Saramago, Cognitive Estrangement, and Original Sin?

Kenneth Krabbenhoft

For Carlos Veloso

Introduction

José Saramago's questioning about the possibility of justice in the world often works through reduction: his view of society and human nature strips away relations and values, the better to see what lies at the core of experience. In this sense his novels are like experiments: they pose the question "what if..." In *Baltasar and Blimunda* (1982), Saramago asks what would happen if a man and a woman were to step out of their social roles and connect on a level unmediated by laws and institutions; in *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* (1984) he resuscitates one of Fernando Pessoa's heteronyms, brings him back from Brazil, and sets him loose in Lisbon to "see what happens"; in *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* (1989), he asks what would happen if a tiny change in the historical record were to alter radically our understanding of the past; in *The Stone Raft* (1986), the entire Iberian peninsula becomes a laboratory to test the question of what would happen if Portugal and Spain were to disconnect from Europe and float off into the Atlantic; and in *All the Names* (1997), he imagines the impact of a startling discovery on the otherwise profoundly banal and routine life of a government functionary.

In a typical Saramago experiment, historical time is folded to create unexpected juxtapositions. The narrator retreats to a vantage point of timeless omniscience—a hallmark of Saramago's style—and speaks with a kind of distanced concern. Saramago writes with the impatient irony of the observer who knows better than the observed (and the reader, for that matter). This explains why his novels can be simultaneously lyrical and terrifying—lyrical to the extent that they point out the paradoxical wonders that the human spirit is capable of experiencing, and terrifying when they

turn the observational lens on the cruelty and despair that make victims even of the victimizers. This is something that Saramago has in common with at least two previous winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Samuel Beckett and William Golding. Like Saramago, Beckett and Golding take an unflinching look at what lurks beneath the surface of accepted meanings. Beckett does this by viewing the world through the eyes of his charming philosopher-bums, while Golding does it by removing the social strictures that hold the lust for power in check. Is it any coincidence that the works that won both of these writers the Nobel Prize are from the stressed and paranoid 1950s? (Beckett's trilogy *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnameable* is from 1951-1953, *Waiting for Godot* is from 1952, *Endgame* from 1957 and *Krapp's Last Tape* from 1958; Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and *The Inheritors* are from 1954 and 1955 respectively). The characters in these novels and plays are often in flight from someone or something—we might say in flight from the abyss of self-consciousness that prevents them from integrating easily in the social and historical "now." Like Beckett and Golding, in the two works discussed below Saramago creates characters that are set adrift in shadowy landscapes illuminated only by the occasional spark of human solidarity.

I will take two approaches in examining the way in which Saramago achieves this: the first is Darko Suvin's notion of cognitive estrangement, and the second is the Augustinian notion of original sin. I have chosen the 1975 prose poem *O Ano de 1993* (*The Year 1993*) and the 1995 novel *Blindness* to make my point because in my view they most completely embody this aspect of Saramago's work, creating a nightmarish vision of humanity under stress in a readily recognizable near future when society takes a step backward into anarchy, violence, and death.[1]

Cognitive Estrangement in *O Ano de 1993*

In his 1979 book, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, Darko Suvin defines science fiction as the literary genre that embodies "not only a reflecting *of*, but also *on* reality," a process that he calls "cognitive estrangement" (10).[2] Suvin supposes that the literary experience that links the author's and the reader's imaginations rests on a representational *adequatio rei ad intellectu*, in which elements common to the reality of both parties are distorted to make the familiar seem unfamiliar, thus introducing an observational distance that makes possible fresh insights into the present. It is an important distinction to make with respect to a genre like science fiction, which often creates places

and periods that have not literally existed and may never exist. In this, of course, science fiction sets itself apart from mainstream realism of the nineteenth-century variety, which presents us with the world in which we live, or a world close enough to us in space and time that we can reasonably be expected to recognize it as our own.

This is where, as noted above, Suvin makes his crucial distinction, for whereas "standard" realism stresses representation, science fiction gives equal importance to evaluation in the form of implicit social criticism or overt satire. Suvin's idea is that, in order to achieve the critical distance necessary to bind evaluation to realist representation, science fiction writers transform the cognitively familiar into something unfamiliar or estranged from present-day experience. Suvin adapts this notion of estrangement from the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky, who used the term "ostranenie" to designate art in general, as those forms of non-historical or non-documentary representation that produce "defamiliarization, a making strange ... of objects, a renewal of perception" (Jameson 51), "a forcing us to notice" (Jauss 85), or "a cleansing and renewal of our perceptions, brought about by the distancing properties of poetic language" (Parrinder 73). Cognitive estrangement thus defined bears a close resemblance to Bertolt Brecht's "estrangement effect" (*Verfremdungseffekt*), the purpose of which, to quote Fredric Jameson again, is "to make you aware that the objects and institutions you thought to be natural were really historical" (58): we might say that Suvin transforms what for Brecht is a tool of social realism generally into the hermeneutical principle of a specific literary genre.

It might seem incongruous to associate a writer like Saramago, heir to the rich novelistic tradition that extends from classical antiquity through Cervantes to James Joyce and Marcel Proust, with a genre like science fiction: although it, too, has roots in ancient Greece and Rome, sci-fi has blossomed relatively late in the history of the novel. The association has nevertheless been made from early on in Saramago's career, beginning with Ana Hatherly's 1976 review of *O Ano de 1993* in *Colóquio/Letras* where she compares the poem to *1984*, George Orwell's similarly named 1949 novel. Horácio Costa's pioneering study of Saramago's early work also points in the direction of science fiction: he locates the same work in the "futurist-dystopian tradition" ["linhagem futurante-distópica"] pioneered by H.G. Wells's *The War Between the Worlds* (1897) and carried on in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), Orwell's *1984*, and Doris Lessing's *The Memoirs of a Survivor* (1977).[3] Costa's description sounds

very much like Suvin's notion of cognitive estrangement when he specifies that *O Ano de 1993*'s "specific link with Huxley and Orwell's works occurs more on the broad level of the literary subject matter and the author's moral or ethical perspective on the world he lives in *through a mirroring of this world in a future one defined by the vicissitudes of the present*, than on the level of [literary] form" (215; my emphasis). In *O Ano de 1993*, which Saramago says is a direct outgrowth of his experience of the April 25, 1974 Revolution, he creates the estrangement effect by looking forward chronologically 18 years from the time of its writing.[4] An unnamed city has been invaded and destroyed by nameless forces: we see only the aftermath—"the city sick with the plague" with its squares "piled high with ruins" (fragment 2). Even the light has been infected, "like some kind of poisonous, phosphorescent rot" (fragment 3). The forces occupying the city construct mechanical wolves and eagles to hunt people down. The few surviving pets and zoo animals are turned into robots controlled by a central computer that programs them with hatred and turns them loose on their former owners. The occupiers torture people in an attempt to understand what has happened. They build a prison that is completely transparent except at night, when the inmates are asleep and there is nothing to see. All thermometers are confiscated and the mercury in them used to make roving spy-eyes. The local commandant works with a witch doctor to reduce the city to the size of a human body so that when he whips it, all of the inhabitants get welts on their backs. Outside the city, people return to a tribal existence and hide from the mechanized beasts.

The reader experiences cognitive estrangement because, although the majority of these elements are not literally a part of the 1975 world (or the world of 2000 for that matter), they are recognizable extrapolations of technologies and social realities that are in fact known to us. Although Saramago does not specify the nature of the conflict that destroys the anonymous city of *O Ano de 1993* and of what Américo António Lindeza Diogo has called the consequent "fall back into pre-history" (68), the scenario evokes the aftermath of nuclear war, an image common in post-World War II film and television and notably explored in science fiction novels like Walter Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960) and Russell Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980). The mechanical wolves and eagles are conceptual extrapolations of the attack dogs that many American readers undoubtedly associate with both the Nazis and the enemies of the Civil Rights Movement in the Alabama or Mississippi of the 1960s, while the

computer-controlled pets and zoo animals recall photographs of laboratory monkeys and cats with radio transmitters protruding from their brains. The roving spy-eyes bring us to the Cold War and the Space Race, to the U2 and peeping satellites, while the transparent prison was in effect envisioned as early as the seventeenth century, in the panopticon that Michel Foucault has studied in *Discipline and Punish.* The cognitive closeness of these elements sets off the estrangement effect much more effectively, I think, than purely fantastic, far more metaphorical details like the shrunken city; they also ally Saramago with contemporary science fiction writers like Philip K. Dick, who populate their not-too-distant futures with mechanical animals and androids (as in Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the source for Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*).

All is not unrelieved hopelessness and suffering in *O Ano de 1993*, however: eventually there are signs of change for the better. A real bird defeats one of the machines—an event that one tribe records in wall paintings. There is a reference to happier times that will come one hundred years in the future, which means that the narrator is speaking from a vantage point after the year 2093 (this is the science-fiction technique of the double jump forward: from now to a future time viewed from an even farther future, placing the reader in a present that is also a distant past). Saramago suggests that sex is one of the keys to repairing society: the tribes' fertility rites coincide with the retaking of the wrecked city and the execution of the former occupiers. The ending indicates that this is an inevitable circular process of destruction and recreation: "Once more then the world the world a few things accomplished just a few so many not and to know it" (fragment 30). In this we are reminded again of Saramago's proximity to the principally British tradition that goes back to the artificial incubators of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), the loveless and sexless society of Orwell's *1984*, and the dialectic of fertility and infertility in Anthony Burgess's *The Wanting Seed* (1962), to which I will return below.[5] In all of these, sexual love and reproduction are a powerful symbol of what is most indomitably human, as if to say that no amount of technological meddling or social engineering can long succeed in suppressing the instinct for preservation and the affirmation of life that manifests itself in human love. Because the future scenarios of these novels involve human beings that are still identifiable as such, sex and reproduction provide a backdrop against which both elements of cognitive estrangement stand out in sharp relief.

Namelessness as Estrangement

Cognitive estrangement works much the same way in *Blindness*. The year is not specified, but it is a not very distant future: all of the details are present in today's Lisbon. As in *O Ano de 1993*, the city is in the grips of a primeval affliction, a plague that is as elemental as it is inexplicable: very simply, people start going blind. The affliction does not discriminate between male and female, young and old, sick and healthy, rich and poor. There is no apparent cause for it, though it seems to be contagious; there is no cure: certainly no treatment explains the fact that at the end of the novel people regain their sight as suddenly and mysteriously as they had lost it.

This lack of specificity covers every aspect of the story. Not only do we not know exactly where or when the action takes place, we never learn the names of any of the people involved; they remain for us the doctor, the car thief, the woman in dark glasses, or the ophthalmologist—familiar labels that become as arbitrary as given names in a context where blindness renders everyone's profession obsolete and where the characters, as Maria Alzira Seixo has observed, suffer from a "degradation ... imposed by the position of socially determined isolated marginalization in which they find themselves ("Os espelhos" 200). Their anonymity or namelessness marks a new stage in Saramago's writing, as a number of critics have noted. Agripina Carriço Vieira writes:

> Indefinite or unnameable spaces take over from the recognizable, named places of the previous novels. Instead of place names, which are entirely missing from the two texts, we find generic descriptions... Proper names are also entirely missing ... having been substituted by descriptive labels: the old man with the eye patch, the doctor, the doctor's wife, the young woman in the dark glasses, the evil blind men, the dog with teary eyes.... (386)

Similarly Isabel Pires de Lima states:

> This is the first of Saramago's novels that provides no information whatsoever about the place and the time of the action. We find ourselves in the midst of a nowhere and a no-when ... along with the fact that the characters do not have proper names: they are merely the doctor, the doctor's wife, [et alia]. (416)

Seixo has called this phenomenon "the incompleteness of names" and identified *O Ano de 1993* as the precursor of *Blindness* because in it "the

question of the *unnameable* is raised, on the level of a concept that is both verbal and ontological" (*Lugares* 165 and 100; original emphasis). She points out that "the names of Saramago's characters are either strange, from Blimunda to the characters in *The Stone Raft*, or on the contrary have an ambiguous, insipid nature (Senhor José [the only named character in *All the Names*]), although they can also be simply descriptive, as in *Blindness*" (166). By reducing all of the characters to the same status, namelessness universalizes the human condition while depersonalizing each individual's life: since what happens here could happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time, there is no guarantee that what we are reading could not apply to us tomorrow or the day after. As Carriço Vieira points out: "To name is always somehow to limit, and to limit is to exclude" (391). Significantly, Saramago makes it impossible to explain the plague of blindness scientifically. Since we know nothing of the culture, history or material conditions of this country, we can neither rationalize nor assign responsibility or blame—in other words, we cannot hold it at arm's length by persuading ourselves that although this horror makes sense for a country with (say) a history of political tyranny or scientific backwardness, it is inconceivable where *we* live. One is reminded of Sinclair Lewis's 1935 novel, *It Can't Happen Here*—what "can't happen" being the takeover of the United States by a fascist insurgency.

For Saramago, this reduction of individuals to irrelevant labels means that, when the day-to-day fabric of the social order rips apart, the person we assume ourselves to be—our identity as defined by relationships, job and possessions—ceases to have any importance. In *Blindness*, everyone becomes literally faceless: the semiotics of individuality are metamorphosed. Universal blindness makes the nuances of gesture, dress, and style obsolete; the individuals who make up the nucleus of characters that we follow through the eyes of the one person who retains her sight in effect cease being the doctor and the car thief and the woman in dark glasses and the ophthalmologist: the old categories are as unimportant as these people's unspoken names. What previously made them unique has disappeared, as Carriço Vieira has remarked: "Once sight has been lost, the other intrinsically human qualities are also lost: love, solidarity, brotherhood, and reason; and existence becomes entirely focused on the need to survive" (388). For the first time in Saramago's fiction (as later in *All the Names* "what is special gives way to the banal, the insipid. We plunge into a world of the everyday, the trivial, populated by ordinary people ... whose lives are completely dissolved in the magma of anonymity" (385).

Eventually the characters are rounded up and put under armed guard in a kind of asylum, where they are joined by additional generic types: the policeman, the cabbie, the salesman, the office worker, the cleaning lady, the married couple, parents and children. They begin to relate to each other on a level that we can't help considering more primitive (a survival of the ancient idea that sight is superior to the other senses because less dependent upon physical immediacy). They rely on hearing, smell and touch, and this means that they are often disgusted with each other, with the weeping and moaning of despair, pain and sex, the smell of unwashed bodies, and the shock of unexpected physical contact. This human "animality" is epitomized by the criminal gangs that set up an extortion racket in the asylum; their ruthlessness enables them to control the food supply even though they, too, are blind, and to exact whatever they want—usually women—in exchange for food.

The flip side of the blind people's self-revulsion is the fear they inspire in those who have yet to lose their sight—which means, from the novel's viewpoint, the soldiers who have been assigned to guard them. For their jailers, the faces of the blind become terrifying symbols of helplessness and need. Even though they cannot possibly represent a threat to the sighted and heavily armed soldiers, they are kept at a distance, all the more so after a nervous young guard machine-guns one of the inmates, and the captain declares that the best solution would be to kill all the blind, like stemming gangrene through amputation. Saramago himself has drawn attention to the obvious similarity between his novel and the present day: "All of the horrible things that I am describing and which will surely upset the reader ... are happening right now in the building next door, on the next street over, somewhere."[6] The difference between the historical record and a work of fiction is that the latter can use cognitive estrangement to create that critical distance that is fundamental to the novel's success. An effective means of achieving this is to reduce the plot elements to a minimum, by which Saramago insures that every detail stands out in sharp relief. If it is true that the blind develop an especially acute sense of hearing and touch to compensate for the loss of sight, then this vividness of description would seem to be a kind of heightened sensory expression that puts us, the readers, in somewhat the same position as the blind in the novel. This is the great irony: that through using our eyes (reading) we share the experience of those characters whose eyes are useless. At the same time, as readers, we stand above

the mutual hostility of the two groups of characters: our sight gives us the power to protect us from too intimate involvement.

Why the relationship between the blind and the sighted should be one of hostility is a question that Saramago does not answer per se: he takes it as a given that, in this particular experiment, sight translates into power and blindness into weakness—sight not so much as a physical characteristic, much less a spiritual one, but rather a commodity whose possession is the key to humanity itself. Yet even this duality breaks down in the end. There is a paradox in the fact that the relationship of oppressors and oppressed provides at least some structure in a violently stressed situation: it provides identity through the knowledge of belonging to one group or the other. But as the oppressors also begin to lose their sight and the gates of the asylum-turned-concentration camp are flung open, the characters realize that the end really *is* near. When the soldiers could see, there was still the hope that they would change their mind and use their sight for charity; with everyone blind, we acknowledge the truth that there is no difference between victim and victimizer, because we are our own oppressors. As Lindeza Diogo notes, in *O Ano de 1993*, "the 'occupied' and the 'unoccupied' are bodies equally converted into a 'despotic signifier'" (69).

In a 1998 interview with Alan Riding of the *New York Times*, Saramago said that the idea for *Blindness* came to him when he was sitting in a restaurant. "The question suddenly came into my head," he said: "'And if we were all blind?' And then immediately, as if answering myself, 'But we *are* all blind'" (5). These words are echoed at the very end of the novel by the doctor's wife, the one who never lost her sight: "I don't think we did go blind, I think we are blind, Blind but seeing, Blind people who can see, but do not see" (310).

Original Sin?

What happened to reason in all of this? What is it about the humanity that Saramago portrays for us in these works that seems to turn first, in moments of social catastrophe, to the brutalization and oppression of its own members?

For all of Saramago's belief in class solidarity and social justice as the ultimate ideal, he has no illusions about humankind's capacity for inflicting injustice and suffering on itself irregardless of social context. Underlying his deeply disturbing portraits of mankind at its worst is an assumption about human nature that bears a close resemblance to views associated historically

with Saint Augustine, who in the early fifth century AD first used the term original sin to describe the fundamentally fallen nature of the human race.[7] It was Augustine, too, who defended this central feature of Christian orthodoxy from the opposing view of the British monk Pelagius, who denied that all mankind inherited Adam and Eve's transgression of divine law and held, on the contrary, that all people were inherently disposed to sanctity, which could be achieved by the exercise of free will with minimal assistance of divine grace. Pelagius was condemned in 418 at the Council of Carthage and again at Ephesus in 431, but his notion of the essential inclination of human beings toward virtue can be said to underlie any number of secular ethical philosophies and political ideologies.

Anthony Burgess exploits this connection in *The Wanting Seed* when he has a schoolteacher explain the role of Pelagianism in a future social order based on the assumption of human perfectibility: "Pelagianism was thus seen [by the founders of this future state] to be at the heart of liberalism and its derived doctrines, especially Socialism and Communism... in the Pelagian phase or Pelphase, the great liberal dream seems capable of fulfillment" (10 and 18). In Burgess's future scenario, the Pelagian view exists in perpetual dialectic with the Augustinian or Gusphase, with a transitional period (the Interphase) connecting the two. The Interphase begins when the citizens awake to a realization of the essential fallenness of themselves and their fellows, and the state's response, as the schoolteacher says, is to "try and force the citizens into goodness." This is when reason gives way to brutality:

> Beatings-up. Secret police. Torture in brightly lighted cellars. Condemnation without trial. Finger-nails pulled out with pincers. The rack. The cold-water treatment. The gouging-out of eyes. The firing-squad in the cold dawn. (19)

Interphase ends when a politics of state-sanctioned homosexuality gives way to a random indulgence in heterosexuality, when the repression of reproduction and everything associated with it yields to an anarchic surrender to the forces of procreation. The wheel turns again when, as the teacher points out, people realize that "human social behavior is rather better than any Augustinian pessimist has a right to expect, and so a sort of optimism begins to emerge [and] Pelagianism is reinstated" (23).

Whether or not Burgess intends us to accept the schoolteacher's characterization of the Pelagian heresy literally, his notion of Interphase can

be applied to *O Ano de 1993* and *Blindness* insofar as they portray the tension between social control doomed to failure despite its best intentions and social anarchy from which a new order necessarily emerges as the affirmation of the creative (or procreative) impulse. This in turn suggests a more general movement in Saramago's thinking: whereas in novels written prior to *Blindness* he seems to express a basically Pelagian view of society in which intolerance and violence can be dealt with through corrections to a hierarchical class structure (at least in theory), the 1995 novel seems to place the blame in Augustinian fashion squarely on human nature itself. Although described differently, this change has been observed by a number of critics. Costa, for instance, notes "the break with the canon of realistic representation in *O Ano de 1993*" that "marks for us the moment in Saramago's career in which he conclusively abandons the patterns that up to that point had characterized his writing *grosso modo*" (223 and 248). Seixo sees the beginning of this change in *The Stone Raft*, although she notes that a more purely negative and dystopian view takes over beginning with *Blindness*. She writes: "With its simultaneously fantastic and fairy-tale orientation (which is by virtue of the latter also partly utopian), and set in an uncertain future of confusing fears and attractions, *The Stone Raft* initiates the series of timeless dystopias in which *Blindness* and *All the Names* also figure, with the same uncertainty and with a markedly negative—and consequently dystopian—bias" (*Lugares* 159-60). Piero Ceccucci also identifies the source of this negativism in a negative appraisal of human nature. In *Blindness*, he writes, "an unmistakable message about the origin of evil is given free expression ...: evil is no longer thought to be solely the consequence of an unjust or cruel social order but is also related to human nature itself, imperfect and corrupt in its tendencies" (178-79).

Saramago's statements to interviewers provide further evidence of this shift towards disillusionment with reason as a means of human improvement, both ethical and social. He has spoken openly about his understanding of human nature, often in the context of a mistrust of the ability of reason to curb the tendency to abuse power. Speaking with Maria Leonor Neves, for example, Saramago states categorically: "Our reason is not used rationally" (Ceccucci 179). He makes the same point to Baptista-Bastos, speaking of *Blindness*:

> In this book I intend to question myself and the reader about our rationality, if we are in effect rational. And if this thing we call "reason" in fact deserves the

name. And if it does deserve it, whether we use reason rationally, in the proper sense of the word, as a defense of life. And the defense of life is everything. We do not use reason as a defense of life. (64-65)

Commenting on violence in modern urban culture, Saramago says to Juan Arias: "We are much weaker that we think and reason is not much good to us, it only props us up in the non-conflictive situations of life" (Arias 49). Saramago's viewpoint often seems to stem from the disillusionment of a rationalist disabused by the reality of human history, as when he says: "I will never understand why we human beings are the ones who invented cruelty: this I cannot understand" (Arias 49-50) or "I think there is no solution for the human race" (Ceccucci 185). Other comments (e.g., "I, who am as pessimistic as it is possible to be, am nevertheless trying to create a better kind of person" [Arias 63]) support the idea that the "better" people to be found in his novels are not the products of natural creation or historical evolution but of the literary imagination, the results perhaps of a moral wishful thinking that makes sense only if the assumption of basic human fallenness is granted.

Conclusion

Saramago's moral vision derives its power from the unvarnished depiction of humanity in its most fallen and as yet unredeemed state, what Richard Zenith calls "our all too dupable and corruptible human nature." In the two texts analyzed above, he uses cognitive estrangement to remind us that the danger to the future of humanity is not external but internal: a technique fundamental to science fiction becomes an instrument of what I have described as an increasingly Augustinian view of human nature.[8] The humanity of *O Ano de 1993* and *Blindness* does seem clearly to be fallen and Saramago's message to be that the future will be a nightmare if we don't take our fallenness seriously into account. Fiction may not be a plan of action to change human nature, but it can call our attention to the destructiveness that lies within us.

Notes

[1] Similar themes are found in the short fiction of *Objecto quase* (1978), especially "Embargo" and "Coisas." For more on these stories, see Horácio Costa's analysis in *José Saramago: o período formativo*, 319-49, especially pp. 328-39. See also Margarida Braga Neves's

remarks on the "effect of estrangement" created by "the almost minimalist sobriety of each of the story titles" (124).

[2] I have adapted the following summary of Suvin's theory from my article, "Ignácio de Loyola Brandão and the Fiction of Cognitive Estrangement."

[3] Costa discusses the influence of these novels as well as Ray Bradbury's *Martian Chronicles* (214-15). See also Neves 123.

[4] In *Cadernos de Lanzarote–Diário V*: "I situated in the future this society of an unnamed country, an image of many such communities that have lived oppressed and humiliated by a greater power" (29-30; qtd. in Neves 123).

[5] Mention should also be made of the planet imagined by Isaac Asimov in his 1957 novel *The Naked Sun*, where human beings live a utopian existence at the cost of a morbid fear of physical contact.

[6] Ceccucci 179, citing an interview with Clara Ferreira Alves, "José Saramago: todos os pecados do mundo," in *Expresso* (October 28, 1995), 84.

[7] *Confessiones* Book V, ix (16): "et ibam iam ad inferos portans omnia mala, quae conmiseram et in te et in me et in alios, multa et gravia super originalis peccati vinculum, quo omnes in Adam morimur" (89).

[8] Although I have not gone into the allegorical nature of the works in question, a matter that Saramago's criticism has looked at closely, the connection between allegory and cognitive estrangement has received a good deal of attention from theorists of science fiction. See, for example, Damien Broderick, especially p. 80.

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Saramago, at 8 years

Saramago as a young man

Saramago in Firmangaya, Lanzarote

Saramago at work

Saramago with Jorge Amado and Salman Rushdie in Santiago de Compostela

Saramago with Susan Sontag in Lanzarote

Saramago in Central Park, New York

Saramago as recipient of the Nobel Prize, with the King and Queen of Sweden and Pilar. December, 1998.