



MULHERES — TRILOGIAS E OUTROS CONTOS, BY ROSABELA AFONSO. EDITORIAL NOVEMBRO (2023)

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Rosabela is a realistic author (as mentioned by Isabel Lousada in the preface, which provides an essential, sensitive, personal, and irreplaceable reading, looking deeply into the scope of the texts and their human and interventionist dimension). The author has a light and fluid pen, coherent and concise, accessible to various audiences, especially young and adult readers, in the case of the work we are reflecting on today: *Mulheres — Trilogias e Outros Contos*. Her writing is always direct, incisive, clear, and captivating. In a way, we can say that these characteristics compose or are part of her literary identity, increasingly recognizable.

The work includes six independent stories and four trilogies. The narratives unfold over time, concerning the same character and the surrounding environment — as in the case of *CLARINHA/CLARA* and *CLARA, A VELHA DOS SILÊNCIOS* — as well as including various texts that draw a perceptible parallel, as in *MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO/MARIA DA GLÓRIA* and *MARIA DO CARMO*.

In this work, we highlight the dramatic touch, the tone of announced tragedy. The inevitability of life and death is emphasized, and concepts of determinism and free will are reflected upon at every step. Rosabela's book is easy to read in the best sense of the term, never lightweight: it contains, as expected, few adjectives, plenty of information and action — perhaps remnants of her journalist side, which often shapes the narrative style. Rosabela increasingly asserts herself (and this work confirms it) as an excellent storyteller: confident and with her own voice, with a mature perspective on society and the individual.

In this book, very strong and painful themes are addressed, where women and children are always in the foreground, regardless of age, family background, and socio-economic condition. As victims, caregivers, heroines, and tireless fighters, they always seek solutions in the rubble of life, trying to piece things together. Emotionally, intellectually, and literarily powerful characters. Inspiring women or girls who suffer and are reborn, who resurrect and rebuild as they can, eliciting empathy and a longer look. The titles of the stories are also quite auspicious, short and opening a veil on the history, just right.

Only the author can speak authoritatively about her sources of inspiration (for this work in particular), but we infer that it is based on the analysis of contemporary Portuguese society, its vulnerabilities, and the ability to rise from the most difficult circumstances, on the brink of bearability, sliding into unfathomable abysses.

Two important details affectionately mentioned by Rosabela Afonso during the public presentation of the work link me to this book: the cover design (spontaneously born from observing a photo of the author) and the title of the story *A FADA DAS VINHAS*. The truth is that TRILOGIA II refers to the name by which my mother has been known since childhood: Clarinha. It's a coincidence, but a significant one for me as a reader, to the point that I read the narratives in a disorderly manner, disregarding the most basic common sense and rules of disciplined reading, which are supposed to respect the normal sequence of texts. This proves that we read cerebrally, but also emotionally, spontaneously, sometimes with eagerness, which may allow us to assimilate the work on various levels.



Regarding the other trilogies, in *A QUESTÃO/A DECISÃO/A SOLUÇÃO* (TRILOGIA I), we can speculate about the power of love over death, insanity, and pain. The narrative presents us with an extreme circumstance, which triggers psychological processes of mourning and revolt until a solution based on acceptance is glimpsed. One might say that hope itself has its roots in suffering, and from there sprout renewed paths and lives.

MARIA DA CONCEIÇÃO/MARIA DA GLÓRIA/MARIA DO CARMO, the stories that make up TRILOGIA III, allow the author to highlight the power of sisterhood among women, also referred to today as sorority, a term that is gaining more and more followers. Here, infidelity and disloyalty are discussed, as well as stoicism and determination, the courage to break toxic relationships. And also the ability to disguise: some people can, with great ease and for long periods, maintain an irreproachable public image while simultaneously engaging in disrespectful, cruel, violent, unimaginable, and deceptive behavior in private. In other words, it is about segmenting their lives, maintaining what they consider to be the best of several worlds (incompatible).

In TRILOGIA IV (*MENTIRAS/VERDADES/EQUILÍBRIOS*), other important aspects in relationships and the construction of personality stand out. The innate gift for lying, social lying, compassionate, harsh, as a form of protection/rejection and to preserve an untouchable world, lying as a way of life, as an automatic reflex, as a refusal to actively listen to others, as a gesture of rejecting affection and intimacy and expressing egocentrism.

“[...] I learned that the truth is the serious and ideal way for people to relate, but with courtesy, and there lies the balance of things [...],” Mariana thinks in *VERDADES*, reflecting on the dignity that results from the balance between truth and lies (p. 103).

As for the remaining narratives, readers of the Portuguese language will quickly discover that the texts highlight the best and worst of human beings, such as a strange tendency toward individualism and indifference, even within the family. In circles where we would expect to be more protected and cherished, we often find a complete absence of affection, continuous aggression, and the destructive impulse of those who have nothing positive to offer. But there also seems to be hope when there is only a lack of skill and training for peaceful coexistence among family members, and not exactly a cultivated distance, a studied hostility.

Much more remains to be unveiled by Portuguese-speaking readers. This work suggests a layered reading: to understand, become aware, reflect, and, finally, perhaps act, with the tools each of us possesses without even realizing it. In any case, we will not be the same people after being touched by *Mulheres — Trilogias e Outros Contos*.

REFERENCES

Afonso, R. (2023). *Mulheres — Trilogias e Outros Contos*. Editorial Novembro.

DECLARAÇÃO ÉTICA

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



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