



The Stone Raft

José Saramago , Giovanni Pontiero (Translator)

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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. “A splendidly imagined epic voyage...a fabulous fable” (Kirkus Reviews). Translated by Giovanni Pontiero.

The Stone Raft Details

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Author : José Saramago , Giovanni Pontiero (Translator)

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From Reader Review The Stone Raft for online ebook

BlackOxford says

Brexit Forefelt

Spain and Portugal float away from Europe as a disunited kingdom, leaving Gibraltar behind, a lonely Atlantic island. Written in 1986 about the Iberian leave-taking from continental Europe, The Stone Raft is the perfect book for Brexit 2016. A cliché, I know, but not an un-useful one.

Separation from the rest of Europe is just not easy emotionally for either party. "A loving mother, Europe was saddened by the misfortune of her lands on the extreme west." All sorts of connections - journalistic as well as legal and physical (particularly electricity) - have to be worked out, as any country with experience would know. And, with Saramago, Portugal has that experience and can share it with Britain.

Apologies by those departing are of course necessary, along the lines of 'it's not anything about you, it's us'. So in their letters home, the inveterate exiteers write "...that their world had changed, and their way of life, they were not to blame, on the whole they were people with little willpower, the sort of people who could not make up their mind..." No fault international divorce.

Even in translation one has often to voice Saramago's prose in order to get the sense of it much less enjoy its full effects. It is a form of written/oral story-telling that has an essential musicality which is as much a part of the tale as its subtle humour and irony. It is also lots of fun. The characters and cadence could be from The Canterbury Tales:

"So let is not ask Jose Anaico who he is and what he does for a living, where he comes from and where he is going, whatever we find out about him, we shall only find out from him, and this description, this sketchy information will also have to serve for Joana Carda and her elm branch, for Joaquim Sassa and the stone he threw into the sea, for Pedro Orce and the chair he got up from, life does not begin when people are born, if it were so, each day would be a day gained, life begins much later, and how often too late, not to mention those lives that have no sooner begun than they are over, which has led one Piet to exclaim, Ah, who will write the history of what might have been."

I am particularly fond of Saramago's alternative Cartesianism: "...the only great truth is that the world cannot die." Quem mundus non potest mori, perhaps, as a replacement for the Cogito ergo sum. Not that it has the same epistemological pretensions as the Cogito, of course, but " ...in the absence of any certainties one has to pretend." Indeed, pretending to leave the EU may be Britain's salvation as well.

Cristina●♥????????♥● says

3.5 stars

Two moths ago (on vacation) I bought "the stone raft" (a jangada de pedra) by José Saramago [nobel prize in literature (1998)] in one of the most beautiful bookstores in the world, "Livraria Lello" in Porto, Portugal

(my country). This somptuous bookshop inspired the Harry Potter's library in Hogwarts. In fact, J.K Rowling lived in Porto teaching English in the early 1990s.

If you ever come to Portugal you should visit it just saying... ♥?

#PortugueseAuthor

"Difícilimo acto é o de escrever, responsabilidade das maiores, basta pensar no extenuante trabalho que será dispor por ordem temporal os acontecimentos, primeiro este, depois aquele, ou, se tal mais convém às necessidades do efeito, o sucesso de hoje posto antes do episódio de ontem, e outras não menos arriscadas acrobacias, o passado como se tivesse sido agora, o presente como um contínuo sem princípio nem fim, mas, por muito que se esforcem os autores, uma habilidade não podem cometer, pôr por escrito, no mesmo tempo, dois casos no mesmo tempo acontecidos."

*

"Writing is extremely difficult, it is an enormous responsibility, you need only think of the exhausting work involved in setting out events in chronological order, first this one, then that, or, if more conducive to the desired effect, today's event before yesterday's episode, and other no less risky acrobatics, presenting the past as if it were something new, or the present as a continuous process with neither beginning nor end, but, however hard writers might try, there is one feat they cannot achieve, and that is to put into writing, in the same tense, two events that have occurred simultaneously."

- José Saramago

* * *

"Mas é verdade que há diferenças de mundo para mundo, toda a gente sabe que em Marte os homens são verdes, enquanto na terra os há de todas as cores, excepto essa."

*

"But it is true that there are differences between one world and another, everybody knows that on Mars the inhabitants are green, while here on earth they are every color except green."

- José Saramago

* * *

"O certo gera o errado, o errado produz o certo, Fraca consolação para um aflito, Não há consolação, amigo triste, o homem é um animal inconsolável."

*

"Right engenders wrong, wrong produces right, Poor consolation for a man in distress, There is no consolation, I'm afraid, man is a creature beyond consoling."

- José Saramago

* * *

"Quantas vezes, para mudar a vida, precisamos da vida inteira, pensamos tanto, tomamos balanço e hesitamos, depois voltamos ao princípio, tornamos a pensar e a pensar, deslocamos-nos nas calhas do tempo com um movimento circular, como os espojinhos que atravessam o campo levantando poeira, folhas secas, insignificâncias, que para mais não lhes chegam as forças, bem melhor seria vivermos em terras de tufões."

*

"So often we need a whole lifetime in order to change our life, we think a great deal, weigh things up and vacillate, then we go back to the beginning, we think and think, we displace ourselves on the tracks of time with a circular movement, like those clouds of dust, dead leaves, debris, that have no strength for anything more, better by far that we should live in a land of hurricanes."

- José Saramago

* * *

A vida está cheia de pequenos acontecimentos que parecem ter pouca importância, outros há que num certo momento ocuparam a atenção toda, e quando mais tarde, à luz das suas consequências, os reapreciamos, vê-se que destes esmoreceu a lembrança, ao passo que aqueles ganharam título de facto decisivo ou, pelo menos, malha de ligação de uma cadeia sucessiva e significativa de eventos."

*

"Life is full of little episodes that seem unimportant, while others at a certain moment absorb all our attention, when we reappraise them later, in the light of their consequences, we find that our memory of the latter has faded while the former have come to seem decisive or, at least, a link in a chain of successive and meaningful events."

- José Saramago

* * *

"Se uma pessoa, para gostar doutra, estivesse à espera de conhecê-la, não lhe chegaria a vida inteira.

*

"If one couldn't like another person before getting to know him, it would take a lifetime."

- Joana Carda

* * *

"Cãozinho bonito, se fores capaz de tratar de nós como pareces saber tratar de ti, estamos bem entregues à tua canina competência."

*

"Good dog, if you're as capable of looking after us as you are of looking after yourself, you'll do a good job of protecting us."

- Joaquim Sassa

* * *

"Este homem que dorme lançou um rochedo ao mar, e Joana Carda cortou o chão em dois, e José Anaíço foi o rei dos estorninhos, e Pedro Orce faz tremer a terra com os pés e o Cão veio não se sabe de onde para juntar estas pessoas."

*

"This man sleeping beside her threw a stone into the sea, and Joana Carda cut the earth in two, and José Anaíço became the king of starlings, and Pedro Orce can cause the earth to tremble with his feet, and the Dog has come from who knows where to bring these people together."

- Maria Guavaira

* * *

"Na nossa vida nunca roubamos nada, é sempre na vida dos outros."

*

"We've never stolen anything in our life, it's always in the life of others"

- Pedro Orce

* * *

"É muito bonita a tua atitude, mas a nossa preocupação não deverá ser dividir a pobreza, mas sim aumentar a riqueza."

*

"That's a kind thought but our main concern should be to share wealth instead of poverty."

- José Anaíço

Michael says

Saramago's works not only keep me up late into the night reading, they also wake me from sleep in those hours after midnight that belong more to death than to life and force me to think again both about the words he has written and about those he has not. *The Stone Raft* is as multi-layered as the strata exposed when the Iberian Peninsula separates from the continent of Europe and begins an erratic journey through the Atlantic Ocean. There is, of course, the expected magical realism together with Saramago's incisive critiques of religion, politics, science, culture, and the human condition. There is the quest narrative with more than a subtle reference to Miguel de Cervantes' Iberian classic. There is the marvelous narrative style of the *Maerchen* used to tell of ordinary people having extraordinary experiences as they follow a fabulous hellhound in a pilgrimage across an *insula* that has lost its prefixed *paene* to become a pilgrim itself. There is the nature of pilgrimage, revealed in the peregrinations of these characters and in the relationships that develop among them in the course of their journeying. But most of all, what Saramago has written is a description of life, that pilgrimage toward death we all must make, which derives its meaning not from its destination but from those we learn to love along the way. We are all passengers on the great stone raft of Earth. According to Saramago, it is through relationships with our fellow voyagers that we make the journey worth the time.

James Hartley says

This is a great read - a magic-realism thriller, if you will - about the Iberian peninsular breaking away from mainland Europe. I'm not the biggest MR fan in the world and faced with the prospect of pages and pages of dense prose, I wasn't looking forward to this one much, but Saramago's prose really does sing. The sentences are long but the story moves forwards, it's not wilfully obtuse or pretentious and is actually quite exciting. The book is warm, wise and interesting.

Luís C. says

*The magical tale of The Stone Raft is developed within a complex plot, where outcrop different ways of living and loving, to problematize the concepts of sexuality and questions the psychology of feelings. The barely contained surprise that the narrator recounts successes that undermine values and beliefs firmly held, the irony of dialogic defense, the discreet access to deciphering the narrative codes capable of ambiguity, create the text in fruition conditions, giving the pleasure of reading. Therefore, The Stone Raft is an immensely entertaining novel, a real amusement, how did give us the century of Voltaire. Transcends, however, the conventions of philosophical tale. And to pursue the object of desire, takes us to the realm of freedom and the dream, the utopia of the text itself. This meeting of myth and history, the real and the fantastic, indicates a return to the hybrid genre of the ancient general Chronicles of Spain, the medieval tradition of legends and visionary literature, encyclopaedic knowledge of **St. Isidore of Seville**, who discerned in name, the word, its mystery. But return that is, above all, awareness identity of peninsular inheritance before the threats of cultural colonization.*

Luís de Sousa Rebelo - Contributor

•Karen• says

Mr. Saramago came to call - well I mean I invited him in - he doesn't just turn up on your doorstep uninvited that would be rude, wouldn't it, well, maybe not rude but discourteous and my impression of him is that he would never be knowingly discourteous, I don't think it's in his nature, which seems to me to be warm, like that lovely feeling you get when you've had a glass of something stronger, there's that warm glow that starts somewhere inside and spreads until it reaches your face and puts a smile on the same, but anyway where was I again, ah yes, Mr. Saramago and of course I asked him in, wouldn't you do the same, because there's a guarantee with him that something good will happen somehow, it doesn't always look that way to start with and sometimes things can get very disturbing, but then it all steps just very slightly outside the realm of reality which is kind of wondrous, sort of mind expanding, the idea of being followed by a flock of starlings, see I think I'd like that although starlings are not really my favourite bird, so noisy, but even if I don't get to choose the kind of bird that would be magnificent to have my own personal flock of birds, and really it would have to be something raucous and sociable because other birds don't flock, so I'd take starlings, yes, or the ability to draw a line in the sand that always reappears no matter how often or hard you try to rub it out or ride in a car that is almost human and whose name is Deux Chevaux, not the brand name now, I mean that is what it is called in the same way as a character might be Jose or Pedro, and those who are called Jose or Pedro are as courteous to the feelings of Deux Chevaux as they are to each other and this makes it all sound a bit fey and unreal, but it's not I assure you it's not, the people do have to make ordinary every day practical decisions that require logical thinking and a discussion of how best to go about this and they do it calmly and without shouting or screaming at each other and it all seems quite sensible even though the situation is crazy mad with the Iberian peninsula zooming westward and a dog that leads Deux Chevaux to where it needs to go in order to deliver the passengers to the place they need to be and to carry out the task they need to do which all seems fitting and right as if this was always how it was meant to be, preordained years before so that they would be here, now, where they are the ones to do this. To bury Pedro Orce.

Oh, and the Peninsula does come to a halt. In case you wondered.

João Carlos says

Casa dos Bicos - Fundação José Saramago - Lisboa - Portugal

Em 2015 li quatro romances de **José Saramago** (1922 – 2010): **"As Intermitências da Morte"** (2005) - 4*, **"A Caverna"** (2000) – 4*, **"O Evangelho Segundo Jesus Cristo"** (1991) – 4* e **"Todos os Nomes"** (1997) – 4* e em 2016 li **"O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis"** (1984) – 4* - em todas as referenciadas obras a qualidade e a originalidade da "sua" escrita única são o denominador comum; **José Saramago** revela-se um criador de **"parábolas sustentadas pela imaginação, compaixão e ironia"**.

A genialidade de **José Saramago** reside na utilização de uma peculiar e original estrutura narrativa que vai alterando em função da temática ou das temáticas dos seus romances, utilizando admiravelmente a ironia, o humor negro, quase sempre delirante e sarcástico. Explora, igualmente e ilimitadamente, as possibilidades da sua imaginação, manipulando o leitor em função de uma narrativa criativa que conjuga com profundas reflexões sobre inúmeros assuntos, como a música clássica, a literatura, com destaque para inúmeros escritores e poetas, sobre a política e os políticos, sobre a educação e as crenças religiosas, sobre a fé e os sacrifícios associados, enquadrando a culpa e a redenção, mas também sobre o mundo capitalista e as injustiças sociais e sobre muitas outras matérias.

"A Jangada de Pedra" (1986) é uma obra ficcional, uma alegoria, uma distopia – comum a alguns

anteriores romances - em que **José Saramago** discorre sobre uma temática eternamente actual – de que o recente **Brexit** é revelador – na época aludindo à unificação da Europa, com a integração dos dois países ibéricos, Portugal e Espanha, que após várias ocorrências bizarras a que se associa um acontecimento incompreensível e sem explicação científica, se separam da Europa, vagueando ao sabor das correntes oceânicas em direcção aos Açores.

Decorridos trinta anos após a sua publicação **”A Jangada de Pedra”** (1986) mantém toda a sua actualidade numa escrita singular, com os diálogos a serem incorporados na narrativa, sem aspas ou quebras de linha, omitindo os travessões, os pontos de interrogação ou de exclamação; entabulando profundas reflexões sobre as pessoas, o indivíduo, e sobre a vida, a bondade e a amizade, mas enfatizando sobre a “família” e as relações sexuais.

A 8 de Outubro de 1998 a **Real Academia Sueca** concede a **José Saramago** o **Prémio Nobel da Literatura** referindo que em **”A Jangada de Pedra”** “(...) o escritor recorre a um estratagema típico. Uma série de acontecimentos sobrenaturais culmina na separação da Península Ibérica que começa a vogar no Atlântico, inicialmente em direcção aos Açores. A situação criada por Saramago dá-lhe um sem-número de oportunidades para, no seu estilo muito pessoal, tecer comentários sobre as grandezas e pequenezas da vida, ironizar sobre as autoridades e os políticos e, talvez muito especialmente, com os actores dos jogos de poder na alta política. O engenho de Saramago está ao serviço da sabedoria.”

Ahmed says

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Claudia says

My edition is in Portuguese, although I had borrowed a Spanish version to keep on the side and help me in

case I felt I was drowning in Portuguese (afogar – ahogar). But no, I floated in Portuguese (flutuar – flotar) and I enjoyed the different waters – less salty. And this wavering between the two languages was suitable, since Saramago, who obviously wrote it in his language, had settled in Spain (in Tenerife, one of the Canary islands). The book has many references and comparisons between the two languages using Spanish ones whenever he thinks they are more suitable, and Saramago rings the echoes of various Spanish and Portuguese literary figures. The wandering chevaliers are literary heirs of Don Quixote, and the featured donkey can only be named Platero Platero and I, and the characters have expressed concern about where Antonio Machado was buried. And of course there is Pessoa's shadow.

Saramago was of the opinion that the two countries should be united and this was written when they entered the EEC on January 1st, 1986. And that is the year when this novel was written.

In his delightful and inimitable style Saramago concocts his idiosyncratic mixture of the absurd and the common sense. With his pen the absurd becomes common and the common sense has an absurd tone to it. What he calls the *Insólito* and the *Sólito* (and the latter is an invented word, and so his comparison becomes more goofy). This is Saramago's stamp.

Saramago, together with the story of his quixotic and diverse wanderers of this floating raft—which, in contrast to Odysseus, moves away from home rather than towards it, and in so doing distances itself from the Mediterranean as it advances West onto the Atlantic--, has also developed a parallel story-line with the geopolitical implications on an international scale. The balance of powers is dislocated as this floating island moves towards the Americas and Lisbon is getting ready to become a facing neighbor to Atlantic City. What are the responses of the other Europeans; what happens with Gibraltar; how the tensions between Canada and the US increase as the latter seems to be calling the shots in the new North-Atlantic allegiance... Or once it seems the stone raft is heading South, the concern of the US President with their missiles grounded in Iberia and whether they will have to deploy them against the penguins...And a long and rich and entertaining etcetera.

But with all the wit, and the humour, and the irony and the absurdity, there is also a loving tone when addressing cherished human subjects, such as love, companionship and loyalty.

And beneath all this absurdity on a geographical, political, personal level, there is the understated question of the nature of identity.

And in this Saramago remains provocative. But that could be another review.

I dedicate this review to the citizens of Greece, hoping that they will not detach themselves from Europe.

Ahmed says

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Nahed.E says

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Ahmad Sharabiani says

A jangada de pedra = ???The stone raft, José Saramago

The Stone Raft (Portuguese: *A Jangada de Pedra*) is a novel by Nobel Prize in Literature-winning Portuguese writer José Saramago. It was written in 1986. The premise of the novel is that the Iberian Peninsula has broken off the European continent and is floating freely in the Atlantic Ocean; bureaucrats around the world are forced to deal with the traumatic effects, while five characters from across Portugal and Spain are drawn ever closer to one another, embarking on a journey within the peninsula as the landmass journeys itself. . . .

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Hugh says

This early novel can be seen as the precursor or model for Saramago's later surreal modern parables *Blindness*, *Seeing*, and *Death at Intervals*, all of which explore the consequences of changing one of the natural laws society takes for granted. It has a similar mixture of philosophy, humour and the political and personal. As in all of his novels, Saramago's style is idiosyncratic, with long and apparently rambling sentences broken only by occasional commas.

This time the starting point occurs when a crack opens up along the French border in the Pyrenees, and the Iberian peninsula starts moving into the Atlantic towards the Azores. The first section brings together a group of people all of whom have been touched by apparently miraculous events at the same time as the gap appeared. This personal story, which has elements of the picaresque, is set against a wider imagining of the political, geographical and social consequences of such an upheaval. Once again Saramago places little faith in the governments he portrays, and his imagination spans both big ideas and quotidian details.

The oddly assorted group of three men, two women (three Portuguese and two Spanish) and a dog travel round the new island on a desultory quest, initially by car and later in a horse drawn wagon (both *Deux Chevaux*). To say much more would spoil the book for new readers, and this one stands comparison with Saramago's best books.

???????? says

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Simona says

Solo un genio come Saramago poteva raccontare con così tanta poesia ed eleganza un evento catastrofico di tali proporzioni. Nella zona del Cerbere, al confine franco-spagnolo, dove i cani che non hanno corde vocali, cominciano ad abbaiare, ci si prepara alla catastrofe, ormai imminente. Qui la terra comincia a tremare e

diventa una "zattera di pietra", errando nell'Oceano e lasciando che ognuno vada incontro al suo destino. Nella zattera di pietra si condensano le tematiche dell'uomo e dell'umanità, quali lo spaesamento, la desolazione, la solitudine, l'irrazionalità. Ognuno cerca di trovare una alternativa al proprio destino, quando ormai tutto viene a mancare.

In questo mondo che è una "commedia di sbagli", Saramago scova l'irreale nel reale dando vita a un libro che mescola prodigi, oscuri presagi che altro non sono che una grande metafora e allegoria della vita che stravolge cose e persone, trascinandole in balia della corrente e delle onde.

David says

I admit, I love Saramago's work, but I would only recommend *The Stone Raft* to his most ardent fans; If you are intrigued by the idea of the Iberian peninsula breaking off of Europe and the possible ramifications thereof, you have missed the point and will be thoroughly disappointed. *The Stone Raft* is beautifully written (of course), but Saramago meanders, philosophizes, uses allegory and parables, all towards what seemed to be an existentialist tale of five wanderers of the Iberian peninsula (plus one possibly angelic dog who does not bark, for that would be unseemly of an angelic creature). In my estimation, the Iberian peninsula is simply a microcosm for the 'Stone Raft' we all inhabit: This Island Earth (to borrow from a song title). What we are confronted with is the sojourn of five individuals who stoically continue their lives despite their absurd circumstances and geopolitics, just as we all do on our giant 'Stone Raft.' This is a book about the absurdity of the human condition, love, life, and ultimately death, exercising very little control over ones situation and circumstance; an existentialist novel through and through, yet more lighthearted than Camus' tour de force, *The Plague*.
