Our great task is to succeed in becoming more human
Having written more than 40 titles, José Saramago was born in 1922 in a small village called Azinhaga. For his educational purposes the Palácio das Galveias, a public library in Lisbon, was a main upbringing source, and there he read everything he could night after night, till the closing time. «And it was there, all alone, with no help or advises, guided only by curiosity and the will of learning, that I developed and refined my taste for reading.»

He published his first novel in 1947. His choice for the title was *A Viúva*, but for editorial reasons it was changed to *Terra do Pecado*. Six years later, in 1953, he finished *Claraboia* (*Skylight*), published only after his death.

In the late 50’s he became responsible for the production department in Estúdios Cor, a publishing house, along with the translation work he performed since 1955 and later with the one of literary critic. He returns to the writing in 1966 with a poetry book, *Os Poemas Possíveis*.

In 1971 he becomes a columnist in the daily evening newspaper *Diário de Lisboa* and in april 1975 he assumes the role of assistant director in the daily morning newspaper *Diário de Notícias*.

In early 1976 he settles himself in Lavre (Alentejo) in order to research about the landless peasants. As a result, he writes the novel *Levantado do Chão* (*Raised from the Ground*), changing the traditional punctuation into the one that will characterize the way of writing his novelistic fiction. Until 2010, the year of his death in June 18, in Lanzarote island, José Saramago literally built a unique work in the portuguese and universal literature, from *Memorial do Convento* (*Baltasar and Blimunda*) to *Caim* (*Cain*), along with titles as *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* (*The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*), *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo* (*The Gospel according to Jesus Christ*), *Ensaios sobre a Cegueira* (*Blindness*), *Todos os Nomes* (*All the Names*) or *A Viagem do Elefante* (*The Elephant’s Journey*), translated all over the world. José Saramago was awarded with the Camões Prize in 1995 and with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998.

In 2007 was born this Foundation, carrying his name, whose main pledges are spreading literature, to defend human rights and environment issues, having as a guiding compass the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights. Since 2012 the Foundation’s headoffice is housed in Casa dos Bicos, in Lisbon. José Saramago was awarded with the Camões Prize in 1995 and with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998.

He died at his home in Lanzarote on June 18, 2010. His ashes are in Lisbon, under an olive tree in front of the headquarters of the Foundation that bears his name.
Novel
A Viúva (Terra do Pecado) (1947)
Manual of Painting and Calligraphy (1977)
Raised from the Ground (1980)
Baltasar and Blimunda (1982)
The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis (1984)
The Stone Raft (1986)
The History of the Siege of Lisbon (1989)
The Gospel According to Jesus Christ (1991)
Blindness (1995)
All the Names (1997)
The Cave (2000)
The Double (2002)
Death at Intervals (2006)
The Elephant’s Journey (2008)
Cain (2009)
Skylight (Finished in 1953, published in 2011)
Alabardas, alabardas, Espingardas, espingardas (Unfinished novel, written in 2010 and published in 2014)

Poetry
Os Poemas Possíveis (1966)
Provavelmente Alegria (1970)
O Ano de 1993 (1975)

Drama
A Noite (1979)
Que farei com este Livro? (1980)
A Segunda Vida de Francisco de Assis (1987)
In Nomine Dei (1993)
Don Giovanni ou O Dissoluto Absolvido (2005)

Travel literature
Journey to Portugal (1981)

Short stories
The Lives of Things (1978)
The Tale of the Unknown Island (1998)

Memoirs
Small Memories (2006)

Chronicles
Deste Mundo e do Outro (1971)
A Bagagem do Viajante (1973)
As Opiniões que o DL teve (1974)
Os Apontamentos (1976)
Poética dos Cinco Sentidos – O Ouvido (1979)
Moby Dick em Lisboa (1996)
José Saramago nas Suas Palavras (2010)

Journals
Cadernos de Lanzarote I (1994)
Cadernos de Lanzarote II (1995)
Cadernos de Lanzarote III (1996)
Cadernos de Lanzarote IV (1998)
Cadernos de Lanzarote V (1998)
The Notebook (2009)

Essay
Discursos de Estocolmo (1999)
Comment le personnage fut le maître et l’auteur son apprenti (1999)
Direito e os Sinos (1999)
Aqui soy Zapatista - Saramago en Bellas Artes (2000)
Palabras para un mundo mejor (2004)
Questo mondo non va bene che ne venga un altro (2005)
El nombre y la cosa (2006)
Andrea Mantegna - Uma ética, uma estética (2006)
Democracia e Universidade (2010)
A estátua e a pedra (1999)

Children and young adults
A Maior Flor do Mundo (2001)
O Silêncio da Água (2011)
O Lagarto (2016)

Letters
José Rodrigues Miguéis /José Saramago (2010)
Com o mar por meio - Jorge Amado, José Saramago (2017)

* Titles not published in English have been kept in their original language. The dates are those of publication in Portugal.
José Saramago’s literary work is both highly demanding of the reader and very personal and it always asks thought-provoking questions. He was a late starter as a novelist, but his long literary apprenticeship as writer and reader equipped him, from the 1980s onwards, to produce the kind of fresh, original novels that brought him the Nobel Prize in 1998 (the first time it had been awarded to a Lusophone writer). Dense and ironic, intelligent and sceptical, tender and sarcastic, devastatingly critical, all his novels are concerned with demystifying the conventional view of history and with speaking out against the errors of modern life, always taking as their starting point the essential human qualities - solidarity, compassion and respect for others and their opinions. His strong author-narrator is a constant feature of his work, true to his belief that novel and novelist are one, and he thus created a literature that combines strongly-held political views with bold, visionary, erudite metaphors. He was a brilliant story-teller, but also had the kind of restless mind that was somehow able to remain in touch with the turbulent heart of the contemporary world, laying bare its faults and questioning its values.

Saramago, who never made any secret of his communist beliefs, became an international figure as a writer and as a champion of freedom, human rights and social inclusion, driven always by the desire to build a fairer, more humane society. His political engagement led to him taking on the role of dissatisfied intellectual, one closely involved in the burning issues of the day, which he often
approached from unconventional angles that went counter to the majority view. He called for an individual and collective ethic that would give priority to the dignity of the individual rather than to interests based solely on hierarchy, power or economics. Saramago was a passionate advocate of civic responsibility, keen to place the citizen on the same level as the writer. As he put it: “I may be a Marxist and a card-carrying Communist, but I take great pains not to turn my novels into political pamphlets. I have certain ideas and preoccupations and make no distinction between myself as writer and myself as a citizen. I think it’s time that we writers went out into the world again and occupied the place we once held and which is now filled by the radio, the press and by television. We must encourage humanitarianism and spread the knowledge that thousands and thousands of people are still living in abject poverty.” (1994)

During his long life he was, then, a polemicist, a self-confessed pessimist and a brilliant, vociferous activist, as well as the creator of a large body of literary work which embraced the novel, theatre, poetry, journalism and autobiography. This exhibition, José Saramago. The Seed and the Fruits, reveals how that prince of literature, Saramago, had his roots in the literary labourer whose careful,
methodical work – during the hard, dark years of the forties, fifties and sixties in Portugal – laid the foundations for his future brilliance. This collection of manuscripts, documents, first editions and hundreds of translations into more than forty languages takes the visitor on a journey through Saramago’s literary production and its ideological and social context.

Some displays have an audiovisual element intended to open still more doors into the dense, rich Saramago’s world. The layout of the exhibition allows for a variety of ways into the author’s life and work, and visitors may choose their own route, depending on which aspect most interests them in his literary and intellectual universe, a universe that is as broad and seductive as it is multifaceted.

Fernando Gómez Aguilera
The José Saramago Foundation is a private cultural institution declared of public utility based in the Casa dos Bicos, in Lisbon, with a delegation in Azinhaga, birthplace of writer José Saramago. Constituted by the writer himself in June 2007, aims to defense and dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the promotion of culture in Portugal and around the world and the defense of the environment.

The Casa dos Bicos, head office since June 2012, offers a permanent exhibition on the life and work of José Saramago, entitled *The seed and the fruits*, and other cultural activities such as book presentations, representations of plays and conferences.

1.º Floor - Permanent exhibition *José Saramago. The seed and the fruits*
2.º Floor - José Saramago Foundation office’s
3.º Floor - Bookstore / Shop
4.º Floor - Auditorium / Library

Opening times: Monday to Saturday, from 10am to 6pm (last admission at 5.30pm)

Tickets: go to [www.josesaramago.org/onde-estamos](http://www.josesaramago.org/onde-estamos)

Guided tours: contact us at secretaria@josesaramago.org

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www.josesaramago.org

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vimeo.com/fjsaramago

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AT THE STAIRS - JOSÉ SARAMAGO

«Não subiu para as estrelas se à terra pertencia. E aos leitores!»
Balazar & Blimunda, Harvill Panther, 2001, pp. 343 (Trad.: Giovanni Pontiero)

«Está escrito que onde haja um sol terá de haver uma lua, e que só a presença conjunta e harmoniosa de um e do outro tornará habitável, pelo amor, a terra.»
«it is written that where there is a sun there will have to be a moon and that only the conjoined and harmonious presence of the one and the other will, through love, make earth habitable.»
Stockholm Speeches - "How characters became the masters and the author their apprentice" (Trad.: Tim Crosheld e Fernando Rodrigues), Fundação José Saramago, 2012, pp. 13

«Olharei a tua sombra se não quiseres que te olhe a ti»
«I’ll look at your shadow if you don’t wish me to look at you»
The gospel according to Jesus Christ, Harvill, 1993, pp. 331 (Trad.: Giovanni Pontiero)

«Eu não invento nada. Limite-me a pôr à vista. Levanto as pedras e mostro o que está por baixo. Nós somos o outro do outro.»
«I invent nothing at all. I just uncover it. I catch up the stones and I show what is underneath them. We are the other of the other.»
(Trad.: Rita Pais — Fundação José Saramago)

«Humildade orgulhosa, e obstinada, esta de querer saber para que irão servir os livros que andamos a escrever.»
«What a proud and stubborn humility, the one of wanting to know if there will be a future usefulness for the books we are writing right now.»
(Trad.: Rita Pais — Fundação José Saramago)

«Com a mesma veemência e a mesma força com que reivindicarmos os nossos direitos, reivindicemos o dever dos nossos deveres.»
«With the same emphasis and the same strength we vindicate our rights, let us vindicate the duty of our duties.»
(Trad.: Rita Pais— Fundação José Saramago)

«Além da conversa das mulheres, são os sonhos que seguram o mundo na sua órbita.»
«Besides the conversation of women, it is dreams that keep the world in orbit.»
Balazar & Blimunda, Harvill Panther, 2001, pp. 107 (Trad.: Giovanni Pontiero)

«Teve bons mestres nas longas horas nocturnas que passou em bibliotecas públicas, lendo ao acaso, com o mesmo assombro criador do navegante que vai inventando cada lugar que descobre.»
«He had good teachers during the long late night hours he attended the public libraries, reading in a random way, with the same imaginative astonishment of the navigator that goes on fancying each place he discovers.»
(Trad.: Rita Pais — Fundação José Saramago)

«90 Anos: Quem podia lá faltar, neste dia levantado e principal.»
«90 years: how could he not be here, on this unique and new-risen day.»
Raised from the ground, Harvill Secker, 2012, pp. 387 (Trad.: Margaret Jull Costa)

[Image 340x23 to 417x57]
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Our main task is to make ourselves more human. In their book entitled The Holy Family, Marx and Engels say something that cries out to be put into practice: “If man is shaped by circumstances, then we must shape those circumstances humanely.”

José Saramago, 1999
The seed and the fruits
Permanent exhibition
Deixa-te levar pela criança que foste

Let yourself be led by the child you were

Responsibility, effort, work: the once little boy José Saramago carried already the guiding lines that would define his life. Inteligent and self-contained, José Saramago faced hardly and carefully his pledges since very young, as we can see in his notebooks. One could say that, somehow, observing the labour of his grandfathers, peasant ones, or attending the public school in Lisbon, or even in his daily visits to the library, he was planting the early seeds that later on would frutify and become his way of life. Since this early appetitves in writing the first charac-
ters he learned, as one can see in the notebook grades, until this whole amount of books surrounding us here, although representing only a part of his translated works, José Saramago’s life is a fulfilled example of the value that effort means. «Writing is like building a chair, that has to fit steady on the floor, and, if possible, be also beautiful.» He gathered, because he wanted so, his intelectual and literary labour to the craftsman’s one, or the worker or the peasant that proudly admire the growing of their crop, awared that in life, as citizens, we all must be equally judged and that our our creative work, sensability and effort will be evaluated by others. May be the lucid and active way of living his own era will be a reason for considering José Saramago a world reference, a writer with such a huge number of readers, who keeps growing day after day as a respected and loved human being. These are the fruits of those seeds.

photo / José Saramago
Around 10 years old

Student ID card from Escola Industrial Afonso Domingues (middle school)
1939-1940

Student ID card from Escola Industrial Afonso Domingues (middle school)
1936-1937

School notebook
1933
Contains academic observations about the student, daily registered by his school principal Mr. Vairinho — mentioned in Small Memories —, and by his father.

A Toutinegra do Moinho, de Émile de Richebourg, the firsty book he read, given by his mother

Antoni TÀPIES e José SARAMAGO
Joint work entitled Par la irreversibilitad, 2004
(Screen prints/handmade paper II/XV)
52.5 x 44.5 cm c/u
Private collection: Pilar del Rio

Elkarri, a social movement created in 1992 to defend and mobilize a peaceful and dialectual solution model for the basque conflict, brought together this initiative. The aim of this limited edition screen prints was a fundraising to promote projects that iniguate dialect and peace in Euskadi Herria. An edition of a poster with the two works was created in order to spread this message of irreversibility in Euskadi.
I was born in a family of landless peasants, in Azinhaga, a small village in the civil parish of Sôr do Caramulo in the civil parish of Caldas da Rainha district in Portugal, on June 18, 1922. I should add that my full name was José de Sousa Saramago... But that was not, at the time of my birth, my legal name. José de Sousa would have been my own name had not the Registrar, on his own initiative, added the nickname by which my father's family was known in the village: Saramago. I should add that saramago is a wild herbaceous plant, whose roots are called “saramago” in the Azinhaga area.

Then I made my way to the village, where I spent my early childhood, which would be the period of my life when I was most at home. From the age of seven, when I had to present an identification document at primary school, was I registered on the citizen register under the name José de Sousa. Some twenty years later, I had another encounter with the authorities of the same city, when I had to present a document to apply for work as a policeman, for which job were required no more “literary qualifications” (a common practice at the time).

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A story of self-discovery set against the background of the last years of Salazar's dictatorship, told by H, a second-rate artist commissioned by a wealthy client to paint a family portrait. As he works, he reflects on his struggle to survive in a bourgeois world obsessed with status and affluence. His portrait focuses animosity, his sitters are left uncomfortably exposed. The novel explores wider issues: the functions of art and literature; the critic's role; and, in H's tour of Italian galleries, a meditation on the influences shaping western culture. Back in Portugal, H is embroiled in political fear and mistrust when a friend is arrested by the secret police. He falls in love, too, and by the end of the story defines his objectives and achieves an inner freedom. This coincides with the Portuguese Revolution of 1974 and Salazar's overthrow.
But that is not true. The journey is never over. Only travellers come to an end. But even then they can prolong their voyage in their memories, in recollections, in stories. When the traveller sat in the sand and declared: “There’s nothing more to see,” he knew it wasn’t true. The end of one journey is simply the start of another. You have to see what you missed the first time, see again what you already saw, see in springtime what you saw in summer, in daylight what you saw at night, see the sun shining where you saw the rain falling, see the crops growing, the fruit ripen, the stone which has moved, the shadow that was not there before. You have to go back to the footpaths already taken, to go over them again or add fresh ones alongside them. You have to start the journey anew. Always. The traveller sets out once more.
Levantado do Chão
1980
Raised from the Ground, 1980

video  Literary Prize City of Lisbon for the novel
Raised from the Ground, ceremony award
Arquivo RTP, 1981

photo With Mariana Basuga, who hosted him during the
research process for the book, in the launching of
Raised from the Ground
Casa do Alentejo, Lisbon, 1980

photo José Saramago in Alentejo
Evora, 1970's

"Um livro "Levantado do Chão"", interview by
Ernesto Sampaio about Raised from the Ground
in Diário de Lisboa, Lisbon
March 8, 1980

Transcripts of José Saramago’s interviews to peasants
from Lavre
1977

Levantado do Chão
Raised from the Ground
[First edition]
Editorial Caminho, Lisbon, 1980
368 pp.
Translated by Margaret Jull Costa
Harcourt, USA, 2013
Carcanet, UK, 2012

Set in Alentejo, a southern province of Portugal known for its vast
agricultural estates, the novel charts the lives of the Mau Tempos
as national and international events rumble on in the background—
the coming of the republic in Portugal, the two world wars, and an
attempt on the dictator Salazar’s life. Yet nothing really impinges on
the grim reality of the farm laborers’ lives until the first communist
stirrings.

Highly political yet full of Saramago’s characteristic humor and
humanity. As full of love as it is of pain, it is a vivid, moving tribute
to the men and women among whom Saramago lived as a child.
This is the book in which he found the signature style and voice that
distinguishes all of his brilliant works. Fascinating insight into the
early work of this literary giant.

Personal agenda, 1980

Notes about the first copies he received of Raised from the Ground,
the delivery of the theatre play Que Farei com Este Livro? to the
publishing house, and reflections while travelling throughout the
country for the writing of Journey to Portugal.

digital frame  Scanned documents from the handwritten
preliminary materials and typewritten
pages for Raised from the Ground
1979

Photo With his mother and the president of the
Portuguese Republic, Francisco da Costa Gomes,
during the launching of Raised from the Ground
1980

Notebook with preliminary materials for
Raised from the Ground
1979
Handwritten notes (about local words and places…)

Typewritten text with handwritten corrections for
Raised from the Ground
1979
351 pp.
The novel Baltasar and Blimunda, an extraordinary trinity struggle to realise a creation that will fly in the face of the monstrous vanity of Church and State. So it is for Baltasar, falls in love with Blimunda, a young girl with visionary powers. They are joined by Azurdu, a pet by a love of unassailable strength. A third party shares their tragicomic efforts are buoyed heavenward by the clash, they pursue his impossible, not to mention heretical, dream.

Baltasar is a soldier who has lost his left hand in battle. He is a man of modernity, a member of a trinity: Baltasar, Blimunda and the Convent of Mafra. They share in a singularly loveless age. An extraordinary and rich poet who can see into souls. From the day he follows her home from the convent, falls in love with Blimunda, a young girl with visionary powers. Their tragicomic efforts are buoyed heavenward by the clash, they pursue his impossible, not to mention heretical, dream.

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Baltasar is a soldier who has lost his left hand in battle. He is a man of modernity, a member of a trinity: Baltasar, Blimunda and the Convent of Mafra. They share in a singularly loveless age. An extraordinary and rich poet who can see into souls. From the day he follows her home from the convent, falls in love with Blimunda, a young girl with visionary powers. Their tragicomic efforts are buoyed heavenward by the clash, they pursue his impossible, not to mention heretical, dream.
Saramago’s vision included a profound critique of the economic power and its role in shaping the political and social landscape. He believed that the real power was the economic power, which he associated with neoliberal globalisation. He argued that this economic power, rather than genuine democracy, was driving the world forward.

Saramago’s thoughts and publicised works highlighted the need for solidarity and the fight against inequality and human rights violations. He supported the demands of the landless peasants, the Palestinians, and the Zapatistas, among other causes, to demonstrate the non-existence of God. He was a dedicated intellectual critic and a committed citizen.

His views on political left-wing parties, such as the socialist parties, were critical. He believed that these parties were no longer left-wing and did not align with his political convictions. He argued that the left wing needed to reconstruct itself in a different way, beyond the current social and political context.

Saramago’s legacy includes his dedication to literature, social activism, and human rights. His works publicised in the media worldwide, mainly since he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. His dedication to literature and human rights advocacy continued to shape the political and social landscape, influencing generations to come.
Nobel da Literatura
1998
Nobel in Literature, 1998

video / Nobel Prize Ceremony Awards
December 7, 1998
© Nobel Foundation
Post-production: César Manrique Foundation

video / Nobel Prize Award Dinner Ceremony
December 10, 1998
© Nobel Foundation
Post-production: César Manrique Foundation

video / Speech at the Nobel Prize Ceremony Award
December 7, 1998
RTP – Rádio Televisão Portuguesa
Highlighting the importance of the Human Rights Declaration and denouncing the lack of accomplishments.

Original medal awarded by the Swedish academy to José Saramago for the 1998 Literature Nobel Prize.

photo / With Queen Silvia from Sweden during the Dinner Ceremony of the Nobel Prize Awards
Stockholm, Sweden, 1998

photo / Speech during the Nobel Prize Ceremony Award
Stockholm, Sweden, 1998

photo / Nobel Prize Ceremony Awards
Stockholm, Sweden, 1998
The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis, 1984

Europe dances while an invidious dictator establishes himself in Portugal. The city: Lisbon-gray, colorless, chimerical. Ricardo Reis, a doctor and poet, has just come home after sixteen years in Brazil and is visited by Fernando Pessoa, who died six months earlier. And then...

When the Iberian Peninsula breaks free of Europe and begins to drift across the North Atlantic, five people are drawn together on the newly formed island—first by surreal events and then by love. One day a rift opens along the border between Spain and France, and the Iberian peninsula floats off resolutely westwards across the Atlantic, a great stone raft. The impact on the geopolitical scene is fundamental, as the North American powers look to acquire a whole new tract of land and population lost to Europe. Only staunch Gibraltar gets left behind on its rock. But what of the floating population? Spaniards and Portuguese, disrupted in their daily routines, quit their homes, escaping the looming perils of the coast, and go restlessly wandering the inland roads; they are only the more disoriented when the raft starts to revolve on its own axis, so that the sun rises in what used to be the west. Among the new vagrants are three men, two women and a dog, who meet by chance—or destiny—and take to the road in an old 2CV until they are obliged to settle for a wagon drawn by two ill-assorted horses. The humans pair off into couples, though even the odd-man-out will have his moments of domesticity. And as they pursue their thinker's existence they discover in themselves unsuspected riddles, and the answers to them. Told in a deceptively simple, naïve style, this tale of fixed points and shifting goals is a superb vehicle for Saramago's shrewd and witty dissection of a contemporary European society.

The Jangada de Pedra
The Stone Raft

(c. 1982)

Personal agenda from 1986, on June 11 writes a note referring that he meets Pilar del Río

The dry leaf was kept in this page by the writer himself.
História do Cerco de Lisboa 1989

The History of the Siege of Lisbon, 1989

video / Interview about the recently published novel The History of the Siege of Lisbon 1989

 «O Íntimo e o Real: Simulações e Iluminações» 1986
1 p.
Typewritten text with annotations and his own signature.

Photo / José Saramago Frankfurt, 1980’s © Isolde Ohlbaum

Notebook with handwritten preliminary annotations for the novel The History of the Siege of Lisbon c. 1989

Personal agenda, 1989


Translated by Giovanni Pontiero Harcourt Brace, USA, 1997 Harvill, UK, 2000

A proofreader at ease with a historical text opens up a world of ambiguity and invention, as he finds the relationship between fact and fiction to be far from clear. What happens when the facts of history are replaced by the mysteries of love? When Raimundo Silva, a lowly proofreader for a Lisbon publishing house, inserts a negative into a sentence of a historical text, he alters the whole course of the 1147 Siege of Lisbon. Fearing censure he is met instead with admiration: Dr Maria Sara, his voluptuous new editor, encourages him to pen his own alternative history. As his retelling draws on all his imaginative powers, Silva finds – to his nervous delight – that if the facts of the past can be rewritten as a romance then so can the details of his own dusty bachelor present.

O essencial sobre José Saramago First essay about Saramago's work by Maria Alzira Seixo Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987

«Neste livro nada é verdade e nada é mentira» In Jornal de Letras, Lisbon 1984 2 pp. Interview about the recently published novel The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis

«O autor está triste quando escreve sobre a tristeza de há 50 anos» In O Diário Popular, Lisbon December 7, 1984 2 pp. Interview about the recently published novel The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis

A proofreader tinkering with a historical text opens up a world of ambiguity and invention, as he finds the relationship between fact and fiction to be far from clear. What happens when the facts of history are replaced by the mysteries of love? When Raimundo Silva, a lowly proofreader for a Lisbon publishing house, inserts a negative into a sentence of a historical text, he alters the whole course of the 1147 Siege of Lisbon. Fearing censure he is met instead with admiration: Dr Maria Sara, his voluptuous new editor, encourages him to pen his own alternative history. As his retelling draws on all his imaginative powers, Silva finds – to his nervous delight – that if the facts of the past can be rewritten as a romance then so can the details of his own dusty bachelor present.
The Gospel According to Jesus Christ, 1991

Preliminary materials for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ.

Letter to Artur Anselmo

Letter to Artur Anselmo

Personal agenda, 1991

Preliminary materials for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ.

Typewritten text with the schedule for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ

Maps of Palestine

Preliminary materials for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ.

Letter to Artur Anselmo

Letter to Artur Anselmo

May 11, 1992

1 p.

About the controversial exclusion of the book The Gospel According to Jesus Christ from the list of candidates to the European Literary Prize.

Personal agenda, 1991

The writer envisions the life of Jesus Christ and the story of his Passion as things of this earth: A child crying, the caress of a woman on half asleep, the bleat of a goat, a prayer uttered in the grayish morning light. His idea of the Holy Family reflects the real complexities of any family, and—as only Saramago can—he imagines them with tinges of vision, dream, and omen. The result is a deft psychological portrait that moves between poetry and irony, spirituality and irreverence of a savior who is at once the Son of God and a young man. This is a skeptic’s journey into the meaning of God, the foundations of the Church, and human existence itself. A retelling of the Gospel following the life of Christ from his conception to his crucifixion. A naïve Jesus is the son not of God, but of Joseph. In the desert it is not Satan, but God that Christ tussles with, an autocrat with whom he has an unbalanced and unsettled relationship. A provocative and tender novel that has sparked a wide and intense critical discussion and wonder about the meaning of Christianity and the Church as an institution.

Typewritten text with handwritten notes for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ

444 pp.

Wooden statuette representing a Christ that usually layed near him while working at his desk, not as a religious symbol but as a hommage to the work of the man that carved it.

digital frame / 46 scanned documents of preliminary materials for the novel The Gospel According to Jesus Christ

1991

1 p.
The Double

Tertuliano Máximo Afonso is a divorced, depressed history teacher. One day, when he comes across the records of an anonymous man in the Registry, he discovers a surprising similarity. The man claims to be identical to him in every way. A man proclaiming to be the original and the actor a duplicate? With this possibility, Tertuliano sets himself on a quest to find the actor. By a strange coincidence, the actor has come to the Portuguese city of Tías, where he has a remote doubles-mansion.

Tertuliano follows the actor, pursuing him day and night. Despite the actor’s attempts to avoid Tertuliano, he can’t help but notice the actor’s peculiar habit of sneaking into people’s houses and homes, possessing them for a time before mysteriously returning. Tertuliano begins to understand that the actor, in fact, is a roving spirit, driven by a strange destiny. As Tertuliano roots out the man’s identity, what begins as a quest for the actor, becomes a search for himself.

The actor’s doppelganger life, with malingering elderly relatives who scratch at death’s door while Tertuliano returns, heralded by purple envelopes informing the recipients that their time is up. Death herself is now writing personal notes giving the names of the deceased. The actor’s life is now in Tertuliano’s hands.

In the first working room of his home at Tías, Tertuliano finds a typewritten text of the novel Blindness, with handwritten corrections by the author and the publishing house editor. He begins to understand that the actor’s life is inextricably linked to the novel’s themes of identity, individuality, and the struggle between the living and the dead. As Tertuliano delves deeper into the novel’s protagonist’s life, he realizes that the actor is not just a duplicate, but a manifestation of the protagonist’s life, his past, present, and future. Tertuliano now understands that the actor is not just a duplicate, but a manifestation of the protagonist’s life, his past, present, and future. Tertuliano now understands that the actor has the power to change his own life, to shape his destiny, to become the original.

As Tertuliano pursues the actor, he begins to understand the depth, humor, and the extraordinary philosophical richness of the novel Blindness. The actor’s life is now in Tertuliano’s hands, and he must decide whether to return to his own life, to continue living as he had been, or to follow the actor and change his own destiny.

The Double

Fernando Gómez Aguilera

Editorial Caminho, Lisbon, 2005

320 pp.

[First edition]
Invitation for the launching of the unfinished novel

Copies of first editions in several languages of

The Gospel according to Jesus Christ, Harcourt, USA, 2012

Cain

Editorial Caminho, Lisbon, 2010

The Notebook

Verso, USA, UK, 2011

Small Memories

Harcourt, USA, 2011

Translated by Margaret Jull Costa

238 pp.

Preliminary notes for the novel

A Compilation of the daily chronicles from September 15th, 2008 till 15th, 2009

Últimos livros 1997-2009

Photo / © Helena Gonçalves

June 21, 2007

Private collection: Pilar del Río

Interview about the recently published novel Blindness

2 pp.

Interview about the recently published novel Death at Intervals

4 pp.

in Público, Lisbon

«Provavelmente já chegou o dia em que não terei nada mais a dizer»
José Saramago died on June 18, 2010, at his home on the island of Lanzarote. When the (air)plane that would bring him back to Lisbon was about to take off, those who were their neighbors went to the streets to read aloud fragments of the books he wrote on the island: so, with the sound of the words he had created, he left Lanzarote.

Upon arriving in Lisbon, other people, also their readers, waited for him raising books in their hands, showing them. The same gesture of hoisting books took place in the City Hall of Lisbon, in front of the coffin, and at the cemetery. “The books carry within a person, the author”, wrote Saramago long ago and maybe that’s why they were so cherished.

José Saramago is buried in front of Casa dos Bicos, home of the Foundation that bears his name. His ashes lie beneath a centuries-old olive tree brought from his native village, Azinhaga, with the book that collects the articles that their peers wrote around the days of his death: Words to Saramago. The ashes and the accompanying book are covered by (soil)land from Lanzarote.

The epitaph of José Saramago is the last sentence of Baltasar and Blimunda, “But did not ascend to the stars, for it belonged to the earth.” And to readers.

Replica of his first working room

This scenario reproduces José Saramago’s office through original objects: his working table; the Hermes typewriter, bought in second hand and used until the writing of The History of the Siege of Lisbon, in 1989; his glasses; his stenographic pens; some small ethnographic statuettes from his collection; several stones he brought from symbolic places such as East Timor and Chiapas; his pipe, from when he was a smoker; his first personal library: three volumes from Montaigne, in french language, he cared particularly; titles for regular research (history, geography, literature...) and an engraving by Júlio Pomar.

On the table, near the typewriter and the glasses, one can see the dictionary of portuguese language usually consulted by José Saramago and included in this exhibition as a specific request from the writer, under the motto «A small country, a great language».
LEVEL 3
here you can watch

video / Words for a city [Lisboa]
José Saramago

6’ 00”
Director: Miguel Gonçalves Mendes

video / A Casa [Lanzarote]
José Saramago’s House and Library in the Island of Lanzarote

10’ 00”

video / Universal Declaration of Human Rights

3’ 00”
Readings of articles by visitors to the FJS

video / A Letter to Josefa, my grandmother
José Saramago

5’ 00”
by André Raposo & Maria Alice Amaro Góis, 2014
Words for a city
José Saramago

There was a time when Lisbon didn’t go by the name Lisboa. They called it Olisíbiona when the Romans arrived there, Olissibona when it was taken by the Moors, who immediately began saying Aschbouna, perhaps because they couldn’t pronounce that barbaric (Latin) word. But in 1147, when the Moors were defeated after a three-month siege, the name of the city wasn’t changed right away; if the man who would become our first king had written to his family to announce the news, he would most likely have headed his letter Aschbouna, October 24, or Olissibona, but never Lisboa. When did Lisboa start being Lisbon in law and in effect? At least a few years would have to pass before the birth of the new name, as they would for the Galician conquerors to begin to become Portuguese… One might think these historical minutiae uninteresting, but they interest me a great deal; not just knowing but actually seeing – in the precise meaning of the word – how Lisbon has been changing since those days. If cinema had existed at the time, if the old chroniclers had been cameramen, if the thousand and one changes through which Lisbon has passed over the centuries had been recorded, we would have been able to see Lisbon growing and moving like a living thing across eight centuries, like those flowers that we see on television opening up in just a few seconds, from a still, closed bud to a final splendor of shapes and colors. I think I’d love that Lisbon above all else. In physical terms we inhabit space, but in emotional terms we are inhabited, by memory. A memory composed of a space and a time, a memory inside which we live, like an island between two oceans - one the past, the other the future. We can navigate the ocean of the recent past thanks to personal memory, which retains the recollection of the routes it has traveled, but to navigate the distant past we have to use memories that time has accumulated, memories of a space that is continually changing, as fleeting as time itself. This film of Lisbon, compressing time and expanding space, would be the perfect memory of the city. What we know of places is how we coincide with them over a certain period of time in the spaces they occupy. The place was there, the person appeared, then the person left, the place continued, the place having made the person, the person having transformed the place. When I had to recreate the space and time of the Lisbon where Ricardo Reis lived his final year, I knew in advance that our two concepts of time and place would not coincide—that of the shy adolescent I used to be, enclosed within his own social class, and that of the lucid and brilliant poet who frequented the highest planes of the spirit. My Lisbon was always that of the poor neighborhoods, and when, many years later, circumstances brought me to live in other environments, the memory I always preferred to retain was that of the Lisbon of my early years, the Lisbon of people who possess little and feel much, still rural in their customs and in their understanding of the world. Perhaps it isn’t possible to speak of a city without citing a few notable dates in its history. Here, speaking of Lisbon, I have mentioned only one, that of its Portuguese beginnings, the day it was first called Lisboa; the sin of glorifying its name is not such a dreadful one. What would be a grace matter would be to succumb to that kind of patriotic exaltation that, in the absence of any real enemies over whom to assert one’s assumed power, resorts to the facile stimuli of rhetorical evocation. Exalted rhetoric, which is not necessarily a bad thing, does however bring with it a sense of self-satisfaction that leads to confusing words with deeds. On that October day, Portugal – still barely begun – took a great step forward, a step so decisive that Lisbon was not lost again. But we will not allow ourselves the Napoleonic vanity of exclaiming: “Eight hundred years look down on us from the height of that castle,” and pat ourselves on the back for having survived so long… Rather we recall that blood was shed, first on one side and then the other, and that all sides make up the blood that flows in our own veins. We, the inheritors of this city, are the descendents of Christians and Moors, of blacks and Jews, or Indians and Orientals, in short, of all races and creeds considered good, along with those that have been called bad. We shall leave to the ironic peace of their tombs those disturbed minds that not so long ago invented a Day of the Race for the Portuguese, and instead reclaim the magnificent mixing, not only of bloods but above all of cultures, that gave Portugal its foundation and has made it last to this day. In recent years Lisbon has been transformed, has managed to reawaken in the conscience of its citizens that strength that hauled it out of the mire into which it had fallen. In the name of modernization, concrete walls have been erected over ancient stones, the outlines of hills disrupted, panoramas altered, sightlines modified. But the spirit of Lisbon survives, and it is the spirit that makes a city eternal. Enamored by that crazy love and divine enthusiasm that inhabit poets, Camões once wrote that Lisboa was “...a princess among other cities.” We will forgive his exaggeration. It is enough that Lisbon is simply what it should be—cultured, modern, clean, organized – without losing any of its soul. And if all these virtues end up making her a queen, well, so be it. In our republic, queens like this will always be welcome.

A LETTER TO JOSEFA,
MY GRANDMOTHER

You are ninety years old. Old and in pain. In your youth, you tell me, you were the most beautiful girl in the village – and I can believe that. You never learned to read. Your fingers are thick and gnarled and your feet have the texture of cork. On your head you carried tons of firewood and stubble stolen from the fields as fodder, and whole lakes of water. You saw the sun rise every day. The bread you kneaded over the years would be enough to furnish a universal banquet. You raised both people and animals, you even used to take the piglets to bed with you so that they wouldn't freeze to death. You told me stories about ghosts and werewolves, old family disputes, a murder. You were the mainstay of the household, the fire in the hearth – seven times you fell pregnant and seven times you gave birth.

You know nothing of the world. You understand nothing of politics, economics, literature, philosophy or religion. You inherited hundreds of practical words, an elementary vocabulary. And that was quite enough for you to live by and to go on living. You are as fascinated by major disasters and royal weddings, as you are by petty local scandals and the theft of your neighbour’s rabbits. You harbour grudges against people, for reasons you can no longer recall, and for certain others profess an equally baseless devotion. You live. The word “Vietnam” is merely a barbarous sound of no importance to your league-and-a-half of world. You know about hunger: you’ve seen a black plague flag raised on the church tower. (Did you tell me that, or did I just dream it?) You carried with you your small cocoon of interests. And yet your eyes are still bright and you’re still happy. Your laughter is like a firework exploding. I’ve never heard anyone laugh the way you do.

I’m sitting here before you and I don’t understand. I’m your own flesh and blood and I don’t understand. You came into the world, but made no effort to understand it. Now you’re nearing the end of your life and, for you, the world is still what it was when you were born: a question mark, an unfathomable mystery, something that forms no part of your inheritance, which consists of a few hundred words, a piece of land you could walk round in five minutes, a house with an unboarded roof and a mud floor. I squeeze your calloused hand, stroke your lined face and your white hair, grown thin from the weight of all those burdens carried on your head – and still I don’t understand. You were beautiful, you say, and I can see that you’re intelligent. Who stole the world from you? And why? But perhaps I could understand and explain the how, why and when of it were you able to choose from my innumerable words the words you could comprehend. There’s no point now. The world will continue without you – and without me. And we won’t have told each other what really matters.

Or will we? I will have failed to give you the world you deserved because my words are not yours. Worse, I’m left feeling guilty about something you never accused me of. But Grandma, how can you sit outside your front door, looking up at the vast, starry sky, the sky of which you know nothing and across which you will never travel, at the silent fields and the dark trees, and say, with the serenity and tranquillity of your ninety years and with the fire of your still burning youth: «The world is so beautiful, it makes me sad to think I have to die!»

That is what I can’t understand – but that’s my fault not yours.

Trad.: Margaret Jull Costa