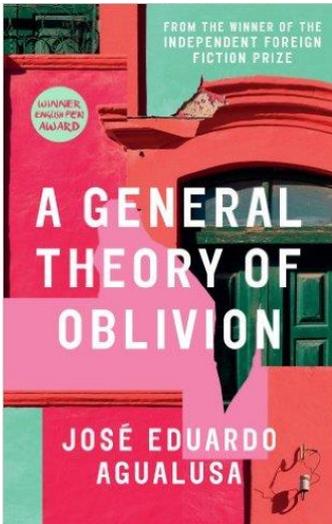


A General Theory of Oblivion



A wild patchwork of a novel, which tells the story of Angola through Ludo, a woman who bricks herself into her apartment on the eve of Angolan independence. For the next 30 years she lives off vegetables and pigeons, and burns her furniture to stay warm. But the outside world seeps in, through snippets on the radio, voices from next door, glimpses of a man fleeing his pursuers and a note attached to a bird's foot...

José Eduardo Agualusa was born in Huambo, Angola, in 1960, and is one of the leading literary voices in Angola and the Portuguese-speaking world. His novel *Creole* was awarded the Portuguese Grand Prize for Literature, and *The Book of Chameleons* won the *Independent Foreign Fiction Prize* in 2007. Agualusa lives between Portugal, Angola and Brazil.

Daniel Hahn is a writer, editor and translator, with over 30 books to his name. His translations from Portuguese, Spanish and French include fiction from Europe, Africa and the Americas, and non-fiction by writers ranging from Portuguese Nobel laureate José Saramago to Brazilian footballer Pelé. A former chair of the Translators Association, he is now national programme director of the British Centre for Literary Translation. He is currently writing the new *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*.

Discussion questions

- How much did you know about Angola's fight for independence before you read *A General Theory of Oblivion*? Do you feel like you have learned from the novel?
- Think of the role of the translator – what do you think the challenges would be in translating this novel? What one question would you ask Daniel Hahn?
- What are the linguistic differences between this and a book written originally in English? Do you get a sense of the source language in the writing? How does the poetic writing style impact your reading experience?
- Think back over the last three decades, what are the key events that have happened and how would you reintroduce someone to our modern world?
- How well did the book give a sense of place? Did you feel transported to the setting of the book?
- Which book would you compare this to if describing it to a friend?