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Receção de *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* de José Saramago no mundo de expressão inglesa: tradução e crítica

RESUMO

Tal como sucedeu com muitos outros escritores, também a obra de José Saramago adquiriu importância nos países de expressão inglesa mediante a sua tradução para inglês. Com efeito, só depois da publicação da primeira tradução para essa língua de uma obra sua, *Memorial do Convento*, em 1987, deixa o autor de ser um estrangeiro praticamente desconhecido, passando logo a ser reconhecido como um Nobel, consagrado por Harold Bloom como um dos maiores romancistas vivos. Esta comunicação debruça-se sobre a primeira fase da receção anglófona da obra *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, publicada em Portugal em 1984 e na versão inglesa de Giovanni Pontiero em 1991. Analisam-se o texto da tradução, assim como algumas das mais significativas recensões críticas que recebeu, com a finalidade de determinar até que ponto, no caso específico deste romance caracterizado por um profundíssima presença da cultura portuguesa nas suas múltiplas vertentes, tanto o tradutor como os críticos conseguiram compreender e comunicar as feições da Lisboa e do Portugal de Fernando Pessoa e do salazarismo, evocadas com tão ricos pormenores nesta obra essencial do cânone do Nobel português.

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The reception of José Saramago's *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* in the Anglophone world: translation and criticism

ABSTRACT

As with many other authors, the work of José Saramago has come to prominence in the English-speaking world by means of its translation into English. It was only following the first translation of one of his works into English, *Memorial do Convento* in 1987, that Saramago ceased to be a virtually unknown foreign-language writer, in a process that would lead to his Nobel award and his consecration by Harold Bloom as among the best of living novelists. This paper will consider the first phase of the Anglophone reception of the novel *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, published in Portugal in 1984 and in English, as *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, in 1991 in the translation of Giovanni Pontiero. The text of the translation is analysed, as also are a number of significant reviews of the novel in the English-language press. The aim is to determine how far, in the specific case of this novel characterised by a particularly deep presence of Portuguese culture in its multiple manifestations, it proved possible for translator and critics to understand the features of the Lisbon and Portugal of Fernando Pessoa and of Salazarism, as evoked in rich detail in this essential work in the canon of the Portuguese Nobel.

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O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis, published in Portugal in 1984 and the fourth of José Saramago's novels to enjoy wide diffusion, is today considered one of his major works. It was

the third of his novels to be translated into any language and the second into English, following *Memorial do Convento* in 1987. The English-language version, entitled *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, was translated by Giovanni Pontiero, who also wrote the introduction, and was published in the US in 1991 by Harcourt Brace and in the UK in 1992 by Harvill. The present paper will examine that translation, as well as several of the reviews it received in Anglophone circles, also in the context of Saramago's crowning as canonical author by no less a critic than Harold Bloom¹.

Before anything else, we may note that Pontiero's chosen title corresponds word for word to the original: there is no question of any simplificatory retitling of an 'alien' Portuguese formulation, as has occurred before and after with Saramago. By contrast, *Memorial do Convento* had become *Baltasar and Blimunda*; and later, the titles of *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* and *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez* would be reduced to simply *Blindness* and *Seeing*². Pontiero's transposition of the original title is especially to be commended considering that its signification is likely to be less obvious to Anglophone readers than to their Portuguese counterparts. The title will immediately alert the Portuguese reader to the fact that the protagonist will be a pre-existing invented character - Ricardo Reis, one of the heteronyms of Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). That reader will have studied Pessoa's poetry and his practice of heteronymy in school, and even before opening the book will expect it to contain some kind of literary game. By contrast, an Anglophone picking up the translation will not necessarily be familiar with the literary practices of Pessoa, be it with his sharing of his poetic production between the heteronyms Alberto Caeiro, Álvaro de Campos and Ricardo Reis and his orthonymic self, or with his adscription of the prose work *O Livro do Desassossego* (*The Book of Disquiet*) to another heteronym, Bernardo Soares. The Portuguese reader will recognise the protagonist as a doctor and neoclassical poet, fictive author of the *Odes de Ricardo Reis* - a book of poems in reality penned by Pessoa, published posthumously in 1946, and substantially quoted across a novel further characterised by a recurring and multiple intertextuality.

It is essential that the translation should enable the Anglophone reader to empathise with the novel's three leading male voices, those of Ricardo Reis (Pessoa's imagined heteronym become a fictional character), Fernando Pessoa (the real writer transformed into his own ghost) and a third-person narratorial voice that is evidently Saramago's. Beyond this triangular scheme, the reader encounters a range of other characters from hotel staff to secret police officers and including, notably, Lídia and Marcenda, the two women in the poet's life, all against the backdrop of a highly specific time and place - Lisbon in the year 1936, evoked in detail at a time of encroaching fascism in Europe and consolidation in Portugal of the homegrown authoritarianism of the Salazar dictatorship.

In 1991 Pessoa was less known to an English-speaking literary readership than he is now. *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* preceded the surprise inclusion by Harold Bloom, Professor of Humanities at Yale University, in his polemical book of 1994 *The Western Canon*³, of

¹ Page references to Saramago's novel (original and translation) will be indicated in the footnotes, with original preceding translation and prefixed by the abbreviation RR. The editions used are: *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*. 1984. Repr. in *Obras de José Saramago*, vol. III. Porto: Lello e Irmão, 1991, 345-745; and: *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*. Tr. and intr. Giovanni Pontiero. 1991. Repr. London: Harvill Books, 1998. Here and for all Portuguese texts reproduced in this paper, the spelling reform ('Acordo Ortográfico') of 1990 is applied.

² This tendency is not confined to English. *Memorial do Convento* had already appeared in French as *Le Dieu manchot* ('The one-armed God'), and examples could be multiplied from numerous languages.

³ Bloom, Harold, *The Western Canon*. New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1994. Repr. London: Macmillan, 1995, 485-492.

Pessoa as one of 32 key representatives of the literary tradition. Pessoa had in fact earlier been included in Anglophone anthologies of foreign-language verse and approvingly noted in works of reference⁴, and a Penguin *Selected Poems* had appeared as early as 1974⁵. The reviewers of Saramago's novel nonetheless clearly felt it necessary to explicate the Pessoa-Reis phenomenon.

The *New York Times* reviewed Pontiero's translation on 30 April 1991 in a piece signed by Herbert Mittgang⁶. The review was generally positive, praising the conversion of Lisbon into a 'visual character' and lauding Saramago as 'one of Europe's major writers who deserves to be better known'. However, the reviewer was more sceptical regarding the 'literary puzzle', and entered a significant caveat over the novel's Portugueseness, adverting that 'the conversations between the Ricardo Reis of the novel and Pessoa will have more meaning to students of Portuguese literature than to American readers'. Still in the US, the *New York Review of Books* exhibited a similar ambiguity. The NYRB review, signed by Michael Wood and published on 24 October 1991, was in fact a two-pack coupling Saramago's novel with Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet*⁷. Regarding Saramago, the reviewer lauded the novel's sense of place ('streets, squares, statues') and of history (the book's Lisbon as 'irredeemably, desperately historical'), while showing somewhat more patience than the NYT with the heteronymy element and pointing up the Pessoa-Reis emphasis on inner multiplicity. Almost a year later, on 6 August 1992 and following the translation's UK publication, the London daily *The Independent* featured an appraisal by Robert Winder, entitled 'Death in Lisbon: a poet disintegrates'⁸. Winder concluded that the novel 'shows Saramago to be a novelist of the grandest sort', eulogising it as 'a dramatic work of great philosophical weight' and pointing up its atmosphere of 'a world shrieking towards war'. On Pessoa and heteronymy he explains the necessary, opining that while this novel 'would seem to require both a basic knowledge of Portuguese history and a working acquaintance with the work of Fernando Pessoa', it is in fact perfectly accessible to the Anglophone reader – thanks to both Saramago and Pontiero, whose translation is praised for its 'heroic inventiveness'⁹. This review, be it noted, is the only one of the three to discuss translation.

The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis reached Harold Bloom as the second of Saramago's works to enter the American critic's purview (he had included *Baltasar and Blimunda* in the reading list annexed to *The Western Canon*)¹⁰. Bloom invariably read the Portuguese writer's books in translation, admitting in his 2002 lecture *The Varieties of José Saramago* that

⁴ See: Guerra, Ernesto da Cal. 'Fernando Pessoa'. In Burnshaw, Stanley, ed. *The Poem Itself: 150 European poems translated and analysed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960, 198-201; Milburn, A.R., 'Pessoa, Fernando'. Entry in Thorlby, Anthony (ed.) *The Penguin Companion to Literature 2: European Literature*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, 608-609.

⁵ Pessoa, Fernando. *Selected Poems*. Tr. and intr. Jonathan Griffin. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974 [an expanded second edition appeared in 1982].

⁶ Mittgang, Herbert. 'Two Women, One Poet and the Ghost of Another: Review of *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*'. *New York Times*. 30 April 1991. <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/10/04/specials/saramago-reis.html>

⁷ Wood, Michael. 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice. Review of [Saramago] *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* and [Pessoa] *The Book of Disquiet*'. *New York Review of Books*, 24 October 1991. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1991/10/24/the-sorcerers-apprentice/>

⁸ Winder, Robert. 'Death in Lisbon: a poet disintegrates. Review of *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*'. *The Independent*, 6 August 1992. www.independent.co.uk/voices/book-review-death-in-lisbon-a-poet-disintegrates-the-year-of-the-death-of-ricardo-reis-jose-saramago-1538909.html

⁹ Winder's review also provides a verbatim sample of the translation (the hotel breakfast episode from early in the novel - RR 396, 43).

¹⁰ Bloom, *The Western Canon*, 550.

'Saramago's Portuguese is still too difficult for me'¹¹. In that same lecture, he praised *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* as a novel 'both visionary and realistic' and as a 'parable of the triumph of Iberian Fascism'.¹² Bloom's role in Saramago's later years in promoting and discussing his books was fundamental, and would not have been possible without the act of translation¹³.

Saramago himself had in his early days worked as a translator¹⁴ and knew the significance of the translator's task. In 1999, addressing a conference in Toledo on the translation of his own work, he called for greater recognition for translators, affirming that 'sin los traductores, los escritores no somos casi nada' ['without translation, we writers are almost nothing'].¹⁵ Works by Saramago have by now been translated into a remarkable number of languages (combined data from UNESCO¹⁶ in 2009, the Porto newspaper *Jornal de Notícias* in 2010 and, most recently, the Fundação José Saramago,¹⁷ yield 51). In this context the English translation constitutes a special case: *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* has been translated into at least 20 languages¹⁸, but it should be remembered that a third-language translator may not always or necessarily work from the Portuguese, in some instances preferring indirect translation and thus operating at one remove, typically via the English version – a point confirmed by Saramago himself in an interview of 2009¹⁹. Saramago was avowedly grateful to Pontiero for his assiduous translational labour and for discussing cruxes with him, the author (by fax, the medium of the time²⁰). Indeed, he described Pontiero as 'um tradutor de uma categoria e de uma qualidade raras' ['a translator of unusual rank and quality'].²¹

¹¹ Bloom, Harold. *The Varieties of José Saramago*. Lisbon: Fundação Luso-Americana, 2002, 26.

¹² Bloom, *The Varieties of José Saramago*, 16, 23. He also quoted what he calls the novel's 'beautifully modulated closing passage', in Pontiero's translation (RR 745, 357-358).

¹³ Bloom, *The Varieties of José Saramago*, 16.

¹⁴ For a list of works translated by Saramago, see: Fundação José Saramago, <https://www.josesaramago.org/traduzido-por-saramago/>.

¹⁵ See Díaz de Tuesta, María José, 'José Saramago cree que los traductores deberían cobrar derechos de autor'. *El País*, 10 November 1999, 49, https://elpais.com/diario/1999/11/10/cultura/942188404_850215.html; and the official conference programme at: <http://escueladetraductores.uclm.es/files/2016/11/folleto-13.pdf>. The quotation from Saramago in Spanish is verbatim from Díaz de Tuesta.

¹⁶ UNESCO's on-line translation database *Index Translationum* at <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/> was active from 1979 but was suspended in 2012, though the old entries are still accessible. Its entries offer full bibliographical data including both target and source titles. There are no entries for Saramago after 2009. It is infinitely to be regretted that so valuable a resource is no longer being updated. See: Lindoso, Felipe. 'Index Translationum: uma lacuna que pode ser irreparável'. *Publishnews* (Brazil), 25 March 2015. <https://www.publishnews.com.br/materias/2015/03/25/81186-index-translationum-uma-lacuna-que-pode-ser-irreparavel>

¹⁷ The Fundação José Saramago logs new translations as they appear, and maintains a list of languages currently standing at 48 (see: <https://www.josesaramago.org/obra/>, accessed 7 September 2018). The UNESCO database lists 541 entries for Saramago, covering translations into 36 languages (many of the entries are for reprints or new editions). The 42 languages listed by the *Jornal de Notícias* include several not logged by either the Foundation or UNESCO.- see: 'Obra de Saramago traduzida em 42 idiomas'. *Jornal de Notícias*, 18 June 2010, <https://www.jn.pt/artes/dossiers/jose-saramago-1922-2010/interior/obra-de-saramago-traduzida-em-42-idomas--1596786.html>. Combining the three sources, we arrive at the grand total of 51.

¹⁸ The UNESCO database lists 16 translations: Arabic, Catalan, Croatian, Danish, English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Serbian, Spanish and Swedish, while further on-line research additionally reveals Dutch, Hebrew, Romanian and Turkish. No doubt there are more.

¹⁹ See Céu e Silva, João. *Uma longa viagem com José Saramago*. Porto: Porto Editora, 2009: interview with Saramago, 268-272 (271).

²⁰ For examples of Saramago's and Pontiero's exchanges of faxes, see Céu e Silva, 271n and 272.

²¹ Céu e Silva, interview with Saramago, 270.

In 1998, one of Saramago's UK publishers, Michael Schmit, stated that 'he is extremely difficult to translate, because he uses the profoundest elements of a language'²², while in 2000 translation scholar Michael Harland described Pontiero as 'without doubt the only person gifted enough to deal successfully with the problems of varying style ... and shifts in register'²³. Pontiero was Saramago's English translator up to his death in 1996, producing versions of seven of the novels, the last being *Blindness*²⁴. Born in 1932 and of Italian-American origin, he learnt his Portuguese in Brazil, teaching at the University of Paraíba and writing a thesis on Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira²⁵.

Pontiero himself, in his introduction to *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*,²⁶ pays particular attention to cultural specificities and translation difficulties. Indeed, he begins by citing Saramago as remarking that his novel 'might be fully appreciated only by someone who is Portuguese'²⁷. To a challenge setting the bar so high, Pontiero responds by stressing the importance of conveying the novel's multiplicity of language strategies: its variety of 'registers and modulations of discourse' and recourse to 'collage, linguistic pastiche and stream of consciousness'²⁸. Evoking a linguistic range including a plethora of specialised vocabulary, proverbs, puns, wordplay and alternation between 'lofty rhetoric and pithy colloquialism'²⁹, he states that 'the problems Saramago poses for the translator are considerable'³⁰. The remainder of this paper will be dedicated to examining Pontiero's words on the page, contrasted with the original, and considering how far and how successfully those problems are surmounted in his translation.

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The translation's front matter includes, significantly, three epigraphs, after the title and facing the introduction. All are from Pessoa's work, but are ascribed respectively to Ricardo Reis, the orthonymic Fernando Pessoa and Bernardo Soares. In the introduction, Pontiero explicates the Pessoa-Reis dyad, but does not mention Soares, thus leaving a loose end dangling. The epigraph attributed to Ricardo Reis is important for the entire novel: 'Sábio é o que se contenta com o espetáculo do mundo'³¹, rendered by Pontiero as 'Wise is the man who

²² Quoted in Moss, Stephen. 'Parables of power politics in Portugal win Nobel Prize'. *The Guardian*, 9 October 1998, p. 3.

²³ Harland, Mike. 'Modern Portuguese Literature'. Entry in Peter France (ed.), *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, Oxford: OUP, 2000, 441-443.

²⁴ Following Pontiero's death, this his last translation was revised for publication by his successor translator Margaret Jull Costa.

²⁵ For more on Pontiero's work, see: Esteves, Laura Rimoli. 'Giovanni Pontiero, tradutor de Saramago'. *TradTerm* (Universidade de São Paulo) No 15, 2009, 11-24. <https://www.revistas.usp.br/tradterm/article/view/46332>; and

Sager, Juan Carlos. 'Las traducciones al inglés de las novelas de José Saramago creadas por Giovanni Pontiero y su recepción en Inglaterra'. *Quaderns. Revista de traducció* (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). No 10, 2003, 111-120. <https://www.raco.cat/index.php/QuadernsTraduccio/article/view/25375>;

²⁶ Pontiero, Giovanni. 'Introduction'. *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, 1992, vii-xv.

²⁷ Pontiero, 'Introduction', vii.

²⁸ Pontiero, 'Introduction', xiii.

²⁹ On the multiple language registers in the novel, see: Rollason, Christopher. 'A História na Literatura, a Literatura na História: José Saramago, Nobel Português'. *Farol* (Viana do Castelo, Portugal), No 12, May 1999, 55-70. <http://yatarollason.info/files/SaramagoNobelPT.pdf>; partially reprinted in English as: Rollason, Christopher. 'Literature as history: On José Saramago's *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*', 1999. <http://www.yatarollason.info/files/Saramago%20Pt%203%20Reis%20EN.pdf>

³⁰ Pontiero, 'Introduction', xv.

³¹ From the ode 'Sábio'. Quotations from the *Odes de Ricardo Reis* are from: Pessoa, Fernando. *Poemas de Ricardo Reis* [1945]. E-book (Kindle). Lisbon: Atlantic Press (Biblioteca Essencial da Literatura Portuguesa),

contents himself with the spectacle of the world'. This, a quotation from the *Odes*, is a summation of Reis' ideological position as critiqued by Saramago. The author on more than one occasion made it clear that one of his motivations in writing the novel was - to quote him from 1997 - 'o meu ajuste de contas' ['my settling of accounts'] with Pessoa's heteronym and his 'filosofia de vida tão complacente' ['philosophy of life of such complacency']³², and hence with a certain type of intellectual whose work he might admire but whose Olympian detachment and lack of public engagement he deplored.

Certain formal aspects merit comment. Saramago's minimalist punctuation and long paragraphs are well-known features of his writing, which Pontiero respects. The translator replicates Saramago's avoidance of inverted commas in dialogues, but where there is a quotation, from Ricardo Reis or elsewhere, Pontiero's practice, diverging from Saramago's undifferentiated text, italicises it. The only aid to the reader is the introduction: there is no glossary or historical chronology, nor are there any footnotes (most likely by publisher's edict). All this may be considered a reasonable compromise between authenticity and accessibility. More problematic, however, is a certain tendency to omission: rather too often sentences are filleted, examples dropped and items removed from lists, and most often not on any obvious grounds of untranslatability. Thus in Pontiero's text as opposed to Saramago's, Lídia, cleaning the doctor's apartment, takes in kitchen and bathroom but not 'o quarto das arrumações' (the storeroom)³³; and the experience of a popular eating-place includes an order for soup, but not one for 'chocos' (cuttlefish)³⁴. Such omissions may perhaps be the result of an over-summary revision.

Intertextuality lies at the heart of this novel, as numerous critics have emphasised³⁵. Saramago's text enters into dialogue not only with Ricardo Reis but with Pessoa's orthonym and other heteronyms, as well as with Camões, Cervantes, Dante, Hugo, Borges and multiple other literary figures. Here we may evoke the exhaustive and invaluable contrastive listings compiled in 2017 by Ana Paula Arnaut, for whom 'a prática intertextual ... contamina ... toda a narrativa' ['intertextual practice conditions the entire narrative']³⁶. The novel begins and

n.d. See also the official Pessoa online archive: Arquivo Pessoa, Lisbon: Obra Aberta CRL, 2008, <http://arquivopessoa.net>.

³² Saramago, José. *A estátua e a pedra*. Lecture, Turin, 1997. Lisbon: Fundação José Saramago, 2013, 26-27. See also: Rollason, Christopher. 'Encontro com José Saramago no Parlamento Europeu', *A Aurora do Lima* (Viana do Castelo, Portugal), 21 May 1999, 1, 3 and: <http://www.yatrarollason.info/files/Saramago%20at%20EP%20PT.pdf>.

³³ RR 584, 214.

³⁴ RR 544, 179.

³⁵ On intertextuality in Saramago, see: Martins, Adriana Alves de Paula and Sabine, Mark, 'Introduction: Saramago and the Politics of Literary Quotation'. In *In Dialogue with Saramago: Essays in Comparative Literature*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2006, 1-23; Grossegese, Orlando. 'About words, tears and screams: Dante's *Commedia* revisited by Borges and Saramago'. In *In Dialogue with Saramago*, 57-79; Sapaga, Ellen W. 'Saramago's "genius": Camões, Adamastor and Ricardo Reis'. In *In Dialogue with Saramago*, 25-35; Ventura, Susanna Ramos, 'A intertextualidade como elemento de base construtiva em *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, de José Saramago', *Nau Literária* (Porto Alegre, Brazil), Vol. 2, No. 2, July-December 2006 - <http://seer.ufrgs.br/NauLiteraria/article/viewFile/4877/2792>; Teixeira, Lucas Rodrigues, 'José Saramago e a transformação de Ricardo Reis: Uma leitura intertextual de *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*'. In *Anais Eletrônicos do IX Colóquio de Estudos Literários: Diálogos e Perspectivas*. Londrina (Paraná), Brazil. Universidade Federal de Londrina, 2015, 329-340.

http://www.uel.br/eventos/estudosliterarios/pages/arquivos/Lucas%20Rodrigues%20Teixeira_texto%20completo.pdf

³⁶ Arnaut, Ana Paula. *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* de José Saramago. Lisbon: Edições ASA, 2017, 37-56 (53). This material includes, inter alia, a blow-by-blow comparison of Saramago's quotations from / allusions to the *Odes de Ricardo Reis* and the relevant passages of the *Odes* themselves. Additional content may be found

ends under the sign of quotation, with a pair of variations on a line from the third canto of Camões' *Os Lusíadas* (Camões: 'Onde a terra acaba e o mar começa' ['Where the land ends and the sea begins']³⁷; Saramago: 'Aqui o mar acaba e a terra principia' and 'Aqui, onde o mar se acabou e a terra espera'³⁸). Pontiero's renderings - 'Here the sea ends and the earth begins'; 'Here, where the sea ends and the earth awaits' - are suitably poetic, and may even suggest to the Anglophone reader that there is a quotation hovering; and yet, even as they frame the novel, they also point up the limits of translation.

Pontiero's handling of the intertextual references is mostly competent, sometimes resorting to in-text glosses. However, in a curious non-recognition he fails to identify the second part of the opening sentence of *Don Quijote*, italicising the words 'En un lugar de la Mancha' (keeping them in Spanish, as does Saramago) but leaving their continuation, 'de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme' unitalicised and in English ('of which I do not wish to remember the name')³⁹. The novel's most significant intertextuality is self-evidently that with the *Odes de Ricardo Reis*. The integration into the novel's fabric of swathes of the Pessoa/Reis poems⁴⁰ has been stressed by critics: for Maria Irene Ramalho Santos, Saramago's fiction is 'all the more remarkable, because, without being any less a novel, it makes the poetic appear'⁴¹, while Miriam Ringel speaks of poetry being woven 'inside the text of the novel'⁴². Reis is observed in his poet's work-in-progress, composing, rewriting, quoting himself to himself. Only one ode appears in full, namely 'Saudoso', which he sends to Marcenda in a letter, but numerous odes and lines are quoted more than once. Pontiero's renderings from the *Odes* appear not to correspond to any previous Pessoa translation⁴³ and may be presumed his own. He is duly attentive to two key lines repeatedly quoted or rephrased in Saramago's text: that concerning 'o espetáculo do mundo', from the ode 'Sábio', which we have already considered as epigram, and the verse 'Vivem em nós inúmeros', from the ode of the same name (translated as 'Innumerable people live within us'⁴⁴). Where allusions to these lines recur, Pontiero generally rises to the challenge and offers a recognisably similar rendering. He also, however, has slip-ups over the *Odes*: 'Ouvi contar que outrora', the first line of the ode of that title, occurs twice in the original but is translated differently the second time⁴⁵; and more than once

on-line at: 'José Saramago, leitor de ...',
http://paraler.leyaeducacao.com/o_ano_da_morte_ricardo_reis/images/AMRR_Saramago_leitor_de.pdf

³⁷ Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, Canto 3, stanza 20. The same line slightly altered recurs later in Camões' epic, at Canto 8, stanza 78: 'Donde a terra se acaba e o mar começa'. Sir Richard Burton, in his classic translation of the poem, appears not to have noticed the recurrence and translates the two lines as, respectively, 'Where endeth land and where beginneth sea' and 'Where ends the shore and where begins the sea'. See: Camões, Luís de. *Os Lusíadas* [1572]. Lisbon: Publicações Europa-América, 1997; Camões, Luís de. *The Lusíads* [1880]. Translated into English verse by Sir Richard Burton. In *Luís de Camões (Delphi Poets Series)*. E-book. Hastings: Delphi Classics, 2015.

³⁸ RR, 351, 1 and 745, 358. On this point, see Ventura, 2-3.

³⁹ RR, 410, 56.

⁴⁰ Arnaut (88-95) identifies 48 quotations from / allusions to the *Odes*.

⁴¹ Santos, Maria Irene Ramalho. 'All the names: José Saramago and Lyric Poetry'. In Martins, Adriana Alves de Paula and Sabine, Mark (ed. and intr.). In *In Dialogue with Saramago: Essays in Comparative Literature*. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 2006, 91-103 (98).

⁴² Ringel, Miriam. 'José Saramago and Ricardo Reis - A Game of Fiction and Reality', 2008.

https://www.academia.edu/23367267/Jose_Saramago_and_Ricardo_Reis_-_A_Game_of_Fiction_and_Reality

⁴³ The book includes no credits or acknowledgments of any kind, whether for the *Odes* or any other element.

⁴⁴ RR, 364, 13.

⁴⁵ The respective renderings are: 'I have heard it said that in times gone by' (RR, 617, 244) and 'I heard how once upon a time' (633, 259).

where Saramago weaves lines from the *Odes* into a long narratorial sentence, Pontiero confounds quotation with linking text and italicises in the wrong places⁴⁶.

The multiplicity of Portuguese cultural references and their language registers, ranging from the highly particular political institutions of the *Estado Novo* through the culinary and the topographical to popular entertainments, is in general handled by Pontiero ably and with virtually no recourse to semi-equivalent anglicisms. Saramago's own painstaking research is broadly replicated in Pontiero's careful renderings. There are, though, inevitably, errors.

To take as an example matters relating to Coimbra, the city whence the romanticised Marcenda hails, Pontiero correctly identifies the Choupal park as 'the city's Poplar Grove'⁴⁷; and for the text's two references to the Quinta das Lágrimas, site of the murder of Inês de Castro and linked to Camões⁴⁸, renders one (figurative) as 'tragic love affair'⁴⁹ while for the second (literal) simply retaining the toponym⁵⁰. However, in a list of carnival costumes Pontiero stumbles, rendering the eminently Luso-Athenian 'estudantes de capa e batina' as, bizarrely, 'scholars in cap and gown'⁵¹.

Other errors relate to day-to-day details of Portuguese life. More than once Pontiero ties himself up in knots over the currency, for instance rendering Pessoa's prize money received for his poem *Mensagem* as 'five thousand reis' (a mere 5 escudos!) where Saramago's original has 'cinco contos de réis', or 5000 escudos⁵². Families enjoying an outing in downtown Lisbon are misleadingly described as consuming 'large drinks' where the original has 'galões', 'galão' being of course the universal term in Portugal for a glass of milky coffee⁵³. Visiting Fátima, Reis lunches on a dish of indeterminate 'fried fish', which in the original is quite specifically 'carapaus fritos' (fried mackerel)⁵⁴. Curiously, Pontiero misunderstands a convention regarding rented accommodation when Reis first notices his future apartment, decrying 'uma casa com escritos no segundo andar' – rendered as 'a house with inscriptions on the upper story', when in fact 'escritos' refers to a rectangular symbol traditionally indicating a property to let⁵⁵. More errors could be tracked down, but a lesser translator would have researched less and anglicised more: in the end the mistranslations are few and tend to concern quotidian

⁴⁶ See, for example, the long list of first lines of poems leafed through by Ricardo Reis in his apartment (RR, 633, 259), where Pontiero wrongly italicises narratorial interpolations such as 'while yet others tell' (for 'outras contam').

⁴⁷ RR, 119, 557.

⁴⁸ The story of Inês de Castro and her tragic death in the Quinta das Lágrimas is told in Canto III of *Os Lusíadas*, stanzas 118-135.

⁴⁹ RR, 152, 515.

⁵⁰ RR, 279, 654.

⁵¹ RR, 136, 497.

⁵² RR, 286, 663.

⁵³ RR 200, 568.

⁵⁴ RR 265, 640.

⁵⁵ RR 157, 520. Pontiero later repeats this error when Reis returns to the address to rent the apartment (RR, 174, 538). For a definition of 'escritos', see: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa. 'Casas com Escritos - Uma História da Habitação em Lisboa' (unsigned), 2016. http://www.fcsh.unl.pt/faculdade/mais_lisboa/conhecer/201ccasas-com-escritos-uma-historia-da-habitacao-em-lisboa201d - 'Durante séculos, Lisboa foi essencialmente uma cidade de inquilinos e poucos eram aqueles que se poderiam considerar proprietários dos andares que habitavam. Quem desejava ter uma habitação percorria os bairros e as ruas da cidade procurando os prédios que tinham «escritos» nas janelas, o que significava que, nesse edifício, haveria uma casa para alugar' ['For centuries, Lisbon was essentially a city of tenants, and those who could consider themselves owners on the floors on which they lived were few and far between. Those seeking accommodation scoured the city's quarters and streets looking for buildings which had 'escritos' in their windows, meaning that property to rent was available in that building'].

Luso-Lusitanian phenomena whose misunderstanding inevitably reflects the fact that Pontiero acquired his Portuguese in Brazil.

Saramago's national reputation is long since consecrated, and here we may quote Carlos Reis's outspoken praise, in a Nobel homage lecture of 1998, of the novelist's 'indagação da nossa condição portuguesa' ['investigation of our Portuguese condition']⁵⁶. It is also a reputation that massively transcends frontiers, such that Carlos Fuentes, also in a Nobel tribute, could denominate Saramago '[el] gran escritor portugués y universal' ['the great Portuguese and universal writer']⁵⁷. Beyond the Luso-Iberian world, Harold Bloom's admiration for Saramago, increasing over the years, reached the point where in 2002, in his massive book *Genius*, he could call the Portuguese writer 'the most gifted novelist alive in the world today', and declare: 'I am a literary critic attempting to reeducate myself ... with the help of the master Saramago'⁵⁸. *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* is among Saramago's best-received works internationally, and Pontiero's translation, while not perfect, is a major determinant of the novel's and its writer's global fame, serving as a key reminder to the literary world of both the difficulty and the necessity of translation.

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⁵⁷ Fuentes, Carlos. 'Saramago en Jalisco' [1998]. In *Blimunda*, No 6 (Edición española - Número especial, 90 Años de José Saramago). Fundação José Saramago, November 2012, 39-40 (40). In Portuguese, '[o] grande escritor português e universal José Saramago'. Portuguese translation, as 'Saramago em Jalisco', in *Camões: Revista de Letras e Cultura*. No 3, October-December 1998, 94-95 (95). <http://cvc.instituto-camoes.pt/conhecer/biblioteca-digital-camoes/revistas-e-periodicos/revista-camoes/revista-no03-saramago.html/1300-1300/file.html>

⁵⁸ Bloom, Harold. *Genius*. London: Fourth Estate, 2002, 516, 519 (from Bloom's discussions of Pessoa and Camões respectively). Bloom did not include material on Saramago as such in *Genius* since the book's rubric excluded living writers.

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