

# Postcolonial Subjects in the Goan Short Stories “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” by Lambert Mascarenhas and “Um Português em Baga” by Epitácio Pais

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**Abstract:** This article analyses two postcolonial short stories from Goa: the Anglophone “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” by Lambert Mascarenhas and the Lusophone “Um Português em Baga” by Epitácio Pais. Both narratives feature a Portuguese subject who returns to the territory after the demise of colonial rule to resolve unfinished business dating from colonial times. Adapting the ideas of Homi Bhabha and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, I look at how each story challenges essentialist ideas about the ex-coloniser in order to move past dichotomising anti-colonial discourses and, in so doing, allow the reader to question common presuppositions about the orientation and operations of postcolonial literature. Written in different languages and at different times, the two prose tales also differ in their conclusions and so reveal the complexity of identity games in postcolonial situations, an intricacy underplayed by a narrowly anti-colonial conception of postcoloniality.

**Keywords:** Goa, Postcolonial Literature, Essentialism, Identity Games, Post-Colonial Relations.

Vasco da Gama’s inauguration of an unbroken Europe-to-India sea route marked the high point of Portugal’s Golden Age. Sung by Camões and enshrined by Salazar, the Portuguese achievement in reaching the subcontinent represents the *ne plus ultra* of Portugal’s imperial self-image. It was in the wake of this voyage, Madureira writes, that the enduring colonialist idea of Portugal’s national essence was defined (5). This gilt likeness had its obverse, however:

the decline of Portuguese power in the region until all that subsisted, territory-wise, was Goa and the tiny remnants of the *Praças do Norte*; the long economic stagnation of the *Estado da Índia* and growing evidence of Portugal's semi-peripherality in relation to British imperialism; the progressive disengagement of Goa's Catholic elites from the Portuguese imperial project (see Pinto 23) and increasing popular discontent with Portuguese rule, especially after the British finally quit India in 1947; the military debacle of 1961, when Goa, Damão and Diu were liberated from colonial rule by the Indian Army. By this time anti-colonial discourse had painted Portugal's colonialism as cruel and backward, as, in a phrase attributed to Pandit Nehru, the pus in a pimple blemishing the face of Mother India (Bravo 149). The image of the Portuguese on the subcontinent has, I argue, always been a particularly disputed ideological site, polarising opinion between hoary mythologies and reductive stereotypes.

This article takes as its object of inquiry two postcolonial Goan short stories, both of which involve the return of a Portuguese subject to decolonised Goa. Each figure can be seen as an iteration of the ex-coloniser, a repetition-in-difference that veers far from the celebratory images of colonial ideology but marks a distance from the peremptory rhetoric of anti-colonial discourse. Rather than considering the ex-coloniser as an undifferentiated mass, as often occurs in pro-colonial and anti-colonial formulations alike, both stories focus on individual figures. In so doing, the stories highlight the problematics of essentialist associations of metropolitan subjects with the bygone regime, especially inasmuch as social class inflects their relation to colonial rule. The stories in question are "A Portuguese Soldier's Story" by Lambert Mascarenhas, published in the English-language collection *In the Womb of Saudade* of 1994 and "Um Português em Baga" by Epiácio Pais, which appeared in the Lusophone anthology *Onde o Moruoni Canta* in 2003. While there is no evidence to prove conclusively its date of composition, the tone, setting and content of Pais's story lead me to believe it was originally written in the late 1960s, perhaps for broadcast on All-India Radio's "Renascença" programme, to which the author was a regular contributor.

"A Portuguese Soldier's Story" narrates ex-serviceman Avelino Catulo's return to post-Liberation Goa and his search for an Indian girl he had once

encountered. Told by a third-person omniscient narrator, the story alternates between Catulo's troubled memories of the colonial past and his experiences of the post-colonial present. Over the course of the tale, the ex-soldier becomes aware that reencountering the woman, as the girl would be in the diegetic present, is a chimera, a hope sustained only by naivety and his ignorance of certain mores in Indian village society. The narrative ends with a surprise meeting with another woman, a woman who in a sense shares Catulo's predicament.

"Um Português em Baga" is the first-person narrative of a Goan policeman. It takes place after a series of bomb attacks supposedly perpetrated by Salazarist operatives. The narrator has been given the job of monitoring the flood of hippies and sun-seekers entering the newly liberated territory to ensure there are no Portuguese agents amongst their ranks. He identifies a suspect, a man who appears European but does not behave like a tourist, preferring to spend his time in a chapel high above Baga beach. The stranger turns out to be from Portugal and the policeman finds himself having to decide whether the man's mission is to make a futile colonialist gesture or to put right a wrong dating from colonial times.

In their portrayal of the ex-coloniser, these two stories tackle a classic theme within what is commonly identified as postcolonial literature—the encounter between the coloniser or ex-coloniser and the colonised or ex-colonised—but do so in ways that challenge clear-cut conceptions of these subject positions. The anomalous passage of Goa from colonial rule into postcoloniality makes the literature of the territory a particularly fecund site for the re-examination of certain presuppositions in the field of postcolonialism. For example, taken in conjunction, the two stories challenge the simple assumption often made that postcolonial writers represent societies internally undifferentiated in their relation to a now-absent coloniser (Mukherjee 15). The most obvious index of Goa's heterogeneous postcoloniality is the two languages in which the texts were composed, a split which shows the affiliation of different sections of the Goan population with different linguistic and cultural spheres. Without subscribing to any linguistic determinism, the fault lines in Goan literary production (which is also extensive in autochthonous languages such as Konkani and Marathi) remind us just how fractured postcolonial scenes can be. These

fissures, which often, as here, find expression in linguistic preference, frequently render large swathes of cultural production invisible to the monolingual West (and are only apparent here via the anomaly of these stories being written in two languages of Western origin) and even lead to the disregard of certain works in their place of origin. Spivak observes how the various linguistic spheres in India, despite their overlap in the real world, are not “in serious contact” academically (“How To” 238). This observation would seem to hold true in Goa today, with the extra complication of the linguistic shifts that have occurred over time. The division of textual criticism across language areas or disciplines in the construction of a general field such as, for example, “Lusophone Postcolonial Studies,” risks obscuring such local facts. The aim of my comparative reading is, in part, to contribute to an awareness of the perspectivism found within Goa’s post-Portuguese situation and within the postcolonial world more generally.

Rather than re-writings of colonialist presumptions about the colonised subject, both “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” and “Um Português em Baga” are examples of the ex-colonised assessing the ex-coloniser, reversals of the traditional pattern wherein the West scrutinises the Other better to understand itself. The implicit audience for these stories, both of which were published in India and have not been released in Europe, is not the scrutinized ex-coloniser but a posited Goan/Indian reader. Neither is limited to what Ashcroft et al. termed “the Empire writing back,” but are both also examples of what Trivedi has called Indians “writing at home” (243). The attempt both narratives make to undermine the moral clarity of distinctions like pro-colonial and anti-colonial is not in any way addressed to a metropolitan audience. If anything, both stories seem to have been written in the light of Goa’s absorption into a larger nation, a process which has seen the relationship between Goan coloniser and Goan colonised come increasingly to be appraised in terms of depersonalised anti-colonial generalisations, disregarding the messy imbrications of the past. Both stories can be seen as contributions towards what Leela Gandhi views as the key aim of the postcolonial, to achieve a postnationalism (122), each moving towards this objective via the dismantling of “Portuguese” as what Spivak terms a “master word,” or a singular term used to deny heterogeneity of object, experience and environment (“Subaltern” 104).

There are, however, important differences between the two texts, which seem rooted in divergent cultural experiences, influences and attitudes, as suggested by the respective linguistic affiliations of the two authors. Whilst it deals sympathetically with the Portuguese protagonist, the Anglophone story ultimately follows the grain of contemporary Indian bourgeois nationalism (even to the point of adopting a view of the Portuguese that can be traced to British imperial constructions). Though it partially dismantles the antagonism upon which anti-colonialism was based and which, the story suggests, is no longer necessary in its previous format, “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” stresses the gulf between what is represented as essentially incompatible embodiments of the European and the Indian (even if the narrative largely avoids the question of Goa’s nuanced position in relation to these two poles of the story) and dismisses the Portuguese as irretrievably marginal today. In the Lusophone text, on the other hand, the disentanglement of the former coloniser from the former colonised is made problematic, even if the question ultimately devolves into a purely interpersonal issue and any question of wider structural relations is bracketed. This exclusion is unsurprising if, as I surmise, the story was composed in the 1960s, a time of internal politicking within Goa that made ample use of anti-colonial sentiments and in which any relationship with a Portugal still trapped by dictatorship was impossible.

Indeed, the differing chronological origins of the two stories are an important reminder that the temporality of the texts is as important as their language. “Um Português em Baga” was written while colonialism was still fresh in people’s minds and its aftermath a key determinant of the political debate in Goa. “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” was written at a point where, though still capable of inflaming passions, the colonial past was sinking from living memory into written history.

### The Blurring of Binaries

If the two texts can be read as undermining a form of what JanMohamed has termed the Manichean allegory, or the conversion of “racial difference into moral (...) difference” (61), the dichotomy they challenge is, I argue, one that operates more in anti-colonial feeling than Salazarist ideology, which tried

rhetorically to erase difference even as it discriminated against Goan subjects in practice. Both stories revolve around the idea that, though a distinct binary between colonised self and colonial other might have been possible to establish politically, the clarity of this dyad might blind us to the complicated, ambivalent intersections between and within subjects at a personal level. The post-colonial move performed in these stories is to problematize the anti-colonial binary from the far side of the opposition, which in the case of Goan literature is the side of the coloniser.

In both “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” and “Um Português em Baga” there occurs a crucial scene in which the former colonised assesses the former coloniser. In the Mascarenhas story this incident takes place upon Catulo’s arrival at the Terekhol Fort Hotel, where he finds that the establishment is full. Upon discovering that the unexpected visitor is Portuguese, the clerk rebukes him: “Do you know that the Portuguese were here for more than four hundred and fifty years... that you treated us very badly... that you did not appreciate our aspirations and tried to suppress them with brutality... did you know that? And so why do you come here now?... and you want me to treat you with kindness?” (Mascarenhas 223). The clerk reverts here to an anti-colonial stereotype, which has the effect of generalising and depersonalising the visitor, perpetuating the assumption that “all Europeans were *ipso facto* imperialists, and all non-Europeans the victims of imperialism” (Young, “Postcolonialism” 9). Here I shall base my analysis of this scene on Homi Bhabha’s notion of the stereotype, extending its application to look not at its use by the imperial-era coloniser but by a post-colonial native subject.

The stereotype, as Bhabha reminds us, is a defence against equivocality, but one that never completely fulfills its purpose and so continually has to be repeated. Furthermore, since stereotypes are iterations, with meanings varying in accordance with context, we must always ask: what role does the stereotype play in the present conjuncture? Or to put it another way: how is the Portuguese visitor ambiguous? Part of Goa’s disentanglement from interpellation by the Portuguese imperial project involved countenancing the image of Portugal on British or Indian terms as, in Boaventura de Sousa Santos’s words, “a very Caliban from the point of view of the European super-Prosperos” (16),

“a dwindling and backward European colonial power,” (Pinto 65) or, in Teotónio de Souza’s trenchant terms, as, at an individual level, historically “riff raff” rather than “*fidalgos*” (25). In other words, at the time the story is set, the Portuguese were stereotyped as different from the Northern Europeans flooding to Goa. The appearance of a Portuguese as Western sun seeker can be seen as out of place, an uncanny reappearance. Here, stereotype disavows the ambiguity of the ex-coloniser returning as a superficially wealthy traveller at a top-end hotel. It recuperates an anti-colonial image in order to fix the Portuguese as unchangeable, known and predictable. Yet the problem of the stereotype is not that it is a simplification, but that “it is an arrested, fixated form of representation” (Bhabha 107). To accept such fixed identities is to underwrite the strictures of a colonial discourse that relied on such conceptions, even in the verbal act of opposing them.

Though he seamlessly associates the present Portuguese subject with the vanquished Portuguese regime, as indicated in his overlapping use of the deictic third-person pronoun, the clerk does take pity on Catulo, in what is almost an act of belittling friendliness (cf. Spivak, “Post-Colonial Critic” 292) that fixes him at his disadvantage, and finds him a spare corner to stay until a room becomes free. Mascarenhas’s story then shifts into the Portuguese soldier’s anamnesis of his former life in Goa, as a means to destabilise the super-annuated docketing of the ex-coloniser on the part of the clerk.

The dramatic irony in the reception scene lies in the fact that the hotel was once the Fortaleza de Tiracol, a Portuguese base where Catulo had once been stationed. As a former member of the Portuguese army, Catulo is well aware of what colonial repression had been like in Goa. Indeed, he had been not only its agent but also, as a lowly *expedicionário*, its victim. Later on the night he arrives, as Catulo tries to sleep in his makeshift lodgings, the clerk’s hasty words prompt a particular memory in the ex-serviceman. He recalls being detained by the PIDE and given the “third degree” (Mascarenhas 224) after being seen to have laughed the morning after Goan nationalists scaled the walls of the fort and raised the Indian tricolour on the flagpole. He remembers that he was not alone in his sentiments and that in general his fellow members of the rank and file “were happy at the end of Portuguese rule in India,

very often a subject of talk amongst themselves in the firm belief that the Salazar government had no right to uproot them from their homes and families to defend what morally did not belong to Portugal” (Mascarenhas 224). Cатуло’s recollections gainsay the assumptions of the receptionist (and interpellate those of the presumed Anglophone Goan reader). If, at face value, the Portuguese soldier is an obvious symbol of colonial repression, his actual experiences are metonymic of the ordinary Portuguese people’s own lack of freedom. His position as an unwilling instrument of the Salazar regime sympathetic to those whom he is forced to oppress, indicates the distance possible between ordinary Portuguese, the lower-class tools of the regime, and Portuguese colonial ideology. The demonym “Portuguese” can refer to a wide range of experiences and subject positions.

Contrary to the Mascarenhas text, Pais’s story is told by the assessing ex-colonial subject. His task is as difficult as the clerk’s judgment is cursory. In the wake of the unexplained and unclaimed terrorist actions, the policeman has been entrusted with a mission that relies on what could be called, following Bhabha, a pedagogical construction of identity (219) on the part of the Indian authorities, one which fixes any individual originating from the space of the former coloniser in terms of recent history, as a vengeful representative of a malicious colonial regime. The suspicious outsider who attracts the policeman’s attention defies easy categorisation: he is suntanned and looks American or European, yet sleeps alone up in the chapel, far from “os da sua igualha” (Pais 145). The seeming incompatibility between his appearance and his behaviour leads the policeman to admit: “não se incluía na lista de utentes de droga psicotrópica. Não andava em pêlo, em contravenção dos avisos da praia. Não era louco perigoso como, ao primeiro relance, se me afigurou, nem mesmo um desequilibrado mental, inofensivo. Não o podia classificar para o colocar em algum parágrafo do meu regulamento” (Pais 143/4). The fact that the stranger evades the net of his expectations leads the Goan officer to monitor the man’s movements, suspecting that his anomalous conduct might indicate nefarious designs.

One evening the policeman finds himself in the vicinity of Baga chapel. Surprised by a thunderstorm, he seeks shelter within, where he encounters the stranger. The policeman is forced to spend the night there, in a place where

the atmosphere oscillates ambiguously between a sense of refuge and forgiveness connoted by the building's institutional purpose and the threat posed by the outlander. The conversation between the two men is tense, as a sort of cat-and-mouse game develops, epitomizing the personal level at which the story as a whole develops. Who is the stranger? Does he realise who the policeman is? If so, is he aware of the policeman's suspicions? The Goan tries to sound the visitor out, making oblique inquiries as to his identity, to which the stranger laughs and replies that he well might ask the same questions of his interlocutor. The chiasmus in their mutual questioning foreshadows the postcolonial ambivalence about to be installed, its ground already prepared by the mystery hitherto created. The idea of an ambiguous relation between coloniser and colonised is a staple of postcolonial theory, but here has little to do with Bhabhian notions of mimicry and mockery. It arises rather in the ex-colonised policeman's realisation that this stranger cannot be placed easily on the opposing side of the self-other binary, leaving this officer of the law torn between duty and humaneness, suspicion and empathy.

The identity game in progress is tricky and bears examination. The policeman replies to the stranger's question with a half-truth, answering that he is a resident of the village. In order to execute his duty, he is forced to act as though he were just another Indian subject, with no knowledge or interest in the Portuguese. The stranger responds to the Goan's equivocation with disarming frankness, by laying out his story. He is Portuguese, from Moscavide in Lisbon. He is there on a mission, but one that has nothing to do with the bomb blasts that have rocked the territory. The stranger reveals that he had been born locally, "de mãe goesa, indiana, como quiser" (Pais 149). His father, formerly a colonial policeman posted to Baga village, had conducted an affair with a local woman, making her pregnant. After the stranger's birth, his father had taken him away to Portugal, abandoning the mother. The stranger, who looks so European and acts so oddly is revealed to be the son of a local woman and a man who, albeit twenty years previously and in a vastly different world, had occupied the same institutional position as the police officer narrator. The fixed oppositions of inside and outside, native and foreign, anti-colonial and colonial that structure the policeman's investigation begin to grow hazy. After all, it is

the stranger who is the villager, by birth at least, not the officer who has been sent there from Panjim, Goa's main city. The narrator remains on the alert however, unsure that the man can be trusted, torn between the official line he is supposed to toe and the emotional response the man's story elicits within him.

### Unfinished Business

In both "A Portuguese Soldier's Story" and "Um Português em Baga" it becomes obvious that the respective Portuguese characters have returned to Goa in order to resolve unfinished business. Their relative prospects for success, as set out in the two narratives, allow us to reflect and elaborate on the state and potential of post-colonial relations between the humbled metropole and the former *Índia Portuguesa*.

In the Mascarenhas story, the unfinished business is revealed in an analepsis. Feeling despondent one day, whilst soldiering, Catulo leaves the fort, which stands on a peninsula cut off from the rest of Goa, and walks to the border between the *Estado da Índia* and the Indian state of Maharashtra, which are separated by a broad, shallow stream. He notices a Hindu girl on the far bank, collecting water. They both stop and stare. Though fascinated by one another, they have no way of communicating as they lack a shared language, even gestural. The girl performs an anjali mudra salutation before taking her leave but the soldier does not understand its meaning. The following evening, when they both return to the same spot at the same time, the soldier calls out in Portuguese, "what is your name?" (Mascarenhas 231), causing the uncomprehending girl to glance round in fear. Catulo realises that she is frightened her fellow villagers might catch her talking to a stranger. He reflects that such a meeting must be "taboo and would surely bring about punishment" (Mascarenhas 231). Nonetheless, despite the risks to him as a Portuguese soldier on the perimeter of colonial territory, and to her for dallying with an outsider so close to home, they return every day to see each another.

In the 1950s the border Catulo approaches was a political divide between two states but also an ideological frontier between the entrenched last European coloniser and a country that saw its role as leader of the newly independent countries of the so-called Third World. It was a frontier supposed to separate

enemies, a limit that, from the colonial regime's point of view, demarcated the civilised enclave of "Golden" Goa from the Indian hordes beyond. The lower-class Catulo does not share this "official" outlook. On his side all he feels is stifling imprisonment, on the far side all he sees is purity and freedom. He is the one enclosed by the border and contained within the colonialist role he detests. What the soldier experiences is what Fonseca terms the ambivalent experience of borders, which oscillates "between separation and union, between a staking out of limits and the possibility of crossing them" (42).

At one point during the first encounter with the girl she playfully splashes water in Catulo's direction. Afterwards the narrator tells us "when he arrived at the fort he felt he did not belong there at all, and his comrades here appeared crude, boorish and filthy. Her face and frame seemed so clean and fresh, undefiled that it also cleansed him" (Mascarenhas 229). The soldier takes no action to cross the frontier and concretize his yearning, lest he cause a diplomatic incident. Soon Catulo is transferred to another fort. Shortly thereafter the invasion takes place and he is repatriated to Portugal. His motive for returning to Goa is to find this girl, in the hope that the end of colonialism has removed the division that separated them. What he discovers, however, when he returns to post-colonial Goa, is just how problematic his simple reversal of colonial binaries actually was, as problematic in its own way as the clerk's knee-jerk evaluation of him upon his arrival at the hotel.

In the Pais story the stranger also tells the policeman that he has returned to find a woman, his mother, with a portion of his savings and a "grande saudade" (Pais 150). The policeman's sympathy for the young man is reinforced by the knowledge that, if he is telling the truth, he has come to the aid of his mother with just cause. The policeman knows who the mother is, a villager who "vivia acabrunhada pelo estigma que desde nova a vinha marcando" and who "tinha nos olhos uma vaga e eterna melancolia" (Pais 150). As the stranger had feared, his mother has been ostracized by her community for bearing a child out of wedlock and so has been doubly prejudiced by both colonial exploitation and local intolerance. At the same time, however, although the bomb attacks had been "mais simbólico que devastador", they had "desafiado a aceitação geral de uma situação política" (Pais 151). If the policeman were to allow himself to be

swayed by his emotions and commit an error of judgment, his dereliction of his official duty might have grave consequences. Which has a greater claim upon him: his fellow feeling towards the young man or his duty to the larger political collective to which he now belongs? The night in the chapel ends in ambiguity with the Portuguese stranger drawing the Goan policeman into an equivocal position. The stranger remains unfixable: is he a spiteful coloniser looking to commit one last, empty act of vengeance or is he really a colonial orphan looking to redeem the mistakes of the past?

### Goa as a Setting for Colonial and Postcolonial Ambiguity

The scene for the ambiguous depiction of the returning Portuguese subject is a Goa under rapid transformation by a mushrooming tourist industry. The phenomenal growth in this sector drew a line in the sand between colonial and post-colonial Goa, as there was almost no tourist activity in the Estado da Índia (Pereira 93). The popularization of Goa as a destination for travellers only began in the early 1960s. It is ironic that, if the arrival of large numbers of tourists is one of the most visible features separating the territory's past from its present, these very same vacationers were often attracted to Goa because of its colonial inheritance. As the policeman comments in "Um Português em Baga," the new visitors, attracted to Goa because of its "hibridismo interessante," "achavam o meio cativante, sem o extremo da civilização ocidental, refinada, de que estavam enfastiados, e do exotismo oriental, a que não se podiam aclimatar facilmente por muito tempo" (Pais 143). Already, in Pais's story, set first chronologically, the arrival of these tourists is beginning to remodel the physical landscape, occasioning the construction of "pousadas rudimentares e baratas, aparecendo por toda a faixa" (Pais 143).

Nowhere are the changes effected by mass tourism more acutely apparent than at the Tiracol Fort, now the Terekhol Fort Hotel. Yet this former military building symbolises more than just the post-colonial alterations that swept Goa: even in the late colonial period the signification of the fort was ambiguous. Supposedly an outpost of Portuguese strength, it could in fact be seen as a sign of the anachronism of Portuguese rule. Sousa Santos has adapted Bhabha's term "The Empire's Lie" to refer to Portugal's pretence at imperial

fortitude, when in practice it was always at the mercy of stronger powers (218). The *Estado da Índia* is one of the most telling examples of the reality beyond the ideological façade. After the rise of British power on the subcontinent, the continuation of Portuguese rule in Goa was dependent on British indulgence; following the independence of India, the Portuguese presence was contingent on Nehru's forbearance, which expired in 1961; after the fading of the Golden Age, Goa consistently evinced the weakness of Portuguese colonialism.

Goa's self-perception as being ruled by a frail colonial power dates at least to the nineteenth century and is a prominent theme in Goan literature. Mascarenhas's story suggests that "The Empire's Lie" was probably just as transparent to some of its agents via Catulo's memory of his frustrated reflections when manning the fort: "[e]ven though he was an ordinary soldier, with no expertise" the narrator tells us, he was well aware that "if the enemy was bent on capturing the fort of the territory, they could do so by a frontal attack from any number of places in (sic) the hundred and odd (sic) kilometres of the artificial boundary" (Mascarenhas 230). The fort was useful in the seventeenth century, during the age of Portugal's seaborne empire. By 1947 it was militarily useless, as outdated as Portuguese colonialism itself.

If the fort is a site testifying both to the former fragility of colonial rule and the sweeping changes subsequent to its demise, the journey Catulo has to undertake in order to reach the now Terekhol Fort Hotel symbolises the contemporary relationship between Portugal and Goa. In order to make his return, Catulo has to travel from Oporto via Frankfurt and Bombay. This interposition of Western Europe and India in the journey between Portugal and Goa, which formerly, in the Golden Age of Portugal's imperial period and at the tail end of the *Estado da Índia* alike, had enjoyed a direct link, is telling. Catulo's is a gruelling journey and shows the current disconnect between Portugal and a Goa now more keyed in to the rest of the subcontinent and more familiar with holidaymakers from northern Europe than with subjects hailing from the former metropole (cf. Pereira 92). While Mascarenhas treats the individual Portuguese subject with compassion, Portugal is shown, through the Tiracol Fort, to have been impuissant in the colonial era and to be largely irrelevant on the post-colonial scene.

### The Postcolonial Portuguese: Semi-peripherality and Inter-identity

The Portuguese characters in “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” and “Um Português em Baga”, whilst treated sympathetically in a way that challenges anti-colonial rhetoric, are also presented critically as representatives of ordinary post-colonial Portuguese. Both Avelino Catulo and the stranger are depicted as semi-peripheral figures, figures that mix surface elements of centrality with structural features redolent of the peripheral. Sousa Santos has remarked that an index of Portugal’s colonial semi-peripherality was the fact that in the so-called overseas provinces, Portuguese subjects were more often emigrants than settlers (17). A parallel observation could be made in the post-colonial period, when former elements of the Portuguese colonial enterprise returned to the mother country as refugees often in difficult or straitened circumstances. Catulo finds himself in such a situation when he is repatriated after the Indian invasion. He becomes a sort of migrant at home, considering himself fortunate to find a poorly paid job that “just helped keep body and soul together” (Mascarenhas 225). The ex-soldier has had to scrimp and save to fund his trip to Goa, a trip that, at the time the story was set, was becoming increasingly affordable for working-class northern Europeans (Pereira 94).

The incredulous and condescending attitude of the clerk flags up the difference between Catulo and the German or British tourists who presumably frequent the Terekhol Fort Hotel. Catulo’s true semi-peripherality, the fact that he is European but lacking the prosperity Goans discern in visitors originating from the economically advanced centre, is similarly apparent in the stranger of Pais’ story. During the evening he spends with the police officer, the self-identified Portuguese reveals how he has managed to enter Goa so soon after the total rupture of diplomatic relations between Portugal and India. The stranger is an economic migrant to the United Kingdom, where he works in a factory. The reader can only presume that the savings he has brought for his mother (as well as the money for his journey to India to find her) have been earned via this blue-collar labour. It is with a British passport that the man has managed to gain access to India; the implication is that this travel document has been obtained illegally. In order to enter Goa, at this point some ten years before the normalisation of diplomatic relations, the man has been forced symbolically to shed his official Portuguese identity.

If there is mimicry in this story, then, it is the Stranger's mimicry of a wealthy Western tourist. In his discussion of Bhabha's conception of the term, Sousa Santos argues that it must be stretched in the analysis of situations arising from Portuguese colonialism, for "underlying this conception is the supposedly obvious idea that what is at stake in colonial mimicry is the colonised's mimicking of the coloniser. Now as far as Portuguese postcolonialism is concerned, nothing of the sort is at all obvious and rather needs to be looked into" (18). Here, lacking any neo-colonial power, the man is forced to pretend he is a "normal" Westerner in order to gain access to post-colonial Goa. The stranger's impersonation of a Western tourist is an instance of what Bhabha describes as "mimicry as camouflage" (172), a tactic that allows the stranger to pursue his own path under cover of a "mottled" surface appearance.

According to Bhabha, mimicry conceals no presence or identity behind its mask (88), and so is the case with the stranger. There is no colonialist Portuguese agent behind his pretence, indeed no clear sense of fixed identity at all, just a man looking for the mother he never knew. The stranger can be seen as an example of hybridity as described by Young, where difference becomes sameness and sameness difference "but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, and the different no longer simply different." ("Colonial Desire" 26). The effect of this process is "a bizarre binate operation in which each impulse is qualified against another, forcing momentary forms of dislocation and displacement into complex economics of agonistic reticulation" (Young 27). Bhabha argues that hybridity necessarily ensues from the colonial encounter. Judging by the policeman's reaction, we can argue here that hybridity, the *différance* of identity, is in part effectuated by the police officer's postcolonial encounter with the stranger.

Sousa Santos described the colonial Portuguese as having an inter-identity between coloniser and colonised, understood as an indeterminacy arising partly as a result of socio-economic semi-peripherality (16). In the Mascarenhas story the inbetweenness of the pre-1961 Catulo is obvious but exists more in terms of class than nationality. He is a vulnerable ordinary Portuguese soldier who sympathises with anti-colonial feeling and feels entrapped by the colonial regime he represents. Catulo's inter-identity is perhaps also discernible in the deep love he expresses for the flora and fauna of Goa, though this might

be part of Mascarenhas's mobilisation of a positive stereotype of the Portuguese in opposition to negative colonial-era images. The post-1961 inter-identity of the ex-soldier is figured by his down-at-heel tourism.

The inter-identity of the stranger in the Pais text is more intricate and more problematic. How to classify someone who has a Goan mother, a Portuguese father and holds a British passport? He seems to be an example of the sort of "baroque" identity Sousa Santos moots (16) as the result of the multi-strand hybridities produced over the course of Portuguese colonialism and in the dislocations of its aftermath. When the policeman notices that the stranger does not act like just another tourist he is remarking upon a possible feature of the post-imperial Portuguese in the spaces of the former empire. Even when colonial links and patterns of cultural exchange have decayed, as in Goa, a Portuguese is unlikely to visit a location like the former *Estado da Índia* as simply another sun-seeker. Trying to explain why he felt he had to return to Goa, the stranger tells the policeman that he had "o sangue a puxar-me sempre para isto" (Pais 150). It is true in a literal sense, but also in more figurative ones. For the stranger, as for Catulo, and so many other post/colonial Portuguese subjects, ties of blood, family, recollection and curiosity provide attachments to the territories that once formed the former Portuguese *Ultramar*, which are unlikely to be experienced in quite the same way from other national standpoints.

Sousa Santos's theoretical considerations on Portuguese postcolonialism, which I have drawn upon here for the purposes of literary criticism, are intended to suggest possibilities for an anti-neo-liberal globalization. One of the questions Sousa Santos poses is whether Portugal can operationalize its supposed psychological and emotional closeness to its former colonial possessions in a positive way and whether the former colonised are likely to be interested in such a re-articulation (34). Both "A Portuguese Soldier's Story" and "Um Português em Baga" end with an encounter suggestive of what can and cannot be achieved by the post-imperial Portuguese subject in India.

### Disappointments and Amends

In the Mascarenhas story, on the day after his arrival the ex-soldier returns to the former border. He pauses for a moment, wondering if his visa is valid for

both Goa and India, before laughing at his stupidity and wading across the stream. He reaches the peasant village on the other side but does not find what he expects. A group of adolescent girls and a man hail him in Marathi. He tries to explain that he has come from Portugal, to which they all murmur “Portuguez, Portuguez” (235). This village is not the space free from Portuguese influence that he had imagined, as this obvious loanword testifies. An old man is brought out to meet him. He is a Hindu from Goa who had moved to the village before the independence of India. The man had passed his *primeiro grau* and can speak Portuguese. He begins to reminisce about his youth, recalling his schoolbooks and the lyric “Portugal é lindo, Portugal de flores” (Mascarenhas 236), and how, when he first moved to the village, it had been common for the residents to cross over to Tiracol to buy coconuts and for soldiers from the fort to return the visit. In this light, Catulo’s experience reveals itself to have been partial and limited.

Faced with this integration of his fantasy world into the colonial past he desired to escape, Catulo finds himself at a loss. Struggling to find something to say he asks the man whether the teenage girls he had met would soon be going to college. The old man laughs and says that girls in the village are married off as soon as they come of age. Catulo’s vague dreams of finding the woman who was the girl he once saw collapse. Not only can the long history of colonialism never be escaped, the cultural divide that separated him as a European from the girl as a Hindu Indian is as strong now as it ever was. Colonialism proves both omnipresent and irrelevant.

The morning after, as Catulo prepares to leave Goa, a woman comes to meet him at the hotel. Her name is Margarida Fernandes. She tells the ex-soldier that she had been in love with a *furriel* named Orlando Navarro. Their relationship was as physical as Catulo’s infatuation had been ethereal and, after the event, she had suffered opprobrium for overstepping this mark. She tells him: “My parents and relatives were dead against this intimacy but who can stop two people who are in love? We were very happy” (Mascarenhas 238). This happiness is, ironically, crushed by Liberation. The woman visited her lover in the detainee camp in which he was interned and he promised to send for her upon his return to Portugal, but never did. She had come to see Catulo

because she had heard that a Portuguese soldier had returned. She walks away in despair, for he is the wrong soldier.

It is another “desencontro” rich in significance, following the interaction of Catulo and the clerk and Catulo and the Maharashtrian girl. On the one hand we have a Portuguese man who craves a new start, to recuperate a possibility that comes from the colonial past while freeing himself from any stain resulting from his involvement in the colonial regime. On the other there is a Goan woman who had thrown in her lot with a Portuguese, been betrayed and abandoned, left to yearn for the past. In the end Mascarenhas’s story represents a certain strand of postcolonial Goan attitudes associated with a Catholic middle class. It is narrated by a disembodied Anglophone voice looking down on the working-class Portuguese soldier, the Maharashtrian Hindu villagers and the Lusophone Goan woman depicted. The narratorial voice implies a difference between itself and the “backward” Hindu villagers outside of Goa who treat their womenfolk so illiberally, the now-marginal Portuguese and the few remaining Goans who regret their leaving, even if it paints the old man, Catulo and Margarida in a light that entreats sympathy for their anomalous situations. The latter two characters are depicted as not quite living in the present. To do so, on the terms of the story, would entail accepting the post-colonial settlement of history.

In the Pais story, on the morning after the stranger’s revelations he and the policeman make their way down to the village. The policeman is still undecided as to whether he should make the arrest or allow the young man to walk free. In the policeman’s conscience, conflict rages. Upon reaching the bottom, before the policeman can say anything, the man turns and asks the Goan to accompany him to his mother’s house, a question that once more, just as in the chapel, pre-empts the policeman and disarms him. The stranger is afraid that he and his mother will have no common language. The policeman gruffly replies that the stranger should just mention his father’s name and the rest would fall into place. The manner of their parting leaves the outcome of the stranger’s presence in Goa undecided, insofar as the story ends without the reader knowing what effect of stranger’s return will produce as we do not witness the reunion with his mother.

Contrary to the impossible desire of resurrecting the past entertained by Mascarenhas's characters, the stranger wants merely to contribute to redressing past ills. It is noticeable that, if the instigator of his mother's situation is his father, then the ostracism from which he wishes to rescue her is the result of a set of attitudes described as little dependent on colonialism (it is giving birth to a child outside wedlock that has caused the woman's isolation, not bearing a mixed-race baby). The stranger's postcolonial inter-identity, the in-between story that has led him to the diegetic present, encodes a criticism of both coloniser and colonised, insofar as the responsibility for his mother's plight is shared between colonial prepotency and local callousness, two wrongs of which the policeman's suspect is entirely innocent.

### Postcolonial Subjects: Themes and Angles

I began with the assertion that these stories are characterised by their portrayal of an ambiguous postcolonial Portuguese subject, but that a further site of ambiguity was their relationship to certain conventional models of postcolonial literature. An early, influential definition of the field was given by Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffith, who saw two important features defining this literature: a reaction against the silencing of the colonial subject by way of processes of abrogation, on the one hand, and appropriation of the language and culture of the silencers on the other (82). I shall conclude by looking at whether these two features are present in Mascarenhas and Pais's stories.

There is indeed recognition of Portuguese colonial repression in both texts, expressed variously by the clerk in the Mascarenhas story and, in his cognizance of the symbolic import of forestalling any new terrorist attack, the policeman's in Pais's prose tale. Nevertheless, the overriding concern in both texts, with their sympathetic treatments of two Portuguese subjects, is filling out of the story of the departed and now denigrated coloniser, freeing powerless individuals from the taint of the Salazarist regime, seemingly in the interests of moving away from an adversarial definition of the Goan self. If anything is abrogated, it is the black-and-white portrayal of the Portuguese (or the reduction of the Portuguese to the wrong-doing of their colonialism) that underpinned the freedom movement and which is well exemplified by Mascarenhas'

own 1946 novel *Sorrowing Lies My Land*. Both “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” and “Um Português em Baga” suggest that in postcolonial Goa such a view is no longer necessary and must be revised, even if the effect each story suggests will be produced by that revision is quite different.

An element of colonial ideology that is repealed, via the representation of a contradictory local reality, is Lusotropicalism, a term first used by Gilberto Freyre to make generalisations about the “mundo português” in Goa in 1951. The Mascarenhas story shows the cultural barriers between the European and the Hindu Indian that made miscegenation rare in the late-colonial period. Even within the section of the Goan population whose ancestors had been converted by force to Catholicism, inter-ethnic marriages were few and far between. In both “A Portuguese Soldier’s Story” and “Um Português em Baga,” the Catholic woman who ventures across the racial divide is later abandoned by her Portuguese partner and left to live a life alone, ostracised by her own community. The one product of such a union, the stranger, does not form part of any miscegenated community. Indeed, he is described as having left the Lusophone space altogether, settling in Britain, part of the bleeding of diversity from the periphery to the centre that was such a feature of the second half of the twentieth century.

The linguistic appropriation performed by these two stories is no less ambiguous. For Mascarenhas, with the exception of the occasional Portuguese word for local colour, there is no adoption and re-dimensioning of the coloniser’s tongue. Instead the language of the departed British is used, the perceived language of Indian unity and certainly the language of opportunity for generations of Goan emigrants. Elements of Mascarenhas’ story make it clear that it was not directed at all towards a potential Portuguese audience. These range from minor details such as the misspelling of the names of Portuguese towns to a more important chronological issue, which betrays the lack at an important level of what Boehmer calls “split perception” (110), the ability to see the world from the position of the coloniser and the colonised at the same time; it is a perspective, however critical, that one might expect from an Anglo-phone writer emerging from a former British colony or a Lusophone African writer. The fact that Catulo is returning to Goa twelve years after December

1961 places his visit just before the Carnation Revolution, which would have made the practicality of visiting Goa before the end of the Salazar regime and the reestablishment of relations between India and Portugal very slim. It is unlikely that a writer more attune to the Lusosphere would not realise the implications of this temporal setting. For the Goa-focused reader unfamiliar with Portugal, Portuguese culture and Portuguese history, especially after 1961, these details are unimportant. The imperial voice is not a site of contestation in the text as it has already been decisively done away with in postcolonial Goa, as attested by Catulo's frequent linguistic doubts and his inadequate grasp of English. The Portuguese have no real voice in today's Goa. Even when Catulo meets local Portuguese speakers they are peripheral figures, like the nostalgic old man or the abandoned woman. Even when they are described as speaking in Portuguese their colloquy is, of course, rendered in English. Mascarenhas' story is ultimately a sympathetic but dismissive representation of the former coloniser, one that suggests that rancour towards the semi-peripheral Portuguese only traps today's Anglophone Goan in a superannuated position of unwarranted colonial inferiority.

The case of Pais is more ambiguous. He did indeed write in the language of the former coloniser, practically a first language for a certain segment of his generation. This language option, if it can be so termed, is no joyful laying claim, the transformation of a colonial imposition into a postcolonial trophy. Just as the policeman allows the stranger to redeem past mistakes, the story merely inserts an element of balance into a question that has not yet become academic. This narrative would have been written at a time when Portuguese was gradually fading from public usage, leaving those for whom it was the principal language somewhat adrift. The model of appropriation is an ill fit for the Lusophone literature created in post-1961 Goa. If post-colonial Goan authors like Pais used Portuguese to address dwindling or non-existent audiences, it was partly because they had no other language in which they felt they could write. They did not seize language, language held them.

In Pais's story the policeman tells us that he was chosen by his superiors to investigate the possible presence of the Portuguese "porque falo medianamente a língua deles" (143), yet in his conversation with the stranger we are

told that they speak to one another in English, perhaps the natural medium for an Indian policeman and a holidaymaking immigrant to Britain. In Pais's story, Portuguese is not then the language of Goa's postcoloniality, it is the language of the author's individual expression. Bhabha traces a difference between nationalist or nativist pedagogical constructions of identity that "set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition" (244) and a performative space, which allows development over time. Not without good reason in the context, the Indian authorities entrust the policeman with his mission based on a fixed idea of the Portuguese derived from the colonial past, what Bhabha terms a "visual image of identity" (71), one in which there is a fixed relationship between signifier and signified. In contrast to this, the policeman allows the stranger a performative purchase on his identity, permitting him the temporality of the in-between, or "control over his own signifying process" (Bhabha 212). Yet when the policeman lets the stranger go, it is an intensely personal gesture, far distant from the climate of animosity and mistrust surrounding 1961, which persists to some extent in relations between Goa and Portugal today, and it is unclear whether the policeman enjoys the same leeway he allows his suspect. Indeed his laconic circumspection regarding both the stranger and his superiors in the now Indian administration is an enigmatic testimony to a certain strain of ambivalent Goan postcoloniality. Pais' story, perhaps the last original story to be published in Portuguese in Goa, ends with the policeman noting in his official ledger "nada de novo quanto à presença dos portugueses" (152). Officially at least, the colonial image of the Portuguese is not written over in the manner of a palimpsest. In the context of the tale's engagement with postcolonial subjects, this line can be read not just as an ironic coda to the story but also as a glum prediction for the future.

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