

Maria Isabel Barreno and Maria Teresa Horta



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Maria Isabel Barreno - Discrimination is everywhere – hidden and usually within us, both women and men. We accept things as ‘natural’, but they are not natural. They are cultural norms that determine the ways things are. Maria Teresa Horta - What I tell young women is - do not to give up on their dreams. The struggle is not for social liberties, since these have already been established; the struggle is rather to change the mentality, to one of change.

The 2 Marias

These Two ‘Marias’ became famous in the early 70s, when in 1972 together with Maria Velho da Costa^[1], they published the now famous **New Portuguese Letters** [*Novas Cartas Portuguesas*]. It was the very first outspoken criticism condemning the Portuguese dictatorship. The book consists of letters, essays, poems, and fragments that portray Portuguese society, but specifically the condition of women in Portugal. The book’s publication resulted in the authors being arrested. But they were able to avoid imprisonment by paying a sizable bail. The judgement was given after the revolution in April 1974 which ended the dictatorship, and the authors were finally acquitted. No text is signed, and to this day, it remains unknown who wrote what, in the book.

The book generated tremendous discussion in Portuguese society and also internationally, when it was published. The New Portuguese Letters stands as a recognised contribution to Portuguese culture. The book was translated and published in many countries. **Maria Isabel Barreno, Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Velho da Costa** have continued to develop their own individual paths in life, but their collective part in changing the lives of Portuguese women for the better, remains a historical fact.

Maria Isabel Barreno

Maria Isabel Barreno published her first novel in 1968. Since then she published more than 20 books, which include novels, short stories and essays. She won a prize (Fernando Namora) with one of her novels, and two prizes (Pen Club and Portuguese Writers Association) with her short stories, but the book she considers the most important of her works is "A Morte da Mãe" ("The Death of the Mother", and, "La Disparition de la Mère", in the French translation) where, she analyses the historical causes and consequences of oppression of women.

Her activities include lectures in universities in Portugal and abroad, newspaper articles, and interviews on television. She believes that women today have more opportunities and more freedom in their life choices than they had in the seventies.

[¹] **Note:** Due to their revolutionary writing, EIGE has received and accepted the collective nomination of the inspiring women, Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno, and, Maria Velho da Costa, the authors of New Portuguese Letters. Although EIGE persevered in its attempts to contact Maria Velho da Costa for several weeks, it was without any success. Thus, unfortunately, the Women Inspiring Europe 2013 Calendar provides information only on Maria Teresa Horta, Maria Isabel Barreno.

Maria Teresa Horta

Maria Teresa Horta made her publishing debut in poetry in 1960 with "Mirror Home". This was considered a turning point in 20th Century Portuguese poetry. Since then, she has continued to produce a range of feminist literature, exploring **and** highlighting the experience of women. By 2012, her poetic work includes eighteen books published in Portugal, Brazil, and France. She believes that there has been improvement in Portugal as a result of their book. "All Portuguese people gained as a result of the 1974 Revolution, but above all it was women who benefited the most."

Maria Teresa Horta has received several tributes in Portugal and Brazil. Her latest novel, "The Lights of Leonor", published in 2011, was considered one of the great works of contemporary Portuguese literature. She has been awarded the Prix D. Dinis and Maximum Literature Prize, two major literary awards in Portugal. In 2012, she published 'The Words of the Body', a collection of her works published over half a century.

Note: the interviews with Maria Teresa Horta and Maria Isabel Barreno couldn't have been conducted without the contribution of Ms Daniela Melo. She voluntarily joined the project team and facilitated the communication while providing English / Portuguese interpretation. Ms Daniela Melo has previously interviewed Teresa Horta and Isabel Barreno when she was collecting information on women's movements in Portugal for her PhD thesis.

Metadata

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MONTHLY PROFILE: August 2013

GENDER AREAS: [culture](#)