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The Desertmakers

Travel, War, and the State in Latin America

Javier Uriarte

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Introduction

The Desertmakers

Aufferre trucidare rapere falses nominibus imperium,
atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.
To ravage, to slaughter, to usurp under false titles, they call empire;
and when they make a desert, they call it peace.
Tacitus, *Agricola*¹

Desertifications

How is a desert made? How is it manufactured; where does it come from? The question might seem strange, even absurd. Isn't the desert a natural space, mere geography? Isn't a desert a monotonous, motionless landscape containing in abundance only sand, extreme heat, and absolute aridity? Yet the epigraph from Tacitus refers to the desert as a *result*, as a *product*. The desertifying agent, as he sees it, is imperial conquest. *Agricola* was his first work, published in the year 98. It is the biography of Gnaeus Julius Agricola, an important Roman general and Tacitus's son-in-law. The text criticizes the Roman Empire's exploitation of the populations it conquered. The excerpt above, the most famous lines from *Agricola*, appears in the text spoken by Calgacus, one of the chieftains of the Caledonian army resisting the Roman invasion of what is now Scotland, to criticize the imperial government.

The Latin noun *solitudo* means, in fact, "desert", a word that, like the Spanish *desierto*, comes from the participle *desertus*, derived from the verb *deserere* (to abandon, to desert), and which means abandoned, alone, empty.² So, the desert, in its very etymology, *was not always there*. There is the connotation of an outcome or conclusion implied by the participle and lost in the noun form. The desert is, properly speaking, a place that was *made* desert. In addition, the epigraph underscores the civilizing aspect the Roman Empire attributed to itself. For Tacitus, the empire is conquest, destruction, slaughter. The result of all these is the desert, which facilitates the substitution of one people for another. Thus, he questions not merely the euphemism "empire" but also what the Romans choose to call peace. The conqueror's focus on the outcome implies an effort to mask the destructive power that leads

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to it. Therefore, these words condemn the discourse by which war, as a *maker of deserts*, is made invisible, civilized, disguised as peace.

In several Latin American countries the desert has been understood as a primordial solitude, an elemental void.³ This trope was used repeatedly, first by foreign travelers and later by Latin American intellectuals; it was a construction, a necessary fiction for the establishment of nations.⁴ This idea of America as a *tabula rasa* in which history was always about to begin and had to be constructed, as a virgin space waiting for projects to be brought to fruition in it, was a constant in the literature on the continent from the so-called discovery until the first half of the nineteenth century. Yet the void, the *tabula rasa*, was the *result* of real and systematic practices of extermination. The questions I attempt to answer in these pages address the concretization of those plans. I argue that in the second half of the nineteenth century, the desert becomes concrete, tangible, present. The governing elites construct the desert they had imagined on paper in previous decades, when—in some countries—they were not yet in power. War itself is the necessary instrument of desertification.

This book suggests that the end of the desert as a representation coincides with the creation of the desert as a void appropriated by the state, as *solitudo*. In a beautifully written discussion of literary constructions of the desert in Argentina, Fermín Rodríguez reads the so-called Conquest of the Desert (1879–85), the war of extermination waged by the Argentine government against the indigenous populations of the pampas and Patagonia, as the end of the desert: “The space ceases to be perceived as a desert. The exploration of the territory, combined with the new techniques for representing the ground, transforms the desert into a fertile space, fit for colonization and cultivation.”⁵ Here an important clarification is needed: a necessary condition for this end of the desert as perceived by the state is the creation of a new void, one that previously existed only in discourse. The transformation of the arid or wild desert into a productive space first requires the transformation of the desert into the *deserted*. It is the concretization of what has previously been an expression of desire. Upon that void, which is now objective and indisputable, the process of modernization and consolidation of the national states will be carried out. The desert, in the second half of the nineteenth century, ceases to be a metaphor or image and takes on a tragic, absolute character. Needless to say, the ideas of modernization, order, and progress—like the idea of peace condemned by Tacitus—hide the true destructive nature of the process: as in the times of the Roman Empire, the desert is the void that results from war.

These pages reflect on the place that war as a generator of deserts—as a *desertifier*—occupies in the view of travelers in the second half of the nineteenth century in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines the term “desertification”

as “the process of becoming desert (as from land mismanagement or climate change).”⁶ It is precisely this topic that Euclides da Cunha addresses in his 1901 essay “Fazedores de desertos” [Desert-makers].⁷ The text criticizes the way the soils irretrievably lose their fertility first at the hands of the native populations of the Brazilian interior through practices such as the burning of vegetation that deplete the soils. These flawed soil management methods were later continued by the colonists and, subsequently, by modern man, who created more drought and more poverty. By appropriating the title of Euclides’s essay to construct the central argument of this book, I hope to give new meanings to the very idea of the desert, which I read as a product—and, paradoxically but fundamentally, a condition of possibility—of the consolidation process of the state bureaucratic and military apparatus in South America at the time.⁸ In the essay, Euclides worries—*avant la lettre* with respect to those who warn of the consequences of climate change today—about the effects of agricultural production methods on climate, denouncing their unsustainability and calling attention to the continuity between the antiquated practices of the *sertão*’s previous inhabitants and those of Euclides’s contemporaries. The exploitation of the land is a form of the destruction that identifies those contemporaries with the supposed barbarians who preceded them: “prolongamos ao nosso tempo esse longo traço demolidor, que vimos no passado” [we extend into our own time the long trail of devastation that we saw in the past].⁹ Thus, the destructive relationship with the natural space likens the inhabitants of the *sertão* to the colonists who have replaced them. Also in Euclides’s best-known work, *Os sertões (Campanha de Canudos)* [*Backlands. The Canudos Campaign*], published in 1902, which narrates the 1897 Canudos War between the state army and a rebel town in the northeastern part of the country, a similar destructive and barbaric logic is one of the elements that links the urban army and the rebels in the eyes of the narrator. *Os sertões* will be one of the focuses of analysis here.¹⁰ Though my research does not examine different ways of exploiting the soil, the desert-making logic discussed in these pages also caused destruction and death in the name of modernization.

The notion of the desert is incredibly rich, its meanings and connotations multiple and changing. While this richness is palpable in Latin America, and is at the core of this book, deserts, their connection with war, with resistance, and with states’ efforts to control nomadic or unknown populations, and to conquer territories, are present in many different contexts. The authors discussed in *The Desertmakers* make reference to the African deserts and to the Arab world in many occasions. And the Conquest of the Desert in Argentina viewed the US conquest of the West as an example to imitate. Historian Brian DeLay, in *War of a Thousand Deserts*, has studied the way in which the desert appears as a category in the context of the nineteenth-century Indian Wars and

Mexican-American War. He explains how the desert was understood in the writing of the authors he studies as sources: "in this context the term referred not to aridity, but to emptiness, silence, fruitlessness, desolation, to the absence of industry and improvement and of human mastery over nature."¹¹ In other words, this is equivalent to Tacitus's *solitudo*.¹² This is also close, in its rich connotations, to the English word "wilder-ness" (one of the many English words to which the Latin *solitudo* has been translated).¹³ In the chapters that follow many references will be found to ways in which the desert is conceived of in different contexts, and even continents. These references to North American, European, African, or Asian discussions about the relationships between deserts, states, and war mold to a certain extent the views and ruminations of the travelers discussed here.

Traveling to War

This book focuses on four travelers' perspectives on the phenomenon of war between 1864 and 1902 in South America. The texts discussed in detail are Richard Burton's *Letters from the Battle Fields of Paraguay* (1870), which describes the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70), a conflict in which Paraguay was utterly destroyed by an alliance between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay; William Henry Hudson's novel *The Purple Land* (1885), a narrative of the adventures of his alter-ego Richard Lamb throughout the Uruguayan territory and his participation in the civil wars that took place there during the 1860s; a variety of texts by Francisco Pascasio Moreno, who traveled to Patagonia a number of times before, during, and after the Conquest of the Desert; and Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*, which recounts a massacre of a rebellious rural community in the Brazilian region known as the *sertão* at the hands of the Brazilian state.

I examine the narrative effects of the different approaches taken by these four writers, concentrating on the transformations in the travelers' understandings of themselves and their starting points—both geographic and ideological. I read travel and war in tandem, during a critical moment in the processes of state consolidation in South America. What particular elements does the perspective of the traveler, constituted by—and *in*—motion, contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon of war? If war is essentially a spatial phenomenon, then approaching it from the perspective of travel writing, anchored in space and in movement, can bring a new light to its understanding.¹⁴ What place do these narratives have in the tragedy of state consolidation to which they bear witness? In the different ways of describing war in these narratives, what aspects of the conflicts appear most vividly? These wars led to the discovery of worlds that were unknown to the narrators, transforming their conceptions of not only the national space but also themselves as part of the

spiral of violence. As Dennis Porter has noted in an influential book on European travel narratives, "the most interesting writers of nonfictional travel books have managed to combine explorations in the world with self-exploration. They submitted themselves to the challenge of travel and, in the process, managed if not always to make themselves over, then at least to know themselves differently". And he adds that "there emerges a process of exploration and self-transformation through a dialogic engagement with alien modes of life".¹⁵ To this we might add, crucially, with their *disappearance*, given the particular circumstances in which the travelogues discussed in *The Desertmakers* were conceived (Porter does not discuss war). Some of the texts analyzed focus more than others on the narrator's point of view and interior processes, but it is always the military conflict that is crucial in determining the interiority/exteriority of the self (and the other) with regard to national spaces. Here we encounter disorientation, together with a struggle to find a center and to define the visited territory in relation to the homeland. The texts largely share a particular rhetoric of confusion, an uneasiness as to how, exactly, to perform the act of looking, and they constantly reveal a need to adjust or readapt the eye. The encounter with that unknown other, the oxymoronic inhabitant of the "deserts", whose uncanny nature makes it familiar and alien at once, ends up inserting that alienation into the narrator and, by extension, into the nation-state itself. In the process of getting to know themselves again, or knowing themselves in a different manner, that these narrators undergo, I am particularly interested in the contact with others, with those whom Mary Louise Pratt has called "travelees".¹⁶ *The Desertmakers* stresses that it is not just travel that allows for a better understanding of the phenomenon of war, but also the other way round: the discussion of the intersection of war and travel that I study constitutes an innovative way to *look at travel*, as it is considered in dialogue with the violent spatial reconfigurations and unexpected ways of looking at and moving through a territory imposed by war.

These pages suggest that there is no coming back from war: returning the gaze to the state, the place from which one has figuratively embarked, sometimes leads to no longer recognizing oneself in it. In exploring this idea, I work with the concept of *oikos* as it has been discussed by Georges Van Den Abbeele, for whom the *oikos*, or home—that point from which one departs and to which one returns—can be lost from view, making the return impossible: in travel, "something can always go wrong. The 'place' of the voyage cannot be a stable one."¹⁷ For these travelers, the experience of war produces deviations, dis-identifications, disorientation, an inability to recognize the self in the state or sometimes even to locate it. Traveling to war also means beginning to look with one's own eyes. In the first half of the nineteenth century, travel entailed the repetition of other people's commonplaces; the gaze was constructed

based on previous descriptions.¹⁸ One could even describe a territory in which one had never set foot, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845) being the best-known example of this. In an influential article Graciela Montaldo focuses on this fundamentally (though not merely) Sarmiento-esque manner of looking at the new as if it were familiar through previous reading and knowledge: "Sarmiento, with a blind faith in the written word—a 'scientific' and 'objective' way of legitimizing knowledge—finds in those texts a truth with which to describe his culture and his own territory."¹⁹

It was not necessary, in these earlier texts, to travel in order to describe a given territory. Reading and repeating or adapting some tropes seemed to be enough. However, war makes it so that it is no longer enough to read in order to give a precise account of a territory; in these cases, of a territory undergoing a radical and violent form of transformation. The travelers I study here highlight the clash between the readings that lead them to each battlefield and the way their own gaze is shaped by the conflict. War confronts the traveler with the insufficiency of reading. These travelogues, then, describe another sort of passage: one that moves from someone else's perspective to one's own. Though in traveling it is impossible not to quote—the texts by Richard Burton and Euclides da Cunha examined here are good examples of this—war nevertheless requires in no uncertain terms that one begin *to look*. Not all travel writing produces a disconnection between what is expected at the moment of departure and what's found while traveling; traveling does not always mean discovering. While it is nonetheless common to find travel narratives that question the assumptions of the self that leaves home, the estrangement that can be found in these texts produces a sensation of foreignness shared by all four of the travelers. This estrangement is a consequence of the experience of war and it calls into question the traveler's identification with the modern state (and in some cases with empire).

Latin American Modernization and the State

This book originates in the indisputable fact that war as a cultural phenomenon merits study in much greater depth. In general, military conflicts have been examined within the framework of history or political science; in the case of Latin America, few scholars have looked at the relationship between war and the state in literature or other cultural products. Ways of depicting war and evaluating its meanings and consequences are nearly absent from discussions in cultural criticism, especially for Latin America—which is all the more remarkable considering war's powerful presence in political processes in the region.²⁰

War is considered here in connection with the state. It is one of the premises of this book that the links between cultural production and the

state, specifically the role of the latter in the production of the former, and, in general, the discursive dimension of the state, call for a more detailed study in the Latin American context. For Max Weber, the state is defined as a system of domination: "a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence."²¹ To exert dominance, the state must have a monopoly on that legitimate violence, as Weber himself noted: "a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory."²² War is not merely a form of that violence but also a central mechanism through which the state obtains its monopoly. Complementing the well-known formula that "war makes states", set out by Charles Tilly in his 1985 article "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime", is the idea that, simultaneously, the state creates war to legitimize itself in its citizens' eyes and in this way consolidate its power and institutional apparatus: "the threats against which a given government protects its citizens are imaginary or are consequences of its own activities."²³ There is another element in this mutual reinforcement between war and the state that seems to be fundamental in the process of state making: the capitalist mode of production. Tilly mentions taxation as a way of obtaining the economic means by which war and the state can arise.²⁴ The European states emerged out of interactions between war, the state's tax-levying powers, and capitalist accumulation of wealth.²⁵ It is an open question how these factors interconnected in Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth century and to what extent Tilly's model explains the consolidation of the state apparatus in the region, but the political scientist Fernando López-Alves has asserted that many of the points mentioned by Tilly are pertinent to the state-building process in Latin America.²⁶

My aim in these pages is to talk not about the founding of nations but instead about the consolidation of the state's bureaucratic apparatus: what in Latin America has been called "modernization". The consolidation of oligarchic nation-states after a long period of unrest unleashed multiple changes in the economic, political, and cultural realms in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The region witnessed the complex transformation of pastoral and rural societies into modernized and market-oriented states with strong agroexport sectors. The regimes that characterized these decades have been aptly described, quite recently, by Juan Pablo Dabove as "the late nineteenth-century Latin American formula of rule: ostensibly liberal and formally republican, but in fact authoritarian, oligarchical, and decisively bent on a project of export-led macroeconomic growth, nation-state building, and social transformation according to Eurocentric models, inspired by positivist philosophy."²⁷ I am thinking here not of dictatorial regimes (though the Mexican Porfiriato and Uruguayan Militarism are two good examples of this)²⁸ but of a significant militarization of the state that was key in its

push for territorial control. In fact, Tulio Halperín Donghi explicitly associates the repressive nature of Julio Argentino Roca's first administration (1880–86) in Argentina with the Mexican Porfiriato,²⁹ while Ángel Rama explores the importance of the army as a modernizing agent in Latin America:

The entity that carried out the modernizing project and was able to make it viable was the army. This phenomenon can be explained another way: only through the repressive force available to the army was it possible to impose the modernizing model, since that model implied an economic and social restructuring that would punish indigent rural communities, thus driving them to desperate rebellion.³⁰

It was these populations that war would help stamp out for good. Therefore, modernization and repression worked together to achieve the military and economic objectives of the elites in late nineteenth-century South America.

I therefore examine the modern state as a militarized and capitalistic institutional apparatus, and not the construction of the idea of the nation. The focus here is not national configurations nor the perception or portrayal of the essence of the nation (the “imagined communities” discussed by Benedict Anderson), but the concrete effects of the state's intervention in the social, economic, spatial, and political dynamics of four Latin American countries.³¹ Oscar Oszlak, in *La formación del Estado argentino*, talks about the state as being characterized by a fundamental duality, constructing itself as a body that is at once both abstract and material.³² If the state is an abstraction, I am interested in moments of its materialization, the various ways that its authority (or traces of it) becomes tangible in the population and the territory. My analysis not just highlights how the presence of the state is felt in concrete ways, and in concrete episodes of violence, but also focuses on symbolic instances. I frequently employ the juridical notion of territory, as in the texts examined war is a territorializing operation whose concern is to establish fixed boundaries for the state or to assert its power over the totality of the country.

My reading focuses precisely on this moment of constructing state bureaucracies and the concomitant effort to push the Latin American economies into the international market, a process complemented by foreign capital's unprecedented penetration into Latin America. *The Desertmakers* suggests that war and state violence in the subcontinent at the end of the nineteenth century functioned as a manifestation of those nations' integration into the global order of capital. War is fundamentally an instrument of the state, but—as is apparent even today—it must be read in dialogue with economic interests that employ it as a tool. Françoise Perus has explained the economic characteristics of

modernization. At the end of the nineteenth century, Latin America joined the global markets through economies based on agricultural exportation, sending raw materials to industrialized metropolitan centers. At the same time, substantial flows of capital arrived from those same urban centers, to be invested in shipping and mining, and in some countries even came to control vital economic centers.³³ Ericka Beckman, in her insightful *Capital Fictions*, outlines the characteristics of the years focused on in her work (which include the period I examine here):

Between roughly 1870 and 1930, Latin American nations were brought swiftly—if unevenly—into the fold of global market relations, mainly as exporters of “raw” or “primary” commodities, and as importers of European and North American manufactures. At the height of European imperial and industrial expansion, the mainly independent nations of Latin America joined an emerging world order rooted in the primacy of the commodity form.³⁴

In the book, Beckman studies the way the language of the market and capital was adopted in the literature of the period, and examines this economic aspect of literature (as well as the literary or fictional aspect of economic discourse) in showing how certain “fictions” and tropes are shared by the language of the economy and that of literature. I would argue that my own book can be read as a way of exploring the other face of the same phenomenon, as an effort to explore the processes that complement those described by Beckman. Modernization was not imposed because it was inevitable, then, nor did it arrive to naturally or magically transform spaces, as the intellectual discourse that lauded capitalist progress claimed throughout the nineteenth century.³⁵

The process of modernization also included fundamental changes in transport and communication, which took place hand in hand with the strong immersion of Latin America in the global markets. The most visible change in this respect was the unprecedented growth of railroads throughout the region (and, notably, in the four countries studied here), a tangible sign of the penetration of British capital. Ángel Rama and Julio Ramos have studied the ways in which the new forms of circulation of goods and ideas, as well as the imposition of a bourgeois mentality in these years, fundamentally transformed the role of the intellectual vis-à-vis that of the journalist.³⁶ The newspaper became a new forum for the expression and circulation of ideas and opinions, as it significantly changed the experience of both readership and authorship. Newspapers were central to the ways politicians and public personalities debated wars in these years; some of the writers studied here wrote dispatches from war or heatedly discussed its causes and consequences in newspapers. In addition, the chronicle, a new genre that began during this period, and that incorporated new ways of understanding displacement, bears

witness to the professionalization of the intellectual, who felt forced to work as an employee of the newspapers, to which he frequently contributed.³⁷ Julio Ramos has described this professionalization process as the constitution of literature as an autonomous sphere, increasingly differentiating it from the realm of politics.³⁸

Relevant to the process of modernization in Latin America was the role that positivism had in the political and social struggles of these decades. Its close relationship with scientific theories of evolution and with racial theories impacted on the ways in which the state was understood in Latin America, the Brazilian flag's motto *Ordem e progresso* being perhaps the clearest example in this regard.³⁹ Positivism was a widespread presence in the intellectual production of these years, in particular informing some of the literary currents of end-of-the-century Latin America, such as naturalism. Theories that sought to legitimize forms of racial inequality in the nation went some way toward explaining the wars recounted in this book. At the same time, they informed the views on supposedly backward peoples—against whom the wars were waged—expressed by the authors studied. Their descriptions and understanding of nature were also greatly influenced by contemporary science: in fact, the label “scientist” could be applied—with no identical connotations—to the four travelers analyzed in *The Desertmakers*.

Modernization had, needless to say, specific articulations in each of the four countries studied. There has been a heated and largely still open discussion regarding the nature of the autocratic governments that ruled Paraguay practically from its independence in 1812 to the end of the War of the Triple Alliance in 1870. With important differences between them, presidents José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia (1814–40), Carlos Antonio López (1841–62), and Francisco Solano López (1862–70) consolidated the Paraguayan state, which was centralized, militarized, and early obtained the monopoly of violence over the entire territory. While Francia strictly isolated Paraguay from international commerce and power dynamics in the region (Paraguay did not participate in the frequent wars that devastated its neighboring countries after independence), Carlos Antonio López stimulated foreign investment in the country (the construction of railroads, the first to exist in the region, being the clearest example), which was therefore in many ways already modernized when the war began, although several elements of a premodern economy persisted. These regimes defended national sovereignty and were pivotal in the construction of a sense of national identity and nationhood, almost unique in the region at the time. The war signaled the end of this process, and completely destroyed the economy of Paraguay, which, deeply in debt and having lost the majority of its population and almost half of its territory, became decidedly a premodern and dependent country.⁴⁰

In Argentina, the modernization process followed the defeat of Juan Manuel de Rosas's government (1829–52), though Rosas had imposed

order and largely ended the turbulent civil wars of the postindependence years. Argentina is perhaps the clearest example in the region of the triumph of liberal ideas: this was a modernization process based on the stimulation of European immigration, openness to foreign capital, important urban reforms (Buenos Aires became known in those years as the “Paris of South America”), free trade, and the appropriation of vast tracks of land to be devoted to cash crops for export. A cattle-raising export economy which benefited ranchers (*estancieros*) went hand in hand with the forced proletarianization of rural populations to work on this land. All of this was finally accomplished during the 1880s. According to Oscar Oszlak, in the case of Argentina it was precisely the wars of independence and civil wars that impeded the establishment of the state in the early nineteenth century.⁴¹ The latter half of the century saw a crucial metamorphosis of the traditional caudillos, if not their utter disappearance. Oszlak mentions the shift from a struggle for hegemony among several simultaneously existing power centers to a definitive verticalization of power.⁴² Thinking of Latin America more generally, John Lynch discusses the different positions that caudillos occupied in relation to the national state and concludes that

the new states, products of economic growth and possessors of improved financial resources derived from tax revenues and foreign loans, could not tolerate the existence of political rivals of the caudillo type. The state now had a professional army, modern arms beyond the capacity of a caudillo, and railways capable of extending its authority to the farthest corners of the republic.⁴³

In Uruguay civil wars continued until 1904 when, during the governments of José Batlle y Ordóñez (1904–07 and 1911–15), the last rural insurgency was defeated, and a modern, secular welfare state was consolidated. Social unrest and permanent civil wars between the Colorado and Blanco parties characterized the postindependence years in Uruguay, after the country's first constitutional president, Fructuoso Rivera, took office in 1830. Modernization began in a systematic way only in the 1870s, with a succession of military governments known as *militarismo* (1876–86), when the state augmented its repressive power, the rural police succeeded in bringing order to the country's interior and protecting rural property, a major reform in education took place, foreign capital flowed into the country, and exports of meat, leather, and wool significantly increased.

Brazil has frequently been considered as exceptional with respect to its Spanish-American neighbors. This is so mainly for three reasons: first, because Brazil's independence was declared (in 1822) as the result of an agreement between elites and did not involve wars of emancipation; second, because the country continued to be ruled by a monarchy until

1889, when the Republican system was proclaimed after a military coup d'état; and third, because it was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888. Even if the period of the monarchy was a relatively stable one, when the state had a stronger presence than in the neighboring countries, only after the proclamation of the republic in 1889 did the Brazilian state become truly modern: the abolition of slavery and the importance that the military and positivism acquired were defining new elements in the country's social and economic life that characterized the period following the proclamation of the republic. Even though Brazil achieved a centralized government earlier than its neighbors, then, the years following the proclamation of the republic brought a scale of militarization and repressive power that were completely new, and the Canudos War was a key manifestation of this new militarized state.⁴⁴ Emília Viotti da Costa lucidly refers to the moment when the army was brought into the political scene: "Convinced that civilian politicians were corrupt, [members of the elite] understood that the army needed to adopt a regenerative mission, that of savior of the nation."⁴⁵ This perception of the army, and its central role in the political life of Brazil, might be among the most lasting legacies of turn-of-the-century Brazil.

War is in fact an important presence in the cultural, social, and political history of Brazil, in spite of the conventional wisdom. Brazil is not a warless country, and though it enjoyed relative peace compared to its Latin American neighbors, the importance of the international wars it fought, and of the internal rebellions it brutally repressed during the nineteenth century, must not be overlooked.⁴⁶ From 1825 to 1828 Brazil fought a long war against what is now Argentina, known as the Cisplatine War or the Argentine-Brazilian War, which ended with the intervention of Great Britain and the creation of Uruguay as a buffer state. Brazil then actively participated in what is known in Uruguay as the *Guerra Grande* (Great War, 1839–51) which was a succession of civil wars between the Colorado and Blanco parties in Uruguay, in which the governments (and other political factions) of Argentina, France, and Great Britain also intervened. From 1835 to 1845 there took place the Ragamuffin War (known in Portuguese as *Revolução Farrroupilha* or *Guerra dos Farrapos*), a separatist rebellion in the southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul, next to Uruguay and Argentina. This was the longest and one of the bloodiest failed wars of secession during the Brazilian Empire, in which Giuseppe Garibaldi fought in support of the rebels. Another important rebellion that also ended up being defeated by the government was the Cabanagem Revolt (1835–40) in the northern region of Grão-Pará (today's states of Pará, Amazonas, Amapá, Rondônia, and Roraima). In addition, the *Revolução Praieira* (Beach Revolt, 1848–50), a liberal and federalist rebellion in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, also defeated by the government, should be mentioned. Afterward, during the republican regime, together with the

Canudos War there was the Contestado Rebellion in the southern state of Santa Catarina (1912–16), and the Juazeiro Rebellion (1914), in the northeastern state of Ceará.⁴⁷

Four Travelers, Four Wars: Reflections on the Corpus

Chapter 1 of *The Desertmakers* examines *Letters from the Battle Fields of Paraguay*, by Richard Burton, which describes a journey from the River Plate through Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Rosario, and Corrientes until reaching the territory where the War of the Triple Alliance, also known as the Paraguayan War or (in Paraguay) the Great War, was playing out. Burton, who had been living in Brazil for three years as a British consul, visited Paraguay in 1868, and again the following year, when the war was almost over and the allied forces had taken Asunción, the capital city. By the time he arrived in South America, Burton had traveled to the Middle East, India, Central Africa, and North America, and had published more than 15 books. In *Letters*, Burton cites previous descriptions of Paraguay and the war, engages in historical and cultural debates, reviews contemporary works on the war, and responds mockingly to authors with whom he disagrees. In a way, he encapsulates a substantial portion of the previous intellectual production about the war and about Paraguay. In addition, Burton arguably stands as the most widely traveled writer of those who visited the South American country in those years. This gives his book extraordinary comparative breadth and allows him to situate Paraguay within a global context, and within South American dynamics, which he knew well by that time. Most important, however, he manages to construct an exceptionally complex and ambiguous approach to the war, something that, even today, most accounts lack. At the same time, he establishes an equally complicated relationship with the British Empire, which, as consul, he represented at the time but whose positions with respect to the war he does not follow: indeed his trip to the battlefield constitutes, I argue, an act of disobedience, a form of detour. Unlike many of his contemporaries' writings on Paraguay, Burton's account is distinguished by his exceptional independence of mind. Finally, this chapter studies *Letters'* place in the representational history of Paraguay as a desert, an unknown and difficult-to-reach territory of barbarism, as it discusses the ways in which the war rearticulated these representations, and to a certain extent brought an end to them. Burton alludes to different ways in which Paraguay will now be open to mapping and commerce, as transits through the rivers that surround the country will be possible without the obstacles previously imposed by the ever-present Paraguayan state that preceded the conflict.

The second chapter looks at W. H. Hudson's novel *The Purple Land*, which narrates the trials and tribulations of the protagonist Richard Lamb throughout the turbulent rural Uruguayan regions in the late

1860s, where he participates in an armed revolt against the government and, specifically, in a fictitious battle that will be the focus of my analysis. Hudson, born in what is today Argentina, is a rather exceptional traveler in that his fictionalized account, narrated by the Englishman Lamb, sees war as a form of resistance to the British imperial presence in South America. Hudson wrote about his native South America from England and in English, but while it has been repeatedly affirmed that his writing constitutes an effort to recover the lost world of his idyllic boyhood and youth, I argue that war and violence are pivotal elements in this nostalgic fiction. Therefore, in this chapter I pay attention to the way in which nature and wilderness are conceived of as violent and resistant. Finally, another element of the chapter are the connections between the understanding of travel and the exercise of violence. In other words, war—and violence more generally—influences both the way the protagonist moves through the territory, and his very identity. So the first two chapters of *The Desertmakers* deal with texts written in English by narrators who are foreigners to the conflicts they narrate (although Hudson's "foreignness" is extraordinarily complicated), and whose gaze in these texts enters into a productive, tense, and contradictory dialogue with the imperial perspective that is at the origin of their journeys.

The texts examined in the final two chapters are produced by travelers who at least initially adopt the perspective of the modernizing Latin American state. The third chapter analyzes various travel accounts by Francisco Moreno in the context of the Conquest of the Desert. *Viaje a la Patagonia austral* [Journey to Southern Patagonia] (1879), *Reminiscencias* [Reminiscences] (1942, posthumous), and *Apuntes preliminares sobre una excursión al Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut y Santa Cruz* [Preliminary notes on an excursion to Neuquén, Río Negro, Chubut, and Santa Cruz] (1897) refer, respectively, to journeys made before, during, and after the Conquest (*Reminiscencias* also includes rewritings of episodes recounted in *Viaje*, as well as writings from the postwar years). Francisco Moreno wrote as a collector and scientist whose descriptions of the territory and its peoples were molded in a national narrative of evolution (he founded and directed for more than 20 years one of the most important Natural Sciences Museums in Latin America). His view of indigenous peoples as remnants of the past, and his conviction that the museum was the only space that the modern nation-state could offer them should be read alongside the state's project of conquest and land appropriation that was taking place as Moreno zealously collected bones and indigenous corpses. At the same time, his attitude toward space and movement was also shaped by the fact that he represented his government in the tense negotiations with neighboring Chile over the necessity of establishing the international border in the Patagonian regions. He was, then, a traveler who sought to draw an exact border and thus read the territory in nationalistic terms. At the same time, his movements

through these supposedly deserted areas helped bring the presence of the state to frontier regions, where the state did not possess a monopoly on legitimate violence since indigenous communities and other local caciques controlled transit and circulation of people and goods. This chapter also offers a diachronic perspective that shows how Moreno's ideas about (and the strategies for representing) the Conquest of the Desert changed in his successive visits to Patagonia from the mid-1870s to the mid-1910s.

The final chapter focuses on *Os sertões*, perhaps the most canonical and complex of these texts. The book presents itself as a chronicle that relates the origin, development, and final massacre of the Canudos War, waged by the Brazilian state against the inhabitants of the town of Canudos (though the rebels called it *Belo Monte*), in the north of the state of Bahia. Euclides's unclassifiable text is also—among many other things—a meditation on nationhood itself and on the place within it occupied by the inhabitants of that region. The many references to invisibility and ruins throughout *Os sertões* evoke the narrator's inability to make sense of the spaces of war. Through what I call a rhetoric of bewilderment, the narrator represents his own difficulties in understanding his surroundings and the absurd massacre that is taking place. In *Os sertões*, the way Euclides defines or refers to deserts is linked to his representation of ruins through the temporal and tragic connotations attributed to both.⁴⁸ I explore various moments when different elements which had remained invisible emerge unexpectedly, reading these moments not only as suggesting the Canudos rebellion and its resisting nature, but also as symbolically referring to the meaningful revelations and discoveries that the narrator experiences as a consequence of the conflict and its tragic ending. The chapter suggests, furthermore, that in the writing of Euclides there is a profound and original conceptualization of spatiality and displacement, as his text pays an exceptional amount of attention to the way people, rivers, and even the soil *move*. He attributes cultural and moral values to ways of walking, of writing, and of waging war: he repeatedly remarks upon the symbolic connotations of linearity, as opposed to those of meandering or erring.

The texts by Burton, Hudson, and Moreno share many of the general characteristics of nineteenth-century travel literature, an enormously popular genre. They include explicit references to other travelers, incessantly imitating, questioning, or simply quoting them. There is, in these books, a complete self-consciousness of the conventions and commonplaces of the genre, which are alternatively (or often simultaneously) adhered to and parodied. All these accounts—including Hudson's fictionalized one of what was an actual trip throughout Uruguay—give precise, sometimes day-by-day details of the places visited and the people encountered; in short, of the way the trip progresses. Euclides da Cunha's book, while not a traditional travelogue, is based largely on

notions of space and movement. These notions inform the narrator's approach to the Brazilian backlands (*sertão*) and to the war through which the state appropriates that territory. *Os sertões* is also a book about a journey in the sense that it involves a brutal experience of learning that happens only when the narrative voice reaches the battlefields. This denunciation of a criminal state massacre is at the heart of the author's project, yet it is revealed progressively as the book unfolds, as the result of a terrible discovery that emerges only when the journey's destination is reached.

Despite the differences in the travelers' origins, all of them are foreigners in the places they visit. The narrator of Francisco Moreno's *Viaje a la Patagonia austral* and the disconcerted chronicler of Euclides's text both describe themselves as completely alien to the spaces explored. In the case of Richard Burton, foreignness is not a factor that impedes observation. Indeed, of these travelers, it may be Burton, thanks to his vast traveling and writing experience, who has the best tools to describe and understand the genocidal war he is recounting. While the narrators in Burton's and Hudson's works view modernization in terms of imperial power, represented by Britain (the nation with which their narrators identify and which they construct as the—deviating, imprecise, problematic—origin of their journeys), the Latin American texts offer narrators whose travel accounts have to do with the national state itself, from whose perspective they observe (or attempt to observe, or prefer not to observe) the phenomenon of war. For this reason, whereas Chapters 1 and 2 consider their texts in relation to forms of imperial politics and economy in the context of the consolidation of the Latin American states, Chapters 3 and 4 focus primarily on the internal dynamics of Argentina and Brazil, respectively, always positioning them in dialogue with other regional and national dynamics and conflicts. As a result, the first two chapters deploy postcolonial theory, and also discuss concepts such as informal empire and neocolonialism.⁴⁹ The Tacitus epigraph with which this book opens brings together the two general perspectives by asserting that it is always through an imperial logic that deserts are created. These pages will suggest that the logic that tells powers "to ravage, to slaughter, to usurp" was thoroughly assimilated and implemented by Latin American elites at the end of the nineteenth century. The British neocolonial presence is actually akin to what David Viñas called, in his groundbreaking *Indios, ejército y frontera*, "an implacable movement of internal colonialism."⁵⁰

These four wars were very different. The Paraguayan War was an international war, fought by four states; *The Purple Land* relates political unrest and revolts involving rural gauchos rebelling against the state in Uruguay; the Conquest of the Desert was more clearly a frontier war, while the Canudos War could be defined as a civil war, but quite different from what happened in Uruguay in that it involved a specific episode

of violence (in Uruguay armed revolts were the norm throughout the nineteenth century). But what I emphasize here is the important, though different, role these wars had in the consolidation of nation-states in the region. In addition, all these conflicts allow me to think of the ways spaces, and displacements through them, are represented. I pay attention to the ways they involved issues of belonging, complicating notions of exteriority and interiority. While some of these conflicts were conceived of by their protagonists as internal and others as international, it is important to stress that at this time and in these places the concepts of interiority and exteriority were deeply ambiguous. For example, if the Conquest of the Desert was indeed a frontier war, it is discussed here taking into consideration the very tense territorial dispute with Chile that Argentina was having in the same years. We should also consider the place of indigenous peoples in the process of state modernization: were (are) indigenous peoples part of the Argentine nation? I discuss the intense forms of circulation of people and goods, and the complex ways in which people identified themselves (or were defined by others) in southern Argentina toward the end of the century. In all these conflicts, then, war reconfigures the interior space by drastically erasing what was thought of as unassimilable or by incorporating what had previously been considered exterior. These are, ultimately, parallel forms of incorporation, of absorbing what the state claims as its own.

The Paraguayan War is particularly pertinent from a comparative perspective because it brings together the four countries visited by these travelers. Fundamentally, though, in this context it serves as a pivotal moment in the centralization process of each country's bureaucratic apparatuses. Although the army and the repressive power of the state became essential weapons in the modernizing effort at century's end, the Paraguayan War mobilized armies in unprecedented ways, and, on top of it, afforded them a great deal of power in governing circles. Indeed, the repressive and modernizing governments in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in the 1880s and 1890s were headed by veterans of this war and had the army as their primary source of support.⁵¹ In Paraguay the war generated the opposite effects from those produced in the allied countries: while it meant the end of a state that was already modernized, centralized, and militarized like none other in South America, it also marked the beginning of a silenced nation, condemned to oblivion. The modernization of some countries seemed to require that others be left behind, mired in dependence.

The Desertmakers, then, assesses four conflicts linked in their historical significance. Each took place during one of the last four decades of the century. They therefore represent four different moments in the process of desertification/modernization with which the century came to a close. By examining these four contexts of war, I trace a trajectory which starts with the initial moment that brings the four countries together in

Paraguay, moves through events of war that reveal a Uruguayan state in the final phase before definitive militarization, and ends with two conflicts, in Argentina and Brazil, that complete that process.⁵²

Travel Time, War Time

There has been a good deal of discussion about the homogenizing logic underpinning the thinking of most nineteenth-century Latin American intellectuals. Today it is practically a cliché to note that one of their goals was to achieve equal rights for anyone who was like them. There is no doubt that war, and the destruction of the other that it brought, constituted a significant step in that direction. In the countries studied in this book, the effect of war was not only the homogenization—whitening—of the countries' populations, but also the homogenization of *spaces*. The desert produced by the conflict is a space without topographical features, without barriers, where movements and their meanings can now be controlled by the logic of the state. War inaugurates, then, a new way of moving through reterritorialized spaces. My analysis of texts pays particular attention to *how* people travel, to the different ways of moving and traversing space present in these narratives and to their relationships to modernization and war. Yet little attention has been paid to the fact that there is a homogenization not just of subjects and spaces but also of *time*. That is, the state seeks to impose the temporality of the city and of progress across the entire territory. It is precisely the—violent, imposed—arrival of this new sort of time that has been called “modernization”. David Harvey has shown that the triumph of a mercantilist logic, which has as its only goal the maximization of profit, seeks to secure control over spaces and times.⁵³

The expansion of the railroad is without a doubt one of the most unmistakable signs of the process of modernization. The railroad brought with it, as Michel Foucault put it, “a new aspect of the relations of space and power”,⁵⁴ but it is a domesticator not merely of space but also, and in significant measure, of time. By creating a space free of obstacles and unforeseen events, travel by rail produces a homogeneous passage that allows the traveler to glide seamlessly across distances. Time, too, becomes predictable, as a journey's duration can be calculated beforehand. Railroads and maps go hand in hand. To the potential of maps to read, resignify, and conquer territories, the railroad adds the possibility of integrating them into the international market. However, the erasure implied by war helps both maps and the railroad to do the work of expansion. That surface that is now so easily traversed, those now reachable and exploitable territories, are in reality the result of a meticulous campaign of annihilation. Foucault has argued that “the railroads rendered war far easier to wage”.⁵⁵ Like the state, whose reach throughout an entire territory it represents, the railroad establishes a relationship of

mutual dependence with war: the railroad is an element that makes war possible, but at the same time it counts on war's desert-making effects in order to expand. On the back of those effects, the railroad transformed the ways time and space were conceived in the region.

Like travel, war is a phenomenon intrinsically made of time. Temporally speaking, war simultaneously marks ends and beginnings: it is the beginning of the realization of concepts and visions such as those of progress or modernization, but it also brings with it crucial erasures, significant absences. Referring to the process by which the elites construct the national state in the region, Miguel Angel Centeno explains, “it involves conquest, the eradication of cultures, forms of ethnic cleansing, or even genocide. A nation-state may arise even with a significant part of the population excluded from it.”⁵⁶

This is a book about destruction, about a destruction that generates deserts. In his stimulating *Rubble*, Gastón R. Gordillo explores processes of what he calls “destructive production” in the province of Salta, in northern Argentina. He works, as I do here, with forms of the destruction of space that are “geared toward the production of new commodities and places”,⁵⁷ but claims that warfare “is destruction as sheer negativity, in which the obliteration of particular places is usually not geared (in the short term) toward the production of a new place, but is an end in itself as part of a military engagement”.⁵⁸ War lacks for him all generating capacity, and thus is excluded from the variety of events that he studies as having simultaneously produced and destroyed space. *The Desertmakers* argues for a connection of war with newness and inauguration through destruction: the outcome of war is a *new* void. Foucault also notes the generative nature of destruction: “the law is born of real battles, of victories, massacres, and conquests which can be dated and which have their horrific heroes; the law was born in burning towns and ravaged fields.”⁵⁹ Destruction, for Foucault, generates the institution, the state.⁶⁰ What the accounts that constitute the corpus of this book share, in their various ways of narrating the destruction that pervades them, is an awareness of the loss provoked by war. The notion of “rhetorics of vanishing” will be used here to describe the way in which destruction is narrated in these texts. To speak of *vanishing* may be more apt for describing the moments in which the narrators hide the war, or instead portray their own slow-dawning understanding of its consequences. *Vanishing* and *extermination* are, then, two ways to refer to the same phenomenon, though the rhetoric of vanishing also incorporates an element of nostalgia that makes it more complex than mere extermination or the justification offered for it. Despite all appearances, progress and nostalgia are not always mutually exclusive. Quite the contrary—and this will be evident in most of the texts discussed here—nostalgic discourse *requires* progress. As Svetlana Boym puts it: “Nostalgia, like progress, is dependent on the modern conception of

unrepeatable and irreversible time. The Romantic nostalgic insisted on the otherness of his object of nostalgia from his present life and kept it at a safe distance.⁶¹ The absolute otherness that the travelers discover in the spaces of war, and in the cultures they see disappearing there, as well as that *other* time they build there in their writings—these elements are essentially linked to the notion of modernization.⁶²

The Past in the Present: War and Ruins

The journeys that I examine here present themselves as journeys into the past, to a temporal dimension characterized by primitiveness, even if the relationship between the self and that other time differs from book to book. Anne McClintock, in *Imperial Leather*, has referred to the use that imperialist discourse makes of what she calls “anachronistic space”: “Geographical difference across *space* is figured as a historical difference across *time*.”⁶³ The construction of the contemporary other as an inhabitant of another time takes on new connotations when produced in the context of war.

In *The Desertmakers*, the notion of ruin is used with a general and sometimes figurative meaning. While images of actual ruined buildings or landscapes appear—sometimes centrally—in all of these texts, these images are often read alongside elements that evoke some connotations of the ruin, such as the juxtaposition of notions of newness and antiquity, of past and present, or of creation and destruction. Ruins, considered as the leftovers of people and places that once existed, are also associated here with images of remains and read as—and alongside—traces of vanished things. I highlight the notions of remains and traces due to their powerful material component and their connections with the discourse of archeology and the activity of unearthing fossils, so present in the narratives discussed here. Particularly in the texts by Euclides and Moreno, I read the references to traces of ancient lives that need to be brought to the surface alongside images of devastated landscapes that prefigure war. The finding of ancient traces appears in these texts alongside the discovery of the corpses (also described with the word “remains”) or devastated landscapes that the contemporary wars leave behind. While conceptually not identical, then, in this book ruins, traces, and remains are associated, as their connotations of permanence (what Gordillo calls their “affirmative resilience”)⁶⁴ are emphasized over their evocation of destruction.

In *Letters from the Battle Fields of Paraguay*, Richard Burton not only visits the actual scenes of conflict, detailing destruction in nature and in a variety of objects, but also describes the ruins of Asunción after the pillage that took place following the allied forces’ invasion. Hudson’s novel describes, in its initial chapters, how the protagonist strolls through Montevideo, which had suffered the ravages of war for nine

years, as he collects traces of that war; he then visits a ruined fortress, from which he observes and proclaims his condemnation of the city; finally, in his wanderings in rural Uruguay he stops at a ruined house, pretending to be someone previously thought of as having died. In the writings of Moreno, he not only describes his work as that of the archeologist who excavates and finds ruins in the desert (by “ruins” he refers mostly to bones and petrified traces of prehistoric beings, such as mollusks), but also, after the war, returns to Patagonia to describe how these territories have become a catalogue of ruins: he enumerates the many fortresses that have become abandoned and destroyed after the Conquest of the Desert eliminated the resistance of indigenous peoples. *Os sertões* is perhaps the work of this corpus that most insistently makes use of the imaginary of ruins. In his book, Euclides not only sees the Brazilian backlands as having been created as a result of seismic activity, and thus as being already destroyed in their origin, but also describes the landscape, the body of the revolt’s leader Antônio Conselheiro, and the very city of Canudos as ruined. While he refers repeatedly to literal ruins (these references are present throughout his entire work, not just in this book), he understands ruins as bringing together the past and the present, as images of the corrupt nature of what may seem new.

The ruin is ubiquitous in Western literature, especially during the Romantic period. Though the texts studied here incorporate many of the conventional themes associated with the representations of ruins, the scenes of war offer a clearer illustration of the ambiguous nature of the ruin as a sign: just as the ruin evokes the inevitability of the passage of time, it can also be a symbol of persistence, of resistance, a way of preserving memory.⁶⁵ In one crucial aspect the catalogue of ruins presented in these texts deviates sharply from the nineteenth-century Romantic aesthetic: there is no effort to make the ruin picturesque. It is for this reason that Gordillo uses the notion of rubble, which lacks the harmony, stability, and aesthetic value of the ruin. He affirms that rubble indicates “the disintegration of recognizable forms”, while the ruin “is the attempt to conjure away the void of rubble and resulting vertigo it generates”.⁶⁶ Yet ruins are not always a synonym of serenity, calmness, or beauty. As I understand them here, they are in fact close to Gordillo’s characterization of rubble: they are forms of the void, forms of vertigo. They do not always convey clear or understandable meanings. They are never glamorous or purely beautiful. These are, then, *ruins of war*. Michael S. Roth understands that war contributes to the production of what he calls “premature ruins”.⁶⁷ “Photography”, he says, “framed the destruction of buildings as the creation of ruins”.⁶⁸ In these pages, I explore the simultaneity of construction and destruction contained in both the ruin and war, reading the ruin as an effect of war.⁶⁹

As consequences of war, ruins are *not* a result of the passage of the centuries. As Roth puts it, “It is one thing to aestheticize the gradual

decay of monumental buildings, another to aestheticize the effects of a disaster."⁷⁰ When they do not describe landscapes as already ruined, and sometimes as ruined in their very origin, these texts propose a sudden, violent production of ruins. There is an immediate relationship between ruins and war, unknown to the Romantic imaginary, for which a ruin was a sign of some ancient violence, or just of the passage of time. This immediacy of the ruin partially blots out its soothing character, its status as landscape. Instead, these "premature ruins" are already present in what is new.⁷¹ Paradoxically, the very idea of ruins suggests a slow destruction, one that battles with the obstinate presence of what has already been destroyed in order to emphasize the process that led to its collapse. In this sense, whereas war—like an earthquake—destroys in abrupt ways, the ruin is a way of extending that destructive element in time: the traces and meanings of these cataclysms become constant.

The images of ruins are an additional example of instances discussed in this book where war is alluded to, remaining nonetheless unseen. While war demands new ways of looking at (and of traversing) spaces, it also impedes *seeing*; combat hurls writing into the abyss of the invisible. Thus, the act of looking is shown to be as essential as it is limited. This book is, then, about strategies of representing war, and suggests that war, conceived of as concrete clashes between armies, tends to remain elusive to representation. In exploring the intricacies of war and representation, I continue a reflection that has long been present in cultural and literary studies. In his article "War and Representation", Fredric Jameson discusses the ways in which language seeks to approach the phenomenon of war in indirect ways, claiming that, while war is unrepresentable, accounts of war in cinema and literature concentrate on specific aspects of conflicts; he refers to these accounts as "the various forms the impossible attempt to represent [war] may have taken."⁷² In her influential *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry reflects on the difficulties of language to communicate experiences of intense suffering, paying special attention to war. She claims, for example, that "physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned."⁷³ In a study of war representations in US literature, James Dawes claims that war disrupts language in many ways, as he quotes Walt Whitman's idea that language could not represent war.⁷⁴ *The Desertmakers* explores these four narrators' approaches to war, and how they struggle to *say* it. War is unquestionably at the center of the texts studied here; and it is, at the same time, surprisingly absent from them. Burton describes scenes of the aftermath of the Paraguayan War, or narrates what others tell him about the development of the conflict, while Euclides most effectively makes war present in its signs on the landscape and nature of the Brazilian backlands. Moreno does not mention the war that looms on

the horizon while he visits indigenous communities that he describes as being on the verge of disappearance without naming the reason for such vanishing; or, in later trips, he describes places in which all traces of indigenous presence have now been replaced by railways or schools, again without making explicit how this came to happen. Hudson's main character, Richard Lamb, participates in a clash that he cannot describe, while in Euclides's text the narrator emphasizes moments in which he (or the state's army) cannot see the enemies, or, in his bewilderment, cannot make sense of what is going on as the war draws to a close.

Perspectives on War, Space, and Capital

In the pages that follow I focus on four specific approaches to war, displacement, and space, and on their aesthetic implications. This perspective complements analyses of Latin American wars conducted in the political sciences. For example, Miguel Angel Centeno's *Blood and Debt* has the indisputable merit of being the only book wholly devoted to the relationship between the state and war in Latin America.⁷⁵ He proposes adjustments to Tilly's theory, saying that in Latin America war did not so much make states, but rather *strengthened* them.⁷⁶ One of Centeno's central claims is that—contrary to what one might think intuitively—international wars were relatively rare in Latin America.⁷⁷ That fact might be surprising, but the quantitative perspective nevertheless elides the impact of these wars on memory, culture (and cultural production), and the construction of national imaginaries, key factors that my book seeks to consider. If it is true that there were not as many wars as in other regions of the planet (which is not, of course, the same as saying there were *few* wars), Centeno's analysis does not take into account the fact that, for example, the Paraguayan War was practically unmatched in its all-consuming and destructive power, even compared to the European wars of the twentieth century.

In many aspects, the four scenes of war on which *The Desertmakers* centers represent exceptions to Centeno's ideas. Centeno makes assertions such as that "control over faraway hinterlands rarely led to geopolitical conflict" or that "the sheer amassing and control of territory was not as central for Latin America as it was for Europe", or, also, that "with notable exceptions, the frontier was not a threatening place where the state's support was needed or where the new nation could expand and grow into itself."⁷⁸ It might indeed be so in general terms, but the four scenes of war on which *The Desertmakers* centers constitute important exceptions. The exploration of the texts, their authors, and their contexts in the pages that follow will put forward evidence to argue that the opposite in fact happened.⁷⁹ In any case, it is important to reaffirm that the states that came out of the push toward modernization in late nineteenth-century Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay were unprecedented

in terms of their territorial control, repressive power, and bureaucratic and military apparatuses, as was the Paraguay that preceded the War of the Triple Alliance. Also, in many Latin American countries, the second half of the nineteenth century—and perhaps the entire century—consisted of a constant battle for territory.

Working from a Marxist sociological perspective, Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space* (1974), has examined the ways in which space is *produced* and resignified through an array of cultural practices, and he has in fact insisted on the relationship between capitalism and the appropriation of space. The methods of appropriating and transforming spaces as well as using them are fundamental in his analysis of social relations. Although war has a relatively marginal place in his analysis, Lefebvre is clear about its importance in the emergence of the European capitalist state: “under the dominion of capitalism and of the world market, [violence] assumed an economic role in the accumulation process ... the centuries-old space of wars ... became the rich and thickly populated space that incubated capitalism.”⁸⁰ The state, war, and capital are elements that bolster one another in Lefebvre’s analysis (which is in this sense not dissimilar from Tilly’s). Violence is the origin of the state: “every state is born of violence, and ... state power endures only by virtue of violence directed towards a space.”⁸¹ This violence is wielded against nature itself, which is transformed in accordance with a new logic. It is important to highlight that what Lefebvre calls “production of space” frequently involves destruction. Gordillo has pointed out that the French sociologist conceived of “the production of space as a disruptive, tension-ridden process” and that “this destructiveness is particularly severe under capitalism.”⁸² Lefebvre affirms that “violence enthroned a specific rationality, that of accumulation, of the bureaucracy and the army—a unitary, logistical, operational and quantifying rationality ... A founding violence, and continuous creation by violent means ... : such are the hallmarks of the state.”⁸³ This founding violence is, for Lefebvre, inextricably tied to the accumulation of capital.⁸⁴ He therefore defines the state in *spatial* terms. This spatial quality of the state (and its ability to produce spaces) is what allows it to make its power concrete.⁸⁵ The conceptualization of war as a struggle over space that has as two of its principal protagonists the state and capital is one of the main concerns of my readings here.

The capitalist dynamic that spread through Latin America with remarkable force in the late nineteenth century in large measure explains war and the process of state consolidation that employed war as its instrument, so attention needs to be paid to Neil Smith’s question: “How does the geographical configuration of the landscape contribute to the survival of capitalism?”⁸⁶ Or, to be more precise, how does capitalism reconfigure (the geography of) landscapes in order to survive? Oscar

Oszlak also underlines the connection between order, progress, and capitalism in Latin America: “‘Order and progress’, the classic formula of the positivist credo, thus encapsulated the central concerns of an era: that era in which relationships of capitalist production began to spread throughout Latin America.”⁸⁷ War was a key element in the production of capitalist space that took place in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Lefebvre’s theoretical effort to spatialize the state, giving it concrete form and thereby discarding the notion of the state as pure abstraction, is key. This theoretical gesture is particularly productive in order to examine the writings of travelers, which largely deal with spatial phenomena. Focusing on displacement in looking at war as a space-reconfiguring practice offers a particularly rich opportunity for thinking about spatiality.

Gilles Deleuze’s and Félix Guattari’s notions of nomadology and the war machine have also informed my approach to these texts. Their poststructuralist philosophy agrees with Marxist theory in its critique of the logic of the modern state.⁸⁸ In their chapter “1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine” from *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), Deleuze and Guattari discuss the relationship between the state (the state apparatus, particularly in its modern sense) and the nomadic groups that oppose it. The war machine “is like the necessary consequence of nomadic organization.”⁸⁹ For this reason, it is always external and previous to the state: “it seems to be irreducible to the State apparatus, to be outside its sovereignty and prior to its law: it comes from elsewhere.”⁹⁰ The state (Deleuze and Guattari seem to be thinking of the modern European state) triumphs over the war machine by appropriating it, whereupon the war machine ceases to exist as such, having been domesticated: “the State acquires an army, but in a way that presupposes a juridical integration of war and the organization of a military function.”⁹¹ But at the same time the war machine as such is never fully appropriated, and its drive to resist (which is perhaps its primary feature) may be maintained.⁹² In the logic of Deleuze and Guattari, the appropriation and vanquishing of the war machine also constitute a metamorphosis, a renewal, one that does not cancel out the subversive power of the war machine but instead provides more sophisticated and surreptitious channels and modes of action. This is important here because there may be a limit to the state’s successful war-related actions, to its dynamics of appropriation and extermination. This book therefore pays attention to any signs of the persistence of other logics, ways of relating to space, and modes of production that the drive to consolidate state and empire at the end of the century was unable to make completely invisible.

What relationship does the war (and state) machine have with space? Deleuze and Guattari outline a distinction between the smooth space inhabited by the nomad and the striated space of the state. Striated space

is furrowed by lines that measure and divide it (for example, highways, roads, political borders, milemarkers, markers describing historic events or that indicate starting or ending points). These authors refer to “the difference between a smooth (vectorial, projective, or topological) space and a striated (metric) space: in the first case ‘space is occupied without counting’ and in the second case ‘space is counted in order to be occupied’”.⁹³ The state, a powerfully territorialized concept, cannot be conceived of without precise boundaries and a concrete expanse: it therefore seeks to codify territory, give it directions, points of departure and arrival, roads. Territory, for the state, is part of its power—or, rather, there is no state power without a territory to which to apply it. Later, Deleuze and Guattari remark on this spatial binary:

Smooth space ... has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. ... Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities. ... *They do not meet the visual condition of being observable from a point in space external to them.*⁹⁴

Contrary to what one might think, smooth space is not homogeneous, and the perpetual proximities are not linked by roads: it is the opposite of the desert created by war in South America. One could say, in Deleuzian fashion, that in the scenarios discussed here, war transforms the “smooth” desert into a “striated” desert. The visibilization project, for its part, seeks to create a homogeneous, monotonous, predictable space. Smooth space resists measurement, and it can be thought of as a space that contains proximities, but not points of arrival or departure: a space where there is movement, but no roads.

A third key opposition here is between the city and its outside, which implies the identification between the space of the city and the space of the state. Deleuze and Guattari contrast the deterritorializing logic of the *nomos* with the reterritorializing *polis*. The city is the place that seeks to channel, organize, and measure movement, where transit is diagrammed and planned. There, distances are always measured in minutes or in blocks. And in its relationship with the outside, the city is often a point of arrival or departure from which it is possible to read—and circumscribe, Deleuze and Guattari would say—movement. I read these wars as moments in which the decisive political authority of the city is imposed on the countryside, on the interior. Through war, economic channels are configured that will make the countryside dependent on the capital city.⁹⁵ With the exception of Hudson, for whom the opposition country-city is nonetheless central, all the travelers studied here have an eminently urban perspective.

On Deserts and Frontiers: Thinking Exteriority

For Deleuze and Guattari, the state is defined territorially in opposition to an outside that it itself constructs, yet at the same time seeks to internalize:

the State itself has always been in a relation with an outside and is inconceivable independent of that relationship. The law of the State is not the law of All or Nothing ... but that of interior and exterior. The State is sovereignty. But sovereignty only reigns over what it is capable of internalizing, of appropriating locally.⁹⁶

The state has a complex relationship with that exterior, which it seeks to obliterate and appropriate but without which it cannot be conceived. In nineteenth-century Latin America, these internalizing dynamics are embodied in the image of the desert. The war scenes examined here are key moments in which the state, in an absurd discourse, wages war on a desert, only to establish another desert in that space. The difference between that supposedly enemy desert and the void that replaces it lies in the shift from the external nature of the former to the interiority of the latter: the result of war is a void that is no longer alien to the state. War, in making legible what has been discursively constructed as a desert, turns out to be a crucial internalization tool. In an activity typical of imperial conquest, the state swallows up territories and populations: war is pure deglutition.

In these scenes of conflict, the notion of the desert has some elements in common with the Spanish idea of *frontera*, meaning both “border” and “frontier”. From the perspective of the state, the border, as a condition of the state’s existence, is inherently and necessarily immobile. The frontier, on the other hand, is a place of exchanges where movement is multiple, constant, and impossible to measure. It is significant that in Spanish both meanings are encapsulated in a single word, and, for this reason, the distinctions between them are sometimes blurry: the closeness between border and frontier is embedded in language. At the same time, the frontier is closer to the image of the desert, and the two are often treated as equivalent in state discourse. The (blurry) distinction between the desert and the frontier therefore resides in the fact that the desert is described as something *totally external*, a space that is completely detached from the state. The frontier, in contrast, is an intermediate, fluid space, but one that is similar to the desert in its non-participation in state efforts to monopolize violence, and so is deemed similarly threatening.⁹⁷ While *desert* connotes lack, stillness, and void, *frontier* suggests action, transit, and movement (in this sense, it is closer to the very idea of war). The conflicts examined here take place in a setting that is sometimes a borderland (what one might call the *external*

border—that is, with other national states) and at other times a frontier (the *internal border*, that murky space, in theory within the national borders, where the state does not have a monopoly on violence, a space where other laws hold sway). Wars require the notion of danger implicit in both connotations of *frontera*.

The importance of defining boundaries with other states was a central and urgent concern in this period, as is evidenced in the origin of the Paraguayan War, the anxiety over the border with Chile in Argentina, and the equivalent anxiety regarding the Amazon in Brazil (and many other South American countries), during the same years. It was vital to definitively and precisely establish the dimensions of the territory in which the state would exert its sovereignty—a territory that contained inexactitudes, blurry and disputed spaces. Two of the writers studied here, Moreno and Euclides, represented their states in international debates and commissions regarding the national borders of their countries with Chile and Peru, respectively. But precisely because both border and frontier are constructed as dangerous by the state, they appeal to travelers. In the contexts studied, states constructed instability in the border and frontier regions, where the state's inability to "see" provoked uncertainty and paranoia, thus producing a continuum between the two kinds of border.⁹⁸

The enemies concocted by the state, who usually live in these so-called deserts, are, like the territory itself, characterized by a certain exteriority, as is evident in the texts examined here.⁹⁹ Although most of the conflicts studied here are not international, borders at the time were blurry or disputed. The very status of these territories, their exteriority or interiority with respect to the state, was at the heart of the conflicts and was largely decided through them; these are wars waged against an *exteriority* that is constructed as dangerous in discourse.

Forms of the Visible

In *Seeing Like a State* James C. Scott studies different cases of state manipulation of nature and people. I am also interested here in the forms in which the territories and the peoples are seen by the state; this is why I focus on the technologies of seeing present in the texts I study. In the opening chapters, Scott offers a historical discussion of forms in which state-sponsored ways of transforming nature to make it "legible" took place in various regions (mainly in Europe). The state seeks to sedentarize its population through the parallel processes of legibility and simplification. The former is necessary for the state to be able to manipulate its subjects:

Any substantial state intervention in society—to vaccinate a population, produce goods, mobilize labor, tax people and their property, ...

conscript soldiers, enforce sanitation standards ...—requires the invention of units that are visible. The units in question might be citizens, villages, trees, fields. ... Whatever the units being manipulated, they must be organized in a manner that permits them to be identified, observed, recorded, counted, aggregated, and monitored. The degree of knowledge required would have to be roughly commensurate with the depth of the intervention. In other words, one might say that the greater the manipulation envisaged, the greater the legibility required to effect it.¹⁰⁰

If war was a tool for making territory "legible" in Latin America, as I claim here, it is because the interventions that Scott enumerates were not possible with certain groups, perhaps because those subjects did not perceive themselves as *state subjects*. Societies, from the modern state's perspective, need to be remade before they can be quantified or measured. Legibility comes first, manipulation being a consequence. Building on what Scott suggests, we can think of war as a necessary legibilizing tool for achieving a kind of radical manipulation: extermination (that is, the condition that allows *other* populations, who would occupy those lands, to be manipulated). What the states studied here needed initially to discern was, precisely, the void.

Attempts to make territory visible were, Scott claims, "undermined by intra-state rivalries, technical obstacles and, above all, the resistance of [the state's] subjects".¹⁰¹ The state strives to improve the levying of taxes, prevent uprisings, and organize the drafting of its men into the military in the simplest manner possible. To that end, it engages in an effort to make individuals and spaces legible so it can effectively control people's movements through its territory. Organizing individuals in order to conduct a census and establish a tangible and concrete relationship between them and the state—that seems to be the state's aim. The idea of simplification, for its part, is associated by Scott with the concept of a uniform and homogeneous citizenry, an idea that is also present in the concerns of Latin American intellectual elites throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁰²

The concepts of legibility and simplification are productive for thinking about war, hence the recourse here to metaphors related to issues of (in)visibility; in these pages, I will discuss ways of seeing and representing war and territories, and I will point out moments when I find limits to the simplifying gaze, and to the ability to make sense of war and massacres. The desert and the frontier are "foggy" spaces that the gaze of the state is unable to fathom, places the state cannot understand in order to subsequently dominate them. Scott speaks of the tragic consequences of "well-intended schemes to improve the human condition", a phrase that cannot refer to the phenomenon of war.¹⁰³ In Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, the possibility of reading a territory and

its inhabitants implied a combination of ordering and erasure, organization and elimination. This is, in a way, a translation of the motto of President Roca, the primary architect of the Conquest of the Desert: “peace [tacitly, war] and administration”.¹⁰⁴ Thus, war implies a successive but complementary process of desertification, legibilization, and appropriation, three elements in a single successful endeavor. In this context, the simplifying and homogenizing dynamics of the state and the market constituted a single project.

On 2 September 2018, a fire burnt to the ground Brazil’s National Museum in Rio de Janeiro, destroying the vast majority of its collections. The two-centuries-old museum (it had been established in 1818) was the country’s oldest scientific institution. It was the largest natural history museum in Latin America, containing millions of very diverse items, including pieces that had belonged to the Emperor Dom Pedro I of Brazil (1822–31); text and sound materials documenting indigenous languages of Brazil, many of them disappeared; and the skeleton of Luzia, the oldest one ever found in the Western hemisphere (parts of this skeleton were eventually recovered). In an interview on the Portuguese newspaper *Público*, anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro referred to this devastating fire, and to the utter neglect to which the museum (and the country’s cultural patrimony in general) had been condemned, using an expression particularly pertinent to this book: “In Brazil, to govern is to create deserts.” He also stated that the ruins of the museum should remain as such, “as *memento mori*, as the memory of death, of dead things, of dead peoples, of dead archives”.¹⁰⁵ These are very present echoes of a systematic destruction, of a logic that has been creating deserts for a long time, only through different means. *The Desertmakers* speaks of deserts that are also museums, of ruins that continue to evoke destruction, of scenes that anticipate these newer forms of destruction, in which the state disappears and abandons, instead of—as happened in these wars—actively and systematically destroying.

Notes

- 1 Tacitus, *The Agricola*, with an introduction and notes by Duane Reed Stuart (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909), p. 19. Cornelius Tacitus, *The Works of Tacitus. Vol. II. The History, Germany, Agricola, and Dialogue on Orators*, the Oxford Translation, revised with notes (London: Bell & Daldy, 1872), p. 372.
- 2 Joan Corominas, *Breve diccionario etimológico de la lengua castellana* (Madrid: Gredos, 1967), p. 208. For the English etymology of “desert”, see *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C.T. Onions (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 259. See also the *English Online Etymology Dictionary* www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=desert (1 May 2015).

Other terms used as translations in English are “wasteland” (Benario) and “wilderness” (Fyfe). Cornelius Tacitus, *Tacitus’ Agricola*, Germany, and Dialogue on Orators, rev. ed., trans. with an introduction and notes by Herbert W. Benario [1967] (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 45. See also Cornelius Tacitus, *Tacitus Dialogus, Agricola and Germania*, trans. W. Hamilton Fyfe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 73. Santiago Segura Munguía defines the word *solitudo* as “soledad, lugar solitario; desierto” [solitude, solitary place; desert] (Santiago Segura Munguía, *Diccionario etimológico latino-español* [Madrid: Ediciones Generales Anaya, 1985], p. 681). The example given on the same page is the phrase *vastae solitudines*, which appears in translation as “desiertos inmensos” [vast deserts]. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Juan Introini for these references, which he sent me, with his remarkable generosity and erudition, in June 2012, a year before his death.

- 3 There are a great number of works that examine the literary and ideological construction of the Latin American space. Some noteworthy works on the issue include Jens Andermann, *Mapas de poder. Una arqueología literaria del espacio argentino* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 2000); Gabriela Nouzeilles, ed., *La naturaleza en disputa. Retóricas del cuerpo y el paisaje en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2002); Graciela Montaldo, *De pronto, el campo. Literatura argentina y tradición rural* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1993); Graciela Montaldo, “Espacio y nación”, *Estudios. Revista de Investigaciones Literarias* 3, no. 5 (1995), 5–17; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Candice Vidal e Souza, *A pátria geográfica. Sertão e litoral no pensamento social brasileiro* (Goiânia: UFG, 1997); Ileana Rodríguez, *Transatlantic Topographies. Islands, Highlands, Jungles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Flora Süssekind, *O Brasil não é longe daqui. O narrador, a viagem* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1990); Eva-Lynn Alicia Jagoe, *The End of the World as They Knew It: Writing Experiences of the Argentine South* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2008); Tulio Halperín Donghi, “Una nación para el desierto argentino” [1980], in Tulio Halperín Donghi, ed., *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (1846–1880)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel/ Espasa Calpe, 1995), pp. 7–107; Fermín A. Rodríguez, *Un desierto para la nación: la escritura del vacío* (Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia, 2010); Willi Bolle, *grandesertão.br. O romance de formação do Brasil* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades/ Editora 34, 2004); Nísia Trindade Lima, *Um sertão chamado Brasil. Intelectuais e representação geográfica da identidade nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: IUPERJ/ Editora Revan, 1999); João Marcelo Ehlert Maia, *A terra como invenção. O espaço no pensamento social brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 2008).
- 4 On nation, fiction, and foundation in Latin America, see Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
- 5 Rodríguez, *Una nación*, 405.
- 6 “Desertification”, *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/desertification (9 December 2016).
- 7 The article first appeared in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* as “Fazedores de desertos”. It was later included in Euclides’s 1907 book of essays *Contrastes e confrontos* [Contrasts and Comparisons].
- 8 Following the Brazilian scholarly tradition, I have decided to refer to Euclides da Cunha by his first name throughout the book.
- 9 Euclides da Cunha, “Fazedores de desertos”, in *Contrastes e confrontos* [1907], com um estudo crítico do Dr. Araripe Júnior (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1975), pp. 186–91 (at p. 189).

- 10 *Os sertões* also contains a number of pages that discuss man as a geological agent. The book's first part, "A terra" [The Land], has two sections, one after the other, titled "Como se faz um deserto" [How a Desert Is Made] and "Como se extingue o deserto" ["How the Desert Is Extinguished"]. The first of these sections reiterates the ideas that the author had put forward one year earlier in "Fazedores de desertos". The question posed at the beginning of this introduction was inspired by the title of the first of these sections.
- 11 Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts. Indian Raids and the US-Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. xvi–xvii.
- 12 The book's epilogue, from a Mexican source, describes the presence of the Indians in northern Mexico as desertifying. It is a clear reference to Tacitus: "Such is the peace of the barbarians in an old one's expression: When they have reduced the settlements to the silence of the deserts, this they call peace." According to the sources DeLay works with, for Mexicans in those years the deserts were a creation of the indigenous peoples: "A prominent author from Chihuahua, for example, said that raiders had 'destroyed the haciendas, the temples, the cities, all the work and glory of many generations, in order to recreate the desert which the Apalache eye delights in'" (DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts*, p. xvi).
- 13 A very stimulating discussion of wilderness can be found in chapter 8 of Edward Casey's *Getting Back into Place*, titled "Going Wild in the Land". Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 227–70.
- 14 On war and spatiality, see (among others) Fredric Jameson, "War and Representation", *PMLA* 124, no. 5 (2009): 1532–47 (at p. 1537).
- 15 Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys. Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 5.
- 16 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 8.
- 17 Georges Van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor: From Montaigne to Rousseau* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), p. xv.
- 18 One of the key works on this subject is Adolfo Prieto, *Los viajeros ingleses y la emergencia de la literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1996). For the case of Brazil, see also Sússekind, *O Brasil não é longe daqui*.
- 19 "Nuestro oriente es Europa", in Néstor García Canclini and Beatriz González Stephan, eds., *Cultura y Tercer Mundo. 2. Nuevas identidades y ciudadanías* (Caracas: Nueva Sociedad, 1996), pp. 201–20 (at pp. 208–09). Adriana Amante has returned to the importance of this territorializing operation in that book, which founded Argentina's spatial imagination: "[F]aithful to the dictates of a time shaped by the work of naturalists and travelers, [Sarmiento] begins by analyzing a territory that he does not know in any practical sense. Despite this lack of familiarity (if it is even a disadvantage), or perhaps precisely because of it, here Sarmiento offers one of the most determinant configurations of the pampa as a national space. A pampa in which he had never set foot, as we know, but that nobody could have depicted with the clarity with which he does it in this text. Experience can also be gained through letters, and it is through these readings or testimonies (of travelers and naturalists, but also of soldiers, locals, geographers, and poets) and the cartographic way that their thinking can operate that he has gained knowledge about that terrain through which he has never traveled. Reading and thinking are also a form of knowing: that is one of the assumptions of *Facundo*." (Adriana Amante, "Sarmiento el boletínero: del Diario de Campaña al libro de vistas y paisajes", in Adriana

- Amante, dir. *Historia crítica de la literatura argentina. Vol. 4. Sarmiento* [Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 2012], pp. 181–212 [at pp. 181–82]).
- 20 A number of recent works have approached war from a decidedly cultural perspective and have to some degree mitigated the silence I refer to here. These include Julieta Vitullo, *Islas imaginadas. La guerra de Malvinas en la literatura y el cine argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2012); Martín Kohan, *El país de la guerra* (Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia, 2014); and Sebastián Díaz-Duhalde, *La última guerra. Cultura visual de la Guerra contra Paraguay* (Barcelona: Sans Soleil, 2015). Vitullo's and Díaz-Duhalde's books examine, respectively, the Malvinas War in literature and film, and visual representations of the War of the Triple Alliance, while Kohan's posits war as being central to the political and cultural history of Argentina. Also noteworthy is the book I recently coedited with Felipe Martínez-Pinzón, *Entre el humo y la niebla. Guerra y cultura en América Latina*. The book brings together essays by a number of experts who look at various military conflicts throughout Latin American history from a cultural perspective. It also includes an introduction that seeks to create a systematic cartography of the multiple meanings of war in the cultural life of Latin American nations. A key impetus for this project is the fact that war is a sort of a black hole in Latin American cultural and literary studies, which the book explicitly attempts to correct (Felipe Martínez-Pinzón and Javier Uriarte, "Entre el humo y la niebla: guerra y cultura en América Latina", in Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte, eds., *Entre el humo y la niebla. Guerra y cultura en América Latina* [Pittsburgh: ILLI, 2016], pp. 5–30 [at p. 6]). As I finished editing this book, Fernando Degiovanni published *Vernacular Latin Americanisms. War, the Market, and the Making of a Discipline* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), in which he explores the role that the Second World War had in the origins of the field of hispanism in the USA. In spite of being a very different approach to the dynamics of war and culture from the one adopted here, I think the book merits to be mentioned in this context.
- 21 Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", in Catherine Besteman, ed., *Violence: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 13–18 (at p. 14).
- 22 Weber, "Politics as a Vocation", p. 13, original emphasis.
- 23 Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" [1985], in Catherine Besteman, ed., *Violence: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002), pp. 35–60 (at p. 37). Tilly also agrees with Weber's claim: "governments stand out from other organizations by their tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of violence" (Tilly, "War Making", p. 38).
- 24 Tilly, "War Making", p. 49.
- 25 Tilly, "War Making", p. 38.
- 26 Fernando López-Alves, *State Formation and Democracy in Latin America, 1810–1900* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 19–20.
- 27 Juan Pablo Dabove, *Bandit Narratives in Latin America. From Villa to Chávez* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017), p. xi.
- 28 Porfirio Díaz was the president of Mexico first between 1876 and 1880 and then between 1884 and 1911, though the entire period from 1876 to 1911 is known as the Porfiriato. *Militarismo* (militarism) is the term used in Uruguay to refer to the succession of three administrations headed by military leaders between 1876 and 1890: Lorenzo Latorre (1876–80), Máximo Santos (1882–86), and Máximo Tajes (1886–90). I will discuss in greater detail this process of militarization and centralization in each of the countries and conflicts studied in the corresponding chapters.
- 29 Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina* [1967] (Madrid: Alianza, 1986), p. 249.

- 30 Ángel Rama, *La crítica de la cultura en América Latina*, ed. Saúl Sosnowski and Tomás Eloy Martínez (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1985), p. 354.
- 31 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* [1983] (London: Verso, 2006).
- 32 Oscar Oszlak, *La formación del Estado argentino: orden, progreso y organización nacional* [1982] (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1997), p. 17.
- 33 Françoise Perus, *Literatura y sociedad en América Latina: el modernismo* (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1976), p. 48.
- 34 Ericka Beckman, *Capital Fictions: The Literature of Latin America's Export Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p. ix.
- 35 Neil Smith explains the rhetoric through which capitalism has been made natural (to the extent that nature has been made unnatural, Lefebvre would say): "capitalism is not treated as historically contingent but as an inevitable and universal product of nature" (Smith, *Uneven Development*, p. 29).
- 36 See Ángel Rama, "Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico", in *Rubén Darío y el modernismo* (Caracas: Alfadil, 1985), pp. 35–79; and Julio Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina: literatura y política en el siglo XIX* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989).
- 37 On the chronicle and the transformations in the role of the intellectual it implied, see Susana Rotker, *La invención de la crónica* [1992] (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2005).
- 38 See especially the section titled "Fragmentación de la República de las letras", in Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad*, pp. 50–81.
- 39 The importance of positivism in *fin de siècle* Brazil cannot be overstated. On this particular issue, see chapter 6 of an essential book for understanding these times. José Murilo de Carvalho, "Positivists and the Manipulation of the Collective Imagination", in *The Formation of Souls. Imagery of the Republic in Brazil* [1990], trans. Clifford E. Landers (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), pp. 137–50.
- 40 About this singular period in the history of Paraguay, see Nidia R. Areces, *Estado y frontera en el Paraguay. Concepción durante el gobierno del Dr. Francia* (Asunción: Universidad Católica "Nuestra Señora de la Asunción", 1988); Henryk Szlajfer, "Against Dependent Capitalist Development in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: The Case of Haiti and Paraguay", *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (1983): 45–73; Roberto Ares Pons, *El Paraguay del siglo XIX. Un estado socialista* (Montevideo: Nuevo Mundo, 1987); Richard Alan White, *Paraguay's Autonomous Revolution, 1810–1840* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978); Thomas Whigham, "Autonomy, Authoritarianism, and Development", in Peter Lambert and Andrew Nickson, eds., *The Paraguay Reader. History, Culture, Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 70–74; John Hoyt Williams, *The Rise and Fall of the Paraguayan Republic, 1800–1870* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978).
- 41 Oszlak, *La formación*, p. 45.
- 42 "From a 'horizontal' conflict between peers (e.g., conflict between caudillos—as in the long period of anarchy—or between blocs created through ephemeral alliances—as occurred during the clashes between the Argentine Confederation and the State of Buenos Aires) there was a shift to a 'vertical' confrontation between unequals. Any mobilization of forces opposing the order established by the victors would thenceforth be classed as 'revolt' or 'internal rebellion'. A hierarchical element has been imposed on the segmental nature of the social structure" (Oszlak, *La formación*, p. 96). Enrique Méndez Vives offers as a Uruguayan example of the fragmentary and local nature of power the words of a caudillo in response to official repression: "The government

- has risen up against us!" (Enrique Méndez Vives, *Historia Uruguaya. Tomo 5. 1876–1904. El Uruguay de la modernización* [1975] [Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1987], p. 10).
- 43 John Lynch, *Caudillos in Spanish America. 1800–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 427. Charles Tilly outlines a similar idea in discussing the emergence of the European states: "Early in the state-making process, many parties shared the right to use violence, its actual employment, or both at once" (Tilly, "War Making", p. 39). He continues, "The distinctions between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' users of violence came clear only very slowly, in the process during which the state's armed forces became relatively unified and permanent" (p. 40). In Latin America the main difference may reside in the speed of the process, which was carried out almost without exception during the period examined in this book.
- 44 In *Blood and Debt*, Miguel Angel Centeno recognizes the importance of the Canudos War in the process of state territorial control: "With the victory over the Canudos rebellion, the government effectively established its authority over most of the country" (Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt: War and the Nation-State in Latin America* [University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002], p. 109).
- 45 Emília Viotti da Costa, *Da monarquia à república: momentos decisivos* (São Paulo: Livraria Editora Ciências Humanas, 1979), p. 16.
- 46 I would add that war is also a logic, a discourse, a disposition, as Hobbes has explained: "The nature of the war consisteth not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto." Roberto Vecchi, after quoting Hobbes, affirms that "this disposition to war is a constant in Brazilian history and the history of the modernization of its state" (Roberto Vecchi, "A forma literária e o diagrama da Gewalt: exceção e excesso da guerra nos limiares modernos da cultura brasileira", in Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte, eds., *Entre el humo y la niebla*, pp. 159–71 [at pp. 163–64]). Also, João Camilo Penna has argued, for Brazil's twentieth century, that war is central to three of the country's most emblematic works: *Os sertões* (1902), João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande sertão: veredas* (1956), and Paulo Lins's *Cidade de Deus* (1997). His article shows that different ways of understanding and waging war are omnipresent in different regions and moments of the last century. João Camilo Penna, "A imitação da guerra", in Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte, eds., *Entre el humo y la niebla*, pp. 315–40.
- 47 A comparative analysis of these three revolts during the First Republic in Brazil can be found in Duglas Teixeira Monteiro, "Um confronto entre Juazeiro, Canudos e Contestado", in Boris Fausto, ed., *História geral da civilização brasileira. Tomo III. O Brasil Republicano, 2 Volume, Sociedade e Instituições (1889–1930)* (Rio de Janeiro: DIFEL, 1978), pp. 39–92.
- 48 This is certainly an association that existed in antiquity. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* gives "destruction, ruins" as two of the original meanings of "desert" ("Desert", in *Online Etymology Dictionary* www.etymonline.com/word/desert (14 October 2018)).
- 49 Edward Said, *Orientalism* [1978] (New York: Vintage Books, 1994). See also Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).
- 50 David Viñas, *Indios, ejército y frontera* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 1982), p. 43.
- 51 For a contextual and comparative reading of the Conquest of the Desert from a Latin American perspective, see the lucid overview set out by Viñas (*Indios, ejército y frontera*, pp. 22–44).

- 52 Chapter 1 will offer a detailed study of the importance of the War of the Triple Alliance in South America, with a special focus on its effects on each of the four countries involved, on their processes of modernization and state consolidation, and specifically with regard to the other conflicts studied in this book.
- 53 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 227.
- 54 Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power", in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 239–56 (at p. 243).
- 55 Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power", p. 243.
- 56 Miguel Angel Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, p. 276.
- 57 Gastón R. Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 82.
- 58 Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 82.
- 59 Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 50.
- 60 This is obviously close to Tilly's notion that war makes the state (Tilly, "War Making", p. 36).
- 61 Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 13.
- 62 On this subject, see the concept of "imperialist nostalgia" proposed by Renato Rosaldo, which could be useful for reading a significant portion of the corpus examined in this book (Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia", *Representations*, 26 [1989]: 107–22).
- 63 Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 40.
- 64 Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. XII.
- 65 Robert Ginsberg has pointed out that one of the characteristics of the ruin is "its resistance to the forces of destruction" (Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p. 311).
- 66 Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 9, 10.
- 67 Michael S. Roth, "Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed", in Michael S. Roth, Claire Lyons, and Charles Merewether, eds., *Irresistible Decay: Ruins Reclaimed* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute of Art and the Humanities, 1997), pp. 1–23 (at p. 11). Roth studies the photographic representations of the ruins of war. The topic is one that might be amply enriched by the conflicts examined in these pages, since—at least in the War of the Triple Alliance, the Conquest of the Desert, and the Canudos War—photography had a significant presence. The ruin is not, I think, all that dissimilar to the conceptualization of photography in now-classic works such as those of Susan Sontag or Roland Barthes: both the ruin and the photograph inhabit a number of time periods at once; they are simultaneously forms of life and objectifications of death; they are signs both of permanence and of absence, of loss. See Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar/Straus and Giroux, 1989), and Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981).
- 68 Roth, "Irresistible Decay", p. 13.
- 69 This is not as obvious as it might seem. Andreas Huyssen, for example, argues that in discussing war we should talk about rubble and not, strictly speaking, of ruins (Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins", *Grey Room* 23 [2006]: 6–21 [at p. 8]). In this respect, see my discussion of Gordillo above.

- 70 Roth, "Irresistible Decay", p. 7.
- 71 Francisco Foot Hardman has used the equivalent expression "ruínas precoces" [precocious ruins] when discussing Euclides da Cunha's writings (Francisco Foot Hardman, *A vingança da Hiléia. Euclides da Cunha, a Amazônia e a literatura moderna* [São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2009], p. 117).
- 72 Jameson, "War and Representation", p. 1533.
- 73 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain. The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 4.
- 74 "When Whitman asserted that the real war would never get into the books, he was arguing not only that the scale of the war defied comprehensive encapsulation, but also that the attempt to depict war's violence through language afterward is impossible, necessarily, because the essential nature of violence is always in excess of language. All that is ever produced amounts to 'scraps and distortions'" (James Dawes, *The Language of War. Literature and Culture in the U.S. from the Civil War through World War II* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], p. 7).
- 75 A general historical study of Latin American wars is René De La Pedraja, *Wars of Latin America, 1899–1941* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006). It focuses on a later period than that examined in this book. I consider it problematic to study war in Latin America without mentioning the nineteenth century, when war occupied a central place in governmental and political dynamics. In addition, De La Pedraja categorizes numerous wildly varying conflicts as wars without adequately distinguishing among them or explaining that it is not easy to determine what constitutes a war in Latin America, which he describes as a "turbulent region" (De La Pedraja, *Wars of Latin America*, p. 1). Robert L. Scheina also devotes two lengthy volumes to war in Latin America. The first, subtitled "The Age of the Caudillo, 1791–1899", is relevant to my analysis. See Robert L. Scheina, *Latin America's Wars. Volume 1. The Age of the Caudillo, 1791–1899* (Washington: Brassey's, 2003).
- 76 Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, p. 276. A key reference on the relations between war, capital, and the state, from the perspective of political science, is Michael Mann, *States, War, and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).
- 77 Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, p. 261.
- 78 Centeno, *Blood and Debt*, pp. 270, 271.
- 79 Centeno seems to be aware of the importance of the wars that I study here in their respective countries' processes of state consolidation. He is also aware of the particularities of the Paraguayan case. Some of the general assertions I quote here from *Blood and Debt* seem to contradict his detailed approaches to specific conflicts.
- 80 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 276.
- 81 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 280.
- 82 Gordillo, *Rubble*, p. 79.
- 83 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 280.
- 84 David Harvey himself has continued Lefebvre's thinking with regard to the relationships between space, time, and capital: "command over spaces and times is a crucial element in any search for profit" (Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 226). Harvey highlights the importance, building on Lefebvre's ideas, of the category of time and the ways it becomes a form of profit. He also thinks deeply about space and time as sites of struggles for power. In this sense, as we will see, his thinking intertwines with that of Deleuze and Guattari (who are nevertheless working within another

- theoretical framework), for whom, according to Harvey, "capitalism is continually reterritorializing with one hand what it was deterritorializing with the other" (Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 238).
- 85 "Without the concepts of space and of its production, the framework of power ... simply cannot achieve concreteness" (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 281).
- 86 Smith, *Uneven Development*, p. 4.
- 87 Oscar Osziak, *La formación del Estado argentino*, p. 27.
- 88 It is important to consider that at the time of the publication of *The Production of Space* in 1974, only the first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, titled *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), had been published. It does not include a critique of the state, as Lefebvre points out (with regard not just to Deleuze and Guattari, but also to Foucault) (Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre. Theory and the Possible* [London: Continuum, 2004], p. 240). In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), however, this critique is evident. In *The Production of Space* Lefebvre refers critically to the concept of the machine that recurs throughout *Anti-Oedipus*, since he believes the concept is inadequate: it "is not only highly abstract but also embedded in a very abstractly conceived representation of space" (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 195). In *Le temps des méprises*, a collection of interviews published a year later, he questions the use of the concept of flow in a discussion of Deleuze and Guattari that culminates in an explanation of the real reason for his disagreement with those philosophers: "I do not think we can talk about our own era without foregrounding the analysis of capitalism, the bourgeoisie, the state" (Henri Lefebvre, *Le temps des méprises* [n.p.: Stock, 1975], p. 173). We should relativize some of these claims, since a political tone and critical analysis of the state become central in *A Thousand Plateaus*.
- 89 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Masumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 390.
- 90 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 352.
- 91 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 352.
- 92 "Could it be that it is at the moment the war machine ceases to exist, conquered by the State, that it displays to the utmost its irreducibility, that it scatters into thinking, loving, dying, or creating machines that have at their disposal vital or revolutionary powers capable of challenging the conquering State?" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 356).
- 93 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 361–62. The embedded quotations are in the original, attributed to Pierre Boulez's work on music.
- 94 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 371, emphasis added.
- 95 On this subject, see the section titled "Territorialidad" in Ana Ribeiro's *Los muy fieles*. It includes insightful reflections on the relations of power and discipline between the city (especially Montevideo and Asunción) and the interior in the period just prior to and early on in the revolutionary process. Ribeiro contemplates the way bodies and power are distributed both within the space of the city and between the city and the countryside. See Ana Ribeiro, *Los muy fieles. Leales a la corona en el proceso revolucionario rioplatense: Montevideo-Asunción, 1810–1820: estudio comparado. Tomo 1* (Montevideo: Planeta, 2013), pp. 117–202.
- 96 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 360.
- 97 Chapter 3 will present a more detailed discussion of the notion of the frontier. At the beginning of this book, I have outlined some important books that deal with the Latin American space from a cultural perspective. The

- bibliography on frontiers in Latin America is abundant. When discussing this notion it is inevitable to refer to Frederick Jackson Turner's pivotal address "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893). While this text does not focus on Latin America, it reflects on the notion of the frontier vis-à-vis national identity and state expansion. And, clearly, war, which seems to be inextricably linked to the frontier. A very useful book that traces a history of the conceptualization of the frontier in Latin America is David J. Weber and Jane M. Rausch, eds., *Where Cultures Meet: Frontiers in Latin American History* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1994). The frontier is a central topic in the work of Richard W. Slatta; perhaps his most relevant books for this study are *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983) and *Comparing Cowboys and Frontiers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997). A compelling discussion from the perspective of anthropology is Miguel Bartolomé, "Antropología de las fronteras en América Latina", *AmeriQuests* 2, no. 1 <http://ejournals.library.vanderbilt.edu/ojs/index.php/ameriquests/article/viewFile/41/30> (12 January 2016). See also Alejandro Grimson, *Fronteras, naciones e identidades. La periferia como centro* (Buenos Aires: Cicus-La Crujia, 2000). On the desert, especially for its conceptualization in Argentina, see the essential book by Fermín Rodríguez *Un desierto para la nación*.
- 98 Tilly has explained the state's need to create imminent dangers to increase its control over spaces and subjects: "governments ... commonly simulate, stimulate, or even fabricate threats of external war" (Tilly, "War Making", p. 37).
- 99 This goes beyond the matter of the bandit, that impure figure who is expelled, excised from the body of the nation. Dabove explains that the bandit is someone who is persecuted, since there is a "ban" (hence the word's origin, the Italian *bandire*, to prohibit) that declares him outside the law. He is a member of society who has broken its norms and is therefore judged, persecuted by the law itself. The origin of the bandit is found in what Dabove calls "the state gesture of expulsion". In the late nineteenth century, the state constructed its enemies as largely external, and in this sense they were exempt from that gesture of expulsion (Juan Pablo Dabove, *Nightmares of the Lettered City: Banditry and Literature in Latin America, 1816–1929* [Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007], p. 8). The final consolidation of the state, at century's end, was accompanied by logics of erasure, of extermination, not of expulsion. It may be possible to read the idea of the bandit and his relationship with the *ban* in accordance with Giorgio Agamben's biopolitical theory. In his section on "The Ban and the Wolf", Agamben talks about the liminal status of the bandit, who is defined under the law as a wolf-man and is located in "a threshold of indistinction and of passage between animal and man" (Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998], p. 105). I believe that the very notion of war and the way the subjects it eliminates are narrated in these texts could be productively approached from a biopolitical reading. I have chosen not to do so here, as such an endeavor is beyond the scope of my project. I am nevertheless grateful to Gabriel Giorgi and Roberto Vecchi for their insightful remarks on the possibility of looking at war and its victims (and at the desert itself) from that state of near nonbeing implied by the Agambian concepts of *homo sacer* and bare life.
- 100 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 183.

- 101 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 80.
102 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 32.
103 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 4. In fact, for Scott war is an opportunity for a state to intervene, employing a visibilizing strategy. It is as if war were, for him, something independent of the state, as if its origin were not in the state. For Scott, war is not in itself a phenomenon that reconfigures spaces.
104 Each of these terms is equivalent to the corresponding terms in the Brazilian slogan “Ordem e Progresso”.
105 Alexandra Prado Coelho, “Entrevista. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro: ‘Gostaria que o Museu Nacional permanecesse como ruína, memória das coisas mortas’”, in *Público*, 4 September 2018 www.publico.pt/2018/09/04/culturaipilon/entrevista/eduardo-viveiros-de-castro-gostaria-que-o-museu-nacional-permanecesse-como-ruina-memoria-das-coisas-mortas-1843021 (4 September 2018).

1 War in *Terra Incognita* Richard Burton’s *Letters from the Battle-Fields of Paraguay*

“The long stretches of the waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances ... you lost your way on that river as you would in a desert”

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*¹

“A Disastrous War”

There are few places in this world where Sir Richard Francis Burton (1812–90) did not set foot. Among many other adventures, he visited India, traveled to Africa in search of the source of the Nile, and made the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1853 disguised as a Muslim pilgrim, risking grave consequences if he were discovered. Indefatigably engaged in a wide range of activities, he was not only a traveler but also a translator, diplomat, spy, and poet.² Compared to this perpetual movement, his ten-year stint in the Americas (1860–69) could seem insignificant. Indeed, historians and biographers tend to overlook Burton’s three years living in Brazil as a British consul and his subsequent travels through South America, which eventually brought him to territories where one of the cruelest wars in the subcontinent’s history was playing out.

It is with the words that open this section that Richard Burton describes the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–70) in his *Letters from the Battle-Fields of Paraguay* (1870), the focus of the present chapter. This war, known in Brazil as the Paraguayan War, and in Paraguay as the Great War (*Guasú War* in Guarani), was one of the central events in the history of the nineteenth century in Latin America. Not only was it the first formally declared international conflict that involved four nations, but it was also, in many senses, the region’s first modern war.³ It included, for example, the widespread use of artillery; key roles played by the railroad, steamships, and telegraphy; and the unprecedented participation of the press.⁴ Francisco Doratioto and Luc Capdevila, two historians who have written about this war, agree in calling it a “total war”, an expression describing, in the words of historian David Bell, a conflict “involving the complete mobilization of a society’s resources to achieve the absolute destruction of an enemy, with all distinction erased between combatants and