

Jorge de Sena, Poet in Exile

Kenneth David Jackson

Yale University

Abstract A study of the literary and aesthetic development of the Portuguese writer Jorge de Sena (1919-1978), before and during his prolonged exile. With notable artistic and intellectual versatility, JS meditated on human destiny in his poetry, supported by dreams of liberty derived from the universal lesson of major works of architecture, art and music. As a political exile, JS never ceased to direct severe criticisms and satires at the society and politics of Salazar's Portugal. He was always conscious of his permanent exile from Portugal, redeemed only by the excellence of his work and thought.

Key words poetry, exile, protest, voyage, music

[...] falareis de nós – de nós! – como de um sonho
Jorge de Sena “Ode para o Futuro” (*Poesia-1*, 141)¹

When I organized the Yale conference on Jorge de Sena, “20 years without servitude” in 1998, I never imagined that I would be in Santa Barbara today to celebrate and commemorate “40 years without servitude,” on a date that marks not only his centenary by also equals the forty years of JS as poet and the 40 years since his death. JS celebrated his 40th birthday soon after beginning his academic career in Brazil. We commemorate JS scholar and professor. No one was more knowledgeable or more dedicated to teaching Luso-Brazilian literatures and cultures. On this centenary date, I repeat my homage, recognize my intellectual and personal debt and express my gratitude to Jorge and Mécia de Sena and family for the unforgettable years of study and companionship that began more than half a century ago.
Santa Barbara, November 16, 2019

¹ *Poesia-1* (Lisboa: Moraes, 1977), 141.

Early literary activity

Jorge de Sena was always avidly interested in literature. Beginning with the volume *Persecution* (1942), his first books of poetry were allied with the neo-realist movement of the *Novo Cancioneiro* of the 1940s, nevertheless with strong themes of Eros, love and death, metamorphosis and the neo-baroque disconcert of solitude. Essayist António Carlos Cortez sees in Sena's poetry over the decades "one of the most profound visions of existence written in Portuguese language (and even other languages)."² In this poetry, life is strange music with obscure words. Sena writes, "I touch reality without believing in it."³ From early on, Sena was conversant with the French avant-garde poets, and he traveled to England to interview Edith Sitwell, among other poets of English modernism, to whom he dedicated the poem "Meditation in King's Road." Sena would later write a history of English literature, with notable chapters on Shakespeare and vanguardism, a work which, although neglected, is an important indicator of his own literary and esthetic development.⁴

First literary activities

Sena's poetry in Portugal after *Persecution* (1942) produced four more collections, *Crown of the Earth* (1946), *Philosophical Stone* (1950), *The Evidences* (1955) and *Fidelity* (1958). In these books JS engages with moral universals —purity, unity, felicity, eternity, fidelity -- initiating a current of philosophical poetry and investigation of life, through its universal patterns and meanings, and the poet's place in the world. Scholar Jorge Vaz de Carvalho sees in his poetry "the superior expression of an intelligence sensible to the apprehension and esthetic transformation of his testimony of historical reality, as well as the cultural dynamics of Humanity, or, in his own words, 'a meditation on human destiny and on the very fact of creating language'."⁵

These early books include memorable poems of social satire, as seen in the poem "Artificial Paradises:" "[I]n my land there is no land, just streets / my land is not ineffable / Life in my land is what is ineffable / Ineffable is what cannot be spoken" (1950) – or the famous "Epigraph on the Art of Stealing:" "they steal my country, and my humanity, others rob me, of whom can I sing?" (1958) – and the vibrant refrain in "He Who Has It": "Death

² *Jornal de Letras*, Ano XXXIX, No 1280, 7-10. All translations are mine.

³ *Sobre Esta Praia ... Oito Meditações à beira do Pacífico* (Porto: Editorial Inova, 1977), 86. All translations of JS's poetry in this essay are mine.

⁴ *A Literatura Inglesa: Ensaio de Interpretação e de História* (São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1963).

⁵ Jorge Vaz de Carvalho, *Jornal de Letras* (Ano XXXIX, No. 1280), 10.

cannot take me before I come to know the color of liberty” (9.12.56) – and the unforgettable “little light” –the “Pequenina Luz” that continues to shine, exactly and firmly, like justice, when all seems uncertain, stubborn, dark and false. Scholar Luís Adriano Carlos distinguishes Sena’s poetry for its dialectic, phenomenological and existential reasoning.⁶ The satirical and sarcastic verses revive denunciations made by seventeenth-century authors such as Gregório de Matos and Pe. Manuel da Costa in Portugal and Brazil, respectively.

Salvador, Bahia, August 1959

In August of 1959, on the occasion of the 4th International Colloquium of Luso-Brazilian Studies at the University of Bahia in Salvador,⁷ JS took advantage of the opportunity to leave Portugal and accept a position as professor of literature in Brazil. He traveled to Salvador with only what he could carry, and his family came later, encountering some difficulties in leaving Portugal. Brazil was the first “port” of JS’s grand peregrination, first a position at the State University of São Paulo in Assis, then in Araraquara. The Brazilian university contributed two of the positive features that JS had sought in leaving Portugal: prestigious scholarly companionship throughout his university career and the title of professor of literature. He gained notable colleagues, including fellow Portuguese poet Adolfo Casais Monteiro (1908-1972), who also left Portugal at this time, as well as leading Brazilian intellectuals such as Antonio Candido (1918-2017), Antônio Soares Amora (1917-1999), and Segismundo Spina (1921-2012). Sena became a Brazilian citizen and wrote many of his most important books while in Brazil. He took on translations of novels by Hemingway and Faulkner to help support his large family. If in Brazil he occupied a prestigious position as professor of literature, respected by brilliant colleagues, he carried the condition of exile as a permanent pain for the rest of his life, in the sense defined by Eduard Said in his reflections on exile.⁸ Said describes the separation between a person and his land as an essential, irreparable loss, sadness and estrangement, a condition of terminal loss that marks and undermines any accomplishments that follow the separation. Thus, as an exiled Portuguese, JS never felt completely at home in Brazil, in view of the obligation to continue to act conscientiously against the political and social scene in Portugal.

⁶ *Fenomenologia do discurso poético: ensaio sobre Jorge de Sena* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 1999).

⁷ The *IV Colóquio Internacional de Estudos Luso-Brasileiros*, Bahia, August, 1959, sponsored by the Universidade da Bahia and Unesco (Bahia: Imprensa Oficial da Bahia, 1959).

⁸ “Reflections on Exile,” *Reflections on exile and other literary and cultural essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 137-149.

Sena contributed energetically to congresses in Brazil on language and literature in the 1960s, important for their critical debates on the future of writing and literary theory in Brazil and also for the presence of scholars and intellectuals of the first rank. Sena's activities in Brazil after 1959 were very productive: JS wrote a history of English literature and two books on Camões.⁹

Permanent Exile

After leaving Portugal in 1959, JS began a long period of exile, a condition described by Said as discontinuous, separated from its roots. In the case of JS, exile became a permanent voyage – decentered, nomadic, mixing past and present – with the consolation of encounters with great works of art, literature, and music in the museums and theaters of the world, sustaining his humanistic vision and the ideal of recuperating and restoring the greatness of the country he had lost.

Despite the geographic and political separation from Portugal, JS could still act in Brazil within the Lusophone orbit. He considered his own exile parallel to that of grand historical figures who traveled in the voyages of expansion of the Portuguese world, and he compared his search for personal truths, through poetry, to the voyages of Portuguese navigators. Like them, as he writes in his poems, he crossed a metaphorical cape of storms: “So dangerous is the stormy cape / that one dies betrayed by the body and all friends” (London, 2-5-1972).¹⁰ His travel to Brazil, and later to the US, constituted for him a cartography of the worlds of culture and knowledge that he explored on his wanderings, for which poetry would serve as a route and guide, a compass for the cardinal points of that human adventure in search of truth, exactitude and, foremost in JS's experience, dreams of liberty, completeness and plenitude. His travels became his autobiography written in poetry, summarized in the poem “Whoever has Seen A Lot”:

Whoever has seen a lot, gone through hard times,
hurtfulness, humiliations, sad surprises,
and was betrayed and robbed,
and was deprived in the extreme of just justice
and who passed through lands and peoples, came to know
worlds and sub worlds, and lived
inside himself the love with which he was raised,
who read everything and loved, was all things,

knows nothing, not even how to win

⁹ *A Literatura Inglesa: Ensaio de Interpretação e de História* (São Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1963); *Uma Canção de Camões: interpretação estrutural de uma tripla canção camoniana* (Lisboa: Portugalíia, 1966); *Os Sonetos de Camões e o Soneto Quinhentista Peninsular* (Lisboa: Portugalíia, 1969).

¹⁰ *Poesia-III* (Lisboa: Moraes, 1978), 230.

by luck like others who know how to live,
by simply not living he had everything

Restless and honest, proud and affectionate
he will forever be without a country. And death itself,
when it comes for him, will find him already dead.¹¹

Metamorphosis and peregrination became the guideposts of his intellectual and esthetic observation and unrestrained criticisms of life. At the same time, he enjoys new liberty of speech in other lands; like Camões, he laments his symbolic captivity: “Don’t ask me, oh life, for what you will not give / Since you never gave me what I most wanted.”¹²

His survey of the world that began in 1959 is confirmed by a poem, “The deeds and the days.”¹³ “I sit down at my desk as if writing were the whole world, and writing were like breathing.”¹⁴ His recreation of the voyages of discovery served to emphasize their universality, renewing the criticisms that Camões directed to Portugal in *The Lusíads*. In a comparable way, in his own journey, JS was always a vocal and critical opponent of the Salazar regime, which he attacked with biting satire and which he held responsible for depriving Portuguese citizens of freedom. It is a theme of growing bitterness and intensity, according to Eugénio Lisboa, with respect to the Portugal he left behind, giving rise to a poetry of high voltage. Consider the poem ironically titled in French “L’été au Portugal:” “What can you hope for here? For what do these people hope who hope without hoping?”¹⁵ From the official Portuguese viewpoint of the time, it is as if JS had been cast off into Brazil like the two convicts left on the shore by Cabral in 1500.¹⁶ For JS, freed from another type of degradation and privation, exile, although punishing, was a necessary and inevitable condition to give voice to the ideal of personal and national freedoms. Exile then would determine Sena’s existence; he would never again reside at his house on R. Dinis Dias, 18, Restelo, and only after a decade would he visit the country briefly during the regime of Marcel Caetano.

Even today on his centenary, Portugal is unsure of what to do with this gigantic, ubiquitous censoring voice and guiding light. He is admittedly cultured, erudite, complex, and distant from Portugal. He is poly faceted in literary genres and polyhedral in the argumentation of his vast critical work. He is a writer of essays (his long erudite introductions

¹¹ *Peregrinatio ad Loca Infecta* (Lisboa: Portugália Editora, 1969), 50.

¹² *Peregrinatio ad Loca Infecta* (Lisboa: Portugália Editora, 1969), 45.

¹³ Sena refers to a book by the poet Hesiod, *Works and Days*, c. 700 a.d.

¹⁴ *Sobre Esta Praia ... Oito Meditações à beira do Pacífico* (Porto: Editorial Inova, 1977), 84.

¹⁵ “L’été au Portugal” (Agosto 1971) *Poesia-III*, 179.

¹⁶ *A carta de Pero Vaz de Caminha* (Ericeira: Mar de Letras, 1999).

to the fac-simile editions by Faria e Sousa of Camões,¹⁷ or of the English poetry of Fernando Pessoa),¹⁸ short stories (the famous “Prodigious Physicist”), a novel (considered one of the most important of the century), theater (the most important play in twentieth-century Portuguese theater), poetry (along with Sophia, the most significant poet of the century), correspondence (still being published), translator of Hemingway, Faulkner, Cavafy, and Malraux, and compiler of the anthology *26 Centuries of Poetry*.¹⁹ Calling him an “indigestible giant of Portuguese culture” in the press, Luís Miguel Queirós explained that there has been no equal intellectual figure since Fernando Pessoa.²⁰ Sena’s work touches on every genre of literary creation, also theory and criticism, history of culture, any area of which would be more than enough to make a career. Now, forty years after his death, Queirós sees JS as the “truculent and human Minotaur of Portuguese letters that has still not been tamed.” In testimony to his standing in 2019, Portugal’s airline TAP dedicated its newest jetliner the “Jorge de Sena,” and the “Correios de Portugal” issued a commemorative postage stamp for 0,53 euros with his image and name, “Jorge de Sena.”²¹

Other voyages and other navigators

In 1965 JS moved to Madison, WI as a full professor in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese, where he had been invited by distinguished Hispanic scholars, and in 1970 left Wisconsin for Santa Barbara and UCSB, again finding himself in the company of distinguished scholars and chair of two departments, Comparative Literature and Spanish & Portuguese. Although as he liked to point out, he was once again Portuguese while in the United States, restoration of his citizenship was far from an invitation or right to return to Portugal; however it was a motive of renewal and reaffirmation that gave meaning to his years of exile and protest, as well as to his immense work.

¹⁷ *Lusíadas de Luís de Camões*. Comentadas por Manuel de Faria e Sousa. Introdução de Jorge de Sena. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1972; *Rimas várias de Luís de Camões*. Comentadas por Manuel de Faria e Sousa. Nota introdutória do F. Rebelo Gonçalves. Prefácio de Jorge de Sena. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1972.

¹⁸ *Poemas Ingleses de Fernando Pessoa*. Edição bilingue, com prefácio, traduções, variantes e notas de Jorge de Sena. Lisboa: Edições Ática, 1974.

¹⁹ *Poesia de 26 séculos: antologia, tradução, prefácio e notas de Jorge de Sena* (Lisboa: Editorial Inova, 1971-72).

²⁰ Luís Miguel Queirós, “Jorge de Sena: o gigante indigesto da cultura portuguesa,” *ípsilon, O Público* (2 de Novembro de 2019), 15-16.

²¹ Others honored in the series are Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, Fontes Pereira de Melo, Gago Coutinho, Francisco de Lacerda, Fernando Namora and Joel Serrão.

JS understood his exile in an historical dimension to be the inverse of other celebrated voyages of adventure and exploration. His 1969 poetry collection, *Peregrinatio ad loca infecta*, with its Latin title, invokes its little-known opposite, the *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, or *Itinerarium Egeriae*,²² a text written during a long stay in Jerusalem in the 380s, ostensibly by a woman named Aetheria, a text discovered only in fragments in the 11th century. Like Aetheria, JS is on a crusade to return to a holy land, however one that unlike Jerusalem is unfinished or incomplete or failed. The Latin title confirms his intention to mirror Aetheria's manuscript title, substituting the demonic for the angelic.

Sena compared his exile to Camões and placed himself in a parallel position in poems, as in “Camões on the Island of Mozambique” or “Camões addresses his contemporaries:” “You can steal everything from me, ideas, words, images, even metaphors, themes, motifs, and the pain of learning a new language. Then you can erase me, ignore me. No matter. The punishment will be terrible. Everything will revert to my name.”²³ These poems express the common theme of exile, since Camões chose sailing to India in place of remaining in prison in Portugal, leaving his greatest love behind to sail the Indian Ocean and the South China Seas as soldier, poet, sometime prisoner and civil servant for seventeen years in Portuguese Asia. His bitter critiques of the excesses and immorality of the Portuguese aristocracy in the overseas expansion, both in poetry and in letters, resonates with Sena's denunciations of fascist Portugal.

The second reference in Sena's title is to the travel account by Fernão Mendes Pinto of his peripatetic adventures in Asian lands and waters in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the title *Peregrination* (1614)²⁴ on its posthumous publication by a house of wayward women in Lisbon, with a subtitle:

Peregrination of Fernam Mendez Pinto in which is told the many and very strange things he saw and heard in the kingdom of China, in the one of Tartary, in the one of Sornau, usually called Siam, in the one of Calaminhan, in the one of Pegù, in the one of Martauão, and in many other kingdoms and lordships of the Oriental parts, and that in our Occident there are few or no accounts.²⁵

²² Aetheria. *De itinero Aetheriae abbatisae perperam nomini s. Silviae addict ad veniam legent a summon philosophorum ordine impetrandam disputavia*. Bonnae: typis Caroli Georgi typographi academici, 1909.

²³ “Camões dirige-se aos seus contemporâneos” (11.06.1961), *Metamorfoses, Poesia-II*, 99.

²⁴ Fernam Mendez Pinto, *Peregrinacam de Fernam Mendez Pinto* (Lisboa: Pedro Crasbeeck, 1614).

²⁵ Mendes Pinto's incredible account of adventures in South and Southeast Asian seas, in China and Japan became one of the most popular books of its time, rivaling the *Quixote*. Mendes Pinto's narration is certainly novelesque, and his tendency to hyperbole led to the dismissal of his by readers as fabrications. In 1949, Maurice Collis presented and translated

JS's grand peregrination has comparable drama and scope for the contemporary age. Some 400 years after Mendes Pinto, JS began his personal, intellectual, and esthetic wanderings like a modern *Ulyssiponensis* sailing in search of a homeland.

Scholar Patrícia da Silva Cardoso encounters another dimension of Sena's exile in his *Studies of History and Culture* (1963-67),²⁶ being a detailed account of Portuguese history from Afonso Henriques, founder of Portugal in the 12th century, to Philippa of Lancaster, Inês de Castro, historian Fernão Lopes, D. Sebastião, and 16th century authors António Ferreira and Camões. These are the maximum symbols in a philosophy of the history of Portugal. both in historical and mythical context, with which Sena established ties meant to clarify his own situation. Guided by contemplation, Sena's poem on the nave of Alcobaça and the tomb of Inês contains the hope inherent in a continuous line of genealogical and human history:

Vacuous, vertical, of cold white stone / long light and lines of silence /
succession of arcades, mortal / morning of eternity, pure vacuum, full
space, pointed like crystalline transparency of harmonious heavens, thick,
concave / upright concrete, air sucked from the final tremor of living
flesh [...] geometry of a probably spirit [...] vacuous and vertical hope.
Humanity."²⁷

JS's peregrination was prolific, yet neither fantastic nor unbelievable; its most prominent feature was not travel in a previously unknown world, but flight and the impossibility of return to Portugal. Even after the 1974 carnation revolution, subsequent political instability and even chaos made it unwise for him to attempt a permanent return, and the illnesses soon appeared that would end his life four years later. In Santa Barbara in April 1978 he announced to me a planned a trip to Europe for the coming November and added, "if I'm still alive."

Cartography of exile

The cartography of JS's exile and peregrination can be mapped in his books of poetry after 1959, which form an intellectual biography of variations on the theme of being in the world. His books of poetry then take a turn toward the writing of an intellectual and global journey:

segments in English translation under the title *The Grand Peregrination* (1949). Scholar Rebecca Catz confirmed the names and locations in the *Peregrination* in the splendid translation to English, with its detailed confirmation of geographical names and places mentioned in the text, supported by the thesis of verisimilitude in his extraordinary adventures (1985). Catz's work was continued by the Galician researcher Afonso Xavier Canosa, who published on its geographical and geo-referential references (2013: 9-34).

²⁶ Patrícia da Silva Cardoso, "Jorge de Sena e a peregrinação no tempo." Address at the International Conference of the Cátedra Jorge de Sena, UFRJ, 2010; Jorge de Sena, *Estudos de história e de cultura*, 1.a série (Lisboa: Edição da Revista Ocidente, 1963).

²⁷ "A Nave de Alcobaça" (27.11.1962) *Poesia II* (Lisboa: Moraes, 1978), 83≥

they begin with *Post-Scriptum* (1954), in which he writes that poetry is a disguise for living (“The one who begins to suspect / how much poetry is a disguise for life”). There follow *Metamorphoses* (1963), accompanied by the experimental *Four Sonnets to Afrodite Anadiomina*, the *Art of Music* (1968), and *Peregrinatio ad Loca Infecta* (1969), where he proclaims that, although he will certainly die in exile, he will remain faithful to the world of Portuguese language and to a Portugal restored to justice and liberty. His book *Exorcisms* (1972) begins with a warning, “Do not read this book delicately,” since JS is confessing “the pain of having been born in Portugal, with no release except to carry it in my soul.”²⁸ His last two books follow, *Camões addresses his contemporaries* (1973), and his last meditation, written in Santa Barbara, *On This Beach* (1977).

A poetic map of JS’s grand peregrination begins with his state of exclusion from the world, seen in the way JS describes exile in his poetry:

Because I have no hope of ever returning to the land where I was born / because should I return, I don’t expect to find it ready to know me in the way I now know it. It’s impossible to discuss whatever subject, either one accepts the rules of the game, or changes life and place. Whoever has seen a lot, worked, suffered pain and humiliation, sad surprises and was betrayed, denied just justice and wandered through lands and peoples, came to know worlds and underworlds, and kept love inside him, will forever remain without a country. There will be only a name, not God or country or love or life. But what hope did I ever have, only desperation. And for what? If everything is treasonous. Oh! foolish search. Ingenuousness. Today there is no more world for anyone to leave. The world left us, and solitude is like a giant convent.²⁹

The second coordinate on the map of exile is moral judgement and justice, aimed by the poet at the world of Portuguese empire:

[...] thieves, the promiscuous, bestial, sadistic and treasonous, at times magnificent, sharp thinking penetrating everything, suffering and love [...];³⁰ the world is an immense pier of austere intolerance, to which slaves and pepper arrive;³¹ Poets say ‘those die young whom the gods love,’ and I ask, how old are the people they detest?³² To chew on a bone, human if possible, is the Portuguese dream of afterlife, after spending years and years undressing women with their eyes.³³

JS allies moral judgment with political satire. Commenting on the composer Smetana’s patriotic composition “My Homeland,” Sena muses, “To love a country so much [...] can it be that it is slave to a glorious past, pure countries don’t just spring up.”³⁴ His poem “To

²⁸ “Aviso à porta de livraria” (25.01.1972) *Poesia III*, 178.

²⁹ “Glosa de Guido Cavalcanti” (11.06.1961) *Poesia III*, 53.

³⁰ “Homengem à Grécia” *Poesia III*, 47.

³¹ “Eleonora di Tolego, Granduchessa di Tosccana’, de Bronzino” *Poesia II*, 101.

³² “Glosa de Meandro (1962) *Poesia III*, 58.

³³ “Balada do Roer dos Ossos,” *Poesia III*, 178,

³⁴ “Ma Vlast de Smetana,” *Poesia II*, 199.

Portugal” expresses sentiments totally opposite to Smetana: “This is the blessed country I love. No. It is neither blessed, because it is not deserving, nor beloved because it is only a stepmother. Or my country, because I don’t deserve the bad luck of being born here.”³⁵ At the same time, his satire of Brazilian politics, the “Democracy Waltz,” precedes Ferreira Gullar’s famous “Dirty Poem” and Affonso Romano de Santana’s well-known poem “What Kind of Country Is This?” for its perceptive and strong denunciation: “This is a parchment bound inside another, with a golden clasp and a silver lock, and inside, when you open it, you first see a ballerina, and there is a hidden music box to whose sound the ballerina dances the Democracy Waltz.”³⁶

Sena’s map of exile is not only exterior but also interior, charting the existential condition of possible hope, as in a medieval *cantiga de amor*: “my Love is to be found/ in the lands beyond the sea / Her eyes stare at the night / her breast overcome / Oh my lady of bitterness.”³⁷ Existence becomes solitude in the world of exile: “nothing frees us from ourselves;³⁸ our intelligence searches *ad infinitum* for possible solutions, even if limited;³⁹ we all live deprived of reason, dreaming that we are more human than we were yesterday.”⁴⁰ For Sena in exile, time becomes distance: “there is an incommensurable distance between us that no gesture can cross;⁴¹ the duration of time is anxious despair, time doesn’t run through our fingers but through the very form of things;⁴² Oh! music, come naked into this vacuous space beyond form and concept, beyond what reconciles contrary pairs.”⁴³

Notwithstanding Sena’s voyages, like Camões and other sixteenth-century navigators, he retains a neo-baroque hope for meaning, homeland, and salvation:

Love and longing I have for this life / No matter how much I live it or
detest it, or rage with rancorous clenched teeth for not having my full of
what it most denies to whomever desires more;⁴⁴ it wasn’t just to die that
we were born, speak and dream / We are what denies nature / There are
no limits to Life;⁴⁵ I cannot despair of humanity. And how I would like to!

³⁵ “A Portugal,” *40 Anos de Servidão*. 2.^a ed. revista (Lisboa: Moraes Editores, 1982), 89.

³⁶ “Valsa da Democracia,” *Poesia 2* (Lisboa: Guimarães, 2015), 536-38.

³⁷ “Nas terras de Além do Mar” *Poesia 2*, 531.

³⁸ “Cabecinha Romana de Milreu,” *Poesia II*, 69.

³⁹ “Bach Variações Goldberg,” *Poesia II*, 176.

⁴⁰ “For Whom the Bell Tolls,” *Poesia 1*, 510-14.

⁴¹ “Soneto do Envelhecer,” *40 Anos de Servidão*, 163.

⁴² “Elegia por Certo,” *Poesia 2*, 564-567.

⁴³ “Requiem, de Mozart,” *Poesia-II*, 185.

⁴⁴ “Amor, Saudades Tenho, *Poesia*, vol. 1, p. 674.

⁴⁵ “A Morte, Espaço, Eternidade,” *Poesia II*, p. 137

Loving as I do the world in all its variety.⁴⁶ It would not take much to make me happy: Truth, Peace, Justice, and Liberty.⁴⁷

Experimental Poetry

JS's poetry of exile is marked by experimentation, found primarily in heterogeneity and difference among his varied styles of composition: "From the Camonian sonnet to the vanguardist poem, JS possesses a versatility notable since his premier in the Portuguese lyric."⁴⁸ Poet Ana Hatherly found that his poetic works were "[...] of an inquisitive attitude and an omnivorous curiosity, within an eclectic and universalist spirit that is recognizably modern,"⁴⁹ and pondered whether his works constituted a third modernism.

His poetry followed the cartography of his travels in exile after 1959, showing characteristics of the artist's diary, traveler's *Baedeker*, socio-political analysis and existential and philosophical meditation. In it is a register of experiences and truths observed, as if it were the intellectual script for new voyages of expansion, in spirit a new Camonian disconcert. While aware of practices and attitudes of modern vanguardist movements, which attracted him – some have noted in him "a disposition for experimentation"⁵⁰– JS kept himself intellectually and critically above these movements, maintaining an independent and *sui generis* point of view. From exile, he wrote with the color of liberty and the force of conscience. By instinct he went "against everything that attempts to be official whatever it may be."⁵¹ We find in his poetry the same qualities with which he explained his love of literature in 1961:

Loving it, however, it is impossible not to want to know it everywhere and in all times, in extension and profundity; it is impossible not to want to study it, to transmit and communicate to others the fascination that it holds over us; it is impossible not to want to live it, gratuitously and as an agent, which it is, of everything that it constantly overcomes in itself and in us [...] But, having it and investigating it and tuning it, with the gravity, the lightness, the impetus, the suavity, the unforeseen, the habit, that are the ingredients of such investigations, there will be nothing to fear. We will be able securely and with confidence to teach literature and to be taught by it. (1984, p. 98)

There is experimentalism in his incorporation of the modern tradition – in its heterogeneity and variability -- not only geographically, in view of his exile in Brazil and the United States, but also temporally. Sena's conception of the modern tradition is universalist:

⁴⁶ "Não Posso Desesperar da Humanidade," *40 Anos de Servidão*, 103.

⁴⁷ "Sobre as Metáforas," *Poesia 2*, 567.

⁴⁸ Gilda Santos, *40 Poemas de Jorge de Sena*.

⁴⁹ Ana Hatherly, "Jorge de Sena – Um Terceiro Modernismo?"

⁵⁰ Hatherly, p. 23.

⁵¹ Jorge de Sena, *Poesia II*, p. 14.

not belonging to any particular place, he belongs to them all. His desire for universality appears ironically in a series of concrete verses in a poem about a poem by João Cabral de Melo Neto, “In ink and pencil – one can write all the verses in the world.” He had already written in *Crown of the Earth*, “I sit down to the table as if it were the entire world” and in the introduction to the 2nd series of the *Cadernos de poesia* that the ideal poet would be “capable of integrating all of the past into present time”. The desire to write a work overflowing with the depths of universal experience, to write “all the verses in the world,” returns implicitly in the poem “Chopin: An Inventory” in *Art of Music*:

Almost sixty mazurkas; about thirty studies; two dozens of preludes; some twenty nocturnes; about fifteen waltzes; more than a dozen ‘polonaises’; ‘scherzos’, improvisations and ballads, four of each; three sonatas for piano; and two concertos for orchestra [...] An art of composing music like one writes a poem in a disguise of listlessness, hiding the structure in an air of inspiration, a harmonious melody above the ironic one (or the contrary), the magic of rhythms used to hid the thought [...] warm, on the great occasions of triumphal life, and cold when only the music tells of the vacuous desperation of one’s being a piano and nothing more in this world.⁵²

From early on Sena’s poetry showed the influence of other poets and styles, above all Fernando Pessoa, not only in explicit verses, like “Ode to Ricardo Reis” or “Apocryphal Ode to Alberto Caeiro,” but also visible in the line “sleeping god,” from *Metamorphosis*, in the “unknowing generations” of the “Pietà of Avignon,” and in poems like “It’s late, very late at night” and “Ode to the books that I can’t buy:”

Today I made a list of books,
And I don’t have money to buy them...
It’s ridiculous to cry for lack of money
All this I have to connect with myself deeply
Thus, I have to buy some books.⁵³

He revisits disquiet in the poem “Who speaks of departing:”

How many times I’ve departed in this life,
said a final goodbye to people and places
and returned to find them changed
[...]
And sometimes to depart
was just to walk with vain melancholy
streets of cities without
anyone who remembered me.⁵⁴

⁵² Jorge de Sena, *Poesia II*, p. 192.

⁵³ Jorge de Sena, *40 Anos de Servidão*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Jorge de Sena, *Poesia 2*, edição de Jorge Fazenda Lourenço, Lisboa, Guimarães, 2015, pp. 726-7.

He praises Pessoa for having made himself modern with tendencies and tonalities of the last decades of the 19th century and simultaneously for having cut ties with the past. In the same way, Sena both applied and distanced himself from his poetic models, being capable of treating subversively the vanguards themselves, Pessoa-like, of inserting himself in the discourse of Portuguese modernity and of desiring the destruction of discursive language as meaning, alongside the concrete poets. Perhaps he did in fact, as he said, “keep up with everything that happens in this world”?

Marks of experimentalism run throughout his poetry in their variety and virtuosity, often accompanied by a unique creativity, subversive humor and rage against injustice (see “Ode to Incomprehension”). Different terms have been employed to describe these differences – “distrust,” “dialectic,” and “disconcert” among others -- perspectives that constitute not a third modernism but a mannerism within the modern, not in the sense that modernism in itself would constitute a mannerism, but from the viewpoint of a consciousness simultaneously creative and critical, which in Ana Hatherly’s analysis ties JS to tradition through self-awareness and knowledge. JS himself gives us a key to understand his “art of wit” by joining abstract and concrete in a telling verse of the poem “The Nave at Alcobça:” “limitless / within limits.”⁵⁵

Sena’s experimentalism within the modern tradition produces unforgettable works, such as the round “Who has It” (“I shall not die without knowing/ the color of liberty”), “Camões addresses his contemporaries”, “Letter to my children about the shootings of Goya”, “Artificial Paradises”, “In Crete, with the minotaur,” “I know the Salt” and others on political, erotic or satirical themes. Universality and incessant variability are keys to the malleability, critical historicity and self-consciousness that reinforce and summarize the modern tradition in which JS participated, albeit from a critical distance. He examined modernity with an intellectual density that allowed him to act subversively and with great liberty. He seems to have observed the counsel left by the Brazilian writer Lima Barreto:

Our obligation is to put aside all the old rules, any discipline outsider the genres and take as much advantage of each as we can and, in proportion to our inspiration, try to reform certain uses, suggest doubts, remember forgotten judgments, spread our great and high emotions in the face of the world and human suffering, to weld, gather humanity in something greater in which all are aware, through revelation of individual souls, what they have in common and depending on themselves (*apud* GALVÃO, 1960, n.p.)

⁵⁵ Jorge de Sena, *Poesia II*, p. 81.

These qualities have been recognized by critics of his poetry: a poetry that “announced novelties and questioned established knowledge,”⁵⁶ that used “a language always on the verge of disintegration and always ready for constant renovation”⁵⁷ and that “combined, with radical subjectivity, discipline and excess, order and tumult, the classical and modern.”⁵⁸

Ana Hatherly concluded that JS fulfilled his cultural aims by having created “an entire cultural universe.”⁵⁹ Without experimentation, however, this universe would have lacked some essential qualities, a necessary dimension of originality, a sharpness that is the creative consciousness of his time, a fidelity to his experience and a participation in the most daring contemporary poetic tendencies.

World Voyager

JS learns to travel in poetry and to live through culture and knowledge. He builds a universalist and humanistic vision that brings the European Enlightenment into the contemporary age, with his encyclopedic and museological excursions through world culture. As a sign of his universality, JS compiles an anthology of the poetry of 26 centuries, translated into Portuguese, in two volumes; he organizes and writes an extensive preface for a comprehensive anthology of Portuguese poetry, the *Portuguese Lyrics*; he translates Cavafy and Dickinson. In the books of poetry after 1960 – *Metamorphoses*, *Art of Music*, *Peregrinatio ad loca infecta*, *Exorcisms* -- JS travels widely in art, music and literature. In his *Metamorphoses* JS revisits Iberia and Mediterranean culture -- the Mosque at Cordoba, the Alcobaça Monastery, the Pietà in Avignon, the Granduchessa di Toscana – and poetizes on works by Rembrandt, Fragonard, Turner, Van Gogh, Keats, and Goya.

Music is another dimension of liberty; in music composers “say what is not sayable.”⁶⁰ In the 1968 *Art of Music*, Sena travels through pieces by composers from the renaissance to the present: Dowland, Bach, Händel, Scarlatti, Mozart, Beethoven, Berlioz, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, Brückner, Brahms, Smetana, Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Puccini, Mahler, Strauss, Debussy, Sibelius, Satie, Bartok, Schönberg, and Piaf.⁶¹ His survey of world culture becomes concentrated in Europe after his return in late 1969 and 1972, although he also visits Mozambique. The volume *Exorcisms* features a panorama of European

⁵⁶ Joaquim F. M. Coelho, 1998, p. 11

⁵⁷ Gilda Santos, 2019.

⁵⁸ Fernando Martinho, 2017, p. 12

⁵⁹ Ana Hatherly, 1995, p. 33.

⁶⁰ “Ouvindo o Quarteto Op. 131, de Beethoven”, *Poesia-II*, 188-190.

⁶¹ A respeito, há o estudo fundamental de Francisco Cota Fagundes, *A poet's way with music: humanism in Jorge de Sena's poetry*, Providence, R.I.: Gávea-Brown, 1988.

cities and literary cultures, from Copenhagen to Spinoza in Amsterdam, to Dusseldorf, Vienna, Milan, Rome, and Florence, to Salamanca and Santiago de Compostela, the Prado, to Paris, Antwerp, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Sena's last geographical poetry, the 1977 *On This Beach: Eight Meditations alongside the Pacific*, written in Santa Barbara, signals a final and definitive return to humanistic philosophy and another, substitute point of arrival:

This is another ocean. Another time. If gods were born here, there is nothing left of them.⁶² The serene peace of infinite afternoons.⁶³ Today only a memory, it's late now, in the day as in the year, until more than successive mornings return in a continuous series that whets out appetite for seasons that suddenly today are coming to an end,⁶⁴ in this country where life hides everyone.⁶⁵

The poem "In Crete, With The Minotaur" (1965) synthesizes JS's grand peregrination in the world and in humanity; it represents his own personal autobiography, in a poem where travels and accompanying experiences are reduced to their essence, told in a tone between epic and colloquial: "The Minotaur will understand me and have coffee with me, while the sun sets serenely over the sea."⁶⁶ With the Minotaur, JS returns to the origins of culture, before history, before language, and before Portugal. They speak in "volapueque," or no language or country at all: "Neither I nor the Minotaur has any country. Just coffee, aromatic and really strong, not from Arabia or Brazil... or Angola or anyplace. Just coffee."⁶⁷ The meeting with the minotaur is a search for a redeeming or utopian vision, a solution to being in the world. In saying "I myself am my country,"⁶⁸ JS confirms that his identity is constructed out of ethical consciousness and perhaps genealogical linguistics, but mostly a profound respect for life, when "I don't believe in another / and if there were another, I would want it to be exactly like this one."

JS sits down to have coffee with the Minotaur to discuss the origins of life, and everything else. "In Crete" is the poem that overcomes the profound deception of political exile; like the "very little light" that never goes out, this poem affirms the poet's timeless faith in our common humanity. The aromatic coffee is at the same time a conciliation, a new homeland, the idyllic fantasy of a reencounter with the origins of the truth of experience: "In

⁶² *Sobre Esta Praia*, I, in *Poesia-III* (Lisboa: Moraes, 1978), 241.

⁶³ *Sobre Esta Praia*, III.

⁶⁴ *Sobre Esta Praia*, IV.

⁶⁵ *Sobre Esta Praia*, V.

⁶⁶ "Em Creta com o Minotauro," II, *Poesia-III*, 76.

⁶⁷ "Em Creta com o Minotauro" IV.

⁶⁸ "Em Creta com o Minotauro," I.

Crete, with the Minotaur, I can drink my coffee in peace.”⁶⁹ On the beach in Santa Barbara, JS’s poetry of exile came to a grand finale.

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⁶⁹ “Em Creta com o Minotauro, V.

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Bio Kenneth David Jackson is professor of Luso-Brazilian literatures and cultures at Yale University. k.jackson@yale.edu