

# Corruptions of the Narcissism of History in *Os cus de Judas*, by António Lobo Antunes

**Sebastián Patrón Saade**

*Rutgers University*

**Abstract:** This article explores the connections between history and love in António Lobo Antunes' *Os cus de Judas*. It analyzes how the effects of the war endured by the narrator go beyond post-traumatic stress disorder, the trauma wreaking unexpected consequences on the narrator's desire and ego. The narrator cannot begin a meaningful relationship with any woman, nor can he identify himself with the Portuguese historical narrative. At the heart of this impossibility lies the narrator's shredded self-image. Without an ego, the narrator loses his ability to insert himself in any sort of national narrative or identify with the set of images that compose it. Likewise, without a clear and defined image of himself, the narrator cannot narcissistically identify with any particular woman or fall in love.

**Keywords:** History, love, Portuguese colonial war, desire and ego.

There is a nuanced relation between history and love, determined by the ability of the ego to relate to other images. If the ego disappears or loses its clear contours, this obviates the possibility of engaging in a sexual relationship or situating oneself in a historical narrative. This subtle relation between ego, love, and history is illustrated superlatively in António Lobo Antunes' *Os cus de Judas*. In recounting his experience of Angola, the novel's narrator is unable either to fall in love or to identify with all the images that compose Portuguese history. His fragmented, non-linear narrative sets the backdrop against which the Portuguese narcissistic obsession with historical images is highlighted and undermined. Through the abrupt and somewhat violent distortion of both the

narrator's desire and his self-image, he is unwittingly extricated from the vain-glory of command underscoring the imperial project upheld by the Estado Novo. In this article, drawing on a Lacanian framework, I aim to tease out the intricacies that underpin narcissism's role in love and history, and to show how Lobo Antunes' project necessarily entails the subversion of both through his relentless post-traumatic assault on the ego.

*Os cus de Judas* was one of the first novels to revisit and revise repressed aspects of the Estado Novo and the Portuguese Colonial Wars after the Carnation Revolution. For Lobo Antunes, however, *Os cus de Judas* is not a novel about war, but about love. The novel is built around the narrator's recounting of his experience as a doctor in Angola; his narration is a fragmented reconstruction of the influence that the Portuguese imperial legacy has had on his life. According to José Mauricio Saldanha Alvarez, this competing tendency between his narrative and the dominant ideology takes the form of a duel throughout the novel (47). In this narrative counterpoint, images from his bourgeois house in Benfica, his time in Angola, and his first days in Lisbon after the revolution pile up in a disorderly, repetitive manner as he tries desperately to love the woman who listens to him. His particular circumstances illustrate how love and history are not altogether unrelated. The narrator's inability to relate to people is tightly linked to the breakdown of imperial rhetoric. Through the exploration of this connection, the novel opens up intriguing aspects of the history of Portugal and, more importantly, of the way in which the Portuguese relate to their own history. This relationship is depicted by the narrator as extremely narcissistic.

These distortions in the novel's narrative stem from the effects of trauma on memory. The narrator's account of his life during the colonial war is completely fragmentary; the return of the repressed continually disrupts any coherent attempt at establishing a straightforward account of the years spent in the army. Time's homogeneous texture becomes entangled as unwanted memories constantly irrupt and do away with any clear-cut perception of reality. The consequences of this trauma, however, escape the normal boundaries of post-traumatic stress disorder as described by Isabel Moutinho ("Writing the War" 79) and Margaret Anne Clarke (196). The reflections and descriptions offered by the narrator's broken account of his life in *Os cus de Judas* have far more complex

ramifications, which go beyond the play of memory and the urge to remember associated with trauma. His account is suffused in a return of the Real, that is, the unnamable kernel that cannot be symbolized or incorporated into his narrative. Stirred up by the traumatic experience, the Real alters the structure of the narrator's tale and disrupts his desire; moreover, it also impinges on any discernible image that the narrator may have of himself, affecting both his ability to love and his self-positioning in a Portuguese national narrative.

The narrator of *Os cus de Judas* is, if we take him at his word, literally dead. He died in Angola, where he was confronted with the vertigo of his own end and that of his comrades: “Pulara sem transição da comunhão solene à guerra ... obrigaram-me a confrontar-me com una morte em que nada havia de comum com a morte asséptica dos hospitais ... e ofereceram-me a vertigem do meu próprio fim no fim dos que comiam comigo, dormiam comigo, falavam comigo” (Antunes 114-5).<sup>1</sup> But being dead, at least in his case, has little to do with the suspension of his vital functions. For him, death equates to a disruption in the flow of his desire, of which trauma caused by the war is the driving force. The images of his Angolan experience appear repeatedly and uncannily during the night in which the narrator renders an account of his life to an unidentified woman. First at an unspecified bar in Lisbon, and then in the narrator's apartment, his narration proceeds laboriously until he realizes he can no longer perform adequately in bed with her. This has not been his only failure since his return from Angola. Divorced and unemployed, the narrator has no love life save repetitions of the same compulsive scene he performs the night of his account. He can feel no lasting desire for any woman. Any attempt to live his fantasy is subverted by the incessant return of his memories of Africa: “O passado, sabe como é, vinha-me à memória como um almoço por digerir nos chega em refluxos azedos na garganta” (Antunes 114). All these images return with an insistence that echoes Lacan's characterization of the always missed and ever-repetitive encounter with the Real and its resulting impositions on desire (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 55).

Desire is the product of the metonymic substitution of signifiers in the symbolic chain; it only asks for more desire, regardless of its apparent aim, and can never be completely satisfied since, by its nature, it constantly slips away to

other objects and other signifiers. Though never satisfied, desire can, nonetheless, be disrupted. The Real can condition the flow of signifiers; and by disrupting the substitution of signifiers that takes place in the symbolic chain, the Real can interfere with desire and the semblance of satisfaction that usually results from its constant flow. The Real prohibits any substitution that does not lead back to itself, conditioning the flow so that nothing but itself remains always at the center of remembrance.

In *Os cus de Judas*, the overwhelming presence of the Real triggered by the trauma of the war in the symbolic domain disrupts any kind of amorous relationship. The war, after the narrator's return, never really ends; its presence remains as intense as ever. Neither the narrator's depiction of the years in Angola nor his description of his current life in Portugal show any trace of desire. The narrator's fantasy completely collapses under the pressure exerted by what he experienced during the war. The compulsive masturbation that scarcely responds to any desire on his part while posted in the heart of Angola—"a miséria de ter de masturbar-se a pensar em nada, puxar a pele para cima e para baixo" (Antunes 102)—as well as his inability to have a one-night stand with a flight attendant due to a sudden flood of tears, are the first instances in which the collapse of his fantasy becomes patent. This same disruption of desire becomes even more apparent in his brutal and harsh descriptions of physical contact. For the narrator, the parts of the body always retain a harsh aspect, as if they were nothing more than dead matter: "A sua boca possui o gosto sem gosto dos biscoitos antigos envoltos no açúcar do baton, a minha língua é um pedaço de esponja enrolada nos dentes, inchada pela espuma oleosa da saliva" (Antunes 139). In his flat and monotonous vision of reality, the city lacks all mystery, exposed like a nude beach. Images, in the bareness of their exposure, remain barren. There is no fantasy to serve as a scaffold for reality.

The effects of the traumatic experience, at least in the case of *Os cus de Judas*, do not remain in the Symbolic; they also impact the structure of the images that compose reality, that is, the Imaginary domain, which is anchored to that of the Symbolic. The play of images that compose the conscious perception of reality is organized according to the structure of the unconscious. Any alteration in the flow of the symbolic chain influences the images that structure

the Imaginary. Disrupted by the overwhelming presence of war memories, the unconscious is completely permeated by the Real. In spite of their connection, the disruption brought by the emergence of the Real in the Symbolic is not reflected in the same way in the Imaginary. The Imaginary, a domain composed exclusively of specular images, is characterized by its plenitude and the idea of completion, lacking gaps or interruptions. The Imaginary is continuous in its fullness, but contains inner frontiers; its formation draws limits between the ego and its surroundings. Any deep disruption in the Symbolic may thus be traced along this precise frontier. Indeed, as the narrator of *Os cus de Judas* seems to imply, the lines between the ego and its surroundings are not absolute.

Several elements depend on this clear-cut distinction between the ego and its surroundings. The love relationship, for instance, is equally dependent on a narcissistic identification of the ego, as well as on the presence of desire (Lacan, *Encore* 6). If both are altered, the possibility of initiating a sexual relationship is practically nil. Love covers up for the fact that there is no sexual relationship, that is, for the fact there is no union of perfect halves involved in the interaction between the sexes. The inexistent sexual relationship is structured around a fantasy, and fantasies are, by definition, non-reciprocal (Lacan, *Kant with Sade* 649). The exchange between the subject and the object of its desire can never be mutual; each subject tries to get off as best it can in front of the object of its desire, regardless of the peculiarities of the other subject's fantasy. Desire is not incumbent on the sexual partner's desire. Only the narcissistic identification of the subject with the object of its desire in the Imaginary gives the impression of complementarity. In disrupting the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the Real keeps love from emerging; and so love cannot disguise the fact that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship. Unsurprisingly, the only thing we find in the narrator's account is his stagnant desire and a vague self-description. Tellingly, there is a complete omission of any features that might identify the woman with whom he spends the night.

Likewise, we have no single clear-cut image of the contemporaneous narrator in the novel, only sparing details from his childhood. Due to the effects of trauma, the narrator lacks a defined ego—a coherent image of himself, that is. The constant emphasis on the blurred image reflected by mirrors and the

empty, alienated and deformed descriptions of his body poses a sharp contrast to the precise image of his youth in a bourgeois apartment in Lisbon. Unable to articulate a discourse and provide a frame for self-recognition, the narrator is forced to bring forth images and memories from his childhood. After the war, childhood becomes his frame of reference, a point in time where everything made sense; limits were defined and history seemed to have a smooth trajectory. However, following the narrator's war experience, repetitions make all sense of direction impossible: hence the importance attributed in his account to his childhood. Reviewing the past, reshaping his image and articulating a comprehensible discourse are strategies repeatedly employed by the narrator in an attempt to reshape the lost thread of his personal history.

This deformation of the ego, with its vague contours and poorly defined features, has its origin in the horror witnessed by the narrator in Angola. Bodies mutilated and deformed by violence appear time and time again; limbs blown apart by land mines, crushed torsos, broken ribs, and men without faces are just some of the cases dealt with by the doctor-narrator during his military service. The parade of decayed and amorphous body images, however, has not passed without leaving marks on the narrator's self-image. Each experience is reflected in the way the narrator perceives himself in front of mirrors. Described as a body that only has a pair of pupils—"e eu achei que não existia já, o meu tronco, os meus membros, os meus pés ... eu era só essas pupilas espantadas que fitavam e que hoje reencontro" (Antunes 110)—, or like the amorphous and viscous structure of a sea monster—"o meu rosto se move em gestos lentos de anémone, os meus braços adquirem o espasmo de adeus sem ossos dos polvos, o tronco reaprende a imobilidade branca dos corais" (145)—, little is known about the narrator's physical appearance besides his blue eyes and baldness. There is nothing behind the Santa Claus beard of foam with which he covers his face, shaving himself every morning, except for a pair of eyes that float with no apparent direction in front of the mirror: "e tenho a impressão, ao barbear-me, que quando a lâmina me retirar das bochechas as suíças de Pai Natal mentoladas da espuma, apenas ficarão de mim as órbitas a boiarem, suspensas, no espelho, indagando ansiosamente pelo corpo que perderam" (109). But even those eyes, the narrator's most significant feature,

become dim and indifferent when replaced by the expectant eyes of the famished children of Angola (166).

In spite of this trauma, love does appear once in the novel. Only in his relationship with one specific woman –Sofia, an MPLA commander—can love make up for the fact there is no sexual relationship. His description of her differs from the descriptions of other women in the novel. According to Maria Alzira Seixo, Africa’s and Sofia’s descriptions are tinged with a happiness and a poetic elation not to be found anywhere else in the narration (60). This distinct tone produced by the possibility of love is linked to the transient articulation of the narrator’s image of himself. Through Sofia, he can project himself back to the time when his ego was clearly separated from its surroundings: “A tua casa, Sofia, cheirava a vivo ... sabia-me a infância estar contigo ... ao meu avô que se debruçava para o meu sono e me deixava na têmpora violeta de um beijo... eu que passava o tempo no meu quarto, desdenhosamente só” (Antunes 153). Everything about Sofia reminds the narrator of his childhood—of a time in his life when he did not feel so isolated. This is a time where everything, including himself, appeared to be in its right place.

The disruption of desire’s flow and the corruption of the ego have repercussions beyond the collapse of the narrator’s love life. Much more depends on love than would, at first, seem plausible. The disruption that trauma produces in desire and narcissism also impinges on the fantasy constructed around the proud and powerful Portuguese empire. As Margarida Calafate Ribeiro shows us, *Os cus de Judas* allows for a revision of the nation’s identity through the account of the narrator’s life (265), establishing an analogy between the collapse of the sexual fantasy and the collapse of the imperial one. Likewise, the novel draws a parallel between the narcissistic identification of a love relation and a similar identification with history. Love and history, suggests Lobo Antunes, are intimately intertwined.

The collapse of the imperial fantasy is expressed in the narrator’s disenchantment with Angola. Portuguese influence in Angola is portrayed as decadent; Luanda, the capital, is nothing more than a miserable dock, populated by black people, over a stagnant sea: “Luanda começou por ser um pobre cais sem majestade cujos armazéns ondulavam na humidade e no calor” (Antunes 21).

Gago Coutinho, the narrator's first outpost near the frontier with Zambia, hardly deserves such a name: "Gago Coutinho... era um mamilo de terra vermelha poeirenta entre duas chanas podres" (37). There is nothing in the collection of shacks on a patch of red earth to justify Portugal's desire to hold this colony. The empire reigns over wastelands. This ruined landscape, however, is produced by the Portuguese in their continuous travels: "em toda parte do mundo a que aportamos vamos assinalando a nossa presença aventureira através de padrões manuelinos e de latas de conserva vazias, numa subtil combinação de escorbuto heróico e de folha-de-flandres ferrugenta" (22). Trapped in the dynamic of their own imperial fantasy, the Portuguese cannot help but destroy what they most desire. No one else is entitled to enjoy the product of their colonies; but in their zeal to protect and keep their conquered territories, not even they can enjoy them.

Once away from the colonies, the narrator's disenchantment with Portuguese imperialism is seen in his choice of lodgings: he lives in an apartment complex in the suburbs so that he might not see horizons. He does not accept this flawed but necessary point in space, as described by Pessoa in a poem of the same name. Horizons, as symbols of the ever-expanding desire of the conqueror, are rejected, as indeed are open spaces. The relief at not being able to see the Portuguese sea from his apartment stems from not having to find any more islands to invade: "que alívio ... não se vê o mar, não existe o perigo dos olhos se alongarem para o horizonte em busca de ilhas à deriva ou dos inquietantes veleiros da aventura interior" (121). Nothing more natural, then, than replacing the dream of Infante D. Henrique for an apartment which is compared to the monotonous expanse of the Gobi Desert, a barren place where nothing but death can be expected: "Esta casa, cara amiga, é o deserto de Gobi, quilómetros e quilómetros de areia sem nenhum oásis" (126). All the dreams born of the imperial fantasy are traded for the peaceful monotony of a perfect bourgeois residence. The Portuguese sea is exchanged for a cup of linden tea. The powerful Portuguese conqueror is transformed into a retired worker from the Caixa Geral de Depósitos: "Tenho a certeza de que se fechasse à chave e permanecesse, por exemplo, aqui um mês à secretária ... me transformaria ... no insecto perfeito ... de um aposentado da Caixa Geral de Depósitos,



correspondendo-se em esperanto com um bancário persa e um relojoeiro sueco, a beber chá de tília na marquise a seguir ao jantar” (121).

Another consequence of the presence of the Real is the abolition of history itself. Unlike the collapse of the fantasy and the desire that is structured by it, the corruption of the historical narrative depends on the blurring of the ego’s frontiers constructed during the Lacanian Mirror Stage. Not only are the limits between the ego and its surroundings produced during this process of alienation, so is the projection of the individual into history (“Mirror Stage” 78). Our notion of history comes from an image, that is, from the ego. As soon as it is formed, the ego articulates itself in a temporal line that allows the individual to step from the domain of insufficiency into the domain of anticipation. From its origins, the ego projects itself through anticipation—causality—into the past and future. The ego positions itself from its formation in a historical narrative; without it, there can be no homogeneous time or history. Thus, history is the product of an image and can be subjected to the same kind of narcissistic identification that takes place in the Imaginary domain. History is either loved or hated depending on the degree of resemblance it has with the ego, since the ego, while delving into its past, looks for its reflection in each and every one of its details.

The relation between the ego and traumatic memory plays a central role in *Os cus de Judas*. Contrary to the conventional theoretical approach on trauma deftly employed by José Ornelas (337), a more Lacanian argument would posit that the disruption of the narrator’s self-image is not actually responsible for the persistence of the trauma. Rather, its persistence is what sustains the disruption of his self-image and his resistance to the dominant historical narrative. The narrator’s resistance against the ideological apparatus comes from the presence of the Real. Trauma, then, not only has negative connotations, it can also be a site of resistance. *Os cus de Judas* is not the narrative of an impossible mastery over memory, but a narrative of resistance against silence. As Moutinho points out, the narrative is also a way of breaking the official silence concerning the war that followed the revolution of April 1974 (“Writing the War” 85). Revisiting the past—working through the trauma of the war—does not entail assimilation of the trauma or mastery over memory.

Repetition, after all, also entails the responsibility for the past, regardless of the unexpected consequences the horrors of the colonial war have on the narrator.

In *Os cus de Judas*, the imaginary limits that separate the narrator's ego from his environment are unstable. His ego has the blurry consistency of scars, and its surroundings are completely distorted. In a play of mirrors, every image loses its consistency. Lisbon lacks all reality; it is a city where light is constantly being reflected. In its constant display of images, every object is compulsively repeated until it detaches itself from its surroundings, just like the objects floating in light in Matisse's paintings: "Esta cidade absurda, onde os azulejos multiplicam e devolvem a mínima parcela de claridade num jogo de espelhos sem fim, e onde os objectos vogam suspensos na luz como nos quadros de Matisse" (Antunes 126). The city is nothing more than a labyrinth of mirrors, repeating the same images from time immemorial, which reverberate in its narrow and asphyxiating atmosphere: "sou homem de um país estreito e velho, de uma cidade afogada de casas que se multiplicam e reflectem umas às outras nas frontarias de azulejo e nos ovais dos lagos" (31). Here, the narrator is surrounded by reflections of reflections. Unsurprisingly, he longs for a firmer grasp on reality, a time when things still had a clear and concise consistency: "sem subterfúgios, nem subentendidos" (50). Lisbon, with its constant emphasis on the repetition of images from a glorious past, dilutes Portuguese history, its mirrors exacerbating the sensation of unreality. No linear and directed historical narrative can be constructed amid a city composed of mirages.

Likewise, trapped between two worlds, with no chance of separating his past from his present, the narrator's identification with the images that represent Portuguese history becomes increasingly remote. This is why one of the reference points of his narration is the distant and alien photograph of a mustachioed fireman wearing a suit covered with medals: "um bombeiro antipático de bigodes, dono de numerosas medalhas que tronavam no armário de vidro da sala, juntamente com outros troféus guerreiros igualmente inúteis, mas a que a família parecia prestar uma veneração de relíquias. Pois fique sabendo que durante anos ... escutei semanalmente ... as proezas vetustas do bombeiro elevadas na circunstância a cumes de epopeia" (Antunes 34). History, with all its pomp and glorious derelictions, makes no sense anymore for the narrator.

He can no longer identify with the images that were held as an ideal. Nothing farther from the man the family wished to build up through military training, than the man who comes back and can hardly fit into his suit (196). Moreover, the photographs of heroic times and of dead generals, and the statues of Lisbon, stand in stark contrast to the image of the mangled bodies of soldiers in Angola. These fragmented bodies erupt constantly in his narration to question the legitimacy of the war images venerated by Portuguese society.

The key thing to note is, without an ego, the narrator of *Os cus de Judas* can identify *neither* with the images that compose Portuguese history, *nor* with any form of otherness. His identity is so torn that he cannot place himself within the coordinates of colonial logic. According to Adriana Martins, this identity crisis at the frontier occurs when the narrator is forced to confront the dehumanization of the Other perpetrated by his fellow officers (66). Faced with the horrors of colonial society, the narrator struggles to recast his position along the divide created by the colonial discourse. But if there is no absolute difference between the colonizer and the colonized, as Martins has highlighted in her reading of the novel, neither can there be an absolute identification between them. As Luís Madureira points out, a complete identification entails a continuation of the mythologies that inform the Portuguese imperial narrative (242). The narrator refuses both to identify with the Portuguese national narrative and the ideological constructs that compose it, and to appropriate the Other's discourse in order to build up a replacement narrative to fill the historical void left behind by colonialism's demise. In this sense, the narrator's gesture is even more radical. Memory's captive and history's victim, as William Deresiewicz puts it (145), the narrator will not stop until every historical master narrative crumbles completely.

*Os cus de Judas* is also the story of an impossible return. Although the narrator's body is spared during the colonial war, in more than one way he does not make it back from Angola. His ego was blown to pieces by his experience during those years on the front, making his placement in time and space impossible. The spatialization of time is not, as Clarke suggests, wholly responsible for the fragmented character of his narrative (200); space does not take precedence over time, since both were disrupted when the ego lost its contours.

Indeed, the narrator's account also partakes of the general crisis of imagination that hinders the construction of alternative spaces in post-imperial Portugal, as Phyllis Peres has pointed out (192). No single point of space can be precisely isolated from the rest, since neither space nor time was spared. In fact, after his experience in the war, the narrator belongs neither to Angola nor to Lisbon. Thus, the difference between center and periphery is subverted. The narrator can no longer participate in the idea of Empire as a way of imagining the center so often used by the Portuguese, as asserted by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (15). In this respect, the narrator cannot belong anywhere. As Moutinho remarks, he is "acutely displaced" (*Colonial Wars* 31). An intense feeling of estrangement pervades his narration. No temporal fragment or concrete point in space can make him return to his past and regain the life he left behind when he embarked for Angola, full of a pride that was bound not to last.

In fact, there is no final destination for the narrator's voyage—no definitive homecoming. Estranged, the narrator fails to recognize himself as equal to his countrymen upon his arrival. Lisbon remains as foreign as Angola, and its inhabitants as removed from his new reality as the Africans were when he was a doctor fighting on the front. The consolation of identity that history offers its partisans, which is withheld from Antunes's protagonists as Leela Gandhi suggests in her reading of *As naus*, is also denied to the narrator of *Os cus de Judas* (344). The never-ending assimilation of difference that characterizes the narcissism of history, according to Hegel, is stopped by the sudden disruption of the ego. Indeed, when compared to Ulysses, the narrator of *Os cus de Judas* travels in exactly the opposite direction. The outcome of Ulysses' voyage, in Horkheimer and Adorno's reading of the *Odyssey*, is completely reversed in *Os cus de Judas'* narrator's account of his sojourn in Angola. For Horkheimer and Adorno, Ulysses' voyage signals the passage from myth to enlightenment (38).<sup>2</sup> The story of the adventures of Ulysses exemplifies the formation of the ego as a coherent unity in opposition to the environment, since at this early stage, "the self does not exist simply in rigid antithesis to adventure but takes on its solidity only through this antithesis, and its unity through the very multiplicity which the myth in its oneness denies" (Horkheimer and Adorno 38). The formation of the ego also marks the advent of time as a separate sphere from space

and, thus, the beginning of history (39). Hence, Ulysses' voyage is equivalent to the Lacanian Mirror Stage. The ego is the last stop of the voyage; it is its final destination. However, for the narrator of *Os cus de Judas* there is no possibility of such return. His journey, rather than reinforcing his identity, ends up tearing it to pieces.

In sum, the narrator is unable to identify himself with the Portuguese imperial project because, on the one hand, the normal flow of his desire has been disrupted and, on the other, he cannot identify himself with the image of Portuguese history upheld by the *Estado Novo*. Thus, Angola is neither a pink image on a map, nor the image of proud Portuguese youth on their way to fulfill their destiny. The Angola he experiences has no relation whatsoever to the image constructed during his childhood:

Também vim para aqui porque me expulsaram do meu país a bordo de um navio cheio de tropas desde o porão à ponte e me aprisionaram em três voltas de arame cercadas de minas e de guerra ... Angola era um recângulo cor-de-rosa no mapa da instrução primária, freiras pretas a sorrirem no calendário das Missões, mulheres de argola no nariz, Mouzinho de Albuquerque e hipopótamos, o heroísmo da Mocidade Portuguesa a marcar passo, sob a chuva de abril, no pátio do liceu. (Antunes 143)

No image coincides with the images that have haunted him since the war's end. The only identification possible, after three years in Angola and the resulting fragmentation of his ego, is established between the narrator and a cast of mutilated, crippled figures that he had to treat during the war (Antunes 115).

As well as offering the narrator a way of escaping the imperial image deployed by the *Estado Novo*, the blurring of the ego's limits turns his experience of love on its head. The image we possess of history is nothing without narcissistic identification, but neither is love. While the position of the individual in history depends on the appearance of the ego, the individual's relationship with history also depends on a degree of identification with the ego. Likewise, love cannot exist without a certain degree of imaginary identification. No account of history can be given if love cannot make up for the inexistent sexual

relation. The analogies between love and the Portuguese imperial history are more than palpable in this novel. They both require a subtle equilibrium between desire and narcissism to account for what has never really existed, that is, the powerful Portuguese empire.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> All quotations in this article come from the 2010 edition of the novel published by Alfaguara. For an English version, please see Margaret Jull Costa's excellent 2011 translation, *The Land at the End of the World*, published by Norton.

<sup>2</sup> Enlightenment should be understood as the rationality that strives for the domination of nature. A domination of nature "that was not self-reflective but asserted its control over its so called materials by subsuming, classifying, subordinating and otherwise cutting them short" (Adorno 13).

## Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor. *History and Freedom*. Malden: Polity, 2010. Print.
- Alvarez, José Maurício Saldanha. "Duelo contra o império: o indivíduo e a busca da felicidade no romance *Os cus de Judas* de António Lobo Antunes." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 45-60. Print.
- Antunes, António Lobo. *Os cus de Judas*. Rio de Janeiro: Alfaguara, 2010.
- Clarke, Margaret Anne. "Time and Narrative Structure in António Lobo Antunes's *Os cus de Judas*." *Portuguese at Leeds*. Ed. Lisa Jesse. Leeds: Trinity and All Saints College and Juma Printing and Publishing, 1995. Print.
- Deresiewicz, William, 2011. "Politics and the Novel in *South of Nowhere* and *The Inquisitor's Manual*." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 143-150. Print.
- Gandhi, Leela, 2003. "Acts of Literature: Notes on The Return of the Caravels." *A Escrita e o Mundo em António Lobo Antunes*. Eds. Eunice Cabral, Carlos J. F. Jorge and Christine Zurbach. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2003. Print.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Encore. On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 1998. Print.
- . *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1998. Print.
- . "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2006. Print.
- . 'Kant with Sade.' *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2006. Print.

- Madureira, Luís. "A Supplement to the White Man's Burden: Lobo Antunes, History, the Colonial Wars, and the April Revolution." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 227-46. Print.
- Martins, Adriana Alves de Paula. "Haunting Imperial Representations into Dialogue: *Os cus de Judas* by António Lobo Antunes and *Waiting for the Barbarians* by J. M. Coetzee." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 61-70. Print.
- Moutinho, Isabel. *The Colonial Wars in Contemporary Portuguese Fiction*. Rochester: Tamesis, 2008. Print.
- . "Writing the War and the Man in the First Novels of António Lobo Antunes." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 71-87. Print.
- Ornelas, José N. "Negation of the Narrative Framework or the Failure of Narrative Memory: The Case of *Os cus de Judas*." *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 19/20 (2011): 321-39. Print.
- Peres, Phyllis. "Love and Imagination among the Ruins of Empire: António Lobo Antunes's *Os Cus de Judas* and *O Fado Alexandrino*." *After the Revolution: Twenty Years of Portuguese Literature, 1974-1994*. Eds. Helena Kaufman and Anna Klobucka. Cranbury: Bucknell UP, 1997. Print.
- Ribeiro, Margarida Calafate. *Uma história de regressos: império, guerra colonial e pos-colonialismo*. Porto: Afrontamento, 2004. Print.
- Seixo, Maria Alzira. *Os romances de António Lobo Antunes*. Lisboa: Dom Quixote, 2002. Print.

**Sebastián Patrón Saade** studied biology at La Universidad Nacional de Colombia and is currently a PhD candidate in Spanish and Portuguese at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. His dissertation explores the relationship between love and aggression in the narratives of António Lobo Antunes, Pepetela, and Fernando Vallejo.