

Stories from Outside and Inside the Goan Casa Grande: Away from the Community Romance¹

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Goa has been a contested space for many centuries. It has always received people from other parts of the subcontinent as well as from abroad, before the arrival of the Portuguese in 1510 to the coming of the hippies in the 1970s. Each newcomer left an imprint upon the locale. One of the symbols of Portuguese culture on Indian soil was the Great House, the Casa Grande, which represented the power of the Portuguese colonizers, who left Goa in 1961 after the territory was annexed to India. These houses have been described by Caroline Ifeka as “stately Catholic mansions ruled by landed aristocrats whose sensibilities [were] oriented to the West, rather than to the East” (308) and whose division into “unchanging and physically bounded sub-units of interior space” (309) pointed to cultural values that permeated not only the architecture of the house but also the highly stratified Goan Catholic society—product of the encounter between the Portuguese and the Indian on the subcontinent. The Casa Grande also stood for what has been defined as “Golden Goa,” the territory regarded as a Western enclave in the East, a product of the Portuguese imaginary in contradistinction to Indic Goa, the Indian side of Goan society, seen as a reaction to Golden Goa (Trichur 17). Raghuraman Trichur problematizes this Golden Goa as based on the prosperity and leisure of the *bhatkar* class, the landowners who lived in the Casa Grande and belonged to the local Catholic and Brahmin elite, and had the support and protection of the Portuguese State and institutions. Trichur adds that this elite enriched themselves at the expense of the *mandukars*, rural workers from a lower caste. Hence, the relationship between *bhatkars* and *mandukars* could at times be highly antagonistic and, when the *mandukars* did not fulfill their tasks, they could be evicted from the land.

Focusing on what the Casa Grande meant for the different segments of Goan society during the period of Portuguese presence in Goa, the aim of this article is to read in counterpoint two works of fiction: the English-language short story, “Mand Goes to Church” (2017) by Selma Carvalho²—in which the Casa Grande is seen from the outside, from the perspective of a “tribal”—and the Portuguese-language novel *Casa Grande e Outras Recordações de um Velho Goês* [*The Great House and Other Memories of an Old Goan*] (2008) written by Leopoldo da Rocha³—in which the Casa Grande is seen from the inside, as presented by its owner. Where the short story is the genre of the understatement,

concerns and tensions unknown in Carvalho's story animate Rocha's characters in the complex plot of his novel. Hence the "house-in-stasis," described in Carvalho's short story, becomes in Rocha's novel a "house-in-movement," when the characters come out of their bounded areas to interact with each other.

In his article, "The Ghosts of Place," Michael Mayerfield Bell reflects upon the meaning of locale. He says that places, like things, are often "imbued with spirits and personified sentiments" or a "felt presence" that "gives a sense of social aliveness to the place" (815-816). He goes on to describe what he calls "the social experience of the physical world, the phenomenology of environment" which arises from "the social relations of memory, and the memory of social relations" (820). He defines this phenomenon as "the ghosts of places" which, rather than "scary spirits of the unsettled dead," are "spirits of temporal transcendence of connections between past and future" (820). This is precisely the feeling the reader experiences with novels such as *Casa Grande*, written by such people as Leopoldo da Rocha, who were witnesses to Indo-Portuguese Goa. The fact that the author should declare in the novel's "Preface" (Rocha 12) that he can offer a first-hand account of some of the events presented in the novel, because he took part in them, confers an aura of authenticity to his narrative. Like Mand, Carvalho's main character, the reader feels the urge to cross the threshold of the Casa Grande, "a spirited space" treated almost "with ritual care" (Mayerfield Bell 820) in order to have a peep at this erstwhile world, whose indelible marks are part of Goa's cultural identity to this day.

Both literary narratives can be understood as what Sandra Zagarell defines as "narratives of community" which portray "the minute and quite ordinary processes through which the community maintains itself as an entity. The self exists here as part of the interdependent network of the community rather than as an individualistic unit" (499). However, in the two narratives in question the same community is seen from opposing perspectives as represented by the languages in which the characters speak and define their identities: native Konkani in the case of "Mand Goes to Church" and Portuguese, the language of the Goan elite, in the case of *Casa Grande*. These distinct perspectives turn the characters, in each language, into their Goan Other, as they give voice to the concerns of their own communities.⁴ Nonetheless, both narratives cannot be considered isolated units because they are profoundly interrelated in the sense that stories told in one language are complemented, contested and resignified when narrated in the other languages of Goa, since they represent the interests of different communities that share a common locale.

Outside the Casa Grande

The short story “Mand Goes to Church” is narrated from the perspective of a young man named Mand. From up a hill and on the tense border between the newly converted and the native, this Gauda tribal gazes longingly at a Catholic village somewhere in Goa at some unspecified moment during the four hundred plus years of Portuguese colonialism on Indian soil. It is the beauty of the villages, as represented by their buildings, churches and houses, which symbolize Golden Goa (Perez 55) and bewitch Mand. However, this paradisiacal place is subtly and masterfully problematized by Carvalho when her main character, Mand, is prevented from approaching the Catholic village and can only look at the Casa Grande from afar.

Mand is twice-removed from the houses, as the distance separating him from them is not only geographical, but also cultural and has to do both with the intricate relationship between the Indian and the Portuguese that existed in Goa, during Portuguese colonialism (1510-1961) and the impassable distance between indigenous groups, like Mand’s, and high-caste Indians that marginalised such figures to an extent they felt like foreigners in their own land. This distance is implied in his name, Mand, which can also denote the space of the village square where the rituals of the local communities are performed, autochthonous practices considered profane by Catholic priests. Mand’s name, then, indicates his distance from the sacred space of the white-washed church and the stately houses, symbols of the Portuguese colonial power in Goa he so much admires and would very much like to see from the inside.

This distance between Mand and the Catholic village becomes even more apparent during the moments when the intrusive narrator takes over Mand’s almost literal portrayal of the village, as if, being a subaltern, he needs to be spoken for. The narrator voices the prejudice of those who regard Mand as their Other, “... a creature of their past: pagan, savage, filthy, disgusting, dishonorable, a man-boy without a religion, without a caste, without even a surname. A boy that the nameless tribal woman living up in the hills had given birth to” (Carvalho no page). Mand is therefore presented as the “half devil and half child” of Rudyard Kipling’s famous poem, “The White Man’s Burden,” only in Carvalho’s story he represents the past of both European colonizer and high-caste Indian.

What Mand sees from his vantage point is the transplantation of European design to Indian soil, in the form of a Portuguese-style enclave which, in terms of architecture and layout, appears divorced from its surroundings. The cluster of Catholic houses he sees are emblematic of colonial power, so perfect with “their pyramid roofs, tiled methodically, one tile and then the next and then the next, all neatly arranged with nothing left to chance, not one gaping hole which would let in the rodents or the rain” (Carvalho). What seems to attract him in these houses that he identifies in an almost communalist fashion with the religion of the

newcomers is the regularity and solidity of European construction, the thick walls and flawless roofs that keep at bay unpleasant animals and are able to weather the Monsoon. What the reader can perceive from Mand's description of this village is the way the colonizer had altered the vast Indian landscape as he fought against man and nature to impose his culture upon it. Mand's aching desire to be part of this singular and apparently harmonious community requires him, a native, to perceive his own condition of outsider in his own land.

He also portrays the houses of this enclave as "standing together in solidarity" (Carvalho) as if their inhabitants were insecure in their own condition, knowing that the likes of Mand are constantly marauding through the area. At another level, as a result of the Portuguese colonization of Goa, they themselves also became outsiders in their own land when they adhered to the culture of the colonizer. This condition turned them into a local elite of *bhatkars*, or gentlemen landowners who enjoyed the favour of the colonial regime. Mand's roving eye then focuses upon a second group of houses that also are distinguished by their neatness, "thatched to perfection," but that stand in a "subservient semi-circle around those that were tiled" (Carvalho) their localization and layout also reinforcing the idea of colonial power and denoting the internal hierarchies, in terms of caste, of this seemingly peaceful community, since these houses belong to the *mandukars* or tillers of the land, also converted to the new religion but from a lower caste.

Furthermore, there are the people who live in the houses "the Almeidas, the Alfonsos, the Albuquerque and the Colacos, the Cardozos and the Carvalhos, the Fernandes and the de Souzas, the de Silvas and the Furtados, the Pintos and the Pinheiros" (Carvalho) whose names reveal "their past, their ancestors, their lineage, their right to property" (Carvalho).

Mand settles down on his perch to continue his observations, peering this time inside "the soul" of the perfectly illuminated red-tiled house, the Casa Grande, in which men and women have clearly and rigidly allocated spaces and duties. He could see the women in the kitchen "performing feats of magic, a little austerity and a little indulgence, tempering seasoning and spicing to produce breads, broths and brews" (Carvalho); the privileged young men who speak Latin and Portuguese, the newly acquired language of the Catholic community, and may falter when using the language of the land, Konkani, now relegated to the kitchen, and pace the upper rooms examining books and violins, imported from foreign lands; the older men who sit in the verandah waiting for someone to pass by and convey the latest news from the village; the young belle of the house whose only aspiration is "to pass like ships from the safe harbour of the father's house to that of their husband's" (Carvalho).

There is an implied contrast between the young and the old, women and men of the family which speaks volumes, but is lost to Mand, though not to the knowledgeable narrator: among this Catholic elite, marriage is a complicated social affair which does not necessarily bring happiness to the

young brides. The highly educated young men, on the other hand, may reach old age only to realize that things did not necessarily turn out as they had expected—despite their command of Latin and Portuguese or their prowess with the violin—due to the limited possibilities the colony offers.

In this sense, Selma Carvalho's story follows the tradition of many other short stories written by Goan women authors after Goa's annexation to India, some in Portuguese like Vimala Devi's *Monção* (*Monsoon*) (1963) and Maria Elsa da Rocha's *Vivências Parilhadas* (*Sharing Lives*) (2005), and others in English like *Tales from Goa* (1991) by Bertha Menezes Bragança. Like Carvalho, these authors also make a point of depicting the relationship between social communities in Goa, whether harmonious or troubled.

Though we can visualize the people Mand sees moving inside the houses, we cannot understand what they say because they are speaking in the language of the colonizer, while Mand speaks the language of the land. To be able to actually listen to the people Mand saw inside the Casa Grande, we will enter it through Leopoldo da Rocha's Portuguese-language novel which gives an internal view of the house and its inhabitants.

Inside the Casa Grande: What Mand Does Not Know

Rocha's *Casa Grande* focuses on the life of Bal, a Goan Catholic priest, from childhood to adulthood, before and after the Portuguese presence in Goa. He was born and lived in the Casa Grande and can, therefore, bring back to life, in a highly critical manner, what is, for Mand, no more than a series of incomprehensible gestures or distant murmurs. In the "Preface" to *Casa Grande*, Rocha states that his narrative is based on "uma mesma mescla de realidade psiquicamente vivida pelo autor, um relato biográfico, temperado com um tudo-nada de ficção. O componente 'ficção' entra, mas em grau reduzido" (Rocha 12).⁵ Thus, in *Casa Grande* fiction and history come together as the main character's biography gains new meaning when seen in terms of Goa's historical context.

At a personal level, Rocha, like his alter ego, Bal, lived in the Casa Grande, was raised in the Christian faith, and later moved to Portugal to live in self-imposed exile (D'Lima 318). Rather than presenting life in the Catholic community, and inside the Casa Grande, as the safe haven Mand sees from afar, Rocha has no qualms about depicting these elite families as being at times unjust to their own members, due to the beliefs and values of their class, which he presents as a model of false consciousness, as Marxists would have it.

In this sense, his novel is in line with several other novels from Goa, both in Portuguese and in English, that were published during and after the Portuguese regime and which tell the story of the community, through the story of a family, in a highly critical manner: *Jacob e Dulce*. *Scenas da*

Vida Indiana [*Jacob and Dulce. Sketches from Indo-Portuguese Life*] (1896) by Francisco João da Costa, *GIP, A Goiabeira do Quintal* [*The Goiabeira in the Yard*] (1960) by Belmira Baptista de Almeida, *The Mango and the Tamarind Tree* (1970) by Leslie de Noronha, *Skin* by Margareth Mascarenhas (2001), and *The Sting of Peppercorns* (2017) by Anthony Gomes.

Like most narratives of community (Zagarell 498), geographical location (Goa) provides unity in Rocha's episodic novel rather than a linear development or chronological sequence. Through a series of flashbacks and prolepses, the narrative spans thirty years that synchronically points to the patterns, customs and activities through which the Indo-Portuguese community tried to perpetuate itself. It also describes the rapid changes that took place in the same community due to Goa's integration into India, all told from the perspective of Bal, the novel's main character.

Looking back, from his new life in Portugal, in *Casa Grande* Rocha analyzes places, customs and rituals through which the Goan Indo-Portuguese community tried to maintain itself as an individualized entity. If, as Sandra Zagarell would say "the self exists here [in narratives of community] as part of the interdependent network of the community, rather than as an individualistic unit" (499), the fact that Rocha chooses to tell the story from the perspective of Bal, who positions himself both inside and outside his community simultaneously, is highly significant. If, on the one hand, he is obliged to become a priest by his family to uphold family traditions, on the other, he uses the same Cartesian education he received in the Seminary, from the Jesuits, to become a critical observer of his own community and his situation inside it. Hence, unlike Mand's naïve and almost bucolic portrayal of the Catholic village, Bal presents the same locale, not as a place of stability and continuation, a rural and romantic paradise, but as a deeply troubled community because of what he sees as the failures of the Portuguese regime and of the Goan Catholic elite.

As we have seen in Carvalho's story, the *Casa Grande*, the model colonial house during Portuguese rule in Goa (1510-1961)—whose original layout often contained a remnant of the Hindu house—was one of the main emblems of the relationship between the locals and the colonial government. On the one hand, as Ikefa explains, these houses were built on the "quadrilateral plan" (326) of the Hindu caste society, which looked towards the inside of the construction, and their four walls were equidistant to one another and associated with cosmic forces that acquired more or less auspiciousness. Ikefa also observes that, to these houses, the Catholic elite would add large windows facing West that looked out into the world, and thus emphasized the attitude of their new owners, who adopted Western values and religion, and understood their mission was to civilize the world. Similarly, the Westward rooms of these houses would be sumptuously decorated in a Western style that demonstrated the family's ties with Europe. Hence, the original Hindu ground plan would

be subordinated to Western notions of the palatial house yet still be part of its foundations as if reminding the inhabitants of their own origins.

The Casa Grande was thus a spatial model of colonial urban domesticity whose interior represented Western and colonial modernity and, as such, a material example of the way in which the Portuguese colonizers tried to impose their own culture on the locals and establish a boundary between Christian culture and the remaining Hindu community. As a token of their recognition, the Portuguese would grant to these families titles of nobility that, in turn, became reflected in the façade of their houses in the form of coats-of-arms, placed above the entrance door, as in European noble mansions. To show both the grandeur and misery of Portuguese culture, as transplanted to Indian soil, Rocha has no qualms about depicting both the beautiful verandahs at the front of the house and the squalid bathroom at its rear.

Nonetheless, these Christian houses, like the people who inhabited them, displayed the indelible marks of Indian culture because, as Chattopadhyay argues when talking about colonial Calcutta, the division between what she calls the “white” and black communities” (154), the foreigners and the locals, was never complete or static. The story is much more complicated. In *Casa Grande*, one of the most emblematic signs of the intricate way in which the Hindu and Catholic communities were united is in the figure of the Virgin Mary that appears, now and then in the novel, with the features of a Hindu goddess: she is an Indian Devi, arising from a water lily (Rocha 19) or a *saibinn*, Konkani word for Our Lady, in the shape of a Saraswati painted by an Indian craftsman (Rocha 42). However, as Rocha makes a point of showing, a Manichean attitude would often rule the lives of the new Christians who, lest their loyalty to the new faith and master were doubted, would interiorise an extreme notion of what constituted sinful behaviour, particularly in matters of sex. They would also deny any cultural practice associated with Hinduism, such as the use of the Devanagari script. Nonetheless, says Rocha through his narrator, not all Goan Catholics, or Hindus, for that matter, adopted this attitude. In *Casa Grande* this is clearly shown in Bal’s family. Unlike Bal’s mother, who was openly prejudiced against the local Hindu community, Bal’s father was of a more open disposition. If they had a Casa Grande in the area of the Old Conquests, the heart of the Catholic community in Goa, the family also owned a house in the New Conquests, inhabited by Hindu families, among whom Bal’s father lived during the week, working as an *advogado provisionário* (or chartered lawyer), on the best terms of conviviality.

The newly acquired grandeur of the Indo-Portuguese elite, as represented by their houses, would sometimes isolate them from non-Catholics and lower-caste families since, in replicating Western culture on Indian soil, the houses revealed not only the owner’s loyalty to the new regime but also their desire to establish a distance from their own past. As Carvalho would state in her short story, through Mand’s narrative, and Rocha writes in *Casa Grande*: “A Casa Grande das Velhas Conquistas

incutia solidão, por falta de convívio, imponente e dominadora, arredada da gente vizinha, situada num plano de terreno elevado, à semelhança de um castelo, com o seu amplo balcão virado ao oriente para um troço da estrada” (Rocha 74).⁶

Rocha’s novel begins with the baptism and the wedding of the young Hindu Sonum Kamat, who actually starts the lineage of Bal’s family: “Baptizei António..., no gentio, Sonum Kamat...” (Rocha 72).⁷ Sonum is soon afterwards married to an adolescent girl, a Christian, chosen by the priests. His new life starts with a conversion that signals the two sides of his hyphenated identity. The new couple thus sets out on their journey down the Mandovi, on the way to their new destination. Their house, like the one that Mand sees from afar, is built up layer upon layer, which reveals its Christian present, as it accommodates the newly introduced life style of the colonizer, but also suggests a Hindu past that cannot be extinguished. Upon the grounds where the Casa Grande will be built and rebuilt by the long line of Sonum-cum-António’s descendants, as they forge a family dynasty, and assume the shape of a noble Christian house, there is a feeble and insignificant little tree that refuses to die, even after the extirpation of all signs of Hinduism. In turn, it becomes a towering tree as imposing as the house itself, a *peepal* or *Ficus Indica*, worshipped by Hindus, a silent reminder of the family’s history rooted in Indian soil and culture. In future generations, every time a Hindu procession passed by the Casa Grande, the people would stand in awe of the tree while ignoring the Christian inhabitants of the house.

The culture clash that resulted, says Bal, had new and tragic developments which, with the passing of time, would alter the façade of the Casa Grande and affect the lives of the people who inhabited it. The sad destiny of one of the ancestors of the young men upstairs, whom Mand watches with a mixture of admiration and envy, was the reason for the cross that, in a later historical period, would be erected in front of the house by the people of the neighbourhood. That cross is built to honor the young *morgado* of the Casa Grande, beheaded for defending a group of native patriots in favour of appointing a local as governor of Portuguese India. This nomination, backed by the liberal government of the Metropolis, had been violently resisted by some Portuguese, people of mixed race, and natives for whom, due to oppositions of race and caste, felt it humiliating to be governed by a local. Nonetheless, the *morgado*’s heroism is short-lived, and he eventually kneels down to beg for mercy and offers his own daughter in marriage to one of his tormentors in order to save his life (Rocha 73).

The young men observed by Mand would come to lead ordinary lives, as they became “medico, pela Escola Médica de Goa, ou padre, pelo seminário diocesano, ou advogado provisionário” (Rocha 81).⁸ But, as Bal adds, these professions were viable only for people of means, a fact that points once again to the internal borders of the community. The same hierarchy between *bhatkars* and *mandukars* would be replicated in the Portuguese bureaucracy, and liberal professions as well as enrolment in

the Lyceum were not open to all. Nonetheless, though a privilege, they were not always a choice. Often these professions were imposed on the young scions who saw their will curtailed in early youth bringing about frustration and despair: “Jamais, ao longo dos anos em que Bal cresceu e foi estudando, se lhe abriu uma perspectiva para ele decidir a sua vocação em Liberdade. Não. Naquela casa, para Bal, a livre afirmação fora atrofiada na raiz” (Rocha 87).⁹ When Bal was born, as was the custom in these families, he was given the name of an uncle, who had been a priest. It was unanimously decided by the family, when he was only nine years old, that he would enter the Diocesan Seminary to become a priest and continue the family tradition. Giving up the seminary was totally out of the question because it would affect not only the young student but the whole family’s reputation: “A hipótese de deixar o seminário era apresentada numa perspectiva negativa, perversa, como se desistir de ser padre fosse um acto de cobardia e seria mal interpretada no meio social” (Rocha 216).¹⁰ To show the rigidity of conventions, as well as the ties that existed between Catholics and Hindus despite their cultural distance, it is a Hindu doctor—to whom Bal will at some point turn for help—who takes an interest in him and advises him to give up a career in the church if he has no real vocation. Though Bal is finally ordained and becomes a priest, his lack of any true calling turns the vow of celibacy, *sine qua non* condition for Catholic priests, into a torment that goads him into licentious behaviour, as he sexually assaults some impoverished cousins who lived in a decadent great house with their aging parents. Due to a lack of dowry, education and connections, this part of his family is isolated from all good society at a moment when the Portuguese power in Goa was dwindling and the Indian takeover was imminent. To leave no doubt about the purport of his narrative, Rocha presents these facts in the opening chapter of the novel, significantly entitled “The House of the Cousins,” that sets the tone for the novel as it de-romanticizes both hero and house.

Hence, the *sossegado* quality of the almost model village that Mand observes from afar, in *Casa Grande* becomes a thin veil disguising a hierarchical society whose beliefs and prejudices, as Zagarell observes, become overt in the quasi ritualistic daily procedures through which any community sustains itself (503). Rocha depicts this process through a tableau vivant of Bal’s family at meal times:

Bal provinha de uma casa socialmente elevada, é certo. Em sua casa cultivava-se leitura, música. Antes do jantar, quando a família toda se encontrava reunida, viam-se irmãos, irmãs, mãe e pai, cada qual com seu livro ou jornal, enquanto o criado preto, a adoptiva e umarapariguita auxiliar se atarefavam na cozinha. (Rocha 32)¹¹

Though every member of the family was highly cultured, as their taste for reading and music reveals, the black servant, which all seem to take for granted, hints at the history of slavery in Goa.¹² Also, the woman Mand sees in the kitchen, cooking spicy Goan food, in *Casa Grande* is the *poskina* [adoptive girl] who is called Rufina. She spends the week alone with Bal’s father in the great house the family has in the New Conquests,¹³

to the despair and jealousy of the mother who stays behind in the family's property in the Old Conquests.¹⁴ She is the one whom Mand hears speaking Konkani, and she devotes her life to serving the master and mistress of the house, as well as raising their children. Women like Rufina were adopted in their childhood by rich families to do the household chores, as servants.¹⁵ Often, as is the case of Sabina, the auxiliary girl in *Casa Grande*, these children were de facto purchased by rich families. Whenever poor people would approach the Casa Grande to offer themselves to do odd jobs around the house, relates Bal, his mother, the *batkann*, would engage in a conversation that always ended with the same request: "Olhe lá, você conhece alguém da vossa gente que tenha uma pequenita e que esteja disposata a dar-nos? Serão pagos, com dinheiro. Claro, não se paga pela criança..." (Rocha 90).¹⁶

Mand also sees from afar the young belle of the family, who enchants him and whom he would like to meet in church, a space forbidden to "tribals." When seen up close in *Casa Grande*, the young woman of marriageable age is Bal's sister, a frustrated young woman brought up by an absent and alcoholic father and a prejudiced and loveless mother who is more interested in the family's caste and honour than in the daughter's happiness. Therefore, the mother denies her any possibility of marrying and having her own family, condemning her to a lonely life in the Casa Grande. The young lady gets a convent education that instead of turning her into a pious soul, converts her into a superstitious young woman, as biased as her mother against the Hindu community. Her main aim is to persuade the young brother, Bal, to become a priest in order to continue the family tradition for snobbish reasons rather than as a true vocation. As a result, God would bless their family and help her find a good husband revealing, at another level, how tightly bound together were the destinies of family members in this self-contained community.

Perhaps Bal's sister would eventually follow in the steps of an old uncle, who never married in order not to divide the family fortune, or her aunt Olú, who due to a domineering father and a rumour spread by a mean male relative of having "touched" her during a picnic, not only remained single for the rest of her life but started having hallucinations that ended in madness. Through the plight of his characters, Rocha makes a point of showing that Goa's social system, like many others, refused to consider the natural inclination of the young men and women of the house. The frustration and long-term anger caused by suppressing their own ambitions and desires would certainly play a role in explaining why the residents of the Casa Grande behave as they do.

The old man in the verandah whom Mand sees hailing passers-by as they return from the village, becomes in Rocha's novel an aged relative of Bal's, a member of an old traditional family who lived in an ancient mansion in a village by the sea. He was the last survivor after an epidemic, bubonic plague or influenza, had killed his wife and four sons. He spent his days in pajamas, sitting in a Voltaire chair; both the pajamas and the European-style chair were symbols of the stereotypical figure of the

patriarch of the Casa Grande, the *bhatkar*, who ruled the *mandukars* tilling his fields with a firm hand from the verandah of the great house.

As these examples show and Marise D'Lima would point out, Rocha's novel censures the behavior of his own community, deeming it to be retrograde and selfish, rather than assuming a nostalgic tone (319). He constructs this critique systematically through major and minor characters, in the words of D'Lima: "manipulative elite women and their misogynous men hiding their displeasure in depression and in alcohol [...] and their voiceless children subjugated and forced along paths or into marriages chosen for them" (320). What he defends, however, are the human ties between Portuguese, Catholic natives and Hindus over and above any kind of communalist attitude. This connection becomes clear in the episode entitled "The Defector" when Bal, already a priest, comes to the rescue of a frightened Portuguese soldier who deserts the day when the Indians enter Goa. Rather than hide him in the Casa Grande, Bal asks a Hindu merchant, who actually favoured the annexation of Goa to India, to give the deserter shelter. While in this house the soldier and the daughter of the family, Sushila, fall in love. Though they do not speak each other's language, they are somehow able to communicate. To prevent his daughter from ruining any chance of a good marriage, the Hindu merchant asks Bal to take the soldier away. On the day of his departure, however, the father cannot help feeling pity for his daughter and the young man who look at each other with immense sadness. Their emotions, which defied words, were analogous to the way many Portuguese and Goans felt the day the Portuguese regime came to an end and Goa became integrated into India. As the Hindu father tells Bal, "Pareceu-me uma bela despedida, essa do português e da nossa Sushila. Um adeus bem português à sua Índia!" (Rocha 69).¹⁷

Falling Trees: The End of an Era

Outside Bal's Casa Grande there are two age-old trees. One of them is an imposing jackfruit called "a jaqueira da sala" (Rocha 69)¹⁸ because it had grown up a few meters from that room and provided it with shade since the genesis of the house. According to local tradition, the Franciscan priest who converted the local population to Catholicism had planted the tree. It therefore dated back to the time when Bal's ancestor had changed his name from Sonum to António. The variety of the jackfruit, *rossav*, is unique, like the Indo-Portuguese community. However, unlike this group, the tree provides the most delicious fruits. Unfortunately, as Bal tells us, nobody in the family had done much to tend this jackfruit and now, from this tree, instead of fruits only dry branches would fall down.

In the same way that the roots of Hindu culture were still part of the foundations of the Casa Grande and the Catholic community, entwining them forever, not far from this jackfruit stands a *peepal* tree, the sacred

tree of the Hindus, which had also been part of the genesis of the Casa Grande, and had likewise been ignored by the family. As Bal narrates, like the jackfruit tree, it is also dying. Like the land in which they had been planted, both trees had given all they had to offer the people of the Casa Grande, independent of community or belief, though often these riches had been taken for granted by the family. In a way, they seem to represent the generosity of the Indian land that protects its people despite their selfishness:

Foi sorte nunca um vendaval, durante as incontáveis monções, por que passara, ter abatido tanto a *jaqueira da sala* ou o sagrado *pimpal*. Caso tivesse ocorrido uma calamidade destas o famoso balcão da Casa Grande desapareceria num montão de pedra, colunas, calça e, junto com ele, o ‘salão’...(Rocha 92) ¹⁹

In the novel, the death of both trees is thus symbolic of the downfall of family, community and the Portuguese regime on Indian soil and can be understood in analogical relationship to the behaviour of the people of the Casa Grande: the obtuse mother, the ineffectual father, the prejudiced sister, the frustrated son, the harsh *bhakhtar*, the fact that any kind of choice had been denied to the members of the family, in order to preserve their status quo. Their behaviour had, at times, reduced their culture and religion to a series of empty gestures.

What makes Carvalho’s short story so enticing to the reader is the powerful metaphor of an individual who has been turned into an alien in his own land and has been restricted within its borders, from where he peers into the culture of the newcomer. Similarly, what makes of Rocha’s novel both captivating and unsettling, setting it apart from many other stories about the same historical period in Portuguese and in English, is his ability to turn the *sossegado* life of the Catholic village and the Casa Grande into a high-pitched narrative. This quality of his narrative is due to the fact that once inside, the reader is not confronted with the remains of a time gone by, brought back to life through the idealized reminiscences of the last descendants of the family. Rather, the reader actually plunges into the life in progress of the family, as it was, like a narrative in real time, told by a Goan old timer, and in Portuguese, the language of the Casa Grande. This old timer, rather than extolling the grandeur of the manor house or its inhabitants and his own lineage, chooses to tell the life of his community in a manner that includes all and silences no one. However, rather than scorning his people, as D’Lima points out, Rocha not only “invites the reader to judge history for himself” but also “urges his own community to dig deep into the recesses of its own conscience and examine its past and currents beliefs in the light of his testimony” (322).

For all their differences, what brings Mand and Bal together is what Mayerfield Bell calls “the trauma of the loss of place” (Mayerfield Bell 814). In Mand’s case, because he would like to call home a place from which he feels excluded, while Bal sees what he once called home disintegrate and be swept into the past. The way Rocha found to preserve the memories of his home, as he writes in the last lines of the novel, was

to turn it into a narrative of the Casa Grande which reads like an ethical and political compromise with his own people; in contrast, Carvalho's way of communicating the complexity of her community was to tell her story across community borders, and from the perspective of the subaltern. Both authors' narrative strategies turn their perspectives on the Casa Grande into singular and compelling stories.

Notes

1. This work was carried out as part of the FAPESP thematic project "Pensando Goa" (proc. 2014/15657-8). The opinions, hypotheses and conclusions or recommendations expressed herein are our sole responsibility and do not necessarily reflect the ideas of FAPESP.

2. Selma Carvalho was born in Goa and left with her mother for Dubai in the Persian Gulf, where she spent her formative years. Later, she lived in Minnesota, USA, before moving to London in 2008, where she currently resides with her husband and daughter. Her first book, *Into the Diaspora Wilderness* (Goa 1556; 2010) has been cited in various publications and was acknowledged at the Goa: Postcolonial Society Conference, Yale, 2013. Between 2011-2014, she headed the Oral Histories of British Goans Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, UK. Since then, she has written two books which document the Goan presence in colonial East Africa. Her works of fiction have appeared in various literary journals. Her short story "Home" was second-runner up in the New Asian Writing Contest 2017. Her stories have been short or longlisted for several contests including DNA-Out of Print prize 2016, Exeter Writers prize 2015 and again in 2017 and The Berlin Writing prize 2017. She is currently working on an anthology of short stories.

3. Leopoldo da Rocha is a native of Goa where he was born (1932) and grew up. He left his homeland eight years after the end of Portuguese rule. He began training as a priest at the age of ten. He has a PhD in Canon Law and Social Sciences from the Gregorian University of Rome. His doctoral thesis, *Historical and Juridical Confraternities of Goa* (16th-20th centuries), was published with the sponsorship of the Gulbenkian Foundation and is considered by specialists as a reference in the field.

4. Edith Melo Furtado explains that immediately after Goa's integration into India, in 1961, Portuguese stopped being the official language of Goa and English, the vehicular language of India, which was already taught in many schools in Goa, began to dominate. This change had a deep impact on the sections of the Catholic community which, until then, had been educated in Portuguese at the Lyceum (478). Thenceforth a serious debate gripped Goa as to whether Konkani or Marathi should be its new official language, until Konkani was chosen in 1987. Goa became

a new state of India based on the Indian policy of one language one state, instead of becoming part of the state of Maharashtra, as would have been the case had Marathi been chosen as its official language. Hindi was added to these languages, as it was an official national language of India together with English after 1947 (“Reacting to a Transition. The Case of Goa,” *Lusotopie* 2000, pp. 477-86).

5. “...a mixture of the reality psychically lived by the author, a biographical narrative, spiced with only a bit of fiction. The element of fiction enters [the narrative] but in a limited manner.” (My translation)

6. “The Great House of the Old Conquest instilled loneliness, lack of conviviality, imposing and domineering, cut off from the neighboring people, set on a level plot of land, like a castle, with its large balcony facing east to a stretch of the road.” (My translation)

7. “I baptized António..., the gentile, Sonum Kamat....” (My translation)

8. “landowners, doctors, graduated from Goa’s Medical School, or priests by the diocesan seminary, or chartered lawyers.” (My translation)

9. “Never in the years during which Bal grew up and studied, was there an opening for him to decide his vocation in freedom. Not at all. In that house, for Bal, free affirmation had atrophied at the root.” (My translation)

10. “The hypothesis of leaving the seminary was presented from a negative, even perverse perspective, as if giving up the soutane were an act of cowardice and would be frowned upon by the community” (My translation).

11. Bal came from a socially elevated house, where reading and music were cultivated. Before dinner, when the whole family was assembled, brothers, sisters, mother and father could be seen each with his book or newspaper, while the black servant, the adoptive girl [*poskina*], and an auxiliary girl were busy in the kitchen”. (My translation).

12. *Skin* (2001) by Margaret Mascarenhas is one of the few Goan novels that addresses the theme of slavery in Goa.

13. Area of Goa called “Novas Conquistas” [New Conquests] conquered by the Portuguese in the 18th century. It comprises the districts of Pernem, Sanquelim and Sattari. To these were later on added Bicholim, Antruz, Sanguem, Quepem and Canacona. By this time, the Portuguese zeal for Christianization in Goa had decreased; therefore, they did not interfere in the religious and social order of the area.

14. The “Velhas Conquistas” [Old Conquests] were the first area of Goa Christianized by the Portuguese in the 16th century and comprised the districts of Bardez, Mormugao, Salcette and Tiswadi.

15. In Konkani, the word “poskina” means “adopted girl,” the masculine being “posko” and the plural “poskem.” Though the word “poskem” is used when couples adopt children in normal circumstances, the term might be misleading because it was commonly used to refer to the illegitimate child of the patriarch or an older male of the Goan landed gentry. She would even be given the family name but without any rights to inheritance.

16. “Hello there, do you know anyone, among your people, who would have a little girl and would be ready to give her to us? You will be paid, with money. Of course, it is not the child that is being paid for...” (My translation)

17. “It seemed to me a beautiful farewell, that of the Portuguese and our Sushila. A good Portuguese farewell to his India!” (My translation)

18. “the jackfruit tree of the drawing room.” (My translation)

19. “It was fortunate never a whirlwind, during the incontestable monsoons that had passed, to have uprooted either the jackfruit of the room or the sacred pimpal. If such a calamity had occurred, the famous verandah of the Casa Grande would have disappeared into a heap of stone, columns, and lime, and along with it the drawing room...” (My translation)

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