



All the Names

José Saramago , Margaret Jull Costa (Translator)

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Senhor José is a low-grade clerk in the city's Central Registry, where the living and the dead share the same shelf space. A middle-aged bachelor, he has no interest in anything beyond the certificates of birth, marriage, divorce, and death that are his daily routine. But one day, when he comes across the records of an anonymous young woman, something happens to him. Obsessed, Senhor José sets off to follow the thread that may lead him to the woman—but as he gets closer, he discovers more about her, and about himself, than he would ever have wished.

The loneliness of people's lives, the effects of chance, the discovery of love—all coalesce in this extraordinary novel that displays the power and art of José Saramago in brilliant form.

All the Names Details

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Author : José Saramago , Margaret Jull Costa (Translator)

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From Reader Review All the Names for online ebook

Lori says

All The Names is the third book I have read by Jose Saramago. Blindness and Seeing left strong lasting impressions on me, and I expected this novel to do the same.

Except I found myself having to take numerous breaks from this one. While Saramago starts out with an interesting subject on which to base his book,(A clerk at the Central Registry comes across a card for an unknown woman, and becomes obsessed with hunting her down and collecting as much information as he can about her), It would have done much better as a shorter novel. The main character has long drawn out talks with his ceiling, which represents the multiple eye of God... and also comes through as his conscious.... and the author over-thinks and over-comtemplates everything.

The author writes in run-on sentences, does not use normal punctuation, and his paragraphs can go on for up to three pages without a break.

While I liked the novel (hence the three stars) it was hell to get through, it certainly didnt read smoothly at all, and with out taking regular breaks from it, Im sure I would be half crazy by now. This book will take a lot of work, but in the end, I would say it is worth it.

jeremy says

"You know the name you were given, you do not know the name that you have," reads the epigraph of *All the Names*, a gorgeously written and captivating allegorical tale of identity penned by the illustrious José Saramago, which concerns the seemingly mundane life of Senhor José, a lowly registry clerk in an unidentified metropolis, whose tedious and impersonal existence suddenly becomes full of intrigue and zeal when he finds himself compelled to, contrary to both bureaucratic regulation and established law, quixotically pursue the identity of a woman whom he knows only by name, in hopes, perhaps, of simply making a connection in an inconceivably interrelated world often obscured by lonesome anonymity, from whence fortuity and happenstance can supplely alight most unexpectedly.

Luís C. says

Memory of a book read a few minutes ago. Remnants of images, impressions. Remembering a book called All the Names, by the Portuguese writer José Saramago.

Resting then in memory, the smell of old paper breathes Mr José, employee of the National Conservatory of civil status, archive where all the names of the living and the dead are kept. A word, an adjective is needed to read these pages: "**Kafkaesque**". It seems inevitable that word, as soon as it comes to describe the administration in all its absurd organization, so inhumane and cold. Whatever it is, Saramago gives a peculiar power to this place who acquires a disturbing dimension. Memories of the wanderings of Mr José in the maze of the corridors of the Conservatory, place that seems to multiply without end. And Mr José, do not get lost in the labyrinthine corridors of the Conservatory, focus must be on a breadcrumb.

Loner old-boy, submitted to the monotonous rhythm of his work, Mr. José could die without that nothing happens in his dull life. But while our employee model sorted cards, this one falls on the picture of a stranger. Mr José taken from crazy fascination, decides to do the crazy bet to find that woman out of anonymity. Its existence is upset, and the peaceful employee will risk it crazy to find one he loves madly. However, his quest will be more complex than he predicted and obstacles multiply, taking the unknown away into the mist of possibilities. I must say that Mr José does not facilitate the task and the tortuous path of the lovers mime the meanders of an administrative application. But by a very chivalrous way to consider his situation, Mr. José comes to prefer a diverted way, holding the object of his desire to distance.

However, the quest for Mr José leads to the cemetery. Cemetery where it intersects the amazing character of the pastor, element of liberating and creative anarchy in the ordered world and stuffy administration. Short passage of black pastoral in a cemetery invades free, wild vegetation. Troublemaker, the Pastor inverts the names of the graves. And ironically the only glimmer of life and hope are may be in the cemetery; May be because the place is governed according to the same principles as the Conservatory. ...

Finally it is the complex style of Saramago who remains in memory. The labyrinthine twists a prompt writing digression and irony.

Fatemeh Am says

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Stratos says

Ποδαρικ? της ν?ας χρονι?ς με τον βραβευμ?νο Σαραφ?γκού. ?ναν συγγραφ?α με ιδι?ρρυθμη γραφ? που ενδεχομ?νως δυσκολε?ει ? αν θ?λετε απωθε? πολλο?ς αναγν?στες να διαβ?σουν τα βιβλ?α του. ?μως με το δικ? του μοναδικ? τρ?πο σε οδηγε? σε καθημερινο?ς κ?σμους με δυνατ?ς συνταγ?ς φιλοσοφικ?ν νοημ?των αλλ? και υπαρξιακ?ν θεμ?των που απασχολο?ν τον ?νθρωπο. Σε παρασ?ρνει με τον τρ?πο του σ? ?να γοητευτικ? ταξ?δι στην ανθρ?πινη φ?ση. ?τσι και το?το το βιβλ?ο με βασικ? πρωταγωνιστ? ?ναν ληξ?αρχο, θ?τει βασικ? προβλ?ματα της ανθρ?πινης φ?σης. Κι ?χει ενδιαφ?ρον το τ?λος του. Διαβ?στε το ?ως στο τ?λος, ?να πρ?γματι απρ?βλεπτο τ?λος...

Mohamed Shady says

Araz Goran says

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Ahmad Sharabiani says

Todos os Nomes = All the names, José Saramago

All the Names (Portuguese: Todos os nomes) is a novel by Portuguese author José Saramago. It was written in 1997 and translated to English in 1999 by Margaret Jull Costa winning the Oxford-Weidenfeld Translation Prize.

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Greg says

Forward: I'm sorry José! You didn't need to give up the will to live just because I didn't like your writing style. Lots of people did like you. More people liked you than like me. Really! You shouldn't have cared so much about what I thought. Now I feel like an asshole for killing you. Fine. I guess I can live with that, but it was a real douche bag move, dying the week I write a bad review about you just to add to my excessive guilt complexes. You know what, I'm sorry that your dead and all, but fuck you, this was a low shot Saramago. Jeez.

Review

When you've won the Nobel Prize for Literature you are above the criticisms of some schmuck who works for a corporate bookstore and writes reviews for books on the internet. You also get a validation of sorts for any and all of your earlier little pretensions that, Do you really think you are the type of person who can call someone else's writing style pretentious, Well yes I do, But how can you, Well one can say that writing dialog in this style is pretty fucking pretentious, One could, but one can also be a philistine, do you not realize that this is decentering the text, making, Yes I get it, it's making me pay attention to the text in a manner that I'm not used to doing, thus making me realize that I am reading a book and am in fact engaged in a text, as opposed to getting lost in the text and possibly thinking that the text is a surrogate for reality, I wasn't going to say that, No I'm sure you weren't, there are probably a slew of other reasons why one can write this way, but seriously it's so reeking of High Modernism silly gobbledegook that in 1998 it might work as a parody, but there is never the sign that this is supposed to be a parody, instead it just feels forced, contrived, like, Yawn, where is your Nobel Prize for Literature, Good question, since Nobel Prizes are given out for good intentions without action these days I'm making it my intention to write the greatest fucking body of work that anyone has ever fucking seen, smelled, or read and it will be so awesome, and appeal to the dumbest dumbass and the most head up their ass snob and everyone in between.

So now send me my check.

Please.

Saramago should be smacked around with the pretentious stick. His prose style is so heavy handed and derivative in it's *originality* that it turned me off of the book after only a handful of pages.

The book could have been pretty fucking awesome. It's Borgesian in it's paradoxical portrait of archives (read "Library of Babel"-esque without hexagons); and the atmosphere and setting of the novel is Kafkaian (as opposed to Kafkaesque, which is a nonsensical and overused phrase that has lost all meaning, just rest assured that Kafkaian is legitimate, in the same manner that Orwell-esque is now the only acceptable manner for one to speak of doublespeak type situations, but only in an appropriate manner and may not be used for any kind of paranoid conspiracy Big Brother bullshit, if you want to say something about that the proper phrase is "the government is watching me", there is no Big Brother, until such time that a cult of personality figure is in fact watching you, then it will be fine to use the term Orwell-esque to talk about the situation you find yourself in). One (I) would think that a book that mixes the two great tastes of Borges and Kafka could do no wrong, but how wrong I (one) would be. Maybe if the writing style hadn't been so heavy handed and Kafka-like (aka, German) in it's dense paragraphs. Maybe once one enters into the Borges realm one needs to have a lighter hand on the old pen. Maybe this is the kind of story that should have been a story and not a novel and that there are reasons why Borges never wrote a novel. Or maybe there is something about the philosophical whimsy of Borges that meshes with the short story / parables of Kafka but not with the stifling and asphyxiating world of his novels.

If you like clunky prose and interesting ideas this book might just tickle you in that special spot. If not, then there are probably many finer books to read in the short time we have to spend reading on this mortal coil.

mai ahmd says

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Sara Kamjou says

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Fábio Martins says

Há um sr. José de quem tenho permanentes saudades, que criou um outro sr. José que não sabia estar no mundo de forma feliz.

Ambos (ou o mesmo) são um universo de paradoxos que exercem um fascínio tremendo nas minhas características de leitor.

O sr. José demiурgo, na sua clássica visão desesperançada sobre a realidade, exerce uma espécie de feitiçaria sobre o banal, tornando-o grotesco e sensível, delicado e rude, agressivo na acção, mas cuidadoso na reacção, que o elevam, muito frequentemente, à condição de parábola frustre.

O sr. José personagem, no clássico de uma existência crua, hierarquizada e rotineira, insufla a confrangedora solidão com essa magia, e procura, obstinadamente, um resgate identitário que lhe aqueça um

pouco os pés.

Para lá das referências ideológicas latentes, de uma angústia obstinada, crescente e distópica, esconde-se uma preciosa reflexão sobre a identidade e a fronteira forjada entre a vida e a morte. Num livro de pequenos gestos (fascinantes pequenos desvios que crescem numa lenta mas crescente espiral) mas grande maturidade, fica a ideia mais humanizada do autor.

Este que é, possivelmente, um dos títulos menos celebrados da bibliografia do sr. Saramago, foi, provavelmente, aquele que mais prazer me deu.

Obra Prima!

Amr Mohamed says

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Amira Mahmoud says

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Petra X says

Generally when I write a review, I do it straight off and don't edit much. I start off with the idea of what I want to say about the book and it flows from there. But not this time. I also don't want to review the book(s) but just give my reactions to them. These are books that will be easily spoiled if you know too much about them before you read them.

Firstly it was by accident I read *Death with Interruptions* first and then this one. That was fortuitous, as the other way round would have spoiled the 'joke' of Death's filing cabinet. The two books not only hang together, fit like pieces of a jigsaw, they are immensely revealing of Saramago's preoccupations. One book was not enough for him to work out either the bureaucracy of death or unhealthy and insane obsessions with it, or of it come to that.

Sheer genius. But not 100% enjoyable.

I've just read the first few pages of reviews and to be honest none of them saw in the book what I did. (There were an awful lot of reviews in Arabic I couldn't read though). The reviews that concentrate on story, the plot, I think miss out on Saramago generally. You don't win the Nobel Prize for literature when you have such an annoying writing style if you just stick to fairly mundane stories. It's what is behind the story that is the genius, what you dimly perceive and is illuminated more as the novel progresses and you see the workings of the utterly original author's mind. And if you read the books in the order I did, you will be stunned at his genius and hope that some day someone makes a film of these books. They are perfectly visual anyway.

Then again all those reviewers might say I've just completely missed the point myself. It happens. But this time, I think they're wrong.

Rewritten July 16th 2016

BlackOxford says

Registered Redemption

Most of Saramago's themes are found here: death, the community of the living and the dead, the beautiful uncertainty and fluidity of language, the ultimately indecipherable complexity of human communication, identity, the search for meaning.

He would probably have reacted harshly to the suggestion that he had created (perhaps 'outlined' is a better verb, but then again perhaps there is no adequate word at all) a sort of religion without a deity, the core of which is a humble irony laced with wit and grace. Then again perhaps he wouldn't object too forcefully; there are worse religious beliefs.

Saramago's point is after all to redeem, through a kind of communal registration and remembrance, the existence of every one of the unique human species that has become extinct. For, as Aquinas taught so eloquently, each human being is indeed a distinct species and deserves recognition as such. It deserves its proper name.*

*Proust had a similar theme in the third volume of his *Lost Time*. It would be interesting to know if Saramago was influenced by him in *All the Names*. See: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Sarah saied says

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both shared a similar outlook, especially in terms of satirizing the lowly position of clerks within a government. Of course, Saramago is a master of the form and I wouldn't dare to compare my own work with his, but it was quite a treat to find a similar subject as my own handled with such skill. The author's use of long, drawn out sentences and intricately detailed passages truly heightens the level of satire and parody and I am quite curious to know if this is the standard style of Saramago, or if it was just a technique employed for use in this novel. Either way, ALL THE NAMES is not a book I will soon forget, and a wonderful introduction into this internationally celebrated writer's work.

Amari says

simply gorgeous. a story of timidity and how a tiny seed of imagination and curiosity can transform a person and his life.

i adore this one because there's no "love interest" and because of saramago's unbelievable ability to effortlessly pop breathtaking statements about humanity at the ends of long paragraphs. they seem like afterthoughts because of the way they're placed and articulated, but if everyone had a single thought like these in his or her lifetime, the world would be just fine.
