

Eroticism, Feminism and “Mátria”: The Revolution through the Writing of Natália Correia.

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Abstract: This article presents a scientific analysis of the trajectory and impact of Natália Correia (1923–1993) on the Portuguese sociological and cultural landscape of the 20th century, with the primary objective of understanding the author's role in the transformation of national social and cultural structures. Through an interdisciplinary approach, which combines perspectives from sociology, literary studies and political theory, the mechanisms by which Natália Correia's literary production, political intervention and activism contributed to the deconstruction of patriarchal paradigms, as well as to the strengthening of democratisation and social pluralisation processes in Portugal, are examined. By integrating concepts such as freedom, eroticism, feminism and the innovative notion of 'Mátria', the study highlights the author's importance in redefining gender relations, questioning established norms and promoting new models of citizenship and social participation. This article aims to analyse how Natália Correia's literary works and political actions contributed to the redefinition of gender relations and the consolidation of democratic practices in Portugal.

I. Introduction

Contemporary Portuguese sociology has deep roots in the Revolution of 25 April 1974. In this context, Natália Correia stands out as a figure who sparked important debates in Portuguese society. During the Salazar regime, marked by strict moral conservatism and a consolidated patriarchal structure, Natália Correia used literature as a mechanism for social criticism and an instrument of emancipation. Her literary legacy reveals a humanist and libertarian perspective, in opposition to cultural alienation and censorship, promoting fundamental values of individual freedom and cultural diversity (Correia, 1968; Correia, 1992).

Born in the Azores in 1923, Natália Correia distinguished herself as a poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, and Member of Parliament. She was known for rejecting the traditional roles assigned to women by the Estado Novo regime, consistently defending individual and collective freedom. Her career was marked by boldness, civic engagement, and intellectual enrichment.

After being abandoned by her father at the age of 11, she settled with her family in Lisbon, where she completed her secondary education. She published her first book, *Aventuras de um pequeno herói* (Adventures of a Little Hero), in 1946, aimed at children and young people, but she was best known for her poetry.

Natália Correia built a multifaceted career, working in areas as diverse as television, journalism, drama, poetry, political activism, and fiction. Her career is distinguished by the intensity of her social and political intervention and the relevance of her intellectual contribution to public debate.

Her work constitutes an incisive sociological analysis of the context of oppression experienced during the Estado Novo, highlighting a staunch stance in favour of freedom of expression and human rights. Natália Correia is recognised not only as a writer, but also as a symbol of the struggle for gender equality in Portugal. Her work continues to inform contemporary discussions about women's emancipation and fundamental rights. Texts such as 'A Madona' (1968) and 'Antologia da Poesia Portuguesa Erótica e Satírica' (1966) illustrate the centrality of the themes of censorship and female emancipation to sociological analysis, consolidating Natália Correia's position as a reference in the critique of prevailing social and cultural norms.

"A Madona" (1968) is a poetic work that stands out for its critical stance towards social repression and moral hypocrisy during the Estado Novo regime. In the book, Natália Correia addresses themes such as sensuality, female corporeality and spirituality, articulating elements of the sacred and the profane through language marked by symbolism. Through innovative poetic discourse, the author challenges religious and cultural dogmas, proposing a vision of women as autonomous subjects, creators and holders of freedom. Eroticism, in this work, is presented as a subversive vector capable of questioning patriarchal social norms and affirming the creative potential of women.

In turn, the Anthology of Portuguese Erotic and Satirical Poetry (1966) represents a landmark in national literature, compiling poems by various Portuguese authors who explore eroticism and satire as forms of social and political criticism. Organised by Natália Correia, this collection broke down barriers by valuing texts that had previously been marginalised or censored, promoting freedom of expression and diversity of perspectives. The anthology includes works from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, highlighting the recurrence of eroticism as a language of resistance and emancipation. By bringing together writers such as Bocage and António Botto, Natália Correia emphasises the relevance of humour, irony and desire in Portuguese cultural tradition, contributing to the consolidation of erotic and satirical discourse in the country's literature.

Her writing, with its firm, striking and provocative style, also stood out for its thematic diversity, including reflections on love, freedom, sensuality, death and society. She was also a pioneer of the national feminist movement, actively participating in the political and cultural sphere, defending women's rights, freedom of expression, social justice and democracy.

Natália Correia's feminist stance is based on a central appreciation of freedom, understood as a structuring element of thought and action. Through her work, the author defends a critical view of the role assigned to women, using eroticism as a language of liberation – 'Eroticism is the religion of freedom' (Correia, 1969,12) – and challenging entrenched patriarchal structures.

Among her most important works for sociological and feminist studies are 'A Madona' (The Madonna), 'Cântico do país emerso' (Song of the Emerged Country), 'O Vinho e a Lira' (The Wine and the Lyre) and the organisation of the 'Antologia da Poesia Portuguesa Erótica e Satírica' (Anthology of Erotic and Satirical Portuguese Poetry). These titles critically address themes such as oppression, censorship, sexual autonomy, and female emancipation, and are considered milestones in the consolidation of progressive national thought. Natália Correia's feminism is based on freedom, which she uses to criticise the social role of women and challenge patriarchal structures. Through eroticism, irony and symbolism, the author deconstructs normative discourses and exposes contradictions in Portuguese society. Her literary and public work demonstrates a commitment to female emancipation, the promotion of equality and respect for diversity.

In 'A Ilha de Circe' (1983), Natália Correia explores female myths to question stereotypes and propose narratives of empowerment. In "As Núpcias" (1992), the author introduces the concept of "matrism" as a response to

patriarchal hegemony, proposing a cultural reorganisation centred on the valorisation of the feminine: “The Fatherland is masculine, the Motherland is the promise of a new order” (Correia, 1992, 103).

The concept of ‘mátria’ (motherland), formulated by Natália Correia, proposes an alternative approach to the traditional notion of ‘pátria’ (fatherland), highlighting values associated with femininity, such as creativity, intuition and care. This perspective aims to overcome the historical marginalisation of women, suggesting structural changes in society that integrate feminine practices and knowledge as fundamental elements of a more equitable community. By questioning the predominance of the patriarchal model, the concept contributes to current debates on gender, citizenship and democracy, proving relevant to the renewal of social and cultural paradigms in Portugal.

Projects such as ‘Mátria’, featured in essays and television productions, reinforce the importance of women as creative and cultural agents. These initiatives contribute to consolidating Natália Correia's role as a central figure in Portuguese feminism, particularly through her ability to challenge conventions and promote significant social change.

Natália Correia's sociological impact is reflected above all in her uncompromising defence of women's rights and promotion of freedom. She combined literary activity with activism, joining movements and associations dedicated to gender equality and contributing decisively to the evolution of public debate in Portugal.

Her legacy remains relevant, inspiring successive generations with the richness of her reflections on the human condition, individual rights and Portuguese society as a whole. Her works highlight her role in the struggle for freedom and Portuguese feminism. Essential reading for discussing the autonomy, poetry and journey of a figure who challenged conventions.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the lasting influence of this author and other women involved in the national cultural and civic scene, whose importance was portrayed, for example, in the series ‘As 3 Mulheres’ (The 3 Women). This production recalls the fundamental role of figures such as Natália Correia, Snu Abecassis and Vera Lagoa in the resistance to the Estado Novo regime, highlighting the impact of their activism between 1961 and 1973, until the April Revolution of 1974.

References.

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