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Unveiling the Unseen: Haunting Histories and Cultural Dynamics in Jessica Faleiro's *Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa*

Desvendando o invisível: histórias assombradas e dinâmicas culturais em *Afterlife*: *Ghost Stories from Goa*, de Jessica Faleiro

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ABSTRACT

Jessica Faleiro's *Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa* offers a compelling exploration of haunting histories and cultural dynamics within the Lusophone world. Through a close examination of the ghost stories portrayed in her book, this article explores how Faleiro navigates themes of historical reparation and reparative justice within the context of Goa's colonial past and postcolonial present. I intend to show how Faleiro employs Gothic narrative techniques to illuminate the ongoing effects of colonialism, explore themes of historical trauma and cultural identity, and contribute to the broader decolonial discourse in Indian postcolonial literature. Drawing on interdisciplinary perspectives, this article situates Faleiro's work within the broader framework of Lusophone literary and cultural production, shedding light on the unseen forces that shape the heritage of the Portuguese-speaking world.
KEYWORDS: Gothic narratives. Lusophone heritage. Historical trauma. Decolonial discourse.

RESUMO

Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa de Jessica Faleiro oferece uma exploração cativante de histórias assombradas e dinâmicas culturais no mundo lusófono. Através de uma análise detalhada das histórias de fantasmas presentes na obra, este artigo investiga como Faleiro aborda temas de reparação histórica e justiça reparadora no contexto do passado colonial e presente pós-colonial de Goa. Pretende-se demonstrar como a autora utiliza técnicas narrativas góticas para iluminar os efeitos contínuos do colonialismo, explorar traumas históricos e identidade cultural, contribuindo para o discurso decolonial

na literatura pós-colonial indiana. A partir de perspectivas interdisciplinares, o estudo situa a obra de Faleiro no contexto mais amplo da produção literária e cultural lusófona, destacando forças invisíveis que moldam o património do mundo de língua portuguesa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Narrativas góticas. Património lusófono. Trauma histórico. Discurso decolonial.

In the broader context of Lusophone literary and cultural production, Goan literature remains relatively underexplored by literary critics, especially when compared to the extensive academic work on former Portuguese colonies in Africa. This discrepancy may be elucidated by the introduction to a 2018 issue of the *InterDISCIPLINARY Journal of Portuguese Diaspora Studies*, which is dedicated to the "Rome of the East," a moniker given to Goa by the Portuguese. As the organizers of this issue remind us, Goa "has long been a place of transit" (Festino *et al.*, 2018, p. 9), with its history marked by the passage of people through the Indian subcontinent since time immemorial, the colonization by the Portuguese empire influenced by economic shifts, and the Goan diaspora spreading globally and occasionally returning home. These movements render what they term "Goan literature" an elusive and nonlinear field of study, as it is a literature inherently "on the move." This dynamic quality, however, is also its most distinctive and appealing characteristic, "the ever-changing fate of those in diaspora, have given rise to a large body of poems, novels, short stories and personal narratives that represent these experiences as a process of what Leela Gandhi terms 'mutual transformation' (2018, p. 129), one affecting destination and origin, host community and migrant, family and society" (Festino *et al.*, 2018, p. 9). Goan literature, with its blend of themes and voices, can offer insights into the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity. Writers like Vimala Devi and Lambert Mascarenhas have chronicled the multifaceted experiences of Goans, weaving narratives that reflect the region's colonial past, postcolonial struggles, and the ongoing negotiation of cultural identities. These works often explore the intersections of tradition and modernity, the impacts of migration, and the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of globalization. The diasporic nature of Goan literature means it is not confined to geographical boundaries but is instead dispersed across various global communities. This dispersion has led to a literary tradition that bridges continents and cultures. For instance, writers such as José Pereira and Antonio Gomes have contributed to the Goan literary canon from their diasporic vantage points, enriching it with diverse perspectives and experiences. Thus, the fluid and migratory nature of Goan literature not only complicates its study but also enhances its

richness and depth, offering a compelling narrative corpus of resilience, adaptation, and continuous transformation, a "house of many mansions" as defined by Melo e Castro and Cielo G. Festino (2017).

Jessica Faleiro's writing stands apart from traditional diasporic Goan literature and can be better understood through the lens of her experience as a "Third Culture Kid (TCK)." This term, coined in the 1950s by social scientists Ruth Hill Useem and her husband John, and later expanded upon by David Pollock and Ruth Van Reken in their book *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (2010), describes individuals who grow up in a culture different from their parents' native culture. Before delving into her critically acclaimed novel *Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa* (2012), which is noted for its blend of supernatural elements and cultural narratives, it is useful to consider the impact of her background. The specific nuances of being part of this generation profoundly influence Faleiro's storytelling, infusing her work with a unique perspective that resonates with the complexities of identity and belonging. In her essay titled "On Being a Third Culture Kid," Jessica Faleiro articulates the distinction between diasporic Goan literature and her own work, shaped by her specific life experiences as a globally mobile migrant:

> I'd always known I was different and that my life experiences influenced my writing. But, the difference was that it was only in the last few years that I was able to clearly articulate my difference and understand the impact on my writing as differently nuanced from that of diaspora literature. I believe that all art, after all, is generated from unresolved grief, loss and trauma; we write from our wounds in the hope of healing them through expression, exploration or catharsis, of any kind. On deeper reflection, I find that I write to discover the depth of my own humanity and hope that it translates across boundaries, whether natural or man-made. (Faleiro, 2018, p. 399).

A daughter of Goans who sought better economic opportunities in Kuwait, she grew up between two cultures that she had to constantly negotiate, "while developing a third culture that belonged neither to [her] parents nor to the host country where [she] lived" (Faleiro, 2018, p. 393). She was raised in a country she knew was not hers, lacking a sense of homeland, home, or belonging. As the author explains, what set her experience apart from her parents' migration was that she "was infused early on with the persistent anxiety of question marks about belonging, home, country, place and identity constantly pushing against the back of my brain from the moment I became conscious of these things" (Faleiro, 2018, p. 393). Despite having lived a life "haunted" by a sense of loss and grief due to global mobility and transitions between places and people, Faleiro has come to understand that

"Home is where my humanity is" (Faleiro, 2018, p. 396). She emphasizes that "TCKs are cultural chameleons, able to cope and adapt to varied types of transitions and circumstances with aplomb" (Faleiro, 2018, p. 394). These experiences, she realizes, "have only helped me become a stronger, better writer" (Faleiro, 2018, p. 394). As previously mentioned, being part of a generation of Goan Third Culture Kids has influenced Faleiro's writing to approach themes similar to those common among members of the diaspora, while also setting it apart. She notes:

> While my parents were a part of the Goan diaspora that eventually returned to their homeland, my own cultural identity lay within a sub-set under the broad reach of diaspora. From a literary point of view, my writing, while it covers similar themes often seen in literatures of the diaspora like Alienation, Belongingness, Home and Identity, is generated from a different source, embedded in the absence of one homeland in particular and of a monocultural upbringing. (Faleiro, 2018, p. 396).

One distinctive aspect of Faleiro's work is her use of creative non-fiction as a literary form. This genre blends factual reporting with the narrative techniques of fiction, allowing her to craft compelling, immersive stories while conveying real-life experiences and truths. By utilizing creative non-fiction, she can explore complex themes such as identity, belonging, and cultural dislocation with both emotional depth and factual accuracy. As R. Benedito Ferrão mentions, "For Faleiro, this cross-pollination of fact and creativity derives, on the one hand from the personal and, on the other, from her experience as a writer of fiction" (2020, p. 181). This approach not only engages readers on a deeper level but also provides a nuanced perspective on the intricacies of life as a Third Culture Kid. Through this blend of creativity and authenticity, her writing stands out in the Goan literary landscape, offering a unique and powerful voice in the discourse on diaspora and cultural identity. Faleiro's goal, as Ferrão points out, "is not to be didactic. Her task as a writer is to narrate events—not simply as they occurred, but as she perceived them after the fact" (2020, p. 183). If her reader derives some understanding of the contemporary world during this period of globalization, which drives people from familiar settings to the unknown, it is due to the deeply personal nature of her writing, which invites introspection.

A second layer of differentiation in Faleiro's writing is the intentional project of integrating Goa's history into the broader narrative of Indian history. This approach highlights the distinct colonial experiences that shaped different regions of the country. The prolonged Portuguese influence has left an indelible mark on Goan culture, society, and identity, distinguishing it from the rest of the country.

Faleiro's writings bring this historical context to the forefront, arguing that the Portuguese colonial experience is an integral part of India's overall colonial narrative. Goa, having been a Portuguese colony until its annexation by India in 1961, had a markedly different historical trajectory compared to the rest of the nation, which was predominantly under British rule. Faleiro's work challenges the general tendency within Indian historiography to focus primarily on British imperialism. In several of her short stories, she provides brief introductory explanations, such as:

> The story suggests that the way to move forward is to understand colonialism and its continuing impacts, as well as to recognize the appearances of neocolonialism in the present. In this regard, the story can also be read as the struggle for the central government of India, based in Delhi, to accept the 451-year Portuguese colonial history as an indelible part of Goa. Finally, storying in itself is a decolonial practice, a way for Goans to find self. (Faleiro, 2023a, p. 119).

Faleiro argues that "post-colonial literature from India needs to move away from the tendency to focus on just a British-Indian framework and broaden its perspective to include wider frameworks including the Luso-Indian framework" (2019, p. 20). Her contribution to postcolonial literature in India, and particularly in Goa, is marked by her innovative use of the Gothic narrative style. This stylistic choice allows her to explore the complexities of colonial and postcolonial experiences, weaving together themes of hauntings, decay, and the supernatural to reflect the lingering impacts of colonialism on contemporary society. By analyzing her first novel, *Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa*, I intend to show how Faleiro employs Gothic narrative techniques to illuminate the ongoing effects of colonialism, explore themes of historical trauma and cultural identity, and contribute to the broader decolonial discourse in Indian postcolonial literature.

Cheryl McEwan articulates that "Ghosts, spectres, and spirits and the stories told about them have long been a source of intellectual inquiry" (2008, p. 1). Gordon (1997) posits that ghosts are manifestations of something lost, barely visible, or seemingly absent, making themselves known or apparent. While ghost stories are often fictional and metaphorical, addressing incidents that never occurred or inexplicable presences, feelings, or events, their significance lies in their meaning, power, and the fervor with which they are narrated or suppressed. These spectral tales serve as conduits for exploring hidden truths and the complexities of human experience, reflecting deeper cultural and psychological realities.

As Mélanie Joseph-Vilain and Judith Misrahi-Barak (2009) explain in their introduction to *Postcolonial Ghosts*, "Ghosts are liminal beings. They lie at the threshold between present and past, between life and death, between presence and absence, between the visible and the invisible, between here and there, between self and other. Their capacity to blur boundaries and to question dichotomies makes them apt figures to interrogate the postcolonial condition" (Joseph-Vilain, 2009, p. 15). In the postcolonial context, the figure of the ghost becomes an ideal symbol for negotiating concepts of "home" and identity. Postcolonial ghosts embody the ongoing process of cultural negotiation and conflict between indigenous peoples and settlers. They often represent the return of repressed or hidden events from the tumultuous era of colonization, symbolizing unresolved conflicts and the enduring impact of colonial history. Postcolonial cultures are frequently described as "fantasmophoric," carrying the spectral presence of ancestors who were marginalized or silenced. These ghosts reflect the irreconcilable differences between indigenous and settler cultures, surfacing as manifestations of a past that continues to haunt the present. Colonization itself is likened to a ghostly process, transforming native cultures into spectres that haunt both their descendants and the descendants of colonizers. Thus, postcolonial ghosts can be seen as either native spirits seeking recognition or revenge, or as the ghosts of colonizers, embodying the collective guilt of historical victors. These spectral figures bridge the gap between past and present, highlighting the close relationship between identity and place, and can only be fully understood in the context of postcolonial subjects and their histories. According to Mélanie Joseph-Vilain and Judith Misrahi-Barak, "the postcolonial ghost can also be conjured up voluntarily by the postcolonial subject who wishes to exorcise past evils. From this perspective, the ghost does not only link past and present: it also shows the way to the future, closing or opening perspectives for the postcolonial subject" (Joseph-Vilain, 2009, p. 17).

In the postcolonial world, ghosts manifest textually and linguistically, embodying the voices of the past and creating haunting narratives. French linguist Alain Fleischer (2005) described accents as "phantom tongues," an image that aptly describes postcolonial art. The artist's voice in this context is always ghostly, a "phantom tongue" reflecting the layers of a complex history. Creole languages, too, can be seen as haunted, their hybrid nature bearing the linguistic traces of colonial encounters. Ghosts in postcolonial contexts raise fundamental questions about heritage and transmission of history, culture, and identity in societies shaped by conquest and conflict. They symbolize what is transmitted and what is repressed. The figure of the ghost, whether used consciously or unconsciously, reveals the intricate dynamics of these issues. In literature, ghosts are closely associated with magic realism, a mode of writing that explores the palimpsest-like reality of the postcolonial world, where the elusive and metamorphic nature of ghosts characterizes the postcolonial condition. The postcolonial space, as articulated by Mélanie Joseph-Vilain and Judith Misrahi-Barak, can be aptly described as a "haunted

space of negotiation" (2009, p. 18). This characterization underscores the complex and dynamic nature of postcolonial societies, where the legacies of colonialism continue to permeate cultural, social, and political realms. The term "haunted" evokes the persistent presence of historical traumas, unresolved conflicts, and suppressed memories that linger within these societies, influencing contemporary identities and experiences. In this haunted space, negotiation becomes a crucial process. It involves the ongoing dialogue between past and present, colonizer and colonized, tradition and modernity. The ghosts of the colonial past—manifested through cultural artifacts, language, and collective memory—demand recognition and reconciliation. They challenge individuals and communities to confront uncomfortable truths, re-examine historical narratives, and redefine their sense of belonging and identity.

The Gothic narrative, with its emphasis on the eerie, the uncanny, and the unresolved past, serves as an effective medium for Faleiro to critique the colonial legacy in Goa. By employing this style, she is able to illustrate the haunting presence of colonial history in the present day, portraying it as a specter that continues to influence and disrupt the lives of the colonized. This narrative technique underscores the enduring psychological and cultural scars left by colonialism, making it a powerful tool for postcolonial critique. In *Afterlife: Ghost Stories from Goa*, Faleiro captivates readers with a collection of supernatural tales set against the backdrop of a family gathering, weaving in the enduring legacy of Goa's Portuguese past. The Fonseca family gathers to celebrate Savio Fonseca's 75th birthday. His two daughters, Joanna and Carol, who live abroad, come home for the occasion, accompanied by Savio's son-in-law, Sam. The night before the party, Uncle Eduardo, his wife Marie, and their two children, Susheela and Jason, visit their house.

As darkness falls on the eve of Savio's birthday due to a power outage, the family seizes the opportunity to share ghost stories. These eerie narratives delve into the history of the Fonseca family, spanning mysterious sightings, lonely buildings, and magical spells. The prologue, narrated by Joanna, who shares similarities with the author Faleiro, including the same initials (JF)—having completed a degree in English at Oxford University, residing in London where she teaches literature, and working on her third book concerning ghost stories and the postcolonial Other—provides the reader with initial insights into the family and generational dynamics. The reader also gains insight into the narrator's mother's pride in her Portuguese ancestry and her preoccupation with maintaining appearances, as revealed through her meticulous approach to home decoration. The living room, adorned with teak furniture upholstered in muted floral prints and complemented by ivory curtains, showcases her fine crystal collection and an array of Portuguese antiques inherited from her mother: "(…) everything from large dining plates from Macao to mini copies of Faberge eggs. Mama's prized item was a black and gold Art Deco dining plate that had been imported from England as part of her grandmother's

trousseau" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 10). Simultaneously, Joanna establishes the thematic groundwork for subsequent narrative elements—the sharing of supernatural stories—by evoking a scene imbued with palpable tension and anticipation:

> Just then, a deafening crack of thunder drowned out the sound of our voices. We felt an electric charge fill the air as a bolt of lightning lit up the garden, the surrounding rice fields and the coconut grove beyond it. Suddenly, everything went dark and silent as Amanpour disappeared from our screen. A familiar twinge of anxiety hit me, as it always did whenever the lights went out in our house, ever since I was a little girl. The house was isolated at night; our nearest neighbours were five hundred metres away. The beauty of the house was, of course, in its isolation, surrounded by trees and the fields. But at times like this, I was glad that I wasn't alone. (Faleiro, 2012, p. 9).

As the family gathers in the room, which "floated around us in semi-darkness" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 11) with only the flickering of candles, the rain drumming "against the windows in a fierce, rhythmic beat," and "long shadows danc[ing] on the walls" (2012, p. 10), family stories begin to emerge from the past and the recesses of memory. The first story is told by Uncle Eduardo, renowned as "the life of the party" and "one of the best storytellers I had ever met in my life" (2012, p. 14). Uncle Eduardo recounts the tale of the kogul, a bird associated with Savio, his deceased brother, and his late ninety-five-year-old mother, Teresa. In many cultures, including Goan and broader Indian folklore, the kogul (or koel) is often linked to omens and the supernatural. Within this narrative, the kogul becomes a significant presence for Savio's ninety-five-year-old mother, who is impatiently awaiting death. Throughout the narrative, the reader is transported into the Fonseca family's past, delving into the intricacies of their lives and the legacy of their home. Teresa, the matriarch, grapples with the persistent presence of the kogul, a bird that disrupts her daily routine with its unsettling pecks on the windowpane. The bird's strange, almost human-like appearance at times triggers poignant memories, such as reflections on her son Francis, particularly poignant as he had moved to Texas to pursue flight training, marrying a Polish American woman against traditional Goan expectations: "Something in the way it was looking at her seemed familiar. She swallowed hard. The way it squinted at her in the afternoon light made it look almost human. It reminded her of the way her son Francis often looked at her whenever he wanted something, with his head tilted to one side. She shook her head, dismissing the strange comparison from her mind (…)" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 16). Tragically, both Francis and his wife perished in a car accident while vacationing in Switzerland, a loss that deeply haunted Teresa.

She mourned not being able to bid farewell to her son “and put his soul to rest” (2012, p. 24), a sorrow that permeates the family’s history and interactions. Amidst these personal tribulations, the Fonseca family’s ancestral home remains a focal point. Teresa firmly believed it to be haunted, and despite its isolation and deteriorating condition over the decades, it remains the only occupied residence in the area. We also discover Savio’s sister, Josephina, residing in Canada, and Agnelo, his brother who serves as a priest. Like many other Goan families, they are deeply connected to the diaspora and maintain strong ties to their traditional Catholic Portuguese ancestry.

As Savio and his brother Agnelo attempted to eliminate the kogul, Agnelo hesitated with his gun poised: “He took aim and hesitated. As he stared at the bird, the bird stared at him; he felt that it was trying to communicate something with him. Agnelo put the gun down and turned to Savio with a look of bewilderment on his face” (Faleiro, 2012, p. 22). Transported by memories of his deceased brother, Agnelo comes to believe the bird is “possessed by Francis’s spirit” (Faleiro, 2012, p. 23). Consulting Teresa on Francis’s favorite bird, the kogul, solidifies Agnelo’s conviction. He resolves that conducting a series of masses is the path to peace for his brother’s soul, explaining that “the traditional belief [is] that the spirit of a person taken suddenly in death actually jumps out of its body and is held in limbo, unable to reach its Maker. Prayer is needed for the spirit to depart in peace and go to its rightful place” (2012, p. 26). After nine masses, the kogul vanishes. On the same day, Teresa peacefully passes away: “laying back on her pillow, closed her eyes and exhaled her last breath” (2012, p. 25). Savio recalls witnessing “a kogul, with a glossy black coat and a white steak on its chest, sitting on a tree next to the grave, watching [Teresa’s funeral] proceedings” (2012, p. 26).

The kogul is portrayed as a supernatural entity that intersects with the family, exploring themes of memory, grief, and the enigmatic connection between the living and the deceased. Serving as a symbolic conduit to the family’s history, the bird evokes poignant recollections and narratives that have shaped their identities and relationships. Through the tale of the kogul, Faleiro delves into Goan folklore, revealing the enduring impact of ancestral ties on contemporary life.

While Savio’s oldest daughter and his wife remain skeptical, dismissing the story as “superstitious nonsense” (Faleiro, 2012, p. 16), the unfolding of one narrative prompts another. Marie, engaged by the stories, asks Savio to recount Agnelo’s first exorcism. In the subsequent narratives, members of the Fonseca family take turns recounting their personal experiences and interactions with the supernatural, as well as sharing anecdotes involving other family members. This narrative structure not only provides a complex view of the family’s encounters with the unseen but also emphasizes the communal and intergenerational nature of their storytelling tradition. Each family member’s perspective adds depth and richness to the overarching narrative, intertwining individual experiences with family trauma, long-held secrets, and the lingering impacts of historical colonialism, collectively

capturing the essence of the family's relationship with the supernatural. In the second narrative, Savio recounts the experiences of his brother Agnelo, the priest, who helped his colleague and friend Oswaldo perform an exorcism on a young boy, descendant of a Portuguese family. This boy was possessed by the spirit of a deceased man who had been murdered by his own brother out of jealousy. Only after Agnelo discerned that the spirit of the deceased man needed to communicate with his wife, and subsequently brought her into the boy's presence, could the spirit find peace and rest: "Dona Maria glanced hopefully in Oswaldo's direction. 'Vishant's soul is at rest now,' said Agnelo quietly. 'Your son has come back to you.' Oswaldo nodded and smiled at her" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 44).

The family becomes increasingly enthusiastic about the unfolding stories, despite Carol's continued skepticism. Aunt Marie, in contrast, views this as an opportunity to contribute to the narrator's book. Joanna concurs, stating, "The stories we'd been hearing were much better than the made-up ones I was struggling to concoct in my book" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 45). As previously noted, Faleiro's choice of genre—creative nonfiction—is embedded in the narrative, which is loosely based on the stories heard by Faleiro, allowing her to blend factual storytelling with creative expression. The family's anecdotes provide rich, authentic material that surpasses the fictional accounts Joanna initially struggled to invent. The incorporation of these real-life, even if supernatural, stories not only enhances the narrative's authenticity but also demonstrates the power of lived experiences to enrich literary works. As Lee Gutkind, a prominent figure in the genre, explains, "Creative nonfiction writers do not make things up; they make ideas and information that already exist more interesting and, often, more accessible" (Gutkind, 2012, p. 13). Gutkind further elucidates that creative nonfiction allows writers to engage deeply with their subject matter, blending their personal perspectives with factual content to produce a more nuanced and compelling narrative. This approach also encourages writers to become integral participants in the narrative, fostering a journey of self-discovery, flexibility, and creative freedom (Faleiro, 2012, p. 13). By integrating genuine family stories into the book, Faleiro is able to craft a more compelling and engaging narrative that resonates with readers on a deeper level, blending the lines between reality and storytelling.

In an interview for the *MEHFIL* podcast (2023b), Faleiro discusses her motivation for writing *Afterlife*, mentioning a pivotal emotional encounter that occurred while she was on holiday visiting her grandmother's village in Goa. One afternoon, after lunch, she went to the backyard and noticed the house beyond their boundary wall, which belonged to an old miserly uncle who had passed away many years prior and had since been boarded up. During this still, windless afternoon, around two or three o'clock, she observed a lace curtain moving inside a closed window of the abandoned house. Despite her rational disposition, even as a child, she found herself unable to explain this phenomenon under the prevailing atmospheric conditions. As she continued watching, she saw the curtain move again,

accompanied by the sight of a rocking chair inside the house also in motion. This eerie sight caused her hair to stand on end, evoking a common reaction described by others who have recounted similar supernatural experiences. Nine years later, Faleiro learned from her grandmother about various sightings around that house, confirming the eerie presence she had felt. She vowed never to visit her grandmother's house again due to the fear and vivid memories associated with the incident. This fear was so profound that she had to stop writing her stories by 5 p.m. to avoid being haunted by these memories after dark. Writing became a form of exorcism for her, purging the emotional weight of that encounter. From a practical standpoint, Faleiro realized that there is a strong tradition and culture of discussing supernatural experiences in Goa, characterized by vivid and vibrant storytelling. This realization extended beyond South Asia, as she discovered that people globally share a reluctance to disclose such experiences. However, when she shared her own stories, others felt a sense of relief and of gaining permission to recount their encounters, revealing common motifs and tropes across different cultures (Faleiro, 2023a, mins. 7.19-11.00).

In *Afterlife*, the youngest generation discovers that their "ancestors seemed to have been an exciting lot" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 93). Faleiro's personal experience is fictionalized in the sixth family story of the book, titled "Jacinto," and narrated by her father. Savio recounts the story of his sister Josephina, whom the villagers "always said [to be] a very special lady—she seemed to know things and see things that others didn't" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 93). The story begins with the funeral of Savio's uncle Jacinto, a man who, in life, "moved like a man with a dead branch for a soul" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 96). Jacinto endured a harsh existence, burdened with the responsibility of caring for his brother Álvaro and supporting Álvaro's musical aspirations. Jacinto never forgave Teresa for encouraging Álvaro's musical pursuits, and as a result, "kept himself from the family as a punishment to them defying his wishes, but it only ended up making him bitter and miserly" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 97). Despite Jacinto's refusal to provide financial support, Álvaro continued to care for him and chose to live next door after marrying Teresa. Upon Jacinto's death, it is revealed that "all of Jacinto's assets were tied up in the house, the land and his shares," and if Teresa could not find "those shares, all his wealth may be lost to [her] and [her] family" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 99). Despite her efforts, Teresa wasn't able to locate any papers and believed that Jacinto would not leave anything for the family, since he "only had a stone for a heart" (2012, p. 99). However, Josephina knows otherwise, recalling that her uncle "*did* have a heart" (100) because he would watch over her from his rocking chair, where he napped every afternoon. It was in this chair that his body was discovered three days after his death. What follows reveals Josephina's encounter with the unseen, mirroring Faleiro's own experience:

> It happened a few weeks after Jacinto's death, on one of those hot May afternoons, when the mangoes on the trees outside hung heavy (…). Josephina was once again out on the veranda in the back of the house, relaxing. She closed her eyes and breathed all of her ten years in and out again. When she opened her eyes, she instinctively looked to the left, knowing she'd never see Uncle Jacinto at his window again. The house was boarded up now, except for the windows. The open window caught her attention. She was about fifteen metres away from it. She squinted in the bright afternoon light and tried to look into the room from her veranda. Her eyes caught something moving inside. What—or who—was it moving back and forth, back and forth?
>
> She waited. There was no wind in the air, not even a gentle breeze, and yet, somewhere inside the abandoned house, her dead uncle's chair was rocking. As she tried to work out what she was seeing, the hairs on the back of her neck rose. (Faleiro, 2012, p. 101).

Josephina tried to explain to her mother what had happened, but Teresa dismissed her. It was only after a revelatory dream about her uncle, in which she saw the rocking chair moving to reveal a spot where the wood was bent, that she realized he had sent her a message. She dragged her mother to Jacinto's bedroom, and there they discovered that he "had placed the shares under the floorboards for safekeeping" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 103). Jacinto had left the shares to Josephina, who claimed that "she still saw him from time to time in her dreams, when he dropped by for a nap" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 103).

At the conclusion of this story, the restoration of electricity symbolically reconnects the Fonseca family with the broader aspects of modern civilization. Reflecting on the evening's events, Joanna observes, "we'd found a way to pass the time as a family and, ironically, I'd found out more about my extended family members in these few hours than I had in all the years I'd known them. I might have never known about their secrets had the power cut not occurred" (2012, p. 103-104). Her introspection underscores the unexpected family intimacy and revelations, highlighting the familial bonds and hidden narratives that were uncovered in the absence of technological distractions. Even Carol begins to warm to the idea that there are unexplained phenomena. Joanna seeks her father's permission to incorporate some of the family stories into her third book, a request he readily approves, expressing his appreciation for "the idea of recording our family history" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 105). This decision underscores a desire to preserve and document the family's narrative heritage, blending personal recollections with literary expression. At this crucial juncture, the reader is introduced to the second underlying motivation of the book: colonialism and intergenerational trauma. Savio reveals to

Joanna that the Fonseca family can trace its lineage back to nineteenth-century Portuguese aristocracy. He hints at a family secret intertwined with the nation's history, dating back to 1810. Savio promises to share this story with Joanna, but insists she must not disclose to her mother that he was the source. The story, titled "The Beginning," serves as the foundational chapter where the intricate legacy of the Fonseca family and its historical context are unveiled.

The narrative goes back to Father Raoul Costa, who had been dispatched to Goa to serve at the Palace of the Inquisition. In his diary, Father Costa reveals his profound doubts about the Church's role in the persecution, massacre, and expropriation of property from the Sephardic Jews[1] who had fled to Goa. He confesses his own participation in the torture of these individuals and expresses the heavy burden on his conscience, lamenting, "*there is no redemption for me. My only hope is in this record that notes every piece of land and treasure that has been usurped*" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 110). Through this diary, Father Costa seeks to document and acknowledge the injustices committed, hoping to preserve the truth as a form of atonement for the atrocities in which he was complicit. Father Raoul Costa begins to feel haunted by his actions, confessing in his diary, "And now, I'm in hell, trapped with a spirit who talks to me of his son every time I close my eyes" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 111). The spirit is that of Joaquim Menendes, who "died while Raoul was administering his torture" (2012, p. 111). Raoul now feels a profound sense of responsibility for Joaquim's son, Tomas, who is being falsely accused of heresy. He is tormented by the knowledge that Tomas is truly innocent, further exacerbating his guilt and sense of moral conflict. Nonetheless, he is able to successfully disguise Tomas, facilitating his escape from confinement, entrusting him with his diary to be faithfully copied and made public only posthumously (Faleiro, 2012, p. 120). The story unveils a family scandal involving a forbidden and illegitimate romance between Father Costa and Clarinda Fonseca, a Portuguese aristocrat, which was considered a grave transgression against the rigid racial and social hierarchies imposed by colonial and religious rule. The birth of Jacinto Fonseca marked the culmination of a relationship between Clarinda and Raoul, who chose to discontinue their relationship to avoid scandal, thereby underscoring the family's dedication to preserving their social status and honor.

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[1] The Sephardic Jews in Goa, often referred to as "New Christians" or *conversos*, were initially welcomed in the region after fleeing persecution in Iberia. Many arrived in the early 16th century, bringing with them significant economic influence which soon attracted the ire of both Portuguese colonial and ecclesiastical authorities. The establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition in Goa in 1560 marked a dark period for these Jews. The Inquisition targeted New Christians suspected of secretly practicing Judaism, leading to severe persecution, torture, and execution of many individuals. One notable case was that of the prominent physician Garcia de Orta, whose remains were posthumously exhumed and burned in 1580.

Despite these challenges, the Jewish community in Goa maintained a clandestine presence. Eighteenth-century accounts suggest the existence of organized communal life, although the extent of this remains uncertain due to the oppressive conditions of the Inquisition. For further reading on the subject, see "Auto De Fé and Jew" by E.N. Adler, and *The Marranos* by Cecil Roth (1974).

> Months after Raoul's son Jacinto was born, Clarinda wrote him a letter describing his first steps; how his fingers curled around her hand and clutched her skirts to keep his balance. Raoul often smiled at the memory, thinking that though Jacinto was his, he would be raised a Fonseca. Her husband never found out their secret, and Raoul never saw Clarinda in private again. (Faleiro, 2012, p. 116).

In exploring the trauma echoing across generations, the Fonseca family grapples with secrecy, shame, and unresolved tensions. The narrative delves into themes of identity, power dynamics, and the enduring impact of colonialism, revealing how past events continue to shape their present reality. When Joanna's mother discovered the truth, she asked Savio to maintain silence, prioritizing the family's societal status and the preservation of the Fonseca name: "You know how much she values our family's standing in society… (…) In society's eyes she married a Fonseca. The family name matters to her" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 121). This pivotal disclosure by Savio to Joanna unveils a concealed aspect of their heritage, prompting a reckoning with the intergenerational trauma that subtly governs their family dynamics. Savio contends that "the Fonseca family has been living a lie for far too long" (2012, p. 122), suggesting that unveiling these narratives through Joanna's book may offer a form of catharsis while maintaining a semblance of fiction for external audiences.

The story culminates in Savio's birthday celebration, where family members, seeking respite from their obligations, gather at a gazebo and continue sharing ghost stories. Marie recounts another tale, and tensions escalate when Joanna's mother discovers their absence, and then finds out Joanna was aware of the long-held family secret. Shocked and dismayed by her husband's revelation, Joanna's mother confronts him while the rest of the family tries to make sense of the unfolding drama. Abruptly, "an ear-splitting rumble of thunder rattled the windows of the mansion" (Faleiro, 2012, p. 148), disrupting the scene. The narrative closes with a surreal twist: all eight individuals are tragically killed, their spirits forever confined to the mansion. Each year on September 29, Savio's birthday, their spectral forms gather, perpetually ensnared in contentious debates about the family's unresolved history.

By setting her book in Goa's Portuguese colonial past, Faleiro not only enriches the historical discourse but also addresses the nature of India's colonial legacy. This inclusion underscores the diversity of colonial experiences within India, promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the country's history. The annexation of Goa by India in 1961 marked a significant moment in the postcolonial reconfiguration of the nation. Goa's identity and historical development were largely

influenced by its Portuguese colonial rulers, creating a distinct cultural and social landscape. Faleiro's narrative efforts thus serve to bridge these historical divides, offering a more inclusive view of India's past that recognizes the varied colonial influences that have shaped its regions. Her broadened perspective encourages a more holistic view of Indian history, one that acknowledges the complexity and plurality of its colonial encounters.

The story's conclusion suggests that the unresolved traumas and secrets within the Fonseca family are so deeply ingrained that they persist beyond death. This reflects the idea that trauma, particularly intergenerational trauma resulting from historical injustices deriving from colonialism or family secrets, can haunt descendants and perpetuate cycles of suffering. The trapped spirits arguing about the family's past symbolize unresolved conflicts and the inability to move forward without acknowledging and addressing historical trauma. The mansion where the spirits are trapped becomes a metaphor for the need for historical reparation and reparative justice. Just as the spirits are unable to move on until their history is acknowledged and resolved, societies affected by historical injustices often face ongoing challenges until reparative measures are taken. This can include acknowledging past wrongs, offering apologies, providing compensation, and implementing policies to rectify systemic inequalities stemming from historical injustices. By acknowledging and confronting the secrets and traumas of the past, Faleiro suggests that true healing and justice can only begin once the full truth is unearthed and addressed. She suggests that the way to move forward is to acknowledge and understand the legacies of colonialism, as well as to recognize the manifestations of neocolonialism in contemporary times.

By framing storytelling as a decolonial practice, Faleiro posits that narratives from Goa serve as a form of resistance, allowing Goans to reclaim and redefine their identities. She challenges the dominant British-centric paradigm that has long overshadowed other colonial experiences within the Indian subcontinent. The author's fictional work not only highlights the Portuguese colonial legacy in Goa but also advocates for a more inclusive understanding of India's complex colonial history. Faleiro's work is thus a call to action for scholars and writers to recognize and integrate the varied colonial histories within India. *Afterlife* can be understood more broadly as the Indian central government's struggle to acknowledge Goa's 451-year Portuguese colonial history as integral to its identity. Storytelling emerges as a decolonial practice, empowering Goans to reclaim their sense of self. This postcolonial arena, fraught with historical ghosts, underscores the ongoing challenge of reconciling inherited burdens with aspirations for a fairer, more inclusive future. Here, the past persistently intersects with the present, urging recognition and reinterpretation, while negotiation serves as both a path to healing and a catalyst for transformation. In short, the novel offers an

exploration of the unseen and spectral aspects within the Lusophone context, making it a compelling addition to the world of literature written, or not, in Portuguese.

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