



AGE DRIES PEN OF BRAZIL'S GREATEST LIVING WRITER

12 Brazil

SALVADOR, Brazil. - Just turned 84, Brazil's greatest living writer, Jorge Amado, is feeling his years.

His pen has run dry and old age has achieved what lightning opponents cooperated by his leftist lens could not - stemming the flow of words that reduced 37 books over 65 years. "I'm an old man," Amado said, running a crinkled hand through his flowing white hair as he lounged in a well-worn wenge chair. "At 84, you're afflicted by age. At 84, you're useless."

A household name in Brazil, he has captivated millions of foreign readers as well. His novels, drawing on the tropical sensuality, violence and feudal politics of his impoverished home town of Bahia, have been translated into nearly 50 languages and have sold over 20 million copies

**BY MICHAEL
CHRISTIE**

worldwide.

Amado has reached an even larger audience through soap opera versions and film adaptations such as *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands* and *Uberaba*, which were global hits. But he has not written for about two years and says he has no plans "musing" at the moment.

Earlier this year, he was hospitalized in Paris, where a spend half the year, and a mid-August health kept him from attending the opening night in the Bahian capital Salvador of the latest film to spring from one of his books, *Terra of the Wilds*. Amado suffered a heart attack in 1993 and is currently confined to his room on doctor's orders.

"I am not afraid of death," he said with a shrug as darkness fell on the home he built in the 1940s on a hill overlooking the Bay of All Saints in Brazil's northeast. "I just don't like the idea of death. I prefer not to think about it. There are still so many things to do."

Amado was born in 1912 in the small town of Itabuna and began writing at 15 as a cub reporter covering the Salvador mosque, moving in a crowd of what he recalls were Bohemian artists and poets. He published his first work at 19. In the early days, he wrote socialist tirades like "Red Harvest" against injustice in the cocoa fields of Bahia's semi-arid outback, where so-called "Colonists" ruled like medieval barons.

Briefly jailed for his socialist views during the 1937-1945 dictatorship of Getulio Vargas, the young Amado went into exile.

But time has already chipped away at some of the fundamentals of his life. Once a Communist congressman, he now describes himself merely as a "socialist." Then, glancing at a Picasso hanging on his wall, he changes his mind: "No, I am for socialism and against capitalism. You can't be a pure socialist in a capitalist world."

In the 1960s he launched himself on a lighter vein of writing, blending reality and fantasy and taking Bahia's sexuality, spiritualism and tropical colour as his inspiration.

With the end of his career approaching, Bahian literary circles have embarked on a furious



Jorge Amado

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