

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

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SENA, Jorge [Cândido Alves Rodrigues Telles Grilo Raposo de Abreu] (Lisbon, 1919 – Santa Barbara / California, 1978)

Jorge de Sena led a life marked by professional experiences which accounted for an eclectic intellectual production grounded on the search for knowledge in its multiple facets. The social and humanist dimensions of his writings are central to a reflection on his relationship with history and historiography. Although he never renounced his ideological independence, Sena was highly driven by social and political concerns with a Marxist slant. As a poet, he belonged to a generation that established itself in the literary scene of the 1950s and which was heavily marked by humanist values and by the idea of the writer as an entity committed to social causes. Proof of this lies in the essay “Marx and Capital”, where he pays tribute to Marxism while highlighting the need to regard knowledge as a contributory factor to the transformation of society rather than simply as a theory (Maquiavel e Outros...[Machiavel and Others...]). One of his main concerns was searching for ways to bridge the gap between thought and action, knowing and doing, thinking and feeling, culture and technique. (Lourenço, O Essencial Sobre... [The Essential on ...], p.32). In fact, it is in the dialectic distinction between knowing and doing that Marxist influences can be detected in the reasoning of this man who did not envisage conflict of any sort between artistic creation and being in the world.

Some parts of Jorge de Sena’s biography attest to his attachment to freedom at both individual and collective levels. He was the son of Augusto de Sena, a captain in the Merchant Navy, and of Maria da Luz Telles Grilo de Sena, born in Lisbon to a bourgeois family of aristocratic lineage. Having attended the Liceu Camões, at the age of 17 he joined the Escola Naval [the Naval Academy] to pursue a career in the Navy to honour his father’s wishes. However, the Spanish Civil War and his inadaptation to military discipline were determinant for his decision to leave the Navy (Idem, p. 18). In 1938, he entered the Faculdade de Engenharia do Porto [the Oporto University School of Engineering] where he completed a degree in civil engineering six years later. Although he was not affiliated to a political party, Sena, from an early age, had been involved in activism against Salazar’s regime. When he publicly voiced his political views on the antidemocratic workings of the Estado Novo [New State], Sena became a target of censorship and of other forms of pressure that culminated in his exile. In October 1945, a group of democrats, including himself, gathered at the Centro



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Escolar Republicano Almirante Reis [Almirante Reis Republican School Centre] to demand that the government postpone the general elections, dismantle the PIDE [the Portuguese Secret Police] and abolish censorship. This led to the creation of the Movimento de Unidade Democrática [Democratic Unity Movement] (MUD), which existed legally until 1948. From 1948 to 1959, when he left for exile in Brazil, Sena worked as an engineer for the Junta Autónoma de Estradas [the Portuguese Road Authority]. During this period, he became acquainted with the country “as few others ever will because few will have used that opportunity to get to know the country from a cultural perspective” (“Falando com Jorge de Sena...” [“In a Conversation with Jorge de Sena ...”], p. 415). Over the years in which he worked as a civil servant, he translated works which, to some extent, disseminated equalitarian and libertarian values, such as Hemingway’s *Fiesta* (1954), Caldwell’s *Georgia Boy* (1954), and Malraux’s *Man’s Fate* (1958). Sena also wrote for acclaimed literary journals such as *A Presença*, *O Unicórnio*, *Seara Nova*, *Vértice* and *Cadernos de Poesia*, which published *Perseguição* [Persecution] (1942), his first book of poems,. The 1958 presidential elections, which sparked a wave of protest in Portugal, and his involvement in the *Revolta da Sé*, a failed coup attempt against the dictatorship of Salazar set for March 1959, were the main reasons behind Jorge de Sena's decision to leave his country (Vasques, Jorge de Sena, *Uma Ideia de...*, [Jorge de Sena, *An Idea about...*] pp. 231-232).

About to turn 40, and with no hope of living in a free Portugal that would offer him the teaching career he had always dreamt of, Sena capitalized on the invitation to participate in the IV Colóquio Internacional de Estudos Luso-Brasileiros [4th International Conference on Portuguese-Brazilian Studies], organised by the Universidade da Bahia [the University of Bahia], and went into voluntary exile in Brazil. A short time later, he accepted the post of professor of Theory of Literature at the newly founded Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras de Assis [Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Arts of Assis], in São Paulo. On the other side of the Atlantic, he continued to engage in political opposition against Salazar’s regime. Humberto Delgado, also an exile in Brazil, joined the opposition from overseas and restructured the Movimento Nacional Independente [the Independent National Movement], which published the newspaper *Portugal Livre* [A Free Portugal]. There was also another movement, namely the Centro Republicano Português [the Portuguese Republican Centre] in which the Movimento de Unidade Democrático was integrated, both supported by the Comité de Intelectuais Portugueses [Portuguese Intellectuals Committee]. As a result of his connection to this Committee, Jorge de Sena began to collaborate with the newspaper *Portugal Democrático* [Democratic Portugal], which was headquartered in São Paulo. It was in this newspaper, where he was a member of the newsroom team for three years, that Sena published articles that caught the attention of the PIDE. A document in support of MUD signed by members of the Portuguese opposition in October 1961 was among these texts, which led to a request issued by the Portuguese government (1962) for Sena’s arrest and his subsequent ban from entering Portugal – this entry ban would remain in force until 1968 (Santos, “Da arte de ser multiplamente...” [On the art of being multitudinously...], p. 66).

In addition to his reflective work of a political and civic nature, Jorge de Sena also invested in his academic



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career. In 1962, he completed *Uma Canção de Camões* [A Song by Camões], his first doctoral and habilitation thesis, which he was prevented from submitting to the Universidade de Belo Horizonte [University of Belo Horizonte]. In 1964, a year after he had acquired Brazilian nationality, he obtained the title of Doctor of Letters and Full Professor of Portuguese Literature with a second thesis entitled *Os Sonetos de Camões e o Soneto Quinhentista Peninsular* [The Sonnets of Camões and the 16th Century Sonnet in the Peninsula]. Besides positioning Camões within the scope of Mannerism, and favouring both his lyric works and epic poem, in these and other studies Sena interpreted Camões from a historical viewpoint, as if he were his contemporary, humanizing him in his failings as an ordinary man, therefore contradicting the academic tendency to judge the author of the *Lusíadas* [the *Lusiads*] through a patriotic filter. Even though Sena was a renowned literary critic and poet in Portugal and had already published several works of which the *Pedra Filosofal* [Philosopher's Stone] (1950) and *As Evidências* [Evidences] (1955), the poem in twenty one sonnets, are particularly noteworthy, the transformation in his life as a result of his exile in Brazil granted him more time to further his work as an essayist, while also allowing him a mental disposition that he had never enjoyed in Portugal to accomplish works that lent a new perspective to the study of Camões. His work *Estudos de cultura e literatura brasileira* [Studies on Brazilian Culture and Literature], which was published posthumously (1988), also dates back to this period in Brazil. In this work he addresses the issue of Luso-Brazilian cultural relations, regarded by the author as verging on "mutual disinterest" (*Estudos de cultura... [Studies on Culture...]*, p. 57). In 1965, Sena moved to the United States of America to teach at the University of Wisconsin, where he was appointed Full Professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese (1967). Between September 1968 and February 1969, he returned to Europe for a number of conferences and visited Portugal, following a period of such long absence. In 1970, he moved to the University of California, in Santa Barbara, as Full Professor of Portuguese and Brazilian Literature and Comparative Literature, where he would remain until his death.

Although Jorge de Sena did not have an academic background in history, a historical dimension is clearly perceptible in his literary and critical work, thus making it worthy of a historiographical analysis. Indeed, his life is relevant per se for an in-depth understanding of contemporary Portuguese culture and of the history of the opposition to the Estado Novo. His writings alone may be said to feature elements, ideas and concepts which are pivotal for a global overview of Portuguese cultural production in clearly defined historical moments. Sena wrote abundant prose on the most varied themes and authors, ranging from Luso-Brazilian history, culture, and literature to English and American literature. His work encompasses conferences, articles, papers, literature reviews and mere encyclopaedia or dictionary entries. Also noteworthy were his compilations of correspondence with major Portuguese intellectual figures and the volumes of essays published late in his life (or organised posthumously by his wife Mécia de Sena). One of such volumes, *Estudos de História e de Cultura* [Studies on History and Culture], which was mainly composed of essays published by issue from 1963 onwards in the journal *Ocidente* [West] and later compiled in a volume in 1967, may be regarded as an interdisciplinary work that encounters a vehicle in history to attain something altogether more far-reaching and



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closer to the author's interests, namely the multiple nuances of Portuguese culture. Some documents worthy of mention are the genealogical study "A família de Afonso Henriques" [The family of Afonso Henriques], the study "O vitorianismo de dona Filipa de Lancaster" [Victorian traits of Phillipa of Lancaster], the article "Os painéis ditos de 'Nuno Gonçalves'" [The so-called 'Nuno Gonçalves' Panels], in which he examines 16th-century Iberism and the reams of critical texts prompted by those panels and, perhaps the most important text, "Inês de Castro ou literatura portuguesa de Fernão Lopes a Camões, com uma análise estrutural da Castro de Ferreira, um longo estudo com várias abordagens e aspectos [...] [Inês de Castro or Portuguese Literature from Fernão Lopes to Camões, with a structural analysis of Castro by [António] Ferreira, an in-depth study with different approaches and features]".

It could hardly be said that the essays in this book are the product of a purely historian mind, since the reader encounters a mind for whom culture was "free discussion and enlightenment, and the personal conquest of freedom of thought and of speech" (O Essencial Sobre... [The Basics of...], p. 30). One is left with the feeling that he is familiar with a great variety of themes, from Portuguese and European literature to 16th-century drama, from cinema to music, from science to philosophy. While his essays may have a strong historical component – suffice to recall the texts that evoke history such as "Portugal e a sua história" [Portugal and its History] and "Jaime Cortesão, o historiador" ["Jaime Cortesão, the historian" (Rever Portugal... [Revisiting Portugal]), it should be noted that they fall within the scope of literary and cultural history, focusing to a large extent on the production of books, on the influence of foreign authors in Portugal in different centuries, and also on literary analyses centred on the field of literary theory. Nevertheless, when considering, for example, the anthology entitled *Líricas Portuguesas* [Portuguese Lyric Poetry] (1958), it is particularly noteworthy that Sena took great pains to provide a historical contextualization of the period (1909-1929), consisting of a historical and literary classification and sociological profile of the poets included, according to variables such as their academic education and geographical origin.

In keeping with the line of thought that Portugal was experiencing a period of stagnation, riddled with economic and political crises and standing in stark contrast to its Discoveries past, Jorge de Sena was sceptical with regard to the evolution of Portuguese contemporary history. With his cosmopolitan spirit, quite common in those who had had to adapt to different countries and lifestyles, Sena often challenged the inability of the Portuguese to take advantage of the cultural and linguistic heritage left by this period of imperial glory (Alves, "Permanente lucidez crítica" [Permanent critical clarity], p. 22). It was these 'psychological' features, also described by other authors such as Teixeira de Pascoaes, partly related to the country's decadence and the absence of solutions to overcome the doldrums, a closed mindset, provincialism, and the lack of audacity, that encouraged him to write articles, essays, and poems in which his frustration regarding the condition of Portugal is particularly salient. Considering, however, that Jorge de Sena's criticism of Portugal's approach to life stemmed partially from his personal struggle for artistic and academic recognition, it must be noted that some of his texts, for example, on the "mediocrity" of national artists, should not be read without considering their



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subjectivity, contrary to the precision required of academic works. A great many documents attest to the trials and tribulations endured by the poet before earning the respect of his peers. According to Eugénio de Lisboa, with regard to Sena's relationship with Portuguese intellectuals, in order to achieve artistic recognition, Sena had had to fight "the classic betrayals of the less talented artists who are often the most small-minded" (Lisboa, "Breve Perfil..." ["Brief Profile"], p. 29). Also stressing Sena's compulsion to decry mediocrity, in *O Reino da Estupidez* [The Realm of Stupidity] (1961) Gaspar Simões claims to have encountered "the homeland (...) in such an utterly stupid state, and it remains so even after adopting intelligence as its motto" (Simões, "Jorge de Sena, O Estrangeirado" [Jorge de Sena, The Admirer of Everything Foreign], p. 76).

The volumes of *O Reino da Estupidez* feature many of Sena's sources of irritation. One of the book's pervasive ideas is that, far from seeking "to acquire knowledge", on the contrary Portuguese intellectuals present certainties and are inward-looking (*O Reino da Estupidez-I*, p. 59). In many of his texts, it is in this corrosive style that Sena insinuates that Portuguese letters has been taken over by uneducated, corrupt individuals who do not do justice to the names of the past. As an example, he uses irony to convey that following the disappearance of the "wretched" scribes such as Camões and Sá de Miranda, informed literary critics and writers had descended on the Portuguese literary scene, resorting to "fruitful methods" such as "silencing", "allusion", "cowardice", "stylistic infamy", "buying-a-pig-in-a-poke tactics" and "appropriation" (idem, p.70). (Idem, p. 70). He further expands on the question of silencing, explaining that it involves never making "any reference, not even a negative one, to the name or work of an individual whose activity is clearly contrary to that harmonious inversion of values on which the peace and glory of the Republic of Letters are unquestionably grounded" (Idem, p. 71). Knowing from his correspondence that the writer regarded himself as a victim of the contempt and silence of his countrymen, it is no wonder that his texts appear to be quite autobiographical. Judging from his articles, but mainly the letters he sent to friends such as José-Augusto França, Sophia de Mello Breyner and Vergílio Ferreira, Sena believed that "very few reputable Portuguese writers owe as little to literary criticism as me" ("Breve Perfil...", p. 13). On reading these letters, one is struck by the image of an exile who feels excluded from his beloved country. In a letter sent to José-Augusto França, dated 3 November 1960, Sena complains about the silence both of friends and editors, claiming that his books were not being reviewed and he was not receiving the attention he deserved (*Correspondência Jorge de Sena...*, p. 178 [Jorge de Sena Correspondence]). This bitter tone is perceptible in several of his letters. He confided to Padre Manuel Antunes that he was frustrated by the cowardice of the Portuguese, the cowardice behind not awarding him literary prizes and forcing him to leave his manuscripts to wither away on his editors' desks (Antunes, "Sena, Jorge e Mécia..." [Jorge de Sena and Mécia...], p. 175). Indeed, when Sena states that the Portuguese do not acknowledge their great men and that the country is overrun with mediocre and ungrateful individuals (*O Reino da Estupidez-II*, pp. 163-166), one cannot but assume that he is including himself among the country's great men.

When analysing Jorge de Sena from a historiographical viewpoint, with the knowledge that his work did not



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focus on this scientific field, it is important to understand the extent to which his life and work contribute to the interpretation of Portuguese history. From this perspective, it may be inferred from the books and letters, such as those previously mentioned, that regardless of the literary genre or topic addressed, Sena's work is framed by an analysis of the ways of being of a people he both loved and hated. However, as noted above, it is clear that despite his fascination with Portugal's fate in a cultural context, Jorge de Sena avoids resorting to patriotic statements or flattering psychological characterisations. It might even be said that his work "deliberately contests the established cultural myths" (O Essencial Sobre..., p. 58). It is precisely this opposition to the established cultural myths that one encounters in *O Indesejado* [The Unwanted] (António, Rei) (1951), a historical tragedy in verse where the rejection of King Sebastião's mysticism is highlighted through the characterisation of the anguished fate of D. António Prior do Crato (1531-1595), son of prince Luís and a candidate to succeed King Sebastião. By depicting D. António as a hesitant and fearful character, who, to no avail, pursues the recognition of his fellow countrymen in order to spare the kingdom from dependence on the Philips, Sena, devoid of patriotic aggrandizement, gives the same pessimistic tone to this historical event as that used to describe the Portuguese cultural scene in his other writings. After all, as a man whose fate has been decided on the basis of his illegitimacy and fearfulness, D. António cannot rise to hero.

Alongside his plays, Jorge de Sena's fiction offers a more in-depth understanding of his historical viewpoints. As noted above, the poet was particularly sensitive to egalitarian and democratic values, and to an almost existentialist obsession with freedom. Since the latter is a concept with many different meanings and not restricted to individual freedom but rather to each society's ability to live according to its potential and to seek material abundance and equity, it is perhaps appropriate to underline that Sena's concern with freedom is related to his desire to study man in his essence. In other words, converting the previous sentences into questions, what does it mean to be in the world? What is man's mission towards himself and towards others? The short story "Defesa e Justificação de um Ex-Criminoso de Guerra" [Defence and Justification of a Former War Prisoner] included in *Novas Andanças do Demónio* [The Devil's New Wanderings] (1966), is pivotal to understanding Jorge de Sena's reasoning. Although his inspiration came from Adolf Eichmann's trial, in this short story no direct reference is made to the crimes committed by the Nazi officer or to the concentration camp massacres. What the writer offers the reader are his thoughts on the human condition. Sena follows the line of thought explored in "Maquiavel e O Príncipe" ["Machiavel and The Prince"] to argue that, bereft of divine protection and as his own sole measure, for better or worse, man is left to fend for himself and is therefore responsible for all his actions (Maquiavel e Outros Estudos [Machiavel and Other Studies], p. 48). This former war criminal, however, does not pursue any humanist ideal, basing himself instead on "German ethics", believing that, with effort and planning, some peoples will survive and conquer rival nations. For that reason, Nazi mentality and its beliefs in biological determinism and racial supremacy clash with the belief that man is accountable for his actions. (Monteiro, "Jorge de Sena's "Eichmann Story", p. 13). Sena seeks to understand the mind of someone who, as observed by philosopher Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963),



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believed in the superior law of the Führer, above merely encouraging repugnance towards Naziism. What this short story conveys is a view of freedom that contrasts with that of the author, namely a democratic freedom, of full accountability of the individual as far as intruding the space of others is concerned, as noted above. (*O Reino da Estupidez-I*, p. 134).

In a totally different register, *Sinais de Fogo* [Signs of Fire], a project conceived as the first volume of a major cycle of novels, even though it was only published posthumously (1979), addresses the theme of the Spanish Civil War and how this conflict was viewed in Portugal. Jorge, the main character, is a young man reporting on his adolescence, first in Lisbon and then in Figueira da Foz; his narrative is very important from a historical point of view insofar as it provides in-depth knowledge of what life in summer was like in Figueira da Foz, a town associated with the presence of Spaniards who, in 1936, were refugees rather than tourists. However, to say that this book solely addresses the reactions to the outbreak of the Spanish conflict would be to oversimplify the meaning of *Sinais de Fogo*. In fact, this book has a variety of meanings and offers an exemplary depiction of the people, mentalities, and behaviours of the time. Simultaneously, in this work Jorge de Sena, a keen connoisseur of Spanish life (he wrote over forty articles and essays on Spanish literature and culture), explores the Spanish stereotypes that had been disseminated for centuries in Portugal. One of the myths in the novel is that, unlike the melancholic, lugubrious Portuguese people, the Spanish are noisy and festive, they gesticulate and address each other as “Dons”, drawing attention to themselves wherever they go (*Sinais de Fogo*, p. 78). By reproducing popular beliefs and national jokes about the people from this neighbouring country, the writer depicts a scenario populated with prostitutes, dancers, and other sensual Spanish women (Gago, “*Sinais de Espanha...*” [Signs of Spain], p. 278). We are led to believe that in this novel Sena wished to return to the mental framework of his youth and offer the reader a full picture of society. Therefore, with its realistic descriptions of the Civil War, of life under a dictatorship and the all-pervasive fear in Portugal, and even with its examination of the “myths” around the Spanish, this novel is crucial for those driven to further investigate themes related to the Spanish Civil War, and in particular its relationship with Portugal.

The fact that it is difficult to refer to Jorge de Sena as a poet, novelist or critic is because he excelled in different areas. While this alone is reason enough for scholars connected to history to read this author, there is still much more to learn about “Jorge de Sena, the historian”. It may be inferred from some of his essays that history, rather than a tool used to contextualize his artistic work, emerges as part of an interdisciplinary critical methodology that allows him to substantiate theories, to broaden his understanding, and to challenge concepts (“classic”, “symbolist”, “baroque” or “naturalistic”) and traditional periodisation. Jorge de Sena, after all, historicised the most important published material on literature in Portugal, both in ancient and modern times. One needs only to consider his analyses on Modernism, Romanticism, or the Renaissance in texts such as “*Tentativa de um Panorama Coordenado da Literatura Portuguesa de 1901 a 1950*” [Attempting to Define a Coordinated Overview of Portuguese Literature] (*Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa-II* [Studies on



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Portuguese Literature - II), or even his research on Machiavel and Marx to observe how through historical research, he manages to attain a comprehensive overview and to inter-link literature with the lifestyles of each period and setting. Based on the assumption that Portuguese literature was largely an “official” literature, the heir of a feudal and oligarchical mentality stemming from the Middle Ages (*Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa - I*, p. 11), Sena was driven to probe national literary history by his search for innovative interpretation paths for themes deemed unquestionable by the Portuguese Academy, regarded by the author as being prone to dogmatism and averse to critical thinking. To exemplify, with regard to Romanticism, “glorious, unburied corpse” he states that “defining it is just like defining what everybody thinks they know it is ... at the risk of (...) being proved to us that it does not exist or that it is exactly the opposite of what has been defined” (*Idem*, p. 83). By not separating the work of art from the social, political, and cultural context underlying its creation, Sena reinterprets traditional conceptualisations, and in the specific case of Romanticism, argues that the movement was late to manifest itself in Portugal, contending that, in many aspects (Garrett’s “sexual scepticism” which contrasts with the idealised eroticism of Romanticism, Camilo’s irony and caricature-like realism, Júlio Dinis’ “aesthetic impersonality” contrary to Romantic subjectivism, etc.) it asserted itself as Counter-Romanticism.

He uses similar reasoning with regard to 16th-century Renaissance: when, following a period of change in the social and cultural structures, the Renaissance was disseminated from Italy to the rest of Europe and arrived in Portugal, it was no longer the Renaissance but Mannerism (*Idem*, p. 100). In addition to redefining concepts and historical periodisation, a clear urge was noted in essays, such as those compiled in *Estudos de Literatura Portuguesa*, to reinterpret the works of Oliveira Martins, Bernardim Ribeiro, Antero de Quental and Sá de Miranda from this multifaceted perspective which immerses itself in historical knowledge with a view to grasping new meanings and ensuring the precision of literary criticism. In “Sobre Gil Vicente [On Gil Vicente]”, Sena rejects António José Saraiva’s views on the progressive and Brechtian nature of Gil Vicente, to describe the 15th-century playwright’s thinking as one of “a reaction to all forms of modern spirit” (*Idem*, p. 32). This example reinforces the theory that Sena believed that it was impossible to separate a work of art from its time and that in order to fully absorb it in all its complexity it was necessary to understand the ways of thinking, the culture, politics, and social structures that influenced its creation, instead of making analogies with present-day works of art and phenomena. Hence, acknowledging that history is fundamental to understand art, it is no wonder that in an essay entitled “A viagem de Itália” [“Journey through Italy”] he explains how Sá de Miranda’s journeys through Italy between 1521 and 1526 contributed greatly to the renewal of 16th-century Portuguese literature. (*Idem*, p. 59).

Jorge de Sena did not just write essays of historiographical interest. He also published texts which, explaining the importance of studying history when writing on literature, contribute to an understanding of his approach as a literary critic and historian. In one of those texts, he underlines that by limiting literary studies to linguistic factors and failing to culturally integrate language, personalities, biographical and historical



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circumstances in an in-depth philosophical approach and a historical analysis, the scholar will be deprived of research in which a relationship is established between his own world view and conception of history and those implicit in the work of any author under study (*Dialécticas Teóricas* [Theoretical Dialectics], p. 27). In “Sobre o Perspectivismo Histórico-Literário” [“On Historical and Literary Perspectivism”], an essay that is both an apology of history and a criticism of the researchers who are focused on understanding the present while dismissing the past, he argues that the man who confines himself to the present and turns his back on the past succumbs to the fallacies bequeathed by the past to the present, and therefore “provincially” believes that his village is the whole world (*Idem*, p. 205). He also states that the literary historiography of the previous century, devoid of a vision of the past, embraced evolutionist methodologies and criteria, therefore confining itself to simplistic periodisations, rigidly dating literary movements or schools which were often contemporary to each other. (*Idem*, p. 206). Furthermore, he mentions that in addition to the inaccurate periodisation and listing of authors, such literary review lacked a historical vision and insisted on exalting the most acclaimed literary figures while relegating talented artists to oblivion, and compartmentalising authors in different literary genres when in fact they cultivated a variety of genres. This defence of the literary-historical perspective serves as a pretext to summarise some of the reasons that lead us to believe that Sena and historiography share common convictions. Firstly, he believed that a period could only be understood in light of all its manifestations. Secondly, he refused to simplify the past or approach it as being less complex than the present, and to view artistic “schools” as separate individuations. Finally, he rejected the idea that history could teach us how to live the present (*Idem*, p. 210). By way of conclusion, it may be said that Jorge de Sena’s essayistic, poetic, and fictional work is central to historiography and that it is more than fitting to consider this great figure of Portuguese letters a historian of literature and culture who should be studied by all those seeking to understand how art, particularly literature, has evolved (and reacted to political and social conjunctures) in Portugal and in Europe across the centuries.

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