

## JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S CROSSOVER PICTUREBOOKS AND THEIR RECEPTION IN TURKISH<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The article presents a case study of three picturebooks – *A Maior Flor do Mundo* (2001), *El Silencio del Agua* (2011), and *O Lagarto* (2016) – by Portuguese author José Saramago in Turkish translation. It first looks at the implied readers of the books through paratextual analysis, and then assesses the influence of paratextual choices on the responses of real Turkish readers using data culled from social media, online reader platforms and a specially constructed reader group session. The findings demonstrate that the implied crossover reader has disappeared in Turkish, which causes these works to be received as children's storybooks. This in turn influences real readers' reactions, depending on who they have bought the books for – children or themselves.

**KEYWORDS:** José Saramago, Crossover Picturebooks, Translation, Reception, Reader Response

### 1. Introduction

The Portuguese Nobel-prize-winning author José Saramago (1922 – 2010) is usually thought of more as a novelist for adults than as a children's writer. In fact, he wrote only one story addressed to child readers, *A Maior Flor do Mundo* (2001), although two more picturebooks bearing his name, *El Silencio del Agua* (2011) and *O Lagarto* (2016), were published after his death. These two books were created by adding artistic illustrations to texts that had originally been conceived as parts of longer books aimed at adults. Consequently, through this process, these last two works gained a new readership. All three of these picturebooks were subsequently translated and published in Turkey where Saramago has a considerable fan following.

When picturebooks are translated into another language, the question of the target reader acquires a new relevance. We tend to assume that picturebooks are always directed at children, and that like all children's literature they will therefore have a dual audience of both children and the adults that read to them (Shavit, 1986; Alvstad, 2010; O'Sullivan, 1993; Oittinen, 2018; Oittinen et. al., 2018). However, there also exists another category known as "crossover picturebooks", which targets readers of all ages, "challenging adults as well as children, promoting decoding skills and encouraging critical thinking in both readerships" (Beckett, 2018, p. 211). Zöher (2018) suggests that works of world literature that have originally been written by canonical authors in the adult literary system but are repackaged as picturebooks may continue to attract adult readers and are therefore eligible to be considered as crossover picturebooks.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the hypothesis that the paratextual choices made in the Turkish translations of these works have caused the loss of the implied

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a part of the ongoing doctoral project "José Saramago in Turkish: A Corpus-based study of Translation from Portuguese into Turkish", conducted in CETAPS/UNL and financed by the FCT (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia) with the grant number 2021.05834.BD.

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crossover reader that exists in the source editions, and that this has influenced the reception of the books in Turkey. Therefore, in the first part of the study, the paratextual elements are analyzed to discover the *implied* readers of the source and target versions.<sup>2</sup> The second part looks at the *real* readers and assesses their reaction based on data culled from social media, online reader platforms and a specially constructed reader group.

## 2. The implied reader of Saramago's picturebooks

Crossover picturebooks differ from conventional ones because of their “complex nature of the text-image relationship and the innovative narrative and discursive devices” (Beckett, 2018, p. 212). They are for readers from all ages, offering “different forms of reading, depending on the age and experience of the reader” (Beckett, 2012, p. 16 cited in Sezzi, 2020, p. 215).

In most studies of picturebook translation, adults are usually treated merely as aloud-readers (see Oittinen, 2018; Oittinen et. al., 2018; Sezzi, 2020). However, in the case of crossover picturebooks, adults are not merely the buyers and / or aloud-readers of these books for child readers, but may also be appreciators of the work themselves. This is especially true when the author is as well known and widely read as José Saramago.

In this reception study, the paratexts are analysed for two distinct purposes. The first aim is to uncover the implied reader, who, as Beckett (2018, p. 212) points out, is usually announced somewhere in the subtitle, blurb, or on the dustjacket. The second objective is to determine how these features may have influenced the real readers' response in the target context. Prior studies have shown how blurbs and other para- and peritextual components may “lead the audience reception in specific directions” (Kümmerling-Meibauer and Meibauer, 2013, p. 106 cited in Pantaleo, 2018, pp. 39-40), attract the reader's attention to the story (Short et al., 2014), and / or introduce the characters or the narrative (Bjorvand, 2014), and how illustrated endpapers can have meaning-making potential (Duran and Bosch, 2011) (all cited in Pantaleo, 2018, pp. 39).

In the following sub-sections, three picturebooks – *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, *El Silencio del Agua*, and *O Lagarto* – and their Turkish translations are analysed in detail. The analysis focuses on para- and peritextual elements such as covers, blurbs, endpapers, title- and half-title pages, and copyright pages, as well as webpages allocated to each book on their publisher's websites.

### 2.1. *A Maior Flor do Mundo* – *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*

*A Maior Flor do Mundo* is the first and only story that was actually written by José Saramago for children. At the beginning of his story, Saramago actually apologizes to child readers for not knowing how to write children's stories, and for using difficult words. It is a story of a boy who, wandering out of his village, finds a withered flower. The boy saves the flower by

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<sup>2</sup> In this study, the concepts implied reader and real reader are understood, respectively, as “the notional reader who can be constructed from the text” and “who borrows books from a library or purchases them at a bookstore” (Chan, 2010, p. 171).

bringing water in his hands. The flower grows enormously tall and the tired boy falls asleep under it. His worried parents together with other villagers find and bring him back home, and people acclaim him for having done something heroic. At the end of the tale, child readers are urged by the author, still sitting at his desk, to write the narrative again in their own words.

Although Saramago originally wrote it in the early 1970s, the story only really caught the attention of readers when it was published as a picturebook in 2001 by Editorial Caminho with illustrations by João Caetano. Porto Editora started to publish this book in 2014 and continues to do so, with its most recent reprint coming out in November 2021. In addition to this, Porto Editora has also produced two new versions of the story with illustrations by André Letria (2013) and Inês Oliveira (2016) respectively, which means there are currently three versions existing on the market. This study, however, will consider only the Porto Editora's edition<sup>3</sup> since it is Caetano's illustrations that feature in the Turkish version, published in December 2014 with the title *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (The biggest flower of the world) by the publisher Kırmızı Kedi.<sup>4</sup> The translator Emrah İmre has translated some other books by Saramago from Portuguese into Turkish as well.

When the Portuguese and Turkish versions are compared, the first visible difference lies in the overall format. The Portuguese version is an A4 size book with a hard cover while the Turkish version is slightly smaller and in paperback. The front cover of the Portuguese edition displays the emblem of the Portuguese national reading plan (LER+) in a prominent position, and the author's name is centralized at the top, with the title beneath it, and below that, a little further down, the name of the illustrator (J. Caetano). To the right of the title, we see the stem of the flower together with a ruler that extends through it, while in the bottom left, a boy is looking upwards at the flower. The most interesting thing about the presentation of the work is that the font used in the lettering in the Portuguese version looks like a child's handwriting. This choice may be related to the possible intention of the illustrator and / or editor to give the impression that the story is told by a child, or maybe even that it could be a story of Saramago as a child. Indeed, in the first three spreads, the reader sees the author Saramago at his desk thinking and writing the story, and in the story, the image of the boy actually has some of the author's facial features. Adult readers familiar with Saramago's childhood (or who have read *As Pequenas Memórias*<sup>5</sup>) would also remember how he liked to wander in the fields near the village of Azinhaga, where he was born, and where he would return to spend the summers at his grandparents' house after moving to Lisbon; thus, they could make such connection seeing this paratextual element.

This font has disappeared from the Turkish version, though the illustration has been kept, so such connections cannot be made by Turkish readers. The title is now placed vertically on the right-hand side of the cover together with the emblem of the children's

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<sup>3</sup> The 2019 reprint is used in this study for comparison due to availability. The images of the first edition, by Caminho, found on the internet, prove that all paratextual and textual features are the same in two publisher's editions, except the national reading plan emblem (LER +) added in the latter edition.

<sup>4</sup> The sixth edition of the Turkish translation published in February 2020 is used for comparison in this study.

<sup>5</sup> The author's autobiography about his childhood years was published in 2006 (see below).

branch of the publisher. The translator's name is also printed on the bottom. The round stamp on the cover announces that this edition is the sixth reprint.<sup>6</sup> This information demonstrates that the book was reprinted every year since its first publication in Turkey, which can be interpreted as a sign of ongoing interest in this book amongst Turkish readers.

As for the back cover, both versions show two houses in the bottom left and a long road winding up from the bottom right to the top left, merging in places with two paths that go through yellow and green patches that evoke fields and a forest. In the Portuguese version (2019), beneath the road, we read:

E se as histórias para crianças passassem a ser de leitura obrigatória para os adultos? Seriam eles capazes de aprender realmente o que há tanto tempo têm andado a ensinar?

The back cover of the translation, despite using the same illustration, does not ask the same questions but features a blurb that includes a quote from the book and an introductory text recounting the plot of the story together with the following sentence:

This warm story that José Saramago, the skillful Nobel Prize winner, penned for children tells in the most beautiful way how everything can be overcome with hope and sacrifice.<sup>7</sup> (My translation)

The endpapers of the Portuguese book consist of a collage made up of images like paths, leaves, and flowers, followed by a blank page on the left and a title page on the right. As Pantaleo (2018, p. 47) suggests, this kind of visual art can be chosen in the paratexts for various reasons including "the creation of a particular mood or atmosphere" and "rousing aesthetic appreciation". On the right-hand page of the following spread is the half-title page with a close image of the boy looking sadly at and touching the withered flower, a scene from the narrative. This picture, together with the one on the cover, foreshadows the story, implying that the boy is going to do something to help the flower. An important detail is that all the words on these pages are written in the same font as the writing on the cover. The Turkish version, however, does not include the endpapers with the collage or the title page, thus stripping the book of from the artistic features the original possesses, and starts directly with the half-title page for which a different picture where the boy is looking out of the window is chosen from the narrative. This picture takes place on the spread where the author begins to introduce his story. Here, we see that the boy is looking out at the fields depicted in the form of a world map together with a big flower image and a hand pointing to the next page, foreshadowing the adventures recounted in the rest of the book. However, the image on the title page does not include the piece with the fields,

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<sup>6</sup> The seventh edition was released in November 2021, which also announces the reprinting number. The analysis of the publisher's other products on its website, as well as of the two other picturebooks in this study, makes it safe to say that the Turkish publisher announces new editions as a marketing strategy to signal the success of the books to potential readers.

<sup>7</sup> Turkish original: "Nobel ödüllü usta yazar José Saramago'nun çocuklar için kaleme aldığı bu sıcak öykü, umut ve özveriyle her şeyin üstesinden gelinebileceğini en güzel şekilde anlatıyor."

flower and hand, but only the boy looking out of the window. Thus, it is not possible for the Turkish reader to make a connection between the images on the outer and inner covers or between the image and the title.

When the page allocated for this book is visited on the website of Porto Editora,<sup>8</sup> information about the book's format and about the target reader is found. It mentions that it is listed as recommended reading within the Portuguese National Reading Plan for 4th grade students of 9-11 years of age. The Turkish publisher<sup>9</sup> provides similar information about format, alongside the names of the translator and illustrator, and lists the book within the children's books category but does not indicate any specific age group.

In sum, the findings suggest the Portuguese edition targets both children of elementary school age and adult readers. The paratexts in this version have elements (such as the font choice in the titles), which cue it is a child's story, images that assist the reader to make connections with the story, and the endpapers with collages that prepare readers for the artistic visual narrative inside, as well as the appeal to the adult reader on the back cover. The sophisticated look and feel of this book can appeal to both child and adult readers. However, almost all of these features have been eliminated in the Turkish edition. The softcover and the lack of endpapers now make it look more like a children's storybook, and indeed the blurb is designed to appeal to child readers.

## **2.2. *El Silencio del Agua – Suların Sessizliği***

*El Silencio del Agua* (The Silence of the Water) was published by the Spanish publisher Libros del Zorro Rojo in 2011, a year after Saramago's death. The story in the book is a childhood memory of the author taken from his book *As Pequenas Memórias* (2006), which was translated into Spanish in 2007 as *Las Pequeñas Memorias*: that is to say, the Spanish publisher extracted the text directly from this Spanish translation and repurposed it as a picturebook by bringing it together with illustrations by Manuel Estrada. This picturebook was published in Turkey in 2012 by the publisher Kırmızı Kedi (the same one that published *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*) under the title *Suların Sessizliği* (The silence of waters). Although *As Pequenas Memórias* had also been translated into Turkish with the title *Küçük Anılar* (little memories) in 2008 (that is to say long before the picturebook appeared), the publisher chose to retranslate the text from the Spanish picturebook instead of using the existing translation in *Küçük Anılar*.<sup>10</sup>

The picturebook describes a day when Saramago as a boy goes fishing in the river in the village where his grandparents lived. A fish tears off the hook and line, which upsets him, so he decides to go back home to mend the rod. When he returns to the riverside, the

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<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://www.portoeditora.pt/produtos/ficha/a-maior-flor-do-mundo/15870206> (Accessed: 17 December 2021).

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmiziked.com/kitap/urun/6c0f3d2f819341728b139598eed2423f> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

<sup>10</sup> *Küçük Anılar* was translated from Portuguese into Turkish by İnci Kut. On the intricate relationship between these source and target texts, see Carvalho (2021).

fish has gone. He waits for a long time, but the fish does not come back. Disappointed, he consoles himself saying the fish had his mark on it because of the hook, hence it is his fish.

The most obvious difference between the Spanish and Turkish picturebooks is again the format: while the Spanish version is published in A4 size with a hard cover, the Turkish version is in a similar format to *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, as if part of a series.<sup>11</sup> The cover designs share the same feature in both books while in the case of the Turkish one, we again see the emblem of the children's literature branch of the publisher on both front and back covers. The front cover also informs the reader that this print (2017) is the third reprint of the book.<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, there are considerable differences as regards the back cover. The Spanish blurb contains a quote from the text and informs the reader about the source of the text: "From a childhood memory, José Saramago wrote this universal fable that shines with his wisdom"<sup>13</sup> (my translation). This classification as a 'universal fable' abstracts the narrative from the concrete real-life context in which the incident is embedded in Saramago's autobiography, *As Pequenas Memórias*, and effectively repurposes it.<sup>14</sup> This information, and the quotation, have been translated into Turkish, but with the addition of 'the great Nobel laureate author'. Additionally, the Turkish blurb features the following sentence: "Suların Sessizliği offers children that have recently started to read the opportunity to meet the pleasant world of literature"<sup>15</sup> (my translation), which means that the book is explicitly targeting a certain age group (the copyright page also indicates that the book is listed in the publisher's children and youth category).

Finally, the website of the Spanish publisher<sup>16</sup> features only the technical information about the format along with the information given in the blurb on the back of the book,

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<sup>11</sup> The same kind of cover layout has only been found in the children's literature catalogue of the Turkish publisher in one other work: the translation of the picturebook *Bir Yıldıza Övgü (Oda a una estrella)* by Pablo Neruda, published in Turkey in 2012, which was also originally published by Libros del Zorro Rojo. Apparently, the Turkish publisher used the original Spanish covers for these books and later decided to continue with the same layout in the translation of *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, thus creating a series. However, they have obviously not continued this idea as is seen in the case of *O Lagarto* in the following section.

<sup>12</sup> The fourth reprint published in May 2019 is currently available in Turkey (the information on the edition number is also visible on the cover of this book.) The third edition has been used in this study since it was this edition that was accessible to the researcher at the time of the study.

<sup>13</sup> Spanish original: "A partir de un recuerdo de infancia, José Saramago compone una fábula universal que brilla por su sabiduría"

<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, the origin of the text is indicated in the fineprint on the copyright page that stands before the back endpaper of the source book. It reads "*El silencio del agua es un fragmento publicado originalmente en el libro Las pequeñas memorias (Alfaguara, 2017)*" [*El silencio del agua is a fragment originally published in the book Las pequeñas memorias*] (my translation). Admitting the text was taken from the Spanish translation, this information fails to refer to the Portuguese original of the mentioned book. Curiously, reference to the original is made in the copyright page of the Turkish version as "*Bu metin yazarın As pequenas memórias adlı yapıtından alınmıştır*" [This text has been taken from the author's work *As pequenas memórias*] (my translation) although the picturebook was translated from the Spanish version. Nevertheless, an attentive reader who cares to read the copyright page would not know that the mentioned book has a translation (*Küçük Anılar*) available for Turkish readers.

<sup>15</sup> Turkish original: "Suların Sessizliği, okumaya yeni başlayan çocuklara edebiyatın keyifli dünyasıyla tanışma fırsatı sunuyor."

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://librosdelzorrojo.com/catalogo/el-silencio-del-agua/> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

with no explicit reference to the target reader. However, a search in the publisher's catalogues reveals that the book is listed in the children's section. The Turkish publisher also provides technical information about the book and indicates the source language as Spanish<sup>17</sup> (that is to say, none of these publishers refer to *As Pequenas Memórias* as ultimate source of the text) on their websites. The book is listed here in the romance / story branch of the children's books category.

As a result, it can be inferred from this analysis that this book is presented, again in the paratexts, as a book targeting young children in the target context.<sup>18</sup> The Turkish publisher seems to have interpreted the words and letters sprinkled through the book (apart from the textual story) as an encouragement to reading and literacy. However, repurposed from a real childhood memory published originally for adult readership, this picturebook has the characteristics of crossover picturebooks with its visual and verbal narrative in both Spanish and Turkish versions even if the latter does not look so on the outside.

### **2.3. *O Lagarto – Kertenkele***

The tale *O Lagarto* (The lizard) is originally one of the chronicles in the book *A Bagagem do Viajante* (1973) which brought together a collection of chronicles previously published in newspapers in Portugal.<sup>19</sup> With the collaboration of José Saramago Foundation in Portugal, the editor Alejandro García Schnetzer, who also created *El Silencio del Agua*, invited renowned Brazilian artist J. Borges to illustrate this text in Portuguese with wood print illustrations, and the resulting picturebook was published simultaneously in Brazil and Portugal in 2016 by Companhia das Letrinhas and Porto Editora respectively. In this sense, this tale was repurposed just like *El Silencio del Agua* to become a crossover picturebook.

*O Lagarto* tells of how a big green lizard appears in the middle of Chiado (a shopping district in central Lisbon) causing fear and panic. The armed forces are called in to restore order, and prepare to attack the animal; however, before they can do so, it turns first into a red rose, and then into a white dove and flies away. This suggests an allegory, which can yield various readings depending on the reader's experience of Saramago's works and knowledge of his views on subjects such as people's participation in public and political life, distrust, authority and power (Nogueira, 2016, p. 243), particularly under the Estado Novo dictatorship regime that was in power when the original chronicles were written. In the picturebook, Borges's wood prints in black, brown, green, red and blue narrate the story in movement by representing the lizard in different colours, its metamorphosis, and the reaction of people.

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<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/e71028d9ef3745b5b2a925ed96987024> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

<sup>18</sup> In Turkey, the age to start school is between 5 and 7, and it is usually when they gain literacy skills.

<sup>19</sup> The book *A Bagagem do Viajante* gives the information that the chronicles in the book were first published in the daily newspaper *Capital* in 1969 and in the weekly newspaper *Jornal do Fundão* in 1971-2. However, neither the book nor existing studies on the tale *O Lagarto* give information about which newspaper first published it or if it was published in both of them.

This picturebook was translated from Portuguese into Turkish by the translator Emrah İmre, who also translated *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, and was published in Turkey by the same publisher, Kirmızı Kedi, with the title *Kertenkele* (The lizard) in 2019. In this study, the first edition by Porto Editora and by Kirmızı Kedi are analyzed as source and target texts respectively.<sup>20</sup>

The Portuguese and Turkish versions share the same hardback cover and illustrations. Both back covers feature the first paragraph of the ultimate source text (the text in the *Bagagem do Viajante*) as the blurb. However, the Turkish version differs from the Portuguese edition greatly in terms of the book size; while the Portuguese version is A4 size, the translation is A5. There is no reference to the targeted reader on the covers of either version, but on the copyright page of the translation, the book is shown as listed in the publisher's children and youth category. As for the translator's name, it is printed in capital letters on the back cover of the Turkish version.

Finally, the publisher of *O Lagarto*, Porto Editora,<sup>21</sup> mentions in the website synopsis that the story is included in *A Bagagem do Viajante* and claims that the fable can captivate readers of all ages; indeed, the book is classified not as a children's book but under *books > books in Portuguese > literature > stories*. The Turkish publisher, on the other hand, does not present any explicit information about the intended readership.<sup>22</sup> The paragraph on the blurb is used to explain the book's content, and the details about the book include information about the book's format, the names of the translator, illustrator, and editors, and the original language of the source book as Portuguese. Here the book is listed in two categories: Children's Books / Stories, and Literature / Youth Literature. Finally, the Turkish publisher does not mention *A Bagagem do Viajante* as the ultimate source of the tale.

To sum up, the analysis of *O Lagarto* and its Turkish translation shows that it was intended for a crossover readership in the source context (the publisher explicitly states it is for all ages), while the Turkish editor seems to have wanted to make this book look less like a children's book by shrinking the book and font size. The only indication that the book can be read by various ages (though still only child and young readers, rather than adults) is in the technical details on the website. This suggests to Turkish readers that this picturebook was also written by the author for a juvenile readership.

Based on this analysis, it can be deduced that all the source editions in this study feature the characteristics of crossover picturebooks, in that they can appeal to both child and adult readers. However, the paratexts create a different reception in the Turkish context, giving the idea that Saramago wrote all these books for children (in the case of *A*

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<sup>20</sup> This book has only two editions in Turkish. This second edition also announces this fact on the front cover with a "2. Basım" (second print) stamp. Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/0318fe8cc2374969b580f940171b9667> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Available at: <https://www.portoeditora.pt/produtos/ficha/o-lagarto/18442001> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

<sup>22</sup> Available at: <https://www.kirmizikedi.com/kitap/urun/0318fe8cc2374969b580f940171b9667> (Accessed: 11 December 2021).

*Maior Flor do Mundo* and *El Silencio del Agua*), or for young readers more broadly (in the case of *O Lagarto*). The omission of the appeal to the adult reader in the translation of *A Maior Flor do Mundo*, and the statement that the book is for emergent readers on the back cover of the translation of *El Silencio del Agua* look suspiciously like attempts to erase the crossover nature of the books on the outside.

The following section looks at the real readers of these picturebooks in Turkey and how their responses to them have been influenced by the findings demonstrated here.

### 3. Turkish reader responses

In this section, the reactions of Turkish readers to these books are analysed using a range of different data sources: social media sites (*Facebook* and *Instagram*), special online reader platforms, and an online reader-group session set up for the purpose. Such methods have been successfully employed by other scholars.<sup>23</sup>

#### 3.1 Social media

For this part of the study, reader reviews and posts about these picturebooks were sought on Instagram and Facebook. Instagram yielded 20 posts published by 19 public accounts: 12 for *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, 7 for *Suların Sessizliği*, and one about *Kertenkele* (*O Lagarto*). Eight of these accounts can be described as mother-accounts, that is, they belong to mothers who publish comments about the books they read with their children along with other snippets relating to their children's lives and experiences. Of the others, 3 accounts belong to teachers who suggest reading alternatives for their pupils; another 3 belong to children's literature publishers / booksellers; one is an account that specialises in sharing posts about picturebooks for children, while 4 belong to readers who have apparently bought the book for themselves.

As for the content of the comments, one post dealing with *Kertenkele* does not mention that it might suit child or younger readers but recommends the book as a piece of adult literature, which is interesting. Five mothers commenting on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* claim they enjoyed reading the book with their children, although one says it was a bit too long. One teacher commenting on the same book criticizes Saramago's ability to write children's books, and another teacher complains about the length of the sentences, mentioning that the pictures are better than the text. The remaining comments, including 2 by adults who had bought the book for themselves, are all quite positive. Of the comments referring to a certain age group, most indicate that the book is for children over 6, or for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, though one mother recommends it for younger children (5-year-olds). The 7 comments about *Suların Sessizliği* are all posted on accounts related to children (i.e. by mothers or teachers, or on accounts commenting on children's literature), and although they are generally positive (and they suggest parents should include this book in their children's reading list), one mother who read the book with her two children

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Arnold, 2016; D'Egidio, 2015; Işıklar Koçak, 2017; Procter & Benwell, 2015; Tekgül, 2017.

criticises it because of the inverted, difficult-to-read sentences, and the traumatic message given at the end. Most commentators recommend this picturebook for first-year elementary school students and children over 6.

Facebook proved less fruitful, as few posts about these books were located, although there are many about Saramago's other works. In fact, I found only 7 posts, all suggesting the book as recommended reading for children. Three of these posts belong to the children's branch of the Turkish publisher, Kırmızı Kedi Çocuk, with 586 followers: in two of them, *Dünyanın En büyük Çiçeği* is suggested for children over 5 years of age and in the third (the most recent), all three books are recommended for child readers.

Overall, then, reader reactions on social media demonstrate the paratexts have been influential in the reception of these books by these readers / buyers in that most of the commentators have bought these picturebooks for child readers and evaluated them as children's literature, but the omission of crossover reader in the paratexts resulted in a disappointing reading experience for some. On the other hand, the single Instagram post treating *Kertenkele* as a piece of adult literature also reflects that the editorial choices in the book format to attract older readership has been effective.

### 3.2 Online reader platforms

The websites chosen to collect reader comments are *1000kitap.com* (an online book reader platform where Turkish readers create reading diaries, record and / or analyse the books they read, and write quotes from the books) and *kitapyurdu.com* (an online bookstore where buyers are invited to comment after purchase). As for the users of these platforms, on *1000kitap.com*, the users' profiles can be checked revealing that they are all adults; and although this type of information is not available for *kitapyurdu.com*, the commentators are also assumed to be adults based on what they write and on the fact that they are the buyers of the books.

On *1000kitap.com*, 3 commentators writing about *Kertenkele* mention how much they enjoyed the book and its illustrations, and 2 of them specifically mention that they bought the book for themselves. Seventy-five people marked this book as "read" on their records, and 34 rated it with an average score of 8.9 out of 10. As for *Suların Sessizliği*, though 4 people said they liked the book, 3 commentators doubted whether the content of the story and chosen words would be comprehensible to child readers, despite being physically packaged as a children's book. In this case, the statistics show that 60 people read the book and 25 awarded it with an average of 9.2 points out of 10. Finally, there is only 1 comment on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (an appreciative comment by a Saramago fan) although the book is marked as "read" by 63 readers and rated with an average of 9.5 score by 26.

The second platform studied here belongs to the online bookseller *kitapyurdu.com*, which encourages buyers to rate the books with stars from 1 to 5, and comment on them. Out of 24 comments on *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği*, there are 8 with a 5-star rating and 7 with 4-star rating, which shows that most readers enjoyed their reading experience. The

comments also support this perception. Five of these buyers mention that they bought the book for a child reader. On the other hand, lower ratings and more negative comments were made by adults who had bought the book for themselves: in general, they criticised the book for being too long, or too short, or being too concerned with transmitting a moral message.

Of the 17 comments on this platform written by people buying *Suların Sessizliği*, 12 rate the book with 5-stars, 3 with 4-stars and 1 gives a 3-star rating (one buyer has not rated it at all). There are only 2 comments referring to the reading experience of a child reader. One of them is from a mother who writes that she also enjoyed the book while reading it with her daughter, and the other one is from the person that did not give any stars, but who claims to have bought the book for a niece / nephew and that the child complained about not being able to read foreign words.<sup>24</sup> Most of the remaining commentators indicate they bought the book because of the name of the author, which indicates that the marketing strategy of highlighting Saramago's Nobel Prize served its purpose.

Finally, *Kertenkele* was evaluated by only 7 buyers on this platform, yielding four 5-star reviews, one 4-star, one 3-star and one 2-star. None of the comments refer to any child reader, and although some reviewers had already stated that they read whatever Saramago writes, others were more negative, expressing disappointment at the length and / or plot of the story.

Overall, the comments collected from these online platforms mostly targeting adult readers / buyers demonstrate that Saramago's name was influential in their choices to buy and read these books for themselves in most cases. However, they bought / read the books thinking they were children's books written by the author. It is clear in the comments referring to the child reader's experience that the adult readers / buyers question the adequacy of the content of these picturebooks for the age group implied by the publishers.

### 3.3 Online reader-group session

Since May 2021, I have been running a series of online reader-group sessions called José Saramago'yu Türkçe Okumak (Reading José Saramago in Turkish)<sup>25</sup> in order to collect reader response data for my doctoral research project on the reception of the author's works in Turkey. These activities are disseminated through an Instagram account and closed Facebook group page, as well as through other social media platforms. The first of these sessions took place on May 27 2021 with 6 participants, all female, to discuss the above-mentioned books published in Turkey. The sessions were recorded with the permission of all participants on the condition that the recordings would not be shared on any platforms but used only for note-taking purposes. After explaining the scope of my research in general

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<sup>24</sup> Although it is not stated in the comment, I infer that these foreign words are those in the illustrations, considering the only foreign words in the story are the names of the rivers "Almonda" and "Tejo", and they are not phonetically difficult to read for Turkish readers.

<sup>25</sup> Available at: <https://www.cetaps.com/teals-translationality/> (Accessed: 10 December 2021).

sense to the participants, I made a brief presentation and read each book aloud showing them the books,<sup>26</sup> then I opened the floor for discussions separately for each book, and in the end, I asked for a final evaluation. The recording of this session lasts about 130 minutes (02:09:28 exactly).

Of the 6 participants participating in this session, 2 live in Portugal and 4 in Turkey.<sup>27</sup> As for their educational background, half of them are currently students of a bachelor's degree in primary school education, and the other half have an undergraduate degree (at least).

I stimulated the discussion by asking questions about their opinions on the books: if they liked them, who they thought they were addressed to, and so on. All participants said they had enjoyed the books, but that they had bought them in the first place as children's books (in a couple of cases for their children years ago). They agreed that especially these two books look like children's storybooks because of the font size, covers and blurbs. However, they generally felt that the sentences were too long and that they contained words difficult for children, though the illustrations could help child readers form their own interpretations or make the reading more appealing for them. Nevertheless, they thought that children would not get the main idea of the stories (especially in *Suların Sessizliği* and *Kertenkele*) since they are allegorical and complicated even for adult readers, and so the children would need adult help to understand the text.

Throughout the session, the participants engaged in lively conversations especially about the written text, focusing particularly on what Saramago was trying to tell readers in the books. I concluded that they were trying to work out what message that he might have wanted to transmit to children, on the assumption that Saramago wrote all three texts for child readers. When they were told at the end of the session that this was not the case and that the works (except *A Maior Flor do Mundo*) were written for adult readers, they felt that the complexity of the narrative had now made more sense, and that the publishers should have warned the readers about this somewhere on the covers.

In short, the participants of the online session had initially responded to these picturebooks based on their format and appearance and the information provided on the covers. However, they encountered what seemed to be a mismatch between this information and the complexity of the visual and verbal texts. Similarly, their speculations about the possible (moral) message that Saramago might have been trying to transmit (based on their opinion that a children's book should teach something to children) show that the works did not fit their expectations of children's picturebooks and caused them to discuss the adequacy of the works for child readers.

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<sup>26</sup> I decided to read the books aloud and show the illustrations before starting discussion on each book because either the participants had not read all three books, or they read them long ago and had difficulty to remember the details.

<sup>27</sup> All participants are native Turkish speakers and none of them speak Portuguese or Spanish.

#### 4. Conclusions

This study has departed from the hypothesis that these three picturebooks of José Saramago are crossover picturebooks that target readers of all ages in the source context, but that they have mostly lost this crossover status in the translations as a result of the paratextual choices. This hypothesis has been confirmed through the analysis of covers, endpapers, blurbs, title and half-title pages, and product pages of the publishers' websites as paratexts.

Therefore, it is shown that two of the picturebooks, *El Silencio del Agua* and *O Lagarto* were originally written as texts for an adult readership, and were repurposed as crossover picturebooks through the reinterpretations by Manuel Estrada and J. Borges with their illustrations. Even though Saramago wrote *A Maior Flor do Mundo* for children, there are various factors which allow it to be placed in the same category as the others: his confession at the outset that he does not write like a children's author, the chosen book material, João Caetano's artistic and interpretative illustrations, the endpapers, and the appeal to the adult reader in the blurb (also written by Saramago).

However, the analysis of the translations indicates that they are received differently in Turkey. As a result of the paratextual choices such as the explicit implication of children as target readers and the omission of any appeal to adults, *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* (*A Maior Flor do Mundo*) and *Suların Sessizliği* (*El Silencio del Agua*) are perceived as picturebooks for children by Turkish readers. The cover material chosen for the translations also makes these books appear to be simpler, more like the storybooks published for small children in Turkey. In contrast, the smaller size of the Turkish version of *O Lagarto*, *Kertenkele* makes it look more like a crossover picturebook in Turkish than it actually does in Portuguese, although this book is categorised in the publisher's child and youth literature section.

The influence of these paratextual choices is reflected in the findings of the reader response to these picturebooks in Turkey based on the analysis of the data gathered through social media and two websites, and an online reader group session. It is seen that the adults buying these books for their children base their decision to do so on the paratextual information implying a child reader as targeted readership. Besides, the negative or doubtful comments about the adequacy of these books for children also result from the paratextual elements eliminating the crossover nature of the books on the surface, thus causing false expectations. This aspect of the investigation, that is studying the reaction of adults buying the books for child readers, has actually led to an interesting outcome regarding the taken-for-granted opinion about the picturebooks that they are meant to be read aloud by adults. At the end of the online session, when I explained that the books' crossover nature in the source system, one participant – other participants also agreed with her view – made me think that maybe this inference does not reflect the reality, especially for the books targeting children at early school-age. Her comment was as follows:

I don't have to read all the books with my child, I don't always have time for that. But these books are not like such books that you can give to your child and tell them to read. If they put a warning or a sentence on the book saying these books (talking especially about *Suların Sessizliği* here) are to be read with an adult, that would be better, then we would know.

This statement, along with other negative comments about these three picturebooks, indicates that it may be actually better for editors and publishers to consider keeping implications to the crossover audience and refrain from referring to any specific age group in crossover picturebook translation. It is clear from the data, especially from the blurbs of *Dünyanın En Büyük Çiçeği* and *Suların Sessizliği*, that these paratextual choices had the objective of introducing a Nobel Prize winning author, known for his works for adult readership, to a younger audience. However, crossover picturebooks ostensibly packaged for children but surreptitiously appealing to adults by foregrounding the author's high-literature status may produce an unintended setback, even for the books of canonized authors.

Moreover, along with the lack of this reference to the adult readers in the paratexts, the omission of artistic aspects like illustrated endpapers, the use of softcovers instead of hard, and the reduction of the book size (as in the example of the translation of *O Lagarto*) seemed to cause some negative reactions among a significant number of adult readers of Saramago's books in Turkey. Maintaining the paratextual features of the originals in translation might have resulted in the reception of these books as artistic endeavours instead of just storybooks and increased the satisfaction of the authors' fans, who like to keep the books on their bookshelves.

Therefore, it can be concluded that paratextual elements have a significant influence on the reception of crossover picturebooks, and that avoiding simplifying these elements, and treating them as art works, may prevent unintended negative feedback and improve adult readers' satisfaction.

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Carvalho, I. - José Saramago's crossover picturebooks and their reception in Turkish  
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