attitude of detachment. By contrast, the fourth poem, 'Languidez' is the only poem in the whole collection where the poet seeks a more physical contact with someone.

In 'Velhinha' (p.94) the poet's detached stance is attributed to the fact that she is a prematurely aged figure:

E o bando cor-de-rosa dos carinhos
Que tu me fazes, olho-os indulgente,
Como se fosse um bando de netinhos...

'De Joelhos' and 'Amiga' describe a slightly different sort of detachment. There, the poet is willing to sublimate and even sacrifice her love in order to please the loved one, as the ending of 'De Joelhos' (p.85) makes clear:

E se mais que eu, um dia, te quiser
Alguém, bendita seja essa Mulher,
Bendito seja o beijo dessa boca!!

It is significant that when Raul Proença read 'Primeiros Passos', a sample of Florbela's early poetry, he was most complimentary about the early version of this poem, entitled 'Oração de Joelhos'. describing it as 'Uma das produções melhores do caderno. É cheia de delicadeza, ainda que seja bem pouco humano esse amor'⁴⁰. The theme of self-abnegating love was frequent in the work of the poetesses of the period as was shown in Chapter 1, and was greeted with approval, because it was perceived as an appropriately feminine theme, enabling the poetesses to display their elevation of feeling, or 'delicadeza'

³⁹Seabra Pereira 'De Rastros, Com Asas', pp.3-4.

⁴⁰*Obras Completas*, vol.1. p.261.

as Proença wrote (but at least he had enough common sense to add that such love was 'bem pouco humano').

Florbela herself was not unaware that the love she displayed in 'De Joelhos' was 'bem pouco humano' and the sonnet 'Amiga' (p.77), which on the surface is also about renunciation, already points to her wish for a more physical relationship. In this poem indeed, Florbela's apparent willingness to turn love into a fraternal relationship in the third stanza, is undermined in the fourth:

Beija-me as mãos, Amor, devagarinho...
Como se os dois nascêssemos irmãos,
Aves cantando, ao sol, no mesmo ninho...

Beija-mas bem!... Que fantasia louca
Guardar assim, fechados, nestas mãos,
Os beijos que sonhei prá minha boca!...

Although ostensibly the poet is resigning herself to a chaste relationship in the third stanza, by wishing a brotherly love from her companion, she nevertheless dreams of keeping in her hands his kisses. 'fechados', in a very physical fashion. Moreover these kisses are the kisses she had dreamt for her mouth, suggesting that Florbela could not be satisfied within the bounds of a chaste liaison and revealing her wish for a more sexual contact.

'Amiga' is not the only poem which points to the sensual love which would become the hallmark of later collections: 'Languidez' (p.86) also illustrates Florbela's yearning for physical contact. The poem starts off by describing an afternoon setting propitious to *rêverie*, the 'tardes d'Anto', which in the second stanza are perceived as:

Horas benditas, leves como penas,
Horas de fumo e cinza, horas serenas,
Minhas horas de dor em que eu sou santo!

In the last line of this second stanza, something quite extraordinary happens: the poet speaks as if she were a male speaker, 'em que sou *santo*'. This use of the masculine is quite puzzling, for it is one of the few times it occurs in the whole of Florbela's poetry, and certainly the only time where it really comes as a shock to the reader. It may be argued that

this change of genders occurs merely for reasons of rhyme (encanto / Anto / Tanto / santo), but the explanation is perhaps more complex. Anna Klobucka has suggested that in this poem, Florbela is identifying herself with the figure of the poet, and that this figure is male (Anto, but also Santo Antero), hence the use of the masculine⁴¹.

Another explanation is possible, however: it may be that the use of the masculine illustrates Florbela's difficulty in speaking about physical desire (in the last stanza) as a female. It seems that what she needs to do is to desexualize herself, become ethereal like a poet, unwittingly acquiring in the process a male gender, because in her mind poets are still male. This dematerialization can be seen at work in the first tercet:

Fecho as pálpebras roxas, quase pretas,
Que poisam sobre duas violetas,
Asas leves cansadas de voar...

The closing of her eyelids represents an escape into dream. The eyes are the most intellectual of our senses, and by closing them, Florbela is allowing herself to become more aware of her body. The last stanza vividly portrays her heightened senses:

E a minha boca tem uns beijos mudos...
E as minhas mãos, uns pálidos veludos,
Traçam gestos de sonho pelo ar...

In this stanza, the concrete desire to reach out to someone in a physical embrace is dematerialized by the words that qualify her kisses, 'mudos', and her gestures, 'de sonho'. Even her hands become ethereal, since the apposition describes them as 'pálidos veludos'. What is furthermore striking is that the person to whom these kisses and stretched arms are destined remains invisible within the poem, in sharp contrast to the three poems of renunciation where the masculine 'tu' was directly addressed.

All this (the desexualization of the poet, the absence of the 'tu' within the poem) highlights the difficulties felt by Florbela when expressing her desire for a more physical contact. Nevertheless, this poem is in many respects a precursor of the poetry of her later

⁴¹Anna Klobucka, in her PhD thesis *O Formato Mulher*, University of Harvard (in preparation).

collections. As Billie Maciumas stresses, Florbela's voice was problematized by a tradition 'that posits Woman as abstract and therefore silences the woman'. In reaction to this, 'as a poet, Espanca symbolically reappropriated the feminine body as speech, sexuality and mortality'⁴². In 'Languidez', for the first time in *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela clearly impresses her body upon the text for, as Maciumas notes, the words '*boca, beijos* and *mãos* signify, in florbelian terms, herself as agent in the symbolizing process itself'⁴³. And indeed, these elements or, more accurately in my view, the words 'boca', 'mãos' and 'olhos' (the latter one present in this poem under the guise of 'pálpebras'), become in the later collections the means through which Florbela would express her quest for a more physical relationship⁴⁴.

⁴²Billie Maciumas, 'Voice as Thematics in the Poetry of Florbela Espanca', *Hispanófila*, 103 (1991), 61-72 (p.62).

⁴³Billie Maciumas, p.63.

⁴⁴Thomas J. Braga, in his article 'Florbela Espanca, the Limbs of a Passion', *Hispania*, 73 (1990), 978-982, also stresses Florbela's use of three key emblems. According to him these are firstly hands and arms, secondly the rose, and thirdly the mouth. Having dealt with the presence of these three emblems in Florbela's poetry, he does however discuss the importance of sight in what he calls her 'map of love'.

CHAPTER 4

LIVRO DE SOROR SAUDADE

Livro de Soror Saudade came out in January 1923. It seems that by the summer of 1920 Florbela had given up her University studies¹, therefore ceasing in all likelihood to have the chance to share poetic discussions with her fellow-students. Traces of literary friendships are nevertheless still present in this second collection.

In this work, the characterization of the poet as a *female* poet becomes almost the norm, in contrast with *Livro de Mágoas*, where Florbela had felt her two identities as a woman and as a Romantic poet to be at odds with each other. At the same time, the expression of female suffering is increasingly linked to the absence of love. As a result, love becomes the main theme in this collection, a fact underlined by the presence of a substantial number of poems which attempt to come to terms with conflicting erotic impulses, such as the tendency towards sublimation on the one hand and the tendency towards acceptance of sensuality on the other.

As we can see, *Livro de Soror Saudade* starts where *Livro de Mágoas* had left off and in it, new themes emerge. These new themes will be further developed in *Charneca em Flor* and to that extent it could be said that *Livro de Soror Saudade* acts as a turning-point between *Livro de Mágoas* and *Charneca em Flor*.

¹According to Rui Guedes, in *Acerca de Florbela*, p.53, António Guimarães, who was to become her second husband, moved to Castelo da Foz in July 1920 and Florbela followed him. Further evidence of the fact that by the summer of 1920 Florbela was no longer in Lisbon is provided by a letter dated 25 August 1920 sent to her by a lady named Maria Augusta Supico Ribeiro. The letter was addressed to Mme António Guimarães, Rua do Godinho, 146, Matosinhos. Unfortunately Rui Guedes did not include this letter in *Obras Completas*, but the manuscript is available at the Biblioteca Nacional (N10/20). I have reproduced this letter in Appendix 7.

4.1. THE ROMANTIC POET

4.1.1. THE FEMALE ROMANTIC POET

In *Livro de Mágoas*, there was an overall feeling that Florbela was misunderstood. Other people did not recognize that her extraordinary suffering was the hallmark of the poet. Consequently, they reproached her for her eccentricities and accused her of cultivating them in a way contrary to the behaviour conventionally expected of women:

Disseram-me hoje, assim, ao ver-me triste:
"Parece Sexta-Feira de Paixão. [...]"

O que é que tem?! Tão nova e sempre triste!
Faça por 'star contente! Pois então?!..." (Impossível, p.96)

In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, Florbela's status as a Romantic poet is no longer under question. Indeed, her perception of herself as a poet, someone belonging to a higher plane, misunderstood by the vulgus, now becomes substantiated by other poets in the names they use to designate her and which she evokes:

Irmã, Soror Saudade me chamaste... (p.114)

Minh'alma é a Princesa Desalento,
Como um Poeta lhe chamou, um dia. (p.151)

The names Soror Saudade and Princesa Desalento fully express the Romantic notion of the sensitive poet forever pursuing higher aspirations, yet disheartened at being unable to reach the absolute. Even more significant is the fact that the titles of *princess* and *soror*, bestowed upon Florbela by fellow-poets, clearly stress her female identity. In that respect, Florbela's delighted reaction to the name Américo Durão gave her, described in the poem 'Soror Saudade', cannot be overemphasized. She felt as though he had revealed her to herself:

Irmã, Soror Saudade me chamaste...
E na minh'alma o nome iluminou-se
Como um vitral ao sol, como se fosse
A luz do próprio sol que sonhaste.

Her identity as 'Soror Saudade' is one she felt to be true to life, and one may wonder whether it was precisely because it posited her as a *female* Romantic poet. Certainly, her immediate adoption of the *persona* of Soror Saudade is confirmed by two letters she wrote at that time, the first to Durão himself, the second to Augusto d'Esaguy, where she coined the term 'Soror Vitral', a term that perhaps takes up the comparison 'Como um vitral ao sol' present in the poem 'Soror Saudade'². Several years later, in her correspondence with Guido Battelli, Florbela would also make much use of her *persona* as 'Soror Saudade', thus showing how important it was for her to be perceived both as a Romantic poet, forever pursuing an unattainable ideal, and as a *female* Romantic poet.

While Florbela makes clear that Durão is responsible for christening her Soror Saudade by quoting a stanza from his poem as one of the epigraphs to her collection, there is no indication as to the identity of the poet who christened her 'Princesa Desalento'. However, João Boto de Carvalho's poem 'A Princesa Incompreendida', dedicated to Florbela, had referred to her as 'Princesa Desolação'³. It is probable therefore that in 'Princesa Desalento' she was attributing the designation 'Princesa Desalento' to him.

These two designations encapsulate Florbela's sense of despair at being unable to reach that which she longs for. Another portrayal of Florbela by a male artist also vividly put across her sense of longing and her despondency: that of her brother, Apeles Espanca. Apeles, at his sister's request, drew a picture intended for the cover of *Livro de Soror Saudade*⁴. There, a female figure, languidly lying on a chaise-longue, is staring out of the window into an exotic landscape, flooded by light. It is telling that Florbela should be indoors, looking out of the window. The drawing brings to mind the figure of the Portuguese nun, staring out of her balcony. It encompasses vividly the plight of a woman

²*Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.221-227 and pp.229-231 respectively. The letter to Esaguy makes clear that by that stage the image of the Romantic poet was being taken over by attempts to capture herself and her emotions: 'Fala-me ainda, Você, de José Duro, de Anto, de Wilde. Eu não os leio, já nem creio neles! Agora leio-me...' (vol.5, p.231). This letter was first published as 'Impressões. Florbela Espanca' in *Gazeta dos Caminhos de Ferro*, Lisbon, 1 May 1933, p.278.

³This poem was discussed in the previous chapter. It is reproduced in Appendix 5.

⁴This drawing was never used. It belongs to the Biblioteca Pública de Évora.

condemned, it seems, to see life pass her by, while suggesting the temptation to escape through the open window. But more of that later.

In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, a third sonnet, 'Maria das Quimeras' (p.136), designates her by a title (Maria das Quimeras) in a context which highlights her identification as a female poet. This time, however, the person calling her 'Maria das Quimeras' is not a fellow-poet, but a mysterious 'Alguém' which, as the poem develops, reveals its true face: that of a cruel destiny.

The first stanza explains the designation 'Maria das Quimeras' by describing Florbela absorbed in her search for 'flores d'oiro e azul', which are reminiscent of the romantic blue flower of poetry and, like it, represent dreams and ideals:

Maria das Quimeras me chamou
Alguém... Pelos castelos que eu ergui,⁵
Plas flores d'oiro e azul que a sol teçi
Numa tela de sonho que estalou.

The last word in the stanza, 'estalou', unexpectedly exposes the shattering of her dreams. The second stanza consequently describes the disappearance of all her chimeras, stolen by an omnipotent 'Alguém' acting as a despotic destiny:

Mas, quando despertei, nem uma vi,
Que da minh'alma, Alguém, tudo levou!

The two tercets show the disorientation of the dispossessed 'Maria das Quimeras' through the rhetorical device of an accumulation of unanswered questions. In describing the poet as being in the hands of destiny, this poem is quite close in tone to *Livro de Mágoas* and, as in the earlier collection, what is stressed is the inherent suffering and

⁵Rui Guedes based his edition of *Livro de Soror Saudade* on the typographical proofs, but there are several instances where his transcription is not completely accurate. I have rectified mistakes and typographical errors in the quotations and indicated in footnotes how the relevant lines read in *Obras Completas*. In the case of 'Maria das Quimeras', there are several differences in punctuation between typographical proofs and first edition on the one hand and *Obras Completas* on the other. In *Obras Completas* 'Alguém... Pelos castelos que eu ergui' (sic), 'Mas, quando despertei, nem uma vi' (sic) and 'Maria das quimeras, sem quimeras?...' (sic).

solitude of being a poet, a 'Maria das Quimeras, sem quimeras'. But this time, the shattered dreams are explicitly linked to lost love, as the poet recalls her dreams of 'beijos':

Pelo mundo, na vida, o que é que esperas?...
Aonde estão os beijos que sonhaste,
Maria das Quimeras, sem quimeras?

Florbela seems to have regarded this despondent sonnet as emblematic of her state of mind, since she had thought of it as the opening sonnet for a collection which she had planned to entitle *Claustro das Quimeras*⁶. The collection later became *Livro de Soror Saudade* because, when Alfredo Pimenta published his *Livro de Quimeras*, Florbela decided to re-arrange the order of the poems in *Claustro das Quimeras* and rename it, perhaps to avoid accusations of plagiarism⁷. The new collection, *Livro de Soror Saudade* had as its opening poem 'Soror Saudade'.

It is significant that Florbela had thought of both 'Maria das Quimeras' and 'Soror Saudade' as suitable opening poems, since they both confirmed her image as a poet singled out by destiny to suffer. But it is equally significant that they clearly underlined her female identity, since this is an important step forward from *Livro de Mágoas*, where Florbela had mostly felt her identities as a poet and a woman to be at odds with each other.

In *Livro de Mágoas*, alongside poems on the contradictions and tensions between these two identities, many poems conveyed Florbela's suffering. In *Livro de Soror Saudade* too, there are poems which express Florbela's inordinate suffering, but several features distinguish them from the poems of the earlier collection. Firstly, most of the poems now indicate the female identity of the speaker. Secondly, in the depth of her

⁶The manuscript of *Claustro das Quimeras* belongs to the Biblioteca Nacional. The list of the poems Florbela had planned to include in that collection is given by Rui Guedes in *Obras Completas*, vol.2, pp.109-110.

⁷As she revealed in a letter to her brother: 'O maroto do Alfredo Pimenta escangalhou-me o arranjinho, publicando um *Livro de Quimeras*' (vol.5, p.244). Ironically, after *Livro de Soror Saudade* had come out, later that same year Alfredo Pimenta published a collection entitled *Este é o Livro da Minha Saudade* (Lisbon, 1923). Such a coincidence proves that Florbela was attuned to the literary fashions of the time and, precisely because of that, cautious about avoiding any possible accusations of plagiarism. In fact, she did not succeed in avoiding these altogether since, as was discussed in Chapter 1, she was accused in a critical review of imitating Virgínia Vitorino.

predicament, Florbela shows signs of taking pride in her suffering. Thirdly, the poems repeatedly associate the negative image of the self with want of love.

4.1.2. WRETCHEDNESS AND ABSENCE OF LOVE

Several poems describe Florbela as an outcast, notably 'Hora que Passa' (p.154), 'O Que Tu És' (p.117), 'O Meu Orgulho' (p.122) and 'O Meu Mal' (p.125). This section looks at the first two, the other two will be dealt with in the next section.

'Hora que Passa' (p.154) is perhaps the closest in tone to *Livro de Mágoas*, in that it stresses the utter loneliness and grief of the poet. As in the earlier 'Eu', Florbela impresses her misery upon the reader by depicting herself as an outcast, adrift in the world, through an accumulation of negative images:

Vejo-me triste, abandonada e só
 Bem como um cão sem dono e que o procura,
 Mais pobre e desprezada do que Job
 A caminhar na via da amargura!

Judeu Errante que a ninguém faz dó!
 Minh'alma triste, dolorida, escura,
 Minh'alma sem amor é cinza, é pó,
 Vaga roubada ao Mar da Desventura!

However, in 'Hora Que Passa' Florbela compares herself to famous literary figures associated with a curse, Job and the Wandering Jew, something she had not done in the earlier collection. This reveals an incipient tendency to turn herself into a mythical figure, emblematic of suffering, and by extension a new-found readiness to set herself on the same level as male poets (such as Nobre, for instance, who also used the comparison with Job, as was discussed in Chapter 2). It is also worth noting that line 7 clearly indicates that the poet's plight is, at least partly, caused by lack of love 'Minh'alma sem amor é cinza, é pó'.

'O Que Tu És' (p.117) also describes Florbela as someone who is under a curse. This poem is one of only two poems in *Livro de Soror Saudade* to make a comparison between Florbela and other women (the other being 'Alentejano', p.119). Here, the curse stems both from the fact that destiny has elected her to suffer and from the fact that she is

not like other women. This looks back to earlier poems in *Livro de Mágoas*, such as 'Pior Velhice' where, in order to give credibility to her image as a Romantic poet, Florbela had to show that she was a 'freak', different from normal women. Stylistically, 'O Que Tu És' also recalls another poem from *Livro de Mágoas*, 'Eu', in its accumulation of anaphoras, underlining a succession of negative definitions of the self.

In the first stanza, Florbela claims to be the daughter of the allegorical figure of 'Mágoa', rejected by God and men alike. This filiation, of course, ensures her recognition as a Romantic poet:

És Aquela que tudo te entristece
Irrita e amargura, tudo humilha;
Aquela a quem a Mágoa chamou filha;
A que aos homens e a Deus nada merece.

But in the second stanza, Florbela reduces the scope of her portrayal as an alienated Romantic poet, predestined to suffer, by linking her misery to the fact that love is absent from her life (lines 7-8):

Aquela que o sol claro entenebrece
A que nem sabe a estrada que ora trilha,
Que nem um lindo amor de maravilha
Sequer deslumbra, e ilumina e aquece!

And consequently, in the last stanza, after more negative definitions of the self in the first tercet, her awareness of not being like other women cannot be divorced from the absence of love in her life (conveyed through the image of being a year without spring, symbolically the season of love):

És ano que não teve Primavera...
Ah! Não seres como as outras raparigas
Ó Princesa Encantada da Quimera!...

The title 'Princesa Encantada da Quimera' redresses *in extremis* the wholly negative portrayal of the self of the rest of the poem, by throwing into relief that she is a poet, given the Romantic image of the poet as a prince(ss); this implicitly marks her as special, with higher aspirations than 'the girl next door'. It is significant that this ending was a last

minute change: in the manuscript of *Claustro das Quimeras*, the exclamation originally read 'Ah! Não sou como as outras raparigas / Do Palácio Encantado da quimera', stating therefore it was the other girls who belonged to the realm 'Encantado da quimera'. Perhaps Florbela realized that this was inconsistent with the fact that 'quimera' could only belong to poets like herself, the 'Maria das Quimeras'. Certainly, by calling herself 'Princesa Encantada da Quimera', Florbela is showing an incipient pride in her wretchedness, a clear departure from *Livro de Mágoas*, where the experience of being a poet was unbearably painful.

Yet, there is no doubt that the cost of being different was very high. And thus against the portrayal of what Florbela *is* (an exception), stands an idealized projection of what she would like to be (a normal girl), in the sonnet 'Alentejano' (p.119), which depicts local girls, reaping:

Cantam as raparigas meigamente.
Brilham os olhos negros, feiticeiros.
E há perfis delicados e trigeiros
Entre as altas espigas d'ouro ardente.

A terra prende aos dedos sensuais
A cabeleira loira dos trigais
Sob a bênção dulcíssima dos céus.⁸

The scene is one of plenitude. Nature exudes voluptuousness and the peasant girls, framed by a fecund Nature, reflect sensuality in their 'olhos negros, feiticeiros'. It is as if, in a society at one with nature, sensuality was acceptable because it had been assimilated as part of the natural course of things sanctioned by the 'bênção dulcíssima dos céus'⁹.

In the last stanza, Florbela depicts herself as a girl amongst the others, with nothing to differentiate her from them in their normality 'E eu sou uma daquelas raparigas...'. By so doing, she is momentarily negating the fact painfully stated in 'O Que Tu És' of not being 'como as outras raparigas'. As a result, her integration translates itself in the

⁸In *Obras Completas*, bênção (sic).

⁹This theme will also be explored in *Charneca em Flor* with 'Rústica' (p.168). The theme of acceptable sensuality in peasant girls, close to nature, had already been explored as early as *Trocando Olhares*, in a poem also called 'Rústica' (vol.1. pp.241-242).

blessing of the loved one, in sharp contrast with 'O Que Tu És', where love had been denied to her:

Há gritos arrastados de cantigas...
E eu sou uma daquelas raparigas...
E tu passas e dizes: "Salve-os Deus!".

But the positive image of the self as a peasant girl put forward in 'Alentejano' constitutes an exception within the collection, and indeed within Florbela's work as a whole. While female sensuality will begin to be acknowledged in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, it will often remain linked with disorder, and always perceived as only possible outside society. Before looking in more detail at how Florbela deals with love and sensuality, however, we must examine the other poems where she portrays herself as an outcast.

4.1.3. WRETCHEDNESS AND PAST GLORY

In the poems 'O Meu Orgulho' and 'O Meu Mal' Florbela contrasts a past of former happiness with a lonely present. In *Livro de Mágoas*, 'A Minha Tragédia' and 'Lágrimas Ocultas' had already built such a contrast and, in both instances, the poet's wretchedness in the present was associated with the absence of love. This is also what happens in 'O Meu Orgulho' (p.122):

Lembro-me o que fui dantes. Quem me dera
Não me lembrar! Em tardes dolorosas
Eu lembro-me que fui a Primavera [...]

O que eu mais amo é o que mais me esquece...

In 'O Meu Orgulho', unlike what happened in the poems of *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela attempts to sublimate the loneliness of her early poems into something positive, marking her superiority. This confirms the tendency, already noted in 'Hora que Passa' and in 'O Que Tu És', for the poet to display an attitude of pride, which contrasts with her utter wretchedness in *Livro de Mágoas*:

E eu sonho: "Quem olvida não merece..."

E já não fico tão abandonada!

Sinto que valho mais, mais pobrezinha:
Que também é orgulho ser sozinha,
E também é nobreza não ter nada!

The equation between isolation and greatness culminates in 'O Meu Mal' (p.125). There, the evocation of former times is not used to articulate the grief of a present without love, but rather dwells on the feeling of being in exile from the greatness experienced in former worlds, giving Florbela a mythical dimension, a theme which will subsequently become more pronounced in *Charneca em Flor*.

In the poem, right from the opening lines, Florbela claims to know the cause of her suffering (a self-knowledge that contrasts with her complete lack of self-knowledge in *Livro de Mágoas*):

Eu tenho lido em mim, sei-me de cor,
Eu sei o nome ao meu estranho mal:

Once she begins to describe the essence of her 'estranho mal', it becomes clear that it is caused by having experienced other states and shapes in the past:

Eu sei que fui a renda dum vitral,
Que fui cipreste, caravela, dor!

Fui tudo que no mundo há de maior:
Fui cisne, e lírio, e águia, e catedral!
E fui, talvez, um verso de Nerval,
Ou um cínico riso de Chamfort...

The succession of shapes taken by Florbela is successfully underlined both by the anaphorical construction (Fui /Fui / E fui) and by the accumulation of details, achieved in the first stanza with an asyndetic sequence ('cipreste, caravela, dor') and in the second stanza with polysyndetons ('Fui cisne, e lírio, e águia, e catedral! / E fui, talvez, um verso de Nerval, / Ou um cínico riso de Chamfort')¹⁰.

¹⁰In their *Nova Gramática do Português Contemporâneo* (Lisbon, 1984), p.623, Celso Cunha and Lindley Cintra describe the polysyndeton as a stylistic device particularly apt 'para sugerir movimentos ininterruptos ou vertiginosos'. One of the examples they chose to illustrate this was precisely Florbela's line 'Fui cisne, e lírio, e águia, e catedral'.

Not all the elements listed are as equivalent as the use of the asyndetons and the anaphoras might lead one to believe. In the asyndetic sequence 'cipreste, caravela, dor', for instance, there is a progression from concrete (the cypress, the caravel) to abstract (grief). This pattern is repeated in the second stanza, where the polysyndeton 'fui cisne, e lírio, e águia, e catedral' evoking concrete objects, stands on the same level syntactically, through the use of anaphora (Fui / Fui / E fui), as the lines that follow, but which describe abstractions: 'um verso de Nerval' and 'um cínico riso de Chamfort'.

Yet all these elements have one thing in common: greatness and, moreover, a greatness derived from a sense of aloofness. The cypress stands alone in the cemetery, the cathedral is usually built in a prominent place, the eagle lives in the heights. Also present, particularly in the abstract elements (the line from Nerval and the cynical laugh of Chamfort), is the association between greatness and grief, since Nerval had an aura of 'poète maudit' and Chamfort, a philosopher known for his cynicism, died under the guillotine.

In the third stanza, the link between greatness and grief recedes momentarily into the background as Florbela describes her power to transform nature into royal or divine symbols:

Fui a heráldica flor de agrestes cardos,
Deram as minhas mãos aroma aos nardos...
Deu cor ao eloendro a minha boca...

In lines 10-11, her hands and mouth (both life-giving parts of the body), like those of a goddess, give aroma and colour (symbols of life) to spikenards and oleanders. Both are heraldic flowers: spikenards symbolized royal qualities, while oleanders were linked to the symbolism of immortality¹¹. But since line 9 had stressed that Florbela had been a heraldic flower, the metaphors of lines 10-11 both convey the image of a life-giving

¹¹'On extrayait du nard un parfum des plus précieux qui évoquait des qualités royales': 'Le laurier est lié [...] au symbolisme de l'immortalité', in Chevalier et Gheerbrant. *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 2nd edn (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1982), pp. 659 and 563 respectively.

goddess and suggest that she was embodied in these plants endowed with mythical powers.

Although this is one of the relatively few poems within this collection that has no indication of the gender of its author, Florbela clearly impressed her signature upon it, by describing herself metonymically through her hands and mouth (and in the last tercet through her eyes, present in the 'lágrima de Boabdil') for these three parts of her body, as was discussed at the end of the last chapter, are elements which symbolize 'herself as an agent'¹².

The last stanza again stresses the poet's incarnation into grief, bringing it up to the present:

Ah! De Boabdil fui lágrima na Espanha!
E foi de lá que eu trouxe esta ânsia estranha,
Mágoa de não sei quê! Saudade louca!

Boabdil was the last Moorish king of Granada, before being defeated by the Reyes Católicos. By associating herself with the grief of a destitute king, Florbela is justifying her yearning for a former greatness.

Therefore, although in *Livro de Soror Saudade* there are still poems which dramatize Florbela's plight, on the whole they differ substantially from those of *Livro de Mágoas*. Firstly, others now recognize her double identity as a poet and as a woman poet. This enables Florbela to present in some poems her suffering as a sign of her greatness, something that had been completely absent from *Livro de Mágoas*. Secondly there is an increasing number of poems where Florbela's suffering is motivated by the absence of love in her life. In fact, love becomes the central preoccupation in this collection and the rest of the chapter will be devoted to a discussion of her handling of the theme.

¹²Billie Maciumas, p.63.

4.2. LOVE

In this second collection, the poems about love, many in which Florbela addresses a male 'tu' (usually with the apostrophe 'Amor'), account for more than half of the total. These poems deal with a wide spectrum of feelings, from Florbela's reactions when faced with the loss of love, to descriptions of her relationship with her loved one. Whether dealing with unrequited or requited love, Florbela oscillates between fairly conventional attitudes and utterly subversive ones.

4.2.1. LOSS OF LOVE

There are five sonnets which evoke the poet's reaction to the end of a relationship: 'Fumo' (p.121), 'Saudades' (p.137), 'Cinzento' (p.135), 'Ódio' (p.143) and 'Sombra' (p.153). In addition, the sonnet 'Anoitecer' (p.131), although not explicitly about love, is thematically and stylistically linked to both 'Cinzento' and 'Fumo'. Given the large number of poems on this subject only three will be examined here: 'Cinzento' and 'Ódio' in this section and 'Sombra' in a later one for reasons which will be explained then.

'Cinzento' (p.135) is a sonnet of infinite sadness evoking the intense melancholy of the poet. It is set at sunset, a time favoured by the Symbolists, for whom the fading of light echoed loss, melancholy and inner dissolution. The whole sonnet is a successful one stylistically, with several anaphoras and recurring lines creating a nostalgic and languid state of mind, where the distinction between self and nature becomes blurred, in a Verlainian way.

The opening stanza describes Florbela as a still figure surrounded by the greyness of dusk, giving the impression that she is slowly merging with it:

Poeiras de crepúsculos cinzentos,
Lindas rendas velhinhas, em pedaços,
Prendem-se aos meus cabelos, aos meus braços,¹³
Como brancos fantasmas. sonolentos....

¹³In *Obras Completas* 'Prendem-se aos meus cabelos, aos meus braços' (sic).

Syntactically, the dissolution of the poet's sense of identity is conveyed by the fact that the subject of the sentence is 'poeiras de crepúsculos' while she is the object. The immateriality of the atmosphere that surrounds the poet, suggested by the words 'poeiras' (evoking the fragmented light of dusk) and 'fantasmas', appears to take hold of her, and this is described in line 3 through the image of dusk settling on her hair. The metaphor of dusk as antique lace in line 2, as well as creating a nostalgia for bygone ages, brings to mind the idea of a veil covering her.

In the second stanza, the unreal light is described through the metaphor of the ghostlike 'monges soturnos', a metaphor which is not introduced by any syntactic links. The breakdown of syntax mirrors the breakdown of the poet's own identity:

Monges soturnos deslizando lentos,
Devagarinho, em mist'riosos passos...
Perde-se a luz em lânguidos cansaços...
Ergue-se a minha cruz dos desalentos!

In the last two lines of this quatrain, the poet links the desintegration of dusk light with her own inner dissolution. The parallel between the dispersion of light and the poet's melancholic state of spirit is strikingly thrown into relief by the very similar rhythmic pattern of lines 7-8 (stresses on the 1st, 4th, 6th and 10th syllables), also underlined by the analogy of sounds in some of the stressed syllables: 'Perde-se / Ergue-se' and 'luz / cruz'. This parallel is further intensified by the fact that after the unexpected change to the Sapphic verse in lines 5-6, lines 7-8 go back to heroic verse.

In line 8, Florbela's despondency is conveyed through the metaphor of the cross, a metaphor reminiscent of her comparison to a 'Sexta-Feira de Paixão' at the close of *Livro de Mágoas*. But the description of the poet's suffering through religious imagery is also a distinguishing feature of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, as the image of 'Soror Saudade' suggests.

The two tercets help to pinpoint the cause of the poet's dejection: it is due to the desintegration of love, which the anaphora of the final tercet (Hora / Hora / Hora) vividly

throws into relief, suggesting the evolution of the love relationship, from the time of falling in love to separation:

Hora em que o teu olhar me deslumbrou...
 Hora em que a tua boca me beijou...
 Hora em que fumo e névoa te tornaste...

If 'Cinzento' is perhaps the sonnet which most closely resembles Verlaine in the way it conveys the poet's loss of love and her despondency, 'Ódio' (p.143), expresses the poet's feelings through what has come to be seen as an image more typical of Florbela, the image of the nun.

This image appeared in *Livro de Mágoas*, in the sonnets 'A Minha Dor', 'Dizeres Íntimos' and 'Lágrimas Ocultas'. At the start of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, in 'Soror Saudade', the image of the poet as a nun was thrown into relief, both because the poem opened the collection and because, as already discussed, Florbela's identity as Soror Saudade was endorsed by a fellow-poet. But in 'Soror Saudade', the onus was on the suffering of the nun, not on the causes of suffering. By contrast, in 'Ódio', Florbela links her grief to the loss of love, which literally 'petrifies' her into the image of the nun:

Que importa se mentiu? E se hoje o pranto
 Turva o meu triste olhar, marmorizado,
 Olhar de monja, trágico, gelado
 Como um soturno e enorme Campo Santo!¹⁴

Thus, the image of the melancholic nun, whose sorrow at the beginning of the collection had no clear cause, now becomes explicitly associated with Florbela's detachment from a lost love. Mário Sacramento has drawn attention to the fact that 'Ódio' is an attempt on Florbela's part to detach herself from a love that is no more, but that underlying it is already present an attitude of 'disponibility' towards love, which would come to the fore in later poems¹⁵. The nun figure will appear once more in this collection,

¹⁴In *Obras Completas* 'Com um soturno e enorme Campo Santo' (sic).

¹⁵'Florbela num Verso'. in *Ensaio de Domingo* (Coimbra: Coimbra Ed., 1959), pp.155-61. particularly pp.159-160.

in the poem 'Renúncia', but this time to subvert the poet's self-renouncing stance openly, as the next section will discuss.

In 'Cinzento' and 'Ódio' there is a passive or sublimated acceptance of the melancholy of lost love. But within the collection, there is one poem, 'Princesa Desalento' (p.151), where far from expressing her grief passively or trying to overcome it, Florbela depicts her contradictory feelings of rage and utter devastation:

Minh'alma é a Princesa Desalento,
 Como um Poeta lhe chamou, um dia.
 É revoltada, trágica, sombria,
 Como galopes infernais de vento!

É frágil como o sonho dum momento,
 Soturna como preces de agonia,
 Vive do riso dum boca fria!
 Minh'alma é a Princesa Desalento...

The adjectives used by Florbela in this poem echo those of 'Ódio': in 'Ódio', the nun's gaze was described as 'Olhar de monja, *trágico*, gelado / Como um *soturno* e enorme Campo Santo!' (my italics). In 'Princesa Desalento', her soul is 'revoltada, *trágica*, sombria,' (line 3) and '*Soturna* como preces de agonia,' (line 6) (my italics).

However, while in 'Ódio', we were presented with a nun willing to sublimate her feelings, in 'Princesa Desalento' we are faced with its opposite: the witch, an image clearly suggested by the comparison with the wind in line 4, 'Como galopes *infernais* de vento!' (my italics). As a result, whereas in 'Ódio' the poet, presented as a nun, relinquishes love completely and strives to distance herself from all earthly passions, including hatred, in 'Princesa Desalento', the poet (or rather her sister soul, the moon) goes back to haunt her lover, pinning on his door tangible evidence of her suffering in the form of a cross:

O luar ouve a minh'alma, ajoelhado,
 E vai traçar. fantástico e gelado,
 A sombra dum cruz à tua porta...

It is significant that the poet's stance was perceived to be inappropriate enough for the person who went over the typographical proofs of *Livro de Soror Saudade* to make

important changes to lines 3-4, toning down her unfeminine rage and revolt. Thus, where Florbela had written:

*É revoltada, trágica, sombria,
Como galopes infernais de vento!* (my italics)

in the poem published in the first edition and thereafter, the lines were changed to:

*É magoada e pálida e sombria,
Como soluços trágicos de vento*¹⁶ (my italics)

4.2.2. SPIRITUAL LOVE AND SUBVERSION OF SPIRITUAL LOVE

The last section examined how Florbela's sadness in the face of unrequited love was momentarily subverted in 'Princesa Desalento' by displaying an 'unfeminine' rage. The coming section discusses how in some poems, in order to attract the loved one, Florbela adopts typically 'feminine' attitudes in the way she portrays herself, before showing that in others she subverts this image.

4.2.2.a. The Poet as a Spiritual Being

In the society in which Florbela lived, in order to be attractive, women, if they did not want to be viewed as whores, could not give an overtly sexual image of themselves. The fact that Florbela had internalized this can be surmised from the fact that she had been struck enough by 'Lassitude', a poem by Verlaine which puts across a message of that nature, to copy it out¹⁷. Indeed, the poem suggests that the essence of female attractiveness is precisely to be found in a demure behaviour:

De la douceur, de la douceur, de la douceur
Calme un peu ces transports fébriles, ma charmante.
Même au fort du déduit parfois, vois-tu, l'amante
Doit avoir l'abandon paisible de la soeur.

¹⁶*Sonetos Completos*, (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1950), p.99.

¹⁷This poem was mentioned in Chapter 3. The manuscript belongs to the Biblioteca Nacional, BN N10/12.

In many of the poems from *Livro de Soror Saudade* Florbela adopted such an image of the self, projecting herself as a gentle and desexualized being. This is particularly clear in 'Suavidade' (p.149), 'Sol Poente' (p.156) and 'Nocturno' (p.134).

In 'Suavidade' (p.149), Florbela literally takes up Verlaine's metaphor of the lover behaving like a sister, by referring to herself as a 'doce Irmã compadecida'. The poem reflects a *fin de siècle* pessimism, portraying her as someone who has been torn to pieces by life (E eu, pra te consolar, direi o mal / Que à minha alma profunda fez a Vida) and is thus prematurely aged (E os meus dedos enrugados, velhos). In the last stanza, the poet who seeks to console the male 'tu' addressed in the sonnet, depicts a physical contact, the touch of her fingers on his face:

Hão-de poisar-se num fervor de crente,
Rosas brancas tombando docemente
Sobre o teu rosto, como penas d'aves...

Despite being physical, this contact is turned into something spiritual through the apposition 'Rosas brancas' and the comparison to the delicate 'penas de aves', pointing to the poet as an immaterial being.

'Sol Poente' and 'Nocturno' also describe a spiritualized and suffering female figure. In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, spirituality and suffering seem to go hand in hand, an association underlined by the image of the nun itself. In these sonnets, however, the poet's suffering is no longer caused by some dark predestination like in 'Suavidade', but by her male companion himself.

The first stanza of 'Sol Poente' (p.156) creates a melancholic setting at dusk, pervaded by a diffuse sense of religiosity:

Tardinha... "Ave-Maria, Mãe de Deus..."
E reza a voz dos sinos e das noras...
O sol que morre tem clarões d'auroras,
Águia que bate as asas pelos céus!¹⁸

¹⁸In *Obras Completas* 'pelo céu' (sic).

The second stanza shows that this atmosphere reflects the poet's own melancholy, by recalling former moments shared with her loved one. The third stanza encapsulates the poet's melancholy through a description of the suffering of a personified nature, 'saudades'. The word has a polyvalent meaning since it designates both nostalgic memories and a flower and this reinforces the despondent feelings of the personified (female) *saudades* which mirror those of the female poet:

Horas em que as saudades, plas estradas,
Inclinam as cabeças mart'rizadas
E ficam pensativas... meditando...

The last stanza, however, unexpectedly shifts from a description of the poet's despondent state of spirit, as the physical presence of the loved one, up to then undisclosed, is suddenly introduced:

Morrem verbenas silenciosamente...
E o rubro sol da tua boca ardente
Vai-me a pálida boca desfolhando...¹⁹

There is a marked contrast between the description of Florbela's partner, with the adjectives 'rubro' and 'ardente' indicating sensual passion, and her own passivity, conveyed by the palidity of her mouth. Furthermore, the word 'desfolhando' suggests a penetration of the poet's intimacy but also brings to mind the martyred flowers *saudades* of the previous stanza, as 'desfolhando' belongs to the semantic field of flowers, emphasizing Florbela's sorrow.

In 'Nocturno' (p.134), Florbela also constructs an image of herself as suffering. The first stanza sets up an unreal atmosphere, at once spiritual and sensual, with moonlight bathing the earth: 'Anda o luar todo bondade, / Beijando a terra, a desfazer--se em luz'.

¹⁹A comparable ending occurs in 'Outono', a poem which forms part of the recently discovered manuscript *Livro do Nosso Amor*. This poem has been published by Rui Guedes in *Obras Completas*, vol.2, p.103.

Meu Amor! Meu Amor! Outono vem...
Beija os meus olhos roxos, beija-os bem!
Desfolha essas primeiras violetas!...

Spirituality however takes over in the lines that follow when moonlight becomes defined as 'os pés brancos de Jesus'.

But the immaterial atmosphere only serves to highlight the poet's disillusion and suffering, evoked, as in 'Sol Poente', through the image of martyrdom contained in the metaphor of the calvary (in the second stanza), and the image of the aggrieved soul as a flower, this time a waterlily (in the third stanza):

E eu ponho-me a pensar... Quanta saudade
Das ilusões e risos que em ti pus!
Traçaste em mim os braços dum cruz,
Neles pregaste a minha mocidade!

Minh'alma, que eu te dei, cheia de mágoas,
É nesta noite o nenúfar dum lago
'Stendendo as asas brancas sobre as águas!

The image of the waterlily, describing her soul, encapsulates Florbela's dejected state of spirit²⁰, but also attenuates the violence of the preceding image of crucifixion. It suggests the sublimation of her sorrows through the metaphor of the petals spreading like 'asas brancas' over the water.

Despite the fact that, as in 'Sol Poente', her suffering is caused by her lover, the last stanza evokes physical proximity (this time in a desexualized 'beijo dolorido e vago') while still stressing the poet's dejection:

Poisa as mãos nos meus olhos, com carinho,
Fecha-os num beijo dolorido e vago...
E deixa-me chorar devagarinho...

'Da Minha Janela' (p.155) seems to follow the pattern of 'Sol Poente' and 'Nocturno', beginning with a description of an atmosphere of heightened feeling, which

²⁰This is a recurrent image in Florbela's poetry. In the early poem 'Poetas' (vol.1, p.206) from *Trocando Olhares*, it was used to show the solitude involved in being a poet:

E a minha alma cega, ao abandono
Faz-me lembrar o nenúfar dum lago
'Stendendo as asas brancas cor de sono...

In 'Soneto II' it conveys Florbela's dejection:

Sou triste como a folha ao abandono
Sobre um lago onde vogam nenúfares... (vol.2, p.215)

reflects the poet's inner pain, and ending with a kiss. But a closer look reveals that the pattern is in fact subverted.

Like 'Sol Poente', the poem begins with the description of a feeling nature at sunset:

Mar alto! Ondas quebradas e vencidas
 Num soluçar aflito, murmurado...
 Voo de gaivotas, leve, imaculado,
 Como neves nos píncaros nascidas!

Sol! Ave a tombar, asas já feridas,
 Batendo ainda num arfar pausado...
 Ó meu doce poente torturado
 Rezo-te em mim, chorando, mãos erguidas!

The last line of the second stanza, 'Rezo-te em mim', shows that the suffering of the sunset can find an echo in the poet's soul, as if it reflected her own suffering.

The first tercet provides an unexpected comparison of the sunset to a line by Samain:

Meu verso de Samain cheio de graça,
 Inda não és clarão já és luar
 Como um branco lilás que se desfaça!

The sun at dusk is in a state of flux: like poetry, it does not give out a bright daytime light ('clarão'), but a diffuse moonlight halo, which Florbela compares to a white lilac. The lilac, because of its whiteness and the scattering of its petals, acquires here the same value as the waterlily in 'Nocturno', expressing the melancholy of the sunset/'verso de Samain' and by extension of the poet herself.

Like in 'Sol Poente', in the last stanza the presence of the loved one, up to then undisclosed, is introduced, as the poet's inner thoughts link her response to the sunset to her reaction to her lover. She can *feel* his heart in the same way as she could feel the sunset inside her at the end of the second stanza ('rezo-te em mim'):

Amor! Teu coração trago-o no peito...
 Pulsa dentro de mim como este mar
 Num beijo eterno, assim, nunca desfeito!...

This ending differs from 'Sol Poente' and 'Nocturno' in that, here, there is no longer the male lover kissing a passive and melancholic female figure. On the contrary, Florbela is now the agent, and her lover's heart the object which she has annexed inside her, enclosing it within her. However a semblance of equality is restored because the lover's heart is alive within her, 'pulsa dentro de mim', an equality encapsulated in the kiss. This, on a symbolic level inverts previous power relations, and it is perhaps not a coincidence that it takes place in what is arguably the most figurative sonnet of the whole collection, since it would have been difficult for Florbela at the time to invert traditional male and female roles without the screen of metaphor²¹.

4.2.2.b. The Conflict Between Spiritual Love and Sensuality

The previous paragraph examined how Florbela portrayed herself as a spiritual, suffering woman, subject to her lover, while showing that 'Da Minha Janela' described a relationship where she was in control. In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, there are other sonnets which portray the female self as a doleful, spiritualized being, but which also contain elements that subvert that image, this time by pointing to the female poet as a sensual being. They are 'Sombra' (p.153), 'A Noite Desce' (p126) and 'Crepúsculo' (p141). 'Sombra' (p.153) evokes a relationship that has ended, while 'A Noite Desce' and 'Crepúsculo' describe a relationship taking place. But it makes sense to discuss the former alongside the other two because all three make use of similar imagery.

The first two stanzas of 'Sombra' build up an image of the poet as a melancholic figure. through the description of her eyes and hands. In the previous chapter, attention was drawn to the use of these elements in the sonnet 'Languidez' (p.86), where it was suggested that they acted as pointers to Florbela, to 'herself as agent'. This is also the case here:

De olheiras roxas, roxas, quase pretas,

²¹For a detailed analysis of this sonnet, see also Anna Klobucka, *O Formato Mulher*, PhD thesis (in preparation), University of Harvard.

nun in 'Lágrimas Ocultas' from *Livro de Mágoas*, or in 'Ódio' from *Livro de Soror Saudade*.

If the description of Florbela's eyes in 'Sombra' recalls earlier ones from *Livro de Mágoas*, so does the description of her hands in the second stanza:

De mãos esguias, finas hastes quietas,
Que a vento não baloiça em noites quentes...
Nocturno de Chopin... risos dolentes
Versos tristes em sonhos de Poetas...

In 'Dizeres Íntimos', hands were: 'As minhas mãos esguias, languescentes'. However, while there are similar descriptions of hands and eyes in both 'Dizeres Íntimos' and 'Sombra', in the latter poem there is a significant departure from the imagery used in *Livro de Mágoas*, in the reference of line 6 to the setting as 'noites quentes'. Never in the earlier collection had the adjective 'quente' been used to describe the night. There night had always been cold and associated with death.

In 'Sombra' by contrast, although the hands of female figure remain immobile (finas hastes *quietas*), and are then associated with expressions of melancholy in the appositions of lines 7-8 (Nocturno de Chopin... risos dolentes... / Versos tristes em sonhos de Poetas...), the use of the adjective 'quentes' surreptitiously introduces a disturbing note, suggesting that an atmosphere of voluptuousness surrounds the poet.

This sensuality becomes all-pervasive in the first tercet:

Beijo doce de aromas perturbantes...
Rosal bendito que dá rosas... Dantes
Esta era Eu e Eu era a Idolatrada!...

Syntactically both 'Beijo doce' and 'Rosal bendito' are parallel to the appositions of the second stanza, 'Nocturno de Chopin' and 'Versos tristes', which qualified 'De mãos esguias': consequently, they too seem to be apposed to the 'mãos esguias'. That being so, the hands which in the previous stanza had been described as immobile at first (finas hastes *quietas*) and then full of the sad harmony of something ideal (nocturno de Chopin, versos *tristes*), suddenly become endowed with life and sensuality: they are a perturbing kiss and also a rose-bed blossoming and bearing fruit.

The description of the female figure culminates, at the end of this tercet, in the identification of the poet as the 'Idolatrada', an ideal figure put on a pedestal, as the use of the capital in 'Idolatrada' implies. But Florbela's evocation of herself as an 'Idolatrada' is short-lived and is violently shattered in the last stanza, which portrays the poet in the present (contrasting with the use of the imperfect in the line 'Esta era Eu e Eu era a Idolatrada') as a lone figure and moreover as someone who has lost her identity:

Ah, cinzas mortas! Ah, luz que se apaga!
 Vou sendo em ti, agora, a sombra vaga
 Dalguém que dobra a curva duma estrada...

By depicting herself as a colourless shadow, in sharp contrast with the detailed portrayal of her eyes and hands in the earlier part of the poem, Florbela conveys the fact that she is only a pale reflection of her former self. Moreover, she underlines the progressive fading of her image in the memory of her lover through the beautiful image of lines 13-14, evoking a shadow gradually disappearing out of sight until a bend in the road would make it completely invisible.

The sonnet 'Sombra' contrasts with the descriptions of Florbela we have so far come across, both in *Livro de Mágoas* and in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, because it paints the female poet as simultaneously melancholic and sensuous. But, in *Livro de Soror Saudade* the same imperceptible juxtaposition of a melancholic (and religious) image of the poet with a more sensual note is also used in two other poems, 'A Noite Desce' and 'Crepúsculo'. Unlike 'Sombra', in these poems there is a relationship between the poet and her lover.

'A Noite Desce' (p.126) again sketches the image of a doleful woman. Its first stanza, like the first stanza of 'Sombra', begins by evoking melancholic eyes:

Como pálpebras roxas que tombassem
 Sobre uns olhos cansados, carinhosas,
 A noite desce... Ah! doces mãos piedosas
 Que os meus olhos tristíssimos fechassem!

The first two lines compare the falling of night to eyelids closing on tired eyes, leading Florbela in the second half of the stanza to express the wish that kind hands (possibly the night's) should close her own eyes, whose suffering is highlighted through the use of the

superlative, 'tristíssimos'. On a symbolic level, the wish is to isolate herself from reality, to forget. But in the second stanza, when she voices the wish that these hands should first nurse her to sleep then bury her, what is suggested is a longing for the more permanent sleep of death:

Assim mãos de bondade me beijassem!
 Assim me adormecessem! Caridosas
 Em braçadas de lírios, de mimosas,
 No crepúsculo que desce me enterrassem!²⁵

In the first tercet, there is an imperceptible shift from the intensely melancholic state evoked thus far, with the introduction of a more sensual note:

A noite em sombra e fumo se desfaz...
 Perfume de baunilha ou de lilás,
 A noite põe-me embriagada, louca!

Stylistically, the use of the anaphora 'a noite / a noite' means that widely different elements are put on the same plane, obfuscating the shift from the melancholy present in the dissolving image of line 9, 'A noite em sombra e fumo se desfaz', to the sensuality present in the perturbing aroma of flowers (line 10) and its effect on the poet (line 11).

But despite the striking admission of sensual impulses in line 11, the last stanza, evoking Florbela's relationship with her lover, shrinks from physicality:

E a noite vai descendo, sempre calma...
 Meu doce Amor tu beijas a minh'alma
 Beijando nesta hora a minha boca!

The relationship with the loved one remains seen in terms of spirituality, since his kiss, ostensibly on her mouth, would actually touch her soul.

Yet by using the same words to describe her lover as she had used earlier to refer to hands ('meu doce Amor tu beijas' (line 12) / 'doces mãos' (line 3) and 'mãos de bondade me beijassem' (line 5)), Florbela is leaving it open for the reader to think of 'hands' as

²⁵In *Obras Completas*. 'braçados' (sic).

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²⁵In *Obras Completas*, 'braçados' (sic).

'lover's hands' in the earlier passage where she had wished for hands to nurse her to sleep and bury her. This, thus seen, would indicate a wish for a sexual relationship.

An identical pattern of a doleful image of the self, followed by a sensual description occurs in 'Crepúsculo' (p.141). In the first stanza Florbela's eyes are again described as 'dois lírios roxos e dolentes...'. In the second stanza, likewise, a mystical image of the self is built through the image of her hands, which have suffered mortification:

E os lírios fecham... Meu Amor, não sentes?
Minha boca tem rosas desmaiadas,
E as minhas pobre mãos são maceradas
Como vagas saudades de doentes...

But in the third stanza, there is a shift similar to those of 'Sombra' and 'A Noite Desce', with the image of the personified Silence opening its hands and pouring out roses, an image which indicates sensuality:

O Silêncio abre as mãos... entorna rosas...
Andam no ar carícias vaporosas
Como pálidas sedas, arrastando...

The image of the spilling of roses contrasts with the closing of the lilies in the previous stanza (line 5), and reinforces the ambiguity of the description of the 'rosas desmaiadas' (line 6).

In the last stanza, nevertheless, as in 'A Noite Desce', any indications of sensuality on the poet's part remain elusive, while her male companion's desire is clearly evoked in the adjectives 'rubra' and 'ardente', recalling the ending of 'Sol Poente'²⁶:

E a tua boca rubra ao pé da minha
É na suavidade da tardinha
Um coração ardente palpitando...

At this point it is worth opening a brief parenthesis to underline the evolution from *Livro de Soror Saudade* to *Charneca em Flor*, by contrasting the three sonnets just

²⁶An earlier unpublished poem, also entitled 'Crepúsculo', likewise described her male companion's desire, while hers remained veiled: 'Fecho os olhos, cansada, languesciente...' [...] '-- Tu fitas num anseio a minha boca.' (vol.2, p.32)

discussed with 'Toledo' (p.184). 'Toledo' has an ending comparable to that of 'Crepúsculo' and 'Sol Poente'. But, by contrast, the first stanzas of the poem unequivocally focus on the sensuality of the poet (albeit with the grammatical masculinization of her body):

Diluído numa taça de oiro a arder
 Toledo é um rubi. E hoje é só nosso!
 O sol a rir... Vivalma... Não esboço
 Um gesto que não me sinta esvaecer...

As tuas mãos tateiam-me a tremer...
 Meu corpo de ambar, harmonioso e moço
 É como um jasmineiro em alvoroço
 Ébrio de sol, de aroma, de prazer!

Cerro um pouco o olhar onde subsiste
 Um romântico apelo vago e mudo,
 -- Um grande amor é sempre grave e triste.

Flameja ao longe o esmalte azul do Tejo...
 Uma torre ergue ao céu um grito agudo...
 Tua boca desfolha-me num beijo...

Even in the last tercet, where the last line is comparable to the endings of 'Crepúsculo' and 'Sol Poente', there are oblique references to sexuality in the symbolism of the water (standing for female sexuality) and in that of the tower (standing for male sexuality). The third stanza, though, still suggests something of the mood pervading *Livro de Soror Saudade*, in the statement that 'Um grande amor é sempre grave e triste'. It is indeed on this romantic mood, 'grave e triste', that the sonnets from *Livro de Soror Saudade* dwell, while simultaneously introducing more sensual notes.

There is clearly a conflict in Florbela's mind between inborn sensuality and internalized duty, something which is hardly surprising considering that for centuries patriarchy had created an image of women as desirable if passive and spiritual, but sinful if overtly sexual. Nowhere is this conflict better illustrated than in the sonnet 'Renúncia' (p.145). The central theme of 'Renúncia' is the inner struggle of a nun who, in spite of all temptations, strives to renounce her earthly, instinctive longing for freedom in an attempt to

conform to an image with which she is naturally at odds²⁷. This struggle is conveyed through antithetic images of opening and closing, of life and death, of fertility and sterility, of warmth and coldness, of good and evil.

The first quatrain describes the voluntary seclusion of the female figure in a metaphorical 'convento da tristeza':

A minha mocidade há muito pus
No tranquilo convento da Tristeza;²⁸

Straightaway, the opposition between the essence of the speaker and the existence to which she has pledged herself is highlighted through imagery. The synecdoche 'a minha mocidade' standing for 'I', emphasizes one aspect of personality, youth, which is associated with restlessness, *joie de vivre*, and therefore is at odds with its setting, the 'tranquilo convento da tristeza' which is calm, as opposed to restless, and sad, as opposed to joyous.

Lines 3 and 4 describe her way of life, further showing the constrictions imposed on her:

Lá passa dias, noites, sempre presa,
Olhos fechados, magras mãos em cruz...

'Lá passa, dias, noites,' suggests imprisonment, but the inhumanity of this immolation of the self only comes out fully in the rest of the description: 'sempre presa' indicates that there is no escape and the alliterations of [p] in that line reinforce the idea of oppression; 'olhos fechados' evokes the denial of the most important of our five senses, that of sight; finally 'magras mãos em cruz' suggests martyrdom.

In contrast to this crucifixion of the self, the second stanza focuses on freedom and self-realization, as it describes the breath of life that runs through nature:

²⁷Freedom, seen both as desirable and as a mirage, is obviously a problem with which Florbela wrestled throughout her life. In the early poem 'Anseios' (vol.1, p.192) which gave rise to a long epistolary discussion between her and her friend Júlia Alves on the theme of duty versus the rights of the heart (vol.5, pp.145 and 158), her position is very similar to that expressed in 'Renúncia'. This was discussed in Chapter 2.

²⁸In *Obras Completas* 'convento da tristeza'.

Lá fora, a Noite, Satanás, seduz!
 Desdobra-se em requintes de Beleza...
 É como um beijo ardente a Natureza....
 A minha cela é como um rio de luz...

The night, in contrast with the confining walls of the convent, stands as a limitless space, multiplying itself endlessly, even if this is attributed to the evil doings of Satan (Satanás seduz a noite). Unlike the convent which represses self-expression, outside the natural world is allowed to express itself freely: beauty is allowed to flourish, contrasting with the bare nakedness of the 'convento da Tristeza', and nature can expand at will unlike the enchained young woman 'sempre presa'. The comparison of nature with an ardent kiss suggests fecundity, sensuality, which contrast strongly with the ascetic attitude of the 'magras mãos em cruz'.

But it is not only the outside world that can experience this upheaval. In line 8, even her cell, that confining unit par excellence, undergoes a metamorphosis as it is suddenly flooded by a 'rio de luz', perhaps a moonbeam (the moon itself is a symbol of fertility). The comparison between her cell and a 'rio de luz' is suggestive for it turns something enclosed (the cell), into something boundless and dynamic (the 'rio de luz').

The entire stanza thus contrasts the outside world with the stifling convent, while showing the speaker's growing attraction to the wondrous beauty and richness of that world. The seduction exercised on her by what she sees comes out in the lingering, dreamy tone of the stanza, also reflected in the differences of punctuation between this stanza and the two that follow. The predominance of dots here reveals her growing inability to resist the suggestions of the night, whereas the profusion of exclamation marks in the tercets coupled with the use of imperative underline the fact that she is trying to shake herself out of temptation.

Indeed, in the tercets, instead of letting herself go, Florbela attempts to shut herself off from the persuasive influence of nature. Hence the string of orders she gives herself, 'fecha', 'não vejas', 'empalidece', 'prende', 'gela', 'enche': these attempts at self-denial are intensified by the use of adverbs or a double negative: 'fecha bem', 'não vejas nada', 'empalidece mais', 'gela ainda'.

Furthermore, she strives to discipline and control all the parts of her body (eyes, arms, mouth) that could open to the world: 'fecha os teus olhos bem', 'prende os teus braços a uma cruz maior', a process culminating in the violent and cruel 'enche a boca de cinzas e de terra'. This also means rejecting all that is life within her, embracing symbolic death: 'empalidece mais', 'gela ainda a mortalha que te encerra'. In fact, instead of abandoning herself to nature's ardent kiss, symbolically a life-giving kiss, she seeks to make her mouth taste of death, not of life: 'enche a boca de cinzas e de terra'. In the Christian tradition, ashes and earth are symbols of death; on Ash Wednesday, Christians display ashes on their foreheads as a reminder of human mortality. Through this image, then, we see Florbela encouraging herself to embrace death.

But the demands she imposes upon herself are inhuman and this is strikingly emphasized through the paradox of the last two lines:

Enche a boca de cinzas e de terra,
Ó minha mocidade toda em flor!

Her youth had, right from the opening line of the poem, been identified as the protagonist of this drama. But here, through the image 'mocidade toda em flor' we are made aware of the éclat of youth, of its impulse towards life and simultaneously of the cruelty of mutilating it. The opposition between 'cinzas e terra' and 'toda em flor' is an opposition between life and death and, by stressing it, Florbela is also stating that the natural need for self-expression cannot be indefinitely withheld.

'Renúncia' strikingly conveys Florbela's need for freedom. While the poem only talks of freedom in general terms, it is almost impossible not to read into it the question of freedom of sexual self-expression. This is a question which will be more fully addressed in *Charneca em Flor*, but already in *Livro de Soror Saudade* there are some sonnets where female sexuality comes to the fore.

4.2.3. LOVE AND SENSUALITY

The previous section examined the tension between spirituality and sensuality in some of the sonnets of *Livro de Soror Saudade*. This section dwells on the sonnets where the image of Florbela as a melancholic and spiritualized being recedes into the background, as the stress falls on a description of her physical yearnings.

4.2.3.a. Unsatisfied Quests

'Tarde Demais' (p.133) and 'Prince Charmant' (p.130) recount the poet's feelings while she awaited the coming of her lover. In 'Tarde Demais' (p.133) the poet's apparent excitement as she witnesses the arrival of her lover is conveyed in the quatrains through the description of the coming to life and flowering of nature. In the second quatrain, the awakening of nature is reinforced through the use of paradox in lines 7-8:

Chegaste enfim! Milagre de endoidar!
Viu-se nessa hora o que não pode ser:
Em plena noite, a noite iluminar
E as pedras do caminho florescer!

In the first tercet, there is a transition to the poet's own flowering:

Beijando a areia d'oiro dos desertos
Procurara-te em vão! Braços abertos,
Pés nus, olhos a rir, a boca em flor!

Once more, 'braços', 'olhos' and 'boca' function as metonymies of desire. But the last stanza, which contrasts abruptly with the previous hopeful tone, reveals that the quest was in vain, stressing the tragedy of death:

E há cem anos que eu fui nova e linda!...
E a minha boca morta grita ainda:
"Porque chegaste tarde, ó meu Amor?!..."²⁹

It is as if the clear expression of female desire, and the fact that the female poet was seen here as actively seeking a physical relationship, could not go unpunished.

²⁹In *Obras Completas* 'Em plena noite, a noite iluminar,' and 'Porque chegaste tarde, Ó meu Amor?!... (sic).

'Prince Charmant' (p.130) is also an account of the poet's quest for a lover. Again, the poem focuses on her physical yearnings through a description of parts of her body ('mãos' and 'boca') that point to her as a sexual being (in sharp contrast with the description of her eyes which, in this instance, still suggest her maiden modesty):

Boca sangrando beijos, flor que sente...
Olhos postos num sonho humildemente...
Mãos cheias de violetas e de rosas...

But the object of her quest never materializes:

E nunca O encontrei!... Prince Charmant
Como audaz cavaleiro em velhas lendas
Virá, talvez, nas névoas da manhã! [...]

-- Nunca se encontra Aquele que se espera!... --

The generalization of the last line encapsulates an all-pervasive pessimism and disillusion. The poem is a denial of both a fairy tale ending (since the lover she seeks is a 'Prince Charmant') and of *sebastianista* hopes (the legend that King Sebastião would come again one misty morning). This dramatic negation of the possibility of finding a 'happy ending' in real life will surface again intermittently in *Charneca em Flor* and even more strongly in *Reliquiae*.

4.3.2.b. Dreams of Union

If 'Prince Charmant' ends in a despondent generalization about the possibility of ever meeting the person of one's heart's desire, there are three sonnets in *Livro de Soror Saudade* in which Florbela strikes a more positive note and expresses her longing to be physically united with her lover. These are 'Horas Rubras' (p.147), 'Esfinge' (p.132) and 'O Nosso Mundo' (p.129).

The first two stanzas of 'Horas Rubras' (p.147) evoke nighttimes overflowing with sensuous promises, recalling the seduction of night exercised upon Florbela in 'Renúncia', as well as echoing the atmosphere of 'noites quentes' that surrounded her in 'Sombra':

Horas profundas, lentas e caladas

Feitas de beijos rubros e ardentes,
De noites de volúpia, noites quentes
Onde há risos de virgens desmaiadas...

Oiço olaias em flor às gargalhadas...
Tombam astros em fogo, astros dementes,

In the second half of the second quatrain, however, as noted by Seabra Pereira³⁰, there is a shift to a less overt sexuality:

E do luar os beijos languescientes
São pedaços de prata plas estradas...

This shift is underlined by the different adjectives qualifying the kisses in lines 2 and 7 respectively: the 'beijos rubros e ardentes' of the first stanza, clearly indicating sensuality, become 'beijos languescientes' in the second quatrain, an adjective which in other poems was identified with the melancholic image of the female poet. The metaphor of the 'beijos languescientes' of moonlight constitutes a prelude for the description of the poet as an immaterial figure in the first tercet:

Os meus lábios são brancos como lagos...
Os meus braços são leves como afagos,
Vestiu-os o luar de sedas puras...

The adjectives which qualify the poet's body (seen through her mouth and arms) suggest spirituality: 'brancos', 'leves' and 'puras'.

In the last stanza, however, the night's sensuality contaminates the poet, with a reconciliation of opposites taking place. As Florbela attempts to seduce her male companion, she depicts herself as being simultaneously 'chama e neve' thus acknowledging her paradoxical nature, both sensual and spiritual:

Sou chama e neve e branca e mis'triosa...
E sou, talvez, na noite voluptuosa,
Ó meu Poeta, o beijo que procuras!

³⁰Seabra Pereira, 'De Rastros, Com Asas', p.23.

In this last stanza the poet describes herself as a kiss, something ambiguous, at once material and immaterial, all the more so given that in the previous stanzas kisses of two different natures had been evoked. While Florbela plays on the ambiguity of the kiss, the ending of the poem goes one stage further than the other poems ending with a kiss, with the exception of 'Da Minha Janela'. This is because, here, Florbela is no longer being kissed: she embodies the kiss. Even if her sensual self is only described as a means to attract the loved one, an answer to male fantasies of the seductive woman, she has the initiative and this empowers her.

'Horas Rubras' is not the only sonnet to feature an atmosphere of unpunished sensuality. In this collection, however, the best-known poem evoking the poet's desire for physical union is probably 'Esfinge' (p.132). Contrasting with most of the other sonnets of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, where Florbela seeks to reconcile the uneasy tension between sensuality and spirituality, 'Esfinge' expresses a sense of complete harmony within a sensual relationship. This is perhaps only possible because what is expressed is not actual fact but a wish and, moreover, a wish which, in the second stanza, the poet recognizes as a mirage, a vain dream.

In the first stanza, the poet identifies herself with nature, the ardent nature of the Alentejo, depicted in 'Alentejano', where the landscape reflected the sensuality of the reaping girls:

Sou filha da charneca erma e selvagem.
Os giestais, por entre os rosmaninhos,
Abrindo os olhos d'ouro, plos caminhos,
Desta minh'alma ardente são a imagem.

By the second stanza, she has become the *charneca* itself, and describes the dreams of her ardent soul:

Embalo em mim um sonho vão, miragem:
Que tu e eu, em beijos e carinhos,
Eu a Charneca e tu o Sol, sozinhos,
Fôssemos um pedaço da paisagem!³¹

³¹In *Obras Completas* 'Fôssemos um pedaço de paisagem!' (sic).

The characterization of the female 'Eu' and the male 'tu' in line 7 seems to inscribe traditional conceptions of the feminine and the masculine: the *charneca* represents (feminine) horizontality, the sun (masculine) verticality; the *charneca* is a feminine earth to be fecunded by a masculine sun. But this apparent polarization is suddenly subverted, in the last line of the stanza, line 8, in favour of the new equilibrium that would be achieved with true union, where the opposites would be reconciled and fused into something at once masculine and feminine, vertical and horizontal: the boundless, intemporal 'paisagem'.

In the tercets, however, the poet acknowledges that this perfect union would nevertheless be subject to temporal limitations:

E à noite, à hora doce da ansiedade
Ouviria da boca do luar
O *De Profundis* triste da saudade...

What is foregrounded here is the incompleteness and the sorrow of the female *charneca* in the absence of the male sun. Furthering this, the last stanza highlights the passive waiting of the female *charneca* tied in utter fidelity, for whom love is the sole purpose in life (which implicitly contrasts with the mobility of the sun):

E à tua espera, enquanto o mundo dorme,
Ficaria, olhos quietos, a cismar...
Esfinge olhando a planície enorme...

The third sonnet expressing Florbela's yearning for a physical relationship is 'O Nosso Mundo' (p.129). The manuscript of *Claustro das Quimeras*, where the sonnet, dated 2 June 1920, has the dedication 'Ao meu homem querido', confirms that this poem was written at the beginning of Florbela's relationship with António Guimarães. Subsequently, in the later manuscript of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, the dedication disappeared.

The first two stanzas of 'O Nosso Mundo' evoke the sense of plenitude love brings. The depth of shared love is conveyed through a chiasmus, indicating reciprocity ('Poisando em ti o meu amor eterno' and 'O teu olhar em mim, hoje é mais terno'). But

in the two tercets there is a shift of tone, as Florbela describes with growing intensity to her lover her wish to live life to the full:

A Vida, meu Amor, quero vivê-la!
Na mesma taça erguida em tuas mãos,
Bocas unidas hemos de bebê-la!

Que importa o mundo e as ilusões defuntas?...
Que importa o mundo e os seus orgulhos vãos?...
O mundo, Amor?... As nossas bocas juntas!...

Within the poem, the last line of each tercet, 'Bocas unidas hemos de bebê-la!' and 'O mundo, Amor?... As nossas bocas juntas!...', are the only overt expressions of the search for a physical relationship. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 1, 'O Nosso Mundo' was considered in a critical review to be a revoltingly immoral sonnet, and this must be because of its explicit rejection of abiding by the rules of 'o mundo', a subversive statement indeed (all the more so given that in the final version there was no longer any indication about the identity of the male 'tu' Florbela was addressing).

Florbela's rejection of the rules of society was also made plain in two other poems in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, 'Inconstância' (p.128) and 'A Vida' (p.146), both of which stress the transitory nature of love and the need to move from one lover to another. The implication underlying all these, but particularly 'O Nosso Mundo', is an endorsement of free love, and the indignation this idea caused would later become fully apparent in the strong reaction to the sonnet 'Amar!', from *Charneca em Flor*.

But arguably the most subversive poem of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, despite the fact that scant attention has been paid to it, is the poem closing the collection, 'Exaltação' (p.157). What is striking in 'Exaltação' is the equation between sensual love and the creation of poetry as if, both being two areas traditionally closed to women, by entering one, Florbela was gaining access to the other:

Viver! Beber o vento e o sol! Erguer
Ao céu os corações a palpitar!
Deus fez os nossos braços pra prender,
E a boca fez-se sangue pra beijar!

In lines 1-2, Florbela expresses her irrepressible wish to live life fully. The opening exclamation condenses powerfully in one word, 'Viver', her urgency of desire to live fully rather than exist passively³². Through the image of 'Beber o vento e o sol!', the poet then underlines her need to quench her thirst, a thirst which can only be quenched by drinking wind and sun, symbols of freedom and glory. This is reinforced stylistically by the accumulation of exclamations which go in a crescendo, culminating in the enjambement 'Erguer / Ao céu'.

In line 3, Florbela justifies the legitimacy of seeking to experience life in its entirety, by asserting that God willed it since he created our arms to 'prender', a heterodox argument since it is hard to sustain that God created our arms primarily with this in mind. Line 4 is even more daring, by staging a new genesis 'E [...] fez-se'. What is created there is a mouth endowed with life 'E a boca fez-se sangue pra beijar', successfully suggested through the image of the mouth turning into blood, a symbol of life and also of passion because of its deep colour.

In the second stanza, the impetus towards life is expressed through images of verticality and ascension, prolonging the images present in the two first lines of the poem. In line 8, this culminates in the triumph associated with poetic creation:

A chama, sempre rubra, ao alto a arder!
Asas sempre perdidas a pairar!
Mais alto até estrelas desprender!
A glória! A fama! Orgulho de criar!

Consubstantial with Florbela's confidence as a creator and producer of meaning, is the subversive portrayal of the self in the two tercets:

Da vida tenho o mel e tenho os travos
No lago dos meus olhos de violetas,
Nos meus beijos estáticos, pagãos!

Trago na boca o coração dos cravos!
Boémios, vagabundos, e poetas,

³²The ideas in this poem may have been crystallized by Assis Esperança's novel, *Viver*, (Lisbon, 1921) a novel by which she was sufficiently struck to keep a critical review of it. The review belongs to the Biblioteca Nacional, although it has not been catalogued.

Como eu sou vossa Irmã, ó meus Irmãos!

This new portrayal of the self contrasts radically with the opening sonnet of the collection, 'Soror Saudade' (p.114), where Florbela still sought to project a Romantic image of the self. In 'Exaltação', she is again describing herself as a poet, different from the ordinary. But this time it is not because of the fact that she has been singled out by destiny to suffer, but rather because of something which equally distinguishes her from the norm: her intense sensuality, expressed in the subversiveness of her 'beijos estáticos, pagãos' and in the line 'trago na boca o coração dos cravos', which looks back to the first stanza, where the redness of the mouth was interpreted as a justification for sensuality.

One cannot overemphasize the significance of the contrast between 'Soror Saudade', which opens the collection, and 'Exaltação', which closes it: indeed the only two sonnets which did not appear in the draft of *Claustro das Quimeras* were precisely these two. Yet, by the time Florbela was re-organizing *Claustro das Quimeras* as *Livro de Soror Saudade*, she chose one to begin the collection and the other to end it.

Obviously, by choosing to end *Livro de Soror Saudade* with 'Exaltação', Florbela is also radically contrasting the tone of its ending with that of *Livro de Mágoas* where, in 'Impossível', she had lamented the fact that no one understood her. As *Livro de Soror Saudade* draws to a close, she at last feels that she belongs to a community, albeit a community of outcasts, of 'Boémios, vagabundos, e poetas'. But for her this would be a source of pride, since the poet is by essence different from ordinary folk. Her sense of equality, achieved at long last, is triumphantly spelt out in the last line of the sonnet: 'Como eu sou vossa Irmã, ó meus Irmãos!'.

Significantly, while Florbela stresses her membership to the brotherhood of outcasts / poets, her portrayal of the self in this sonnet proves that what makes her an outcast is as much the fact of being a *poet*, as that of being a *woman* poet who, far from keeping to the conventional themes glossed by the majority of 'poetisas', marginalized herself by addressing the taboo subject of female sexuality. And in *Charneca em Flor*, proudly aware of her poetic power, of her sexuality and of being different, her transgressions would become ever more daring.

CHAPTER 5

CHARNECA EM FLOR

Although *Livro de Soror Saudade* had attracted comparatively little attention, the few articles reviewing it were on the whole positive. Despite this limited encouragement, Florbela was not to publish anything else during her lifetime. This was not for lack of interest on her part, or want of trying, but her lack of contacts in the literary world meant she was faced with the indifference of publishers.

It is apparent that by 1927 she was ready to publish a new collection of poetry, entitled *Charneca em Flor*, as she told José Emídio Amaro in a letter dated 15 May 1927¹. This suggests that, by then, many of the poems from *Charneca em Flor* as we know it (and possibly others, eventually left out of *Charneca em Flor* but gathered and published by Battelli under the title *Reliquiae*) had already been written. The letter to J.E. Amaro also reveals that Florbela had undertaken translations and that she was busy writing 'um livro de prosa', which in all probability was to become one of her volumes of short stories. But the literary activity reflected in this letter was abruptly stopped three weeks later by a major tragedy: on 6 June 1927, Apeles, Florbela's beloved brother, died.

For the six months that followed this tragic event, there was a complete silence about her work in Florbela's correspondence. Only at the beginning of 1928 did her letters to J.E. Amaro start mentioning it again². In the course of that year, Florbela repeatedly alluded to her collection of short stories, both in her letters to J.E. Amaro and to her father.

¹*Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.69.

²*Obras Completas*, vol.6, pp.85-6. Evidence of this can also be found in a letter to her father, omitted from *Obras Completas*, which was published by Viale Moutinho in *Diário de Notícias*, 'Uma Carta Inédita de Florbela e Alguns Reparos às Cartas', 20 April 1986 (Suplemento Cultura), pp.IV-V. The letter, dated 4 January 1928, refers to the publication of a book of hers in the spring and to the fact that the person on whose help she was relying on to publish it was Lage (Francisco Lage?). The book in question was in all likelihood a collection of short stories. I have reproduced this letter in Appendix 7.

But the project of publishing them never materialized. A year later, in a letter to her father, dated 6 November 1929, Florbela summed up the situation: 'Perguntas-me pelo meu livro; tenho dois prontos, um de verso outro de prosa, mas continuam na gaveta, pois não há editores; só o podia fazer à minha custa e eu não tenho dinheiro para isso'³, adding immediately afterwards, in an attempt to get financial help from her father, that these books were her best and, should he have any spare money, she would be delighted to publish them.

The following year, in June 1930, in her very first letter to Guido Battelli, a professor of Italian at the University of Coimbra, who had written to express his admiration for her poetry, Florbela spoke in similar terms, again indirectly trying to enlist help: 'tenho dois livros: um de prosa e outro de versos, na gaveta'⁴. This time, however, things were to take a completely different turn, for Battelli immediately volunteered to finance the publication of her collection of poetry.

Once Florbela was certain that she had found someone willing to publish *Charneca em Flor*, she started putting the finishing touches to it, adding new poems in the process, even after proof-reading had begun. Indeed, in a letter to Battelli dated 10 July 1930, she stated that her unpublished collection had 50 sonnets⁵. A few months later, when she sent her manuscript to Battelli, the collection had 52 sonnets⁶. At this point, Florbela indicated that the last six sonnets would form a sequence, introduced by Camões' line 'É um não querer mais que bem querer'. In its final form, the last sequence of *Charneca em Flor* is made up of ten sonnets, thus suggesting that its last four sonnets were last minute additions, making the final number 56. This would partly explain Florbela's request, in a letter dated 18 November 1930 'mando-lhe esse soneto que fiz ultimamente [...] Ponha-o no fim do livro, sim? Fechará bem'⁷.

³ *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.117.

⁴ *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.136.

⁵ *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.147.

⁶ *Obras Completas*, vol.6, pp.195-6.

⁷ *Obras Completas*, vol.6, p.210.

In this chapter, I propose to analyse the poems of *Charneca em Flor* as a self-contained group, leaving aside the poems forming *Reliquiae*. Only too often critics have failed to make a clear distinction between these two collections, no doubt because from the second edition onwards *Charneca em Flor* was published with a set of additional poems found after Florbela's death which Battelli gathered under the title *Reliquiae*⁸. It would however unnecessarily obscure the organic unity of *Charneca em Flor*, Florbela's most outstanding collection, to discuss it together with *Reliquiae*, in the preparation of which Florbela had no part.

Thematically *Charneca em Flor* pursues some lines already present in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, but can be distinguished from it by the boldness of its tone. In this collection, Florbela continues to portray herself as accursed, as in the earlier works. However, many poems now dwell on the fact that her suffering can be converted into a source of strength and greatness. Simultaneously, her poems about love become more and more daring, as she turns herself into a myth, a female goddess, with unique attributes.

5.1 IMAGES OF SORROW

A number of poems from *Charneca em Flor* continue to portray Florbela as someone exiled from happiness. In her first collection, *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela had achieved this by building two overlapping images of herself: that of a Romantic poet cursed by Destiny and forever an outcast, and that of a lonely and incomplete female figure, often implicitly and sometimes explicitly deprived of love. In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, images of wretchedness were also present, but a few poems, such as 'O Meu Mal', showed incipient signs of Florbela projecting herself as a mythical figure.

⁸Rui Guedes gives two different dates for the publication of the second edition of *Charneca em Flor*, in *Acerca de Florbela*: July 1931 (p.81) and April 1931 (p.116). The latter is the correct one, as confirmed by the date of April 1931 stamped on the copyright copy belonging to the Biblioteca Nacional.

In *Charneca em Flor* several changes occur in the way Florbela portrays her suffering, in particular she becomes representative of female suffering in a mythical dimension. In the first part of this chapter three different images or comparisons that Florbela uses to dramatize her suffering will be discussed: the image of the princess exiled from a realm of glory, the image of the outcast and the comparison with the suffering of natural elements.

5.1.1 THE IMAGE OF THE PRINCESS

Charneca em Flor is the first collection to explore in depth the image of the fairy tale princess exiled from a former realm. It is true that the image of the princess had already appeared in the two earlier collections. In the sonnet 'Castelã da Tristeza', from *Livro de Mágoas*, Florbela described herself as an imprisoned princess. In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, she had called herself and others had called her a princess. But in neither instance was the princess image so explicitly linked to the idea of being exiled from a realm that was once hers.

In *Charneca em Flor* the sonnets presenting Florbela as a princess stripped of her possessions or her kingdom are 'Soneto IX' (of the sequence 'É um não querer mais que bem querer' (p.222), 'Nostalgia' (p.190) and 'Lembrança' (p.180). 'Soneto IX' (p.222) is a poignant account of Florbela's successive losses:

Perdi os meus fantásticos castelos
 Como névoa distante que se esfuma...
 Quis vencer, quis lutar, quis defendê-los:
 Quebrei as minhas lanças uma a uma!

Perdi as minhas galeras entre os gelos
 Que se afundaram sobre um mar de bruma...
 -- Tantos escolhos! Quem podia vê-los? --
 Deitei-me ao mar e não salvei nenhuma!

Perdi a minha taça, o meu anel,
 A minha cota de aço, o meu corcel,
 Perdi meu elmo de oiro e pedrarias...

Thematically, the poem makes use of motifs that were widespread at the time: the first and third stanza describe the loss of symbols of royalty, a motif which has obvious thematic affinities with both Symbolist poetry and contemporary poetry, such as Fernando Pessoa's sonnet 'Abdicação'. The second stanza uses the loss of ships at sea, a motif linked with the loss of the empire, and one which again was widely present in the poetry of the period.

The poignancy of the poet's loss is achieved through the use of a combination of stylistic devices. The anaphora 'Perdi / Perdi / Perdi' over the first three stanzas, by focusing in turn on the various objects lost, dramatizes the loss. The third stanza produces an acceleration in the description of her losses, which underlines its ineluctability, thanks to the symmetry of lines 9-10, a symmetry increased by the internal rhyme 'taça / aço'. The fact that the last element to be lost is the helmet is significant for, symbolically, 'le casque est un symbole d'invisibilité, d'invulnérabilité, de puissance' and consequently its loss of that represents a loss of power and identity⁹. Once the helmet is lost Florbela is well and truly deposed, an impotent being. The last stanza describes her powerless, annihilated:

Sobem-me aos lábios súplicas estranhas...
Sobre o meu coração pesam montanhas...
Olho assombrada as minhas mãos vazias...

Although the poem uses themes in vogue, there is something unusual about it: the poet is clearly female ('assombrada'). But despite this, all the symbols of royalty described in the third stanza, even the ring, are masculine: they are symbols of knighthood. This reveals that even at this late stage Florbela had internalized male imagery as universal.

While 'Soneto IX' builds the image of a (male) knight, crushed by destiny, 'Nostalgia' (p.190) is a clear feminine reworking of the theme of the exiled king, since her misfortunes are conveyed through the loss of brocades and jewels, undoubtedly feminine symbols:

Nesse País de lenda, que me encanta,
Ficaram meus brocados, que despi,

⁹Chevalier et Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles*, 2nd edn (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1982), pp.176-177.

E as jóias que plas aias reparti
 Como outras rosas de Rainha Santa!

Tanta opala que eu tinha! Tanta, tanta!
 Foi por lá que as semeiei e que as perdi...

In line 4, the comparison of her jewels to the roses of a Rainha Santa associates Florbela with the Portuguese Rainha Santa Isabel, remembered for performing the miracle of the roses. Throughout *Charneca em Flor*, Florbela's tendency to compare herself with figures of history, mythology or popular legend, is a recurrent one, making her stand out as an exceptional female figure, even when she has lost her status, as in this poem.

Florbela's predicament as a destitute princess is vividly brought out in her emotional plea for help, which makes use of anaphora to add a sense of urgency:

Mostrem-me esse País onde eu nasci!
 Mostrem-me o Reino de que sou Infanta!

As she is cut off from her realm, what is truly undermined is her sense of identity. Her inner desintegration is foregrounded in the tercets, firstly through the reiteration of ignorance 'Não sei / Não sei', throwing into relief her doubts about the reality of her dreamland, and secondly through the image of the shadow, highlighting her powerlessness:

Ó meu País de sonho e de ansiedade,
 Não sei se esta quimera que me assombra,
 É feita de mentira ou de verdade!

Quero voltar! Não sei por onde vim...
 Ah! Não ser mais que a sombra duma sombra
 Por entre tanta sombra igual a mim!

The exclamation of lines 13-14 can be read in two ways: is Florbela expressing a desire to be a shadow or is she lamenting the fact that she is but a shadow? Grammatically both interpretations are possible, but in the light of an earlier poem like 'Sombra' (p.153) where, having lost her divinity, Florbela described herself as being 'a sombra vaga / Dalguém que dobra a curva duma estrada...', it is perhaps more likely that she is mourning her lost

identity and the erosion of her former greatness into a shadow, something incomplete. Either way, it is clear that her sense of identity has been shaken at its roots.

The third sonnet about Florbela's exile from a former kingdom, 'Lembrança' (p.180), like 'Nostalgia', uses the description of the loss of royal status to dramatize her anguish at being deprived of a stable sense of identity. In the first stanza of the poem Florbela evokes former images of herself:

Fui Essa que nas ruas esmolou
E fui a que habitou Paços Reais;
No mármore de curvas ogivais
Fui Essa que as mãos pálidas poisou...¹⁰

The capitalization of the word 'Essa' suggests a clearly defined and recognizable identity, that of a princess (despite of the ambiguity of the first line, which allows us to see Florbela either as a princess or as a beggar, since the verb 'esmolou' can mean both to beg for alms and to give alms). In line 2, Florbela's tendency to turn herself into a mythical figure is given a historical background as the 'Paços Reais' she inhabited recall the 'Paço Real' of Vila Viçosa.

In the second stanza, however, her tendency to turn herself into a myth shifts to recollections of former glory in other shapes, in a way that is reminiscent of the sonnet 'O Meu Mal' (p.125) from *Livro de Soror Saudade*:

Tanto poeta em versos me cantou!
Fiei o linho à porta dos casais...
Fui descobrir a Índia e nunca mais
Voltei! Fui essa nau que não voltou...

The first line of this stanza evokes the glory of having been sung by poets in verse. This is not the first time that Florbela expresses in her poetry the feeling of having been the subject of poetry: such a feeling had been previously evoked twice in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, in 'Sombra' ('Versos tristes em sonhos de Poetas...') and 'O Meu Mal' itself ('E fui, talvez, um verso de Nerval.'). Her feeling of being embodied in verse highlights a historical truth: throughout the centuries, poets propagated the myth that one of the highest

¹⁰In *Obras Completas* 'Fui essa que as mãos pálidas poisou...' (sic).

forms of greatness a woman could achieve was to be sung in their verse. Florbela had internalized this myth, sensing that her image reflected in verse bestowed her an unproblematic identity. But what must be stressed is that 'Lembrança' is the only poem in *Charneca em Flor* in which Florbela sees herself embodied in poetry. By contrast, what the collection highlights is her own poetic power. Indeed, as we shall see, in other sonnets within the collection, the myth is subverted, as Florbela becomes aware of the power of her own poetry, which makes her unique and furthermore enables her to confer greatness upon others.

Line 6, 'Fiei o linho à porta dos casais...', links Florbela to the mythological figure of Penelope, weaving while Ulysses was away. Lines 7 and 8 portray her as a Discoverer and then as a ship. This shows that in her former state, the categories of sex were transcended: she was successively, if not at once, both female and male (since the Discoverers were men). But it also reveals, once more, that when depicting her greatness, Florbela appropriated male imagery as universally valid.

It is significant that in this poem the explorer who went out to Índia never returned. Indeed, throughout Florbela's poetry, the image of people or ships which left never to return is a recurrent one, used to mirror her incompleteness¹¹.

The third stanza introduces a different legendary figure, but this time one invented by Florbela, who describes herself as a Lusitanian deity, a siren reminiscent of the goddess Venus and born like her out of the sea:

Tenho o perfil moreno, lusitano,
E os olhos verdes, cor do verde Oceano,
Sereia que nasceu de navegantes...

In the last stanza, however, it becomes apparent that the evocation of Florbela's past greatness, embodied in a sequence of mythical figures, only serves to dramatically highlight an altogether different present:

¹¹People who have left never to return appear in 'Errante' (vol.1, p.204) and 'Minha Culpa' (p.211), while 'Caravelas' (p.127), 'Soneto IX' (p.222) and 'Navios-Fantasmas' (p.263) all refer to ships that did not come back.

Tudo em cinzentas brumas se dilui...
 Ah, quem me dera ser *Essas* que eu fui,
 As que me lembro de ter sido... dantes!...

Implicitly, each of those former identities (thrown into relief by the use of italics, one of the few instances of italics in her poetry) was stable, clearly defined and endowed her with greatness. By contrast, Florbela's present state is characterized by the fact that she no longer has any sense of stable identity, as is suggested in the line 'Tudo em cinzentas brumas se dilui', conveying desintegration.

This loss of a clearly defined identity is also the subject of the well-known poem from *Reliquiae*, 'Loucura' (p.258). There, once more, Florbela uses the loss or destruction of symbols of royalty to convey her precarious sense of identity:

Tudo cai! Tudo tomba! Derrocada
 Pavorosa! Não sei onde era dantes.
 Meu solar, meus palácios, meus mirantes!
 Não sei de nada, Deus, não sei de nada!...

As a result, her identity is fragmented into a multitude of identities, and her suffering is dramatically conveyed through the use of an anaphora in lines 12-13 and of an enjambement and of alliterations in [t] and [d] in lines 13-14:

Ó pavoroso mal de ser sozinha!
 Ó pavoroso e atroz mal de trazer
 Tantas almas a rir dentro da minha!

5.1.2. THE IMAGE OF THE OUTCAST

In the poems analysed in the previous section, Florbela used the metaphor of the princess in exile to convey her suffering and the breakdown of her sense of identity. However, not all the later poems which describe her feelings of bankruptcy make use of princess imagery. Other poems from *Charneca em Flor*, such as 'A Minha Piedade' (p.205), 'Minha Culpa' (p.211), 'Minha Terra' (p.209) and 'Mendiga' (p.182), are instead built around its opposite, the image of the outcast (whose shadow momentarily flickered in 'Lembrança'. in the ambiguity of the opening line 'Fui Essa que nas ruas esmolou').

In 'A Minha Piedade' (p.205), the first two stanzas express Florbela's empathy with all those who suffer because of their heightened sensitivity and efforts to reach something more:

Tenho pena de tudo quanto lida
Neste mundo, de tudo quanto sente,
Daquele a quem mentiram, de quem mente,
Dos que andam pés descalços pela vida,

Da rocha altiva, sobre o monte erguida,
Olhando os céus ignotos frente a frente,
Dos que não são iguais à outra gente,
E dos que se ensanguentam na subida!

Florbela enumerates, in an asyndetic sequence, the different categories of people and objects she feels for. In some cases what is stressed is their utter misery (for instance 'os que andam pés descalços' of line 4), in others, the dignity of their fight against destiny (for instance the rock of lines 5-6 facing 'os céus ignotos frente a frente').

In the first tercet, the attention then shifts to the poet herself, as she views herself in the same light as the outcasts described in the two quatrains: she is a victim of destiny, forever falling short of her aspirations. This is encapsulated in the image of her inability to kiss 'o riso duma estrela', symbolizing her inability to reach the unattainable:

Tenho pena de mim... pena de ti...
De não beijar o riso duma estrela...
Pena dessa má hora em que nasci...

In the last stanza, the fact that Florbela has fallen short of her aspirations is equated with her failure to be true to herself:

De não ter asas para ir ver o céu...
De não ser Esta... a Outra... e mais Aquela...
De ter vivido e não ter sido Eu...

In line 13, she laments not being 'Esta... a Outra... e mais Aquela'. The capitalization of the words indicates that these identities are ideal ones, while the anaphora 'De não / De não' throws into relief her inability to reach them, or indeed any other symbols of greatness,

culminating in line 14 with the statement of having lived without managing to be fully her ideal self (the capitalized 'Eu').

If 'A Minha Piedade' articulates Florbela's despondent feelings of failure, it is almost in a tone of resignation. By contrast, 'Minha Culpa' (p.211) is much more anguished in tone. The sonnet is built around the haunting anaphora 'Sei lá quem sou?', a rhetorical question about identity, which Florbela answers with a succession of profoundly negative self-definitions. Each definition the poet gives of herself is that of something either incomplete or unreal, reminiscent of her definitions of the self in the earlier 'Eu' from *Livro de Mágoas*:

Sei lá! Sei lá! Eu sei lá bem¹²
 Quem sou?! Um fogo-fátuo, uma miragem...
 Sou um reflexo... um canto de paisagem
 Ou apenas cenário! Um vaivém...

Como a sorte: hoje aqui, depois além!
 Sei lá quem sou?! Sei lá! Sou a roupagem
 Dum doido que partiu numa romagem
 E nunca mais voltou! Eu sei lá quem!...

It is striking that none of the elements that Florbela suggests as possible definitions of herself are human. In line 6 where a human figure, that of the madman, appears for the first time, it does not describe Florbela as such. The fact that she is the lowest of the low, not even a person, is stylistically conveyed through the use of metonymy: she is not the madman, but only part of him, his clothing.

Further highlighting her nothingness, the use of the word 'romagem' in line 8 brings to mind a vague echo of the tragic 'romeiro' in *Frei Luis de Sousa*. The 'romeiro' too had no identity, he could only define himself as 'ninguém'. Florbela is not the 'romeiro', however, for unlike him, the madman whose clothing she embodies in this poem never came back. Thus again, we find the motif of the person who left never to return, symbolizing her incompleteness.

¹²Inexplicably, this line has only eight syllables. It appeared thus in the first and in all subsequent editions, and it also appears in this way in the only known manuscript, which belongs to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa.

In the third stanza, Florbela's complete lack of knowledge as to her identity leads her to suggest some definitions of herself that are grammatically feminine and some that are grammatically masculine. Her sense of incompleteness is such that in the last tercet she is led to see herself as a kind of Wandering Jew, expiating some unnamed sin:

Sei lá quem sou?! Sei lá! Cumprindo os fados,
Num mundo de vaidades e pecados,
Sou mais um mau, sou mais um pecador...

One of Florbela's best-known portrayals of the self as an outcast, however, is undoubtedly that of 'Minha Terra' (p.209). The sonnet dramatically conveys the wish, previously expressed in 'Nostalgia', to return to her homeland. But the homeland evoked is no longer a faraway imaginary kingdom, it is instead her real homeland, the Alentejo, an Alentejo which despite being real ('Minha terra onde o meu irmão nasceu') is simultaneously perceived as a mythical space, a lost paradise, in its whiteness ('Branca de sol e cal e de luar'), timelessness ('Sem um bater de folha... a dormir') and preciousness ('Meu anel de rubis a flamejar'). The anaphora of the apostrophe 'Minha terra', used five times over the first three stanzas, underlines emotional charge with which the homeland is invested by the poet.

In sharp contrast with the haven of peace which the homeland represents in the eyes of poet, the last stanza dwells on Florbela's destitute state and utter misery. She is an outcast, homeless and tired, seeking a place of rest for when she dies:

Truz... truz... truz... Eu não tenho onde me acoite,
Sou um pobre de longe, é quase noite...
Terra, quero dormir... dá-me pousada!

A further dramatic variation on the image of Florbela as an outcast is to be found in 'Mendiga' (p.182). The central image of the poem is that of Florbela's present nothingness and lack of identity, evoked in the first and third stanza, and highlighted in the second stanza by the loss of royal attributes. In the third stanza, having lost everything, she portrays herself as a beggar, dramatizing her plight through the contrast between her

nothingness (embodied in the image of the worm) and the powerful heavens, suggested in the personified 'mundos infinitos':

Agora vou andando e mendigando,
Sem que um olhar dos mundos infinitos
Veja passar o verme, rastejando...

The comparison between worm and beggar had been used in *Livro de Soror Saudade* in 'O Que Tu És' (p.117): 'A rastejar no chão como as mendigas'. In that earlier poem, Florbela had attempted to redress the negative image of the self by pointing to the fact that she was a poet. Here, the negative image of the self leads her to wish that she could cry out her revolt:

Ah, quem me dera ser como os chacais
Uivando os brados, rouquejando os gritos
Na solidão dos ermos matagais!...

Crying out her revolt is a subversive attitude, since women were supposed to be long-suffering and resigned to their lot. It is perhaps significant therefore that Florbela wishes she were an animal to express fully her anger, for animals are outside socialization and they do not have to obey social conventions. Albeit under a guise, Florbela is however effectively expressing her revolt, and this constitutes a liberating utterance. The second part of this chapter will examine how in other poems in *Charneca em Flor*, Florbela transforms rejection of constricting social conventions into one of the attributes of the poet and turns it into a way of life. But before discussing this, we must first look at the poems in which she compares herself to natural elements.

5.1.3. COMPARISON WITH NATURE

In the sonnets just examined, Florbela viewed herself as an outcast. If, to a large extent, 'A Minha Piedade' and 'Minha Terra' read as reworkings of the topos of the poet unable to reach the ideal, 'Minha Culpa' introduced the image of Florbela as a sinner, someone bad. It is almost impossible to read the sonnet without linking Florbela's sense of expiating some dark sin with her anguish at being unable to conform with the behaviour

society expected from women. The same occurs with 'Mendiga'. In this connection, it is telling that in *Charneca em Flor* a number of poems compare Florbela's suffering with natural elements which she personifies as cursed or marginalized beings and which, significantly, are all endowed with female identities. These poems are 'Árvores do Alentejo' (p.203), 'Mistério' (p.176) and 'A Voz da Tília' (p.199).

'Árvores do Alentejo' (p.203), one of Florbela's best known sonnets, is one in which she strikingly associates herself with something she perceived as accursed. The poem paints with dramatic eloquence the plight of the trees of the Alentejo:

Horas mortas... Curvada aos pés do Monte
A planície é um brasido... e, torturadas,
As árvores sangrentas, revoltadas,
Gritam a Deus a bênção duma fonte!

The opening words of the poem 'horas mortas' suggest deep silence as if time had stopped, giving a timeless dimension to the scene. In line 2, this timelessness becomes associated with hell, since the description of the plain as 'um brasido' suggests on one level the intense heat of the Alentejo at the height of the summer but also, on a metaphorical level, the fires of hell. The metaphor of hell is pursued over lines 3 and 4, with the image of the trees crying out for water in their torment, like damned souls. The hellish nature of their torture is rendered both syntactically, through the dislocation of the adjectives to either side of the noun they qualify, 'árvores': '*torturadas / as árvores, sangrentas, revoltadas*' (my italics) and phonetically, through the accumulation of the sounds [r], [t], [a], [o] and [v].

In the second stanza, the suffering of the trees continues to be evoked:

E quando, manhã alta, o sol posponte
A oiro a giesta, a arder, pelas estradas,
Esfíngicas, recortam desgrenhadas
Os trágicos perfis no horizonte!

Again, to dramatize the suffering of the trees, the adjectives are dislocated, this time to either side of the verb, '*esfíngicas, recortam desgrenhadas*' (my italics). Furthermore, their intense suffering acquires an even stronger resonance through their personification, begun

in the previous stanza with the use of the verb 'gritam', and pursued here in the words 'desgrenhadas' and 'perfis'. The personification, which turns the trees into souls, enables the poet to draw a comparison between their plight and hers in the first tercet:

Árvores! Corações, almas que choram,
Almas iguais à minha, almas que imploram
Em vão remédio para tanta mágoa!

Having shown that the souls of the suffering trees were identical to hers, in the last tercet the poet addresses herself to the trees, drawing their attention (and consequently also the reader's) to her plight:

Árvores! Não choreis! Olhai e vede:
– Também ando a gritar, morta de sede,
Pedindo a Deus a minha gota de água!

Like the trees, she is without water, which is a symbol of life, 'source de vie, moyen de purification, centre de régénérescence', as the *Dictionnaire des symboles* stresses¹³. Thus the poet expresses the misery of her life. On one level, this is an illustration of human condition: man doomed to suffering without the possibility of relief, forever trying to reach an unattainable ideal, a theme also explored in '?' (p.201). On another level, however, in the context of the collection as a whole, her portrayal of the self as someone accursed, acquires overtones of a specifically female plight, a reading to which 'Mistério' and 'A Voz da Tília' lend themselves even more readily.

In 'Mistério' (p.176), Florbela goes against people's dislike of rain by stating her love of it:

Gosto de ti, ó chuva, nos beirados,
Dizendo coisas que ninguém entende!
Da tua cantilena se desprende
Um sonho de magias e de pecados.

The first two lines of the poem suggest that it is precisely because no-one can understand the meaning of what the rain says that the poet is drawn to it. The second half of the stanza makes clear that the poet can partly understand the subversiveness of the song of the rain.

¹³Chevalier et Gheerbrant. p.375.

According to her, it releases 'um sonho de magia e de pecados', something negative, linked to witchcraft (magia) and which society labels as evil (pecados). Rain has underlying connotations of fertility and sexuality and thus Florbela's self-proclaimed love for it is not only a statement of solidarity with a rejected being but also a subversive acknowledgement of suppressed sexuality¹⁴.

But clearly, in a society that represses sexuality, Florbela cannot fully decipher the message of the rain. Hence, in the last stanza, her musing about whether its message may only become clear with the freedom that death brings:

Talvez um dia entenda o teu mistério...
Quando, inerte, na paz do cemitério,
O meu corpo matar a fome às rosas!

The sonnet in which the clearest association between something accursed and female plight occurs is 'A Voz da Tília' (p.199), in which the poet recounts the words of a personified tree, a lime-tree.

In the first stanza, the personified lime-tree (which in Portuguese is feminine in gender) describes herself in terms of fragility, grace and sincerity, all of which are usually perceived as quintessentially feminine characteristics:

Diz-me a tília a cantar: "Eu sou sincera,
Eu sou isto que vês: o sonho, a graça,
Deu ao meu corpo, o vento, quando passa,
Este ar escultural de bayadera..."

The first three lines of the second stanza depict daytime as a moment of plenitude for the lime-tree as she receives the light of the sun, a metaphor of male sexuality, further stressed through its comparison to a crater and a serpent:

E de manhã o sol é uma cratera,
Uma serpente de ouro que me enlaça...
Trago nas mãos as mãos da Primavera...

¹⁴See Chevalier et Gheerbrant, pp.765-66.

But this state of luminosity, rendered through the image of the Spring in line 7, is shortlived. Contrasting with it, night is a time of grief, darkness and loneliness for the sensitive tree:

E é para mim que em noites de desgraça

Toca o vento Mozart, triste e solene,
E à minha alma vibrante, posta a nu,
Diz a chuva sonetos de Verlaine..."

The contrast between the tree's feelings by day and by night recalls the experience of the female 'charneca' in 'Esfinge' (p.132) from *Livro de Soror Saudade*, for there too the sun (male sexuality) was perceived as giving plenitude, while night represented the loneliness to which the female 'charneca' was subjected in the absence of the sun.

In the fourth stanza, the lime-tree, empathizing with the poet's sadness, concludes by highlighting the intimate connection between her and Florbela:

E, ao ver-me triste, a tília murmurou:
"Já fui um dia poeta como tu...
Ainda há-de ser tília como eu..."

By stressing that in another life the lime-tree had been a poet, it is implied that the tree's plight derives at least partly from that fact. But since the poem also highlights that the tree's plight is linked to the fact that it is female, it follows that Florbela links female condition and poetic condition, viewing both as a curse and a source of suffering, which stem from being too sensitive.

5.2.CONVERSION OF SUFFERING INTO A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

In the sonnets examined in the last section, Florbela compared herself with natural elements which she perceived as cursed or under a spell. It was suggested that this intense suffering was related to the fact that, as a female, she was an outsider. In fact, the suffering involved was so hard to bear that, in some poems from *Charneca em Flor*,

Florbela yearned to change herself in order to avoid it. In 'Não Ser' (p.200) she expressed the wish not to think and in 'Rústica' (p.168) the desire to be like other women. In 'A um Moribundo' (p.171) she saw death as the ultimate refuge. In 'Quem Sabe?...' (p.204), she was tempted to repent and seek the solace promised by Christian faith.

But if in some instances Florbela aspires to eliminate suffering through various means, by far the most dramatic and novel attitude in *Charneca em Flor* is to equate the fact of being an outsider and experiencing suffering with something positive, powerful, a source of strength, even if it means being at odds with society.

5.2.1. SUFFERING AND THE POTENTIALITIES OF THE SELF

Four sonnets in particular make the link between suffering and self-discovery. They are 'Sou Eu!', 'Interrogação', 'Soneto X' and 'Mais Alto' .

The first stanza of 'Sou Eu!' (p.206) describes an idyllic vision of the poet at one with nature. Her dreams can spread over a free, unconfined space, and her oneness with nature is highlighted through the description of her privileged communication with birds:

Pelos campos fora, pelos combros,
Pelos montes que embalam a manhã,
Largo os meus rubros sonhos de pagã,
Enquanto as aves poisam nos meus ombros...

The second stanza shows that there have been attempts to suppress her freedom, but that they were in vain. It is telling that Florbela should associate repressive forces with Christianity, symbolized by its cathedrals, for even early feminists had been aware of the repressive role of the Church in the lives of women:

Em vão me sepultaram entre escombros
De catedrais duma escultura vã!

At this point one would expect Florbela to proclaim her victory over those who crushed her. But instead the rest of the stanza is filled with sadness:

Olha-me o loiro sol tonto de assombros,

E as nuvens, a chorar, chamam-me irmã!

Although Florbela is free, her freedom brings suffering, not triumph, because the price to pay is marginalization from the world. Her marginalization is conveyed through the reaction of others: the (male) sun looks on with fear and does not understand, while the (female) clouds, frail and grief-stricken, express their empathy.

The idea that Florbela belongs to another plane is highlighted in the first tercet where she recalls the former world to which she belonged:

Ecos longínquos de ondas... de universos...
Ecos dum Mundo... dum distante Além,
Donde eu trouxe a magia dos meus versos!

Significantly, her suffering and marginalization become explicitly associated with the fact that she is a poet, in line 11, 'Donde eu trouxe a magia dos meus versos!', for as a poet, she is an outsider. But, simultaneously, being a poet also means that suffering, marginalization and society's attempts to repress her natural impulses can all be turned into a source of strength. And this is illustrated by the last stanza where, recognizing the ordeals she has undergone, Florbela can proclaim her identity, with a mix of excitement and pain, translated through the reiteration 'Sou eu!':

Sou eu! Sou eu! A que nas mãos ansiosas
Prende da vida, assim como ninguém,
Os maus espinhos sem tocar nas rosas!

Although this self-definition is deeply negative, the reiteration 'Sou eu' draws attention to the uniqueness and importance of her own self. This self can only be defined as someone, who like Christ (whose shadow is perhaps present in the word 'espinhos', evocative of his crown of thorns), has embraced extreme suffering. In this image, Florbela becomes paradigmatic, a divinity emblematic of the suffering that must be undergone in order to free her true identity from society's constraints.

A similar link between suffering and freedom is depicted in 'Interrogação' (p.194), one of Florbela's most daring poems. It too describes the mix of pain and excitement which self-discovery entails. The first stanza expresses Florbela's suffering as she

suppressed her true voice, in what seems to have been an attempt to yield to society's conventions:

Neste tormento inútil, neste empenho
De tornar em silêncio o que em mim canta,
Sobem-me roucos brados à garganta
Num clamor de loucura que contenho.

The enjambement of lines 1-2 highlights the impossible task of silencing her inner self, by suggesting in the very overflowing of meaning from one line to the next, the overflowing which Florbela is trying in vain to repress. The futility of her efforts is further highlighted by the paradox 'silêncio / canta'. Lines 3-4 describe the inhuman suffering which such repression causes, suggesting it drives the poet to the brink of madness.

In order to find someone who will understand her inner contradictions, she has to turn to nature, in the form of her native *charneca*, free from the constraints imposed by culture:

Ó alma da charneca sacrossanta,
Irmã da alma rútila que eu tenho,
Dize pra onde vou, donde é que venho
Nesta dor que me exalta e me alevanta!

Here, although Florbela experiences the emergence of her own inner self with 'dor', it is an uplifting 'dor que me exalta e me alevanta'. But the images used in the first tercet show that her voyage of inner discovery is both a wonderful and an intensely painful experience:

Visões de mundos novos, de infinitos,
Cadências de soluços e de gritos,
Fogueira a esbrasear que me consome!

She simultaneously has visions of a new world, with all the promises inherent to a new, virgin territory (line 9), and experiences hell, where damned souls are expiating their crimes, weeping and shouting (line 10). The contradictory nature of these experiences culminates in the image of the fire (line 11). Fire represents 'une accélération du temps de la nature, une sorte de concentré d'énergie'. At the same time, however, it must destroy in order to give way to 'un principe vital supérieur'. Hence it is both destructive and a means

of purification¹⁵. The duality of fire is reflected in the duality of the image of the blood-stain in the last stanza:

Dize que mão é esta que me arrasta?
 Nódoa de sangue que palpita e alastra...
 Dize de que é que eu tenho sede e fome?!

Like fire, blood is both a curse and something life-giving. The image of the blood-stain suggests violence entailing blood in the quest for freedom. But it is simultaneously positive because the act of giving birth itself entails blood, and thus the blood spreading expresses the birth of something new within the poet. It is also possible to see the idea of menstrual blood inscribed in the image of the blood-stain. Menstrual blood is inextricably linked with adult sexuality, and since here the image of the blood-stain spreading is moreover followed by the poet's admission of being hungry and thirsty for something that she does not know -- or does not want to admit to know --, the image could then be read as a metaphor of the poet's quest for sexual fulfilment. Yet, if this stanza and the entire poem can be interpreted as a quest for sexual fulfilment, the poem is also about poetic discovery, access to language, the suffering that creation entails and the need to go beyond oneself in a quest for meaning and purpose.

In 'Soneto X' (p.223), significantly ending both the series of 'É um não querer mais que bem querer' and the collection as a whole, transcending limits becomes a way of life. This constitutes a breach of the traditional idea that women should not seek more than their modest lot. Reacting against limitations normally imposed by society, the whole sonnet is built around the use of the comparative 'mais' to show that, only by constantly seeking more, does Florbela feel that she can live life to the full:

Eu queria mais altas as estrelas,
 Mais largo o espaço, o sol mais criador,
 Mais refulgente a lua, o mar maior,
 Mais cavadas as ondas e mais belas; [...]

E abrir os braços e viver a vida,
 -- Quanto mais funda e lúgubre a descida

¹⁵See Aziza, Oliviéri and Sctrick. *Dictionnaire des symboles et des thèmes littéraires* (Paris: F.Nathan, 1978), p.91.

Mais alta é a ladeira que não cansa!

The wish to transcend herself and to reach something other, despite all the suffering entailed, becomes the driving force in her life. Suffering then actually becomes a means to experience something new. Likewise, in the sonnet 'Mais Alto' (p.197), the anaphora 'Mais alto, sim!' is used throughout the sonnet to convey Florbela's determination to transcend limits.

In the first stanza, the poet, in her search for an absolute, yearns to lose her identity:

Mais alto, sim! mais alto, mais além
Do sonho, onde morar a dor da vida,
Até sair de mim! Ser a Perdida,
A que não se encontra! Aquela a quem

O mundo não conhece por Alguém!

The enjambement across two stanzas (lines 4-5), something extremely rare in Florbela's poetry, mirrors in the syntax of the sonnet her desire to go outside herself. By transcending herself, she would lose her individual identity, and thus become 'a Perdida / A que não se encontra'. The term 'perdida' is normally used to describe a fallen woman and, by using it, Florbela is showing that she was aware that in the eyes of society she was a fallen woman since the wish to exceed herself constituted a transgression. Yet, here, the capitalization of 'Perdida' simultaneously deifies the figure, suggesting that she can rise beyond the personal, above her individual identity.

In the two tercets, Florbela, completing the ascension image present in lines 6-9, identifies herself with the Virgin Mary, by referring to herself as a 'Turris Ebúrnea', as Jorge de Sena and José Régio after him were the first to point out¹⁶:

Mais alto, sim! Mais alto! A Intangível!
Turris Ebúrnea erguida nos espaços,
À rutilante luz dum impossível!

Mais alto, sim! Mais alto! Onde couber
O mal da vida dentro dos meus braços,

¹⁶Jorge de Sena 'Florbela Espanca' in *Da Poesia Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Ática, [n.d.]), pp.115-143, (pp.135-136) and José Régio, 'Florbela' in *Florbela Espanca, Sonetos Completos* (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1950), pp.7-27 (pp.25-26).

Dos meus divinos braços de Mulher!

By transcending the limits of the self, she becomes a universal deity, a new 'Mater Redemptrix', a female version of Christ who, like him, can embrace all the evil of the world and redeem it.

5.2.2. THE POET BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

The poems just examined reveal Florbela's desire to transcend the limitations society tried to impose on her, and show how she perceived suffering as a means to release the powers within her and bring out her true self. In a further group of sonnets, 'Ser Poeta' (p.186), 'Versos de Orgulho' (p.167), and 'Mocidade' (p.188), the desire to go beyond herself becomes the central attribute of the poet, which distinguishes him/her from the crowd.

In 'Ser Poeta' (p.186), the first three stanzas are a succession of definitions of what it means to be a poet:

Ser Poeta é ser mais alto, é ser maior
Do que os homens! Morder como quem beija!
É ser mendigo e dar como quem seja
Rei do Reino de Aquém e de Além Dor!

In the opening line of the poem, Florbela uses, as in 'Mais Alto' and 'Soneto X', the comparative 'mais alto' to equate being a poet with transcending oneself. The second line, 'Morder como quem beija', introduces the idea of passion. This looks directly back to the last poem of *Livro de Soror Saudade*, 'Exaltação' (p.157), where Florbela had equated the creativity of being a poet with the idea of transcending limits and experiencing passion. Lines 3-4 give a more conventional romantic definition of the poet as both a (male) beggar and a king.

The second and third stanzas, however, taking up the definitions of lines 1-2, dwell on the fact that going beyond oneself also means experiencing intense desires and yearnings:

É ter de mil desejos o esplendor
 É não saber sequer que se deseja!
 É ter cá dentro um astro que flameja,
 É ter garras e asas de condor!

É ter fome, é ter sede de Infinito!
 Por elmo, as manhãs de oiro e de cetim...
 É condensar o mundo num só grito!

To underline her enthusiasm, Florbela makes use of a sequence of anaphoras and exclamations. To be a poet, according to her, is to live intensely, to transcend barriers. This definition leads her to redefine passion in the last stanza as the natural consequence of being a poet who experiences intense desires:

E é amar-te, assim, perdidamente...
 É seres alma e sangue e vida em mim
 E dizê-lo cantando a toda a gente!

What is striking in this stanza is the fact that, out of the blue, in a sonnet that had began as an attempt to define the essence of being a poet, Florbela addresses her lover directly, indicating that in her mind there is an inextricable link between the creative act and the act of love: Florbela's lover literally gives her life, and this is conveyed stylistically through the use of the polysyndeton: 'E é [... / É seres alma e sangue e vida em mim / E dizê-lo'.

The message expressed in 'Ser Poeta' is a deeply subversive one. It also goes one stage further than the earlier 'Exaltação' (p.157), which had already included love in its definition of being a poet, because now the poet actually addresses her lover.

'Ser Poeta' is not the only poem where Florbela put forward a subversive view of the poet, by linking being a poet with the acceptance of love. Such a link is also present in 'Versos de Orgulho' (p.167) and in 'Mocidade' (p.188). In both these, Florbela's female identity is clearly marked (while 'Ser Poeta' is one of the few poems of *Charneca em Flor* without a single mark of the female sex of its author). Possibly because of this both describe, much more clearly than 'Ser Poeta' had, being a poet in terms of marginality.

In 'Versos de Orgulho', Florbela's starting-point is the hostility of the world towards her. This hostility, however, is a proof that she is truly a poet, in the Romantic tradition in which the poet was ostracized for being different:

O mundo quer-me mal porque ninguém
Tem asas como eu tenho! Porque Deus
Me fez nascer Princesa entre plebeus
Numa torre de orgulho e de desdém!

In the second stanza, Florbela is portrayed as a Romantic poet, who can see beyond normal life. This is done through the use of anaphora, which gives dramatic eloquence to the reasons that turn her into a poet:

Porque o meu Reino fica para Além!
Porque trago no olhar os vastos céus,
E os oiros e os clarões são todos meus!
Porque eu sou Eu e porque Eu sou Alguém!¹⁷

The stanza culminates in what may seem to today's reader as a tautological statement, 'Porque eu sou Eu e porque Eu sou Alguém!'. At the time, however, this was a revolutionary statement, proclaiming the female poet as a sovereign person (notice how the small 'eu' becomes a capitalized 'Eu'), in defiance of a society that constantly erased women's identity.

Furthermore, it is because Florbela is a poet that she can ignore the ordinary world and build a new world through her poetry, a world of love which acquires cosmic proportions:

O mundo! O que é o mundo, ó meu amor?!
O jardim dos meus versos todo em flor,
A seara dos teus beijos, pão bendito,

Meus êxtases, meus sonhos, meus cansaços...
São os teus braços dentro dos meus braços:

¹⁷Although in *Obras Completas* this line reads 'Porque Eu sou Eu e porque Eu sou Alguém', which is an accurate transcription of the manuscript belonging to the Biblioteca Pública de Évora, I think the version of the first edition 'Porque eu sou Eu e porque Eu sou Alguém', should be preferred as it makes more sense. Furthermore there also exists a manuscript featuring this version which was reproduced in *Sonetos Completos*, 15th edn (Amadora: Bertrand, 1978) p.115.

Via Láctea fechando o Infinito...

'Mocidade' (p.188) expresses a similar continuum from being a poet to finding life and meaning in love. In the first three stanzas of the poem, Florbela again depicts herself as a poet forever aspiring to more. In the first stanza, she describes 'youth' and its uncontainable aspiration to beauty and self-realization, which is powerfully rendered through the asyndetic sequence of five adjectives, something extremely unusual in her poetry:

A mocidade, esplêndida, vibrante,
Ardente, extraordinária, audaciosa,
Que vê num cardo a folha duma rosa,
Na gota de água o brilho dum diamante;

In the second stanza, however, there is an apparent contrast between the drive of the 'mocidade' towards beauty and the effect it has had upon Florbela:

Essa que fez de mim Judeu Errante
Do espírito, a torrente caudalosa,
Dos vendavais irmã tempestuosa,
-- Trago-a em mim vermelha, triunfante!

The 'mocidade' has turned Florbela into an outsider, and this is conveyed through the image of the Wandering Jew (line 5). It has also turned her into something violent, 'Dos vendavais irmã tempestuosa' (line 7), highlighted through the use of an inversion. This again makes her an outsider, in a society which taught women to be meek and mild. Yet, being an outsider is a source of pride for Florbela, as the last line of the stanza makes clear: 'Trago-a em mim vermelha, triunfante!'. Stylistically, her enthusiasm, characteristic of the impetus of youth towards something different, is mirrored in the syntactic construction of this sentence, which spreads over the first two stanzas, culminating in the triumphant proclamation of line 8.

This triumph is then stressed in the first tercet:

No meu sangue rubis correm dispersos:
-- Chamas subindo ao alto nos meus versos,
Papoilas nos meus lábios a florir!

Triumph is expressed through the use of the colour red present in the words 'vermelha', 'sangue', 'rubis' and 'papoilas'. The triumphant stance of the poet is conveyed in the fact that she is different from other human beings: her blood is made of precious stones (line 9) and her poetry becomes fire, capable of purifying (line 10). Having described herself as a poet, in a continuum, Florbela moves on to love in the last stanza, but this time the transfigurative power of love is only there by implication, as a means of surpassing the transitory nature of life:

Ama-me doida, estonteadoramente,
Ó meu Amor! que o coração da gente
É tão pequeno... e a vida, água a fugir...

5.3 LOVE

If experiencing love is the result of being a poet and becomes the ultimate aim of the poet, then it follows that the central theme of *Charneca em Flor* should be love. The centrality of the theme of love within the collection was in fact clearly acknowledged right at its outset, with an epigraph by Ruben Darío proclaiming love as the most important feeling in life:

Amar, amar, amar siempre y con todo
El ser y con la tierra y con el cielo,
Con lo claro del sol y lo obscuro del lodo.
Amar por toda ciencia y amar por todo anhelo.

Y cuando la montaña de la vida
Nos sea dura y larga, y alta, y llena de abismos,
Amar la inmensidad, que es de amor encendida,
Y arder en la fusión de nuestros pechos mismos...

Of course, the theme of love is not new to *Charneca em Flor*. The previous chapter showed how in *Livro de Soror Saudade* Florbela wrestled with the tension between spiritual and sensual love. *Charneca em Flor* starts where *Livro de Soror Saudade* had left off: its poems on love become much more daring, producing some of Florbela's most original and justly famous poems on the subject.

Florbela herself was aware that, in its attitude towards love, *Charneca em Flor* was different from the poetry of her earlier collections. In fact, marking this at the outset of the collection, the sonnet 'Charneca em Flor' constitutes a reworking of the earlier image of the self presented in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, that of the female struggling between contradictory impulses, which culminated in 'Renúncia' (p.145). Further confirming Florbela's willingness in *Charneca em Flor* to portray herself, against all conventions, as a sensual being, another sonnet from *Charneca em Flor*, 'Eu' (p.172) is a reworking of an earlier earlier image of the self, presented in the sonnet also entitled 'Eu...' (p.61), from *Livro de Mágoas*. These reworkings of earlier images of the self warrant detailed analysis.

In 'Renúncia', Florbela was struggling to remain, or perhaps more accurately, to become indifferent. In 'Charneca em Flor', by contrast, she allows herself to become totally receptive to the outside world and to the internal movements of her being. The fact that the later poem is intended to stand in contrast with the earlier one is undeniable, for it takes up several images from 'Renúncia', namely that of the shroud and that of the convent, even if only in order to reject them, as Florbela adopts an amoral, pagan stance. Furthermore, the image of Nature as a fertile, life-giving power, present in the second stanza of 'Renúncia', now takes over and becomes the central image of 'Charneca em Flor' as, in a parallel movement, the image of the nun is rejected.

The first two stanzas of 'Charneca em Flor' depict Florbela's sensations of both fear and excitement, as she witnesses the gradual emergence of something to which she cannot give a name overcoming her:

Enche o meu peito, num encanto mago,
O frémito das coisas dolorosas....

The verb 'Enche' stands out here because the use of inversion throws it into relief, but also because the idea it conveys (to be filled) is directly opposed to the one which stood at the heart of 'Renúncia' where Florbela was trying to empty herself of everything. In 'Renúncia', the only thing with which she sought to be filled meant a symbolic death: 'Enche a boca de cinzas e de terra'.

Strangely enough, in 'Charneca em Flor', that which invades her is not devoid of pain, being described as 'o frémito das coisas dolorosas' in line 2. What are these intriguing 'coisas dolorosas'? The pain inherent to the suppressed self? The very suffering of silenced feelings as they come to the surface? Perhaps the rest of the poem will help us to elucidate this. Be it as it may, what comes over her may be painful, but it simultaneously fills her with enchantment, as stressed by the phrase 'num encanto mago'. What she is witnessing is a process of rebirth and this is evoked lines 3-4:

Sob as urzes queimadas nascem rosas....
Nos meus olhos as lágrimas apago.....

The fact that this is a completely natural process, as opposed to the artificiality of the image of the self she was trying to embrace in 'Renúncia', is conveyed through the implicit comparison with nature: in the same way as roses can blossom out of a barren land, she too, in spite of her sterile past, can spontaneously flower into something beautiful. It is this process of blossoming she is witnessing without quite knowing what is taking place. She tries to look inside herself and decipher the signs she hears, but it is as though things were happening at a subconscious level:

Anseio! Asas abertas! O que trago
Em mim? Eu oiço bocas silenciosas
Murmurar-me as palavras misteriosas
Que perturbam meu ser como um afago!

The whole stanza is an attempt to articulate experience and evokes the unconscious trying to express itself through mysterious signs. The paradox 'bocas silenciosas / murmurar' stresses that what is being murmured is something which had been silenced before and can therefore only express itself through a code language.

In the first tercet, the irruption of this voice within her prompts her to reject her former life of self-denial, conveyed though the act of getting rid of her religious habit, a symbol of that self-denial:

E, nesta febre ansiosa que me invade,
Dispo a minha mortalha, o meu burel,
E, já não sou, Amor, Soror Saudade...

Once she has free herself from a personality that she had imposed on herself, that of 'Soror Saudade', she witnesses a complete metamorphosis of the self, a self at last allowed to come out. In the last stanza, in bewildered wonder, she sees the coming to life of the parts of her body which she had previously attempted to suppress, in particular her eyes and mouth:

Olhos a arder em êxtases de amor,
 Boca a saber a sol, a fruto, a mel:
 Sou a charneca rude a abrir em flor!

This last tercet of 'Charneca em Flor' is the complete negation of the last tercet of 'Renúncia', stressing the radical consequences of the statement of line 11: 'já não sou, Amor, Soror Saudade'. In contrast to the string of orders of 'Renúncia', conveying an artificial attempt to discipline herself, the last tercet of 'Charneca em Flor' registers her openness to the slightest vibration. Thus the line 'Gela ainda a mortalha que te encerra' in the earlier 'Renúncia' is directly opposed to 'Olhos a arder em êxtases de amor', for the idea of coldness, impassibility and constraint give way to a feeling of exuberance and life. Likewise, the suggestions of death present in 'Enche a boca de cinzas e de terra' are totally abolished by the suggestions of fertility expressed in 'Boca a saber a sol, a fruto, a mel'. Lastly, whereas the last line of 'Renúncia' was an exclamation of despair addressed to the blossoming youth which was being denied the right to blossom, the last line of 'Charneca em Flor', 'Sou a charneca rude a abrir em flor', constitutes a triumphant proclamation of self-expression.

The close analysis of 'Renúncia' and 'Charneca em Flor' illustrates very clearly the changes of the way in which Florbela perceived herself. Another pair of poems, the two sonnets that share the title 'Eu', also illustrates the fundamental changes in Florbela's attitude in *Charneca em Flor*.

In the early 'Eu...', Florbela had depicted herself as a wretched, dejected figure, separated from its ideal half like the Hermaphrodites described by Plato in his *Symposium*.

By contrast, in the later 'Eu' (p.172) she portrays herself as a fulfilled person, whose self-knowledge makes her feel at one with life, the world and her own self.

The second 'Eu' begins by looking back to former attempts at self-definition, realizing in retrospect that they were misguided:

Até agora eu não me conhecia,
Julgava que era Eu e eu não era
Aquela que em meus versos descrevera
Tão clara como a fonte e como o dia.

The light in which she had previously seen herself had been an unproblematic one, since 'Tão clara como a fonte e como o dia' evokes the idea of a transparent image. Looking back from an enlightened standpoint ('Até agora' suggests that the view she had had of herself up to then has now been changed), she realizes that the identity which she had taken to be her real one (the 'Eu' with a capital letter) did not correspond to what she truly was (the 'eu' with small letters).

The second stanza, however, introduces a nuance for it raises the possibility that she may have been in fact aware of the falseness of her official identity, even if only at a subconscious level, but that inhibitions would have prevented her from recognizing and admitting it, even to herself:

Mas que eu não era Eu não o sabia
E, mesmo que o soubesse, o não dissera...
Olhos fitos em rútila quimera
Andava atrás de mim... e não me via!

Yet truth had to come out, and looking at the image of herself reflected, not in a normal mirror, but in a privileged one, the eyes of the loved one, she suddenly discovers her true identity, previously concealed by cultural impositions:

Andava a procurar-me -- pobre louca! --
E achei o meu olhar no teu olhar,
E a minha boca sobre a tua boca!

Her self-discovery hinges on the ready acceptance of her sensuality. She is not the idealized, transparent figure 'tão clara como a fonte e como o dia' that society had made her

out to be, nor is she the dream-figure she had portrayed herself as in the early 'Eu...', she is something much more complex, a person made of flesh and bones. Through love, she is fully revealed to herself.

The last tercet of the later 'Eu', like the last tercet of 'Charneca em Flor' which stood in complete opposition to the ending of 'Renúncia', stands as a complete negation of the ending of the early 'Eu...'. In the last tercet of the early 'Eu...', Florbela had highlighted that her self-knowledge was condemned to remain fragmentary because she had failed to meet the right person, who would have made her come to life. In the later 'Eu', by contrast, the last tercet states exactly the contrary:

E esta ânsia de viver, que nada acalma,
É a chama da tua alma a esbrasear
As apagadas cinzas da minha alma!

It is only because she has found someone (we are not concerned here with assessing whether this someone corresponds to the absolute 'Alguém' she felt so sure had to exist but had failed to meet) that she is revived: the 'chama da tua alma' designates the living, creative power of the loved one, who can transform what is dead ('As apagadas cinzas da minha alma') into something living, making her thereby undergo a process of rebirth.

'Charneca em Flor' and 'Eu' describe Florbela's willingness to open herself to love. But if both poems constitute transgressions by implicitly putting love above social conventions, the transgression is prompted by a lover endowed with the power to give her a new lease of life. Not so in 'Amar!' (p.189) which pushes the subversion to its extreme limit by placing love itself above the object of love:

Eu quero amar, amar perdidamente!
Amar só por amar: Aqui... além...
Mais Este e Aquele, o Outro e toda a gente...
Amar! Amar! E não amar ninguém!

The exalted tone of the poet is rendered through a multiplication of exclamations and the insistence on the keyword 'amar' repeated seven times in four lines. What is put forward here is a subversive view of love, suggested right from the opening line in the adverb 'perdidamente' qualifying the verb to love, for although the phrase 'amar perdidamente'

normally means to love hopelessly, in Christian terms 'perdidamente' means 'in a fallen way', a suggestion immediately confirmed in the line that follows with the statement 'Amar só por amar', expressing the desire of experiencing love as an end in itself, a selfish, unchristian love. Pushed to its extreme, this results in the object of love becoming contingent (although momentarily deified, as underlined by the use of capitals in line 3 'Este e Aquele, o Outro'), for the most important thing is for the poet to remain free to experience love, without being tied down to loving one person in particular, hence the paradox of line 4: 'Amar! E não amar ninguém!'.

The second stanza goes against society's morality by asserting that its traditional endorsement of the idea of 'love for life' is hypocritical, because love for life does not exist. Following from that, the two tercets advocate an epicurian enjoyment of love as natural and even willed by God.

However, contrary to what the sonnets 'Charneca em Flor' and 'Amar!' might lead us to expect of the collection as a whole, in *Charneca em Flor* only a minority of poems describe fulfilled love. Instead, some dwell on Florbela's attempts to win over the love of the man she loves or seduce him, while others voice her dissatisfaction and even frustration. The remainder of this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the collection's full range of sonnets on love.

5.3.1. ATTEMPTS TO WIN THE LOVED ONE

There are three sonnets in *Charneca em Flor* where Florbela attempts to persuade the person she loves to return her love, 'Espera' (p.193), 'Soneto II' (p.215) and 'Conto de Fadas' (p.170).

'Espera' (p.193) is an attempt on the poet's part to regain the love of her partner and makes use of various arguments. The first argument is that of past love:

Não me digas adeus, ó sombra amiga,
Abranda mais o ritmo dos teus passos;
Sente o perfume da paixão antiga,
Dos nossos bons e cândidos abraços!

The next stanza draws attention to Florbela's uniqueness, portraying her spiritual nature, brought out in the adjectives 'místicos', 'fantástica' and 'estranha':

Sou a dona dos místicos cansaços,
A fantástica e estranha rapariga
Que um dia ficou presa nos teus braços...
Não vás ainda embora, ó sombra amiga!

Her spiritual dimension is further highlighted in the first tercet, where Florbela refers to herself as an *ondine*, stressing that her lover has not fully uncovered her mystery:

Teu amor fez de mim um lago triste:
Quantas ondas a rir que não lhe ouviste,
Quanta canção de ondinas lá no fundo!

Aware that this may not be enough to attract her partner's attention, in the last stanza, she turns to the most powerful of all arguments, his own well-being, stressing that if he leaves her, he will remain on his own forever and will not have another chance to change his mind. This recalls the story of Ondine where having lost Ondine, Hans is condemned to spend the rest of his life in solitude¹⁸:

Espera... espera... ó minha sombra amada...
Vê que pra além de mim já não há nada
E nunca mais me encontras neste mundo!...

In 'Soneto II' (p.215) Florbela attempts to win the love of the man she loves. The first stanza throws into relief her never ending love for him, through the use of paradox (lines 3-4):

Meu Amor, meu Amado, vê... repara:
Poisa os teus lindos olhos de oiro em mim,
– Dos meus beijos de amor Deus fez-me avara
Para nunca os contares até ao fim.

The second stanza draws attention to her body, by describing her eyes and hands:

Meus olhos teem tons de pedra rara,
– É só para teu bem que os tenho assim –

¹⁸See Christine Planté, 'Ondine, ondines: femme, amour et individuation', *Romantisme*, 62 (1988), 89-102.

E as minhas mãos são fontes de água clara
A cantar sobre a sede dum jardim.

The description of Florbela's eyes as precious stones is reminiscent of the philosophical stone, while the portrayal of her hands as water-fountains associates her with a life-giving power. Lines like these have led several critics to accuse Florbela of 'narcissism'. José Régio was one of them, although he recognized that there were also times when she dwelt on her own physical attributes simply in order to attract the loved one¹⁹. This certainly would seem to be the case in 'Soneto II', where in line 6 Florbela herself indicates that her beauty only exists to fulfill her lover's needs: 'É só para teu bem que os tenho assim'.

Several other sonnets in *Charneca em Flor* feature a stanza evoking Florbela's physical appearance. In them, Florbela gives a mythical dimension to her physical attractions, but usually it is in order to seduce her loved one. The only sonnet where this is not the case is 'Lembrança' (p.180), discussed at the beginning of the chapter. But there, once more, the aim of Florbela in evoking her face and eyes was to turn herself into a mythical creature, in a context where she was trying to put across her sense of lost greatness.

Coming back to 'Soneto II', the first tercet continues a portrayal of the self, but one which contrasts sharply with that of the previous stanza:

Sou triste como a folha ao abandono
Num parque solitário, pelo Outono,
Sobre um lago onde vogam nenúfares...

In the second stanza, Florbela had depicted her hands as life-giving, flowing water, but here this image is replaced by that of the stagnant water of the lake. Likewise, while earlier the poet had a purpose, that of pleasing the loved one, here she is completely adrift, as the image of the Autumn leaf shows.

¹⁹José Régio, 'Florbela' in Florbela Espanca, *Sonetos Completos* (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1950), pp.7-27 (pp.14 and 17).

Having tried to draw her lover's attention to her, by successively highlighting her immense love, her beauty and finally her loneliness in the absence of love, the last stanza turns to a completely different argument: the fact that God willed their encounter. Pushed to its extreme, this argument means that her lover's unwillingness to take notice of her will have to be answered to God:

Deus fez-me atravessar o teu caminho...
 -- Que contas dás a Deus indo sozinho,
 Passando junto a mim, sem me encontrares? --

In the two poems just examined, Florbela is dealing with an unreceptive interlocutor, and therefore her strongest argument is that it is in his best interest to love her, both because she is unique and because if he does not, his unresponsiveness will be punished.

There is no hint of her lover's unresponsiveness being punished in 'Conto de Fadas' (p.170), where Florbela concentrates on building an image of herself as a mythical figure, who can bring meaning into the life of the loved one:

Eu trago-te nas mãos o esquecimento
 Das horas más que tens vivido, Amor!
 E para as tuas chagas o unguento
 Com que sarei a minha própria dor.

The image of her holding a magic balm, which can cure all misery, suggests that she has special powers, she is no ordinary human. This suggestion is reinforced in the second and third stanzas, which describe her as a mythical being:

Os meus gestos são ondas de Sorrento...
 Trago no nome as letras duma flor...²⁰
 Foi dos meus olhos garços que um pintor
 Tirou a luz para pintar o vento...

The concluding lines of the poem confirm her mythical nature by identifying her as the princess of a fairy tale story:

²⁰In *Obras Completas* 'de uma flor' (sic).

-- Eu sou Aquela de que tens saudade,
A Princesa do conto: "Era uma vez..."

The three poems just examined are attempts to win the loved one. By contrast, the next poems we will look at are attempts to seduce her lover. In these poems the argument of her own attractiveness seems to be sufficient, and consequently they are much more obviously sensual.

5.3.2. INVITATIONS TO LOVE

'Passeio ao Campo' (p.173) is a feminine reworking of the *collige, virgo, rosas* topos, with the woman as the subject, who addresses the male lover:

Meu Amor! Meu Amante! Meu Amigo!
Colhe a hora que passa, hora divina,
Bebe-a dentro de mim, bebe-a comigo!
Sinto-me alegre e forte! Sou menina!

The second stanza offers once more a description of Florbela's own attractiveness, linking her with a vision of art, a statue (line 6) or a madonna in a Renaissance painting (line 7), highlighting her mythical nature and her timelessness, which render her unique:

Eu tenho, Amor, a cinta esbelta e fina...
Pele doirada de alabastro antigo...
Frágeis mãos de madona florentina...
-- Vamos correr e rir por entre o trigo! --

The third stanza focuses on the sensuality of the nature surrounding the two lovers, with the evocation of 'gramíneas', 'trigais maduros' and the water of the fountain, all suggesting fertility and therefore connotations of eroticism:

Há rendas de gramíneas pelos montes...
Papoilas rubras nos trigais maduros...
Água azulada a cintilar nas fontes...

The description of a fertile nature is here used as an argument to show that it is the right time for love, and it leads the poet in the last stanza to invite her companion to merge with her in one:

E à volta, Amor... tornemos, nas alfombras
 Dos caminhos selvagens e escuros,
 Num astro só as nossas duas sombras!...

In the last line, the transfigurative power of love is powerfully rendered through the image of the two shadows merging into a single star and the metamorphosis of darkness into light further underlines their oneness in love.

But by far the most overtly sensual invitation to love is 'Se Tu Viesses Ver-Me...' (p.175). In this poem, the female poet addresss her absent partner, expressing her desire for physical contact:

Se tu viesses ver-me hoje à tardinha,
 A essa hora dos mágicos cansaços,
 Quando a noite de manso se avizinha,
 E me prendesses toda nos teus braços...

The second stanza dwells on recollections of the presence of her lover and of their embraces. From there the tercets move to a description of the poet, vividly evoking her desire for him:

Se tu viesses quando, linda e louca,
 Traça as linhas dulcíssimas dum beijo
 E é de seda vermelha e canta e ri

E é como um cravo ao sol a minha boca...
 Quando os meus olhos se me cerram de desejo...
 E os meus braços se estendem para ti...

These two tercets are extremely successful in conveying Florbela's desire, through the use of various stylistic devices. The inversion of the normal order of the sentence in the third stanza means that the subject of the sentence, 'a minha boca', only appears in the fourth stanza. The delay thus created enables the poet to draw attention to the attractiveness of her mouth, by using a polysyndetic construction 'E é de seda vermelha e canta e ri / E é como

um cravo', emphasizing the seduction which is taking place. Once more, Florbela is here drawing attention to her mouth, eyes and arms/hands to express her sensuality.

In the last stanza the use of the dots is particularly effective in creating a suggestive atmosphere where things are left unsaid. By the end of the poem, there is a complete inversion of the starting-point of the poem: the person stretching out her arms to embrace the lover is no longer the male lover but Florbela herself, with the last line of the poem forming a chiasmus to the fourth line of the poem: 'E me prendesses toda nos teus braços' and 'E os meus braços se estendem para ti'.

Coming across such unambiguous statements of female desire, which subvert all expectations of high-mindedness, raises the question of how overt Florbela would dare to be in her descriptions of love relationships. The next two sections will examine this, first in the sonnets where a fulfilled relationship is painted, then in the sonnets where Florbela voices her doubts or discontent.

5.3.3. FULFILLED LOVE

The sonnets describing completely fulfilled love are 'Outonal' (p.185) and 'Soneto IV' (p.217). Three other sonnets, 'Toledo' (p.184), 'Alvorecer' (p.187) and 'Tarde no Mar' describe a sexual relationship, but begin to inscribe in their imagery the poet's ambivalent attitude towards love.

'Outonal' (p.185) starts off in a way reminiscent of many of the earlier sonnets from *Livro de Soror Saudade*. It is set in the Autumn, suggesting a vague mystical mood:

Caem as folhas mortas sobre o lago;
Na penumbra outonal, não sei quem tece
As rendas do silêncio... Olha, anoitece!
-- Brumas longínquas do País do Vago...

Veludos a ondear... Mistério mago...
Encantamento... A hora que não esquece,
A luz que a pouco e pouco desfalece,
Que lança em mim a bênção dum afago...

But having described in the first two stanzas an impressionistic setting which recalls previous poems from *Livro de Soror Saudade*, Florbela then subverts it, by focusing not on the melancholy of the Autumn, but on its opulence, already suggested in the second stanza in the word 'veludos':

Outono dos crepúsculos doirados,
De púrpuras, damascos e brocados!
-- Vestes a terra inteira de esplendor!

Phonetically, this opulence is conveyed through the alliterations in [d] and [p] in lines 9-10 and [t] in line 11. Such splendour suggests sensuality and, in the last stanza, mirroring the revelation of the sensual face of Autumn, love also displays its sensual face (as opposed to the wistful one which had been predominant in *Livro de Soror Saudade*):

Outono das tardinhas silenciosas,
Das magníficas noites voluptuosas
Em que eu soluço a delirar de amor...

The word 'soluçar' normally suggests grief, since it means to weep, but in a context where it is followed by the group of words 'a delirar de amor', it clearly refers to the overwhelming nature of the experience of sensual love, and therefore has positive overtones.

The most famous sonnet describing a fulfilled relationship is undoubtedly 'Soneto IV' (p.217). Like the earlier sonnet 'O Nosso Mundo' from *Livro de Soror Saudade*, it focuses on the fact that love transforms the world and in fact expands to become the world itself.

The first stanza of 'Soneto IV' expresses Florbela's delight with the arrival of her beloved through an accumulation of exclamations. Her euphoria is also conveyed through the anaphora 'És tu', conveying her wonder before the miracle of his presence:

És tu! És tu! Sempre vieste, enfim!
Oíço de novo o riso dos teus passos!
És tu que eu vejo a estender-me os braços
Que Deus criou pra me abraçar a mim!

In the fourth line, Florbela expresses the belief that her lover's arms were created by God for the exclusive purpose of holding her. By claiming that their love is justified by divine will, it acquires sacred value, as the first line of the second stanza shows:

Tudo é divino e santo visto assim...

The rest of the second stanza focuses on the transfigurative power of love, which turns the world, normally a hostile place peopled by desillusions ('desalentos', 'cansaços') into something new, fertile and boundless: a garden, an open sky.

Foram-se os desalentos, os cansaços...
O mundo não é mundo: é um jardim!
Um céu aberto: longes os espaços!

The poet's excitement at the presence of her lover is translated in the third stanza by her feverish utterances, first a reiterated command to hold her, then a dismissal of all that surrounds them. Only in each other is there life, the rest of the world is empty and lifeless:

Prende-me toda, Amor, prende-me bem!
Que vês em redor? Não há ninguém!
A terra? – Um astro morto que flutua...

The meaninglessness of their surroundings, strikingly rendered through the description of the earth as a dead star drifting in the space, lacking in gravity, contrasts with the life they can find in each other, and which in the last tercet is conveyed through vocabulary of fire, life and movement:

Tudo o que é chama a arder, tudo o que sente,²¹
Tudo o que é vida e vibra eternamente
É tu seres meu, Amor, e eu ser tua!

Florbela's sense of plenitude is highlighted through the anaphora 'tudo / tudo / tudo' and through the triumphant alliterations in [t]. The perfect harmony of the lovers' togetherness is inscribed, in the last line of the poem, in a chiasmus: the word 'Amor' is at the centre of

²¹In *Obras Completas* 'tudo o que sente' (sic).

the line, occupying syllables 5 and 6, with a perfect symmetry achieved either side of it: 'tu seres meu' and 'eu ser tua'.

'Soneto IV' describes a sense of complete harmony. In other sonnets, by contrast, the poet's relationship with her lover does not preclude melancholy and even ambiguity. The sonnet 'Toledo' (p.184) was discussed in the last chapter to throw into relief the boldness of its description of female desire in comparison with the sonnets from *Livro de Soror Saudade* on the same theme. But it was noted at the same time that, while 'Toledo' depicted the poet's desire in an overt fashion, a momentary flicker of sadness occurred in the third stanza when the poet stated that 'Um grande amor é sempre grave e triste'.

The same momentary sadness can be seen in a sonnet like 'Alvorecer' (p.187). On the surface, this sonnet does not in fact deal with a love scene at all: it describes an awakening, that of dawn. But on a metaphorical level it can be read as an image of sexual awakening. The first two stanzas describe dawn breaking out, highlighting its 'intensa alegria de viver' in a symphony of colour and sound. The last two stanzas use the images of Columbine and Pierrot to contrast the life emerging with dawn, with the world of night and dreams that recedes into the background:

Passos ao longe... um vulto que se esvai...
Em cada sombra Colombina trai...
Anda o silêncio em volta a q'rer falar...

E o luar que desmaia, macerado,
Lembra, pálido, tonto, esfarrapado,
Um Pierrot, todo branco, a soluçar...

There is a strong ambiguity in that, if in the third stanza Florbela appears to associate herself with the hidden Columbine, whose presence is about to become visible, in the last stanza she then seems to empathize with the Pierrot of dreams who is driven out by dawn. This reflects on a metaphorical level the struggle inside her between the impulse towards light and sensuality, symbolized by the half-hidden Columbine and the pregnant silence, and the ethereal world of dreams, symbolized by the Pierrot 'todo branco'.

A much stronger ambivalence towards sexuality is inscribed in the imagery of the sonnet 'Tarde no Mar' (p.174). The poem describes the end of an afternoon by the seaside, at sunset. In the first stanza, there is a contrast of colours between red and gold on the one hand, and white on the other. The horizon is red and golden, while the foam of the waves breaking out on the shore is white; in the second stanza, likewise, the sun projects red images onto the white houses:

E o sol, nas casa brancas que incendeia,
Desenha mãos sangrentas de assassino!

The violence of the image of the murderer is surprising. So much so that, when in the fourth stanza the hands of Florbela's lover are compared to the wings of the sun, although the adjective 'milagrosas' bestows positive connotations onto them, the reader cannot help thinking back to the sun's murderous hands:

E, sobre mim, em gestos palpitantes,
As tuas mãos morenas, milagrosas,
São as asas do sol, agonizantes...

Some could conceivably argue that this represents an unconscious desire for male domination, but in the context of a number of other sonnets indicating ambivalence, it rather suggests that while on an explicit level Florbela welcomes her lover's sexual advances, on an unconscious level, she was deeply ambivalent about it.

5.3.4. LOVE AND FRUSTRATION

The last section ended by showing how the imagery of 'Tarde no Mar' pointed to Florbela's ambivalent feelings towards the physical act of love. Other poems, such as 'Realidade' (p.169), 'O meu Condão' (p.177) and 'Soneto III' (p.216), go further and openly voice her conscious dissatisfaction or sense of frustration.

José Régio, discussing the sense of frustration that some of Florbela's sonnets patently revealed, suggested that it might be attributed to physiological causes. In support of his hypothesis, Régio quoted the endings of 'Realidade', 'Soneto II' and 'Sonho Vago',

from *Reliquiae*²². He chose these three sonnets as examples, possibly because they all use the verb 'encontrar' in a context which throws into relief Florbela's doubts about the lovers having encountered each other. In order to examine Florbela's dissatisfaction we shall look at one of the sonnets mentioned by Régio, 'Realidade', and two sonnets he did not mention, but which are equally revealing, 'O meu Condão' and 'Soneto III'.

In the first two stanzas of 'Realidade' (p.169) Florbela describes to her lover her passionate reaction to falling in love with him. Love means rebirth, a new beginning for her, and this is conveyed in lines 1-2 through the images of 'alvorada' and 'gorgeio de ninho', while the image of line 4 'a minha boca teve a frescura pálida do linho' suggests chastity and purity. By contrast, in the second stanza, passion is depicted in pagan terms, firstly through the comparison of her lover's kiss to a sensual wine, and secondly through the image of her hair undone, a symbol of sensuality, and perhaps a subversion of the image of the sinner Mary Magdalene at the feet of Christ:

Embriagou-me o teu beijo como um vinho
Fulvo de Espanha, em taça cinzelada,
E a minha cabeleira desatada
Pôs a teus pés a sombra dum caminho.

In the third stanza, Florbela then focuses on her beauty which, following the pattern of other sonnets, is only there for the benefit of her lover since she was born exclusively to meet him, as line 11 highlights:

Minhas pálpebras são cor de verbena,
Eu tenho os olhos garços, sou morena,
E para te encontrar foi que eu nasci...

This sets up expectations of a harmonious relationship. But any such expectations are violently shattered in the last stanza, which foregrounds Florbela's doubts and sadness at the discrepancy between her hopes and reality:

Tens sido vida fora o meu desejo,
E agora, que te falo, que te vejo,
Não sei se te encontrei, se te perdi...

²²José Régio, 'Florbela', p.18.

Like 'Realidade', 'O Meu Condão' (p.177) conveys the poet's sense of frustration at the fact that her lover seems unable to respond adequately to her overwhelming passion. Once more, Florbela invokes the fact that God has willed their relationship, this time through the anaphora 'Quis Deus' over the first three stanzas. In the second stanza, the extreme nature of her passion is highlighted:

Quis Deus fazer de ti a ambrosia
 Desta paixão estranha, ardente, incrível!
 Erguer em mim o facho inextinguível,
 Como um cinzel vincando uma agonia!

Her passion is glorified through the asyndetic sequence of adjectives 'estranha, ardente, incrível' (line 6), which however simultaneously points to its excessiveness. This excessiveness is further highlighted in lines 7-8 through the image of all-consuming fire ('facho inextinguível') and its comparison to 'um cinzel vincando uma agonia!', an instrument of torture evoking the unbearable suffering brought about by excessive passion.

In the two tercets, Florbela throws into relief her despair before the inability of her lover to accept her love, viewing herself as a victim, and using the image of crucifixion:

Quis Deus fazer-me tua... para nada!
 – Vãos, os meus braços de crucificada,
 Inúteis, esses beijos que te dei!

Anda! Caminha! Aonde?... Mas por onde?...
 Se a um gesto dos teus a sombra esconde
 O caminho das estrelas que tracei...

In the last tercet, unlike what happened in 'Passeio ao Campo', instead of 'sombra' being converted into stars, darkness prevails, a symbol of the divergence of the two lovers.

'Soneto III' (p.216) describes Florbela's sexual desire in the first two stanzas. Violently contrasting with its vehemence, the third stanza focuses on her lover's indifference:

E vejo-te tão longe! Sinto a tua alma
 Junto da minha, uma lagoa calma,
 A dizer-me, a cantar que me não amas...

The last stanza conveys the despair and violence of this unrequited passion, contrasting her unrest with his calm in the previous stanza, through the contrasting metaphors of his soul as a lagoon and hers as a skiff adrift in the currents:

E o meu coração que tu não sentes,
Vai boiando ao acaso das correntes,
Esquife negro sobre um mar de chamas...

The hyperbaton dislocating the apposition 'Esquife negro sobre um mar de chamas' to line 14 is used to throw the poet's suffering into relief, mirroring in the syntactic construction the fact that she is adrift. The apposition conveys a hellish image of Florbela's heart as a black skiff: in its blackness, the skiff polarizes everything that is negative; at the same time, the image of the sea of flames evokes both the all-consuming fire of passion and the devouring fire of hell.

5.3.5. LOVE AND SUBVERSION

The last section examined poems which expressed Florbela's overwhelming sense of frustration in love. In this section, we shall see how in other poems, such as 'Crucificada' (p.192), 'Filtro' (p.196) 'Supremo Enleio' (p.183) and 'Soneto VII' (p.221), Florbela rises above her lover's inability to recognize her uniqueness by positing her extraordinary love as capable of saving him of the error of his ways. In so doing she projects herself as an omnipotent being, a goddess.

'Crucificada' (p.192) begins with an entirely self-abnegating attitude on the part of Florbela, who states that not only is she ready to live the relationship in her lover's terms, but also, in the second stanza, that she is willing to put her talent as a writer at his service so that he may serenade other women he might love:

Podes amar até outras mulheres!
-- Hei-de compor, sonhar palavras belas,
Lindos versos de dor só para elas,
Para em lânguidas noites lhes dizeres!

This apparent submission is prolonged in the third stanza:

Crucificada em mim, sobre os meus braços,
Hei-de poisar a boca nos teus passos
Pra não serem pisados por ninguém.

Her submission is expressed through the metaphor of crucifixion. In other sonnets, this metaphor had been used to convey Florbela's suffering. But here it is no longer used just with that meaning, as there are resonances of the full meaning of crucifixion: Jesus Christ was crucified so that man could have eternal life, and in this sonnet, this is exactly what happens. In lines 10-11, Florbela agrees to be crucified, so that her lover's footsteps may remain untouched, in other words so that he may be purified.

In the last stanza, it becomes apparent that such sacrifice carried out to its extreme would ensure his rebirth:

E depois... Ah! depois de dores tamanhas,
Nascerás outra vez de outras entranhas,
Nascerás outra vez de uma outra Mãe!

In this extraordinary reworking of the Christian myth, Florbela's sacrifice secures new life for her lover. In effect she takes the place of the God the Father, becoming the Creator.

The sonnet 'Filtro' (p.196) follows a similar pattern to that of 'Crucificada'. Like 'Crucificada', it begins with an entirely submissive attitude, as the poet expresses her doleful mood:

Meu Amor, não é nada: — Sons marinhos
Numa concha vazia, choro errante...
Ah, olhos que não choram! Pobrezinhos...
Não há luz neste mundo que os levante!

The following two stanzas take up the crucifixion image, showing Florbela's willingness to sacrifice herself for her lover:

Eu andarei por ti os maus caminhos
E as minhas mãos, abertas a diamante,
Hão-de crucificar-se nos espinhos
Quando o meu peito for o teu mirante!

Para que corpos vis te não desejem,
Hei-de dar-te o meu corpo, e a boca minha

Pra que bocas impuras te não beijem!

This crucifixion, like the one in 'Crucificada', is aimed at redeeming her lover. Subjacent to the idea of crucifixion is the power to free the sinner, which turns Florbela into a divinity. As a result, by the end of the sonnet, the poet is able, through her sacrifice, to possess her lover and make him rise above the ordinary world:

Como quem roça um lago que sonhou,
Minhas cansadas asas de andorinha
Hão-de prender-te todo num só voo...

Florbela's transformation into a divinity, after a sacrificial rite, also occurs in 'Supremo Enleio' (p.183). Once more, the poem begins in an ostensibly submissive tone, showing her willingness to accept the various successive women in her lover's life:

Quanta mulher no teu passado, quanta!
Tanta sombra em redor! Mas que importa?
Se delas veio o sonho que conforta,
A sua vinda foi três vezes santa!

Erva do chão que a mão de Deus levanta,
Folhas murchas de rojo à tua porta...
Quando eu for uma pobre coisa morta,
Quanta mulher ainda! Quanta! Quanta!

The appositions of lines 5-6, 'Erva do chão' and 'Folhas murchas de rojo' underline her subservient attitude and her awareness of her nothingness. But in the tercets, her apparent submission is suddenly subverted:

Mas eu sou a manhã: apago estrelas!
Hás-de ver-me, beijar-me em todas elas,
Mesmo na boca da que for mais linda!

E quando a derradeira, enfim, vier,
Nesse corpo vibrante de mulher
Será o meu que hás-de encontrar ainda...

In death, she is reborn, becoming a transcendental, omnipotent and ubiquitous presence, a female principle to be found everywhere in the universe in the most different guises.

Similarly, 'Soneto VII' (p.220) which begins with statements about the transitory nature of this life, ends with a twist. Indeed in the tercets, Florbela expresses the wish to

become part of nature when she dies, 'A sombra calma dum entardecer'. This would turn her into a universal presence and result in her being able to be in control of her lover's body, this time unexpectedly described as a dead body:

Que Deus faça de mim, quando eu morrer,
Quando eu partir para o País da Luz,
A sombra calma dum entardecer,

Tombando, em doces pregas de mortalha,
Sobre o teu corpo heróico, posto em cruz,
Na solidão dum campo de batalha!

It is significant that, in this sonnet, the man's body is portrayed as 'posto em cruz', since this inverts the earlier images of the suffering woman as crucified. Here, it is the man who is crucified, and his death symbolically suggests that he is expiating his usurpation of power. For the first time in the battle of the sexes, symbolized in the 'campo de batalha', the woman is the winner. But she is the winner as poet and mythical entity, not as woman, since she has to undergo the transformation of matter into spiritual essence that death entails, the transubstantiation of her body into poetry, symbolized in the 'sombra calma dum entardecer' in order to rise free from the warrior's struggle to dominate her.

5.3.6. THE GODDESS

The last section showed how in some poems Florbela rose above her lover's inability to understand her by describing her sacrifices for him as capable of winning him over. This turned her into someone endowed with divine powers. This links up with Natália Correia's perceptive analysis showing that the myth of Diana, the Virgin Goddess, immune to male power, seems to be inscribed in some of Florbela's sonnets²³. The sonnets she analyses in this light are 'Volúpia' (p.195) and 'Ambiciosa' (p.191) and 'E não sou de ninguém' (p.253) from *Reliquiae*.

²³Natalia Correia, 'A Diva' in Florbela Espanca, *Diário do Último Ano* (Amadora: Bertrand, 1981), pp.9-30.

In 'Volúpia' (p.195), Florbela starts off by offering her body in a seemingly sacrificial rite, again taken from Christian symbology: the wine representing the body of Christ in the mass. But it soon becomes apparent that, unlike in the sonnets examined in the previous section, this seemingly sacrificial rite is merely destructive:

– Meu corpo! Trago nele um vinho forte:
Meus beijos de volúpia e de maldade!

The next stanza reinforces this by showing that the poet's embrace can be deadly:

Trago dalias vermelhas no regaço...
São os dedos do sol quando te abraço,
Cravados no teu peito como lanças!

Her fingers, which have incorporated the masculine principle of the sun, become spears, a traditionally masculine image. Correia sees in this image the presence of the myth of Diana, the Virgin Goddess: 'A integridade da luminosa exige o extermínio da virilidade que a solicita' (pp.14-5). Thus, the male becomes the powerless victim of the goddess's sortileges, as she encircles him in a dance that recalls that of the wicked Salomé:

E do meu corpo os leves arabescos
Vão-te envolvendo em círculos dantescos
Felinamente, em voluptuosas danças...

Another sonnet, 'Ambiciosa' (p.191), brings out fully the Virgin Goddess's potential destructiveness:

Se as minhas mãos em garra se cravaram
Sobre um amor em sangue a palpitar...
-- Quantas panteras bárbaras mataram
Só pelo raro gosto de matar!

In these two sonnets, Florbela becomes her own person, refusing to surrender her autonomy to anyone. This culminates in the incomplete 'E não sou de ninguém' (p.253), from *Reliquiae*:

E não sou de ninguém... Quem me quiser
Há-de ser luz do sol em tardes quentes,
Nos olhos de água clara há-de trazer
As fúlgidas pupilas das videntes!

As the tercets make plain, the only person who could aspire to possess her would be a God that like her would be universal:

Há-de ser seiva no botão repleto
 Voz no murmúrio do pequeno insecto,
 Vento que enfuma as velas sobre os mastros!...

If 'E não sou de ninguém' highlights Florbela's refusal to surrender herself to anyone short of a universal deity, the sonnet which most clearly stresses her own independence is 'O Meu Soneto' (p.264), from *Reliquiae*, a sonnet surprisingly not discussed by Correia. 'O Meu Soneto' is appropriately entitled thus since the whole of it is about Florbela herself.

The first stanza describes her as the high priestess of a mysterious ritual, charming her lover, taking him over and rendering him powerless:

Em atitudes e ritmos fleumáticos,
 Erguendo as mãos em gestos recolhidos,
 Todos brocados fúlgidos, hieráticos,
 Em ti andam bailando os meus sentidos...

Her gesture in the second line, 'Erguendo as mãos em gestos recolhidos', recalls that of a priest celebrating mass in the Christian liturgy. But this is a pagan mass, which bewitches her lover and glorifies her body. The rest of the poem, through the description of her eyes, hands and mouth, focuses on the fact that, as a goddess, Florbela is beyond the reach of any human:

E os meus olhos serenos, enigmáticos,
 Meninos que na estrada andam perdidos,
 Dolorosos, tristíssimos, extáticos,
 São letras de poemas nunca lidos...

As magnólias abertas dos meus dedos
 São mistérios, são filtros, são enredos
 Que pecados d'amor trazem de rastros...²⁴

E a minha boca, a rútila manhã,
 Na Via Láctea, lírica, pagã,
 A rir desfolha as pétalas dos astros!...

²⁴In *Obras Completas*, 'rastros' (sic).

In the second stanza, her eyes are like the riddle of a Sphinx, which has yet to be deciphered: 'São letras de poemas nunca lidos...'. In the third stanza, her hands are the means through which she draws her lovers into her web: 'São mistérios, são filtros, são enredos'. Finally, the last stanza evokes her freedom, in the image of her mouth as a morning: morning suggests rebirth, freedom, renewal, underlining that this goddess is perpetually reborn, and therefore not subject to anyone. Her independence and timelessness are further enhanced by the fact that she lives in a realm beyond the earth, the Milky Way. Her freedom culminates in the last line of the poem, with the image of her laughing and stripping 'as pétalas dos astros'. Stars are by definition absolute, unattainable. But as a goddess, Florbela has absolute freedom and power over them, and this is what the image triumphantly conveys.

In *Charneca em Flor* Florbela therefore succeeds in projecting herself as a divinity, thus fully assuming her role of poet as a myth-maker. This in turn enables her to come to terms with her experience as a woman. In earlier collections, Florbela had been reluctant to challenge too openly established codes of behaviour. In *Livro de Soror Saudade*, there were incipient and tentative efforts to rebel against the repressive effect society had on women. But in the earlier collections, by and large, without love Florbela constantly defined herself as a shadow, as non-existent. By contrast, in *Charneca em Flor*, her self-confidence in her inner strength as a poet enables her to overcome this, and in this collection she is able to free herself from society's expectations of women as demure, meek and silent. Thus she becomes able to articulate her dissatisfaction and voice her anger when a relationship is not fulfilling. She is also able to express her sensuality in a fashion that had never been publicly expressed before in Portugal by a woman. Last but not least, she is able to find meaning within her, and not solely in function of relationships.

CHAPTER 6

CHANGING IMAGES: SIXTY YEARS OF WRITINGS ABOUT FLORBELA

As the preceding chapters have shown, Florbela gave various, often diametrically opposed, mythical images of herself in her poetry: the Romantic poet, the nun, the princess, the all-powerful goddess amongst others. Not a single one of these images can readily encompass all the others, although subjacent to all of them is the problem of female identity. But instead of acknowledging the diversity of these images, let alone seeing their underlying unity, many critics have privileged one of them to the detriment of the others. Their choice reflects their 'horizons of expectations', to use the Jaussian term, meaning the set of expectations both literary and cultural, with which a reader (or critic) approaches a text. By examining the changing interpretations which Florbela's poetry has elicited over a period of fifty years, we can trace the changes in critics and readers' horizons of expectations, and from this gain a clearer understanding of society's views of women and women writers.

6.1. GETTING INTO THE LIMELIGHT

6.1.1. THE FIRST COMMENTS IN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

During her lifetime Florbela's work went largely unnoticed. The person chiefly responsible for her posthumous recognition was undoubtedly Guido Battelli, the Italian professor who had offered to publish *Charneca em Flor*. Battelli himself, however, was the first to acknowledge that Florbela's projection into the limelight would have been extremely difficult, had it not been for a providential newspaper article, published as the

editorial of the *Diário de Notícias* on 24 February 1931, written by one of the most influential journalists of the day, António Ferro, an article already evoked in Chapter 1¹.

Guido Battelli was clear about Florbela's talent, and as a result, undeterred by her death on the night of 7 to 8 December 1930, he went ahead with the publication of *Charneca em Flor*. In fact, in trying to bring Florbela's poetry to the attention of the public, Battelli's biggest asset was paradoxically her very death, because it enabled him to build a powerful image of Florbela as a Romantic artist, striving for a higher ideal, neglected by the public and, being true to the last, dying for her art. Such was the image he put forward in two newspaper articles published a few days after her death, 'Florbela Espanca' and 'Elegia à Morte de Florbela Espanca'². In the latter, the myth of the Romantic poet finding solace in death after a tormented life is particularly clear:

Pálida e serena como Ofélia, a jovem poetisa repousa no seu leito de flores [...] Irmã de Ariel, feita de ar e luz, esvaiu-se no céu, perdeu-se nas nuvens [...] O seu coração, ansioso de interrogar o Mistério, parou de bater.

More importantly, Battelli organized an 'In Memoriam', published as a postface to the first edition of *Charneca em Flor* in which tribute was paid to Florbela³. It consisted of extracts of five articles that had appeared in the one month interval between Florbela's death, in December 1930, and the publication of *Charneca em Flor* in January 1931⁴. This 'In Memoriam' was of course moulded by Battelli's view of Florbela as a Romantic poet. It opened accordingly with the article 'Elegia à Morte de Florbela' just mentioned. It was followed by a new piece by Battelli, 'Irmã de Ariel' (pp.67-8), which again stressed Florbela's struggle for a higher ideal and interpreted her death as the crowning moment of all her aspirations:

¹In 'Florbela: Recordações e Impressões Críticas', *A Cidade de Évora*, 29-30 (1952), 409-430 (p.411).

²In *Correio de Coimbra*, 20 December 1930, p.4 and *Jornal de Notícias*, 21 December 1930, p.1 respectively.

³*Charneca em Flor* (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1931), pp.66-72.

⁴During that time, only six articles had appeared. The only article which was not included in 'In Memoriam' was Celestino David's article in *Diário de Notícias*, 14 December 1930, p.15, possibly because it was too factual. However it turned out to be important because, in it, David launched the idea of a commemorative bust of Florbela.

Irmã de Ariel, que tanto sofreste da solidão e da incompreensão do mundo, que com tanto ansioso anelo procuraste a divina nascente da Verdade e da luz, que cantaste a tua dor com o melodioso canto do rouxinol, e as tuas raras alegrias com o ímpeto canoro da cotovia que se levanta no azul do céu, Tu foste verdadeiramente a heroína do Ideal, cantada por Emerson. Parecem escritas por Ti as palavras fatídicas do grande sábio americano: 'Vive, combate, sofre pelo Ideal, e para o conquistar, paga-lhe o seu tributo: a morte!'

After Battelli's two pieces, 'In Memoriam' contained an article by Tito Bettencourt, 'A Poetisa da Ânasia, do Sonho, do Amor e da Tristeza'⁵. This also conveyed the image of Florbela as a superior artist, someone endowed with 'uma Alma sensível, doente de Beleza, prisioneira do Sonho e da Quimera'. Simultaneously, it dwelt on the sincerity of the artist as a measure of his/her greatness: 'Se toda a obra de arte deve ser, segundo diz Paul Gsel, "uma magnífica lição de sinceridade", Florbela Espanca lega-nos uma obra de artista superior'. This idea of placing great value on the artist's sincerity was topical at that time. Indeed, in 1928, José Régio had hailed the virtues of 'poesia viva' over 'poesia livresca' in the pages of *Presença*, and many of Florbela's early critics, not just Bettencourt, whether or not under the influence of Régio's views, highlighted the sincerity of her poetry as one of its main appeals.

The next piece of 'In Memoriam' was an extract from Teresa Leitão de Barros' article, 'Florbela Espanca'⁶, with its title changed to 'Crucificada'. The new title was no doubt chosen by Guido Battelli. Again it reflected his view of Florbela, encapsulating in one striking word the suffering of the artist. Comparing the original article with what Battelli chose to quote of it, it is clear that he selected a passage which conveyed particularly well the image of Florbela as a great, suffering poet: 'A Vida foi má, foi implacável, para aquela que deixará na literatura portuguesa de hoje, um grande, um glorioso nome'.

The last two testimonies were also extracts of articles, and again one finds Battelli chose passages which conformed to his image of Florbela. The extract from Albino Lapa's 'Soror Saudade' praised Florbela as an artist who translated her suffering into art, saying

⁵First published in *Diário de Coimbra*, 18 December 1930, p.1.

⁶First published in *Portugal Feminino*, January 1931, p.18.

that Florbela 'cantou chorando'⁷, highlighting the primacy of sincerity and feeling, in line with the romantic idea that 'A lira move mais lavada em pranto' (Marquesa de Alorna). The extract from Aurora Jardim Aranha's article 'Florbela Espanca' portrayed her as a tortured soul in search of an absolute: 'Florbela, com seus dedos trémulos de ansiedade e sua alma torturada de ideal e de altura, criava catedrais de emoção e sinfonias de beleza [...]'⁸.

All these articles came from the pen of people who had known Florbela personally and were written prior to the publication of *Charneca em Flor*. They are not critical reviews, since their authors, in all likelihood, did not know the exact contents of the posthumous collection. They are tributes to the poet. But the critical reviews of *Charneca em Flor* were all⁹, save one¹⁰, similar in tone to these tributes, continuing to dwell on the image of Florbela as a Romantic poet of which 'In Memoriam' had made so much, and attributing the greatness of *Charneca em Flor* to its Romanticism. One example: Lopes de Mendonça's description of the poet as 'mais parecida no génio com Antero, mais semelhante no desespero ao Chatterton estilizado pelo estro de Vigny'.

To be sure, this sombre image was one which Florbela had given of herself in her poetry, but it was an image which was primarily put forward in *Livro de Mágoas* and *Livro de Soror Saudade*, becoming comparatively more diffuse in *Charneca em Flor*. Indeed, as Chapter 5 showed, half of the poems of *Charneca em Flor* are about love, and an overtly sensual kind of love, subverting the traditionally passive (and spiritual) stance women were supposed to display, and it is difficult to see how this collection could be read exclusively

⁷First published in *Diário de Lisboa*, 20 December 1930, p.8.

⁸First published in *Jornal de Notícias*, 7 January 1930, p.1.

⁹I have looked at the following articles: Celestino David, 'Charneca em Flor', *Diário de Notícias*, 5 January 1931, p.13, and 'Versos de Florbela', *Diário de Notícias*, 3 December 1931, p.9.

Branca Lopes, 'In Memoriam. Florbela Espanca', *Portucale*, Jan-Feb 1931, pp.54-55.

Celso, 'A Poetisa da Ansiedade', *Jornal de Notícias*, 22 February 1931, p.1. Lopes de Mendonça, 'Florbela Espanca', *O Comércio do Porto*, 5 March 1931, p.1.

Zita de Abreu, *Revista Civilização*, December 1931, pp.81-82.

Alfredo Reguengo, *A Aurora do Lima*, 9 December 1932, pp.1 and 4.

José Agostinho, 'Uma Grande Poetisa', *O Libertador*, 8 February 1931, p.4.

¹⁰Herculano de Carvalho, 'Charneca em Flor', *Correio de Coimbra*, 7 February 1931, p.1.

as the work of a sombre, Romantic poet. Nevertheless this was what the majority of reviewers of Florbela did.

However some of them did sense, even if unconsciously, the novelty of Florbela's treatment of love in *Charneca em Flor*. Branca Lopes, analysing the themes of the collection, stated that '*O amor, vibrando na sua voz com um novo acento, a ascensão a um mundo irreal, o enigma inquietante do destino da alma, a nostalgia de uma anterior existência são os temas dilectos da sua poesia, enriquecendo-a de vida interior*' (my italics). The phrase 'o amor, vibrando na sua voz com um novo acento' suggests that Branca Lopes had understood the novelty of Florbela's treatment of love. However, her perceptive comment was then obscured by including love alongside a list of romantic themes.

Leitão de Barros too instinctively felt the strength of Florbela's love-poetry (for I think this is what she had in mind) when she observed that 'na verdade, aquilo que sobretudo caracteriza a sua poesia desvairada e ululante – só raras vezes equilibrada – é a extrema, a absoluta pureza da sua inspiração, à qual obedecia sem discutir'. But since her statement was about Florbela's poetry as a whole, not specifically her love-poetry, her potentially perceptive insight is obscured and reads instead as a description of the dramatic side of the Romantic poet.

The critic who came closest to acknowledging the potential subversiveness of Florbela's love-poetry was Celestino David, who said that 'A Literatura Portuguesa para ser notável bastaria ter-nos dado as *Cartas* de Soror Mariana e os sonetos de *Charneca em Flor*'¹¹. Although he did not qualify what exactly was so notable about the two works, it seemed to be the intensity with which these women writers had expressed their passion¹². Intensity, however, links up with Romantic excess, and thus misses out the importance of the unrivalled boldness present in this love-poetry.

However one article, by Herculano de Carvalho, shows full awareness of the eroticism of *Charneca em Flor*¹³. In a fashion similar to Nemo's review of *Livro de Soror*

¹¹'Versos de Florbela', *Diário de Notícias*, 3 December 1931, p.9.

¹²It is now widely accepted that Soror Mariana is a fictional character, the creation of a male writer, but at the time she was generally believed to be the author of *Cartas de Amor*.

¹³'*Charneca em Flor*', *Correio de Coimbra*, 7 February 1931, p.1.

Saudade examined in the Chapter 1, Carvalho put forward two conflicting criteria to evaluate a work of art: artistic and moral. Thus he could profess to admire the talent of the poetess while simultaneously condemning her poetry on moral grounds because it dealt with the 'gritos de revolta de uma alma que procura libertar-se dos liames da paixão dos sentidos' and displayed an objectionable 'sensualismo pagão'.

Herculano de Carvão's article suggests that, at the time, the intensity and frankness with which Florbela dealt with love was shocking to many, and this may explain why reviewers such as Branca Lopes, Teresa Leitão de Barros and Celestino David chose to make general remarks about Florbela's Romanticism.

But the most important of all the reviews, the one which was unanimously credited for bringing Florbela out of oblivion, was undoubtedly that of António Ferro¹⁴. He too praised Florbela as a Romantic poet and, while he sensed the potential disruptiveness of her poetry, he avoided any direct reference to its overt sensuality.

This review has already been examined in the Chapter 1 as an illustration of the attitude of male reviewers towards female poetry in general. There, we showed how Ferro drew a remarkably negative picture of women's poetry, treating Florbela as an exception who, unlike other poetesses, was 'uma grande poetisa, uma poetisa-poeta'. By calling Florbela a 'poetisa-poeta', Ferro was ostensibly praising her but, by the same token, negating her gender.

It is interesting to note how strongly Ferro rejected the comparison with female poetry. This becomes even more significant when we realize that, in fact, not one of the reviewers attempted to draw a parallel between Florbela and other contemporary Portuguese women poets. The only Portuguese woman writer with whom she was compared was the seventeenth century Portuguese nun, Soror Mariana¹⁵. Instead, Florbela was insistently (albeit superficially) compared with António Nobre. Ferro stated that her poetry had 'o direito de entrar na sensibilidade portuguesa, na paisagem interior da

¹⁴'Uma Grande Poetisa Portuguesa'. *Diário de Notícias*, 24 February 1931, p.1.

¹⁵This comparison was made by Ferro, by Celestino David and by Battelli, in his preface to *Juvenília*, (see footnote 12, p.205). In addition, Battelli also compared Florbela to the French Romantic poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore.

nossa poesia, como o *Só* de António Nobre, como os versos de Cesário ou como o *Fel* de José Duro'. Tito Bettencourt wrote that Florbela's work was on a par with that of António Nobre, José Duro and Guilherme de Faria. Alfredo Reguengo called her a Romantic poet, along the lines of Antero, José Duro, António Nobre etc... Battelli, as well as comparing Florbela with the greatest male European writers (Verlaine, Keats, Leopardi and Ruben Darío), drew, over and over again, the comparison between her and Nobre¹⁶.

Ironically, this would no doubt have pleased the Florbela of the early days, the one whose poetry and letters revealed an incessant preoccupation to emulate Nobre, precisely because he and José Duro (whom she also quoted), were the poets who had best succeeded in exploiting the myth of the Romantic poet. But one can express doubts as to whether this would have satisfied the later Florbela, the Florbela of *Charneca em Flor*, who wrote poems which directly negated this earlier image of the self as a Romantic poet, and put forward a novel image of the woman poet, an image which early critics failed to notice. As Jorge de Sena was later to say, for many years her poetry was certainly not understood for what it was, the poetry of an exceptional, and therefore representative woman¹⁷.

It becomes clear that Ferro too built a Romantic image of Florbela, highlighting her sincerity, for which her death was proof: 'A sua morte, dramática, angustiosa -- selo da sua arrepiante sinceridade, soma dos seus versos...', and stressing the fact that her talent had been consistently ignored (again something in agreement with a Romantic view of the poet): 'Apenas eu e mais alguns, poucos, lemos a sua morte, recitámos a sua morte, como um dos seus mais belos sonetos, o soneto-redoma de todos os seus versos...'. Furthermore, as his choice of poems ('Minha Terra', '?', 'Na Cidade de Assis') shows, he privileged first and foremost the dramatic, emotional side of Florbela's poetry.

Ferro, however, did not fail to see the potential subversiveness of *Charneca em Flor* in terms of traditional morality. And to pre-empt those who would be opposed to this poetry on moral grounds, he countered the criticism that 'Florbela não é uma poetisa a

¹⁶See *Juventília*, p.7, and his letters to Celestino David published in 'O Romance de Florbela', *A Cidade de Évora*, 17-18 (1949), 353-435.

¹⁷Jorge de Sena, 'Florbela Espanca', in *Da Poesia Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Ática, [n.d.]), pp. 115-143.

aconselhar às novas gerações, porque é uma poetisa doentia, inquieta, dissolvente, niilista',
by the argument of artistic freedom:

Talvez, mas eu recuso-me a julgar e a condenar Florbela Espanca. Sejam os severos diante de todos os humanos, mas deixemos os poetas em liberdade, deixemos viver, em cada época, até para exemplo, um punhado de almas livres, inteiramente livres, de almas desvairadas, mas que se castiguem e fiquem presas na sua própria liberdade.

Although there is no mention of Florbela's love poetry in Ferro's statement, his description of Florbela as an 'alma desvairada' who refused to curtail her freedom for the sake of conventions, a description which recalls that of Barros, makes us wonder whether he might not have had Florbela's more daring love-poetry in mind.

In two articles published in *Diário de Notícias*, Celestino David had suggested erecting a bust to Florbela's memory¹⁸. Ferro ended his article by taking up Celestino David's idea, stating that Portuguese poetesses should rally together to pay tribute to Florbela:

Que as mulheres portuguesas, as poetisas, sobretudo, cuidem da sua memória como se cuida de um jardim... Agora que eu a desenterrei da secção da necrologia, da secção da vala comum, para a trazer, como uma estátua, para o artigo de fundo dum grande jornal, não a deixem cair mais, não a deixem esquecer...

Three days later, the same paper printed, again on the first page, a letter signed by three women poets, Fernanda de Castro, Teresa Leitão de Barros and Laura Chaves, asking the director of the paper, Eduardo Schwalbach, to open 'uma subscrição a favor do monumento'¹⁹. On the same page, in answer to this letter, a brief note stated that 'O *Diário de Notícias* patrocina [*sic*] a ideia e entrega a sua organização à revista feminina *Eva*'. The idea of a tribute to Florbela was thus launched. During the months that followed, *Eva* published several articles to encourage its readers to give money towards the bust²⁰, while the *Diário de Notícias* continued to devote first page articles to Florbela,

¹⁸*Diário de Notícias*, 14 December 1930, p.15 and 25 January 1931, p.13.

¹⁹*Diário de Notícias*, Carta ao Sr Director, 27 February 1931, p.1.

²⁰*Eva*, 7, 14, 21 and 28 March and 4 April.

keeping its readers informed of the contributions²¹. But as the next section will make apparent, it was to be years before anything was done, because the 'moral' argument, put forward by Herculano de Carvalho, dismissed by Ferro, yet revived soon after, was to have the upper hand with the authorities, preventing the erection of the bust for nearly two decades.

6.1.2. GUIDO BATTELLI'S EDITIONS OF FLORBELA'S WRITINGS

The articles on the front page of a national newspaper, however, had drawn attention to the name of Florbela and, as a result, the first edition of *Charneca em Flor* sold out extremely quickly. The second edition came out in April 1931. It included 28 new poems gathered under the title *Reliquiae*. Battelli was responsible for the order of these new poems. Order produces meaning and in the case of *Reliquiae*, as the sequence of sonnets unfolds, it becomes clear that Battelli wanted it to read like the story of a quest, the quest of a soul. Thus the collection began with the sonnets 'Évora' (p.231) and 'À Janela de Garcia de Resende' (p.232), focusing on the quest of the poet, painfully aware of her inability to find fulfilment, 'Tenho corrido em vão tantas cidades' [...] / 'Minha divisa: um coração chagado'.

The middle sonnets, from 'Sonho Vago' (p.237) onwards, turned to the theme of love, with most sonnets expressing a humility towards the loved one far removed from the tone of *Charneca em Flor*, as well as an awareness of the incompleteness of love. It culminated with the sonnets 'Último Soneto de Soror Saudade' (p.256) and 'Esquecimento' (p.257), describing Florbela detaching herself from the world, and 'Loucura' (p.258) stressing the poet's inner fragmentation. This leads to the logical conclusion that she could not find any answers in this life, a conclusion emphasized with

²¹Throughout March there were several articles: on 1, 3, 5, 7 (a sonnet by Candida Aires de Magalhães), 10 (a reprint of Henrique Lopes de Mendonça's article 'Florbela Espanca', first published in *O Comércio do Porto*, 5 March 1931), 11 (an article by Bourbon e Meneses), 13 (a letter from Guido Battelli to state that the first edition of *Charneca em Flor* had sold out), 18, 21 and 30. The last two updates on Florbela's bust come on 10 April and 31 May.

the two poems on death with which the collection originally ended, 'Deixai Entrar a Morte' (p.259) and 'À morte' (p.260). Indeed the five poems that follow these were only added in 1936. By choosing to end the 'collection' with 'À Morte', Battelli was consciously impressing upon the reader his view that Florbela's suicide was the natural outcome of her quest in life.

Clearly, the image Battelli had of Florbela shaped the way he organized 'In Memoriam' and then *Reliquiae*. But he was furthermore responsible for the publication of three other books of Florbela's writings in the course of 1931 and, on two of those, he also left his mark. The first was, in May 1931, a 'neutral' reprint of *Livro de Mágoas* combined with *Livro de Soror Saudade*, since Battelli's only intervention was the decision to gather the two collections under one roof. It was followed in August by *Cartas de Florbela Espanca*, a selection of Florbela's letters to both Júlia Alves and Battelli.

There, Battelli insisted on the image of Florbela as a true artist in the Romantic vein right from his introductory note:

Nestas cartas Ela nos revela com uma sinceridade absoluta a triste amargura da sua vida, a causa da sua dor, a sua sede de infinito, o seu amor à Poesia e as suas preferências literárias [...] Nada de convencional, nada de retórico, nenhuma pose, nenhum fingimento. Só o coração que fala... e sangra.

The letters themselves were selected (and edited) by Battelli. His selection is telling: Florbela's correspondence with both Júlia Alves and Battelli was literary and, in it, she purported to build a Romantic image of the self, as the analysis of her letters to Júlia Alves in Chapter 2 showed. By choosing to publish these letters, while ignoring more prosaic correspondence (such as Florbela's letters to her father or to her stepmother Henriqueta, which can be read in *Obras Completas*, vols 5-6), Battelli was propagating the myth created by Florbela herself, a myth in which he believed, that of a poetess detached from the material world.

But not only did Battelli choose the two series of letters in which Florbela gave most consistently a Romantic image of herself, he actually edited parts of them. By

comparing the originals with the letters as they were printed in Battelli's edition²², it becomes apparent that Battelli edited from these letters the passages which discussed more prosaic realities, such as the proof-reading of *Charneca em Flor*, omitted from the letters dated 30 November 1930 and 5 December 1930 (which can be read in full in *Obras Completas*, vol.6 (pp.213-4 and 217-8)) or, in the case of the correspondence with Júlia Alves, the omission of the first two letters, which show Florbela's distaste for sexual love, and of the later letter which details a typical day of work for her, teaching and being taught (*Obras Completas*, vol.5, pp.123-132 and 191-192). Thus Battelli ensured that the letters that were published gave an absolutely flawless image of Florbela as a Romantic artist.

Finally, in October 1931, Battelli published Florbela's early work under the title *Juvenília*. The book opened with a long foreword in which he attempted to ground Florbela's greatness in a critical study of her work²³. His tendency to see Florbela as a Romantic poet, misunderstood by the vulgus, again prevails. This is in spite of the fact that he showed himself to be fully aware of the sensuality present in Florbela's love-poetry, firstly by comparing her to the Portuguese nun: 'bem sei que nalguns dos seus sonetos palpita a mesma intensidade de paixão, a mesma ternura de sentimento que se encontra nas Cartas de Soror Mariana' (p.29), and secondly by quoting from some of the more subversive poems, such as 'Amar!' : 'Eu quero amar, amar perdidamente! / Amar só por amar: Aqui... além' (pp.32-33). At that point, Battelli used an expression rather like Teresa Leitão de Barros' to describe Florbela's feelings 'a sua alma desvairada, ululante' (p.32). The two adjectives come up again in the last but one page of his study 'A sua poesia desvairada, ululante, raras vezes equilibrada, foi o eco sincero da sua alma torturada e crucificada' (p.42), thus suggesting that he viewed intensity as one of the characteristics of her poetry.

²²The manuscripts of Florbela's letters to Battelli are available for consultation in the Biblioteca Pública de Évora. There is no known manuscript for the letters to Júlia Alves, but more complete versions of those in Battelli's edition as well as new letters were published by Carlos Sombrio in *Florbela Espanca* (Figueira da Foz: Ed. Homo, 1948).

²³'Florbela Espanca', in *Juvenília*, pp.5-43. The study is made up of four sections, three of which were published as individual articles in *Gil Vicente*, 6 (1931), 129-138; 6 (1931), 176-183 and 7 (1931), 39-49.

But although he did acknowledge more clearly than most other critics at the time the intensity of Florbela's descriptions of love, Battelli viewed these as part of a cycle where illusion was followed by disillusion. This enabled him to subsume her love poems in an overall conception of Florbela as a Romantic poet, unable to find happiness in this world and like Goethe's Faust victim of the fact that 'O ideal foi sonho e a realidade foi dor' (p.33). Indeed, ultimately, Battelli, like most early reviewers, thought that Florbela's greatness lied in her dramatic, emotional sincerity: 'cantou chorando', he wrote, taking up Albino Lapa's expression (p.23 and again p.42). And nowhere is this view of Florbela's love-poetry as Romantic in essence better brought out than in the epigraph he chose for his study:

L'Amour, dont l'autre nom sur terre est la Douleur,
De ton sein fit jaillir une source écumante [...]

Ivresse ou désespoir, enthousiasme ou langueur,
Tu jeta tes cris d'or à travers la tourmente.
Et les vers qui brûlaient sur ta bouche d'amante
Formaient leur rythme aux seuls battements de ton coeur.

These two stanzas come from a poem by Samain addressed to the most famous woman poet of nineteenth century France, Marceline Desbordes-Valmore. Samain's description of Desbordes-Valmore's poetry fits neatly with Battelli's view of Florbela for, while ascribing violent feelings of passion to the female poet, Samain emphasized her sincerity, 'Et les vers qui brûlaient sur ta bouche d'amante / Formaient leur rythme aux seuls battements de ton coeur' (a Romantic quality) and her suffering, derived from intense love, 'Tu jeta tes cris d'or à travers la tourmente' (another Romantic topos), two themes which according to Battelli, were central in Florbela's poetry.

Around the beginning of 1932, Battelli went back to Italy. But he continued to write about Florbela²⁴ and it is probable that he continued to have a hand in subsequent editions of her work. In 1934, *Livro de Mágoas*, *Livro de Soror Saudade*, *Charneca em Flor* and *Reliquiae* were published together under the title *Sonetos Completos*. From then

²⁴For a list of Battelli's articles, see Rui Guedes' bibliography in *Acerca de Florbela*.

onwards, this was to be the format under which Florbela's poetry was published, but the final version of *Sonetos Completos* (as we know it) is not that of 1934 but the one that followed it, in 1936, when five new sonnets were added to *Reliquiae*.

For that edition, someone (Battelli ?) had to choose the order in which the five new poems were to be added, and it is symptomatic that the person responsible for the choice decided to highlight 'Nihil Novum' (p.265) by placing it at the end, for this is a typically Romantic poem, where Florbela conveyed the fact that nothing on earth could satisfy her. Furthermore the sonnet echoed in its last lines, 'Sempre da vida o mesmo estranho mal, / E o coração -- a mesma chaga aberta', the ending of the second poem of *Reliquiae*, 'À Janela de Garcia de Resende': 'A minha divisa -- um coração chagado', thus giving an impression of unity to the 'collection'. Therefore, whether Battelli was actually responsible for this order or not, it obeyed the same logic that had governed his earlier decisions about the order of poems in *Reliquiae*, namely the projection of Florbela as a Romantic poet.

6.1.3. FURTHER READINGS OF FLORBELA - 1932-1944.

After the critical reviews that followed the publication of *Charneca em Flor* in 1931 and Battelli's various prefaces and postfaces, hardly any studies of Florbela's poetry came out until the second half of the thirties. This may be explained by the fact that, unlike most writers, she did not belong to a literary school and had never established contact with leading critics, who would have been able to promote her work efficiently. Initially, Battelli had almost single-handedly drawn attention to her, but after he returned to Italy, the national press forgot about her.

But in the Alentejo Florbela had not been forgotten: her poetry and some of her letters to her family were regularly printed in the regional newspapers: in *Notícias do Alentejo* (Vila Viçosa), a paper started in August 1931, in *Brados do Alentejo* (Estremoz), also started in 1931, and in *Callipole* (Vila Viçosa) a short-lived paper which came out between 1934 and 1935. A further sign of the importance which was bestowed on her by some people in the Alentejo is the fact that, in 1933, when the Câmara of Vila Viçosa, her

birthtown, decided to change several street names to celebrate in its toponomy the memory of illustrious local people, the former Rua Teófilo Braga became Rua Florbela Espanca²⁵. The image of Florbela as a 'poetisa alentejana' put forward by Celestino David in the *Diário de Notícias* was thus gaining currency.

A couple of studies too began to draw attention to the importance of the Alentejo in her poetry. The untiring Battelli had highlighted the presence of the Alentejo in her poetry in *Juventília* (pp.19-20). In 1936, Victor Santos published a study entitled *A Paisagem Alentejana em Florbela Espanca, Mário Beirão e Monsaraz* (Lisbon, 1936).

In the second half of the thirties, the first longer studies in journals and books started to appear. What is noticeable is that the prevailing image of Florbela was still that of a Romantic poet. Diogo Ivens Tavares published two studies, 'O Narcisismo de uma Poetisa', in 1936, followed by 'O Sentimento de Solidão na Obra de Florbela Espanca', in 1938²⁶. This latter article interpreted Florbela as a Romantic artist, and in order to make his point, Tavares compared her at length with Thomas Mann's artist in *Tonio Kröger*, highlighting the similarities between their vocation as cursed but great artists. In 1943, Feliciano Ramos still saw Florbela as a 'Romantic' poet, despite the fact that the word he associated with her with was *saudosismo*: 'Florbela, de facto, coincide com o seu tempo. Toda a sua poesia está impregnada de certo saudosismo místico que a leva a viver na contemplação invencível do mundo de beleza e de perfeição'²⁷.

But simultaneously, a new image of Florbela was beginning to attract attention: that of Florbela as a poet of sensual love. This is particularly well-brought out in João Tendeiro's article of 1938, which traced the evolution from *Livro de Mágoas* to *Charneca em Flor* as an evolution from suppressed to expressed sensuality²⁸. Other critics however still noted Florbela's sensual poetry only to condemn it. In particular Madureira, in his

²⁵*Notícias do Alentejo*, 11 June 1933, p.3.

²⁶*Portucala*, 51-53 (1936), 106-120, and *Gil Vicente*, 14 (1938), 19-23, 48-55, 71-81 respectively.

²⁷*Eugénio de Castro e a Poesia Nova* (Lisbon: ed. da Revista *Ocidente*, 1943), chapter on Florbela pp.119-138 (p.135).

²⁸'O Ciclo Poético de Florbela Espanca', *Pensamento*, 108 (1938), 231-233.

book *A Dor*, devoted several pages to a comparison between Florbela and Antero do Quental, contrasting the 'intellectual' suffering of Antero, with the 'sentimental' one of Florbela²⁹. Madureira was fully aware of the sensuality inherent in Florbela's poetry, but he condemned it as an imbalance: 'a sua vida amorosa revela uma exaltação mórbida, uma quase loucura sentimental' (p.150), and to support this point he quoted the subversive sonnet 'Amar!'. Once more, therefore, we come across a critic describing Florbela's poetry with a term signifying madness, 'loucura', synonymous of the earlier expression 'desvairo' used by Barros, Battelli and Ferro, as if the only way critics were able to account for poetry which refers openly to female desire was by viewing its author as being on the brink of madness.

At this point, it is necessary to wonder why nearly all the early critics who noticed the sensuality of Florbela's love poetry referred to it as a 'desvairo' or 'loucura'³⁰. It may reflect the fact that, throughout the ages, female sexuality had been so scantily acknowledged that almost every time a woman expressed desire too openly, she was accused of madness or hysteria. And it is perhaps in this light that one must understand the comparison between Florbela and Soror Mariana in the writings of several early critics. For in Portuguese literature Florbela, like Soror Mariana, constituted an exception, talking about love with a passion that was previously unknown. Like Soror Mariana, therefore, she was accused of 'desvairo'.

The fact that it was still commonplace in the first quarter of the twentieth century for a woman who openly expressed her sexuality to be perceived as mad, out of her wits, can be briefly illustrated by an example drawn from real life, a case of adultery which caused a stir in the middle classes of Porto in 1920: that of a young married woman, who had had an affair, for which she was tried, but acquitted after her lawyer pleaded 'temporary

²⁹*A Dor* (Porto: ed. Educação Nacional, 1943), pp.145-154.

³⁰Amélia Vilar, in her lecture *O Drama de Florbela Espanca* (Porto: Costa Carregal, 1947), concentrates on the 'desvairo' present not in the poetry, but in the person, describing Florbela as 'Um feixo de nervos movido pela excentricidade dum temperamento roçando a loucura, desvairo que me foi revelado pelo desequilíbrio das suas atitudes, muito particularmente pelo lume do seu cigarro irreverente, quando preso nos seus lábios sensuais, na linguagem de fogo que lhe abrasava a alma' (p.19).

madness'. The madness verdict provoked a highly passionate indictment from the pen of the feminist writer Maria Feio, in a book entitled *Doida Não, Antes Vítima*³¹. Feio argued that it was scandalous that a woman could not be deemed in possession of all her faculties while committing adultery, because it was tantamount to a fallacious negation of female sexuality³².

In 1937 M. J. da Silva Junior extended the notion that Florbela was a clinical case by associating her with more or less 'deviant' behaviour³³. Silva Junior called Florbela's narcissism a disturbance and quoted Freud. Furthermore, he mentioned the possibility of incest between Florbela and her brother Apeles, which prompted a violent response from Battelli³⁴. But the idea of incest had been launched, adding to Florbela's image of immorality. It would surface again intermittently over the years³⁵.

By the late thirties and early forties, therefore, Florbela was no longer viewed exclusively as a Romantic poet. But she had still not attracted the critical attention she deserved: indeed, the little that had been written about her was scattered in ephemeral and fairly minor newspapers and magazines and came mostly from the pen of minor critics. Something had to happen to prompt two established critics, José Régio and Jorge de Sena, to write about Florbela. It was the heated controversy over the erection of her bust in Évora.

³¹This book was brought to my attention by Maria Regina Tavares da Silva's short article in *Notícias*, published by Comissão para a Condição Feminina, 16-17 (1990), 15-16.

³²That female sexuality, and moreover a woman's right to her own sexuality, continued to be a controversial issue until quite recently, can be clearly seen by the reaction to the publication of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas* by Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Velho da Costa in 1972. These *Cartas* constitute a reworking of the seventeenth century *Cartas* with the intention of addressing the traditionally taboo question of female sexuality. They caused an enormous scandal and underwent a trial for which they became internationally famous, known as 'O Processo das Três Marias'. For a detailed analysis of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*, see Darlene Sadlier, *The Question of How* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989).

³³'Através da Obra de Florbela', *Gil Vicente*, 13 (1937), 33-40 and 68-77.

³⁴'A propos du "narcisisme" de Florbela Espanca: lettre ouverte à M.J.Silva Júnior', *Gil Vicente*, 13 (1937), 135-136.

³⁵Augusto Sobral in particular, in his play *Bela-Caligula* (Lisbon: Edições Etc, 1987).

6.2 THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE BUST

6.2.1. MORALITY OVER ARTISTIC FREEDOM

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, the idea of a bust was launched immediately after Florbela's death by Celestino David, in his articles in the *Diário de Notícias*, and was taken up by Ferro and then by Fernanda de Castro, Teresa Leitão de Barros and Laura Chaves. Although the donations towards the bust were to be collected in the first instance by the *Diário de Notícias*, the body which took over the organization of the tribute to Florbela was the Grupo Pró-Évora, whose president until November 1935 was Celestino David himself and thereafter Bartolomeu Gromicho³⁶.

Vila Viçosa donated the marble for the sculpture. The artist Diogo de Macedo offered to sculpt the bust. Macedo's work was duly completed and, at the end of 1934, it was sent to Évora. According to Celestino David, it was stored 'numa arrecadação que a Câmara tinha no rés-do-chão do Palácio D.Manuel, por ser ali o lugar mais próximo daquele em que o monumento seria erigido'³⁷. This, however, led to the accusation that the bust had been 'shelved' and as a result, in October 1935, people from Vila Viçosa suggested that, since Évora was not displaying the bust, it should go to Vila Viçosa which was Florbela's place of birth³⁸.

The suggestion prompted the Pró-Évora into action. But, in 1936, when it asked the Council (Câmara) for permission to start to build the base for the sculpture, it realized with surprise that all the members of the 'Comissão Administrativa' were against the erection of the bust. Nevertheless, on 5 June 1936, an official decision allowed the Group to go ahead. But soon after, on 2 July 1936, the decision was overturned by a motion stipulating that the 'Junta Nacional de Educação' had to be consulted about the appropriateness

³⁶Celestino David, 'O Romance de Florbela', *A Cidade de Évora*, 17-18 (1949), 353-435 (p.369).

³⁷Celestino David, 'O Romance de Florbela', p.369.

³⁸Albino Lapa, 'Uma Ideia em Marcha: o Busto de Florbela Vai Ser Erigido em Vila Viçosa', *Diário de Lisboa*, 24 October 1935, p.1. The *Notícias de Évora* took up the issue which led to the publication of various articles for and against between October and December 1935. The question was solved with the suggestion that if Vila Viçosa wanted to have a bust of Florbela, it should pay for a different one.

of the tribute to Florbela before anything could proceed. The president of the Grupo Pró-Évora, Bartolomeu Gromicho protested in writing to the Comissão Administrativa³⁹. According to Maria Manuela Moreira Nunes, he went to Lisbon to put forward the case in person, but to no avail, because 'entidades locais entra[va]vam de tal modo o seguimento e informa[va]m as superiores com tais factos deturpados, que o então ministro da Educação [Carneiro Pacheco], por um despacho ministerial, faz ir o busto para o Museu de Évora, como peça de arte de Diogo de Macedo'⁴⁰.

The critic Costa Leão was more specific about the identity of these 'entidades locais': 'Como se houvessem manifestado contra a pública homenagem algumas senhoras eborenses e dois sacerdotes, que fizeram chegar mais alto, aos domínios governamentais, os seus clamores, [o busto] foi mandado guardar nas caves do paço camarário'⁴¹. It is indeed more than likely that some priests would have been against the bust, for Florbela was an illegitimate child, twice divorced, and it was rumoured that she had committed suicide⁴². We must also bear in mind, furthermore, that by 1936 the 'Estado Novo' with its strong moral principles was in place, and this explains why the views of those against the bust should have prevailed. At that point, the Group Pró-Évora decided there was no point in fighting against the authorities. And for nearly seven years, nothing happened.

6.2.2. THE 1944 CONTROVERSY

In 1944 the controversy over the bust hit the headlines. Unwittingly responsible was a priest, Padre Nuno Sanches who, contrary to what might be expected, was pro-

³⁹The Câmara's two different decisions and Gromicho's letter were published in the *Notícias de Évora* on 18 June, 16 July and 18 July 1936 respectively.

⁴⁰Nunes, Maria Manuela Moreira, 'Florbela Espanca: Sarça Ardente de Fogos Fátuos', *A Cidade de Évora*, 45-46 (1962-63), 160-224 (p.228).

⁴¹Costa Leão, *Poetas do Sul: Bernardo de Passos e Florbela Espanca* (Lisbon: Portugália, [1947]), pp.61-2.

⁴²One priest, Padre Lobato, had written an article against Florbela, prompting the article 'Florbela Espanca e o Estado Novo' in *Notícias do Alentejo*, 13 September 1936, in which J. E. Amaro defended her.

Florbela⁴³. On the anniversary of Florbela's death, in 1942 and again in 1943, he had written in the Catholic newspaper, *A Voz de Matosinhos*, two short columns arguing that Matosinhos, where the poetess had lived during the last years of her life and where she had died, 'tem para com ela uma dívida a saldar' and suggesting that a plaque should be placed on the house where she had lived⁴⁴. The poet Alberto de Serpa came across Padre Sanches' suggestion and approached the sculptor of the bust, Diogo de Macedo, to ask him whether he would agree with the bust being erected in Matosinhos, since it seemed that it could not be displayed in Évora. On 12 August 1944, the *Jornal de Notícias* printed a letter in which Diogo de Macedo officially gave his permission⁴⁵.

This led straightaway to vehement protests in the Alentejo, where people were horrified at the thought that the bust could be erected anywhere other than in Évora: first in the regional newspaper, *Notícias de Évora*, on 16 August 1944⁴⁶, and then in the *Diário de Notícias*, on 19 August 1944⁴⁷. Over the month that followed, the regional press of the Alentejo was full of articles arguing for the bust to be allowed to be erected in the Jardim Público de Évora⁴⁸. But the most heated debate took place between José Régio and Celestino David, in the Oporto *Jornal de Notícias*, which had started the ball rolling⁴⁹.

José Régio's first intervention was on 21 August 1944, in support of the view that if the bust of Florbela could not be placed in Évora, it should be brought to Matosinhos⁵⁰.

⁴³According to Mécia de Sena, this priest had been a personal friend of Florbela and her third husband, so much so that 'inclusivamente e tendo sido por isso admoestado, lhe fez um enterro católico [...]. Naquela altura foi outro escândalo uma vez que não havia a mínima dúvida de que ela se suicidara, o que interditava a realização de enterro católico', quoted in Zina Bellodi da Silva, 'Florbela Espanca', *Cadernos de Teoria e Crítica Literária*, 15 (1988), 66-92 (p.69).

⁴⁴6 December 1942, p.1 and 12 December 1943, p.1.

⁴⁵'Florbela Espanca: a propósito da Colocação do seu Busto num dos Jardins de Matosinhos', p.6.

⁴⁶'Mais uma Vez o Busto de Florbela', p.1-2.

⁴⁷'O Busto de Florbela Destinado a Évora Vai Ser Colocado num Jardim de Matosinhos?'

⁴⁸In the *Notícias de Évora* alone, there were articles about the bust on 19, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27 and 31 August 1944.

⁴⁹This debate was reproduced in Celestino David, 'O Romance de Florbela', *A Cidade de Évora*, 17-18 (1949), 353-435, but unfortunately with a number of mistakes over dates.

⁵⁰'Florbela Espanca e o "Caso" do seu Busto', p.1.

Celestino David answered Régio's article in the *Diário de Notícias*, arguing that the bust belonged to the Alentejo⁵¹. José Régio wrote back on 4 September, agreeing that the bust should stay in Évora if the tribute was possible, but if not, then people in Évora should agree to let it go to Matosinhos, or else they would be displaying a narrow-minded 'bairrismo'⁵².

There followed an article from Albino Lapa, on 9 September stating that the bust should actually go to Vila Viçosa, because that was Florbela's place of birth⁵³. Lapa's article was followed by an unsigned article on 12 September, which summed up the positions thus far, presumably because the debate was threatening to become more and more complicated⁵⁴. It certainly had become a generalized controversy, for as well as articles in the various regional papers of the Alentejo, the *Oporto Jornal do Comércio* also published several articles about the bust⁵⁵.

On 16 September 1944, Celestino David, in his first intervention in the *Jornal de Notícias*, replied to José Régio, challenging him to suggest ways in which the *veto* preventing the bust from being erected in Évora could be removed⁵⁶. In his answer to Celestino David, José Régio stated that he had no direct political power, all he could do was: 'Escrever, sonhar, agitar o meio, intervir na questão por meio da palavra escrita ou falada, apresentar as nossas razões às autoridades constituídas...'⁵⁷. After this, the debate ended, possibly because Régio realized that he had underestimated how strong a feeling there was about keeping the bust in the Alentejo, and possibly because he was not prepared to spend time fighting in practical terms to achieve permission for the bust to be erected, whether in Matosinhos or in Évora.

The priest who had inadvertently started the whole debate, Padre Nuno Sanches, wrote one last article to defend Florbela, in the *Primeiro de Janeiro*, on 22 November 1944.

⁵¹'O Busto de Florbela Espanca Pertence ao Alentejo onde a Poetisa Nasceu', 24 August 1944, pp.1-2.

⁵²'Ainda o Monumento de Florbela Espanca', p.1.

⁵³'O Busto de Florbela', p.3.

⁵⁴p.3.

⁵⁵In its 'Suplemento Dominical', on 3 and 10 September.

⁵⁶'Florbela Espanca Terá desta Vez o seu Monumento em Évora?', p.1 and 6.

⁵⁷'Continua o Triste Folhetim de Florbela Espanca', 25 September 1944, p.1.

In it, he stated that she had not committed suicide, thus sticking his neck out in order to remove one of the arguments that had been used against her consecration⁵⁸.

Although the debate between Régio and David had initially centred on the possibility of the bust being erected somewhere other than the Alentejo, it had ended up raising the fundamental question of *why* the bust had been vetoed. This prompted several articles arguing that, irrespective of her private life, a tribute should be paid to Florbela as an artist, for the artist was great, even if the woman, who was human, was less than perfect, an argument which had already been made in the regional press in 1935-36⁵⁹.

The controversy led to renewed efforts on the part of the Pró-Évora, and on 27 July 1945, the Câmara decided to allow the bust to be displayed in the Jardim, after receiving 'um parecer favorável da Junta Nacional de Educação'⁶⁰. Most of the regional and national press began to celebrate the victory, as a base for the bust began to be built in the Jardim⁶¹. But then, on 29 September 1945, progress was once more halted when official powers, namely the Governador Civil de Évora, decreed that the bust was a work of art and as such was not to leave the Museum⁶². As a result, 'o busto, que chegara a sair do Museu para junto do plinto, recolhe de novo ao Museu'⁶³ and, for nearly four years, the Jardim Público de Évora had an empty base with the inscription 'A Florbela Espanca' written on it, while the bust remained indoors.

⁵⁸'A Memória de Florbela é Piedosamente Ilibada', p.3. The church was quick to make its official position known, in an article which lamented Padre Sanches' words. cf 'Florbela Espanca', *A Voz*, 30 January 1945.

⁵⁹See in particular the articles by Emília Sousa Costa, 'Florbela Espanca', in *Vida Mundial Ilustrada*, 13 July 1944, p.16, Isaura Correia Santos, 'Florbela Espanca' in *Democracia do Sul*, 3 November 1944 and Joaquim Torrinha, 'Em Defesa de Florbela Espanca: a Mulher e a Artista', *Notícias do Alentejo*, 18 November 1945, p.1 and 3.

⁶⁰'O Busto da Poetisa Florbela Espanca', *Notícias de Évora*, 31 July 1945, p.1.

⁶¹For instance 'O Busto de Florbela Brilhará, Afinal entre as Flores', *Jornal de Notícias*, 31 July 1945. The only exception to this was the Catholic press. A letter making plain the official Church stance was published in *A Defesa*, 11 August 1945. This letter was transcribed by Rui Guedes in *Acerca de Florbela*, p.83.

⁶²His letter was widely published in the press, for instance in the *Notícias de Évora*, 30 September 1945, p.1.

⁶³Celestino David, p.421.

6.2.3. STUDIES ON FLORBELA - 1946-1949.

One repercussion of the controversy over the bust in 1944-45 was that Florbela's name was brought to the attention of critics and the wider public. And, in the years that followed, some of the most important studies about her life and work came out.

The real breakthrough for Florbela came with a lecture by Jorge de Sena, on 28 January 1946, in the Clube dos Fenianos do Porto, which was intended to celebrate the 50th anniversary of her birth⁶⁴. Ironically, someone had got the date wrong by a year, since Florbela was born on 8 December 1894, not 1895. But what really matters is that the lecture was a resounding success⁶⁵. Jorge de Sena stated that Florbela was a great artist because she had been able to translate into poetry her experience of the world as a woman. At the time, Sena's interpretation constituted a major shift from previous criticism, which had viewed Florbela as an artist and had tended to ignore the issue of her sex.

Sena ended his 'rehabilitation' of Florbela with a sly reference to the problem of the bust, commenting that official authorities could stop a bust being erected but could not alter the fact that Florbela was a great poet: 'No entanto, com processo ou sem ele, com monumento ou sem ele, a sua grandeza é a mesma -- se é que não aumenta, mercê da nossa simpatia'⁶⁶. Sena suggests here that, by being against the bust, the authorities were in fact drawing attention to Florbela and to the unfairness with which they were treating her in the name of morality, thus increasing sympathy for her (and against the regime)⁶⁷.

⁶⁴This was published under the title 'Florbela Espanca ou a Expressão do Feminino na Poesia Portuguesa' (Porto: Biblioteca Fenianos, 1947) and subsequently reprinted in *Da Poesia Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Ática, [n.d.]), pp.115-143.

⁶⁵In Mécia de Sena's words, this lecture 'haveria de ser o maior êxito de homenagem que jamais vi na minha vida. Naquela altura, estimou-se em cerca de mil pessoas as que estariam dentro e fora e pelas escadas e corredores dos Fenianos Portugueses' quoted in Zina Bellodi da Silva, 'Florbela Espanca', *Cadernos de Teoria e Crítica Literária*, 15 (1988), 66-92 (p.68). The lecture was also widely publicized in the three main Oporto dailies, *Primeiro de Janeiro*, *O Comércio do Porto* and *Jornal de Notícias*.

⁶⁶Jorge de Sena, p.142.

⁶⁷One case in point might be that of Vergílio Ferreira, who used the stir over the bust as material for his novel, *Mudança*, (Lisbon: Portugália, 1949), where in chapters 15 and 16, there are references to a plan to erect a bust of a recently deceased 'painter', called Eugénia, a plan which is objected to on political grounds (ie the immorality of the life she led), by the main character Carlos Bruno. According to Ferreira, the novel was written in Évora, between 1948 and January 1949, therefore at a time when the controversy over the bust

Shortly after Sena's lecture, José Régio's 'Sobre o Caso e a Arte de Florbela Espanca' was published as a preface to the 7th edition of *Sonetos Completos*. This was subsequently completely rewritten, and published with the title 'Florbela', from the 8th edition of *Sonetos Completos* onwards⁶⁸. This later version has been almost unanimously praised as the best study written on Florbela, and therefore warrants close attention, but before discussing it, a word must be said about the tone of the 1946 text. The piece is a defence of Florbela's poetry against those who saw it as dangerous and immoral, arguing that 'a arte é uma actividade libérrima, cuja moralidade intrínseca é outra [...] a polícia dos costumes e da linguagem não tem de se arvorar em juiz supremo lá onde outro espírito domina, julga, compreende, explica'⁶⁹.

By contrast with the 'political' tone of the early preface, the rewritten preface is much more concerned with literary analysis. The new piece is divided into six sections, with the introductory section presenting Régio's thesis: Florbela is a representative human case, 'a obra de Florbela é a expressão poética de um caso humano'⁷⁰. While agreeing with Sena that to a large extent hers was a representative *female* case, Régio thought that Florbela's case went beyond its representative femaleness, to become the case of an artist, which 'parece chegar a transcender qualquer distinção de sexos' (p.9). After two sections (II and III) devoted to comments about Florbela's femaleness, the main body of the text (sections IV and V) considers Florbela as an artist, analysing what Régio viewed as the two main concerns Florbela expressed in her poetry. The first, which Régio called her 'insaciabilidade', led him to examine Florbela's love sonnets and to stress her inability to find fulfilment in love (pp.15-21). The second, which Régio described as the symptom of 'ser de mais para uma só', led him to point out her tendency to view herself as multiple, enabling him to compare her to Pessoa and Sá Carneiro (pp.21-24). In his conclusion, he

was still raging, and consequently there is no doubt that the real bust of Florbela provided the base for this fictional episode.

⁶⁸'Sobre o Caso e a Arte de Florbela Espanca', in Florbela Espanca, *Sonetos Completos*, 7th edn (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1946), pp.5-15 and 'Florbela', in Florbela Espanca, *Sonetos Completos*, 8th edition (Coimbra: Livraria Gonçalves, 1950), pp. 7-27 respectively.

⁶⁹Régio, 'Sobre o Caso e a Arte de Florbela Espanca', p.9.

⁷⁰Régio, 'Florbela', p.8.

wrapped up his analysis by saying that Florbela was essentially an artist, forever aspiring to something more.

Régio's study is extremely perceptive and his analysis of Florbela's love cycle and of her anxiety to transcend the limits of one personality, convincing. However, by viewing the gender issue as only part of the story, Régio loses something, namely the problem of female identity, in a culture where women were expected to be passive. And this loss is particularly visible in his discussion of Florbela's anxiety to transcend the limits of one personality as an attempt to 'afirmar a sua imensidão (p.24). Of course Florbela can be viewed as possessed by a 'Romantic' impulse to be godlike and, from that angle, comparable to Pessoa and Sá Carneiro but, the preceding chapters tried to show, it seems to me that Florbela is seizing on the problem of identity, because, *as a woman and as an artist* aspiring to transcend her human condition, her two identities were at odds with each other. In order to overcome this conflict, the poet had to identify herself with an omnipotent, active goddess, in short characterized by qualities at odds with those traditionally attributed to women.

Therefore, although Régio's study commands respect because it was instrumental in Florbela's rehabilitation and because it is undoubtedly one of the best pieces written about her poetry, it nevertheless suffered from the syndrome present in most of Florbela's early critics. Régio, like others, was inclined to view Florbela as a great artist, with a universal outlook, and thus did not refused to single out the specific female perspective of her poetry.

Sena and Régio's pionering studies were closely followed in time by three books devoted to Florbela. They were Aurélia Borges, *Florbela Espanca e a sua Obra*; Costa Leão, *Poetas do Sul: Bernardo de Passos e Florbela Espanca* and Carlos Sombrio, *Florbela Espanca*⁷¹. All three referred, directly or indirectly to the question of the bust, thus clearly showing that it was very much a problem on the agenda. These three books contained valuable new information, such as unpublished letters, or in the case of Costa Leão's book,

⁷¹(Lisbon: Edições Expansão, 1946), (Lisbon: Portugália, 1947) and (Figueira da Foz: Ed. Homo, 1948) respectively.

previously unknown poetry⁷². But at the time, perhaps their primary importance was the underlying concern of their authors to present a positive image of Florbela which went a long way towards correcting the distorted image of the immoral and scandalous poet held by many.

6.2.4. THE ERECTION OF THE BUST

It is undoubtable that the controversy in the press and the subsequent studies devoted to Florbela indirectly played a role in the erection of the bust. However, according to Túlio Espanca, the poet's cousin, who told me this in conversation in July 1991, the person directly responsible for the erection of the bust was the new President of the Câmara, Eng^o Henriques Chaves, brother of Laura Chaves, one of the three poetesses who back in 1931 had written to the director of the *Diário de Notícias* in an appeal to raise funds for the monument. On the afternoon of 17 June 1949, at the meeting of the Council (Câmara Municipal de Évora), Eng^o Chaves put forward a motion to place the bust of Florbela in the Jardim. The motion was unanimously carried⁷³. The following day, 18 June, at nine in the morning, the bust was at last placed in the Jardim Público de Évora, and higher authorities, presented with the *fait accompli*, wisely abstained from intervening.

6.2.5. THE REACTIONS TO THE ERECTION OF THE BUST

6.2.5.a. The reaction of artists

Even before the case of the bust was resolved, some artists had been inspired by the figure of Florbela and used her as a symbol. The earliest writer to consecrate Florbela as a

⁷²In addition to the new material presented in these three books, previously unpublished letters by Florbela were also published by Roberto Nobre in 'Florbela Espanca: inéditos da sua correspondência de amor', *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, 9 October 1946, p.3, and by Celestino David in 'O Romance de Florbela', in *A Cidade de Évora* 15-16 (1948), 41-100 and 17-18 (1949), 353-435.

⁷³This is reproduced in *Notícias de Évora*, 18 June 1949, pp.1-2.

symbol was Manuel da Fonseca, in his collection of poetry, *Planície*, published in 1941, which featured the poem 'Para um Poema a Florbela'⁷⁴. There, Manuel da Fonseca described Florbela as someone both close to common people (Mas ela sabia tudo / que há no coração da gente: / -- ouviu a gente cantar. (p.136)) and an outsider in terms of traditional morality (Senhora na sua terra / sua terra abandonou... / Porque lá ninguém a queria... (p.137)). Later in the poem, this statement is repeated in the present tense, 'porque lá inda a não querem....' (p.142), in what is a clear reference to the problem of the bust. Within the poem, Florbela stands for a mysterious greatness, and simple people (ceifeiros, cavadores, malteses and moças dos montes) instinctively sense that upon her death. Only in the last section of the poem, however, does it become clear that the greatness that Florbela represents is the power of life and free love:

O calor que vem da terra
ondulando como asas
de subtilíssima chama,
não é do lume do Sol:

-- é cio que treme, solto
dos alvos seios de Florbela. (pp.143-144)

Another tribute paid to Florbela was a dedication by the novelist Maria Archer in her award-winning novel *Ela é Apenas Mulher* (Lisbon: Parceria A.M.Pereira, 1944). The dedication read 'A Florbela Espanca, ao seu génio de poetisa, à sua desventura de mulher'. It is tempting to read this dedication against the background of the problem of the bust as an implicit criticism of double standards (preventing on moral grounds a memorial that would not be denied to Florbela if she were a man, hence 'a sua desventura de mulher'). However, it is perhaps more likely that what Archer had in mind when recalling Florbela's 'desventura de mulher' was Florbela's plight as a woman in more general terms. This is a feminist statement, since it implies that the 'desventura de mulher' is something to be remembered because it exemplifies the oppressed condition of women, in a society which

⁷⁴'Para um Poema a Florbela'. in *Obra Poética* (Lisbon: Caminho, 1984), pp.134-144.

provided them with little to aim for other than love and marriage, punishing them if they departed from the narrow path of virtue, as Archer illustrated in her own novel.

The desire to turn Florbela into a symbol, albeit a different one, was also present in a plaquette of poems to which fourteen poets contributed. The plaquette, entitled *Poemas Para Florbela Dalma*, was published in 1950 to commemorate the fact that at long last the bust had seen the light of day⁷⁵. Most of these poems praised Florbela as an artist and as source of inspiration (i.e a muse), highlighting her unlimited capacity to dream, her unquenchable thirst for the Infinite. At first sight, this may seem a praise of Florbela as a Romantic poet. But given that by then censorship was in place, one can read into this a praise of non-conformism and, therefore, a criticism of a regime which was attempting to limit self-expression. The praise of non-conformism is particularly clear in lines like:

Filha da Lei de Lynch, a turba castigou
Esse crime tramado e enterrado na cela:
O crime de sonhar que um dia perpetrrou
A Loucura de Florbela!

(Alexandre Pinheiro Torres,
'Quarteto para Instrumentos de Dor', p.11)

Por isso nós os jovens te saudamos
Assim rebelde, boémia e insatisfeita

(Alfredo de Azevedo,
'Carta a Florbela', p.16)

Amar é pecado
Quando exige lume.

(Fernando Guedes,
'Mensagem para Florbela', p.35)

Many other poets devoted poems to Florbela at various points in time. It would be futile to list them and impossible to analyse them all. Only one more will be mentioned

⁷⁵*Poemas Para Florbela Dalma* (Porto: Cítara, 1950). The following contributed: Alexandre Pinheiro Torres, Alfredo de Azevedo, Altino Carlos Olímpio, Armando Ranito, Carlos Gabriel, Egito Gonçalves, Fernando Guedes, Florentino, Leonor de Almeida, Luís Ribeira Seca, Natércia Freire, Paulo António, Taborde de Vasconcelos and Vasco de Lima Couto. According to Alexandre Pinheiro Torres, who told me this in conversation in October 1991, the original idea came from the female poet Leonor de Almeida who was a great admirer of Florbela.

here: in 1949, also in Porto, the poet Eugénio de Andrade, wrote a poem devoted to Florbela entitled 'Na Varanda de Florbela'⁷⁶, showing that he too had been sensitive to the power of Florbela as a symbol of freedom.

6.2.5.b. The reactions of those against the bust

Some people in Évora had been against the public tribute to Florbela. Voicing this discontent, José Augusto Alegria published several articles in *Novidades* (the first on 31 July 1949, followed by another seven). These, together with four new ones, were subsequently published in book-form under the title *A Poetisa Florbela Espanca. O Processo de uma Causa* (Évora: Centro de Estudos D.Manuel Mendes da Conceição Santos, 1956).

Alegria put forward several arguments against the bust: firstly that Florbela's poetry and life were contrary to Catholic principles, which had been enshrined in the Portuguese Constitution, and therefore rendered any public tribute incompatible with the nation's official beliefs (p.16 and p.164). Secondly, that she was not a great poet, because she was far from outstanding technically speaking and 'Pode perfeitamente fazer-se uma história da poesia moderna sem citar sequer o nome de Florbela Espanca. O mesmo não se poderá aliás dizer de Sá Carneiro, Fernando Pessoa, Camilo Pessanha ou José Régio, entre outros' (chapter 7 and 8). Finally, that the claim that she was a 'poetisa alentejana' was nonsense, since he could only see three sonnets out of a total of 156 [*sic*] ('Alentejano', 'Árvores do Alentejo' and 'Pobre de Cristo') that really described the Alentejo (chapter 10).

Alegria's first argument, that of public morality, had been the one which had prevented Florbela's bust from seeing the light for so long. The fact that it had been defeated only went towards showing the pressure under which the government had come by attempting to curb artistic freedom in the name of morality⁷⁷. Alegria's second argument,

⁷⁶Published in Eugénio de Andrade, *Poesia e Prosa, 1949-79* (Lisbon: Imp. Nac. - Casa da Moeda, 1980), p.267.

⁷⁷One may see a parallel, on a smaller scale, between Florbela's unofficial 'trial' after her death, and the official trial undergone in the early seventies by 'As Três Marias' because of the alleged immorality of *Novas Cartas Portuguesas*.

that of Florbela's status as a minor writer, can be dismissed outright, given the fact that at the time he was writing Florbela's name was already mentioned in several major literary histories and anthologies⁷⁸.

As for the argument that Florbela was not a 'poetisa alentejana', this deserves further examination. Florbela is not a 'poetisa alentejana' in that she was not a regionalist writer, she did not 'paint' the Alentejo. However she used the Alentejo as a backdrop ('Pobre de Cristo', 'Évora', 'À Janela de Garcia de Resende') and evoked experiences characteristic of the Alentejo (the heat of the blazing sun, the parched trees, provincial tranquility) as a term of comparison in a poetry which expresses subjective feelings.

But it seems that irrespective of whether Florbela had depicted and glorified the Alentejo or not in her poetry, local people would still have perceived her as a 'poetisa alentejana' by virtue of the fact that she was born and had lived the first twenty-two years of her life in the Alentejo. Irrespective of whether Florbela was a regionalist artist or not, local people would have wanted to pay a tribute to her because tributes are generally paid to artists by their native towns. (In this case it had been stipulated that Évora would do the honours, despite the fact that Florbela was born in Vila Viçosa, as it was the capital of the Alentejo. Vila Viçosa had never quite accepted the decision and after the bust had been placed in Évora, it undertook to pay a tribute of its own to Florbela, which will be discussed in the next section, thus confirming the importance of the link between an artist and his/ her birthplace).

Alegria's work was the longest and best reasoned attempt to argue against the bust, but it was not the only one. Narino de Campos expressed his disagreement with the public

⁷⁸Florbela was mentioned in one of the main literary histories published in the forties, Fidelino de Figueiredo's *História Literária de Portugal* (Coimbra: Nobel, 1944) and in the first edition of Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva's *História da Literatura Portuguesa* (Porto: Porto Editora, [1955]). Her work was included in two important anthologies, *Antologia de Poemas Portugueses Modernos*, edited by António Botto and Fernando Pessoa (Coimbra: Editorial Nobel, 1944) and *Poesia de Amor*, edited by José Régio and Alberto de Serpa (Porto: Portugália, 1945). She was also included in the repertoire of some of the best known declaimers of the period, such as Margarida Lopes de Almeida and João Villaret, to mention only two (for further details see Mário Baptista Pereira, *Antologia Poética de Poemas Ditos por João Villaret*) (Lisbon: Estampa, 1985).

tribute, in 1955, in a lecture entitled *A Poesia, o Drama e a Glória de Florbela Espanca*, later published at its author's expense. Campos argued that Florbela's poetry was great but immoral and restated the importance of morality as a criterion for judging art. Given that this was by then a losing position, it had a rather reactionary ring to it.

These two pieces against Florbela, however, had very little impact in preventing Florbela's spreading fame; witness her inclusion in an ever increasing number of anthologies and literary histories in the years that followed. Before examining how she was viewed in these and, more importantly, in the studies about her that came out after the erection of the bust, a further episode in her public consecration must be briefly mentioned: that of the transfer of her body from Matosinhos to Vila Viçosa.

6.3. THE TRANSFER OF FLORBELA'S BODY TO VILA VIÇOSA

6.3.1. THE IDEA AND THE EVENT

Soon after Florbela's bust had been placed in the Jardim Público de Évora, Azinhal Abelho and José Emídio Amaro published a number of Florbela's letters under the title *Cartas de Florbela Espanca* (Lisbon: [n. pub], [1952?]). The book included a study about Florbela, which ended with a literal interpretation of the sonnet 'Pobre de Cristo'⁷⁹. According to Amaro and Abelho, the sonnet expressed Florbela's wish to be buried in her place of birth, Vila Viçosa. Thus, they claimed, 'Évora já tem um busto de Florbela; para Vila Viçosa devem ser trasladados os seus restos mortais. [...] É tempo de satisfazer o formoso apelo 'Terra, quero dormir, dá-me pousada'⁸⁰.

To a certain extent, it is not surprising that Vila Viçosa, which had been denied Diogo de Macedo's bust, should have wanted to pay tribute to Florbela. October 1952 saw

⁷⁹In the first edition of *Charneca em Flor*, the sonnet was published with the title 'Pobre de Cristo', but in *Obras Completas*, Rui Guedes used the title of the manuscript belonging to J.Emídio Amaro, 'Minha Terra' (vol.2, p.209).

⁸⁰*Cartas de Florbela Espanca*, p.194.

the launch of the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa, a group much in the style of the Pró-Évora, concerned with promoting Vila Viçosa's cultural heritage. In the late fifties, the group took up the idea of having Florbela's body transferred to Vila Viçosa. The transfer eventually happened on 17 May 1964⁸¹. According to Alexandre Torrinha, who told me this in conversation in July 1993, the delay was mainly financial; indeed although there were initially some people against the transfer, eventually even the Church was present at the ceremony⁸². The inauguration of a bust of Florbela by the sculptor Raul Xavier took place the same day; it was placed in the Jardim Público near the cemetery⁸³.

6.3.2. THE FURTHERING OF FLORBELA'S LEGEND

The transfer of Florbela's body to Vila Viçosa marked the end of a 'militant' period, which had stretched for just over thirty years and which contributed decisively to Florbela's recognition, furthering the legend of her 'tragedy', the tragedy of someone isolated on this earth, forever an 'alma errante'. The idea of Florbela's tragedy had gained currency from the early days, forming part of the Romantic image of Florbela that Battelli, Ferro and other critics had put forward. But with the problems over the erection of the bust, it gained a new dimension, with the feeling that the Florbela's tragedy was continuing beyond death, as Celestino David argued in 'O Romance de Florbela'⁸⁴. After the erection of the bust, Amaro and Abelho used the legend of Florbela's tragedy to give strength to their ambition to have her body transferred to Vila Viçosa.

The transfer of Florbela's body to Vila Viçosa prompted the appearance of a few more studies of a biographical nature, where the image of an ill-fated poet continued to

⁸¹For a detailed account of the transfer, see Alexandre Torrinha's article 'Florbela Espanca, e a Terra Deu-lhe Pousada' *Revista Alentejana*, 29 (1964), pp.20, 21 and 25. This number of *Revista Alentejana* is entirely devoted to Florbela.

⁸²Rui Guedes, in *Acerca de Florbela*, pp.85-86, publishes a letter from the Archbishop of Évora to Padre Joaquim Reia of Vila Viçosa, giving permission for the Church to be present at the ceremony.

⁸³This bust has recently been relocated to the main square of Vila Viçosa.

⁸⁴*A Cidade de Évora*, 17-18 (1949), 353-435. The word 'tragedy' was also used by many other critics in reference to her life and the way in which the bust was prevented from being erected.

flourish. This image is particularly in evidence in José Emídio Amaro's article 'O Drama de Florbela Espanca', Maria Alexandrina's *A Vida Ignorada de Florbela Espanca* and José Gomes Ferreira's account 'Encontro com Florbela'⁸⁵. But although interpretations of Florbela both as a Romantic artist, forever seeking something more, and as a 'poetisa alentejana' were thus still firmly in place, they were now in competition with a third view, which was gaining ground: that of Florbela as a precursor of women's emancipation, whose sensual love poetry marked a moment in history.

6.4. MORE RECENT INTERPRETATIONS OF FLORBELA

6.4.1. FLORBELA AS A SENSUAL POET

The idea that Florbela was in the main a female poet and a poet of sensual love was developed by Óscar Lopes and António José Saraiva in 1955, Gaspar Simões in 1959, Maria Aliete Galhoz in 1966, and Luisa Dacosta in 1973, to mention but the most important⁸⁶. Galhoz provides an example:

A imediata atracção de Florbela parece ser uma sua poesia de expressão do erótico, frementemente declamado em seus sonetos. Linguagem de amor dita por uma voz feminina com uma tal tonalidade de desafio e violência, triunfal ou desgraçada, que faz de repente da mulher amorosa um ser interessante e verdadeiro.

⁸⁵'O Drama de Florbela Espanca', *Revista Alentejana*, 29 (1964), pp.14-16, *A Vida Ignorada de Florbela Espanca* (Porto [n. pub], 1964) and *A Memória das Palavras*, 3rd edn (Lisbon: Portugália, 1972).

⁸⁶Lopes e Saraiva, *História da Literatura Portuguesa* (Porto: Porto Editora, [1955]); Simões, 'Florbela e a Poesia Feminina', in *História da Poesia Portuguesa do Século XX* (Lisbon: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade, 1959), pp. 448-454; Maria Aliete Galhoz, 'Sobre Florbela Espanca', *Colóquio*, 37 (1966), 52-53 and Luisa Dacosta, 'Literatura de Autoria Feminina', in Óscar Lopes, *História Ilustrada das Grandes Literaturas*, 8 vols (Lisbon: Estúdios Cor, 1973), vol.2, pp. 534-541. It is worth noting that Jorge de Sena, the first to see Florbela as a woman artist, was fully aware of the limited extent of Florbela's emancipation stating that society's disapproval began 'logo que a mulher se afirma não como independente e livre, mas embora dependente e aprisionada, como mulher' (p.122).

The image of Florbela as a poet of sensual love was also subjacent in another image of her, that of a female Don Juan. This image had been suggested by José Régio in his 1950 study and was later taken up by Urbano Tavares Rodrigues⁸⁷. Natália Correia, however, criticized those who viewed Florbela as a female D.Juan (no doubt with primarily José Régio in mind) for their inability to come to terms with female sexuality: 'a partir do século 19, surge uma perspectiva feminina do erótico (que o homem classifica erradamente de Dom Juanismo feminino) mas que não é mais do que a revolta da mulher contra o ideal que a desfigura'⁸⁸, thus turning too Florbela in a precursor of women's emancipation.

The fact that, by the sixties, the sensuality of Florbela's poetry had become, in the eyes of leading critics, the main novelty of her poetry, reflects, by implication, a change in their horizon of expectations. Indeed, in Portuguese society at the time women, or perhaps more accurately urban middle-class women, were freeing themselves from traditional views of women as 'anjos do lar', subordinated to men. There were now more female writers publishing and gaining recognition than ever before (for instance Agustina Bessa-Luis, Fernanda Botelho, Natércia Freire. Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, Fernanda de Castro). Women were slowly becoming more visible (some would say more emancipated), if only because more and more were choosing to embark on a career. And as women were becoming more visible, society could no longer completely ignore their rights and their feelings as autonomous individuals, including their sexuality⁸⁹. Thus, in the new Civil Code of 1966, some concessions which gave women a semblance of equality were made, and in 1968 women were granted at last the right to vote on the same conditions as men (ie if they could read and write), whereas up to then only those with secondary education had been allowed to vote.

⁸⁷In *O Mito de D.Juan e o DonJuanismo em Portugal* (Lisbon: Ática, 1960), pp.47-8, and the entry 'Florbela Espanca' in *Dicionário das Literaturas Portuguesa, Galega e Brasileira*, ed. by Jacinto do Prado Coelho, 2 vols (Porto: Livraria Figueirinhas, 1968), vol.1, pp.304-5.

⁸⁸In *Antologia da Poesia Portuguesa Erótica e Satírica* (Lisbon, [1965?]), p.31.

⁸⁹Cecília Barreira's book of interviews *Confidências de Mulheres* (Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1993) which describes the recollections of women who reached adulthood in the 50s and 60s, documents the shift.

This change of 'horizon of expectations' helps to account for the shift in criticism from a view of Florbela as a Romantic poet to that of a sensual woman poet and precursor of women's emancipation. The extent of the change is further underlined by the fact that when in 1977 António Freire, a catholic priest, published his critical study *O Destino em Florbela*, he wholeheartedly agreed with Luisa Dacosta that 'a sensualidade é a pedra de toque da poesia e da originalidade de Florbela'⁹⁰.

6.4.2.BEYOND THE IMAGE OF THE SENSUAL POET

More recently, in the last fifteen years, even the image of Florbela as a liberated woman, a precursor of women's emancipation, has been somewhat redefined, as critics began to distinguish between the real historical Florbela and the images of her that she tried to project in her poetry, in a reaction to several decades of criticism that had taken at face value the different images Florbela had given of herself in her poetry. This has led critics to reflect upon the poet as a human being, a product of a given historical (and family) context, consequently viewing her poetry both as a reflection of a historical context and as an attempt to transcend it.

Agustina Bessa-Luis is the first to attempt to portray Florbela in this new light in her full-length study *Florbela Espanca, a Vida e a Obra* (Lisbon: Arcádia, 1979). This work purports to be a biography, but it soon becomes clear that Bessa-Luis goes beyond existential events to try and capture a Florbela shaped by a network of relationships. Schematizing Bessa-Luis' portrait, Florbela is viewed as someone profoundly marked by an unconscious 'mensagem de cólera' coming from her father⁹¹. As a result, she is the victim of neurosis (a term Bessa-Luis does not really define). Neurosis and her relationship with her father, according to Bessa-Luis, largely account for Florbela's 'comportamento exibicionista' (p.154), for her 'repressão erótica', ('pese à carga sensual

⁹⁰*O Destino em Florbela* (Porto: ed. Salesianas, 1977), p.21.

⁹¹Agustina Bessa-Luis' quotations all come from the second edition of *Florbela Espanca, a Vida e a Obra*, published as *Florbela Espanca*, (Lisbon: Guimarães, 1984), p.34.

que lhe atribuem') (p.22), for her 'complexo de abandono' (p.121) and ultimately for her death.

This portrayal of Florbela throws into relief some aspects of her human nature: Florbela is a human being, susceptible of being explained, to a large extent, in terms of early family relationships. This picture also redresses the imbalance produced by both the idealized image of Florbela as an inspired artist and the later image of the liberated woman, by showing how indispensable others' approval was to Florbela, for neither a Romantic artist nor a liberated woman would have been so heavily dependent on others. Florbela's human weakness is moreover emphasized by the fact that, according to Bessa-Luis, the 'neurose do abandono' is a 'fatal estigma com que espantosa percentagem de seres humanos vive' (p.185).

Yet, despite portraying Florbela as a dependent character, Bessa-Luis did stress that, through poetry, Florbela was able to free herself from the immanence of a human creature and reach transcendence. This point is emphasized right from the beginning, in the second paragraph of the book: 'Esta é a história dum bardo' (p.8), because 'um poeta canta a existência que ele [próprio] encarna; mas a sua canção é, como o tempo do bardo, desencarnada' (p.8) (i.e. universal). Bessa-Luis did clearly sense that Florbela was able to transcend her individual circumstances in her poetry to reach, so to speak, the domain of the universal, particularly in *Charneca em Flor*. 'É neste último livro que Florbela melhor enfrenta a sua totalidade humana. [...] Bela já não vive apenas as suas pobres tentativas de adaptação; domina-as e converte-as em símbolo' (p.82).

Bessa-Luis does not discuss at any length how Florbela's work might have been shaped by the fact that she was a woman. Yet she was perceptive enough to see that through Florbela's poetry ran a current that could potentially convert her into a symbol of a female principle forever alive:

Em Florbela, que me divirto a relacionar com a Bela das origens célticas, pela força duma inspiração que derruba períodos imensos de transformação repressiva, nós deparamos com essa Mulher [...] Ela é a virgem eterna, o que não quer dizer intocada, mas sim a que não vive sob o domínio do homem. (pp. 41-42)

Bessa-Luis' biography of Florbela truly produced a new image of Florbela: that of someone conditioned by her personal history, doubled however with the poet of genius, whose poetry speaks to the collective unconscious. This image, it seems to me, influenced two subsequent works: Natália Correia's preface in 1981⁹², and Hélia Correia's play *Florbela* in 1991⁹³.

Natália Correia, possibly seizing upon Bessa-Luis's observation about the undercurrent of an archetypal female principle present in Florbela's poetry, sees Florbela in the following terms: 'atriz do seu ser mítico de que está assombrada, Bela representa-se como diva do simbolizante feminino' (p.9). For Natália Correia, Florbela is unconsciously re-enacting 'a virgindade ôntica do ser feminino' (p.14), and as a result her poetry is haunted by the unconscious archetype of Diana, the virgin Goddess, symbolizing the female principle.

Correia completes the picture of Florbela as a female goddess by contrasting her to her brother, Apeles, who Correia sees as representing the masculine principle, the God of the sun, Apollo, drawing not only on the assonance Apeles / Apolo but on the fact that Florbela divinized him in the short story 'O Aviador' in *As Máscaras do Destino*. Finally, in Correia's interpretation even the fact that Florbela's death occurred on the morning of her birth, is explained in mythical terms; it is a ritual which ensures that in death she is reborn (like the female principle): 'Bela entrega-se à euforia de festejar na morte o seu renascimento' (p.27).

Natália Correia is truly the writer who has best explained the mythical charge present in Florbela by deciphering a female archetype present in her poetry 'mulher lendariamente subjugante porque subjugada a um arquétipo carregado de sortilégios'

⁹²'A Diva' in Florbela Espanca, *Diário do Último Ano* (Amadora: Bertrand, 1981), pp.9-30.

⁹³The play 'Florbela' in *Perdição. Florbela* (Lisbon: Dom Quixote, 1991). By contrast, Bessa-Luis' image of Florbela does not seem to have influenced Yvette Centeno who, in her preface to the first edition of *O Dominó Preto* (Amadora: Bertrand, 1982), pp.9-21, happily subscribes to the myth of Florbela as a liberated woman, even if it is in order to criticize its absence in her short stories.

(p.29). This in itself is such a breakthrough that it becomes almost impossible to level at her the criticism that by dwelling exclusively on the myth subjacent to Florbela's later poetry, Correia is building a partial view of Florbela's poetry, which ignores the fact that it is shot through by contradictory images of femaleness. Indeed, throughout her life, Florbela struggled with the view of womanhood she had inherited but with which she could not conform, and her poetry reflects this struggle and her attempts to find an image of the self with which she could live⁹⁴.

Bessa-Luis' biography and Natália Correia's preface both made important contributions towards the revision of the image of Florbela. The next contribution surprisingly did not come from a critic, but from Florbela's own work. Indeed, the 8 December 1980 marked the 50th anniversary of her death and, as a result, the author's work fell into public domain, enabling the publication of previously unpublished material, namely the *Diário do Último Ano* in 1981 and the volume of short stories *O Dominó Preto*⁹⁵. More spectacularly still, as was discussed in the Preface, in 1983 a number of previously unknown manuscripts (Florbela's *espólio*) came to light. Rui Guedes undertook to publish them, and this resulted in Florbela's *Obras Completas*, which attempted to gather in six volumes everything Florbela ever wrote: her poetry (both her major collections and isolated pieces, some previously unpublished), her short stories and her diary, and -- very importantly for those who attempt to build an image of Florbela as a person -- her letters.

The image of Florbela that emerged from *Obras Completas*, particularly from the two volumes of letters and from her diary, supported the image that had been put forward by Agustina Bessa-Luis, that of a woman living inside a small circle of family and friends,

⁹⁴Natália Correia was however fully aware that Florbela's poetry embodied her struggle against the mutilating image of womanhood society had made her internalize, as is clear from the fact that she had earlier described her poetry as displaying 'a ambiguidade da mulher nostálgica da sua integridade sexual mas coagida pelos contornos de idealização masculina', in *Antologia da Poesia Erótica e Satírica* (Lisbon, [n. d.]), p.31.

⁹⁵*Diário do Último Ano*, (Amadora: Bertrand, 1981) and *O Dominó Preto*, (Amadora: Bertrand, 1982).

uninterested in the outside world of *res publica* (although able to be practical in domestic terms, as her letters to Henriqueta, her father's second wife, showed), someone leading on the whole a fairly unremarkable everyday life.

This image of almost banality was taken up by Hélia Correia in her play, *Florbela*, which seems to be an attempt to demythologize Florbela. The play consists of a dialogue between Florbela (as a young girl at the beginning and at the end of the play, as a grown up woman in the central scene) and a 'Guia', an omniscient character, who functions as a relentless critic of Florbela, unfolding before her some of the (usually negative) reactions her work and life would attract, but nevertheless comforting her with the knowledge that she would be hailed as a great poet. Amongst other things, the Guia accused Florbela of desperately needing love and recognition: 'Precisas de que te amem, não é, Bela?' (p.66). She also criticized Florbela for being a 'pequeno-burguesa engalanada que se há-de trair sempre em pormenores' (p.77), posing as a great poetess.

Despite all this, the 'Guia' reassured Florbela that she would have a place in Portuguese literary history:

F -- Eu não fico na História?
G (*apaziguadora*) -- Ficas. Ficas. (p.72)

The greatness of Florbela's poetry, however, is never explained by any reason other than the common consensus around the view that she is a great poetess, while reservations about her poetry are constantly being voiced: 'Para muita gente, fazes parte de um passado em que os versos rimavam quase sempre de forma previsível' (p.68).

In her preface to her play, Hélia Correia acknowledged that 'A Florbela, confesso, irritou-me um bocado. [...] Quando a gente se irrita, começa fatalmente a fazer julgamentos. Receio, pois, ter sido agressiva com ela' (p.10). It is indeed true that the play criticizes incessantly Florbela's vulnerability and some of the shortcomings of her poetry. Yet, by a strange turn of fate, it makes readers aware of the difficulties faced by Florbela as a woman in the context of early twentieth century society. And to that extent, without it having been Hélia Correia's intent, it may help to shed light on her poetry.

Recapitulating: a survey of sixty years of criticism about Florbela throws vividly into relief the changes in critics' perceptions as to where her greatness lay, reflecting the change in their horizons of expectations. Florbela's early critics consistently failed to take into account both the overt sensuality of her poetry and, perhaps more significantly, her female identity, attributing instead her greatness to her Romantic side, forever aspiring to an impossible ideal. Those early critics who did not portray Florbela as a Romantic poet, endeavoured to ascribe her greatness to the fact that she was a great 'poetisa alentejana'.

Ironically, it was the more conservative quarters who, on becoming aware that the popularity of Florbela was spreading, pointed to the sensuality of her poetry, made a fuss about its immorality (and the immorality of Florbela's life) and attempted to prevent her consecration. All this achieved, of course, was the opposite effect. Florbela attracted for the first time since Ferro's editorial the attention of leading critics, who at last recognized the specificity of her female voice (Jorge de Sena) and analysed her treatment of sensual love (José Régio).

From then onwards, coexisting with the view of Florbela either as a Romantic poet or as a 'poetisa alentejana', Florbela became seen as a poet of female sensuality. But until more recent years, what still characterized both criticism and readers' attitudes was the unconditional fervour of those who hailed her as a great poet on the one hand, turning her into a mythical figure and, on the other, the slander and vilification used by those against her.

In the last decade, leading female writers, such as Agustina Bessa-Luis and Hélia Correia, have attempted to demythologize Florbela, by throwing light on her as a person, who like any other human has a mix of positive qualities and shortcomings and is furthermore the product of a given socio-historical context. This interpretation acquires new meaning when juxtaposed with the latest critical studies of Florbela's poetry which show how, at the heart of her poetry, is constantly her experience as a woman (Maria Lúcia Dal Farra, Renata Junqueira, Billie Maciumas, Thomas J. Braga). And the new image of Florbela that is emerging -- will it be the definitive one?-- is that of a woman embodying and expressing in her poetry her divided sense of identity.

CONCLUSION

At the time of her death, Florbela was a virtually unknown poet. Today, it is unquestionable that she forms part of the literary canon and is known as a precursor of twentieth century Portuguese women writers. But despite her prominent position as a female writer, until now, little attention had been paid to her peculiar position as a woman determined to make her mark as a poet. In an introductory chapter, Chapter 1, the problems facing women writers at the turn of the century were thrown into relief, with particular reference to the unspoken constraints which femininity placed on poetic self-expression and even creativity. Simultaneously, however, the chapter highlighted the extraordinary momentum of women's poetry at the turn of the century and its apogee in the early twenties, stressing both how Florbela benefited from women's increased visibility and how paradoxically it meant that most critics failed to notice the increasing originality in her poetry in challenging some of the prevailing stereotypes of femininity. This chapter also drew attention to the thematic convergences between Florbela Espanca's poetry and that of Judite Teixeira.

After situating Florbela in the context of the female poetry of the first quarter of the twentieth century, Chapter 2 looked in more detail at her poetic beginnings, tracing evidence of her growing poetic awareness in the course of the year 1916 and drawing special attention to the role of *Modas e Bordados* as an early mentor. It then analysed her correspondence with Júlia Alves, documenting her attraction to the figure of the Romantic poet, crystallized by António Nobre, and her own attempts to set herself as a Romantic poet. It discussed evidence of her efforts to articulate a female poetic persona against the male poetry of the period, with particular reference to Nobre, in the early poetry of *Trocando Olhares* and in *Livro de Mágoas*, and her awareness in some early poems of female suffering in a society which often constrained poetic and personal self-expression.

Chapter 3 stressed the influence of Florbela's male colleagues at the University of Lisbon (particularly Américo Durão, João Boto de Carvalho and Vasco Camélier) on the consolidation of her perception of herself as a female poet in the poetry of *Livro de Mágoas*, while discussing how she constantly equated being different (from other women) with suffering and lack of identity, an equation also underlined by the absence of love in her life. The last part of the chapter discussed incipient evidence in some of the poems of her wish to escape from conventional attitudes expected from women writing about love, by expressing her wish for physical contact with the loved one.

Chapter 4 showed how *Livro de Soror Saudade* acted as a turning-point between *Livro de Mágoas* and *Charneca em Flor*. It traced Florbela's growing self-confidence in her image as a female poet in *Livro de Soror Saudade*, while drawing attention to the tensions in this collection between conflicting tendencies towards love, as Florbela increasingly began to subvert the image of the woman in love as silent, passive and demure.

Chapter 5 provided a detailed analysis of *Charneca em Flor*, the work which threw Florbela into the limelight. It examined how, while Florbela continued to portray herself as accursed as in earlier works, this increasingly became emblematic of female suffering while many poems now indicated that suffering could be converted into a strength. This chapter then discussed how *Charneca em Flor* could be distinguished from her previous collections by the boldness of its tone, with particular reference to the love poems. It examined poems where Florbela consciously reworked previous images of the self and emphasized the fulfilment to be found in sensual love, even in the face of society's disapproval. It highlighted that as a result in this collection Florbela truly came into her own, expressing sensuality in a manner that had never been expressed publicly before in Portugal by a woman, and going as far as voicing dissatisfaction and even sexual frustration.

If Florbela was undoubtedly the product of her period, her poetry nevertheless increasingly challenged traditional images of womanhood; but this was not openly recognized as her main merit until much later. Exploring this, Chapter 6 examined the changes Florbela's image has undergone in the last sixty years, pointing out the underlying shift in critics' 'horizons of expectations'. Early reviewers failed to acknowledge the overt

sensuality of her poetry and, perhaps more significantly, her female identity, attributing instead her greatness to her Romantic side, forever aspiring to an impossible ideal. But as time went by and as the controversy surrounding the erection of her bust in Évora brought Florbela to the attention of leading critics, the specificity of her female voice was at last recognized. By the sixties, Florbela was widely acknowledged as a poet of sensual love, but even this image has undergone some changes in the last fifteen years, as writers have started pointing out the limitations in her 'liberation'.

There is no doubt that from today's viewpoint, Florbela's subversive stance may have to be redefined to take into account her limitations. But one must never forget the context in which Florbela was writing, and this is what this thesis set out to explore, showing the difficulties she experienced as a woman in order to throw into relief her achievements as a poet.

Questioning her identity and her conflicting impulses towards love, later voicing erotic desire and setting herself as an absolute, all this was extraordinarily subversive and it is small wonder that Florbela's poetry has found an echo with successive generations of women. Simultaneously, critics have also noted how adolescents of both sexes are often deeply receptive to her poetry¹. The adolescent is discovering him or herself, resolving inner conflicts and, as Bruno Bettelheim has argued, this process can be helped if those conflicts can be solved on a symbolic level². Thus, the fact that Florbela, while using a specifically female experience, was simultaneously able to touch the roots of the collective unconscious of a much larger audience, may go towards explaining the lasting popularity of her poetry in Portugal.

¹See Maria Aliete Galhoz, 'Sobre Florbela', *Colóquio*, 37 (1966), 52-53.

²Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: the Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1991).

APPENDIX 1

TROCANDO OLHARES

Dedicatória

As quadras dele (I)

Cantigas levas-as o vento...

Num postal

Sonhos

No Minho

A Doida

Poetas

Desafio

O teu olhar

Crisântemos

Que diferença!...

Os teus olhos

Doce milagre

Folhas de rosa

Dantes...

As quadras dele (II)

Junquinhos...

O Fado

Verdades cruéis

Li um dia, não sei onde,

As quadras dele (III)

Carta para longe

Triste passeio

Mentiras

Cemitérios

A Mulher I

A Mulher II

No Hospital

Os meus versos

As quadras dele (IV)
Aos olhos dele
Súplica (I) (incomplete, page missing)
Embalada num sonho aurifulgente (incomplete, page missing)
Mistério de amor
Escreve-me
O Meu Alentejo
A Voz de Deus
Paisagem
Filhos
Às mães de Portugal
Doce certeza
O teu segredo
Sonho morto
Súplica (II)
Sonhando...
Noites da minha terra
Vozes do mar
Cravos Vermelhos
Saudade
Visões da febre
Oração
À guerra!
Meu Portugal
Desejo
Anseios
O Espectro
Confissão
Poder da graça
Aonde?...
Quem sabe?!...
Nunca mais!
Triste destino!
Humildade
Oração de Joelhos
Aos olhos dele
Desdém
Rústica
?!...

Súplica (III)

A Anto!

Escuta...

Talvez...

Sol posto

Estrela Cadente

Versos

Duas quadras

Balada

"Noite Trágica"

Sonhos

Vulcões

Errante

Só

Desalento

A um Livro

Maior Tortura

Cegueira Bendita

Noivado Estranho

APPENDIX 2

MODAS E BORDADOS

The role of *Modas e Bordados* in Florbela's early career has not yet been adequately acknowledged. This appendix aims to reveal the full import of that role. In the course of 1916, Florbela wrote several times to the supplement of *O Século*. Two of Florbela's letters and two of the replies she received have been published by Rui Guedes in *Obras Completas*. Florbela's letters were however answered in two different ways: through ordinary letters sent by post but also (and this is what had not been mentioned up to now) through the pages of the paper itself, where there was a section 'A Correspondência das Nossas Leitoras' answering readers' queries. There Florbela was addressed as Florbela Moutinho, (Moutinho being the surname of her first husband).

Since this is the first time that the answers given to Florbela in *Modas e Bordados* are examined, they have been transcribed in their entirety. In addition, to gain as complete as possible a picture of the dialogue between Florbela and *Modas e Bordados*, this appendix includes references to the answers sent to Florbela in private letters, briefly summarising their contents. The same has been done for the only two existing letters written by Florbela to Mme Carvalho.

The answers given to Florbela reveal how much encouragement and support she received from *Modas e Bordados*, right from their first reply where her 'faculdades de inspiração de uma alma delicada de poetisa' are acknowledged, through to their last where she is praised for her 'autêntico talento de poetisa inspirada'. The positive encouragement she received is quite unusual: only a minority of readers ever had their poetic production praised. But what is quite unique is that her ambition to have her poetry published in book-form was encouraged with concrete advice.

This appendix thus shows that *Modas e Bordados* played an invaluable part in the shaping of Florbela's awareness and self-confidence as a poet. In that connection, the advice given to her *not* to take on a pseudonym is particularly interesting, given that most of the readers who wrote to *Modas e Bordados* hid their identity under pseudonyms, often well-known female literary characters, such as Dama das Camélias, Jenny Whitestone, Manon Lescaut, Soror Mariana or flower-names, with countless Violetas and Rosas. In contrast to this tendency, Florbela was encouraged to have the strength to be herself, and one may speculate that this might have reinforced her innate tendency to see herself as an unique being.

14 January 1916 ?¹

Letter from Mme Carvalho to Mariana Espanca (alias Florbela) (vol.6, p.223).

This letter encouraged her to continue writing poetry: 'é sempre com júbilo que constatamos as faculdades de inspiração de uma alma delicada de poetisa. Vxa deve prosseguir na sua produção poética'. This opinion was based on the reading of two poems sent by Florbela, 'O teu Olhar' and 'Poetas'.

26 January 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho (1032)²

'Tanto o soneto, que é lindo, como as quadras, após ligeiras emendas, merecem inserção e tê-la-ão'.

In all likelihood, 'o soneto' was 'Crisântemos' and the *quadras* 'Cantando'.

9 February 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho (1908)

'São também interessantes, mas uma delas, 'Num Postal', é vulgar nas imagens e na linha geral. Excepto esta, serão publicadas. Mas tenha V.Ex^a a bondade de não nos enviar mais por enquanto, porque temos muita matéria literária a dar à estampa'.

¹The letter is dated January 1915. It is clear, however that Mme Carvalho was writing in January 1916 but had forgotten that a new year had started. Indeed, the two poems submitted to her appreciation, 'O teu Olhar' and 'Poetas', are dated mid-1915 in *Trocando Olhares* and could not therefore have been discussed in January 1915.

²This number in parenthesis reflects the order in which letters were received in the office of *Modas e Bordados*.

22 March 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*

Publication of 'Crisântemos'.

(The version published differs slightly from the version of *Trocando Olhares*, vol.1, p.82.).

19 April 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho (6606)

'Entendidos. Retiraremos do original que estava à espera de vez, na publicidade, os versos 'Aquele Dia' e 'Passeios no Campo' que eram os que tínhamos aqui da autoria de V. Ex^a. Enquanto ao conselho que lhe deram os tais... jornalófobos, achamos que os não devia seguir. Se quer vir a prezar o seu nome literário e se tem consciência da originalidade das suas produções poéticas não deve tomar agora um pseudónimo'.

23 April 1916

Letter from Florbela to Mme Carvalho (vol.5, pp.115-117)

She submits 'O Teu Olhar' and 'Rosas' for publication.

This letter is used by Dal Farra as evidence of Mme de Carvalho' distrust of Florbela. Dal Farra's interpretation is hard to accept since Mme de Carvalho had by this time happily been in contact with Florbela for several months through the pages of *Modas e Bordados*.

26 April 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*

Publication of 'Cantando'.

This poem is made up of five *quadras*. The last three were published as part of *Trocando Olhares* (vol.1, p.106) but the first two, because they were not copied into *Trocando Olhares*, were simply omitted from Rui Guedes' edition. For this reason, I have reproduced 'Cantando' in Appendix 3.

10 May 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho (8084)

'Tanto as quintilhas como o soneto são admiráveis. Vamos jubilosamente dar-lhes inserção, logo que nos seja possível. V. Ex^a, pelas suas magníficas qualidades de poetisa distintíssima, terá sempre o nosso melhor acolhimento'.

31 May 1916 ----- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho (9434)

'Registamos o seu agradecimento. Enquanto ao seu projecto, ele é tudo quanto há de mais legítimo. O seu livro não seria um insucesso, porque conteria versos muito apreciáveis. Mas seria preciso que tivesse unidade entre as poesias, um pensamento essencial a torná-lo uma obra ligada e harmónica. Isto também V.Ex^a o pode fazer, porque tem as faculdades precisas. E a sextanista de letras apareceria a firmar com bons auspícios o seu nome literário. E porque não o realiza? Relativamente ao nosso nome, ele vale pouco para

apadrinhar tentativas como a sua. Com a nossa boa vontade nos conselhos sobre as suas obras de poetisa, pode, porém, sempre contar'.

June 1916?³

Letter from Florbela to Mme Carvalho, (vol.5, pp.119-122).

This letter describes Florbela's book project *Alma de Portugal*, taking up the advice offered to her in *Modas e Bordados* on 31 May, about giving her book a coherent overall thought.

14 June 1916 ---- in *Modas e Bordados*, Florbela Moutinho 10 850

'Plenamente concordes [*sic*] com a sua intitulação e divisão de partes. Os versos que nos mostram [*sic*] são magníficos e revelam o seu talento autêntico de artista inspirada, principalmente os que se chamam 'No Meu Alentejo'. Na 'Paisagem' há no último verso da primeira quadra uma imagem futurista que poderia substituir. A alusão de Mozart não é própria no 'Fado'. Esta ligação germânica e lusa destoa naquele assunto tão nosso, tão pátrio. O primeiro verso das 'Mães' está errado. A parte estes senões ligeiros, que V.Ex^a facilmente removerá, o espécime do livro, que tivemos agora o prazer de examinar garante-lhe um certo sucesso'.

June 1916 ?⁴

Letter from Mme Carvalho to Florbela, (vol.6, p.225).

This letter is the answer to one where Florbela had obviously expressed her despondency with regard to the publication of her poetry in book-form, in my view, in a gloomy reaction to the criticisms of 14 June and the careful assertion that her book would have 'um certo sucesso'. In this letter, however, Mme de Carvalho encourages her not to lose heart and is much more positive about the reception the book is likely to receive: 'Publique-o, pois, o mais breve possível, que terá, certamente, um acolhimento entusiástico, digno de todas as reveladas organizações artísticas verdadeiras'.

16 August 1916 ---- in *Modas e Bordados*

Publication of 'Rosas' (vol.1. p.56).

23 August 1916 ---- in *Modas e Bordados*

Publication of 'O Teu Olhar'.

³Rui Guedes suggests that this letter was written at the end of May (vol.5, p.266). But since it takes up advice that was only given to Florbela on 31 May, it must in fact have been written in early June.

⁴Rui Guedes suggests that this letter was written in May (vol.6, p.258). Personally, I believe that it can only have been written after the one in early June where Florbela's projected book begins to take form.

The version published differs slightly from the version of *Trocando Olhares*, (vol.1, p.213).

4 October 1916 ----- Florbela Moutinho (18220)

'O que se intitula 'Junquinhos' será publicado, o que não pode suceder ao outro --
incharacterístico, se o considerarmos da autoria de uma senhora e se atentarmos em que fala
de paixão amorosa apesar de ser dedicado a uma senhora também.

Não há nada que tire essas manchas amarelas, decerto não foram provenientes de poeira
mas sim do sol'.

8 November 1916 ---- in *Modas e Bordados*

Publication of 'Junquinhos'.

The version published differs slightly from the version of *Trocando Olhares*, (vol.1,
p.212).

APPENDIX 3

CANTANDO

A lembrança dos teus beijos
Inda na minh'alma existe,
Como um perfume perdido
Nas folhas dum livro triste;

Perfume tão perdurável
E de tal suavidade
Que, mesmo desapar'cido,
Revive numa saudade.

Levanta os olhos do chão
Olha de frente p'ra mim;
Fingindo tanto desprezo
Que podes ganhar assim?

Não andes tão distraído
Contando as pedras da rua;
Para que serve fingir?
Tu és meu e eu sou tua...

Não finjas tanto desprezo,
Que podes ganhar assim?
Se Deus nos fez um p'ró outro
Para que foges de mim?

(Published in *Modas e Bordados*, 26 April 1916)

APPENDIX 4

FLORBELA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Modas e Bordados

- 'Crisântemos', 22 March 1916
- 'Cantando', 26 April 1916
- 'Rosas', 16 August 1916
- 'O Teu Olhar', 23 August 1916
- 'Junquinhos', 8 November 1916

Notícias de Évora

- 'Espectro', 2 July 1916 a Júlia Alves
- 'Estudantes', 15 July 1916
- 'A Doida', 16 July 1916
- 'Poetas', 23 July 1916
- 'Visões de Febre', 27 July 1916
- 'A Anto', 3 August 1916
- 'Triste Destino', 6 August 1916
- 'Pra Frente', 17 August 1916
- 'Rosas', 24 August 1916 (see Modas e Bordados)
- 'As Quadras dele', 27 August 1916
- 'As Quadras dele', 31 August 1916
- 'As Quadras dele', 8 September 1916
- 'Triste Passeio', 10 September 1916
- 'Aos Olhos Dele', 14 September 1916
- 'Doce Milagre', 17 September 1916

A Voz Pública

- 'Desejo', 6 July 1916
- 'Anseios', 13 July 1916 À minha gentil Júlia Alves
- 'Nunca Mais', 27 July 1916
- 'Escuta', 13 August 1916 À minha querida Beatriz
- 'Talvez', 17 August 1916 (alternative title for 'A Esta Hora')

'Voz de Deus', 24 August 1916
 'Aos Teus Olhos', 10 September 1916
 'Sonho Morto', 14 September 1916
 'Balada', 17 September 1916
 'Noite Trágica', 21 September 1916

O Século da Noite

'O Meu Nome', 27 December 1919

Diário de Lisboa

'A Noite Desce', 19 January 1923

Seara Nova

'Prince Charmant', 1 August 1922

Europa

'Charneca em Flor', June 1925

Dom Nuno

'Árvores do Alentejo', 13 September 1925
 'Noitinha', 13 September 1925
 'Nostalgia', 13 September 1925
 'Nada Novo', 15 January 1926 (alternative title for 'Nihil Novum')
 'Primavera', 6 May 1928
 'Ao Meu Irmão', 17 June 1928 (alternative title for 'In Memoriam')
 'A Minha Piedade', 14 April 1929
 'Minha Terra', 19 May 1929

O Primeiro de Janeiro

'Aos Bons Amigos da Torre', 29 August 1929

Revista Civilização

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 'Escrava', November 1930, p.70

Diário de Coimbra

'Évora', 18 October 1930
 'Conto de Fadas', 22 November 1930

Portugal Feminino

'Noite de Chuva', May 1930

'Nós Dois', May 1930 (alternative title for 'Soneto IV')

'O Meu Condão', August 1930

'Vão Orgulho', October 1930

'Crucificada', November 1930

APPENDIX 5

POEMS DEDICATED TO FLORBELA
BY UNIVERSITY COLLEAGUES

I. Sonnet by Américo Durão

A Uma Poetisa

Irmã, Soror Saudade... Ah! se eu pudesse
 Tocar de aspiração a nossa vida!
 Fazer do mundo a Terra Prometida
 Que ainda em sonho às vezes me aparece!

Mas em vão tua boca empalidece,
 E em teus olhos a sombra dolorida
 Alarga mais cavada, mais ungida,
 Por um incenso místico de prece...

Tão perto o sonho foi! Bastava erguer
 Ao alto as nossas mãos para colher
 O fruto dum amor quase intangível!

E, se hoje as nossas mãos erguidas colhem
 Apenas rosas mortas, que as desfolhem
 As sombras espectrais dum impossível!

From *Tântalo*, (Lisbon, 1921)

First published in *O Século da Noite*, 27 December, 1919

II. Sonnet by Vasco Camélier

Para a Excelentíssima Sr^a Dona Florbela Dalma

... E as tuas mãos quiméricas e frias
 Adormeceram sobre os crisântemos,
 Como um rosário branco de elegias
 Ao debandar dos beijos que nós demos!

Missa profana, reza de agonias,
 Folhas do livro -- Amor -- que já não lemos,
 As tuas mãos são como as sinfonias
 Que o Mar soluça ao assomar dos remos!...

Olho-te ainda, sim; -- saudosamente,
 Como se olhasse um ídolo quebrado...
 Como um luar descido à minha porta...

E fico a meditar, perfidamente,
 O prazer criminoso e requintado
 De possuir a tua boca morta!...

de *As treze sinfonias da morte*, 1919⁵

(The manuscript of this sonnet belongs to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa).

⁵ Although the manuscript has the indication that the sonnet belongs to the collection *As treze sinfonias da morte*, this collection must have remained unpublished, since there is no trace of any book of that name in the catalogues of the Biblioteca Nacional.

III. Poem by João Boto de Carvalho

A Princesa incompreendida

Para a Senhora Dona Florbela Dalma

Eternamente incompreendida e misteriosa
 E dolorida e caprichosa
 E impaciente
 Caminha no jardim fantástico da Vida,
 Incompreendida e dolorida
 A Princezinha doente.

Leva caídas e desmaiadas
 E adormecidas e descoradas,
 Ao longo do vestido,
 As suas mãos de Morta, transparentes.
 Frias e tão esguias, como um lírio caído,
 As suas mãos doentes.

O rosto erguido ao céu, olhar no céu,
 Em busca dum fulgor que não existe,
 Eterna incompreendida e sempre triste,
 Banhada no luar como num véu,
 Perde as noites em sonho, perde os dias,
 E não encontra nunca as suas alegrias.

Adora a violeta...
 Sorri-lhe e a brincar chama-lhe sua irmã.
 Esquecida, desmaiada, sobre o leito
 Nunca vê nascer o Sol pela manhã...

E quente e sensual, nervosa e esteta,
 Constantemente irrequieta,
 Sensual e ardente.
 Tem um bucinho negro impertinente
 E sombras de veludo sobre o peito.

Deseja qualquer coisa que não vê
 Que não sabe o que é e não conhece.
 Faz versos que ela anima e que ela aquece,
 E sente os versos que lê.

Débil, anémica e fria,
 Olhos negros, vincados, olheirentos,
 -- Estátua do cansaço de viver --
 É a Princesa da Nostalgia
 Do país dos desalentos...
 ... E quer morrer.

E as suas mãos de Morta, amareladas,
 Caídas ao comprido.
 Abandonadas.

Repousam entre as pregas do vestido.

Frio e esguio, num dos seus pulsos,
 Finos, nervosos, convulsos,
 Terrível, pequenino e inapagável
 O primeiro sinal dum suicídio em vão...
 Firme, inalterável,
 Como a vontade sublime e acesa
 Da Princesa
 Desolação.

E procurando atormentar
 A cada instante o coração adormecido
 Passeia no jardim fantástico e florido
 A Princezinha à luz do Luar.

E sonha -- que sei eu? -- com qualquer cousa
 Que possa amortalhar-lhe o coração,
 Pesada e fria como a fria lousa,
 Solene como o aspecto dum caixão.

E a Princezinha. as suas mãos adormecidas,
 Frias como defuntas,
 Tombadas juntas
 Sobre o vestido
 Passeia no jardim fantástico e florido.

E distraída, incompreendida e misteriosa
 E dolorida e caprichosa.
 A meditar. o olhar vago,
 Ao pé dos cisnes e do repuxo
 Que orvalha as folhas do buxo...
 ... Passa o resto da noite ao pé do lago...

From *Sol Poente*, (Lisbon, 1919)

APPENDIX 6

MANUSCRIPT TEXT BY BOTO DE CARVALHO

A Propósito... das poetisas.

Aqui há uns anos atrás começou-se a esboçar a fúria dos poetas. Todos os dias aparecia um livro novo nas montras, um novo poeta que prometia, esperança radiosa, mas não dava nada.

Hoje são as poetisas que aparecem em bandos todas as primaveras como as andorinhas. Todas elas são, em geral, duma pequena envergadura literária. Cheias de suavidade mas incapazes de construir uma obra.

A vida apenas as interessa pelo prisma do amor.

Umam são correspondidas, outras não o são. E costumam declará-lo como se escrevessem uma carta à sua melhor amiga.

O tema à força de ser velho cansou por lhe não darem uma nova tonalidade. E cansou principalmente pela insipidez e pela monotonia desses amores vulgares, gargarejados dum qualquer andar para a rua.

Principalmente os nervos, esse fluído que se não empresta e com que se escrevem as obras destinadas a marcarem, são duma deplorável debilidade.

No entanto, e isto é o caracter curioso da época, são todas na opinião pública grandes artistas. E todas elas possuem um grupo destinado a declarar solenemente, que A, B ou C é a 1ª poetisa portuguesa. Para não ferir as suas susceptibilidades seria interessante dizer de todas elas que... são a 2ª poetisa portuguesa.

São todas tão parecidas... todas não. Há três anos conheci eu uma que publicou um livro e de quem nunca mais se teve novas.

O livro passou quasi despercebido. Era o *Livro de Mágoas*. Revelava um talento ... que a crítica não notou. Ela lá sabe porquê. Quando se fala em 1ª poetisa portuguesa não se conta com ela.

No entanto...

Chamava-se Florbela Dalma.

7 Janeiro 1922

Boto de Carvalho

(The manuscript of this text belongs to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa)

APPENDIX 7

CORRESPONDENCE

I. Letter addressed to Mme Guimarães (alias Florbela) by Maria Augusta Supico Ribeiro Pinto (The manuscript belongs to the Biblioteca Nacional, catalogue number N10/20).

Praia das Maças

Hotel Bogal

Agosto 25, 1920

Exma Senhora

Já há mais tempo que devia ter escrito a V.Excia para em meu nome e do Liberato, agradecermos imensamente penhorados a V.Excia e seu Exmo marido os cuidados e a bondade que tiveram com o nosso filho.

Ele gostou imenso de estar em casa de V.Excias e fala-me muito com saudade nesses dias. Creia, minha senhora, que tenho pena de a não conhecer e de não poder agradecer-lhe de viva voz.

Quando voltarmos ao Porto, terei então o prazer de visitar V.Excias.

A nossa casa em Lisboa, Rua das Taigoas, 2, e o nosso fraco préstimo estão sempre ao dispor de V.Excias.

O Luís tem continuado os seus banhos aqui, para onde vim logo a seguir.

Aceitem V.Excias muitos cumprimentos do Liberato e meus. E afeituosas lembranças do Luís.

Creia-me, V.Excia sempre mto obrigada

Maria Augusta Supico Ribeiro Pinto

II. Letter addressed by Florbela Espanca to her father

Matozinhos 4-1-1928

Querido paizinho

Envio-te junto uma carta que recebi hoje do Humberto de Castro, do sargento que falou na homenagem prestada pelos alunos mecânicos da Aviação Naval ao nosso querido Peles. Eu escrevi-lhe agradecendo-lhe a ele e aos marinheiros que organizaram a homenagem, descerrando na sala de aula o seu retrato, com a comparência do Director da Aviação e dos outros oficiais. Não sei se leste isso nos jornais. Ele respondeu-me hoje dizendo-me que os marinheiros tinham por ele uma verdadeira adoração e conservam uma grande saudade pelo oficial a quem consideravam extremamente. Envio-te um bocado da carta para veres mais o que ele me diz pois fala acerca dos carros duma maneira que dá que pensar. Eu não quero comprometer o pobre rapaz que era um amigo extremoso do nosso querido senão tinha mandado esse bocado de carta ao Dr. Boto mas seria bom ver isso pois ele que fala alguma coisa haverá. Ninguém diz "Acho conveniente levá-los daqui o mais depressa possível" sem par isso ter razões de peso; não é essa a tua opinião? Aquilo por lá, tirando os humildes que sinceramente o amavam, é tudo uma malandragem, uma data de invejosos a quem o morto era tão grande, que ainda faz sombra. Vê lá isso. Pedia-te o favor de tirares mais um retrato do Peles desses da Fotografia Brazil e mandá-lo ou para cá ou directamente para o Humberto de Castro que mo pediu com grande empenho. A direcção dele é essa: Calçada Sto Amaro 154-1º, Esq., Lisboa; vai na carta. Não te esqueças que o rapaz tem sido incansável em provas de carinho à memória do nosso querido morto.

Estou desejosa de lá ir para trazer os meus quadradinhos [*sic*] do meu adorado pintor que para os meus olhos orgulhosos de filha é o maior que existe. O meu livro está

pronto. Espero apenas o Lage para me auxiliar nos últimos preparativos, arranjo de editor, prefácio, etc. Deve sair por toda a próxima primavera.

Sei bem o quanto presta ao tio o que lhe mando. Tudo que puder arranjar para lá irá pois preocupa-me bastante a sorte deles todos. Ao menos roupa não lhe há-de faltar. É pena não os poder ajudar mais intensamente, mas quem dá o que tem...

Quando partirem para V.Viçosa avisem. Depois a Henriqueta que tenha paciência que não se esqueça de me informar sobre o preço da carne. Vou dar-lhe muito trabalho mas ela é tão amiga de fazer vontades e tão boa que lhe resta, que tenha paciência para a aturar. Já voaram os bons o nosso Peles e a Gena, coitadinha que era um anjo; ficou a que valia menos, mas a sorte é assim: o que não presta é que fica.

Dá-lhe um grandão abraço meu. O Mário continua o mesmo e tão bom para mim como não imaginam. Manda saudades aos dois.

Beijos para ti da filha

Bela

Note: transcribed from Viale Moutinho, 'Uma Carta Inédita de Florbela e Alguns Reparos às Cartas', *Diário de Notícias*, 20 April 1986, (Suplemento Cultura), pp.IV-V.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. MANUSCRIPTS

The following list of the manuscripts of Florbela Espanca attempts to be as far as possible complete, since this is the first time that such a list is compiled. It will be noted that the manuscripts belonging to the Biblioteca Pública de Évora and the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa do not have a catalogue number.

1. MANUSCRIPTS BELONGING TO THE BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL

ESPÓLIO N10 – FLORBELA ESPANCA

The *espólio* of Florbela Espanca is number N10. The various pieces belonging to it are numbered N10/1 to N10/39. I give the BN reference in parenthesis although for the sake of clarity a different order has been adopted in this list.

1.1. Isolated Poems

- 1.No dia de anos, dated 2-2-1904 (N10/3)
- 2.'Anoitecer'. On verso 'O Que Tu És' and untitled *quadra* 'Matei a ilusão dentro de mim' (N10/1)
- 3.O Nosso Mundo (two versions, one dated Lx 2-6-1920) (N10/5)
- 4.'O que sou eu, Amor?...' (N10/6)

1.2. Manuscript exercise-books

- 1.Trocando Olhares (N10/9)
- 2.Primeiros Passos (N10/4)
- 3.Untitled exercise-book with 30 sonnets, beginning with 'Livro do Nosso Amor' (N10/8)
- 4.Claustro das Quimeras. 35 sonnets (N10/2)
- 5.Soror Saudade, 37 sonnets (N10/7)

1.3. Proofs

- 1.Livro de Soror Saudade (N10/38)

1.4. Others papers in Florbela's handwriting

- 1.Pensamentos (N10/10)
- 2.Text in French (fragment of letter to Mademoiselle Rosine) (N10/11)
- 3.Poems by Verlaine 'Lassitude' and on verso 'Mon rêve familial' (N10/12)
- 4.Poem by Verlaine 'N'est-ce pas? en dépit des sots et des méchants' (N10/13)

1.5. Correspondence addressed to Florbela

- 1.By Gastão de Bettencourt, dated 16-2-1923 (N10/14)
- 2.By Apeles Espanca (undated) (N10/16)
- 3.By Apeles Espanca, postmark 24-3-1922 (N10/17)
- 4.By Alberto de Jesus Silva Moutinho, dated 9-7-1920 (N10/18)
- 5.By Maria Augusta Supico Pinto, dated 25-8-1920 (N10/20)

1.6. Correspondence between third parties

1. From Mme Carvalho to Mariana Espanca, dated 14-1-1915 (N10/15)
2. From Alberto Moutinho to João Maria Espanca, dated 16-7-1920 (N10/19)

1.7. Press Cuttings

a. Poems

1. Amiga (N10/22)
2. Castelã da Tristeza (N10/23)
3. Pedacos de ouro: three sonnets from *Livro de Mágoas* (N10/33)
4. O meu nome (N10/26)
5. A Noite desce, *Diário de Lisboa* (dated by Florbela 19-1-1922, in fact the correct date is 19-1-1923) (N10/24)
6. Six sonnets from *Livro de Soror Saudade, Diário de Lisboa* (N10/25)

b. Critical Reviews of Florbela Espanca's Work

1. Livros e publicações: *Livro de Mágoas* (N10/31)
2. Gastão Bettencourt, dated 4-3-1923 (N10/34)
3. B. de C. 'O Sr A. de A. e as poetisas portuguesas' (N10/36)
4. Nemo 'A Nossa Estante' (two copies of same article, one identified as coming from *A Época*, 1-4-1923) (N10/27 and N10/37)
5. O Livro de Soror Saudade, *O Século da Noite*. (dated by Florbela 4-1-1923, in fact the correct date is 4-2-1923) (N10/30)
6. O Livro de Soror Saudade, *Correio da Manhã*, dated 20-2-1923 (N10/29)
7. Livro de Soror Saudade, *Diário de Notícias*, 29-3-1923 (N10/28)

c. Other Press Articles

1. O Poeta Campos de Figueiredo e a Geração Moderna (N10/36)
2. Fernanda de Castro, Album de Retratos, *Diário de Notícias*, 27-9-1924 (N10/35)
3. Viver, *Diário Monárquico Independente* (This article has not been classified)

1.8. Miscellaneous

1. Will by Maria do Carmo Inglesa Espanca (N10/21)
2. Photograph of Florbela (N10/39)

1.9. Manuscripts belonging to the espólio of Raul Proença (Catalogue number E7)

1. Letter from Florbela Espanca to Raul Proença dated 7-5-1918 (E7/865)
2. Letter from Florbela Espanca to Raul Proença dated 2-12-1927 (E7/864)

2. MANUSCRIPTS BELONGING TO THE BIBLIOTECA PÚBLICA DE ÉVORA**2.1. Poetry** (the asterix indicates that there is another manuscript of the same poem belonging to the Grupo de Amigos de Vila Viçosa)a. From *Charneca em Flor*

Charneca em Flor

Interrogação

Ambiciosa*

Ser Poeta*

Realidade*

Passeio ao Campo*

Conto de Fadas*

Não Ser*

Versos de Orgulho

A Minha Piedade

In addition the sonnet ? is included in the letter dated 3-8-1930

b. From *Reliquiae*

Évora

À Janela de Garcia de Resende

O Meu Impossível

Sonho Vago

Tarde de Música

Chopin

E não sou de ninguém

Passam no teu olhar nobres cortejos

2.2. 23 letters or cards to Guido Battelli

1.Dated 18-6-1930

2.Dated 27-6-1930

3.Dated 5-7-1930

4.Dated 10-7-1930

5.Dated 27-7-1930

6.Dated 3-8-1930

7.Dated 12-8-1930

8.Dated 21-8-1930

9.Dated 22-8-1930

10.Dated 26-8-1930

11.Dated 3-9-1930

12.Dated 28-9-1930

13.Dated 5-10-1930

14.Dated 14-10-1930

15.Dated 27-10-1930

16.Dated 28-10-1930

17.Dated 6-11-1930

18.Dated 11-11-1930

19.Dated 17-11-1930

20.Dated 18-11-1930

21.Dated 25-11-1930

22.Dated 30-11-1930

23.Dated 5-12-1930

2.3. Letters between third parties

Guido Battelli to Celestino David (in italian), dated 12-1-1932

Maria Amélia Teixeira to Guido Battelli, dated 14-6-1930

2.4. Miscellaneous

1.Two photographs by J.Teixeira (Porto)

2.Telegram addressed to Guido Battelli to communicate Florbela's death

3.Watercolour 'Toledo' by Guido Battelli

4.Watercolour by Apeles Espanca

5.Article by Guido Battelli 'Una Grande Poetessa Portoghese. Florbela Espanca', *Salsomaggiore Illustrata*, 14, (1936)

3. MANUSCRIPTS BELONGING TO THE GRUPO DE AMIGOS DE VILA VIÇOSA

3.1. Poems (the asterix indicates that there is also another manuscript for the poem belonging to the Biblioteca Pública de Évora)

a. From *Charneca em Flor*

Volúpia

O Meu Condão

A Voz da Tília

Quem Sabe?

Tarde no Mar

Mistério

Panteísmo

Sou eu

Minha Culpa

Passeio ao Campo*

Realidade*

Não Ser*

Conto de Fadas*

Ambiciosa*

Ser Poeta*

b. Others

Vão Orgulho (from *Reliquiae*)

À tua porta há um pinheiro manso

Há nos teus olhos de dominador

Vida (alternative title for 'Inconstância' from *Livro de Soror Saudade*), dated Lx 30-4-1920. This poem is written on the verso of Camélier's poem (see item 3.4.1)

Liberta

A Lua ignóbil, informe...

3.2. Prose

1. Diário

2. Contos (Mulher de Perdição, O Regresso do Filho (incomplete))

3.3. Other papers in Florbela's handwriting

1. Three separate sheets with quotations in French and Portuguese

2. Two stanzas of poem by Rubén Darío

3. Dedicatórias (oferecimentos)

3.4. Other people's manuscripts

1. Poem by Vasco Camélier, dated 1919

2. Article by Boto de Carvalho 'A Propósito... das poetisas', dated 7-1-1922

3. Article by Américo Durão (published in *Revista Alentejana*, 332, (1964), 13)

3.5. Letters between third parties

1. From Mário Lage to Dr. Alexandre José Torrinha, dated 23-7-1962

2. From Mário Lage to Dr. Alexandre José Torrinha, dated 30-1-1964

3. From Mário Lage to Dr. Alexandre José Torrinha, dated 4-5-1964

3.5. Miscellaneous

1. Books belonging to Florbela

2. Photographs

3. Diploma da Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, conferido a D. Bela Lage (Festa da Flor no Porto, 1929), dated 18 June 1930.

4. Three files with press cuttings relating to Florbela (articles published between 1934 and 1964)

II. PRINTED MATERIAL

1. PRIMARY SOURCES

(All primary sources have been listed chronologically)

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relationship is not fulfilling. Last but not least, she is able to find meaning within her and not solely in function of relationships, leading to poems where she turns herself into a myth, a female goddess, with unique attributes.

The final chapter of the thesis. Chapter 6, looks at the transformations which Florbela's image has undergone since her death. In the first instance, Florbela's recognition was triggered off by the fact that her tragic death virtually coincided with the publication of her most outstanding work, *Charneca em Flor*, causing critics to portray her as a neglected Romantic artist, an image that persists to this day. A subsequent argument over the erection of her bust in Évora, which set supporters of the conservative moral values propounded by Salazar's regime against various other groups, ensured that her stock image became that of a daring woman writer, ahead of her time. The role that this controversy over the bust played in the projection of Florbela into the literary mainstream is fully analysed here for the first time. The controversy, which raged until 1949, ensured Florbela's place in the literary canon, but if her name had by then started to feature regularly in literary histories and anthologies, still hardly any attention was devoted to the analysis of her work.

By the late sixties, Florbela was depicted as the poet of sensual love, but even this image has undergone some changes. In the last decade, leading women writers, such as Agustina Bessa-Luis and Hélia Correia, have highlighted Florbela's human limitations, depicting her as the product of a given socio-historical context. Unintentionally, this potentially increases readers' awareness of the difficulties faced by Florbela as a woman in the context of early twentieth century society. Consequently, the new image of Florbela that is emerging, which this thesis explores, is that of a woman who, while embodying in her poetry her divided sense of identity, nevertheless managed to challenge some prevailing stereotypes of femininity and put forward a strong image of women.