



[Book Review] Paul Melo e Castro, ed. “Lengthening Shadows: An Anthology of Goan Short Stories Translated from Portuguese” (2 vols). Saligão and Margão: Goa 1556 and Golden Heart Emporium, 2016.

By R. BENEDITO FERRÃO

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In translating and compiling these 45 stories in the double volume *Lengthening Shadows*, editor Paul Melo e Castro showcases the legacy of the Portuguese short story from the former region of *Goa Portuguesa*. Held by the Portuguese between 1510 and 1961, Goa was the capital of Luso-Asia and the *Estado da Índia Portuguesa*. For Melo e Castro’s purposes, the anthology functions as “the autopsy of a dead literature,” focused as it is on a corpus that spans the period between 1864 and 1987 (8). After its 451-year colonization by Portugal, Goa was annexed by the Indian nation-state in 1961, a diminished literary output in Portuguese being a marker of the change in the enclave’s political identity. Even as the collection brings together a range of Portuguese stories by Goan authors, Melo e Castro’s introduction to the work dwells on the writers’ literary styles, their historical and social milieux, and links that could be made across the collection. In tying together Portuguese-language cultural production with Goa’s Portuguese identity, the edited volume looks to Goa’s past to recall its literary heritage. In this, the book is a testament, but its very publication may evidence a cultural continuity that cannot be so easily relegated to a bygone era.

Melo e Castro is a [lecturer in Portuguese](#) at the University of Leeds, whose scholarly work has centered on translating Portuguese Indian fiction, as well as contributing several essays and chapters about these works to an array of publications. In addition to his introduction and the translated short stories themselves, *Lengthening Shadows* also contains an afterword by Augusto Pinto, a cultural and social commentator, as also an



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**Associate Professor of English** at Goa’s S. S. Dempo College of Commerce and Economics. As bookends to the anthology, Melo e Castro and Pinto bring varied perspectives to the collection. While the former hones in on the aesthetics of the stories and the historical moments they emerged from, the latter considers the sociocultural backdrop of these works.

Though previous collections have compiled Goan Portuguese literature or included Portuguese short stories in translation alongside other works of fiction from Goa, this is the first English language anthology to be published in Goa that is solely dedicated to the Goan short story in Portuguese. Harking back to the publication history of the genre, Melo e Castro acknowledges his debt to Vimala Devi and Manuel de Seabra by titling the anthology with a reference to “the epigraph of ... *Monção*,” Devi’s 1963 short story collection, which borrows from the Sanskrit poet Kālidāsa (54). “Partly this choice is homage to Devi and Manuel de Seabra, who have done more than anyone to preserve and transmit Goa’s Lusophone literary heritage,” Melo e Castro comments (54). Though Devi and de Sabra’s anthological labors are the source from which Melo e Castro gathers his materials, what he adds with *Lengthening Shadows* is a series of biographical notes on the writers. These are meant to serve as a reference about their personal histories, literary styles, and the periods in which they wrote.

In several instances, the information Melo e Castro provides, in addition to chronicling publication dates and venues, also offers formalistic analysis. For instance, in reflecting upon the oeuvre of Luís Manuel Júlio Frederico Gonçalves (1846-1896), Melo e Castro places the writer’s output within the period of Romanticism, the Goan iteration of which occurred in the 1860s, he argues, in contrast with its late eighteenth century European counterpart (10). In exploring Gonçalves’ writing as a product of this literary tradition, not least because the short story “was also a characteristic of Romanticism,” Melo e Castro underscores how Gonçalves and his peers “turn[ed] to Goan settings ... An enduring legacy



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of Romanticism was the attention given to national and local identities...” (10). Signaling the rise of nationalism during this period in Europe, even as Melo e Castro links the metropole with the politics of its colony, he highlights the need to expand literary understandings of genre and period. In turn, this advises comprehending the manifestation of European cultures beyond the borders of the continent.

In “The Good Old Bad Days,” Pinto’s afterword to the collection opens with a personal reminiscence: “You could see, hear and smell *Goa Portuguesa* even as late as 1970. That was the year my parents, along with my nine-year-old self, returned from Kenya to live in our ‘ancestral house’ [in Goa]” (178). Where Melo e Castro explores Goa’s connections to and differences from Europe in the collected stories, Pinto reveals the region’s other colonial networks and ruminates on its internal ecologies and their effect on Goan literature. As a metacriticism, Pinto says of *Lengthening Shadows* that it “can be read as a social exposé although it may have limitations in that all of the writers are middle or upper-middle class. And most are male, [except] Maria Elsa da Rocha and Vimala Devi ... Also, with the exceptions of Anantha Rau Sar Dessai and Laxmanrao Sardesai ... the [other] writers are Catholic” (183-184).

Pinto explains that despite these lacunae, what the collected stories offer, precisely because they are in Portuguese, is “a better mirror of society than other Indian languages or even English ... [Portuguese] could connect the educated classes from all strata as everyone was obliged to study it at least till the primary level” (185). To illustrate this observation, as well as the way in which the stories speak to the kaleidoscopic Goan experience, even if in Portuguese, Pinto refers to the satire employed by Goan writers in the past two centuries. These authors “[ridiculed] the old aristocracy” even as they turned their critical gaze upon “the returning *Bomboikars* and *Africanders* [- Goans] who brought back wealth from the booming British colonies” (181). Further, though there existed the appearance of tolerance



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between those of different castes and classes, Pinto is quick to mention that the stories bear out the “formalised rules of behaviour” that undergirded the tacit social contract (181).

“A sombra da árvore alonga-se ao pôr do Sol / Sem nunca se separar dela” is the verse from which Melo e Castro borrows for the anthology’s title from Devi’s translation of Kālidāsa (7). Between the Sanskritic reference and the Indic pseudonym of “Devi” that Teresa da Piedade de Baptista Almeida (b. 1932) adopts, it can be surmised that she believes Goa’s pre-Portuguese heritage to be solely Hindu. These Brahmanical gestures notwithstanding, her stories explore inter-religious themes, echoing the multiplicity of Goan identities. Though Goa is part of South Asia, and now a territory of India, “[t]he tree’s shadow [which] lengthens / Without ever splitting from it” must also evoke those other illuminations that cause its umbra, one that continues to inform Goan identity. In this, Goan literature in Portuguese cannot be pronounced dead, as Melo e Castro suggests. Rather, its after-light persists. That an anthology of Portuguese stories should appear in English does not foreclose their legacy but, instead, indicates how they can continue to live on as a record and tales that can be told anew.



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