

Hegemony and Search of Meaning in the Post-Apocalyptic Fiction: The Case of *Blindness* by José Saramago

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Abstract: The purpose of the present thesis is to explore Hegemony and Search of Meaning in the Post-apocalyptic Fiction: The Case of *Blindness* by José Saramago. The researcher through Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and defining meaning making process try to lay down the foundation for thesis questions. Fiction and fictionality is significant as well. What happens after the apocalypse the new world order is found and un-named characters juggle to find meaning. Even if they are led by their ideologies and the hegemony over them, they try to find their way out of the given world and salvage themselves. The role ideology plays is significant as well.

Even if they are struck by an unknown white blindness, eventually however, they find their eyesight back and continue to live their lives, even if the Doctor's wife states that they have always been blind, but seeing. Their commotion and actives in the clandestine and forsaken sanitarium is so significant by being in direct stream of the whole thesis that all concepts of hegemony, ideology, search for a meaning, and a post-apocalyptic fiction are fully investigated.

The conclusion would be the notion that Doctor's wife mentioned. We may find salvation, but we are taken aback by our eternal blindness which we may never want to see the truth due to being stricken by hegemony of ideology, playing an important part in our background and the way we see the world as our frame of reference.

Keywords: ideology, fictionality of the real, Logocentrism, Hegemony, post-apocalyptic fiction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apocalypse and Post-apocalyptic fiction:

By looking up at common dictionaries two definitions of the phenomenon, fiction, is given:¹

1. Literature in the form of prose, especially novels, that describes imaginary events and people.
2. Something that is invented or untrue.

Fiction is the classification of any ilk of writing propelled by imagination; it varies from play, short stories, novel, novella and so forth.

Fiction constitutes an act of creative invention, so that faithfulness to reality is not typically assumed; in other words, fiction is not expected to present only characters who are actual people or descriptions that are factually true. The context of fiction is generally open to interpretation, due to fiction's freedom from any necessary embedding in reality; however, some fictional works are claimed to be, or marketed as, historically or factually accurate, complicating the traditional distinction between fiction and non-fiction. Fiction is a classification or category, rather than a specific mode or genre, unless used in a narrower sense as a synonym for a particular literary fiction form.²

Oxford Dictionary. ¹
<http://dbpedia-live.openlinksw.com/page/Fiction>. ²

Edward Albee, the American playwright rightly described fiction however as: "Fiction is fact distilled into truth." (1966). Quite wrongly fiction is thought to be mere imagination; accordingly Jean Baudrillard describes fiction and imagination as:

Fiction is not imagination. It is what anticipates imagination by giving it the form of reality. This is quite opposite to our own natural tendency which is to anticipate reality by imagining it, or to flee from it by idealizing it. That is why we [Europeans] shall never inhabit true fiction; we are condemned to the imaginary and nostalgia for the future. The American way of life is spontaneously fictional, since it is a transcending of the imaginary in reality. (1986: 95)

So according to Baudrillard's Hyper-reality, a work of pure fiction could be more real than facts. This is this probability, likelihood of the improbable which Saramago Himself pointed out. Jorge Luis Borges the famous Argentinian fiction writer vis-à-vis describes fiction as:

1. Every novel is an ideal plane inserted into the realm of reality.
2. Reality is not always probable, or likely. But if you're writing a story, you have to make it as plausible as you can, because if not, the reader's imagination will reject it. ³

Apocalypse and Post-apocalyptic fiction as a genre:

The post-apocalyptic (sometimes abbreviated as "post-apo" or "post-nuke") is a sub-genre of science fiction, that depicts life after a disaster, which destroyed civilization: a nuclear war, collision with a meteorite, epidemic, economic and energy crisis, etc.

Sometimes used simply for its ultra-violent aspects, post-apocalyptic fiction is based on a delicate balance between a lost civilization and a rising chaos. This is both the end of the world and a new start. A rich contradiction that develops an original speech about the real world order that follows.

Origin:

The fear of nuclear war gave birth to the post-apocalyptic genre. In the multitude of post-apocalyptic works, two essential criteria are prevalent: the society is destroyed; the protagonist(s) live in the ruins of the ancient civilization.

These two criteria also allow a wide range of situations. Most of the works offer a vision where society is destroyed, forgotten and scorned its values, and most of humanity has disappeared; like *The Road* (Cormac McCarthy's novel). But other authors prefer a more ambiguous world and closer to ours, where companies have been rebuilt, with laws and rules or even identical situations to ours, where only the central authority of the State disappeared. The survivors sometimes live among technological vestiges without understanding it.

Themes:

A meteorite crashing into the Earth could cause the end of life in the present form. Beyond the classic themes of survival, violence, the environment hostile to man, most post-apocalyptic use of this decoration to bring a reflection on the place of man in relation to beings and to society. Out of the shackles of laws, the men reveal their true nature, and the commotion of the characters amidst the pandemonium creates a kind of social laboratory where the author experiments on human relationships. We regularly find the themes of solitary against the group, coexistence altruistic behavior, selfish and aggressive or nostalgic of the old civilization, aficionados of the new anarchy, and visionaries who want to create a new way of function.

2. ANCIENT PREDECESSORS

Many ancient civilizations, including Babylonian and Jewish, had produced the apocalyptic and mythological literature dealing with the end of the world. The Epic of Gilgamesh, written about 2000-1500 BC for example, speaks of a myth in which the angry gods cause floods to punish humanity because of their sins but the ancient hero Utnapishtim and his family were saved through the intervention of the god Enki. The scriptural story of Noah and his ark describes the end of a corrupt civilization and its replacement by a world remade. The first centuries of our era saw the creation of various apocalyptic works, the best known is Apocalypse of John (Book of Revelation) (the origin of the word "Apocalypse"

³ "Partial Magic in the Quixote", *Labyrinths* (1964)

means "revealing secrets"), which is filled with prophecies of destruction along with bright ideas. In the first chapter of Apocalypse, the author John of Patmos describes his divine mission: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things which shall be hereafter." Apocalypse 1: 19

It is the revelation of the word of God which will cleanse the world from sins and give salvation that were obedient. The Apocalypse of John provides a beautiful vision of the Last Judgment, revealing the promise of God for the redemption of suffering. Apocalypse describes a new heaven and a new earth, and the audience (the Christians under persecution from the Roman Empire to which John wrote letters that finally was made to the book) was delighted and inspired, rather than terrified by the idea of Last Judgment. These Christians believed they were the elected for the salvation of God and therefore these apocalyptic sensibilities, inspired optimism in them of good old times in the Garden of Eden.

3. WORKS BEFORE 1900

The novel by Mary Shelley written in 1826, *The Last Man*, is considered the first modern work of apocalyptic fiction. The story follows a group of people struggling to survive in a world infected by the plague. It focuses on a male character as he struggles to keep his family safe but he is inevitably left as the last living man.

The *Conversation of Eiros and Charmion* of Edgar Allan Poe written in 1839 is the conversation between two souls in the afterlife as they discuss the world's destruction. The destruction was caused by a comet that eliminated the nitrogen of the atmosphere, which left only oxygen and resulted a Hell in the world.

The novel, *After London*, written by Richard Jefferies in 1885 can be described as a true post-apocalyptic fiction. After a sudden disaster and unspecified that wiped out the population of England, nature takes its course and the few survivors return to a quasi-medieval way of life. The first chapters are essentially a description of the recovery of England in nature: fields become overgrown by forest, pets are now wild, roads and cities are overgrown, London becomes a lake and marshes are toxic.

H. G. Wells wrote several novels on post-apocalyptic theme. Published in 1895, *Wells's Time Machine* follows a nameless protagonist who travels to the year 802,701 AD. AD after civilization has collapsed which humanity is divided into two distinct species, Eloi goblins and brutal Morlocks. Later in the story, the protagonist starts off the journey towards a dying future of an Earth under a red sun.

In the novel of Wells in 1898, *War of the Worlds*, an invasion of Earth by the inhabitants of the planet Mars is described. They destroy Victorian England with an armament of advanced technology, mounted on almost indestructible vehicles.

4. *BLINDNESS* IN BRIEF

Beginning is the hardest part, early in the confinement of *Blinds*, Saramago puts the words like this:

"Where to begin, he asked, where you always have to begin, at the beginning, The beginning is never the clear, precise end of a thread, the beginning is a long, painfully slow process that requires time and patience in order to find out in which direction it is heading, a process that feels its way along the path ahead like a blind man the beginning is just the beginning, what came before is night on worthless." (2003: 53-4)

Blindness is the story of an unknown, unexplained pandemic of blindness affecting and inflicting nearly everyone in an unnamed city, and the social breakdown that consequently comes by. The novel follows the misfortunes of a manifold of characters that among the first to be stricken by the white devil, are the doctor's wife, her husband, several of his patients, and crowd of others, that are quarantined. After a lengthy and traumatic quarantine in an obsolete asylum, the group bands together in a family-like unit to survive by their wits and the unexplained good fortune that the doctor's wife has escaped the blindness by. The striking, sudden and unexplained origin, and nature of the blindness causes wholesome panic, and the social order swiftly disintegrate as the government attempts to maintain the apparent contagion and keep order through increasingly repressive measures.

The first part of the novel indicates the experiences of the central characters in the filthy, overcrowded asylum, where they and other blind people have been quarantined. Hygiene, living conditions, and morale degrade horrifically on a very short notice.

Anxiety over the availability of food, caused by irregularities of providence by the governmental agents, acts to undermine solidarity; and the lack of organization, prevents the internees from having discipline or fulfilling the fair share of chores. Soldiers who are assigned to guard the asylum and look after the seeming, well-being of the internees, become increasingly nonchalant as one soldier after another becomes infected by the inevitable blindness. The military refuses to allow in basic medicines, so that a simple infection becomes lethal. Fearing a stand-out and break-out, soldiers shoot a crowd of internees waiting for their food provision.

Conditions degenerate as the story unfolds, as an armed clique of internee gains control over food deliveries, subjugating their fellow internees and exposing them to rape and deprivation through armed force. Faced with starvation, internees do battle and burn down the asylum, only to find that the army has long ago abandoned the asylum, after which the main characters join the throngs of nearly helpless blind people outside who wander the devastated city and fight and loot one another to survive.

The story then follows the doctor's wife, her husband, and their impromptu "family unit" as they try to survive outside the quarantine, cared for largely by the doctor's wife, who could still see (though she was forced to hide this fact at the beginning). The breakdown of society is imminent. Law and order, social services, government, schools, etc., no longer function. Families are separated and cannot find each other. People linger in abandoned buildings and cadge for food. Violence, disease, and despair made so-called collateral human coping almost impossible. The doctor and his wife and their new "family" finally settle a permanent household in the doctor's house and are establishing a new order to their lives, when the blindness fades away from the city en masse, as suddenly and inexplicably as it first struck.

5. THE MEANING OF LIFE; A QUEST

The term quest here refers to the meaning of life, the question about the origin, nature and purpose of life, or more generally from the existence, especially of human existence. This metaphysical question is often asked as a series of questions: "Who are we? ", "where do we come from? ", "Where are we going?"... In the course of human history in different cultures; many intellectual inquiry, philosophical conceptualization, artistic expressions, have had their own understanding of it, leading even to different answers and sometimes even contradictory upcoming.

A philosopher like Jean Grondin, speaks of it as a "critical thinking" which is based on philosophy, and he sums it up as: "What are we doing here, why and for whom are we here, what we need, what can we do here?" According to some philosophers, this question would even be inherent to human being. Arthur Schopenhauer said: "Who does not question is a beast, because the constituent concern for all human life is that of its meaning."(1998:226)

So search for meaning both on ontic and epistemic level preoccupied the mind of the mass, historian and philosophers per se, throughout the entire human history, ranging from Plato's allegory of cave indicating the inevitability of sense-perception failure to grasp the reality, to more recent questioning of an absolute self in the structuralism and post-structuralism objective and scientific approach to reality.

6. SOUS RATURE: SELF UNDER ERASURE

The experience of the Cartesian self, fully capable of reasoning formulating everything and so on could be a myth. Being confined in the prison house of language which transgress even its own hermeneutic rules and is thirsty for making communications (lingual form, intra-human) the total I is doomed to failure, an obsession with names that are necessarily misnames, names that are necessarily catachresis, 'writing,' 'différance,' 'power', names that have no adequate literal referent.

The idea of metaphysic of presence which prevailed western civilization was gradually terminated by the founders of Discursivity in the 19th century and more importantly by Jacques Derrida. Central to Derrida's theory of différance is his discussion on the metaphysics of presence. When Derrida is to "present" différance (i.e., "the present" of différance) on the metaphysical significance (presence) of the "a" in différance, he carefully draws a conditional prerequisite.

The present Derrida says: "The present is a trace, and "this trace [is] related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and [this trace constitutes] what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what is absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present" (Derrida 1982b: 13).

The discussion of the present of the sign plays a more important role than do linguistic differences, which itself is important to Derrida's philosophy of *différance*. "Différance is concerned with the scene of the presence of each element. Firstly, the present of the sign always employs a self-defeating element. Because there are substitutions of linguistic structures, the movement of signification must justify itself by announcing that the alleged element is present in the form of a mark of something other than itself on the basis of that particular temporality."(2004:104)

Différance, Derrida argues, is "what makes possible the presentation of the being-present . . . [and it] is never offered to the present". Perhaps the temporization of essence of the reference in the discussion of *différance* should be understood as "reserving itself, not exposing itself". Derrida explains that in its every presentation "[reference] would be exposed to disappearing as disappearance. [Reference] would risk appearing: disappearing." (2011:156)

This is interplay of signifiers not present and always already there which makes the existence of a pure complete I impossible. That's what *Sous rature* is, a strategic philosophical device originally developed by Martin Heidegger. Usually translated as 'under erasure', "it involves the crossing out of a word within a text, but allowing it to remain legible and in place. Used extensively by Jacques Derrida, it signifies that a word is "inadequate yet necessary"; that a particular signifier is not wholly suitable for the concept it represents, but must be used as the constraints of our language offer nothing better." (2010:46)

7. HEGEMONY

What is hegemony/cultural hegemony?

Hegemony derives from the Latin "Hegemon" which literally means to lead. But the word adopted a new perspective in the recent era which also connotes to dominate. Hegemony is the dominance of one group over another, often supported by legitimating norms and ideas by the ruling class. The term hegemony is today often used as shorthand to describe the relatively dominant position of a particular set of ideas and their associated tendency to become commonsensical and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas. The associated term hegemon is used to identify the actor, group, class, or state that exercises hegemonic power or that is responsible for the dissemination of hegemonic ideas. Not long ago this word was injected into philosophy and cultural sciences and as the matter of fact is the backbone terminology of it.

The concept of hegemony defines the domination of one group over other groups, with or without coercion of force, so that the cultural patterns of the dominant group are imposed on others, who adapt and promote the hegemonic group. The concept has emerged in sociology through the work of A. Gramsci who intended to impose cultural hegemony, through everyday practices and shared beliefs, presentations and cultural vision of a hegemonic group (the middle class) to others social groups, until their internalization and thus creating the conditions for a complex control system. According to Gramsci through hegemonized institutions by the bourgeoisie, such as compulsory education, the mass media and popular culture, the masses of workers would be indoctrinated into a false consciousness, acquiring values, like consumerism and nationalism, which they strayed from the revolution that the Marxist idea, would lead to the satisfaction of their real needs.

The Gramscian cultural hegemony analysis can be seen both in classical terms of classes, both in general terms as the idea that the prevailing cultural patterns should not be seen as factual or natural, but constructed through social relations. The Gramscian concept of hegemony contributed greatly to the scientific climate eventually lead to social constructivism.

At first glance, hegemony and symbolic power operate in very similar ways, ensuring the maintenance of social order by cultural domination (and not coercion). There are passages where they seem to indicate actually to the same thing, which tends to mask fundamental differences, which ultimately lead us to the capacity of the dominated to understand and challenge their conditions.

According to the famous definition that Gramsci has given, "hegemony is a form of domination based on "the combination of force and consent that balance variably without strength prevails to Consent, or by seeking the strength to appear resting on the consent of the majority."(2003: 12) Hegemony must be distinguished from the dictatorship and despotism, regimes in which coercion prevails and applies arbitrarily without regulatory standards. Hegemony is organized within civil society, but it also embraces the State: "The State is all theoretical and practical activities through which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to get the current consensus of the

governed.”(1968) much of the concept of hegemony is thus based on this idea of consent, a conscious and voluntary participation of the dominated to their domination.

Bourdieu sometimes uses the word “consent” to describe the symbolic domination, that it connotes a much greater psychological depth than hegemony. In *Distinction*, Bourdieu coins and called habitus, as "the built form of the class condition and packaging it imposes"

"The schemes of the habitus, classification of original forms, owe their effectiveness to the fact that they operate below consciousness and discourse, so beyond the reach of the examination and voluntary control." Bourdieu wrote:

"The agent engaged in practice knows the world but of a knowledge which, as shown by Merleau-Ponty, does not establish the relation of externality of a knowing consciousness. It includes in a sense too well, without objectifying distance, for granted, precisely because it is caught, because he is one with him, he lives like a habit or habitat familiar to him. He feels at home in the form of habitus, a necessity made under which implies a form of love of necessity, *amor fati*.”(2012)

Thus the symbolic domination is not based on physical strength, or the legitimacy. Indeed, it makes two unnecessary dimensions: "The state does not necessarily need to give orders, and exercises physical coercion, or disciplinary constraint, to produce an ordered social world: that as long as it is able to produce incorporated cognitive structures which are granted to the objective structures and thus ensures doxic submission to the established order.”(2011:4)

“Symbolic domination is defined in opposition to the legitimacy, it arouses in surface and appearance, but also to hegemony, which implies a consciousness of domination, a practicality that works consciously.”(ibid, 7) In a revealing passage, Bourdieu rejects the concept of false consciousness, without questioning the notion of falsity (as usually is done), but rather that of conscience: "In the concept of" false consciousness "that some Marxists invoke to account for the effects of symbolic domination " conscience "is over, and to talk about" ideology "is located in the order of representations, which can be transformed through this intellectual conversion called "awareness", which is in the order of beliefs, the deepest bodily dispositions. "(ibid: 16)

Instead of false consciousness, Bourdieu speaks of "ignorance": the way people spontaneously know the world would be a misunderstanding deeply rooted in the habits and seemingly unattainable reflection.

The design of Gramsci could not be more different. Instead of ignorance, he speaks of a conscious and rational consent to domination; and instead of habitus, he developed the concept of "common sense" - practical activity that can lead to genuine understanding - as well as a legacy of wisdom and ideologies which have been impregnated:

"The assets of the mass is almost, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of this activity is himself, yet it is a knowledge of the world insofar as it transforms. His theoretical consciousness can even historically contradict its activity. One can almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness), one that is implicit in its business and that really unites all those who work with him in the practice of transforming reality, and the other is superficially explicit or verbal, which he inherited from the past and accepted without criticism.” However this design "verbal" is not without consequences: it makes the link with a particular social group, it influences moral conduct on the direction of the will, a more or less powerful way that can be up to the point where the contradictory nature of the will does not allow any action, no decision, no choice and produces a state of moral and political passivity. Critical understanding of oneself happens therefore through a struggle between "hegemony" policies between conflicting directions, first in the field of ethics, and politics, to achieve a greater development of the own conception of reality. "

We reach here to the essential difference between Gramsci and Bourdieu: while the first apprehends the practical activity of collective transformation of the world as the basis of common sense and as a path potentially leading to class consciousness, the second develops the activity practice the opposite way - class and unconscious acceptance of the world as it is. Let us now move Bourdieu, echoing to understand the previous quote of Gramsci:

"Recall that the perception of the social world involves an act of construction, it does not mean that we accept an intellectualist theory of knowledge: the essence of the experience of the social world and the work of building it involves ‘operates in practice, below the level of the explicit representation and verbal expression. Closer to a class unconscious rather than a "class consciousness" in the Marxist sense, the sense of the position in the social space (what Goffman calls the "sense of one's place") is the practice of mastery of social structure as a whole, engaged across the direction of the

position in this structure. Social world perceptions of the categories are, essentially, the product of the incorporation of objective structures of social space. Consequently, they bow to empowered in making the social world as it is, to take it for granted, rather than rebel against it, or to oppose different possibilities to it, even antagonistic. "(Bourdieu 1991, 235)

In other words, according to Bourdieu, common sense is simply a veil of ignorance that seems to envelop all of us, except perhaps a few sociologists who miraculously manage to see through the fog, while for Gramsci, occupying some groups as the "privileged" positions, can develop an understanding of the world they inhabit. Different classes have different chances of developing a "common sense". The working class in particular is well positioned due to its collective processing activity of nature while production in the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie is too individualized, and that the ruling classes are not invested directly in production process.

8. *BLINDNESS A POST-APOCALYPTIC FICTION*

This sense of a jostle, a fraction in the societal status which Saramago poignantly tries to illustrate is the key touchstone in His Blindness. The supersonic world of today, cars moving to and fro, people in great hurry to get to their destination and impatient and nonchalant to their fellow humans, let alone their environ, is the target of Saramago's narration daily routines in his Blindness. A sudden White Blindness inflicts the entire community. The first blind man who is waiting in the traffic for the green light to continue his real/ usual life is struck by the White blindness.

Some drivers have already got out of their cars, prepared to push the stranded vehicle to a spot where it will not hold up the traffic, they beat furiously on the closed windows, the man inside turns his head in their direction, first to one side then to the other, he is clearly shouting something, to judge by the movements of his mouth he appears to be repeating some words, no one word but three, as turns out to be the case when someone finally manages to open the door, I am blind. (2010: 2)

One of the main fears of today's world is the wholesome pandemic, a total destruction which is not imaginative anymore but right around the corner through chemical, nuclear wastes and etc. G. K. Chesterton the ontologist philosopher writer, in his the man who was Thursday writes:

"I really have no experience..."

"No one has any experience of the battle of Armageddon."

"But I'm really unfit..."

"You are willing, that is enough."

"Now, really, I know of no occupation for which mere willingness is the final test."

"I do. Martyrs. I am sending you to your death. Good day."(1908, Ch. IV)

As already mentioned, Blindness expresses a devastating epidemic of "Clunky" "White Devil" blindness. That's what intensifies a routine description of Saramago, of a daily traffic jam that the Devil comes by. The first blind man taken home and then visited by the Doctor, literally, infects every patient in Doctor's office and then the entire town. Not the initial cause but the victim/effect of the pandemic White devil. What seems usual daily experience, through Saramago's wit to make impossible possible turns out phantasmagoric.

The first victims are quarantined on a base guarded by the army but in the absence of a cure, the prophylactic measure is not enough: in the passage of a few months, the whole country is blind, except for one of the main characters, the Doctor's wife.

The novel follows a set of protagonists initially confined in quarantine and then wandering blind in a city plagued by lawlessness. Here lies the crucial point, the Degeneration of so-called civilized man in the technological world led to the adventure of few to a new world. The book highlights the loss of civilized human principles, struggling for survival, a theme that is also perceptible in The Plague by Albert Camus, with former an external quest but the latter happening inside one's mind. In His the fall, Camus states: "Do not wait for the Last Judgment. It takes place every day."

What distinguishes prophesies of John different from the post-apocalyptic fiction is the extent of tangibility of experience believed to be only real by our ancestors but mere myth and fancy to us. The preceding book of John is a vision recited in

the form of a dream. It begins with John, on the island of Patmos in the Aegean, addressing a letter to the "Seven Churches of Asia". He then describes a series of prophetic visions, including figures such as the Whore of Babylon and the Beast, culminating in the Second Coming of Jesus after the rupture of the whole civilization.

Another striking example is Milton's *Paradise lost* which tells the story of Satan locked up in hell then conspiring with other angels, be it Moloch, Beelzebub etc., to corrupt the newly found material world of God, the earth which is occupied by the beloved of God, The Adam and Eve, after some war over taking the heaven and an ongoing attempts to guile Adam and Eve, Satan is successful and Adam and Eve commit the Original Sin. Long story short Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, and Michael says that Adam may find "a paradise within thee, happier far". Adam and Eve also now have a more distant relationship with God, who is omnipresent but invisible (unlike the tangible Father in the Garden of Eden).

Nikolai Berdyaev, in *The Beginning and the End* (1947) said: "What one needs to do at every moment of one's life is to put an end to the old world and to begin a new world." Shakespeare the true sage in his *Midnight summer's dream* also stated: "The true beginning of our end." Mentioned before, post apocalypse is the process and handling of the conditions following or the aftermath of a catastrophic event. In the post-apocalyptic world, there comes the second Fall (coinage mine). Myth formerly believed to be fictive and unreal, now seems tangible, but the fact is that even our historical experience today after millennium would seem a myth per se for the following generations. There was a time.... When Through a pandemic, A mass destruction through eating from technology tree our ancestors were doomed and lived a life of destitute. Aldous Huxley's *Brave new world* (1932) is indicative of the notion, where their ancestors, living outside the artificial commune, a prophet like figure, instead of knowing about scriptures, knows Shakespeare, specifically *The tempest* by heart.

In this respect the old man with an eye patch's comments on remaining blind forever is praiseworthy. "Perhaps only in a world of the blind will things be what they truly are" (1995: 126). The death of death an impossible fact according to common sense, but made plausible in Saramago's *Death at interval*, indicative and supportive in this genre, also shows the aftermath of the epidemic death-undo which no one dies. A historical myth to be immortal now is given the light of gross and despair in the world of today. The elixir now is not needed anymore to remain immortal but a poison to kill is the ideal.

It is this gloomy atmosphere which intensifies the situation. The unavailability of food ratio, of unknown and threatening white blindness, social and individual degradation through the savagery they show in hard times, the spiritual crisis which they face when they came across with the church loaded with people, all in all intensifies the Apocalypticatability of Blindness and the ongoing search for a meaning so that they could possibly stabilize their position in the new world which is the world of chaos and aftermath of the pandemic struck.

This search for a meaning is to be illustrated broadly in the following half of this chapter.

9. "SEARCH OF MEANING" A FOCAL MATTER IN BLINDNESS

Like any other post-apocalyptic fiction which the search of meaning is a central theme after the pandemonium, Saramago's blindness follows the same trodden path. Struck by the unknown cause, the white devil, they are quarantined and put on hold, yet to see what comes about, and finally set loose in the all-encompassing community of blinds, to search for a salvation or miracle of some sorts.

As mentioned in chapter two, search for a meaning in life has always been an ongoing issue throughout human history. To locate where we stand, where we are heading to, and what is the meaning of our existence is not a new phenomenon. Because only man is a conscious being, it is the only one to know it exists. Plants, animals are alive. Only man does not do that "live" it "exists" truly. Heidegger, speaking of man, says he will be in his being, of his being. The being-there (*Dasein*) is man not only exists, it exists. Hence the famous phrase of Heidegger: The essence of *Dasein* lies in its existence (*Being and Time*, introduction).

This is particularly the question raised by Leibniz. The question of the essence (what's this?) Is for him less fundamental than the question of life (why is there something rather than nothing?). Why is he to be? Life is the subject of a real metaphysical interrogation. But to take this object of study is to take an empty apparent object, to any future determination: it seems that there is nothing to say. It exists, that's all. Life, as the first fact seems to escape any speech. There is nothing before him which would base its reason for being. Any discourse on life implies life.

A very complex matrix, the process of meaning making has different forms and outcomes, sometimes even contradictory in nature. Meaning making has been an inseparable part of our Being. For now, we could assume that we have got a meaning making machine, which propels us to move beyond and activate our daily life. Accordingly Albert Camus in his Myth of Sisyphus writes: "I don't know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I cannot know that meaning and that it is impossible for me just now to know it. What can a meaning outside my condition mean to me? I can understand only in human terms. What I touch, what resists me — that I understand. And these two certainties — my appetite for the absolute and for unity and the impossibility of reducing this world to a rational and reasonable principle — I also know that I cannot reconcile them. What other truth can I admit without lying, without bringing in a hope I lack and which means nothing within the limits of my conditions?"(2014: 133).

10. CONCLUSION

This thesis deals with the change in the mode of meaning making process and the conditions this meaning making process takes place, after the upheaval of the superpowers in early to mid-twentieth century to take control of the whole earth to rule over and consequences afterwards in the Portuguese fiction writer, Saramago's *Blindness*.

"A sea of milk"

And if all of a sudden, we all become blind? In *Blindness*, an epidemic of blindness paralyzes the entire country in just a few days. The first blind will be quarantined, but soon hordes of blind people find themselves left to their own devices. More government, more transport, more water and electricity, the country is plunged in a blinding whiteness.

In the most total chaos, human beings, without more modesty, become pigs; Agonized to the extreme, they wander in deserted cities, built for the eyes that see. Removing their humanity, they commit atrocities and reveal their animal nature: they are ready to do anything for food, even if they are malicious, dishonest and lecherous. But what also makes mankind persist: avarice, theft, blackmail, cowardice. The acts of solidarity are isolated, for when one is blind, the absence of the gaze of the other, which judges and sanctions behaviors, no longer obliges goodness. The relationship to others, to oneself and to reality is overwhelmed. One needs the gaze of the other to be aware of one's own existence. Identity disappears; we no longer need names, for we are no longer entirely human.

"I will not forget your face"

Having suddenly lost sight at the corner of their street, away from home or at the wheel of their car, social ties disintegrate. How to find his family, his house, when there is no one to guide us?

Among them, only one woman did not lose sight. It is both a blessing and a trap. A blessing because it can guide survivors and help them survive; A trap because she sees horror in all its forms. To be blind in a community of seers is to continue to feel the weight of their gaze and to feel human; This woman, on the contrary, is the only one to suffer human degradation, to see the bodies of the dead, nudes, old people crawling or walking on all fours.

Finally

Although *Blindness* is an allegorical story with incredible scope, it is also a horror book with scenes difficult to read, on the edge of the unbearable. But what is called horrible is only what brings us back to what we are; We are horror. Saramago puts the consequences of blindness as much as a microcosm composed of a few characters in an apocalyptic world.

The violence, the intensity and the intimacy of this text are striking. Writing, which totally suppresses the punctuation of dialogue, releases a dense stream filled with digressions, which prevents one from regaining his breath and turning away his gaze. One is caught, imprisoned, by these blocks of juxtaposed texts that depict a destroyed humanity. Why are they blind? What do we refuse to see every day passing? Is there an animal species that is as self-destroyed as ours?

"You do not know what it is to see two blind quarrels, Quarrel has always been, more or less, a form of blindness, It's different, You will do what you think best but do not forget That we are blind, blind, blind, without rhetoric or commiseration, the charitable and picturesque world of the brave blind is finished, now it is the hard, cruel and implacable kingdom of the blind, if you could see it That I am obliged to see, you want to be blind, I believe you, but I do not need it, I am already blind, Forgive me, darling, if you knew, I know, Spent my life looking in the eyes of people, it is the only place in the body where there may be a soul, and if the eyes are lost, Tomorrow I will tell them that I see, Heaven, you do

not have to repent, Tomorrow I will tell them, she interrupted and then added, If in the meantime I have not entered this world too. "

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