

# Humour in Macanese Creole literature as an identity creator and consolidator

**João Pedro Oliveira**

Universidade Católica Portuguesa Lisbon, Portugal  
[john.olivetree@gmail.com](mailto:john.olivetree@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*Macanese Creole survives in literary works of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This paper explores comic literature, which constitutes the bulk of the existing corpus in this language, and analyses how this genre relates to the creation and maintenance of a Macanese identity represented as distinct from surrounding historically and demographically significant identities. I resort to the incongruity theory and to some relevant knowledge resources (script opposition, situation, target, and language) of the General Theory of Verbal Humour (Attardo and Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 2001; 2008) to analyse how comic literature in Macanese fabricates a fictionalised and performative memory connected to the way in which the Macanese wish to see themselves and be seen by others.*

*Keywords: Macanese Creole, General Theory of Verbal Humour, José dos Santos Ferreira, Leopoldo Danilo Barreiros, Postcolonial literature, Chacha.*

## 1. Introduction

Macanese Creole (MC) is a Portuguese-based contact language associated with the Eurasian Macanese community. The fact that most of MC vocabulary derives from Portuguese makes the language mostly intelligible for Portuguese speakers. However, MC has been influenced by substrates, such as the Portuguese-based creole from Malacca (Papiá Kristang, “Christian language”), Malay, varieties of Chinese, and English, among other languages (Baxter, 2009, pp. 287-288). The influence of any of these substrates varied in different historical periods (Yan & Moody, 2010). While not spoken in daily life anymore, MC is documented in literary works collected and written from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until about the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bulk of which belong to the comic genre. MC is also still used in plays and *Youtube* videos<sup>1</sup> created, performed and recorded by the theatre troupe *Dóci Papiçám di Macau* (Gaspar, 2015). Comic literature in MC often deals with cultural heritage prized by the community: 1) MC itself and its relationship with the languages which influenced it; 2) Catholicism; 3) Eurasian phenotypic appearance (Pina-Cabral, 1994, p. 215-217); 4) gastronomy; 5) geographical and historical

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/@DocipapiacamdiMacau> (accessed on 22/4/2024).

referents (Costa, 2004, p. 144); 6) traditional medicine; 7) traditional games and gambling; and 8) theatre (Monteiro, 2011, p. 417-436).

Representations of identities often rely on stereotypes. Summarising Henri Tajfel's *social identity theory*, Jenkins (2014) makes a distinction between a personal identity and a social one, which consists of the emotional internalisation of stereotypes about a collectivity and the exaggeration of in-group similarities and out-group differences (pp. 114-115). There are several criteria for the formation of identities. Language is instrumental in this process because groups with similar interests and residing in the same territory develop distinctive ways of communicating, which results in a sense of cultural unity transmitted through cultural products produced in that language (Joseph, 2010, pp. 15-16). According to Li (2008), languages are often appropriated to legitimise/challenge old identities and create new ones (p. 14). This means that literature in specific languages allows writers to create "symbolic universes" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), a concept which refers to the way communities regard their culture and how they wish it to be regarded by others. The creation of specific artistic genres may be regarded as stages in the creation of such universes, given that genres encode cultural ideas shared by the people who create and consume them. This process mixes everyday life and symbolic representations in complicated ways. Although identities are performative representations in flux and not essentialised features of reality, fabricated identities may become real, given that they may influence the way specific communities think and behave.

The authority to create hegemonic representations of identities often belong to powerful social groups. Hall (1997) stated that, through stereotypes, different identities may be categorised according to concepts of normalcy and deviancy, with the former trait often conflated with the hegemonic group and the latter with the subaltern one(s) (p. 258). In colonial contexts, colonisers possessed the power to manipulate the colonised and contact languages were often described as deformed versions of their main lexifier languages (Velupillai, 2015, pp. 7/21/45-46). Creoles were often pejoratively called "broken English, bastard Portuguese, nigger French, kombuistaaltje ('cookhouse ling'), isikula ('coolie language')" (Holm, 2004, p. 1). Through such descriptions, "true" English, Portuguese and French and their speakers were ontologically distinguished from their "false" inferior versions. Accordingly, MC has been historically described as a deformed variant of Portuguese (Arana-Ward, 1978, p. 113; Costa, 2006, p. 194) spoken by women in domestic contexts (Arana-Ward, 1978, p. 110; Gaião, 2010, p. 34; Gaspar, 2015, p. 12), which, given the patriarchal structure of Portuguese society, can hardly be said to be a positive representation.

Despite the hegemony of certain communities and their associated languages and cultures, subaltern identities may accept or reject and ultimately vindicate their representations as a means of resistance and of reobtaining agency. Through positive representation of stereotypes about the in-group and negative ones about the out-group, subaltern identities often seek valorisation and self-esteem. Subaltern discourses of resistance often subvert or invert the hegemonic discourse by representing "deviant" traits as positive. My hypothesis is that this is what happens with comic literature in MC, in which negative stereotypes typical of colonial discourses and regarded as linguistically and culturally low and unsophisticated are recycled as positive ones. This literary effort aims to legitimate the Macanese identity in the contemporary world. This sociolinguistic and representational duality enables the Portuguese and their language, as well as the Macanese and MC, to retain their positive representations in different sociolinguistic contexts. Accordingly, Costa (2006) argues that MC turned into a "language in its own right, possessing scientific status" (p. 194) and Gaião (2010) that its "melodiousness, lexical richness, and the understanding of the origins, influence and structure of the creole" were underscored when the language began to be studied in its own terms (p. 20). Clearly, such assessments are not only linguistic but rely on complex metalinguistic historical vicissitudes which have

determined what are the high (H) and low (L) languages or varieties of a language or of different languages. The tendency to subvert such assessments has increased in postcolonial contexts. It must be borne in mind, though, that postcolonial cases may differ and that Macao is not a typical case in the sense that its population was scarce when the Portuguese arrived and that the Macanese identity arose from the relationship between Portuguese men and Asian women. In any case, the tendency to value MC among the Macanese was very much in evidence in the literature written before Portugal ceased to be a colonial power. In order to understand this tendency, the sociolinguistic distinction between *overt prestige* and *covert prestige* (Wolfram 1997, p. 120) may be helpful, the former concept referring to a globally accepted linguistic practice and the latter to one which, while local and sometimes stigmatised, may be important for its speakers as a determiner of identity. As shall become clearer, comic literature in MC respectively tried to associate Portuguese and MC with these two kinds of sociolinguistic prestige.

Although the attitudes towards different languages in multilingual (post)colonial cases seems to be conducive to the creation of linguistic humour, there seems to a dearth of research on humour in such cases. In fact, even though its extant corpus is mostly comic, MC literature has never been analysed through the perspective of humour studies. With this paper, I attempt to begin filling this gap by analysing the existing written 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century comic corpus in MC through the light of incongruity theory and Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH). The incongruity theory postulates that humour arises from the perception of an incongruity between a set of expectations and what is actually perceived. According to the GTVH, humorous utterances possess six different mechanisms (Knowledge Resources):

- 1) *Script opposition*: a concept developed by Raskin (1984), according to whom an utterance is comic when it is compatible with two semantically opposed ideas (*scripts*). In puns, the cases which have most often been analysed at the linguistic level, the semantically opposed ideas are linguistically fused into a single word or expression;
- 2) *Logical mechanism*: the resolution of the incongruity between the scripts. In puns, this resolution is brought about by a *punch line*, which possesses a linguistic unit which shifts the intended semantic interpretation of the text from one of the semantically possible senses to the other less expected one. As a result, *punch lines* are supposed to be surprising and disruptive.
- 3) *Situation*: the narrative content which frames the humorous content, such as the place in which the action occurs and the sociocultural context;
- 4) *Target*: the butt of the joke;
- 5) *Narrative strategy*: the specific genre of the narrative; and
- 6) the *Language* used to convey the previous resources.

Although Raskin (1984) claims that the semantic-based theory at the root of *Script opposition* could be applied only to simple jokes (p. 143), Attardo (2001; 2008) has tried to extend the GTVH to longer humorous narratives by introducing new concepts: A *jab line* is a line which may be ontologically similar to a punch line, but which is not text-final and may not disrupt the narrative flow (Attardo, 2008, p. 110). A *strand* is a collection of related lines (Attardo, 2008, p. 111). The author distinguishes between *bridges*, which refer to related lines occurring narratively far from each other, and *combs*, which refer to similar lines in close proximity. Finally, a *stack* is a collection of strands. Attardo (2008, p. 111) states that these are common in large corpora. This probably means that, while a strand is intratextual, stacks may

be intertextual and enable lines to be shared by other texts written by the same author or even by texts by different authors but belonging to the same genre.

These concepts refer to specific techniques which can be used in comic sections of serious texts (Attardo, 2001, p. 29). Attardo (2008, p. 112) has created another classification which makes sense of comic texts as stylistically cohesive wholes:

1. Humorous plot with punch line, which are stylistically similar to jokes.
2. Humorous plot with metanarrative disruption, which consist of texts whose plot disrupts narrative conventions. This technique seems related to the concept of parody, which refers to the incongruous disruption of expectations associated with narratives genres.
3. Humorous plot with humorous central complication, in which the central narrative conflict is itself comic.

By means of these classifications, Attardo (2008) concludes that the main aspects of application of the GTVH to longer texts are: 1. The analysis of texts as a vector in which each comic instance is coded as per the GTVH; 2. The distinction between jab lines and punch lines; and 3. A taxonomy and analysis of humorous plots (p. 110). As a structuralist theory, the GTVH may be used to identify puns independently of context and, as a result, mostly dismisses specific sociolinguistic elements. In my view, though, the GTVH can help one make sense of cultural scripts, and hence to better understand the comic dimension of a corpus of literature strongly linked to a specific sociolinguistic context. In the following sections, I analyse how humour is used as a strategy to convey and consolidate Macanese identity as represented by such cultural scripts, which may be analysed as specific instantiations of some of the knowledge resources of the GTVH. Specifically, I argue that comic literature in MC creates a continuous and ontologically cohesive narrative genre as a way to define, perform and transmit a positive representation of the Macanese identity in comparison and contrast with its historical *Others*: the Portuguese and the Chinese.

In what follows, I analyse the most paradigmatic examples of comic literature in MC in light of the incongruity theory and of some relevant knowledge resources of the GTVH (script opposition, situation, target, and language). I also use some of the other concepts devised by Attardo: jab lines, strands, stacks and story classifications. These are helpful to understand how specific narratives, narratives written by the same author and narratives written by different authors can be regarded as forming a single genre. Used in conjunction with *social identity theory*, these humour theories help me make sense of the representational history of Macanese culture and of its interaction with relevant neighbouring cultures. They also help me understand how represented interactions between the in-group and out-groups fixed in-group identity through the establishment of a specific comic genre which became part of what is now regarded as Macanese heritage. I begin by introducing the relevant existing comic literature in MC and then describe it according to the relevant parameters of the GTVH.

## **2. Comic literature in Macanese Creole**

The corpus of literature in MC consists of two bodies of work: one collected by Leopoldo Danilo Barreiros and another written by José dos Santos Ferreira (1919-1993). What follows is neither a summary of the whole literary corpus nor of comic literature in MC, but a summary of some of the most representative comic works to which I will refer.

Barreiros' (1943/1944) *O Dialecto Português de Macau (The Portuguese Dialect of Macao)* includes texts written from the mid-19th century until about Barreiros' time. Those texts

which were not privately assigned to Barreiros were predominantly featured in *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuo*, a magazine which was published in Macao (1863-1866) and Lisbon (1889-1904). Barreiros' anthology includes:

- 1) *fictional letters* exchanged between elderly women and young girls, in which the former talk about the differences between old and modern Macao;
- 2) *short narratives*. “*Narração*” (*Narrative*) tells the story about an elderly Macanese woman who complains about a young female relative who visits her only in order to meet her boyfriend;
- 3) *plays*. “*Os Viúvos ou Velho Sevandizio*” (*Widowers or Philandering Old Man*) tells the story of two elderly women who fight so intensely for the love of an elderly man that the police have to intervene. “*Nora Moderna ou Sogra e Nora*” (*Modern Daughter-in-law or Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law*) depicts the conflict between an elderly traditional Macanese lady and her young and modern daughter-in-law, who is married to a Portuguese soldier; and
- 4) *poems*. “*Diálogo entre José Fagote e Pancha Gudum*” (*Dialogue between José Fagote and Pancha Gudum*) deals with an elderly Macanese man who tries to seduce an elderly Macanese woman, although she replies only with insults and threats; “*Diálogo*” (*Dialogue*), describes an encounter between two young Macanese cousins, one residing in Macao and the other in Hong Kong.

Ferreira, also known as Adé, is arguably the best-loved author in MC among the Macanese community. He was born to a Portuguese father and Chinese mother and lived his adult life during the transitional period in which the Portuguese presence in Macao was waning and the Chinese one increasing. Ferreira's works were published in six volumes by the Macau Foundation (1994-1997). The author also wrote serious texts in Portuguese and non-comic poetry in MC and tried to imbue MC with a higher literary register. However, most of his texts are comic and use the same linguistic and narrative strategies as the authors in Barreiros' anthology. *Papiaçã di Macau* (1996), the second volume of his collected works, contains:

- 1) *plays*. “*Chico vai Escola*” (*Chico Goes to School*), which deals with the headmaster of a school who tries to convince the son of a rich man to join his school, even though the child only wishes to poke fun at him; “*César co Cleópatra*” (*Caesar and Cleopatra*), which tells the story of the well-known historical figures, here anachronistically trying to escape to Macao when they feel that their position in Rome and Egypt is threatened; “*Mui-mui sua neto*” (*Mui-mui and her Grandson*), about an elderly woman who tries to show off the education of her mischievous grandson to one of her elderly female friends;
- 2) *fictional letters*, three of which are titled “*Carta di Chacha pa su Neto Agapito*” (*Chacha's Letter to her Grandson Agapito*), in which an elderly woman writes about: the history of MC; soccer, a sport she is unable to understand; and aeroplanes, which she mistakes for metallic birds;
- 3) *stories*. “*Padrinho*” (*Godfather*) is a gangster story based on the well-known American novel/films; “*Má-lingu co Má-Língu*” (*Two Tittle-tattlers*) deals with two elderly women who gossip about their neighbours; “*Mána-chai na Portugal*” (*Aunt Mána in Portugal*) tells the story of an elderly woman who visits Portugal and gets involved in several misunderstandings with native Portuguese speakers; “*Primo Méno*” (*Cousin Méno*) describes the encounter between a young Macanese girl who lives in Macao and her cousin who lives in Hong Kong and often uses English borrowings; “*Panela di Quartel*” (*Headquarters' Pot*) is the story of a soldier who is told to fix a “pot” (*panela*, a term which

in MC may be used to refer colloquially to female genitalia) and ends up having sex with his general's wife; "Sium Lopes co su Nhónha" (*Mister Lopes and his Wife*) deals with a woman who hides two lovers in her room, one inside the closet and another above it, and of her religious husband, who often refers to "the one up on high" (God), a set-expression which leads the lover hiding above the closet to believe that the husband is referring to him; "Unga Estória di Ôlo-Deco" (*The Asshole's Story*) is the story of a human body whose backside goes on strike and renders the body sick when other organs do not acknowledge its importance; and 4) *the short story* (slightly longer than the previous ones) "Estória di Maria co Alféris Juám" (*Story of Maria and Soldier João*), which tells the story of a young Macanese girl who falls in love with a Portuguese soldier and tries to make her conservative family accept her relationship.

Vol. 3: *Macau di Tempo Antigo* (1996) and Vol. 4: *Macau Sã Assi* (1996) are collections of poems about old and modern Macao and about Macao's relationship with Portugal. Comic examples include "Avó Bitá co Lilita" (*Grandmother Bitá and Lilita*), which is about a young Portuguese soldier who tells an elderly Macanese lady that he wishes to marry her granddaughter and ends up getting insulted; and "Gente antigo vai Portugal" (*The Elderly go to Portugal*), which is about a group of elderly Macanese who go on a trip to Portugal and get into several misunderstandings.

The texts collected by Barreiros and those written by Ferreira share clear stylistic, narrative and thematic ideas. While Barreiros worked as a compiler and Ferreira wrote original texts, both were interested in preserving the MC and in claiming its status as relevant Macanese heritage inspired by Portuguese culture, given that the limited readership of these texts consisted of people from the same background as the authors: educated Macanese aware of MC and schooled in Portuguese. Given the paucity of texts in MC, both the 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneering authors in Barreiros and Ferreira had great awareness of previous works. This led to the conscious adoption of similar styles and narrative strategies as a means of creating a cohesive fictional universe. Such previous structures kept being instantiated into new creative ways, given that, as Tsakona (2020) states, the process for the creation of narrative genres consists of a balance between convention and invention. In the case of comic literature in MC, the balance between convention and invention was a way of canonising the literary tradition and, by extension, the ethnic and cultural group associated with it. For this reason, despite sociocultural changes from Barreiros to Ferreira's time, the texts are often similar in their representations of *Self* and *Other(s)*. In the next section, I analyse in greater detail the comic strategies used by the authors of the texts through the medium of humour theory.

### **3. Analysis of the corpus**

#### **3.1. Script opposition**

Comic literature in MC works on several oppositions which often appear in texts by different authors: tradition/modernity, MC/Portuguese, Macao/Hong Kong, old/young, unsophisticated/sophisticated; and informality/hyperformality. These script oppositions are often interrelated and, therefore, are not easily separable. As one can see, some of them seem to be related to other knowledge resources, such as *target* and *language*. Here, I will deal with them when they are parts of oppositions. I will come back to these two other knowledge resources later and treat them in individual terms.

### 3.1.1. Tradition and modernity

The opposition between tradition and modernity is mainly symbolised by elderly characters, especially female stock-characters frequently called *chachas*. In the texts collected by Barreiros and written by Ferreira, *chachas* are invariably knowledgeable about traditional Macao and MC, Macao's traditional language, and ignorant about modernity and other languages. In a letter collected by Barreiros (1943/1944), a *chacha* complains about her young niece use of English borrowing which she does not understand (p. 129). Ferreira's letters titled "Carta di Chacha pa su Neto Agapito" depict a *chacha* who, in one letter, writes about the history of Macau and MC in a very knowledgeable way, and, in two other letters, is clueless about common modern phenomena such as soccer and aeroplanes.

The texts collected by Barreiros<sup>2</sup> and those written by Ferreira<sup>3</sup> often consist of the opposition between elderly MC speakers and young Portuguese speakers. MC speakers often misunderstand Portuguese speakers and either get confused and feel humiliated or get offended and resort to verbal violence. Portuguese speakers, for their part, try to solve problems through hyperformal dialogue. In Ferreira's "Estória di Maria co Alféris Juám", there is a scene involving two characters, one called Sium Teodorico d'Eça and the other Atútu Bêço-Grôso. Their names predict linguistic/cultural clues. Sium Teodorico d'Eça (Mister Teodorico of Eça) possesses two uncommon Portuguese names which evoke the aristocratic milieu and constitute an allusion to highbrowed Portuguese literature, with which the intended audience of this text is supposed to be familiar. The character's given name refers to Teodorico Raposo, the protagonist of the novel *A Relíquia* by acclaimed Portuguese realist writer Eça de Queiroz, hence Teodorico (Raposo) d'Eça (de Queiroz). Atútu is the Macanese version of the Portuguese name Artur and is associated with a comic nickname which implies physical deformity (*beicho-grosso*, "fat lower lip"). Ferreira states that Sium Teodorico d'Eça makes a loquacious Portuguese-like (*portuguezado*) speech. Atútu Bêço-Grôso then:

(...) tries to go beyond his abilities, goes to the middle of the room and explains Sium Teodorico's words in Macanese Creole, so that elderly people may understand. He only talks nonsense. He is not yet done, when the priest approaches him and tells him to shut up.<sup>4</sup>

(Ferreira, 1996a, p. 107).

This example shows that the Macanese who speak Portuguese are represented as sophisticated, while those who speak only MC are ignorant and subject to scorn.

In the same story, the Portuguese soldier João asks Maria's parents to marry her in hyperformal Portuguese: "With all due respect, utmost humility, and in the absence of my dear father, I would ask you to be so kind as to give me the hand of your beautiful daughter Maria!"<sup>5</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 93). While this kind of language would be expected in highbrowed Portuguese literature, it sounds displaced in the mostly informal Macanese narrative universe. Maria's father then answers in MC: "Listen, my little soldier. When you take Maria's hand, remember also to take the hand, the foot and the head of her mother".<sup>6</sup> This is a pun, given that *tomá má*, "to take somebody's hand" (much like the English expression "to ask for

<sup>2</sup> "Diálogo", "Carta de Tia Pascoela à sua sobrinha Florência", "Nora moderna ou nora e Sogra", "Narração".

<sup>3</sup> "Estória di Maria co alféris Juám", "Mána-Chai na Portugal", "Primo Méno", "Avó Bitá co Lilita", "Gente antigo vai Portugal".

<sup>4</sup> "Atútu Bêço-Grôso sai su capacidade, va meo di sala i xplicá papiázám di Sium Teodorico na maquista chapado, pa gente antigo pôde intendê. Papiá sete pa catórzi, vumitá um-cento boboriça vêm fora. Metade caminho, Tio Padre já vai perto chomá êle calá bóca".

<sup>5</sup> "Com todo o respeito, com a maior humildade, e na ausência do Senhor meu pai, peço a mão da vossa linda filha Maria em casamento!".

<sup>6</sup> "Uví, alféri-chai! Quelora tomá Maria sua má, lembrá levá ramatá má, pê co cabéça di su mai...".

somebody's hand") is a metaphor for marriage, even though here the Macanese character interprets it literally as "to take a body part away from the speaker". His wife then resorts to an insult by answering back "Shut your mouth, you idiot!"<sup>7</sup> and Maria's father adds "The wife of an idiot is also an idiot, isn't she?"<sup>8</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 93). The solemn Portuguese speech by the soldier is opposed to the vulgarity of the interchange between the Macanese couple.

Similar oppositions figure in texts written in other narrative genres and texts written by different authors. In Ferreira's poem "Avó Bitá co Lilita", a young man explains in formal Portuguese that he has gone to Bitá's house because he loves her granddaughter. The dialogue between them and the representational roles they play are similar to the previous example. The young man states:

"Oh, my dear lady,  
May God forgive me,  
I came to know whether little Lilita  
Would like to take a walk with me.  
I love her, for she is fair,  
It would please me to marry her  
I beseech you, Ms. Bitá  
Be so kind as to call her"<sup>9</sup> (Ferreira, 1996b, p. 201).

Bitá curses and insults the young man in MC:

"How dare you babble  
In front of grandmother Bitá  
That you want to take for a walk  
Bitá's granddaughter Lilita?  
Sod off, you crazy beast!  
Get out of my sight immediately  
Before I hit you with my broom  
To get you the hell out of here"<sup>10</sup> (Ferreira, 1996b, p. 201).

Narratives in MC which portray the opposition between MC and Portuguese speakers such as these could be analysed as metanarrative disruptions of highbrowed Portuguese literature, which tend to maintain the hyperformal register in a non-humorous way. In comic literature in MC, Macanese characters react incongruously to common scenes such as meetings with lovers or marriage proposals. In more concrete thematic terms, the informality and lack of sophistication of MC is defined by several scripts: insults and threats; violence and suffering; bodily deformities; bad smells; intimate body parts and physiological necessities; sex; and religion. Except for religion, these scripts are often regarded as informal and unsophisticated for highbrowed literature, even though they seem to be common scripts used in humour and, as such, are less culturally bounded to the specificities of Macanese history and culture. In any case, they are clearly associated with MC and Macanese characters in the corpus, given that Portuguese characters and Portuguese speakers are not usually associated with these scripts.

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<sup>7</sup> "Calá bóca, bôbo!"

<sup>8</sup> "Siara di bôbo sã bôba, sã nunca?"

<sup>9</sup> "- Ó rica senhora minha, / Queira, por Deus, desculpar, / Venho saber se a Litinha / Quer comigo vir passear. / Gosto dela, que é bonita, / Com ela quero casar. / Peço-lhe, Senhora Bitá / O favor de a chamar".

<sup>10</sup> "-Vós astrevê boquiza, / Na diante di Avó Bitá, / Qui querê levá paxá / Bitá sua neta Lilita? / Vai-na, demónio chapado! / Azinha sai de iou sua diante, / Ante qui vai vassorado, / Pa tirá vós sua rompante!"



### 3.1.2. The informality of Macanese Creole

As shown above, insults are often incongruous, as Macanese characters and, more specifically, *chachas* insult other characters in the absence of insulting or threatening stimuli. “Uma Descompostura” (A Scolding), a non-narrative poem collected by Barreiros (1943/1944, p. 591) is basically a succession of insults and threats in versified form and, as such, is incongruous in the sense that this is not a common poetical device. Topics of insults include: personal features and attitudes, physical appearance, animals, and religion. Threats are often related to insults. However, besides resorting to verbal violence, threats predict physical aggression. Insults and threats often relate to the similar semantic fields of violence and suffering.

Comic literature in MC also often focus on scripts related to physiology. Macanese characters, such as Atútu Beiço-Grosso, often have nicknames which point to bodily malformations. Specific deviations include fatness/thinness, stature, walking gait, dishevelled hair, as well as vision and speech pathologies. The pleonastic insistence on the topic of bad odours is evident in the first lines of Ferreira’s story “Estória di Maria co Alféris Juám”:

“It is a bucket which comes out of the bathroom, full of something which smells really bad. It smells so bad that it fills the whole street (...) He immediately felt the bad smell (...) he waved his hand in order to disperse the bad smell (...) he covered his nose in order to avoid the smell (...) that bad smell did not leave his nose”<sup>11</sup>

(Ferreira, 1996a, p. 67).

Intimate body parts are referred to in several texts and Ferreira’s story “Unga Estória di Ôlo-Deco” relies entirely on this subject and on personification, given that body parts are described as entities with independent reasoning and a disease (constipation) is interpreted as a worker’s strike initiated by a human backside as a means of social protest. The following song sung by the character Apolónia of Ferreira’s play “César co Cleópatra” reveals several mechanisms related to intimate body parts and sex:

The pestle that is pestling  
Is so strong  
Whoever has never tried it  
Does not know its taste  
After hitting so much  
After pestling me so much  
Everything melts  
Please, do not blame me  
The ripe grapefruit  
Immediately turns soft  
My hard pestle  
Never rests  
It goes down  
It goes up  
In the end, it falls down  
It’s no fun anymore<sup>12</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, pp. 27-28).

<sup>11</sup> “Sã balsa qui já sai di cacús, inchido di acunga ancuza fêde qui fêde; di fêde qui impestá rua intéro. (...) êle azinha já senti fedôr (...) sacudí vento fêde vai lóngi (...) ta nariz tapado pa nom-pode senti seléa fedôr (...) Acunga fedôr nom-pôde larga su nariz”.

<sup>12</sup> “Pilám qui ta pilá, / Tánto força lôgo têm, / Quim nunca exprementá, / Nádi sabe qui sabô têm. / Tánto qui batê, batê, / Tánto qui pilá pa iou, / Tudo quánto daretê, / Vôs ne-bom culpá pa iou. / Jambulám maduro / Qui móli já fica, / Iou sua pilám duro, / Qui sã nádi discansá. / Pa basso pilá vai, / Pa riva pilá vêm, / Vôs cavá lô cai, / Tudo chiste já non-têm”.

There is a clear metaphoric script opposition between genitalia, sex and the use of a mortar and a pestle. The pun is linguistically enhanced by the acoustic similarities of the terms *pestle* (*pilám*, Portuguese *pilão*) and the one for the male sexual organ (in Portuguese and MC, *pila*). It is also visually enhanced by the phallic appearance of the pestle, the yonic appearance of the mortar and the sexually suggestive use of the pestle and mortar together. *Daretê*, “to melt”, and its past participle, *daretido*, “molten”, are often used in MC to describe philandering men. Fruits may have sexual connotations in both MC and Portuguese.

While focusing on sex, the main narrative strategy of Ferreira’s “Sium Lopes co su Nhónha” relies on a pun related to religion. Besides being a solemn topic whose subversion can be interpreted as incongruous, religion is, together with MC, one of the most relevant cultural vectors of the Macanese community. When fossilised religious expressions, metaphors or periphrases are used in a non-solemn register or interpreted according to different non-solemn *scripts*, they may function as puns. This happens in Ferreira’s play “Chico vai Escola” when the teacher asks the playful child what his father’s name is: “name of the father”<sup>13</sup> and the student answers: “in the name of the Father... and of the Son... and of the Holy Ifrit”<sup>14</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 16). This pun consists of a common literal question unexpectedly (but plausibly) reinterpreted as a religious formula. In fact, the motif of asking for one’s name constitutes a jab line occurring at different moments throughout this text and is also the punch line which concludes it, which means that this instantiation of repetition constitutes a strand.

The informality and unsophistication of MC speakers may also be stylistically analysed through the use of figures of speech to state what could be said in a less marked way. As *chachas* know little about modernity, they often resort to the following devices to describe reality:

1. comparisons/metaphors,
2. personifications,
3. puns,
4. hyperboles, and
5. periphrases.

Given that they often unintentionally reinterpret reality in unexpected ways, their lines can be regarded as incongruous.

1. *Comparisons/metaphors*: a common formula for comparisons and metaphors throughout the corpus, mainly in Ferreira’s writings, is “[*script 1*] *ramendá* (resembles) [*script 2*]”. *Script 1* often refers to modern phenomena and *script 2* to traditional phenomena which the elderly Macanese know well. The most common scripts include: animals, people, weather, flora, fauna and objects.

2. *Personifications*: personifications are similar to metaphors and comparisons in the sense that they associate the features of a *script*, in this case animate, to an inanimate one.

3. *Puns*: puns are also related to comparisons and metaphors. While the latter relates scripts at a semantic level, the former relates them at a phonetic one, such as when equal or similar sounding words have or suggest two semantically incompatible meanings. The main narrative techniques used in the Ferreira’s stories “Panela di Quartel” and “Sium Lopes co su Nhónha” constitute examples of stories which rely almost exclusively on puns. The former is constructed around the *script* opposition of “pot” and “vagina” through the term

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<sup>13</sup> “nómi di pai”.

<sup>14</sup> “Nómi di Pai... Filo... Apito-sánto”. Chico mistakes “espírito” (spirit) for a word with a similar sound “apito” (whistle). As *spirit* and *whistle* do not sound similar in English, I translate the term as “ifrit”.

*panela* (*pot*) and the latter around the opposition of “God” and “the lover hiding above the closet” through the expression “acunga qui têm ali-riva” (*the one up on high*). The fact that these short narratives rely entirely on these puns make them look like jokes. The puns are often repeated in their respective stories. In the second story, in which the character shows excessive religiosity, the repetition works as a comb, that is, as a successive stream of jab lines, which nevertheless end in a punch line in which the religious *script* (God) shifts to one of adultery (the lover).

While the previous examples are intralinguistic, given that they deal only with puns between MC terms or expressions, puns also often arise when speakers of mostly Portuguese and MC come into conflict. Most notably, Macanese characters often do not understand modernity (cultural script) or misinterpret ambiguous Portuguese terms (linguistic script). This is the main strategy used in Barreiros’ play “Nora Moderna ou Nora e Sogra”, Ferreira’s story “Mána-Chái na Portugal” and Ferreira’s poem “Gente Antigo vai Portugal”. The following dialogue from Barreiros’ play presents a comb of interlinguistic phonetic and semantic puns between the elderly MC speaker Vicência and the young soldier and Portuguese speaker Toribio (puns in italics):

VICENCIA – Am I not allowed to speak in my own home? You go *smell rope*!

TORIBIO - What do you want *rope* for?

(...)

TORIBIO - Yes. I received that order because yesterday there was a *fight* scene here.

VICENCIA - Oh! So you are coming to catch the *mice*. Go to the kitchen. There are many mice there.

TORIBIO - Not mice, madam! You and my sergeant's wife were exchanging *punches* yesterday!

VICENCIA - Oh! So Alfredo asked you to come and get the *punch* that I have prepared yesterday?

TORIBIO - Madam, you are joking with a soldier who is just trying to carry out his duty. You should obey me and not *nourish disorder*!

VICENCIA - You are right! Your sergeant has a *nourishment disorder*. He should eat some congee, cow foot, milk and pigeon egg<sup>15</sup>

(Barreiros, 1943/1944, p. 160).

While they belong to the same narrative sequence and resort to the same linguistic strategies, these puns work on several levels. The term *fight* and *mice* are only comparable at the phonetic level and have no semantic relationship. *Smell rope* constitutes an idiomatic insult in MC and, while intelligible in literal terms, makes no sense in Portuguese. That is the reason why Toribio interprets it literally. Such idiomatic insults which are literally interpreted in Portuguese are used in other texts and, in this sense, can be regarded as stacks shared by the genre of comic literature

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<sup>15</sup> “VICENCIA - Minha casa, iôu non pôde falá? Vôs vâi cherá corda. / TORIBIO - Quer corda para quê? (...) / TORIBIO - Sim. Foi ordem recebida, porque ontem houve aqui cenas de pugilatos. / VICENCIA - Ah! Vem senhor soldado aqui p’ra agarrar rato. Vai cozinha ali tem tanto. / TORIBIO - Não é rato, minha senhora! Vossa senhoria e a senhora do meu sargento jogaram batatadas ontem. / VICENCIA - Ah! Alfredo manda vós vem buscar batatada que eu fazê ontem? / TORIBIO - A senhora está brincando com um soldado que está aqui para cumprir o seu dever. Obedeça-me ou vou apitar chamando reforço. / VICENCIA - São deveras! Vosso sargento tá muito magro, êle precisa de caldo de galinha, jaleia pê-de-vaca, leite, ovo de pomba para reforço”. I made some lexical changes in order to preserve the original intention of the text. *Cherá corda*, “to smell rope”, means “to sod off”. This expression has no such interpretation in Portuguese. Vicência interprets *pugilatos*, “fistfight” as the phonetically similar *fugir ratos*, “escaping mice”. In Portuguese, *Batatada* is a colloquial term for “punch”. It comes from *batata*, “potato”, and is also the name of a dish. *Reforço*, “reinforcement”, may mean “military reinforcement”, as the soldier interprets it, but it may also mean “extra portion of food”, as Vicência interprets it.

in MC.<sup>16</sup> The puns related to *punch* and *nourishment disorder/nourish disorder* have a metalinguistic dimension, in the sense that the Macanese housewife tends to interpret scripts in the domestic sense and the Portuguese soldier in the military one.

4. *Hyperboles*: hyperboles refer to exaggerations. Humorous stories often begin in a context of normalcy and gradually progress into incongruity. In comic literature in MC, this involves elderly people getting frustrated and resorting to verbal and/or physical violence. Hyperboles frequently point to a cartoon-like depiction of Macanese society.

5. *Periphrases*: periphrases refer to the use of complex linguistic utterances to state what could be stated in a more economic fashion. Given that they are unaware of standard Portuguese and modern reality, *chachas* often resort to long descriptions to refer to modern phenomena.

Ferreira's second and third letters written by Chacha to her grandson Agapito, in which the former describes soccer and aeroplanes, provide good examples of incongruous use of these figures of speech.

1. *Comparison/metaphor*: Soccer is described as consisting of “watching twentysomething big fellas with red and white clothes looking like crazy cats running around mice in a cave”<sup>17</sup> and aeroplanes as “flying things which look like big birds with thunderous voices”<sup>18</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 207);

2. *Personification*: Aeroplanes are said to have “small bellies” and “from time to time, they have to put their feet on the ground in order to refill with gas”<sup>19</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 207);

3. *Hyperbole*: Modern Macao is said to contain “more cars than there are fish in the ocean”<sup>20</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 207); and

4. *Periphrasis*: the referees are depicted as “three little boys with black clothes (...) One of them comes and goes in the middle of the field, having fun with his whistle, while the other two, each at opposite corners, go up and down with little flags on their hands”<sup>21</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 207).

### 3.1.3. Macao and Hong Kong

One notices that, despite the oppositions that I have analysed, tradition, MC, elderly characters, unsophistication and informality, on the one hand, and modernity, Portuguese, young characters, sophistication and hyperformality, on the other hand, always seem to go together. The geographical opposition between Macao and Hong Kong seems to be an exception to this pattern. While Macao is associated with MC, Hong Kong is not associated with Portuguese but with English. English is represented as even more modern than Portuguese but not necessarily as sophisticated and formal. Given the rise of the local power of the British since the establishment of Hong Kong in 1841 and the corresponding decrease of Portuguese power and of Macao, the English language became increasingly associated with socioeconomic promotion.

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<sup>16</sup> In the *Dóci Papiaçã di Macao* video *Dóci Culpa*, which is about a group of old-fashioned elderly Macanese people who are approached by a group of young Portuguese and Chinese tourists, there is a similar scene in which the Portuguese tourists also play with the idiomatic MC insult *chupá ovo*, literally “to suck eggs”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVy2Z0IHd6c> (accessed on 23/4/2024).

<sup>17</sup> “olá vinte fora latagám, quim rópa vermêlo, quim rópa branco, ramendá gato dôdo na saguám corê trás di rato”.

<sup>18</sup> “unga cuza ta aguá, ramendá unga pastro grândi co voz di trovám”.

<sup>19</sup> “Estunga aropláno têm istómago piquinino, j’olá? Unchinho, unchinho ora, têm-qui tocá pê na chám pa inchí gazolina...”

<sup>20</sup> “Macau, agora têm más caréta qui pêsse na mar”.

<sup>21</sup> “Têm três nhu-nhum tudo ora usá rópa preto (...) Têm unga corê vai, corê vêm, na meo-meo di campal, entretido suprá apito, otrunga dôs, cadunga na su lado, vai riva, vêm basso co banderinha na máam”.

As the Macanese were well versed in Chinese and Portuguese customs, Macanese families migrated to Hong Kong (and to Shanghai, which is not depicted in the *corpus*), where they started developing a sense of Portuguese/Eurasian identity in order to distinguish themselves from the local Chinese (Nunes, 2012, p. 318). The poem “Diálogo”, which was collected by Barreiros, and Ferreira’s story “Primo Méno” deal with the opposition of traditional Macao and modern, anglicised Hong Kong in similar narrative contexts. Both depict the encounter between two cousins, a Macanese girl from Macao and a Macanese boy from Hong Kong. João Fernandes, the male cousin in Barreiros’ poem, prefers English to Portuguese. When he meets his cousin Augusta, he states that MC and Portuguese:

“(…) nowadays  
Are useful only for the destitute  
The others should learn English  
In order to make their living”<sup>22</sup> (Barreiros, 1943/1944, p. 89).

His cousin Augusta prefers Portuguese over English and MC. She tries to convince João to learn standard Portuguese and accuses him of speaking “only a kind of *patois*”<sup>23</sup> (Barreiros, 1943/1944, p. 89), a colloquial name for MC. While nowadays *patois* (*patuá*) is a common positive colloquial term with a much stronger affective connotation than the academic term I use (Macanese creole), the original French term *patois* was used to refer negatively to language varieties which differed from the standard one. While Ferreira and most contemporary Macanese use the term in a positive sense, it is evident that Augusta uses it derogatively. In Ferreira’s story “Primo Méno”, Marie (an anglicised version of Maria, which would be the correct Portuguese and MC versions), the Macanese girl, speaks MC and her cousin Méno (Filomeno) answers also in MC, but uses frequent English borrowings (marked in italics): “Yes, *cousin* Marie. He bought this *camera* for me and called me to come to Macao in order to *enjoy* this *weekend*, *you see?*”<sup>24</sup> (Ferreira, 199a, p. 193).

The use of English seems to work on a different level to the opposition between MC and Portuguese. While the opposition between English and another language, in this case MC, remains clear, here it is not the inability of the character to speak Portuguese instead of MC but his inability to speak MC without resorting to English nonce-borrowings which mark the opposition. Long passages in Portuguese and MC show that these languages are supposed to be part of the script repertory of some characters and of the intended audience. In other words, educated Macanese characters understand both languages, while Portuguese characters and uneducated Macanese understand just one. However, the audience would also have to understand both languages in order to fully grasp the narratives. English, for its part, is never used in long passages and mostly consists of nonce-borrowings, which means that it is still regarded as an innovation which has not yet fully become part of the shared epistemological world of at least Macanese characters living in Macao, which tend to be the main ones. If one considers Nunes’ argument that a unique sense of Macanese identity firstly developed in the diaspora and not necessarily in Macao, this opposition between “true” Macanese who live in Macao and have Portuguese cultural and linguistic roots against deracinated Macanese who live in the diaspora seems to be a fictional literary creation. A similar fictionalised environment is observable in the fact that, in the older text, Augusta speaks and prefers Portuguese, while in the most recent one Marie speaks and prefers MC, which progressively decreolised towards

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<sup>22</sup> “oze em dia / Só serve pra pobretão / Quem mas pode prendê inglez / Pra pode ganhá sua pão”.

<sup>23</sup> “Apenas um patois”.

<sup>24</sup> “Sã, Cousin Marie. Êle comprá estunga camera da iou, chomá iou vêem Macau enjoy iou-sa week-end, you see?”.

Portuguese after standard Portuguese began to be officially taught in Macao from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Baxter, 2009, 280-281). Given the chronology, at least assuming that the stories take place at about the same time when they were written, it would have been historically more plausible if Augusta preferred MC and Maria Portuguese. In other words, this kind of oppositions do not aim to represent reality but create representations of how the authors portray the Macanese and their relationship with different places, languages and language attitudes.

### 3.2. Situation

Comic literature in MC is highly selective in its situational universe in the sense that this genre features elements which were part of Macao's life but did not constitute the whole social picture. The texts often deal with Macanese families and take place in Macanese homes. Non-Macanese characters, such as Portuguese soldiers (secondary) or Chinese maids (tertiary), appear only in Macanese settings in the sense that there are no texts without Macanese characters, while there are many texts without non-Macanese characters. Given that the Macanese have always been a minority in both demographic terms and in terms of the political power they held and given that that Macao is a small territory, this seems to be a very simplified description of the Macanese social fabric. The scarcity of specific temporal data, which is evident mainly in the works of Ferreira, often leaves the impression that the narratives take place in an undefined past, which is imagined as traditional. Furthermore, the texts collected in Barreiros and those written by Ferreira feature similar scenes, which underscores their literary continuity: gossiping between uneducated and often violent elders;<sup>25</sup> generational conflicts;<sup>26</sup> conflicts between Macanese and Portuguese characters<sup>27</sup> and between inhabitants of Macao and Hong Kong.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that such scenes are common because they convey the script oppositions analysed in the previous section. Finally, the texts feature similar stock-characters: mischievous children,<sup>29</sup> youngsters from Macao and Hong Kong,<sup>30</sup> young Portuguese soldiers,<sup>31</sup> and lascivious old men.<sup>32</sup> Such characters never steer radically away from their stereotyped roles. Such roles, however, are more easily analysed in terms of the next knowledge resource.

### 3.3. Target

This knowledge resource can be divided according to several sociolinguistic criteria, most prominently age, gender, education, language, and ethnic group. As stated in 3.1, sociolinguistic groups divided along these lines are usually characterised through opposing traits. Young characters often symbolise modernity and education, while elderly people, particularly women, symbolise tradition and lack of education. A common scene is one in which naïve elderly people ask children who go to school and learn many languages to show off their knowledge of the world and language abilities. This is the main narrative strategy behind Ferreira's "Mui-mui sua neto". Such children often have set names like Chico (diminutive of Francisco and maybe an allusion to the Portuguese term *Chico-esperto*, which literally means "smart Francis" and, more

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<sup>25</sup> "Os Viúvos ou Velho Sevandizio", "Narração", "Diálogo entre José Fagote e Pancha Gudum", "Mui-mui sua neto", "Má-lingu co Má-Língu".

<sup>26</sup> The letters in Barreiros, "Narração", "Nora Moderna ou Sogra e Nora", "Chico vai Escola", "Mui-mui sua neto", "Estória di Maria co Alféris Juám".

<sup>27</sup> "Nora Moderna ou Sogra e Nora", "Mána-chai na Portugal", "Estória di Maria co Alféris Juám", "Avó Bita co Lilita", "Gente antigo vai Portugal".

<sup>28</sup> "Diálogo", "Primo Méno".

<sup>29</sup> "Chico vai escola", "Mui-mui sua neto", "Estória di Maria co alféris Juám".

<sup>30</sup> "Diálogo", "Primo Meno".

<sup>31</sup> "Narração", "Nora moderna ou nora e sogra", "Estória di Maria co alféris Juám", "Avó Bita co Lilita".

<sup>32</sup> "Os viúvos ou velho sevandizio", "Estória di Maria co alféris Juám".

idiomatically, “little fox”) or, as in Ferreira’s story, are simply called “neto” (*grandson*), which underscores their youth. They are usually deliberately playful and make fun of the ignorance of elderly people. In this regard, they are probably traceable to the Portuguese tradition, more specifically to Portuguese jokes, in which the character Joãozinho (Little Johnny) plays a similar role and purposefully interprets language and daily life in incongruous but creative ways. Teenagers and young adults tend to be either Portuguese or Macanese. Portuguese soldiers represent the human and cultural relationship with the Portuguese metropolis and the root language of MC, while Macanese youngsters who live in Macao and in Hong Kong represent modern globalised lifestyles.

As stated in 3.1, *chachas* are the most paradigmatic characters in the texts collected by Barreiros<sup>33</sup> and those written by Ferreira,<sup>34</sup> given that they most clearly embody one of the most relevant script oppositions: the disappearing MC and other Macanese cultural elements which are represented as changing rapidly.<sup>35</sup> Barreiros (1943/1944) remarks that the letters he collected were “a means of criticising local life through the medium of the witty remarks made by ‘elderly Macanese ladies’” (p. 29). More recently, Tomás (1988) has analysed comic literature in MC as a kind of satire through which Macanese cultural traits are embodied in this character. Ferreira’s story “Má-lingu co Má-lingu” is a good example of how this stock-character functions as a kind of metonymy for the disappearing Macanese tradition. It tells the story of two *chachas* who gossip about traditional local life. In their speech, they refer to some of the key cultural vectors of Macanese society I have referred to in the introduction. They do so mostly through words of non-Portuguese origin (between brackets), which makes this text especially difficult for Portuguese speakers unaware of MC and/or Macanese culture:

*People*: “If the woman [*apô*] who carries water comes, she will help me”<sup>36</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 185).

*Food and festivities*: “(...) used to hanging the pot in the kitchen, the cupboard [*fontám*] and the basket for sweets [*abôlo*] are empty, and one eats sauce made with vinegar and chili [*chili-missó*”<sup>37</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 186).

*Disease and traditional medicine*: “Oh, your children have a hunchback [*boncô*] and their skin is dried up”<sup>38</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 188).

*Clothes and make-up*: “That seductress Engrácia is now always applying make-up and looks like the girl in religious ceremonies [*amui-baléu*”<sup>39</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 186).

*Gambling and money*: “Tico wears a new coat every day, puts on a bowler hat and goes hurriedly [*rónça-rónça*] to the gambling house [*pai-cun*]. He is a gambling addict [*fantanéro*]. Isn’t he cheating and earning dishonest money [*sapeca-fêmea*]?”<sup>40</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 186).

Besides the knowledge of MC and traditional Macanese culture, the most salient trait of *chachas* is linguistic and cultural ignorance regarding modern languages and culture. This means that there is a fundamental difference between child characters and *chachas*. Children are culturally and linguistically knowledgeable and purposefully witty. *Chachas*, for their part, are

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<sup>33</sup> “Nora moderna ou sogra e nora”, “Narração”, “Os viúvos ou velho sevandizio”, “Diálogo entre José Fagote e Pancha Gudum ambos velhos”.

<sup>34</sup> “Mui-mui sua neto”, “Má-lingu co má-lingu”, “Mána-chai na Portugal”, “Avó Bitá co Lilita”, “Gente antigo vai Portugal”.

<sup>35</sup> This tendency is also still visible in the videos made by *Dóci Papiçám di Macao*, which are often about conversations between *chachas* or include at least one scene related to this theme.

<sup>36</sup> “Apô de carta águ si vêm, sã logo ajudá unchinho pa iou”.

<sup>37</sup> “(...) costumado pendura tacho na cozinha, fontám vazio, abolô tamêm vazio, comê arôz co chíli-missó”.

<sup>38</sup> “Aia, vós sua Nhu-Nhum boncô, seco ismirado (...)”.

<sup>39</sup> “Acunga tentaçám de Engrácia agora dá pa pintá, rabicá, ramendá unga amui-baléu”.

<sup>40</sup> “Tico tudo dia usá quinzena nôvo, cubrí chapêu-côco, rónça-rónça ta vai pai-cun. Sã unga fantanéro... Vós olá sã nunca sã, ta virá mám panhá sapeca- fêmea?”.

depicted as linguistically and culturally ignorant and are usually unaware of this fact. In the play collected by Barreiros “Nora moderna ou Sogra e Nora”, Vicência tries to speak Portuguese, makes several linguistic mistakes, and blames a Portuguese character for not understanding her. The same happens in Ferreira’s story “Mána-Chai na Portugal” and his poem “Gente antigo vai Portugal”, which tell the story of elderly Macanese visiting Portugal and having troubles fitting both linguistically and culturally. The former depicts a *chacha* who, due to her ignorance, “looks like a fool. She can’t speak proper Portuguese and can’t understand a thing”<sup>41</sup> (Ferreira, 1996a, p. 189). She gets involved in a series of misunderstandings with Portuguese characters and, as in the play collected by Barreiros, thinks that they are the ones who are ignorant. Attitudes towards *chachas*, much like attitudes towards MC, are ambivalent, even though this ambivalence is to be deciphered mostly by insiders who know about the representational history of MC and of the Macanese community. As *chachas* nostalgically embody the Macao which revivalists like Barreiros and Ferreira strive to preserve, they function as *trickster* characters who resist modernity and preserve tradition (Radin, 1956). Sometimes elderly people are lumped together into this representational category, such as in Ferreira’s poem “Gente antigo vai Portugal”, in which gender is not discriminated, given that *gente* (*people*) may refer to men and women. However, in most texts, lascivious old men play a less culturally-bounded role. This gender difference is comprehensible, given that MC and Macanese culture have been historically defined as a language and culture transmitted in Macanese families through the female line.

The fact that *chachas* are the most common target in comic literature in MC and that they are represented as quintessential Macanese characters shows that this kind of humour also has an ethnic dimension. Ethnic humour tends to create such contrastive representations of specific ethnic groups (Gonzales & Wiseman, 2005, p. 172). Interestingly, however, Weaver (2014, pp. 215-219) states that ethnic humour is not necessarily projected onto *Others* but may be directed towards the culture creating the humorous situation. Here, Wilson’s (1979) definition of *shared-ridicule* may be relevant, given that it may be associated with the in-group and out-group stereotypes I have mentioned in the introduction. “Shared” means that the creation of a target may not only serve the function of creating a potentially negative distinction between *Self* and *Other* but also of creating positive in-group solidarity, given that humour constitutes an important part of daily social lives. In short, *shared-ridicule* seems to be ironic, given that, while apparently negative, claims are not supposed to be taken at face-value. In the case of comic literature in Macanese, this kind of ridicule plays ironically with the negative stereotypes associated with the representational history of contact languages. As Attardo (2001) remarks, irony may have an inclusive purpose and build in-group solidarity through shared play (p. 120). The authors of the texts, who were Macanese, evidently felt pride in their culture and used humour as a means to contrast the Macanese community with neighbouring ones. As language is so often associated with ethnicity, *shared-ridicule* also relates to the way language attitudes shifted from one of subalternity to one of positive resistance. If standard Portuguese was the non-marked variety, Portuguese-based creoles could be regarded as marked and incongruous varieties. Although the intention of the representation changed from negative to positive, the content and style of the representations remained. At the same time, even though most of the literature in MC is comic, Ferreira wrote serious poetry and essays in MC and translated the poetry of Camões, who is considered to be the most important author of the Portuguese canon, into MC (Ferreira, 1996a, pp. 217-220). This seems to reveal a double-sided strategy in the sense that MC literature tries to legitimate itself both by mimicking the cultural and literary tradition which lies at its roots as well as by carving a distinctive humorous tradition which is not only

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<sup>41</sup> “Continuá bôba. Non sabe papiá português bem-fêto, tudo ancuza non pôde entendê”.



distinct from the previous mimetic texts but seem to parody them. These oppositional literary efforts were likely intended to show that MC was both a playful language appropriate for informal daily encounters and a serious language capable of transmitting grand literary ideas.

The most commonly represented neighbouring communities are the Portuguese and the Chinese. The other ethnic groups which shaped the Macanese history are almost completely absent. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese politico-cultural influence decreased and the Chinese influence increased, which means that the Portuguese-like Macao of olden days became increasingly influenced by varieties of Chinese language and culture (Pina-Cabral, 1993, pp. 413-414). However, even Chinese characters appear more rarely than would be expected, at least in social reality. Furthermore, Chinese presence is limited to lower class servants. In Ferreira's story "Estória di Maria co alfêris Juám", one of the few texts in which Chinese characters appear, the Chinese maid is an object of physical desire, given that she maintains an extramarital relationship with Avô-cong, the elderly, philandering Macanese male character. In some poems, Ferreira tries to mimic the MC which was spoken by Chinese soldiers and, due to the influence of Chinese phonology (such as the substitution of /r/ for /l/, which is also common in stereotyped representations of non-fluent English as spoken by Chinese speakers), their use of this language sounds even more incongruous than the MC spoken by Macanese characters. No Chinese characters appear in Barreiros' texts. Similarly, while there are positive allusions to Portuguese literary culture (Luís de Camões, Eça de Queiroz, among others I have not mentioned) and to Western history and culture in general ("César co Cleópatra"), there are neither direct nor indirect allusions to the rich Chinese literary or historical tradition. Portuguese characters, by contrast, are common as secondary characters in both the texts collected by Barreiros and those written by Ferreira. Like the Chinese, Portuguese characters are often depicted as objects of desire, even though this desire is sometimes more cultural than physical. Most are respectable soldiers whom young Macanese girls wish to marry.<sup>42</sup> Marriage possesses a symbolic role related to identity, given that these are symbolic "marriages" between the Portuguese and the Macanese cultures. Through the medium of narrative, the historical and cultural destinies of Portugal and Macao become intertwined and come out reinforced. By emphasising Macanese identity, Macanese literature creates a fictional world in which the importance of Portuguese physical and cultural presence is more relevant than it would have been in reality. At the same time, other identities, mainly the Chinese and their historically increasing demographic presence, become less evident. This does not mean that the Chinese are despised, given that the Macanese were and still are firmly rooted in Cantonese language and culture. However, it shows that, even if in a caricaturised fashion, there is an attempt to associate Macanese language and culture with high literary Portuguese culture and with a lower register of everyday Chinese culture.

### **3.4. Language**

The fact that most of the texts collected by Barreiros and those written by Ferreira are in MC instead of Portuguese, a language that seems to be equally shared by all the authors, reveals that there is a close relationship between the previous knowledge resources and language. This is evident, for instance, in the frequent incongruous use of figures of speech. The authors of comic texts in MC often describe this language as being funny. Ferreira (1996a), for instance, often states that the creole is full of *chiste*, "wit", and that, among the Macanese, the "tendency to play with patois was always a reason for great satisfaction" (p. 5). Obviously, nothing is intrinsically funny and MC only ended up being regarded so, first negatively and nowadays positively, because of its specific sociolinguistic history and of its expected social uses, which were limited.

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<sup>42</sup> "Narração", "Estória di Maria co alfêris Juám", "Avó Bitá co Lilita".

This means that the expansion of the uses of MC can be used as a means to create humour based on register. Ferreira's (1996a) story "O Padrinho" is a good example of an unexpected use of MC. Contrary to "César co Cleópatra", whose humour at least relies partially on incongruous historical anachronisms common to many humorous discourses, in "O Padrinho" no common humorous narrative strategy is used. However, the tale is funny because it is told, not in the original English or in standard Portuguese, but in MC, a linguistic choice which goes against expectations related to the gangster genre, which is more commonly associated with American culture and the English language. This story may therefore be regarded as an example of a humorous plot with metanarrative disruption or, perhaps more correctly, with metalinguistic disruption. In the beginning of the story, Ferreira writes: "In this story, whatever reminds one of stories written by others or of somebody's else life is a mere coincidence. The names of the characters, of the lands and of every place are just imaginary"<sup>43</sup> (p. 173). This is a legal formula often used by official languages with considerable artistic/commercial production and in which there is a system of copyrighting. As this is not applicable to MC, this introduction is legally irrelevant. However, it creates humour based on register by making MC play a formal role it does not usually play. Besides, it is ironic and creates a sense of disparity between word and deed in the reader's mind, given that it dismisses the obvious influence of the original story and its adaptation to a Macanese setting.

At the lexical level, the majority of the vocabulary related to the common informal scripts is derived from informal Portuguese and from idiomatic expressions which, while understandable in the literal sense, would have a different semantic interpretation in standard Portuguese. There are also many words from important substrate languages. The existing dictionaries of MC (Fernandes & Baxter, 2004; Gaião, 2019), which were mostly based on the same (and only) literary corpus I use, include a wealth of such terms. Vocabulary related to Chinese characters are often used as insults or as pejorative terms of comparison. These include:

*achi-môco*, "idiot"; *a-fat*, "idiot"; *apai*, "lame"; *apó*, "low class Chinese woman", used in the sense of "ugly"; *amui/amuichai* "bachelor Chinese girl of humble origins"; *amui baléu*, "girl paraded in religious festivals", usually used to refer negatively to a "girl with excessive make-up"; *atâi*, "Chinese boy" and *atâi di rua*, "uneducated Chinese boy, street urchin", both commonly used as "street urchin"; *cachôro-china*, "Chinese-dog"; *chengcau*, "Chinese person who has converted to Catholicism", usually used in the sense of "useless person"; *hâm-sâp-lou*, "lascivious"; *malau(-cón)*, "monkey, skinny person"; *mui-chai*, "servant or prostitute"; *pacfanista*, "drug addict"; *tai-mong*, "idiot"; *tôm-tôm-môm-tôm*, "clumsy"; and *tu-tum-piám*, "useless person".

There are also many words from Papiá Kristang (or Malay), which is more difficult to interpret. This is clear when one considers the topics of violence and suffering, for which the following Malay words (possibly derived from Papiá Kristang) are often used: *chiqui* "to strangulate"; *chuchú*, "to jab"; *cholé*, "to hit"; *cutí*, "to hit with an object"; *pegá rota rutiá*, "to hit with a stick". Papiá Kristang was an important substrate for the initial formation of MC, given that the Macanese community firstly emerged from the relationship between Portuguese sailors and Malay women (Baxter, 2009). The linguistic and cultural contact with this Malay element was significantly reduced after 1641, when the Dutch conquered Malacca (Hancock, 2009). While the influence of Papiá Kristang and Malay decreased, the existing Malay terms in MC became part of the lexicon of this language. It is likely that, during the period of decreolisation, they would (and still) sound distinctively funny to speakers of the most common languages in contemporary Macao: Cantonese, English, and Portuguese. The fact that, during

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<sup>43</sup> "Na estunga estória, tudo qui ramendá estória qui ôtro gente já isquevê, tudo qui ramendá vida di quim tamêm bom, sã somente coincidência. Nómi-nómi di gente, di terá, di tudo lugar sã já di imaginaçám".

the period when the corpus was written, MC was progressively becoming more similar to standard Portuguese may mean that the insistence on non-Portuguese terms may have been due to them sounding incongruous, and therefore funny, to speakers of standard Portuguese.

#### **4. Conclusion**

I have analysed comic literature in MC as a collective artistic venture whose goal has been to turn negative stereotypes associated with subalternity into positive narrative devices imbued with both humorous and nostalgic qualities. Like any literary venture, this reversal has been achieved through selective representations of social reality and, as a result, has enabled the creation and consolidation of Macanese identity through a comical tradition of *shared-ridicule* which ran parallel to an effort to assimilate MC its higher register literary predecessor, that is, Portuguese. Many of these artistic choices can be analysed in terms of incongruity theory and some of the knowledge resources of the GTVH, namely: script opposition, situation, target, and language. I have considered how, besides explaining humorous instances, these knowledge resources may create specific representations of social and linguistic identities. Specifically, it is through the choice of specific narrative situations, through comparison and contrast of different cultural scripts and between different characters, as well as through the use of language in both informal and formal registers, that the Macanese, the Portuguese and the Chinese communities are represented as important parts of Macao in different sociolinguistic ways. Narratives have creators and intended audiences who need to share symbolic universes. The knowledge shared by writers and their readership, in this case educated Macanese aware of MC and schooled in Portuguese, make the latter able to recognise characters as traditional, informal and unsophisticated and others as modern, formal and sophisticated. Such characters represent stock-characters who, through the cementation of the genre, become scripts themselves and, as a result, behave in predictable ways. While audiences of different kinds of narratives expect some degree of innovation, such innovation functions in a larger frame of shared cultural ideas and expectations. However, they would not know the specific humorous instantiations playfully or accidentally created by such characters and thus would be surprised, which yields humorous effects.

Through the interplay of different cultural attitudes towards MC, this language, which has been deemed as a L variety suitable only for informal topics and “dirty humour”, has become a H variety. As such, it has encoded the cherished historical and cultural vectors of an ethnic group which has tried to represent itself as unique and culturally valuable. This discursive effort is also evident in the texts written and performed by the theatre troupe *Dóci Papiçám di Macau*, named after an expression invented by Ferreira which literally means “sweet speech of Macao”. Miguel de Senna Fernandes, the founder of the group and its leading author, also conducts research on the works collected by Barreiros and those written by Ferreira. He then uses the results of his research to write comic texts in what is basically a reconstructed dead language. Despite being fictional, this narrative genre is also discursive, given that it is supposed to encode the real positive “essence” of an imagined, continuous Macanese identity and the positive emotions associated with it. However, identities are not static but are in constant flux, which means that continuity must be constantly reconstructed and reinforced.

This was a preliminary attempt to analyse the intersection between humour, identity and contact languages. My analysis, which has focused on comic literature in MC, has shown that the GTVH and social identity theory may be used as tools to help one make sense of narrative genres and the way they may be culturally associated with specific sociolinguistic groups. In the case of contact languages and their associated communities, these ideas seem particularly

relevant, given that such languages and cultures usually have a history of negative representations through contrast with the more hegemonic languages and cultures from which they have partially emerged. Given that Macao is a relatively unique colonial example, this conclusion may not be related to colonialism per se. For that reason, it would be relevant to understand whether this attempt to create specific humorous genres in contact languages also applies to more typical colonial contexts. While I have engaged with some knowledge resources, I did so to varying length and did not have anything to say about others. Further research is needed to understand whether how all the knowledge resources may explain similar sociolinguistic data. Finally, it would be relevant to know whether my conclusions apply to the works of *Dóci Papiçám di Macau*, whose creator functions in a sociolinguistic world very different from the authors collected in Barreiros and from Ferreira.

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