



Alberto de Lacerda encounters with Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes

Born in 1928 in the Island of Mozambique, twenty years after Maria Helena Vieira da Silva, Alberto de Lacerda came to Lisbon in 1946 and settled in London in 1951. There he worked as a BBC announcer and journalist, promoting the poets Luís de Camões and Fernando Pessoa, among others. In the following years he travelled in Europe, and in 1959 to 1960 he visited Brazil on a reading and lecture tour. From 1967 to 1970 he taught Comparative Literature at the University of Texas, in Austin, specialising in Portuguese, French and Brazilian literature. He was appointed to Boston University, Massachusetts in 1972. From there, he also lectured at Columbia University, New York. He concluded his career in Boston, retiring as Professor Emeritus of Poetics. He then returned to London, his chosen city, where he had retained residence throughout his life. He died there in August 2007.

Despite his sense of privacy linked to a profound solitude, Alberto de Lacerda was the author of a remarkable body of poetry, having been considered one of the best poets of his generation. This was the post-war generation that includes names such as Sophia de Mello Breyner, Jorge de Sena, António Ramos Rosa and David Mourão Ferreira. He is also remembered as a teacher, essayist, critic, linguist, music lover, artist, compulsive collector, and an extremely cultured man. His cultural interests and his option for exile were two fundamental points that united him with Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes, with whom he shared a sincere friendship from 1959 onwards. It was in London, through his colourful circle of friends, that Jean Hugo, great grandson of Victor Hugo, introduced him to French intellectual life and namely Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes. Alberto de Lacerda was based in London, but never took British nationality; Arpad and Vieira chose Paris, but they did become French citizens (in 1956) as Portugal refused to give Arpad Szenes Portuguese citizenship during the dictatorship. Although this

option for exile was common to all, Vieira da Silva and Alberto de Lacerda shared strong ties with Lisbon, revealing a need for freedom, access to culture and a cosmopolitan nature. Alberto de Lacerda is remembered as much for his belief in the things of the spirit, his enormous culture, his passion for music and the visual arts, dance, theatre and cinema, in addition to poetry and literature, as for his friendships which he nurtured with immense loyalty to the privileged few. Vieira da Silva (more than Arpad Szenes) was a very special friend. Generous with his friends, the poet defined friendship as a concrete thing, as Luís Amorim de Sousa, with whom he had a profound and special friendship and an enormous complicity, has testified. Despite their age difference, Luís Amorim de Sousa had also lived in Mozambique, and opted at an early age for London as his city of residence. There, in 1961, he met Alberto de Lacerda and always kept in very close contact. He has now inherited the poet's legacy, and is committed to preserving and disseminating Alberto de Lacerda's work, and to reveal the scope of his collection of books, records, works of art, documents, correspondence, photographs and diaries. Every day continues to present a surprise, a discovery out of the vast estate that was left to Luís Amorim de Sousa, and which the Mário Soares Foundation, in a very timely fashion, is helping to store, classify, unearth and place in order. It is a privilege for the Arpad Szenes-Vieira da Silva Foundation to reveal the close, discreet and private friendship that united the couple to Alberto de Lacerda. Here we find an exchange of letters of great tenderness and creative concerns, interspersed with photographs and drawings, silk screen prints, dedicated works of a personal scale and for this reason sometimes of small dimensions, albeit bursting with affection. We hope to contribute to a better understanding of this mysterious personality and of the friendship that he shared with Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes.

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