



MARIA E SOPHIA — CONFIDÊNCIAS E DESABAFOS (2.ª ED.), BY ROSABELA AFONSO. EDITORIAL NOVEMBRO (2022)

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I choose *Maria e Sophia — Confidências e Desabafos* to offer a few brief comments—just an uncommitted reader’s perspective—although I have informally expressed my thoughts on other books by Rosabela Afonso (*O Visionário* and *O Chá da Joaquina*, both with original and highly personalized illustrations, as well as *Os Tempos de Sophia*, a biographical work whose illustrations by Sara Afonso captivated me from the very first stroke).

In this work, we get to know the special complicity and friendship built between Maria de Jesus Simões Barroso Soares and Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, or simply Maria and Sophia, two women who left their mark on our time, the arts, and the fight for democracy and freedom in Portugal during the pre-Carnation Revolution period.

Not surprisingly—but no less enchanting for it—we find a solidly structured text, infused with sweetness and hope. Rosabela Afonso is a meticulous author, attentive to detail: this work is the result of thorough research among testimonials, documentaries, and biographical works. The text, therefore, bears a realistic stamp, in which the blank spaces in history are filled with the imagination, intuition, deduction, and creativity typical of fiction authors.

History offers us fragments, circumstances, facts, dates and names, events, and significant moments in societies and the dynamics of peoples. Moreover, this text reveals the author’s meticulous work. The understanding and solid intimacy woven between these two extraordinary women, brought together by circumstances and political and philosophical convictions, are evident. Two intellectuals, reflective and active women, mothers, committed to freedom and the anti-fascist struggle; resilient and resourceful women whose husbands experienced the pain of imprisonment and were persecuted, pressured, watched, and cornered in various ways. These women lacked neither courage, faith, nor constancy, as they knew the solidarity and support of friends (even if many, out of fear or conviction, turned their backs on them) and always managed to envision a better future, one of development—and with respect for the plurality of opinions, cultures, and mentalities, without political prisoners. It was this state of mind that animated them until the arrival of *spring*, often alluded to in Rosabela’s work with a taste of freedom.

Maria was a dedicated and esteemed actress, professor, school director, and political activist, one of the founders of the Socialist Party in 1973. She was repeatedly prevented from practicing her profession as a teacher in public and private education, as well as an actress, for political reasons. This situation only completely cleared with the April revolution. Her husband, Mário Soares, who would become the President of Portugal between 1986 and 1996, experienced imprisonment and exile during the dictatorship, a period when the family and professional responsibilities of his wife became even greater, within the context of both the couple and the extended family.

The friendship between Maria and Sophia, an adept poet, distinguished storyteller, translator, and author of several works for children and young people (who would later receive the Camões Prize in 1999), seemed inevitable. Similar in age, both experienced the anguish of seeing their husbands incarcerated and having to maintain an unwavering stance of courage and resistance in the face of the rest of the family, especially younger children and elderly parents. Sophia, of aristocratic roots, often had to confront close people for defending



democratic values, as emphasized in Rosabela Afonso's work. At that time, Sophia was married to Francisco Sousa Tavares, a journalist, politician, and lawyer.

Both are described in this theatrical text as the axis of their respective families, defenders of heritage, survival, and family cohesion, symbols of resistance. Courageous, intelligent women of strong convictions, focused on family, work, the defense of democratic values, and affection; but also on managing routines and even unforeseen and painful situations. In other words, *common* human beings in the best sense, with class, strong temperament, solidarity, and astuteness.

There is an interesting note (extrabook) that allows us to establish a connection to the Brazilian poet Germano Xavier. Since 2005, poems by Sophia with a strong connection to the sea have been placed in the Lisbon Oceanarium: visitors are thus invited to integrate these poems into the sensory experience that includes the idea of proximity to the sea. The story goes that Germano was captivated by the texts and their presence in that place and for that reason dedicated a series of poems to Sophia, which would later be included in the chapter *AS COISAS MINHAS DE SOPHIA* (or *Poemas para o Grande Peixe: o Tempo*), an integral part of the book *ESPLANADA DO TEMPO/LA TERRASSE DU TEMPS*¹, published a few years after the author's centenary in 2019.

Returning to the book that brings us together (like Sophia's sea), we look forward to the pleasure of seeing it staged as it deserves. The text has rhythm, coherence, and soul, combining the real with the plausible, the probable, and the plausible. It is a vivid, credible narrative capable of capturing future spectators as well as captivating readers now. We imagine sober scenarios and a rigorous wardrobe for Maria and Sophia. People have turned into characters, whose friendship is perpetuated in memory through communication between history, narratives, and perspectives, between the playwright, the actors (especially actresses), and the audience. Theater is the embrace between the stage and the audience, just as books bring writers closer to readers.

REFERENCES

Afonso, R. (2022). *Maria e Sophia — Confidências e Desabafos* (2.ª ed.). Editorial Novembro.

DECLARAÇÃO ÉTICA

CONFLITO DE INTERESSE: Nada a declarar. **FINANCIAMENTO:** Nada a declarar.



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¹ Bilingual poetry book published in Brazil by Penalux in 2022 (with French translation by Luísa Fresta). This book is part of Trilogia do Centauro, whose first volume is *O HOMEM ENCURREALADO/L'HOMME ACCULÉ*. Both books contain texts by Luís Osete Carvalho, Regina Correia, and Luísa Fresta.