
East Timor: Language and Gender in the Articulations and Representations of the Nationalist Struggle¹

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The polarity between text and self and narrative and event cannot hold. In a political culture the self that narrates speaks from a position of having been narrated and edited by others—by political institutions, by concepts of historical causality, and possibly by violence.

—Alan Feldman

We, Timorese women, are always facing deadly weapons aimed at us ready to fire and we hardly have the power to say a word of help to the outside world.

—Mrs. Hau Nara, “East Timorese Women Scream Out to the World For Help”

I. Introduction

Post-colonial critics have written extensively on how colonized people and those who have been unrepresented use narrative fiction to express resistance and the existence of their own history. Edward Said writes: “The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future—these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative” (xiii). This essay is about an ongoing colonial war, the Indonesian colonization of East Timor, and the colonizer’s attempt to narrate and edit, through political violence, the history of East Timor as part of the “big, harmonious Indonesian family,”² in which state terror is integrally linked with the objectives and techniques of domestic political surveillance and control.³

The most conspicuous crack in the narrative of the “big, happy family”—the Indonesian national motto is “*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*,” a Sanskrit translation of the Latin “*E pluribus unum*,” or “Unity in Diversity”—is the independence movement in East Timor, which has shown a remarkable resilience in the face of overwhelming military and political odds.⁴

Benedict Anderson powerfully argues in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* that nations themselves are narrations; he observes that “in the modern world everyone can, should, will ‘have’ a nationality, as he or she ‘has’ a gender” (14). In most cases, the nation has been imagined as having a female gender, thus casting nationhood in terms of a contest between the colonizer and the male nationalist in their construction of the nation as a feminized object.⁵

This essay is an attempt to listen to voices which break from the dominant discourse of Indonesian colonial nationalism in East Timor. I will look at: 1) the articulations of the nationalist struggle in the Portuguese language, particularly in the public trial of Xanana Gusmão, leader of FALINTIL (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste); 2) the emergence of popular forms of resistance, specifically millenarianism and oral narratives, which are outside the discursive formations of the universal, secular, nation-state; and, 3) the representation of torture performed upon a feminized body in the protest poetry of Kay Shaly Rakmabeau. These articulations may still appear inchoate and incomplete due to

the absence of an organized form of political representation, but this is also due to the repressive censorship existing under Indonesian rule, which is sustained by an institutionalized system of political violence.

II. The Indonesian State's Counter-Insurgency and the Trial of Xanana Gusmão

The Indonesian generals should be made to realize that they have been defeated in East Timor. Here, today, as the commander of FALINTIL . . . I acknowledge military defeat on the ground. I am not ashamed to say so. On the contrary, I am proud of the fact that a small guerrilla army was able to resist a large nation like Indonesia, a regional power which in a cowardly fashion invaded us and want to dominate us by the law of terror and crime, by the law of violence, persecution, prison, torture and murder. . . . As a political prisoner in the hands of the occupiers of my country, it is of no consequence at all to me if they pass a death sentence here today. They have killed more than one third of the defenseless population of East Timor. They are killing my people and I am not worth more than the heroic struggle of my people who, because they are a small and weak people, have always been subjected to foreign rule.

—Xanana Gusmão, “Xanana Condemns Indonesia”

The political trial of José Alexandre Xanana Gusmão, which began on February 1, 1993 and concluded on May 14, 1993, was a tightly directed script authored by the Indonesian government. The power of the military, in particular, was felt at every stage of the judicial process in this trial. The judges, prosecutors, and even the lawyers for the defense were brought together for briefings by military intelligence authorities handling the case, and instructed in what

they should and should not do in the investigation and trial process.

The trial of Xanana, it is clear, was intended simultaneously to discredit and weaken the resistance in East Timor, humiliate the defendant, assert Indonesian sovereignty over the territory, and dispel international criticism of the Indonesian government's arbitrary use of terror by creating the illusion that Indonesia is governed by the rule of law. The precise charges brought against Xanana were as follows: 1) seeking to separate a part of the national territory from the authority of the state, which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment; 2) leading an armed rebellion against the Indonesian state, which carries a maximum penalty of twenty years in prison; 3) conspiring to commit both of the crimes specified above; and, 4) unauthorized possession of firearms, which carries a maximum penalty of death. On May 21, 1993, Xanana was given a sentence of life imprisonment.

As part of its counter-insurgency campaign to humiliate and discredit the independence movement, the Indonesian military has circulated stories in the press. Below I quote excerpts from one of those which was published almost on a daily basis during the course of the trial in newspapers such as *Jawa Pos*:

Behind his popularity as the boss of the GPK [*Gerakan Pengacau Keamanan* ‘Security Disruptors Movements’]⁶ FALINTIL, Xanana conceals a host of negative characteristics. This was revealed when he was arrested on November 20. This dark side became increasingly evident as more and more of his supporters were arrested. . . . One of the things was when Xanana “married”—or, more correctly, began

living in sin⁷ with—Luci Ximenes. Xanana's act was unacceptable both to his family and to his followers. The point is that when he took over the leadership of FALINTIL, Xanana established a rule that as long as they were in the bush, members of FALINTIL were not allowed to have their wives with them.

They were not allowed to flirt or to have a relationship with a woman because, according to Xanana, such things could damage the state of mind of his fighters. "Anybody who breaks this rule must be punished. The severest punishment is to be shot dead," said Xanana at that time. . . . It is well known that Xanana has had relationships with many women. . . . his libido is very high. To satisfy this need, Xanana often asks for contributions; he often asked villagers for women when his group was in hiding in places nearby. . . . Although Xanana's name was quite popular it seems that not all women who were offered to him accepted this voluntarily. Quite a number of them refused. But their rejection was in vain if Xanana wanted them since he would force himself on them anyway. This is what was experienced by Rege, the niece of Augusto Pereira. . . . On that afternoon, when he came out he was wearing only his sarong. She suspected nothing when Xanana and Augusto approached her and she only realized what was happening after Augusto grabbed her two hands, clamping his hand over her mouth. Then Xanana got onto the bed and

began to rape her. Although he almost always uses a condom when he has intercourse, it turns out that this has not been sufficient to protect him from sexually transmitted diseases. When doctors in Denpasar examined him they discovered that he has a sex disease in such an advanced state that it is very difficult to cure. ("Demonizing Xanana")⁸

Charismatic leadership and the idea of male power in Javanese culture has traditionally been associated with asceticism, especially with regard to sexual activity, and the ability to concentrate one's libido so that it does not become diffused and disintegrated. In Javanese culture, "the loosening of cosmological tautness stems from *pamrih*, which essentially means the use of Power for personal indulgence or the wasting of concentrated Power on the satisfaction of personal passions" (Anderson, *Language* 35). It was believed, for example, that the former Indonesian president Sukarno's demise was due to his excessive womanizing. As Anderson notes:

The essential difference between the heroes and their adversaries is that the latter eventually permit their Power to be diffused by indulging their passions without restraint, whereas the former maintain that steadfastness, that tense singleness of purpose, which insures the maintenance and continued accumulation of Power. (Anderson, *Language* 25)

The Indonesian government's counter-insurgency narratives must represent Xanana as the antithesis of the oral narratives which are circulated by East Timorese, and which describe his extraordinary supernatural pow-

ers, and his ability to fly and transcend human passions. It is for this reason that the government's narratives focus on his body and his sexuality. In contrast to the dignified, heroic, almost mythic image which characterizes the oral narratives, the government must represent him as a filthy sex maniac, infected with venereal diseases, GPK terrorism, etc. Essentially, the government's response is a counter-insurgency narrative which, by representing him as a traditional Javanese-type lord—*bendoro*—both in his behavior—lustful—and in his appearance—he is portrayed as wearing a *sarong*, which only Javanese, and not East Timorese, wear—it attempts to erase the cultural differences between Xanana and his Javanese colonizers. The trial is a “performance” of power, with Xanana being narrated, edited and *re-performed* as though he already is an Indonesian.

These stories are constructed not only for the East Timorese, but more importantly, for the Javanese, and for all of Indonesia and the international community, in order to legitimize and justify colonization of East Timor. It is not necessary for people to actually believe these stories; it suffices that they cast doubt on the figure of Xanana in order to precipitate a crisis in his legitimacy.

In response to what they believed were fabrications on the part of the government, East Timorese women sent a letter entitled “East Timorese Women Scream Out to the World for Help” to the United Nations and to various human rights organizations, which denied all of the allegations against Xanana: “After the capture of Xanana Gusmão, on November 20, 1992, our beloved sister Rege was forced to admit that she had been violated by Xanana Gusmão. *It is absolutely a false admission*” (Hau Nara 8; emphasis added). It would be interesting to know what happened of Rege, but nothing more is heard of her. On November 30, 1992, Amnesty International reported that two of

Xanana's female relatives, who had been arrested along with him, were raped in custody. Most likely, she was one of these two women.

On the first day of Xanana's trial, the judge, the audience—which included five Portuguese journalists—and the defense lawyer for Xanana, who was handpicked by the Indonesian government, were astonished when Xanana solemnly and cooperatively declared (in Portuguese): “Name: José Alexandre Xanana Gusmão. Citizenship: Indonesian. Occupation: GPK Terrorist” (“Xanana Mengaku” 78). Furthermore, Xanana, who is renowned for his fierceness in denouncing the Indonesian government for the past eighteen years, cooperatively acknowledged all the accusations made against him by the thirty prosecution witnesses, former FRETILIN and FALINTIL cadres, who had been severely tortured beforehand by the military to bear witness against him. The most significant symbol of resistance, however, was Xanana's refusal to speak Indonesian—although people who know him claim that he speaks it fluently—and his insistence, instead, to speak in Portuguese with the help of a translator. This resulted in prolonging the trial, by making the process painstakingly laborious and halting for the Indonesian court.⁹ Perhaps it was precisely for this reason—to make the trial as difficult as possible for the Indonesians who wanted linguistic expediency—that Xanana used the Portuguese language to subvert the judicial process and articulate his resistance to Indonesian rule and cultural hegemony. On May 5, Xanana, having written his own defense statement, consisting of twenty-eight pages which was suppressed in the trial, but subsequently smuggled out of East Timor, began to read it in Portuguese. After the second page the judge vehemently ordered him to stop, claiming that it was “irrelevant” (“Courtroom gag”), that “it

could only be presented in Indonesian” (“Courtroom gag”). To which Xanana replied that he does not speak in Indonesian, that he is not an Indonesian citizen.

III. Popular Forms of Resistance: Millenarianism and Oral Narratives

Outside the dominant discursive formations of nationalism and ideology is the emergence of more popular forms of resistance which have either been ignored or trivialized: millenarianism and oral narratives. The independence movement in East Timor has been, to some extent, largely portrayed by sympathetic left-liberal historians as “secular”—that is, non-religious, non-mystical, non-magical. In other words, it has been represented as a “modern”—i.e., “rational,” “practical,” and “realistic”—nationalist movement which fits nicely into the universal categories of the secular European-style nation-state.¹⁰ Although the role of the Catholic church in the resistance movement is crucial, very little analysis has been done on the relationship between religion and nationalism in East Timor, or indeed, on discursive formations outside religion and nationalism.¹¹

There is a long history of millenarian movements in Southeast Asia which fought against colonial rule.¹² Each of these movements had a millenarian leader whom people believed to be the saviour, the just leader who would appear after a millenium to save his people from injustice and bring about a utopian world. These millenarian leaders were said to be endowed with extraordinary supernatural powers—the ability to fly, disappear, and transform into different forms.

One of the most interesting aspects of resistance in East Timor is the emergence of the millenarian movement, *Movimento São António* ‘*Gerakan San Antonio*,’¹³ considered by the Indonesian government to be more of a threat than the military armed struggle

in the mountains, FALINTIL, which seems more “comprehensible” and “quantifiable.” Indonesian newspaper reports describe this movement as “fanatical” and “sinister”—ironically the same kind of rhetoric that the Dutch colonial state had used when referring to Indonesian millenarian movements against them. However, even leftist periodicals which are sympathetic to the independence movement in East Timor, such as *Tapol Bulletin*, have either trivialized or automatically subsumed the cosmology of the *Movimento São António* under the familiar discourse of “nationalism.”

The interview below is a short excerpt of an interview which I conducted in Indonesian and Portuguese in July, 1992, four months before Xanana’s arrest, with one of the main leaders of *Movimento São António*:

Q: Why do you think it has been impossible for the Indonesian military to arrest Xanana for the past seventeen years in spite of its overwhelming military superiority?

A: They almost caught him several times, but he suddenly disappeared. Once, the military surrounded him and almost caught him, but he entered a huge tree and disappeared into the tree. The military cut down the tree because they knew he was inside, but they couldn’t find him.

Q: Is he the only one who has this supernatural power?

A: No. There is a whole movement called *Movimento São António* which trains people to acquire this kind of power. We call it *gerakan anti-peluru* ‘anti-bullet movement.’ What we try to teach is that guns and bullets are not important, that we could keep fighting the Indonesians even without bullets. We prepare them to be highly disciplined, moral, and virtuous, to undergo rigorous physi-

cal training, to live in the jungle for a long period of time, to understand nature—how to blend in with the color of the trees, how to make medicine out of herbs, how to cross a dangerous river. . . .

Q: I heard that it is possible to shoot at you without killing you. Is this true?

A: Yes. After they have completed their training, we put them to a test—we line them up in a firing squad and ask the other combatants to shoot at them. Those who have successfully acquired this power cannot be killed. The bullets will bounce off.

Q: Do you use something like a bullet-proof vest?

A: (Incredulous laughter) No, but you have to know that not everyone can have this power. You have to be a highly virtuous and disciplined person. You cannot commit evil deeds or use this power to hurt innocent people. You have to take moral responsibility for this power because if used improperly, it could turn into an evil force—it could make you insane, make you commit suicide, put things on fire, kill for no reason.

Q: What does the training process entail?

A: You have to do at least four different types of *silat*¹⁴ every morning. But most of all, you have to have absolute faith in the leader who is guiding you. For example, on one occasion, Xanana and his troops were surrounded by the military and almost annihilated. Xanana told everyone to close their eyes and he would make them disappear. However, one person, who had seen him do this several times, wanted to see how it was done, so he didn't close his eyes. Everyone disappeared and

was transported to another place, except him. He was arrested immediately.

Q: Do you use certain symbols of power, powerful things?

A: (He rolls up both of his sleeves. There was a long, straight line on both his arms of what looked like very small wooden insertions on his skin.) These are tiny pieces of a sacred kind of wood which has been cured with special concoctions. We have different types of insertions all over our body. It protects us from getting sick and from bullets. The longer you've had them in your body, the more effective they are because it blends in with your body. There is something else . . . a special belt. (He untucks his shirt and takes off a two-inch wide old cotton belt.) Here it is. . . . The older it is, the more powerful. Inside it are all kinds of things—a bark from a special tree, a certain animal's tooth . . . this belt also protects us from bullets. But even so, this is not enough. Before we confront the Indonesian military, we perform certain rituals . . . lighting candles, saying prayers, reciting certain kinds of mantras. It is a combination of Catholic rituals and traditional belief systems.

Q: What kinds of mantras?

A: If we told you, it wouldn't work. . . . (Personal interview, Dili)

One might argue that if Xanana really had supernatural powers, then why can't he escape from prison, and why was he arrested in the first place? Indeed, the political rhetoric in the Indonesian press about Xanana's arrest is fascinating: "José Alexandre Gusmão alias Xanana ternyata cuma manusia biasa, sama seperti manusia umumnya. . . . GPK FRETILIN ini tak sedikit pun memperlihatkan tanda-tanda kesaktiannya"

'José Alexandre Gusmão alias Xanana turns out to be just an ordinary human being, the same as ordinary human beings. . . . This FRETILIN terrorist did not at all show any signs of his divine, magical powers' ("Setelah 16"). Yet the Indonesian military considers the legends about Xanana's supernatural powers much more dangerous than the man himself. For this reason, in its rhetoric the government downplays his image as a god-like, millenarian figure, and instead attempts to portray him as just an ordinary criminal. This also serves to divert international attention from the Indonesian government's punishment of Xanana's crimes. As the former Minister of Defense, Benny Murdani, argued in a public statement to the international press on November 26, 1992: "He is just a common street criminal, his trial will be of no interest to the international community" (Amnesty International *Urgent*).

A more insightful question is to ask why and how these stories about his supernatural powers came to be constructed as collective oral narratives, which give the East Timorese hope to continue their resistance, and the serenity and profound composure which they need in order to cope with the violence they have to face. While Xanana is represented to the outside world as a "modern guerrilla," or "nationalist leader," the stories about him as a "millenarian leader," which circulate in the creative imagination of his people, is radically different. The Indonesian government finds this creative imagination so dangerous to the maintenance of its hegemonic discourse that it reacts violently in the face of any challenge to it. This fear is justified, since as Gayatri Spivak explains:

Rumour evokes comradeship because it belongs to every 'reader' or 'transmitter.' No one is its origin or source. Thus rumour is not error but primordially (origi-

nally) errant, always in circulation with no assignable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency. (23)

For the East Timorese, it is a narrative insurgency woven throughout the past seventeen years with profound imagination.

IV. *Versos do Oprimido: East Timorese Resistance Poetry*

One of the most powerful forms of resistance to the Indonesian colonial agenda about national goals—the most prominent being national security, unity, stability, order, and development—is articulated in poetry. The poems I will analyze, written by Kay Shaly Rakmabean, are cited from an unpublished manuscript which was smuggled out of East Timor. Due to repressive censorship and the inaccessibility of print, poems like these can only be circulated clandestinely. In a short introduction to the poetry collection, entitled "Versos do Oprimido," the poet writes: "Como seria desejável que estas poesias fossem lidas, refletidas e compreendidas por todos os Timores e por todos os homens de boa vontade que lutam a favor dos direitos humanos violados em Timor-Leste" (1). The following poem is entitled "Às Mães e Donzelas do Universo":

Mães e donzelas do universo,
quero comunicar-vos por verso,
o suplício mais obscuro e mais atroz,
que os sanguinolentos Indonésios
desencadearam contra minha mãe
e minha irmã Timor;
Despiram-te à vista da multidão!
Ali, de modo infame,
fostes violadas;
E com fogo de "gudang garam",
queimando tuas "carnes sagradas":
a mama e o órgão sexual,
mormente o clítoris e vagina

cruelmente incendiados,
 tornando-os “cozidos” e desfeitos! . . .
 Depois, agarrando na baioneta,
 transpassam-te a vagina, logo escorrendo
 sangue;
 cortam-te as tetas e o clítoris “cozido,”
 metendo-os, à força, em tua boca
 inocente,
 obrigando-te a comer tua própria carne!

Torturaram assim minha mãe
 e minha irmã Timor . . .

Acto feito,
 doidamente a soldadesca grita:
 “Rasain kamu, kamu, yang ingin
 memilih kemerdekaan!”
 (Aprende de vez, tu, que queres
 votar pela independência.)
 Oh! Se ao menos as mães e donzelas
 do mundo inteiro sentissem tua dor,
 ouvissem teus gritos,
 ó minha mãe,
 minha irmã Timor! . . . (12)

While the poet's internal audience for whom he grieves is a Timorese mother and sister, his implied external audience in the poem is perhaps an international women's solidarity group, to whom the poem is directed, thus the title “*As Mães e Donzelas do Universo*,” and the poet's lament: “Oh! Se ao menos as mães e donzelas / do mundo inteiro sentissem tua dor, / ouvissem teus gritos, / ó minha mãe, / minha irmã Timor! . . .” ‘Oh, if only the mothers and young women/virgins all over the world could feel your anguish, if they could only hear your screams, oh my mother, my sister Timor!’ (29-33).

Before analysing the poem, I would like to provide it with a social context, by juxtaposing it to the allegations of rape expressed in the individual testimony of countless East Timorese women over the years. An open letter signed on behalf of the women of East Timor, entitled “East Timorese Women Scream Out to the World for Help,” addressed to “Dear Sir,” and

dated January 1993, speaks of the particular ways in which women have been victimized by the Indonesian state since the invasion in 1975. The fact that it was written by a group of women and addressed to an abstract “Dear Sir,” a powerful individual male in the international arena, is quite revealing about gender relations and political violence in the international order. In this letter, Timorese women have openly challenged the claim that New Order Indonesia is a “family,” with the state executive and the military in the role of the benign father:

We have faced the fact that our husbands were arrested and tortured sadistically, and then disappeared; our families disappeared on their way home. They were taken away and disappeared; our children were killed *en masse*, their corpses were lost and never returned. The most tragic action happened to our fellow sufferer, Timorese women, who were taken away then treated as objects of lust by Indonesian troops. We have faced the fact that the Indonesian government has tried hard to conceal these amoral actions from the world by means of their diplomatic channels where they could ensure world's opinion with their lies and tricks. They have also closed the doors for Human Rights Organisations to enter the territory to find facts of human rights violations. By doing this, they could have the chance to continue executing their brutal and sadistic actions against us. (Hau Nara 9)

In most of the narration, imagination, and symbolization of the nation as feminine, the actual, physical body of the woman (e.g., her sexual organs) is omitted. The nation as woman is usually imagined as a mother—an

asexual, virginal, abstract “mother” (for example, “Mother India”). The poem above, however, destabilizes the traditional symbolism. A mother is a sexual organ—“a mama e o órgão sexual” (12). It ceases to be clear whether or not the poem is merely a metaphor for a feminized nation, due to the physicalization of the sexual organs and bodily orifices of a Timorese mother and sister: vagina, clitoris, teats, mouth, running blood. Torture is inflicted primarily on her sexual organs, which are stripped naked, burned, and set on fire by Indonesian soldiers with *gudang garam* cigarettes (a popular brand of Indonesian cigarettes), cut to pieces with a bayonet, cooked as *cozido*, and forced into the woman’s innocent mouth—“metendo-os, à força, em tua boca inocente, / obrigando-te comer tua própria carne” (19-20). The woman’s body is turned into meat (“carne”), an object which is usually bought and sold in the market, and then it is cut to pieces and cooked as a dish—“agarrando na baioneta / transpassam-te a vagina, logo escorrendo sangue; / cortam-te as tetas e o clitoris ‘cozido’” (16-18)—to be eaten. When the cooks/torturers are finished, they threaten spitefully in Indonesian: “Rasain kamu, kamu, yang ingin / memilih kemerdekaan!” (25-26).¹⁴ The poet then translates this abuse into Portuguese: “Aprende de vez, tu, que queres / votar pela independência” ‘Feel this (take this) you, you, who wish to choose independence!’ (27-28). The poet’s use of the soldiers’ direct speech in the Indonesian language is a representation not only of physical torture on a woman’s body, but also of forced integration into the colonizer’s language through violence. The poet’s act of translation into Portuguese is a refusal of this integration.

The horrific reality portrayed in this poem compels an historical analysis. Indonesian state terror has many parallels with the kinds of terror used by the Dutch, who had colonized Indonesia for 350 years, and from whom Indonesia fought so hard to gain its own independence in 1945. In the Indone-

sian nationalist struggle against the Dutch in the 1940s, the most expressive nationalist slogan among the Indonesian *pemuda* ‘nationalist youth’ was “Siapa ingin merdeka harus bersedia dipendjara” ‘S/he who wishes independence must be prepared to be imprisoned.’ Ironically, now that Indonesia is an independent nation, it has in turn become the colonizer, speaking in the violent language of colonialism. For East Timorese (especially women) under Indonesian occupation, the message which is given is: “Rasain kamu, kamu yang ingin memilih kemerdekaan” ‘Feel this (take this) you, you who wish to choose independence.’ In other words, “S/he who wishes independence must be prepared to be raped and mutilated.”

Torture and the performance of power on a feminized body is also inflicted upon the landscape of East Timor. In the poems below, the poet gives an alter/native picture of torture and “development”:

“Monumentos de Massacre”

Ó jovem irmão Timor!
Jamais te glorias
com as obras do invasor:
belas construções de casas,
pontes, museus, monumentos,
estradas alcatroadas . . .
Lembra-te dos irmãos que tombaram,
sob a tirânica e sanguinária opressão,
em Mate-bian,
em Aitana, Crarás,
no monte de Santo António,
no coração de Taci-tolu,
em Santa Cruz . . .
Monumentos incomparáveis,
erguidos no teu Solo Natal.
Sim, meu irmão!
O preço de sangue dos massacrados
é mais caro que todas as obras do invasor.
Dirijas nesta verdade teus passos,
para não caíres
no logro astucioso do inimigo. . . . (14)

Ilha sem flor nem amor
E meu Timor que chora descontente,

vendo seus filhos sem beleza,
 esmagados e saqueados . . .
 Seus montes sem flores,
 seus campos sem milho,
 seus lares sem filhos,
 seus casais sem amores!

.....
 Quem suas flores poderá replantar?
 Quem suas hortas poderá cultivar?
 Quem seus lares poderá povoar?
 Quem sua dor poderá mitigar?
 Quem te compreenderá, meu Timor?
 Quem poderá penetrar tua dor? (15)

“Estrela”

O majestoso rosto do meu Timor,
 é uma pintura do celestial amor;
 na sua frente tão notável da história,
 cravada vê-se uma estrela solitária. . . .
 (11)

In “Monumentos de Massacre,” the “beautiful constructions of houses” ‘belas construções de casas’ (4), monuments, bridges, museums, and asphalted roads represent the repressive structures of the Indonesian state and the massacres in Mate-bian, Aitana, Crarás, Santo António, Taci-tolu, and Santa Cruz. Indeed, the most common rhetoric even among well-intentioned Indonesians is: “What more do they want? We’ve built roads, schools, implemented development projects, etc. Unlike the Portuguese who did nothing for 400 years!” (The same rhetoric had been previously used by the Dutch colonial administration in Indonesia.) However, the poet’s cultural memory of the glories of the great works of the colonizer—“glórias / com as obras do invasor” (2-3)—are not monuments, but massacres. The world witnessed the infamous Santa Cruz massacre on November 12, 1991 because it happened to be filmed.¹⁶ But the many massacres which happened before it, and which continue to happen, will never be known by the outside world,

and may be forgotten or ignored. Thus, the poem ends with a plea to his brothers and sisters not to erase this cultural memory, not to be bought-off with “economic development,” not to become integrated, educated, and socialized into the colonizing regime of the enemy—“Dirijas nesta verdade teus passos/ para não caíres / no logro astucioso do inimigo . . .” (19-21).

In the second poem the poet grieves with a mother whose sons and daughters have been severely tortured, disfigured, and mutilated—“vendo seus filhos sem beleza / esmagados e saqueados . . .” (2-3)—and asks, “When will it be possible to plant flowers again? When will it be possible to live in houses with loved ones again?” Amidst the disfigurement and mutilation in the poem “Estrela,” the poet imagines *one* beautiful face, an image of a beloved that is celestial and ethereal, which transcends the torture which may be inflicted upon a body—“O majestoso rosto do meu Timor, / é uma pintura do celestial amor” (1-2)—and a history in which is carved one solitary star of hope—“na sua frente tão notável da história, / cravada vê-se uma estrela solitária . . .” (3-4). In this poem, “the body fragmented is reassembled, and this act, the weaving of a new body through language, as much as any act of violence, testifies to the emergence of political agency” (Feldman 10). In the same manner, the massacres “em Mate-bian, / em Aitana, Crarás, / no monte de Santo António, / no coração de Taci-tolu, / em Santa Cruz” (“Monumentos” 9-13), which the Indonesian state presents as isolated incidents, are strung together—as in the traditional way of stringing flowers—in a re-presentation of the perpetuation of systematic state terror, massacres which are not isolated incidents, but a product of an institutionalized system of political violence. The poems and the geographic names are a testimony to the massacres which the Indonesian government continues to conceal. “No coração de Taci-tolu” (“Monumentos”

12) activates a collective cultural memory which belongs to every person whose loved ones were killed in these massacres. In a testimony to the United Nations, Constancio Pinto, a political refugee who recently escaped from East Timor, recounted:

At noon—about two hours after the shooting—I told one of the mothers who was looking for her son, to go to the hospital to see if he was amongst the wounded. When she arrived, one of the Indonesian soldiers said to her “Please go to Taci Tolu and see your son. The grave is still open for you.” (United Nations 2)

V. Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to provide an analysis of the articulations of voices which break from, interrupt, or disrupt the dominant discourse of Indonesian colonialism in East Timor. It is a preliminary analysis of the complex issues of Xanana’s trial and the articulations of a nationalist consciousness in the Portuguese language, the emergence of popular forms of resistance, and the poetic representations of torture and violence performed upon a feminized body. I have intended to bring these articulations and representations of the nationalist struggle together around the questions of language and gender—how language functions as symbolic resistance and how the contestation of gender between the colonizer and colonized inflects social reality.

The Indonesian government has enacted a law which forbids Tetum (one of several languages in East Timor, considered to be the unifying language of the nationalist struggle) and Portuguese to be spoken in schools in East Timor. It is evident from Xanana’s trial and Rakmabeau’s resistance poetry that the Portuguese language is used as a symbolic form of resistance, a refusal to

“take on” Indonesian language and culture, something which the East Timorese have vehemently insisted upon. As Frantz Fanon has written: “What then did you expect when you unbound the gag that had muted those . . . mouths? That they would chant your praises? Did you think that when those heads that our fathers forcibly bowed down to the ground were raised again, you would find adoration in their eyes?” (29).

Perhaps the most poignant example of resistance to the prevailing discourse in recent months occurred when one of the witnesses in Xanana’s trial, a young East Timorese named Saturnino Belo, was called by the prosecution. He himself had been sentenced to a long prison term in 1992 for his involvement in the Santa Cruz procession, and his parents had been killed by Indonesian troops years before. He was brought before the court in the first week of March to help prove the prosecution’s claim that Xanana Gusmão was the “master-mind” of the Santa Cruz demonstration, and presumably, he had given assurance that he would cooperate. However, once he was in the court-room, a remarkable thing happened; he stood up, raised his clenched fist in the air and, with tears in his eyes, shouted in Portuguese: “Viva Xanana! Viva Timor Leste! Viva Independência!” (“Timor Witness”).

The official response to this extraordinary act of defiance was revealing. Saturnino Belo was hustled out of the court-room, and some time later, a doctor appeared in the court to explain that Saturnino was “mentally ill” ‘sakit jiwa,’ and therefore not fit to testify. It is not known for sure what happened to him immediately after his removal from court; in addition to his likely having been beaten, it is known that he was taken to the military hospital in Lahane, and thereafter to Balide prison in Dili. There, he was placed in solitary confinement. According to sources inside the prison, Saturnino was told by his military captors

that, should he try something like that again, he would be shot on the spot. This is symptomatic of the vulnerability which the New Order state feels when its discourse is challenged, and a telling reminder of the ultimately violent nature of Indonesian rule.

Notes

¹I would like to thank Florbela Rebelo-Gomes, David Lloyd, and Tico Arenas for their support and insightful comments on this essay. This essay is for Saturnino Belo in Balide Prison, East Timor.

²These values are expressed in a variety of key terms and acronyms by the Indonesian government in their rhetoric. For example, a commonly used acronym is KAMTIBMAS "Keamanan Dan Ketertiban Masyarakat" 'Security and Orderliness of Society,' which reiterates family values.

³East Timor was a Portuguese colony for 400 years. In 1974 when Portugal hastily withdrew, there was a short transition period of semi-independence and finally, on November 28, 1975, FRETILIN (Frente Revolucionaria de Timor Leste Independente) declared independence from Portugal. A week later, on December 7, 1975, Indonesia invaded East Timor. The invasion, immediately condemned by the United Nations, is often likened to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait except, in this case, the international press remained silent about the matter for seventeen years. East Timor is one of two countries—the other is New Caledonia—which continues to be discussed every year in the United Nations Sub-Committee on Decolonization.

⁴For moving and informative accounts on the recent history of East Timor see Taylor and Ramos Horta. On the Portuguese colonization of East Timor, see the series of articles in the chapter on "Timor" in Davares.

⁵For an excellent comparative analysis on

nationalism, gender, and sexuality, see Parker.

⁶The sense of GPK is better captured, I think, by the English "terrorist," which evokes the "irrational" troublemaker, who is a danger to the community and society as much as to the state.

⁷The original phrase, "kumpul kerbau," literally means "living together like cattle."

⁸Translated by *Tapol Bulletin* from a series of articles published by *Jawa Pos*, a daily paper in Jakarta.

⁹While conducting interviews, I found that one of the favorite subjects and source of anecdotes about Indonesian colonialism are the problems of translation and the linguistic misunderstandings between Indonesian-language speakers and East Timorese. There is an anecdote about an East Timorese who had just moved to Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. After having lived in a boarding house owned by a Javanese woman for a month, his landlord asks him: "Anda kerasan di sini?" 'Are you happy here?' The East Timorese man, however, understood *kerasan* 'to be happy' to be *kekerasan* 'violence,' thinking that his landlord was asking him if he had plans to commit violent acts in the boarding house, to which he protested: "Look, I just got here, I don't know where you got the idea that I'm a violent person." (Personal interview, Jakarta)

¹⁰The seminal works include Taylor; Budiardjo and Soei Liong; Dunn; Nicol; and Jolliffe.

¹¹For an excellent critique of the "artifice of history," which continually invokes the secular, universal nation-state, and denies a subject position to the voices of ambivalence among Indians under British colonial rule, see Chakrabarty.

¹²These include the Samin movement in Java; Cao Dai and Hoa Hao, in Vietnam; Saya San, in the Burma Delta; and Sakdal and Colorum, in the Philippines.

¹³In Catholic exegesis, *São Antônio* is the one who recovers those or that which is lost.

¹⁴*Silat* is a form of martial arts and trance which emphasises not only physical, but spiritual power, and is practiced throughout the Southeast Asian archipelago.

¹⁵In Indonesian, using the pronoun “kamu” twice—“kamu, kamu” ‘you, you’—sounds very coarse and obnoxious. A polite form would be “anda” or even “mu.” When “kamu” is used in ordinary speech, unless one knows the person very well whom one is addressing, it comes out as very insulting language.

¹⁶The first major public demonstration in East Timor which was witnessed by the international community was the November 12, 1991 memorial procession for Sebastian Rangel, a seventeen-year-old church activist, which culminated in the infamous Santa Cruz massacre when Indonesian troops opened fire at 3,000 demonstrators, killing an estimated 200 and wounding scores more. After the November 12 massacre, East Timorese students in Bali and Java demonstrated in front of the Indonesian Parliament on November 19, culminating in the arrests of seventy students and the subversion trials of the leaders of the clandestine movement, the most prominent of whom are Fernando de Araujo, Joao Freitas da Camara, Virgilio da Silva Gutteres, Gregorio da Cunha Saldanha, and Saturnino Belo. See Amnesty International *East Timor* and Amnesty International *Statement*.

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