

Representations of East Timor in the Poetry of Ruy Cinatti: Colonial Rule under Crossfire

Reinaldo Francisco Silva

Abstract. Informed by current postcolonial discourse, this article highlights Cinatti's position on Portuguese colonial rule in East Timor, while shedding additional light on its economic, cultural, and ethnic abuses. Realizing, shortly after the revolution, that his warnings about the future of the territory were to no avail, he ceased to write about East Timor. To his dismay, the Portuguese and their politicians were completely enraptured by the taste of freedom, unmindful of Indonesia's readiness to step in for another period of colonial rule and annexation of the territory.

In one of the most influential works in postcolonial studies, *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha has noted that the objective of colonial discourse is to "construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction" (70). This is the political and ideological apparatus that Ruy Cinatti (1915-1986) wishes to attack in his poems about East Timor, now collected in *Ruy Cinatti: Obra Poética*, published in Lisbon, in 1992. Like Bhabha, Cinatti unmasks the Portuguese colonial administration's dealings with the natives of East Timor as based on "relations of power/knowledge," where the colonizer resorts to "those terrifying stereotypes of savagery, cannibalism, lust and anarchy which are the signal points of identification and alienation, scenes of fear and desire, in colonial texts" (Bhabha 72). Although Cinatti worked for the colonial administration in

East Timor, he did not endorse the régime's political agenda and practices. Having spent a number of years in this territory as a free-lance botanist and speleologist, Ruy Cinatti wrote poems about East Timor that not only attest to his deep knowledge of the native culture and tradition, but also express his respect and admiration for its inhabitants. With self-imposed censorship necessary for the purposes of survival, Portuguese writers avoided criticizing as much as possible the political régime openly. Such is not the case with some of Cinatti's poems written before the Portuguese democratic revolution of April 25, 1974. In specific passages, they contain a criticism of the Portuguese grip on East Timor. Within a body of poems that celebrates the beauty and natural wonders of East Timor lies a caustic voice that denounces colonial privileges. Such an approach, however, undermines Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's perception of colonial texts as centering on the "literary representations of the dominant" culture and how it interacts with its minor, colonized subjects. In these texts, Spivak contends that reality is filtered through the eyes and prejudices of the writer from the said dominant culture. Such is not the case with Cinatti. An observer of colonial excesses, Cinatti takes sides with those who are victimized by the ideological and political colonial model that Bhabha describes in the work quoted above.

In another classic of postcolonial studies, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said has defined imperialism as a process that involves "thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others. For all kinds of reasons it attracts some people and often involves untold misery for others" (5). As we shall see further on in our discussion, Cinatti's poems shed much light on the dynamics of a dominant culture and how it imposes itself on the colonized and oppressed. Without the rhetorical tools now available in postcolonial discourse, Cinatti's poems are a substantiation of Said's definition of imperialism and colonialism. Imperialism, Said claims,

means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; 'colonialism', which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory. [...] 'Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. (8)

Informed by current postcolonial discourse, the goal of this essay is to highlight Cinatti's position on Portuguese colonial rule in East Timor, while shedding additional information on its economic, cultural, and ethnic abuses. Realizing, shortly after the democratic revolution in Portugal, that his warnings about the future of the territory were to no avail, Cinatti's poetic output about East Timor suddenly dried up. To his dismay, the Portuguese and their politicians were completely enraptured by the celebration of their freedom, unmindful of Indonesia's readiness to step in. Before delving into these matters, it is important to provide a sketch of Cinatti the man, his fondness for the territory, as well as the ways in which his poetic output has been assessed by literary critics.

Ruy Cinatti Vaz Monteiro Gomes was born in London on March 8, 1915. At the time, his maternal grandfather, Mr. Demétrio Cinatti, was the appointed Portuguese consul in the United Kingdom. The poet often stated that he could trace his Italian and Chinese blood to this side of the family. At the early age of two, the child and his mother traveled to Springfield, New Jersey to rejoin his father. At the time, Portugal was experiencing economic hardships because of the instability prompted by the Republican revolution of October 5, 1910, which brought an end to monarchical rule. At the time, the United States of America looked more promising to his jobless father. In his discussion of Cinatti's poems that reflects the poet's restlessness and strong desire for traveling, Ruy Belo claims that this led "him to Timor today and to Oxford the very next" (146; my translation). It is possible, I believe, to trace such personal characteristics as far back as his childhood, stemming from economic conditions and the circumstances of life. Perhaps the most devastating experience in his life was his mother's death when he was only two years of age, shortly after returning from America. At first, he was raised by his maternal grandparents and, later on, by his paternal grandparents. In the meantime, his father remained in the United States, where he re-married an American woman named Flora Stern. Afterwards, they all settled down in Portugal and Cinatti joined them and his half-sister, Amelia. Over the years, the alienation between father and son widened as the son failed to live up to the academic and professional expectations of his authoritarian father. Cinatti, to his father's dismay, had always expressed a longing for distant islands, preferably in the exotic South Sea. His dream finally came true on July 27, 1946, when he set foot for the very first time in East Timor. He would be joining the staff of the colonial administration since he had received

an appointment as the secretary to the governor. Immediately upon arrival, Cinatti confessed that he had "fallen in love with Timor" (Stilwell 175; my translation), but he also encountered an island that had been completely destroyed by the Japanese during World War II.¹

Through time, Cinatti attempts to convince the governor and the administration that the basis for mutual understanding is respect for the native culture. All to no avail. With academic training in botany and agriculture received at the Instituto Superior de Agronomia in Lisbon and anthropology at Oxford University, Cinatti simply detested his appointment. It did not leave him with much time to interact with the Timorese, learn more about their culture, collect minerals and plants, or even to research the economic potential of the island for agriculture and forestry. As he delved more and more into the local traditions, Cinatti made the acquaintance of several Timorese, eventually coming to the conclusion that they were, in fact, people with real problems and not the exotic, carefree figures he had read about in the travel literature of his adolescent years. As Stilwell has noted, further evidence of his respect and admiration for the Timorese can be seen in his letter to Óscar Ruas, the governor of Timor, where Cinatti reiterates his disapproval of the administration's authoritarian and violent behavior towards the natives (Stilwell 190-91). To him, the people of East Timor are far more important than the economic exploitation of the island, including its sandalwood forests and other natural resources. An uncomfortable voice for the régime to listen to for a time, Cinatti may be seen as a postcolonial critic *avant la lettre* since he anticipates what contemporary postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said, Robert Young, and Ato Quayson have outlined in their discussion of colonial practices and abuses. A Timorese, Cinatti argues,

is an adult with a mind of his own, someone with a strong sense of responsibility and a well-defined social personality. I am neither interested in perceiving him as a case of survival nor do I consider his traditions as mere objects of curiosity. Despite being a more primitive people compared to us, and lacking in technological resources, this is neither evidence of childishness on the social scale nor lack of a psychological density. (qtd. in Stilwell 197; my translation)

Although Cinatti was working for the colonial administration, his outspokenness was not much appreciated and he often became the target of several attempts at silencing and retaliation.

Critical assessment of Cinatti's work is divided. While several scholars have noted some strengths in his poetry, they shy away from ranking it as anywhere comparable to that of, for example, Fernando Pessoa or other poets of his time or age. Only a very restricted number of scholars have found his writings worth praising. In the article alluded to earlier, Ruy Belo analyzed the nomadic and evocative imprint of Cinatti's poems and concluded at the end that there is something missing in his poetic skill. Cinatti's epigraph in *O Livro do Nómada meu Amigo*, taken from Ezra Pound, is, Belo argues, very suggestive: "It doesn't matter which leg of your table you make first, so long as the table has four legs and will stand up solidly when you have finished it" (qtd. in Belo 147). His poetic work, Belo concluded, is "still short of at least one leg" (152). Whereas his poetic skill is not the most commendable, I believe his ideas and castigation of colonial excesses are, as I will try to show, admirable.

Assessing Cinatti's first volume of poems, *Nós Não Somos Deste Mundo*, Adolfo Casais Monteiro contends that it is still too early to discern the ways in which Cinatti's poetry will develop. The volume in question, he argues, is the work of a poet who is still "very young" (287; my translation). In a rather caustic tone, Monteiro asks whether Cinatti "should have looked to prose as the instrument through which to communicate to us what fails to be labeled as poetry" (288; my translation).

Jorge de Sena, one of his closest friends, who resided in the United States and made a career as a teacher at the Universities of California and Wisconsin and as a prolific writer, viewed Cinatti as possessing a "quite original personality, where the Orient and the West" converged into the same person. Unfortunately, he cannot help calling Cinatti's poetic style "adolescent" (207-8).

In the preface to *Ruy Cinatti: Obra Poética*, the best edition of Cinatti's collected poems, Fernando Pinto do Amaral aims for a more favorable assessment of Cinatti's poems. He draws our attention to aspects that have been overlooked, such as the various phases in Cinatti's career, his themes, his restlessness of temper and how it marks his poems, his criticism of colonial rule in East Timor, and his Catholic fervor. Noting that the critical reception, at times, has not been very enthusiastic, Amaral argues that this was

influenced by various factors, some not of a truly literary nature, but, instead, stemming from a certain marginality that Cinatti embraced throughout his life, publishing his work in lesser-known presses or in restricted author's editions, in addi-

tion to refusing straightforward interaction with the dominant groups (for example, at the political level, whether those from the régime or from the opposition).

Other reasons for the difficulty in accepting his poetry, thus, lie in stylistic reasons, since the type of craft adopted by Cinatti (especially after the fifties, and even much earlier) did not match the one that the national lyrical taste had gotten used to. His frequent choice of a not very fluid and relatively abrupt syntax—with sudden jerks into unpredictable directions—as well as a prosodic rhythm that is rather irregular and elliptical, did not help much to enlarge the readership of this not-much-of-a-perfectionist-poet, who kept on writing profusely and, for that very same reason, does not hesitate to give little importance to stylistic and formal details [...] preferring, by all means, to safeguard his faithfulness to his initial impulses—that is, to inspiration—the spontaneity imprinted in each one of his poems. (14; my translation)

Joaquim Manuel Magalhães has focused on the role of memory in the poetry of Cinatti in at least two works. Unlike previous scholars, he has written more favorable impressions of Cinatti's poems. In *Os Dois Crepúsculos*, Magalhães refers to him as “the voice of this major poet of ours” (46; my translation). One of the major strengths in Cinatti's poems, I believe, lies in his portrayal of East Timor. When denouncing colonial abuses, celebrating the island's natural wonders, or praising the benignity of its people, Cinatti's voice is at its most appealing, thought-provoking, and contemporary.

That Cinatti criticized Portuguese colonial rule in East Timor is a given, but what was its underlying political philosophy? In what ways does it contrast, for example, with British colonialism? And which group of Portuguese colonizers is he, in fact, criticizing? As Peter Stilwell has argued,

historically, at the administrative level, Portugal had always known how to make amends for the economic and military weaknesses as well as for the distance separating it from East Timor. While taking advantage of the fact that the local ethnic groups possessed relatively sophisticated cultures, it had established with them relationships based on respect and participation rather than dominance. It is Cinatti who explains this in *Arquitectura Timorense*. (180; my translation)

Cinatti explains in this posthumously published work that, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for example, the Timorese could send back a governor they disliked to the Portuguese Viceroy stationed in India. In

1702, António Coelho Guerreiro, the first governor of Timor, conferred upon the Timorese nobility titles such as *Don* and military titles such as lieutenant and colonel. Stilwell further adds that in the twentieth century, the Timorese plebeians had been freed from their

feudal dependence and had forbidden the practices of enslavement among the local ethnic groups [...]. In 1946, contrary to what happened in the Dutch colonies in the South Sea, the Timorese viewed the Portuguese presence and the return of its administration as desirable. On the other hand, the example of numerous Portuguese who had left Portugal before World War II was seen as positive. They knew how to settle down in the territory and integrate themselves in the local way of life—such had been the case of Manuel Viegas Carrascalão, who had married a Timorese princess, or Pedro Belmonte, whose house Cinatti often called upon; he, too, was married to a Timorese woman. (180; my translation)

While economics—that is, money, riches, financial gain and exploitation—are at the heart of colonialism, sexual benefits are marginal although, no doubt, appreciated too. Marriages such as these, however, were strongly discouraged in, for example, the British colonial model. Although sexual desire is an undeniable reality of colonialism, as Robert Young has shown in *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, hybrid marriages were considered socially degrading according to British standards. Even in the United States, where the dialectics of dominant vs. margins is prevalent in the colonial pattern, slave narratives such as Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* highlight the dominant, white slaveholder's sexual exploitation of his black female slaves. In this narrative, the conventions of mid-nineteenth-century America do not allow the master to file for a divorce and wed his black female slave. Moreover, such an option would have never crossed Dr. Flin's mind. And yet he had fathered a few mulattos with Linda Brent. In the Portuguese colonial situation, hybrid marriages were tolerated and, at times, encouraged, not only for the sake of mutual understanding, but also for a more thorough control of the colonial possession.

This ambience of mutual understanding in East Timor, however, came to an end when the older colonial administration was replaced by employees from the "Portuguese colonies in Africa with no experience of the Portuguese colonial tradition in Timor [and who] had adopted attitudes and introduced practices that repelled the governor's young Secretary [Cinatti]" (Stilwell 180;

my translation). In a letter dated February 27, 1952 addressed to Serpa Rosa (at the time, the governor appointed to East Timor), Cinatti listed the atrocities, violence, gradual disappearance, imprisonment, and the poor quality of the food given to the natives. The famous statement, "You already know, Sirs. Whoever mistreats a native, mistreats me," which Cinatti uttered during a local wedding banquet, dates from this period (qtd. in Stilwell 181; my translation). While Cinatti does not view these administrators as adopting racist attitudes, he considers them, nonetheless, criminals due to their authoritarianism, abuse of power, and overall lack of understanding of Timorese native culture.

Having dealt with this important preliminary material, we shall now look at some of Cinatti's poems so as to ascertain his unique, first-hand poetic account of the abuses inflicted on the natives and the land by those administrators who had come from Africa. In poems such as "Timor," where he compares the island to a sensuous woman whom he wishes to possess because he loves her profoundly, he writes:

Antes sejas consumida
pela paixão dos que te adoram,
mulher-ilha!

Sedes de anjos na "tuaca,"
da minha língua ao teu seio,
vida minha!

[.....]

Ilha, ilha, meu amor,
foste minha moradia,
meu tesouro!

A minha segunda Mãria
na minha vida insolúvel.
Pátria: Deus! (481)

In the poem, "Huato-Builico, Etc.," East Timor is compared to an edenic paradise where spring-like weather prevails all the year round. This edenic bliss, however, is in constant jeopardy due to the colonizer's greed. One of East Timor's most precious natural resources, its sandalwood tree forests, are

being chopped down, as Cinatti reminds us in “Parâmetro Ecológico”:

Onde passei havia florestas
há tantos anos [...].
Hoje, a paisagem é um deserto
De caules nus.

Ninguém me distende o esclarecer
de tal desengano.
Havia florestas, um crescer
sobrehumano.
Pedras e troncos isolados,
Assistem sós.
[.....]
Um Podocarpus
vestígio de arvoredos
outrora extenso e imponente, solitário hoje.
Tamanha ausência
supõe anos de fogo arrepiando
montes circundantes.
Um Podocarpus,
sacralizado pelos Timorenses...
é testemunho
para os viajantes.
Meu gesto lento de fotografia
atesta cegueira aos governantes,
que olhando o que vêem ousam dizer:
Foi sempre assim!

A Natureza, que é manjar dos vivos,
responde por mim.
Onde havia florestas há só capim
e fome que a os vivos arrebatou! (520-21)

In this poem, Cinatti is criticizing the colonial administration's carelessness and lack of a reforestation plan. Whether it is fire or economic exploitation, the administration is insensitive to environmental matters such as erosion, issues that Cinatti draws our attention to in the notes he provides for this

poem (Cinatti 552-53). In "As Camenassas de Díli," the natural beauty of Timor, symbolized by its flower gardens, is being destroyed by the colonizer's frenzy to impose the artifacts of modern civilization:

Eram tão delicadas [...]. Mas a bruta,
 imbecil, canhestra,
 mentecapta alcateia
 de homens ciosos sem qualquer ideia,
 tomou posse de Díli-jardim,
 arrancou árvores, desviou ribeiras,
 transformou a cidade
 num deserto de casas sem memória,
 sem corolas caindo sobre a estrada. (262)

Because of such ecological disasters, over the years, the bay of Díli has been flooded by torrents of alluvium as Cinatti has shown in "Assoreamento da Baía de Díli."

The "scenes of fear" perpetuated by the colonizers and that Bhabha alludes to in *The Location of Culture* are reflected in the poem "Segunda Meditação":

Sete homens morreram com sete
 balas plas costas.
 [...]
 Os outros, algemados, circulavam,
 em volta de um pião,
 que, transformado em bicho, os enrolava

 no seu chicote,
 à unha os atirava até morderem
 o chão.
 [...]
 Um homem gritava:
 Eu vi a marca
 de uma bota cardada.
 [...]
 Os homens não rodopiavam,

não, como piões.
 Caíam, levantavam-se, caíam,
 Chicoteados [...]. (274-75)

As mentioned earlier, the ones responsible for this violent behavior are the colonial administrators who had come from Africa. Cinatti, in particular, abhorred them because of their sadistic, violent behavior, as the references to the whip, handcuffs, and bruises in this poem substantiate. In addition, they also delighted in disrespectful practices such as the ones described in “Cemitérios de Díli e Outros de Timor”:

São cemitérios de Díli,
 Santa Cruz—os outros não
 são mais do que nomes hoje
 lembrados por alguns velhos
 que viram ossos a lume
 pisados pela Administração— [...]. (540-41)

The poem, “Manatuto é a Vila. Lacló—a Ribeira” is, this reader believes, a good example of how Cinatti portrays colonial excess. Instead of devoting an entire poem to the abuse at stake, Cinatti voices his criticism within a poem describing the landscape in East Timor. The poem in question focuses primarily on a stream and the fields of rice, but within lies a brief—yet important—allusion to a colonizer’s manipulation of his authority in exchange for what he considers his sexual rights:

Santo que é coronel.
 Tem direitos, tem deveres.
 Os timorenses da vila,
 dão-lhe tudo, até mulher [...]. (278)

Postcolonial theorists such as Young maintain that “colonialism was always locked into the machine of desire [...]. Nineteenth-century theories of race did not just consist of essentializing differentiations between self and other: they were also about a fascination with people having sex—interminable, adulterating, aleatory, illicit, inter-racial sex” (181). This sexual encounter with the ethnic other is not framed within the conventions of a

colonial marriage celebrated between a white colonizer and a native woman. Instead, it is lustful and coercive, as bell hooks has contended in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Sexual fantasies directed at the dark ethnic other, hooks argues, have loomed in the imagination of white supremacists and colonizers:

Cultural taboos around sexuality and desire are transgressed and made explicit as the media bombards folks with a message of difference no longer based on the white supremacist assumption that “blondes have more fun.” The “real fun” is to be had by bringing to the surface all those “nasty” unconscious fantasies and longings about contact with the Other embedded in the secret (not so secret) deep structure of white supremacy. In many ways it is a contemporary revival of interest in the “primitive” [...]. To make one’s self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one’s mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power- over in intimate relations with the Other. (21- 23)

It is unlikely that Cinatti had such heterosexual longings, however, given his homoerotic nature.

In section forty-five of *Para Uma Corografia Emotiva de Timor* (1946-1972), Cinatti portrays the governor as an intimidating individual and mindless of the native’s needs:

Governador, não!—Astucioso
tiranete,
com maneiras de inocente.
Mente oposta ao realmente
Verdadeiro.

Na Fazenda, dele sabiam
ser pior que um fazendário.
“Um lápis, senhores, um lápis,
custa mais que muita tinta!”

Chamavam-lhe “figo seco”

os das “mil e quatrocentas.”
Os chinas diziam, cautos:
“Vale só meia gasosa.”

Terra devastada.
Gente esfomeada.
Lei escamoteada
Com vagares de cínico.

Quem puder desminta
este falatório
tão mal figurado
preito a um falecido. (505)

While the governor is depicted as a tyrant and a liar, he was also a miser who delighted in the natives' starvation and the exploitation of Timor's natural resources. “Propósito Inadiável” further illustrates Cinatti's position on the economic exploitation of the natives by the Portuguese colonizers. Unquestioning and with a sense of resignation, they accept their fate with a smile on their lips:

O que magoa é ver o pobre
timorense esqualido beber
água do pântano,
onde se escoam lixos,
comer poeira
e saudar-me, quando
rodo na estrada,
deus ocioso [...]. (264)

In the poem “Em Fatu-ahi” Cinatti depicts Díli as a dirty and unpleasant city. This is, in part, due to the colonizer's neglect of local construction practices. Instead of adopting local architectural knowledge, they build replicas of houses and buildings in Portugal, which are, in essence, inadequate for the local climate. Cinatti can only hope for the sea's assistance in washing away what he considers a complete eyesore:

Quero dizer

que quando chegam deitam fora as crenças,
o pouco, talvez melhor, do que traziam.

Depois, a valer, tripudiam
até mais não poder, constroem casas,
maculam a baía,
até ficar parvinhos, mas
prepotentes.

Que o mar a invada,
esse o meu desejo, inunde as casas,
arrume as casas, destrua a imunda
palhaçada urbana, urbanizada
arquitectura
errada até à náusea.

Que o mar a salgue,
desenhe uma estrutura que se entenda,
afim da natureza:

ruas estreitas e largas, sinuosas
como os veios d'água;
jardins, ou praças, torneados, lagos
em vez de pântano-pseudo;
ruas direitas, o quanto baste, apenas,
para que seja consciente a lógica;
e casas para viver,
climaticamente imaginadas,
como as timorenses,
sentidas pelos homens que lá vivem,
cidade sem pés nem cabeça,
que nela suam, mijam, mas resistem
fundo na vida. (270)

“Um Património Sonogado” criticizes those members of the colonial administration who took advantage of their position of authority and influence to steal the churches and their works of art. It also criticizes the administration's complicity, inattentiveness, and, at times, stupidity as the following example illustrates:

Derreteram bronze

de peças históricas
para moldar eixos
de camionetas.

[.....]

Património intacto
ao longo de séculos
foi-se numa década
por caminhos ínvios.

[.....]

Perdeu-os a História,
sorve-os a Política!

São braços quebrados
de Cristo na cruz
o que em Timor fica.

Item, o diabo

que complica as vidas...

Património a saque,

Lealdades findas [...]. (519)

Cinatti sheds further light on this issue when comparing the island of Timor as a whole, that is, the Indonesian side as well as the Portuguese territory:

As strange as it may seem, traces of the Portuguese presence are much stronger in the Indonesian part, that is, in the former Dutch section, because things were well kept there. In the Portuguese part, the military, the administrators, etc. stole everything: Luso-Indian statues from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ivory faces and hands, gold-enameled wooden altars, Chinese porcelain, all of which was obtained through the commerce of sandalwood with China. Especially after 1960, by those Portuguese who had read a few anthropology books and who had been struck by the appealing prices quoted in collector's catalogs [...]. I saw a statue of ivory and another one of Our Lady of the Conception, of Luso-Indian make, being exchanged for another one of Our Lady of Fátima made of plastic, one of those that looks like a music-box [...] along with five hundred escudos into the bargain! (qtd. in Stilwell 301; my translation)

All of these poems attest to Cinatti's love and admiration for East Timor.

As the Portuguese democratic revolution was already under way, Cinatti's poetry about East Timor became imbued with a sense of evil things to happen in Timor. This feeling of foreboding can be grasped in, for example, "Premonição," written on June 30, 1974 and "Vaticínio," written the day before. In the latter, the poetic voice points out that Timor shall never be despoiled by a revolution that has left the territory to fend for itself (476). In both poems, Cinatti is drawing our attention to the confusing political situation in Portugal as well as the abandonment of its overseas colonies during the process of transition and independence. Cinatti fears for the future of East Timor since the Portuguese and their politicians were thoroughly engrossed by the democratic revolution. Stilwell points out that, as early as March of 1954, Cinatti had warned the Portuguese authorities about East Timor continuing to "look very appealing to Indonesia" (qtd. in Stilwell 216; my translation).

In "Programação," Cinatti focuses on the argument that was taking shape in Portugal after the revolution, namely the view that it was not worth bothering with this territory since it had very little to offer economically:

Depois dos vinte e cinco de Abril
 nada mudou
 porque os homens não mudam de um dia para o outro.
 E assim assisto
 —exemplo, o de Timor no qual me sinto—
 à mesma económica postura
 de que Timor
 de nada vale
 e que portanto qualquer tipo serve
 p'ra Timor governar por mais uns anos.

Eu digo não! (476)

The poem "Protesto" further stresses the poet's dismay with another argument that prevailed in some political circles. Certain politicians said it did not really matter if the Indonesians occupied the territory. As a matter of fact, it would be a blessing since it was one less matter to worry about:

Não é o dinheiro que lá gasto,
 mal gasto,

que magoa.
 O que magoa é ouvir um responsável
 dizer que Timor é um luxo
 e portanto (por outras palavras)
 que vão pró diabo
 ou para a Indonésia os Timorenses [...]. (477)

The political situation in Portugal became even more confusing during the Summer of 1975 (usually referred to as the “Verão Quente,” or Burning Summer) and the subsequent months, with Communists in control of the country. “The political situation was dangerously heading in the direction of a civil war and instability was affecting the central government’s ability to take action” (Stilwell 373; my translation). The Indonesians took advantage of this opportunity to invade the city of Díli on December 7, 1975.

We have all learned about the violence, the gradual extinction of a people, a territory in economic shambles, cultural and linguistic imperialism, political imprisonments and mass murders during the Indonesian occupation, which lasted for about a quarter of a century, eventually ending in the apocalyptic month of September of 1999 after the Timorese had been allowed to cast their ballots for independence. The Timorese are now experiencing what Leela Gandhi describes as the “desire to forget the colonial past. [...] Postcolonial amnesia,” she claims, “is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make a new start—to erase painful memories of colonial subordination” (4). Whereas the East Timorese are eager to forget Portuguese colonialism, the desire to do so with that of Indonesia is much stronger.

As I hope this article has shown, Cinatti criticized the Portuguese colonial administration, but the Indonesian occupation and the atrocities it committed in less than twenty-five years will linger much longer in the minds of the people of East Timor. After all, the Timorese are more willing to forgive the Portuguese for their abuses during their colonial rule—which Cinatti so eloquently wrote about—than the bloodshed and extermination perpetuated by the Indonesians. Their choice of Portuguese for their official language is, without a doubt, meaningful. Moreover, Nobel Prize winners José Ramos Horta and D. Ximenes Belo have stressed the role of Portugal in keeping the East Timorese cause alive during Indonesian occupation. With diplomatic, financial, educational, and military support now in effect, Portugal is trying

to redeem its colonial record—and assume its historical responsibilities—towards East Timor. And if there is an afterlife as Cinatti believed, one may imagine him in heavenly bliss, smiling at the winds of change now sweeping through East Timor, proud of the country he was born in even if the former administration had exploited and abused the people and the territory he had loved so much.

Notes

¹ We may now argue that this episode foreshadows the Indonesian devastation of East Timor in the aftermath of the Timorese vote for independence in late August of 1999. Whether it was the Japanese retaliation, the Indonesian invasion, or centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, the ill-fated people of East Timor have known no other reality than hardship, suffering, destruction, and oppression.

Works Cited

- Amaral, Fernando Pinto do (ed). *Ruy Cinatti: Obra Poética*. Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1992.
- Belo, Ruy. *Obra Poética de Ruy Belo*. Ed. Joaquim Manuel Magalhães and Maria Jorge Vilar de Figueiredo. Vol. 3. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1984.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998.
- Hooks, Bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End, 1992.
- Magalhães, Joaquim Manuel. *Os Dois Crepúsculos: Sobre Poesia Portuguesa Actual e Outras Crónicas*. Lisboa: A Regra do Jogo, 1981.
- . *Um Pouco da Morte*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1989.
- Monteiro, Adolfo Casais. *A Poesia Portuguesa Contemporânea*. Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa, 1977.
- Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Sena, Jorge de. *Líricas Portuguesas*. Vol. 1. Lisboa: Edições 70, 1984.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1999.
- Stilwell, Peter. *A Condição Humana em Ruy Cinatti*. Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1995.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

Reinaldo Francisco Silva holds a Ph.D. degree in English and American Literature from New York University and is a faculty member at the Department of Languages and Cultures, University of Aveiro. He is currently revising his dissertation, *Representations of*

the Portuguese in American Literature, for publication. In addition to teaching American authors from the Realist and Naturalist periods, he also teaches contemporary ethnic fiction, with a strong emphasis on Portuguese-American writers. His publication record includes, for example, the following articles: "The Corrosive Glance from Above: Social Darwinism, Racial Hierarchy, and the Portuguese in Frank Norris's *The Octopus*" in *Frank Norris Studies*; "Representations of the Portuguese in Jack London's *The Valley of the Moon*" in *Re-Viewing Race and Ethnicity in American Texts*; and "'The 'Gees': Herman Melville's Quarrel with Racism" in the Proceedings of the 2000 International Comparative Literature Association Conference.