Specters of Doom

Saramago’s Dystopias in *Blindness* and *The Cave*

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Although Plato’s Utopia or ideal city is the non-place that holds the promise of perfection, it remains the place in which citizens are categorized by a rigid structure. José Saramago, on the other hand, introduces us to a dystopia in his novel *Blindness*, in which one event leads to the ruin of a city. Yet, as with Plato’s Utopia, a similar desirable separation by the higher authorities is enacted. When a strange ailment leads to the blindness of some of the citizens, we begin to witness the disintegration of both the human and the city. In *The Cave*, which reverberates with Plato’s “Simile of the Cave,” Saramago provides an unrelenting criticism of a city’s landscape that is changed by a blind capitalist system. In this unnamed city, imitation is more valued than the real. In the simile, Plato questions what would become of the dwellers of the cave if one were to see beyond the screen. In Saramago’s novel, the lone potter is the one who is able to see beyond the shadows.

Keywords: utopia, dystopia, reality, illusion, simulacra, late capitalism.

I. Introduction

In José Saramago’s intriguing fable “The Tale of the Unknown Island,” a man approaches a king at the door of petitions with a demand that the monarch should give him a boat so he might sail in search of the unknown island. Fearing a popular revolt, the monarch reluctantly grants the man his wish, and provides him with a boat to sail in search of his dreams. In this short parable, the man realizes that an unknown island that promises a better or utopian world does not exist. The island, the man discovers, is in the inner self rather than in the imagined outer world, and in the fable finding such a place remains elusive. In his allegorical novels, Saramago has been vocal in his criticism of the excesses of late capitalism, embodied by globalization and its promises...
of a better world. According to Saramago, obsession with the material world has not only blinded people but has also made them insensitive to the world around them. Moreover, globalization in its current form devours democracy, which is now epitomized by a global economic and financial power that is neither democratic nor just, specifically because it has not been elected by the people and does not have “the people’s happiness as its aim” (Saramago 2010, 19). According to the Portuguese Nobel laureate, we are currently witnessing the repercussions of the practices by a directionless authority, which rules by the law of the jungle (p. 46). The results of such a rule have had grave consequences on people’s lives; the financial crisis of 2008 is one example (p. 54).

These excesses of late capitalism with their globalized modern cities, often typified by a guarded community promising an ideal existence, invariably result in the exact opposite.¹ These themes are addressed by Saramago in his two novels *Blindness* and *The Cave*, which form the first and last part of an “involuntary trilogy” (“José Saramago,” 2001, 112).² In this paper, I shall discuss the unraveling of two dystopias resulting from an authority blinded by its excesses and lack of vision in the aforementioned novels, works that sardonically parallel earlier utopias discussed by Thomas More and Plato.

**Plato’s utopia revisited**

In both *The Republic* and *The Laws*, Plato discusses and lays down the foundations and constitution needed for the establishment of the ideal city. In both treatises, Plato sets the ethical principles, along with the social and political laws, that should govern Kallipolis or Magnesia, the names given to the city, which is in effect a utopia or the “good place.” Intrinsically, both cities are the place that humans should strive for or are the non-place that can only hold in their folds the promise of perfection. In *The Republic*, Plato describes what the ideal city is, while in *The Laws*, the philosopher takes into account human nature, and the ways it can impact the ideal city. As the ideal city places great ethical demands on its citizens, it is debatable whether Plato believed such a city was viable or even realizable; however, if such a city is possible then it should produce virtuous citizens, who value justice and ethics highly. The ideal city should serve as a model and according to Plato should be
governed by philosophers who are more fitting to rule and are knowledgeable on all aspects of life, specifically those that relate to what is good for the citizens; within this utopia, the citizens’ good should concur with the good of the city.

As Plato’s ideal city is in its essence totalitarian, citizens of such a city are categorized by a rigid structure and the latter is determined by what they are capable of doing; the structures, which are socioeconomic in nature, label people as belonging to one of these categories: golden, silver, bronze, and iron. These categories dictate the privileges that the citizens of the city are entitled to. Furthermore, the rules suggested by Plato for such a city call to some extent for the abolition of private families and property. This sentiment is also shared by More in his book Utopia, in which his perfect place is an island divided into 54 cities with shared language, law, customs, and institutions (More 1965, 42). The layout of More’s cities is the same, and as in Plato’s city, private ownership is discouraged. Given the rigidity of the rules that are needed to found the utopian city, the latter became the ideal that humans have striven for in developing various utopian ventures, which eventually resulted in failed experiments or dystopias, such as Fordism, in Brazil.³

Saramago’s emerging utopias or dystopias, like Plato’s, are explicitly rigid in nature, and in return are also products of the superfluity of late capitalism; moreover, the novels show that utopia and dystopia can only exist together, as one is the antithesis of the other.⁴ Striving to create an ideal city as in The Cave or enforcing barriers as in Blindness can only result in dystopias, as stratification rarely leads to citizens’ working toward the greater good or upholding the same ethical standards as Plato has envisioned. In addition, in his ideal city, Plato recommends that separation is a desirable state of existence, and this is favored by the higher authorities in both Blindness and The Cave. For utopia to exist, the boundaries have to be defined, and this becomes clear in both Saramago’s novels from the outset.

II. Blindness: A dystopia unraveled
Following the outbreak of a mysterious illness, boundaries become rigidly defined in Saramago’s novel Ensaio sobre a cegueira or Blindness,
exposing us to a dystopia. Saramago first published *Ensaio sobre a cegueira* in 1995; the English translation, *Blindness*, came out in 1997. In the novel, almost the entire population of a city succumbs to a strange form of blindness, which forces them to see everything white. This unexplained malady comes about suddenly with the first incident occurring at a traffic light, between amber and green. A few moments later the man who volunteers to help the blind man, and who then steals his car, also becomes blind. So does the ophthalmologist who treats the man. Patricia I. Vieira sees in this plague of white blindness “a figuration for the irrational organization of contemporary societies, where inequality prevails” (Vieira 2009, 2). This becomes evident in the way the authorities decide to handle the situation. David Frier argues that the premise of a blind and irresponsible authority leading its citizens to a fiscal disaster is a recurrent theme in the novels of Saramago, and even though the authority in *Blindness* can see, it is blinded by its ignorance and incompetence (Frier 2007, 36). Given that the disease is both infectious and inexplicable, the government authorities transport and confine all those who have become blind to a deserted asylum, claiming that, in there, they will be taken care of. The officials have chosen that particular asylum because it permits them to establish boundaries:

É o que apresenta melhores condições, por que, a par de estar murado em todo o seu perímetro, ainda tem a vantagem de se compor de duas alas, uma que destinaremos aos cegos propriamente ditos, outra para os suspeitos, além de um corpo central que servirá, por assim dizer, de terra-de-ninguém, por onde os que cegarem transplantarão para irem juntar-se aos que já estavam cegos. (Saramago 1995b, 46)

(It’s the place that offers the best facilities because not only does it have a perimeter wall, it also has the advantage of having two separate wings, one to be used for those who are actually blind, the other for those suspected of having the disease, as well as a central area which will serve, as it were, as a no man’s land, through which those who turn blind will pass to join those who are already blind.) (Saramago 1995a, 37)

Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno argue that “[h]umans believe themselves free of fear when there is no longer anything unknown” (Horkheimer & Adorno 2002, 11). This unexplained malady came to challenge this notion, hence the incarceration; the blind are not permitted to exist outside the eyes of the authorities. Confining the blind
citizens to the asylum is an attempt to ensure that nothing “is allowed to remain outside, since the mere idea of ‘outside’ is the real source of fear” (p. 11). The only thing that unifies the new residents of the asylum is blindness. Vieira sees in this malady a great equalizer (Vieira 2009, 6). Frier argues that the malady exposes the lack of trust that exists in the novel between the characters, manifested by the relationship of the authority to the inmates, and the latter’s relationships with one another (Frier 2011, 102). Moreover, an unexplained illness grants the authorities the right to withdraw the citizens’ rights, namely freedom of movement; all is enforced under the guise of the welfare of the citizens within and outside the asylum, the assumption being that prior to the illness, there was an ideal that was worth preserving. In his description of the camps, Giorgio Agamben states:

*The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule.* In the camp, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the rule of law on the basis of a factual state of danger, is now given a permanent spatial arrangement, which as such nevertheless remains outside the normal order. (Agamben 1998, 168–169)

As with the camp, the asylum allows the authorities the right to suspend all rule of law within the confines of a specific spatial arrangement. In the asylum, a rigid line is drawn between those who are sighted and those who are blind. The central area better defines the boundaries. The soldiers, whose role is to ensure that the blind inmates stay within their limits, add another dimension to the rigid boundaries. When they shoot three of the inmates dead, they demand that the blind inmates bury them, as within these confines the fact and law become completely confused (p. 170). Rhian Atkin argues that the first speech by the authorities on a superficial level does offer some comfort, but the authorities fail to take into account that the incarcerated inmates are newly blind, “unused to a world without vision” (Atkin 2008, 113). With a closer reading of the speech, and as events begin to unfold, the readers as well as the inmates realize that the arrangements are badly organized and insufficient; they are defensive and self-serving in the face of an unexpected situation. It is an authority that is functioning on fear rather than for the good of the people. The ophthalmologist’s wife, who for some inexplicable
reason has retained her eyesight, decides to accompany her blind husband to the asylum. By the end of the novel, she inadvertently becomes the superhuman and messianic figure through “her dedication to the good of others” (Frier 2007, 89). Through her eyes, we are able to see what transpires within the walls of the asylum, a disintegration of the community and the dehumanization of the inmates. Within his study of the camps, Agamben stresses that the impossibility of seeing, and here metaphorically, is capable of transforming the being into the non-human (Agamben 2002, 54). In addition, in these enclosures, the sovereign ban that has captured these non-humans by dictating the boundaries, has reduced the blind inmates to the status of Homo Sacer (“Life that cannot be sacrificed and yet may be killed”), consequently sanctioning their death, as in the aforesaid incident with the three blind prisoners (Agamben 1998, 82, 83).

The epidemic has brought together an unreal community with reluctant participants; the inmates are not given names, a detail that adds a generic trait to their existence within this new community, and as the doctor’s wife comments, “também saberá que aqui não tem importância” (Saramago 1995b, 66; “names are of no importance here,” Saramago 1995a, 57). Sandra Kumamoto Stanley states: “Saramago provides the reader with a diverse group of characters who lose not only their sight but also their former identities as they try to survive in the space of the negative” (Stanley 2004, 297). Instead, the inmates are referred to by the narrator either by their professions or the state they were in when they succumbed to this mysterious blindness; each is “defined, first and foremost, as a blind person” (Vieira 2009, 8).6 This reflects arbitrary naming, which runs contradictory to Plato’s utopia in which citizens are categorized by their professions, and stratified as such. In *Blindness*, the inmates’ professions are rendered irrelevant by this new reality, or by the actions with which they were involved at the time before losing their sight. It is ironic that in a utopian and democratic world, citizens should be equal in the face of the law. However, in the asylum a dystopia unfolds that exposes the darkness within the human soul. If Plato’s ideal city is to produce virtuous citizens, Saramago’s dystopia unveils the abject within the self. The camp becomes the non-place “in which all disciplinary barriers are destroyed and all embankments
flooded” (Agamben 2002, 48). It becomes the third realm in which anything is permissible (p. 48). Frier sees that the motif in *Blindness*, which is comparable to a descent into the underworld, is a necessity so that the characters can emerge stronger, as the illness has forced them to establish stronger bonds between them (Frier 2011, 99). Everything around the inmates crumbles as they become reduced to a bestial existence. Michael D. Gordin, Helen Tilley, and Gyan Prakash argue that dystopia is not simply the opposite of a utopia, but “it is a utopia that has gone wrong, or a utopia that functions only for a particular segment of society” (Gordin, Tilley, & Prakash 2010, 1). In the novel, it is an attempt to protect the physically sighted, hence stratifying society according to the individual’s physical state.

As I would argue that utopia is the non-place or the unattainable perfect place, dystopia is not only the result of failing to realize the ideal city but also evolves into the only attainable one when a certain categorization is established and enforced. The once accepted norms of society can no longer be imposed, and new ones are created in their place. In their attempt to protect their society, which in part they presume is the ideal, the officials in *Blindness* inadvertently create a dystopia when they confine the blind inmates to the asylum. Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash add:

> In a universe subjected to increasing entropy, one finds that there are many more ways for planning to go wrong than to go right, more ways to generate dystopia than utopia. And, crucially, dystopia – precisely because it is so much more common – bears the aspect of lived experience [...] Whereas utopia takes us into a future and serves to indict the present, dystopia places us directly in a dark and depressing reality, conjuring up a terrifying future if we do not recognize and treat its symptoms in the here and now. (Gordin et al. 2010, 2)

The sighted doctor’s wife is the only inmate who tries to avert the future that lies in store for them. The wife essays to organize the day-to-day events within the asylum, hoping that “se não formos capazes de viver inteiramente como pessoas, ao menos façamos tudo para não viver inteiramente como animais” (Saramago 1995b, 119; “if they cannot live entirely like human beings, at least let [us] do everything in [our] power not to live entirely like animals,” Saramago 1995a, 111). She hopes that she can salvage some of their lost dignity, even though she herself has
resorted to killing one of the rapists with scissors. In her desire to achieve unity and integrity, the doctor’s wife serves as a catalyst for change in the realm of a disastrous situation (Frier 2007, 162). Frier adds that her, “essential intervention in Cegueira is humanitarian and humanistic in nature: she ensures that others have enough to eat” (p. 163). On the other hand, Vieira argues that this sightlessness prompts a process of reflection by some of the major characters, specifically in regard to the importance of sharing within a community (Vieira 2009, 5). This sentiment, however, is not shared by all. Toward the end of the novel, the doctor’s wife tells us that the “O único milagre que podemos fazer ser o de continuar a viver [...] amparar a fragilidade da vida um dia após outro dia” (Saramago 1995b, 283; “[the] only miracle [they] can perform is to go on living [...] to preserve the fragility of life from day to day,” Saramago 1995a, 281). The old man with the black patch, who is also a blind inmate at the asylum, reflects on the level they have fallen to:

Regressámos à horda primitiva [...] com a diferença de que não somos uns quantos milhares de homens e mulheres numa natureza imensa e intacta, mas milhões de milhões num mundo descarnado e exaurido. (Saramago 1995b, 245)

(We’re going back to being primitive hoarders [...] with the difference that we are not a few thousand men and women in an immense, unspoiled nature, but thousands of millions in an uprooted, exhausted world.) (Saramago 1995a, 242)

Primordial instincts rule, as food becomes the one thing that punctuates their days; starvation is the instinct that moves them and empowers the worst amongst them especially since the government authorities have failed to provide them with enough food. Instead, more and more people are brought into the asylum, making the task of the doctor’s wife more daunting as she tries to create a system for the blind. The thugs with their weapons become the new masters within the confines of the asylum, and hence decide on who is deserving of food. Within the newly established order, they also begin to label the “Homo Sacer,” those who can be disposed of, and whose lives are deemed worthless. They force the inmates to exchange their possessions for small portions of food; failing that, they decide that food should be handed out only if women agree to grant them sexual favors. In this dystopia, the ones lacking in
ethical practices dictate the rules, which runs contrary to Plato’s ideal city in which philosophers are supposed to govern and not the ordinary people.

Hence, through the thugs another category is established – that of those bearing arms. When the fire breaks out, a group of the inmates led by the doctor’s wife decide to venture out of the asylum hoping to find food. Even though the lines between those inside the asylum and outside it have been rigidly defined, the outside has not been spared the chaos and disintegration that we have witnessed on the inside. The doctor’s wife remarks to the old man with the black patch:

Não há diferença entre o fora e o dentro, entre o cá e o lá, entre os poucos e os muitos, entre o que vivemos e o que teremos de viver. (Saramago 1995b, 233)

(T)here’s no difference between inside and outside, between here and there, between the many and the few, between what we’re living through and what we shall have to live through.) (Saramago 1995a, 229)

Furthermore, the rigid structure set by the authorities could not save the outside from the societal breakup we saw in the asylum. Like the inmates of the asylum, people and animals on the outside are scavenging for food, reduced to bare existence, in which the human being is transformed into the non-being (Agamben 2002, 52). Once the order has been disturbed, what ensues is a dystopia in which human beings stripped to their bare minimum reside. What *Blindness* shows us is that such divisions cannot be sustained; the soldiers also go blind and as the group wanders in the city streets, the doctor’s wife describes a world outside that is no better than the one inside. Following her search for food in a looted supermarket, she reflects:

Nao é assim, porém, por toda a parte há cegos de boca aberta para as alturas, matando a sede, armazenando água em todos os recantos do corpo, e outros cegos, mais previdentes, e sobretudo mais sensatos, sustentam nas mãos baldes, tachos e panelas, e levantam-nos ao ceu generoso, é bem certo que Deus dá a nuvem conforme a sede. Não tinha ocorrido à mulher do médico a probabilidade de que das torneiras das casas poderia não estar a sair sequer uma gota do precioso líquido, é o defeito da civilização, habituamo-nos à comodidade da água encanada, posta ao domicilio, e esquecemo-nos de que para que tal suceda tem de haver pessoas que abram e feç hem vâl vul as de distribuição, e stações de elevação que necessitam de energia eléctrica, computadores para regular os débitos e administrar as
reservas, e para tudo faltam os olhos. Também os faltam para ver este quadro, uma mulher carregada com sacos de plástico, andando por uma rua alagada, entre lixo apodrecido e excrementos humanos e de animais, automóveis e camiões largados de qualquer maneira e atravancando a via pública, alguns com as rodas já cercadas de erva, e os cegos, os cegos, de boca aberta, abrindo tam bém os olhos para o céu branco, parece impossível como pode chover de um céu assim. (Saramago 1995b, 225)

(In a downpour like this, which is almost becoming a deluge, you would expect people to be taking shelter, waiting for the weather to improve. But this is not the case, there are blind people everywhere gaping up at the heavens, slaking their thirst, storing up water in every nook and cranny of their bodies, and other blind inmates, somewhat more far-sighted, and above all sensible, hold up buckets, bowls and pans, and raise them to the generous sky, clearly God provides the cloud according to the thirst. The possibility had not occurred to the doctor’s wife that not so much as a drop of the precious liquid was coming from the taps in the houses, this is the drawback of civilization, we are so used to the convenience of piped water brought into our homes, and forget that for this to happen there have to be people to open and close distribution valves, water towers and pumps that require electrical energy, computers to regulate the deficits and administer the reserves, and all of these operations require the use of one’s eyes. Eyes are also needed to see this picture, a woman laden with plastic bags, going along a rain-drenched street, amidst rotting litter and human and animal excrement, cars and lorries abandoned any old how, blocking the main thoroughfare, some of the vehicles with their tires already surrounded by grass, and the blind, the blind, open-mouthed and staring up at the white sky, it seems incredible that rain should fall from such a sky.) (Saramago 1995a, 221–222)

Benjamin Kunkel rightly comments on the above passage when he writes that the novel “is in this sense a plea for order, an illustration of our mutual dependence on each other, an interdependence that life in a neoliberal society conceals” and that “that no one really lives apart from the others” (Kunkel 2001, 143–142). Even religion is blind to the suffering of the people. The doctor’s wife notices how in the church all the eyes of the statues have been blindfolded with white bandages:

não podia ser verdade o que os olhos lhe mostravam, aquele homem pregado na cruz com uma venda branca a tapar-lhe os olhos, e ao lado uma mulher com o coração trespassado por sete espadas e os olhos também tapados por uma venda branca, e não eram só este homem e esta mulher que assim estavam, todas as imagens da igreja tinham os olhos vendados, as esculturas com um pano branco... as pinturas com uma grossa pincelada de tinta branca. (Saramago 1995b, 301)

(It could not be true what her eyes revealed, that man nailed to the cross with a white bandage covering his eyes, and next to him a woman, her
heart pierced by seven swords and her eyes also covered with a white bandage, and it was not only that man and that woman who were in that condition, all the images in the church had their eyes covered, statues with a white cloth [...] paintings with a thick brushstroke of white paint. (Saramago 1995a, 300)

At this moment in time, the plight of the inmates becomes that of the whole of humanity; even the statues are mimicking their condition (Nashef 2010, 39). This is enforced by the doctor’s wife when she says, “O mundo está todo aqui dentro” (Saramago 1995b, 102; “the whole world is right here,” Saramago 1995a, 94).

Meanwhile, in his “Nobel lecture,” Saramago reflects on the thought that preceded his writing the novel:

Blind. The apprentice thought, “we are blind”, and he sat down and wrote Blindness to remind those who might read it that we pervert reason when we humiliate life, that human dignity is insulted every day by the powerful of our world, that the universal lie has replaced the plural truths, that man stopped respecting himself when he lost the respect due to his fellow-creatures.

(Saramago 1998a)

On the other hand, Blindness can be viewed as commentary on the injustices created by a capitalist system that literally casts a blind eye; hence, in the world of the blind, private ownership becomes irrelevant (Courteau 1999, 25). Furthermore, the malady exposes the fickleness of a system, and how quickly established notions and practices begin to disintegrate. The blind citizens and inmates have to forage for any food they find; everything becomes the property of whoever gets there first and grabs whatever he or she can carry. Michael Keren argues that only after the fire do the asylum inmates begin to see each other as equals, and when communication and organization are established, their eyesight returns (Keren 2007, 458). At the end of the novel, the doctor remarks, “Queres que te diga O que penso, Diz, Penso que não cegámos, penso que estamos cegos, Cegos que vêem, Cegos que, vendo, não vêem” (Saramago 1995b, 310; “I don’t think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see,” Saramago 1995a, 309). Here, the author is not only emphasizing the danger that ensues from a society that has lost compassion and is unable to see injustice but also the peril that is caused by the apathy of its citizens. Werner von Koppenfels suggests
that this “willful blindness leading to barbarism has become universal in the contemporary world” (von Koppenfels 2004, 172) or an “unethical inability to see social ills” (Vieira 2009, 2).

III. The Cave: A dystopian utopia

Failure to acknowledge unethical practices brought about by the excesses of capitalism is a concern that pervades A caverna or The Cave, which was published in 2000 in Portuguese and 2002 in English. This novel not only reverberates with Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” but also provides a stark and unrelenting criticism of a city’s landscape and a way of life that are being changed by a blind capitalist system. Andrew Laird argues that The Cave can be seen as a reformulation of Plato’s text and possibly a contemporary political allegory of the passage in The Republic (Laird 2003, 4). The novel, which has also been described as a parable of late capitalism by some critics, depicts the life of an ordinary and simple family in a small, unnamed rural village. Sixty-four-year-old Cipriano Algor is a third-generation earthenware potter who sells most of his pottery to a nameless residential and commercial metropolis known as the Center. Anna Klobucka suggests that Cipriano’s homestead is an example of a utopian existence rather than a realistic one, but such communities are not altogether archaic (Klobucka 2001, xvi). Algor lives with his pregnant daughter, Marta, and his son-in-law, Marçal, who works as a security guard in the nearby Center and commutes to the village after ten-day shifts. Marçal is also awaiting his promotion to resident guard in order that he, his wife, and his reluctant father-in-law can move into the Center. Algor, on the other hand, attempts to keep alive the profession that his family has held on to for three generations, although this particular profession is becoming obsolete. We learn from early on in the novel that the Center to which he used to supply his crockery and ceramics is no longer interested in what he makes, as people are opting for plastic replicas – “das mentiras de plástico, maliciosamente fingidas à imitação de barro” (Saramago 2000a, 27; “hideous plastic lies, cunningly fashioned to look like earthenware,” Saramago 2000b, 16) – instead of the original products. When the Center cancels their order, his daughter, Marta, comes up with the idea of making earthenware dolls as an alternative, which is a
feeble attempt at keeping the pottery alive. Following a survey conducted by the Center to check if there is a market niche for the dolls however, the Center decides to cancel the order of the figurines. This prompts the family, after much hesitation, especially on the part of the father, to move into the Center.

The Center, which is presented as a form of utopia, may be nameless but appears to be all-pervading metaphorically and physically, even though it is on the outskirts of their village. Christopher Rollason argues that the book’s symbolism “decries the standardising and homogenising impact of global mass culture, as embodied in the shopping-mall,” which is exemplified by life in the Center (Rollason 2001). The Center symbolizes and depicts the excesses of a capitalist system directly (Laird 2003, 7). Moreover, the Center, which spreads uncontrollably across the landscape, sorts the population into insiders turned into “purposeless overseers” and poor outsiders (Esquith 2009, 6). Neither the village nor the Center is given a name, an indication by the author that this situation is not peculiar to Portugal, assuming that this is the country the author is writing about, as the protagonists have Portuguese names. The nameless place stresses the loss of individuality that is incurred through such an edifice, raising the “awful spectre of loss of identity” (Frier 2007, 16). The Center’s ubiquitous presence seems to be absorbing its surroundings as it is continuously expanding. Marçal tells his father-in-law: “o Centro cresce todos os dias mesmo quando não se dá por isso, se não é para os lados, é para cima, se não é para cima, é para baixo” (Saramago 2000a, 281; “the Center grows every day without your even noticing it, if not outward, upward, if not upward, downward,” Saramago 2000b, 243); and earlier while attempting to persuade his father-in-law in a conversation that the Center is not a place of exile, he says:

Creio que a melhor explicação do Centro ainda seria considerá-lo como uma cidade dentro de outra cidade, Não sei se será a melhor explicação, de qualquer modo não é suficiente para que eu perceba o que há dentro do Centro, O que há é o mesmo que se encontra numa cidade qualquer, lojas, pessoas que passam, que compram, que conversam, que comem, que se distraem, que trabalham [...] Houve uma pausa, depois Cipriano Algor disse, E já que estamos a falar de tamanhos, é curioso que de cada vez que olho cá de fora para o Centro tenho a impressão de que ele é maior do que a própria cidade, isto é, o Centro está dentro da cidade, mas é maior do que a cidade,
The omnipresence of the Center and its overbearing structure dominate. In spite of its claiming to be asserting organization, it carries within itself the possibility of chaos, as it sprawls across the landscape devouring the surroundings. Plato’s utopia is, on the other hand, more defined, contained, and structured. Algor remarks that with time no one will even remember what existed on this land prior to the building of the Center (Saramago 2000a, 238; 2000b, 204). Jean Baudrillard reflects on the concept of urban centers, which to him are “satellized by the hypermarket or the shopping center,” and the city is unable to contain or absorb such centers (Baudrillard 2004, 77). This characteristic is common to a number of urban centers or cities that have undergone accelerated growth and extensive infrastructure changes; the rapid development, generally in the name of modernization, not only erases previous sites but also the history of the place. The history survives only in the memory of the older citizens, such as Algor, but once they die so do these memories, and with time, the original site is forgotten. History begins with the new construction. Lebbeus Woods argues that monumental scale building is “nothing less than an instrument of war,” and there is a strong link between building and destroying (Woods 1995, 50). He states:

the ideas commonly described as “construction” and “destruction” need to be examined in the context of the paradoxicality inherent in experience. Few thoughtful people would fail to acknowledge that in order to build, something must be destroyed […] Destruction is factored in, at the very least, to construction. They are inevitably and paradoxically intertwined […] For one thing, buildings are objects that disrupt existing landscapes. Older
buildings, perhaps much-loved, must be torn down. Fields and farms are taken over. (pp. 49, 50)

Woods also adds that what is being destroyed is a culture or a livelihood that is considered inferior (p. 51). The Center becomes the epitome of civilization; anything that preceded it or still surrounds it becomes its opposite, the uncivilized. Algor comments to his son-in-law that the truth behind the Center cannot be that simple, and that the simple truths cannot exist within the confines of the Center (Saramago 2000a, 259; 2000b, 223). Earlier on in the novel, Algor reflects on a world that has evolved into a place in which there are many lies and no truths, and most likely what initially appears to be a truth is actually a lie (Saramago 2000a, 91; 2000b, 75). The only obvious truth is that the Center is devouring everything around it. The Center is a consumerist’s dream of a utopia; and as with such ventures, it is totalitarian, grasping and defining space, including and excluding. Herbert Wright argues that a utopia always serves a political purpose, and the word itself is nothing but a “propaganda tool” (Wright 2008, 54).

Michel Foucault, on the other hand, states:

Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces. (Foucault 1967)

As this real cannot be fulfilled, Foucault contends that humans have established what he refers to as heterotopias, places that have a specific function in society. Foucault writes:

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. (Foucault 1967)

The Center has more than its fair share of security. It is in effect the “gated estate, like the ancient walled city, [which] is defensible and sealed off from the threats and chaos outside” (Wright 2008, 60). Every time Algor has come to the Center he has had to negotiate entry with the clerk
at the front desk. In some respects, the clerk is the person who allows entry or denies it. This specialization of roles, which is essential to Plato’s utopia, is rejected by Saramago, as at once alienating and unreal (Frier 2007, 158). The consumerist areas, however, are open to everyone as people are encouraged to purchase goods.

In Franz Kafka’s “Before the Law,” a man unknowingly finds himself at a gate, making an appeal to an unpleasant doorkeeper to allow him to pass (Kafka 1992, 3–4). In order to be allowed entry, he is told that he has to reach the Law, and in the meantime engages in futile arguments with the doorkeeper (pp. 3–4). Likewise, before being granted an audience or even allowed to go beyond a certain point, Algor is subjected to a similar treatment by lowly administrators. Having barriers makes the place appear more desirable to outsiders, the assumption being that people want to see beyond the gate.

The Center could exist anywhere; it is a result of late capitalism, which has at once commercialized everything and encouraged globalization and consumerism. As with the asylum in Blindness, the Center dominates. This blind domination of the other and of the environment or nature in essence produces “an unfree society whose culture pursues so-called progress no matter what the cost, that which is ‘other,’ whether human or nonhuman, gets shoved aside, exploited, or destroyed” (Zuidervaart 2011). Zuidervaart adds that the “all-consuming engine driving this process is an ever-expanding capitalist economy, fed by scientific research and the latest technologies” (Zuidervaart 2011). The Center tries to recreate the real world through the use of the latest technologies.

Furthermore, the Center’s catalogue, we are told, “suficientes oitenta anos de vida ociosa para ler e analisar os cinquenta e cinco volumes de mil e quinhentas páginas de formato a-quatro cada um que constituem” (Saramago 2000a, 309; “would require more than eighty years of leisure time to read and analyze the fifty-five fifteen-hundred-page volume that constitute [it],” Saramago 2000b, 270). This commercialism produces a need; people are persuaded that what is being sold is what they need as in one of the posters at the Center claims: “VENDER-LHE-ÂMOS TUDO QUANTO VOCÊ NECESSITASSE SE NÃO PREFERÍSEMOS QUE VOCÊ PRECISASSE DO QUE TEMOS PARA VENDER-LHE” and “VOCÊ É O NOSSO MELHOR
CLIENTE, MAS, POR FAVOR, NÃO O VÁ DIZER AO SEU VIZINHO” (Saramago 2000a, 282, 243; “WE WOULD SELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED, BUT WE WOULD PREFER YOU TO NEED WHAT WE HAVE TO SELL” and “YOU’RE OUR BEST CUSTOMER, BUT, PLEASE, DON’T TELL YOUR NEIGHBOR,” Saramago 2000b, 244, 203). Although such signs are claiming that they offer the Center’s residents a choice, they are in fact offering none. Needs are falsely created in the name of benefits for the people. This is an essential component of consumerism. Preserving and maintaining the status quo of such an establishment are the only benefits that are real in such a situation. Moreover, deviancy from the stated norm is not welcome. In this kind of environment, everything is standardized; this even applies to the residents. The posters of the Center

algunas vezes exibe imagens de famílias felizes, o marido de trinta e cinco anos, a esposa de trinta e três, um filho de onze anos, uma filha de nove [...] todos obrigando a sorrir as respectivas dentaduras, perfeitas, brancas, resplandecentes. (Saramago 2000a, 93)

(show images of happy families, the thirty-five-year-old husband, the thirty-three-year-old wife, an eleven-year-old son, a nine-year-old daughter [...] all obliged to smile and reveal their respective sets of teeth, perfect, white, gleaming.) (Saramago 2000b, 76)

The signs that pervade the space within the confines or outside the Center remind the residents and visitors that they are constantly being surveyed. According to Baudrillard, “billboards, in fact, observe and surveil you as well, or as badly, as the ‘policing’ television” (Baudrillard 2004, 76). We are also told the Center does not allow animals, such as dogs or cats,

apenas aves de gaiola ou peixes de aquário (animais que podem ser confinados a um espaço) e mesmo estes usam, se cada vez menos desde que foram inventados os aquários virtuais, sem peixes que tenham cheiro de peixe nem água que seja preciso mudar. (Saramago 2000a, 233)

(only caged birds and aquarium fish [animals that can be confined to a space], and even those are becoming rare, ever since they invented virtual aquariums, without fish that smell of fish or water you have to change.) (Saramago 2000b, 200)

Nonetheless, you still have to feed them so that they will not die.
In an interview with Hernández del Valle, Saramago was quoted as saying: “We confuse images of reality with reality; reality itself becomes a spectacle” (Rollason 2001). Imitations themselves have become reality; people will not be able to differentiate the real from the unreal. In his discussion of the Sophist, Plato states that the latter uses illusions and is essentially trying to assert the non-being, which, because it is neither a number nor a being, will never be real; hence, this imitation will forever reside in falsehood. As with a Baudrillardian simulacrum, one is no longer able to distinguish what is real from what is unreal; and as with The Cave, the imitation becomes more valued than the real. In the Center, they are unable to open windows and the view from the windows is that of the Center's shopping arcades; furthermore, the only source of light is artificial ultra-violet light to replicate real daylight (Saramago 2000a, 279; 2000b, 239–240). Exotic locales and artificial rains can also be experienced at the Center; even people's dreams can be artificially constructed. Following Algor's suggestion that the rain can be experienced naturally outside, one in his group looks at him scornfully and pities him (Saramago 2000a, 313–314; 2000b, 274–275). Moreover, no one dares question the authority; people resign themselves to a robotic daily existence without the agency to change. The lines between real and unreal have been obliterated; once one experiences the spectacle, one is no longer able to distinguish or even yearn for what is genuine. One becomes hooked on the spectacle; and the point of return becomes all the more difficult. The lived experience, which becomes “a play of illusions and phantasms,” is akin to one experiencing Disneyland (Baudrillard 2004, p.12). This imaginary world ensures that a place like the Center would succeed and be self-contained.

Agamben states:

Capitalism in its final form [...] presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles, in which all that was directly lived is distanced in a representation. The spectacle does not simply coincide, however, with the sphere of images or with what we call today the media: It is “a social relation among people, mediated by images,” the expropriation and the alienation of human sociality itself. (Agamben 1993, 79)

Agamben then adds that once the collective perception is manipulated through the spectacle, it takes over the social memory (p. 80). And once everything is transformed into this commodity, even though everything
is subject to questioning, one is not able to call into question the spectacle itself, which says nothing but, “What appears is good, what is good appears” (p. 80).

The Center has managed to regularize people’s experience; their feelings are controlled. The spectacle becomes the real that they perceive as good. Globalization, on the other hand, has endeavored to produce identical markets in the world as it attempts to standardize people’s needs, for the most part, ignoring pre-existing cultures. People are encouraged to purchase the same goods, eat the same food, watch the same television shows, and behave similarly. These types of citizens are much easier to control; they do not question; they just do what they are told. As with Homo Sacer, they have surrendered all will. Saramago had a few comments to make about globalization, which according to him is one of the faces of totalitarianism; he said: “globalisation will eat up the poor mouse of human rights [...] globalisation manufactures exclusion” (Rollason 2001). Furthermore, D. G. Shane states: “Urban enclaves such as marketplaces, department stores, and malls feed on this frenzy of uncertainty, promoting a sense of modernity, insecurity, and shock” (Shane 1995, 62). Humans within such enclaves are at once consumed and overwhelmed by consumerism, and at the same time excluded from the people in power and other humans. The narrator of The Cave tells us:

uma pessoa não é como uma coisa que se larga num sítio e ali se deixa ficar, uma pessoa mexe-se, pensa, pergunta, duvida, investiga, quer saber, e se é verdade que, forçada pelo hábito da conformação, acaba, mais tarde ou mais cedo, por parecer que se submeteu aos objectos. (Saramago 2000a, 305)

(a person is not like a thing that you put down in one place and leave, a person moves, thinks, asks questions, doubts, investigates, probes, and while it is true that, out of the long habit of resignation, he sooner or later ends up looking as if he has submitted to the objects.) (Saramago 2000b, 267)

Individuality is lost, and such places strive to recreate humans into replicas of what is seen as a desirable human being. This in itself is alienating, as it ignores the preceding cultures or subcultures. Humans are commodified by the authorities, and in turn are slaves to the commodities they are led to believe they need. This is the type of human being that the authorities want to live at the Center. Saramago describes this new state as the cult of the market, which he
saw as triumphing over true democracy (Saramago 2004). In addition, Marçal comes to the realization that a human being is only valuable if he or she is of use to the Center only in the way they deem desirable; “Quem não se ajusta não serve e eu tinha deixado de ajustar-me” (Saramago 2000a, 347; “if you don’t adapt you’re no use to them,” Saramago 2000b, 304). The latter remark resonates with something his father-in-law said earlier in the novel, “o que deixou de ter serventia deita-se fora, Incluindo as pessoas” (Saramago 2000a, 130; “if something no longer serves a useful purpose it will be thrown out, Including people,” Saramago 2000b, 110). In an earlier essay, “A mão que embala o berço” (“The hand that rocks the cradle”), Saramago wrote that he is dismayed that “the supreme superintendent of education in our time, including ‘civic’ and ‘moral’ education, is the shopping mall. We are being educated to be consumers. This is the basic education that we are transmitting to our children” (Preto-Rodas 1999, 17). Not only is the Center faceless, it is also rigid in its structure, in the explicit confinement in which humans are placed.

Even though all roads lead to the Center, there is no attempt to make them attractive to the eye. The scenery that is described to us by Algor as he travels from his village to the Center exposes countryside in ruin:

\[ \text{(the Agricultural Belt, or Green Belt, as it continues to be called by those who simply love to disguise harsh reality with words, this slush color that covers the ground, the endless sea of plastic where the greenhouses, all cut to the same size, look like petrified icebergs.) (Saramago 2000b, 73)} \]

Diz-se que a paisagem é um estado de alma, que a paisagem de fora a vemos com os olhos de dentro, será porque esses extraordinários órgãos interiores de visão não souberam ver estas fábricas e estes hangares, estes fumos que
devoram o céu, estas poeiras tóxicas, estas lamas eternas, estas crostas de fuligem. (Saramago 2000a, 89)

(They say that landscape is a state of mind, that we see the outer landscape with our inner eye, but is that because these extraordinary inner organs of vision are unable to see these factories and these hangars, this smoke devouring the sky, this toxic dust, this never-ending mud, these layers of soot.) (Saramago 2000b, 73)

Their own village, which is nondescript, is in itself decaying in the face of this giant metropolis (Rollason 2001). Rollason adds, “Saramago’s Centre crushes the small shopkeepers and artisans as consumers flock to it like flies, and in this sense it may be read as a metonym for the forces of globalisation that destroy the local and particular” (Rollason 2001). What remains Algor tells us are:

uns fragmentos dispersos, uns Farrapos emporcalhados, uns restos de materiais de refugo, umas latas enferrujadas, umas tábuas apodrecidas, um plástico que o vento traz e leva, mostram-nos que este território havia estado ocupado antes pelos bairros de excluídos. (Saramago 2000a, 16)

(a few scattered fragments, some filthy rags, some bits of recycled rubbish, some rusty cans, some rotten planks, a piece of plastic sheeting blown hither and thither by the wind, reveal to us that this territory was once occupied by the homes of the excluded.) (Saramago 2000b, 6)

In the world of the excluded, we do not have replicas of humans nor do we have identical apartments. Nonetheless, the new world of the Center survives on the obliteration of another. The other, who may be like Algor reluctant to conform to its standards, finds himself or herself alienated and humiliated. When Algor picks up his rejected pottery, he tries hard to find a place to hide it in; it is the shame of being different that he is attempting to conceal; he is, in effect, burying a part of himself, his dignity. He finds the ideal hollow to hide his pottery in. This hollow he tells us is also a “uma porta mágica também para alguns miúdos sonhadores” (“magic door for a few imaginative children”), who may dare to be different, in the hope that one day one of them

qualquer dia um dos garotos daqui, se é que ainda são frequentadores da cova ideal, aparece em casa com um prato rachado, perguntam-lhe onde foi que o encontrou, e vai ver que toda a gente irá logo a correr buscar o que agora não quer, Somos feitos assim, não me admiraria. (Saramago 2000a, 159)
When Algor and Marta decide to make the figurines, they end up with dolls that are not duplicates. They choose to make dolls ranging from different periods and cultures, “o bobo, o palhaço, a enfermeira, o esquimó, o mandarim, o assírio de barbas” (Saramago 2000a, p. 136; “the jester, the clown, the nurse, the Eskimo, the mandarin, and the bearded Assyrian,” Saramago 2000b, 115). In addition, as with real life, some of the figurines are imperfect, but Algor decides to hold on to them. Nature itself is not perfect; utopias are not attainable. Saramago is here stressing that imposed regulations can only lead to destruction. Reality has its own limitations.

As I have mentioned earlier, *The Cave* is a parable of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave.” The last lines of the novel confirm this when a recent poster at the Center reads: “BREVEMENTE, ABERTURA AO PÚBLICO DA CAVERNA DE PLATÃO, ATRACÇÃO EXCLUSIVA, ÚNICA NO MUNDO, COMPRE JÁ A SUA ENTRADA” (Saramago 2000a, 350; “COMING SOON, PUBLIC OPENING OF PLATO’S CAVE, AN EXCLUSIVE ATTRACTION, UNIQUE IN THE WORLD, BUY YOUR TICKET NOW,” Saramago 2000b, 307). This unique experience, however, comes with its own sense of morbidity. The awaited Plato’s Cave at the Center is the site in which human corpses have been found by the excavators during the time of its construction, and which the authorities have managed to hide from the Center’s residents. Algor, who succeeds in descending into the underground excavation site, a metaphoric trip into Hades, describes what he has seen:

Com o choque a luz oscilou, diante dos olhos surgiu-lhe, num instante, o que parecia um banco de pedra, e logo, no instante seguinte, alinhados, uns vultos mal definidos apareceram e desapareceram [...] A luz trémula da lanterna varreu devagar a pedra branca, tocou ao de leve uns panos escuros, subiu, e era um corpo humano sentado o que ali estava. Ao lado dele, cobertos com os mesmos panos escuros, mais cinco corpos igualmente sentados, erectos todos como se um espigão de ferro lhes tivesse entrado pelo crânio e os mantivesse atarraxados a pedra. A parede lisa do fundo da gruta estava a dez palmos das órbitas encovadas, onde os globos oculares teriam sido reduzidos a um grão de pollera. (Saramago 2000a, 331–332)
The shock made the flashlight flicker, and, for a moment, there appeared before his eyes what seemed to be a stone bench, and, the following moment, a row of vague shapes appeared and disappeared […] The tremulous light from the torch swept slowly over the white stone, caught some bits of dark cloth, then moved upward to reveal a human body sitting there. Beside it, covered in the same fabric, were five other bodies, all sitting as erect as if a metal spike had been put through their skulls to keep them fixed to the stone. The smooth rear wall of the cave was about ten spans away from their hollow eye sockets, in which the eyeballs had been reduced to mere grains of dust. (Saramago 2000b, 291–292)

In Plato’s “Cave,” the prisoners’ “legs and necks [are] being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads” (Plato 1987, 241). In front of them are shades of the reality from the outside world, of which they are ignorant. The shadows on the wall are the only reality in existence. Algor, however, sees beyond the shadows, beyond the bodies, because these corpses he tells us are “[eles], o Marçal, o Centro todo, provavelmente o mundo” (Saramago 2000a, 334; “[them] […] [him], you, Marçal, the whole Center, probably the world,” Saramago 2000b, 294).

Algor’s comment echoes the novel’s epigraph, which is from Plato’s The Republic: “What a strange scene you describe/and what strange prisoners, /They are just like us” (Saramago 2000). On a number of occasions in the novel, Algor has sat on the stone bench in his yard staring at the shadows produced by the fire in his kiln, pondering over the promises of a better life at the Center. The bodies unearthed in the Center’s cave fixed to a stone, and behind whom a bonfire once blazed, are but premonitions of what lies ahead for them. Algor has been able to see beyond the shadows on the wall. The corpses could also represent the six defective figurines, which Algor places in front of the kiln, hoping that in time they will decompose to become part of the earth again. But in more likelihood, these corpses personify those of us who can no longer distinguish between reality and illusion, in a utopist world in which everything is reduced to a spectacle, in a Center that is all-controlling.

IV. Conclusion
In “The meaning of utopia,” Yves Charles Zarka argues that utopia and the ideal of utopia are now dead. Zarka contends, that by entering
history in order to transform it, utopia becomes political (Zarka 2011). In addition, Zarka states:

In the 20th century collectivist utopias showed their true face: totalitarianism. In the 21st century liberal utopias are showing theirs: belief in deregulation, freedom of the market and the drastic reduction of the place of the state have led our world to the brink of a general disaster that we are still far from sure of having overcome – the financial and economic crisis, and now a political crisis with the ruin of states. (Zarka 2011)

Even though both the utopia promised by the Center in The Cave and the dystopia created by the government authorities in Blindness lead to ruinous and tragic results, carrying within them the specters of doom, Saramago provides a window of hope in the endings of both novels. In 2009, Saramago wrote:

We are reaching the end of a civilization and I don’t welcome its final trumpet [...] neo-liberalism is a new form of totalitarianism disguised as democracy, of which it retains almost nothing but a semblance. The shopping mall is a symbol of our times. But there is still another miniature and fast-disappearing world, that of small industries and artisanry. (Saramago 2010, 197)

Algor and the doctor’s wife are examples of those who resist losing their dignity by seeking a life away from these “utopias.” In The Cave, Algor and his family decide to leave the Center in his old delivery truck in search of an uncertain beginning, as Marta, who is pregnant, refuses to have her child born in the artificial and stifling environment of the Center. Frier notes that in Saramago’s novels, pregnancy can be seen as a motif for change, a possibility of a human transformation (Frier 2007, 165). Frier, however, sees in their escape, a “negative flight,” “an abdication of responsibility on Saramago’s part in his failure to identify a real alternative to the tempting but hollow existence on offer within the Centre” (pp. 151–152). However, I see in their fleeing an escape toward life and away from a sterile and anesthetized existence bordering on a living death; their action is an endeavor to ensure that the cave’s dead prisoners’ prophecy does not materialize. In an interview with Donzelina Barroso, Saramago proposes a move backward in an attempt at trying to save humanity:
Developing backwards means, very simply, this: the level we have reached – not the rich, but those in the upper middle class – allows us to live comfortably. Developing backwards would be to say, Let us stop here and turn toward those billions of people who have been left behind [...] I do not aspire to be the savior of the world, but I live with the very simple belief that the world could be a better place, and it could very easily be made a better place. (Saramago, n.d.)

Meanwhile, in *Blindness*, the possibility of a humane society, which is the foundation for a healthy state, is recognized by the doctor’s wife from the inception of the novel (Frier 2007, 163). By helping her fellow inmates survive in the asylum, and by impressing upon them the need to re-embrace “the truth of universal humanity and the need to maintain respect for others” the doctor’s wife offers a glimpse of hope for a healthier society (p. 163). Redemption becomes possible when the main characters exhibit respect and human kindness toward one another; it is only then that their sight is restored.

NOTES

2. The three allegorical novels that form part of this involuntary trilogy are *Blindness* (1995), *All the Names* (1997), and *The Cave* (2000).
3. “Fordism is a term that refers to a specific stage in economic development in the last century. It was commonly used to describe a system of mass production that was pioneered by the Ford Motor Company and is often associated with a particular political and social order in advanced capitalism” (Britannica, n.d.). Examples of other utopian experiments are Garden City in Hertfordshire, Bournville City in Birmingham, Port Sunlight in Liverpool, all in the UK, and Pullman City in Chicago (Wright 2008, 59).
5. Frier states: “The lack of faith in others runs throughout this society, with the blind themselves calculatedly oppressing the blind, never more clearly than when those who have stockpiled the food supplies demand women in return for releasing rations to the other wards” (Frier 2011, 103).
6. Atkin contends that the narrator is also unable to identify the individuals who are speaking, and can only identify the voices through the gender of the person (Atkin 2008, 110).
7. Frier notes that, in Saramago’s novels, it is the female who is more powerful and is capable of greater initiative than her male counterpart; this pattern of the subaltern leading the supposedly superior to greater insight is in line with Antonio Gramsci’s idea in his discussion of “cultural hegemony” (Frier 2007, 155).
8. Frier argues that in a number of Saramago’s novels the institution of the Church is clearly unsympathetic to the needs of the citizens (Frier 2007, 42).

9. Klobucka contends that the Center acts as “an allegorical satire of totalitarian assumptions of global consumer capitalism” (Klobucka 2001, xvii).

10. If The Cave is a representation of Portugal, one can look at the Center as the site of European dominance following Portugal’s joining of the EU. The village begins to represent the periphery, Portugal’s “meek acceptance of its place in the new economic and social order” within the European community (Frier 2007, 11).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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