Mark Sabine & Adriana Alves de Paula Martins

Introduction: Saramago and the politics of literary quotation

In the first chapter of *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, José Saramago's most brilliantly sustained essay on the concept of authorship and on the social and political location of the writer, the eponymous protagonist arrives in his native Portugal by steamer after sixteen years in exile and brings ashore with him a detective novel that he forgot to return to the ship's library.[1] The book in question is *The God of the Labyrinth*, purportedly the work of the Irish writer Herbert Quain, but in fact a non-existent text by an author who is the invention of Jorge Luis Borges, much as Ricardo Reis is himself in fact a fictional author created by Fernando Pessoa.[2] With this opening salvo of metanarrative pyrotechnics Saramago does more than draw Borges, Pessoa, and their literary creations into his own text and into dialogue with one another. Saramago's quotation of Borges, both here and at the novel's close, frames his novel with an allegory encapsulating several of the key preoccupations both of his whole œuvre and of literature and literary theory in the postmodern era. These preoccupations, which can be summarized as the political, aesthetic, and epistemological implications of the theory of intertextuality and of the practice of literary allusion, are also central to *In Dialogue with Saramago: Essays in Comparative Literature*, as a study that uses a comparative analytical approach to create an overview of the Portuguese writer's novels.

The labyrinth has become established as an emblem of postmodernist thinking. While obviously this derives from its symbolizing of potentially deceptive routes of passage through epistemic uncertainty, it has also —as famously in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*— been due to the idea of the voyage through the labyrinth as a transgression of established rules and boundaries, and as a battle with hostile or oppressive powers, particularly powers that maintain authority by withholding knowledge from others. We have chosen Ricardo Reis's reading of *The God of the Labyrinth* as point of departure for a review of Saramago's intertextual dialogues over nearly thirty years because of its capacity for representing Saramago's literary production as an articulation of an emphatically politically-committed postmodernism. The most constant and urgent message of Saramago's fiction is that admitting to the limitations of potential knowledge must never entail surrender to tyrannies sustained by cultivated ignorance. The following studies of intertextual relationships across Saramago's output indicate how a fight against social and economic tyranny is served

[1] *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 23 (for the editions of Saramago's works cited throughout this book see 'Abbreviations', p. ix above). Except where otherwise indicated, translations are from the published versions by Pontiero and Costa.

[2] Quain made his appearance in 'Examen de la obra de Herbert Quain' (Borges 1997a); the heteronym Reis was invented, by Pessoa's own accounts, in 1912 or 1914.

by a literary practice that the presence of Quain's novel in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* typifies. This practice is based on the transgression of boundaries between textual realms that literary criticism, in its several institutionalized forms, has only latterly and inconsistently ceased to affirm. These include the boundaries between individual texts and between the collective works of individual authors, the boundaries between commonly recognized literary genres possessing varied degrees of cultural capital, and, not least, boundaries between allegedly distinct national traditions or literary canons that are ever more intermingled as a consequence of the accelerated flow of cultural influences in the era of globalization.

Such a practice of literary transgression articulates Saramago's attack first on tyrannical fundamentalisms of the mid-twentieth century, and later —as this essay will explore— on the more insidiously totalitarian practices of an allegedly post-ideological postmodernity.[3] In *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, the porosity of textual and cultural borders mocks the isolationist and nationalist cultural values championed by Portugal's *Estado Novo* government at the time of the book's setting. *The God of the Labyrinth*'s arrival in Lisbon in the baggage of a fictional but still canonic Portuguese poet breaches not only the logic of cultural nationalism, but also the strict censorship laws in force in 1930s Portugal. This can be interpreted as a general rebuke to attempts to police purported cultural frontiers between categories (e.g. 'native' and 'foreign'; 'elite' and 'popular') predicated as much on ideological values as aesthetic ones. But Quain's book's title also becomes, in Saramago's hands, an ironic reference to the discredited, but persistently seductive, myth of the author as omnipotent arbiter and guarantor of meaning in his/her 'labyrinthine' text. The novel proceeds to demonstrate that the author is contrastingly weak, and can indeed become weaker as the cultural capital of his/her writings increases. Saramago's Ricardo Reis spends the interim between his return to Lisbon and the decease that the novel's title foretells gloomily wandering the streets of the city's Chiado district, an area studded with monuments to fêted writers of the past. The heart of this literary Valhalla is the Largo de Camões, where stands a bronze image of the author of Portugal's national epic, *The Lusiads*. Camões, founder of a canonic mythology of the national past and architect of a frequently invoked and imitated blueprint of national identity, emerges as a venerated yet ever traduced figure.[4] The implications of his lack of power over permutations of meaning in his richly allusive poetry are manifest in present-day activities in the labyrinthine cityscape that surrounds him. Here, a murderous police state pays homage to the genius of this 'cantor sublime das virtudes da raça' (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 351, 'sublime bard of the virtues of the race') in yearly ceremonies, while recontextualizing his verses so as to assert their consonance with an authoritarian Catholic-nationalist and imperialist

[3] The relationship between aesthetic/literary and political/social transgression can be identified from the beginning of Saramago's mature novelistic production, in *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* (1977), and emerges as a particular preoccupation in such later works as *História do Cerco de Lisboa* (1989) and *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo* (1991).

[4] On posterity's treatment of the figures of Camões and Pessoa as represented in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* see Silva (1989: 168–82), Sapega (1996, and in this volume), Sabine (2001a: 168–69, 175–81), and Martins (2006: 284, 289, 321).

ideology.[5] Insofar as this reveals the literary text as, in Roland Barthes's words, a 'tissue of quotations' that can itself be dismembered and rehashed in a subsequent act of quotation, the immortality that liberal humanist criticism promises the god-like canonic writer is revealed as the maintenance on life-support, by the self-serving legislators of posterity, of the inert body of what Roland Barthes claims is the always already dead author.

Ricardo Reis is reluctant to acknowledge either this grim truth or indeed the consequent vulnerability of literature to grubby political agendas such as are illustrated by Camões's reduction to the status of mascot of *Estado Novo* imperialism. Saramago's reader, however, if aware of developments since the year of Reis's fictional death, 1936, will know that Camões's fate of posthumous ideological manipulation has now befallen Fernando Pessoa as well. Since 1988 a statue of Pessoa has stood not a stone's throw from Camões's in the Chiado, and this and the poet's writings are routinely commandeered in political speeches and as rallying points for public demonstrations. This has transpired despite the fact that Pessoa is probably the most suicidal author of modern times, who hid his 'true' self and opinions behind a plethora of literary identities, attitudes, and ambiguities.[6] Moreover, it has transpired despite Portugal's movement from isolationist nationalism to EU membership and participation in the purportedly less tribal culture of globalization. A further fact that the reader may remark, in this context of the continuing appropriation of cultural capital for political ends, is that Saramago advances his own use of Pessoa's work by exploiting its intertextual echoes of Borges's symbology of the game of chess. In a much analyzed passage presenting Reis reading of Badoglio's blood-drenched capture of Addis Ababa in May 1936 (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 300–03), Saramago juxtaposes snippets of newspaper copy detailing the Fascist storm troops' assault on the Ethiopian capital with lines from Ricardo Reis's longest and most ambitious work, an ode recounting the fatalistic resignation with which two men in an ancient Persian city under military attack continue a game of chess as destruction and mass slaughter press ever closer around them ('Ouvi contar que outrora': Pessoa 1986: I, 826–29; tr. Keith Bosley, in Pessoa 1995: 69–71). In the translation we indicate in italics the passage quoted from Reis's ode:

> Addis-Abeba está em chamas, as ruas cobertas de mortos, os salteadores arrombam as casas, violam, saqueiam, degolam mulheres e crianças, enquanto as tropas de Badoglio se aproximam, Addis-Abeba está em chamas, ardiam casas, saqueadas eram as arcas e as paredes, violadas as mulheres eram postas contra os muros caídos, trespassadas de lanças as crianças eram sangue nas ruas. (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 301; 'Addis Ababa is in flames, the streets covered with dead bodies, the assailants are smashing up houses, raping, looting, beheading women and children, as Badoglio's troops approach, Addis Ababa is in flames, *houses burned, the coffers and walls were looted, the women, raped, were pushed up against the fallen battlements, skewered on spears the children were blood running in the streets*', our trans.)

The resemblance of historical events to Reis's fictional evocation of looting, rape, and infanticide may itself suffice to make the reader question Reis's 'sad Epicurean' ethics

[5] See further Kaufman (1991: 134).

[6] Introductions in English to Pessoa, his concept of heteronymy, and its implications for the notion of authorship may be found in Sadlier (1998), Santos (2003).

('epicurismo triste', Pessoa 1986: I, 804–05). However, when Ricardo Reis reacts to this discomforting connection between life and art by reaching for Quain's novel (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 301), the allusion to Borges invests a highly politicized irony in Reis's question:

> Quando o rei de marfim está em perigo,
> Que importa a carne e o osso
> Das irmãs e das mães e das crianças? (Pessoa 1986: I, 827)
>
> (When the ivory king is under threat, what can the flesh and blood of sisters, mothers, children mean to them?)

Borges's original story tells that the murder mystery in Quain's novel is solved only with the discovery of the error of believing that the encounter between the two players had been coincidental (Borges 1997a: 79, 'casual'). Allusion to this assertion of the historical determination of a lethal encounter and to Borges's evocation in his poem 'Ajedrez' of the chessboard as battleground ('ámbito | severo en que se odian dos colores', strict confines in which two colours vent their mutual hate) strengthens an analogy that Saramago implies between the game of chess and 1930s great power politics' sacrifice of both humble civilians and weaker states as pawns in a deadly duel between rival potentates.[7]

Reis's discovery that the book he is reading has revised the meaning of what he wrote years before (as well, perhaps, as conditioning the composition of his future writings) illustrates how the palimpsestic properties of all texts, rather than simply of intentional rewritings.[8] Intertextuality places humanity's entire existence within what Umberto Eco (2001: 525, 'Postille: La metafisica poliziesca') calls a 'rhizomatic' labyrinth or web wherein all guiding threads are of only relative utility. Such a labyrinth, obviously, cannot be patrolled effectively even by the most venerated authorial 'god'. Yet the textual labyrinth, while not ruled by the Minotaurean author whom the reader must overthrow or submit to, nevertheless remains a site of confrontation between rival powers. The value of Saramago's work derives from his analysis of and engagement in such confrontations, rather than from his elaboration of analogies and examples (however ingenious these may be) of postmodernist thinking's basic precept of the labyrinthine nature of textuality. Saramago's engagement with a postmodernist epistemology that questions the stability and comprehensiveness of all representations of historical reality refuses resignation to the apparent polyvalency and intangibility of

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[7] Borges (1979), our translation. *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*'s treatment of *The God of the Labyrinth* includes Saramago's own invented synopsis of the detective novel's opening, where the victim's corpse is found by 'o primeiro jogador de xadrez', the first chess player, occupying 'as casas dos peões do rei e da rainha e as duas seguintes, na direcção do campo adversário' (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 301; 'the squares of the king's and queen's pawns and the two in front, facing towards the enemy camp', our translation). Similarly, the victims of the Fascist massacres could be said to be pawns in a battle between the Axis powers and the British-French *entente* that is prepared to sacrifice Ethiopia in order to keep its *rei de marfim* —i.e. sovereignty over neighbouring African territories— out of danger.

[8] For a full treatment of the idea of the literary (inter)text as palimpsest (i.e. since its text inevitably contains traces of other texts, in the form of intended or unintended quotations or allusions) see Genette 1997.

truth.[9] Equally, however, Saramago shuns such abstracted and elitist utopianisms as those that Borges and Pessoa extrapolated from their anticipations of postmodernism. Instead —as in his novel built around quotations from the poetry, fiction, and journalism from a period that witnessed the slow death-agony of civil society in much of Europe and North Africa— Saramago attempts a practice of literary allusion that highlights the responsibility of both writers and readers to address the vulnerability of signs to diverse ideological forces asserting themselves within the labyrinth.

This practice, wherein the writer admits his/her own lack of authority, yet simultaneously asserts his/her meaning and values against those of unsympathetic authorities imposing upon the texts with which he/she initiates dialogue, recalls the parallel that the critic Matei Calinescu (1991) draws between post-modernism and what he terms an 'aesthetics of quotation'.[10] This premise derives from Calinescu's endorsement of Umberto Eco's analysis of the attitudes towards the past assumed by the modern avant-garde and post-modern artists. Calinescu stresses that the post-modernist principle of 'quotationism' (1991: 185) articulates an ethical stance. In other words, if, for Eco, the modern rejects the past, the post-modern acknowledges it, but refuses to consider it innocently.[11] If we assume that both literary and non-literary representations of reality are ideological constructs subject to various orders of manipulation, it is possible to argue that a writer's own ideological allegiances are expressed and advanced in the deconstruction of such representations as his/her text quotes, an aspect that allows us to distinguish between different politics of quotation within which aesthetic choices are dependent on ethical premises.

It should be pointed out that Saramago's aesthetics of quotation, as vehicle both of a general political intervention and a more particular meditation on the cognitive, social, and political function of writing, was neither born nor defined with the publication of *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, even though this novel represents its acme. Various of his poems, chronicles, and short stories can be understood as embryonic forms of his novels, in aesthetic as much as ethical-philosophical terms. However, it is *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* that definitively configures Saramago's novelistic politics of quotation as a poetic craft that axiologically and ideologically responds to his ethical attitude towards such aspects of humankind's troubled existence.[12] In 1977, so soon after the 1974 April Revolution, when artists and writers in particular were still trying

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[9] Precisely this refusal, indeed, is spelt out in the quotation from an apocryphal *Livro dos Conselhos* (*Book of Advice*) used as epigraph for *História do Cerco de Lisboa* (9/tr. vi): 'Enquanto não alcançares a verdade, não poderás corrigi-la. Porém, se a não corrigires, não a alcançarás. Entretanto, não te resignes' ('Until you attain the truth, you will not be able to amend it. But if you do not amend it, you will not attain it. Meanwhile, do not resign yourself').

[10] For a fuller application of Calinescu's theory to Saramago's fiction see Martins (2006, and in this volume).

[11] Calinescu (1991: 285) asserts that it is this refusal of innocence that makes an 'aesthetics of quotation [...] essential to the post-modern identity', thus emphasizing the imbrication of aesthetic choices and values with any such ethics.

[12] This novel has received relatively little critical attention to date; see Costa (1997: 273–319) and Arnaut (2002: 1150–76, 224–45). On Saramago's journalistic *crónicas* as a workshop of practices that would be implemented in his later novels see Seixo (1987: 4, 12–21) and Martins (1999: 95–107).

out new tools suited to an era of freedom of expression, the novel's title could initially have seemed misleading, since the novel could not be considered a kind of handbook providing the reader with rules of how to paint or to write well. The title proves to be appropriate, however, when the reader encounters the confrontation between the social and ideological roles of painting and writing from the protagonist's perspective at a decisive moment in Portuguese history, namely the few years leading up to the Revolution of 25 April 1974.[13] The novel comprises various exercizes in quotation carried out by H., the central character, who sets up a quest for his self through different types of artistic representations of himself and others. However, his paintings and his pieces of writing, essayed in different genres, assume significance as more than a route to self-knowledge through art: they also both stimulate and express the character's need to give testimony of his times. They represent H.'s way of intervening in a crucial moment of crisis and of passage, during which it was essential not only to question the potentialities of representing the empirical world or even the impossibility of its total representation, but also the place left for art when those questions are supposedly answered. What H.'s search for his self through different artistic languages highlights is the problematization of the Pessoan conception of fiction as *fingimento* or a 'modelling of a world that is not a lie, but *an act of seriously-intended make-believe*' that serves to expose and challenge the artifice and aporia of existing representations.[14]

Saramago considered *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* a kind of rehearsal for his later production.[15] Indeed, the novel rehearses an understanding, greatly elaborated in later novels, of how a post-modern practice of allusion needs to be historically well informed, and also of how such a practice need not be considered simply deconstructive. Often, the recreation of motifs familiar from the literature of the past is just as much an act of literary homage and ideological solidarity. Thus, for example, Saramago's first historical novel, *Levantado do Chão* revisits a subject popular with the Marxist-influenced neo-realist writers of the mid-twentieth century, namely the struggle of the agricultural workers of the Alentejo region against political and economic oppression. *Levantado do Chão*'s self-conscious and at times signally burlesque imitations of topoi and symbols from the best-known works of Alves Redol, Fernando Namora, and Carlos de Oliveira can be read as parodies that dismantle the neo-realist novel's meticulous documentary elaboration of a fictional microcosm or reflection of reality, and thereby undermine claims for neo-realism's capacity to reveal historical truth.[16] However, these quoted elements are incorporated into an anti-mimetic narrative form whose disjointed switching between different narrating perspectives, different discourses, and different subjects and settings constitutes an analysis of the historical

[13] On the relevance of *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* to the Portuguese novel after the April Revolution see Vecchi (1999: 231).

[14] Reis (1998: 24) 'modelação de um mundo que não é mentira, mas antes um **fingimento sério**' (author's bold, our translation), describing H's actions in *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* as a metaphor for artistic creation.

[15] On this issue see Reis (1998: 26, 38–39, 42).

[16] On *Levantado do Chão*'s allusions to neo-realist novels see Silva (1996), Viçoso (1999), and Sabine (2001a: 37–39, 50).

events to which the novel refers that is itself expressly dialectical and conjecturally materialist. Thus Saramago's rewriting of the neo-realists is aesthetically deconstructive, yet at the same time ideologically reconstructive, directing the reader to still-unacknowledged aspects of working-class history. Rejecting Harold Bloom's essentially psychoanalytical model of literary production, in which an 'anxious' writer engages in an Oedipal struggle with supposedly paternal antecedents (Bloom 1973), Saramago focuses on rewriting as a social and political intervention. By placing these authors' works in an inconclusive dialogue with other quoted material and challenging the reader to conclude the discussion, he could here be said to treat his predecessors more as brothers in arms than as murdered fathers.

Levantado do Chão thus demonstrates the articulation noted by Calinescu between aesthetic choices and ethical positions within a postmodern conception of novel. Saramago's text opens itself up for interpretation even as it asserts its own interpretation of other texts, presenting the author not as a god, but as one of a cohort of partisans battling to assert, against powerful opposition, an essentially Marxist interpretation of the pre-existing, extratextual labyrinth of Alentejan history. *Levantado do Chão*'s opening chapter surveys this region, its inhabitants, and the time-honoured foundational myths that order the dominant account of its history, concluding with the simple claim that 'tudo isto pode ser contado doutra maneira' (14; 'all this can be told in a different way'). This is, indeed, the premise from which all of Saramago's historical novels proceed, narrating familiar histories 'doutra maneira' while urging the reader not to accept the resultant account but rather to seek out and consider the data and insights overlooked from both old and new narrative perspectives.

Levantado do Chão is just one novel to indicate the universal importance to Saramago's politics of quotation of the dialectical process that Ricardo Reis's lover, the chambermaid Lídia, suggests when she observes that 'as verdades são muitas e estão umas contra as outras, enquanto não lutarem não se saberá onde está a mentira' (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 388; 'there are many truths and they are all opposed to one another, it's only when they start fighting that you know what's a lie', our translation).[17] As the novels of the 1980s elaborate the author's intervention in the process of national redefinition that accompanied Portugal's transition from dictatorship to revolution, then to parliamentary democracy, European Union, and free-market economics, the dialectical opposition of quoted discourses is used to cross-examine unquestioned commonplaces about national history and identity and to reanimate debates quashed by the momentum of governmental and economic forces. In *A Jangada de Pedra*, a fantastical satire of European identity politics is set in a parallel-universe 1980s, the Iberian Peninsula spurns Spanish and Portuguese integration into the European Community by breaking off from the continent and floating off into the mid-Atlantic. Saramago's depiction of different social groups' reactions to this unsettling event indicates the frequent and questionable investment in iconic literary texts and authors as guarantors of the values and destinies of imagined communities. On one side of the border, the Portuguese prime minister responds to the crisis of the

[17] On this passage see also Frier, in this volume.

peninsula's displacement by reworking the messianic patriotism of Camões's *Lusiads*. Making the 'aventura histórica em que nos achamos lançados' sound like a return of Portugal's Age of Discoveries, he identifies within it not simply 'a promessa de um futuro mais feliz' but even 'a esperança de um rejuvenescimento da humanidade' (*A Jangada de Pedra* 169/tr. 131 'the historic adventure into which we find ourselves launched [...] the promise of a happier future [...] the hope of regenerating humanity'). In Spain, meanwhile, TV editors crib a far less heroic inscription of *portugalidade* or Portugueseness from Miguel de Unamuno's *Por tierras de Portugal y de España* (*Through Portuguese and Spanish Lands*) of 1909. Their depiction of Portuguese reactions to events consists entirely of footage of inhabitants of the Atlantic coast,

> a olhar o horizonte, com aquele trágico ademane de quem se preparou desde séculos para o ignoto [...] Agora ei-los ali, como Unamuno disse que estavam, la cara morena entre ambas palmas, clavas tus ojos donde el sol se acuesta solo en la mar inmensa (*A Jangada de Pedra* 93; 'watching the horizon, with the tragic expression of someone who has been prepared for centuries for the unknown [...] There they are now, just as Unamuno described, our dark face cupped between both hands, eyes fixed on where the sun sleeps alone in the infinite ocean', our translation)

The counterposition of these (mis)quotations effectively satirizes the suspect motivations for their recontextualization and mass-media dissemination. Yet, as in *Levantado do Chão*, the practice of quotation here is at once deconstructive and tentatively reconstructive, as self-conscious Camonian and Unamunian appropriations crop up, voiced by the novel's narrator.[18] The novel thus suggests that while neither paradigm is ever ideologically innocent or sociologically reputable, they might both have something to offer a society prepared to conceive of its cultural identity as multifaceted and mutable.[19]

A Jangada de Pedra, like all of Saramago's novels, urges recognition of the fact that quotation is inevitably a dialogue between contemporary society (or its alleged spokespersons) and the canonic author whose work is invoked. An impediment to a less presumptuous and more candid and historically informed citation of cultural icons arises, however, from the pre-existing dialogic inconsistencies within the output of an iconic writer. *A Jangada de Pedra* hints at this in its references to a third analyst of Iberian identities, Unamuno's contemporary Antonio Machado, whose mortal relics are snatched from his grave in a French village in a midnight raid by Spanish 'patriots' (73–74). While the novel's protagonists debate the dubious benefits to his native land of this ghoulish affirmation of cultural separatism (75–76), the excavation of the meanings of Machado's poetry, recontextualized to an Iberia hurriedly reassessing its definitions

[18] For fuller treatment of *Jangada*'s Camonian and Unamunian intertexts see Sabine (2001b).

[19] Hence, perhaps, the sardonic observation of how national memory helps inspire the actions of impoverished locals in the Algarve, who storm the local hotels emptied by the geopolitical crisis and establish democratic, soviet-style squatters' communities: 'afinal [...] os portugueses são de duas espécies diferentes, há uns que vão para as praias e arribas contemplar melancólicos o horizonte, há outros que avançam intrépidos sobre as fortalezas hoteleiras defendidas pela polícia' (*A Jangada de Pedra* 98/tr. 75 'there are two types of Portuguese, those who take themselves off to the beaches and sand dunes to contemplate the horizon despondently, and others who advance intrepidly on those hotels-cum-fortresses defended by the police').

and objectives, is shown to be potentially more productive. Orlando Grossegesse (2001: 178) has pointed out that *A Jangada de Pedra*'s discussion of Machado's hypothetical reburial quotes the poet's elegy for Francisco Giner de los Ríos, doyen of the Generation of 1898 coterie, which used literature to address Spain's spiritual malaise following an earlier national catastrophe ('A Don Francisco Giner de los Ríos': Machado 1975: 234–35). The reclamation of 'the spiritual heritage of the *Generación del '98* for the "new blossoming" of the whole Iberia' (Grossegesse 2001: 179) is affirmed at the novel's close, when the elderly Pedro Orce dies and is buried by his friends on an Andalusian hillside in a ceremony sanctioned neither by Church or State but inspired by Machado's poetry (*A Jangada de Pedra* 329–30/tr. 261–63).[20] Yet while Pedro's burial 'revivifies Antonio Machado as an *author* of an Iberian religion of salvation lacking a God from above' (Grossegesse 2001: 179), this good news must coexist with another, more sombre intimation that emerges from the simultaneous activation of a second Machado text. When Pedro's friend Joana Carda marks his resting place with the elm wand that she has carried throughout the novel as emblem of her independence and dignity, the novel evokes Machado's poem to a dry elm, 'A un olmo seco' (1975: 191–92).[21] Machado's longing for another miracle of spring as he contemplates a few green leaves on the dying tree ('otro milagro de la primavera', 192) is echoed by *A Jangada de Pedra*'s hope that the elm wand might become an 'árvore renascida', but only 'se um pau seco, espetado no chão, é capaz de milagres' (330/tr. 263 'resuscitated tree [...] if a piece of dry wood stuck in the ground is capable of working miracles'). The consequent uncertainty about the floating peninsula's precarious 'nuevo florecer' (Machado 1975: 235, 'new blossoming') shows how easily the use of unstable cultural icons to affirm a community's ontological consistency and value or to inspire utopian ambitions can become too selective and too abstracted from material circumstances.

The need for an ethical practice of quotation and allusion to be historically informed emerges most forcefully when one notes the correlation, throughout history, between dominant ideologies and aesthetic systems. The engagement with this phenomenon is also central to the relationship between quotation, ideological commitment, and historical enquiry in Saramago's novels. In *Memorial do Convento*, for example, shifts of focus between the court of the devout and conservative King João V (1706–50) and a marginalized coterie of religious and intellectual dissidents are used to trace the history of eighteenth-century political thought through art. The Baroque magniloquence and monumentalism exemplified in royal decrees and in the gigantic Mafra monastery founded by the king corroborate the alleged omnipotence of the absolutist monarch and the god who anointed him. They also, however, allow Saramago to adopt Jonathan Swift's tactic of using grotesquely disproportional representations of the human body to belittle Dom João and his *folies de grandeur*, or render monstrous the symbols of his

[20] As Grossegesse (2001: 179) observes, this burial echoes the one deemed appropriate for Machado, 'de baixo de uma azinhiera, que em castelhano se diz *encina*, sem cruz nem pedra tumular' (*A Jangada de Pedra* 74/tr. 56 'beneath a holm oak, called *encina* in Castilian, without any cross or tombstone'), which in turn alludes to Machado's description of Giner de los Ríos's heart lying 'bajo un encina casta | en tierra de tomillos', under a noble holm oak in a land of thyme (235).

[21] See further Sabine (2001b: 198–99).

might.[22] Meanwhile, *Memorial* explores the articulations of successive aesthetics, ideologies, and epistemologies through its fictionalization of court composer Domenico Scarlatti, the pioneer of classical sonata form. Scarlatti's music develops from keyboard improvisations into a form that unites two motifs in different keys in a structure of exposition, counterposition, development, and reconciliation that mirrors the thesis, antithesis, and synthesis of the Hegelian dialectic.[23] Scarlatti's insistence on the 'necessidade do erro' (*Memorial do Convento* 162/tr. 151 'necessity of error') in the search for harmonic 'truth' (demonstrated in the movement from improvisation to composition) serves as an indictment of the religious obscurantism and censorship that sustained João V's rule, and indeed his completed sonatas herald the displacement of absolutist dogma by Enlightenment empiricism. Yet the novel's depiction of Scarlatti's painstaking synthesis of harmonic oppositions also introduces a critique of any ostensibly empirical and scientific search for truth that insists on the subordination of one account or theory to another (just as the sonata's neat conclusion depends on its second subject's harmonic subordination to the first). Such attempts to give a finite and harmonious form to representations of a worldly totality impose a false order and achieve not truth but only a specious aesthetic ideal. *Memorial do Convento*'s juxtaposition of the biographies, beliefs, and discourses of the privileged elite and the marginalized poor sets up a sonata-like dialogue between the ideological subject and countersubject it exposes. Yet while Saramago's sympathy for the poor and for socialist rather than elitist principles is evident, the novel's composition and its allusion to its own 'errors' of historical selectivity and partiality refuse any neat resolution comparable to the archetypal musical expression of Enlightenment positivism. Rather, 'truth' is compared to the reverberations of music that emerge from the well into which Scarlatti's friends Baltasar and Blimunda hurl his harpsichord in order to protect him from the attentions of an Inquisitorial search party: fragmentary, intangible, and looming up out of the past without regard for human priorities or preconceptions (*Memorial do Convento* 281).

Reminders of the importance of embracing uncertainty, exploring errors, and acknowledging contradictions pervade Saramago's work. A further demonstration that such attitudes make possible a positively instructive dialogue between fictional and historical rereading and rewriting is encountered if we retrace our footsteps to *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* and its conceit of Pessoa's invented poet reading a book by Borges's invented novelist. By the novel's close Ricardo Reis has resolved neither the mysteries of Quain's novel nor the more urgent questions that besiege him about his

[22] Saramago's debt to Swift's satirical use of grotesque disproportion appears, for example, when D. João is reduced to Lilliputian stature in comparison to the outsized crucifix and bucket-like chalice that are borne before him at the ceremony of dedication of the Mafra monastery foundations (*Memorial do Convento* 131, 135/tr. 124, 126). For a full account of Saramago's adaptation of the perspectivist techniques of Swift and of Gracián and other Baroque satirists see Sabine (2001a: 121–34).

[23] In the novel Scarlatti and the acclaimed orator and scientist Padre Bartolomeu Lourenço de Gusmão explicitly discuss the common aim, in music, sermons, and philosophical discourse, of a neat structure of 'expor, contrapor e concluir' (*Memorial do Convento* 162/tr. 151 'exposition, counterpoint, and conclusion'). For a fuller account of Saramago's use of Scarlatti's music-making as an allegory of different strategies for the writing of history see Sabine (2001a: 117–20); on Scarlatti and the development of sonata form see Sheveloff (1980: 570–72).

identity, the validity of his philosophy and writings, and the search for historical truth under conditions of censorship. His dying act is to remove Quain's book with him to the tomb, hoping thus to leave the world 'aliviado de um enigma' (*O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* 415/tr. 357 'relieved of one enigma'). Unfortunately, this act —like his earlier removal of the book from the ocean steamer's library— only replicates a miscalculation described in another Borges's story, 'La biblioteca de Babel'. In the labyrinthine and perhaps infinite universe 'which others call the library' of Babel the contents of each identical-looking volume are unique; though the huge majority appear to consist only 'of senseless cacophonies, verbal hodgepodges, and incoherences', collectively they archive 'everything that is capable of being expressed, in every language' (Borges 1997b: 90 'de insensatas cacofonías, de fárragos verbales y de incoherencias', and 92 'todo lo que es dable expresar: en todos los idiomas'). The search by the library's inhabitants for the volumes containing genuine wisdom and the one book that would be 'the key and perfect compendium *of all the others*' leads to attempts to 'eliminate useless works, resulting in 'the senseless loss of millions of books' (94–95 'eliminar las obras inútiles [...] la insensata perdicíon de millones de libros [...] la cifra y el compendio perfecto *de todos los demás*', author's italics). As the narrator concludes, however, due to the relational meaning of all language and of every text, and the activation of textual meaning through the reader's recognition or creation of relations between texts, the destruction of imperfect or useless texts only serves to further restrict humanity's access to any truth.

The implications of this in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* start with the fact that the relationship between Quain's novel and Reis's last poems becomes undetectable, rendering inaccessible a potentially crucial field of meaning. The Borgesian motif of the mutilated library serves further as metaphor for the construction, through a process of accidental *and* deliberate elimination of data sources, not only of a canon of an author's literary works, but also of a canon of national or world classics and —most importantly— of a canonic version of history. This latter and constant concern of Saramago's fiction is writ largest in *História do Cerco de Lisboa*. Here, Raimundo Silva, the proof-reader of a new account of the Christian capture of the city from its Muslim rulers —a somewhat problematic set piece in all patriotic retellings of Portuguese history—, determines to challenge the shortcomings of what he is reading. The book's conformity to what Saramago has characterized as the 'partial and parcelled' format of positivist narrative history (Reis 1998: 83 'parcial e parcelar') first of all gives an appearance of comprehensiveness to an incomplete account. Moreover, it dissembles that account's consequent bias towards a Christian, Eurocentric, and patriarchal world-view by moulding and tempering the shape and mode of its emplotment to lend a semblance of historical inevitability to the *telos* of Portugal's rise to spiritual and secular greatness.[24] Finally, the book's attempts to make past events appear accessible and explicable to the reader not only disguise gaps in knowledge, but also introduce inaccuracies and

[24] On the role of emplotment and narrative modes in historiography see White (1973); for a reading of *História do Cerco de Lisboa* in relation to White's theory see Sabine (2001a: 267–69). On the proof-reader's questioning of historical sources and its epistemological and ideological implications for the topic of rewriting public memory see Martins (1994, 2006).

anachronism.[25] When, after setting the book down in disgust, Raimundo sets off to explore the historic site of the siege on Lisbon's Castelo hill, he comes little closer to a 'whole' truth, but is apprised of the inevitability of the book's errors and omissions. The biased and selective narrative reconstruction of times past is exposed by such material evidence as the fragments of the city's walls built and rebuilt by its succession of Phoenician, Celtic, Roman, Visigothic, Muslim, and Portuguese rulers (*História do Cerco de Lisboa* 68, 74). Both history and the stones and streets of Lisbon are revealed as palimpsests wherein the indelible traces of previous constructions of memory and identity persist to inflect or even contradict those of the present.[26] Raimundo thereupon insists to the history book's author that 'tudo quanto não for vida, é literatura, [...] A história sobretudo' (*História do Cerco de Lisboa* 15; 'everything that is not life is literature, [...] History above all', our trans.). From this premise, it becomes a respectable proposition to introduce self-evident fiction into historical discourse in order to speculate on the importance of such traces of the past as have been demonstrably or presumably excluded from current accounts, and thus to dispel the illusory comprehensiveness of conventional historical narration. When Raimundo writes a deliberately 'wrong' history of the siege, based on a premise that contradicts a fundamental element in the accepted version, he asserts the value of writing a history in order to ironize the (positivist) practice of history, or to replace the concept of the ideal history book as an infallible book of certainties with that of it as one thesis amongst several that, by questioning their own and each others' presumptions and omissions, approach —even if they never reach— the 'whole truth' through a process of negative dialectics.

História do Cerco de Lisboa's use of 'seriously-intended make-believe' to interpose the perspectives of Muslim culture and other marginalized subjectivities into a historical narrative long monopolized by nationalist and Catholic powers concludes Saramago's intervention in the politics of Portuguese identity with an affirmation of Portugal's development into a more visibly pluralist and multi-ethnic society.[27] His next novel, *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*, marks a significant shift of focus, despite demonstrating both a continuing preoccupation with the writing and popular understanding of history and the political objectives of an aesthetics of quotation that transgresses textual and discursive boundaries.[28] The novel's modelling of Jesus as a mortal Everyman bur-

[25] Exemplary is the case of the history's reference to King Afonso Henriques's standard, raised over the conquered city, showing the five shields of the coat of arms of Portugal, which in fact were first used as a heraldic symbol by Afonso's son, Sancho I; while Raimundo Silva balks at this spurious reference, he recognizes its vital narratological importance in creating a recognizable and climactic conclusion to the epic story of the Portuguese and Christian victory (*História do Cerco de Lisboa* 41–42/tr. 32); see Sabine (2001a: 270).

[26] On *História do Cerco de Lisboa*'s presentation of the city and history as palimpsest see Finazzi Agrò (1999) and Sabine (2001a: 274–76).

[27] In this context it is worth making the comparison of Saramago's *História do Cerco de Lisboa* and his Spanish contemporary Juan Goytisolo's challenge to a nationalistic and anti-Islamic historiographic tradition in such novels as *La reivindicación del Conde Don Julián* (1970); see Grossegesse (1994, 2001). On the renegotiation through print culture of Portuguese national identity in the post-dictatorship era see Kaufman & Klobucka (1997).

[28] On this shift of focus see also Martins (2006: 110–11).

dened by the monstrous destiny forced upon him by a God the Father impatient for power and glory redeploys the Saramaguian tactic of anecdotalizing a dominant historical discourse by forcing it into dialogue with fictional hypotheses and suppressed historical evidence. *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo* treats the New Testament principally as a historical document rather than as holy scripture, and counterposes to this source two kinds of apocrypha: first, Saramago's psychological portraits of Christ, Mary Magdelene, the Virgin Mary, Joseph of Nazareth, God the Father, and the Devil, and, second, ancient accounts of the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth that were excluded from the canon of the Christian Gospels.[29] While the novel mounts an assault upon the attitudes and dogmas that Saramago identifies within Christian teaching as being conducive to totalitarianism and to such abuses of institutional power as are chronicled in *Levantado do Chão* or *Memorial do Convento*, it nonetheless undertakes a movement away from detailed and sustained dialogue with specific texts from specifically Portuguese, Iberian-Latin American, or European canons. This shift no doubt relates to the fact that, seventeen years after the April Revolution and in a period of relative stability, Portuguese artists did not experience that anxiety that drove the search for new aesthetic codes and representations of the nation after 1974. One must also, however, take into account the increasing popularity since the mid-1980s of Saramago's literary production with a diverse international readership. This may also explain why Saramago's concerns started to be more self-evidently universalist. Hiss later novels, beginning with *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* (1995), address themselves to a global audience by foregrounding two things. The first is the author's always manifest concern for the material wants and inequalities afflicting mankind. The second is the discussion, underpinning the 1980s novels' historiographical critique, of fundamental philosophical conundra: the inherent capacity for deception of the mimetic and narrative impulses that remain ineradicable in the transmission of information, the difficulty of knowing the Other when even the identity of the self is elusive, the capacity of the human intellect to degrade the concept of reason, and the challenge to eliminate exclusory or oppressive hierarchies from social organization.

In *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* Saramago develops the seriously-intended ludic dimension of his literary production, once again —and now to a greater degree— subverting the framework of genres. He entitles his novel an essay, and blurs the spatial and historical coordinates so that any, or every, place and time could be the referent to a haunting plot that rests on the principle that everyone (except for one character, the doctor's wife) starts suffering from a white and deeply contagious blindness that can be neither scientifically explained nor treated medically. Meanwhile, the novel's intertextual dialogues with a varied range of fictional visions of dystopia undoubtedly inform its unveiling of the worst that exists in human beings, at the individual and collective levels, when survival is at stake.[30] When the sick start to be transported to a former

[29] On *O Evangelho*'s use of early Christian, and particularly Gnostic, apocryphal texts such as the Gospel of Philip see Arnaut (2002: 307, n22); on its fictional rewriting of the gospels, Fokkema (1999), Bloom (2001), Silva (2000a, 2000b), Krysinski (1999).

[30] See, in this volume, Rollason's reading in relation to Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Ornelas's comparison with Camus's *The Plague*.

psychiatric hospital, which thus becomes a kind of prison, the good and bad impulses of human beings are clearly and cruelly confronted. Thus Saramago assesses the frailties of humankind, and its tendency to self-destruction and to indifference or even perverse cruelty towards the Other, in contrast to other allegedly less rational species.

Ensaio sobre a Cegueira thus exemplifies how Saramago's 'post-national' novels, being largely stripped of detailed and specific cultural references, are necessarily more reliant on an allegorical interpretative mode. Unsurprisingly, however, these narratives often undermine their own allegorical constructions through frequent self-reflexive asides and discursive disjunctions. This is perhaps most blatant in the recently published *As Intermitências da Morte*, where, in a manner without precedent in the earlier novels, the narrative mode shifts at its mid-point from Saramago's trademark insertion of counterfactual fantasy into a quotidian setting to a self-conscious parody of the allegorical mode, complete with the character of Death herself intervening to confront the protagonists, who have somehow acquired the power of immortality.[31] A further feature of these novels, which reiterates the warnings of *A Jangada de Pedra* about the treachery of symbols, is the overdetermination of allegorical structures (which has, for example, prompted debate about *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*'s conclusions regarding the origins of human malice and the possibility or otherwise of its eradication). Such overdetermination is most often achieved through the reformulation of generic archetypes and topoi, or what Genette's typology of intertextual links categorizes as 'architextual' allusions (Genette 1992, and 1997: 4–5). *Todos os Nomes* typifies the kind of sustained hermeneutical guessing-game that arises from the interplay between such references, and how this is used to develop *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*'s pondering of the (in)humanity of humankind.[32] Saramago's references to the hard-boiled private investigator genre and to the medieval quest romance are ultimately revealed as red herrings en route to what Helena Buescu identifies below as a (post-)modernist parable of alienation and failed (self-)discovery. The protagonist Sr. José's obsessive love for a woman unknown to him, and whose life-history he attempts to reconstruct through increasingly illicit sleuthing, calls into question the conventions of representing the common person's existence such as are adhered to in Sr. José's scrapbook of newspaper cuttings about his favourite celebrities, an artefact that, as represention of the world, is not very different from the forms filled in at the Central Registry Office, where Sr. José works, to signal birth, marriage, divorce, and death. However, reflections on the age-old conundrum of representation co-exist with an implicit denunciation of how specifically modern forms of civil administration dehumanize citizens, by treating them as statistics or register entries, to be purged of emotional and spiritual meaning,

[31] We gratefully acknowledge Christopher Rollason's suggestion for the English translation of this novel's title, *Death's Intervals*. Despite the changes we note in Saramago's practice of quotation, one should remark the considerable number of intertextual allusions in Saramago's latest novel, including references to Camões, Malherbe, Montaigne, and Saramago's own earlier novels (Rollason 2006), and also the paraphrase in the first sentence of *Intermitências da Morte*, 'No dia seguinte ninguém morreu' ('The following day, nobody died'), of the opening of Camus's *The Outsider*, 'Aujourd'hui, maman est morte' (1962: 1127, 'Today Mother died').

[32] On Saramago's fiction as hermeneutical puzzles that cast the reader as detective see also Grossegesse, in this volume.

categorized, and eventually erased. Again, Saramago's point gains much of its power from architextual allusion: here, in the resemblance of the Central Registry Office to the anonymous, illogical, and labyrinthine world of bureaucratic oppression presented by Kafka's *The Trial*, or more recently Ismail Kadare's *The Palace of Dreams*.[33]

Despite the aforementioned shift of Saramago's focus since the publication of *O Evangelho segundo Jesus Cristo*, in *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*, *Todos os Nomes*, and their successor *A Caverna*, Saramago focuses more insistently than ever on the issue of representation, recalling the conception of his own and other artists' aesthetic production set out in *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia*.[34] In *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*, this issue is foregrounded by the character who plans to write about the mysterious epidemic of blindness. Despite the fact that all the characters in the novel (apart from the doctor's wife) are blind and would not be able to read his story, he aims to transform his writing into a testimony of human suffering and of the misapplication of political measures that, instead of providing citizens with due shelter and protection, condemned them to an abject way of life. In this sense the blind man's writing acquires an important epistemological and ideological value, and it is no exaggeration to draw a parallel between his attempt and H.'s various exercises of representation in *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia*. In *Todos os Nomes*, meanwhile, Sr. José's need to tie a rope around his body in order to penetrate the labyrinthine Central Registry Office and find the documents of the unknown dead woman with whom he has fallen in love recalls the topos of Ariadne's thread. While this thread leads to no unassailable revelation of truth, it permits Sr. José to transgress institutional order, both in terms of its representations of the world, and of its highly hierarchical organization and imposition of behavioural norms.

If *Todos os Nomes* thus turns out to recall *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*'s demonstration of the need for art, and representation in general, to transgress hegemonic categorical boundaries, *A Caverna* develops this message into a specific assault on the processes of globalization that purport to break down boundaries and increase individual choice. The protagonist, the potter Cipriano Algor, struggles against the logic of a globalized economy, which has rendered his hand-thrown crockery obsolete, by modelling clay figurines representing a range of familiar social types, which he hopes will find a ready market in the huge, anonymous, and sinister shopping centre that now dominates his family's professional and financial life. Corporate globalization's replacing of tradition and diversity with the unconsidered replication of a pre-existing 'one size fits all' model is symbolized by the plastic crockery that curtails Cipriano's livelihood. The references to the modelling of clay, meanwhile, evoke myths of the creation of the world, sowing seeds of doubt regarding notions of the absolute authenticity of traditional social roles and material representations.[35] After Cipriano's business idea fails, the permanence of the abandoned clay figures in his kiln recalls the

[33] Saramago's creation of such bureaucratic dystopias can be traced back to his early short stories, such as 'Coisas' (1978).

[34] On the significance of these three novels within Saramago's literary project see Martins (2006: 111–12).

[35] For a fuller reading of the theme of representation in *A Caverna* see Medeiros, in this volume.

Platonic cave almost as clearly as the cave of historical tableaux that is excavated beneath the shopping centre. But if *A Caverna* identifies no solution to the human's misleading and elusive view of him/herself as the Other, the cave beneath the mall warns of the greater future degree of captivity and dehumanization that may result if we do not rebel against global capitalism's progressive reduction of cultural diversity, of the realm of citizenship, and of alternatives to a consumerist, profit-driven conception of the world. Just as the writer in *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* asserts the value of a blind man's testimony in a world where almost no one can read, Saramago, while acknowledging Plato's critique of mimesis, refuses Plato's banishment of the artist from a polity that remains vulnerable to the misrepresentations of the ideologue.

Platonic dialogues remain a crucial point of reference in *O Homem Duplicado*. Saramago has often carried out a 'doubling' of his characters, as in the cases of Ricardo Reis and Fernando Pessoa's ghost in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*, Raimundo Silva and Mogueime and Maria Sara and Ouroana in *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, or, most provocatively, God and the Devil in *O Evangelho sobre Jesus Cristo*. *O Homem Duplicado* presents a protagonist, Tertuliano Máximo Afonso, who rather than purposefully conceiving of himself as Other, or creating his own Other, as do Pessoa, Raimundo, and *O Evangelho sobre Jesus Cristo*'s God, is forced to come to terms with the independent existence of his living physical double. Reviews and readings of the novel have, again, stressed the importance of 'architextual' allusion to its discussion of the pseudo-homogenization of the modern human, and to the consequently weakening critical attitude towards representations of the empirical and fictional worlds (for example, in its epigraph from Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,* a novel whose elaborate multiple *mises en abîme* and parodies of objective novelistic narration make Sterne one of the literary ancestors of post-modern writers). Similarly, allusions to such genre-specific topoi as the gothic motif of the *doppelgänger*, and to writers associated with such genres and topoi (in this case Edgar Allan Poe), help to position Saramago's theme of the human inability to deal either with the phenomenon of an Other who remains the Other even when apparently physically identical, or with the fact that not respecting such a being's alterity will lead either the self or the Other to death or a loss of identity.

O Homem Duplicado can be considered a kind of summation novel, reiterating Saramago's preoccupation both with the way history should be taught and with the idea that history can be told from a different perspective (here, Tertuliano finds his own history assessed from the perspective of an apparent duplicate of himself who is, nevertheless, another person with a separate existence). The novel's gathering together of so many of the themes of earlier works is of a piece with one final refinement of Saramago's politics of quotation. This is the emergence of a significant degree of what we might term 'intratextual' quotation, as the later novels create an explicit dialogue with other elements of his oeuvre. Intratextual references are already a feature of Saramago's 1980s works, which return to discussions begun in the earlier poems, essays, and short stories, and name-check or even reintroduce characters from earlier novels. In the later novels such allusions are more numerous and even assume the status of major structural devices. This is arguably the case with the doubling of

Memorial do Convento's clairvoyant Blimunda in what Saramago has referred to as her 'twin sister', the doctor's wife in *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*, who shares both Blimunda's ability to see what is invisible to other humans and her heroic dedication of this gift to the common good. A further aspect of Saramago's increasing intratextual allusion is the reference to apocryphal books, such as the *Livro dos Conselhos* (*Book of Advice*) that provides the epigraphs for both *História do Cerco de Lisboa* and *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira*.[36] This development can be interpreted first as a gesture of self-assessment by a writer who had, by 1998, reached a pinnacle of national and international acclaim. Secondly, and more importantly, it constitutes a creative and ludic, but nonetheless serious, interrogation of his production as a whole and of its reception in various different fora. This tactic comes across particularly strongly in *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez* (*Essay on Lucidity*). This story of how civic meltdown and state terror follow an election in which the population protests against the status quo through a mass spoiling of ballot papers makes sundry explicit and implicit references to *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* and its themes. Thus it redirects that novel's observations on the embryonic totalitarianism lurking beneath governmental conventions of the 'free world' towards current perceptions of a crisis in popular democratic participation.[37] The process is not very different from *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*'s problematization of the manipulations of Camões's and Pessoa's legacy. As a canonized oeuvre within the frameworks of both Lusophone literature and world literature, Saramago's output, like those of Camões and Pessoa, is a textual labyrinth increasingly traversed and contested not just by influential critical voices but also by political and commercial endorsers. Saramago's blatant highlighting of connecting passages between individual works serves to amplify and refract the key political messages of each, and to militate pre-emptively against aesthetic and ideological appropriation.

English-language volumes on Saramago are still perplexingly few in number.[38] Our book's primary aim is to complement these by locating his work in relation to current delineations of a canon of western literature, and by examining his response to a post-modern aesthetics of quotation and his assessment of the political implications of quoting and rewriting.[39] As this essay suggests, *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* makes an ideal starting point for discussions of Saramago's work in relation both to current delineations of the literary canon and to theories and practices of intertextual allusion. *In Dialogue with Saramago* opens, therefore, with three readings of this novel.

The first of these, Ellen Sapega looks at how allusions to *Os Lusíadas* and its author

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[36] This device is first used in the volume of essays *A Bagagem do Viajante* (*The Voyager's Baggage*), of 1973 (Saramago 1973). On Saramago's recurrent use of apocryphal books see, amongst others, Martins (1999: 98).

[37] For an account of the various means by which *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez* recalls the earlier *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* see Rollason, in this volume.

[38] To date, only two have appeared: *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies*, 6 (2001 = *On Saramago*, ed. Anna Klobucka), which includes a selective bibliography compiled with the English-speaking reader in mind (271–77), and the collection of studies of Saramago, previously published in journals, in Bloom (2005); we await Frier (forthcoming).

[39] With the exception of *Levantado do Chão* and *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez*, this volume focuses primarily on those of Saramago's works that have been published in English translation.

address the implications of quoting and rewriting in the context of identity politics. Saramago's promiscuously allusive text moves beyond a simple 'dialogue with poets and poetry' to identify canonic texts and authors as sites of public memory whose (re-)definition is crucial to the construction of national identity. The novel's treatment of public monuments depicting Camões and his creations reveals the status of the poet and his work as metonymic signifiers of a Portuguese golden age re-imagined by successive generations of ideologically disparate national leaders.

These observations on how social and political expediencies determine the regulation and reading of the literary canon are amplified by David Frier, who compares the uses Saramago and Camilo Castelo Branco make of the same foundational metanarrative from the Iberian canon to attack the complacent jingoism of the political and cultural elite in a decadent, downtrodden, poverty-stricken nation. Despite the ideological disparity between Saramago and the great Romantic novelist, their satires on an official discourse of Portuguese imperial glory and the vanity of a self-styled intellectual and political elite deploy similar tactics. While Calisto Elói's and Ricardo Reis's bombastic misrecognition of Portugal and their place within it recalls Don Quixote, their refusal to abandon individualist pursuits for more socially responsible roles condemns them to the still less heroic status of second-rate Don Juans.[40]

Orlando Grossegesse approaches the politics of quotation from the standpoint of hermeneutics, considering how Saramago's textualized interplay between historical reality and myth and fiction articulates a fresh take on the artistic representation of human suffering. *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*'s strategy of multi-layered *mise en abîme* within a historically real scenario of trauma challenges the reader not only to interpret a reality that is construed as hermeneutically undecided and labyrinthine but also to consider the ethics of representation itself. Grossegesse's comparison of glosses on Dante's story of Count Ugolino informs his distinction between an aesthetics that sublimates human pain and horror (also exemplified in the 1930s newspaper reportage that the novel quotes) and Saramago's 're-animation' of the reality of suffering through a poetics of 'conflict, imperfection, and screams'.

Helena Carvalhão Buescu reads the motif of the labyrinth as constituent of Saramago's disquisition on what she terms the deceptive and fundamentally dark nature of the universe as conceived by modernity. Buescu stresses how the labyrinthine nature not so much of hermeneutics as of emplotment and setting serves to articulate Saramago's questioning of subjectivity and the possibility of knowing the Other. The motif of the search or quest that structures and characterizes these narratives is constantly undermined by diverse delaying mechanisms that defer the meetings that promise narrative resolution. Meeting ultimately manifests itself as being, and having always been, impossible, and thus indicates an essential and inevitable failure to meet.

M. Irene Ramalho Santos explores the same critique of the concept of subjectivity by reference to Fernando Pessoa's assertion that poetic language disperses subjective identity. Saramago's appropriation of Pessoa's dead body and of several of his heteronyms in *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis* is but a single indication of a more pervasive

[40] For a full treatment of the Don Juan intertext(s) in the novel see Frier (2000).

appropriation of the poet's modernist concept of heteronymy, by means of which Saramago is able to reinvent fiction for postmodernity. Saramago's meditation, in particular in *Manual de Pintura e Caligrafia* and *O Ano de 1993*, on the paradoxes of poetic identity and poetic naming stems from what Ramalho Santos shows to be 'the modern poet's realization of the impossibility of lyric poetry in modernity'.

While Saramago's engagement with Pessoa's radical atomization of the subject makes his professed loyalty to Marxist philosophy a complex matter, it is always evident how forthrightly Saramago scorns Pessoa and his heteronyms' advocacy of abstraction from social concerns through individual poetic *fingimento* or feigning.[41] Christopher Rollason's essay is the first of two studies that consider how Saramago's work allegorizes an assertion of the social responsibility of even the most fragmented and mutable individual. Reading Saramago's later novels, in particular *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* and its 'sequel' *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez,* in relation to Orwell's dystopian allegories reveals a common concern for the inclination towards totalitarian brutality always incipient in imperialism, nationalism, and other exclusory or hierarchical practices of social organization. Rollason points out Saramago's sensitivity to the destructive power of the subtlest acts of coercion to conformity, and his view of corporate globalization as a new and particularly insidious practice of totalitarianism.

José Ornelas reads Saramago's *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* and Camus's *The Plague* in the context of twentieth-century developments of the plague-narrative genre. Considering moral panic and irrational hatred and persecution as latter-day epidemics, Ornelas identifies blindness and plague as metaphors for an endemic human 'virus' of totalitarianism, which can only be constrained by the conscious transgression of conventional, self-preservatory attitudes. By reconceiving 'humanity' as the product of conscious attempts to combat universally endemic moral flaws, Saramago elaborates a compassionate socialist ethics for a post-humanist era of epistemological uncertainty.

Mark Sabine considers how Saramago's *Levantado do Chão* projects elements of Marxist ideology onto the reading of García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which it evokes through the parodic rewriting of key narrative and symbolic motifs. The triumph of Saramago's Alentejan revolutionaries is due to their recognition of the same historical forces whose misrecognition seals the fate of the Buendía dynasty, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. As well as exemplifying the capacity of rewriting to impose ideological coherence on the original text, *Levantado do Chão* vindicates the compatibility with the documentary and agitatory aims (if not the presumptions) of social realism of the types of anti-mimetic discursive collage variously labelled magical realism, historiographical metafiction, etc.

Adriana Martins commences by supplanting this proliferation of labels with a comprehensive typology of the postmodern novel's engagement with historical data and narration. Martins's typology shows how different strategies for identifying and correcting the ambiguities, absences, and aporia of historical accounts relate to distinct ideological projects, as exemplified in the indictments of representational systems of

[41] For an assessment of Saramago's critique of the philosophies of Pessoa himself, Reis, and Pessoa's semi-heteronym Bernardo Soares see Sabine (2002).

national memory in their respective native countries presented in Saramago's *História do Cerco de Lisboa* and Gore Vidal's *Burr*. Distinct practices of *mise en abîme* attest to the multiplicity of histories that can be narrated but also relate to different ideological conceptions of what should be the materials from which history and identity are constructed, and who should be the builders.

Paulo de Medeiros completes the volume's survey both of Saramago's location relative to significant trends and outstanding figures in contemporary historiographical fiction, identifying Günter Grass, the latest German Nobel laureate, as Saramago's peer in addressing literature from a perspective of engaged postmodernity. Medeiros considers their output over several decades in terms both of their enduring political preoccupations and of public perceptions of the two writers as dissident or, according to some commentators, disloyal chroniclers of national life. Medeiros considers such criticism in relation to Saramago's most radical problematization of representation, in *A Caverna*, suggesting that while Saramago's critique of specular reality ultimately requires divesting the nation itself of its claim to ontological status, his novels nevertheless preserve a shred of hope in a collective, utopian redemption.

In Dialogue with Saramago has two subsidiary aims: first, to provide a published record of the series of panels on comparative studies of Saramago's work organized by Adriana Alves de Paula Martins as part of the American Portuguese Studies Association conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in November 2002. The conference sought through these sessions to pay tribute to Saramago on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, and to recall the First International Colloquium on Saramago, organized by José Ornelas and Paulo de Medeiros and held at the same university in 1996 with the writer's participation. Second, this volume celebrates the University of Manchester's longstanding and greatly valued connections with José Saramago. The earliest of these, and still the most significant, developed through the work of Giovanni Pontiero, who was Saramago's first and only translator into English until his untimely death in 1996. It was Pontiero's internationally acclaimed translation work from the mid-1980s and his pioneering of Saramago studies at the University of Manchester that led to the author's several visits to the city and to his receipt from the University of a doctorate *honoris causa* in 1995. The editors of *In Dialogue with Saramago* are themselves deeply honoured to pay tribute to the dialogue between Saramago and Manchester that Pontiero initiated, in what is the first Portuguese-themed volume to appear in Manchester's Spanish and Portuguese Studies.

University of Nottingham
Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Viseu

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