

Goa's freedom struggle

The literary network in the newspaper *Free Goa*

Cielo G. Festino

Universidade Paulista/FAPESP

Abstract

This article considers the literary network of anti-colonial literary narratives, short stories, and poems, by Indian, Goan, and Portuguese writers which appeared in the 1950s and 1960s in the left-wing Goan journal *Free Goa*, published in Bombay (now Mumbai) at a time when Goa's freedom fighters were seeking India's support in order to attain their independence from Portuguese colonial domination. Following Jean-Paul Sartre (1949) and Benoît Denis (2000), we claim that these literary works can be read as engaged literature since in elaborate or straightforward literary styles they urge Goans to look for inspiration in India's independence from British domination (1947) and to free themselves from the Salazarist regime.

Keywords: literary network, *Free Goa*, short story in Portuguese, poetry, engaged literature, freedom struggle

Introduction: The literary network of *Free Goa*

Goa, a former Portuguese colony in India (1510–1961), was characterized by its Westernized lifestyle, its practice of Catholicism, and the use of the Portuguese language, as well as its easy coexistence with Hinduism and Indian culture.¹ In the second half of the twentieth century, when the Portuguese had already been in the subcontinent for four hundred years, winds of change started blowing in Goa that would lead to its annexation to India in 1961, and to becoming a full-fledged state in 1987, when Konkani, its native language, was chosen as the official state language after a series of controversies.²

Already the 1920s had been a period of deep transformation in Goa. While Hindu intellectuals were looking for explicit recognition in the cultural sphere, many writings by native Catholic intellectuals showed a desire to be reconnected to their Indian roots, thus removing barriers between the two communities. This attitude meant a rupture with the Westernizing attitude of the Goan Catholic gentry of the 1800s as Catholic intellectuals believed that what was now required was ‘an internalization of the local sensibility, a reunion with their cultural roots and with the sensorial appeal of the local environment’ (Lobo 2014: 123–124).

This new ‘structure of feeling’ (Williams 1961), which can be understood as a contingent political position reaching its peak in the second half of the 1950s, when Goa was in the midst of the freedom struggle from Portugal and modelled itself on India’s newly acquired independence (1947), found expression in print journalism. One of its main exponents was the left-wing newspaper *Free Goa*, subtitled ‘Organ of Portuguese India’s Liberation’, which Lobo (2018: 1) defines as a newspaper which aimed to establish anti-colonial solidarity among the elites of the different colonies. It was a fortnightly bilingual English and Portuguese publication launched by António Furtado on 10 October 1953. It was first edited in Belgaum and later in Bombay, where Furtado had taken refuge with his wife, Berta Menezes Bragança, having refused to sign an official statement against Nehru’s declaration that Goa was part of India and as such should return to it. The foundation of *Free Goa* was also related to the arrival in Goa of the thinker and nationalist Tristão de Bragança Cunha (1891–1958), who had managed to escape the Salazarist regime in Portugal (Assunção 2020: 6) and moved the journal to Bombay in 1956. After both men passed away, *Free Goa* was edited by Furtado’s wife, Berta Menezes Bragança (1911–1998), writer, activist, and member of the Communist Party; she managed it with a steady hand until Goa’s integration with India in 1961. Cunha not only stuck to the idea that Goa was a part of India and its territory should be viewed as such, but considered what he saw as the imposition of the Portuguese language, to the detriment of Konkani, and of a Western way of life, to be the main reasons for what he referred to as ‘Goa’s cultural bankruptcy’ (1944: 22).

Cunha and his followers were bent on affirming Goa’s Indianness, in particular to counter the press established in Bombay dominated by the Catholic community, which either remained loyal to the Portuguese government or was sceptical about the future of Catholic Goa in a Hindu-dominated India (Lobo 2018: 1; Assunção 2020: 1). *Free Goa* was mainly a political newspaper which, throughout its several years of publication, focused on all subjects related to the Goan freedom struggle: Goans’ troubled relationship with Portugal, the

imprisonment of Goan *satyagrahi* in Fort Aguada and in Portugal, critique of the Salazarist regime, the appeal to Nehru to intervene in Goa, and the liberation of the African colonies. It also established a small but solid literary network of engaged writings which looked to Indian literature, history, and culture for inspiration to further the cause of Goan nationalism, as expressed in one of Adeodato Barreto's poems, published in the journal:

Beautiful Goa!
Behold the Ghats aflame!
Behold the rebel crest afire!
In Bengal's jungles tigers roam freely
'Tis India that speaks to thee!
'Tis India calling thee! (*Free Goa*, 10 February 1960: 1)

As the publication of literary writings in the pages of *Free Goa* attests, Menezes Bragança, like her husband and uncle, shared the views of the members of another nationalist publication, to which they were regular contributors, the literary journal *O Académico* (1940–1943), whose main aim was the emancipation of Goan youth through literature. They saw in Indian literary works a model to be followed. Proof of this are the Indian narratives published in *Free Goa* on the subject of emancipation through change, such as the short story significantly titled 'True conversion' by the great Indian writer and activist Munshi Premchand (1880–1936). These tales become highly significant when read against the political background presented on every page of the journal. In turn, the short story 'The proof', by Menezes Bragança herself, later collected in her *Tales from Goa* (1991), follows in the footsteps of Premchand and presents the Goans' desire for change.

If in these short stories the theme of emancipation through change is conveyed in a subtle manner, in the period between 1957 and 1961 *Free Goa* also hosted an selection of openly nationalist poems by Manohar Sar Dessai (1925–2006), which in every stanza express the Goans' yearning to see their land free; in Lobo's words, 'they aimed to denounce colonial imperialism as an essential evil and urge the total mental and political liberation from foreign domination, in this specific case, Portuguese domination' (2018: 5). *Free Goa's* editors made a point of signalling that all the poems had originally been written in Konkani, the language of the land, thus contesting linguistic colonization, and then translated into English by their authors so that they could be read by all Indians.

This restricted but engaged literary network which found expression in *Free Goa* branched out to include the Portuguese writer Jaime Cortesão (1884–1960), a harsh critic of Salazar’s regime, as well as the Ghanaian politician and leader Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972), who provided a poem on Africa’s quest for freedom – a subject that was discussed often in the pages of *Free Goa* – thus encompassing three continents. At the same time, these literary works conversed with Goa’s plurilingual literary tradition in Portuguese, English, Konkani, and Marathi, the four main languages of Goa, and include the works of authors such as Laxmanrao Sar Dessai (1904–1986) or Lambert Mascarenhas (1914–), who in their poetry, short stories, and novels openly opposed the Portuguese regime, and later on, in the 1960s, the works of Epitácio Pais (1924–2009), Vimala Devi (1932–), and Maria Elsa da Rocha (1924–2007), who reflected on the aftermath of the end of the Portuguese regime.³

Though few in number, each one of the literary pieces published in *Free Goa* from 1957 to 1961 reveals the editors’ and the main contributors’ belief that literature was an important weapon in their crusade to see Goa freed from Portuguese domination and integrated into India. The indissoluble bond they saw between literature and political action is stated in the article ‘Out with traitors’ (10 February 1960, 1). In this piece, the editor, Menezes Bragança, openly criticizes the colonial government’s recommendation that citizens in general and artists in particular, especially those who joined the ranks of the Portuguese administration in Goa, keep literature and politics separate, by making reference once again not only to Goan and Portuguese poets but Indians as well, thus enlarging and consolidating *Free Goa*’s literary network. What becomes obvious in the article is that the government’s appeal to poets and writers to dissociate literature from politics is in itself political. The refusal to bring together literature and politics does not assert literature’s neutrality. Rather, it determines its ideological scope.

In this context, following Jean-Paul Sartre’s classic essay of 1949, ‘Qu’est-ce que c’est la littérature?’, very much in vogue at the period of *Free Goa*’s publication, and Benoît Denis’s *Littérature et engagement. De Pascal à Sartre* (2000), the main aim of this article is to discuss a selection of the literary narratives forming part of the *Free Goa* literary network as engaged literature.⁴

According to Denis, ‘engaged literature’ designates a literary practice associated with both politics and the debates it generates; an engaged writer is thus a writer who ‘makes politics in his books’ (2000: 9–10). Nonetheless, Denis adds (2000: 9), the notion of engagement has become generalized because it refers either to literature in which the author expresses partisan views, as would be the case of

Manohar Sar Dessai or Jaime Cortesão, or has been stretched to encompass the ideas that pervade the author's work or the role he or she attributes to literature, as would be the case of the short stories by Premchand and Menezes Bragança. To this might be added the context and angle from which a reading community decides to interpret these literary works, as would be the case of both the editors, of Marxist persuasion, and the readers of *Free Goa*.

What all these works have in common is that they defend values such as liberty and equality in order to oppose a colonial regime which the editors of *Free Goa* considered unjust. For Denis (2002: 24–27), the engaged author questions the autonomy of the literary field and understands that, through their works, they participate directly, and not symbolically, in the revolutionary process. For Denis, engaged literature is not an end in itself, but becomes the means put to the service of a greater cause which goes beyond the literary text. By extension, the concept and definition of 'engaged literature' is not monolithic but has sometimes been reconfigured, acquiring particular profiles in different historical contexts.

The main tenets of this type of literature, which clearly coincide with the views of the editors of *Free Goa*, are: first, that in a time of crisis, political and social questions should be the concern of all citizens; and, second, that as literary narratives relate the word to the world, they can articulate corrective measures which, ultimately, can contribute to the solution of social or political problems (Sartre 1949: 11). Whether through subtle or straightforward analogies and metaphors, whose referents were obvious to the average Goan of the day in general and to the reader of *Free Goa* in particular, the literary pieces selected for publication in the journal called the reader to confront the ills of Salazarism, based on the principle that in troubled times – as the many articles on the Goan freedom fighters' arrest, torture, and even death in Goan and Portuguese prisons showed – injustice was not just something to be discussed but fought against. Literature was one of the main weapons to fight against injustice. As Sartre himself stated: 'A day comes when the pen is forced to stop, and the writer must then take up arms. Thus, however you might have come to it, whatever the opinions you might have professed, literature throws you into battle' (1949: 65). In his poem 'The noose of words', published in *Free Goa* in 1960, Manohar Sar Dessai declares that, though unarmed, every word in his poetry was as powerful as the hangman's rope:

Armless hero,
I have but the heart to hate

The hateful hand
 And a noose of words
 For the beastly neck. (New Delhi, 18 February 1960; published in
Free Goa, 25 June 1960: 7)

As is common knowledge, a literary narrative can be more persuasive than a theoretical text as it can centre on the life of common people in ordinary situations and, therefore develops a feeling of empathy in the reader. One of the common critiques made about this type of literature, in particular by those who favour the dissociation of politics and literature, is that the writer relinquishes literary quality to serve political ideals, as if ethics and aesthetics were necessarily incompatible. Along these lines, Denis (2002: 79–80) observes that the success of engaged literature is not measured in terms of its duration but by its effectiveness, at a certain time and in a specific social and political context. As Sartre also pointed out, ‘the engaged writer knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to change’ (1949: 23). This does not mean, however, that engaged writers leave aesthetics aside, that they do not take into account literary value, but that they try to reach a certain level of transparency in their writing in order to make it comprehensible to the largest possible audience. Terry Eagleton (1983: 4) questions the concept of literary value by arguing that it is not an essence present in words or languages; instead, he adds, it is the literary community that decides which texts have literary value or not. Seen from this perspective, as Eagleton points out, ‘literature is not some inherent quality or set of qualities displayed by certain kinds of writing [...] but the way in which people relate themselves to writing’ (1983: 9). In other words, literature is that body of texts which a community decides to call literature.

As for the literary genres associated with engaged literature, for Sartre the novel was the genre *par excellence*. He observed that ‘it is bound with the only regime in which prose has meaning, democracy. When one is threatened, the other is too’ (Sartre 1949: 61–62). As regards poetry, he thought it was ‘on the side of painting, sculpture and music’ (Sartre 1949: 11), stating that while prose was the genre of signs, of the concrete, the art of poetry was the reverse. For Sartre, in poetry, ‘the world and things become inessential, become a pretext for the act of writing which is an end in itself’ (1949: 35). In his opinion, this was precisely the opposite of what engaged literature should be all about.

Literature’s styles and genres are not the same in all times and contexts. They are in a constant process of mutation. This is why in a colonial society, as was the case of Goa – in which literary works were published mainly in

periodicals – genres such as the short story or poetry had a wider circulation than the novel and were therefore much more effective. Specifically, for Mary Louise Pratt, the short story is a functional genre in a colonial context as it is used to introduce new and stigmatized subject matter; it is also used to introduce new groups into an established national literature or into an emerging national literature in the process of decolonization, as would be the case of Goa (1994: 104).

The editors of *Free Goa* abided by these principles because, as will be discussed in the following sections, they not only published mainly poems and short stories in the pages of their journal but also, on page 6 of the issue of *Free Goa* published 10 June 1959, they called their readers to participate in an ‘Anthology of Short Stories on Goa’. The aim of the anthology, very much in the spirit of Sartre’s engaged literature, was to promote ‘a true understanding of Goa, Goan life and culture’. To this end, they proposed to first publish a collection of short stories which reflected on ‘the social, cultural, economic, political and other aspects of life in Goa past and present’. The call revealed the editors’ belief in the power of literature in the service of what they understood as a greater cause, Goa’s freedom and union with India. The contest thus went beyond the tenet of ‘art for art’s sake’; as more than entertainment, the stories would lead Goans to reflect on their culture, past and present. The editors also justified the genre chosen, that of the short story, as ‘the most suitable medium for bringing home to the reader, in a vivid manner, a true picture of their people’. There were restrictions, however, on both style and content. As for the style, it should be faithful to life, along the lines of Formal Realism, rather than Modernist experimentation, because it would be much easier for the reader to identify with the different narratives. As Denis (2002: 87–89) observes, the aesthetics of Realism aim at recreating the whole social picture; this literary style appears as the ideal support for an engaged representation of historical facts founded on the principle of verisimilitude.

Regarding the content, the organizers of the short story contest also favoured stories that portrayed ‘the close affinity, links, influences and synthesis of Goan and Indian cultural and social patterns’. The determination of these short stories’ ideological scope was directly related to the fact that they wanted to reinforce the idea that Goa should be part of India. The stories could be in Konkani, Marathi, Kannada, or in another Indian language, or in English, Portuguese, and French. Ultimately all of them, like the poems published in *Free Goa*, would be translated, first into Hindi, India’s national language, and then into English, India’s vehicular language, thus shortening the distance between Goa and

India, as it would give all Indians the chance to become acquainted with Goa's predicament through a literary narrative, written by an average Goan.

The engaged short story in *Free Goa*

As already noted, one of the stories selected for publication in *Free Goa* was 'True conversion' by the celebrated Indian writer Munshi Premchand. Premchand was one of the most engaged writers in India, a Gandhian, a revolutionary, and a progressive thinker who, through his work as a journalist and fiction writer, fought against the many forms of exploitation and repression on Indian soil: British colonialism, the cause of the Untouchables, communalism, the wretched life of the peasants at the hands of the landlords, and the condition of women (early marriage, dowry, widows, remarriage, domestic violence). He was openly against orthodoxy, in its many forms, and blind faith. He fought for the union of all Indians, as shown by his writing fiction in both Hindi and Urdu and his favouring the creation of a common forum of writers in all the languages of India, which coincided precisely with the aim of the short story contest organized by the editors of *Free Goa*. As for how he regarded literature, in one of his letters he stated his desire that literature should go beyond the realm of aesthetics and the elites to become profoundly ethical and popular:

I would not hesitate to say that I weigh Art as other things in terms of utility. We shall have to change our concept of beauty. Art was and still is the name of a narrow form of worship. The view is narrow and cannot see the acme of beauty's reach in life's struggle. There is no place in the Temple of Literature for those to whom wealth is dear. (Goswami 1984: 103)

What makes Premchand an engaged author, as observed in the quotation above, is that, in the line of Sartre or Denis, he questions the dissociation of literature from everyday life as well as its limitation to a certain elite. Hence, he made his writing a space to defend values such as liberty and social justice even if that opposed him to the political and religious establishment of the times. His progressive views on life and literature were presented in the many novels and short stories that he wrote during his hectic public and personal life since he put in practice in his private life what he preached in public. This is why he was taken as a role model by the editors of *Free Goa*. He became both nationally and

internationally known mainly as a writer of short stories, some of which were translated into Portuguese by the Goan nationalist Evagrio Jorge.⁵

Originally written in Hindi, 'True conversion' has a compact, linear plot which, like the first novels and short stories written in India in Bengali after the English model, deals with historical subject matter. However, in the style of Indian literature in Sanskrit, the story, which takes place in the Iberian Peninsula at the time of the Muslim rule of Portugal and Spain, can be read as an allegory of Portuguese colonization in Goa in reverse. In this case, it is the Christians who feel displaced in their own land: 'Several centuries had passed since the Moslems had been ruling over Spain and Portugal. In the place of cathedrals, mosques were going up. Instead of church bells one heard the call of *azan*' (Premchand 1957: 11). It is not only the landscape which is changing; even highly placed Christians were embracing the new faith in order not to lose their standing in the new social order: 'The respectable folks among Christians were giving up refuge in Christ and joining the Islamic fraternity' (Premchand 1957: 11). There is one gallant Christian, however, who refuses to yield to the conqueror. His name is Daud and he stands for the poor and destitute Christians who, rather than enter the kingdom of Islam, preferred to die in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Daud comes face to face with an equally young and gallant Muslim, Jamal, who defends the faith of his people as Daud defends his. While the latter criticizes Islam for enforcing its faith through violence, the former argues that 'The sword has always guarded the truth' (Premchand 1957: 11). As made clear in the narrative, for all their differences, their arguments and means of defence are alike. Sadly, both men draw their weapon and the confrontation ends with the death of the young Muslim. Daud must run for his life. His decision to fight for his life mirrors the choice open to his countrymen: to be disheartened or stand firm in the battlefield.

Premchand's story, though violent, has its Gandhian moral. Contrary to all expectations, Daud finds refuge in the house of Jamal's father, a devout Muslim. For the old father, Daud is the killer who murdered his courageous son. Nonetheless, following his faith and tradition as dictated by the Koran, he offers Daud, a man in distress, refuge in his house. Taking revenge upon Daud would mean breaching the tenets of his faith, which are above any human feeling or desire. This is why he does not give him away when a band of Arab pursuers come to his house looking for the outlaw. Nonetheless, the grieving old man has to fight against his better judgement not to avenge his son's death. Realizing the old man's great pain, Daud feels sympathy for him: 'This has nothing to do with race or religion. If somebody murdered my son, I too would have felt thirsty for

the murderer's blood. That is only human nature' (Premchand 1957: 12). He offers his head to the distressed father if that can erase one portion of his grief. In return, when the old Arab realizes that though Daud is his son's murderer, he is also a true fighter for the Christians' cause, he lets him go unharmed. Daud reaches home safely, but he is no longer bent on the destruction of Islam. On the contrary. He starts to regard Islam with respect. What unites the characters is the recognition of the humanity in the other beyond the barriers of communalism.

The ethical message implied by the allegorical quality of Premchand's narrative does not undermine its aesthetic quality, as seen in the depiction of his characters, real human beings rather than mouthpieces of a certain ideology. The precision in the presentation of their predicaments, the recreation of the scene and time, all of which are wrought in an economical but effective plot, contribute to the unity of effect sought by the author. He wishes to move the reader to action so that, like the characters, they can understand that the only true conversion, as the title suggests, is that which allows us to see beyond partisan attitudes. In this sense, the story provides an example of truly engaged literature because it goes beyond reciting the litany of one particular party (Denis 2002: 17). In Gandhian style, the story appeals to the humanity in all and is a clear critique of any form of communalism, in particular because it was published after Partition (1947), when the rivalry between Hindus and Muslims was at its worst in India.

Read against the news of arrests and persecutions published in *Free Goa*, the story can also be interpreted as a guide to the Goan government to find inspiration in the wise old man who, though a member of the group in power, could recognize the motives and bravery of his enemy and treat him with respect. On another level, and echoing Tristão Menezes Bragança's editorial in *Free Goa* on 10 April 1957, 'New deal for liberation', the grieving father's promise to protect the Christian who murdered his son, because he is in his house, though they belong to different religious denominations, can be equated to the promise of the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, to review Indian policy towards Goa and assist them in their fight against colonialism because Goa was Indian and not a foreign territory. This is what the Goan nationalists, like the editors of *Free Goa*, had been claiming from the start.

The story 'The proof' (*Free Goa*, 25 January 1957: 6–7) by Menezes Bragança can be read as a critique of India's government and a warning to the Portuguese administration. In an apparently light tone, it tells the story of a young Goan, Jeremias Casavelha, a voracious reader who, like the young men in Premchand's story, was an idealist, with 'the most good-natured spirit' (p. 6). However, unlike

the young Christian and Muslim, he lacked the *physique-du-role* of the man of action. This is why his friends spare him no teasing when he breaks the news that he has killed a panther which had been terrorizing all the inhabitants of the village of Betul: 'with his style and tendencies he might have killed panthers even by the score in rhyme and verse, but not with a gun' (p. 6).

After arriving in the village of Betul, while he was settling down for the night, some of the hunters who had been after the panther asked him if they could leave their guns with him as they were going to a festival in their own village. During the dead of night, Jeremias found himself face to face with the beast. Though he understood nothing of shooting, he remembered the hunter's guns in the verandah, got out of bed and took the biggest gun, ready to kill the panther. He went to the back of the house where he heard a rustling of leaves; there he was confronted by a pair of fiery eyes. Trembling with fear, because what he was about to do was against his own nature, he aimed and shot. Not knowing whether he had actually killed the beast, he started blockading the entrance to the hut and spent the night in dread and silence. The next day, he was woken up by the people of the village who were outside the hut looking at the dead beast. He could not believe that he had single-handedly been able to do what the most intrepid hunters had been unable to do: 'I, myself, could hardly believe that I had done it' (p. 6). Proof of it was that two of his front teeth were missing, the result of 'the kick of the gun' (p. 6). The moral of the story is told in an allegorical and discreet manner: the brave but ineffectual hunters, who even depart for a celebration in their own village, leaving the panther at large, can be equated to the ineffectual attitude of the government of India towards Goa as observed in the editorial of *Free Goa*, 'Republic Day 1957' (25 January 1957: 1). As stated in the editorial, 'like the Indian nation and people, not daunted by the apparently formidable odds against their struggle for freedom, preserved their faith in their own strength in the battle for resistance and finally won the battle' against British imperialism, Goans, like Jeremias Casavelha in Menezes Bragança's story, should also persevere and trust their own strength,⁶ because, as also stated in the editorial and exemplified by the short story, 'Goans have always cherished their freedom as something precious [...] and the long line of martyrs who died in an attempt to regain lost freedom repudiates the suggestion that the Goan people or leadership ever accepted the foreign rule without resistance'. Though Casavelha, as his surname significantly indicates, might be a member of the decaying Casa Grande, leading a *sossegado* [easy] life, as his physical condition shows, he will defend his own rights at any moment, as his behaviour, suggested by the title of the short story, 'The proof', proves. As in

the case of 'True conversion', the direct relationship between the editorials and the short stories demonstrates explicitly that, like all engaged literature, Bragança and Premchand inscribed their stories in 'a political process that shows that their writings were committed to their communities' (Denis 2002: 31).

Mary Louise Pratt (1994: 99–103) differentiates the short story genre from the novel in terms of three propositions which apply to the two stories just analysed: the short story deals with a single theme, while the novel deals with a variety of themes; the short story is a sample or example of some larger text, while the novel is a more complete text; the novel can constitute a whole text, a book, while the short story never does. The most important proposition is the first: while the novel tells a life, the short story tells a fragment of a life, what Pratt defines as 'a moment of truth' (1994: 99). As we have seen, both Premchand's and Berta Menezes Bragança's stories unveil moments of truth which apply to the Goan context and were exemplary to both Goans and the Goan government: while the former story criticizes both communalism and the ineffective behaviour of those in power, the latter shows Goans, apparently passive, ready for action whenever necessary. After Denis (2002: 34), it might be argued that these moments of truth in the works of both authors confirm that in engaged literature aesthetics is linked directly to an ethical project.

Engaged poetry in *Free Goa*

Though, as already stated by Sartre, prose rather than poetry should be the style of engaged literature, the relationship between poetry and politics, as Denis (2002: 171) points out, goes back to the nineteenth century and the apex of Romanticism. The Romantics exalted the writer, identified with the figure of the poet-prophet who, thanks to the power of his imagination, was capable of profound insights which passed unnoticed by the ordinary man. In turn, these revelations of the poet-prophet were shared with the community through powerful metaphors, which could have a strong political appeal.

Poetry is the literary genre that most frequently appeared in the pages of *Free Goa* and its presence became more conspicuous in the second half of the 1950s and in 1960 and 1961. The poet who was most associated with *Free Goa*'s crusade for freedom was Manohar Sar Dessai. The son of the eminent writer Laxmanrão Sar Dessai (1904–1986), who was also a contributor to *Free Goa* and *O Académico*, Sar Dessai wrote some of his most engaged poems while studying at the University of the Sorbonne in Paris. He wrote mainly in Konkani but also in Marathi, Portuguese, English, and French. In the issue of *Free Goa* of

10 November 1959, when the conflict between Goans and the Salazarist regime had reached a high point of tension, Menezes Bragança published Sar Dessai's poem, 'My Goa', written in 1955 while the poet was in France. In blank verse and irregular stanzas that, rather than following a pre-established rhymed pattern, are shaped by the poet's political fervour, Sar Dessai deconstructs the usual portrayal of the Goan landscape as that of Golden Goa, of green fields, elegant great houses, and picturesque huts, by planting in its midst a personified Goa, which like many Goans of the day, suffered at the hands of the colonial administration. In the first stanza, this Goa, which stands for the Goan Everyman, is, paradoxically, seen begging for food in the land of plenty: 'Fertile land, land of paddy fields, / My Goa goes begging for a grain of rice'.

In the next stanza, Goa's bucolic and fragrant landscape, 'Land of the perfume and of the Mogra and Champa flowers', is depicted as a suffocating place in which 'Goa can hardly breathe' because 'the air is filled with the gun-powdered smoke' of the colonial police. In a crescendo, and a move from light to darkness, Goa then becomes the personification of the freedom fighters shivering with cold 'In the dark cells of Peniche'. Goa is then also represented through complex religious imagery. If in one line it is portrayed as 'Land of goddesses, land of Shantadurga and of Mother Mary', in the next this Goa is tragically depicted dying: 'My Goa sweats blood on the cross of the Portuguese'. Through the personification of Goa, the poem questions the idea of a Golden, democratic, and Christian Goa and thus contradicts Salazar's statement that Goa was a province of the empire rather than a colony. The dictator argued this in order to back up the thesis that there was no colonial problem in Portugal (Lobo 2018: 6). The poem can be read as an example of what Assunção (2020: 7) defines as a counter-historical discourse since it aims to correct the distorted and romanticized image of Goa the Portuguese had disseminated in order to justify their presence on Indian soil.

One of Sar Dessai's most-quoted poems, and, like 'My Goa', written in Konkani, 'For your sake' was published in the *Free Goa* of 10 November 1959. In this poem the lyrical 'I' addresses Goa to say, as in Berta Menezes Bragança's 'The proof', that though apparently calm, he awaits the moment of action: 'And patiently do I stand'. Eventually, the Goan's suppressed rage will shake 'Plants, trees and mountains' from their roots and become so powerful that it will open the doors of the mighty prisons of the Portuguese: 'The iron doors of the mighty prisons / Like wax will melt'. As a result, Goans will reconquer their land: 'You will be the Master of the green fields'. Meanwhile, with his poetry, in the style of the truly engaged poet, the lyrical 'I' sows the seeds of rebellion in the hearts of Goans: 'Now, I do sow red seeds of fiery words / In the field of your Hearts'.

For all the political content, literary value is not sacrificed in Sar Dessai's poetry. On the contrary, only literary works of high aesthetic value can endure through time (as does Sar Dessai's poetry) on the one hand and, on the other, attain their ethical end. It is the affective value implied in the rich literary metaphor that can turn the poem into a persuasive weapon that leads the reader to experience vicariously the problems it helps articulate and, eventually, move him to action. There is no incompatibility or dissociation between Sar Dessai's poetry and the political scenario of the times. Rather, his poems, as Denis (2002: 178) would have it, entwine the metaphysics of Beauty, the Good, and Truth. Arguably, these three values enshrine the dual aesthetic and social mission of the poet and become effective in the context of a nationalist struggle.

As explained above, Manohar Sar Dessai was part of the *Free Goa* literary network that branched out to Portugal to include the openly engaged poetry of the Portuguese man of letters and political activist Jaime Cortesão (1884–1960). In the *Free Goa* of 6 September 1960, Berta Menezes Bragança reproduced Cortesão's poem 'The curse', which she had translated from Portuguese into English. The poem is accompanied by a short introductory text in which Cortesão, a prose writer and poet, is presented as another intellectual victim of Salazar's oppressive regime. The editor highlights the poet's engagement from the start in the fight to free Portugal from Salazar's dictatorship. 'The curse' was chosen for publication, the editor states, because it represents the anguish experienced by the people of Portugal, 'crushed and oppressed for the last 33 years by the tyrannical rule of pious Salazar' (*Free Goa*, 6 September 1960: 5). The angry and desperate tone of the poem serves to reinforce the ideas defended by the journal. First, as Lobo explains (2018: 6–7), the dictatorship hindered any democratic debate in Portugal itself and, second, 'the dictatorial tone of Portuguese power under Salazar made almost impossible any type of negotiation of the Goan problem since Salazar was aware that one of the supports of his own dictatorship was the survival of the Empire' (2018: 6). This poetry, whether written by Goans or Portuguese, had a common referent: the fight against a common enemy, the tyranny of Salazar's regime.

If, following Denis (2002: 178), it can be claimed that Sar Dessai's poem balances its political content with the quality of its metaphor, in Cortesão's poetry the content seems to prevail over the form, as his lyrical 'I' is bent on giving voice to the fury of the Portuguese against the injustices of Salazarism and he wants his work to have an immediate effect. Unlike Sar Dessai's, Cortesão's poetry can be defined as 'militant' rather than 'engaged' literature. If the latter connects the political to the literary because it is in this latter realm that the poet's world vision materializes, the former is political from its conception (Denis 2002: 35). In stanza

after stanza, this urge translates itself in the lines' simple syntax and transparent vocabulary to leave no doubt about its political message. Where Sar Dessai, with Romantic overtones, dresses the Goan Everyman in the robes of extreme suffering, Cortesão openly dismantles Salazar's self-constructed image of the pious man to dress him in the clothes of the assassin. In the first stanza, through the extended robes metaphor, Salazar is presented as a vile Pharisee who wants to pass for 'a wise man in the temple'. In the next stanza, the lyrical 'I' affirms that Salazar's hatred of Freedom, Reason, and Truth, the triad associated with democracy, which has extinguished hope in all Portuguese homes, has turned him into a bird of prey feeding on the pain of the Portuguese: 'Fair People, the hero of peoples, who gave the World new worlds', he exclaims in, nonetheless, imperialistic overtones. While in Sar Dessai's poem evil is the result of the more impersonal forces of colonialism, in Cortesão's the figure of Salazar is equated to that of Lucifer from which animals and people flee as he is the embodiment of the assassin: 'You pass and the grass withers in the paths, / in terror the birds flee from their nests'. In the style of Walt Whitman, the lyrical 'I' makes a point of stating that his cry is not individual, but contains multitudes, as it voices the wrath of all the Portuguese: 'It is the multitudes that roar in a single cry' (*Free Goa*, 6 September 1960: 5).

Cortesão's is a clear example of doctrinal literature with a definite purpose: to influence the social and political context of the day even if it meant sacrificing its long-lasting existence in the literary pantheon. Like most doctrinal literature, the unification of Cortesão's lyrical 'I' with the Portuguese people in the poem expresses what Denis defines as 'a holistic vision of the social' (2002: 181) which usually pervades militant literature; in other words, the aim is to make manifest the desire that the organic whole of society should not be destroyed by an unjust political regime, in this case Salazar's, represented in *Free Goa* as historically the most violent, undemocratic, and culturally disrespectful of all colonialists.

Also, as part of the leftist literary network, bent on expressing anti-colonial solidarity, on 25 June 1960, *Free Goa* published the poem 'There is victory for Africa' by Kwame Nkrumah so that Goans would also find inspiration in Africa's struggle for freedom. At the time, Nkrumah was a political leader and activist in favour of the decolonization of Africa and founder of the Pan-African movement who, through his poetry, called both men and women to action:

Sons of Africa, arise;
Girls of Africa rise and shine;
In the name of the Great Africa,
We shall fight and conquer now. (*Free Goa*, 25 June 1960: 7)

The simple and direct style of Nkrumah's and Cortesão's poems shows that their aim is to establish a certain transitivity between their poems and the world (Denis 2002: 178) as they seek to promote a common political consciousness and anti-colonial solidarity between the political elites of the Portuguese colonies and the Portuguese people. Though this does not imply a renunciation of literary values, it is evident that the poets seek a certain directness of style which will reach a wider public more quickly.

Different literary genres and a common purpose

In the context of the articles and editorials published in *Free Goa*, these short stories and poems function as a web or network of anti-colonial texts which, in the contingent political circumstances of the second half of the 1950s and first half of the 1960s, and as understood by the editors of the journal, were related by an ethical project whose ultimate aim was to unite Goans both to the other colonies in Africa, and to the Portuguese people under the yoke of Salazarism, in order to urge them to confront colonial history.

If, as Assunção (2020: 7) explains, Cunha in his famous essay 'The denationalisation of Goans' (1944) had tried to show how Goans had been denationalized by colonial forces throughout history, the literary network in *Free Goa* also called for a revision of that historical discourse so that there would be a process of renationalization which, in their view, would lead Goans to consider their Indian ancestry from a different perspective, as the publication of Premchand's story, together with the narrative by Menezes Bragança, reveals. As shown in our discussion, going one step beyond, Menezes Bragança made a point of reinforcing the role of literature in these circumstances not only by publishing articles directly addressing this question, such as 'Out with traitors', but also by promoting a literary contest on the issue of Goan identity that would lead Goans to reunite with their Indian roots. If it might be argued that the contest was biased in the sense that the theme proposed was restricted to emphasizing the Indian aspects of Goan culture, it was coherent with the objectives of the journal: the reunion of Goa and India.

Whether in prose or in verse, in styles which denounce the political agenda of the writers and rank them as engaged authors, as would be the case of Sar Dessai, or militant authors, like Cortesão and Nkrumah, these literary works served to reinforce the idea found on every page of *Free Goa* – in Lobo's words, that 'the desire to become free from Portugal and be part of the new Indian state was not the desire of half a dozen Hindus or lunatic radical Catholics but the will of most of the Goan people, who were unable to express themselves due to the repressive

dictatorial system' (2018: 6). Engaged literature, in oblique or simple metaphors and analogies, in styles more accessible to the general public, and with a stronger romantic appeal than political or historical treaties, was foremost in this effort.

Notes

- 1 This research was carried out as part of the FAPESP project 'Pensando Goa' (proc. 2014/15657-8). The opinions, hypotheses, and conclusions or recommendations expressed are my sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of FAPESP.
- 2 For a full discussion on the topic, see Fernandes (2013).
- 3 See Devi and de Seabra (1971); Melo e Castro (2016); Passos (2013); Festino and Garmes (2018).
- 4 In this article, I use the Portuguese translations in Denis Benoît (2002).
- 5 'True conversion' was translated into Portuguese by Evagrio Jorge and published in the Goan Journal *O Herald* (7 August 1968, 2), with the title 'Perdão'.
- 6 In 1991, 'The proof' was included in Menezes Braganza's collection *Tales from Goa*, a short story sequel in which each story presents Goan colonial society from a markedly critical angle.

Works cited

- Assunção, Marcello Felisberto Morais de (2020) 'Uma analítica goesa da colonialidade no ensaio "The Denationalisation of Goans" (1944) de Tristão Bragança Cunha', in *Historiografia Crítica: Ensaio, analítica e hermenêutica da História*, ed. Bento Luiz Carlos, Godoi Rodrigo Tavares, and Antônio Passos (Vitória: Editora Milfontes), 309–336.
- Barreto, Adeodato (1960) 'Beautiful Goa', *Free Goa*, 10 February, 1.
- Cortésão, Jaime (1960) 'The curse', *Free Goa*, 6 September, 5.
- Cunha, Tristão de Bragança (1944) *The Denationalisation of Goans* (Panaji, Goa: Goa Gazetteer Department Government of Goa).
- Denis, Benoît (2002) *Literatura e Engajamento. De Pascal a Sartre*, trans. Luiz Dagobert de Aguirra Roncari (Santa Catarina: EDUSC).
- Devi, Vimala, and Manuel de Seabra (1971) *A Literatura Indo-Portuguesa*, Vol. 1 (Lisbon: Junta de Investigação de Ultramar).
- Eagleton, Terry (1983) *Literary Theory* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell).
- Fernandes, Jason Keith (2013) 'Citizenship experiences of the Goan Catholics', PhD thesis, ISCTE, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.
- Festino, Cielo G., and Hélder Garmes (2018) 'Some considerations on Goan literature at home and abroad', *InterDISCIPLINARY Journal of Portuguese Diaspora Studies* 7: 89–106.

- Goswami, Kewal (1984) 'Prem Chand through his letters', *Indian Literature* 27.3 (101): 98–110, www.jstor.org/stable/24158724 (accessed 24 September 2019).
- Lobo, Sandra Ataíde (2014) 'The return to Indianness: Goa nationalism in the 1920s', in *Goa 2011: Reviewing and Recovering 50 Years Later*, ed. Savio Abreu and Rudolf C. Heredia (New Delhi: Concept Publishing), 121–143.
- Lobo, Sandra (2018) 'Libertação e anticolonialismo solidário no jornal *Free Goa*', paper read at the conference 'Africa na Imprensa Colonial e a Imprensa Colonial em África' organized by Joel Tembe and Sandra Ataíde Lobo, Arquivo Histórico de Moçambique e GIEIPC-IP, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, Complexo Pedagógico, 6 November.
- Melo e Castro, Paul (2016) *Lengthening Shadows*, vols. 1 and 2 (Saligão Goa: Goa 1556 and Golden Heart Emporium).
- Menezes Bragança, Berta (1957) 'The proof', *Free Goa*, 25 January, 6–7.
- Menezes Bragança, Berta (1960) 'Out with traitors', *Free Goa*, 10 February, 1.
- Menezes Bragança, Tristão (1957) 'New deal for liberation', *Free Goa*, 10 April, 1.
- Menezes Bragança, Tristão (1957) 'Republic Day 1957', *Free Goa*, 25 January, 1.
- Nkrumah, Kwame (1960) 'There is victory for Africa', *Free Goa*, 25 June, 7.
- Passos, Joana Filipa (2013) *Literatura Goesa em Português nos Séculos XIX e XX* (Lisbon: Humus).
- Pratt, Mary Louise (1994) 'The short story: The long and the short of it', in *The New Short Stories Series*, ed. Charles E. May (Athens: Ohio University Press), 90–113.
- Premchand, Munshi (1957) 'True conversion', *Free Goa*, 10 April, 11–12.
- Sar Dessai, Manohar (1959) 'For your sake', *Free Goa*, 10 November, 3.
- Sar Dessai, Manohar (1959) 'My Goa', *Free Goa*, 10 November, 8.
- Sar Dessai, Manohar (1960) 'The noose of words', *Free Goa*, 25 June, 7.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (1949) *What Is Literature?*, trans. Bernard Frenchman (New York: Philosophical Library).
- Williams, Raymond (1961) *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto & Windus).

Cielo G. Festino teaches English at Universidade Paulista, São Paulo, Brazil. She is a member of the project 'Thinking Goa: A Singular Archive in Portuguese (2015–2019)', funded by the São Paulo Research Foundation. She is co-editor, with Paul Melo e Castro, of *A House of Many Mansions: Goan Literature in Portuguese. An Anthology of Original Essays, Short Stories and Poems* (Under the Peepal Tree, 2017), and, with Paul Melo e Castro, Hélder Garmes, and Robert Newman, of 'Goans on the Move', a special issue of *Interdisciplinary Journal of Portuguese Diaspora Studies* 7 (2018).