

“Out” Performing the Mãtria in Natália Correia’s *A Madona*¹

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Para incarnar a mãtria
[Natália Correia]
rodeou-se da sabedoria de homens.
(Menéres 25).²

A Mãtria da Língua Portuguesa?

Natália Correia was born in Fajã de Baixo on the Ilha de São Miguel in the Azores archipelago in 1923 and died in Lisbon in 1993. At different points in her colourful and well-documented life, she was a novelist, poet, playwright, journalist, opponent of the Estado Novo, publisher, critic, parliamentary deputy, literary salon hostess the owner and presiding doyenne of the Botequim bar in Lisbon, and presenter of the Portuguese cultural television series “Mãtria” which ran during the 1980s. Perhaps more than any other writer of her generation, Correia consciously assumed the public image of the feminine creative spirit, the presiding Matriarch of Portuguese national culture. Indeed, the critic António Quadros defends a fairly standard perception of Correia, when he describes her novel *A Madona* and her long

¹ I would like to acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Board in funding sabbatical leave in 2004, which enabled me to conduct the research for this project.

² In order to embody the motherland [Natália Correia] surrounded herself with the wisdom of men (all translations are mine)

poem “Mátria”, in terms of a “busca do arquétipo matrlista e matriarcal” (174).³

Correia herself embraces a theoretical and aesthetic position that she described as “matrismo” and which she explicitly distinguished from “feminismo”. She explains and justifies this distinction as follows in an interview in 1983:

A mulher deve seguir as próprias tendências culturais, que estão intimamente ligadas ao paradigma da Grande Mãe, que é a grande reserva, a eterna reserva da Natureza, precisamente para os impor ao mundo ou pelo menos para os introduzir no ritmo das sociedades como uma saída indispensável para os graves problemas que temos e que foram criados pelas racionalidades masculinas. É no paradigma da Grande Mãe que vejo a fonte cultural da mulher; por isso lhe chamo matrismo e não feminismo (Sousa 65).⁴

The Natalist/Maternalist Dilemma

Certainly Correia’s fascination with the paradigm of the Great Mother, particularly the light and dark aspects of the Mother Goddess identified by Jung, confirms her well-documented

³ Search for the maternal, matriarchal archetype. Admittedly Quadros was writing in 1969, referring to Correia’s novel *A Madona* which was published in 1968, but similar idealizations of Correia’s maternalism continue to be celebrated in many of the contributions to the National Costume Museum’s Correia tribute in 2000, organized by Madalena Braz Teixeira, as well as in the Porto University collection, *Natália Correia 10 Anos Depois...* produced in 2003.

⁴ Women should follow their own cultural tendencies, which are intimately linked to the paradigm of the Great Mother, the great reserve, the eternal reserve of Nature, precisely so that they can impose them on the world or at least introduce them into the rhythm of society, as the only possible way out of the serious problems we are now confronting, which were created by masculine rationality. I see the paradigm of the Great Mother as women’s cultural wellspring; that is why I call it ‘matrismo’ and not feminism.

affinity with surrealism.⁵ The Mother Goddess was a recurrent tropes among surrealist artists and writers including, perhaps most notably for our purposes, André Breton, who recreated the figure of the Egyptian goddess Isis in his *Arcane* (Carrouges 285). However, the theoretical and aesthetic positioning, which Natália Correia defined as “matrismo” was a complex and ambivalent statement, resisting simple reduction to what Jung himself termed “an invariable nucleus of meaning” (13-14) binding the variants of universalist archetype at the core.

Correia’s trademark maternalism actually existed in productive tension with her equally clear anti-natalist positioning and her defence of abortion rights.⁶ She also drew on an extensive and varied mythological repertoire, which served as much to destabilize as to delimit a feminine sexual symbolic grounded in the maternal. This paper will discuss Correia’s 1968 sexual “coming of age” novel *A Madona*, in order to explore the implications of her “matrismo” for her discursive construction of sexuality and its relationship to female artistic creativity. It will argue that since this “matrismo” was articulated through an anti-natalist stance, and relied heavily on a surrealist-influenced narrative aesthetic, it worked rather to question than to reinforce gender and sex typologies, suggesting a shifting dynamic, interaction between the sexes, which does not so readily cohere into the ideality of a socio-symbolic norm. Nor does Correia simply reproduce the bisexual “androgyny” myth, beloved of surrealism but potentially glossing the

⁵ See Fernando Pinto do Amaral, *100 Livros Portugueses do Século XX*. Correia was later to edit and introduce the controversial anthology *O Surrealismo na Poesia Portuguesa* in 1973.

⁶ See Fernando Rebelo, “A discussão do aborto na voz de Natália Correia” in *Natália Correia. 10 Anos Depois...*, 53-8. Rebelo discusses her 1982 speech to the Portuguese parliament on the subject. Her 1974 study *Uma Estátua para Herodes* takes a highly polemical Malthusian stance against what she terms the Portuguese natalist cult of “criancismo” (9) and “puerocracia” (69).

masculine assimilation of female procreativity.⁷ In so far as she defends a form of creative “bisexuality” Correia’s work does consciously evoke the effeminate masculinity of a Nietzschean Dionysus, celebrating the sublimation of male procreative energy, in terms of maternal gestation (Battersby 119-123). However, as the foregoing will indicate, by embedding her discussion of sexual mythologies within a socio-historical *Bildungs* narrative of female restitution and revenge, she places the emphasis rather on reclaiming the disruptive power of Dionysian creativity as a space for sexual self-definition in the artistic processes of women. In this respect, I claim that Correia gestures towards Judith Butler’s examination of the discursive limitations of sexuality and her focus on reiterable, phantasmatic trajectories of sexual identification (99).⁸

Re-Sexing the Madonna

A Madona was controversially received in 1968 as an iconoclastic statement on women’s emancipation. Many of Correia’s contemporaries also read it as a *roman à clef* seeking

⁷ As the feminist philosopher Christine Battersby has pointed out, in her study of gender and genius, the apparent cross-over of masculine and feminine attributes in the Jungian concepts of *animus* and *anima*, still maintains a sexual hierarchy in that the “masculinized” feminine, what Jung terms a parody of male logos, serves only to inspire male creativity the better, in a covert re-endorsement of Jung’s “logos spermatikos” or “spermatic word” (7), while masculinity benefits from the emotional aspects of the feminine. Battersby has suggested, therefore, that, “for a male art is *displaced* sexuality: for a female it is already *misplaced* sexuality. It is only males who can sublime (alchemists’ language) or sublimate (Freudian language) their sexual drive into art. The School of Spermatic Art has a lineage which is impressively (and depressingly) ancient” (70).

⁸ I refer here to Butler’s contention that “‘sexed positions’ are not localities, but rather citational practices instituted within a juridical domain” (108) dependent on the “authority-producing” effect of iteration, rather than grounded in any universal absolute.

clues to the identity of well-known writers and artists in their circle (Sousa et al. 42-4). Set in the 1960s and moving between Bohemian Paris and mythical, rural Portugal, *A Madona* is narrated in the first person as a *Bildungsroman*. It adopts a cyclical structure favouring a synchronic superimposition of time frames rather than following a linear, diachronic sequence. The protagonist and narrator, Branca, departs from her family’s ancestral landed estate in Briandos, rural Portugal, where she grew up, in order to explore her adult identity in Paris, inspired by the intellectual and artistic influences of de Beauvoir, Sartre and Artaud. She later also visits London, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Italy. The double temporality of the novel switches between Branca’s past and present life, and between her subconscious fantasies and her contemporary reality.

The connecting thread of Branca’s “coming of age” story is the avenging of her father’s humiliation of mother, during her childhood. Her father, a powerful landowner, enjoyed a series of publicly known love affairs, which ultimately caused his death whilst having sex with one of his mistresses. Branca’s mother tried to take public revenge on her husband, by donning a celebratory red dress for his funeral, but was hidden away by her family who declared her mad. Branca, who was a child at the time, was forced to connive at the drugging of her mother. The departure of the young adult Branca for Paris is therefore motivated by revenge on the male world for the mental and emotional destruction of her mother.

Branca leaves behind in Briandos a young, macho huntsman named Manuel whom she knows is attracted to her. She subsequently becomes involved with two different men, the neurotic, sadistic and over-intellectual Portuguese Miguel with whom she lives in Paris, and the disembodied and ethereal Danish anti-nuclear campaigner Lars Nielsen nicknamed o Anjo, or “the Angel”, whom she first meets in London. The tension of maintaining relations with both of them comes to a

head when Miguel manipulatively “desexualizes” Branca by exposing Anjo’s latent homosexuality as the reason for his rejection of sexual relations with Branca. She furiously departs for northern Europe where she explores the boundaries of her own sexuality when she encounters Elsa, a Danish lesbian.

Branca finally returns to Briandos during the winter, at the time of the full moon. She embarks on a physically passionate relationship with Manuel whose name also, of course, evokes Emmanuel or Christ, gradually assuming total power over him as she sadistically abuses and degrades him in a ritual of revenge for her father’s maltreatment of her mother. When Miguel comes to Briandos and resumes his relationship with Branca, Manuel descends into despair as he realizes he will never truly possess her, and shoots himself with his own hunting rifle. The scenes from Manuel’s funeral which provide the opening for *A Madona* are repeated at intervals throughout the narrative, fused with descriptions of Branca’s father’s funeral, rhetorically connecting the two men in a cycle of death and resurrection, the female burial and regeneration of the phallus. The novel ends as Branca returns to Paris with Miguel, the sexual and creative equilibrium of their relationship restored.

This cyclical narrative structure of departure, return and female revenge is interwoven with a dense web of mythical reference and fantasy intervention, evoking Branca’s subconscious response to her experiences, and connecting her to a series of figures from classical literature and mythology, particularly mother goddesses, such as the Egyptian Isis and the Babylonian Ereshkigal. The myth and fantasy elements of the narrative are introduced largely through Correia’s deployment of “le hasard objectif” or “objective chance”, the surrealist device, most famously developed by André Breton. Objective chance may be broadly defined as the ability to influence material reality through powerful acts of the imagination or as Michel Carrouges puts it, with reference to Breton, “une téméraire prétention de forcer le merveilleux à se produire au défi des lois

les plus élémentaires du principe de réalité” (248) such that Breton’s surrealist figures are “fantômatique” (249). Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron’s analysis of women surrealists adds a further dimension to “hasard objectif” which is of relevance to my reading of Correia, in so far as it opens up a consideration of temporality. Chénieux-Gendron refers to “le hasard objectif” operating through a series of “glissements référentiels” which, in narratological terms, shift the emphasis from “histoire” to “discours” (60). These referential slippages also, I would add, have the effect of exposing temporal disjunctures between atemporal mythologies (discours) and linear history (histoire). Thus the novel’s Greco-Roman, Egyptian and Babylonian mythological discourses, spinning on a discursive axis of repetition, reiterate sexual identifications through the ages, the Madonna, Isis, Osiris, Dionysus, Pentheus, according to a cyclical narrative logic which destabilizes and disperses the linear narrative history of Branca’s sexual maturation. The temporal undecidability which results from these constant “glissements” between the novel’s time schemes, has the effect of exposing the temporality of repetition itself as a random, artificial force sedimenting the Judeo-Christian sexual symbolic as law.

Women Go Back to Bacchus

The key mythical paradigms for Branca’s appropriation of the phallus are the Greek story of the dilaceration of Pentheus King of Thebes by the *bacchantes*, famously represented in the Euripidean drama *Bacchae*, and the Egyptian fertility myths surrounding Isis and Osiris.⁹ These overlapping mythical referents produce a complex merging of de-individuated

⁹ See António Quadros. References to mythical sources in *A Madona* are drawn primarily from James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough*. On the dilaceration of Pentheus, see 378-9. On the fertility myths based on the scattering of Osiris, see 362-8.

characters, destabilizing the novel's kin relations and sexual identities. Thus Manuel's funeral is also Branca's father's, Branca herself embodies her mother's vengeful spirit, she sees her lover Miguel as both son and lover, and the boundaries of her own sexuality and Miguel's intersect with those of o Anjo and Elsa. If the story of Dionysus and the "bacchantes" underpins Branca's revenge on her father, the regeneration myths associated with Dionysis and Osiris are the main referent for Branca's relations with Manuel and Miguel. All of these myth complexes detail the physical destruction and dispersal of the male body, and its eventual restitution to wholeness by a redemptive feminine, the opposing facet to the destructive force.

In the story of the Bacchae, Pentheus the king of Thebes embodies the spirit of law and rationalism. He is torn to bits by his own mother, Agave, along with the women of Thebes, the "maenads" or "bacchantes", who are followers of Bacchus, because he has tried to prevent them from enjoying wild drunken rites in celebration of the Bacchanalian cult and denied the divinity of Bacchus. Having been driven into a frenzied state by Bacchus, the women of Thebes eventually return to their senses and realize what they have done. The dilaceration of Pentheus also echoes the tale of Bacchus'/Dionysus' own destruction by the Titans in Orphic myth. In this version Hera, the wife of Zeus, is jealous of her husband's love for the mortal Semele, the mother of Dionysus, so she has the Titans tear the child to pieces, to cook and eat him. However, his heart remains and Rhea the mother of Zeus is able to put him back together and regenerate him.

In her revenge against Penthean rationalism, Branca gradually assumes the mythological role of the "maenad", the servant of Dionysus, as she visualizes her mother as Agave awakening the "ménadas adormecidas" (17)¹⁰ and later exhorting all the woman at the father's funeral to take their

¹⁰ Sleeping maenads.

revenge on their faithless “inchados consortes” (56)¹¹ by tearing them to bits. As she departs for Paris, Branca imagines that she is urged on by the voice of her mother telling her:

Vai!.. vai!... chegou a hora! Vai unir-te às humilhadas filhas da noite, tuas irmãs! Ao som dos tambores do sangue ide acordar a Grande Mãe! Quebrai o vidro tumular em que o tirano coroado de louro aprisionou a sua augusta ira! Chegou a hora! Libertai a fúria exilada nos cristais do seu sono milenário! Chegou a hora! (17-18).¹²

Branca later imagines her mother gratefully kissing the mouth of the local prostitute Carriça whose sexual activity had killed Branca’s father, and serving pieces of the father’s body to the “maenads” in the manner of profane communion hosts.

The culmination of Branca’s revenge ritual significantly takes place during the winter. She returns to Briandos asking “estará aqui a salvação?” (136)¹³ and subsequently watching the local peasants perform the same Bacchic ritual dances that “os lusitanos executavam nas noites de prenilúnio” (sic) (146).¹⁴ Her metaphorical gestation of the creative spirit is associated with suppression of the body in the winter months when “o corpo seca. O espírito desperta da sua sonolência e inteiriça-se como as ideias de um filósofo ou o desprezo do monge pela

¹¹ Bloated consorts.

¹² Go!... go!... your hour has come! Go and join the downtrodden daughters of the night, your sisters! Go and rouse the Great Mother to the beat of the drums! Shatter the glass tomb in which the laurel-crowned tyrant has imprisoned your righteous anger! The hour has come! Unleash your fury exiled in the glass chambers of millennial slumber! Your hour has come!

¹³ Will my salvation be here?

¹⁴ That the ancient Lusitanians used to perform on nights with a full moon.

carne. E nasce o génio. A técnica da crueldade” (227).¹⁵ As Branca finally drives Manuel to insanity through her finely calculated cruelty and indifference towards to him, he shoots himself with his rifle, the symbol of his own phallic potency which underlines his association with the ancient fertility gods killed, buried and resurrected to restore life to communities and crops. As Branca explains to Miguel, “sentia que se o [Manuel] destruísse me consumava realmente como mulher” (219).¹⁶ As the novel concludes, Miguel and Branca leave behind the mourning rituals for Manuel at Briandos and return to the degenerate urban modernity of Paris to enjoy the spring. Branca has finally reached sexual maturity by silencing the destructive “bacchantes” of her ancient “memória celular” (221) or cellular memory.

The mythical referent for Branca’s sacrifice of Manuel is that of the Egyptian fertility god Osiris whose jealous brother/father Set kills him and then tears his body to pieces, scattering the fragments over the entire land of Egypt.¹⁷ Osiris’s wife Isis, who is also his sister, however, lies on top of the dead body of Osiris, in the guise of a hawk flapping its wings, and is thus impregnated with a son Horus. Isis also seeks out and rejoins all the scattered pieces of Osiris’ body. The only missing piece, which Isis cannot find is the phallus, which has been thrown into the river and eaten by fish. Isis thus fashions Osiris a new phallus, which serves to commemorate him as a god of fertility, in future rituals (Frazer 362-5).¹⁸ The Osiris subtext is

¹⁵ The body dries up. The spirit wakes from its sleep and stiffens like the ideas of a philosopher or a monk scorning the flesh. And genius is born. The technique of cruelty.

¹⁶ I felt that if I killed him (Manuel) I would truly be consummated as a woman.

¹⁷ See António Quadros, 177.

¹⁸ Other versions detail the resurrection of Osiris, pieced together by Isis and her sister, with the help of the embalmer Anubis, and brought to life by Isis

further underlined in *A Madona*’s closing passages as Branca comments regarding Miguel, “vou procurar os pedaços do meu filho e amante espalhados por toda a face da Terra. Até que os céus chovam leite” (268).¹⁹ Thus Branca, like Isis, refashions the creative phallus for Miguel in an apparent enactment of the redemptive feminine role. At the same time, however, this Egyptian evocation of regeneration refers back to a crossing of the rules of kinship laid down in western culture by the strictures of the incest taboo, since Isis is both wife and sister to Osiris. This licenses, in turn, a blurring of sexual symbolic law as Isis appropriates the phallus and actively impregnates herself, becoming revered as Mother to the Egyptian people through the regeneration of a husband/son.

The Mother of De/generation

Similarly blurring both kinship and generation by referring to Miguel as her “filho e amante”, Branca explicitly refuses to conceive real, physical children as a continuity of her dead father’s three hundred year-old lineage, originally founded by a High Court Judge. This paternal control of female reproduction through genealogy, is apocalyptically linked to the “máquina do dia do juízo” (155) or Doomsday machine. Preferring instead an “irónico desfecho dos votos formulados há três séculos pelo Desembargador” (154)²⁰ her ultimate revenge on her Penthean father is her rejection of maternity as she exclaims:

flapping her wings over him, and subsequently becoming lord of the underworld (Frazer 366-7).

¹⁹ I will seek the pieces of my son and lover scattered over the surface of the Earth. Until the skies weep milk. It is noteworthy here that the Maenads, when possessed, could create the miracle of bringing forth milk by scratching the earth with their fingers. See Carlos Parada.

²⁰ An ironic closure to the wishes expressed three centuries earlier by the Judge

Ter um filho?! - pensava eu – só se for do Espírito Santo.

Presumo que os meus germes de mulher me assinalavam uma maternidade mais transcendente e necessária do que aquela que brota dos filhos nascidos da carne como as crias paridas pelas vacas.(147-8).²¹

Connecting paternal laws of natalism and biological essentialism, with the fatalism of nuclear holocaust, the Domsday, as the culmination of enlightenment rationalism, Correia dramatically dearticulates her celebration of the Mother Goddess from any grounding in socio-symbolic practices of motherhood or the reproduction of kinship. Thus Correia's assertion of Branca's sexual maturation is not ultimately stabilized by the social normativity of reproduction. Nor is it effectively subjected to symbol law by differentiation from homosexuality, as the foregoing will show.

If the figure of Branca's father and her male ancestry represent a deadly hypermasculinity, Miguel and o Anjo are, conversely, deprived of their phallic creativity. Presented as antagonistic, self-alienated mirror images of each other, Miguel and o Anjo are intellectually and physically emasculated respectively. Quadros describes Miguel as:

A imagem do intelectual do Ocidente, cuja obra-prima é a invenção da bomba atômica, cuja espiritualidade é literata, árida, enciclopédica e auto-suficiente, cujos caminhos racionalistas o

²¹ Have a child?! – I thought – only if it is with the Holy Spirit.

I believe that my female seeds predestined me for a more transcendent, vital type of maternity, than the kind that springs from children born of the flesh like the offspring of cattle.

conduziram à angustia (sic) sem sentido, à noção do absurdo, ao niilismo, à auto-destruição... (176).²²

Miguel’s strongest affirmation of sexual desire for Branca emerges as a perverse “double negative” in his denunciation and rejection of o Anjo’s latent homosexuality. It is through this unveiling of o Anjo’s homosexuality, that Correia directs Branca to explore the experiential limits of her own sexual desires and identifications. When Branca initiates a relationship with o Anjo, believing that Miguel does not know, she cannot understand why o Anjo does not make love to her. Miguel takes revenge by outing o Anjo in order to humiliate them both. Embroiled in an erotic, physical struggle with o Anjo, Miguel fends off his advances, and rages against “homossexuais contrafeitos! A perigosa argila de que são feitos os guerreiros e os idealistas tiranos” (186).²³ Yet Miguel’s defensive assertion of his own sexuality is no less “counterfeit”. His “masculinity” is a relative, artistic positioning built on the sublimation of desire, rather than any authoritative statement of embodied, social experience. He claims, “só as mulheres nos dão a sensação do inalcançável” (186)²⁴ a sentiment that he repeats at the end of the novel, stating “quero o meu ciúme vivo [...] é o que resta de individualmente criador” (259).²⁵

²² The image of the Western intellectual, whose greatest masterpiece has been the invention of the atom bomb, whose spirituality is literate, arid, encyclopaedic and self-sufficient, whose decision to follow a rationalist path has driven him to meaningless *angst*, to the notion of the absurd, to nihilism, to self-destruction.

²³ Fake homosexuals! That dangerous clay of which warriors and idealistic tyrants are made.

²⁴ Only women give us a sense of the unattainable.

²⁵ I want my jealousy to stay alive [...] it is the only thing left that is individually creative.

Rather than staying in Paris to act as Miguel's artistic muse, Branca responds to the fight between the two men by leaving Miguel and going in search of her own sense of the "unattainable", as she travels first to Italy and then to Scandinavia. Her experiences of sexual harassment in Rome cause her momentarily to consider lesbianism, the joy of "uma só carne pulsando no amor de se saber indivisível no núcleo" (193).²⁶ Yet, she fears the prospect of real homosexual contact when Elsa, a Danish lesbian, shows a sexual interest in her. On her return to Briandos, Branca resumes the passionate sexual relationship with Manuel.

These gestures of distancing from homosexuality are particularly revealing as regards Correia's treatment of phantasmatic sexual identification. As Judith Butler remarks, "if the figures of homosexualized abjection *must* be repudiated for sexed positions to be assumed, then the return of those figures as the sites of homoerotic cathexis will refigure the domain of contested positionalities within the symbolic" (109). For Butler the symbolic law governing sexual "norms" institutes its regime of power by repeated citation of the law working as a kind of "self-fulfilling prophecy". However, this repeated citation must also, following Butler's Foucauldian line of argument, produce proliferating forms of resistance such that the repudiation of homosexuality backfires on its own terms. For this reason, I would argue, although the novel concludes with an apparently clear acquisition of heterosexual maturity, which has entailed a process of differentiation from homosexual "alternatives", the sexual identifications adopted by Branca and Miguel circulate in a purely citational "empty space" which increasingly declares itself to be such. Identifying with the shifting, sexually ambivalent figures of mythology, untethered by the normative social demands of reproduction, and ultimately unpunishable for

²⁶ One single flesh beating with the love of knowing itself to be indivisible at its core.

the “suicidal” death of Manuel, Branca and Miguel point towards the fantastic and phantasmatic nature of sexual identification beyond the limits of the law, as a source of subversive and creative inspiration.

Risking the “Matrismo” Metaphor

I began my consideration of sexual identification in Correia’s work by citing her often-reiterated definition of “matrismo” as constitutively opposed to “feminismo”. I would like to conclude by revisiting this from a different angle. Correia repeatedly and vehemently repudiated the key moments and manifestos of 1960s radical feminism in the US and UK, in terms uncannily resonant with Branca’s and Miguel’s rejections of homosexuality. No feminist drew greater vituperation from Correia than the American Valerie Solanas, in her article “O Manifesto S.C.U.M.”, that appeared in the arts and literature supplement of *A Capital* in 1970. Solanas’s notorious SCUM manifesto (Society for Cutting Up Men) had been written in 1967 and published in 1968, the same year as Correia’s *A Madona*, and also the year in which Solanas shot and wounded Andy Warhol, ultimately precipitating his early death. Interestingly, although Correia condemns Solanas, she also refers to her at one point as a mythological “bacchante”, as if effectively writing her into the text of *A Madona*.²⁷ What Correia cannot forgive Solanas is her promotion of a painfully material “dilaceration” process, the literalization of the “feminist metaphor” for creativity. Solanas’s cutting men off, by cutting them up implies for Correia the absolute, and deadly, closure of the symbolic, the impossibility of repetition or reiteration,

²⁷ As Teresa Horta points out in her preface to Correia’s *Breve História da Mulher* Correia’s appalled fascination with Solanas rather betrays “uma espécie de efeito de espelho no qual Natália se veria um pouco reflectida” (15) [a kind of mirror effect in which Natália would have seen some reflection of herself].

heralding the death of art itself, not just of the male artist. Correia voices her objection as follows:

Solanas intui magistralmente a peculiaridade de uma cultura feminina, uma cultura vital em que as ideias se materializam em vez de hierarquizarem no olimpo literário da vida que podia ter sido vivida. Mas a autora do S.C.U.M. Manifesto falha estrondosamente quanto ao conteúdo dessa cultura, quando a exige unilateral e pasmadamente partenogenética, eliminando o objecto apaixonante da subjectividade feminina: o homem, a humanidade que a mulher não é, a carência que excita a imaginação feminina, tal como a mulher que o homem não é, é a privação inquietante que exacerba a imaginação criadora do homem (*Breve História da Mulher* 161-2).²⁸

Admittedly, as the above suggests, Correia tries to locate a clear heterosexual differentiation at the centre of an artistic process driven by a Lacanian sublimation of desiring lack. Yet this distinction, by its very nature, does not reliably hold in practice. The figures of homosexuality which are implicitly repudiated in this move, return, as Butler suggests, “as the sites of homoerotic cathexis [to] refigure the domain of contested positionalities within the symbolic” (109). Correia effectively goes on to recognize this, as the desire *for* the other, spills over into the desire to act out, to *become* the other, in the sexually contested

²⁸ Solanas brilliantly intuits the specificity of a feminine culture, a vital culture in which ideas materialize rather than being structured as a hierarchy on the literary Olympus of a life that could have been lived. But the author of the S.C.U.M Manifesto makes a disastrous mistake regarding the content of that culture when she demands that it be unilateral and foolishly parthenogenic, eliminating the desired object of feminine subjectivity: man, the humanity that woman is not, the lack that inspired the female imagination, just as the woman that man is not, is that disturbing privation that drives the creative imagination of man.

domain of symbolic identification as artists. Thus Correia describes poetry as emerging from “uma cosmovisão feminina havendo o homen quando poeta de proceder como actor”²⁹ whereas literature *per se*, “é a aplicação de um conceito mimético que subentende a capacidade que a mulher tem de masculinizar o seu poder criativo” (159).³⁰

In her attempt to consider these cross-gendered projections of artistic subjectivity as interdependent and of equal value, Correia moves to envision for both “sexes”, and often in spite of herself, a dynamic, performative interaction between sexual and artistic identification that is not inevitably subject to, nor constitutive of, the hierarchical ideality of paternal law. In this respect, I contend that Correia’s engagement with surrealism in *A Madona* as well as in her better known poetry, enabled her to open up a discussion of sexuality and creativity along the discursive perimeters of symbolic law in a way that was highly productive for her own later writings on gender, as well as for the new generation of women writers, including iconoclastic feminists such as Maria Teresa Horta, whom she influenced and inspired in the 1970s.

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²⁹ A feminine vision of the world such that the man who seeks to be a poet must proceed in the manner of an actor.

³⁰ “is the application of a mimetic concept which assumes woman’s capacity to masculinize her creative power.”

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