



BIBLIOASIS PRESS

READING GUIDE

TRANSPARENT CITY

BY *Ondjaki*

TRANSLATED BY *Stephen Henighan*

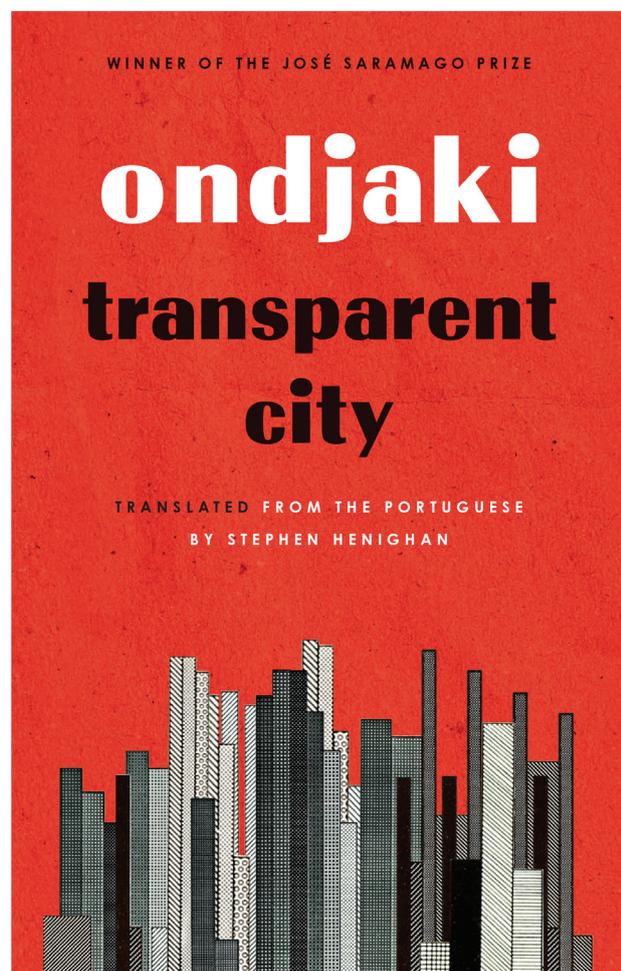
READING GUIDE

A VANITY FAIR HOT TYPE BOOK
FOR APRIL 2018

“The prose in which Ondjaki tells this story is deftly stylized, suggesting the hazy interconnections between the cast of this sprawling, stunning work. Over time, the plot threads begin to converge, and both the miraculous and the absurdist aspects take on tragic qualities as the novel reaches its stunning conclusion.” —*Words Without Borders*

IN A CRUMBLING apartment block in the Angolan city of Luanda, families work, laugh, scheme, and get by. In the middle of it all is the melancholic Odonato, nostalgic for the country of his youth and searching for his lost son. As his hope drains away and as the city outside his doors changes beyond all recognition, Odonato’s flesh becomes transparent and his body increasingly weightless.

A captivating blend of magical realism, scathing political satire, tender comedy, and literary experimentation, *Transparent City* offers a gripping and joyful portrait of urban Africa quite unlike any before yet published in English, and places Ondjaki, indisputably, among the continent’s most accomplished writers.



Transparent City

9781771961431

\$19.95 CAD | \$14.95 USD

Trade Paper | 328 pp

Published by Biblioasis | www.biblioasis.com



Distributed in Canada by Ampersand/UTP
Distributed in the USA by Consortium/Ingram



ABOUT ONDJAKI

ONDJAKI was born in Luanda, Angola in 1977. He is the author of five novels, four short-story collections, and numerous books of poems and stories for children. He has also made a documentary film, *May Cherries Grow*, about his native city. His books have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

In 2008 Ondjaki was awarded the Grinzane for Africa Prize in the category of Best Young Writer. In 2012 *The Guardian* named him one of its “Top Five African Writers.” *Transparent City* won the 2013 José Saramago Prize in Portugal, and, in France, the 2015 Prix Transfuge for Best African Novel and a 2016 Prix Littérature-Monde from the St. Malo World Literature Festival.

ABOUT STEPHEN HENIGHAN

STEPHEN HENIGHAN’S previous translations include Ondjaki’s *Good Morning Comrades* and *Granma Nineteen and the Soviet’s Secret*. He is the author of five novels, including *The Path of the Jaguar* (2016) and *Mr. Singh Among the Fugitives* (2017), as well as four short story collections, most recently *Blue River and Red Earth* (2018). Henighan has been a finalist for the Governor General’s Literary Award and the Canada Prize in the Humanities.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The eternally running waters on the building’s first floor become a place where the residents can gather. What other signs of community do you see in the building?
2. The novel is written with unconventional punctuation and contains many cross-cultural and cross-linguistic misunderstandings and jokes. What do you think this says about the relationship between Western society and life in Luanda?
3. The plan to drill for oil in the middle of the city makes fun of the way the modern world is dominated by the oil industry. What specific criticisms of the oil industry do you think it raises?
4. Senhor Adviser is another aspect of Ondjaki’s satire. What issues in government do you think this character is intended to critique?
5. How did you react to Odonato floating away at the novel’s conclusion? What are some of the causes of his weightlessness?
6. Did reading this novel change your image of Africa? If so, how? If not, why not?