

A-Ma

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Alchemy of Love

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...by plunging into the depths of the mind, for which there is no great need to open the eyes to the sky, to raise the hands, to direct the steps to the temple, nor sing to the ears of statues in order to be the better heard, but to come into the inner self believing that, God is near, present and within, more fully than man himself, being soul of souls, life of lives, essence of essences: for that which you see above or below, or round about, or however you please to say it, of the stars, are bodies, are created things, similar to this globe on which we are, and in which the divinity is present neither more nor less than he is in this globe of ours or in ourselves.

Giordano Bruno

At a Point in Time, Somewhere in Space

"She is a witch!"

Whispers broke out through the streets of Macao.

"What do you mean a witch?" that is Ama! "They arrested Ama!"

This little commotion of confused words, unsettled thoughts and scattered feelings was happening on the streets of Macao in China, sometime in the mid 17th century, during the Age that is known as the one of Reason.

Two shadows, deeply disturbed, rushed through the night talking, merging their forms with the moonlight and shadows of buildings and trees.

Just after the death of her father, that retched soul, Fra Thomas, couldn't settle down he was the one to arrest Ama.

Arrest! That is absurd! The second man shook his head with the most sincere and spontaneous gesture of anger. Her father is the founder of our Church and University! Their friends are influential, they would not let this happen. When did it happen?

Last night! If it happened to her, it can happen to any one of us! Does Ruben know?

Ruben? , Ruben is nowhere to be found, lost, gone...

What do you mean gone? Maybe the same people killed him?

No, no! the two are not connected. He left the Monastery, went into seclusion, and then disappeared a couple of months ago. What bad timing, it is now that Ama needs him the most...

Fra Tomas is a crook! He is a haunted soul! He hated both of them.

Many more unspoken words of fear, confusion, disbelief, for a moment of eternity, crafted a thick wall of silence. The sound of a bird or wind blowing their way, started the conversation again.

Ama's Chinese friends will not let this happen... Wait and see...

There is no time to wait. To accuse a woman of being a witch, an inquisitor needs only two witnesses and the confession that is forced out of the accused. I've seen neighbours accusing each other, locking relatives or close friends, punishing the innocent, and often the whole scary witchcraft story is based on the fanciful accusations of scared children.

Ama would never confess to such a ridiculous thing!

I pray that we never come to the moment of trial and notorious enquiries. It is easy to force anybody to confess: pricking her body with needles to find a place, made by the Devil that is insensitive to pain. Do you remember those horrid jail chamber chairs? full of spikes? I've seen them many times. Poor women either die during the torture, or confess anything to the confessor. Even a thought of the horror of such methods makes me sick...

Enough, enough, that won't happen. That is ridiculous! How barbaric can a man be! We are in China! These horrors happen in the main-land, not here! The Chinese wouldn't allow mass murder of their sisters and wives to eradicate flying monsters that supposedly devour children. They are too scared of the spirits of dead, and too civilised to even dream out loud such a nonsense.

We must help Ama... We have to act quick...

Fra Thomas is crazy, you never know what he might do next, can we call Father Benedict?

He was arrested too...

Arrested? For Christ's sake! To arrest an old wise man? This won't come to any good!

It is fascinating that in Europe, back in time, during the fifth, sixth and seventh century, humanity had more of this grey mass called brain and wiser laws. The Christians who believed in witches were anathematized as mad and obsessed, and now, during the time of Shakespeare, Michelangelo and Da Vinci, we open a hunting season against women targeting none else but our herb gatherers, doctors, midwives, and of course widows, women who have no men by their side to protect them.

Shame! Shame! Not in here though, not in Macao...

Trying to deeper investigate this atrocity examining the craziness of some of the Church officials during these times, we came across an official record naming one hundred thousand women with a name and a birth-place killed during these procedures. One hundred thousand women with a name, back in time, will naturally become a scary number of millions of the ones that were un-recorded, too poor to be noticed, too innocent to be noted, the number confirmed within the unofficial rumours of the sane, centuries later.

How the hell did it all begin?

Pope Innocent the VIII hunted by dogs of his own desires, kept awake by his own sinful thoughts decided that for his sleepless nights he wants to punish all the Mother Earth followers, Devil's worshipers, nurses healing sick with herbs, spells or folk magic, single widowed women that seduced man in their dreams; the village youth, and of-course the daughters of rich merchants, whose fathers could now easily be black-mailed. The Inquisition in its blind madness got all the power it needed to act against this so-called evil, supported by Malleus Maleficarum's Witches' Hammer-the hunting manual, printed and re-printed many times in the centuries to follow.

I hear that this wicked book was created by the Devil who spoke through the two German Dominicans isn't it?

Yes, this legal slaughter and torture manual was the oil in the lantern of the witch hunting-craze. To any sane man's surprise, the Witches' Hammer became a best-seller, a hit amongst different classes. It was passed from hand to hand, read aloud in Churches, and village squares, stored in special places, with the Bible and consulted in the dark corridors of the torture chambers. The best Hunters would know it by heart, reciting it as a deepest wisdom against the poor women.

The work of this Devil was reprinted and translated into German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, English and Portuguese, and it outsold all other books except the Bible!

For the benefit of the reader, that might not be familiar with the content of this now almost forgotten book, without a wish to enter into its cruel and disturbing mental core, we will give you just a brief look into its words, leaving to your imagination the materials that built the picture of this intriguing space and time.

'All wickedness, is but little to the wickedness of a woman. ...' is written in the manual. 'What else is woman but a foe to friendship, an inescapable punishment, a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, domestic danger, a delectable detriment, an evil nature, painted with fair colours... Women are by nature instruments of Satan - they are by nature carnal, a structural defect rooted in the original creation.'

We share with you this thought left in many, of how can anyone in their right mind allow the book that carried within its pages these sentences, to become readily accessible to the uneducated mob, thirsty for scandals, Devil's blood and punishment? The mob was fascinated with the idea of witches, of flying monsters that devour kids and have secret sexual allegiances with the Devil. In the middle of the night, they cuddle their kids even closer, as the nights are scary, hiding dangerous

thoughts, people, and places. That is the peak time women transform into witches, ruling the darkness of starry nights: stealing good health, good fortune, poisoning cattle, and destroying crops. Fanatics of all sorts just waited for another excuse to shred many drops of Eva's blood... A crazy revenge for the paradise lost allowing the sado-masochism of their lower human nature to rule, abandoning the laws of common logic. This angry thought against women madly back-fired, creating a forest fire that just couldn't be distinguished until it burned thousands, maybe millions of trees. Our two silhouettes in the midst of their conversation, back in Macao on the 16th century's cobalt road- that in certain places stayed intact even to this date- continued their worried chatter.

Some high officials, educated and cultured men, accepted the ways of the hunt to be the correct one and they stopped questioning or using their reason.

If they ever had one.

For what is written and published must be the highest of truths!

In the society that fought so hard to establish the law as the norm, they abandoned all legal procedures and norms.

Aware that not a single woman would be accused if the procedure was governed by the law.

The church elite and judges,

Who are supposed to protect us...
...started their malicious hunt with an amazing zeal.

No cost too great, no number too high and no logic too inverted because they believed witch-hunting served the greater good of Christianity.

Yes, I know that argument, it is not the first time that a murderer 'saves' not only his soul but the souls of his

beloved villagers, killing a wicked Eve, cleansing the Earth of Evil as the End of the World approached.

End of the World, of course, another nonsense!

Our fellow men from all around the planet: Portuguese, Spanish, Germans, Italians, English, French all believed in the conspiracy of the Devil to destroy the Christian world. The Pope gave them a sign from Heaven, sealed with instructions on how to fight against this newly-found, and yet very exciting evil.

The hunt begun, no mercy ever shown. The torture and execution became a necessary evil. Sisters, mothers, neighbours, lovers, all, came under the attack of the faithful. If you were different, if you stand out of the crowd in any way, if you knew more, you were a possible threat, if you are rich, you are accused for the money you possess, or if you are unlucky to have a 5 year old that dreamt or invented one of the witches' gatherings: the child's fearful dream would be a mighty proof for the inquisitors!

So, children are witnesses?

Oh, yes! Sometimes the main ones! Kids as young as 5 would be called as witnesses. Their vivid imagination gave the priests and the mob plenty of materials of their 'supposed' meetings with the Devil.

Madness materialised within the circles of the ruling class, the madness of the hunt!

In reality no 'doing' ever could be tracked, proven, or seen.

Witches are accused of acts that normally live in fearful dreams, an intercourse with the Devil, sacrificing new-born babies, or causing natural disasters, droughts, floods and diseases.

When the Hunt became a reality in most of the countries - entering the courts, churches, markets, and every last house in the village, people were encouraged

to spy on each other inevitably creating an ever-expanding wave of accusations leading to mass killings. A typical craze would start with one or two suspects and through the forced confessions would spread indefinitely. The longer the panic the larger the numbers, and of course wealthier the victims.

A French witch hunter, Pierre de Lancre, accused, believe it or not, all 30,000 inhabitants of Labouré of witchcraft, priests included! He succeeded in executing around 600 women in the region.

A German witch hunt could kill hundreds in a single city, in Würzburg the number was 1200. The Catholic archbishop of Cologne, boasted that he burned 2,000 members of his flock during the 1630s. The witch prosecution spread from Northern Italy to Poland, Germany, France, Switzerland, and England. Our time became the Burning Time.

Can you imagine, your mother or sister within this cycle of nightmares?

Can you imagine all the medical knowledge collected throughout the centuries and shared amongst wise women, midwives and women healers - herbs that cure illnesses, the knowledge about the birth and birth control methods, all the Nature Wisdom, burnt during these Burning Times?

Luckily, not all of Europe got the bug. My Spain was protected...

What happened?

Alonso Salazar, a Spanish inquisitor, a man of notorious reputation for burning heretics in Spain, was the one to stop witch-hunting in his region.

How come? What happened?

Salazar was a judge in a trial that threatened to engulf 1,800 suspects, of which 1,500 were children, in his Navarra region. As a lawyer, his common sense guided

him to reject the statements of children. He visited the supposed witches gathering places and interrogated in details the women that gave their testimony, about where the devil sat and how the ceremony looked like. Of course, they all contradicted each other. He cooked supposed poisons, and ointments, and they all proved to be harmless and fake created by women to satisfy blood thirsty curiosity of their persecutors. In fact, none amongst 2,000 people involved has ever seen a witch. Salazar realised that the Devil hides in unjustly accusing the innocent. He freed all the accused and the Spanish Inquisition never executed another witch.

I thought that this far, in Macao, we would be free from this madness.

Ama is a witch! Fra Thomas claimed, but we will see for how long this absurd accusation can hold.

An absurd accusation indeed, but this was the century when absurdity was the middle name of much that happened. The 16th and 17th century tip-toed over the Earth with the clumsiness of a Giant, shaking the roots of all past beliefs, leaving huge finger prints all throughout scientific work and religious structures. These centuries saw changes in knowledge, culture, and conscious behaviour; our unconsciousness, habits, and good old superstitions stayed within our make-up for a while longer, lingering there, waiting for some other spiritual revolution to happen hundreds or maybe thousands of years later.

This was the time of the first telescope discovery and the time when the earliest really precise star movement observations were made. The time when mathematicians and astronomers tried to challenge our homocentric cosmology, and its obsession with our mighty-human-selves when it claimed that Earth is the centre of the Universe and Life was created and fine-tuned to preserve and serve our very important selves – the human species. What a quantum leap!

This was the time of the final acceptance of the number zero amongst European mathematicians and this led to

the invention of relative numbers, negative quantities, infinite decimal points, abstract and irrational, imaginary and complex numbers. Accepting zero led to the birth of complex calculations. Accepting zero, we finally accepted the possibility of an idea that has no form. For some Monastic Orders the adoption of zero was a device of the Devil. Zero provided a framework for the development of atheism. Zero is associated with nil, non-being, nothingness, emptiness, and with zero defining non-quantitative as non-existent, everything non-quantifiable could now be defined as non-existent - including God.

This was the time when the Bible was for the first time publicly questioned and the Church resolved to defend its dogmas using pure force, the time of Martin Luther and his refusal to accept the Pope as an ultimate messenger of God.

This was the time of trials in the name of God, against progress and science and against individuals that were ahead of their time.

This was the time of kings and queens and their knights bathing in milk, covered in silk, eating from golden plates, and time of many that are always 'too many' dying of hunger, disease, and harsh work. Seen from the point of someone who has a car, whose house has electricity and running water, a regular salary and whose major disaster is when a washing machine breaks down for a few days, these times where almost every single person was part of a 'mob' feel very far and almost impossible to picture. Yet they were our reality not so long ago, and these were the times when every-single-body still believed that there is a major difference between Me who works all day long in a field and My Family, and Him who is chosen by God, who 'protects' us, who we die for, and His Family.

This was the time of discovery of al-qahwa al-bunniya (Amharic) or kisher (Arabic), a wonderful hot infusion of coffee-beans that quickly became men's favourite, the time of spread of coffee-shops all around our worlds. Coffee is native to Ethiopia, and the 16th century saw

this magic liquid cross the Red Sea to be first used in Yemen and spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Even though, you as our reader might not find it immediately that obvious, the importance of these newly emerging coffee-shops was and is tremendous.

Most of you probably remember this story: Once upon these times, carving our future, our ancestors dreamt of a new, better, more exciting Christian kingdom, and they sent ships into the vastness of unknown seas, to find the shortest route to the source of gold, exotic spices, silky-skinned women – India. The Destiny led one of the ships off a well-known course, to touch the shore of what is now known as Brazil. The year was 1492, his name is Columbus and he was granted, by the King Ferdinand II of Spain, to equip three ships and sail out west into the Atlantic, in search for a western route to the Orient. The Great Admiral of the Ocean Sea Verily, verily, (he was called that way) landed in the island of San Salvador, discovering a new continent and with it new tastes, sensations and new thoughts. Potato and tobacco were brought from America, together with coffee that was brought from Africa, the ritual of smoking and drinking tea and coffee entered our veins. Spices and coffee sneaked into the streets of London and Paris and a first slab of chocolate was on sale in Spain. A completely new set of Gods and Deities marched into our conscious and unconscious sphere, influencing the minds of European philosophers, artists and scientists. However, other than discussing and sharing philosophy behind the doors of various Monasteries, and at the comfort of their homes, the great minds of the time did not have an outlet, a comfortable place where they can sit, mingle and share.

The society that was pulsating with the discovery of new species, seas, oceans, countries, continents, planets, stars, and amazing new mixes of thought forms needed a place to discuss philosophy and science. Also, a place to read aloud manuscripts, to be idle and flirt with the Lady of Knowledge. The exploration bug entered our blood, transforming all our maps, our diets and our preferences for clothing. After centuries of isolation, the World looked at us, and we looked at the World, and our

eyes finally met, in this glow of self-reflection, doubts and challenges. We needed to share it with others.

During the times of Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Raphael, the time of nude, luscious sculptures and paintings in churches, that surprise visitors even today with their bare boobs, and pronounced gluteus maximus, we officially as lunatics, marched into the Age of Reason. Our Universities flourished, manuscripts that were for centuries exclusively passed from one monk to the other, were finally discovered, printed and published, and for the first time distributed, freely or in secret, amongst the geeks thirsty for knowledge.

The transition needed a place where all are equal, where commoners can pay their bill, where all can sit together, where one must wait to be served, hence one can listen and talk. This time of transition needed coffee houses.

The preparation of coffee is somewhat complicated, the beans need to be roasted, ground and brewed, so it takes time to serve a customer, there is always plenty of time to 'kill', yet the black liquid is cheap and affordable to all. The coffee houses near the Great Mosque in Cairo and the ones along the waterfront in Istanbul, the simple coffee shops in villages near markets in Yemen, or the big spacious elevated halls in the cities of Persia, the ones in London, Paris and Milan, all had the same in-common, they were visited by scholars, teachers, and students, sitting either on the floor or low benches talking, reading and discussing various manuscripts.

At the time before coffee houses, it was difficult to find a public place with the comfort of a home, accessible to all social classes. A place for a group of young men to relax and spend a light-hearted evening amongst friends and strangers. Coffee shops offered all of this: an informal seating that encouraged mingling, a door open to all that can pay a penny for the magic liquid, and a great atmosphere for study, debate and story-telling. They provided a place where different classes could meet and talk more freely than anywhere else, so

much so, that in England they got a nick name: 'penny universities'.

Coming back to the heart of the Asian continent, we find a rich and vast territory, beyond all measures, that lives more or less isolated from its neighbours. The people, who live here, now in the 16th and 17th century, have reasons to believe that within their Great Walls spreads all true civilisation. Outside it is wilderness and chaos haunted by robbers and barbarians. Within it, there is China, with its cities that are large, and well-lit, that have water and drainage, Universities and large libraries, paper money that allows the flow of commerce and growth of trade, markets and industry.

If you didn't know, the Chinese were the ones to invent the press, gunpowder, and the magnetic compass some centuries before these miracle war-inducing goods came to Europe. The land of silk, spices, stunning cities and amazing culture was in those days ruled in order and harmony by their Emperor, Thienku, the Son of Heaven, and because they worshipped Heaven as the Supreme, the Son of Heaven was their Son of God. China was these days also governed by some very educated men. It had two special orders of chosen philosophers, whose titles carried a great respect and authority. These wise men task was to advise the King of any violation of the law in any part of the Kingdom and not even the King himself was spared from their scrutiny, and their dishonesty.

The size of their navy at the time is impressive; at the beginning of 15th century they counted more than 1,300 combat vessels, the world's largest and most technologically refined merchant marine and navy. Its ships sailed to the coasts of Africa and back but whilst the nations of Europe seemed to be entirely obsessed with the idea of domination, no Chinese King thought of waging a war against Europe or Africa. For thousands of years the Chinese used the trade to communicate with the rest of the world. They crossed the dangerous mountains and hostile deserts between the Western worlds, along the Silk Road, transporting and trading precious stones, spices and silk.

After the discovery of the sea route to India, the Portuguese were one of the first to open the trade with all the distant kingdoms of the Far East. They landed and settled for the first time in Macao's small harbour in mid-16th Century.

Like a compass turning, our Earth comfortably nests within the Milky Way and dances her tango with the Sun and the Moon. Let's zoom into our blue planet and descend into Macao where we placed this magic story called A-Ma. Macao started her life as a shelter to weather storms, a port for refugees, mainly missionaries fleeing trouble in other parts of Asia, but was a good choice for settlement because of its perfect position: some 40 miles to the east-northeast, across the mouth of the Pearl River, is Hong Kong, and not further than 100 miles is Canton.

Not long after the first Portuguese built their settlement, Macao developed into a major port for trade and the centre of culture and religion exchange funded by its soon-established virtual monopoly on trade between China and Japan, and Europe and East Asia.

From 1573, the Chinese Government approached the new-comers at various occasions, asking these new settlers to pay rent for living on their lands. The Portuguese missionaries, traders, and sailors already had their King and Pope, the official Representatives of God, and since God is One and only, his Representatives must be the one and only, they listened to the orders given across the Oceans, collecting phenomenal amounts of gold, and silk and spices, claiming their God's supremacy with guns, bribes, and piracy. Following the example of all the major colonising forces throughout the Earth at the time, they demanded autonomy, they established their own governing body with a Governor appointed from Portugal or elected by local Portuguese.

In 1582, disapproving of the Portuguese violation of Chinese governance, the Chinese Main Governor summoned the Governor of Macao, and tried to teach

him the rules of law and order, a simple property game we all find familiar today, yet so far from the consciousness of European war and gold thirsty semi-Gods of the time. He had a hard time convincing him that Portuguese are just uninvited guests in a foreign land and that they should obey the law of China.

The struggle for political supremacy between the two continued for centuries to come.

However, underneath the layers of greed, beneath the selfishness of Royal Courts and Churches, something more mysterious and profound connected the two lands: the Chinese and Europeans. Stronger than the urge to trade, wage wars, posses, convert, amidst these turbulences, was our fascination with one another, our deep respect for the hidden beauty radiating from the other.

The Chinese Philosophy developed in a different direction than the European one.

Nobody in China thought of studying Nature in an independent, methodical way, they approached it with a sacred awe for the mysteries of Universe, and built an amazing system of beliefs based on ancient mystic formulas, the system deeply rooted in the minds of people, interwoven into their way of life. For the Chinese, Nature is a living organism and its breath lives in everything, producing different conditions of heaven and earth, called: Yang and Yin. The heavens, Yang, give light, warmth and life; while Yin or Terrestrial Breath, brings death and darkness. With the knowledge of the two, one can live happiness, abundance, and peace on Earth.

The wisdom radiating from the ancient Chinese philosophies, wanted to move into the grounds of Europe that desperately needed this 'female' approach to Earth and its beings. On the other hand, the new insights coming from the Universities of Vienna, Rome and Oxford quickly became the fascination of the Chinese educated classes who dreamed of a better world, a better social system, a better Earth. The two

were meant to merge and Macao became the symbol of this merge, an alchemical egg that metamorphosed into a mythical beast of the times yet to come. The times of tolerance and harmony towards all living creatures, piloted as the ability for Portuguese, Chinese and Africans to live side-by-side in Macao sharing their so different worlds. Macao lived far ahead of its time, influencing the change from one to another reality of existence and from one to another level of consciousness.

Macao's Goddess that protects the little peninsula and supports her growth is A-Ma. People of Macao believed in A-Ma, they prayed to Her when they needed help, to conceive a child they longed for, to heal the sick or return the lost ones home. They believed that She could help them predict auspicious and inauspicious events and drive out tragedy or turn danger into safety. The energy of Love and trust gathered them into the temple to pay homage, burn incense, chant, and fishing boats returning to the harbour took turns to line up in front of the temple giving A-Ma their offerings.

As it is with all magical stories, Macao or the Bay of A-Ma, is symbolically connected to the mainland by a sand land bridge, creating a peninsula in the shape of a lotus flower.

Various stories and miraculous rescues of the fisherman caught in the rough sea were connected to the Goddess A-Ma. The most famous is the story of a girl who dreamt of her father and brothers caught in a storm and who tried to help them in her dream. Her mother was alarmed with the uneasiness of her child's sleep and she shook her to wake her up, causing her, in her dream, to let go of one of the boats. Later, the story goes, her brothers returned without their father, recalling a terrible storm and the vision of a beautiful girl, their sister, coming to save them but vanishing just before she was able to hold onto their father's boat that disappeared within the roughness of the sea. The girl, appearing as a spirit, continued helping boats in trouble bringing the sailors to safety for many centuries.

Another tale is the one of a fisherman boat giving a free passage to a peasant girl and being saved from a typhoon that destroyed all the other larger vessels. When the small boat landed in Macao, the girl walked to the shore and mysteriously disappeared in a glow of light. The passenger of the boat was none other than Goddess herself.

The fishermen built a temple in her honour at the entrance of Macao's inner harbour.

The legend that most profoundly relates to the deeper levels of our story is the one of the Sun Goddess Ama-Theresu.

Once upon a time, Sun Goddess, Ama-Theresu, had a horrible fight with her brother, Storm God, and after one of those tiresome, scary arguments only a brother could contemplate and with the full scrutiny execute, she got so hurt that for a moment of insanity she forgot her real Nature and decided to escape and retreat into a cave. She blocked the entrance of her new abode with a large stone, leaving the rest of the world in Darkness.

Oh, mighty heavy was the Darkness! A minute after minute, an hour after hour, a night after night, all the living creatures that depend on Her Light waited for Her return. Long is the wait that is filled with fear, grave is the thought of even a possibility of the Goddesses disappearance. To no avail were tears of lilies and butterflies, that have shorter lives and for it even deeper connection to Her Light, the Sun was not to be seen in the skies, She was hidden in her dark abode and nobody could entice her out. The Lady Balance that rained on Earth before this moment, hid Her face within the lava of a newly born volcano, allowing Chaos to prevail winning its game of Death and Destruction, Life as we know it, started to wane.

After the 4th night, even Gods got worried. Their words were useless against Her fears, and they realised that they had to bring Her back to the purpose of Her own existence.

An Oracle was called to shine the Light into this little game of unconsciousness, to gather the energies of the Beginning and the End, and give a hint of where the Key to this puzzle hides.

Create an atmosphere of Magic and Wonder in front of Her cave, the Oracle said, the atmosphere that triggers curiosity even of the tinniest forest spirits, the energy of game, excitement, trill, that might entice Her Majesty to look outside. Chose a woman that will dance her way into infinity, eternity, Golden Light, using Maya of different realities.

Nothing less than the purity of Her own Being will make the Goddess return to the Path of Life. She has to be exposed to Her own Light, the Oracle said.

Hang up a mirror at the entrance of Her cave, Oracle was revealing the clever plot. Entice Her to look outside.

And who is the maiden? Gods looked around.

And the Oracle said: You will find Her amongst the Stars. She has many names.

Nuit is one of Her names, Holder of Stars. She carries a lantern oiled with innocence and joy, her voice is a soothing melody and her touch is one of an angel. If she finds you wondering in the middle of a tunnel of shadows, lost, fighting against own and other people's devils, living within self-created nightmares, She will take you by the hand and deliver you to the World of Colours.

Alchemy is Her name, a witch, a doctor, a magician, an artist of transformation, a principal force that leads a Soul's journey to its Merge with the Holy Spirit. Unpredictable, she experiments playing with Gods and Devils. She guides the union manipulating energies to accelerate our transformation.

She is Maria, Virgin Mother, a protector that is always awake. The Embodiment of Strength and Wisdom that is capable of carrying pain of generations to come. She

understands and forgives fully, unconditionally, and patiently turns back to Love.

She is Kali, a Principal Force of Destruction, a carrier of storms, a fierce Goddess that brings fear to humanity, incarnating terror. With skeletons around her neck, and corpses as her carpet, she dances, screaming, demanding from her followers a complete renunciation. She shrieks that the ultimate nature of Life is Death. She laughs at our pain and sends it back to us over and over again, until we learn our lesson. She is dark and ugly and evil but she still is a perfect manifestation of Self.

Her name, said the Oracle, will this time be Ama, a female that sleeps in every one of us, Yin of Creation, a wisdom guide that with her purity extinguishes thirst for spiritual longings. She is the one that stands on a crescent moon with stars in her hair, pouring water from jars of her soul into lakes of emotions, awakening compassion for humankind and its Chaos, nourishing Earth and Her constant renewal.

Materialised in a female body, through centuries, with the life of an ordinary person, She ascends to meet the ones that are ready for Her, that call Her, that have a wish to understand. She is the personification of the Universal Mother. She lives Love and Clarity and She dies at Will, when She decides that it is time to go.

Her name is Ama.

There was an Ama in the village, a girl at a peak of her vitality that had 'abundance' written on her forehead, just emerging from the search for identity, growing into a wonderful human being. As a fragile essence rising from the foam of a rough sea, she was gentle and giving in her openness, powerful and overwhelming in her beauty.

Gods called Ama and told her of a plan to organize a huge gathering in front of the Goddess's cave asking her to dance for them. Ama was to give a performance that would remove obstacles from the hearts of man, hoping

that the noise of Happiness, Delight and Joy will intrigue Sun Goddess to come out from her hiding place.

Ama was a beautiful young dancer that enchanted many in a nearby village and had a body and a zeal of a Goddess. Ama knew that her dance is going against all the odds of depression and distress. She knew that the hope was gone from the minds of Man. Looking at the sky, night after night, in vain, waiting for Her arrival and observing everything sink into Darkness had scared and tired them. She felt her task was difficult. She needed to create an illusion of Light that would lead to the release of pure Light.

The gathered crowd was waiting, grumbling, gossiping, whispering. None and all felt like partying, none and all understood why they were there. In the middle of their anxiety music brought by stars and Ama emerged, dancing her Magic, encircled with Beauty that is Pleasure and Bliss.

Carried by the Divine Ecstasy she drummed using her feet and hands, her voice became an instrument, she swayed in the rhythm of breathing, using her knowledge of non-breathing, she carried Life on her naked shoulders. Awakening spirits, enchanting Gods, and rejoicing people was the core of her dance that instantly healed the doomed, sick and tired minds.

Torches uncovered colours of her flesh, glow of her smooth skin became an invitation to her Dance. She had nothing to lose and everything to gain: the salvation of all living beings on Earth. With her dance her body became a prayer wheel connecting Life and Death, creating Timelessness within the Space of this Myth.

Her beauty unfolded shining the energy of Creation.

Dancing with Gods, people and animals, teasing them with her nakedness, her burning body was moving effortlessly through the crowds inviting them to forget their troubles and join this crazy festivity.

The invitation came too sudden to refuse, too strong not to be noticed and crowds started moving and clapping, feet followed the rhythm and within minutes the air was filled with laughter of approval, hooting and shouting; Man lit thousands of torches forgetting their misfortunes, Gods joined in the celebration; animals and cocks began crowing loudly in unity, and it felt as though Earth for a moment regained its Balance: the ecstasy and delight returned. The Essence became Now, past and future disappeared.

And yes, the plot has worked!!! Sun Goddess was surprised to hear all the noise of happiness outside Her cave. World was supposed to be dying in Darkness without Her! Moving the stone to see what caused all the cheer the Sun Goddess caught a glimpse of Her own reflection in the mirror hanging in front of the cave and got transfixed by the image, by Pure Light. This sight has reminded Her of who She really was and at once destroyed Darkness hidden in Her heart making Her return to the reserved palace in Heavens and vow never again to be frightened by any storm and never again to hide from the sight of Gods, men, or Earth.

The beautiful naked girl was standing amidst the delighted crowd that was enchanted by the sight of Sun's return. Ama, with her purity and determination, managed to win the world of shadows, fears, and death that succeeded in seducing even Sun Goddess herself.

Ama, of our story, was born inside this temple at noon of 21st of June 1593, by an African mother, a wife of a Portuguese Lord, Ottavio de Nobille.

Gold is the first and the most perfect of the elements.

Gold comes from the centre of the earth, and while it passes through warm and pure places, it becomes the subtlest and purest element on Earth.

It is the most beautiful of all metals, the best that Nature can produce and no other element can corrupt it, or change it.

For what the eagle is among birds, the lion among beasts, the Sun among planets, such gold is among metals. The legend says that the centre of the sun emanates gold, by its rays to all beings. It is a life substance that penetrates all living things.

And all the beings on Earth carry within a grain of gold, hidden deep within their inmost centre - a precious grain of gold. Our core is golden, and when our body gets perfected and our mind gets purified, when we cleanse the uncleanness from it, we will reach within the centre of our beings, our own most precious gold.

Ruben

Her skin, dark olive, tight and silky, her eyes, shape of almonds, piercing and deep, her hands, carved iron, fingers long, jet-black curly hair, and a gracious swan-like neck. Even though I wouldn't admit it, at the time, I wanted her from the very moment I saw her.

I got to know Ama during the Dutch attack on Macao, the 24th of June 1622.

The future generations will also remember the 24th June, 1622, they will call it the 'Dia da Cidade' or the City Day, the day of miracles, the day of a fight with the Dutch, who also had their eyes on our fast-growing trade centre, that was now virtually controlling the European - Far East trade route. During the last couple of years, Macao became the target of repeated invasion attempts, culminating with this most violent and dangerous one in June 1622.

I find Macao hot and damp in summer, especially when there are no winds coming from the ocean or interludes of typhoon. Once or twice a year, the humidity reaches its highest point, the hot air swells over the Land and it becomes impossible to move or breathe or work, the settlement gets lulled into its yearly sleep. Once or twice a year, the heat becomes unbearable, it becomes the master, it spreads over the stone narrow streets covering us with dust and sticky sweat, and both, animals and people fight against this sickness of Earth, locked within their shelters. At the time of the attack Macao was asleep.

At around noon a fisherman came back to the city alarmed with the sight of a fleet of Dutch galleons. He entered the church breathless, almost crying, grasping for air, panicking, and told me, the local Jesuit Portuguese priest, the man left in charge:

that this was our last day

that there was no hope for our Land

that there was no God that can help us

that there was no worst nightmare than this that was just approaching us.

The moment when 13 huge ships appeared on the horizon manned by thousands of men was a moment of Hell for the citizens of these 3 small islands.

Macao gathered traders from Portugal and Spain, it gathered survivors of shipwrecks, refugees that managed to escape Dutch prisoners' ships and others who found mercy from pirates escaping cruel death. The population in 1622 was already an amazing mix of Portuguese, Asians and Africans. Today, when the priests and the city council did their fast estimate of people able to fight they added up only 600 men aged over 12, and almost 3,000 women and children older than 8 with around 500 African slaves. Macao has much more inhabitants but this was a very good time for trade and the army of men was miles away in inland China trading their porcelain, silk and spices. We were really just a handful, compared to the thousands of soldiers that were about to embark on the island.

God why did you forsake us? – were the words that roamed my mind for what felt like an hour after I heard that Dutch were going to attack.

Everything was against us: the humidity of this summer day, the settlement deeply effected by the heat and the lack of air, the fortress, Monte Fort that was far from its completion, and the atmosphere of the crowd in front of the church, the atmosphere of fear, despair and anger towards God that sends this type of challenge.

The ships surrounded us and they looked mighty and evil. The so long dreaded attack of Dutch was finally there, about to happen. And even though we were expecting it, it just did not need to happen now, here, to me, to us, one is never really ready for death. We are about to witness a disaster of an unfair battle, a battle against children and women and slaves, a

nightmare of killing, rapes and houses on fire. One is never really ready for death.

When I stepped on Macao's ground some years back, I knew that many confrontations will be a part of my destiny, that I am living in tremulous times when the Chinese government and the Catholic movement are trying to learn how to live with each other, passing through their strongest conflict ever. Different European kingdoms, their pirates and trade companies mercilessly fought for the supremacy over the trade routes, establishing laws using power and guns all through the area, no place was truly peaceful.

My mind was in shambles.

Destiny would have it that I started my journey to China with a close encounter with Death. During the night of my ship-wreck, even though I trusted the skills of our Captain and the strength of the ship that was our home all the way from Portugal, the storm that we had encountered was so strong that it shook all my confidence and awakened all my fears. When it started, it raged for hours increasing its strength and fury with every moment that passed. The rain came down in torrents and during this wrath, we never once saw the sun by day, nor the stars by night. The tempest was so fierce that no one could remain on his feet. The noise was so deafening that we could not hear even our own voices. My fear was so thick that I thought my head is going to burst when the ship gave its first terrible threatening jerk. If I remember correctly, it was the 3rd day of our nightmares, when we hit a rock just off the Formosan coast where the ship gave up its fight delivering us to the sea. The woodland under our feet cracked and disappeared and I was not sure what was spreading faster, water or panic overcoming the crew. The creaks coming from the hull convinced me that we are now at God's Grace and that only He could save us from the ill fate of disappearing within the depths of the glum waters. For the first time I became fully aware of Her Majesty - Death.

All through the days of ship-wreck, Death was steadily breathing down my neck. What an ugly and powerful face she had! Whether she came to our dreams as a skeleton in black armour mounted on a white horse, or we smelled her in rotting stench of the bodies that surrounded us and within our hope deprived souls; she did not discriminate or take preferences. She was present everywhere, my mortality shadowed every step I made. This little episode had a happy ending, once we managed to build our little improvised boat, we set off for a new adventure expecting the worst, but after some days of calm sailing and a calm sea, God's giving, we reached the coast of Macao with almost three hundred survivors.

At this point of our little story I will make a small transgression, before I tell you all about our little war-tale with the Dutch, I feel an urge to introduce myself, give you a brief sketch of my background, my hopes and thoughts at this stage of my life.

I entered the Jesuits in Rome at the beginning of this century when I was 17 and I was ordained a Jesuit three years later taking a special obedience to the Pope undertaking to go wherever I am sent. My Love for Jesus, Truths of Religion, and the quest for Self-Knowledge led me to choose this path, the path that demanded extreme Faith, extreme Sacrifice and extreme Hardship, the path of a Spiritual Warrior. Like all the others, I took the vow of poverty, and the vow of refusal of external honours, material worlds did not interest me.

I knew that I would be going to foreign lands, and that I was to be surrounded by unfaithful, by dangerous customs, diseases, strange people, but I had nothing to lose and my gain was great, I could prove my love for Jesus spreading his teachings and fighting for what I believe in, delivering more and more souls to salvation.

I was always attracted to the secrets hidden within a human soul believing that people can change. For me the story of Jesus' life was the story of tremendous Willpower and Divine Faith that won over instincts,

devils, temptations and cruelties of the world around him. Jesus lived in a desert for forty days without food, clothing, or any contact with humans and he resisted all the temptations of power and all the weaknesses of the flesh. The stories of Saints I knew, respected, and loved, were also the stories of fights against the world of desires and against many different devils. My path was the path of strengthening the willpower and my heart was that of a warrior.

Deeds, not words, interested me. Following Christian teachings, as manifested through Jesus Christ and His Holiness, the Pope, I became one of the Pope's Soldiers. From an original desire that led me to Jesuits: to dwell in the Holy Land imitating the life of Christ, following one question: what would Christ do if he is here, now, with me; I decided to become a missionary, devoting my whole life to bringing Christianity to the East.

After I received permission from my superiors, I embarked on a Portuguese merchant ship with the greatest zest heading to China.

As I told you earlier the trip was not an easy one and at its very end God performed a series of miracles to keep us alive. Arriving to Macao, six months later we were joined by the crew of the second ship that started their journey with us. They were halved in size because after the storm, some miles away from our shipwreck, they were attacked by war ships in service of the Dutch East India Company. The Dutch took the possession of the cargo and imprisoned them. They were taken to the island of Formosa and kept there captive for six months. With little to eat, living in a stable with the cattle, many of them fell ill and died. That was the first time that I faced Her Majesty: Death, and the first time that I experienced the fear of Her sight. This time She looked even fiercer and I could hear Her laughing.

The Dutch fleet started its approach and I started panicking:

We had just a dozen of cannons and an unfinished Fort

and a bunch of kids, women and slaves.

Nothing more than a dozen of cannons!
God why did you forsake us? I couldn't help thinking!

I recognized the smell of anticipation before the catastrophe, I felt deep within my stomach a knot of excitement and panic, I was not sure whether to run, or scream, or lay down in despair and die praying. Like an animal trapped in a cage, pacing up and down, thinking the same useless thoughts, not seeing a way out, not knowing how to re-collect, not understanding, I tried to appear calm.

God why did you forsake us? Was the scream that kept bouncing off the walls of my cell.

In difficult moments I used to try to remember Jesus and his difficult moments, I would call His presence and ask for help, direct help. So I turned my head to heavens and asked

How would You react now?

All I heard was Silence, a God mighty Silence. My mind was too upset to hear signs from Heaven.

The Fort built by us, Jesuits priests and locals, some years ago, was looking at us.

The mix of mud, shells and straw, was our only hope. The mixture packed into place could, perhaps, withstand a hail of cannonballs.

But for how long?
And why?
How long before the defeat?
Are we heading towards suicide?

What is our choice?
To kill ourselves trying to save what we have called 'home' in these last few decades or to be murdered after we surrender!

And if we do surrender, would they show mercy towards women and children?
Are we choosing the worst of two alternatives?

What would Jesus do, if He was here, now?

The army of men on the ships was hungry for victory, blood and women. I knew how highly Dutch valued this port and its strategic place for trade between the East and West.

I wanted to believe that there was hope, but I heard only fears!

The stories of horrors roamed in my head, executions and isolation, torture and merciless killings...

Was that God tempting my Faith?
And what would You do, if You were here, just now?

I screamed my question in the silence of my room.

She appeared from nowhere wearing her colourful sarong. Looking at her I instinctively knew that this was no coincidence and I stayed attentive, strangely awakened by her presence, alert to what she is going to say or do. Even from the distance I could see her eyes shining and I could hear the clarity of her voice, it was determined and strong. It was hard to link her black skin, soft hair, delicate hands, and gentle warm eyes with the areole of warrior that this role demanded, but the aura of inspiration around her being, the energy of God's grace and the sound of His guidelines were there, around her.

We have no time to waste! she said

There is no other choice.
God will protect us if we truly trust Him.
Remember what you've always known.
Let's find the shelter within Monte Fort. Let's offer our prayers to A-Ma, Buddha and Christ. We must keep on believing and He will guide us.

It struck me that those should have been my words, but no, I was silent and she was the one uttering them. She looked at me determined, I was a part of her mission, she wanted me to lead.

I knew of Ama from the numerous stories that were connected to her being. I knew of her as of a preacher and a witch doctor. She was a mystery among masses living within this little settlement: a beautiful black young woman who carried the name of the Goddess herself and who knew how to read stars, understood secrets of herbs, and it was rumoured knew how to speak with ghosts and animals. People went to her to discover their destiny, to get healed or just sit around the fire with her and listen to her stories. The ones who admired her talked about her as of a guide, the scared ones were unnaturally polite to her, afraid of her curses, and the ones who did not understand her accused her of the witchcraft. She was loved and hated by many.

Her unusual background, her figure, her voice, her manners, all of her, just couldn't pass unnoticed. If she was born in any other Christian country she would have been marked as a saint or burnt as a witch, but in Macao, she became a walking legend.

Ama was a daughter of an African mother and her skin was dark, eyes brown, large and alive. She was tall and slim, and she walked gracefully, gliding through our mortals' worlds as though she was just a passer-by observing our struggle to survive untouched by our pettiness, and trivialities, always within her supreme state of peace. She walked as a queen, silently, elegantly, gently but assertively and people treated her as a queen.

Ama lived in the house of her father, Ottavio de Nobille and she was his favourite child. The fairy-tale woven around Ottavio de Nobille, his wife and his daughter Ama, during the long, cold winter evenings, amongst fishermen and lay-people, were many, because this family came from afar, it was rich, and very private, so just a few, chosen ones, knew the true details of their lives. The gossips whisper about ancestors' ghosts and

angels, and sometimes even Goddess Herself intervening in this child's birth and life, they talk about unspeakable love that existed between Ottavio and his wife and about her magic death.

Ottavio de Nobille came to Macao around 30 years ago bringing with him his wealth, his vast knowledge, his laboratory, and books about Philosophy, Astronomy, Art, Natural Sciences, and a spectrum of secrets about his life and the reasons for his immigration to Asia.

Ama's mother got violently sick while giving birth just at the time when they arrived from Portugal to Macao, and the crew brought her to shore, into the Ama's temple soon after the first contractions started. The baby girl was born healthy but unfortunately nobody was able to save her mother. One life was sacrificed for the other, the legend says, and to thank the Goddess for saving his child, Ottavio gave his daughter her name A-Ma – the Great Mother.

The day, when 13 Dutch ships appeared on the horizon surrounding Macao, only a miracle could save us and I felt within the depth of my being that Ama was to create that miracle.

I allowed her beauty and determination to give me strength and focus. Even though I was full of fear and confusion, I was enchanted. Looking at her courageous face, the fuzziness of my mind was gaining clarity.

In the difficult moments it was my mind that I needed to fight, not the circumstances, my mind was the one to decide on a defeat or a victory. God would give me a tremendous strength when my life was endangered, if I would just trust Him and His Guidance. But before God could act in such a way, the choice to accept this grace, was always in my hands.

Faced with the danger, my mind was divided into two, three, five different personalities and speculatively worked against me, wasting my powers and precious time.

I can!

I can't!
 You can't!
But he might do this or that!
 We can!
 We can't!
But what if...?
But what if not!

My many 'I's all screamed at the same time, fighting, whispering, moving within me bringing clouds of weaknesses and dragging me deeper and deeper into the abyss of my own imagination.

If you have ever experienced a close embrace with the force of fear, its dark and cold touch, its sweaty smell and its never ending spiral that drags you down into its core, its breath that takes away all hope, all confidence, its icy power that paralyses every single movement, you know what I was going through.

Citizens of Macao were expecting my help and I was seeking the guidelines from Heavens. Both encouraging and destructive forces were offering their help and I needed to clutch to the right one.

Thanks to God, I sensed the signs of encouragement in Ama's voice and I followed it. Passing Her inspiration through me, I woke up and started moving.

Fear and despair turned around and changed their direction. It is hard to explain how this happened. What is the invisible force that guided me? Are the angels the one that helped, or was this shift the result of a few strong minds calm enough to lead this swing through? Today, it was hard to say because everything happened just in a few moments, moments that lasted an eternity. At those moments the impossible became our Reality and Death was not a Threat any more.

I led the citizens to retreat to Monte Fort, high on the hill in the centre of Macao.

Was I, at these moments, executing my Will or was I a puppet of a Miracle orchestrated on the hill tops of

Olympus? I did not know. When the Egyptian army surrounded the Jews and left them without any hope and when the thought of the Promised Land was transformed into the thought of Inevitable Death, Moses raised his stick and asked God to help and waters opened in front of them and let the people through. And how did that happen?

That day, during the fight against the Dutch, I followed the insight within me, the voice that trusted Ama, and I took the role that God gave me, the role of the guided and the guide.

That day, during the fight against the devils within my head, I felt, Jesus was acting through me, we became His words, His action, His thoughts, and we became a part of His Divine plan, and everybody including slaves, women and children were there, ready to die and ready to follow.

My belief was fuelled by Ama's presence, and crowds around me fuelled their thirsty scared souls with my words. From time to time, in my quest for further guidelines, I looked for her finding her facing Chinese, Africans and Portuguese encouraging them with the same determination, just changing the tongues of her speech.

We saw the face of Death and we decided to fight it even though our chances were minimal. Our sword was bravery, our shield - complete trust. Intuitively I led our fight. She was my perfect warrior and I was her perfect leader. There was no time for doubt and our actions were coming from God. We let ourselves be led.

The Dutch were about to disembark and the war game was about to begin. This was my first battle ever. I feared this was Her first battle too.

From the Fort we could see clearly galleons landing and tens of boats leaving the ships with the mighty army rowing towards Macao. We knew that they were many, they did not know our numbers. We lost our fear, their

fear was on our side. We lost our minds, their thoughts and doubts were inspiring us.

Admiring Ama's determination to fight for lives of Macao's women and children I remembered my first encounter with Macao's Goddess A-Ma.

The temple devoted to A-Ma was the first building I saw when I landed in this little settlement. The temple was built on a cliff facing the sea, and it appeared from nowhere smiling at us, newcomers. Flying eaves and carved lions looked at me from above, reflecting the light of the dawn, receiving me with the grace and superiority. Magical and mystical and yet so real, this architectural miracle stood in its simple perfection manifesting Heavens on Earth. After months of travelling, and the fatigue of our encounter with Death, it was not easy to resist this sight, my heart was filled with a unique mixture of respect and obedience.

The maze of red-hued prayer halls, pavilions and altars, Gods and Goddesses that ruled these lands, for an instant of amazement and insanity, opened a worshipping paradise within my heart. Centuries of prayers instilled the energy of harmony and purpose into the walls of this temple. I fell on my knees and kissed the earth: A-Ma was calling me... And there was no soul that could stay untouched by the sight. I was too astonished to think of paganism, theism and differences between 'my' God and what I was experiencing: A-Ma engulfed me. The smell of offerings: flowers, fruits, and candles, left by fishermen, and the sense of complete devotion that this place carried within its walls encircled me, leaving behind no space for questions. I was enchanted...

The network of climbing gardens surrounding the temple brought me back to my senses, giving me escape from the magic of this fabled place and leading me to the reflection of myself and the task that I came to perform - to join the trade centre, establish a monastery and start signing up converts.

One of the most difficult tasks I had in the conversion of Chinese was pulling them away from their strong links

to ancestor worship and life with the spirits. The superstition and supernatural was so much a part of their culture and the way they lived their lives that I found it extremely difficult to publicly ask them to despise idols and renounce their old rituals. Their refusal was so strong that sometimes I just had to give up and ignore the fact that they worship other Gods and let them live with their previous customs trying to convert them later, once they understand Christianity better.

Today, when Death was just minutes away from us, I saw African slaves calling their spirits and living-dead, Chinese pleading to their ancestors and different Gods for help, Christians and non-Christians praying together. People of different religions united against a common enemy, lighting candles as one, and this scene changed something essential within me. A crack of an enlightened idea of a possibility of non-Christian, non-Buddhist, non-pagan, not-named God carved its path amongst neurons of my brain waiting for its moment to break the stone of firmly set beliefs that I called mine for many decades.

While converting Chinese into Christianity to replace worship of idols, I would give my converts images of the cross to adore and teach them to light candles on the altar in admiration of Christ and Holy Mary. Today, candles were the same, they were lit to all Gods – to Christ, to A-Ma, and to Buddha - showing our respect to all, burning for Life.

Looking Death in the eyes, we were united and it didn't matter any longer whose God was the right one and whose prayer was better – they all counted. The name of God was not important, the Force behind Creation and Fate was the one we were praying to, the Force that decides who will live and who will die. We were united in the fight to save our lives.

I organized children and women into groups of ten all around the fort and I instructed them to scream and shout, creating war sounds following rhythms of cannons' fire, giving the impression of multitude of

fearsome warriors. Soon, shouting and sounds of horns were coming from everywhere within the fortress. The strength was on their side, the illusion of strength on ours. Our battle could not last long, time was not on our side, we had to act fast. We could not afford face-to-face combat, we could not afford them knowing our numbers. We were loud and united in despair.

I organized the cannons, only a few amongst us knew how to shoot but we were striking in unity. Some of the firemen were children, just passed the adolescence age, and they were most amazed by what a gun could do. Perhaps they were all waiting for this moment of bravery that each boy eagerly looks for and each mother silently resents, listening to the stories of grown-ups around the fire, just after the dinner, the stories mostly invented to be scarier and more exciting than the reality. We had no protection of guards and soldiers, of trained muscles and strong army, the only protection we could hope for was the protection from Above.

We aimed and observed what is happening down there in the midst of our shots. Every time we hit the target we screamed celebrating our temporary victory. We aimed, we prayed and we shouted. The Fort was on fire, our euphoria was at its pick.

A lucky shot (if such a thing as 'luck' exists) from a cannon on the walls of Monte Fort hit the Dutch gunpowder boat resting in the bay and created a huge explosion that caused attackers to panic. We saw smoke and heard screams, the Chaos was in their lines. This gave us further strength, God was on our side. We had nothing to lose, lives we have already left behind.

In the mist of smoke and heat of our exited bodies I heard chanting in the background, candles were lit everywhere, we were all lost in the smoke and purity of our beliefs. We have surrendered and this surrender made us Whole.

Music was getting louder and the beat was encouraging us to move. Up front, united, violent, coming from the

core of Force unknown to any of us was our little army rapidly spreading disorder through the Dutch in front of us. Another lucky shot and the second ship was on fire and later we found, with this one, we managed to injure the Dutch commander.

Noise, smoke, chaos...
Screams...
Minutes passing as seconds...

The battle that was decided before it started...

The battle that was one of the union of Christ, Ama, Buddha and many other Chinese and African Gods against the army that was 10 times stronger than ours.

The outcome defied anybody's belief, the minuscule army managed to sink a few more vessels and in the ensuing confusion we turned into attackers routing the Dutch completely. The fear was transformed into bravery and almost certain defeat into a victory and our sleepy and scared city became the city of strength, violence and euphoric joy.

I was part of that joy, I was part of that euphoria, I felt powerful. I knew I had changed, I knew that I would need time to reflect, but now I wanted to celebrate. I looked for Ama in the crowds and I saw her standing peacefully outside the centre of celebrations, outside the excited crowds, steaming with life, glowing within clouds of dust with an expression of somebody whose mission was not yet complete. It was not happiness but stillness that mirrored on her face. Or was it sadness?

I promise you one thing! I will teach all our children to hate wars!

There are no winners in a war, there is death and destruction and this barbaric force should not be a part of any human experience.

On a cosmic scale, a winner will anyhow become a loser and a loser will experience a role of the winner, so why such an urge to kill or hurt, when we are just puppets in

this theatre of Life. We strive to be a meeting place of all the various energies within the Universe, and through this experience we strive to become better human beings. Within our little journey there is a commandment we still are not ready to hear: DO NOT KILL... DO NOT KILL... DO NOT KILL...

The spectrum of possibilities is vast and our souls long to incorporate as many as they can. To understand ourselves we need to understand the flow of Life within us. This is why one day we face happy thoughts and another we get sick or sad. We are in a constant process of learning how to think, behave, or act and how to understand the manifestations of Tao, the manifestation of Qi within us.

So, when we are at the very top, surrounded with the smell of success, we must carefully look at the defeated, at the fellow being that is in trouble. Detaching from the role, observing the theatre, will teach us the lesson experiencing it only once. Be aware of the power that is given to you when you are the winner, the energy will soon vanish but the act that you have committed might haunt you for the rest of your life. Be merciful to your enemy while holding the knife under his throat because you might be the one who asks for the mercy tomorrow.

Ama was among the few who stayed on the battlefield tending wounded, both the Dutch and the citizens of Macao.

Later that week, Ama and her father, managed to convince the City Council to grant the freedom to all the slaves that were in Macao during the attack, in recognition of their almost suicidal loyalty.

That day I've decided to get to know Ama better. My heart wanted to be closer to her and my mind was deceiving itself with two reasons: one was to understand Ama and paganism around her better, the other was my, I so believed in that moment, wish to convert this special soul into Christianity.

For a man to do all that is demanded of him, he must
regard himself as greater than he is.

Goethe

Father Benedict

Every-body and every-thing on Earth lives under the influences of Yin and Yang. Every single rock or plant or a water source hides within it a mixture of these two properties, spirits, manifestations and for Life to manifest in its fullest potential, their proportions must be right. Isn't that just fascinating as a theory that if there is too much heat or too much cold the earth will not be fertile, diseases will prevail and people will not live in harmony? Yin follows Yang as birth is followed by death and night by day, joy does not exist without sorrow, nor health without sickness. I was discussing the meaning of Life and Human Existence with my Chinese friend.

Sitting inside Ole (Ama and Ottavio's) coffee and tea house we had much to share. The inside of Ole is quite appealing. It is a simply decorated single large room with cushioned benches running all around the walls. Its simplicity is charming and the whiteness of the walls dances with the outbursts of colours of red and golden silk cushioning. It has a water basin in the middle that gave us all a feeling of peace and tranquillity.

I spent many nights in summer, and days in winter frequenting this place, meeting friends and strangers, reading, writing and discussing both weather and the purpose of life on Earth. I spoke to peasants, craftsman, merchants, slaves, mandarins, all passing through Ole, all classes coming from China, Siam, Malaysia, Ceylon, India, Japan, Philippines, Korea, and all of its frequent customers that returned to its allure year after year for inspiration.

Both, traders and passers-by intermingling on our little peninsula, would find our little hiding place, leaving a bit of themselves every time they came to visit Ole. Macao had regular trade routes to Japan, the Philippines, and Indo China. Exchanging Chinese porcelain, silk, musk, and furniture made of precious woods with Japanese silver, sandal wood, amber, aromatic woods, incense from Indochina and spices from the islands of South Asia. It was a very vibrant little place. The porcelain,

the silk, the precious woods furniture and the incense found its way into the simple décor of this magic place, inspiring visitors' lush dreams of Heaven's and Nature's beauty.

Ole opens in the early morning and it is then as well as in the evening that it is mostly frequented. The evenings were reserved for story-telling, music, and candle light poetry reading. Some were open for public and some had a special audience invited just for the occasion.

Amazing as only a dream can be, within this coffee shop patrons were more or less freed from the rigid protocols of our times. People varied, conversations varied, often uncovering deeper levels of philosophical truths, or Universal secrets. Since customers are free to choose their-own seating on the elevated platforms around the walls or on the floor that was in the winter covered in silky carpets, and colourful cushions, the exchange of thoughts, and the life-changing discussions often happened amongst strangers. The places were taken on the first come first served basis, not according to rank or wealth, creating a very exciting sense of freedom from any social constraint.

The art of making tea is called 'Cha Dao', said Ottavio standing amidst the ancient vases and jars, at a small carved wooden table performing the tea ceremony.

A good tea has the flavour of nature. It smells of the spring mountain waters, earth and air filled with cold breeze of winter that has just decided to leave us-added Ama, bringing some more porcelain tea caps. Get to know the tea plant to be able to bring out its most fragrant properties choosing the right pot, right amount of tea leaves, the right water temperature, the brewing time.

It was obvious from the enthusiasm that the father and daughter shared, and the shine in their eyes, that the ritual of preparing and serving tea had a special place in their lives.

The smell of tea, its taste, its texture, how smooth it is, how hot the mixture is, how refined the leaves are, and its right combination will bring out the perfection in it. Muttered Ottavio as thought he was talking about an alchemical process of changing metals into gold, not making tea.

He gently took the small porcelain cups from Ama cursing them in his large hand, placed them in a circle around a small, unglazed clay teapot made from red sand clay.

To seal the inside of the teapot, I boiled special old tea leaves mixture with water for many hours. Oils from the tea leaves sealed the pores of the fired clay and left a delicate scent that will stay with all our teas. An alchemist and a magician spoke to us about the sealing of the teapot.

This is green tea, Ama continued, the leaves of this tea are not broken, but dried into little buds, bringing the buds closer so I can smell them. The tender plants collected on the mountain hills looked alive in her beautiful gentle hands.

What is the difference between black tea and green tea? I asked, looking at the young, tender leaves in front of me.

The difference amongst the types of tea is the length of the fermentation used to process the leaves. While fermenting, the green tea changes its colour into reddish-brown. She smiled. The longer the fermentation, the darker is its colour. Green teas are just lightly fermented, she nodded, but red and black teas could sometimes be fermented for years.

Ama left the tea leaves in my hands so I can touch them.

Each step of this magical creation was a sensory exploration of a spiritual experience. The smell took me in to a journey to the high mountain ranges covered in mist untouched by a human foot.

After boiling water, Ottavio rinsed the teapot and cups with the steaming water. Each one of his movements was precise and meditative carrying within the respect

for all the elements: fire, water, earth, air, respect for the tea and us, his guests at Ole. Using a bamboo tea scoop, he filled the teapot with tea leaves and then poured the boiling water into the pot to very quickly drain the water out.

This dispels any bitterness, he says then rinses and sets the tea leaves.

He poured the boiling water into the tea pot again and around 30 seconds later he poured the magic liquid into the cups moving the teapot around in a continual motion over the cups so that they are all filled together.

The tea has to be poured low to minimize escaping of aroma and it is important not to have bubbles in the pot. He looked at me, as though he is telling me a secret of eternal life. Bubbles, when mixed with the tea, form a foam that spoil its purity.

Each cup should taste exactly the same and have the exact same colour, he noted.

Handing one of the cups to me I gracefully sipped the magic of this liquid. The tiny chalice is just large enough to hold about two small sips of the tea. The tea tasted much different than it smelled. It had a bitter, earthy, green-twigs taste. Looking at the colour I observed a few leaves gently unfolding within my cup. I entered a silence of meditation observing this little ritual.

The ceremony continued.

Each pot of tea serves three to four rounds and the same tea leaves are used over again until the fragrance is gone. My host explained.

China is the homeland of tea. I noted as they both nodded.

We, for certain know that the Chinese had tea-shrubs five to six thousand years ago, Ottavio said. During the mid-Tang Dynasty (around 700 A.D) a Buddhist monk, Lu Yu, wrote the first Tea Classic. It was called Cha Ching, a script explaining and exploring the art of making tea. Ama loves this ancient script, maybe one of these evenings she could share it with you.

Tea is very popular in China. In summer we cool ourselves drinking it, and in winter it warms us. We

have a saying, Ama said smiling: Rather go without salt for three days than without tea for a single day.

I saw lots of old men gathering around teapots, talking, I said.

This we call: Lao Jen Cha, Old Men's Tea ceremony, and probably we inherited it from our ancestors from 2,000 years ago, Ama added thoughtfully.

After the tea ceremony, Ama took me around their little coffee and tea house. She wanted to show me the gardens that were behind the gate, reserved for friends and blooming wonders in this spring day.

Walking through the gardens I could see that all the structures, bridges, fences and trails were designed in a most imaginative and refined manner. Weathering just gave a meaning to some of the areas crossing our paths.

The plants and the paths, all, take in the element of time with grace, old age and death is not frowned upon, here in China, it is respected. Ama was reading my thoughts.

The garden was built around a large pond.

Water is an important element in Chinese life and it is almost always present in Chinese gardens, my beautiful host explored the elements with me. Even in the dry gardens, you find water symbolized by grey gravel or sand with sand patterns on it.

In the centre of the pond was an island, an island of immortals, Ama explained, a large stone resembling a miniature mountain.

Because of its sacred character, the island is not accessible to people, as you can see no bridges lead to it.

I looked at the island, the shape of a tortoise, an animal that according to Chinese mythology lives ten thousand years and symbolises longevity, and I saw no bridges leading to it, just a few small rocks placed around it, inviting visitors to hop from one to the other, giving them a hope that even though the sacred place is unapproachable, with an effort, one still can reach it and live everlasting happiness.

Trees and plants planted all around the paths were also narrating stories. Both the bamboo and pine as an evergreen, Ama pointed out, express longevity and happiness.

The black or male pine and red or female pine symbolize yang and yin forces of the universe. That is why they are planted next to each other, they could not exist without the other. The plum brings forth the qualities of vigour and patience since it blooms first after the cold winter months.

Further down the path, I noticed some large rocks with their main bodies set deep into the ground as though the gardener wanted to offer a symbol, a thought, a shape intriguing our minds, expanding beyond just the physical manifestation. I asked Ama about it.

This garden is a shrine, she said. We surround ourselves with shrines. Every stone, every tree, every pathway is a shrine. There is a symbolism behind each pattern, each plant planted, each colour chosen. We build shrines everywhere, within the walls of our houses, at the entrance of our shops, at the corners of our streets and in the fields. Symbols, rituals and magic, they are all in the core of our Being.

We entered their outdoor pavilion with a floor carved in the shape of a Chinese character. Through one of the carvings on the floor, surged a stream which flowed from the pavilion to their rocky garden.

We respect all the elements, Ama said, water, fire, wood, metal and earth. Understanding them we aim to understand the Lady Destiny and live our lives in harmony.

The ancient science of elements and the way they behave is not that simple. For example, trying to manipulate and dominate an element that is in 'power' is interfering with the precious balance of elements. During the reign of Metal one should not practice metallurgy, or during the rain of Earth, one should not construct anything made of earth, clay or stone.

The dreams of this amazing Kingdom are very much mixed with reality, the reason dances its eternal dance with superstitions, and common practices flirt with magic, I said to Ama, creating quite a unique blend of respect for all living creatures, but also a pure motion of fear and habit driven patterns. I continued.

Yes, Ama smiled, like anywhere where magic enters the homes of the uneducated. The proper Chinese shamans are educated for decades and have the gift of Wisdom, they work in many different fields: weather forecasts, magical healing, dream interpretation, and fortune-telling. They use astrology, exorcism or feng-shui to communicate with Gods and spirits. The science behind their work is very far from a common person superstition that you will unfortunately find everywhere. The relationship between Chinese and their Gods is very personal.

I had to admit that for most of Europeans, Chinese culture was completely alien. It will take centuries or even longer to get to feel or hope to mentally comprehend this matrix of spiritual thoughts so closely linked to every-day's manifestations.

We returned to Ole, my favourite meeting place of all sort of humans marching on this little Universe of ours. Apart from tea, they also served an amazing stimulating and flavourful drink called: 'coffee'.

This was not my first encounter with a coffee shop. I came across these fascinating gathering places travelling across villages in Yemen, Mokeya was their name. There, they stand in an open country, before the other village huts, at the edge of the settlements, offering Kischer, a hot infusion of coffee-beans, to travellers. This hot and bitter drink was strange to taste at first but with the most amazing smell, a bit like black tea but with an earthy overtone to its taste. Back there, in Yemen, it was served in simple and beautiful earthenware cups with water that was given out gratis. At the very beginning of my encounter with this magic liquid, it took some time to adjust to the bitterness of the coffee taste, but later I got hooked to the smells of

spices added to it, to the ceremony around its making, and to the sweet expectation while waiting for coffee beans to be roast and ground, and the warm feeling of expansion that followed the experience of drinking. Here, at Ole, in China, the drink is served in beautiful Chinese porcelain cups.

Ole is near water, has many windows, and two small private almost invisible galleries, with an amazing view into the endless blue, where I many times got lost contemplating the secrets of existence. Its front garden was accessible to all and it changed with the seasons, shaded by a huge tree, full of roses and flowers, offered us, who came there regularly, a performance of shades, with interlude of sounds.

Our, Western world is a rational, intellectual world that exists within linear thoughts, formulas, and clear logic. My friend, Ottavio, started one of his usual discussions when he was surrounded with his friends. It is what Chinese call the Solar, Male, Yang of the creation.

Chinese however is intuitive and imaginative. It is the heart, filled with symbols, signs, sounds, and meditations. It is Yin of the creation, the Moon, the Female child of the Universe.

If it just could be achieved, my dear friend, he turned around to face me, as though he is telling me the secret of our great, great grandparents, the merge of Yin and Yang, would lead us to perfection, uniting Solar and Lunar ways of thinking would lead us, humanity, to a new state of Consciousness.

If it just could be achieved, we would see the carbon of the human soul that is now visible as graphite, transform into the one of a diamond. If it just could be achieved we could see an inner transformation of any metal to gold. This is a secret of Alchemy, my dear friend. The Alchemy of Humanity!

Any substance, as an alchemist would tell you, whatever it is, continued Ottavio, is what it appears to be, set just for a moment that is lost in eternity, by parameters of a

given place, time, and given circumstances. Carbon could be graphite and diamond at the same time. When a human being is subject to hardship, mistreatment and is not given a chance to develop, he will become a murderer, a thief or an abuser. How quickly before he becomes an animal! When one is treated with love, respect and care, how far can he develop? Contemplated Ottavio.

A human being could be studied by investigating a section of his liver or the brain, or observing the amazing matrix of soul's behaviour patterns, said Ama, moving swiftly through the space of the hall. Directing a telescope to Venus, an astrologist could examine substances that form part of it or observe astral elements that are emanated by Venus spiritual light to Earth. What different points of view?

What is better: to build our knowledge from individual broken segments put together forming a thousand pieced mosaic puzzle-that clearly obstructs our vision, ... or to follow the spiritual intuitive way that uncovers the secrets of the cosmos interwoven with a magic game of our own imagination? Asked Ama.

Will the sounds of Chinese mystical intuitive science ever manage to enter the realities of the West? Ruben asked.

Will the clear and precise Nature laws of the West ever manage to attract the Chinese? Ottavio continued Ruben's question.

Is there a man on Earth who could manage to bridge the gap between the two, who will not get discouraged by the barriers of different languages or by the dogmas of their religions? They both for a moment, so I thought, looked at me...

Like a fog, silence crept into my world, entered my mind through the breathing and became a part of my being.

Silence narrated a story of a deep profound longing planted within my soul at the gate of creation. The

longing also alive within other life forms on earth, the longing for the transformation of carbon found in graphite into carbon found in diamonds, the longing for growth that is deeply embedded within every cell of my beings.

I became Ama's and Ottavio's friend soon after I arrived to Macao. Both their lives were veiled with mystery and encircled with many common folk's legends. These two people, I loved and deeply respected, intrigued me with their freedom of speech and thought, unknown to many in this day and age, and I felt this to be a breath of fresh air in the world full of dogmas I came from.

As a wild wind that crosses the planes on a still summer day surprising everybody around, or a water whirlpool playing in the midst of a calm sea, immensely freed from pre-conditioning, and pre-judices, and almost dogmatically against dogmas, they lived their lives in Macao where different religions co-existed. Perhaps the main reason for this curious madness of truthful expressions was that they were both slightly crazy and unusually courageous.

Ottavio was versed in both Western and Eastern philosophies, and he easily sailed through the ancient knowledge of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. It was his love for religious studies that inspired him to support the intellectual and artistic elite of Macao, trying to merge western and eastern influences, gathering them at his coffee and tea house, at 'Ole', having endless discussions about God, Purpose of Life, Philosophy or Art.

The group that gathered around Ottavio and his daughter Ama, was a group full of weird scientists and artists, wonderful trouble makers, who loved their tea and coffee, the freedom of expression they found around the two.

Ole is by no means a noisy, cluttered space. With its serene, simple, white washed walls, paved with soft stone, and furnishing that is kept to a minimum, scented with incense, and large windows facing the big

blue ocean, lit by candles at night, its design talks lots about its owners Ottavio and Ama.

I was fortunate to incarnate in Macao and meet these two special souls who often invited me to their gathering place. To the eyes of non-believers in this astonishing shift of ages, life still appeared the same, as it was centuries ago, the same as it was during the time of our fathers or grand-fathers, and yet, underneath this calm surface of the sea of the existence, a great transformation was taking place. This transformation was the end of the world as we knew existed.

This evening we have just finished listening to Ama playing 'bianzhong', a heavenly instrument made of 65 bronze bells. Ama's hands played the bells as though each of her fingers possessed a brain on its-own with a magical, instinctive, intuitive feel that directs the music without any interference with the cold, intellectual and rational brain that exists up there, in the head. She took me on to a journey of phoenix sounds, rituals and tales of harmony that are found only through the sound. I felt the shiver of each note running through my spine, getting its-own identity, and running off into heavenly spheres that we, mortals, can only experience in a glimpse of spiritual longings.

After the performance, I examined this marvellous instrument that took me to such an inspiring spiritual journey. An amazing three-tier frame carries the bells that are each different in size giving different sounds. The frame and the bells had Chinese characters engraved on them. Ama told me that she is at the moment studying the 3,000 characters found on the instrument and that they are a treatise on ancient Chinese musical theory. The instrument was a gift from the Chinese Emperor and was made purposely for Ottavio as an exact replica of a 2,000 years old organ that is used by the court's musicians in creation of ritual and court music. The one that I was listening to was just 10 times smaller.

This exquisite work of art largest bell is as high as myself, explained Ottavio, and it weighs over 200 kg.

Inscriptions are engraved with gold on each bell and its music capabilities are amazing... I watched five performers play the Royal set.

This replica sounds just as amazing... I remarked.

Ottavio is not a man much given to flatter but he couldn't hide a smile of pride for possessing such an amazing instrument.

It is fascinating that virtually all major texts, whether philosophical, or poetic from old China are discussing music, music as an integral part of ritual activity, or music as a key to understanding Nature. Meditated Ama.

Confucius, we are talking 500 BC, was convinced that music has a role in maintaining social order. His idea was that a musical system reflects the proper code of moral behaviour. In his view, Life is about 'wholeness' and music is able to demonstrate the importance of regularities and wholeness.

Chinese have a great interest in studying the vibration of any instrument. They compare pitches to the configuration of cosmic Qi energy.

Ama's beauty engulfed me. Her fascination with Chinese system of knowledge was infectious, I was in awe at the vastness and depth of knowledge that was opening in front of me.

The Chinese interest in music is an interest in numbers and symbols, not in quantification and absolute numerical value. Numbers are manipulated as symbols. The Chinese have an elaborate scheme of correlations, the 12 pitch scale is related to the 12 lunar cycles, and they created an elaborate edifice of relationships to interpret Nature, Humans and History.

Early mystics tell us that 12 pitches are discovered by their sage Ling Lun. His name means 'structure and order'. He was a minister of the Yellow Emperor. Ling Lun observed the songs of the male and female

phoenix, the male (yang) calls were six and the female (yin) were six. The legend says that these became pitches of the early music structure. The Yellow Emperor ordered Ling Lun to cast twelve bronze bells that sound the exact pitch. In the Chinese mind, this ordered symbolic set derived directly from observing Nature. Its pitch is an attribute of a lunar cycle. Under each moon, you will find zodiac recommendations and suggestions for human behaviour, and each pitch belongs to a particular lunar cycle.

Confucius believed that if you disturb the rightful order and structure, your mind is going to be disturbed. For example, he spoke of the music of Zheng comparing it to the colour - purple. Purple, is a combination of colours, a combination of red and blue. It detracts from the purity of red, and it does not have the depth of blue. He claimed that the music of Zheng was not in harmony with the elegant ritual music of ancient China, and that this only reflected the state's government that was deviant and wicked.

I told Ama of how grateful I feel that God has given me an opportunity to explore this maze of knowledge that is so alien and so vast. I felt so lucky to be living at this time in this place.

It is an astonishing shift of ages that we live in, isn't it? She said.

Life still appears to be the same, and yet, underneath this calm surface of the sea of the existence, a great transformation is taking place. This transformation is the end of the world of our time. Ottavio passed his remark.

A common belief of our time, or I suppose of any time, is that this era is the exact time-frame of the somehow never to come and always expected 'End of the World' and the second coming of Christ. Within Macao 'the end' of the world was our reality, however, we did not exactly live the bible story, we were not burning in the flames with the angel of Death looking upon us.

Earthquakes, plaques, tsunamis, wars, diseases, came and left us alive re-building our lives from scratch.

The astrological and prophet texts published all throughout the 16th century led to the same conclusion: that the end of our World would be with us, if not the next morning, then surely in the couple of years. The astrological tables have predicted an unusual succession of eclipses at the very start of the 17th century and numerologically the year 1600 was the chosen year: 16 being the number that was composed of seven and nine, the divine numbers according to different numerology system, multiplied by a hundred times, multiplying its magical fatal value.

Ottavio knew that the prophets are not talking about the end of the life on Earth but the shift of Consciousness. He believed that our generation was born at this very special moment to be able to influence and direct the results of the change that was certainly going to happen.

The life of our grand-children and grand-children of our grand-children is at stake, he prophesised.

What we manage to place in the matrix or scientific, and religious thoughts, in the matrix of energies of this great being called Earth will be essential for the generations to come. This is where the power of yours and my magic should be directed, my dear friend, he told me, into the structure of this amazing matrix we live in.

Soon after he arrived to Macao, Ottavio publically exhibited his good will towards the Church and City Council supporting the foundation of St. Paul's College, which was the first European University in China. The College offered courses in European Arts and Theology and simultaneously concentrated on the studies of the Chinese and Japanese language and civilisation.

With his never-ending fortune he heavily financed this project. Just after he had given me a substantial amount of money for building one of University Halls, pouring Chinese tea into my cup, he said:

It is quite amazing how a culturally and scientifically inferior nation took upon itself a mission to convert a superior one. Missionaries would love to convince the Chinese to worship the *Right God*, his voice slightly changed emphasising the absurdity of this term, even though this IS a supreme dogma that puts God into a box that does not allow expressions of spiritual diversity amongst different nations. If there is anything that will destroy the Church, and Religions, it will be this selfish attitude of every one of them that keeps the right to God only to its followers!

It was very difficult to win an argument with Ottavio, he was more or less always right, quick with words, not tolerating fakes and hypocrites. His natural honesty and truthfulness quite quickly won my love towards him, but has also caused him to have many rivals.

His enemies within the Church have often questioned my relationship with him, but after the authorities have realised that I have an easy access to his wealth, their greediness superseded their worry and his heretical behaviour dispersed amongst the golden shine of his coins.

There were many speculations about Ottavio's fortune, speculations about murders, devils, inheritance, and wicked businesses, but no one could really tell anything specific about Ottavio's past and his wealth: he only joked about it. I tried my luck this time, asking him about alchemy and his fortune and his answer was as mysterious as he was:

With alchemy, my dear friend, I did learn how to make gold, he said. Using alchemy, any metal can become gold, and any human can reach his highest potential. The coffee beans become gold, he looked at me with a devilish smile, I work with both, metal and people, and people my dear friend, are much more challenging!

Alchemy is a science that fascinated many for centuries. Scientists would spend hours and hours of sleepless nights examining and experimenting with the nature of

chemicals in hope to find the sacred stone that transforms metals to gold. To my knowledge, no one has as yet succeeded in this endless quest and I found it hard to believe that Ottavio has, so I let his answer disappear into oblivion, leaving it to draw within my mind yet another life legend of this profoundly mysterious man.

About the Author

Nataša Pantović BSc Economics, Management Consultant, Adoptive Parent, Consciousness Researcher, is a Maltese Serbia Author of 9 Books called AoL **Mindfulness**.

AoL (Art of eLEments) Research into Mysticism Art and Ancient Worlds. Applied Psychology & Philosophy from Tao to Neo-Platonism to Jung to deeper understand Intuitive Wisdom & Pure Ratio. In search of Language of God exploring symbols & sound frequencies

Applying Quantum Physics to manifestation of Consciousness researching Ancient Psychological aspects of Alchemy & Chinese, Greek, Hindu Philosophers, the 9 AoL books: 2 fiction and 7 non-fiction explore Symbols, Mysticism, Arts, and Creativity in both Eastern and Western Ancient Traditions. Developing both Left and Right Brain could be essential for Creative Thinkers of our Future. To purify mind we start with the consciousness that energy follows thoughts and we use Quantum Physics Logic using spiritual exercises Taoism, Christianity, Hinduism, Shamanism to enter Creative Flow. Size 8,000* pg

AoL publishes books, audio, and video materials in the areas of Ancient Worlds, Comparative Religion, Symbolism, Spirituality and Art, Inner Alchemy, and Consciousness Research We have published the AoL Mindfulness Series of 9 fiction and non-fiction books by 7 authors focusing on spiritual growth, creativity and higher states of consciousness. A series of many genre's, including poetry, personal development, historical fiction, the world of "AoL Mindfulness" explores numerous self development themes.

== Nataša Pantović Nait ==



A-Ma Alchemy of Love
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For information address: Artof4Elements

ISBN 978-9995754198

Pantović Nataša Nuit, A-Ma Alchemy of Love
-English-

Published by Artof4Elements
4, Holly Wood, St. Albert Street, Gzira GZR1157,
Malta

www.artof4elements.com

A Interview with Nataša Pantović

AoL Mindfulness is my latest personal growth project of 9 fiction and nonfiction books, that through the use of ancient worlds' techniques, give the explorers a box full of inspirational spiritual but not religious tools to achieve good physical, mental and emotional health.

The titles of the AoL Mindfulness Series include:

Ama Dios (9 AoL Consciousness Books Combined)

<https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B07NL6WBFR>

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"Applying the Laws of Quantum Physics to Philosophy Mother of all Sciences and acknowledging that Micro Cosmos is deeply connected to Macro Cosmos we acknowledge that... Yin and Yang Consciousness States of Universe are NOT positive nor negative. There are only negative and positive applications of Yin and Yang states of consciousness within Yin and Yang charged environment. Each one of us, as a soul incarnated to experience different states of Consciousness Manifestations, tries to understand the positive applications of Yin (Intuitive) combined with Yang (Reason) states of Consciousness."

Nataša Pantović, Mindful Being

AoL Mindfulness books offer tools that explore the power of mind, creativity, consciousness, and mindfulness. The courses work on developing the qualities of both heart and intellect, exploring virtues or ethical values, inspiring the inner growth. A spectrum of ancient world exercises enhances both cognitive and emotional development enhancing Divergent Thinking.

What is Conscious Parenting?

Within the parenting world, the goal is to promote: unobstructed learning from nature and freedom in the learning environment. We encourage families to adopt healthy diets that have the least ecological foot-print, to avoid using plastic, to spend time in nature, grow own vegetables adopting a sustainable life-style, to work with habits that empower the physical body: mental body, and emotional wonder-land exercise regime daily.

How does it differ from unconscious living?

"Self-development is a way of Life. Our Self-Development never ends. We are never too young or too old for personal growth. We have an amazing potential to reach our highest potential, to have truly inspiring careers and loving relationships. Unfortunately, often we walk through our lives asleep, we let our habits rule us, and find it difficult to change our beliefs. Recognizing the power of our Mind and the power of our Soul, learning the art of Concentration and Love, we are learning to Live with the Flow, not against it. It is in our nature to learn and grow. For happiness we need to learn to Love, we need to learn to Concentrate and we should keep the flow and energy of inspiration within our lives." Nataša Pantović, Mindful Being Course

Consciousness explorers have the courage to take the life journey as the self-development journey, to experiment, and acknowledge that we are all souls incarnated to learn.

How does Mindfulness Training work in practice?

Mindful Being and Conscious Parenting Courses are 12 Modules Courses, examining body, nutrition, home environment, relationship with Earth, the "Eco" habits, and our set behavior patterns, examining subconscious mind through the use of drawing mandalas, exploring various emotional responses, and training the mind powers. Looking into goals, dreams, and building the personal development plan does empower habits that strengthen the physical body and the mind training. The daily routine includes practices of concentration, tools to increase creative intelligence, creative thinking, and the art of the day-to-day mindful living.

When and how did you develop the Mindfulness Training?

The series is inspired by yin and yang, by mythology, alchemy, and within the parenting world by simplicity parenting, and alternative teaching educational models. The Mindfulness Training Series of 9 fiction and non-fiction books by 7 authors focusing on spiritual growth, creativity and mindfulness was launched in 2015. The world of "AoL Mindfulness" explores numerous self development themes.

A little bit about Nataša Pantović, your background?

Nataša Pantović Nuić, BSc Economics, is Serbian / Maltese Author, Management Consultant, Adoptive Parent, and Spiritual Researcher into Higher States of Consciousness.

Published my first book in Serbia in 1991.
Author of 9 AoL Mindfulness Books.

"Pulsation, vibration, rhythm exists everywhere as Akasha / Sound / Waves and we hope to reach the vibration of Wisdom embedded Logic or Love Enlightened Intelligence transcending our microcosmic limitations understanding the macrocosms." Nataša Pantović

The early eMalta years saw a heavy investment by Government in its ICT infrastructure to transform Malta into an Information

Society. As Management Consultant working within the MEU, in the Office of Prime Minister, Nataša worked on large number of management and HR consulting projects throughout the various Ministries and Government Institutions.

After helping Father George build a school in a remote area of Ethiopia, Nuit entered the most amazing world of parenting adopting two kids from Ethiopia as a single mum. Nuit left her Management Consultancy job to follow this amazing journey into the parenthood. At the moment she says that her kids are actively teaching her how to be a more loving, mindful and conscious parent. Ema and Andrej love and train basketball, play music, act within a Music Theater Group and were Chess Champions of Malta.

While heading a large UK IT company (Crimsonwing, later KPMG) that has set-up its operations in Malta, she was in charge of its Management Consultancy, Training, and Business Development, expanding the company's markets in Europe, and has been invited by Malta Enterprise, to promote Malta as a European near-shore IT outsourcing destination. As a woman, and an IT Executive, travelling around our little planet, her memory recalls many venues in London, Cardiff, Manchester, Milan, Brussels, Rome, Amsterdam, presenting the company's large UK IT case studies (Safeway, Banks, etc.) while at the same time promoting Malta IT, but the most impressive was the Euro-Med Summit in Marseille (France) where Nataša was a Guest Speaker in an Experts Panel Discussion addressing Ministers and Business Heads from around the Euro-Med region with the Presentation Strategies for Growth in the Euro-Med Region Euro-Mediterranean Business Summit 2006.

Nataša has traveled through more than 50 countries and lived in 5: UK, New Zealand, Holland, Serbia and Malta. As a volunteer she organized six Body Mind Spirit Festivals in Malta, an International Vegetarian Festival, a Children Festival, and 10 days Temples Conference. She regularly writes about variety of self-development topics with Times of Malta.

Who seeks out, and/or needs, this approach and why?

Within the spiritual growth arena, in our drive for goodness, humanity used to exercise tremendous efforts to transform Yin into Yang, searching for Balance within Order, applying force to guard "chastity", "honor", or "inner laws".

Within our understanding of the "wisdom" system, like in any learning, we pass through a spiral, slowly climbing up its various levels – physically, mentally and intuitively mastering the tools, comprehending its more subtle wisdom and beauty. Exercising Tai Chi, for example, takes us into a journey that as a gift combines breathing, movement, and the energy flow.

Watching a Master exercise the Art, we watch him / her exchange with Tao.

Customers Reviews 5 out of 5 Stars

Sue Andreas's review Feb 27, 2017

Historical Fantasy, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery book set during the Age of Enlightenment. A novel about China, eastern philosophy, enlightenment, love, magic, Gods, Ama, Portuguese priests, the settlers of Macau (Macao) during the 16th and the 17th century.

Beautifully written wisdom of ages.

Alchemy of soul within the alchemy of love.

Through the eyes of 12 narrators: Ama-s friends, Gods, & spirits, Historian, Lover, Alchemist, Reuben, Father Benedict, etc. A-Ma explores the human and social alchemy through the historical events in Macau: Dutch Attack, Chinese Calendar Reform, missionaries work, Witch Hunt, through the eyes of Gods, Goddess, Amas father De-Nobille, a Portuguese Alchemist, her mother spirit, her lover.

We also follow a universal spiritual journey that is within each one of us: the path from suffering to love. Each character chooses their-own path to God and each path leads to Divine, whether it is called Christ or Buddha or Tao.

Must read at least once!

Elena Trintas's review, Mar 05, 2017

Loved this deep and intriguing novel!

Back into the 17th century, gliding through Amas life, exploring the wisdom of China (such a fascinating culture) and multi-leveled dimensional stories of Reuben, the man with no name, tales of Macau, A-Ma goddess, Father Benedict, and Lilith was a very special experience. Within my own life I already had a fascination with Chinese I Jing, Feng Shui, the Chinese most fascinating character writing, so I found my own sanctuary within the setting of Nuit-s 17th century story.

An uproar of wisdom that can not be contained by religious dogmas, I was re-incarnated within such a complex setting working with enlightened minds of the time. I felt that this is exactly what Nuit wanted us to do, take an active role, worship the Temple of Ama, return to own quest to follow the river to its ocean, become one of many that instigates the change.

Beautifully written, with a strong spiritual message, I also deeply connected to the alchemy thread within the story. I am very blessed that I had a chance to come across Nuit-s work at the time my focus is within further understanding of Yin and Yang balance, within the understanding of Kundalini, understanding of Goddess, and our, Christians (but also humanity) focus with suffering.

Ama and her friends, lovers, family told me a story of "change", story of "alchemy", story of "transformation" and the book has a deep message for every day of the journey. Yet this is not a book for all. The special, who have the opportunity to come across it, will understand all the levels of the story and get in touch with the feminine eternal wisdom within.

Must read!

Mario Johns's review, Feb 26, 2017

Deep profound reading.

Following a very interesting story set in the 16th century of Alchemy, magic, Chinese I Jing. The dance of Yin and Yang, rational and intuitive is very obvious within the chapters of the book. A female dreamy approach to life versus a male, an energetic and scientific approach. Ama lives during the scientific revolution of Age of Reason, during the time when missionaries tried to convert Chinese to Christianity finding a rich, advanced, intriguing culture, and philosophical approach to Life and God that is amazingly different from our Western one.

Learning from the Chinese that during the centuries lived in a huge land surrounded by a wall is just an attempt to bridge two sides of the world, two ways of thinking, two approaches to spirituality, art, music, the Yin and Yang of energies manifestations, creating an Alchemy of Humanity and witnessing an alchemy of souls.

The book is multi-leveled and I enjoyed following Amas life, learning about different African / Chinese customs, exploring spiritual stories of different eras and moving through the historical events of the time in Macao and in China: the Dutch attack, Building of the annual Chinese Calendar, Father Schall appointment to the Board of Mathematicians, first Universities in Macao translating manuscripts from Chinese to Portuguese and Spanish, witch hunt, and scientific revolution that moved the centuries ahead.

Ama puts us in the main seat. We feel like we are driving the history of humanity together with Gods, spirits, and enlightened people of the time. We are the alchemists who work on the personal transformation and lovers or confused souls that are too attached to the idea that we all need suffering to grow. In fact there are many messages reoccurring through this work: it reflect the wisdom of today's search. What is the alchemy of love? What is God? How to live Divine in all the areas of life. Soul and spirit, spiritual not religious, deep and complex, interesting and playful.

Aurora Zora's review, Apr 05, 2017

Ama. Who is Ama?

I asked when I saw her eyes for the first time looking at me from the cover of the book. She intrigued me instantly. I know Nuit and her work, from the moment of her first exhibition launch of Art of 4 Elements poetry and art book in 2012, when a group of artist exhibited 120 works (photos, painting, pastels) inspired by Nuit's 120 poems of elements, and I was looking forward to hold this beautiful book /novel in my hands. I know that Nuit was writing Ama for more than 10 years and I was aware of some of her writing anecdotes. Ama had a life and personality of her-own and the most amazing one. For example, Ama as a protagonist of the story, was black before Nuit has decided to adopt her two kids from Ethiopia. Her deep connection to the African story and wisdom is completely fascinating.

At one point I remember Nuit recalling, she has decided to remove Ama's love-life from the book. After she did all the edits, she forgot about this little crazy episode. She did not touch the book for a while and when returning to it she mistakenly returned to the previous, un-edited version of the story, the one with Ama's love-life intact. Nuit said that Ama did not want her to do anything so stupid as to remove such an important part of the story.

So who is Ama? A divine female incarnated within a setting of the 17th century Macau (China). A most amazing female protagonist whose wisdom is vast and moving. I read about Tao, I read about alchemy, I read about love, and China and its amazing esoteric knowledge. I think Ama will be something else for each one of us. I will not spoil your story. I will let you do your-own discovery. I personally was impressed with what I got from the novel.

Best reads!

Kristina's review Mar 25, 2017

Ama as a virginal youth, or fully blooming female, or as a Goddess herself.

This book transferred me into a journey to another sphere, time, through foreign lands, mix of cultures, perhaps even through different spiritual dimensions, still touching upon questions we all ask even today. Is it religion, or magic or heart we ought to follow? Love that is in its pure simplicity the essence of the path to highest spirituality, through the deep respect of life elements: water, fire, wood, metal and earth.

Inside of your eternal search perhaps you will find the answers exactly within this book. Do Gods and Goddesses face the same dilemmas as we pure mortals and how different we are truly from the Creators? How one contains the magic of two and One is mirrored in all.

How often the differences between us divide us and how often do they bring us together. In an attempt to solve the secret of life and death, do we come across the stage of the Creator Herself? Where is the harmony and how to live it? When is the moment when "The Essence became Now, past and future disappeared."

A-Ma Alchemy of Love, the spiritual book that I sincerely recommend to all, the book you will return to always learning something new, with the questions that are at that moment within you. "Everything in Nature manifests either through Heavenly Father or through Mother Earth." A-ma Alchemy of Love

Sharing a mile-stone!

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