

FOLLOWING A HETERONYM'S INNUMERABLE SELVES IN JOSÉ SARAMAGO'S *THE YEAR OF THE DEATH OF RICARDO REIS*

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Abstract:

José Saramago's 'The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis' deals with an existential confrontation of the human subject who strives to impart meaning to a crucial juncture in his life. The coinciding occasion of the death of Fernando Pessoa and his heteronym's return to the place of his origin underlines an existential experience wherein, rather than discovering definitive answers, Ricardo Reis undergoes a multiplicity of experience which is productive of a body constructed by innumerable, partitive selves. This paper attempts to explore the series of incidents Reis encounters independently after the death of his creator from the perspective of the thematic paradigm of innumerability. It would be argued that Reis's belief that he is innumerable people could be specifically contextualized with respect to the understanding of his character that evolves out of the interconnectivity between the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, his alter ego Ricardo Reis, and existential episodes involving the heteronym as imagined by Saramago. It becomes a threefold human struggle, charged with significance and presented through a paradigmatically chosen pattern of signifying images revealing the complexity of his existential condition.

Keywords: *Existential, innumerable, heteronym, human condition, partitive, paradigmatic.*

The fact that *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* belongs to the category of historical fiction does not encapsulate it within the boundaries of any particular genre. The appreciation of the Portuguese history as attempted by José Saramago, gives rise to analyses of the relations between writing history and political power. However, what lies beneath the crucial time and space of the 1936 Portugal and the world around it is an ideological examination of the historical, literary and the human condition of man.

For its subject, Saramago's historical fiction, which best renders itself as an intertextual, metafictional narrative, must be constructed and delineated carefully, i.e. it must have in its capacity to present existential situations in which a character exists. Hence, the complex political and historical period in Portugal is presented through a world of literary-creative imagination that manifests, among others, surreal, magical-realist instances. Highly intertextual in nature, the text problematizes human nature in the questions posed by Ricardo Reis which Saramago refers to in both Pessoa's and Reis's poetry and extends his conversation to the other guiding figures of Portuguese literature, such as Camões and Eça, whose works are alluded to when Pessoa and/or Reis pass through the streets of Lisbon. Thus, although the historical context of the complex period of Europe is described in detail, as through the newspapers which Reis curiously reads, Saramago reflects upon the representation of the empirical world through the eyes of literary imagination. This essentially lends the structure of the literary discourse a parabolic stance, which is coupled with the poetic voice of heteronymic odes.

This paper proposes to deal with José Saramago's *The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis* as a crucial space of signification where the human subject strives for the generation of existential meaning(s). Saramago's writing is characteristic of presenting an individual's confrontation with an existential situation, wherein the protagonist comes across as "a being who is constantly 'under construction', but also, in a parallel fashion, always in a state of constant destruction" (Politicalaffairs.net). Reis manifests

degeneration of human experience into inconsequentiality and an equally sustained regeneration of meaning, a problematic supposition, according to which, the human subject exists not plenitudinally but as a partitive existence.

The coinciding occasion of the death of Fernando Pessoa and Reis's return to the place of his being signifies a series of incidents which underline an existential experience wherein, rather than discovering fixed answers, the human subject undergoes a multiplicity of experience which is productive of a body constructed by innumerable, partitive selves. Such a body or being could be considered as a "substrate that is also identified as the plane of consistency... as a non-formed, non-organised, non-stratified or destratified body" (Message 37). Disparate but interrelated under the same plane of immanence, the partitive selves represented by Ricardo Reis interact in their finitude to render a plenitudinal process of continual 'becoming'. In the light of the narrative discourse, Saramago presents a threefold existence of Ricardo Reis.

Like most of Saramago characters, Ricardo Reis manifests a peculiarity which needs to be introduced to the reader. Ricardo is an imaginary character, a heteronym of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). But since Reis is as much Pessoa (being the alter-ego of the poet) as it is not (because, in the first place, it is not real and secondly, it is being re-imagined by Saramago), it demands equal consideration to be taken as an individual literary creation. This intricacy can be better understood by a Portuguese reader who has prior knowledge of Fernando Pessoa and his writing. But once we consider this duplicity, or rather a multiplicity of existential crisis within the text, the reader seems to follow the leads.

It is important to respect the interconnectivity between the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, his alter ego Ricardo Reis (Pessoa's poetry depicts this differentiation), and existential episodes involving the heteronym as imagined by Saramago. It becomes a threefold human struggle, charged with significance rendered especially for the Portuguese reader. First, as Saramago intends to write for the Portuguese reader, it is the middle-aged poet, Pessoa, who has died and appears as the ghost-at-unrest. Second, it is about the heteronym of Pessoa, Ricardo Reis, who being a heteronym is a separate entity living a different existential situation. His individuality manifests in the odes written by Pessoa; as a different aspect of his existence altogether. Third is the literary character, Ricardo Reis, as presented by Saramago emerging on the scene after the death of his creator and thus, in a way, lives independent of his creator. This threefold existence of the protagonist reflects upon the existential human condition on the one hand, and a being embodying multiplicity or innumerability on the other.

Moreover, from the point of view of the metaphor of death, once again we encounter the problematic of human condition for Pessoa, who is dead; albeit not as yet concluded as dead, and Reis, in his own gustative existence, is alive, only deferring his moments until he exits the stage with his creator:

It is an utterly new mode of aestheticism: both visionary and realistic, the cosmos of the great poet Pessoa and of the Fascist dictator Salazar and yet it presents us also with an original literary enigma: how long can Ricardo Reis survive the death of Fernando Pessoa? (Bloom 458)

Human condition, therefore, has more to it through the irreducible questions and pondering of the heteronymic presence of Ricardo Reis than getting interpreted as either a historical or fantastical phenomenon of existence. By presenting the threefold existential condition, I attempt to contextualize the paradigm of innumerability through a conscious choice of various signifying images or thematic ensembles that the character of Ricardo Reis manifests. This is where employing the literary device of a parable provides the narrative with a productive (literary) space in order to harbour an essentially fragmentary and partitive human existence. In this context, Reis's return to Portugal, to the space where his creator is no more, signifies the "need to renew an unfinished dialogue about life and art, reality and illusion" (Pontiero 139).

Paradigmatic Patterns of Signification

Innumerable people live within us. If I think and feel, I know not who is thinking and feeling, I am

only the place where there is thinking and feeling (13).

A given literary text, in all its architectonic structure, could be studied at two distinct levels. The 'semantic level' analysis of the text lays foundation for the explanation of its structural units in a linear progression. According to A. J. Greimas, the semantic level of the text is made up of categories that have no relation with the outside world as it is perceived. With the detailing of the syntagmatic course of events we get across the manifest order of the narrative, that is, "the formation of the sign level or the postulating of the plane of expression at the time of the production of the utterance" (Greimas and Courtés, 183). The 'semiological level' can be defined in opposition to the semantic level as being made of categories in correlation to the external world (Greimas and Courtés, 271).

Once we participate in the process of comprehending the significance of the choices made by Reis, the linear progression of the manifest order of the narrative essentially dissolves into a new immanent order that is paradigmatic in nature. The last sequence starts reflecting in the light of the first and vice versa. For instance, the first and the last lines of the text correlate thematically. Then for the first time we perceive the discourse as a whole. No unit whatsoever stands dislocated from the other. As an intact architectonic construction, the discourse analysis acquaints us with the specificity of the human condition of Ricardo Reis. This non-linear progression of existential choices made by Reis that highlight the theme of innumerability is the subject of this paper.

The text offers numerous conceptual possibilities around the general theme of the human condition; innumerability or the existence of innumerable beings within a single human consciousness is one and which I choose to analyze. The conceptual basis of (the theme of) innumerability in Ricardo Reis could not be initiated without putting into consideration the character of Fernando Pessoa, who is the creator-master of the heteronymic voice and life of Reis. Reis's belief in his being innumerable people does not signify anything without holding Pessoa's belief in his own innumerability; the proof of which is Reis himself. In a way, Reis is the extension of Pessoa's belief in plurality of experience and life. Here is precisely the point of departure as far as the thought of innumerable beings that Reis believes he is is concerned. The critical question that emerges thus is what makes Ricardo Reis utter, for the first time, that he is innumerable people.

From the beginning, the focus on Reis highlights him being the outsider who would like to perceive what he sees from his own point of view. The narrator informs us on the first page about the port on which the passengers disembark, "Lisboa, Lisbon, Lisbonne, Lissabon, there are four different ways of saying it, leaving aside the variants and mistaken forms" (2), acknowledging the possibility of alternative perceptions. The concept of innumerability evokes the tension between imagination and reality. Existence as a physical construct is considered to be real, but the problem arises when the concept of city is perceived by human understanding.

While disembarking what frightens the passengers is the 'silent city' which endows an unbearable 'chimera' manifested in the 'hypnotic horizon', an image depicting a nowhere. Against this backdrop of the feeling of a void, Reis is introduced, keeping much with the mysterious atmosphere of the landscape and his tedious journey, as an anonymous entity; an outsider at best: "we will say only that he is only skin and bones... and as dark and clean-shaven as the man he is accompanying. Yet they are both quite different, one a passenger, one a porter" (4-5). The anonymity of the protagonist maintained by the dubious passenger-porter roles is underlined as he is repeatedly addressed first as 'passenger', then 'traveller' and 'guest' until the question about his identity is asked at the hotel reception. The 'passenger' is asked by the driver of a taxi he hires about the destination in the 'Where to' and 'Why', to which Reis answers instinctively, "I don't know, and having said, I don't know, the passenger knew precisely what he wanted, knew it with the utmost conviction" (6). He answers that he is Portuguese and that he would like to go to a hotel near the river.

The issue of innumerability is marked early on by this dual-strand consciousness about some inherent contradiction; the consciousness about knowing and not knowing; Ricardo Reis does not know

and yet he does know. For he does not know he is an anonymous passenger and for he knows still, he is Ricardo Reis. Starting with anonymity, from the narrative point of view, Reis is associated with many roles until his own identity is questioned. In the hotel room, Reis notices “the musty smell, the smell of dirty linen forgotten in some drawer... smell of one kind or another linger, the perspiration of insomnia or a night of love... unavoidable smells, the signs of our humanity” (11-12). The metaphor of smell helps us find the initiation or baptism of Ricardo Reis amidst the signs of birth and life, ‘the signs of... humanity’.

The humanizing of Reis is significant from the point of view of situating the character independently and existentially. However, nowhere do we witness him proclaiming any plenitudinal identity in its completeness. Accompanying always his human individuality is the equally ambiguous questions about the nature of his identity. Among the books Reis brought with him, there is one which he forgets to return to the library of the ship. Since ‘The God of Labyrinth’ is a book by Herbert Quain, an author who is a literary creation of Jorge Luis Borges, and since the narrator insists still to notice the play on the name Quain, which could be easily mistaken for the Portuguese ‘Quem’ meaning ‘who’, the identity of a character (in this case an author) attracts obscurity of origins and identities. The reason that the author foregrounds the title of the book further in asking, “A labyrinth with a god, what god might that be, which labyrinth, what labyrinthine god” (12) presents the conceptual domain which is key to the theme of innumerability.

The device of metatextuality thus springing out of the direct line of Portuguese literary tradition presents a vast and productive literary space. Within this space, the above mentioned contradictions thrive as well as the space given, intertextually, to Borgesian ‘Quain’, Pessoa’s Reis and the Saramagoan pun that questions, ‘Quem’ (who). These observations emerge through essentially a paradigmatic approach according to which the thematic correlations around the theme of ‘innumerability’ are established in a non-linear selection or rejection of the signifying ensembles in the text.

The multi-layered complexity of the protagonist’s utterances about existence, death, and his identity gets manifested through various signifying images that construct the narrative. The constitution of the literary discourse around the theme of innumerability is thus instanced by significant happenings, non-happenings which control the paradigmatic or the non-linear understanding of various thematic-clusters. In order to understand the utterance about ‘innumerability’, to contextualize the statement from his ode, it is important to choose signifying images and see them *vis-à-vis* the character manifesting them. For instance, after Reis reaches Lisbon and is accompanied by a porter to hotel Bragança, the narrator notes that, “Yet they are both quite different, one a passenger, one a porter” (4-5). The comparison is not accidental. Since both of them appear the same when described physically, the signifiers, ‘passenger’ and ‘porter’ present two selves of the same person.

In the newspaper archives, Ricardo Reis reads about the death of Fernando Pessoa. Herein lies the inherent ambiguity of the ‘innumerability’ paradigm. As a poet, Pessoa was not only one person. He was also Alvaro de Campos, Alberto Caeiro and Ricardo Reis, whereas Reis who is reading the news of the death of his friend considers himself to innumerable beings. The narrator insists that we are not dealing with the same person in Reis as one who was a mere figment of Pessoa’s imagination. The contradiction problematizes the nature of reality and imagination. The true identity of Ricardo Reis is first questioned when he, as the ‘guest’, takes to fill the details in the “register of arrivals” (10). Then Reis is addressed, again repetitively, as ‘Doctor’ by the hotel manager and staff. The constant and varied addresses that Reis hears are identities given to him as in what he is supposed to be or how he is seen by society. The conceptual opposition between anonymity and identity builds up when, having addressed thus over and over again in inadvertent ways by people who meet him after he lands in Lisbon, Reis is left alone in the hotel room. The moment he is left alone, he feels himself to be “in transit, his life (is) suspended” (11).

In this quintessential state of existential suspension, Reis expresses, in all ambiguous terms, his thoughts in terms of his poetic voice, in an ode he had written before his journey: “*Innumerable people live*

within us. If I think and feel, I know not who is thinking and feeling, I am only the place where there is thinking and feeling" (13). The 'thinking and feeling' thus makes him contemplate on his words:

If I am this, muses Ricardo Reis as he stops reading, who will be thinking at this moment what I am thinking, or think that I am thinking in the place where I am, because of thinking. Who will be feeling what I am feeling, or feel that I am feeling in the place where I am, because of feeling. Who is using me in order to think and feel, and among the innumerable people who live within me, who I am, Who, *Quem*, Quain, what thoughts and feelings are the ones I do not share because they are mine alone. Who am I that others are not nor have been nor will come to be (13).

What after all, makes Reis utter that he is innumerable people and which one of them he really is? 'Who am I' is the existential quest Reis finds himself to be on. Is he someone who others are not? Or is he all the innumerable people? Or, as his ode mentions, is he "*only the place where there is thinking and feeling*" (13), which again leads to the question, 'Who am I' who thinks and feels. As he starts his quest with the stay at the hotel, we see Reis putting an effort to interact with people from the society. He starts with socializing at public places and theatres; but only to end up being with the impenetrable magnitude of his questions and words. After dinner on the first night of his stay, we find him standing in the hallway in front of a big mirror, "contemplating himself in the depths of the mirror, one of the countless persons that he is, all of them weary" (16).

Following Reis visiting the cemetery reveals that as soon as he reaches Pessoa's tomb, his 'uneasiness' turns into 'nausea' and he quickly returns. All he feels is 'absence', and "a piece of brain missing, the piece relinquished by Pessoa" (29). Fernando Pessoa was someone who is at least one of the innumerable beings Reis considers himself to be. The visit to the cemetery accomplishes that Reis, among other beings that he could be, also is the dead Fernando Pessoa. But, importantly, the utterance, "*Innumerable people live within us*" (13), does not cancel out the counter-productive existential question, "Who am I" (13). Both the assertion and the question persist in each other's face as the protagonist struggles to fill the 'absence' or discover the 'piece of brain missing'.

Reis tries to alleviate his unease by giving way to a sudden impulse to join the carnival of people at midnight of the New Year but is disappointed. On returning back to his hotel room Reis finds a visitor. The visitor is Fernando Pessoa. As the heteronymic 'presence' meets its authorial 'absence', the paradigm of innumerability is manifested for the first time. Most of their conversation revolves around the nature of life and death as to what do the two categories signify. The sequence manifests a conceptual framework in the meetings of two individual characters. The situational context dictates that Reis, who is supposed to be a product of Pessoa's authorial consent, is the independent creator of his own odes and a manifestation of an existential condition whereas Fernando Pessoa, being the ghost-self, can only "cast a shadow" (65). The observation signifies not any hierarchical power equation, but a role reversal strictly in the sense of one human being more than his outer self, someone who contradicts his own self, registering a multiplicity of counter-productive selves. Each self establishes its own truth, however different and contradictory from the other.

Death is a constant presence in the text. Fernando Pessoa is dead, and death of a self signifies life for another. Reis says that he has come back only because Pessoa died. From the title of the book we know that this is the year of Reis's death as well. Death helps Reis to recognize that which he does not know and the unknown signifies the utterance, "*Innumerable people live within us... I know not... who am I*" (13). Ricardo Reis missed the funeral ceremony of Pessoa as he was in Brazil. He feels nauseated when he first visits Pessoa's grave and could not stand the overwhelming feeling induced by the unfathomable unknown reality of death. Then one day Reis decides to pay a visit to the funeral of a stranger named Mouraria. This time, as if to pay homage to the unknown in the death of Pessoa, he resigns himself to the reality of death.

However, innumerability is signified each time the perception of reality is challenged by the

unknown and through imagination. One night, “repressed Dionysian turmoil stirring within” (133) drives Reis to join the carnival, but he is soon bored with the ‘tawdry procession’. At one crucial point, Ricardo bumps into “a strange figure in the procession, despite its being most logical of all, namely Death” (137). The man is dressed exactly like Pessoa had suggested in the previous scene. Reis thinks if it could be Fernando Pessoa but dismisses the thought as absurd for he knows Pessoa would never do any such thing. To confirm, however, Reis pursues Death by running after him, while the man clad as Death rushes away as “he appeared to leave a luminous trail” (137) behind: “but Ricardo Reis could see him distinctly, neither near nor far, a walking skeleton. . . . Those who encountered him called out, Hey, Death, hey scarecrow, but the masquerader neither replied nor looked back . . . an agile fellow, surely not Fernando Pessoa . . . But the skeleton halted at the top of the stairs, looked down as if to give him time to catch up” (137-38).

Reis asks in desperation; “Where is wretched Death leading me, and I, why am I following him” (138). Later, the masquerader comes toward Reis, who panics and breaks into a run. This time ‘Death’ catches up with Reis in a corner and asks in a harsh tone, “who do you think you are following” (138). Reis replies that he mistook the masquerader for a friend. But Death asks again: “How do you know I’m not shamming, and the voice now sounded quite different” (138). While the sentence menacingly echoes Pessoa’s question, “How do you know”, the masquerader replies for a final time in a voice that now resembles that of Fernando Pessoa.

The paradigm of innumerability is signified by the thematic cluster manifested through the passage. There is certainty (the known) in the fact that Reis sees the masquerader distinctly as a fellow ‘surely not Fernando Pessoa’ countered by uncertainty (unknown) in the repetitive use of the conjunction, ‘but’. And the opposition is juxtaposed to derive the impending equivocality of the situation through phrases like ‘neither near nor far’, and that the masquerader ‘neither replied nor looked back’. The predicament apprehends Ricardo Reis, whose state of mind is gradually coming to terms with the situation as he asks where ‘wretched Death’ is leading him. And soon the pursuer starts getting pursued. Death pushes Reis into a corner and asks him how is it that he knows. Yet again, through the surreal encounter with Death, the reasonably numerable selves get contested with a question Reis has no answer to.

To the paradigmatic strand that emerged through Reis’s question, “Where is wretched death leading me” (138), the argument between Reis and Pessoa contemplates a reply in his thought:

... it is difficult for one who is alive to understand the dead. I suspect that it is just as difficult for a dead man to understand the living. The dead man has the advantage of having being alive; he is familiar with the things of this world and of the other world, too, whereas the livings are incapable of learning the one fundamental truth and profiting from it. What truth is that. That one must die. Those of us who are alive know that we will die. You don’t know it, no one knows it, just as I didn’t when I was alive, what we do know without a shadow of doubt is that others die (234).

Having died, or having had his much prized life-self died, Pessoa is able to muster the meaning of death and thus life from a new perspective; a perspective which is missing with Ricardo. While alive, as Pessoa confesses now, he was ‘mistaken’ when once he wrote, “*Neophyte, there is no death*” (235). Pessoa also reminds Reis that, “If we do not say all words, however absurd, we will never say the essential words” (235). Unless Reis accepts the existence of death as much as he accepts life, he would be unable to say ‘all’ words and know where death is ‘leading’ him. In order, for Reis, to accept innumerable people, the death of one being counts as much as the life of another. This realization takes place later in the third sequence when Ricardo truly encounters himself in the others that he perceives as equals.

In another signifying image, during his first stay in hotel Bragança, one of the innumerable selves of Reis is resigned to the ‘mournful noise of the rain’ which he listens to like “a silkworm in its cocoon” (169). However, in the next scene, standing by the window of his new apartment, Ricardo asserts: “I live

here, this is where I live, this is my home, this, I have no other” (186). And yet, the very next moment, “suddenly he felt fear, the terror of a man who finds himself in a deep cave and pushes open a door that leads into the darkness of an even deeper cave, or to a void, an absence, nothingness, the passage to nonbeing” (186). The ‘innumerable people’ Reis believes himself to be, fluctuate from hope to despair.

These crucial conceptually opposed articulations constitute paradigmatic correspondence between innumerable contexts manifested through the innumerable beings in question. Driven out of his privileged position, Reis is no longer “*Serene and watching life from a distance*” (97). Reis leaves for Fatima hoping to find Marcenda but for all that he searches, he is met with a “sea of people” (269), the multitude, he does not know: “Ricardo Reis is resigned, whether he finds or doesn't find Marcenda seems of no great importance now” (270). What Pessoa points out earlier in the need to see the absurd in ‘all words’, Reis faces it himself at Fatima:

Ricardo Reis finds this all absurd, the idea that he has travelled from Lisbon like someone pursuing a mirage, knowing all the while that it was a mirage and nothing more, his sitting in the shade of an olive tree among people he does not know, waiting for nothing whatsoever, and these thoughts about a boy whom he saw for only a moment in a remote provincial train station, this sudden desire to be like him.... Have I ever really experienced life, Ricardo Reis murmured to himself (271).

Right from the beginning, Reis faces crowds and carnivals, but avoids them. He thinks of himself as not one of them, which helps to build the conceptual construct of innumerability. Without being one of them, how could he be one among the ones he'd believed he is? The situation exposes the susceptibility of the human condition in Reis and echoes Pessoa's questioning of Reis who was once, “*Serene and watching life from a distance*” (97). The least that the question Reis asks, in whether he has really ever experienced life, does is that it lets him create room (as it results out of a conscious effort least accidental) for innumerable people by considering them; a space for the absurd so that the ‘essential’ may be uttered. He leaves for Fatima as the lover of Marcenda but the essential absurdity of life faced with and among people he does not know renders within his self the possibility of being a pilgrim.

Before leaving for Lisbon, Reis is able to see himself as, ‘two people’; “the dignified Ricardo Reis, who each day washes and shaves and this other Ricardo Reis, a vagrant with a stubble” (275). The innumerability he believes in stems from the coexistence of ‘two people’ Reis sees in himself. The two are essentially more than a singular identity Reis cultivates either socially or professionally (as manifested in the two stays in the city). Having returned from Fatima, Reis writes the poem, “*Not seeing the Fates who destroy us, we forget that they exist*” (285), once again echoing Pessoa's words, “If we do not say all words, however absurd” (235). The proposition is further explicated paradigmatically in the next meeting between Reis and Pessoa where the invisible Pessoa tells Reis that all of us are crippled and reiterates that “out of an infinite number of hypotheses, this is one” (331).

By choosing the above mentioned signifying images from the narrative, the paradigmatic universe is unveiled from the perspective of the protagonist. The selection of these images results from Ricardo Reis's belief about the innumerability of his being. From first seeing him aboard the ship to Lisbon, to the pilgrimage of Fatima, Reis confronts the questions emanating out of the partitive selves that are manifested in various existential situations. It is only when we correlate the images that the thematic construct renders an understanding of the idea of ‘innumerable people’, which Reis is able to accept instead of just articulating.

One of the central thematic oppositions in the text, i.e. Real/Unreal, extends the paradigm of innumerable beings. Reis confesses his fatherhood to Pessoa. The being of a father here is again a matter of acceptance for Reis. Fatherhood has not been a matter of direct choice for him, but in recognizing himself as ‘two people’, he manifests his fatherhood as well. Reis accepts the presence of his unborn child through whose being he derives his own fatherhood and thus one of the essential innumerable people he is or would

be.

Contrary to Reis's notions of class-consciousness, by which Lydia was known to him as a chambermaid, he is able to perceive that Lydia is also a 'woman'. Hence, the acceptance of innumerable people and 'infinite number of hypotheses' result in the realization of his own being. Saramago's fiction, in its confrontation with the problem of human condition, awakens to the production of the articulation of innumerable contextual meanings. In the process of the architectonic articulation of human condition, Saramago's fiction functions to reveal partitive selves in their finitude rather than a plenitudinal singular self.

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