

**Mary L. Daniel**, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

# Symbolism and Synchronicity: José Saramago's *Jangada de Pedra*

Since time immemorial, the Portuguese have traveled, as if by inherent compulsion. They have opened new intercontinental routes "por mares nunca dantes navegados" and been the agents of international commerce and cultural interchange during their Golden Age of navigation. Their fascination with the world "out there" has been balanced by their delight in rediscovering "the world at home," as Almeida Garrett's *Viagens na minha terra* (1843) so gently reminds us. But what of the Portugal of the twentieth century? Are there any new worlds to explore or facets of Lusitania to rediscover? José Rodrigues Miguéis, in his short story "Viagens na nossa terra" (*Léah*, 1958), has humoristically reduced patriotic national tourism to a comedy of errors through the misadventure-filled travelogue of five *lisboetas* on a day tour of their *pátria bem amada*. His description of the arrival of the tourists at a promontory from which they have their first full view of the sea is given through the words of Artur, the "fifth wheel" of the group:

E ao fundo o mar. Ah, o MAR! Foi um rito de júbilo dilacerante, que assustou as aves e fez calar os ralos: "O Mar! Lá está o Mar! Olha o Mar!" Sentimo-nos de repente uma raça marítima, uma espécie de vocação anfíbia até ali então recessiva. E como eu nada dissesse, absorvido, extasiado precisamente na contemplação daquele Mar, a Alzirinha da Fonseca, acotovelando-me nas costelas com uma espécie de rancor lírico mal disfarçado, muito próprio da amizade que há muito nos une, perguntou se eu então *não via* o Mar, se não me interessava pelo Mar, pela Paisagem, pela Natureza, "seu mono"! Mas decerto que sim, nem eu faço outra coisa, balbuciei, despertando da minha quieta contemplação. E o Mar perdeu de repente todo o encanto (Miguéis 73).

It remains for novelist José Saramago (born 1922) to advance the fictional account of Portuguese voyages to new heights. In his *Memorial do Convento* (1982) we are carried back to the eighteenth century to witness the maiden flight of Father Bartolomeu de Gusmão's *passarola*, or primitive dirigible, "por ares nunca dantes navegados" in 1709. But it is in his *Jangada de Pedra* (1986) that we accompany the most daring voyage of all, for in this fanciful novel filled with geopolitical, socio-psychological, and philosophical implications, the entire Iberian Peninsula breaks loose from Europe and floats out to sea, with all Portuguese and Spaniards aboard!

Of his *Jangada de Pedra*, author Saramago has said the following in a December, 1988, interview with the *London Times* "Literary Supplement":

There have been times when this novelist, caught in the mesh of the fiction he was weaving, began to imagine himself being transported on that extraordinary stone raft into which he had transformed the Iberian Peninsula, floating over the Atlantic Ocean and heading for the South and Utopia. The singular nature of the allegory was transparent: although preserving some of the same motives as an ordinary emigrant who departs for other shores to seek his fortune, there prevailed, in my case, a definitive and substantial difference, in so far as I took with me in this unprecedented migration the whole of my native Portugal, and—without having sought permission from the Spaniards, therefore without any authority or mandate—Spain itself. Now, filled by these imaginings of mine, I observed that they brought no feelings of regret, of melancholy, of distress bordering on panic or any of the nostalgia summed up by that inevitable Portuguese word: *saudade*. The reasons will soon become clear. To all appearances, I was certainly leaving Europe behind for ever more, but the essential fabric of the immense craft transporting me continued to nourish the roots of my own identity and of my collective heritage. I found no reason, therefore, to mourn my lost treasure.... I hereby testify that I would be prepared to bring my wandering raft back from sea after having learned something during the voyage, if Europe would acknowledge that she is incomplete without the Iberian Peninsula (*TLS* 1370).

The grand symbol of *A Jangada de Pedra* is that of the journey, whether by land or sea (since both comprise elements of the novel). The jour-

ney is both that of emigration and of quest, of going *from* and going *to*, and may be read in a variety of ways in light of the dubious economic benefits which may or may not accrue to the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe by the adherence of Spain and Portugal to the European Common Market in the year 1992. Perhaps absence does in fact make the heart grow fonder, as might be suggested by the episode in which the youth of all the other European nations rebel against the *status quo* of their unimaginative cultures and proclaim in solidarity with the departed countries of Portugal and Spain: "Nós também somos ibéricos!"

In simultaneous journeys of unification and decentralization, groups and individuals travel in pursuit of various ends, whether known or unknown, while the great stone raft on which they ride—the Iberian Peninsula itself—gently floats out to sea, leaving behind the mass of Europe and, of course, the Rock of Gibraltar, since that small patch of land pertains to England and would not be expected to accompany Spain on its voyage! On the grand overall journey of the *jangada de pedra*, a westerly direction is initially perceived, bringing general fear to the Azores, which are directly in the path of the massive stone ship. Fortunately, however, the Peninsula changes course at a right angle at the last minute and heads toward the general area of Greenland and Iceland; finally, when the altered latitude is beginning to show its effect on the climate of the Peninsula and the heads of state of Canada and the United States ponder how their nations will receive millions of new Mediterranean immigrants should Portugal and Spain come ashore on the Atlantic seaboard, another change of route is experienced and the stone raft eases down the central Atlantic between Africa and South America. Will it replace the lost Atlantis on future maps of the world? We do not know.

A lonely seaman in his small sailing craft finds a new lease on life after the wind fails and he runs out of potable water. On the horizon looms, not a lifeboat but the entire Iberian Peninsula, and the lone sailor paddles gratefully into the estuary of the Tagus River in Lisbon, which has come to rescue him! Between the overarching voyage of the great stone raft and the microscopic case of this lone sailor, we find the interwoven journeys of a nucleus of five individuals whose paths cross within the national boundaries of Spain and Portugal to form the texture of what may be called the plot of the novel, if indeed there be a plot. But the five individuals in question—three men and two women, including four Portuguese and one Spaniard—have substance not so much because of their personal qualities, well-roundedness or development in the course of the novel (since by all these accounts they fail the test) as because of their symbolism individually and the overarching philosophical and metaphysical implications of their interaction as an evolving unit within a fluid, constantly changing external context. Let us approach each of the five protagonists individually in the order in which they appear in the novel, observing the symbols which distinguish or accompany them and relate them eventually to each other and to the grand scheme of the separation of the Iberian Peninsula from the rest of Europe and its quest for its fluctuating, unknown destiny as a binational block alone on the open sea with an entirely radical "sense of place."

The omniscient third-person narrative voice announces at the beginning of the novel that Joana Carda, residing somewhere in Portugal (presumably the north) has casually scratched a line in the dirt with an elm twig (*uma vara de negrilho*). At the same moment, it would seem, a certain Joaquim Sassa, walking along a beach in northern Portugal, throws a large flat rock into the sea; after skipping once on the surface of the water, it sinks, leaving behind it concentric circles moving progressively outward. A country schoolteacher in central Portugal, José Anaiço, suddenly discovers that an increasingly large flock of starlings seems to be accompanying him wherever he goes. Somewhere near the border of Portugal and Galicia, a certain Maria Guavaira begins to unravel a blue wool sock, winding the wool into a ball. In southern Spain, a pharmacist by the name of Pedro Orce rises from his chair to feel the earth trembling under his feet, while along the Pyrennean border between Spain and France all the dogs have begun to bark even though their breed is normally barkless. As a fine crack develops along the Pyrennees between the two countries, one of the dogs jumps from the French to the Spanish side, where he will continue through the remainder of the book with various names (among them *Ardent* and *Constante*). Joaquim Sassa hears on his transistor radio about Pedro Orce's experience with the trembling earth and sets out in his car, named Dois-Cavalos, to find him, for he calculates that the case occurred precisely when he tossed the stone into the ocean. Along the way south, in Ribatejo, Joaquim crosses paths with José Anaiço and his horde of starlings, and the two travel

together to search out Pedro Orce and "compare notes." Once the three have combined forces, they return to Portugal with the intent of traveling together to the north to view the spot where the Peninsula recently separated from Europe, after they join a small wave of tourists viewing the Rock of Gibraltar, now increasingly distant from Spain. All three men are on a kind of summer holiday, and an increasing comaraderie develops among them; naturally, the flock of starlings overhead serves as faithful escort, and cheap luxury hotel rooms are available throughout southern Portugal and Spain since the rich Europeans have all fled back to "Europe" so as not to get caught permanently on the Iberian Peninsula! Once in Lisbon, the three friends are hounded by newspaper reporters and called to give detailed reports to the police of their unique experiences. Soon Joana Carda turns up at the hotel, elm wand in hand, searching for José Anaiço to compare notes on the coincidence of the furrow she had scratched in the soil of northern Portugal (which simply does not disappear) and the appearance of the flock of starlings overhead in Ribatejo. Oddly enough, no sooner has Joana Carda made the acquaintance of José Anaiço than his "guardian angel" starlings wheel as a flock and head south, never to reappear. Joana convinces the "three musketeers" to accompany her to see for themselves that what she has said is true, so off go the four in Dois-Cavalos.

Unlike the tourists of José Rodrigues Miguéis's story, Joana's new friends enjoy a successful trip through Portugal, made even more pleasurable for José Anaiço by a nascent romance with the lady of the *vara de negrilho*. After witnessing the permanent furrow in the earth and trying unsuccessfully to reproduce the phenomenon themselves, all four travelers are startled by the approach of an apparently stray dog with a bit of blue wool hanging from his mouth. His insistence in staying with them convinces them to follow him, driving slowly in Joaquim's car, and old Pedro Orce strikes up an affectionate relationship with the canine guide, who eventually leads them to Maria Guavaira's door. As the unexpected carload of tourists is accommodated by Maria's hospitality, experiences are once again exchanged and plans made to incorporate Maria into the touring group, which is now about to outgrow Dois-Cavalos. Since the car seems about to suffer demise anyway, the five travelers and their dog acquire a sort of covered wagon drawn by one and, eventually, two horses: a new version of Dois-Cavalos! Romance blossoms between Maria Guavaira and Joaquim Sassa as the trip progresses northward to view the point of cleavage between Iberia and Europe, the latter now far distant geographically; the tourists then return south, and both Joana Carda and Maria Guavaira discover they are pregnant. Pedro Orce's health worsens and he dies peacefully, lying on the good earth, which has just ceased to tremble. His faithful canine companion howls briefly, then returns to his customary silence. Plans are made to carry the body back to Pedro's birthplace for burial, and fellow Spaniard Roque Lozano, who with his donkey Platero has crossed paths twice with the tourists, accompanies the cortege to southern Spain. News items received by the group reveal that the Peninsula has just stopped moving and that all the fertile women in Portugal and Spain are pregnant. The friends dig Pedro Orce's grave, and Joana Carda plants her elm wand at his head.... Perhaps it will bud out next year.

Curiosity is aroused among the five protagonists of *A Jangada de Pedra* by their respective surnames, all uncommon. Joaquim Sassa explains that he has discovered that a *sassa* is a tree of the Nubian desert. Joana Carda's ancestral name was *Cardo*, but a widowed matriarch's powerful presence resulted in the gender shift generations before Joana's time. José Anaiço's surname is the result of a simple transposition in country speech of an original *Inácio*, while Pedro Orce's reflects his birthplace. Maria Guavaira explains that her name is an original and that it came to her mother in a dream; though this explanation seems to convince her hearers, it may be expected that readers of the novel will link Maria's name literarily with the article of clothing that inspired Portugal's oldest recorded *cantiga de amor*:

No mundo non me sei parelha,
mentre me for como me vai,
ca já moiro por vós—e ai!
mia senhor branca e vermelha,
queredes que vos retraia
quando vos eu vi en saia!
Mau dia me levantei,
que vos enton non vi fea!

E, mia senhor, dês aquel dia', ai!
me foi a mi mui mal,
e vós, filha de don Paai
Moniz, e ben vos semela
d'haver eu por vós guarvaia,
pois eu, mia senhor, d'alfaia
nunca de vós houve nen hei
valia d'ua correa (Paio Soares de Taveirós, c. 1198).

Maria Guavaira's blue wool thread, unlike Ariadne's, seems to lead the other protagonists *into* the labyrinth rather than *out* of it. While Joana Carda forswears any magical powers to her elm wand, noting that it bears no resemblance to the magic wands of folkloric tales, there is an undeniable echo of Aeneas's descent into the underworld which unifies her *vara de negrilho*, José Anaiço's birds, and the Cerberus-like guard dog of many names who comes, after all, from the section of Provence called *Cerbère*. Let us observe Edith Hamilton's paraphrase of the tale:

> Aeneas had been told by the prophet Helenus as soon as he reached the Italian land to seek the cave of the Sybil of Cumae, a woman of deep wisdom, who could foretell the future and would advise him what to do. He found her, and she told him she would guide him to the underworld where he would learn all he needed to know from his father Anchises.... She warned him, however, that it was no light undertaking.... First he must find in the forest a golden bough growing on a tree, which he must break off and take with him. Only with this in his hand would he be admitted to hades.... They went almost hopelessly into the great wilderness of trees where it seemed impossible to find anything. But suddenly they caught sight of two doves, the birds of Venus. The men followed as they flew slowly on until they were close to Lake Avernus.... Here the doves soared up to a tree through whose foliage came a bright yellow gleam. It was the golden bough. Aeneas plucked it joyfully and took it to the Sibyl. Then, together, prophetess and hero started on their journey.... Charon was inclined to refuse Aeneas and his guide when they came down to the boat.... At sight of the golden bough, however, he yielded and took them across. The dog Cerberus was there on the other bank..., but the Sibyl...had some cake for him and he gave them no trouble.... Aeneas soon came upon Anchises, who greeted him with incredulous joy.... He gave his son instructions how he would best establish his home in Italy and how he could avoid or endure all the hardships that lay before him (Hamilton 226-30).

The bough, the dog, the birds, the boat, and the wise woman who unifies all—are these mere isolated symbols, or could they be part of a grand synchronic scheme? Are they interrelated just as surely as are the ripples to the stone which Joaquim Sassa threw into the ocean? Is there a cause-and-effect linkage between the concentric journeys being realized simultaneously by the protagonists and by the Peninsula itself, or is all apparent synchronicity pure coincidence? Is every human act a stone in the cosmic ocean which inevitably produces ripples in every other part of the ocean? These are the fundamental issues raised by *A Jangada de Pedra*, and to them we now turn our attention.

The initial chapter of the novel presents as simultaneous at least five of the scattered events recorded: the furrowing of the soil by Joana Carda, the barking of the hitherto barkless dogs, the hurling of the stone into the ocean by Joaquim Sassa, the splitting of the Pyrennees, and the seismographic sensations of Pedro Orce. The remaining two "events" or processes —the appearance of the flock of starlings over José Anaiço and the unraveling of the blue woolen sock by Maria Guavaira—are assumed to have their onset within a few minutes or hours of the preceding group. The novel's first word—*Quando*—sets the tone for the underlying assumption of synchronicity which pervades the novel:

> Quando Joana Carda riscou o chão com a vara de negrilho, todos os cães de Cerbère começaram a ladrar, lançando em pânico e terror os habitantes, pois desde os tempos mais antigos se acreditava que, ladrando ali animais caninos que sempre tinham sido mudos, estaria o mundo universal próximo de extinguir-se (*Saramago* 9).

Throughout the remainder of the work the leitmotivs of stone, elm wand, blue thread, dog, starlings, and trembling earth recur alone and in concert as in a musical composition. Of the 330 pages of the novel, the dog appears in 90, the stone in slightly over 50, the starlings in 45, the elm wand in 35 and the references to trembling earth and blue thread in 20 each.

Is apparent synchronicity fortuitous, or is there a covert relation of cause-and-effect in such cases? If the latter be true, which of the actions precipitated the others, and in what order? Was the earth trembling before Pedro Orce rose from his chair and put his feet on the floor? Did Joaquim Sassa's throwing of the stone in some way cause the Pyrennees to split, or was it perhaps Joana Carda's furrowing of the earth with her twig that produced the slight perturbation that upset the mountain chain? Hypotheses crowd the pages of the novel, which is in its way a fictional essay on this and related philosophical subjects. Let us hear the novel's own words in a selection of textual quotations arranged in simple order of appearance:

> Todas estas coisas, mesmo quando o não parecerem, estão ligadas entre si (Saramago 19).

> Não há um só destino, ao contrário do que tínhamos aprendido nos fados e canções. Ninguém foge ao seu destino, pode sempre acontecer que nos venha a calhar, subitamente, o destino doutra pessoa (Saramago 116).

> Ainda há quem não acredite em coincidências, quando coincidências é o que mais se encontra e prepara no mundo, se não são as coincidências a própria lógica do mundo (Saramago 127).

> O que tem de ser, tem de ser, e tem muita força, não se pode resistir-lhe.... A vida está cheia de pequenos acontecimentos que parecem ter pouca importância, outros há que num certo momento ocuparam a atenção toda, e quando mais

tarde, à luz das suas consequências, os reapreciamos, vê-se que destes esmoreceu a lembrança, ao passo que aqueles ganharam título de facto decisivo ou, pelo menos, malha de ligação duma cadeia sucessiva e significativa de eventos (Saramago 141).

Não é da vara, não é da pessoa, foi do momento, o momento é que conta.... A sua vara, a pedra de Joaquim Sassa, os estorninhos de José Anaiço, serviram uma vez, não servirão mais. São como os homens e as mulheres, que também só uma vez servem (Saramago 149).

O instinto conduz este cão, mas não sabemos o quê ou quem conduz o instinto, e se um destes dias tivermos do estranho caso apresentado uma primeira explicação, o mais provável é que tal explicação não passe de aparência dela, excepto se da explicação pudermos ter uma explicação e assim sucessivamente, até àquele derradeiro instante em que não haveria nada para explicar o montante do explicado, daí para trás supomos que será o reino do caos (Saramago 180).

Embora pareça absurdo, acabámos por acreditar que existe uma relação qualquer entre o que nos aconteceu e a separação de Espanha e Portugal da Europa (Saramago 189).

Nós aqui vamos andando sobre a península, a península navega sobre o mar, o mar roda com a terra a que pertence, e a terra vai rodando sobre si mesma, e, enquanto roda sobre si mesma, roda também à volta do sol, e o sol também gira sobre si mesmo, e tudo isto junto vai na direcção da tal constelação, então o que eu pergunto, se não somos o extremo menor desta cadeia de movimentos dentro de movimentos, o que eu gostaria de saber é o que é que se move dentro de nós e para onde vai...que nome finalmente tem o que a tudo move, de uma extremidade da cadeia à outra, ou cadeia não existirá e o universo talvez seja um anel, simultaneamente tão delgado que parece que só nós, e o que em nós cabe, cabemos nele, e tão grosso que possa conter a máxima dimensão do universo que ele prório é (Saramago 269).

Meu Deus, meu Deus, como todas as coisas deste mundo estão entre si ligadas, e nós a julgar que cortamos ou atamos quando queremos, por nossa única vontade, esse é o maior dos erros, e tantas lições nos têm sido dadas em contrário, um risco no chão, um bando de estorninhos, uma pedra atirada ao mar, um pé-de-meia de lã azul, se a cegos mostramos, se a gente endurecida e surda pregoamos (Saramago 328).

The consensus of these probing quotations supports what might be called paradoxically the "synchronicity of intentional coincidences." Rather than a linear sequence of cause-and-effect, there is perceived throughout the universe a meaningful and concentric overlapping and interpenetration of lives and events at all levels. Each human act is therefore potentially significant in a cosmic sense even when it appears to be merely a random occurrence.

The echoing of Camões's *Lusíadas* (Canto X) in the last of these quotations, appearing two pages from the end of the novel, leads us to the quintessentially Portuguese nature of the conscience of several of the protagonists and of the work itself. Against the argument that the *moment* or *fate* has produced the synchronicity of the several phenomena experienced by Joana Carda, Joaquim Sassa, José Anaiço, Pedro Orce and Maria Guavaira appears what Alexandre O'Neill has called the "cosmic guilt" complex of the Lusitanian nation. Joana Carda and Joaquim Sassa both feel individually responsible for the separation of the Peninsula from the rest of Europe; note the following dialog between the latter and José:

Quem sabe se a culpa não é minha, murmurou Joaquim Sassa. No te ponhas em conta tão alta, ao ponto de te considerares culpado de tudo.... Atirei uma pedra ao mar e há quem acredite que foi razão de arrancar-se a península à Europa. Se um dia tiveres um filho, ele morrerá porque tu nasceste, desse crime ninguém te absolverá, as mãos que fazem e tecem são as mesmas que desfazem e destecem, o certo gera o errado, o errado produz o certo. Fraca consolação para um aflito. Não há consolação, amigo triste, o homem é um animal inconsolável (Saramago 73).

By virtue of the equalization of opposites just observed by José Anaiço, however, and in harmony with the timeless maritime destiny of the Portuguese, it is the venturing of the Peninsula into the primordial waters that cover the earth that symbolizes potential rebirth and cosmic baptism so that a better human race may face a better future. Pondering the collective pregnancy of all the fertile women of Spain and Portugal, the omniscient third person narrative voice tells us:

Há por cima de nós um lume vivo, assim como se o homem, afinal, não tivesse de sair com históricos vagares da animalidade e pudesse ser posto outra vez, inteiro e lúcido, num mundo novamente formado, limpo e de beleza intacta. Tendo tudo isto acontecido, dizendo o tal português poeta que a península é uma criança que viajando se formou e agora se revolve no mar para nascer, como se estivesse no interior de um útero aquático, que motivos haveria para espantar-nos de que os humanos úteros das mulheres ocupassem, acaso as fecundou a grande pedra que desce para o sul, sabemos nós lá se são realmente filhas dos homens estas novas crianças, ou se é seu pai o gigantesco talha-mar que vai empurrando as ondas à sua frente, penetrando-as, águas murmurantes, o sopro e o suspiro dos ventos (Saramago 319).

From the abstract level of Thomistic argumentation of first causes or prime movers through the pragmatic consideration of national consciousness and international relations in a changing world, we come at last to an inherently textual problem: how to present synchronicity on the printed page and what to expect of the synchronicity of a "readerly" text. Again, music

serves as the ideal vehicle for synchronic communication, in the narrator's opinion, especially the operatic genre:

> Dificílimo acto é o de escrever, responsabilidade das maiores, basta pensar no extenuante trabalho que será dispor por ordem temporal os acontecimentos, primeiro este, depois aquele, ou, se tal mais convém às necessidades do efeito, o sucesso de hoje posto antes do episódio de ontem e outras não menos arriscadas acrobacias, o passado como se tivesse sido agora, o presente como o contínuo sem presente nem fim, mas por muito que se esforcem os autores, uma habilidade não podem cometer, pôr por escrito, no mesmo tempo, dois casos no mesmo tempo acontecidos. Há quem julgue que a dificuldade fica resolvida dividindo a página em duas colunas, lado a lado, mas o ardil é ingénuo, porque primeiro se escreveu uma e só depois a outra, sem esquecer que o leitor terá de ler primeiro esta e depois aquela, ou vice-versa, quem está bem são os cantores de ópera, cada um com a sua parte nos concertantes, três quatro cinco seis entre tenores baixos sopranos e barítonos, todos a cantar palavras diferentes, por exemplo, o cínico escarnecendo, a ingénua suplicando, o galã tardo em acudir, ao espectador o que lhe interessa é a música, já o leitor não é assim, quer tudo explicado, sílaba por sílaba e uma após outra, como aqui se mostram (Saramago 14).

> Para que as coisas existam duas condições são necessárias, que homem as veja e homem lhes ponha nome (Saramago 71).

> Estes lugares são de meter medo.... Em Venta Micena é bem pior, foi lá que eu nasci, ambiguidade formal que tanto significa o que parece como o seu exacto contrário, dependendo mais do leitor do que da leitura, embora esta em tudo dependa daquele, por isso nos é tão difícil saber quem lê o que foi lido e como ficou o que foi lido por quem leu (Saramago 83).

In *A Jangada de Pedra*'s layering of concentric journeys are embedded concentric levels of symbolism and synchronicity which lure the reader back repeatedly to the quest of the text. As the narrator says:

> Uma palavra, quando dita, dura mais que o som e os sons que a formaram, fica por aí, invisível e inaudível para poder guardar o seu próprio segredo, uma espécie de semente oculta debaixo da terra, que germina longe dos olhos, até que de repente afasta o torrão e aparece à luz, um talo enrolado, uma folha amarrotada que lentamente se desdobra (Saramago 286).

We may say of this text, with appropriately polysemic connotation and in the words and spirit of José Saramago himself: "O conteúdo pôde ser maior que o continente" (Saramago 18). The Iberian Peninsula, by virtue of its fortuitous separation from the rest of Europe, becomes a new continent in its own right, with the potentially signified looming ever more significant than the signifier itself. Of the five human protagonists of the terrestrial quest within the maritime journey, the three males represent three fields of professional training: Joaquim Sassa is an engineer, José Anaiço a teacher, and Pedro Orce a pharmacist. All three, however, follow the course set for them by the three "non-professionals": Joana Carda with her wand of elm, Maria Guavaira with her horsedrawn carriage, and the ubiquitous "dog for all seasons." Even the mechanical "Dois-Cavalos" succumbs to a literally horse-powered vehicle! As throughout the history of Portugal in its national and international affairs, the "scientific" or "analytical" of the head gives place to the intuitive and spontaneous of the heart. The women form the firm foundation of insight and orientation within the constantly evolving external world, and it is they who bear the symbols of promise for a brighter future of continued life on the new continent: their pregnant wombs and the ever-green *vara de negrilho*, with which they bless even the tomb of the defunct Pedro Orce.

There runs throughout *A Jangada de Pedra*, alongside its gentle irony regarding the foibles of human and nationalistic nature in the areas of communication and international understanding, an optimistic and robust vein of confidence in the future. To the degree that the institutional powers-that-be and the *status quo* are subverted by the latent powers of nature, the horizon is cleared for a simpler, more instinctive and humanitarian impulse to surge forth. Symbolically, it is Portugal, ever looking outward to new challenges as in centuries of yore, who leads the way through "azares nunca dantes navegados" and models a nucleus of unprejudiced solidarity and mutual understanding to the rest of the world.

## ■ WORKS CITED


Frazer, Sir James George. *The New Golden Bough*. New York: Anchor Books, 1961.

Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. New York: Mentor Books, 1942.

Lopes, Oscar. *Os sinais e os sentidos*. Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1986.

Miguéis, José Rodrigues. *Léah*. Lisbon: Estúdios Cor, 1958.

Saramago, José. *A Jangada de Pedra*. Lisbon: Editorial Caminho, 1986.

Seixo, Maria Alzira. *O essencial sobre José Saramago*. Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional/Casa da Moeda, 1987.

*Times Literary Supplement* (Dec. 9-15, 1988), London.