SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW ARCHIVES
ISSN Online: 3006-4708
ISSN Print: 3006-4694
https://policyjournalofms.com

The Deconstruction of Identity in José Saramago's *Blindness*

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i4.1452

Abstract

This research aims to highlight the deconstruction of the notion of identity in Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness*. It focuses on how in times of social collapse both personal and collective selfhood becomes unstable. Using Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, the study claims that identity within the novel is simultaneously produced through systems of representation and regulated through institutional power. In such a case the metaphor of *Blindness* serves as a metaphor for the postmodern condition which is marked by loss of perception, reality and individuality. This loss results in an idea of self that is fluid, performative and contingent. Along with thematic analysis the research draws on narrative strategies such as nameless characters, fragmented dialogue, and flowing prose to expose the fragility of social and individual order. Moreover, it also highlights how human identity is shaped by perception, social interaction, and governance. By integrating literary analysis with philosophical and sociopolitical critique, this study argues that *Blindness* not only interrogates the postmodern self but also critiques the mechanisms through which contemporary societies construct, monitor, and control human existence. This work thus contributes not only to existing Saramago studies but also to broader discussions on the interplay of representation, power, and the instability of identity in contemporary literature.

Keywords: Blindness, Identity, Hyperreality, Biopolitics, Postmodernism, Representation

Introduction

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation (Hall, 222). We live in a world where everything is uncertain and constantly evolving, and the idea of stability has been reduced to an illusion. This illusion extends beyond material or social structures to something far more intimate that is our sense of self. Thus, our understanding of the concept of identity becomes something that flickers, something that is constructed through shifting perceptions and external conditions rather than inner truth. This very idea is embedded in José Saramago's novel *Blindness* which highlights this instability, presenting a world where sight, order, and individuality collapse into chaos. Here, reality seems to multiply into versions of itself, each one competing for authenticity, until the difference between what is real and what is imitation becomes uncertain. People begin to live through reflections of meaning, through repetitions of what once felt original, and as a consequence the boundaries between truth and appearance quietly dissolve. As one of the characters in the novel says "Any day now, we shall no longer know who we are." (Saramago, 24). At the same time, life itself becomes a site of control. Even in moments of collapse, systems of power continue to manage, categorize, and define individuals, deciding whose lives hold value and whose do not. The fragile sense of self becomes entangled with these invisible mechanisms of order, shaped by fear, survival, and the desire to belong. Thus, this sudden epidemic of

Blindness exposes how identity is contingent on perception, social interaction, and power structures. This research argues that José Saramago's *Blindness* deconstructs the idea of a stable human identity by revealing how it is simultaneously produced through systems of representation (Baudrillard's hyperreality) and controlled through mechanisms of power (Foucault's biopolitics). In the novel, *Blindness* operates as a metaphor for a postmodern condition where perception, truth, and individuality collapse, exposing how identity is not inherent but constructed, simulated, and governed within social and ideological structures.

Literature Review:

In José Saramago's *Blindness*, personal and collective identity become fragile in the face of social collapse. Feibel and Arch provide a medical-historical perspective, situating the novel's epidemic of Blindness alongside real-world occurrences such as the Cuban Epidemic Optic Neuropathy. They highlight how systemic social and political failures such as malnutrition, state mismanagement, and environmental stressors can destabilize both individual bodies and collective well-being (Feibel and Arch 122). This suggests that the loss of vision in *Blindness* functions both literally and symbolically, representing the breakdown of social and moral systems that sustain identity. Keren applies Rawls's concept of the "original position" to the narrative, noting that the epidemic removes all social markers status, profession, gender leaving individuals in radical equality (Keren 47). Unlike Rawls's hypothetical agents, Saramago's characters face fear, violence, and coercion, showing that identity becomes contingent on survival strategies rather than moral or social codes. Sociological theories also illuminate the processes at play. Stets and Burke explain that personal and group identities rely on consistent social roles, recognition, and normative frameworks (Stets and Burke 17). In *Blindness,* these stabilizing anchors collapse: role identity becomes meaningless, and group identity disintegrates under quarantine and gang domination. Identity emerges as performative, dependent on verification and recognition, which are rendered impossible in conditions of social and sensory chaos. Integrating these perspectives with Baudrillard's hyperreality and Foucault's biopolitics clarifies the novel's critique of identity. Baudrillard explains how simulation replaces reality, destabilizing the self (Baudrillard 166). Characters reduced to descriptors such as "doctor" or "first blind man" inhabit a hyperreal environment where social distinctions circulate without referent. Foucault's biopolitics demonstrates how populations are regulated under crisis; quarantine, categorization, surveillance, and rationing show individuals treated as functional units within controlled systems (Foucault 138). Together, these frameworks suggest that in *Blindness*, identity is simultaneously simulated, governed, and dependent on social structures. While existing frameworks provide valuable tools for analysis, few studies explicitly examine how narrative techniques, hyperreality, and biopolitics intersect to produce the fragility of identity in Saramago's novel. There is also limited attention to the interaction between individual and collective identity under extreme social stress. Addressing these gaps, this study explores how *Blindness* portrays identity as fluid, contingent, and socially regulated, emphasizing the mechanisms through which the self is produced and controlled in conditions of societal collapse.

Significance

This study moves beyond conventional moral or narrative analyses to examine Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness* through the frameworks of hyperreality and biopolitics. While much existing scholarship has focused on the ethical and social dimensions of the epidemic depicted in the novel. For example, Chesney (2021) argues that the novel "explores his experiment in thinking about the foundation of human community … by imagining the response to a sort of pandemic of white Blindness" (Chesney, 211). This research emphasizes how Saramago destabilizes the very notions of reality, perception, and human identity. By applying Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, the study demonstrates that the novel portrays a world in which reality and simulation collapse. A world where the characters' loss of sight renders them incapable of distinguishing between what is 'real' and what is constructed, this mirrors the broader

philosophical anxieties of contemporary society. Additionally, incorporating Foucault's theory of biopolitics highlights the ways in which power and control operate even amid social chaos. The research thus aims to underscores how institutions, societal structures, and collective behavior attempt to regulate human bodies as well as behavior. Ultimately, revealing the fragile and often coercive nature of social order. This dual focus illuminates the tension between individual autonomy and institutional control which serves as a medium offering insight into the mechanisms through which identity is constructed, monitored, and manipulated. Furthermore, the study with its combined theoretical approach, aims to bridge literary analysis with philosophical and sociopolitical critique. In this manner it will be demonstrating how literature can serve as a lens for understanding complex theoretical ideas, and how theoretical frameworks can, in turn, deepen our understanding of literature. Thus, by situating Blindness within discussions of hyperreality and biopolitics, the research contributes not only to Saramago studies but also to broader conversations about identity, power, and perception in contemporary literature and culture.

Research Objectives

- To explore how personal and collective identities become unstable and fluid in *Blindness* during social collapse.
- To show how narrative techniques, like nameless characters and fragmented dialogue, reflect the fragility of identity.
- To analyze how identity is shaped both by social perception and institutional control, using Baudrillard's hyperreality and Foucault's biopolitics.
- To examine the tension between individual autonomy and societal or ideological pressures in constructing the self.

Research Questions

1. How does Saramago's in his novel *Blindness* expose the instability and fluidity of personal and collective identity in contexts of social collapse?
2. In what ways does *Blindness* serve as a critique of the reduction of individuals to functional or categorical data within contemporary bureaucratic and digital systems?

Research Method

This research follows a qualitative approach, using Jose Saramago's novel *Blindness* as the central text. The approach includes interpreting the novel through the lens of Baudrillard's hyperreality which focuses on unstable reality and identity and Foucault's biopolitics which is about control over human life and bodies. These frameworks analyze how identity in the novel is constructed, destabilized, and controlled. Along with these theoretical perspectives the research will employ close reading, analysing Saramago's use of stylistic devices such as the absence of proper names, fragmented dialogue, and long, flowing sentences to show how identity becomes fluid and unstable when familiar social order collapses. Through this method, the study seeks to uncover how the novel destabilizes conventional notions of identity and autonomy, reflecting broader socio-political and philosophical concerns about the depersonalization of individuals in contemporary society. The paper interprets Saramago's work as a literary enactment of hyperreal and biopolitical conditions: the collapse of distinction between reality and representation, the reduction of humans to functional or categorical entities, and the mechanisms of control and normalization that govern collective life. Theoretical Framework. This research draws upon Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality and Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics to examine the instability and fluidity of identity in *Blindness*. Both theorists, though emerging from distinct philosophical trajectories, converge on a shared concern that is the dissolution of stable categories of meaning, truth, and the self under modern regimes of power and representation. Baudrillard's Simulacra and Simulation (1981) describes a world in which images no longer reflect reality but replace it entirely. In the hyperreal condition, the

distinction between the original and its representation collapses, producing a reality composed of simulations. Ryszard Wolny (2017) expands on this by suggesting that in hyperreality, meaning becomes self-referential objects and signs derive significance only from other signs. This serves as a basis of eliminating the authentic core of identity and also situating the self in a perpetual state of construction and imitation. In Saramago's *Blindness,* the epidemic operates as a metaphor for this hyperreal condition, where perception which was once the foundation of truth and identity, becomes something unreliable. Characters lose not only their sight but also the stable sense of who they are which embodies Baudrillard's claim that in a postmodern world, the "real" self is replaced by simulacra and is shaped by circumstance, fear, and collective imagination. While Baudrillard exposes the collapse of authenticity, Foucault's notion of biopolitics articulated in his Lectures at the Collège de France and explored in The Government of Life: Foucault, Biopolitics, and Neoliberalism (2014) traces how modern power governs life itself. As Alexander J. Means (2021) and Francesco Adorno et al. (2014) explain, biopolitics emerged when life became a political object, which refers to the time when the state began managing populations through surveillance, normalization, and control. Foucault states this as a shift from sovereign power (the right to take life) to biopower (the capacity to regulate life). Under neoliberalism, identity becomes an effect of governance, a managed construct rather than an essence. Individuals internalize mechanisms of control, transforming themselves into subjects who conform to economic and moral norms. By integrating Baudrillard's and Foucault's frameworks, this research argues that the instability of identity is not only a product of representation (hyperreality) but also a symptom of regulation (biopolitics). In *Blindness*, the social order's disintegration reveals how both forces intersect, particularly when institutional control collapses. In such a case individual can no longer rely on imposed categories to define themselves, exposing identity as fluid and contingent. Thus, through the interplay of simulation and power, Saramago's narrative exposes the fragility of the modern self-caught between illusion and governance, between seeing and being seen.

Analysis

Jose Saramago's work *Blindness* is a novel that presents to us an extreme scenario where the idea of a stable of identity disintegrates. This disintegration happens under the pressure of an epidemic that erases not only visual perception but also the symbolic structures through which individuals recognize themselves and others. Saramago's deliberate anonymity, its chaotic social reorganization, and its breakdown of meaning collectively produce a condition in which identity becomes simulated rather than grounded. This idea is a demonstration of Jean Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality, which asserts that hyperreality is a condition which emerges when the distinction between truth and representation collapses, and subjects inhabit a world constituted entirely by signs without referents (Baudrillard 2). This condition is evident throughout the course of the novel, where Blindness is staged not merely as physical loss but as the collapse of the "real", that once anchored human identity. This renders identity as something that is not destroyed from the outside but it is hollowed from within, exposing it as a construct dependent on perception, representation, and social order. The result of which is emergence of a hyperreal subjectivity, that is unstable, contingent, and constantly reproduced through shifting signs of survival, fear, and power. Analysing the novel from this perspective, the first and foremost instance of the destabilization of identity appears in the novel's foundational stylistic choice that is the refusal to assign proper names. All characters are identified solely through functional or contingent descriptors for example "doctor," "doctor's wife," "first blind man," or "girl with the dark glasses", thus reducing them to abstract signs rather than anchored selves. This anonymity is what mimics Baudrillard's first stage of simulation, a stage where the sign begins to detach from the real object it once represented. The people in *Blindness* no longer possess identities; they are "markers," circulating in a system of representation without intrinsic meaning. This reduction becomes explicit early in the epidemic when the doctor, upon falling blind, confronts an identity crisis. His Blindness renders him indistinguishable from others, and he recognizes the

collapse of the differential markers that once sustained a sense of individual selfhood. In the absence of sight, identity becomes a flat field in which symbolic distinctions disappear, producing a hyperreal mass of interchangeable subjects. Baudrillard argues that in the hyperreal condition, subjects inhabit a world in which the difference between reality and representation becomes undecidable (Baudrillard 6). Saramago literalizes this condition through the epidemic of "white Blindness," a phenomenon repeatedly described as seeing "a milky sea, as if the world had become submerged in light". This whiteness is not darkness but overexposure, which can be described as an excess of visibility that paradoxically eliminates the real. The epidemic produces not a lack of images but their saturation, mirroring Baudrillard's idea that simulation arises not from absence but from proliferation. The doctor articulates this collapse of the "real" when he notes that Blindness has "no explanation, no logic, no cause". A phenomenon without origin perfectly parallels what Baudrillard calls the "generation by models of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard 1). The spread of blindness is not thus an outcome of biological mechanisms but through imitation where the sighted becomes blind simply by encountering the already-blind. This pattern suggests that blindness itself functions as a simulacrum which is detached from physical causality as it spreads as a sign, not as a pathogen. The quarantine asylum serves as another prominent demonstration of the hyperreal condition. The asylum is a place where the blind people attempt to reconstruct order using remnants of their former reality. Yet these reconstructions become grotesque simulations serving as parodies of functioning social structures rather than continuations of them. For example, the internees attempt to imitate governmental categorization by dividing themselves into wards, but this merely reproduces bureaucratic order without any of its stabilizing force. The asylum thus mimics reality while remaining fundamentally unreal, a state Baudrillard would identify as the third order of simulacra, in which representation no longer refers to any reality whatsoever but only to other representations. Within this environment identity can be read as equally simulated, where characters are seen enacting roles based on prior social expectations that no longer hold meaning. As we see that the "doctor" can no longer see to perform medical duties, the "girl with the dark glasses," formerly defined by appearance and social perceptions of morality, becomes indistinguishable from others; and even the "thief," initially marked by illicit activity, is reduced to a bare life stripped of moral coding. As a consequence of this their identities become floating signifiers disconnected from any grounding reality. Moreover, language in *Blindness* becomes unstable too. This instability mirrors the collapse of meaning, and resonates with Baudrillard's idea that in hyperreality, meaning becomes self-referential and circulates without grounding (Wolny 76). Throughout the course of the novel it can be observed that Saramago has used fragmented dialogue, interrupted speech, and sentences that run endlessly. These techniques help in creating a textual environment in which communication is partial and unreliable, thus this linguistic breakdown can be said to correspond to the characters' loss of perceptual anchoring. The very idea that without sight, language fails to stabilize identity or social interaction. One of the novel's most striking textual moments illustrates this collapse: "Any day now we shall no longer know who we are, nor even remember our names" (Saramago 24). This is not simply a prediction but an articulation of hyperreal dissolution. To "not know who we are" is to inhabit Baudrillard's universe of simulation, where identity is no longer grounded in memory, history, or bodily coherence but in unstable signs with no referent. The novel's refusal to use quotation marks reinforces this destabilization, an act where speech blends with narration, and individual voices merge indistinguishably. The narrative structure itself thus simulates the collapse of unique identity, producing textual hyperreality in which boundaries between speaker and listener, between inner thought and external description disappear. Identity becomes a linguistic effect rather than a stable interiority. Moving on, the sexual violence committed by the gang controlling the food supply is another instance which exposes the hyperreal dissolution of identity. Here, women can be seen as being treated as "exchangeable bodies," who are no longer individualized persons but commodities within a simulated economy of power and survival. Baudrillard notes that in hyperreality, bodies become surfaces of operational value rather than sites of interiority

(Baudrillard 92). This reduction is evident when the gang leader claims the right to "use" the women as payment for food, turning human identity into a fungible currency. The doctor's wife who remains sighted serves as a witness to all these happenings, she notes that the women "no longer knew where their own bodies ended or began". This fragmentation reflects the hyperreal condition in which physical and psychological boundaries dissolve and Identity becomes not only destabilized but something that is violated into incoherence. Also the sight of the doctor's wife positions her as a witness to hyperreality, she can be seen as a figure who perceives the collapse of the real while others inhabit it unknowingly. Her role here becomes ambiguous as she is both inside and outside of the simulation, thereby, embodying the tension between reality and its representation. Even she, however, eventually recognizes that sight offers no privileged access to truth, evident by her remark that the blind "see everything," suggesting that perception itself has become decoupled from reality, completing the novel's hyperreal inversion. In the novel, apart from individual identities Saramago also dismantles the notion of collective identity. It can be observed that traditional social bonds like family, professional class, and civic structure disintegrate, and are replaced by provisional communities. These communities are in turn formed through necessity rather than shared meaning. The group that emerges around the doctor's wife functions as a hyperreal collective as it imitates familial structure without its emotional or symbolic grounding. They act as a "family" because the narrative requires cooperative survival, not because they share familial identity. This simulated community becomes the most apparent when they occupy an abandoned apartment after escaping the asylum. Here, they prepare meals, clean the space, and enact routines reminiscent of domestic order, but these actions are nothing but hollow reproductions of pre-blindness. The doctor's wife notes that they are merely "playing at being a family" which marks these domestic rituals as simulations only established to provide temporary psychological structure and not any authentic connection to past identity. This resonates with what Baudrillard argues that in hyperreality, simulation becomes "more real than the real" (Baudrillard 12). The group's imitation of domestic life thus becomes a survival mechanism that both replaces and erases their former identities. They no longer remember who they were before blindness; instead, they become the roles they perform within the simulated community, thus identity becomes performance rather than essence. Perhaps the most striking affirmation of identity's deconstruction comes at the novel's conclusion, that is when sight returns inexplicably. The doctor's wife, observing the first man to regain his sight, notes that his identity does not return with his vision, she notes "He looked at himself as if he did not recognize his own body". It infers that vision restores perception but not selfhood, which in turn is a marker that identity has been irreversibly destabilized. This very final moment when seen through the lens of Baudrillard asserts that once the real is lost to simulation, it cannot be restored (Baudrillard 23). The epidemic has thus revealed identity as a construction sustained by fragile systems of representation, and even when those systems are reinstated, the illusion of stable selfhood cannot be recovered. The characters do not return to who they were because those selves never existed as stable entities. They were always productions, as Hall would argue, constituted within mutable social and perceptual systems. Identity in *Blindness* is dismantled through the collapse of perception, the erosion of symbolic structures, and the reproduction of social forms as empty simulations. Saramago constructs a world in which the distinction between real and unreal disintegrates, aligning with Baudrillard's hyperreality: signs circulate without referents, social roles are performed without grounding, and subjectivity dissolves into indistinguishable anonymity. The novel ultimately exposes identity as a fragile construct which is produced through representation, maintained through social order, and easily destabilized when those systems collapse. By integrating stylistic techniques, narrative developments, and theoretical resonances, Saramago reveals the hyperreal condition at the heart of modern subjectivity: identity as simulation, always contingent, always in flux, and always vulnerable to collapse. To further elaborate on the idea of an unstable and fluid identity, this research will draw on Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics. This idea highlights how power is exercised over life rather than territory or legal subjects and thus provides one of the most compelling frameworks for

understanding the systematic dehumanization depicted in José Saramago's *Blindness*. In Foucault's terms, biopolitics emerges when the life of populations becomes the principal object of state administration which asserts that rather than focusing on juridical punishment or sovereign decrees, biopolitical power works through techniques of classification, quarantine, surveillance, statistical calculation, and environmental control. This further contributes to the idea that individuals cease to matter as autonomous subjects; instead, they are reduced to biological units whose value lies in their manageability. Saramago's novel exposes this logic with startling clarity, very evident from the very beginning of the novel when the epidemic spreads and institutions, soldiers, medical authorities, and bureaucratic systems cease to see people as persons. They see them as risk categories, carriers of contagion, quantities to be stored, and bodies whose biological functions must be regulated or contained. Through the novel's depiction of quarantine, classification, capacity, and state violence, Saramago critiques how modern power transforms human beings into functional or categorical data. From the moment when the very first person goes blond, we see that the state starts to divide them according to their risk rate. The Ministry of Health does not ask who the blind man is; instead, it asks what category he belongs to from the infected, contagious, or dangerous one. Foucault argues that biopolitical power functions by fragmenting populations into "relevant units," separating and re-arranging them according to medical, social, or administrative criteria (Foucault 254). Saramago dramatizes this fragmentation when the government converts an abandoned mental asylum into a quarantine facility and divides the blind into separate wards: "the other wing… for those suspected" (Saramago 57). The language here for example the use of the word *suspected* is interrogative, procedural, and non-human and it presumes guilt, not humanity. The people sent to this second ward are not evaluated as individuals; they are placed into a category whose identity is determined entirely by bureaucratic labeling.

This biopolitical sorting immediately erases individual identity. Names, occupations, family structures, and histories cease to matter. The government does not inquire about personal needs or vulnerabilities. It simply assigns positions within a statistical schema. This mirrors the Foucauldian shift from sovereign power, which acts on individual bodies, to biopower, which acts on populations by "managing collective phenomena, such as birth, death, illness, and risk" (Foucault 90). Saramago exposes the violence inherent in such categorization by showing that once individuals are reduced to medical categories, the ethical obligation to treat them humanely collapses. The doctor's wife, the only sighted person among the interned, recognizes this loss of subjecthood when she tells her husband, "We are losing ourselves, we do not know who we are anymore" (Saramago 89). The state's labeling system strips people of their personhood long before blindness strips them of sight. Identity becomes administrative, not experiential; the self becomes what the institution declares it to be. A central mechanism of biopolitical power in the novel is the state's use of numerical logic. Once the blind is quarantined, the soldiers guarding the asylum discuss its "capacity" in the same way one calculates the volume of a container: "the total capacity is one hundred and twenty… minus a dozen we were obliged to kill" (Saramago 81). The phrase "minus a dozen" is chilling. It translates death into subtraction. Human beings become integers in a logistical equation. Foucault explains that biopolitics regulates life by "establishing averages, determining norms, and optimizing circulation" (Foucault 91). Saramago shows this optimization when officials calculate not only how many bodies can fit into each ward, but how quickly the disease will spread: the epidemic, they declare, will multiply "according to what is mathematically referred to as a compound ratio" (Saramago 64). The state's response is not ethical deliberation but computational prediction. Action is organized through epidemiological modeling, not moral consideration. Numerical comprehension becomes the primary mode of governance. The blind is treated as predictable variables whose behavior can be contained through statistical reasoning. The government reduces them to what Foucault calls a "population body," a collective biological mass whose movements must be regulated according to risk and utility. Saramago underscores the moral emptiness of such logic by showing that "capacity" justifies neglect. When food deliveries are insufficient, the soldiers claim they are

only following orders consistent with the facility's capacity. They perceive the blind not as starving human beings but as overflowing units in an overburdened system. Capacity becomes a biopolitical principle: when the system is saturated, excess individuals become expendable. For Foucault, biopolitics does not function primarily through force but through the manipulation of *milieu*, the environment in which people move, behave, and live. Power operates by building spatial structures that channel bodies into predictable patterns. The asylum in *Blindness* serves precisely this function. Its gates, wards, hallways, and fences create a biopolitical environment designed to regulate behavior. The asylum's spatial organization marked by "three wards on each side," "open all the wards," "column five deep" mirrors the disciplinary architecture described in Foucault's analysis of hospitals, prisons, and barracks (Saramago 52). Individuals are not addressed personally; they are positioned within a spatial grid that determines how they must act. The blind quickly adapt to the environment's demands such as they form queues, negotiate territories, and follow the architectural logic imposed on them. The soldiers stationed outside the asylum rely on this architecture to enforce control. They do not need to see the blind to govern them. The distance created by gates, boundaries, and designated areas enacts power without direct confrontation. The blind are contained not by continual oversight but by the built environment itself. This is the essence of biopolitical power: it operates through structures that pre-configure behavior, making it unnecessary to exercise force continually. Power is automated through spatial design. When the doctor's wife observes, "The building itself is killing us," she articulates Foucault's insight that modern power resides not in sovereign decrees but in environmental arrangements that regulate life indirectly (Saramago 105).

One of Foucault's most unsettling claims is that biopolitics transforms the traditional sovereign right "to take life or let live" into a modern right "to make live and let die." In this framework, the state prioritizes the flourishing of some segments of the population while allowing others to perish when their lives obstruct the goals of security, order, or efficiency. Saramago dramatizes this shift when soldiers shoot blindly into the group of internees approaching the boundary for food. They justify the killing as a necessary enforcement of quarantine. The victims are not executed as criminals; they are neutralized as threats. Their deaths are framed as passive consequences of regulatory action. The soldiers insist, "Orders are orders," reflecting the administrative coldness that Foucault identifies as characteristic of biopolitical violence (Saramago 84). The scarcity of food becomes another mechanism of "letting die." When the soldiers reduce the deliveries, knowing the internees cannot survive on the rations provided, they do so not out of cruelty but out of compliance with protocol. This reveals how biopolitics produces death indirectly, through calculated non-intervention. The blind die not because the state kills them, but because the state structures conditions that ensure their deaths. The worst biopolitical violence in the asylum is committed not by soldiers but by other blind internees, the armed gang that takes control of the food supply. They mimic state logic by demanding payment, imposing rationing, and punishing non-compliance. Their power is biopolitical because it regulates life and death at the level of the group. Saramago illustrates how easily biopolitical structures replicate themselves once established: those oppressed by them learn to govern others through the same techniques. Although *Blindness* was written before the rise of algorithmic governance and digital surveillance, Saramago anticipates the logic of contemporary systems that reduce humans to data. The government's classification of the blind into categories resembles the sorting algorithms used in modern databases. The soldiers' strict adherence to protocol resembles the automated behavior of digital systems that operate without moral judgment. The focus on "capacity," "ratio," "suspected cases," and "containment zones" mirrors the statistical tools used in public health systems, biometric surveillance, and risk management platforms. In this sense, Saramago critiques biopolitics not only as a mechanism of the state but as a precursor to the digital age, an age in which individuals are processed as information rather than encountered as humans. The asylum becomes a proto-database, a structure that stores human bodies as if they were entries in a registry. The blind are tagged, quarantined, and positioned according to categorical markers. Their individual identities dissolve into administrative

metadata. Foucault foresaw this development when he argued that modern power "reduces life to its biological surface, stripping away all other dimensions of subjectivity" (Foucault 164). *Blindness* reveals the human cost of that stripping away. When the city eventually collapses and bureaucratic systems fail, the blind survivors step into a world where identity must be rebuilt without the scaffolding of categories and data. The collapse of the asylum represents not the end of power but the exposure of its hollowness.

Through its depiction of quarantine, classification, spatial control, statistical reasoning, and administrative violence, *Blindness* offers a penetrating critique of biopolitical power. Saramago exposes how modern institutions reduce individuals to units within a population, stripping them of identity, agency, and humanity. Under the lens of Foucault's theory, the novel reveals the mechanisms through which life becomes administratively managed and ethically abandoned. In the world of *Blindness*, the greatest danger is not the loss of sight but the loss of personhood that follows when humans become data. The novel warns that a society governed by biopolitical logic may preserve itself, but only by forfeiting its humanity in the process.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that José Saramago's *Blindness* destabilizes the notion of stable human identity by portraying it as fluid, contingent, and socially constructed. The study finds that personal and collective identities collapse under social and sensory disruption, highlighting the performative and relational nature of the self. Narrative techniques such as nameless characters, fragmented dialogue, and flowing prose simulate a hyperreal condition where reality and representation blur, reinforcing the instability of identity. Simultaneously, mechanisms of biopolitical control like quarantine, categorization, spatial organization, and statistical reasoning regulate and reduce individuals to functional units, revealing the ethical and human costs of governance. The research offers new insights by showing how hyperreality and biopolitics intersect in literature, illustrating that identity is simultaneously produced through systems of representation and constrained by institutional power. Unlike prior analyses that focus solely on ethical or social critique, this study emphasizes the philosophical and sociopolitical dimensions of identity, demonstrating how Saramago enacts complex theoretical concepts through narrative and style. Its contribution to literature lies in bridging literary analysis with critical theory, highlighting how contemporary fiction can illuminate broader questions about perception, power, and the construction of the self. By foregrounding the interplay between narrative form, social collapse, and mechanisms of control, this study deepens understanding of postmodern identity and offers a framework for analyzing similar dynamics in other texts exploring social, political, or sensory crises.

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