

Absurdo e formas de lidar com a morte na obra de Saramago: *Refluxo*, *As Intermitências da Morte* e *Todos os Nomes*

Absurdity and ways of dealing with Death Saramago's *Reflux*, *Death with Interruptions*, and *All the Names*

Miriam Ringel

Ph.D. in the Hermeneutics and Cultural Studies program at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. Dissertation: Textual Experiences as Denoting Subjectivity in José Saramago's Work. Dr. Ringel holds an M.A. in Comparative Literature from Bar-Ilan University, Israel, and was the Head of Literature Studies in Ort – Colleges & Schools for Advanced Technologies & sciences (1991-2007). Author of a book published in 2009, in Hebrew – Viagem na Senda das Vozes – A Obra e a Vida de José Saramago, (Journey Following the Voices – Life and Work of José Saramago, Carmel Publishing House, Jerusalem, Israel. The book published with the support of José Saramago Foundation, Portugal). Author of a second book published in 2015, following her Ph.D. thesis: Moral Imagination in José Saramago's Work, Carmel Publishing House, Jerusalem, Israel. Email : miriam.ringel@gmail.com

Resumo

A morte na sociedade moderna não tem valor intrínseco além de outros valores e muitos autores ficcionais apresentam a questão da morte nas suas obras. O nosso principal objetivo neste artigo é olhar e examinar como os escritos de Saramago abordam as várias formas de morte que aparecem na sua obra. Nesta discussão, o autor envolve o leitor num tópico complicado. Ao fazê-lo, ele coloca-se numa posição a partir da qual o leitor também pode refletir. A morte, segundo Saramago, é uma parte necessária da vida. Nessa visão, a morte não é meramente um evento contingente. Torna-se uma tarefa ou um projeto existencial. Na obra de Saramago, a morte é um tema que possibilita a discussão da autenticidade e da inautenticidade. As visões de Saramago correspondem às de Heidegger sobre a vida e a morte (HEIDEGGER, 1962), e Albert Camus sobre encarar a morte com o absurdo (CAMUS, 1979). Neste artigo, apresento três exemplos da obra de Saramago: "Refluxo", "Todos os Nomes" e "As Intermitências da Morte".

Palavras-Chave

Morte, Negando a Morte, Autenticidade, Absurdo.

Abstract

Death in modern society has no intrinsic value beyond other values, and many fictional authors present the issue of death in their works. Our main objective in this article is to look at and examine how Saramago's writings touch upon the various forms of death as they appear in his work. In this discussion, the author engages the reader in a complicated topic. While doing so, he places himself in a position from which the reader can also reflect. Death, according to Saramago, is a necessary part of life. In this view, death is not merely a contingent event; It becomes a task or an existential project. In Saramago's work, death is a subject that enables discussion of authenticity and inauthenticity. The views of Saramago correspond to those of Heidegger on life and death (HEIDEGGER, 1962) and Albert Camus on facing death with absurdity (CAMUS, 1979). In this article, I present three examples of Saramago's work: "Reflux," "All the Names," and "Death with Interruptions."

Keywords

Death, Death-denying, Authenticity, Absurd.

Introduction

Em suma, no poseo para expresar
mi vida sino mi murete.¹

Throughout Saramago's fiction, death often provides the opportunity to discuss authenticity and inauthenticity, particularly in *All the Names* and *Death with Interruptions*. People, or what Heidegger calls "the id," are influenced by accepted conventions and customs in modern society. Authentic dying involves living so that death is constantly watching one's actions, as Heidegger suggests with his notion of "being-towards-death." Hence, the Dasein anticipates death and is only aware of its process when it is just beginning. The Being-towards-the-end (HEIDEGGER, 1962, p. 296) is an existential concept of death and comprises existence, facticity, and falling.

Saramago's novels present a great deal of meaningless rhetoric about death, offered by kings, governments, and churches. Particularly in those where the heroes stand up against the powerful state. For example, *Memorial do Convento*, *The History of the Siege of Lisbon*, *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*, *Blindness*, *Seeing*, and *Death with Interruptions*. When we are self-conscious, we are willing to face death with courage. Heidegger views death as an essential part of reality, rather than an independent event (HEIDEGGER, 1962, p. 297). Saramago exemplifies it in *All the Names*, where he describes both the central registry office and the cemetery office the same way. And in *Death with Interruptions*, he portrays death as a reality that the heroes must confront.

Camus argues in his writings that we have no knowledge of death, whether it be our own or another's. It is the certainty of death that awakens the absurd, as "the horror comes in reality from the mathematical aspect of the event" (CAMUS, 1979, p. 21). Absurdity arises from the sheer certainty of death. Our fragility awakens terror in us. Man's absurdity is his relationship with the world, others, and himself.

Literature about the Holocaust has a traumatic perspective on death (Jorge Semprún, Primo Levi). Semprún speaks about "the look of survival" in *L'écriture ou la vie*, which refers to the reaction of those within the camp when the French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs is dying in Buchenwald concentration camp. The people around him are never free from death's burden.

Ainsi, paradoxalement, du moins à première et courte vue, le regard des miens, quand il leur en restait, pour fraternel qu'il fût – parce qu'il l'était, plutôt -, me renvoyait à la mort. Celle-ci était substance de notre fraternité, clé de notre destin, signe d'appartenance à la communauté des vivants. Nous vivions ensemble cette expérience de la mort, cette compassion. Notre être était défini par cela : être avec l'autre dans la mort qui s'avavançait. Plutôt, qui mûrissait en nous, qui nous gagnait comme un mal lumineux, comme une lumière aiguë qui nous dévorerait. Nous tous qui allions mourir avions choisi la fraternité de cette mort par goût de la liberté (SEMPRÚN, 1994, p. 18).

Semprún cherishes a memory of brotherhood. It is the feeling of progressing toward him with the others, of sharing death with them - the act of brotherly love, the experience of being in contact with death together - that he experiences as freedom. It is commonly portrayed in Western literature that death threatens the very existence of humans. We can find

¹ Cezar Vallejo 1980, p. 208 - The poem was written on November 25, 1937, and found in a collection published after the poet's death. "In short, I have nothing to express my life except my death".

it in Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, André Malraux, Albert Camus, Rilke, and many other authors.

Several South American authors describe death differently, including Garcia Marquez and Jorge Amado. Their novels portray death as an everyday event. Saramago reflects this perspective in his work. When the protagonist is alive after death, as in Jorge Amado's novella, *A Morte e a Morte de Quincas Berro Dágua*, or Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, the horror of death disappears. Mexican poet and essayist Octavio Paz address the culture of the Mexican festivals associated with death in an article titled "All Saints - Day of the Dead."

Para los antiguos mexicanos la oposición entre muerte y vida no era tan absoluta como para nosotros. La vida se prolongaba en la muerte. Y a la inversa. La muerte no era el fin natural de la vida, sino fase de un ciclo infinito. Vida, muerte y resurrección eran estadios de un proceso cósmico, que se repetía insaciable. La vida no tenía función más alta que desembocar en la muerte, su contrario y complemento; y la muerte, a su vez, no era un fin en sí; el hombre alimentaba con su muerte la voracidad de la vida, siempre insatisfecha... El advenimiento del catolicismo modifica radicalmente esta situación. El sacrificio y la idea de salvación que antes eran colectivos, se vuelven personales. La libertad se humaniza, encarna en los hombres. Para los antiguos aztecas lo esencial era asegurar la continuidad de la creación; el sacrificio no entrañaba la salvación ultraterrena, sino la salud cósmica; el mundo, y no el individuo, vivía gracias a la sangre y la muerte de los hombres. Para los cristianos, el individuo es lo que cuenta. El mundo —la historia, la sociedad— está condenado de antemano (PAZ, 1991, p. 21).

For Christians, death is the bridge between temporary and non-life; In the Aztec tradition, participation in the constant renewal of creative power is endangered unless it is fed with blood, sacred food. Death and life are two sides of the same coin in these two systems; they do not exist independently. Meaning comes from values that control the other, which refer to invisible realities (PAZ, 1991, p. 22). Death in modern society has no intrinsic value beyond different values. It is simply the end of a natural process in almost all cases. Death is an unavoidable part of life. That is a painful fact, one that leaves us questioning all our perceptions and all the meanings we assign to our lives. We commonly ignore death in modern society. Nobody expects it. Political preaching, merchant awareness, the public's customs, the low cost of joy, and the provision of hospitals, pharmacies, and sports fields have all been eliminated. Death is not a transition but a void that can never be filled. It is an era characterized by health, hygiene, contraception, magic drugs, and synthetic food and by concentration camps, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb. Mass slaughter results from collectivization (PAZ, 1991, p.22).

The contempt for death implied by Mexican indifference towards life and death is incompatible with their death cult, says Paz. Death shapes their thoughts and their celebrations. The perception of Europeans and North Americans based on laws, customs, morality, and the value of human life, is that life should be preserved. Western societies are not regarded as exemplary since we suspect them of being two-faced. It is a cult of death when life is genuinely cherished. Death is an integral part of life. **The negation of death is the negation of life.** Human beings were humiliated, turned into objects, and slaughtered in droves, just like in concentration camps. Paz argues that there are two ways to approach death: one that moves forward and is seen as creation, and the other is a backward return characterized by magic and nostalgia. Cesar Vallejo came closest to conflating these two concepts in Mexican or Latin American poetry.

This last point refers to the characters of poets and artists in Saramago's works. For

example, H. the Painter in the novel *Manual of Painting and Calligraphy*, and Fernando Pessoa and Ricardo Reis in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis*. The Composer Scarlatti, in *Memorial do Convento*, Cipriano Algor the Potter in *A Caverna*, and the Cellist in *Death with Interruptions*. In all these figures, death and creation are interrelated. Pessoa, the living-dead man, and Ricardo Reis, his fictitious heteronym, who is about to die, engage in a surreal dialogue about death:

Ainda sinto o sono que tinha em vida, Estranha coisa é a morte, Mais estranho ainda, olhando-a do lado em que estou, é verificar que não há duas mortes iguais, estar morto não é o mesmo para todos os mortos, há casos em que transportamos para cá todos os fardos da vida. Imagine você que sonhei que estava vivo, Terá sido ilusão sua, Claro que foi ilusão, como todo o sonho, mas o que é interessante não é um morto sonhar que está vivo, afinal ele conheceu a vida, deve saber do que sonha, interessante é um vivo sonhar que está morto, ele que não sabe o que é a morte, Não tarda muito que você me diga que morte e vida é tudo um, Exactamente, meu caro Reis, vida e morte é tudo um, Você já disse hoje três coisas diferentes, que não há morte, que há morte, agora diz-me que morte e vida são o mesmo, Não tinha outra maneira de resolver a contradição que as duas primeiras afirmações representavam, e dizendo isto Fernando Pessoa teve um sorriso sábio, é o mínimo que deste sorriso se poderia dizer, se tivermos em conta a gravidade e a importância do diálogo (SARAMAGO, 1995, p.271, grifo nosso).

Refluxo – An Attempt to deny Death

In *Objecto Qause* (SARAMAGO,1984), the story *Refluxo* is like a prelude to *Death with Interruptions*, in which death is the focus. In *All the Names*, Saramago explores the Central Registry. The space separates the front of the office, where the living cards are kept, and the gloomy and dark archive, where the dead's documents are saved. As in *Refluxo*, the dead are metaphors for human beings as objects, for what is a corpse if not a lifeless body that has become an object? The story is ironic and describes an absurd situation, which remains absurd to the very end. In this case, there is no rebellion since the heroes are only watching, not acting; thus, they always obey the king's orders. Since evil is absent in this story, the heroes are not required to rebel and act in solidarity. Saramago is not so concerned with the absurdity of appearances as he is with the conclusions the audience draws. And in *Death with Interruptions*, he will tell us a long story that is all about death. *Refluxo* is the story of a king who dreamed of avoiding death and possibly distancing himself from it. The king decides to bury all state residents in one cemetery in his kingdom. The king, as well as his subjects, were "very sensitive." It is insensitivity to the idea of death, or everything associated with a funeral or burial.

The king experienced a great deal of pain while traveling. Death was everywhere he looked. The cypress trees symbolize the cemetery, like a widow's black scarf. As a result, he suffered unbearable pain when he passed by a funeral that was not written in the protocol but took place. When the king returned to his palace, he was always filled with worry, convinced he would also die. One day, he was standing on the balcony of his palace when he saw four white walls, which his dynasty had never seen. He imagined this was the only cemetery his country would ever need. For the people, the concept of burying all their dead in the same cemetery was a profound and terrible revolution. For hundreds of years, they buried their dead near the windows of their houses, where they could be observed. It was now time to move the dead bones to the newly constructed cemetery in new burial boxes. A new pantheon was also built. Everyone thought the king's plan was the most fabulous idea ever conceived. Indeed, "que nenhum povo podia honrarse de haver um rei assim" (SARAMAGO, 1999, p. 57).

Initially, there were no problems with the newly adopted arrangement. However, it turned out that there were many dead, some buried under every tree and on every hill. Therefore, the king summoned the court sages for advice. In the lab, they discussed the layout of the upcoming building. In the end, there wasn't enough space for everyone, and the cemetery spread over the streets, forcing the residents to move. In any case, the people and king celebrated the cemetery's completion, "marking the end of seeing death." However, the cemetery also quickly became a place where the hierarchy of society ruled supreme. Because the cemetery had a "very complicated administration," the rich were buried in better places than the poor.

Initially, the various officials, of all categories of the cemetery, lived within the square compound of the new cemetery. In a central place, far enough away from the sight of dead bodies. Very quickly, however, a hierarchy problem arose, of schools for children, kindergartens, hospitals, and the like. The question is what to do: Should a city be built inside the cemetery? It would be like going back to the beginning: "Seria voltar ao princípio, sem contar que com o passar dos anos a cidade e o cemitério se invadiriam mutuamente," (SARAMAGO, 1999, p. 66). The solution was to establish a cemetery for all four towns. Thus, boarding houses were built in all streets and categories such as hotels of one, two, three, four, and five stars, bordels, shops, innumerable houses, municipal offices, etc. One thing has remained constant throughout all these changes: 'the dead should be kept out of sight of the living,' so buildings taller than nine meters are prohibited. Before long, the length of the wall that surrounded the cemetery was forty kilometers. Very quickly, stories began about wandering souls, about ghosts roaming among the living. What could they do if not build doors for the cemetery?

Quatro grandes cidades se interpuseram assim entre o reino e o cemitério, cada uma virada ao seu ponto cardeal, quatro cidades inesperadas que começaram por chamar-se Cemitério-Norte, Cemitério-Sul, Cemitério-Oriente, Cemitério-Occidente, mas que depois foram mais benignamente baptizadas e denominadas, pela ordem, Um, Dois, Três e Quatro, porquanto haviam sido vãs todas as tentativas para lhes atribuir nomes mais poéticos ou comemorativos (SARAMAGO, 1999, p. 67).

Eventually, no one remembered who came up with this "wonderful" idea. As the king grew old, he climbed the top balcony of his palace. Even though his eyes were heavy, he could still see the tip of a cypress tree breaking over the four white walls of the cemetery. Finally, the king realized it was time to die. "Ali numa clareira se deitou, sobre as folhas secas se deitou, e estando deitado olhou o guarda que se ajoelhara, e disse antes de morrer: "Aqui" (SARAMAGO, 1999, p. 69).

People have an attitude toward death; they cannot deny or ignore it. Sometimes, death is frightening, and sometimes, it is a relief from suffering. Some bravely face death, like the heroes in Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey*, lauded for their bravery, as well as modern soldiers on the battlefield, who are examples of those who faced death with honor and courage. As Schrag argues, Kierkegaard suggests that while everyone ought to have a disposition toward death, in most cases this disposition tends to view death as an external and objective phenomenon, negating the unique death of each individual subject. Schrag (SCHRAG, 1961, p. 100-101) points out that "subjective understanding of death" refers to asking about one's death rather than something external that people experience when passing a cemetery. Although *Refluxo's* king is worried about his death, he takes every precaution to avoid death. Death is observed externally, not internally. And Saramago, who writes about the situation with humor and

irony, concludes that there is no way but to "being to death" if one lives an authentic life.

The king wished to live free of death's terror, but no attempt could succeed because time frightens us all. In the end, it illustrates that death exists, whether it is your own or someone else's: "A man will die," and that is a certainty, says Camus. "No code of ethics and no effort are justifiable *a priori* in the face of the cruel mathematics that commands our condition"(CAMUS, 1979, p. 21).

As Intermittências da Morte – Delusions of death

But in another sense despair is even more definitely the sickness unto death. Literally speaking, there is not the slightest possibility that anyone will die from this sickness or that it will end in physical death. On the contrary, the torment of despair is precisely this inability to die. Thus, it has more in common with the situation of a mortally ill person when he lies struggling with death and yet cannot die. Thus, to be sick unto death is to be unable to die, yet not as if there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness is that there is not even the ultimate hope, death. When death is the greatest danger, we hope for life; but when we learn to know the even greater danger, we hope for death. When the danger is so great that death becomes the hope, then despair is the hopelessness of not even being able to die (KIERKEGAARD, 1980, p. 17-18).

Endings can take many forms, including simply stopping. Summer has ended, we say, or a street has come to an end, and that marks the end of an achievable goal. However, the phrase "cease to be" has other modifications, not referring to an area near and within reach. Such modifications do not apply to Heidegger's "being" (Dasein) and can therefore not be used to characterize the desired death of being in the world. Dasein is neither complete nor does it cease to exist at death. Death, according to Existentialism, does not indicate "the end of being in the world" in any of these modifications, but rather "being towards death," or "dying authentically," which involves living so that death is always present in human projects (HEIDEGGER, 1962, p. 296).

An authentic understanding of death is when the Dasein anticipates his final possibility. Only by appropriating this possibility, which becomes relevant at every moment of existential judgment, can the Dasein authentically understand his death. To be authentically alive is to stand with courage in the face of the certainty of death as perceived through self-consciousness. Being, falling, and factuality characterize existence. Death is not something that comes after we have lived our lives, but it is imminent to us (HEIDEGGER, 1962, p. 296). In non-authentic existence, death is not understood beyond the empirical possibility of observing it in others. Authentic existence, however, takes a brave look at the final death. In the authentic self, death is not regarded as an external event after man has lived his life. He instead accepts death as an imminent reality and recognizes that when a person is born, he is already old enough to die.

In *Death with Interruptions*, Saramago's primary concern is not the absurdity of the events. In addition, the writer wonders how the heroes will handle death's absence. A lack of death will impact different people, institutions, and public bodies. Death will return, but how will it affect life and questions, such as should we die willingly? People who cross the border will rebel against absurdity and emulate those who rebel and bury their dead and build a bond between them. Is it possible to hope this is a temporary phenomenon?

"No dia seguinte ninguém morreu" is the first and last sentence of the novel *Death*

with Interruptions. It is possible to read this circular narrative from beginning to end and from end to beginning. However, from beginning to end, this sentence presents an absurd situation. *Death with Interruptions* is a book about death, but it is also a life story. Humanity, which dreams of immortality, has descended into absolute chaos because of the absence of death.

In *Death with Interruptions*, Death appears as a woman mocking people from all sides and ruling over their lives. As Saramago teaches us, we should not focus on the outer appearance of death, but rather on what is inside each of us. Even though the woman (death) deceives residents by sending them letters about their impending deaths, she causes them to re-evaluate their lives. The tone of the narrative is ironic throughout. There is also a basis for analyzing modes of existence from an existentialist perspective, and Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's concepts of death are relevant here. In the discourse of the philosopher's apprentice, whose knowledge of philosophy has been nourished by books just like Saramago himself, the "spirit" hovers over the aquarium as they discuss philosophy. The question is: "Já pensaste se a morte será a mesma para todos os seres vivos, sejam eles animais, incluindo o ser humano, ou vegetais, " (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 78). The apprentice says that once people were still dying around him, it did not occur to him that he would also die. And the Spirit answers:

Isto é, cada um com a sua morte própria, pessoal e intransmissível, Sim, E depois mais duas mortes gerais, uma para cada reino da natureza, Exacto, E acaba-se a distribuição hierárquica das competências delegadas por tântos, perguntou o aprendiz de filósofo, Até onde a minha imaginação consegue chegar, ainda vejo uma outra morte, a última, a suprema, Qual, Aquela que haverá de destruir o universo, essa que realmente merece o nome de morte, embora quando isso suceder já não se encontre ninguém aí para pronunciar-lo, o resto de que temos estado a falar não passa de pormenores ínfimos, de insignificâncias, Portanto, a morte não é única, Concluiu desnecessariamente o aprendiz de filósofo, É o que já estou cansado de te explicar, Quer dizer, uma morte, aquela que era nossa, suspendeu a actividade, as outras, as dos animais e dos vegetais, continuam a operar, são independentes, cada uma trabalhando no seu sector, Já estás convencido, Sim, Vai então e anuncia-o a toda a gente, disse o espírito que pairava sobre a água do aquário. E foi assim que a polémica começou (SARAMAGO, 2005, p.79-80).

In Saramago's story, Portugal, and humanity, in general, are the central topics. It is described in Saramago's ironic description of the country as one characterized by so much so that it is commonly believed that if forced to repeat the entirety of his first and thus, "que o senhor Jesus Cristo não quererá outro lugar para nascer se tivesse de repetir, de A até Z, a sua primeira e até agora, que se saiba, única existência terrenal" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 121). Many of the characters in this novel, as well as in other books by the author, are represented by characters rather than their names: the prime minister, the cardinal, the director of television, the cellist, death, the mafia, etc. The story focuses on an ancient subject - life in the face of death. There is a complementary relationship between Eros and Thanatos. This pendulum that the mythological heroes that Homer so well describes, between lust for life and becoming after death (death of heroes, of course, but it is still death), passes through history.

The story opens with an absurd situation where death awakens one day and stops killing humans. Her province is the only place where death strikes. It is because death doesn't strike people or animals in other countries. The absence of death can be challenging to deal with in a country where citizens follow government, police, and media rules. Furthermore, how does a church that knows everything handle death's absence? The description of death begins with a frightening, faceless, human-shaped figure, like a ghost.

The absence of death profoundly affects the behavior of the various bodies that govern our lives in a capitalist society. The government acts like the government in the novel *Blindness* when the crisis breaks out. First, the government keeps a watchful eye until the crisis ends. Then, when things become complicated, the government orders people to keep patients at home, causing them to "kill" and bury the dead across the border. Nobody was reassured by the soothing speeches of the prime minister and health minister. Like the speeches in the novel *Seeing*, these words have no practical meaning. Having described the media's handling of the new situation, Saramago suggests a headline for the newspaper: "Let us not foster false hopes" but agrees on a less charged one: "Ano Novo, Vida Nova" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 19).

Hospitals and doctors express concern and worry. Logistics are problematic, however: where will the beds of all the alive patients be placed? Still, the corridors are full of beds. A manifesto states that people should be taken care of by their families. Unfortunately, patients in difficult situations often do not know where they are, whether at home or hospital. Afterward, beds were placed in warehouses and on all corners, and severe terminal patients were no longer treated (Saramago, 2005, p. 30). Shelters for the third and fourth age groups, which relieve the family of caring for the elderly who have difficulty controlling their sphincters and drool during meals, also expressed concern about the lack of shelter—a problem resolved by natural death. The most dangerous situation is in nursing homes when they become "Cemitérios de Vivos" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 33).

Many insurance companies have warned about the dangers facing their industry. Creatively, it was decided that metaphorically "em que ficaria fixada a idade de oitenta anos para morte obrigatória, obviamente em sentido figurado... Havia que acrescentar ainda, e isso não seria o menos interessante, que, no caso de assim o desejarem, os clientes poderiam renovar o seu contrato por mais oitenta anos" (Saramago, 2005, p. 35) The cessation of death would mean a catastrophic economic collapse for burial societies. As the animals died, a grotesque decree ordering citizens to hand over dead animals was issued. "As agências funerárias transitaram da euforia ao desespero, outra vez a ruína, outra vez a humilhação de enterrar canários e gatos, cães e a restante bicharada, a tartaruga, a catatua, o esquilo, o lagarto não, porque não existia outro que se deixasse levar ao ombro do dono." (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 74). Giving someone the perfect reason to begin their book with the words "The next day there was no dog death".

A peasant family transports their sick sons and fathers to the border, where they will die and be buried, adding yet another dimension to the absurdity. A description of the poor family evokes the author's thoughts on writing. As in his other works, he portrays an ordinary family, often illiterate people. By depicting them as heroes, he conveys a simple message: rebel against the absurd. They will transfer the patients to the border, bury the deceased, and conclude the story with one of the most moving farewells:

Que importam pouco a este relato os parentescos de uns tantos camponeses que o mais provável é não voltarem a aparecer nele, melhor que ninguém o sabemos, mas pareceu-nos que não estaria bem, mesmo de um estrito ponto de vista técnico-narrativo, despachar em duas rápidas linhas precisamente aquelas pessoas que irão ser protagonistas de um dos mais dramáticos lances ocorridos nesta, embora certa, inverídica história **sobre as intermitências da morte**. Aí ficam, pois (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 42-43, grifo nosso).

The public imitates mass exodus while the government ignores and fails to view it as a sin. Sitting on the fence is a good option if the government does not directly deal with the mafia. Whenever there is an opportunity to earn easy money, the mafia always raises its head. As expected, the government cooperated with the mafia since the mafia can quickly resolve

problems that the government finds difficult to determine. As a result, the mafia has seized control over the government. The mafia is hiring virtuous, decent citizens, and this is an absurdity that reminds us of the daily reality of capitalism (Saramago, 2005, p. 58).

A series of grotesque discussions occur between the ministers and the prime minister. In attempting to dissuade the Prime Minister from cooperating with the mafia, the Interior Minister offers numerous suggestions regarding stopping the scourge. The first suggestion is to stop immoral families. Such families can kill their relatives. The prime minister mocks him with remarkable coolness. The president offers him another minister's portfolio in every proposal until almost all the files are under his control (Saramago, 2005, p. 61). The government uses sacred principles of humanity, love for others, and solidarity to persuade residents to leave dying patients at home. When a government surrenders to the mafia, it transfers civil servants to the crime organization, and Saramago mocks the moral values of politics, where pragmatism conducts the concert over the world:

[...] poder-se-ia pensar, dizíamos, que já não seriam possíveis maiores baixezas morais. Infelizmente, quando se avança às cegas pelos pantanosos terrenos da realpolitik, quando o pragmatismo toma conta da batuta e dirige o concerto sem atender ao que está escrito na pauta, o mais certo é que a lógica imperativa do aviltamento venha a demonstrar, afinal, que ainda havia uns quantos degraus para descer (SARAMAGO, 2005, p.63).

Another example of the feeble, unnecessary monarchy that persists in several parts of the world today is the exchange between the prime minister and the king. In this conversation, the prime minister states the following sensible statement: "se não voltamos a morrer não temos futuro." Unfortunately, because the king does not understand the sentence, he crossed out the word pension, as all that concerns him is the budget that continues to flow into the royal court, allowing him and his family to enjoy a senseless, hedonistic lifestyle (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 92). It may be better not to have a monarchy and establish a republic (as in Portugal). Lectures, books, congresses, conferences, and symposiums will be held. The King will host eighty receptions and a round table discussion. In addition, he will observe the length of skirts when they come back into fashion and reduce atmospheric ozone when it occurs. It is the most poignant example of the current irony (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 89).

Consequently, *Death with Interruptions* provided Saramago another opportunity to attack the church. During the "interval" of death, the Cardinal went into a panic: "sem morte não há ressurreição, e sem ressurreição não há igreja" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 20). The church, accustomed to delivering eternal answers, cannot function in a situation where there is no death. The Church has contradicted reality from the very beginning and has never asked for explanations in regard to its actions: "a nossa outra especialidade, além da balística, tem sido neutralizar, pela fé, o espírito curioso" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 22).

In a dialogue between clerics and philosophers organized by the interdisciplinary commission, the cleric argues that religion is an earthly phenomenon with nothing to do with heaven. It is unusual for the public to hear information of this nature. "What can we do?" replied the representative of the religions, "Algo teríamos que dizer para tornar atractiva a mercadoria, Isso quer dizer que em realidade não acreditam na vida eterna, Fazemos de conta" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 38). In the absence of adequate answers, the church tries to gain time. One philosopher argues, sarcastically, that the more we study religions, the more we will realize that death is the only thing that justifies their existence. Religions need death, just as the mouth needs bread. Therefore, the church is one of the first to rejoice when death reappears after seven months because, according to the church, it is Satan's doing, and we can almost say:

A dúvida de que deus teria autoridade sobre a morte ou se, pelo contrário, a morte seria o superior hierárquico de deus, torturava em surdina as mentes e os corações do santo instituto, onde aquela ousada afirmação de que deus e a morte eram as duas caras da mesma moeda passara a ser considerada, mais do que heresia, abominável sacrilégio (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 127).

It becomes even more absurd when death enters the world using a purple envelope containing a letter informing people that they will die in seven days. A "compassionate" death toward humanity gives the departed seven days of life. The purpose of this is to enable them to separate from their families, reconcile with those with whom they have disagreements, draft a will, or do anything else that needs to be done to complete their lives. Humans reject these ideas and refuse to accept the offers of death. Nevertheless, such a letter arrives at the table of the Director-General of Television, and he reads it to the entire public. The absurdity is increasing due to the belief that DNA should be analyzed in the author's handwriting (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 108). A pedant has conjured the following conclusions regarding the writing of death, and we confront Saramago's writing style:

[...] a morte, simplesmente, não dominava nem sequer os primeiros rudimentos da arte de escrever. Logo a caligrafia, disse ele, é estranhamente irregular, parece que se reuniram ali todos os modos conhecidos, possíveis e aberrantes de traçar as letras do alfabeto latino, como se cada uma delas tivesse sido escrita por uma pessoa diferente, mas isso ainda se perdoaria, ainda poderia ser tomado como defeito menor à vista da sintaxe caótica, da ausência de pontos finais, do não uso de parêntesis absolutamente necessários, da eliminação obsessiva dos parágrafos, da virgulação aos saltinhos e, pecado sem perdão, da intencional e quase diabólica abolição da letra maiúscula, que, imagine-se, chega a ser omitida na própria assinatura da carta e substituída pela minúscula correspondente. Uma vergonha, uma provocação, continuava o gramático, e perguntava, Se a morte, que teve o impagável privilégio de assistir no passado aos maiores génios da literatura, escreve desta maneira, como não o farão amanhã as nossas crianças se lhes dá para imitar semelhante monstruosidade filológica, a pretexto de que, andando a morte por cá há tanto tempo, deverá saber tudo de todos os ramos do conhecimento (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 117).

Likewise, a letter in a purple envelope arrives to a cellist from a local orchestra, but it makes its way back to the sender (death) three times. As in most of Saramago's novels featuring male protagonists, the hero of this novel is a cellist in the Municipal Symphony Orchestra. He is about fifty years old and has rarely been in a relationship with a woman. Over an extended period, and with the dog's 'consent,' he did not share his bed with any women. As in *Memorial do Convento*, the music creates a sense of solidarity. However, it is also a reaction to the absurdity of the situation described in the novel. Bach's Suite, its hearing even affects the behavior of death: "como a nona sinfonia de Beethoven, na tonalidade da alegria, da unidade entre os homens, da amizade e do amor" (SARAMAGO, 2005, p.159).

When a musician encounters death, he becomes a new musician, who plays as if bidding farewell to the world. The play shows that he has many feelings, desires, and dreams that he has never realized, and they all represent life, the life he has not lived in the plenum which we are invited to participate in (SARAMAGO, 2005, p. 198). The story's absurdity is when death is reincarnated as a beautiful, attractive woman, and an affair occurs between the two. As music has breathed life into death, it has also breathed life into love, and love is the only source of hope. The meaning of love is to live without fear in this life, even knowing that death is just around the corner.

Saramago states in an interview that the choice of a cellist is not random: Quando era muito novo, comecei a estudar música na Academia dos Amadores de Música com a ideia de vir a tocar violoncelo. Nunca lhe pus as mãos em cima, mas sempre me ficou essa vontade por se tratar um instrumento cujo som mais aproxima da voz humana (SARAMAGO, 2010, p. 86).

Todos os Nomes – and not a single name – life alongside Death

[...] Aqui, na sala da morte e da ganha, seria impossível estabelecer um critério parecido com o que foi adoptado por aquele conservador de registo civil que decidiu reunir num só arquivo os nomes e os papéis, todos eles, dos vivos e dos mortos que tinha à sua guarda, alegando que só juntos podiam representar a humanidade como ela deveria ser entendida, um todo absoluto, independentemente do tempo e dos lugares, e que tê-los mantido separados havia sido um atentado contra o espírito (SARAMAGO, 2005, p.165).

In the novel *Todos os Nomes*, the Central Registry presents an irony by separating the living from the dead. This place has the appearance of a labyrinth, with living documents at the front and dead documents at the back. A cemetery is a place where life ends, and gravestones mark the names of the deceased. Despite its similarity to the Central Registry in structure, it becomes a place where life and death coexist. The dead are buried in the ground, and their living family members visit them. Throughout Saramago's work, the subject of death is discussed in miraculous realism, intertwining reality and supernatural beings. Leave the usual order of presentation and describe the areas that do not have any logical explanation, nor is it necessary to look for one.

There are descriptions of areas in the novel that lack logical explanations or require further exploration and exclusions from the ordinary course of events. The protagonist of the novel, José (a Portuguese name that means "a certain man"), has worked at the Central Registry for 25 years and lives in an apartment adjacent to the office by a door. He maintains a private collection of famous people's birth records that he creates himself. Senhor José is so devoted to the work that he has never been absent from it. He has never been ill, and he is an obedient employee to his superiors' orders. He accidentally included a record card belonging to an unknown woman in his private collection on one occasion. An impulse leads him to copy the records of this unknown woman who he does not know. His collection is limited to the names of famous people, whose biographical information can be obtained from newspapers and other media outlets. The man decides to leave his regular job of registering and learn more about this woman. Searches have been conducted at four locations: the Central Registry, the city, the school where she studied and worked, and the cemetery. Only the investigation leads him to encounter a human being that provides him with any other knowledge of the "anonymous" woman (who turns out to be dead at the end of the novel). Knowing all the details of this woman's life, which no one was aware of, he drafted a false birth record in the Registry's current book, a false record that contained all the details of the actual record, except the date of death.

The author of *Todos os Nomes* explores the search for "the self," "otherness," and "love," which lack words or meaning in the life of an anonymous clerk. When confronted with the absurdity of another's suicide, an anti-hero undergoes a process of self-enlightenment and realizes happiness as a result of self-realization. To locate the woman, the hero must leave the enclosed areas of the house and the Central Registry. Only a faint light emanating from a hatch in the ceiling illuminated the imprisoned and painful place. Senhor José must use

"Ariadne's thread" every time he enters the archive, which contains the dead documents and is in the offices, to get out of the labyrinth.

Saramago describes, in his diary, the kind of office he believes should be established. Hierarchy, order, and discipline need to be well defined and unquestionable. He writes:

A sala da conservatoria tem um balcão corrido para atender o público. Os funcionários são onze e alinham-se Segundo uma hierarquia que recordará a antiga disposição dos jogadores de futebol no campo, isto é, cinco à frente, três depois deles, dois a seguir, finalmente, ao fundo, o chefe. O funcionário protagonista ocupa um dos extremos da primeira linha. Por trás dos funcionários estão os arquivos, cinco enormes estantes que se prolongam, paralelas, para o interior da sala, obedecendo à disposição dos funcionários: o topo da estante central está logo atrás do chefe, os topos laterais, de um lado e do outro, avançam de modo a ficarem também atrás dos funcionários que ocupam os extremos das duas primeiras filas. Os dois funcionários que estão à frente do chefe são subchefes, os três que estão à frente dos subchefes são oficiais, os cinco que estão à frente dos oficiais e atrás do balcão são escriturários. O conjunto é harmonioso.

O arquivo está arrumado de forma racional, **separando os mortos dos vivos**. As estantes dos mortos estão lá para dentro, onde a luz natural que entra pelas clarabóias do tecto não consegue chegar. A luz artificial, quando excepcionalmente a acendem, é mortiça. A cada pessoa corresponde um processo e uma ficha. Para facilitar o trabalho, o arquivo de fichas dos vivos ocupa as prateleiras devaixo do balcão. O arquivo das fichas dos mortos está instalado junto com as estantes que lhes correspondem. O mesmo sentido da racionalização do trabalho orientou a arrumação dos processos dos vivos: os que estão mais perto dos funcionários correspondem às pessoas idosas, os novinhos recentemente registrados encontram-se no final das estantes. Os processos movem-se constantemente: como na vida real, vão saindo os que morrem. À medida que o tempo passa, os processos das pessoas vão-se aproximando dos funcionários. Nos casos de vidas excepcionalmente longas os processos respectivos colocam-se nos primeiros lugares e aí permanecem por um tempo, provocando a curiosidade, e logo depois a impaciência do chefe (SARAMAGO, 1998, p.13-14, grifo nosso).

The moment José enters the city, where the streets are flooded by heavy rain, he is immersed in another world, the world of others. Good things and bad things are happening in this world. In this context, he is introduced to the story of this anonymous woman by her parents and her neighbor. The latter recalls her life and provides interesting details regarding it. Moreover, since José lacks a real-life narrative, he is exposed to the story of himself or the absence thereof.

Saramago does not confine himself to describing his attitude toward power, bureaucracy, and its representatives in this book. In Saramago's story, a sensitive reader will see that "succumbing" to the story means reading a story in which the words, all the words, exert a powerful hypnotic force. Only at this point will he notice the thoughts, self-dialogues, and endless reflections, which are the proper theme of this entire discussion. In *Todos os Nomes*, the main character, Senhor José, was lost among the labyrinth of documents at the Central Registry. His actions illustrate why mountains of words and names serve no purpose. The author refers to bureaucracy, the absence of names, and the meaning of names. While we all share the same fate and are essentially anonymous, our stories are all different.

In this novel, almost all the dialogues are imagined. José has very few brief genuine and realistic conversations with his co-workers, the old woman in the basement, the old

shepherd in the cemetery, and other characters. Many of them describe the contingencies of life in imaginary dialogue. He manages his life by imaginary dialogues that discuss abstract concepts such as 'reason' and 'anxiety.': "A angústia, quando chega, não se vai embora com essa facilidade" (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 47). Reason and anxiety conclude that chance has a special place in this process. And "Como se a conversa não lhe dissesse respeito, o Sr. José revolvia-se na cama sem poder entrar no sono" (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 48). It appears that he ironically manages his life, responding as if they do not concern him. Accept the presence of abstract elements and their appearance as human beings. José's search for the unknown woman is like his reflections on "rational thought" and "autonomous thought" in the absurd situation he lives in (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 68).

The protagonist may become merely an observer through rational thought and may even be paralyzed from acting. But a person's autonomy and independent thought motivate the individual to act, and the individual discovers that the meaning lies in the search itself. He encounters many obstacles in his search for the unknown woman but engages in a fascinating conversation with the question, which never ceases to intrigue him. Finally, having thrown himself on the bed, he wished to sleep:

Voltou para a cama, aliviado, mas a pergunta tinha lá ficado à sua espera, Não adiantaste nada... Esperarei que as coisas se acalmem, E depois, Não sei, há-de aparecer-me uma ideia, Podias resolver o assunto agora mesmo, Como, Telefonas aos pais, dizes que falas em nome da Conservatória, pedes que te dêem a direcção, Isso não faço, Amanhã vais a casa da mulher, não sou capaz de imaginar que conversa será a vossa, mas ao menos tirarás daí o sentido, Provavelmente não quererei falar-lhe quando a tiver diante, Sendo assim, por que é que a procuras, por que é que andas a investigar-lhe a vida, Também ando a juntar papéis sobre o bispo e nem por isso estou interessado em falar algum dia com ele, Parece-me absurdo, É absurdo, **mas já era tempo de fazer algo absurdo na vida** (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 82, grifo nosso).

Because Senhor José cannot comprehend his condition, his experience of absurdity is in the imaginary dialogues he conducts. It is in his rebellion against the rules and regulations of the Central Registry, which he respects without ever daring to challenge them. Although the experience does not necessarily activate consciousness, it can decode itself. Jose solved it on a concrete, personal level. Although the dialogues were internal, they brought him into the world. The request is both concrete and personal: "do something absurd in life" implies setting out to revolt and seeking out the "other" in the form of solidarity that was previously unknown. For example, discovering a woman who is no longer alive and becoming an integral part of his life. In the story, the absurdity of life is not necessarily reflected in actions. An example of this absurdity is the day-to-day operation of the registry. The registrar approaches a clerk and asks for his health (after the clerk has fallen ill) without adhering to the proper hierarchy. The rest of the officials are concerned about this gesture, and they observe José differently (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 140).

Quite a few metaphysical dialogues, the most beautiful in this novel, are held by José with the ceiling:

Não poderias estar na minha pele, não passas de um tecto de estuque, Sim, mas o que estás a ver de mim também é uma pele, aliás, a pele é tudo quanto queremos que os outros vejam de nós, por baixo dela nem nós próprios conseguimos saber quem somos... A sabedoria dos tectos é infinita, Se és um tecto sábio, dá-me uma ideia, Continua a olhar para mim, às vezes dá resultado... Vivia em paz antes desta obsessão absurda, andar à procura de uma mulher que nem sabe que existo, Mas sabes tu que ela existe, o

problema é esse... Essa é mais rançosa ainda, não me digas que é nesses lugares-comuns que consiste a sabedoria dos tectos, comentou desdenhoso o Sr. José, Não sabes nada da vida se crês que há mais alguma coisa para saber, respondeu o tecto, e calou-se (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 157-158).

Time becomes exceptionally relevant when one considers one's relationship with another as a subject. As a result, José performs the following actions: first, he searches for the woman at the address listed on the Central Registry record, then he looks for her at the school where she studied and taught, and at the end of the search, he discovers that she is buried in the suicide section of the cemetery. José's search for this woman and finding out that she is no longer alive is "absurd madness." Thus, disrupting the sense of time and allowing him to contemplate, enlighten, and decode consciousness. José has difficulty in conducting a dialogue with himself about the differences between **psychological time, mental time, and mathematical time:**

Em lugar de reconhecer-se uno e inteiro na sucessão dos instantes, se encontrasse repartido ao longo da duração destes últimos dias, da duração psicológica ou subjectiva, não da matemática ou real, e com ela se contraísse e dilatasse. Sou definitivamente absurdo, repreendia-se o Sr. José, o dia já tinha vinte e quatro horas quando foi decidido que as tivesse, a hora tem e sempre teve sessenta minutos, os sessenta segundos do minuto vêm desde a eternidade... Não sendo o desarranjo, pelo menos que eu saiba, na máquina do tempo real, mas na mecânica psicológica que o mede, o que eu deveria fazer era procurar um psicólogo que me reparasse a roda de escape (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 180, grifo nosso).

As José's subjective time is disrupted, there is the possibility of unity in his existence. Saramago describes three types of time: mathematical, clock, and psychological. We live in an existential time, in which time moves at once fast and slow -a time in which time does not move linearly from the past to the future. The outcome of a story that unfolds over several days or months is the same. Therefore, existential time is precious. Psychology or subjective time, like the experience of absurdity, arises when one examines his consciousness and decodes his actions. It enables him to revolt and acquires a sense of solidarity. It is difficult for José to cope with this disruption since he lives according to a mathematical time frame that governs his day and night. Being able to recognize this within himself, rather than on a continuum of moments and days, allows him to view reality differently. It's like when people are starving in a mental hospital, exposed to the terror of the military outside, and bullies inside the room, in Saramago's *Ensaio Sobre a Cegueira*. They never ask the question about how time is measured. When the doctor's wife, who owned a mechanical watch, forgot to stretch it, she lost mathematical "time," but she remained attached to the existential time, to the "time of life." In *Death with Interruptions*, we ask how we can measure the time at which death ceases to exist. In this case, time is no longer measured in quantitative terms but becomes a different quality of time.

Throughout the novel, the reader is given the impression that this is a thriller with new details and layers added. Despite the irony of the hero's description, the reader is left with a sense of sympathy. An example of this is in the weekend description of Senhor José when he spends time at the school where the unknown woman studied. Upon investigating this woman's life, he discovers that she was a teacher at the school she attended as a child. Clumsy José scratches his knees upon climbing and is soaked from head to toe by the pouring rain.

Não aguento mais, pensou, e sem se poder conter, de pura exaustão nervosa, começou a soluçar, um choro desatado, quase convulsivo, ali, de pé, como se tivesse voltado a ser, noutra escola, o rapazinho das primeiras classes que

cometeu uma travessura e foi chamado ao director para receber o merecido castigo... sujo o corpo, magoado o espírito, e ambos infelizes, Que faço eu aqui, perguntou-se, mas não quis responder, teve medo de que o motivo que o tinha trazido a este lugar, posto assim a descoberto, lhe aparecesse absurdo, disparatado, coisa de louco (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 98-99).

In addition to his weekend stay at school, tragic and pathetic images accompany this story and insights gained only by leaving his home, which contains only words, images, and illusions. As he approaches the end of the school day, he sees himself in the bathroom mirror and is frightened: "o Sr. José pôde ver-lhe a cara de frente não obstante as gotículas que se agarravam à vidraça, houve um momento em que, talvez impaciente por o autocarro tardar a arrancar, ela levantou a cabeça, foi então que encontrou o olhar dele." (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 112). The experience of being in the same school where the unknown woman studied and taught provides an opportunity for consciousness to decipher itself. Being a person who has lived all his life in an absurd existence without connection with reality, he will view any unusual act as absurd, disturbing, and insane. Jose's attendance at school is evidence of his rebellious behavior. Camus links absurdity to the first certainty, the certainty of revolt, from which one can move in the right direction:

I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd, but I cannot doubt the validity of my proclamation and I must at least believe in my protest. The first and only evidence that has supplied me, within the terms of the absurdist experience, is rebellion. (CAMUS, 1991, p. 9).

The relationship between Senhor José and the chef of the Central Register leaves us as readers amazed by the virtuosity with which Saramago has portrayed the characters, their thoughts, and the change that began with them. When a clerk informs the chef that José is ill and cannot work, the absurd hierarchy of the office is comical. Angry, the first clerk takes three steps towards the senior clerk in charge of his department, who, in turn, takes four steps toward the deputy; the latter takes five steps to reach the Registrar's (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 79). By making a 'different' speech, this Registrar exposes José's illegal actions and points out the absurdity of his proposal. A dramatic climax is reached in the story when the Registrar announces that he has recently realized how absurd it is to separate the dead from the living.

[...]nunca eu teria chegado a compreender a dupla absurdidade que é separar os mortos dos vivos. Em primeiro lugar, é uma absurdidade do ponto de vista arquivístico, considerando que a maneira mais fácil de encontrar os mortos seria poder procurá-los onde se encontrassem os vivos, posto que a estes, por vivos serem, os temos permanentemente diante dos olhos, mas, em segundo lugar, é também uma absurdidade do ponto de vista memorístico, porque se os mortos não estiverem no meio dos vivos acabarão mais tarde ou mais cedo por ser esquecidos... nós os que escrevemos e movemos os papéis da vida e da morte, reunamos em um só arquivo, a que passaremos a chamar simplesmente histórico, os mortos e os vivos, tornando-os inseparáveis neste lugar, já que lá fora a lei, o costume e o medo não o consentem... teria de explicar-vos que só de vida tenho estado a falar aqui, e não de morte, e que, se isto não o havíeis entendido antes, é porque nunca sereis capazes de entender seja o que for (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 208-209).

As the Registrar concluded his last words with sarcasm, he returned to being as he had always been arrogant and ironic, critical, and ruthless, keeping discipline within the orderly workplace he managed. José's rebellion exposes the absurdity of archiving death records in the dark rear wing. From the perspective of human existence as well death is an intrinsic part

of existence, and any attempt to deny this fact leaves us in an absurd situation. It is a story about life and death living side by side. The cemetery is a replica of the Central Registry, which operates in the same hierarchy. When a graveyard is a labyrinth, a person must have prior knowledge to locate the grave he is looking for. The cemetery clerk has provided Senhor José with a map. Several people had lost their way, and when the cemetery workers went to find them, they were in a panic. It is like the Central Registry, where you must tie yourself to a rope called the Adriane thread when you enter the dead wing. A clerk who did not find his way out was found dead. At this cemetery, people are buried, and only their names are engraved on the five visible sides of the stone, like five blank pages in a book. After visiting the cemetery, Senhor José learns that it is a landmark on his journey. It is just as significant as the apartment on the ground floor of the old woman, the school, and the pharmacy, where he seeks clarification on several outstanding issues. It is also true of the Central Registry Archive, which contains records of deaths.

The absurdity grows when the old shepherd in the cemetery changes the names on the fresh graves every night since the sign means nothing to him. More than that, he believes it is more honorable for a dead person to have strangers mourn their passing. It is especially true in the graveyard section dedicated to suicides, who carried out the act to avoid being discovered. The mere substitution of names on a grave "frees" them from unwanted visitors. A few days later, when the old shepherd revisits the place and finds the marble gravestones engraved with the names of the people and the date of their deaths, he thinks, "Que é possível não vermos a mentira mesmo quando a temos diante dos olhos." (SARAMAGO, 1997, p. 241). Following an encounter with a shepherd in a graveyard of suicides, Senhor José moves the unknown woman's name to another grave in a show of rebellion and absurdity. Perhaps tomorrow, when the shepherd makes another exchange, he will place the appropriate mark on the correct tomb, and the lie will become truth. It is one of the many beautiful scenes in Saramago's novel that make us marvel again and again at his fertile imagination.

As in Saramago's other books, irony also dominates with a big question mark, the question of life and death, truth and falsehood, physical existence and spiritual existence, the individual and society. Existential questions through the "chisel" - his writing pen penetrates the stone's interior. *All the Names* is a novel describing a person living an absurd, completely meaningless life. But here, too, the spark of hope arises when José leaves his room and goes looking for the unknown woman. He says "no" to the boss and the bureau, and only saying this "no" takes him out of his solipsistic place toward solidarity with the other, compassion for the other and its suffering.

Ponto final em *Todos os Nomes*. Não sou capaz de imaginar o que se dirá deste livro inesperado, creio, para os leitores...A noite, enquanto passeava no jardim para acalmar nervos, tive uma ideia que explicará melhor o que quero dizer: foi como se, até ao *Evangelho*, eu tivesse andado a descrever uma estátua, e a partir dele tivesse passado para o interior da pedra. Pilar acha que é o meu melhor romance, e ela sempre tem razão (SARAMAGO, 1998, p.122).

Final considerations

This article was written with the intent of presenting a reflection on death by José Saramago. This reflection may help us accept death as a companion of life throughout our existence. Saramago uses this opportunity to describe how contemporary society is moving away from the body, denying death and life. As an illustration of this notion, I chose to discuss Saramago's *Refluxo*, *Todos os Nomes*, and *As Intermitências da Morte*.

Saramago presents the issue of death in various ways in his writing, and his conception is like that of South American writers. However, he offers death in his works uniquely. The author engages the reader in a discussion on a complex subject. While doing so, he places himself in a position from which the reader can also reflect. Death, according to Saramago, is a necessary part of life. According to this view, death becomes a task or an existential project rather than a contingent event. The only subject worth discussing is life and death, said Saramago in an interview. When asked, "why death"? He answered:

Porque é da morte que temos sempre que falar. Nós morremos, mas lidamos com ela como se fosse mais um episódio da vida, banalizamos-la, e não deveria ser assim. Em *Todos os Nomes* fala-se muitíssimo da morte, mas fala-se muitíssimo da morte para falar da vida. O que acontece é que pretende falar da vida iludindo a morte, como se não existisse, é mentira. O que eu pretendo fazer é confrontar-me com a morte, não com a minha morte, não com o final da minha vida, o desastre que será, a pena que sentirão quando forem ver-me: pobrezinho, morreu. Não é isso. Trata-se do facto em si da morte, de que temos que morrer e como isso ilumina ou, pelo contrário, obscurece a própria vida que temos. Está tudo aí: a vida, o amor, tudo está contido nesse final, tudo o que tu digas ou tenhas feito aponta nessa direcção e aí se cumprirá tudo. Não há nada de mórbido no que estou a dizer-te, nada, não há morbidez alguma. Não me agrada falar da morte, mas está aí. O que eu quero é confrontar-me com ela e que aquilo que escreva tenha essa referência, que não é expressão definitiva do pessimismo, não. O pessimismo está antes e não é pelo facto de te confrontares **com a morte que se resolve tudo**; o que pretendo evitar é que se esqueça que existe, que é o que se costuma fazer. Procuramos apagar a morte. Nós já não morremos, desaparecemos simplesmente (ARIAS, 2000, p. 63, grifo nosso).

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