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MÁTHERESIS



In Memoriam
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V I S E U · 2 0 1 1

**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***

ADRIANA ALVES DE PAULA MARTINS

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*).