

R. Benedito Ferrão will present a paper titled 'With this Sea-Port I thee Wed: Of Royal Dowries and Self-Making in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*' at the Oceans and Shores: Heritage, People, and Environments conference – III CHAM International conference, FCSH/Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 12-15 July, 2017.

"Midnight's Children"

Ferrão's paper will examine how Rushdie's novel, *Midnight's Children*, uses the early modern history of sea-ports and maritime trade to underscore the postcolonial location of characters and their Lusophonic connections as subaltern legacies subsumed in post-British India.

In having Mary Pereira/Braganza be Goan, *Midnight's Children* brings into focus the significant utility of his character's native land in the European imperial history of South Asia. Mary Pereira evokes the figure of Goa as one of the earliest colonies and then the last foreign dominion (1510-1961) in what was to become modern day India. In adopting the Braganza moniker, the character recalls an important historical moment in the making of coloniality. The 1662 marriage of Catherine of Braganza to Charles II was orchestrated to secure the relationship between two colonial powers. Through the alliance, England received the port city of Bombay as dowry.

Further, in renaming herself after the Portuguese *infanta*, Mary Pereira also evokes that other Catherine. On 25 November, 1510, Afonso de Albuquerque took the port of Goa. It was the feast day of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, and the Portuguese conqueror believed she had overseen his defeat of the Muslim ruler of the enclave. This conquest changed the course of commercial relations between Europe and Asia, displacing Middle Eastern trade hegemonies. Simultaneously, the site where Saint Catherine discovered her faith – North Africa – doubly pagan and quintessentially "other" in the later Occidental imagination is also the continental location from which sprung the Moors: Muslims who once ruled over Iberia.

By centring on the iconic naming and renaming of Mary Pereira in *Midnight's Children*, the paper argues that the novel uses the history of the ports of Goa and Bombay to challenge the Anglo-centrism of postcolonial thought in relation to India, especially by highlighting maritime commerce.

More information about the conference *here*.



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