

JORGE DE SENA, FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IN THE MEDIA AND THE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING (INTER)CULTURAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Jorge de Sena (1919–1978), recognised as one of the most versatile Portuguese intellectuals of the 20th century, left a legacy that, as some scholars argue (Baltrusch, 2019; Santos, 2019), warrants deeper investigation to fully understand his impact on Portuguese-language cultural heritage. Outlawed by the Salazar regime, Jorge de Sena built an extensive body of work across Portugal, Brazil, and the United States, asserting his intellectual independence from an early age by resisting political affiliations, social patronage, and literary trends. While this defiance clashed with the oppressive regime that denied him a place to live in Portugal, it also enabled him to propose forward-thinking ideas, such as establishing a Portuguese-speaking (inter)cultural community. Thus, based on the observation that Jorge de Sena's views on this community remain largely overlooked and have yet to be systematically explored and disseminated, we hypothesise that the media, through their treatment of this intellectual figure, are partially responsible for this lack of recognition. To test our hypothesis, we mapped, read, analysed, and interpreted various media content by or about Jorge de Sena from 1942 to the present, dividing this period into two phases: before and after April 25, 1974. Firstly, it is evident that during the dictatorial period, Sena consistently expressed his freedom of thought in the works he produced. Secondly, texts about Jorge de Sena written by other authors emphasise his life journey more than his intellectual contributions and legacy.

KEYWORDS

Jorge de Sena, media, freedom of thought, Portuguese-speaking (inter)cultural community

JORGE DE SENA, LIBERDADE DE PENSAMENTO NOS MÉDIA E A COMUNIDADE (INTER)CULTURAL DE LÍNGUA PORTUGUESA

RESUMO

Jorge de Sena (1919–1978), um dos mais multifacetados intelectuais portugueses do século XX, deixou um legado que, de acordo com certos autores (Baltrusch, 2019; Santos, 2019), merece ser explorado mais aprofundadamente para que seja apurada a dimensão do seu contributo para o património da cultura da língua portuguesa. Autor proscrito pelo regime de Salazar, com vasta obra produzida entre Portugal, Brasil e Estados Unidos, demonstrou desde cedo a sua

liberdade de pensamento, recusando sacrificá-la a filiações políticas, apadrinhamentos sociais ou correntes literárias. Se, por um lado, essa liberdade foi incompatível com uma pátria ditatorial que lhe usurpou o lugar de pertença, por outro, permitiu-lhe fazer propostas inovadoras à época, como a constituição de uma comunidade (inter)cultural de língua portuguesa. Assim, a partir da constatação de que o pensamento de Jorge de Sena sobre esta comunidade permanece sob um espesso manto de esquecimento, encontrando-se ainda por sistematizar e divulgar, é proposta a hipótese de caber aos média, e ao tratamento que deram e continuam a dar a este intelectual, uma parte da responsabilidade por esse desconhecimento. Para testar a nossa hipótese, procedemos ao mapeamento, leitura, análise de conteúdo e consequente interpretação de vários conteúdos nos média, da autoria de, ou sobre, Jorge de Sena, desde 1942 até aos dias de hoje, dividindo esse período entre antes e após o 25 de Abril de 1974. Primeiro, constata-se que durante o período ditatorial, Sena nunca deixou de exprimir a sua liberdade de pensamento nas peças que assinava. Depois, textos sobre Jorge de Sena da autoria de outros enfatizam mais o seu percurso de vida do que o seu pensamento e o seu legado intelectual.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Jorge de Sena, média, liberdade de pensamento, comunidade (inter)cultural de língua portuguesa

1. INTRODUCTION

You can steal all that's mine:
my ideas, words, images,
my metaphors, themes, motifs,
my symbols and preeminence
in suffering the pains of a new language.
—Jorge Sena, “Camões Dirige-se aos Seus Contemporâneos”

“You can steal all that’s mine” is the opening verse of “Camões Dirige-se aos Seus Contemporâneos” (Camões Addresses His Contemporaries; Sena, 1988b), written by Jorge de Sena¹ (1919–1978) in 1961. According to Jackson (2020), this verse can be interpreted as both a self-referential lament and a prophecy. The author explains that, while living in Brazil due to the political circumstances of the Estado Novo, Sena saw himself as an author with an intellectual destiny similar to that of Camões, his idol and subject of study. Both were marginalised, “stolen from” by their contemporaries and forced into exile. However, both also had a promising future ahead in the Portuguese language culture, with their works receiving posthumous recognition for their significance and originality. Half a century after the end of the dictatorship that led to Sena’s expatriation and 45 years since his death, it is important to agree with Jackson (2020) that such recognition, in his case, is at the mercy of a Portugal that “remains uncertain about how to interpret this figure, compass, and voice of immense denunciation” (p. 162).

It is true that in certain academic and intellectual circles — particularly in Portugal, Brazil, and the United States — the recognition of Sena’s poetic and fictional work is

¹ Henceforth Sena.

unquestionable. However, as some authors have demonstrated (e.g., Baltrusch, 2019; Jackson, 2020; Santos, 2019), other crucial aspects of his intellectual legacy remain overlooked. The various interdependencies between Portugal, Brazil, the former colonies, and the diasporas, along with their implications for the construction of the Portuguese-speaking (inter)cultural community² — concerns that were voiced by Sena in numerous texts and public speeches throughout his career — are elements that shape a framework of thought yet to be explored (Cunha et al., 2018; Macedo, 2023; Macedo & Moreira, 2024).

In this sense, the verses in the epigraph illustrate the issue this article aims to address: Sena's thinking on the PS(I)CC, which is in many ways anticipatory and innovative, remains invisible despite the debate that this community has generated and in which other authors have been notable.

It is worth underlining that the name proposed for this community cannot be directly attributed to Sena, as it arises from the interpretation of various works produced by the author throughout his intellectual journey. Out of scientific caution, the PS(I)CC defended by Sena should not be confused with the idea of “Lusophony”, which often generates tensions and fractures. As Macedo and Moreira (2024) note, during the period in which Sena defended his ideas, the controversial notion of “Lusophony” had not yet been integrated into the lexicon of the Portuguese language. In fact, the authors question whether “Lusophony” would have deserved the author's full support had he taken part in the debates it provoked; on the one hand, the proposals he put forward do not correspond linearly to the idea of “Lusophony”, on the other hand, this notion has sparked heated controversies in Portugal, Brazil, and the Portuguese-speaking African countries, whose cultural autonomy Sena advocated. Secondly, as Macedo and Moreira (2024) also argue, the author proposed the PS(I)CC gradually, aligning with its temporality and historicity, taking as his starting point the possibilities of common acceptance of one cultural heritage based on its size and diversity, in a period prior to globalisation, which introduced the notion of “interculturality”. This justifies the prefix “inter”, placed in parentheses in the adjective of this community, which Sena envisioned based on its cultural possibilities.

Among the texts that contributed to the proposal of the PS(I)CC, one of the most significant is “Possibilidades Universais do Mundo Luso-Brasileiro” (Universal Possibilities of the Luso-Brazilian World; Sena, 1988a) written at an unknown date between 1959 and 1965. In this work, Sena advocates for cultural and linguistic dialogue between Portugal and Brazil. At the same time, he anticipates the independence of the former Portuguese colonies in Africa, asserting the potential of a community of language and culture emerging from the European colonial empires, which was less susceptible to the risks of identification with the “fears of Euro-American capitalism” (Sena, 1988a, p. 195), as it provided favorable conditions for preserving cultural diversity.

In this context, one question arises: what factors have led to the obscurity of Sena's thoughts on the PS(I)CC, a crucial element of his intellectual legacy?

² Henceforth PS(I)CC

The first observation concerns the fact that Sena did not systematise his ideas on the PS(I)CC, nor did he foster the connections necessary for such a task. The absence of systematisation, with his ideas scattered across various texts and public speeches, partly accounts for the limited knowledge of his reflections on this community. It is important to emphasise, however, that this study is not intended to systematise Sena's thoughts on the PS(I)CC — a task that is both urgent and to which we aim to contribute, but one that we have only just begun.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that, in the author's own words, although through the voice of Camões, the ideas might have been stolen from him. In this regard, it is important to highlight that Boschi (2022), in his analysis of the precursors of the community of Portuguese-speaking countries, does not include Sena, overlooking the pioneering vision in "A Comunidade de Estados Portugueses" (The Community of Portuguese States), published in the opposition newspaper *Portugal Democrático* in August 1960. This omission confirms the prophecy in the following lines from the poem previously cited: "and then you can refuse to quote me,/you can suppress me, ignore me, and even/acclaim other thieves, luckier than you". At the same time, the notion of intellectual usurpation conveyed in these verses reflects a world where messages born of freedom of thought are silenced under dictatorship and only gain visibility in a democracy if mediated within the public discursive sphere. Indeed, the media are a key part of a culture, and through their role in informing, they shape the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) and the creation of community (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2014), possessing the power to either make people and ideas visible or render them invisible.

As Sena was an intellectual outlawed by the autocratic Portuguese regime, his ideas could not be prominently featured in the media of the time due to the presence of "an ideological and repressive apparatus based on a poorly elaborated legislative framework, often subject to arbitrary interpretation, enacted by a series of agents and pressure mechanisms, which could even involve Salazar's direct interference" (Lima, 2013, p. 114).

Therefore, the research presented in this paper seeks to test the hypothesis that one of the reasons Sena's thoughts on the PS(I)CC remain obscured is partly linked to the treatment this academic received in the media from the beginning of his career in 1942 to the present day. To test this hypothesis, we mapped the content identified in this research, by or about Sena, across various media over more than 80 years (see Table 1), analysing and interpreting its content critically.

	DATE	CONTENT	GENDER	MEDIUM	COUNTRY
BEFORE APRIL 25, 1974	1942, May	“Poemas de África, de António de Navarro” (Poems from Africa, by António de Navarro)	Critical review	<i>Aventura</i> , Issue 1	Portugal
	1942, May	“Ambiente, de Jorge Barbosa” (Atmosphere, by Jorge Barbosa)	Critical review	<i>Aventura</i> , Issue 1	Portugal
	1942, February	“Porto Grande (S. Vicente de Cabo Verde)” (Porto Grande [São Vicente, Cape Verde])	Short story chronicle	<i>O Mundo Português</i> , Issue 98	Portugal
	1944, May	“A Ilha que Perdeu o Equador” (The Island That Lost the Equator)	Short story chronicle	<i>O Mundo Português</i> , Issue 125	Portugal
	1960, August	“A Comunidade de Estados Portugueses” (The Community of Portuguese States)	Opinion article	<i>Portugal Democrático</i> , Issue 39	Brazil
	1968, April	Various	Various	<i>O Tempo e o Modo</i> , Issue 59	Portugal
	1972, July 16	“Jorge de Sena Disse Aquilo que Disse” (Jorge de Sena Said What He Said)	Interview	<i>Notícias</i>	Mozambique
	1972, July 19	Interview with Jorge de Sena	Interview	Rádio Clube de Moçambique	Mozambique
AFTER APRIL 25, 1974	1974, December 28	“As Eleições” (The Elections)	Opinion article	<i>Diário Popular</i>	Portugal
	1976, September 9	Interview with Jorge de Sena	Interview	RTP	Portugal
	1977, May 6	Interview with Jorge de Sena	Interview	<i>Diário Popular</i>	Portugal
	1977, June 2	Interview with Jorge de Sena	Interview	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>	Portugal
	1978, June 16	<i>A Ideia e a Imagem, Especial Jorge de Sena</i> (The Idea and the Image, Jorge de Sena Special)	Television magazine	RTP	Portugal
	2005	<i>O Escritor Prodigioso</i> (The Prodigious Writer)	Documentary	RTP	Portugal
	2009, September 12	“Póstuma Reconciliação com Jorge de Sena” (Posthumous Reconciliation With Jorge de Sena)	News article	<i>Diário de Notícias</i>	Portugal
	2018, October 11	“A Liberdade na Vida e Obra de Jorge de Sena” (Freedom in the Life and Work of Jorge de Sena)	Essay	Comunidade Cultura e Arte	Portugal
	2019, November 2 to 9	<i>Especial Jorge de Sena: O Século de um Intelectual Indispensável</i> (Jorge de Sena Special: The Century of an Indispensable Intellectual)	Eight articles and essays	<i>Público</i>	Portugal

Table 1. Mapping of the content analysed in the media for this research

Since Sena championed freedom of thought throughout his intellectual journey and was a self-declared opponent of the Portuguese dictatorial regime, a stance he encapsulates in the verses “in understanding others, in daring/to fight, to judge, to penetrate/recesses of love where you are impotent”, we also compared the results across two distinct periods: before and after April 25, 1974.

It is important to note that this work is not intended as a comprehensive or detailed bibliographical review of Sena's views on freedom. As Picchio (2012) points out, this is an issue in Sena's work that takes on complex and varied contours expressed through multiple media that a broader study would need to fully define. This article aims to highlight key moments in an intellectual trajectory where freedom of thought was both present and central. In this regard, it is also crucial to emphasise the deep connection between Sena's thought and poetry, as evidenced in his lines from the poem "Quem a Tem" (Those Who Have It), written in 1956 while he was still in Portugal: "I will not die without knowing/the colour of freedom" (Sena, 1958/2023, lines 1–2).

2. JORGE DE SENA AND THE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING (INTER)CULTURAL COMMUNITY IN THE MEDIA UNDER THE DICTATORIAL REGIME

From a very young age, Sena demonstrated a keen interest in the culture of the Portuguese colonial territories. This interest was rooted in his early experiences of contact with those territories and Brazil. According to Lourenço (1987), Sena

joined the Naval School at the age of 17 (...). First in his class, on October 2 1937, he set sail on the school ship Sagres (...) — a voyage that lasted until February of the following year, providing him with his first contact with Africa (Cape Verde, São Tomé, Angola), Brazil, and the Canary Islands, and, above all, with the sea. (p. 7)

By analysing the early years of Sena's intellectual journey, it is possible to highlight his interest in the colonies of the time. His first critical review, focused on works by African poets or poets connected to Africa, was published in 1942 in Issue 1 of the journal *Aventura* (Macedo & Moreira, 2024). This was followed by the extent to which the colonial experience and imagery inspired him to write short story chronicles³ such as "Porto Grande (S. Vicente de Cabo Verde)", first published in Issue 98 of *O Mundo Português* in February 1942, and "A Ilha que Perdeu o Equador", about São Tomé and Príncipe, which was published in Issue 125 of the same periodical in May 1944⁴.

From an early stage, Sena proved to be an intellectual with extensive cultural knowledge, remarkable erudition, and an exceptional ability to stay abreast of publishing developments. Thus, as Macedo and Moreira (2024) observe, Sena's engagement in critical literary reviews appears a natural choice, given that this textual genre focuses on literary contemporaneity, enabling him to merge an informative approach with a hermeneutic perspective. The authors further highlight that this genre was relatively shielded from censorship, which was particularly active at the time, thereby allowing Sena to exercise his freedom of thought.

³ A name assigned to them by Macedo and Moreira (2024), reflecting their hybridity between the short story and the travel chronicle.

⁴ These narratives were combined with "Atlântico" (Atlantic) written in 1960, forming a triptych titled "Duas Medalhas Imperiais, com Atlântico" (Two Imperial Medals, With Atlantic), included in the collection *Andanças do Demónio* (Wanderings of the Demon), published the same year.

Sena's literary criticism debut involved reviews of *Poemas de África* (Poems From Africa) by António de Navarro and *Ambiente* (Atmosphere) by Cape Verdean author Jorge Barbosa. In his review of *Poemas de África*, Sena commends the author's originality, underscoring the need for a renewed perspective on Africa, devoid of the instrumentalisation characteristic of the prevailing literary canon.

Navarro is a poet who offers us the world, not through the poetic understanding of its existence, but through the comprehension of an inner poetic expression shaped by his existence in the world (...). However, this book is not merely the work of an admirable poet. These are "poems from Africa". And has Africa ever been treated poetically in our context? (p. XLVII)

Sena also highlights the theme of freedom, asserting that the author of *Poemas de África* refuses to be imprisoned at a time of "fearful imprisonment within the freedom obtained" (p. XLVII).

Regarding *Ambiente* by Jorge Barbosa, Sena begins by affirming the validity of the title, stating that "the book indeed provides us with an atmosphere, and the author is identified with it in his poetry" (p. XLIX). He then confronts us with the existential condition of the intellectual in the colonies, a figure embodied by the Cape Verdean poet (Macedo & Moreira, 2024). Sena anticipates not only chronologically but also ontologically that Barbosa's belonging to the Cape Verdean milieu is not questioned, nor does it lead to rootlessness, but rather manifests itself through a conflict inherent to insularity. The literary critic resonates with the poet's aims, interpreting his *maladaptation* as a "protest of solidarity" with the people of his archipelago, unveiling the "mystery of coexistence", materialised in a lyrical response to the issue of colonial oppression: "His poetry draws closer to the Cape Verdean people and (...) points out, one by one, the prisoners of a dry land" (p. XLIX).

The chronicle stories about the Portuguese island colonies in Africa should be discussed due to their denunciatory nature. It is no coincidence that, in the first story, Porto Grande (S. Vicente de Cabo Verde), Sena describes his arrival and departure from this location, removing any mystery about what occurred *in medias res*. Upon arriving in this territory, the narrator occupies a privileged position of observation, perched at the top of the mast, a panoramic vantage point where he experiences a sense of freedom. When departing, there is a fleeting yet striking and significant reference to the encounter between two ethnic groups, leaving the outcome suspended: "on the quayside, on the last day, a Creole and frail woman with a child on her lap, whose blonde hair shone from a ship that had come from the North, said to me – But take it, take it... – and stretched out those blue eyes to me in a ragged, dark little body" (Sena, 1942/1960, p. 196). Sena's prose conveys a restrained but moving sympathy for the desperation of that mother, who embodies the struggles of the Cape Verdean people, a plight the author subtly denounces between the lines.

In the short story "A Ilha que Perdeu o Equador", the atmosphere grows progressively denser, becoming increasingly oppressive. The visit to São Tomé lasts only a day,

but the intensity of the narrative heightens due to its testimonial tone. Nature is both overwhelming and inhospitable. There is a stark contrast between São Tomé as the land once imagined in childhood atlases — a place of freedom — and the metaphorical image of the “sunless dawn” that marks the moment of arrival.

These texts from the early 1940s demonstrate Sena’s independent position and his anti-colonial denunciation. He was an intellectual who distanced himself from trends and refused to align with any literary movements or political ideologies. This posture, which persisted until his exile in Brazil in 1959, as Lourenço (1998) suggests:

indeed, Jorge de Sena was not alone. (...) For those who, without being apolitical, wished to remain independent of any party, the situation was agonising: either they collaborated with Ferro’s “politics of the spirit”, or they endured the spirit of Stalinist politics. That was the situation Jorge de Sena faced until he went into exile in Brazil in August 1959. (pp. 140–142).

In fact, Sena voluntarily went into exile in Brazil to escape the political persecution he would have faced after his involvement in a failed coup attempt. Not by design, he had written, in the 1956 poem above, the lines: “I cannot be other than/of this land of my birth/while belonging to the world” (Sena, 1958/2023, lines 3–5). It was in exile that he experienced his first years of freedom in adulthood, which enabled him to broaden his horizons and professionally reinvent himself, exchanging engineering for a career in teaching literature and ultimately earning a doctorate in Literature.

During these six years, his intellectual activity intensified, coinciding with a strengthening of his civic engagement as an opponent of the Estado Novo regime. In addition to being a member of the board of the Portuguese Democratic Unity until 1961, he also contributed to the editorial board of the newspaper *Portugal Democrático* until 1962, where he regularly published articles on political and cultural thought. It was precisely during this time that Sena, drawing on his previous career and his experience of cultural immersion in Brazil, began to develop a structured approach to the concept he referred to as the “Luso-Brazilian community”⁵.

According to Silva (2011), *Portugal Democrático* published a total of 37 texts by Sena, which “reflect the multiple forms of political intervention considered by the writer” (para. 3). However, a more contextualised and in-depth interpretation of these texts reveals that, in addition to their political stance opposing the Estado Novo and colonialism, they also convey a cultural dimension rooted in what Sena referred to as “Luso-Brazilian cultural and linguistic unity”. Of particular note is “A Comunidade de Estados Portugueses”, published in Issue 39 in August 1960. Sena had begun writing this piece while still in Portugal, but it had been further developed during his time in Brazil. Arguing that it was essential to resolve the colonial tensions threatening Portugal’s future and that of “the territories that depend on our homeland”, he called on the democratic opposition to undertake this task. He emphasised that the restitution of freedoms and guarantees was

⁵ In the present day, with the necessary post-colonial re-contextualisation and updating, we should consider it as PS(I)CC.

an essential condition to avert an “incalculable disaster” (Sena, 1960/2011, p. 95). In his portrayal of Portugal at the time and its political leaders, the thinker argues that Salazar’s removal would not be sufficient for the country to revert to progress, nor would the dismantling of the totalitarian state’s mechanisms of repression suffice for the various social, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups across the Portuguese territories to achieve a fraternal understanding. Instead, it would be necessary to rethink the entire system that forcibly united these peoples and propose new solutions. Sena proceeds to scathingly criticise the imperial mythology propagated as a strategy to legitimise Salazar’s power and justifies the impossibility of “keeping the immense Portuguese world united and submissive” (Sena, 1960/2011, p. 96) through colonialist paternalism or by military force. In his view, the Portuguese Army, rather than preparing for a lost war, should take on the mission of ensuring “within a totally democratic structure, the very urgent formation of the Community of Portuguese States” (Sena, 1960/2011, p. 97). After outlining nine points for the political organisation of this community of sovereign states, Sena proposed its constitutional foundations, including in Article 5.º the election of a president of the Community by universal and direct suffrage in all the countries represented. Notably, Article 18.º, which granted participating countries the right to secede and to unite with others thereafter, safeguarded conditions that would promote “the realisation of the Luso-Brazilian Community”, a concept Sena consistently framed within the cultural matrix of his thought. The author concludes the text by reaffirming the freedom, dignity, and representativeness of all peoples within the “Comunidade de Estados Portugueses”, underscoring the need to anticipate the future in light of the new directions of the world. This would allow Portugal, “on the brink of disaster”, to rise again “not for what it was or thinks it is, but for what it really is and can become” (Sena, 1960/2011, p. 104).

In 1965, Sena travelled with his family to the United States to teach at the University of Wisconsin, fearing the consequences of the 1964 military coup in Brazil. This transition presented him with ambivalence: the opportunity to teach and disseminate Portuguese-Brazilian culture in the United States was counterbalanced by the restriction of his activities to the academic world and the emigration circle. He sought to compensate for this through extensive correspondence with fellow Portuguese and Brazilian intellectuals. According to Sá (2019), it was this very correspondence that allowed him to make his voice heard in Portuguese literary circles. Perhaps this is also why, in April 1968, *O Tempo e o Modo – Revista de Pensamento e Ação* took the risk of bringing him to light in its Issue 59, acknowledging in the “Nota de Abertura” (Opening Note) that the homage paid by those who considered it a privilege to be Sena’s contemporaries was worth the resulting unpopularity they might face. In that issue, which featured Sena on the cover, more than 100 pages were dedicated to him, including the aforementioned “Nota de Abertura”, articles and essays by António Ramos Rosa, Luís Francisco Rebelo, Eduardo Lourenço, and João Rui de Sousa, unpublished poems by the author — including “Em Creta com o Minotauro” (In Crete With the Minotaur) — a piece with fragments from the then unpublished novel *Sinais de Fogo* (Signs of Fire), a study with a survey of 39 poets (answered by 23) on Sena’s place in Portuguese literature and culture, and an in-depth interview with the honoured author.

All the pieces explore Sena's freedom of thought, but only the interview evidences his ideas about the PS(I)CC. Sena refers to the lack of international interest in Portuguese-language literature as "the painful legacy of a language trapped in the silence of itself, and now emerging from it above all because of the international importance of Brazil" (Sena, 1968, p. 427), and goes on to suggest that Portuguese and Brazilian literatures are "within one culture and one language" (p. 427).

In 1970, as a full professor, he moved to the University of California, Santa Barbara, where he held management positions in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Comparative Literature Programme. In 1972, the year marking the fourth centenary of the first publication of *Os Lusíadas*, he received several invitations to speak at international conferences. This led to an extended working trip across various countries, culminating in a stay in Mozambique during three weeks in July, followed by a brief visit to Angola. His arrival in Mozambique, where the poetry magazine *Caliban*, with which Sena collaborated, had just been banned by the Colonial Administration, coincided precisely with the official commemorations of the fourth centenary of the first publication of Camões' epic in that colony, taking place under the auspices of the General-Governor. Invited by the Coimbra Alumni Association, Sena took part in an alternative programme to these commemorations (Mendonça, 2024), giving four lectures in Lourenço Marques and one in Beira, and participating in a poetry soiree in what, according to Cunha et al. (2018), was a true anti-regime event. During his time in Mozambique, two of the interviews he gave to the media stand out: the first was published in the daily newspaper *Notícias* on July 16; the second was recorded by Rádio Clube de Moçambique three days later but was censored before it could be broadcast.

In *Notícias*, he drew attention to "a problem to be solved first and foremost" (p. 10). Despite the fact that the Portuguese language was, at the time, one of the six most widely spoken in the world and was expected to be in the top four by the end of the 20th century, "the magnitude and weight of our language are largely ignored in the world" (p. 10). This problem had its root causes in aspects that the professor from Santa Bárbara, with his natural freedom of thought, did not shy away from listing in a disruptive way. Stating that "many people in Portugal are still not convinced [that] languages belong to those who speak them and those who write them — not to grammarians" (p. 10), Sena seeks to launch a debate on the appropriation of the "cultured norm" of the Portuguese language by a culturally centralist Portugal.

To Rádio Clube de Moçambique, Sena suggests that the fact that Portugal and Brazil had turned their backs on each other culturally and that the cultural production of the then colonies was not recognised in the metropole were also causes for the "culture of the language" to remain in the shadows internationally. In his view, these circumstances did not preclude, for instance, the organisation of anthologies featuring writers and poets from all Portuguese-speaking regions, the recognition of Rui Knopfli, born and residing in Mozambique, as one of the greatest Portuguese-language poets of his time, or the acknowledgement of Eugénio Lisboa, also born and living in Mozambique, as one of the finest literary critics of his generation. Throughout the interview, Sena employs

metaphors and rhetorical techniques to highlight what he saw as remedies for such deep-rooted issues: demythologising the historical past by re-establishing the “culture of language” on a foundation of scientifically grounded history, reinterpreting Camões through his literary value to move beyond the manipulated readings that focused on the glorification of Portuguese overseas expansion, and fighting both Portuguese and Brazilian cultural nationalisms to ensure the realisation of the PS(I)CC.

3. JORGE DE SENA AND THE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING (INTER)CULTURAL COMMUNITY IN THE MEDIA WITHIN A DEMOCRATIC CONTEXT

After the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974, and following 15 years of exile, Sena, the anti-fascist critic and *persona non grata* under the autocratic Estado Novo regime and a staunch advocate for the self-determination of peoples oppressed by Portuguese colonialism, longed for a role in the construction of democracy. He yearned to finally experience the “colour of freedom” in his country, as expressed in the conclusion of the 1956 poem above: “but even though they hide everything/and would have me blind and dumb/I shall not die without knowing/the colour of freedom” (Sena, 1958/2023, lines 11–14). According to Picchio (1998), the verses of this poem represent, from the outset, an “enlightening light (...) following the isotopy of the search for freedom, that colour of freedom which, come what may, would not fail to hurt and disappoint him, albeit amid inevitable joys” (para. 19).

Mécia de Sena — the author’s wife and a key figure in the dissemination and editorial promotion of his work — stated that Sena had not anticipated the revolution of April 25, 1974. However, “after it occurred, he expected to be asked to help, but realised that there was no room for him” (Pontes, 2005, 00:62:00). Mécia further asserts that Sena was overwhelmed by disillusionment, as he waited for years to return to the country, only to be excluded once again.

In an opinion article titled “As Eleições”, published in *Diário Popular* on December 28, 1974, Sena defended the upcoming elections for the Constituent Assembly (scheduled for April 25, 1975) as a crucial moment to legitimise and institutionalise the revolution and pluralist democracy, passionately advocating for its values, with freedom being a central one. To this end, Sena argued that the Armed Forces Movement⁶ and its programme were vital to this ongoing democratic process, although he cautioned against the dangers of an excessive appropriation of this programme. Sena also condemned those who, under the guise of democracy, sought to exploit it by advocating a return to authoritarian governments. Furthermore, he expressed concern about individuals within the AFM who did not fully trust in democracy, positioning himself alongside those both inside and outside the movement who were fighting for it, for all political freedoms, for decolonisation, and for justice.

In this article, Sena calls for the participation of the people and underscores the importance of expressing one’s views through voting, acknowledging that the right wing

⁶ Henceforth AFM.

can be conservative without being reactionary, just as not all of the progressive left wing is communist. Sena rejects the notion of the left and the right wings as homogeneous, impermeable blocks, highlighting instead the diversity within each of them.

In an interview with RTP1 on September 9, 1976⁷, the writer told journalist Joaquim Furtado that, when the April Revolution took place, he was among those who delivered “the speech of the occasion” (00:02:18) to the Portuguese community living in California, explaining what was happening in Portugal. He went on to explain why he did not return after the revolution: “I didn’t come because nobody called me; secondly, because I have a permanent position [in the United States, as a full professor]; and thirdly, because I wouldn’t ask anyone” (00:07:03). Sena clarified that during his first visit to Portugal after the revolution, in July 1974, he deliberately refrained from visiting friends in the new government “to make it clear that I wasn’t coming to Portugal to rock the boat” (00:07:36). In this critical tone, Sena reinforces his free and independent spirit, tinged with bitterness, in a discursive style typical of him: transparency, freedom of thought, and a sense of injustice at the insufficient recognition of his artistic and intellectual merit, despite his self-taught journey: that of the engineer who became a poet.

On May 6, 1977, during an interview with João Alves Costa for the *Diário Popular* in Lisbon, Sena, on his way to Italy to receive the Poetry Prize in Catania, took the opportunity to stress that the distinction was awarded by a jury that recognised his merits, rather than being the result of his participation in a competition. He clarified that he had only entered a literary competition once to highlight his stance as an opponent of the Estado Novo. When João Alves Costa asked how he felt about the international honour he had received, Sena unapologetically responded as was typical of him: “to a certain extent, it serves as a reward for the national honours that I neither have nor seek” (p. 28).

Regarding the possibility of settling in Portugal, Sena said: “that is not my concern, and I no longer believe — in fact, I have never believed — that Portugal would ever consider it” (p. 28). In this piece, the writer explains why he accepted the Commendation of the Order of Prince Henry the Navigator, awarded by the President of the Republic: “by accepting the Commendation of the Order of Prince Henry, I expressed my solidarity with the other emigrants distinguished alongside me” (p. 28). This position, which aligns him with those who, like him, were emigrants, coexists with a certain regret at never having been invited by official entities to return to Portugal. It also resonates with the discourse found in the interview given to *Diário de Notícias* on June 2, 1977, conducted by Manuel Poppe. The journalist pointedly remarks that Sena was living outside Portugal and employed by a foreign university. Sena argues that intellectual and ideological independence often carries the risk of exclusion and that the price of this freedom is being denigrated and, consequently, condemned to oblivion and invisibility.

There is one thing that is unforgivable in Portugal, and that is total independence. The price of independence in Portugal is extremely high. In Portugal,

⁷ The writer stopped in Portugal on his way to Italy to take part as a guest in an international writers’ congress in Grado, in 1976.

one has to belong to some group, whether it's a major political party or a name-based faction. If you don't belong to any of these, you're lost. (Sena, 1977, para. 1)

In this testimony, we also see how Sena viewed poetry and literature as forms of expressing his freedom since, for him, these discourses were socially and politically committed, even if they did not imply a definite party stance.

One of Sena's last public speeches in Portugal took place on June 10, 1977, during the celebrations of the Day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese Communities in the city of Guarda, at the invitation of the then President of the Republic, General Ramalho Eanes. In his famous "Guarda Speech", he highlighted the Portuguese language as "one of the six great languages of the world", emphasising that Camões was the language's greatest poet and one of the greatest ever, even though the rest of the world was unaware of it. This was a clear reference to the lack of recognition of the significance of "Portuguese language culture" on the global stage. Further on, he mentioned freedom as a key concept in both his personal life and his work. He then went on to discuss and praise the diversity of Portuguese communities around the world, denouncing not only Lisbon's old centralism but also the historically and psychoanalytically explainable lack of a framework for the Portuguese people to deal with freedom itself. Sena suggested that it is in Camões — and in understanding *Os Lusíadas* in all its breadth and depth — that we should seek to transform this situation and resolve the challenges in the process of building national identity in the post-25 April period. He argued that interpreting and accepting the contradictions of the country's history and of human nature itself, as Camões did in his work, must be done with a sense of freedom and justice. It should be noted that Sena's public speech received some coverage in the national media⁸, although it was overshadowed by the speeches of politicians during the same commemorations. In the local press, specifically in *Jornal da Guarda*, there was no mention of Sena's presence or his speech in the coverage of the June 10 celebrations in the city.

4. POSTHUMOUS TRIBUTES AND THE RITUALISATION OF MEMORY

Sena passed away a year after delivering that speech, in California, United States, without receiving due recognition for his work and without reconciling with the country that had proscribed him. Vieira (2020) observes that, on June 4, 1978, the Portuguese press could not ignore his passing: "Jorge de Sena's death was noisy" (p. 69) — making front-page headlines, inspiring editorials, leading television news bulletins, and prompting a special programme on RTP. Analysing this coverage, Vieira notes that the media portrayed a narrative suggesting that the country had not distanced itself from Sena, as "at least the intellectual and political elite recognised by the newspapers and represented in the press were unanimous in their praise of the poet's work and the significance of Sena's public engagement" (p. 82). Nonetheless, "this does not diminish the legitimacy of

⁸ *Diário de Notícias* June 13, 1977.

the sense of injustice regarding the critical silence surrounding Jorge de Sena's work, nor does it lessen the 'heartache' for the homeland that his friends speak of" (p. 82).

An analysis of the special magazine programme *A Ideia e a Imagem*, broadcast by RTP on June 16, highlights the focus on his "difficult life" while his genius was acknowledged by figures such as Fernando Guimarães, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, and Agustina Bessa Luís. However, his extensive and diverse intellectual output is described by several as little read or known. Óscar Lopes, his brother-in-law, chooses to focus more on personal aspects of Sena's career, highlighting his exceptional abilities and the contradictions in his personality, ultimately concluding that the celebrated figure was much more talked about than truly understood. In the second part of the programme, Álvaro Manuel Machado, its creator, observes that the essayistic dimension of Sena's work was largely unknown and warranted further study for a better understanding of his intellectual legacy.

In 2005, RTP aired the documentary *O Escritor Prodigioso* by Joana Pontes, which weaves a narrative that recovers Sena's life and work. Biography, personality traits, and modes of poetic production are evoked through archival footage and testimonies from people who were close to him, such as Fernando Lemos, Hélder Macedo, Eduardo Lourenço, and João Bénard da Costa.

In September 2009, the writer's remains were transferred from the United States to the Prazeres Cemetery in Lisbon. Regarding this event, *Diário de Notícias* reported that both Eduardo Lourenço and the then Minister of Culture, José Pinto Ribeiro, referred to it as "an act of reparation and reconciliation" that ended "his condition as an exile from our country" ("Póstuma Reconciliação com Jorge de Sena", 2009, para. 2). The article also suggested that Sena's return to Portugal would foster renewed interest in his legacy: the Editora Guimarães would be reissuing his complete works, following José Saramago's remark on "the oblivion that had befallen the writer, particularly among younger generations" ("Póstuma Reconciliação com Jorge de Sena", 2009, para. 7).

The article published in 2018 on the Comunidade Cultura e Arte website, "Liberdade na Vida e Obra de Jorge de Sena", emphasises that the author, with "a certain revolutionary spirit, opposing the amorphous and repressive structures of the Estado Novo (...), elevates the phenomenon, the occurrence, and the impact of freedom to the pinnacle of his life and work" (para. 1).

However, in 2019, the centenary of Sena's birth, the absence of media attention to his life and work seemed particularly odd. In November, *Público* newspaper dedicated a *Special Issue* to him, featuring eight articles and essays⁹: Jorge de Sena: *O Século de um Intelectual Indispensável*. In his opening text on November 2, "Jorge de Sena: O Gigante Indigesto da Cultura Portuguesa" (Jorge de Sena: The Unpalatable Giant of Portuguese Culture), journalist Luís Miguel Queirós (2019) highlights this silence in both the public media sphere and in academia.

⁹ For this analysis, we considered only the articles published between November 2 and 9, 2019, as other articles from 2020 and 2021 were later associated with the main page of this Special Issue, featuring the name of Jorge de Sena.

Jorge de Sena was born exactly one hundred years ago, on November 2, 1919. Judging by the little visibility his centenary celebrations have received so far — if any celebrations can even be said to have taken place — it seems that his friend Eduardo Lourenço may have been premature when, in April 1968, he predicted in the magazine *O Tempo e o Modo*: “And the time is near, or has already arrived when the neglected figure of our literature will receive the belated flowers of admiration, with double the reward”. (Queirós, 2019, p. 2)

In this article, Queirós (2019) argues that “the fierce and profoundly human Minotaur of Portuguese literature remains untamed” (p. 2), suggesting that, despite the numerous academic studies on his work, “the polyhedral and monumental work has yet to find a reconciled global interpretation and the undisputed position it holds in 20th-century Portuguese culture” (p. 2).

The remaining articles in this *Special Issue* address various facets of the author. “O Poeta em Sena” (The Poet in Sena) praises the “dominant role that poetic creation played in his entire body of work” characterised by his “extreme (sometimes excessive) love for humanity and its dignity” (Frias, 2019, para. 5). “O Poeta Não É um Fingidor” (The Poet Is Not a Pretender) asserts that Sena has the “determination to explore the new world introduced by Pessoa” (Martins, 2019, para. 5), concluding that he was the critic who most contributed to the understanding of this figure of Portuguese modernism. “Um ‘Realismo que Não Recua’: A Ficção de Jorge de Sena” (A “Realism that Does Not Retreat”: The Fiction of Jorge de Sena) highlights the intellectual “in his almost boundless excess” (Pereira, 2019, para. 1), depicting Sena as a poet who couldn’t resist prose fiction, which was primarily testimonial in nature. In “O Crítico Prodigioso” (The Prodigious Critic), Meirim (2019) explores the breadth of Sena’s critical work, in which “it is possible to recognise the persistent practice of (...) ‘elucidating’, ‘correcting’, ‘disproving’ and ‘analysing’ (...) [because] Sena spoke about everything, everyone, and in the manner he felt was right” (para. 1). “Jorge de Sena, Antologista” (Jorge de Sena, Anthologist) also highlights “the silence surrounding Jorge de Sena throughout this centenary of his birth” (Vasconcelos, 2019, para. 2), recalling that the author’s extensive *corpus* was partly dedicated to denouncing the policies of the Estado Novo and was always guided by the advocacy of freedom of thought. “Jorge de Sena e o Brasil” (Jorge de Sena and Brazil) examines the scholar’s complex but productive relationship with Brazil, from which he proposed “action plans to foster closer ties between the two countries, combating (...) mutual prejudice and ignorance” (Silvestre, 2019, para. 8), validating his vision of the first steps towards the construction of the PS(I)CC. Finally, António Araújo’s “A Política em Sena” (Politics in Sena) highlights the contradictions in his personality and trajectory, in which a structured political thought was lacking, despite his declared anti-fascism and anti-colonialism, especially evident in his proposal “A Comunidade de Estados Portugueses”. In this text, Sena defended the self-determination of colonised peoples within a Commonwealth-style framework.

In 2001, the Jorge de Sena Chair and the Postgraduate Programme in Vernacular Languages at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro established the journal *Metamorfoses*, which is still published in his honour. Additionally, this university launched a pioneering initiative in 2010, led by Professor Gilda Santos and a group of personalities, combining scholarly interest with the goal of making Sena's work more accessible to the general public: the *Ler Jorge de Sena* project. This digital platform is dedicated to exploring the hermeneutics and heuristics of Sena's multifaceted oeuvre, extending beyond literature. *Ler Jorge de Sena* stands as one of the largest digital repositories dedicated to a Portuguese-language author, serving both as a valuable research resource and a platform for promoting the life and work of this "prodigious writer".

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research has aimed to shed light on the reasons why Sena's ideas on the PS(I)CC, a foundational aspect of his intellectual legacy, have remained obscured. By tracing his intellectual journey over time, including the posthumous reception of his work, the study mapped and analysed key media pieces authored by or about Sena. This approach tested the hypothesis that the media's treatment of the scholar contributed to the persistent invisibility of his thinking on the PS(I)CC.

Sena boldly exercised his freedom of thought openly and through direct speech, both in specialised press outlets and those opposed to the regime. He put forward proposals for building a democratic, post-imperial Portugal, realising its fullest potential through its language and culture, thereby contributing significantly to the formation of the PS(I)CC, envisioned as including other Portuguese-speaking countries and diasporic communities worldwide. His proposals emerged most clearly during his Brazilian exile but trace back to the early stages of his intellectual career, where colonial territories and their cultures already featured prominently in his critical writings. The significance of Sena's early literary criticism and his first African-themed short-story chronicles lies in the germination of an inclusive idea of freedom, anticipating what would later be framed as the PS(I)CC. Though he did not use this term in his early texts, he stressed the necessity of coexistence. However, this aspect of his thinking has received limited academic attention and even less media coverage. Media narratives about Sena tend to centre on his life story and the lack of recognition he endured rather than highlighting his visionary proposals grounded in intellectual freedom.

During the dictatorial period, paradoxically, Sena expressed his freedom of thought about the PS(I)CC most effectively in the media. Between 1974 and 1978, his media presence centred on Portugal's democratic reconstruction and his frustration at being unable to participate in it. After his death, media narratives shifted toward his personality, life story, or legacy, rarely addressing the substance of his thought.

With their framing mechanisms that highlight or suppress specific aspects, the media have functioned as agents of (in)visibility in the public discourse, constructing narratives about Sena that offer limited insight into his intellectual journey — and even less into his ideas on the PS(I)CC.

Sena was a traveller in search of freedom, much like Camões, the poet he celebrated through his writings. Both could have been stripped of everything except their freedom of thought and their love for a language and culture, which Sena envisioned as a united community.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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