

Althenopis composition

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Fabrizia Ramondino debuted in 1981 with the novel *Althenopis*, which is full of footnotes. *Althenopis* is a name, used by the Germans, who wanted to be a mockery of the myth of Southern Italy and Naples. It is a text halfway between the autobiography and the novel. We are in the late thirties to the fifties. At the time of Fabrizio's childhood and adolescence, and a season of his adult life. A family with three children, a domineering grandmother and a mother in poor health. In a village on the Sorrento peninsula (known as Santa Maria del Mare or Frasca), among peasants, displaced from the city and owners of luxury homes.

For much of the novel return, insistently, the portrait of her grandmother and her mother. Completely absent, or almost, the figure of her father, who is always far. And then a set of aunts, uncles, cousins around which the narrator reflects on her fate and her family. Fabrizio's writing is very detailed and descriptive, it looks like a picture of the reality of that period. In this novel she describes a kind of matriarchal family, and women play a central role. Particularly important and interesting is the figure of the grandmother, a strong, extravagant woman and lover of food.

In my opinion the figure of the grandmother has a great influence on Fabrizio, thanks to her determination and self-confidence. She is a woman who has a strong personality and she believes into the real values (like religion). Grandma can be defined the antagonist of the mother. Indeed Fabrizio had not a good relationship with her mother, who is described as a depressed, sick and weak woman, completely the opposite of the grandmother. So there is a strong relationship between Fabrizio and her

grandmother while the relation with her mother is absent. Through the novel we can also understand the problem of identity.

In fact, Fabrizia turns out to be a woman, who can't find a true identity. In my opinion this inner distress is also demonstrated by the fact that she describes many different places and people so meticulously, all different from each other and each with its own personality and identity. This way of telling, without finding a strong and constant point of reference, makes us understand the problem. Every time in which she describes a place or person, she does it as if she is reinventing herself. In addition, the footnotes play an important role, as if they wanted to indicate a presence, which stays outside.