

Visions of China: Stories from Macau — Chinese Women in the Eyes of Macanese/Portuguese Female Writers

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ABSTRACT: Nestled on the periphery of southern China, tiny Macao has offered profuse inspiration for Deolinda da Conceição (a Macanese) and Maria Ondina Braga (a Portuguese) to draw up narratives about the Chinese. Translated and collected in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, a series of their short stories vividly recount the predicaments and struggles of the common people. These two female writers are expressly concerned with downtrodden women's forlorn fates. Despondent characters from wide-ranging social strata are narrativised against the war-ravaged, poverty-stricken backdrop when post-imperial China was mired in socio-political turmoil, coinciding with a full-scale invasion launched by Japan. The main heroines discussed are: a westernised nightclub hostess, an educated wife from America, an illiterate barefoot mistress, a disillusioned slave-girl, an ignorant firecracker worker, a ghostly mad widow, a doomed leper girl and a saintly Buddhist avenger. These *dramatis personae* are either oppressed and discriminated against in a patriarchal system, or entrapped in the bottom part of a hierarchical society. Not least, others exist at the outer fringes of the lowest social echelon. Through the eyes of these two authors, we can see in their 'women's writing' a dismal tapestry of hapless women woven together in a historic period of time when Macao was destined to be a refugee haven.

KEYWORDS: Women's writing; Social oppression; Japanese invasion; Wartime victims; Lowest social echelon.

In 1911 the Great Qing collapsed. With the abdication of the last emperor, Asin-Gioro Puyi (1906–1967), imperial China's millennia-old monarchy was finally abolished on 12 February 1912. The demise of the Manchu rule was followed

by a cataclysmic period of political chaos, social upheaval and economic stagnation. Shortly, Japan launched a sweeping invasion of China, known as the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937–1945), which was part of the Pacific War. In spite of the fact that

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Macao — the former Portuguese settlement — was neutral and narrowly unscathed from Japanese brutality and savagery, the aftermath of the war inflicted boundless misery and adversity upon local residents.

A faltering China, further aggravated by the Civil War and political/ideological struggles in the decades that followed, drove mass migrations of desperate Chinese abroad, not to mention that countless people fled for their lives from adjacent provinces to Macao. This speck of land involuntarily became a refugee haven for the traumatised diaspora. The first half of the twentieth century was a time of serious destitution in history throughout the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao.

Hayden White (1928–2018), an American historian and literary critic, contends that ‘there is no such thing as a specifically historical approach to the study of history, but that there are a variety of such approaches’.¹ He has argued that the approach to history can then be interdisciplinary from varying sources. In addition to historical texts, literary writings can help us understand ‘the past’, mainly because they are themselves history and they tell stories about a particular place and era from disparate angles.

White’s argument could be applied to the literary texts of Deolinda da Conceição and Maria Ondina Braga, who would contribute relevant information to understand more about China/Macao’s recent history. Predicated on the war-torn backdrop in a tumultuous era, this paper examines the short stories by these two female writers, which were translated and collected in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*.

Literary writings by women are termed ‘women’s writing’, which has been a recognised genre of studies in the West since the 1970s, and is one of the major themes found in feminist literary theory. This emerging academic discipline chiefly

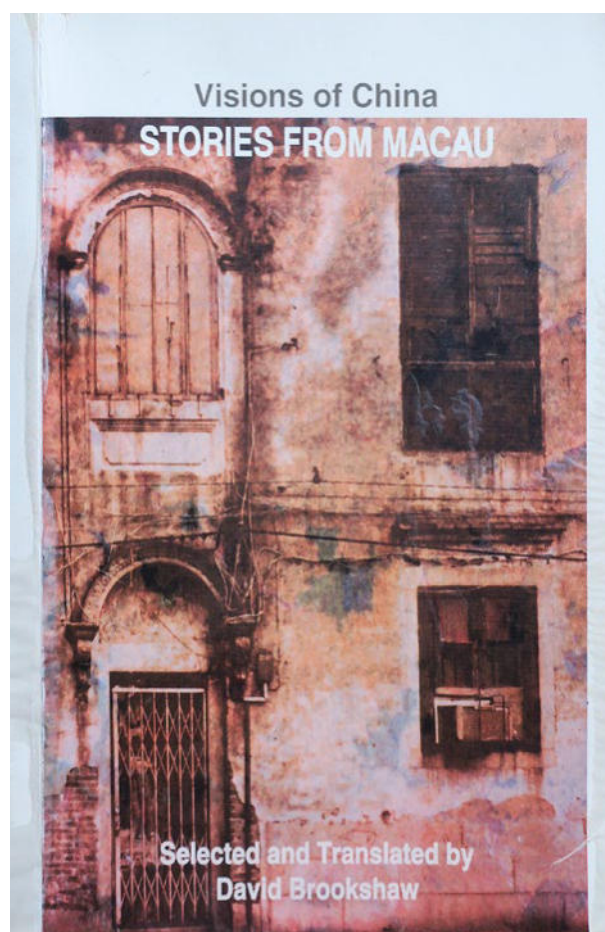


Fig. 1: Book cover of *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*.

focuses on texts produced by women within the literary world, regardless of the subject matters and the authors’ political stance. It has been argued that women writers by definition are a group worthy of separate study, as ‘[t]heir texts emerge from and intervene in conditions usually very different from those which produced most writing by men.’²

To this end, one may wonder how the writings by Deolinda da Conceição and Maria Ondina Braga capture the plights of the misfortunate, and the sufferings of those who are victims of the Japanese war, and how women from divergent social strata are represented in a patriarchal/hierarchical society. Their stories do not merely reveal an external reality;

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they also reflect a sense of reality. What we consider in this paper is a sense of reality in history in the not-too-distant past, in which Chinese women's oppressed roles and their ill-fated experiences through the lens of these two women writers are discussed.

DEOLINDA DA CONCEIÇÃO

Born to a Portuguese father and a Macanese mother in Macao, Deolinda da Conceição (1913–1957) was a teacher, translator and journalist. She studied in Macao and Hong Kong before moving onto Shanghai,³ where she was briefly interned in a concentration camp by the Japanese aggressors before the end of World War II. After the war, she was back in Macao and worked for the Portuguese-language newspaper, *Notícias de Macau*. Apart from publishing editorials and chronicles, she also published a collection of short stories under the title *Cheong-Sam, A Cabaia* (1956). Her stories unveil a realistic tapestry of Chinese women from different classes, either educated or illiterate in Macao and on the Chinese mainland. Five of her short stories centring on their terrible fates are examined below.

'CHEONGSAM'

A victim herself, Conceição lived through a period of atrocity and calamity during the Sino-Japanese War in Shanghai. Her writings reflect some of her own experiences in this westernised port city, which was dotted with ritzy nightclubs, and where the *cheongsam*⁴ was a fashionable attire for women at that time.

Against the backdrop of the belligerent Japanese invasion, the story 'Cheongsam' delineates a couple from the middle-class. Chan Nui, at the age of 15, is the only daughter of a wine merchant, and A-Chung is the heir to a rice merchant. Regarded as a good 'rice-wine' match, they are arranged by their fathers for a marriage in the near future.

Before the marriage takes place, Chan Nui is eager to leave for the New World (implying America) to study. She is fascinated with Western lifestyle, habits and customs outside China. On the other hand, A-Chung has no idea of going abroad to study, but is satisfied with his mastery of the abacus and some knowledge of Chinese characters that are enough as a rice merchant. Chan Nui's aspiration to receive more education is in contrast to A-Chung's lack of ambition for betterment, and their differing mentalities foretell a mismatch, if not their deadly fates, in the end.

Chan Nui comes back after completing her two years' studies abroad, with tremendous changes — she is elegant, confident, and has a delightfully feminine personality. More than that, she speaks to A-Chung as an equal, without servility.⁵ Becoming westernised, Chan Nui breaks off her submissive role in patriarchal ideology. Regardless of the apparent gap, they are united by their fathers to get married and later have three children.

Before long, the war is spreading and getting fierce. The couple and the children take flight for safety in Shanghai, where the Japanese shortly begin to attack. 'China was being consumed by the fire of constant battles, and its people lay crushed, lifeless, in a state of frightful chaos, where all vestige of human solidarity had disappeared.'⁶ With no money and all their valuables ending up in pawnshops, they are on the brink of starving to death.

There is no hope that the unskilled A-Chung can find a job, but Chan Nui, young and beautiful, is able to work as a nightclub hostess. They experience the war very differently: the wife becomes the breadwinner working outside, whereas the husband is taking care of children at home. Such switching of gender roles exemplifies sheer subversion in traditional norms.

Chan Nui is thrust into a whole new world. She wants to wear her beautiful, fashionable *cheongsam* in

order to greet her clients in Shanghai's glitzy dance hall. 'From the bottom of one of the baskets came the long black satin gown, with its design of coloured leaves, which she had worn at her wedding banquet and had so lovingly kept.'⁷ Her wedding black satin *cheongsam* is well-designed and must be an art piece, with a standing collar and high slits, which at once symbolises elegance and seduction.

A-Chung is aware of the fact that Chan Nui dances with many rich men every night. When he reflects on the *cheongsam* that many men have in their arms, he feels like tearing it into pieces. But, the rice she brings home is vital for their children. Even if they are not hungry anymore, they quarrel more often. Faced with the insoluble dilemma, A-Chung is tormented and torn between survival and reality. He has a deep impression of losing his dignity as a man and a husband, and 'would come to his senses and weep bitter tears in the privacy of his cubicle, while Chan Nui would spend hours on the dance floor, laughing and in lively conversation'.⁸ They are so far apart that their relationship already cannot bear the strain.

One night, Chan Nui meets a man of immense wealth, who speaks the foreign language that she has learnt abroad. Her long-lost happiness seems returning, and she 'elopes' with the man to a neighbouring city. 'She had been regaled with beautiful things, perfumes and jewellery, sumptuous gowns. She had been infatuated by luxurious and elegant surroundings, she had sat at abundant dinner tables, and tasted the most precious wines.'⁹ For some days, she forgets about her afflicted existence, and her less educated, jobless husband.

When she is back to her cubicle home after a week, they quarrel bitterly. A-Chung, overwhelmed by rage, grabs a kitchen cleaver and attacks her with satanic forces. Chan Nui is murdered and the murderer is led away in handcuffs. As the miscreant leaves the room, he has the delusion of seeing that

black satin *cheongsam* hanging on the back of the door, billowing in the wind.

In the prison cell, he becomes insane and has hallucinations. He always screams at the shadows of a nearby tree at night, and believes the swaying shadows are her seductive wedding *cheongsam* that seemingly taunts his imminent execution.

Conceição feels pity for A-Chung and seethes with hatred towards the war. 'What a cursed war! A cursed war, that had taken everything away from him and turned him into a criminal, a murderer, a heartless father, a man incapable of rational thought.'¹⁰ Equally, because of the cursed war, the Western-educated Chan Nui is incapable of rational thought to resist attractive temptations in that glamorous, opulent port city. Metaphorically, they are all but the 'casualties of war'.

'A CONFLICT OF FEELINGS'

Conceição further describes an educated woman in a weakening China. The characters are not given names. At the outset, she recounts the story of a mother of just over 40 years of age and her son of ten going to embark on an ocean-going ship. They return to 'the New World, that distant America, land of promise for so many who had suffered painful times and the harshest privations in their poverty-stricken land of China'.¹¹ Post-imperial China is mentioned in a time of indigence and devastation, whereas 'that distant America' is the 'land of promise'.

The story is narrated in a flashback. The woman has returned to Mother China and marries a rich merchant, whose first wife died some time before. In America, where she is born and brought up, she attends schools. Her husband is proud to introduce a well-educated, cultured wife to his friends. She is the right-hand to her husband, '[s]he took such an active part in his business ventures that these began to prosper by leaps and bounds.'¹²

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No sooner has a son been born than her husband frequently goes to clubs and theatres, and gambles heavily almost every day. Worse still, he invokes his rights as a Chinese husband that he is going to take a concubine, 'given that she could hardly accompany him in his social life, busy as she always was with their son'.¹³ Money corrupts the process of reasoning, as the saying goes, and he collects four demanding and extravagant concubines.

With his unabated interests in women, he neglects his business interests. One day he declares himself bankrupt, and their standard of living begins to decline. The woman's chief concerns turn to the son's education, and her brother comes up with the idea of sponsoring her son to go to America to study. When her husband learns of the news, he shouts in her face. Yet, she aspires to spare her son a life full of toil and uncertainty, and to return to the 'land of promise'.

On the day of their departure, her downcast, feeble husband complains that he does not feel well. 'Then, they all went down to the quay, and the inner conflict that had arisen at this decisive moment in her life opened a fresh wound in her heart.'¹⁴ Her disappointed soul is tortured about whether to leave or to stay with this man when he is not well.

At the quay, an elegant young woman, fresh and smiling, passes by. Her husband seems to be devouring her with his gaze. He follows and tries to engage her in conversation. In that defining instance, '[s]he raised her head, as if shaking a strange weight from her. Her lips opened in a confident smile.'¹⁵ Her mind is now clear. Without any hesitation, she completely puts an end to the conflict of feelings towards her undeserving husband, who never stops to show an insatiable lust for women. Taking her son's hand, she swiftly walks up the gangplank to begin a new life, and envisages to recuperate her dignity as a self-assured, independent woman.

Two westernised and educated women portrayed by Conceição are sufferers at the hands of their undignified husbands — one is killed, one is broken-hearted. In a different vein, she turns to depict women on the lowest rung of the social ladder in the following three short stories.

'AN ACT OF CHARITY'

The characters are again not given names. Besides focusing on a tragic interracial marriage and the quandary of a mixed-race progeny, Conceição recounts an illiterate, subaltern woman, who has been sold as a slave-mistress to a Portuguese man and gives birth to a Eurasian boy. This boy, at his tender age, has already felt deeply hurt at the humiliating shadow of his illegitimacy.

Given his mixed parentage, the boy is enmeshed in an identity crisis and self-representation at the crossroads of Portugal and China: he can neither identify with the Portuguese/Macanese community nor is he able to be assimilated into Chinese society in Macao. He is, in the words of Homi K. Bhabha, 'a *problematic* colonial representation',¹⁶ considering that he is entrapped in the liminal state between the two dominant political entities.

His father comes 'from the ancient continent of Europe, disillusioned by life, embittered and in despair, to hide his pain and his humiliation in that distant part of China'.¹⁷ 'That distant part of China', implying Macao, is a sanctuary where this European seeks self-exile for relief and consolation.

The storyline finds a striking parallel in the real life of Camilo de Almeida Pessanha (1867–1926), a Portuguese symbolist poet, who is lauded as the chief precursor of Modernist poetry.¹⁸ Pessanha was the illegitimate son of a law student and a maid; likewise, the boy is an illegitimate child.

Closely mirroring the boy's father who looks for an Arcadia to heal his desolation in the East, Pessanha sought refuge and left his homeland for

Macao in 1894 due to a failed love-affair. In 1895 the poet bought a Chinese mistress in Macao through a broker. In like manner, the boy's Chinese mother is sold to his father as a slave-mistress.

The boy is ashamed of, if not despises, his benighted mother, who comes at the bottom of the pecking order in society, and goes around barefoot. Most of all, due to the boy's racially mixed, distinctive physiognomy, she turns up to be her son's 'm<other>', that is, she poignantly comes to be his son's Other:

*His mother was a poor ignorant Chinese woman, who went around barefoot, had no education whatsoever, and had been brought home one day by the father. There she remained, her situation ill defined, unsure of whether she was just a servant, or a spouse, but without the protection of marriage.*¹⁹

The boy's parents live in a disparate world. He has never seen them go out together. They neither go for a walk in each other's company nor exchange ideas about their life together. This perhaps derides the ideology of the benign consummation of Portuguese pan-racialism that hails racial egalitarianism through mixed marriages. This no-name, barefoot woman is purchased solely for erotic expediency and household chores.

It would be recalled that the illiterate barefoot water-seller A-Leng in Henrique de Senna Fernandes' *The Bewitching Braid* is narrated differently. She can climb the social ladder by marrying a dallying Macanese and is assimilated into the 'higher' Macanese community. This woman, nevertheless, is fated to be a submissive, slavish servant-mistress serving her European master. She is gripped by subalternity and social oppression.

Her son is constantly tortured by the great cultural divide of his parents and hates himself

for his cruel fate. Furthermore, like other racially mixed minorities in Macao, he is often treated with prejudice because of his mixed ancestry. His only dream is to escape from the atmosphere of depression and to free himself from the stigma of illegitimacy.

There is a silver lining coming to his miserable life. He is leaving home to continue his studies in a far-off land and to join his father's family. Beginning a new life in a new place, he would have a new circle of friends and companions. He expects not to be troubled by his mixed-blood physiognomy and the shame of his origin.

Contrary to his unhappy father, who decamps to Macao in order to start a new life, the son departs from this hybridised space in the hope of escaping a bleak reality. He is, however, unable to project an uncertainty in fate in the 'ancient continent of Europe', in the same way as his father and Pessanha, who unhesitatingly pin their hopes on the distant East for retreat from bitterness in life.

Now the boy is ready to sail away from Macao. When he steps out of the house, he reminds his mother not to say goodbye to him at the quayside, though he knows he would never see her again. As the ship is about to depart, he notices this woman, his 'm<other>', with unkempt appearance and clumsy behaviour, sobbing profusely and pushing in the direction of him through the crowd. She expresses her sorrow in loud wailing and dries her eyes on the sleeve of her dress. All at once, he is embarrassed by her exaggerated gestures and the absurd demonstration of sadness.

The mother manages to get near him. He pulls out a coin from his waistcoat pocket and drops it in her hand. During the time he strides feverishly up the gangplank onto the ship, he is laden with mixed emotions, 'half sad, half relieved'.²⁰ Down on the quay, she continues to wail loudly, repeating in sobs, '[h]e gave me his charity, he gave me a dime,

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in return for the life I gave him!’²¹ As the frustrated son is heading for his imagined promised land, his ‘m<other>’ is left behind in frantic grief.

Macao is a city of abandonment. In the same trajectory of presenting the trope of abandonment as in Henrique de Senna Fernandes’ short story ‘A-Chan, a Tancareira’ (A-Chan, the Tanka Girl), in which the ocean-going sailor casts aside A-Chan and returns to Portugal with their Eurasian daughter, the uncouth ‘m<other>’ is deserted by her detached, indifferent Eurasian son. Unlike A-Chan who accepts a bad fate in stoic silence, the downtrodden slave-mistress is hysterical to see her son — her own ‘mutant’ flesh and blood — leaving for the West.

‘THE JADE RING’

In addition to delineating the illiterate barefoot woman, who is sold as a slave-mistress, Conceição depicts another no-name girl, who is taken to a rich household where she is ‘to be the companion and servant to a girl of her age’.²² That is, this pitiful girl is sold into domestic service as a slave-girl, or slave-servant on the lowest rung of society.²³ Scarcely eight years old, this girl is endowed with the usual Chinese generic characteristics, ‘her skin pellucid, her eyes almond shaped, dark and always shining, her hair black and abundant, and tied in plaits’.²⁴ Obviously, she has lovely features that foretell her attraction as she grows older.

Girls/women portrayed as saleable commodities bring to mind Martha in Austin Coates’ *City of Broken Promises*. She is an abandoned orphan and is sold into prostitution. What is more, in ‘A-Chan, a Tancareira’, A-Chan is sold and later re-sold to an old Tanka woman. Macao is depicted by these writers as a human market where poor Chinese girls/women are sold and re-sold, just like commodified livestock.

The slave-girl is given the leftovers from the dining table to eat, and has to sleep on a mat on the

floor of the young mistress’ bedroom. Her spoilt and impertinent mistress would take pleasure in tugging her plaits until it hurts and bite her whenever she feels like it. She is often ill-treated and is *de facto* the oppressed subaltern. Despite her maltreatment, she has a chance to learn to read and write vicariously, since she has to accompany the young mistress for lessons. She is not at all illiterate.

In the household, she notices a jade ring belonging to the lady of the house. Every time she looks at the bright green of its cold, smooth surface, she is awestruck and enthralled:

She would stare, fascinated, at an oval shaped jade ring encircled by diamonds that the lady of the house wore, and she should forget all her duties.

*Whenever she came across the ring lying around somewhere, she would stand there contemplating it with devotion, without daring to even touch it.*²⁵

Traditionally revered by Asian cultures, jade is highly cherished as possessing mystical powers to protect against evil spirits and bring good luck. As the case may be, the impecunious slave-girl would never have possessed a valuable jade ring.

At the age of 17, she runs into ‘a gentleman in a long gown, with slender aristocratic hands’ that handle a paintbrush with skill.²⁶ He is a painter and she is attracted to him. One evening, she slips away from her dungeon to start a new life with him. She thought he comes into her life ‘like a true god’, and feels happy, happier than she could ever have dreamt.

For five years, she has spent her days differently. She no longer eats the leftovers from the dining table, instead she eats ‘with ivory chopsticks from a bowl of fine porcelain. She did a little sewing

and was dazzled by all the clothes she could now call her own',²⁷ although she is rarely allowed to leave that 'gilded cage'. As a matter of fact, she is kept as a 'secluded' mistress, or concubine, secretly.

One day, she happens to read a forthcoming wedding announcement in a newspaper — the painter marries her former young mistress. Shocked and grieving as she is, the man comes back that night, giving her a beautiful jade ring, surrounded by gems. 'She put it on her finger and was ecstatic. A jade ring such as she had always wanted and was now hers!'²⁸ The dream to have a jade ring comes true, but the nightmare comes into reality as well. He nevertheless consoles her that her life would not change in any way. That is to say, the painter is going to take a woman of the upper-class as his new wife and simultaneously to have her as concubine.

On account of her debased, inferior upbringing in the lower-class structure, the slave-girl's hope of being the choice of 'wife' is dashed; she would remain at most in a subordinate status as a concubine. Worse still, she would receive mistreatment once again at the hands of her former young mistress. In other words, she remains in the grip of oppression within a patriarchal/hierarchical society. Precipitously, she throws the jade ring at his feet and flees to nowhere.

That speck of fascinating jade appears to have lost its supernatural quality to protect her from anguish and hopelessness. Two days later, her corpse is found by the sea. A 'well-dressed man, with slender, aristocratic hands [...] placed a beautiful ring encircled with gems on one of the fingers'.²⁹ Posthumously placing a jade ring on her finger, it may be guessed, is to appease her unsettled grievance in the nether world and to pacify her possible avenging spirit. The world still turns, the newspaper reports, 'the wedding of a famous painter and the daughter of an important businessman, which had been attended by the cream of society.'³⁰

The despondent slave-girl takes her own life in her disillusion that she has met a 'true god', who would marry her as his 'wife'. Her suicide is a despairing response to the untrustworthy painter and an ultimate resistance against social oppression, as well as a remonstrance against the hierarchical system.

The slave-girl's devastating consequence cannot fail to recall yet another short story 'Madame Butterfly' (first published in 1898), by John Luther Long (1861–1927).³¹ It tells of a tragic orientalist romance between Cio-Cio-San, a 15-year-old *geisha*, a Japanese performance artist and companion, and Benjamin Franklin Pinkerton, an American naval officer. Through a marriage broker, he acquires Cio-Cio-San as his 'wife', but not quite; she is sold to enter into a marriage of convenience.

Before long, Pinkerton sails back to America and finds a 'proper' wife. Coming back to Nagasaki with his new American wife, he wants to divorce the Japanese *geisha* and to take away their Eurasian son. Inconsolably, Cio-Cio-San takes out a dagger and stabs herself to death 'with honour'. Both Cio-Cio-San and the slave-girl epitomise the archetypical tragedy of not being chosen as 'wife'. They die for an unrequited love rather than to live in shame and agony.

Likewise, George Orwell (1903–1950) presents an orientalist East-West affair in *Burmese Days*. John Flory, an Englishman, is enchanted by Ma Hla May, a Burmese 'outlandish doll', who has been his mistress for two years. However, soon after he meets Elizabeth Lackersteen, a pretty English woman, he aspires to marry her. He feels that an English woman would be at best desirable as his wife, and that she can bring him back to 'the air of England'.³² The doll-like mistress is thus driven out of his house. Ma Hla May does not commit suicide. Rather, she retaliates by ruining the Englishman's reputation in public.

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Fig. 2: The preserved heritage of the dilapidated Yick Loong Fireworks Factory on Taipa Island. Photograph by the author.

Ma Hla May, Cio-Cio-San and the slave-girl are not considered a choice of ‘proper’ wives for the two white men and the Chinese. These Asian women of low social status are merely exploited and reified as objects for sexual consumption.

‘THE SUFFERING OF LIN FONG’

Despite following a familiar storyline of an East-West tryst and abandonment, Conceição at the outset tells of the deplorable experience of a firecracker worker, Lin Fong. It could be surmised that the story is set in Macao, where firecracker manufacturing ranked as the principal industrial activity in the 1950s and 1960s.³³

Belonging to the lowest social stratum, Lin Fong works in a firecracker factory and lives in grinding poverty, similar to many other factory workers who have fled to Macao. Her daily routine is to roll the firecrackers on her little wooden wheel in an enclosed, shabby structure, ‘suffering heat and cold, the base of her spine in agony at having to sit in such an uncomfortable position’.³⁴ Earning the pittance of her day’s wages that not even amount to one *pataca*, she has to take care of her mother who has infected tuberculosis.

The predicament of firecracker workers brings to mind Colin Simpson (1908–1983), an Australian journalist, author and freelance writer of travel books. He provides a dialogic perspective in his travel memoirs about child labour in making firecrackers on the former outlying Taipa Island in *Asia’s Bright Balconies* (1962). His description complements the historical context, against which Conceição’s story is set. Simpson relates that some children look no more than six years old:

*We saw these children at their cracker work, each perched on a tiny stool at a small table, or just a packing case, and on this a round bundle of crackers as big as a dinner-plate [...]. They worked, very deftly and quickly, closing the ends of the power-filled crackers with a tool like a small punch. They were paid 10 avos a bundle [...]. The industry is not fully mechanized because child labour on this piece-work basis is so cheap [...]. These little cracker-workers were all of school age, and obviously they weren’t at school.*³⁵

Aside from Simpson’s account of child firecracker workers, Lin Fong’s plight readily resonates with the historical novel, *Wan Muchun* (萬木春) (1976) by Chang Zheng (長爭), the pen name of Zhang Zheng (張鐸, 1931–2021), a Chinese actor, film director and playwright in Hong Kong.³⁶ Based on his research on the firecracker industry, the author narrativises the true, disheartening happenings of a group of distressed migrants taking refuge on Taipa Island from neighbouring places.

Zhang Zheng’s story brings out the firecracker workers’ struggle for bare survival in the late 1950s. Amid highly explosive powders in small, wooden cage-like huts, they usually work 11 hours a day to insert fuses into firecrackers and to string them

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up in bundles. Often harassed by loan sharks, they are ruthlessly exploited by unscrupulous Chinese employers, who are under the mantle of unchristian local Portuguese magistrates.

The leading character Luo Shaojian (羅少堅) is 23 years old, but she has 17 years working experience in a firecracker factory. At the age of six, this little girl begins to work in order to help pay a spiralling loan. Like many child workers, she has no chance to go to school and cannot understand many things. Still, she always ponders about why all the firecracker workers lead such a miserable and dangerous life, especially her mother and some of her relatives have been consecutively killed in the deadly blasts.

Constructed as a proletarian heroine in a realistic structure to challenge capitalistic exploitation and oppression, Shaojian brushes aside the concept of predestination and atheistically renounces the belief that life is predetermined by fate. With unwavering determination to stave off all sorts of impediments, she forms an alliance with other workers to press the factory owners to compensate for the loss of life and the injured, and for improvements in their working conditions.

Dissimilar to Zhang Zheng's self-esteemed, brave and rationalistic Shaojian, Conceição's Lin Fong is ignorant and gullible. As the story develops, A-Cheoc, the factory supervisor, has cast a lusty eye on Lin Fong for some time. When he comes to know that she has a foreign devil lover — a Portuguese soldier, he pours out obscene insults on her. A-Cheoc disdainfully accuses his rival of dishonest intentions to seduce an illiterate factory worker, whose sole attraction is the freshness of her youth and the promise of a gracious body under her cotton clothes.³⁷ A-Cheoc's accusation, to some extent, is not all wrong.

Lin Fong, however, believes that her Portuguese lover is different from the rest, because he 'promises'

[my emphasis] that one day he would show her the fields full of wheat and the snow-capped mountains in Sai Iong (Xiyang [西洋], meaning the West, alluding to Portugal).³⁸ Her lover's promise again evokes Austin Coates' *City of Broken Promises*, in which the Englishman Thomas van Mierop intends to marry Martha, his Chinese pensioner-mistress, and take her to England. Martha knows that the promises made by foreigners to marry their Macao mistresses are only to leave them abandoned and their children bastards when they are gone. She reacts to van Mierop's intention as a would-be broken promise:

*I would be a fool if I believed you. In Macao we know this, that when the time comes it is always otherwise. Whatever words may have been said, whatever promises made, when an Englishman goes, it is alone.*³⁹

While Martha is well aware that Macao is a city of broken promises, Lin Fong thinks otherwise. Every time, when her Portuguese lover puts his arm round her waist, she feels a surge of blood through her veins. Regardless of A-Cheoc's warnings, she is intoxicated in the sensation of limerence, and 'only felt happy when she was by his side, and all but lived for the moment when he would come to her, as the sun set'.⁴⁰

One night, Lin Fong confesses to him that she is pregnant with his child. At the same time, he tells her that he is going to leave unexpectedly with the battalion for his distant country. Her romantic hope shatters, but she does not even shed a tear as the horror of her quandary has already devastated her. That the fleeting moments of happiness and pleasure she pursues and enjoys virtually bring forth the intense pain of uncertainty after his departure. She lives through unspeakable torments, waiting for him to return from Sai Iong to hear the first cry of the child.

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Even though the Goddess Cun Iam (Guanyin [觀音], Goddess of Mercy) seems to have forgotten her supplication, she nevertheless believes that life has some happiness in store for her when he comes back from Sai Iong.⁴¹ Francis Bacon (1561–1626) once said: ‘Hope is a good breakfast, but it is a bad supper.’⁴² Lin Fong’s hope might come up with unrealised expectations and despair in the end. Had her lover never returned, she would have had to face an otherwise grimmer future: an illegitimate Eurasian new-born baby to be fed and an ailing mother to be taken care of, with her paltry wages.

The story applies the usual clichés of the tragic East-West dalliance. It again resonates with Senna Fernandes’ Tanka girl, who is abandoned by the departing Portuguese sailor. Similarly, this deprived firecracker worker, emerging purely as an object for sexual consumption, is left behind in the mire by the Portuguese soldier with an unborn child. These two subaltern women unfortunately bear the bitter fruit of their unmediated trust in flirtatious men from the West. Their relationships all but illustrate exploitative affairs between Western men and Asian women.

MARIA ONDINA BRAGA

Born in Braga, a city in the far north of Portugal, Maria Ondina Braga (1932–2003) started her eastward teaching career at a convent school in Angola. When a national uprising broke out in Angola, she left for Goa in 1961. No sooner had Goa been invaded by India than she took refuge in Macao, where she spent four years as a teacher until 1966. In 1982 she was invited to teach the Portuguese language at Peking University. Capitalising on her experiences in the mainland and Macao, she published *A China Fica ao Lado* (1968), *Angústia em Pequim* (1984) and *Nocturno em Macau* (1991). While Deolinda da Conceição recounts the woeful fates of women who are on the

lowest rung of society, Braga tells tales of distraught refugees who exist even at the outer fringes of the lowest social echelon. Discussion is now turned to her three short stories.

‘THE MAD WOMAN’

The story of a ghostly mad widow is related by Sam-Lei, an old maid, to the first-person narrator. Sam-Lei says that after sunset, a thin, mad woman used to come to Coloane Island and sit on the boulders near Cheok-Vân Beach (alternative spelling: Cheoc Van [竹灣]), with her feet in the water and her face in her hands. No one has ever caught sight of her during the day, or sees her arrive. She does not appear in daytime, but only comes out all of a sudden on the rocks silently, like a lizard, every night and disappears before sunrise.⁴³

The mad woman had a traumatic past. Having taken flight from her motherland with her baby, who died on the way, she would come and wait for her husband at nightfall. But he never appears. The reasons why she fled from her hometown with the baby are not known, yet Macao is explicitly acknowledged as the shelter for asylum seekers.

As an uninterrupted habit, she comes to the beach waiting for his arrival. She sits immobile and looks into the distance ‘with her tattered coat, her dirty grey braid, her bare feet, and her face lost in thought.’⁴⁴ The bitter issues of exile and displacement of the ordinary people in a time of hardship and chaos are addressed.

Sam-Lei maintains that she would shriek in the early morning, expressing her agony of losing the beloved ones. She cries in penetrating screams of pain, like a peacock. In the words of Sam-Lei, the mad woman is already truly dead. She is a divided spirit, a shadow. She has no insides, no soul. She is nothing. ‘By day, she lives in a hole in a tree [...]. By night, she takes the shape of a person, and goes



Fig. 3: The Village of Our Lady in Ka Ho on Coloane Island. Photograph by the author.



Fig. 4: The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows on Coloane Island. Photograph by the author.

to await her ghosts.⁴⁵ Tumult and disorder torture her in the wake of tragic events, and she is described as an eerie, ghostlike creature.

The narrator decides to solve the mystery of this wandering spirit with the company of a Chinese friend. They start their adventure on a sultry night waiting for her arrival. The murmuring of the waves and the hushed whisperings of the beach suddenly ceased. They hardly dare utter a word — the ghostly woman with the dirty grey braid is already huddled inertly on a rock, water around her ankles.

The moon is high and it is about four o'clock. They hear the peacock shriek. But, the cry is clearly from the direction of a rich man's house further up the beach; it is not from the woman. She does not even shriek or scream — her pain has perhaps numbed her senses to express her indescribable distress. The rock is there with the tide still low, yet the desolate widow vanishes without any traces. The images of nighttime and darkness are employed to create a mental picture of the pathetic, deranged woman, as well as enhancing the weirdness of the story.

The story has a tinge of magical realism, in which the author stitches a realistic scenario of a

refugee woman from an inhospitable China with the unexplainable. Magical elements and supernatural phenomena are used to point out a bleak reality that she lost her beloved ones after her own escape to safety. Whilst the story blurs the lines between fantasy and reality, it presents an otherwise real setting on Coloane Island, where the distraught woman bizarrely appears and disappears, like a hollow spirit.

'THE LEPERS'

Braga touches an 'untouchable' subject matter — leprosy, which is seldom found in literary creations. It could be assumed that the story is set at the Ka Ho Leprosy Centre in Ka Ho Village (九澳村) on Coloane Island, which was completed in 1885.⁴⁶ This leprosarium was a specialised institution to quarantine exclusively female patients and to stop the spread of the disease. In 1930 it was rebuilt and expanded with five residential houses with a capacity for 90 patients and a chapel. In 1966 Ka Ho Village was renamed as the Village of Our Lady in Ka Ho (九澳聖母村) soon after the new Church of Our Lady of Sorrows had been constructed.⁴⁷

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Leprosy is one of the oldest infectious diseases in human history, and has historically been associated with social stigma and discrimination.⁴⁸ The word ‘leper’ is considered detestable in *Burmese Days*: the imperious Elizabeth despises the jaded Flory and hates him ‘as she would have hated a leper or a lunatic.’⁴⁹ Be that as it may, Gaetano Nicosia (胡子義, 1915–2017), an Italian priest of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, arrived at Ka Ho Village in 1963 and dedicated himself to a spiritual/medical mission.⁵⁰ He lived with, and took care of, lepers for 48 years until 2011. Hailed as the ‘Angel of Lepers’, he died in Hong Kong, aged 102, and was buried in St. Miguel Arcanjo’s Cemetery in Macao.

Previously, Coloane was barely inhabited and could only be reached by boat. Abandoned and ostracised as they were, lepers were virtually left desolate and hopeless on the island. Boatmen were even unwilling to land on Ka Ho Village, and daily necessities were pulled to shore with ropes. Under this context, Braga tells a tale of a young leper girl, A-Mou, who has fled with her grandmother from the nearby mainland to Macao. Again, the reasons behind their flight are not told, rather the writer reiterates Macao’s status as a refugee centre. Most of all, it is a leper sanctuary.

A-Mou’s grandmother dies shortly after she is sent to the island for isolation. She has no family. The lonely girl is in an initial stage of the disease; her face is just marked by one or two red spots of leprosy. Every evening A-Mou goes out to admire the sunset, trembling with anxiety and hope. She would climb to the top of the hill of the island, where ‘the marshy rice paddies down in the valleys, glimmering in the last rays of sunshine [...]’. And to gaze upon the island was, in some way, like contemplating the world, catching a glimpse of life beyond the leper colony.⁵¹ And, every evening she imagines her recovery on the following day — having a farewell thrown to her with kisses and presents.

But, every morning when she plaits her hair in front of the mirror, she finds the blotches are still on her cheekbones, sometimes pink, other times almost purple. She is still optimistic and ‘her soul is filled with faith, with a feeling of warmth toward existence itself, with a happiness that brought tears to her eyes’.⁵² A-Mou has a hopeful spirit in face of her ill-starred fate. She yearns for recovery, loves life and has an intense feeling to go on living.

She has never loved anyone, or does she quite know what the sense of love is. There and then, a leper boy arrives at the men’s quarter on the other side of the hill. The handsome new arrival is not in a serious condition. She begins to imagine him as some sort of a god, and thinks about him with godly devotion. Thereupon, she takes more care to plait her hair every day. At twilight one day during her routine walk, she comes across him on the hill:

*In the darkness, A-Mou could only see his eyes.
The sea echoed among the hollows in the rocks.
He plucked a sprig of lemon verbena from a
nearby bush, crushed its leaves between his
fingers, and the perfume spread and took hold
of the night.*⁵³

Their meetings repeat themselves and the ‘ritual’ of crushing the lemon leaves continues in the same way after sunset. Immersed in the refreshing scent of lemon leaves and the whispering of the sea, he would praise her plaited hair. In her mind, she compares him to the young gods in a temple. She even considers herself lucky for being isolated on the island, because she can meet the ‘otherworldly’ boy.

On moonlit nights, ‘their silence expressed more than words; their gesture was freely given; their soul was released’,⁵⁴ as if they silently feel compassion for each other. A-Mou is entranced by the encounters, and the boy gives the impression of being a divinity, coming down from the Unknown

to meet her. She surrealistically moves from the realms of the real world into the fantastic world.

Months pass by quickly. She still goes out for her evening walk to the top of the hill. She does not see the boy anymore. She wonders whether he may be cured, but is incapable of asking him. She does not even want to know it. Her purple blotches grow, day by day, and the doctor does not mention any possibility of a cure.

In the darkness, A-Mou now contemplates neither a new, better tomorrow nor for any possibility of a cure. She simply gives thought to a vision that she has envisaged an apparition all those nights beyond the mysterious horizons, and that she has a chance to have the sensation of compassion, if not the joy of love. The mesmerising scent of the crushed lemon leaves, *inter alia*, turns into a source of consolation, strength and support for her forlorn existence. She hopes one day, crouching in the yard, to relate her ethereal rendezvous to the unfortunate newly arrived.

'The Lepers' leaves a trail of pathos and hopelessness. At the same time the boy is hinted to have been cured, A-Mou is getting more serious, with her hands, nose or ears gradually rotting away. The images of nighttime and darkness are a recurrent trope, which may metonymically allude to the ill-fated lepers on the island. Darkness imagery is meant to arouse the emotions of the reader and, not least, to make the story more captivating.

'RACIAL HATRED'

Braga evokes the aftereffect of the invasion of China by Japanese militarism. The central character Tai-Ku is the eldest daughter of a rich Chinese man, who has an obsessive habit of taking a new wife every new moon: women of all types and every nationality.

Be that as it may, every one of his wives is a virgin. He insists on their being untouched, and



Fig. 5: The Cotai Strip is glamorously dotted with magnificent hotels and casinos. Photograph by the author.

they simply become his protégées. Tai-Ku has the impression that his father is [mentally] ill, but she never criticises his excesses or comments on his peculiar obsessions. After her younger sisters are married off, she remains 'to warm the great man's bath every morning, to pour his tea, to forgive him his lasciviousness'.⁵⁵ Her father has profound respect for her wisdom and purity. For him, she is a saint, the innocent one.

Tai-Ku is literally a saintly Buddhist follower. Like a frugal Buddhist nun, she wears rice straw slippers, and has devoted herself to a religious life of prayers, fasting and offering. Now her hair grows white, as yet 'she carried out her filial duties, without seeking to know who the new wife was, without wishing her ill, or showing any interest in making her acquaintance'.⁵⁶ She would ignore every woman who crosses the courtyards of the house.

One day in winter, her father acquires a new wife — a Japanese *geisha*, who entertains the old man by singing in the gentlest voice in the world. Subsequent to this new acquisition, Tai-Ku is enmeshed in enmity and hatred. She hurtles many years back in time and has a clear flashback in the bygone days when the Japanese invaders occupied their house by force. Her mother died in childbirth without the last rites of having monks to commend her soul to the Divine Realm. Her father ceded

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part of his fleet of ships and jewels to the lecherous Japanese in order not to have to surrender his daughters.

Only a young girl then, Tai-Ku witnessed the Japanese insolence and atrocities inside and outside the house. 'She detested those Japanese more than all the satanic spells put together. From that time, she had never stopped beseeching the Heavens to inflict all manner of punishment on them.'⁵⁷ She is latently and manifestly haunted by the brutal past.

Tai-Ku's religion advocates no killing, but that Japanese woman incarnates the worst of all evils — invasion, violence and war. Tai-Ku's soul is divided — to kill or not to kill. She spends many sleepless nights as she considers it a sin for the daughter of the vicious invaders to be living in her house. Then an idea strikes her and the cavern of her mind is light.

As a tradition, Tai-Ku used to prepare snake soup with chrysanthemum petals and lemon leaves for the New Year dinner. When New Year's Day is near, she zealously orders a snake. Thinking of the snake, she wears a wry smile on her face, with her gold-capped teeth 'permanently gleaming in the slender mouth'.⁵⁸ Amid the celebratory firecrackers on the streets, she puts the venomous snake into her shiny leather bag. She is going to carry out an avenging mission.

On New Year's Day, the Japanese *geisha* is found dead in her bed with purple and bloodied eye sockets. 'The innocent one' listens to the news with downcast eyes, and an immense peace emanates from her pale face. The reason for choosing the New Year's Eve to kill the *geisha*, it could be conjectured, is intended to have a celebratory new beginning for the coming days without the presence of the enemies' daughter at home.

Despite the fact that the old man turns decrepit lying in bed for three days and never gets up again, the saintly Tai-Ku's disturbed soul is now free and unshackled, 'as if it were crossing the darkened

paths of absence, in order to become re-united with her father in the great Unknown'.⁵⁹ The devout woman can eventually find heavenly tranquillity in mind after annihilating the Japanese.

The *geisha* is the victim of racial hatred. Even though she is merely 'collected' as the old man's protégée, the ingrained memories of the savagery of Japanese aggressors are ineradicable in Tai-Ku's mind. For her, being the daughter of the invading Japanese is unforgivable and she must pay the price for the war crimes of her countrymen. Constructed as a pious Buddhist follower and filial daughter, she takes revenge on the sinless Japanese woman out of patriotism and nationalism.

CONCLUSION

The approach to literature, history and culture can be interdisciplinary. Mikhail M. Bakhtin (1895–1975), a renowned Russian theorist of literature, is of the opinion that literature cannot be understood outside the total context of the entire culture. Besides, textual materials are representations and articulations of particular historical contexts, as well as reflections and commentaries of the social process. Literature hence offers multifaceted perspectives for the reader to glimpse the socio-cultural context of 'the past'.⁶⁰ In line with Bakhtin's theories, the literary texts by Deolinda da Conceição and Maria Ondina Braga appropriately render assorted visages of Chinese women at a specific point of time.

In their storytelling repertoire, most Chinese are wartime asylum seekers in Macao in a time of socio-political turbulence on the Chinese mainland following the Japanese invasion and the Civil War. Macao is not just destined to be the sanctuary for the desperate, it is the refuge for lepers. The displaced Chinese are largely penniless and some cannot even maintain a living on the Macao Peninsula, but have to settle in the simplest shelters on impoverished Taipa or Coloane islands, earning meagre wages to

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fill their hungry mouths. These wretched people would have never imagined that the two former barren islands have now been united by an artificial landfill and developed, out of recognition, into the famed Cotai Strip, which is glamorously dotted with resplendent resort hotels and casinos for leisure and pleasure.

In the eyes of Conceição, the educated and the uneducated alike share blighted fates inflicted by their husbands. Certain no-name characters are relegated to the bottom of the social pecking order and fall prey to ill-treatment and slavery. They are also deemed as mere objects for sexual consumption and saleable commodities. In another way, Braga employs a tinge of magical realism and fantastic

elements in delineating the disconsolate lives of those who inhabit at the outer fringes of the lowest social echelon — the lunatic and the outcast. As if bound by shared hostility with Conceição towards the war, Braga creates the saint-like Buddhist avenger of Japanese militarism. Apparently, both have been wrestling with disturbed emotions and indelible memories of the atrocious war years.

By telling the widely varied stories of Chinese girls/women from diversified social strata, these two female authors show subtle sensibility and sympathy to the underprivileged and *les misérables* in their 'women's writing'. The portrayal of these *dramatis personae*, moreover, constitutes a realistic picture to behold the recent past of Macao and China as a whole. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 Hayden White, "New Historicism: A Comment," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), 302.
- 2 Virginia Blain, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy, eds., *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English: Women Writers from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), viii–ix.
- 3 In the wake of the First Opium War concluded by the Treaty of Nanjing, Shanghai was officially opened in 1843 as a major treaty port that shortly attracted foreigners and Chinese migrants alike. It developed into a westernised and flourishing city, with countless nightclubs, brothels, luxurious restaurants and international clubs. In the 1930s and 1940s, this city of 'a deafening babel of tongues' was occupied by the invading Japanese.
- 4 *Cheongsam*, also known as *qipao*, and sometimes referred to as the mandarin gown, is originally the ethnic clothing of the Manchu people. Evolving to a typical tight-fitting dress with a standing collar and a pair of high slits above the knee-level, *cheongsam* was popularised by Chinese socialites and high society women in Shanghai from the 1920s to 1940s.
- 5 Deolinda da Conceição, "Cheongsam," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 28–29.
- 6 Conceição, "Cheongsam," 31.
- 7 Conceição, "Cheongsam," 32.
- 8 Conceição, "Cheongsam," 33.
- 9 Conceição, "Cheongsam," 34.
- 10 Conceição, "Cheongsam," 25.
- 11 Deolinda da Conceição, "A Conflict of Feelings," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 42.
- 12 Conceição, "A Conflict of Feelings," 43.
- 13 Conceição, "A Conflict of Feelings," 44.
- 14 Conceição, "A Conflict of Feelings," 45.
- 15 Conceição, "A Conflict of Feelings," 46.
- 16 Homi K. Bhabha, "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 156.
- 17 Deolinda da Conceição, "An Act of Charity," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 38.
- 18 On Pessanha's poetry of Symbolism, see Camilo Pessanha, *Clépsidra* (Lisbon: Edições Ática, 1956).
- 19 Conceição, "An Act of Charity," 38.
- 20 Conceição, "An Act of Charity," 40.
- 21 Conceição, "An Act of Charity," 41.
- 22 Deolinda da Conceição, "The Jade Ring," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 51.
- 23 In bygone days, slave-girls or servant girls were known in

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- Chinese as *nubi* (奴婢) or *binü* (婢女) (in Cantonese: *mui tsai* [妹仔], meaning 'little sister'). The slave-girls, often sold at a young age, were typically from poor families. They worked as domestic servants in affluent Chinese households in traditional Chinese society. Discriminated against by their own society, many of them ended up as either concubines or prostitutes. One may consider the work of John A. Davis (1839–1897), *The Chinese Slave-Girl: A Story of Woman's Life in China* (n.p.: Legare Street Press, 2022).
- 24 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 51.
 - 25 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 52.
 - 26 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 52.
 - 27 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 53.
 - 28 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 54.
 - 29 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 54.
 - 30 Conceição, "The Jade Ring," 54–55.
 - 31 John Luther Long, "Madame Butterfly," in *Madame Butterfly and a Japanese Nightingale: Two Orientalist Texts*, eds. Maureen Honey and Jean Lee Cole (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 25–80.
 - 32 George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), 156.
 - 33 The manufactures of firecrackers, matches and joss sticks were the main income of Macao in the mid-twentieth century. Macao only stopped producing firecrackers in the 1980s. The site of the abandoned and dilapidated firecracker factory, Yick Loong Fireworks Factory on Taipa Island, has now been conserved and is open to the public. It has earned the reputation of 'the best preserved heritage and the most significant industrial relic in southern China'. Albert Hung Kin Lai, *The Firecracker Industry in Taipa*, trans. Bernard Cheung Ming On and Vong Weng Kan (Macao: Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government, 2018), 73.
 - 34 Deolinda da Conceição, "The Suffering of Lin Fong," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 47.
 - 35 Colin Simpson, *Asia's Bright Balconies: Hong Kong, Macao, Philippines* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1962), 137–138.
 - 36 Chang Zheng 長爭, *Wan muchun* 萬木春 (Hong Kong: Zhaoyang chubanshe 朝陽出版社, 1976).
 - 37 Conceição, "The Suffering of Lin Fong," 48–49.
 - 38 Conceição, "The Suffering of Lin Fong," 49.
 - 39 Austin Coates, *City of Broken Promises* (London: Frederick Muller, 1967), 149.
 - 40 Conceição, "The Suffering of Lin Fong," 49.
 - 41 Conceição, "The Suffering of Lin Fong," 48.
 - 42 Susan Ratcliffe, ed., *Little Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 184.
 - 43 Maria Ondina Braga, "The Mad Woman," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 155.
 - 44 Braga, "The Mad Woman," 156.
 - 45 Braga, "The Mad Woman," 157–158.
 - 46 Beyond the sphere of mere commercial interests in Macao, the Portuguese were pioneering in establishing the earliest asylum in the Far East for leprosy patients in 1568. Later, two leprosariums at Pac Sa Lan (白沙欄) on Xiao Hengqin Island (小橫琴島) and at Ka Ho on Coloane Island were respectively built in 1883. See exhibition leaflet: Archives of Macao, *Land of Hope: Historical Archives Exhibition on Leprosariums in Macao* (Macao: Cultural Affairs Bureau of the Macao S.A.R. Government, 2021). As leprosy is no longer an incurable disease, medical services have now been suspended.
 - 47 Once an almost isolated, forgotten place, the Village of Our Lady in Ka Ho was comprehensively restored and renovated since 2016. The revitalised village was inaugurated in November 2021, and presented 'Land of Hope: Historical Archives Exhibition on Leprosariums in Macao'. It has now been classified as immovable cultural heritage and open to the public (Exhibition leaflet).
 - 48 Initiated in 1954, World Leprosy Day is annually observed around the world on the last Sunday of January in order to draw public awareness to those affected by leprosy.
 - 49 Orwell, *Burmese Days*, 291.
 - 50 At times, Fr. Nicosia was joined by priests from other monastic orders, notably Fr. Gabriele Allegra (雷永明, 1907–1976), a Franciscan friar and biblical scholar from Italy. He is best known for producing the first complete translation of the Catholic Bible into the Chinese language. Referred as the 'Saint Jerome of China', Fr. Allegra was beautified in 2012, a step toward sainthood.
 - 51 Maria Ondina Braga, "The Lepers," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 163.
 - 52 Braga, "The Lepers," 163.
 - 53 Braga, "The Lepers," 167.
 - 54 Braga, "The Lepers," 167.
 - 55 Maria Ondina Braga, "Racial Hatred," in *Visions of China: Stories from Macau*, sel. and trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2002), 176.
 - 56 Braga, "Racial Hatred," 177.
 - 57 Braga, "Racial Hatred," 177.
 - 58 Braga, "Racial Hatred," 181.
 - 59 Braga, "Racial Hatred," 183.
 - 60 M. M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 2.

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