



Fado Alexandrino

António Lobo Antunes

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'In this new work by the foremost Portuguese novelist, the reunion of five men on the tenth anniversary of their battalion's return from Mozambique, Portugal's Vietnam, ends in a fatal stabbing - which ultimately serves as an act of liberation for the corrupt city of Lisbon.' Newsday

Fado Alexandrino Details

Date : Published August 21st 1995 by Grove Press (first published 1983)

ISBN : 9780802134219

Author : António Lobo Antunes

Format : Paperback 497 pages

Genre : Cultural, Portugal, Fiction, European Literature, Portuguese Literature

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From Reader Review Fado Alexandrino for online ebook

Chad Post says

Over the course of one long, long night five military men who fought in the Portuguese Colonial Wars get blasted and tell their life stories from "before the revolution," "during the revolution," and "after the revolution." Each chapter centers on one of the particular characters--the lowly foot soldier, the lieutenant colonel who returns from the colonies to find out his wife has died, the communist supporting communications officer, the second lieutenant whose rich wife leaves him for another woman--but voices mingle across chapters, and the past and present become nearly indistinguishable, a literary muddle of moments, some humorous, but most pretty emotional and dire.

And filled with detritus. In Antunes's world, everything is a bit broken, dirty, faded, fat, and gross. It's as if all of his characters are living in the entropic end-times and trying to figure out how to keep themselves together. In many ways, this is the prototypical Antunes novel.

Gillian says

This was a challenging and very difficult book to understand and read. Written in a stream of consciousness with little punctuation and with voices switching mid sentence I needed infinite time and patience to try and understand what the author was telling the reader. the translation was excellent but because of the dense writing, few paragraphs and the narrative voices continually changing I felt I never got to know the characters sufficiently well to begin to understand the story. I know little about Lisbon where the story was set.

Ricardo Gomes says

Há uns dias atrás, ouvi uma entrevista antiga do Gonçalo M. Tavares em que ele dizia querer evitar as "palavras casadas à nascença". Ficou-me na cabeça a expressão e quando voltei ao gigantesco tomo que é o Fado Alexandrino, percebi o quanto bem encaixava este querer na obra do Lobo Antunes.

Li livros do Lobo Antunes contemporâneo e agora estou a fazer uma leitura cronológica, tendo começado no primeiro e assim em diante. Fado Alexandrino parece-me uma obra de transição entre as duas fases. Menos autobiográfico que os anteriores, mais denso, mais intrincado, mais próximo da maneira circular de escrever de agora. É neste limbo, que se ergue esta história assente em quatro personagens principais. Cinco militares, companheiros de armas em Moçambique, juntam-se para um jantar. Todos eles vão contando à vez ao capitão, que é no narrador, a história da sua vida até aquele momento. O autor divide o livro em 3 atos, pré-revolução, revolução e pós revolução. É assim, apoiado nas vicissitudes destes homens e das suas mulheres, que o autor dissecava a história socieconómica do Portugal da época. A fuga para o Brasil das famílias ricas com medo dos comunistas, os milhares revolucionários, o falhanço do 25 de Novembro, o saneamento dos oficiais, a miséria dos bairros de Lisboa.

A escrita é irrepreensível, mais domada que em livros anteriores, menos pomposa. Como disse no início, o

autor encontra metáforas belíssimas onde ninguém as veria, junta palavras que nunca seriam gémeas. O estilo é inigualável e aparece neste livro mais depurado, com menos plumas, mais eficaz. O autor admitiu já que os primeiros livros são vaidosos, tinha muita vontade de mostrar a cultura que tinha, os livros que lia, os quadros que conhecia, a música que ouvia. Neste o autor despe-se desses adereços e afunda-se pela primeira vez na sua obra em vidas alheias, nas quais enxerta um pouco da sua. Não conheço na língua portuguesa autor tão bom a criar personagens, que surgem no livro tão verdadeiras nas suas forças e fraquezas que podiam ser o nosso vizinho do lado.

Susan says

As other readers have said, this is NOT an easy book to read due to the stream of consciousness, the characters not being given names (described by military rank) - very slow reading. But worth it I thought. Five men are having a reunion on the 10th anniversary of their return from Mozambique having served in the Portugese army at the very end of the occupation of Mozambique, returning home just before the overthrow of the Portugese dictatorship. It helps to know at least a little of mid-20th Century Portugese history. For 500 hundred pages we follow these soldiers (and their wives, girlfriends, bosses, oomrades) lives for better or worse (mostly for worse.) A fascinating rather beautiful book.

Emanuel says

Em 1982 um grupo de camaradas reúne-se para jantar e retomam contacto após os dez anos separados, desde a chegada da guerra colonial em 1972. Do grupo, e não vou dizer os nomes porque faz parte da experiência da leitura descobrir o nome de cada um, faz parte um alferes, um capitão, um oficial de transmissões, um tenente-coronel e um soldado.

O livro está estruturado em três partes, antes da revolução, durante o 25 de Abril de 1974, e após a revolução. Cada parte, qual verso alexandrino que possui 12 sílabas, terá 12 capítulos.

No início do jantar retomaram a 1972, cada um falará dos primeiros tempos após o regresso, quando já nos digestivos a narrativa move-se para a revolução e os acontecimentos mais recentes, pós 25 de Abril já são narrados em casa do alferes onde a noite acaba com um grupinho *sui generis* de meninas. Destes cinco ex-combatentes só um era claramente contra o regime e este facto torna-se interessante no seu próprio destino ao longo desta noite de reencontro.

Lembro-me do António Lobo Antunes referir numa entrevista que o seu pai só o considerou escritor após "Fado Alexandrino" e percebe-se. Este quinto livro quebra com os quatro anteriores e surge já com o que será mais tarde o seu estilo definitivo, o fluxo de consciência já praticamente permanente, ainda há ausência de musicalidade narrativa e ainda é presente narrativa na terceira pessoa.

Além do próprio livro nos levar por caminhos inesperados, sendo bastante espirituoso e divertido, nunca perde fôlego em mais de 700 páginas, continuo a maravilhar-me com a capacidade do António em colidir informações entre histórias distintas levando a memória a abrir os seus outros livros já lidos para alterar, ir buscar, acrescentar informação.

O seu penúltimo capítulo é sublime... Em "Fado Alexandrino" há uma pertinente denúncia da revolução, o que implicou e não mudou, o que implicou e piorou. E a perda do caminho, não só dos que estiveram na guerra, também a dos que os viram partir. Podendo até saber que possuem um lar, não vislumbram onde fica.

"O que me faz mais impressão,..., é tudo ter mudado na minha vida sem eu dar por isso, é nada ser igual como era dantes, as pessoas, os sítios, a minha própria idade, exactamente o que eu necessitava que não

alterasse nunca. Como se o norte fosse agora sul e eu à rasca, sem bússola, à procura de qualquer coisa que me guie. Esta certeza, entende, de que é tarde de mais e perdi o caminho de casa, ou, se der com ele, malho com os cornos numa parede, numa esquina, num beco sem saída."

RK-isme says

Second read. As is my habit, I shall not attempt to summarize the story, just my take on what it is about.

A brilliant novel by Portuguese author, António Lobo Antunes. *Fado Alexandrino* is an alcohol fuelled crawl through Portugal's colonial wars, the Carnation Revolution, and the post-revolution period, all portrayed in their hideous glory.

As with all of his novels, the author takes his readers into a world of violence, sex, drunkenness, hatred and love. Simultaneously, he has created a work of genius in which the conscientious reader can discern the pain and the confusion in the stories of each of the central characters. Most importantly, he has left this reader, at least, in a story filled with deprivation, disgust and humour, with a deeply felt sense of empathy with the human condition.

At the end of the book, I found myself wondering if, given the circumstances of each of their lives, I would have been able to overcome a similar fate, a fate which, on the surface seems to be so easily avoidable. As with all of us, each character wants to be understood, wants to understand, wants to simply live - what? - the good life? Don't we all?

This is the story of five men who gather to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their return from the war of counter insurgency in the then colony of Mozambique. They are the soldier, the communications officer, the second lieutenant, the captain, and the lieutenant colonel. During the long night of talking, drinking and whoring, each relates, often in painful detail, the circumstances of his life. Only four of the characters are speaking. The fifth is generally the one being addressed. Often they are speaking over each other, not paying much attention to what the others are saying. Often they are confused, bewildered, distressed by another's story. Typical human communication.

But I shall leave it those of you who decide to read the book to discern the story. Keep in mind that António Lobo Antunes wants to portray people as they actually feel and behave, so it is not always easy to sort the characters out. Also, as the characters speak, events do not always unfold chronologically.

Also, note that the book is divided into three sections, each with four chapters. Thus, each character is given three chapters to tell his story in each section (but it's not always that simple.). If you take on this wonderful challenge, I would suggest that you make a list of the four characters then write down the various names they are given throughout along with the events and the women in their lives. You may also wish to list the names of the women as they come up and be on the lookout for those known by different names. This is probably not at all necessary for those not addled by old age (as I am.)

Do read it. It is a very human, even touching, story with lots of heartfelt humour. António Lobo Antunes does a wonderful job of putting us in touch with our inner humanity. Really.

Bob Newman says

literature as tapestry

Drowning in words that crash, rumble, streak past, drip down through the cracks in the ceiling, swell up from the pages and invade my brain, stumble, drop, fall, plunge from every page, topple my usual sense of books, I made it through FADO ALEXANDRINO to the very end, sometimes wondering why I was subjecting myself to such a difficult novel, sometimes rejoicing that I'd heard of it by chance many years ago. Lobo Antunes, whose other works I didn't know, has written a nearly-500 page masterpiece which definitely is not for everyone. It demands close attention, it demands patience, and you have to like the flow of language. That this is the case even in English is a tribute to the famous translator Gregory Rabassa, who almost single-handedly, brilliantly, has brought Portuguese-language literature to English readers. Five men gather in the 1980s in a bar. They served together in Mozambique around 1970, fighting in one of Salazarist Portugal's colonial wars. The novel covers their return to Lisbon, the resumption or crumbling of their previous lives, and then the onset of the bloodless Portuguese revolution of April 25, 1974. One man never speaks, but we feel his presence. There's a soldier, become a furniture mover for his uncle's tottering business. There's a second lieutenant from a humble background, married into a rich family who flee to Brazil when the Revolution occurs. Third is a lieutenant colonel whose wife dies just as he returns from Africa and who takes up with "a cloud of perfume" in silver high heels and oyster-colored eyelids. Fourth is a communications officer (also referred to as "Lieutenant" which caused me no end of confusion at first) an underground Communist agitator, jailed for his pains before being freed after April 25th. What happens to the men during that confused period in Portugal's history, and then when things settle down is the subject of the rest of the book. There's a lot of their sex life, a murder and a denouement. Set down like that, the 'plot' of FADO ALEXANDRINO doesn't amount to much. No, you'll read this because you want to read a highly unusual work of art, one that weaves stories, the gritty side of Lisbon, times, voices, dreams, thoughts, imaginations, and moments together like a collage, like a Pollock painting, like a tapestry. Lobo Antunes changes direction on pages, in paragraphs, and even in sentences---some of which are extremely long. He draws a detailed picture of Portuguese society seen from the bottom up; no touristy views for him. You can't just skim along; you have to pay close attention.

Let's face it. Either you're going to be blown away by this incredible book or you're going to toss it after the first 20 pages.

Tej says

If you like the stream-of-consciousness style of writing, you will love this. It has very vivid similes and metaphors and, unlike Beckett, I could actually make sense of it. Unfortunately, I don't like stream-of-consciousness writing, and so this was extremely painful for me. Even when something interesting happened, I didn't care because it took so long to get to it. But, if you like a slow, tedious narrative, give it a shot.

Robert says

The novel is about five Portuguese soldiers returning from the civil war which took place in Angola in the 70's. As they sit around a table all five discuss the madness of war and eventually commit an murder which affects the town they live in as well and works as a sort of wake up call.

Fado Alexandrino displays war in all its cartoon insanity, there are passages stuffed with sex, violence and corruption, crossed with complex emotions and anecdotes. The author himself was part of this conflict so I'm sure the novel is autobiographical.

My problem is that I found it dragging. Passage upon passage of detail which I found superfluous, sure the novel is written in the fado style (twelve chapters of 26 verses, if i'm not mistaken) but I found it a tough slog many times.

Nathan "N.R." Gaddis says

"Two years ago Lobo Antunes pissed people off by making the unarguable statement that by the time he was 40, about the age the 2001 crowd is now, he had already published Fado Alexandrino, one of the greatest novels of the 20th century, and they had nothing of identical power to show for. It's easier to prove 2 and 2 equals 5 than refuting that statement. They're not even trying: instant success and hyperbolic adulation has curbed their development." --Miguel, <https://theuntranslated.wordpress.com...>

Joni says

the voice of realism cracked like a colony. tour de force

Nicole Mercer says

"Fado Alexandrino" is a stream of conscious-style story of five men reuniting to tell their experiences during the Portuguese revolution in 1974. The language is beautiful and the reading experience very immersive.

Philip Lane says

Not an easy read. I found myself struggling to distinguish the characters, locations and times because much of the narrative is stream of consciousness and not everyone is given a name. However the language is so evocative, and quite extraordinarily well translated, that I was moved and thrilled with sensations created by a large number of passages throughout the book. This is a book I will mark down to read again as I am sure that with re-reading the plot and characters will become clearer and the smells and sounds will remain just as strong.

Daniel Pinto says

credo. é bom que se farta. mas eu já só o queria acabar.

Robert Hyman says

Jeg gir denne boka tre stjerner; men det kunne gjerne vært null stjerner eller fem stjerner. Boka er en fantastisk fortelling om fem menn som møtes i Lisboa 10 år etter de hadde tjenestegjort i Afrika i Portugalskolonikrigene. Du ser dem også før, under og etter Nellikrevolusjonen av 1974. Problemet er at boka mangler noen som helst form for struktur. Det er en slags «stream of conscienceness» hvor tid, sted og til og med hvem som snakker eller tenker er hulter til bulter. Det er ofte liksom forfatteren skrev ned forskjellige ideer på papirlapper; kastet lappene i været, og skrev ned i den rekkefølge de falt ned. Nesten hver dag måtte jeg spørre meg selv om det var verdt det å bruke tid på dette. Men historien var så god at jeg bare måtte gjøre det. Boka kunne ha blitt så mye bedre med enkle grep som avsnitter.
