



# Passarola Rising

*Azhar Abidi*

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## Passarola Rising Azhar Abidi

The fabulous debut novel by new international talent Azhar Abidi, *Passarola Rising* is a deftly written picaresque tale filled with evocative detail, adventure, and suspense. Set in eighteenth-century Europe, it tells the story of Bartolomeu and Alexandre Lourenço, who use their airship, the *Passarola*, to escape the strictures of the Church, the suspicion of the government, and the intellectually stultifying climate of Lisbon. As they venture from the salons and bordellos of *ancien régime* Paris to the desolate far reaches of the North Pole, the brothers Lourenço encounter some of the most colorful characters of the European Enlightenment, including the loquacious Voltaire and the irascible King Stanislaus of Poland.

## Passarola Rising Details

Date : Published December 26th 2006 by Penguin Books (first published January 1st 2006)

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Author : Azhar Abidi

Format : Paperback 244 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Adventure, Fantasy, Cultural, Australia, Literature, 18th Century, Historical Fantasy

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# From Reader Review *Passarola Rising* for online ebook

## Mike Rogers says

I don't read much historical fiction other than Patrick O'Brian's wonderful naval series but the cover of "Passarola Rising," depicting a sailing ship floating in the sky, looked too interesting pass up. The book is the story of the airship *Passarola*, its travels and its creator Bartolomeu Lourenco (who did actually exist) as told by his brother Alexandre.

The brothers have several adventures aboard *Passarola* and meet many notable characters from history in their travels including Voltaire and King Stanislaus. Their travels begin in Spain but they are soon forced to flee to France when their airship attracts the attention of a Cardinal who deems the concept of air travel heretical. The king of France sends them on several missions, the final one nearly making both brothers insane as they ascend to the limits of human endurance.

The ship itself could never have actually flown of course, but once the reader moves beyond the far-fetched physics, this book is an enjoyable tale of adventure with authentic period detail.

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## Kenyon says

Realistically, I would give this 3.5.

The middle really drags, but it ends nicely. Check it out if you like historical fiction, specifically if you're also interested in the emergence of science in the 18th century.

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## Kristin says

I wanted to read this for a really long time; and I like it, but I'm abandoning it. As soon as I started reading it, I read it for as long as I could in one sitting because I knew as soon as I had waded into the shallows that I would have a hard time returning to it again once I closed it. Even though I like how it's written and everything, it just doesn't pull me in. I think it's because the writing is grand, but the plot is thin. It's like a beautiful dress on a mannequin instead of a person, or like an exquisite seashell, naturally hollow inside. It's all about atmosphere, and it captures that well, but it doesn't change. It's a snapshot of an atmosphere; that is how I would describe it. Light blue sky in the morning, still cool but you know it's going to be a really hot, sultry day. The sea; sand; the breeze; the silence of oncoming heat and expectation under a bright, white sun. I like that. But it feels like that's all there is to it. In conclusion, an odd book-- I like it while reading it, but can hardly bring myself to pick it up again. "Boring" is on the tip of my tongue, but I know that's not it. Strange indeed.

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## Russ says

A light read, it didn't really inspire me, I finished it only because I didn't want to let it beat me.

I hate it when authors stuff around mixing up history and fiction, lending personalities to historical people is a doubtful practise to me, why not just invent a character. It is not as if using history adds any authenticity to the subject of the book....

It finished poorly and was generally disappointing.

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### **Carla H. says**

This is one of my "through the alphabet at the library" books. Not a book I would have selected, but an easy read. One of my criteria for whether a book has been worth my time is if it has piqued my curiosity and caused me to learn/think/wonder about something new. The protagonists in the story are historical characters (Bartolomeu and Alexander Lourenco) about whom I knew nothing. I am interested in learning the fact behind the fiction. Also, reflections on "enlightenment and religious authority, research and totalitarianism, gravity and ideas" (T. Keneally) and how society forms and shapes our lives.

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### **Joana says**

Gostei. Algumas coisas são fantasiosas demais mas algumas partes emocionaram-me bastante.

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### **Lois says**

There is a wonderful interview with the author at <http://us.penguingroup.com/static/rgu...> . His comments stretch my imagination.

Here is one quote from that interview: "I wanted to write about the limited ability of science to describe the richness of human experience. I set the plot during the Enlightenment—a time of struggle between religion and science—because we are reaping the fruits of the Enlightenment. We think of religion in terms of faith and dogma, and science in terms of reason, logic, and rationalism, but in my mind, science is as much about faith in empiricism and materialism as is religion about spiritualism. Science demands proof as evidence of truth. Anything that cannot be proven risks being dismissed. Surely whether something cannot be proven does not mean that it does not exist. The human experience is far too rich, mysterious and deep to be captured by scientific method. That question, I believe, is as unresolved today as it was then. And that is the gist of my book."

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### **Sarah says**

The book has an interesting premise: what if Bartolomeu Lourenço de Gusmão's flying machine had worked? This is an alternate history as told from the perspective of Bartolomeu's brother, and includes some very pretty passages, but the book suffers from "and then" syndrome, by which I mean the book never really ends up being more than a list of events. The characters change over time, but the writing doesn't invest you in them as characters in the first place, so their epiphanies don't really matter. It was a very fast read, and ultimately hollow.

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### **Morgan says**

What if the first flying machine had been build in the 18th century instead of in the 20th? A Pakistani author living in Australia penned this Vernesque fable set in imperial Portugal about a lesser-known Da Vinci who defies the Church in an airship set for the heavens. It's a bit of an odd subject to tackle and at the same time appropriate as globalized society hurtles us through the gap between science and fiction.

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### **Chanel Earl says**

This book feels older than it is. It is fast paced, meaning that the events move quickly and the reading goes fast, but it is certainly not suspenseful or fast paced in the modern way. I never had trouble putting the book down for a while, I never wondered what was going to happen next. In fact, I never really cared what happened to the characters. It was fun to read, though. I enjoyed the last 20 pages especially.

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### **stephanieisabookworm says**

This was an enjoyable read, but it wasn't so compelling that if I had been abducted with aliens I would've been upset about not knowing the ending. That said, I appreciated this book in a calm sort of way. It does tell an interesting story--there's just never too much danger or suspense in it. People who are into 18th-century European history will probably either really enjoy this book or be utterly disgusted with it for taking some historical liberties--I enjoyed seeing Voltaire as a character, myself, although I had a little trouble believing him as a character... I guess I kept waiting for disaster to strike and it didn't really ever, but I did find the end satisfying, as well as the journey.

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### **Matt Kurjanowicz says**

I found that Passarola Rising was a nice, simple adventure story. The book is about two brothers who were sailing the Earth in a flying ship. While it looks like the book attempts to touch on some more serious subjects - mainly what truth is and the struggle between satisfaction, ambition, and family - I feel like the book failed to satisfactorily address them. It seems like the author treated these subjects with aphorisms, rather than rallying the entire book around them.

The writing was also fairly simple, and left me wanting more - either more flower to describe what's going on or less to get at the mental state of the characters more.

Finally, I didn't feel attached to any of the characters. This was not a book I was sad to finish.

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### **Janeka says**

Um relato imaginário, mas que parece tão real..

Apesar de algumas passagens mais aceleradas e fantasiosas, gostei de conhecer estas personagens, e li o livro "num pulinho".

Recomendo :)

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### **Jillian says**

I thought this book was fairly poorly written, with a non-gripping plot and Terrible Science. Still, it was pretty great to read an adventure about airships taking place in the 18th century. And the science couldn't be right anyways for that to happen. The airship conveniently doesn't need any fuel! Wouldn't that be neat.

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### **Rosanne Hawke says**

Azhar Abidi is one of my favourite writers: talented, thought provoking and writes beautiful prose. There's more to Passarola Rising than a romp in the sky. This is a gentle, literary and thought provoking historical fantasy set in the time of the inquisition in Europe -- the clash between science and religion. I met Azhar Abidi at Adelaide Writers Week one year and have read his creative essay about flying carpets. It too is very clever. I am waiting in hope for another Azhar Abidi novel.

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