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AURÉLIA DE SOUZA

A PROVINCIAL WOMAN ARTIST OF PORTUGAL, 1866-1922

by

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Department of Fine Arts  
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University  
December 1983

Approved Ellen C. Oppler

Date 16 December 1983

## ABSTRACT

Aurélia de Souza holds a special position in Portuguese art history at the turn of the century. Although she is nationally recognized as one of the finest painters of her time, her work has never been studied before with the attention it deserves.

In the first part of this thesis I examine the particular circumstances that Aurélia de Souza faced, from her formative years through her academic development, up to her practice as a professional artist. In the second part, I analyze Aurélia de Souza's personal contribution to art, namely her fresh approach to conventional subjects with an ever-present feeling for the situation of women. Finally, I briefly discuss contemporary and later criticism as a means to initiate an understanding of how she has been perceived as a person and as an artist.

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## PREFACE

Only three women so far have surfaced to the top of Portuguese art history: Josefa de Obidos (?-1684),<sup>1</sup> Aurélia de Souza (1866-1922), and Vieira da Silva (1908- ).<sup>2</sup>

Of these three, Aurélia de Souza has received the least attention. Although she is consistently included among the major Portuguese artists at the turn of the century, her art has not been studied in detail.

This thesis is about Aurélia de Souza's life and work. It attempts to determine her significance for Portuguese art history through an analysis of her social and artistic environment as well as of the work itself. Furthermore, it examines her particular situation as a woman and a provincial artist.

When Professor Oppler's course on women artists stimulated my interest in the subject, I found myself in an ideal position to undertake this study about Aurélia de Souza: I am well acquainted with her environment because I have also lived in Porto most of my life and so have my parents and

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<sup>1</sup> For more information in English see: Germaine Greer, The Obstacle Race, (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1979), p. 235, and Edward J. Sullivan, "Josefa de Ayala -- A Woman Painter of the Portuguese Baroque," Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore Journal, vol. 37, 1978, pp. 22-35.

<sup>2</sup> Biographic study in English: Lassaigue and Weclau, Vieira da Silva, (New York: Rizzoli, 1979).

grandparents. Through my friendship with members of the de Souza's family, who own many of her paintings, I became familiar with her work. I could also interview relatives of the artist who lived in Quinta da China during her lifetime or shortly after her death.

An overall assessment of Aurélia de Souza's art faces three major difficulties:

1 - Access to the paintings is limited because very few are in public collections. I was fortunate to be able to examine a great number of works owned by members of her family.

2 - The majority of her paintings are not dated. In some cases it was possible to determine approximate dates by analysing the subjects: foreign landscapes, buildings, or costumes dated the paintings from between 1898 and 1901, the only period of time that Aurélia de Souza spent abroad. Recognizable faces -- her sisters, mother, or nieces -- also helped to date some of the portraits and family scenes. Careful study of her signature revealed an evolution, from a convoluted Aurélia de Souza which appears on her earlier dated works to a very sketchy A.S. on her mother's portrait. This also allowed for cautious tentative dating. Exhibition reviews did not help in most cases, because they were too general and rarely described particular paintings. In the case of Self-portrait with Bow, however, the 1897 attribution was possible because of the full, elaborate signature

and external documentation . In one exhibition review of 1897, a critic comments on her self-portrait "the bow on her neck seems almost to strangle her."

3 - Much of Aurélia de Souza's biography is still to be uncovered. Inaccurate details in early publications have been repeated over and over again. In other cases, contradictory information from different origins increased the confusion. Aurélia de Souza's birth date, for example, in most publications is 1865. I am convinced, however, that the accurate date is 1866, according to information in her baptism and death certificates.<sup>3</sup>

An aspect beyond the scope of this paper but worth further study is the relationship between Aurélia and her younger sister Sophia. They had similar training at the Porto Academy. Sophia also won prizes, although always a little behind her older sister. When the time came to go to Paris, Aurélia went ahead and Sophia only joined her during the last year, probably for economic reasons. They usually participated in the same exhibitions and Sophia received good reviews and sold well. It is possible that Sophia was more dependent upon Aurélia than vice-versa but, since they lived and worked together, they must have influenced each other. It would be revealing to analyze the pictorial dialogue between the two sisters (See Figs. 1 and 2) as well as the reasons for Sophia's decreasing artistic activity after

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<sup>3</sup> Whenever possible , I relied on primary written sources and, when these were not available, on interviews with members of the artist's family.

Aurélia's death.

I am grateful to Mrs. Maria Helena Caiado de Souza and her family as well as to Mr. Armando Couto; they all allowed me to photograph their paintings and spent time answering my questions. I am indebted also to the director of the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Dr. Maria Emília Amaral Teixeira, for her prompt collaboration and to artist Barata-Feyo of the Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto who made the school archives available to me.

I am most thankful to my advisor, Professor Ellen C. Oppler, for alerting me to the problem of women artists and for her support and advice, as well as for the time she spent reading and editing this thesis.

Finally I must thank my husband, José Matos, for his encouragement and time spent assisting me with the writing of this thesis and my mother, Gualdina Almeida, who uncovered valuable information for me in Porto.

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BECOMING AN ARTIST IN PORTUGAL

1.1 Family Background

Aurélia de Souza's family life and cultural atmosphere were crucial influences on her personality and work. It is necessary to examine them in order to understand her artistic development and accomplishments.

She was born in Valparaíso, Chile, in 1866, to a family of uneducated Portuguese immigrants. Her mother, Olinda Perez, was only 15 years old when she married her father, António Martins de Souza. They worked in Chile at least for eleven years and the first five of their seven children were born there, including Aurélia.

In 1869 the family returned to Portugal, relatively wealthy, and Martins de Souza was able to fulfill his lifelong dream and buy a large estate known as Quinta da China on the right bank of the river Douro. Aurélia lived there most of her life. The house, the garden, and the view over the river became constant subjects of her paintings.

The six daughters were provided the usual education of well-to-do families -- private lessons of piano, languages, embroidery and, of course, drawing and painting. Aurélia's instructor, Costa Lima, took special interest in her ability

and insisted that she matriculate in the local academy, sponsoring her application in 1893. She was then already 28 years old.

The reasons for such late enrollment are yet to be established. A partial explanation could be some resistance from her mother, who probably gave in for economic reasons. One of the younger sisters, Sophia, also enrolled in the Porto Academia in the same year.

The old woman was in charge of the household with four of her daughters, including Aurélia, who never married. Being an artist was then one of the few professions a woman from a good family could allow herself to pursue. The general helplessness of the women in her family and their dependency upon marriage for support<sup>4</sup> must have been an incentive for Aurélia, a strong-minded woman.

Her determination to be a painter, however, went beyond material necessities. She was not satisfied with the local art instruction that, she knew, left a great deal to be desired. It would be enough, surely, to make a living as it was the case with other of her female companions in the Porto school<sup>5</sup> but she was aiming higher for the kind of education her male colleagues obtained, with government schol-

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<sup>4</sup> Helena and Maria Estela de Souza married into wealthy families.

<sup>5</sup> At the time there were several female students in the Academy whose names appear later in group exhibitions. Aurélia and Sophia de Souza, however, are the only women consistently mentioned along with distinguished male students.

arships for study in Paris.

Aurélia de Souza's family background in no way was turned to cultural matters. Her parents were uneducated and the years of hard work abroad did not favor an interest in the arts. But after settling in Porto, the newly earned status assured their children the education and the social contacts to make Porto cultural life accessible to them.

## 1.2 The City of Porto

Porto is the second most important city in Portugal, but it has always been regarded as provincial and secondary to Lisbon. The city is proud of a long tradition of wealthy merchants and liberal political thought<sup>6</sup> and it resents the capital's highbrow attitude of cultural detachment from the rest of the country.

During the 1700s and 1800s a small but important British colony grew in Porto, attracted by the lucrative commerce of Port wine. The prosperity assured by the wine trade and the influence of the British taste affected the appearance of the city.

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<sup>6</sup> Two major events brought the city to the center of the political scene in the 19th century. In 1832, a confrontation between the two candidates to the throne, the liberal Prince Pedro and the absolutist King Miguel came to a climax with the Absolutists' siege of Porto. Subsequently Pedro took over Lisbon, installing the new Liberal regime. Then, in 1891, the Republican party tried to initiate a revolution to overthrow the king. The uprising was crushed, only to succeed later, in 1910, with the assassination of King Carlos and the proclamation of the new Portuguese Republic.

A few monumental iron structures provided a modern outlook unique in the country: a new Stock Exchange in 1842 boasted glass and iron construction. A Crystal Palace inaugurated in 1865 with the first international exposition in the Peninsula. Two bridges permitting direct connection with Lisbon for the first time: one, designed by Eiffel, in 1876, for railroad traffic; the other, with two levels, for regular traffic, was built between 1880 and 1886. New wealth and tastes also surfaced in a number of mansions built by immigrants returned from Brazil or other South American countries, as was the case with the Souza family. These buildings were often covered with tile, which became a structural as well as a decorative element. The different colors, shapes, designs, and textures enriched and brightened the dark, granite look of Porto, and became a distinctive attribute of the city before being adopted in other parts of the country. The industrial growth of Porto encouraged the creation of schools for the applied arts, with an enrollment four times that of Lisbon. A new interest in the decorative and popular arts promoted an exhibition of ceramics in 1882, one of gold and silver-smithing in 1883, and another of textiles in 1884. Local art magazines,<sup>7</sup> generally reactionary and poorly informed, nevertheless, promoted the taste and concern for Portuguese folk art

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<sup>7</sup> In Porto there were more and longer lasting art magazines than in Lisbon: A Arte Portuguesa (1880-1883); Portugal Artístico; Arte Portuguesa; Arte (1905-1912). José Augusto França, A Arte em Portugal no Sec. XIX, Vol. 2 (Lisbon, Livraria Bertrand, 1966), p. 109.

and conservation of national monuments. This developing interest in the arts, nurtured by wealthy British families, is also manifested by numerous private collections.<sup>8</sup>

Local initiatives, however, could hardly make up for the neglect the art academy was suffering. In March 1881, a reform of both Porto's and Lisbon's academies was completed. Two months later, one of the most distinguished personalities in the country, Joaquim de Vasconcelos, publicly criticized the new reform for its lack of imagination and improvement. He also pointed out the unfair treatment that the Academia of Porto was receiving. He called the only four articles in the legislation dedicated to the Academia of Porto a postscript to the reform of the Academia of Lisbon:

The entire city will recognize that, in the political circles in the capital the same exclusive spirit is manifest which is unfair and disloyal to Porto, and of which we have had so much evidence already.<sup>9</sup>

Contrary to what happened in Lisbon, the number and pay of the Porto art instructors stayed the same and the overall budget was one third of the capital's.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the disciplines of landscape painting and art history would not be available for many years to come. Yet, by the

<sup>8</sup> In 1850, the city acquired the Allen collection, including 600 paintings, to found a Municipal Art Museum (França, Vol. 1, p. 412).

<sup>9</sup> Joaquim de Vasconcelos, 'A Nova Reforma das Academias de Bellas-Artes,' Revista da Sociedade de Instrução do Porto 1 April 1881, pp. 151-152.

<sup>10</sup> J. de Vasconcelos, p. 167.

end of the century, the Academia of Porto had the largest enrollment<sup>11</sup> and had produced the overwhelming majority of the best Portuguese artists of the period.<sup>12</sup>

The cultural impact of the Academy on the general population, however, was minimal. Private initiative complemented it more or less effectively. Joaquim de Vasconcelos, Soares dos Reis and Marques de Oliveira (these two former students on scholarship in Paris) organized the Centro Artístico Portuense with an interesting program of basic drawing classes, conferences, annual exhibitions, and an art magazine. The objective of the association was

to promote the intellectual and artistic growth of its members and to contribute ... to the spreading of good taste for the fine arts as well as the industrial arts in the country.<sup>13</sup>

Its real contribution, although significant, was brief, lasting only from 1880 to 1883. Later, between 1908 and 1920, another association also led by a former student on scholarship, the sculptor Teixeira Lopes, offered a program of art instruction, conferences and exhibitions.

<sup>11</sup> O Primeiro de Janeiro (Porto), Feb. 1902, quoted in Cristóvão Ayres, "A Reorganização da Academia de Belas Artes do Porto" (speech given in the Chamber of Deputies on 18 April 1902).

<sup>12</sup> Painters: Silva Porto, Marques de Oliveira, Pousão, Souza Pinto, Artur Loureiro, António Carneiro, Aurélia de Souza, Acácio Lino. Sculptors: Soares dos Reis, Teixeira Lopes, Tomás da Costa. Architects: Ventura Terra, Marques da Silva.

<sup>13</sup> "Estatutos do Centro Artístico Portuense" (1880), quoted in França, vol. 2, p. 86.



### 1.3 The Art Scene

When Aurélia de Souza entered the Academia in 1893, the current style was a Portuguese interpretation of Barbizon naturalism. Most of its major representatives were former students of the Academia in Porto. They constituted the "first generation of naturalists,"<sup>14</sup> and with their works sent from Paris, their teaching, and their participation in group exhibitions, shaped Portuguese art well into the 20th century.

Silva Porto and Marques de Oliveira arrived from Paris in 1879 and took over the leadership of art in Lisbon and Porto, respectively. They had studied at the Ecole des Beaux Arts with Adolphe Yvon and Cabanel and followed the academic style of their instructors, tempered, in the case of Silva Porto, with the teaching of Daubigny and, in the case of Marques de Oliveira, with a personal admiration for Corot.

Silva Porto<sup>15</sup> was immediately assigned the discipline of landscape painting at the Academia in Lisbon. Later, he would justify missing a faculty meeting because "he was out with his students studying from Nature."<sup>16</sup> His style, "representing Nature with no artifice of any kind,"<sup>17</sup> was enth-

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<sup>14</sup> França, p. 44.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix A.1

<sup>16</sup> Varela Aldemira, Silva Porto, 1954 quoted in França, vol. 2, p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Rapin (Rangel de Lima), A Arte 1 (1879): 15, quoted in França, vol. 1, p. 459.

slastically followed. "Modern paintings"<sup>18</sup> like Moore at Belas (Fig. 3), a deserted harsh landscape where two peasant women humbly gather wood at dusk, were competent Portuguese translations of Millet and Daubigny. They carried as much modernity as artists and public were ready to accept and that is what made Silva Porto so important in the evolution of Portuguese art. While teaching, he was also promoting artistic activity outside the school and became the central figure of an informal art association known as "Grupo do Leão."<sup>19</sup> Columbano<sup>20</sup> depicted the group in 1885, in a large painting to be hung in their meeting place. O Grupo do Leão (Fig. 4) is a humoristic yet sensitive collective portrait of friends sitting in a beerhouse. They are being served by a pompous waiter who stands conspicuously holding a tray of food. The action evolves around an understated Silva Porto to whom Alberto de Oliveira, always well-informed, shows the latest magazine from France. Everyone is carefully represented according to personality and rele-

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<sup>18</sup> The "Grupo do Leão" announced "modern paintings" in their exhibition catalogues (França, vol. 2, p. 24).

<sup>19</sup> The art critic Mariano Pina named the "Grupo do Leão" after the bar "Leão d'Ouro" where the group usually met. It grew spontaneously in 1880 around Silva Porto, in opposition to the art establishment. "Given the completely barbaric indifference of the authorities for the artistic education, the painters of Lisbon tried to defend their own interests themselves." Ramalho Ortigão, Arte Portuguesa 1883, p.110, França, vol.2, p.22. After nine years of successful exhibitions, the group was disintegrated to give way to a more structured association, the Grémio Artístico.

<sup>20</sup> See appendix A. 2

vance within the group. José Malhoa, standing on the far left, is a painter of peasants and sunny landscapes, obviously uncomfortable in this Bohemian setting. António Ramalho, the clown, balances the moderation of Silva Porto. Columbano himself cannot be missed in the far background, standing on the right side next to his self-assured, sophisticated brother, Bordalo Pinheiro.<sup>21</sup> This painting started Columbano's career as portraitist. From a beerhouse in downtown Lisbon in 1885 to the Pitti Gallery, Florence in 1927, he painted penetrating portraits of his friends and himself. He had an instinctive understanding of his time and a gift for capturing the essentials of each personality. The images, painted in a gloomy naturalistic style, were usually dramatic and powerful.

Another relevant member in the group was José Malhoa.<sup>22</sup> His taste for the sunny outdoors and for peasant life is evident in his combinations of genre and landscape painting. In The Yow (Fig. 5) a procession slowly progresses along a bright country road between rows of festive decorations and fresh pastry stands. In the foreground, a group of women painfully fulfill their pledges. Malhoa succeeds in recording the event and in conveying the suffering and solidarity that tie these people together. Yet, although

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<sup>21</sup> Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro was a famous caricaturist. He published several periodicals in Brazil and Portugal criticizing society and government. He also founded a ceramic factory where he sculpted many of his popular characters.

<sup>22</sup> See appendix A. 3

sympathetic, he is not personally involved and cannot go beyond the narrative stage.

In the restricted cultural and social environment of Porto, Marques de Oliveira's<sup>23</sup> developing activity was confined to the Academia, where he started teaching figure drawing in 1881 and history painting in 1895. He was highly regarded for his encouraging and open-minded attitude towards the students. Throughout his long teaching career he stressed the importance of drawing and was an accomplished draftsman himself.

Waiting for the Boats (Fig. 6) is a close-up portrait of a fishwife sitting on the beach, immersed in her own thoughts. The artist was careful not to disturb her as he sketched the earthy yet harmonious figure and the unsophisticated but intelligent face. The simplicity of the composition enhances the shapes and volumes of the white scarf, the rounded skirt and basket next to her. Marques de Oliveira's landscapes often have surprising impressionistic elements in the treatment of light. His admiration for Corot sharpened his sensibility, putting him a step above Silva Porto.

Silva Porto and Marques de Oliveira's successors in Paris were two more students of the Academia of Porto, Pousão and Souza Pinto. Both benefited from the works sent by their predecessors; Pousão<sup>24</sup> was particularly influenced

<sup>23</sup> See appendix A. 4

<sup>24</sup> See appendix A. 5

by Marques de Oliveira's figure paintings. He was admitted to the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1880 and for a year studied with Yvon and Cabanel before leaving for Rome. His academic training is evident in Cecília, exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1882. But Pousão's most interesting works were produced away from the academy, possibly influenced by work seen in the Impressionist Exhibition of 1881. In the summer of 1882, in Italy, he painted major landscapes such as White Houses in Capri (Fig. 7) which would lead to more advanced attempts in smaller works. House with Blue Shutters (Fig. 8), for instance, depicts a rustic Mediterranean house in warm, bright ochre, orange, and pale blue. The rectangular shape of the house completely fills the space and then becomes the painting surface itself. The blueish, vertical rectangles of the windows and the horizontal orange roof below add to the abstraction. The playful ambivalence of the blue used both on the shadows and the shutters reinforces the abstract quality of the painting. The green patch of plants and the waving clothes drying out in the sun bring the composition down to reality. Pousão's promising career was cut short at the age of 25 when he died. His art was appreciated but not understood. The Portuguese artists were not prepared for a new approach after the recent change brought by Silva Porto.

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<sup>25</sup> See appendix A. 6

Souza Pinto,<sup>25</sup> also a student at the Beaux Arts, fell under the spell of the French Salon. He was awarded several medals for his genre and landscape paintings, became a member of the jury in 1900, and in 1900 had work included in the collection of the Musée du Luxembourg. His success made him settle in Bretagne but he still took part in several national as well as international exhibitions with his Portuguese friends. Broken Apple Tree (Fig. 9) is a good example of his competent, French style with a preference for the sentimental and anecdotal.

#### 1.4 The Academia Portuense de Bellas Artes

The Academia Portuense de Bellas Artes provided free courses for both men and women in drawing, architecture, history painting, and sculpture. All students had to be at least ten years old and have a Primary School diploma or equivalent<sup>26</sup> One year of drawing was required for architecture students, two years was required for sculpture students, and the complete drawing course, of five years, for students in history painting. Aurélia de Souza took the first and second year exams in 1893 and immediately enrolled in the third year.<sup>27</sup> Instruction in the first two years

<sup>26</sup> Written announcement made public by the Academia Portuense de Bellas Artes, 23 September 1887 (in the archives of the Escola Superior de Belas Artes do Porto).

<sup>27</sup> Artist's petition, June 1893, to the head of the Academia to be admitted to the final exams of the first and second years in order to enroll immediately in the third year (in the archives of the Escola Superior de

included drawing from engravings<sup>28</sup> and casts. She was probably more interested in the classes with the live model, available in the last three years of the course. Female students were not required to take these classes but she did enroll. Examples of her work from this period are kept in the collection of the Academia.<sup>29</sup> Her grades were usually above average, and during the three years that she attended drawing classes, she won two annual prizes in competition with both male and female students.

In 1896 she started studying painting under the supervision of Marques de Oliveira. She belonged to a small minority of women who proceeded from drawing to history painting. Most of her female colleagues of the previous years had left the school even before completing the drawing course. Instruction in history painting included painting from the nude and draped model, studies in composition, and history and genre painting. Aurélia de Souza was then 30 years old. She would soon participate in group shows, receiving very favorable reviews<sup>30</sup> side by side with her own teacher, Marques de Oliveira, and other nationally famous painters such as António Ramalho and Júlio Ramos.

Belas Artes do Porto).

<sup>28</sup> The copy of engravings was officially abolished by the reform of 1911.

<sup>29</sup> And were shown among works by other former students in the exhibition "The Nude" organized by the Escola Superior de Belas Artes in 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Ruy de Almedina, "A nona exposição no Atheneu Commercial," Revista Luso-Estrangeira, Porto 1897.

The other major painter in the Academia of Porto at the time was Antônio Carneiro, who like Aurélia de Souza, painted dramatic portraits of himself and his friends. He had a preference for tragic and mysterious subjects painted in a symbolistic style. Most famous is his triptyc of 1890, Life.

The next step was going to Paris. A talented artist with no personal funds had two alternatives: to compete for a government scholarship or to find a private sponsor. Although government scholarships had always been awarded to male students, there is no evidence that women were explicitly excluded. There was, however, an age limit. Applicants could not be older than twenty-five. In 1887, the critic Mariano Pina wrote from Paris, protesting against this limitation. As he saw it, "The Portuguese academies recognize the right to the boys to improve in Paris, categorically denying it to the men." (sic)<sup>31</sup> Aurélia de Souza turned to her family for help, and her older sister, Helena, who had married into a wealthy family, sponsored her trip.

### 1.5 The Parisian years

In 1898, Aurélia de Souza went to Paris to study at the Académie Julian. The Portuguese community in Paris was quite large and she probably met three other colleagues from the Porto Academy, the painters Antônio Carneiro and Thomaz de Moura and the sculptor Fernandes de Sá, also students at

<sup>31</sup> Mariano Pina, "Chronica" A Ilustração, 1887, p. 34.



the Académie Julian. Instruction was closely modeled after that at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. David Sellin describes how the American artist Simmons arrived at Julian's and

confidently pitched right in with paint, only to be told by professor Boulanger that he might as well go home and make shoes if he did that. He was put to work drawing the model in the manner of Gerome painstakingly observed and copied -- over and over -- until he found there were no short cuts to the grunts of approbation of his master but hard labor.<sup>32</sup>

The school provided the room and a model, while the students worked on their own, preparing for the weekly visits of the instructors ( in this case, Jean-Paul Laurens and Benjamin Constant). The teachers would choose the works to be publically exhibited each month. Aurélia de Souza was "distinguee par ses professeurs"<sup>33</sup> and showed works in these exhibitions having no problem selling them.<sup>34</sup> She also won a prize in a contest between male and female students.<sup>35</sup> The event was proudly reported in Porto newspapers.<sup>36</sup> Her devotion and talent were attested by her final certificate where she was considered to be "un exemple a citer"<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> David Sellin, Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860-1910, (Phoenix Art Museum, 1982), p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Certificate signed A. Julian and dated 30 April 1901.

<sup>34</sup> Joaquim Costa, Aurélia de Souza, (Porto: 1937), p. 53.

<sup>35</sup> See above, Footnote 33

<sup>36</sup> O Comércio de Porto, Porto, 18 February 1980. This is a commemorative issue reprinting news from 1900 .

<sup>37</sup> See above, Footnote 33

Devotion to work was an attribute of most students on scholarships from the Academia of Porto. Writing from Paris in 1886, Mariano Pina compared the attitude of the students from Lisbon with the ones from Porto and at the same time made interesting remarks about the situation of the artists in both cities.

The painters in Lisbon are talked about, discussed and acclaimed, while the young painters from Porto are completely unknown by the press or the public in general.<sup>38</sup>

As they arrived in Paris, those from Lisbon were presumptuous, the others were modest, and the result was that the first "go back to Lisbon as they left" and the latter became "first class artists."

The students' dedication to their work was unquestionable. Neither Aurélia de Souza nor the others, however, took full advantage of their stay in Paris. The problem was extended to students of other nationalities. What an American critic wrote about her compatriots fits the Portuguese and probably most foreign students as well:

If he [the student] visits an exhibition, he judges with the academical eye of his professors but as for art in the broad sense of the word, he is no nearer to it than he was before he crossed the Atlantic. But he is not aware of his deficiencies, nor does he know that another world exists in the city of Paris beyond the narrow circle of his acquaintances. He lives in the most artistic centre of the world and is not of it, has perhaps never heard of Degas, of Carriere, of Rodin.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Mariano Pina, "Chronica," A Illustração, 1896, p. 178.

<sup>39</sup> Frances Keyzer, "Some American Artists in Paris," International Studio, vol. 4, March-June 1898, p. 246.

If Aurélia de Souza did visit the few private galleries showing art other than what was found in the official Salons, she was not significantly affected by this experience. In 1898, she could have seen Monet at Georges Petit's and Pissarro at Durand-Ruel's.<sup>40</sup> A few months later the same galleries were showing Besnard, Cazin, Monet, Sisley, and a group of Neo-Impressionists. Boudin was shown at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in 1899.<sup>41</sup> Seurat had an exhibition at the Revue Blanche in 1900, right before the World Exposition. In that winter the Independents had their annual show, and again, in the following spring, including works by Bonnard, Cézanne, Ensor, Matisse, and Rousseau. Van Gogh was also shown in March 1901 at the Galerie Bernheim-Jeune just before Aurélia de Souza left the Académie Julian.<sup>42</sup>

Art students in Paris would usually use their summer vacation to travel and visit museums or find a place to work in the countryside.

Summer brought sweltering conditions in the typical attic studios. The ateliers and schools closed. The best models went back to Italy or to work on the harvest. Exhibitions ceased.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> International Studio, vol. 5, July-October 1898, p. 208.

<sup>41</sup> International Studio, vol. 7, March-June 1899, pp. 132, 207.

<sup>42</sup> Donald E. Gordon, Modern Art Exhibitions 1900-1916. (Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1974).

<sup>43</sup> Sellin, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Sellin, p. 69.

Aurélia de Souza was in Brittany. According to Will Low<sup>44</sup> the women outnumbered the male artist population there in the 1890s and eagerly sought the instruction of the most famous American artists established in the area. Aurélia de Souza is likely to have done the same.<sup>45</sup>

During this decade Whistler was at the height of his popularity in Paris. "In art students circles, in Paris, Whistler was 'discovered ...' and then 'tonality' came to the fore...<sup>46</sup>" He was the major influence on Aurélia de Souza outside her immediate academic circle.

Although Aurélia de Souza was not on a government scholarship, she still kept close contacts with the Academia in Porto and sent a few works to Marques de Oliveira so he could evaluate her progress.

In 1900 Sophia, Aurélia's sister, joined her at the Académie Julian for one year<sup>47</sup> and in 1901 they both went on a trip throughout Europe. It is not possible to determine what Aurélia de Souza saw during this trip. She was in Rome, Florence, and Venice where she probably visited the Esposizione Internazionale exhibiting works by Burne-Jones, Carriere, Ensor, and Rodin.<sup>48</sup> She was also in Brussels,

<sup>45</sup> According to the introduction to the catalogue of the 1973 retrospective exhibition, Aurélia de Souza was in Etaples, Pas-de-Calais, where she studied with an American artist.

<sup>46</sup> Low quoted by Sellin, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Sophia's trip was sponsored by their other married sister, Maria Estela.

<sup>48</sup> See above Footnote 42

Antwerp, and Amsterdam, and finally in Seville and Madrid.

### 1.6 Professional Activity

Portuguese artists faced two major difficulties upon their return from Paris: artistic isolation and general lack of support.

The few years spent in Paris for most of them were the only contact with major art currents. The challenge of the Parisian art scene was essential to assure continuity in their development. Back in Portugal, they were reduced to mirroring one another and consequently falling into artistic apathy. Frances Keyzer was aware of the problem in 1898:

The American, therefore, shares the fate of many others. He can only thrive in the artistic atmosphere of Paris. Once transplanted to his native country he is influenced by his surroundings; the commercial instinct takes the upper hand, and, though he may amass wealth, he is dead to art.<sup>49</sup>

Unfortunately, the financial future of these Portuguese artists was far from promising. As Mariano Pina wrote already in 1887,

1. If he (art student) recognizes he has no talent, he goes back to his country.
2. If he has talent and loves his country and if he sees the possibility of finding a teaching job in any academy, he goes back.
3. If he has talent and thinks he can succeed abroad, he never goes back.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Keyzer, p. 252.

<sup>50</sup> See above, Footnote 38

Undoubtedly the artistic situation in Portugal was very discouraging. Painters such as the Souza Pinto brothers and Artur Loureiro found abroad the recognition and financial success impossible to attain in their own country. Most of them, however, did return "full of enthusiasm" only to face insurpassable indifference and lack of support "producing little of what they had promised."<sup>51</sup> A teaching job at one of the academies was the best any artist could expect and those were scarce given the size of the schools and their tight budgets. Marques de Oliveira literally had to wait until the history painting instructor at the Porto Academy died to take over his job.

Support from the government was over, once the students came back from Paris and Rome. The money spent on their education was virtually wasted for lack of opportunities to put it into practice. There were very few public commissions or purchases for the museums.

The artists organized themselves in associations to promote exhibitions and increase sales. In Lisbon the Grémio Artístico grew out of the Grupo do Leão under the direction of Silva Porto in 1890. The program included the organization of annual exhibitions, a permanent exhibition, a library, and a drawing class. In 1891, the Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes replaced the Grémio Artístico with a similar program, but it had a larger influence and financial

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<sup>51</sup> Ribeiro Artur, Arte e Artistas Contemporâneos, vol. 2, p. 237, quoted by França, p. 92.

help from the government. In Porto, the first association was the Centro Artístico Portuense which had a short life span (1881-83) but a lasting influence on the city. Its drawing class followed a German outline. The first exhibition included the traditional fine arts disciplines as well as decorative and applied arts and even archeology and art literature. The Grupo de Exposições de Arte was formed in 1887. Aurélia de Souza was probably a member because she participated, with great success, in their last exhibition in 1895. But the Sociedade de Belas Artes do Porto, lasting between 1906 and 1921, was to be the major art association in the city. The sculptor Teixeira Lopes, president of the association, stressed its professional nature by inviting the King and Queen to become members in their capacity as artists rather than being offered the usual honorary presidency.<sup>52</sup>

The purpose of the association was to encourage art appreciation and to help the artists, especially the young ones. To this end the association opened a drawing class for members and non-members and also created a sub-section, the Amigos da Arte, to promote sales. Members paid a small monthly fee to purchase paintings from the regular exhibitions of the association which then were raffled among the members.

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<sup>52</sup> O Comércio do Porto, 3 June 1906.

The overall quality of the exhibitions was uneven. Amateurs exhibited along with professional artists who endorsed this participation to keep their clientele of private students. The lists of prizes and purchases, however, as well as the reviews, usually singled out the best, and always included Aurélia de Souza who participated regularly.

But the relatively frequent sales did not amount to significant financial reward.<sup>53</sup> Most paintings were small-sized landscapes, flowers, or genre scenes, the only kind easily bought by a bourgeoisie who, especially in Porto, had little use for art. Aurélia de Souza found support in her two married sisters, Helena and Estela, who bought extensively from her. Still, she often kept the larger paintings, usually portraits of members of her household.

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<sup>53</sup> She also illustrated books by famous Portuguese writers and, occasionally, contributed illustrations to the magazine Portugália. (introduction to the catalogue for the retrospective exhibition of 1973).



CONTRIBUTION TO ART

The range of Aurélia de Souza's subjects is as wide as that of any accomplished painter of her time.<sup>54</sup> She painted biblical and classical scenes, landscapes and still lifes, genre scenes and portraits. Yet, a unifying force becomes clear as one examines a variety of subjects: her concern for the condition of women. She painted female characters from the Bible, domestic scenes, images of poor or working-class women, still-lives with objects used by women. Her sympathy is visible in the way she portrays her female sitters: intelligent, hard-working, with an intense inner life showing through their eyes.

2.1 History Painting

History painting could only develop in the capital with its official patronage. The Lisbon Academy, however, did not have a counterpart of Silva Porto to teach it until Veloso Salgado arrived from Paris in 1895. His competence was immediately rewarded with numerous public commissions executed in a correct French style that would set a standard

<sup>54</sup> For a thorough discussion of Realist and Naturalist subjects see: Gabriel P. Weisberg, The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900. (The Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980).

for years to come. Meanwhile, in Porto, Marques de Oliveira had to wait fifteen years to be assigned the teaching of history painting, for which he had been trained in Paris. The expertise he had shown with Cefalo and Procris in 1879 had not been developed and he used his drawing skills and his feeling for the figure in less ambitious enterprises more acceptable to the practical society of Porto.

Most of Aurélia de Souza's history paintings deal with biblical subjects and were painted during her school years at the Porto Academy and at the Académie Julian. They are small studies in composition of biblical scenes: Christ resuscitating Jairus' daughter, the Prodigal Son, or the Visitation. In agreement with the nature of the discipline, the emphasis is on the arrangement of the figures in order to present a dramatic moment, "with simple disposition of light and dark areas" and sacrificing "details injurious to the general effect."<sup>55</sup>

Christ Resuscitating Jairus' Daughter (Fig. 10) captures the moment immediately preceding the reanimation of the young woman. The action takes place around the girl's bed. Her family surrounds her, anxiously hoping for a miracle. Christ holds her hand. In the darkness of the room the two figures are drawn together by an intense white flow of light. The expressions on the faces can only be guessed by the expressive posture of the figures. Two men look

<sup>55</sup> Albert Boime, The Academy and French Painting in the 19th century, (New York: Phaidon Press 1978, first published in 1971), p. 46.

intently at the girl, while the women turn to Crist imploring him, their last hope. There is a suggestion of a stage performance. The characters surrounding the bed allow just enough space for the viewer to see the scene while a small crowd of secondary characters fills the background. An improbable flower arrangement in the foreground is the final detail in the staging of this drama.

Contrary to the previous painting, Mary Magdalene (Fig. 11) is deserted. The woman is standing alone, looking up, her hands clasped on her chest in a gesture of anxiety and despair. The crucified body of Christ is only partially visible on the towering wooden pole. It is possible that Aurélia de Souza did not wish to paint such an overcharged subject as Christ on the cross, or perhaps she just did not want anything to distract the viewer from the woman she chose to depict. Unlike the other compositions of religious themes, Mary Magdalene was not an assigned subject. In her choice of a subject to compete for the Barão de Castelo de Paiva award<sup>56</sup> she was not interested in anecdotal renderings of past events. Instead, Mary Magdalene is the portrait of a suffering and desperate woman. The presence of the cross accounts for the extension of the pain rather than for documental accuracy.

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<sup>56</sup> This award was established in 1884 in Porto for paintings dealing with biblical subjects (França, vol.2, p.56).

Biblical and classical anecdotes were not Aurélia de Souza's favorite subjects. The events and people involved were too far above humanity to interest her.

## 2.2 Flowers and Landscape

After Silva Porto began to teach landscape painting, interest in the subject rose significantly. Carlos Reis, his successor, organized the Sociedade Silva Porto which sponsored field trips around the country for his landscape class. At the Porto Academia, landscape painting was not taught as a separate subject. Marques de Oliveira, in charge of history painting, therefore was instrumental in developing of the discipline. His admiration for Corot led to more advanced handling of light, evident in Beach -- Póvoa de Varzim (Fig. 12), and Aurélia de Souza benefited from it. When she herself was in Paris, she was undoubtedly exposed to Impressionism, then in its most advanced stages. This exposure is manifested in brighter canvases and freer handling of the brush, although it did not produce a radical change.

During Aurélia de Souza's lifetime she was usually considered a painter of flowers. Women were frequently reduced to the painting of flowers as if this were always to be their only specialty, beauty and fragility agreeing with their gender. It is not surprising therefore, that in spite of Aurélia de Souza's diversified subjects, she was best known for her flower paintings.

Her depictions of flowers, however, are not conventional. She avoided the traditional flower arrangements in vases on table tops and preferred to keep them in their natural setting in the garden, on pots on a balcony, in the border of a lake. Thus her flower paintings take on the nature of delicate landscapes.

Flowers on the Border of a Basin (Fig. 13) exemplifies her ability to combine the decorative, light quality of a flower arrangement with the depth of a landscape. The painting has warm, earthy overtones enhanced by the harmonious combination of white flowers, green and brownish leaves, a clay pot, and the water where a few loose pink petals brighten the color scheme. The sunlight on the white lilies is masterfully rendered, as is the water where real leaves and their reflections ambiguously merge together.

In Flower Pots and Balcony in Quinta da China (Fig. 14) the combination of flower painting and landscape is explicit. In the foreground a display of cultivated and wild flowers trim the view over a field in the first painting, and the river in the second.

Garden at Quinta de China combines the academic realistic landscape and Impressionism. The treatment of the background landscape is conventional, as is the foreground on the left. The path of white flowers on the right, however, is of unexpected modernity: a mass of different tonalities of green topped with a cloud of Whistler-white flow-

ers. The stylistic difference between the two parts of the painting is stressed by a distinct handling of light flooding the flower bed and acquiring somber tonalities in the right corner.

In Girl in the Sun a child sits on a stone-paved patio; she wears a straw hat that completely conceals her face; behind her, a mass of lilacs scintillates in the sunlight. It is a lazy summer day, and Aurélia de Souza floods the canvas with a bright warm light reflected by the clear stones of the patio and enhanced by the few but well defined shadows of the plants and the girl's hat.

### 2.3 Genre

José Malhoa was the towering figure in Portuguese genre painting. His bright canvases described every aspect of country life in a picturesque, sometimes dramatic fashion, very much appreciated by the public and the critics. With romantic optimism he portrayed a way of life that was hard-working and difficult. romantic optimism. Aurélia de Souza had a different approach: she was more concerned with individuals, mainly women.

Family Scene -- Working (Fig. 15) depicts a young woman sewing, while two girls sit near her, chatting and perhaps playing house. It is painted in the best academic tradition, dark colors contrasting with crisp whites and a touch of red. The stillness of the young woman absorbed in

her work is contrasted with the liveliness of the children engaged in their games.

A similar composition and mood is evident in Family Life (Fig. 16) where de Souza depicts her own family gathered around a table having tea. Again, the scene is intimate and warm: two women talk attentively with a child while the old mother, absentminded with a news paper on her lap, sits in a reclining chair on the left.

These familiar activities are also described in such paintings as Interior — Lace-maker (Fig. 1) and Spinning. In both, the central figure is a young woman concentrating on her work, aloof from what is around her, but at the same time in intimate agreement with the warm familiar environment.

Young Women in the Fields (Fig. 17) is a close-up of two women working in a field. Aurélia de Souza conveys a feeling of sisterhood between them through the identical clothing and the attentive presence of one waiting for the other to finish her work. This emphasis on their relationship, more than the patchy technique, differentiates this painting from the usual popular variations of the Millet theme.

Girl from Brittany (Fig. 18) is an even more individualized genre painting: the awkwardness of the little girl is rendered sympathetically and humorously. The roundness of her face is reinforced by her ballooning clothes, oversized wooden clogs, and a clay jar in her hand. Her position

with the sun in her eyes suggests that this was painted with the help of a photograph.

In Paris, Aurélia de Souza often moved away from these traditional peasant images to depict busy urban social life scenes that had become popular.

#### 2.4 Portraits

The sophisticated society portrait was not cultivated in Portugal. The less pretentious, more personal kind, however, was masterfully executed by Columbano in Lisbon, and António Carneiro and Aurélia de Souza in Porto. Columbano often has been pointed out as a major influence on Aurélia de Souza's portraits. This is a predictable theory, considering the status of the famous male painter from the capital, but it needs further and careful scrutiny.

She was obviously fascinated by the human face and could expertly interpret the inner life of her sitters. She used female models almost exclusively, often poor women and children from the neighborhood to whom she paid a little money, or members of her household.

One of the earlier portraits is a study of a Head of Girl (Fig. 18) dated 1895. De Souza wittily captured the restlessness of the girl who was obviously more interested in what was around her than in the painting.

One of the rare images of men is a school work, a sketch of a head painted quickly, an exercise in both facility



and speed of execution. In large patches of lights and darks she carved the model's face emphasizing the roughness suggested by the eyes and mouth.

Girl from Brittany (Fig. 20) is not a simple genre painting but a moving portrait of a seated young girl dressed in her traditional costume. It is smaller and painted with less detail than the one with the girl in wooden shoes. Aurélia de Souza is not concerned with folklore but concentrates on capturing the contained expression, tightly closed lips, and eyes that stubbornly refuse to look at you. The traditional white cap forms a stiff bright aura around the girl's head and emphasizes the feeling of withdrawal and inadequacy.

Aurélia de Souza's portraits of adults are usually of members of her family. The portrait of her mother (Fig. 21) is modelled after Whistler's, with the general compositional scheme, but de Souza is less concerned with abstract patterns of form and color. The mass of dark clothing, without distracting detail, enhances the resigned yet intelligent and still beautiful face of the old woman.

In the portrait of her sister Sophia (Fig. 22) Aurélia pays more attention to the velvety texture of the brown suit and the frilly details of the umbrella, blouse and hat. Yet the costume also stresses the bony severity of the face and hands.

The different approaches in the two paintings -- soft, curved lines in her mother's portrait, rigid straight ones in her sister's -- clearly account for the individuality of the two.

## 2.5 Self-Portraits

Aurélia de Souza's gallery of self-portraits is a collection of her masterpieces and of moving self-revealing images.

Two early self-portraits set the pattern for later portraits: the artist uses either complete restraint of decorative details or uses them to excess, in a dramatic fashion. In Self-portrait with Bow (1897, Fig. 23) she presents herself in a rich, loosely painted black-and-white costume: a white painter's smock from which emerges an oversized black bow that overwhelms her face. In Self-portrait with Black Dress (1895 ?, Fig. 24) the colors are reversed -- black dress, white collar -- and the costume executed in a more linear technique. The sharp inverted V-cut echoed in the lips and the carved cheekbones stresses the stiffness of the collar.

The first is executed in a loose, painterly style with attention to the silky texture of the bow. The elegant black-and-white composition reminds one of Whistler's symphonies in white and Arrangement in Black and White No. 1 (1878, Fig. 25). Since Aurélia de Souza had not had direct

contact with Whistler's work at this time, this self-portrait can only be explained by the well absorbed lessons of Marques de Oliveira and other examples of paintings sent by students on scholarships in Paris. The second one is a more private statement. She is more concerned with exploring her own face than with showing off her ability as an artist.

These two self-portraits can be best evaluated as preparatory for Self-portrait with Red Coat (Fig. 26), painted in Paris. The dark background almost eats up her brown hair causing the face to jump out of the picture, confronting us with a persistent troubled stare. A dark line, hides the neck, separates dress from head, and thus makes her face float dramatically. The sharp angular lines of the bones, eyebrows and mouth reinforce the effect giving her face a mask-like quality. The stillness of her expression, is undisturbed by the costume, even stressed by the geometric patterns of the dress, medallion and coat. The absolute frontality and symmetry of the figure is intentionally emphasized by a vertical line that parts her hair and continues down to her nose and lips, and obvious again in the contrasting white stripe in her dress and closing of the coat. The use of bold colors and geometric patterning reinforces the abstract quality achieved by this symmetry.

Self-portrait with Blue Dress a pastel, is probably her last one, of around 1920 when Aurélia de Souza was in her

fifties. The color and style of the dress recall the Self-portrait with Red Coat. The face, however, does not show the strength and determination of the early portrait but is now emaciated and tired. The light greenish background spreads over the face with ghostly tones of death.

## 2.6 Style

Most of Aurélia de Souza's paintings are small, as was true for other women artists, and provincial male painters as well. This could be explained by the artist's lack of confidence, or it could simply be a question of economics, since small canvases were much easier to sell.

The competence of her academic style is clear in works such as Head of Child (Fig. 27), in the best tradition of Bastien Lepage (Fig. 28). Academic, however, is not a suitable label for all of her paintings. It excludes a number of stylistic innovations or experimentations that cannot be overlooked without dismissing her individuality.

Although Aurélia de Souza was formed under the naturalism of Marques de Oliveira, both his open-mindedness and her strong personality allowed for individual growth. In Paris, her provincial respect for academic instruction, kept her from following any of the current avant-garde tendencies. Like most art students, she only could be as advanced as the school would allow her to be.<sup>57</sup> Instruction at the Académie Julian, however, was of a "general, non-specific

<sup>57</sup> Boime, p. 21.

nature"<sup>58</sup> thus encouraging the students to experiment. Aurélia de Souza took advantage of that freedom, manifesting in her work a desire to avoid convention.

The tranquil luminosity of Marques de Oliveira's landscapes acquires in Aurélia de Souza radiant tonalities, especially in her flower paintings. She developed an eye for abstract patterns and bold colors, as evidenced in Self-portrait with Red Coat, Fishing Boats (Fig. 29) and Castelo do Queijo (Fig. 30).

The abstract quality of this last one is broken by the recognizable shape of the fort pinning the painting down to reality. Its geometric shape effectively contrasts with the randomness of the vegetation and the rocks. These are, by themselves, purely abstract. The whole painting suggests an exercise in contrast of color and form as the green vegetation contrasts with the beige of the stone and the linear geometric shape of the castle with the crumbling roundness of the rocks.

Fishing Boats is particularly striking because of the unusual gaiety of the colors, namely the bright cobalt blue of sky and ocean, and the green, orange, and yellow boats on the sand. The thick, irregular impasto adds to the modernistic character of the painting.

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<sup>58</sup> Cecilia Beaux, Background with Figures. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1930), p. 172.

De Souza often broke the evenness of the academic color scheme with a dab of bright color, as she did with the little pink spot on the house of View of Douro River (Fig. 31) and the pinkish petals in the water of Flowers on the Border of a Basin.

In Self-portrait with Bow and Portrait of Maria Helena (Fig. 32) Aurélia de Souza uses white extensively. The sharp black and white contrast in one, is softened into white and shades of grey in the other. This Portrait of Maria Helena displays both expertise and exquisite taste in the handling of the crisp white collar and the soft skin of the little girl whose rosy cheeks and lips are the only color in this otherwise silvery painting.

Aurélia de Souza usually uses composition as an accessory to the picture as a whole. To reinforce a mood as it is the case in Mary Magdalene where simple vertical lines on the horizontal plane add dramatism to the subject, or to emphasize by contrast as she does by placing her rounded Girl from Bretagne between two straight pillars.

However, she does sometimes enjoy playing with composition for its own sake. In View of Douro River she develops the diagonal line of the balcony in Balcony in Quinta de China into the more involved angular line of the balcony moving into the center of the picture plane. At the same time, she blocks that invasion with two obstructing vertical columns. In Landscape with Castelo de Queljo (Fig. 33) the

vastness of the view is controlled and at the same time amplified by the diagonal road coming from the left and merging into a swirling beach line.

EVALUATING AURÉLIA DE SOUZA

3.1 Attitudes towards women artists

In 1875 the role attributed to women in an otherwise progressive evaluation of the arts in Portugal was of decorating fans, china, and books, as women were not expected to pursue a higher level of art education. Just a few years later, however, in 1882, a woman was studying figure drawing at the Porto Academy and from then on the numbers escalated. In 1884 the first woman registered for history painting. Aurélia de Souza would be the fourth to do so in 1896.

Women artists who until then made their apprenticeship at home with members of their families or with minor art instructors, were, for the first time, on equal level of education with men. Aurélia de Souza was undoubtedly the most educated of the female artists of her time, the only one to have completed three years of art education in Paris after finishing the regular program in Porto.

With the invasion of women into the Academy, criticism became more strict and demanding. In 1886, Mariano Pina writing his "Chronica" about Portuguese artists in the Salon, comments on two sculptures exhibited by the Duchess of Palmela. As he praises the quality of both, he encourag-



es her to abandon subjects usually treated by amateurs and not by true artists. He ends his long considerations on the subject

It is necessary that you forget for a moment that you only intended to be an amateur and believe that you truly have talent and qualities that would honor a professional artist.<sup>59</sup>

This type of encouragement reserved for a high member of the aristocracy was not always used on less fortunate art students attending the private classes of major male painters such as José Malhoa in Lisbon and Artur Loureiro in Porto. The same was true with most women participating in group exhibitions after a few years of drawing classes and no formal instruction in painting. They were either ignored by the critics or dismissed under the label of "poor malhoas."<sup>60</sup>

### 3.2 The critics and Aurélia de Souza

Criticism of this time tends to be verbose, hyperbolic and subjective. Not surprisingly, favorite adjectives describing women's work were "adorable," "delightful," "charming." But these sugary attributes were also used on men. Marques de Oliveira himself was reported to be "one of the most beautiful ornaments"<sup>61</sup> of the Academy.

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<sup>59</sup> Mariano Pina, "Chronica," A Illustração, 1886, p. 178.d

<sup>60</sup> A reference to the artist José Malhoa (Fialho de Almeida, A Esquina, 1889, p.190, quoted by França, vol. 2, p.190).

<sup>61</sup> Article on Marques de Oliveira signed L.L., Arte Porto, October 1909, P.79.

When specifically evaluating the work of Aurélia de Souza, the critics, undoubtedly impressed by her academic accomplishments, would usually stress her training and technical competence: "talent allied with training" or "scrupulous and perfect." On the other hand, there is the perception that she has "powerful faculties" and a "virile talent." As early as 1897, when she was still a student of the Porto Academy, a severe critic recognized in her "talent hand in hand with audacity." At the Académie Julian she was a student "specially interesting and strong." She was also respected among the artists. Marques de Oliveira was reported to have had great admiration for her work<sup>62</sup> and the sculptor Teixeira Lopes invited her to fill a prestigious position in the Sociedade de Bellas Artes.

Modern reviews of Aurélia de Souza's work have rightfully placed her among the best portrait painters in Portuguese art history. J. A. França singled out her Self-Portrait with Red Coat.

the value of this work grows in time, as it assumes modern values....It is far beyond its Portuguese century and points a new way, which was then incomprehensible.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Júlio Brandão, introduction to the catalogue for the 1933 retrospective exhibition.

<sup>63</sup> França, vol.2,p.238. See also the introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition Pintores da Escola do Porto -- sec.XIX e XX, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, October 1983.

Other criticism evolves mainly around the two major retrospective exhibitions of 1936 and 1973. In the catalogue for the first one, Júlio Brandão wrote that

rarely do we find on her canvases that feminine fragileness which, when giving them a touch of grace and softness, takes away the vigorous individual touch of the masters.

In 1939 Joaquim Lopes saw in her a demonstration of how powerful are the "strength and the delicate manifestation of the spirit" put together.<sup>64</sup> In 1964, Manuel de Figueiredo insists on the "vigour" of her figures, the "audacious" intense colors of her flowers and comparing her with Marques de Oliveira finds in her splashes of light "chromatic vibrations" unattained by the master. The introduction to the catalogue for the second retrospective exhibition in 1973 mentions the modernity of Aurélia de Souza's flower paintings with "the vibration of light on the fragility of the flowers" and also her landscapes "treated with vigor and control."

### 3.3 Museums and Exhibitions

Most of Aurélia de Souza's work is in private collections. The Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis in Porto owns a few of her paintings, and has Self-portrait with Red Coat and Family Life—Working on permanent exhibit. Her work is also represented in the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea in Lisbon.

<sup>64</sup> Joaquim Lopes, "Aurélia de Souza," O Ocidente, vol. 5, 1939, pp. 78-85.

There were two major retrospective exhibitions of her work since she died. The first, in 1936, was held in the Porto Crystal Palace, organized by the municipality, included a total of 258 works. The second, took place in the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Porto, in 1973 and included 161 items.

She was represented in the section reserved for women from Porto in a major exhibition about Portuguese Women organized by the Lisbon newspaper O Século in 1930. In 1933 she was also part of a Retrospective of Portuguese Art held in Porto. In 1963 she was represented in the exhibition The Douro River Seen by the Visual Artists (oils and watercolors) in the Museu Nacional de Soares dos Reis, Porto.

Aurélia de Souza participated actively in local exhibitions all her life. Her name was always part of a variety of artistic events: exhibitions promoted by the art schools or the art associations, commemorative events, exhibitions for charity, exhibitions of women artists.

Yet, in spite of the relevant place she occupied in the Portuguese art scene and her success at the Académie Julian, she is not known to have exhibited in the Paris Salon or participated in any Portuguese delegation to an international Salon.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The information given in the introduction to the 1973 exhibition catalogue about Aurélia de Souza's participation in the International Exhibition of Santiago, Chile, in 1910 is incorrect: she was not among the Portuguese delegation to that exhibition nor was she among the Chilean artists. I am grateful to the director of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Nena Ossa, for this

The annual Salon was the major event for most art students in Paris. Howard Buttler, an American in France, described the situation in 1885:

The Salon is over. The medals have been given. A new art fiscal year begun. Paris has no longer any attraction to the artist. In a weeks time they will nearly all be gone ... It is under the inspiration of one Salon that the subjects for the next are chosen. Many of the artists go with the intention of spending a whole year in painting a single picture, all working for the "medaille d'honneur"<sup>66</sup>

Julian's students were as eager as everybody else to be accepted at the Salon. Lovis Corinth, who got his honorable mention in 1890, described the process involved in being accepted:

They [the students] rushed to the office to give the number that they got, which Jules registered and transmitted to the professors. This way they could recognize which were the paintings of their students. An establishment like the Académie Julian, which formed every year a good number of students who would become famous, was synonym of politic-artistic power, not only for the selection of the jury but also for the Medaille d'Honneur (...). This way professors and students supported one another.<sup>67</sup>

But being accepted could turn out to be a source of great disappointment and humiliation. Too often there were paintings hung in less than mediocre places, over doorways

information.

<sup>66</sup> Howard R. Butler Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Howard R. Butler, July 3, 1885, quoted in Sellin, p.9.

<sup>67</sup> Lovis Corinth, "Un Etudiant allemand a Paris a l'Académie Julian (1884-1887)," Gazette des Beaux Arts, vol.97, May-June 1981, p. 223. First French translation of a chapter from Legenden aus dem Künstlerleben. (Berlin: Cassirer, 1908).

or even on the ceiling. This not always meant that the painting had no quality but was a way of settling private grievances.<sup>68</sup>

An analysis of the list of participants in Portuguese delegations to international exhibitions can also be enlightening as to how the artists were selected. A good example is the delegation to the Paris World Exposition of 1900. Aurélia de Souza was then in Paris, as was her fellow student of both the Porto Academy and the Académie Julian, António Carneiro who participated with four oil paintings.

In a total of 38 painters, 11 were women and 7 were artists from Porto. The women were all from Lisbon and consistently upper class, often aristocrats. They exhibited most of the pastels and paintings on porcelain in the group thus exposing their dilettantism; the 20 per cent participation of painters from Porto did not represent the importance of the school; more than one third of the number of works exhibited were by the five major artists from Lisbon: Columbano, Malhoa, Carlos Reis, Veloso Salgado, and Souza Pinto. These were the only artists named in França's discussion of this delegation which also included, he says, "a handful of clever disciples..." (sic).<sup>69</sup> These statistics call for the commentary by a well known critic, Fialho de Almeida, who discouragely commented on the increasing numbers of amateurs in the exhibitions: "nepotism in exhibit-

<sup>68</sup> Corinth, p. 224.

<sup>69</sup> França, vol. 2, p. 89.

ing, nepotism in selling, and regarding talent -- zilch!"<sup>70</sup>  
(sic).

Aurélia de Souza was a very private person and probably did not care to become involved in the political games inevitable in these procedures.

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<sup>70</sup> Almeida, p. 190, quoted by França, vol. 2, p. 84.

CONCLUSION

Aurélia de Souza belonged to an unsophisticated working family and lived far from the mainstream of European modernistic ideas. The arts were not of first priority in the business-oriented city of Porto, and local artists found little support among the public, or the government for that matter.

Provincial women artists faced specific problems that, in most cases, proved to be overwhelming and account for obscure careers and forgotten works. Aurélia de Souza, however, armed with a strong personality and determination, overcame these difficulties and lifted herself to a position where her talent could not go unnoticed.

The choices she made throughout her life demonstrate her devotion to art: she enrolled in the Academia Portuense against her family's wishes, attended drawing classes with the nude model when this was not required, and proceeded to study painting, as opposed to the majority of the other students; She raised the funds to go to Paris and, once there, did not miss the opportunity to travel during the summer, always painting; finally, she returned to Porto and kept active until her death, exhibiting at every opportunity.



In addition to these profession related decisions, she made others, more personal, but also relevant to her painting career: contrary to the current use, she never married (the petty household problems that kept her away from her art work were enough to upset her) nor did she engage in social activities. Instead, she lived a notoriously secluded life. She totally disregarded public opinion, frequently riding her bicycle into the countryside, looking for interesting spots to paint, or dressing with no concern for fashion, although always with a taste for dramatic accents (see Fig.23).<sup>71</sup>

In spite of living in a society suspicious of independent professional women and in a limited artistic milieu, Aurélia de Souza seems to have been always in control of her life and career. She was not interested in the fame offered by the large international Salons, as was the case with other provincial artists.<sup>72</sup> Instead, following either a realistic evaluation of her options or her personal taste, she focused on relatively small-sized portraits and flower paintings, and through them, reached the level of excellence that ranked her among the best Portuguese artists of her time.

Aurélia de Souza displayed an individuality in her work that could not be dismissed by the gallant reviews usually given to female artists. Her paintings in general, and her

<sup>71</sup> Lopes, pp.84,85.

<sup>72</sup> Linda Nochlin, in Anne S. Harris and Linda Nochlin, Women Artists. 1550-1950, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1976, p.50.

portraits in particular, are so powerful, that critics have given her that dubious praise of saying her work resembles that of a man. This embarrassed her admirers who hastily reassured readers that she was a tender, soft-hearted, fragile woman:

In front of her portraits, landscapes, flowers, interiors, the viewer who doesn't know the artist, would believe admiring the strong, lively work of some extraordinary male painter.

This doesn't mean that she was a dry, stiff, woman ... on the contrary, Aurélia de Souza was delicate and fragile, with great tenderness for the flowers she lovingly cultivated in the gardens of Quinta da China.<sup>73</sup>

Aurélia de Souza knew that this "manly" strength in painting had nothing to do with the artist's gender but rather with the quality of the training. These words of a woman American art student at the Académie Julian could very well be de Souza's own:

Some of our countrymen find an impropriety in our working in a mixed atelier, and perhaps there is, according to society's code; But if a woman wants to be a painter, she must get over her squeamishness; if she wants to paint strong and well like a man, she must go through the same training ... There is no sex here; the students, men and women, are simply painters. In the atelier, excessive modesty in a woman painter is a sign of mediocrity; only the woman who forgets the conventionalities of society in the pursuit of art stands a chance for distinction.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Júlio Brandão, Exposição de Homenagem a Aurélia de Souza, (Porto: Câmara Municipal do Porto, June 1936).

<sup>74</sup> Albert Rhodes, "A Day with the French Painters," The Galaxy, vol. 16, July 1873, pp. 5-15.

## APPENDIX A

### A.1 Silva Porto

António Carvalho da Silva Porto (1850-1893) was born to a poor working class family. At the age of 12, he studied drawing in a vocational school and enrolled in the Academy at 15. He was a fine student and in 1873 obtained the scholarship to study landscape painting in Paris. He studied in the Ecole des Beaux Arts under the supervision of Yvon and Cabanel and on his own sought the teaching of Daubigny. He exhibited in the Paris Salons of 1876 and 1878, after a trip to Italy. He was also included in the Portuguese delegation to the World Exposition of 1878. Before returning to Portugal in 1879, he traveled to Belgium, Holland, England, and Spain. In the same year he was assigned the teaching of Landscape Painting at the Lisbon Academy. In 1880 he was active forming an informal art association the 'Grupo do Leão'. In 1891 he was the first president of another art association, the 'Grémio Artístico'. His abundant production, often lacking originality and spontaneity, demonstrates, however, the unifying good quality expected from a competent artist.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> França, Vol. 2, pp. 27-32.

## A.2 Columbano

Columbano Bordalo Pinheiro (1857-1929), the eleventh child in a family of twelve, grew up among artist: his father, Manuel Maria, a genre painter; one brother, Rafael, a caricaturist; one sister, Maria Augusta, a Flower painter. After an irregular student career, he stumbled from Genre to History Painting and began to find himself through humorous depictions of social life in Lisbon. He was privately sponsored to go to Paris in 1881 and reluctantly stayed there two years, aloof from both the Academy and the avant-garde groups. He exhibited in the Salon of 1882 and 1883 and returned to Lisbon, joining his friends in the 'Grupo do Leão'. His collective portrait of the group finally revealed his gift for Portraiture. Throughout his life he painted insightful portraits of his friends and associates most of which he either kept or gave away. In 1901, he started teaching Figure Painting in the Lisbon Academy and in 1914 became director of the Museum of Contemporary Art. He was awarded the Legion d'Honneur in 1900 and the Cross of Santiago in 1921. He had major exhibitions in Lisbon (1894 and 1904), Porto (1895), and Paris (1913). He exhibited and won medals in Brasil, United States, Germany, and England. In 1917 one of his still lifes was included in the collection of the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris and in 1927 he invited to paint a self-portrait for the Pitti gallery in Florence.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Thieme-Becker, Kunstler-Lexikon, Leipzig, 1934, vol. 4,

### A.3 Malhoa

José Malhoa (1855-1934) was born to a modest family in a small town near Lisbon. He studied in the Academy while working in a fashion store. He was the only major painter of this period who never studied abroad. He soon initiated a long repertoire of sympathetic depictions of peasant life interrupted with a few unsuccessful attempts in history Painting. He was identified with sunny, warm canvases; in 1928 was caricatured dipping his brush in the sun. However, his sensibility for atmospheric light could not develop within the limited horizons of the Portuguese art scene of the time. Besides an isolated impressionistic attempt with Autumn (1918), he stayed within the limits of genre painting. Malhoa took part in several annual exhibitions of the Société des Artistes Français. He was awarded a silver medal in the World Exposition of 1900 and an Honorable Mention in 1901. In 1927 he was awarded the cross of Santiago and in 1928 was nationally celebrated when his bust was inaugurated in his home town. Finally, in 1933, he was honored with the creation of the José Malhoa Museum.<sup>77</sup>

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p. 343. França, Vol. 2, pp. 254-277.

<sup>77</sup> Bénézit, Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs, Paris, 1876, vol. 7, p. 119. França, vol. 2, pp. 277-290. The Studio, 1905, vol. 26, pp. 242-247.

#### A.4 Marques de Oliveira

João Marques da Silva Oliveira (1853-1927), studied in the Porto Academy before winning a scholarship to go to Paris in 1873, to study Figure Painting. He exhibited at the Salon in 1876 and 1878. His role in the Porto art scene was crucial given the cultural isolation of the city. In 1881 he was one of the organizers of the Centro Artístico Portuense, a private initiative intended to complement the academic instruction. At the same time he taught figure drawing, history painting, and later became director of the Academy. His role in the shaping of Pousão, Sousa Pinto, and the second generation of naturalists including Aurélia de Souza and António Carneiro, is not always recognized and deserves attentive consideration.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> França, vol. 2, pp. 33-36.

Paris Salon de 1876, New York, 1977 (First published in 1876).

Paris Salon de 1878, New York, 1977 (First published in 1878).

A.5 Pousão

Henrique Pousão (1859-1884) was born in a small town in the south of Portugal and died there, a victim of tuberculosis. After having studied in the Porto Academy he went to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1880. A year later he moved to Rome and then to Naples and Capri. He exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1882. His finest, most original works were finished after 1882, when he had completely abandoned formal art instruction. On his own, he showed an understanding of Impressionism unique among the other Portuguese artists of the period.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> França, vol. 2, pp. 37-44.

A.6 Souza Pinto

José Júlio de Souza Pinto (1856-1939) was born in Azores before his family moved to Porto where he was educated. In 1880 he studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts under Bastien-Lepage and Cabanel. He won an honorable mention at the 1883 Salon, a silver medal at the 1889 World Exposition, and became a member of the jury in 1900. He was awarded the Legion d'Honneur in 1895 and the Cross of Santiago. His paintings were widely reproduced in France and were always very popular at the Salons. He probably remained in contact with the Portuguese students in Paris after settling in Bretagne. He made several trips to Portugal where he exhibited and was included in Portuguese delegations to international Salons.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Bénézit, vol. 9, p. 728.  
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## ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. A. de Souza, Interior (Lace-maker).



Fig. 2. S. de Souza, Interior (Lace-maker).



Fig. 3. S. Porto, Moor at Belas.





Fig. 4. Columbano, O Grupo do Leão.





Fig. 5. Malhoa, The Vow.



Fig. 6. M. de Oliveira, Waiting for the Boats.



Fig. 7. Pousao, White Houses in Capri.



Fig. 8. Pousao, House with Blue Shutters.



Fig. 9. S. Pinto, Broken Apple Tree.





Fig. 10. A. de Souza, Christ Ressuscitating Jairus' Daughter.



Fig. 11. A. de Souza, Mary Magdalene.

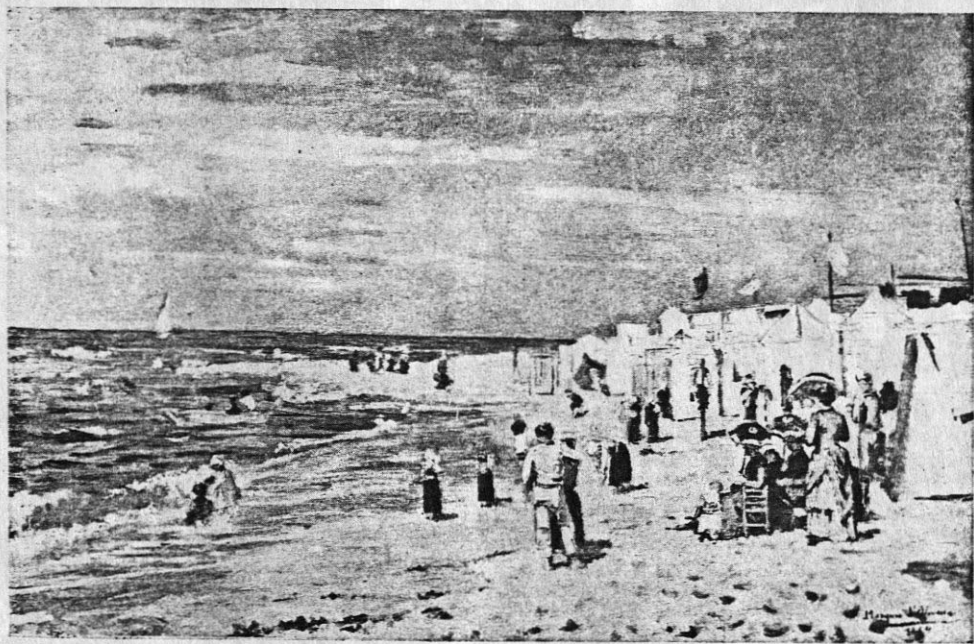


Fig. 12. M. de Oliveira, Beach -- Póvoa de Varzim.





Fig. 13. A. de Souza, Flowers on the Border of a Basin.

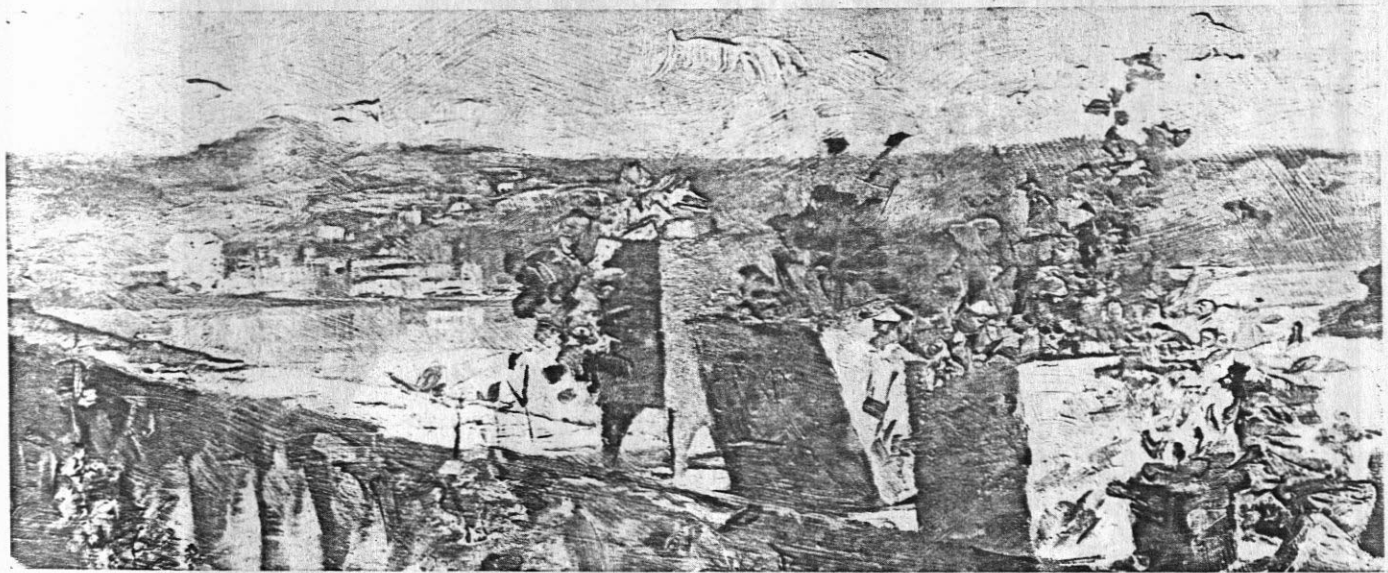


Fig. 14. A. de Souza, Balcony at Quinta da China.



Fig. 15. A. de Souza, Family Scene -- Working.





Fig. 16. A. de Souza, Family Life.



Fig. 17. A. de Souza, Young Women in the Fields.



Fig. 18. A. de Souza, Girl from Brittany.





Fig. 19. A. de Souza, Head of Girl.



Fig. 20. A. de Souza, Girl from Brittany.





Fig. 21. A. de Souza, Portrait of the Artist's Mother.



Fig. 22. A. de Souza, Portrait of Sophia de Souza.



Fig. 23. The Artist with Self-portrait with Bow.





Fig. 24. A. de Souza, Self-portrait with Black Dress.



Fig. 25. A. Whistler, Arrangement  
in Black and White no. 1.

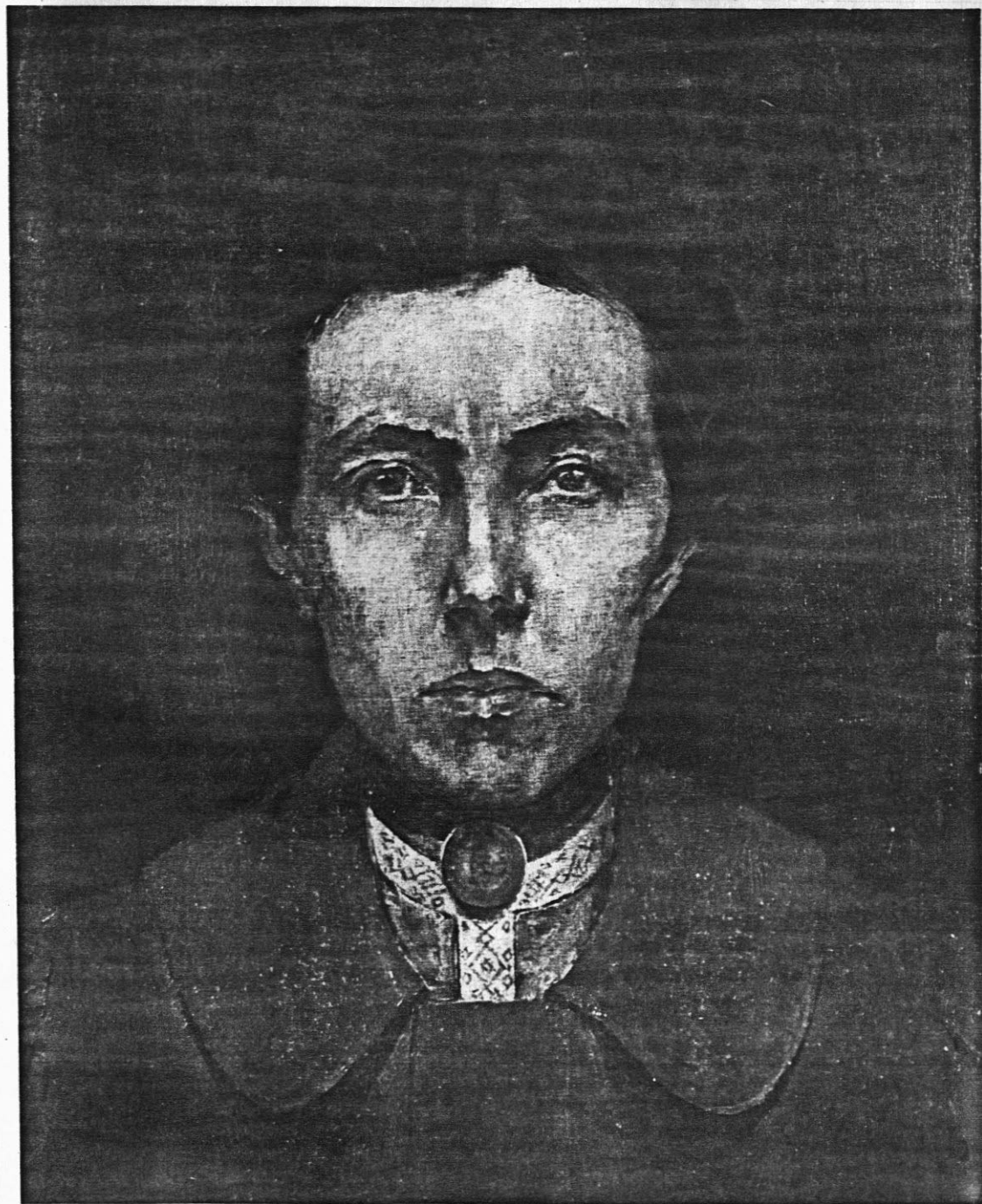


Fig. 26. A. de Souza, Self-portrait with Red Coat.





Fig. 27. A. de Souza, Head of Child.



Fig. 28. B. LePage, Going to School.





Fig. 29. A. de Souza, Fishing Boats.

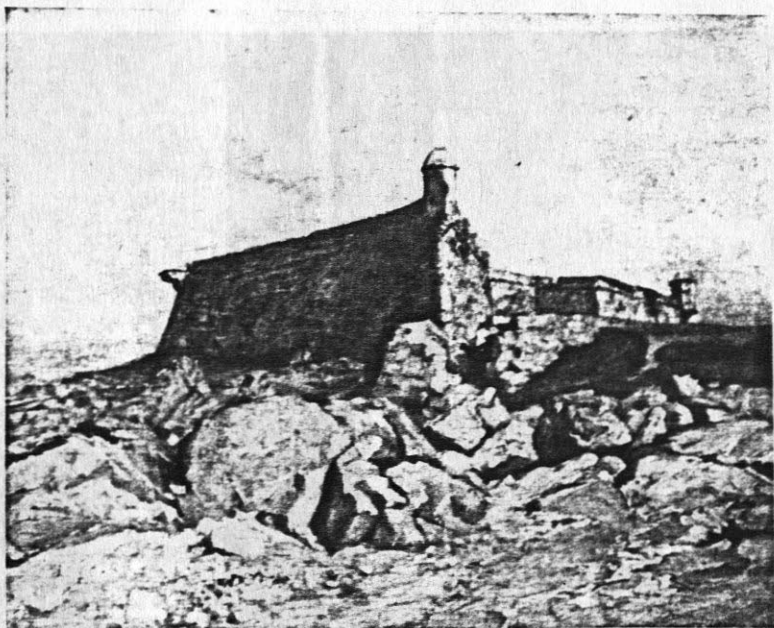


Fig. 30. A. de Souza, Castelo do Queijo.

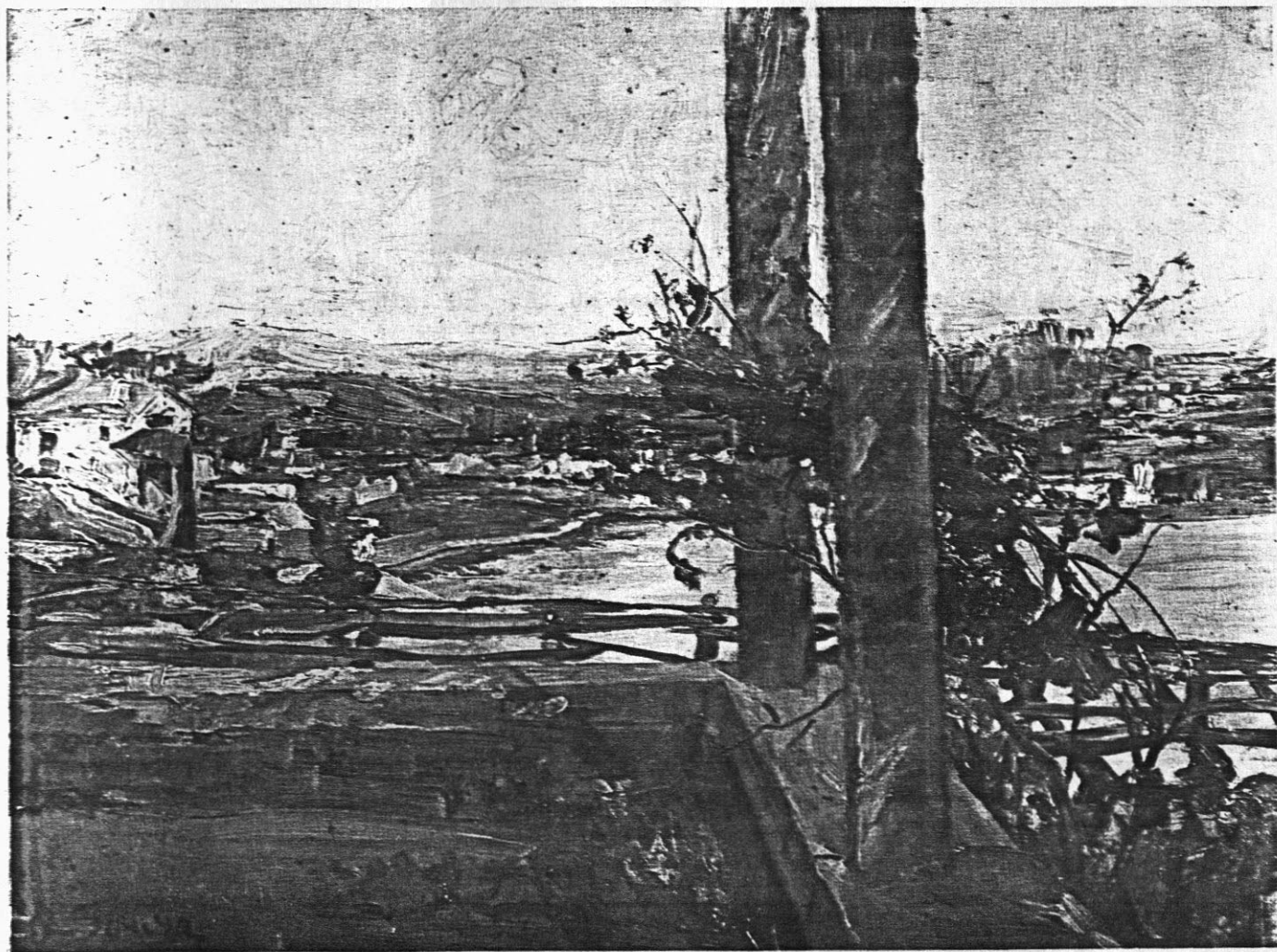


Fig. 31. A. de Souza, View of the Douro River.





Fig. 32. A. de Souza, Portrait of Maria Helena.



Fig. 33. A. de Souza, Landscape with Castelo do Queijo.

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