

Henrique de Senna Fernandes and Macao — His *Mátria*

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ABSTRACT: Henrique de Senna Fernandes, in various instances, professed his deep affection for Macao, endearingly referring to it as his motherland (*mátria*) and setting it apart from Portugal, his fatherland (*pátria*). His initial intention to depart Macao before the Handover gave way to a change of heart, fueled by his admission in private conversations and interviews that he could not bear to leave Macao, a place he would deeply miss. Despite his fervent pride in his Portuguese heritage and affection for Portugal, his heart remained steadfastly tethered to his beloved Macao. This sensation served as the canvas for most of his short stories and novels, a setting he intimately knew, much like a child's bond with their mother — recognising her visage, her scent, and the harmony of her voice. By drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's 'chronotope' concept, this narrative resonates with Senna Fernandes's literary works, weaving a tapestry of short stories and novels. Beyond the confines of this narrative, this paper also embarks on an exploration of his interviews, discussions, and writings that echo his profound love for his *mátria*.

KEYWORDS: *Mátria*; *Pátria*; Macanese literature.

INTRODUCTION

Hundreds of pages have been devoted to analysing, criticising, or simply mentioning Henrique de Senna Fernandes's fiction. However, the author has not always been adequately recognised for his achievements, in spite of the first prize awarded to his short story 'A-Chan, a Tancareira'¹ in the literary competition included in the 'Ribbon Burning' (*Queima das Fitas*) celebrations of graduation at the University

of Coimbra, in 1950. The story was apparently written as a palliative for his nostalgic feelings for Macao, his birthplace, his beloved *mátria*. In a final note to the beautiful 'love' story, the young writer added: 'Written in Coimbra, in February of 1950, longing for Macao' (*Escrito em Coimbra, em Fevereiro de 1950, com saudades de Macau*).² The young man lived far from his family for several years, as a law student in Coimbra. In the 1950s, Macanese students could only go back

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Fig. 1: *Largo de Lilau*, 2019. Sketch in black and white, by Catarina Cortinelli.

home after graduation, because travels were long and expensive. But he mentions Macao, which includes memories of family and friends on this land. Through his writings, he expresses his nostalgia to his family and friends and to the city itself. Senna Fernandes constantly indicates, in various ways, his love for his birthplace, his motherland, as we will demonstrate in the following text.

This paper briefly reviews each of Senna Fernandes's books, as related to the mentioned topic. The analysis will first include the two volumes of short stories, and then four of the five novels: *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé*, *A Trança Feiticeira*, *Os Doreis*, and *A Noite Desceu em Dezembro*. The fifth novel, *O Pai das Orquídeas*, was partly published by a Macao newspaper, but the manuscript was lost in a fire prior to its planned publication.

THE SHORT STORIES

Senna Fernandes was born in Macao, in one of the oldest Macanese families, and the fact that his parents lost everything during the war did not prevent the young man from following his dreams, even though it happened a little bit later than he had expected. He was taught to love Portugal, the distant *pátria* which he could only feel after World War II, when he could finally begin his studies in Law at the University of Coimbra. He wanted to be a writer from his childhood and actually did write some stories and short plays that he would read to his sisters. Unfortunately, we will not be able to read those texts as the manuscripts that were stored in an old trunk have been lost. Some other short stories have been published in Catholic newspaper *O Clarim*, but Senna Fernandes did not keep copies for himself. Officially, 'A-Chan, a Tancareira' is considered as his first literary text.

In spite of the story's success in Portugal, there was no echo in Macao. Only six years later, the short story was published in magazine *Mosaico*. Approximately 20 years later, in 1978, Senna Fernandes published his first book *Nam Van: Contos de Macau*, a modest author's edition that included six short stories, and 'A-Chan, a Tancareira' is one of them. The author distributed copies of his work to persons from whom he anticipated feedback, but unfortunately, this feedback never materialised. In response to this disappointment, he voiced his frustration in interviews with some Macao newspapers, and Brazilian publications like *O Globo*, as well as on television channels in both Macao and Portugal.

Senna Fernandes's explicit love for Macao, which often expressed in interviews, was reinforced in his fiction. Constant reference to the city is an implicit form of his love for Macao. Both urban and rural places are constantly mentioned as the proof of the beauty of the beloved space and also as part of the special atmosphere that reveals itself propitious to good feelings and love. These references serve as a

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literary map, leading the reader through the streets and iconic locations of the historic Macao. They hold great significance in shaping the characters, defining their social status, and delineating their profiles.

A-Chan is a *tan-ka* woman who was sold several times since she was a child and ended in the hands of an old *tan-ka* woman who often mistreated her. However, she inherited everything when the old woman died. And then, she met Manuel, a melancholic Portuguese sailor, with whom she had a romantic relationship. They could hardly communicate as they could not speak each other's language. Manuel had a health problem and did not stay for a long time. A-Chan was pregnant and gave birth to a little girl. When Manuel knew that, he accepted his little daughter and lived together with A-Chan for some months. When Manuel had to leave Macao, A-Chan gave him the child, because she wanted her to have a better life.

The candid style of the beginning of the 'love story' between A-Chan and Manuel is justified by the simple words: 'Magic Summer night...Macao night...' (*Noite mágica de Verão...Noite de Macau...*).³ The return from the first night of the 'love affair' is also very poetic: 'The city drowsed in the serenity of a blue summer. The snaking contours of Lapa were now clearer, in the light of the dying stars' (*A cidade modorrava na serenidade dum estio azul. Os contornos serpentes da Lapa eram agora mais nítidos, à luz das estrelas moribundas*).⁴

Manuel's thoughts, when alone and nostalgic, are supported by the sympathising landscape: the twilight in Penha, the sunset behind the imponent Lapa, the rumour of the pine trees in Guia, the Camões Garden, and other 'niches in the City of the Holy Name of God, where he would seek peace for his pain' (*recantos da Cidade do Santo Nome de Deus, a cujo silêncio e Beleza ia rogar sossego para os seus pasares*).⁵ The city is not only a geographic locale or a place where people live, but of human and sensitive, sympathising with the feelings of the character.

The strong presence of the city in Senna Fernandes's stories is constant in another story, 'Candy'. The main character, a Macanese emigrant, is about to return to Brazil, via Hong Kong. The man, who was only a few kilometers from his hometown when he stopped in Hong Kong, marked his nostalgia to Macao:

[Translation by author] *His eyes were still full of his native landscape. The trees of Praia Grande and Chunambeiro, the red Autumn sunset on any of the Penha belvederes, the Meia-Laranja with the eternal image of the junks, going to and coming back from their sea labor, the narrow and sinuous streets and alleys leading from S. Lourenço down to Praia do Manduco, parts of an old Macao that was slowly disappearing.*⁶

From the six short stories included in *Nam Van: Contos de Macao*, the story 'A Fishing Party off Macao' (*Uma Pesca ao Largo de Macau*)⁷ is the richest in details of the geography of the territory and its whereabouts. It is also full of autobiographical references and details of the social and political situation of the time when the story happens. The narrator begins the story in first person and introduces the reader to the main character, his grandfather, the count (his character name and also his social position in Macao society at the turn of the century). At that time, Portugal was still a monarchy and the count, Senna Fernandes's grandfather, illuminated the *façade* of his house on the occasion of 'their Majesties' birthdays.

He describes the house itself, the servants' routines, the hospitality granted to friends and visitors, as well as Macao landscape at the time. The narrator describes the sight from the house balcony:

[Translation by author] *From that desirable terrace, as there are no more in Macao, we could admire the beauty of the bay, the curve of which*

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*extended from the small Fort São Francisco to Bom Parto Fortress.*⁸

A description of the Praia Grande, 'the elegant thoroughfare of the city', the movement of the dandies, the bandstand in the Garden of São Francisco, the movement of boats (sampans, *lorchas* and junks) in the bay, the golden lights of the Hing Kee Hotel and the Oriental Hotel, the city's evening heartbeat, fills around one page. But the main topic of the story is the adventure of 'the fishing party'. The reader follows the route of four 'fishermen' from the meeting point to the Cathedral, to attend the Sunday dawn Mass, and later to the small Cais da Pedra in Praia Grande. Servants, carrying all they needed for the journey, were already waiting for the count and his friends. It was late August, which is considered by the Chinese as the beginning of Autumn. When the three boatwomen were also ready, the group departed. From Rada to Pedra da Areca, the text provides a description of all of the places they passed, or could see from the boat. They could see the beaches, the monuments, the hills. Later, after realising that Pedra da Areca was not a good fishing spot on that day, the party went on to the rocks of the Isle of São João (Shangchuan Island), where they could finally catch fish. On the way, they stopped at the village of Lapa Island to buy some seasoning for lunch, and they decided on a spot near Ma-Lau Chau (馬騮洲 Maliuzhou).

The significant adventure occurs on the return journey at sunset. This story, while captivating, will only focus on the details that showcase Senna Fernandes's profound knowledge of his hometown and underscore Macao's pivotal role in his works. *Mong-Há*, the author's second book, published in 1998. It was launched precisely a year before the Handover, which offers eight very interesting short stories.

The introduction, 'Frontispício' (*façade*, or title-page), explains the reason for the title. The 'stories' were told by the author to his friends during a social

occasion in Pousada de Mong-Há. One of those friends suggested that Senna Fernandes should write those memories, and he eventually agreed. As the author states, the stories are 'product of painful elaboration [...] in which memories, living experiences and pages of pure fiction are mixed' (*produto de dolorosa elaboração [...] em que se misturam recordações, experiências vividas e páginas de pura ficção*).⁹

The stories are rich in details, especially when it comes to the memories of places in Macao, for Senna Fernandes in his seventies that could still provide details of his beloved city, even of people or places that had disappeared a long time before.

One of the stories 'Rua das Mariazinhas' calls our attention because of its title. This is a name that the Portuguese in Macao know and use. However, the real name of the street is Rua de S. Domingos. It was, and still is, a lively street where people could find a wide variety of shops. The author's memories go back to his childhood. He remembers the time when the street was known by its real name, Rua de S. Domingos, and *Mariazinhas* was only a part of that street between Calçada da Sé and Calçada das Verdades, in front of the Cinema Capitol. However, the unofficial name was later extended to part of the next street. Today it includes the entire Rua de S. Domingos, starting from S. Domingos square and including a significant part of Rua de Pedro Nolasco. In a detailed description, the author mentions various shops that existed there in his childhood, especially an antiques shop called Pessanha-Curious. He remembers: 'There was a man at the door'. He asks his father about the man and was told that the man was the son of Camilo Pessanha, a Portuguese lawyer and symbolist poet who lived and died in Macao, a name that sounded familiar to the child.

The story 'Rua das Mariazinhas' is the pretext for a description of Macao, and of Senna Fernandes's own life. The story shows the reader the author's routes from home at the time of primary and

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secondary school, the alternatives that deviated from that routine, the meaningful tiny details, the shops, and the changes that occurred in those places, all in a kind of prolepsis in the history of the city. He explains the day-by-day life of each small shop, the delicacies sold at the 'popular A-Chai's shop' that made people, especially Macanese, line up to purchase the famous *chilicotes* (a kind of deep-fried meat pastry), to buy coffee from Timor-Leste and spices for delicious Macanese dishes.¹⁰ He describes the streets and places with details, painting the human landscape of the town centre. The shopkeepers and the peddlers shout or sing their specific cries, announcing their merchandise, mainly Chinese cakes, sweet soups of soy, sesame, almonds, or the famous *tau-fu-fa* (white soy sweet pudding in sugar sauce). He also describes the bookshops that fascinated him. In addition, there is a full description of the *Via Dolorosa* (in Macao, Procissão de Nosso Senhor dos Passos, a religious procession in which the statue of Christ carrying the Cross is taken from the Cathedral to the Santo Agostinho Church and there are stations represented different moments of the Passion). The description includes the names of all the streets visited by the procession, from the Cathedral to Santo Agostinho's Church, as well as the seven stations that Christ, carrying his cross, suffered, met Veronica (according to the tradition, a young woman who cleaned his bleeding holy face) or met his mother. The author also describes the procession of our Lady of Fátima, held on 13 May. Concerning these demonstrations of Catholic faith, the author mentions the respectful attitude of Macao's Chinese Buddhists, a symbol of harmony and tolerance that define Macao.

Senna Fernandes does not forget Macao's hard moments, those moments of weakness, different problems that created insecurity and instability: tuberculosis and other epidemics, the 'Hong Kong foot disease' (tinea pedis) and the war (The Pacific War, 1941–1945). He explores a wide range of

subjects, spanning from discussions about movies to his early bicycle adventures, the initiation of boys into the realm of sexuality, and the ensuing consequences. This includes all events, whether they brought good or ill, that unfolded in Macao and left an indelible mark on its residents' lives. In short, Senna Fernandes's life story is intimately related to the story of Macao in his lifetime. Through 'A Rua das Mariazinhas', the reader can view the city in the form of a film that flows through her/his imagination. As what happens in most of the work of Senna Fernandes, this text is very rich in 'chronotopes'.¹¹ The relation among time, place and action is indisputably presented in Senna Fernandes's fiction. This relation reflects the author's unconditional love for his birthplace, the place where he felt at home and where he wanted to live and die.

However, bookshops, especially a Portuguese bookshop at Rua das Mariazinhas was one of the reasons for the author to walk on this street. The nostalgia of the past does not harm the pride in the present or the hope for the future:

[Translation by author] *Rua das Mariazinhas was, once more, indispensable for me. The Portuguese Bookshop is there, with the books, exhibitions, discussions, long chats with good friends who frequent it [...]*¹²

*The 'Mariazinhas' will be in my memory forever. From each epoch, a never-fading remembrance, from that of the turbulent little boy who used to chew bits of sugar-cane to the one of the man that stops in front of the shopwindow of the Portuguese bookshop, staring at the new book that he would like to have.*¹³

THE NOVELS

Amor e Dedinhos de Pé was published in 1986. In the introduction, 'Raising the Curtain' (*Subir do Pano*), Senna Fernandes states that the story, which

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involves the life of two young Macanese, the beautiful and witty Francisco Frontaria (Chico), and a young lady, Victoria Vidal, was an old tale that he heard one evening from his grandmother. Although Senna Fernandes was unable to recall the entire tale, he believed it to be a well-written short fiction. Therefore, he made the decision to enhance the tale with other Macao stories, and it became a novel.

Francisco was an orphan of a rich family who was raised by aunt Bitá and uncle Timóteo, siblings of his father. He was spoiled by Bitá, who was mainly responsible for the little boy's education. Her tendency to repeatedly forgive his misconduct, money wasting, extravagance, and lack of respect for others, as well as his dangerous social (and sexual) adventures, led to his misfortune: suffered from a terrible infection in his toes and his feet stunk, which gained him the nickname *Chico-Pe-Fede*. He was expelled from home and considered a marginal, someone whom everybody avoided, the object of insults, the terror of the city. One evening, he collapsed in front of Victorina Vidal's door. Victorina had been humiliated by Chico in a ball in front of Macao society, as she was not pretty; she was cross-eyed and too thin, he called her *varapau de osso*,¹⁴ a nickname that tormented her. Unlike Chico, Victorina was not a daughter of a rich family. The Filipino origin of her mother's family, the Padillas, was the reason that Victorina's family was not accepted by Macanese society. Her 'ugly' appearance was like a curse that prevented her from being happy, except at school, where her intelligence and natural kindness were considered more important. Even when she became a nurse, after having successfully nursed her grandfather, gaining praise at the hospital, her aunt still criticised her for working in such a 'dirty and inappropriate' profession.

After her father ran away from a desperately unhappy marriage and from the cohabitation with his in-laws, Victorina left the family. She sought help from Gonalo Botelho, her father's Godfather and

good friend, whom she attended in the hospital, and chose to live her life alone in a small house in Beco do Lilau, which she inherited from Botelho. In spite of being well off financially, Victorina started working as a seamstress, and soon became the best *couturière* in Macao. One evening she 'found' that miserable, suffering man at her door and offered him shelter in the house, where she lived with an old maid and a male servant. Even though she recognised him as the person who had caused her so much sadness and pain, she began to try to heal his stinky, putrefied feet. It was the healing and redemption that led to a beautiful love story.

The plot is much richer, but we intend to highlight the importance given to the details related to the city and the territory which are relevant to the topic we are pursuing. Strangely enough, such details are not so present in this long novel (447 pages)¹⁵ as they are in the tales of *Nam Van*. The political and economic situation of Macao was significantly affected by the foundation of Hong Kong and the political events in Macao itself. Most of the action occurs indoors, both at Francisco's and Victorina's. However, we have references to Botelho's *chácara* (a country house near the town), the place where Victorina learned to see herself in a different way and to value her positive side; and, later, the place where she loved, and was loved by, the convalescent Chico Frontaria.

The way to the *chácara* in the quarter Areia Preta was the route that Hipólito Vidal, Victoria's father, walked when he sought Botelho's help; the route from the family home, where he was hated and vexed, to a new life in Shanghai was the route from Purgatory to Heaven:

[Translation by author] *He walked down the short slope, walked through Tap-Seac under the murmurs of the bamboo plantations and of the acacias covered by red flowers [...] along meditating planetrees. The calm and bucolic*

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*Flora area was far from the city noises. [...] In the macadam road, a buffalo, tied to a tree branch, ruminated patiently. [...] The Flora pond looked like a greenish mirror with silver reflexes.*¹⁶

Some years later, Victoria walked the same route, she traced her father's footsteps years before with same purpose: to seek Botelho's advice and help. She was extremely unhappy:

[Translation by author] *Under the pressure of melancholy, she could hardly appreciate the chipping of the birds that followed her, jumping from one tree to the other, nor the dark green of the fields where buffalos ruminated.*¹⁷

References to streets and locales in Macao are scarce. Chico finds shelter in the Chinese part of the city after being expelled from the 'Christian city' where he belonged because of both his misconduct and his stinking feet. Victoria's place is her family's home, her *locus horribilis*, the place where she was not loved and miserable. She found peace at school, in her short time working at the hospital and later in the very Macanese quarter of Lilau and in the Botelho's *chácara*. Much like a theatre play, the scenes mostly occur inside. In fact, the book was adapted to a movie by one of the best Portuguese film makers, Luís Filipe Rocha, with actors in the main roles and the collaboration of the Macanese, including Senna Fernandes himself. However, the writer was not satisfied with those changes made by the film director, in Senna Fernandes's words, he did not know Macao, he did not understand what was meant in the final. *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé* brings us a fascinating story of sin and redemption through love. Macao, the author's beloved *mátria*, is a place of conciliation and harmony, where love miracles happen.

A Trança Feiticeira, Senna Fernandes's second novel, was published in 1993, in an edition supported by the Orient Foundation (Fundação Oriente). To begin with, the author offers readers four pages of nice prose. He calls them *Primeiras palavras*, a sort of preface that brings the reader to a better understanding of the story, a beautiful love story that sounds impossible but comes true.

Senna Fernandes provides a full picture of the old Macao. He describes the differences between the Christian city (*cidade Crista*) and the Chinese city (*bazar*), but he also mentions another part of the city, some sort of enclave in the *Christian city*. This is Cheok Chai Un, a densely populated Chinese quarter, famous for the violence of men and the beauty of young women, most of them working as water carriers (*aguadeiras*) who collected water from a natural spring, *o poço*, in the quarter and carried it to the houses in the city. The landscape was familiar and the author admits that he would cross the place on his way to school, because it was a shortcut, but also because he enjoyed the sight of the beautiful 'China ink' long braids of the girls.

The male protagonist, Adozindo, known as 'the beautiful Adozindo' (*o belo Adozindo*), is the son of a middle-class Macanese family, disputed by most of the girls of Macao, in an affair with a beautiful, young, rich widow who he was expected to marry. One day, he saw a beautiful water carrier with a long and shiny 'China ink braid' — A-Leng. He followed her to Cheok Chai Un, which meant something like trespassing as Western people were not welcome there. The girl attacked him with her *tám-kó* (a strong wood stick that was used for the transportation of two buckets of water). After enduring this humiliation, the beautiful Adozindo resolved to put the incident and the disrespectful girl behind him. Adozindo had been humiliated and subjected to physical attacks on multiple occasions when he attempted to engage with her. His most fervent desire was for revenge. How

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Fig. 2: View of the Lake Nam Van, Macao, 2020, by Catarina Cottinelli.

could she, a mere water carrier, degrade him in such a way? He believed that the ultimate revenge would be to seduce her and then discard her, as if she held no value. However, A-Leng's innocent behaviour, her beauty, and her beautiful braid, made him change his mind. He fell in love with her and left his parent's home, because they refused to accept the girl in their house. Adozindo and his girl went to visit her friend's modest house in the *bazar*. He confronted his family, his friends, and his prospective wife, but A-Leng was also expelled from Cheok Chai Un, because she had chosen a *kwai-lou* (Portuguese or westerner). As a result, Adozindo was no longer accepted in Macao

society. Everybody looked down on him. He had to work hard in unqualified jobs, because his father asked all his friends not to offer Adozindo a job. The couple had difficulties. The social, cultural differences tried to separate them, but love was stronger, and Adozindo and A-Leng started a nice family life. Eventually they got married happily and had children, after A-Leng's conversion to the Catholic faith. To complete their happiness, Adozindo's father finally accepted the new family.

Macao of the 1930s is the scene of the entire novel. An important turning point in the relation between Adozindo and A-Leng is the historical fact of

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the tremendous explosion of the powder room of the Guia fortress. 'At five and forty-five of the fatidic 13 August 1931' (*Às cinco e quarenta e cinco da manhã do fatídico dia 13 de Agosto de 1931*)¹⁸ starts chapter 7 of the novel. A detailed description of damages caused by the explosion makes it easy for the reader to understand how A-Leng was scared when she heard that Adozindo was hurt. When they occasionally met, all her defences vanished, and everything changed when she invited him for dinner that night. The secret love affair between the princess of Chok Chai Un and the *kwai-lou* became public and she was expelled from her community.

In this novel, the Christian city and the Chinese city, or *Bazar*, are divided. Adozindo's family lives in Camões Square, where Adozindo was born and raised. They are not rich and his father is a civil servant and small entrepreneur. Adozindo is a true *mamão*, a Macanese born in St Antony's parish. When Aurélio, the father, decides that the family should move to a new and larger house in Estrada da Vitória, Adozindo supports his father against his mother's opinion. The new house elevates their social standing. Lucrécia, the cheerful widow his father had in mind for him to marry, lives just a short distance away, but his father insists on him taking a rickshaw to visit her, considering it a stylish choice.

Cheok Chai Un, where A-Leng lived was a very special Chinese quarter, was an 'enclave' in the Christian town, where foreigners, Portuguese, and Macanese were considered enemies. They should never go to Cheok Chai Un. But the *Bazar* was far away and even the Chinese were afraid of those from Cheok Chai Un, because they were 'hostile and violent'.

When A-Leng and Adozindo's love affair becomes public, both are turned out from their 'worlds'. As Adozindo's family would not accept the poor Chinese girl as a wife, or even concubine, of the young man, Adozindo departs with her, taking some simple clothes and a couple of objects, but no money. The lovers

had to go to a poor and rather suspect small pension, then to a very poor house near the Kiang Wu hospital. Adozindo's depression and his lazy attitude caused the couple to separate. When he finally got a modest but decent job, A-Leng and Adozindo were together again. They got married and Adozindo found a better house for the family. Their children were born and Adozindo was promoted. He wanted to find a better place to live, so they moved to Rua dos Arneiros, again near St. Antony's church. He found house with good *fong-sô*, the right place for a true *mamão*. The negotiations for the place, whose owner, D. Capitolina, repeatedly refuses to rent, were wisely conducted by A-Leng. The owner wanted to sell the house. A-Leng made all kinds of arguments: Chinese traditional culture, Catholic and social, e. g: 'My mother, a friend of geomancers, has taught me that we should never sell a house that has a good *fong-sô*. It is like defying luck...' (*A minha mãe, amiga de geomantes, ensinou-me que nunca nos devemos desfazer duma casa que tem um bom fong-sô. É brincar com a sorte...*).¹⁹

When D. Capitolina accuses A-Leng of saying something contrary to the Catholic faith she had converted to, the young woman asks: 'Is there anyone that was born or has lived in this region for many years and does not believe in *fong-sô*? [...] Religion does not harm the *fong-sô*. I do believe that the *fong-sô* is a gift from God.'²⁰ D. Capitolina is touched by A-Leng's attitude, her candid faith, and the respect for her husband, and agrees to let out the house to the family.

The importance of such details is the way they highlight the possible peculiar harmony among people of diverse cultures, different religions, and different social status. Macao represents that harmony, much as we can see, such harmony in the presence of a small Chinese Buddhist temple next to the ruins of the church of the Holy Mother of God.

The harmony is reached by the couple because they love each other and each contributes to a change for the better: A-Leng redeems the lazy, spoiled, almost

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inutile Adozindo and she manages to make him a better person, a good husband, a good family father, while Adozindo also plays an important role: the poor water carrier who walked around barefoot or wore wooden clogs, the pretty young woman who attacked anyone who offended her, who did not care about hygiene, who would belch in appreciation for a good meal, became a good housewife, a good Christian, and learned to forgive those who had offended her. The final statement of the novel is hers, when she opens the door to her father-in-law, in the splendour of a red-golden sunset and says: 'Come in, father. You are at home.' (*Entra, pai. Está em sua casa*).

Os Dores is a posthumous publication released in 2012, two years after the author's death. In the preface that is not only related to this novel, but to Henrique de Senna Fernandes, his son — Miguel de Senna Fernandes wrote:

[Translation by author] *Macao is the real reason of his writing, the source of his inspiration. 'Celebrating Macao is my passion [...] is the often-repeated statement in informal chats with myself or with his closest friends.'*²¹

However, *Os Dores* does not offer so many references to places, or many details about the streets on which characters live in or stroll. The story of Leontina das Dores, the little Caucasian-looking girl that was saved by Mr. Remígio Policarpo, is anything but trivial. She is expelled from the Policarpo's home and sent to an orphanage, where she completes her education. Later, she moves out of the orphanage because she wants to live her life. She had become a beautiful young woman but luck in love is never really on her side. She loves without being loved, and is desired without desiring. However, she finds the way to survive, and Macao is the place. Only very brief references are made to the rickshaw trip from the house where she lived to the Canossian orphanage,²²

and the other, years later, from there to Julia's house.²³ The most enthusiastic landscape description refers to one of her excursions with her friend Eunice who eventually takes her to take a look at 'the sea', a remote remembrance of her childhood. Here, the author sings the splendour of his city:

[Translation by author] *The Praia Grande Bay was covered by the golden sunshine that was sinking behind the Lapa Island. The water of the high tide glittered in dazzling scintillation, whispered in soliloquies next to the granite wall, but it hit strongly the most remote stones of the December 1 small fort, far away. Lazy junks in the anchoring places lowered sails. Lorchas and sampans balanced in the tide. Very small Tan-kas in a continuous sea saw motion drew lines of foam on the greenish mantle of the water at the beginning of September. [...] Admiring the wide landscape delighted Leontina.*²⁴

A long paragraph describes the details of that beautiful bay, the buildings that Leontina recognises, the beauty of the Macao skyline that could be appreciated from the local.

A NOITE DESCEU EM DEZEMBRO

As mentioned above, this novel was partly published in 2005, as a feuilleton in newspaper *Ponto Final*. A simple remark: The book does not follow Senna Fernandes's usual formula of four or five parts and a number of chapters. *A Noite Desceu em Dezembro* comprises 481 pages divided into 55 chapters.

What really matters for our topic is the way Macao is presented in this fascinating novel that brings us a handful of interesting stories: the story of the Belmares Family and the story of each of the five Belmares brothers and sisters and their friend Álvaro Sameiro. But there are more adjacent characters contributing to the story, including the famous boat woman, Sam

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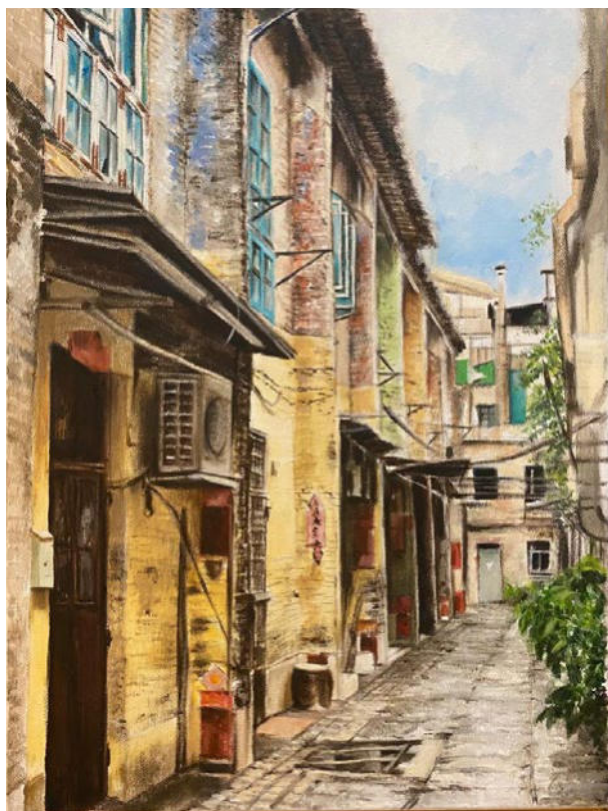


Fig. 3: *Rua do Bazar*. Painting by Catarina Cottinelli.

Ché. More important than the several stories in the novel is the history of the world and particularly the history of Macao. Senna Fernandes's interest in history is a fact. In his curriculum vitae we find the mention of his secondary school teaching activity: he was a history teacher, and several of his former students refer to his very interesting classes. The novel is set in the period of World War II, more precisely of the Pacific War (1941–1945), a period that caused substantial changes in the region and in the way of life and social attitudes in Macao. The war caused damages, pain, death, and hunger, but made people more open-minded, less swayed by prejudice, accepting the others for what they really are and not judging for what they seem to be, regardless of nationality, race, or even behaviour. Nuno Belmares, one of the five Belmares 'children', is the hero in the story, the one that risks his life to

fight for the right cause of the moment: Free China, Hong Kong and Macao. However, Macao was the safe anchorage port for all kinds of refugees; Chinese, Hong Kong Portuguese, and many others. Indeed, Senna Fernandes also wrote in the story 'Hotel Rivera' of the fall of Hong Kong and the transformation of Macao:

[Translation by author] *Suddenly, Macao changed completely. After the fall of Hong Kong, Macao was separated from the rest of the world, communicating only by telegram. The conquest of the British colony caused a flood of thousands of refugees, filling the streets and the houses with the 'strangest people' who brought new habits, new customs, and a new mentality.*²⁵

We tried to present Senna Fernandes's filial love for Macao as it appears in his tales and novels, and also is testified by others.

To complete this text, we would like to recall the author's own statements. On 24 May 1997, Portuguese television journalist Helena Balsa broadcasted an interview with Senna Fernandes. After talking about his past in Coimbra, the author mentioned the fascinating experience of reading Portuguese books which were difficult to obtain in Macao. He loved the books of Eça de Queiroz (although disliking Eça's way of treating women) and others, but his epiphany came with the experience of reading Jorge Amado, the Brazilian writer who included the people and the history of his region in his novels. The works of Jorge Amado instilled in the young Senna Fernandes a sense of duty and obligation to write about Macao, the peculiarities of his birthplace, discovering the worst and the best, the splendour and he misery, praising the virtues: 'Macao, though a small place, has a fascinating history. It has extremely beautiful stories, incredible situations that can only happen in Macao. It is a pity if they get lost [...]. Macao is a world. [...] It is a small city that contains

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two different cities, the Portuguese, and the Chinese.' And he emphasises the harmony that exists in the cohabitation of such different people and cultures. He concludes: 'I hope it does never end. What I fear is this charm of Macao may disappear one day.'

There were other interviews and the one conducted by Carlos Morais José, on 10 October 2013, Senna Fernandes's eightieth birthday. Talking about the Handover of Macao, he mentions the feelings of the Macanese and the Portuguese, their insecurities, their fears, and his decision to stay. When being asked: 'Why do you love this place?' he answered: 'I love it very much. I am used to this place, and more than that. I don't want to pretend that I am a hero, but I would feel that I was betraying this place if I left. I am not criticising anyone, but this is what I felt: I would betray my birthplace, I would betray my friends who could not leave. Worse: I would betray all my ancestors, their bones that are in St. Michael's cemetery. I never wanted them to be removed because this is the only place they know.'

Another telling detail affirming Senna Fernandes's deep affection for Macao is the incorporation of non-grammatical Portuguese forms, frequently found in the local Portuguese spoken in Macao. We are not referring to creole, Macanese, or *Patuá*. Rather, we are highlighting the 'deviations' in Portuguese syntax and morphology, shared not only with Macao but also with Lusophone nations, including Brazil. These deviations, often employed by writers, serve as a means to assert their national identity and pride. Senna Fernandes suffered because his books were not popular in Portugal. He was sad when he was told that he was not a Portuguese writer. However, he re-acquired his self-esteem and was proud to be a Macanese writer, the one that could show his love of his *mátria*, showing the positive and the negative aspects of the city and its people in the strong belief that there are things that can only happen in Macao, the city of harmony. **RC**

*A special acknowledgement to Ms. Catarina Cottinelli for granting the permission to use her exquisite illustrations.

NOTES

- 1 A-Chan, the Tanka woman.
- 2 Henrique de Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van: Contos de Macau*, 2nd ed. (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1997), 20.
- 3 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 11.
- 4 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 12.
- 5 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 13.
- 6 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 70. The original Portuguese text: 'Os olhos vinham ainda cheios das paisagens natais. As árvores da Praia Grande e do Chunambeiro, o fulvo poente de Outono, num dos miradouros da Penha, a Meia-Laranja, com a sua eterna paisagem dos juncos, partindo e regressando das fainas do mar, as ruas e ruelas, descendo de S. Lourenço à praia do Manduco, estreitas e sinuosas duma Macau vetusta que tendia a desaparecer.'
- 7 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 31.
- 8 Senna Fernandes, *Nam Van*, 32. The original Portuguese text: 'Dessa varanda invejável, como já as não há em Macau, admirava-se toda a graciosidade da baía, cujo traçado curvilíneo se estendia do Fortim de S. Francisco até ao Bom Parto.'
- 9 Henrique de Senna Fernandes, *Mong-Há* (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1998), 7.
- 10 Senna Fernandes, *Mong-Há*, 82–83.
- 11 Mikhail M. Bakhtine, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (United States: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84–258. Explanation cited: '(literally "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships expressed in literature.'
- 12 Senna Fernandes, *Mong-Há*, 104. The original Portuguese text: 'A rua voltou a ser imprescindível para mim, faz parte do meu quotidiano. Lá está a Livraria Portuguesa com os seus livros, as exposições, as palestras, a cavaqueira com os amigos certos que a frequentam [...]'
- 13 Senna Fernandes, *Mong-Há*, 105. The original Portuguese text: 'As Mariazinhas permanecerão sempre na minha memória. De cada época, uma indelével lembrança, desde a do garoto irrequieto que mastigava tacos de cana-de-açúcar até à do adulto que pára na vitrina da Livraria Portuguesa, a contemplar o livro novo que se cobiça.'

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- 14 Bone stick.
- 15 Henrique de Senna Fernandes, *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé*, 5th ed. (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 2012).
- 16 Senna Fernandes, *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé*, 171. The original Portuguese text: 'Desceu a pequena encosta, atravessou os campos relvados do Tap-Seac, sob o sussurro dos bambuais e das acácias enfloradas de Vermelho [...] correndo à sombra dos plátanos mediterrâneos. Em seguida, abriu-se a zona da Flora, calma e bucólica, longe dos ruídos citadinos. [...] Na estrada macadamizada, um búfalo, preso a um ramo de árvore, ruminava pachorrentemente, [...] O lago da Flora era um espelho esverdeado cintilando revêrberos de prata. [...] A pressão da casa fora-se, sentia-se livre como um passarito à solta.'
- 17 Senna Fernandes, *Amor e Dedinhos de Pé*, 274. The original Portuguese text: 'Esmagada pela melancolia mal apreciava a chilreada dos pássaros que a iam acompanhando, de árvore em árvore, o verde austero das várzeas, onde ruminavam búfalos.'
- 18 Henrique Senna Fernandes, *A Trança Feiticeira* (Macao: Fundação Oriente, 1993), 37.
- 19 Senna Fernandes, *A Trança Feiticeira*, 155.
- 20 Senna Fernandes, *A Trança Feiticeira*, 155. The original Portuguese text: 'Haverá alguém nascido ou que tenha vivido muitos anos aqui, nestas paragens, que não acredite no "fong-sô"? [...] A religião não prejudica o "fong-sô". Creio até que o "fong-sô" é uma dádiva da Divindade.'
- 21 Henrique Senna Fernandes, *Os Dores* (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 2012), 9. The original Portuguese text: 'Macau é a razão de ser da sua escrita e a base da sua inspiração. "Cantar Macau é a minha Paixão", tantas vezes proferido em conversa informal e desprestigiada que tinha comigo ou com os seus amigos mais chegados.'
- 22 Senna Fernandes, *Os Dores*, 57.
- 23 Senna Fernandes, *Os Dores*, 76.
- 24 Senna Fernandes, *Os Dores*, 82–83. The original Portuguese text: 'A Baía da Praia Grande recobria-se de oiro do sol que declinava atrás da ilha da Lapa. A água da enchente reverberava em cintilações resplandecentes, murmurava em solilóquios junto da muralha de granito, mas ao longe batia forte nas pedras extremas do fortim de 1 de Dezembro. Juncos preguiçosos nos ancoradouros recolhiam as velas Lorchas e sampanas balanceavam ao sabor da maré. Tancares diminutos, em labor incessante de vaivém, riscavam em tiras de espuma o manto esverdeado da água dos princípios de setembro. [...] A contemplação da paisagem larga arrebatou Leontina.'
- 25 Senna Fernandes, *Mong-Há*, 231–232. The original Portuguese text: 'Dum momento para o outro, Macau transforma-se radicalmente. Com a queda de Hong Kong, Macau ficou separada do resto do mundo, apenas correspondendo por telegrama. A conquista da colónia britânica trouxe o influxo de milhares de refugiados, enchendo as ruas e as casas das mais desvairadas gentes, trazendo novos hábitos, novos costumes e uma nova mentalidade [...].'

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