

**TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS
IN V. S. NAIPAUL'S *THE MIMIC MEN* AND
LUÍS CARDOSO'S
*THE CROSSING: A STORY OF EAST TIMOR***

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The empires of our time were short-lived,
but they have altered the world for ever;
their passing away is their least significant feature.

— Naipaul, *The Mimic Men*

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Palavras-chave: Identidade, mimetismo, hibridismo, V. S. Naipaul, Luís Cardoso.

Among the many books that informed my cultural background was Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. I first read the novel when I was young, moved by the simple pleasure of learning about adventures in exotic places. A few years later I re-read the novel from a totally different perspective, and the issue that most attracted my attention was the fact that Defoe was, perhaps without being aware of that, creating the prototype of colonial literature written in English, and that would be converted into a powerful tool to spread imperial ideology.¹ Defoe's success was in great part dependent on his protagonist's ability to overcome the difficulties endured on an unknown island after a shipwreck. The so-called "Island of Despair" was transformed into an ideological sign that represented a mixture of prison and paradise and Robinson's stay there turned out to be the key to his reconciliation with God and his transformation into a self-

¹ On *Robinson Crusoe* as a proto-novel of the colonial literature, see Martins ("J. M. Coetzee" 465). On the major role played by literature in the dissemination of imperialist ideology, see Boehmer (*Colonial*).

made man, thus allowing him not only to become a rich person, fulfilling his dreams of youth, but also to sow the seeds of what could be considered a successful imperial project. The protagonist's development would not have been possible if Crusoe were not haunted by the memory of his father's words, who had warned the young man not to challenge God by departing to a dangerous and adventurous trip instead of remaining at home and working hard to attain success as the puritanical ideals demanded. Despite experiencing the reality of a shipwreck, and the sense of failure and despair associated to it, Crusoe converted himself into a hero whose tenacity and faith have inspired many readers since the novel's publication at the beginning of the 18th century, as well as into the model of the colonizer to be (Martins "J. M. Coetzee").

Further readings of Defoe's novel led me to follow the opposite path taken by the novelist. In other words, if Defoe to some extent departed from the fictional modelling of a space – an island – in order to clear the way to the development of a pattern of colonial literature and the dissemination of imperial ideals, I would like to do the opposite: that is to say, to depart from the analysis of symbolic postcolonial representations of islands and of their inhabitants to address the evils of colonization, and, in particular, to reflect on the problematic configuration of colonized people's identity, bearing in mind the impact of colonial education.

My corpus comprises two postcolonial narratives, *The Mimic Men* (1967) by V. S. Naipaul and *Crossing: A Story of East Timor* (1997) by the Timorese Luís Cardoso². Despite belonging to distinct literary traditions and experiencing colonial enterprises with different characteristics, both writers discuss colonialism as a system and its consequences to the configuration of the colonized self through the crises of identity experienced by their protagonists. Various are the elements shared by the main characters: (i) both are islanders who were born in colonies very distant from the metropolis; (ii) both were under the influence of education administered by missionaries in the colonies or by those trained by them; (iii) both have dreamt of having access to education in metropolitan centres, since they believed education in the metropolis was a passport to make them climb the colony's social ladder. Moreover, Naipaul's and Cardoso's narratives rest on the protagonists' memories of their childhood and youth on their home islands, what makes me examine their "islandness" in order to assess, on the one hand, to what extent it

² I will use the Portuguese original for any quotation, even though I will provide my own translation into English, since I did not have access to the book's version in English.

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

contributed to shape their crises of identity and, on the other, how both men were able to cope with the problem in a postcolonial time after leaving their birthplaces. The last element that drove me to study the books was the importance acquired by the protagonists' fathers, who were also islanders, to the characters' lives. Both fathers were influenced by missionaries, a fact that leads me to evoke the role played by Christian education, and, in particular, by missionaries, in different colonial enterprises throughout various imperial cycles along history. It is widely known that education and religion were two basic tenets underlying the so-called "civilizing mission". These principles gain special relevance when articulated, since education in the colonies was usually the responsibility of religious orders. Furthermore, by referring to the figure of the father, I intend to recall the paternalistic nature of colonization. It is worth pointing out that many colonizers presented themselves as a kind of "father" to the colonized, the latter being considered ignorant, innocent, unprotected; in sum, unable to govern themselves. Hence, the figure of the father encapsulates some of the pretexts used to justify the European presence in the colonies.

In this essay my aim is also to address the figure of the father within the framework of colonialism from different perspectives, since the most outstanding aspect related to the protagonists' crises of identity is the fact that the latter do not simply derive from the colonial encounter, and from the consequent process of transculturation resulting from the underlying authority of colonialist education. Naipaul's and Cardoso's protagonists inherit the crises of identity experienced by their fathers, who had also been the target of the colonialist educational system, even if they never went to Europe to study. In other words, by problematizing the everlasting effects of a second generation of crises closely related to the colonialist educational system, Naipaul's and Cardoso's books show that hybridity is much more than a natural consequence of the colonial encounter, for, as Loomba (*Colonialism* 173) states, it is a "result of deliberate colonial policy", since, through the attempt to "civilize" others, colonialism fixes them into permanent "otherness" (*Colonialismo* 173). Therefore, the educational system constitutes a privileged instrument through which the "lie of the empire"³ leads many natives to play "characters"⁴, that is to say, to wear masks that do not fit whom they are in their daily and empirical lives.

³ On the "lie of the empire", see Orwell (*Burmese* 94) and Martins ("Os Magistrados" 44).

⁴ I am borrowing the expression from Naipaul's protagonist in *The Mimic Men* (92).

Problems arise when the colonized start to believe in the role they play. In the books here analysed, it is this “performance” that brings up for discussion the issue of mimicry, considered by Ashcroft *et alli* (*Post-Colonial* 139) as “an overt goal of imperial policy”, since, as Bhabha (*The Location* 86) recalls, “[c]olonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha’s italics). This aspect of the impossibility of being the same, on the one hand, highlights the permanent “otherness” to which natives are voted, and, on the other, reveals how colonized people’s cultural ambivalence underlies the crises of identity they struggle to deal with. If, on the one hand, the limits between hybridity and mimicry are difficult to define, on the other hand, there are cases that prove that the configuration of the colonized self as Other is closely related to the extent mimicry affects hybridity. The exam of Naipaul’s and Cardoso’s novels from a comparative perspective illustrates this point, since both address how discourses of subordination are inculcated in the colonized people (both in the colony and in the metropolis) and how education and different levels of mimicry can influence the former colonized subjects’ identity configuration in a postcolonial time. Moreover, since the context within which the process of transculturation takes place is the island context, it is worth examining if the experience of “islandness” may, to some extent and in some cases, maximize the effects of colonialist education, bearing in mind that islanders’ condition is rather peculiar.

Since islanders were born, they have to deal with an identity that tends to be hybrid, which can be explained by the island location and status. On the one hand, the island location and its constitutive boundaries are, par excellence, fluid, since they are represented by the shoreline and the immensity of water around it. This fact makes islanders more aware of them than are other peoples (Hay 21). On the other hand, the island’s edge status is controversial, as Pete Hay (22) states. It can be either defined as a “community-defining bond of shared sense of isolation” that stresses the islanders’ sense of otherness towards the mainland inhabitants or understood as “a liberated zone; a site of possibility (...) that invite[s] transgression; inspire[s] restlessness; [and] demand[s] to be breached” (Hay 22-23). The experience of island living is, therefore, ambivalent, since it is the sense of isolation, and the island’s association with a peripheral zone that impels islanders to leave and experience life in the outside world. In the studied texts, it is worth confronting how the protagonists’ experience of displacement and the received colonialist

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

education shape the ways they imagine both the island and the metropolis with obvious implications for the configuration of their identities.

Let me start the analysis by considering Naipaul's novel. It addresses the issue of mimicry in a very straightforward way contrary to Cardoso's novella, what becomes evident from the novel's title on. In *The Mimic Men* the projection of mimicry onto hybridity has considerable effects on the configuration of the 'self', as it is illustrated by the fictional modelling of Naipaul's protagonist, Ralph Singh. Singh tries to mimic the colonizer as much as possible since he was a child, fact that prevents him from assessing his behaviour and from defining his own self until his early forties. His tendency towards mimicry results, in great part, from the negative representation he made of Isabella, the island where he was born. To him, apart from his family connections with the owners of a factory that bottled Coca-Cola and that had social prestige, the island was a place connoted with the idea of deprivation, lack of opportunity, and underdevelopment. It was a kind of prison from where the character wanted to escape by any means. Before obtaining his scholarship and going to London, he "escaped" the island by imagining glorious ancestors, by changing his own name without telling anything to his parents, by trying to identify with wealthy relatives and by despising his father's attitude towards his mother's family and its social position. Ralph's childhood was, in sum, marked by the impersonation of a character that helped him to cope with his origins and the "islandness" he was ashamed of.⁵ Parallel to his negative imagination of the island was the opposite imagined aggrandizement of people from and life in the metropolis, which prevented him from understanding the ridicule underlying some of his attitudes. It is not gratuitous that Naipaul frames his narrative by clearly mocking Ralph's behaviour when he first went to London and copied Mr Shylock's habit of stroking the lobe of his ear and inclining his head to listen. In fact, it is only when Ralph lives as an exile in London, after having crossed the sea more than once between the island and the metropolis, and acted as a leading politician on Isabella that he becomes totally aware of his former behaviour and of its implications on a political and personal level. His attempt to write, while living in a boarding house in one of the London suburbs, translates his need to bring order to his

⁵ Some of Ralph's childhood colleagues also impersonated characters in order to deal with a familiar past/origin they either rejected or were ashamed of. I will not discuss their behaviour in this essay due to lack of space.

entire life, and to overcome a crisis of identity that he has experienced from an early age, making him feel like a shipwrecked man.

The most interesting aspect is that the feeling of being adrift had, in Ralph's opinion, been already experienced by his father even if in a distinct context. As Ralph narrates his life in flashback, even though the past is not depicted in successive order, what illustrates how his memories were disorganised, the reader learns that his father was idealized by missionaries who inhabited Isabella. He was described, in a missionary lady's diary, as someone who "had the marks of grace", someone who would not hesitate to protect missionaries, so that people could "receive the Gospel of grace" (Naipaul, *The Mimic* 94). In other words, the missionaries' depiction of Isabella has undoubtedly acquired a mythic tone, since the island was considered a kind of "Biblical land", of original paradise,⁶ which ennobled their mission (and, in indirect terms, the civilizing mission despite the resistance some colonizers offered to the missionaries' presence⁷) (93). The missionaries' account illustrates how colonizers and colonized were, in a certain way, stimulated to play "characters" with obvious repercussions on the configuration of their identity. When Ralph describes how his father begins his radical movement, he refers to the speech he made to the striking dockworkers, in which he mentions "the years of darkness that followed his abandonment" (136), and invites his audience to leave this darkness and search for "a way of looking at the world" (136) in the forest. From a common and an insipid existence after the missionaries left Isabella, Ralph's father decides to impersonate the young man who had "the marks of grace", thus becoming a leader and taking a new name, Gurudeva, who was against the powerful social class of Isabella, which he had always despised. It is his father's new polemical role that makes Ralph feel even more uneasy, making him wish to leave the island and find what he called "his element", through a

⁶ The missionaries' depiction of the island as a paradise clearly contrasts with Ralph's view of Isabella. These opposing views (island as paradise or as a prison) clearly illustrates Baldacchino's premise that "islands are paradoxical spaces" (Baldacchino, "Islands" 5).

⁷ Missionaries' role in the colonies can be considered somewhat paradoxical. Despite the fact that empire was often justified in religious terms, according to Howe (*Empire* 89), "religious figures were also among the earliest critics of empire from within Europe". It is also interesting to consider some colonizers' attitudes towards missionaries. Since missionaries lived in permanent contact with native populations, many colonizers who were moved by the fear of going native either did not facilitate the missionaries' work or considered them inferior. On the fear of going native, see, among others, Boehmer (*Colonial*), Ascroft *et alii* (*Post-Colonial*), and Martins ("Representações").

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

search that, in fact, represented another attempt to play a different “character” that could make him feel accepted by the leading class of the island, which, in sum, meant he had to go to London⁸.

Curiously, the effect of Ralph’s first “crossing” from the island to the metropolis, did not represent any significant change in his behaviour, for he remains tied to his dream of being someone he was not, impressed by the belief that, by mimicking colonizers, he would be like them. It is rather odd that, once in the metropolis, the young man born in the tropical island identifies snow as his “element” (4), and, since he had no guide in the city, he felt free to choose the “character” that was the “easiest and most attractive” (19) to him. The “character” is that of a dandy who does not care for the amount of his scholarship and who marries Sandra, a European, who also impersonates a “character”, as it is suggested by her painted breasts. The mixed marriage and the return to the island can also be characterized as a kind of fiction. Ralph’s mother clearly opposes to her son’s wife, but the couple, who expected to feel constrained by the meanness of island life, starts circulating among the circumscribed group of the powerful on the island (most of them expatriates without ties to the place and their people) until the moment Ralph is dragged into political life. This transition in his life is dependent on the forced acknowledgment of his father’s legacy, and Ralph is led to play another “character” in order to fulfil his political aims on Isabella.

⁸ The term “gurudeva” is even nowadays employed as a title of respect, used to make reference to spiritual leaders, considered as the destroyers of darkness and ignorance in Hindu culture. On this issue, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gurudeva>. It is curious to observe how Ralph’s father impersonates a leader related to his Hindu background. When a representative percentage of Isabella’s inhabitants descended from former Indian indentured workers, Singh’s father’s impersonation of Gurudeva, more than preaching social inequality in relation to the rich families of the island, recalls another context of social oppression, stressing Hindu descendants’ inferior social condition, aspect that Ralph wanted to forget and to hide when he was very young.

It is, however, paradoxical that the same boy had a particular interest in and a wide knowledge of ancient Hindu rituals, as if, by seeking refuge in the cultural glorious accounts of his ancestors, he could somewhat forget what he considered to be an inferior condition. Nonetheless, when the horse Tamango is killed, he associates the case with a sacrifice committed by Gurudeva and his followers, once more feeling ashamed of his father, since Tamango’s killing represented a threat to the social group he wished to belong to. The event reinforced his sense of feeling adrift, as if he had lost his father for a second time. What the episode of the horse’s death stresses is how both father and son were trying to search for an identity through opposing means, which made them even more distant from each other.

It is this last impersonation that stresses the ambiguity experienced by the colonial subject. It is paradoxical that Ralph in order to be accepted politically in his homeland has to make reference to his father's past leadership, something he has always wanted either to ignore or to hide. Naipaul's subtle irony lies on the fact that, when natives try to govern themselves, they resort to representations formerly used by the so-called "emissaries of civilization" (e.g., the missionaries in the case of Ralph's father, since his transformation into Gurudeva relied more on the missionary's belief that he was a special innocent being living in an uncorrupted world than on the influence of his Hindu ancestry), thus perpetuating a politics of mimicry, even if it happened within a distinct political framework. What is even more serious is that these representations are usually used to cheat voters and to respond to social classes' interests, which clearly compromises the construction of the imagined community of a nation that was supposed to govern itself in an independent and fair way. In other words, Ralph accepts Browne's challenge to change the old order of Isabella's political life, through the reminiscence of his father's leadership, even if Singh, at the beginning of the whole process, feels he is acting in a dishonest way.

Ralph crosses the sea once more and returns to London wearing the mask of a politician in order to discuss the nationalization of sugar-cane businesses on Isabella. During this trip, he has a different view of the city that has always impressed him positively and onto which he has projected his dreams of greatness. When British politicians treat him as the colonial Other, as if he were someone who did not deserve to be taken seriously, he becomes aware of the roles he has been playing since he was a child, that is to say, he understands his condition of permanent "otherness". The positive view he had of London (and that was the product of his imagination related to his need to play characters) definitely shatters and he starts feeling the need to bring order to the chaos of his inner life through writing. Before dedicating entirely to writing, he returns to Isabella, where a political chaos reigns, making him feel a shipwrecked man again.

The final crossing from the island to the former metropolis is decisive to Ralph's configuration of his identity. It acquires a political and an epistemological value. Ralph moves to London as a political refugee, but this time without any false expectation of grandeur. The epistemological dimension of this crossing is closely related to his act of writing that gives him the opportunity to close a life cycle and to start a new one. In London he will inhabit a boarding house that is curiously owned by a nice lower-

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

middle-class lady who “has given up the Empire” (268) like him as if writing in that particular location helped him to take off his masks and unveil the lie of the empire. Moreover, writing allows him to reconcile with the memory of his father, since Ralph’s representations of him have always been antagonistic. By the end of the novel, the image of the father who neither was rich nor got along well with his wife’s relatives before the transformation into Gurudeva is replaced by that of a respectful and pious man, who, despite having given up politics, was able to provide those in need with spiritual comfort.

Luis Cardoso’s approach to the protagonist’s crisis of identity is quite different from Naipaul’s. Mimicry is not the Timorese writer’s main concern, since he is more interested in discussing and deconstructing the mythic representations that the colonialist education system makes of the Portuguese empire as the mother/fatherland that protects the natives against all evil on a remote island very far from the metropolis. The novella rests on the depiction of a young man’s process of individual learning from childhood to adulthood that is directly informed by the character’s displacements within East Timor, from Timor to Portugal, and, afterwards, in Portuguese territory. His movements are closely related, on the one hand, to his father’s occupation, a nurse “desterrado pela profissão” [exiled due to his profession] (Cardoso, *Crónica* 20), who is obliged to travel around remote districts of Timor, and, on the other hand, by the protagonist’s studies, which make him live far from his parents due to the limited offer of education on the island. The characters’ displacements allow the novelist to describe the island in great detail, and it is worth pointing out that the urge to leave the island cannot be compared to Naipaul’s fictional modelling of Ralph Singh. If it is true that in Timor the dream of access to education derived in social ascendancy on the island, characters, in general, are not disturbed by their “islandness” as Ralph Singh was. This fact can be explained by the effective impact of colonialist education on Timorese people and their belief in the metropolitan protection. Moreover, Cardoso’s book is considered the first Timorese novel, which makes it acquire a relevant epistemological dimension that has to do with Cardoso’s need to provide readers with knowledge about Timor and its culture and to demonstrate that a whole traditional culture pre-existed the Portuguese colonization. Therefore, various are the references to natives’ beliefs, superstitions, myths and life habits that are described without underlying or subtle mockery.

Cardoso’s fictional modelling of the island is very realistic and the features that are emphasized already in the frame of the narrative are the

island's isolation, poverty, and underdevelopment that transformed it into a peripheral location to where convicts for political or other reasons were sent. This description not only evokes ideas of confinement, death, solitude, and penury, but also subtly highlights the condition of "otherness" experienced by natives and by outcasts banished to Timor, thus stressing the resulting physical and symbolical distance of Portuguese empire towards the colony. The island's status is translated by some characters' references along the novella to the oblivion the colony was voted to by Portugal, which is clearly exemplified by the delay in the acknowledgment of the freedom's arrival to Portugal after almost fifty years of dictatorship, and the consequent debate on decolonization. In fact, echoes from the April 1974 Revolution were not immediately heard in Timor and the old regime's governor continued acting as if nothing had happened for some time.

The crossing that is referred to in the book's title is twofold. On the one hand, the crossing translates the protagonist's passage from innocence to maturity through education and through the significant move from the colony to the metropolis, which allowed him to deconstruct the idealized view of Portugal disseminated by his father at home and by his teachers in Timorese schools. On the other hand, the crossing is related to the story of the protagonist's father, a fierce defender of the Portuguese empire, and who goes to Portugal in order to recover his memory after an accident in Timor, while his son is studying there, and during a period of internal political convulsion in the territory during which the Timorese could not rely on the former metropolis's aid. The latter story frames Cardoso's novella, since it begins in Portugal when the protagonist crosses the river in order to go to the hospital where his father is, and ends with the acknowledgment of the nurse's death that puts an end to his crossing. The protagonist's and his father's crossings of the sea towards Portugal and their experience of life in Europe are crucial to understand how official representations of the metropolis were ideologically produced and disseminated in the colony. Moreover, the book can also be interpreted as the son's tribute to the nurse, since by recalling his and his father's experiences of the empire, the protagonist inscribes the nurse's role in Portuguese imperial history, thus acknowledging the importance official historiography has denied him.

The representation of the colonialist educational system on the island reveals how natives were recruited to be trained as zealous representatives responsible for the dissemination of the Portuguese language, culture and religion in the colony, thus demonstrating that hybridity resulted from a

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

careful politics of education and training⁹. Other aspects, such as the topics given to students' compositions, for instance, exemplify how education did not rest on the colonial reality, but instead on distant and idealized information on the life experienced in the metropolis, what made young natives dream of studying in Portugal, and, thus, of playing a "character" that did not correspond to their real condition, similarly to what happens with Ralph Singh in Naipaul's novel.

Students' handbooks are ironically characterized as "guias turísticos" [tourist guides] (57) that describe not only the faraway metropolis as a kind of paradise on earth, but also the immensity of the almighty Portuguese empire. The idealized representation of the latter and the protagonist's disappointment with the reality is illustrated by the episode during which the protagonist is shockingly confronted with the opposing realities of students' handbook's descriptions of Entroncamento as the Portuguese railway station to where trains from all over the world converged, and the silent and abandoned place similar to a desert where the imperial junk was distributed. With a view to reinforcing the protagonist's sense of loss and confusion when he visits Entroncamento, Cardoso plays a subtle semantic game with the colonizers' depiction of the railway station's location and its geographical position relatively close to Fátima's sanctuary. In fact, what the protagonist finds is nothing more than a miracle, a fantasy, which extends the series of deceptions he had since he had arrived to the metropolis. The reader also learns from the narrator how unequal the educational colonial system was and how only a few privileged people could have access to more advanced stages of education in the colony that could represent the key for a job in the colonial administration. To parents, the chance to send a son with a scholarship to Portugal represented a kind of reward for the difficulties faced during the service given to the colonial enterprise. In a country where the Catholic influence was outstanding and where the school system was in missionaries' hands, a young man who did not follow a clerical life was expected to stamp his passport to study in Europe to return crowned with triumph in the future. What was not in the colonized people's horizons was the experience of observing a whole edifice of beliefs in the imperial grandeur crumbling once they arrived to Portugal.

⁹ The loyal officers of the colonial enterprise were recruited among the *liurais*' sons. *Liurais* were, before the Portuguese colonization, nobles who exercised political functions. Cardoso's protagonist refers to them in order to explain his father's line of descent and how native teachers were recruited to work in missionary schools in order to disseminate Portuguese cultural and religious values.

The protagonist's crossing to the metropolis also allows Cardoso to address the political crisis in Timor, the fratricide conflict and the Indonesian invasion that made many Timorese move into Portugal looking for protection. Their settlement in the former metropolis proves to be difficult, since many of them do not feel welcome.¹⁰ Apart from that, the same internal divisions felt in Timor are reproduced among the Timorese living in Portugal, thus creating an atmosphere of fear and distrust that can be explained by the inexistence of a national sense of belonging, impossible to be developed under colonialism. Moreover, despite the undeniable role Portugal played when East Timor became independent in 2002, Cardoso recalls the former metropolis's omission (reviving the already mentioned metropolitan oblivion towards Timor) when Indonesia occupied the country in 1975, declared it one of its provinces, and started a period of huge violence and attacks on the human rights. This kind of "orphanage" made many Timorese resentful.

The protagonist's solitude in the metropolis becomes less severe when he is contacted by Domingos and Mali Mau, two Timorese who were in Portugal to work. Their appearance in the narrative addresses the issue of "otherness" from two different points of view. On the one hand, when Domingos invites the protagonist to drink a cup of warm tea, the waiter does not come to their table to take their order. When the young man addresses him and asks for tea, the waiter looks astonished and compares the three young foreigners to Portuguese old ladies nearby drinking tea, who, in their turn, are surprised when they observe Domingos, a humble worker, pouring tea without spilling a drop of liquid. On the other hand, the protagonist characterizes Domingos and Mali Mau as typical "mauberes", illiterate and poor natives who have not been under the influence of colonialist education, and who were chosen by FRETILIN, one of the Timorese political forces, as the image of the new and uncorrupted men in whose hands the future of the country freed from colonialist ties would be. Apart from being analysed from the Portuguese

¹⁰ It is estimated that in the early 1970s around 650,000 former Portuguese colonizers, their descendants and many Africans left the African Portuguese colonies because of the long and violent Colonial War and the colonies' processes of independence (Sardica, *Twentieth* 86). They left almost everything they had in Africa and were not well-received by the Portuguese, since internally Portugal faced serious difficulties, and they were seen as a kind of social threat by those who did not serve the colonial enterprise. They were called "returnees" in a very derogative way and were not considered trustworthy. Consequently, many social tensions arose. The Timorese, in fact, could not be considered returnees, but many were treated like that.

TRANSGENERATIONAL CRISES OF IDENTITY:
GROWING UP AS COLONIAL SUBJECTS

people's (the waiter and the ladies drinking tea) and the Timorese's perspective (the protagonist who depicts how mauberes are seen in his society) as the Other, Domingos and Mali Mau are described as mimicking the Portuguese due to their clothes and boots, which together with their physical type transform them into "um misto de maubere com cantor *pop*" [a mixture of maubere and pop singer] (Cardoso, *Crónica* 122). This reference to mimicry cannot be understood as negative or derogatory, as it happens in Naipaul's novel as far as Ralph's attitudes are concerned, since Domingos invites the protagonist to participate in a group that spreads the knowledge of maubere cultural traditions, representing an attempt to cease possible tensions among Timorese living in Portugal and simultaneously helping them to imagine a community that wished to become an independent nation from Indonesia.

Let me now return to the recurrent image of the shipwrecked man in Naipaul's novel, since I want to draw a parallel between this image and the configuration of former colonized people's identity in the studied books. First of all, I want to use the same image that characterizes Ralph and his father to depict Cardoso's protagonist and his father, the nurse. In distinct ways, all of them, despite experiencing different colonial enterprises, were transformed into shipwrecked men by the colonialist educational systems after being brought up as colonial subjects. Like the islands where they were born, they floated on the ocean of manipulated convictions that led them to believe they were sons of the metropolis, when they have always been orphans.

Out of all of them, Ralph is the one who feels more adrift, probably because he was the one who mostly tried to mimic the colonizer throughout his life, attitude that enhanced the negative view of his "islandness" and the experience of loss when the lie of the empire was eventually acknowledged. In Cardoso's novella, although the nurse is not depicted as having mimicked the colonizer, he believed so much in the virtues of colonization that he was blind to the lie of the empire whose meaning his son understood after crossing the sea from the island to the metropolis. He becomes a shipwrecked man when he is deprived of his memory and in a very melancholic way wanders around in the former metropolis. His death in Portugal immersed in his past memories is highly symbolical since he cannot overcome the fallacy of the empire he has always worshipped and served. His death can be interpreted as the way he found to set off the final voyage to his island, where he would not feel as the Other, but at home. Ralph's father, contrary to his son, never crossed the sea towards the metropolis, but his crossing to the forest where he lived

impersonating Gurudeva represented a kind of freedom to him and the achievement of emotional balance, even if he was informed by the lady missionary's idealized image of him. It is suggested that Ralph, through his writing, will be able to deal with his troubled sense of identity and perhaps to diminish his feeling of being adrift, even if nothing indicates he will return to Isabella one day. Cardoso's protagonist remains in Portugal dreaming of a return to a free Timor, which is demonstrated by his integration in the cultural group created to disseminate the maubere culture. The comprehension of the lie of the empire will probably help him imagine an independent nation that is not based on mimicry.

A final reflection brings me back to Defoe's novel. Crusoe's crisis of identity is in great part overcome by the writing of his journal during his long stay on the island, which helped him to cope with his sense of feeling adrift. His journal was obviously conceived to be a testimony, but I believe it was firstly written in the name of his father, since Crusoe could never forget his father's words that sounded like a curse, belief that is reinforced by the character's reconciliation with God and the fact that the father was considered God's representative in the family. It is true that Defoe, by making Crusoe write in the name of his father, was creating the model of the colonizer to be, and that the character's crisis was solved with the creation of an overseas empire. I assume that Naipaul's and Cardoso's books, by addressing their characters' inherited crises of identity, enter in dialogue with Defoe's novel, to debunk the lie of the empire whose initial seeds Defoe's text symbolically sows. In other words, Naipaul and Cardoso write in the name of their protagonists' fathers in order to expose one of the everlasting effects of colonialism – a hybrid identity that is shaped by feelings of inferiority and/or deceit, and that clearly compromises the construction of independent and democratic nations – and to pay homage to all those who, like Friday, were taught to believe in the “paternal” protection of the colonizer and of the metropolis.

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RESUMO: Apesar de pertencerem a tradições literárias distintas, Luís Cardoso e V. S. Naipaul convergem no que diz respeito à reflexão pós-colonial sobre o que os impérios fazem aos seres humanos nos seus livros *Crónica de uma Travessia* e *The Mimic Men*. Ao centrar a sua atenção nas memórias de dois jovens ilhéus que cresceram em colónias pertencentes respectivamente aos impérios português e britânico, os escritores problematizam a crise de identidade enfrentada por gerações de colonos e que resulta da educação implementada pelo império e pelo trabalho dos missionários. Este ensaio pretende examinar como diferentes sistemas educacionais imperiais criaram e alimentaram um sentido de identidade imaginada, que é transtemporal e alienada, e cuja natureza artificial e fragmentada fez com que os colonizados se sentissem exilados tanto na sua terra natal como na metrópole. Através da análise da influência das figuras paternas nos protagonistas de Cardoso e de Naipaul, serão discutidas as consequências ideológicas e epistemológicas da mentira subjacente à missão civilizadora

ABSTRACT: Despite belonging to distinct literary traditions, Luís Cardoso and V. S. Naipaul converge in their postcolonial reflection on what empires do to human beings in their books *Crónica de uma Travessia* and *The Mimic Men*. By focusing on the memories of two young islanders who grew up in colonies belonging respectively to the Portuguese and British empires, both writers address the crisis of identity faced by generations of colonial subjects as a result from imperial education and missionaries' work. This essay aims at examining how different imperial educational systems created and fed a sense of transtemporal alienated imagined identity, whose fragmented and artificial nature makes the colonized feel like exiles both in their own homelands and in the metropolis. By analysing the fathers' influence on Cardoso's and Naipaul's protagonists, the ideological and epistemological consequences of the lie underlying the civilizing mission will be highlighted and discussed.