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The Desertmakers

Travel, War, and the State in Latin
America

Javier Uriarte

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4 The Limits of Visibility and Knowledge

Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed;
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Psalm 46, 1–3¹

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust;
let me never be put to confusion

Psalm 71, 1–2²

In August 2010 I traveled to Canudos, today a tiny town in the *sertão* in Bahia, a state in northeastern Brazil. I made the journey by bus from Rio de Janeiro. It seemed practically endless. After nearly two days together, something resembling a sense of community had developed among the seven passengers. Perhaps because of that, at one point one of the women traveling on the bus came up to me and offered me a prayer card, a manifestation of popular religiosity that is abundant in Latin America. The lines that serve as the epigraph for this chapter come from that gift, which I still have as a keepsake (see Figure 14). These lines may have offered—I thought then and still think today—a good way of entering Canudos.

Desertifying the *Sertão*

The Canudos War (1896–97) was one of the most tragic episodes in nineteenth-century Latin American history. It involved a faceoff between the enormous army (more than 10,000 strong) of the newly fledged Brazilian Republic (founded in 1889) and the numerous followers of Antônio Conselheiro, a mystic-cum-caudillo whose preaching appealed to the marginalized and starving masses seeking a solution to their miserable circumstances. O *Conselheiro* [The Counselor] railed against the new government, declaring it morally corrupt and



Proteção

*Deus está sempre conosco
e nos oferece socorro e
proteção.*

Deus é o nosso refúgio
e a nossa força,
socorro que não falta
em tempos de aflição.
Por isso, não teremos medo,
ainda que a terra seja abalada,
e as montanhas caíam
nas profundezas do oceano.
Não teremos medo, ainda que

b)
e os montes tremam
violentamente, *Salmo 46.1-3*
O SENHOR Deus é a minha luz
e a minha salvação;
de quem terei medo?
O SENHOR me livra de todo perigo;
não ficarei com medo de ninguém.
Salmo 27.1

Ó SENHOR Deus,
tu és a minha segurança;
nunca deixes que eu sofra
a vergonha da derrota.
Ajuda-me e livra-me,
pois tu és justo;
ouve-me e salva-me. *Salmo 71.1-2*

Figure 14 Praying card given to the author in 2010, on his way to Canudos.

encouraging his followers not to pay taxes.³ The cause for resistance in Canudos—the town was known as Belo Monte by its inhabitants—was not limited to the new government taxes, though; also under fire seem to have been civil marriage, the new population census, and the imposition of the metric system.⁴ After three failed attempts to subdue the uprising, Brazil's central government sent an enormous contingent of troops, and the war ended in a huge massacre.⁵ That state-imposed simplification (regarding taxes, marriage, and metrics) was, of course, equivalent to the desertification of Canudos, which was carried out by killing the men who survived and then burning down the entire settlement in an effort to wipe out all trace of it.⁶

Os sertões (Campanha de Canudos) (1902) [*Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*], which came out of Euclides da Cunha's (1866–1909) experience as a correspondent for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, offers an account of the origins, development, and outcome of this conflict. Yet the book goes far beyond mere reportage, and draws on a great multiplicity of varied sources, encompassing a range of topics, which makes it a text of great richness and complexity.⁷ Combining—among other things—newspaper reporting, anthropological essay, military history and strategy, travel literature, public policy, geological and supposedly scientific essay, fiction, and theories of mass psychology, *Os sertões* is an attempt to grapple with the ways the state seeks to construct itself through war.⁸

The Canudos War can be understood in economic terms, having partially arisen from the *sertão* dwellers' refusal to adopt the role of taxable subjects and the fledgling republic's need to incorporate the territory into the cadastral map of Brazil. James C. Scott repeatedly highlights the levying of taxes as one of the key objectives of the state's efforts to create order. Such taxation must be imposed systematically; to that end, the territory must be divided, and each of the corresponding divisions must be identified, as well as the individuals that are included in it: "[State agents'] abstractions and simplifications are disciplined by a small number of objectives. ... [T]he most prominent of these were typically taxation, political control, and conscription."⁹ Mara Loveman, who has studied other nineteenth-century revolts in Brazil that also resisted state forms of ordering and measuring individuals and spaces, explains what these state interventions meant as part of the state consolidation process from the perspective of Scott's theories:

basic administrative foundations such as standardized naming practices (e.g., permanent patronyms), censuses, universal weights and measures, cadastral surveys, and maps, were crucial prerequisites to effective state intervention in society. Such 'tools of legibility' delivered pre-modern states from their blindness with respect to the natural and human resources they aspired to control.¹⁰

Berthold Zilly, along with several other critics and scholars, claims that an additional economic element that had a significant impact on the state's exterminating violence was the fact that the Canudos residents' adoption of communal living meant that local caciques would be unable to employ those individuals as cheap labor; that is, the founding of Canudos led to a drastic reduction in the availability of productive forces in the *sertão*.¹¹ The Canudos rebellion posed an obstacle to the state's consolidation process, since the town's population ignored the law and government authorities, and attempted to establish a new regime within the boundaries of what the state considered to be its territory. Thus, the campaign that ended with an enormous massacre was an attempt to reappropriate a territory, reestablishing symbolic and geographic boundaries.¹²

War (like taxation) represents, in the approach that underpins *The Desertmakers*, an effort to make spaces visible. In *Os sertões*, I argue, Euclides's great preoccupation is precisely with how to narrate (and so make visible) those elements—war, massacre—that, as we have seen, frequently elude representation. For this reason this chapter will focus on moments in which the narrator textualizes his difficulties in visualizing the enemy and the war, thereby representing his own struggle for representation. There are two elements that point to this *struggle to see*. First, there are frequent references to invisibility, to what, for the narrator, remains beyond his gaze and ability to explain. In Canudos, the narrator, who shares the state's ideological and political perspective, finds a world that is for him entirely new, characterized by *other* forms of understanding movement and relating to space. I study modes of invisibility in connection with different ways of understanding displacement and the relationship with the land. This is important for thinking about war in broader terms since the multiple readings of a conflict (the strategies for waging it, its causes, its objectives) go hand in hand with the diverse ways of conceiving of movement as well as thinking about—and looking at—space. Images of emergence—that is to say, moments in which previously unseen objects or individuals rise from the depths of the earth, of the sea, or of the past—will be of particular significance.

Second, in addition to referring to what is not seen, the narrator constantly evokes images of ruins. These images haunt the narrator and infiltrate his language despite his "scientific" language of explication. Images of ruination introduce elements of the past into the present, indicating a limit not just to the representation of otherness but also to everything that lettered knowledge is capable of representing. Ruins, and images of vestiges and remains, are present throughout the entire literary production of Euclides da Cunha, and they have for this reason been repeatedly studied by scholars.¹³ In *Os sertões*, however, the focus of my analysis falls on the specific relationships between ruins and war, on how war—which shares with ruins an essential relationship with

destruction—helps us rethink the spatiality and temporality of ruins. Of particular importance will be images of premature destruction, of elements that are destroyed or ruined even in their very origin.

Newness, Modernization, and Deception: Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões*, and the First Republic (1889–1930)

After becoming independent from Portugal in 1822, Brazil adopted a monarchical system called the *Império* (Empire). The country was ruled by an emperor until 1889, when this regime fell.¹⁴ The proclamation of the Republic, which took place through a military coup that same year, is one of the key political events in nineteenth-century Brazilian history. This proclamation, like the 1822 declaration of independence, did not involve any war or violence, or indeed the participation of the people at large, but it constituted an important moment in the modernization of the state apparatus. The beginning of the end of the Empire was the Paraguayan War (1864–70), which weakened the imperial system even as it bolstered the state apparatus (most fundamentally, its identification with the military).¹⁵ The state's army would play a crucial political role during the early years of the Brazilian Republic: evidence of this is that the first two presidents of the republican period were military men, veterans of the Paraguayan War.¹⁶ This strong presence of the military in the political life of the country continued throughout the Republic, with no fewer than 12 military interventions.¹⁷ Even though it succeeded a monarchical regime, the Republic was in many aspects not a liberal one. While it did accomplish important secularizing reforms and adopted liberal economic measures, it was in fact one of the most repressive regimes in the history of Brazil. Maria de Lourdes Mônaco Janotti enumerates the forms of political persecutions inflicted on those who supported the monarchy, explaining that “the first republican years were characterized by several state of siege decrees, by arbitrariness and violence as ways of ... neutralizing the manifestations of conflicts between social classes”.¹⁸ Brutal police repression was used to quash urban revolts. The first years of the Republic were characterized by the always looming threat of restoration: the Canudos revolt was construed in the press, utterly without evidence, as an international plot masterminded by monarchists.¹⁹ The massacre that brought an end to the revolt was perhaps the most eloquent example of the military violence that characterized the new regime.

The unprecedentedly repressive character of the state should be read in concert with the infiltration of global (mainly British) capital into the country, a phenomenon that dominated the nineteenth century and which explains many of the economic and political events that followed the Paraguayan War. Brazil modernized and made a powerful entrance into global trade markets largely as a dependent and indebted nation.²⁰ This strengthening of the country's role in the global economic scene

was due to the boom of commodities such as rubber (in the Amazon region) and coffee (in the interior of São Paulo). The growth in the external demand for raw materials greatly stimulated Brazil's foreign trade.

Internal modernization also took place, with the centralizing process intensifying as the government strove by military means to extend the power of the capital city throughout the national territory. This effective and stabilizing central control over the whole territory was necessary to guarantee the flow of merchandise, both internally and externally.²¹ In Brazil, state consolidation took place mainly through military engagement, with the Paraguayan War and the Canudos War serving as watershed moments in the state's surveying of national space.²² In some respects the process of state consolidation in Brazil differed from those of most Spanish American countries since the empire was a functioning and rather stable regime, albeit one dependent on slavery until its abolition in 1888, just one year before the proclamation of the Republic. Brazil was the last country in Latin America to take this step, after even Cuba, which was still a colony. While the Brazilian elites parroted the bourgeois liberal ideas that had dominated European thought for almost a century, important portions of these ruling classes continued to—more or less tacitly—support slavery or accept it as a normal part of life from which many benefited personally.²³ In sum, neither the abolition of slavery nor the proclamation of the Republic brought significant structural changes.

This capitalist, centralist, and militarist configuration of state power was also characterized by a relentless policy of territorial appropriation and control. There was constant preoccupation with the territory itself, whose borders were at the time considered vulnerable, since they were part of a large but uncertainly determined national space. In that push to dominate it entirely, one of the resources employed was the expansion of the railway network, in which British capital was heavily involved.²⁴ Territorial concerns included a constant fear of foreign invasion, which went hand in hand with a decidedly expansionist foreign policy: during the First Republic, Brazil consolidated its international borders in negotiations with its neighbors, acquiring some 900,000 square kilometers (the Paraguayan War proved to be a significant antecedent for this state-led aggressive expansionism).²⁵ Euclides da Cunha responded to this expansion by expressing a sincere wish to travel through all of the country's immense territory, as part of a reflection on the meaning of nationality, on the need to come to understand “Brazilianness”. For Euclides, in this context of territorial reconfigurations, thinking about national identity also meant grappling with issues of power and communication. Alongside a militaristic and defensive approach to territorial issues in governing circles, Euclides da Cunha insisted on “the necessity

to get to know the country, colonize the interior, and construct an internal network of railway communication".²⁶

The First Republic's militaristic and repressive tendencies led to great disillusionment with the new regime in intellectual circles and among the general public.²⁷ As intellectuals felt increasingly excluded from the realm of political decision-making, the urban bourgeoisie took control of the political arena.²⁸ As a corollary to the increased distance between the cultural and political spheres, intellectuals were forced to professionalize, and journalism emerged as the new realm in which they could operate, albeit unenthusiastically. There was, then, an increased feeling of alienation within Brazilian intellectual circles at the turn of the century.²⁹

From the start, Euclides da Cunha was a staunch supporter of the Republic.³⁰ In 1888 he began writing opinion pieces criticizing the monarchy in São Paulo's most important newspapers. He continued to contribute to newspapers, periodically and intermittently, until 1907; perhaps the most notable part of these contributions were his 1897 dispatches from Canudos.

Euclides's relations with the Republic were complicated and shifting. He soon adopted a critical view of the new system, and openly expressed his disapproval of the authoritarian government of Marshal Floriano Peixoto, the second president of the Republic (1891–94). Nonetheless, Euclides still maintained his support for the Republic until the Canudos War, the event that definitely consolidated his disillusionment. This didn't mean that he stopped all collaboration with the government, though. After the publication of *Os sertões* Euclides worked as part of an official commission to demarcate the Brazilian border with Peru in the Amazon region.³¹ He visited the Amazon in 1905, and wrote various pieces that were posthumously published under the title *À margem da história* (At the Margin of History, 1909).³² Euclides was quite exceptional compared to many writers of his generation, since he never left Brazil and expressed no desire to travel to Europe, the longed-for destination of the Latin American middle and upper classes. Critic José Brito Broca evocatively called this powerful pull of the interior for Euclides "*hantise do sertão*" [obsession with the *sertão*].³³ His preference for the little-known lands of the country's interior, and rural life in general, over the city was explicit in many of his letters and poems.³⁴

Euclides lived for many years in the interior of Brazil, working as a military engineer. After his trip to Canudos, he wrote most of *Os sertões* in São José do Rio Pardo, a city in the interior of the state of São Paulo, where he was in charge of reconstructing a bridge. His profession molded his views on issues that were central to his writing, such as his understanding of spatiality, his projects for transforming and "taming" nature, and his conceptualization of movement and travel. In his letters, he often refers to his profession in ways that emphasize these elements.³⁵

For many years Euclides struggled to gain recognition; it was difficult for him to obtain a permanent position as an educator or to join the most distinguished literary circles in Rio.³⁶ But thanks to the immediate critical and popular success of *Os sertões*, in 1903 he was appointed a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, the most select circle of writers and intellectuals in the country, which he formally entered in 1906. In 1903 he was also inducted into the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute [Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro], a scientific institution that dealt with the exploration of the national territory. The importance of science, and particularly of positivism, in Brazil during the last decades of the nineteenth century cannot be overstated. The ideas of positivism dominated the Brazilian military and the country's elites, who saw the proclamation of the Republic as a sign of the triumph of ideas of progress and evolution. The most obvious sign of this was the adoption in 1889, immediately following the proclamation, of the new national flag, which displayed the motto *Ordem e progresso* (essentially the same flag Brazil has today). Euclides was strongly influenced by this philosophy of science, which purported to explain the differences between the races that composed the country.³⁷

Os sertões is an ambitious and enormously complex book, and a very long one too: the first edition was of 635 pages. The book is divided into three sections, titled "The Land" [A terra], "Man" [O homem], and "The Battle" [A Luta]. These parts are distributed in accordance with a powerful geographical and racial determinism. In dividing his book thus, Euclides followed Hippolyte Taine's idea, in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863), that there were three factors that determined the history of a people: the physical and geographical environment; race, having to do with hereditary or innate dispositions; and the specific moment, which was determined by the other two elements.³⁸ The book's first part describes the geology, the climate, the flora, and, in more general terms, the geography of the *sertão* of the region of Bahia. The description of the land slowly approaches the site of the war, describing the different regions from the Atlantic coast all the way to Canudos.

The second part discusses the physical and social characteristics of the region's inhabitants, offers a biographical sketch of Antônio Conselheiro, describes the type of relationship he created with his followers, and narrates the story of how Canudos came into being. Contemporary racial theories are a key element in these descriptions.³⁹ The *sertanejo* (inhabitant of the *sertão*; backlander) is compared with other Brazilian "types", such as the Portuguese immigrant, the *mestiço* (people from miscegenated backgrounds) living in the coastal cities, or the *gaúcho* from southern Brazil. Adriana Campos Johnson refers to the racist considerations that appear here as an expression of Euclides's "positivist concepts of race in which stronger races triumph over weaker ones and miscegenation is largely a force of degeneration".⁴⁰ The section closes

with a description of Canudos and of life in the community founded by O *Conselheiro*. Here the narrative strives to explain both the type of religiosity and the kind of social and economic relations that characterized the Canudos community. The alternative conceptualization of spaces that seems to have existed there may have to do with the millennialist project that—as Euclides and others have claimed—the Canudos community was defending.⁴¹ This second part also discusses the relationship between the *sertanejos*, the rebellious settlement, and the nation. In this sense, *Os sertões* can be considered the foundational text of an important genre in Brazilian literature: the essay of national interpretation, seeking to offer a historical or social explanation of the specific features that characterize the country's dynamics.⁴²

The story of the war is narrated only in the third part. “A luta” is the account of all of the expeditions that were sent to quash the rebellion, and their successive failures, up to the final massacre after the fourth expedition succeeded in defeating the settlement. The total duration of the war was a little more than ten months, from the first assault by a 100-man battalion from the state of Bahia on 24 November 1896, to the final fall of the resistant settlement on 5 October 1897. Thus, the perspective adopted in the book is not that of Euclides himself (considered as a single traveler), since he was in Canudos only during the final weeks of combat (from 10 September to 5 October), and did not himself traverse many of the regions described in the first part of the book.⁴³ To create a narrative that transcended the limited episodes of the war he witnessed in person, Euclides worked with a wide variety of sources that included travel narratives, chronicles by other journalists and earlier witnesses; works of fiction; various treatises on geography, geology, and anthropology; and readings of European philosophers and scientists.⁴⁴

Traversing the *Sertão*: Tensions, Deviations, Obstacles

The map reproduced below appears, in the first edition, between the “Preliminary Note” and the first part of the book; that is, it effectively introduces the narrative. The beginning of the book offers a view of north-eastern Brazil through what Leopoldo Bernucci has called a “telescopic perspective”, a powerfully descriptive one that, making use of a specialized language, seems to be taken from a geography book: “O planalto central do Brasil desce, nos litorais do Sul, em escarpas inteiriças, altas e abruptas. Assoberba os mares; e desata-se em chapadões nivelados pelos visos das cordilheiras marítimas, distendidas do Rio Grande a Minas” (p. 71)⁴⁶ [Along the southern coast of Brazil the central plateau descends in high, steep escarpments. It towers over the waves and moves back in ridges, leveling off from the peaks of the coastal ranges, extending from Rio Grande do Sul to Minas Gerais (p. 7)]. This section gives the text a sense of movement toward a destination, even though the text is not the

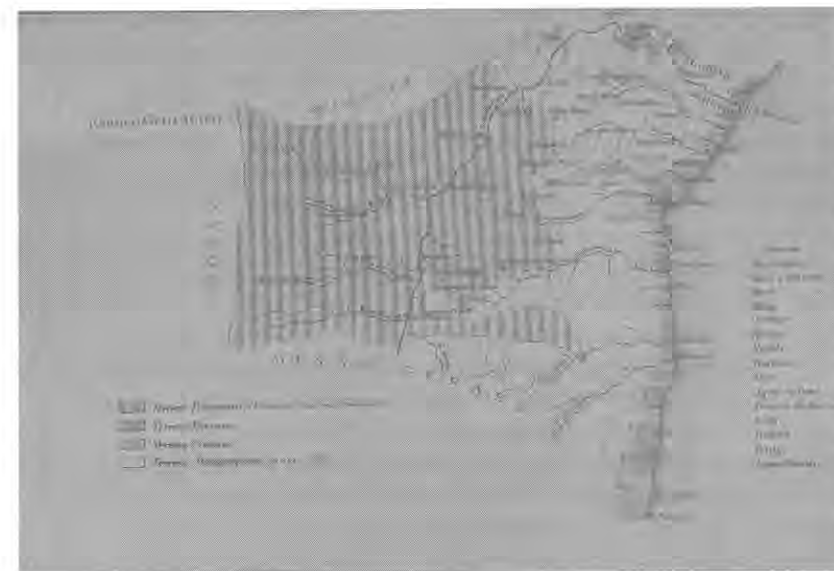


Figure 15 Map included in the first (1902) edition of *Os sertões*.⁴⁵

narrative of any particular trip. The first person is not used; instead, the narrator makes use of an impersonal tone: “De sorte que quem o contorna, seguindo para o norte, observa notáveis mudanças de relevos” (p. 71) [So that if one follows it along toward the north, one will observe notable changes in the relief of the land (p. 7)]. The reconstruction of the region where Canudos is situated is frequently made through references to other sources (the map reproduced above includes the names of various travelers who visited the region; among them, notably, is Richard Burton) (Figure 15).⁴⁷

This first section of the book refers several times to the figure of the traveler, the walker, or the observer who roams the region of the *sertão*. For example, in an innovative rendering of the action of travel, the narrator incorporates his readership into his fictitious forward movement: “É a paragem formosíssima dos *campos gerais*, expandida em chapadões ondulantes—grandes tablados onde campeia a sociedade rude dos vaqueiros ... Atravessemos-la” (p. 78, original emphasis) [This is the most beautiful landscape of the *campos gerais*, going off far and wide in a wave of hills – great platforms where the rugged cow herders roam... Let us cross through it (p. 11)]. The reader is didactically taken by the hand, as the narrator seems to be introducing the landscape. This powerful impression of forward movement is not represented by any concrete physical motion, though; there are no bodies here, just eyes, just words.⁴⁸ The opening pages of the first section present an “observer”

who continuously—and sometimes frenetically—advances. On the contrary, the deserted, impenetrable, unknown, and motionless character of the places traversed is emphasized, as the *sertão* imposes its rhythms on the traveler: “E avançando célere, sobretudo nos trechos em que se sucedem pequenas ondulações todas da mesma forma y do mesmo modo dispostas, o viajante mais rápido tem a sensação da imobilidade. Patenteiam-se-lhe, uniformes, os mesmos quadros, num horizonte invariável que se afasta à medida que ele avança” (p. 86) [Moving along quickly, especially on stretches where small rolling formations come one after the other, all of a similar shape and appearance, the speediest of travelers will get the feeling that he is not moving. These shapes, so uniform, present him with the same picture of an unchanging horizon that keeps on getting farther away as he advances (p. 17)]. The clear antithetical construction emphasizes mobility, but the desert ends up imposing its stillness on the traveler. The only vestige of mobility, the rolling formations (“ondulações”), which could be read as altering a near-perfect linearity, are instead “small” and monotonous. In their unaltered succession, they do not seem to affect the idea of overall uniformity. The immobility is not truly of the territory but instead of the traveler. It is the territory that, stubbornly unvarying, “infects” the traveler with its immobility. The space thus deactivates the domination strategies employed (the all-encompassing eye, the map-drawing style, the frenetic movement forward), refusing to be transformed.

The *sertão* retains the ideological connotations that the desert acquired in nineteenth-century Latin America. It is conceived of as absolute exteriority and otherness, without inhabitants and without order. Yet *Os sertões* encompasses a variety of phases, from the description of a void (the first part constructs the space as if it were truly uninhabited) to the narrative of the inhabited desert (man, in the second part, seems indistinguishable from his surroundings), to the void that is brought back by war.⁴⁹ It would be a mistake, however, to read these moments as somehow separate, since the war is present from the very beginning. The first symptom of disorder in the *sertão* is the absence of roads: according to the civilizing logic, space and movement must be regulated; defining through which channels movement takes place is as fundamental as the movement itself.⁵⁰ The most palpable form of territorial domination is road building, and, in this respect and in this period in Latin America, the railway is the most effective means of ordering space. In this part of the *sertão*, however, the routes historically remained unchanging: “não a alteraram nunca. Não a variou, mais tarde, a civilização, justapondo aos rastros do bandeirante os trilhos de uma via férrea” (p. 83) [In no way did they change it. Nor did civilization, later on, as it put down railway tracks over the path of the *bandeirantes* (p. 15)]. The impenetrability of these regions takes on almost the quality of a force field. Roads

“contorneavam sempre, evitando-a sempre, a paragem sinistra e desolada, subtraindo-se a uma travessia torturante” (p. 83) [would always turn away here and there to avoid the sinister and desolate landscape and escape the torture of its crossing (p. 15)]. They encircle the territory without ever penetrating it. Here the adjectives describe not the landscape but rather the mood of a subject (a modern subject, related to the state) for whom this unincorporated geography is “sinister”, “desolate”, “torturous” (the literal translation of *torturante*). The narrator exhibits his disorientation in the absence of the state and in the face of stymied movement: it is not possible to travel there. He narrates successive attempts to move forward, all of which turn out to be futile. He then notes that “aquelas duas linhas de penetração, que vão interferir o S. Francisco em pontos afastados—Juazeiro e Santo Antônio da Glória—formavam, desde aqueles tempos, as lindes de um deserto” (p. 84) [“these two lines of penetration, touching the São Francisco at distant points—have been the boundaries of a desert ever since” (p. 15)]. The lines only highlight the apparent impenetrability of some regions. This deserted part of the *sertão* would seem to be that place that cannot be *traveled*.⁵¹ All of the previous rhetoric of forward movement comes to a halt in order to surround, to look from a distance or from the outside. If to travel is to see, then the desert is also that which remains invisible.

“O Sertão Vai Virar Mar”: The Return of an Original Sea

The narrator even employs the trope of the land as sea, which has a long and distinguished pedigree in descriptions of the South American plains: it was used by Humboldt, then by the English travelers, and then again by Sarmiento.⁵² Yet the sea takes on other connotations in Euclides, being the *sertão*'s original form: the *sertão* is not only a sea in a metaphorical sense, a vast limitless plain, but also, for Euclides, quite literally: “Imaginamo-los há pouco ... a emergirem, geologicamente modernos, de um vasto mar terciário” (p. 138) [Let us imagine them [the *sertões*] as they were a short time back ... as they emerge geologically modern from a vast Tertiary sea (p. 48)].⁵³ That is, where there is now a desert, there was once a sea. This helps reinforce the notion that these lands belong to another era. The *sertão* is an originary space, and entering it entails—as in the other three authors examined in this volume—a journey in time.⁵⁴ For Euclides, the (impossible) solution to the conflict—impossible because it emerges only after the disappearance of the other—is all but certain—lies in bringing two eras closer together, reducing the temporal distance that would explain the incomprehensible character of the man of the *sertão*. Toward the end of the book, the narrator claims that violence was not the appropriate way to deal with the resistive inhabitants of the *sertão*, and that another war, one consisting of “propaganda”, would be more effective. What is needed, Euclides

believes, is “uma propaganda tenaz, contínua e persistente, visando trazer para o nosso tempo e incorporar à nossa existência aqueles rudes compatriotas retardatários” (p. 682) [to draw these rude and backward fellow citizens into the mainstream of modern life and into the life of the country (p. 401)].⁵⁵ Whether the passages refer to the Tertiary or to an unspecified antiquity, exact correspondences are not the point for Euclides, the idea being that different manifestations of the past are apparent, still today, in the *sertão*. One of the terms that indicate this belonging to another time is *anacronismo* [anachronism], frequently used to refer to the type of life led by the people of the *sertão*. Fundamentally, and similarly to what Moreno believed about indigenous peoples in Argentina, or Burton about Paraguayans, the *sertanejos* are situated in a different stage of evolution:

Insistamos sobre esta verdade: a guerra de Canudos foi um refluxo em nossa história. Tivemos, inopinadamente, *ressurreta* e em armas em nossa frente, uma sociedade velha, uma sociedade morta, galvanizada por um doido. Não a conhecemos. Não podíamos conhecê-la. ... Porque essas psicoses epidêmicas despontam em todos os tempos e em todos os lugares como *anacronismos* palmares, contrastes inevitáveis na evolução desigual dos povos, patentes sobretudo quando um largo movimento civilizador lhes impele vigorosamente as camadas superiores.

(p. 316, emphasis added)

[We must insist on this truth: The war of Canudos was a regression in our history. What we had before us was the unsolicited armed insurgence of an old, dead society, brought back to life by a madman. We did not recognize this society; it was impossible for us to have known it ... These epidemic psychoses appear in all ages and all places as obvious *anachronisms*, inevitable contrasts in the unequal evolution of peoples, contrasts that become especially pronounced when a broad social movement pushes the people to a more advanced way of life.]

(p. 168)⁵⁶

The passage, again strongly antithetical, makes use of the image of a heretofore hidden object (in this case, a society, but sometimes a human body, or even the land itself) that heaves into view, or the very idea of a resurrected life that remains uncannily not recognized. Furthermore, the diagnose of the Canudos rebellion as an “epidemic psychosis” is a good example of the way in which *Os sertões* deploys the typical language of fin de siècle social psychology in order to build the topoi of contagion and collective madness in relation to the rebellion.⁵⁷ The fact that the past is physically present as one travels through the *sertão* appears at

some points with more clarity, such as when the idea of the emergence of another, ancient world is introduced. That extinct sea, which is for Euclides the soil of the *sertão*, is also a vast cemetery wherein lie the remains of that marine life. This combination of signs points to a *previous* life that can be detected only through its remnants:

E por mais inexperto que seja o observador—ao deixar as perspectivas majestosas, que se desdobram ao Sul, trocando-as pelos cenários emocionantes daquela natureza torturada, tem a impressão persistente de calcar o fundo recém-sublevado de um mar extinto, tendo ainda estereotipada naquelas camadas rígidas a agitação das ondas e das voragens.

(p. 91)

[And no matter how inexpert the observer might be, as he leaves the majestic perspectives that unfold to the south and exchanges them for the impressive scenery of this tormented nature, he gets the persistent impression that he is setting foot on the recently arisen bottom of an extinct sea, the agitation of waves and whirlpools still copied in those stark hillocks.]

(p. 20)

This description recalls Moreno's view of Patagonia as an “immense tomb”.⁵⁸ As in the Argentine traveler's account, in Euclides the idea of terrain that is already dead can be understood as prefiguring what that land *will become* as a result of the war.⁵⁹ In evidence here is the idea of nature “tormented” by a climate that continuously punishes it (the nature-climate binary is quite original, as if climate were not part of nature).⁶⁰ The whole passage evokes powerful contrasts that, as is usual in *Os sertões*, anticipate the war toward which the narrative is directed.⁶¹ The passage alludes to different forms of movement taking place simultaneously; the central image is that of walking across the bottom of an extinct sea that is “recém-sublevado”. In Portuguese, “sublevar” evokes both the idea of revolt or rebellion and the broader notion of rising in space.⁶² In other words, that ancient seafloor has risen, has drawn nearer, and remains perceptible. The prehistoric (or premodern, which for Euclides is always the world of Canudos and the *sertão*) element seems to be, though dead, nevertheless still present. The same idea appears at the end of the passage: the waves and whirlpools of that dead sea seem as if they have been “estereotipados” (translated, not entirely satisfactorily, as “copied”), a term that means “converter em formas sólidas, por meio de um metal em fusão, páginas previamente compostas em caracteres móveis” [to turn pages that were previously composed of movable type into solid forms by means of molten metal].⁶³ The image is of making something fixed, inalterable.⁶⁴ The land retains,

transformed into fixed lines, what once were sinuous, agitated, and rebellious elements. Thus, the text alludes to permanence, to returning, to the resistance of that which has been subjected to an effort to suppress it. The extinct element's mark survives on the land, its undulations still perceptible.

The image introduces the remnant as an element that is natural and primordial, and also as a form of resistance. The vestige is, *like all origins*, an emergence—an emergence and a whirlpool. It is in these terms that Walter Benjamin conceptualizes the notion of origin (*Ursprung* in German): "The term origin does not mean the process of becoming of that which has emerged, but much more, that which emerges out of the process of becoming and disappearing. The origin stands in the flow of becoming as a whirlpool."⁶⁵ The origin is not merely a beginning but also an *outcome* that is inherently mobile and unstable. It is the place where coming into being and vanishing coincide in a sort of incompleteness that is inherently wracked by violence and conflict. In precisely this way, toward the very end of the book the narrator claims that the men of the *sertão* are the initial core of the nation, "a rocha viva de nossa raça" (p. 766) [the very bedrock of our race (p. 454)] even as he attests to their disappearance through war.

Euclides's view of landscapes and ruins (sometimes remnants or vestiges) inverts the direction of the relationship between nature and the ruin, since in general it is nature that turns a particular construction into a ruin.⁶⁶ That is, the buildings are generally transformed into ruins when vegetal elements (such as plants) emerge in them. It is as if the structure were returning to the natural realm.⁶⁷ Here, Euclides takes the opposite tack: he introduces the ruin *into* nature; that is to say, he describes nature as a ruin in its very origins. The *sertão* is the result of a cataclysm, of an ancient earthquake, and it also encapsulates vestiges of ancient living forms. But the text also employs the more traditional image of vegetation penetrating a rock as a symbol of the ability to come back to life that resides in dead things, as a form of resistance: "Acredita-se que a região incipiente ainda está preparando-se para a Vida: o líquen ainda ataca a pedra, fecundando a terra" (p. 94) [It could be surmised that this incipient region is still making itself ready for life. Lichens still attack stones, fertilizing the ground (p. 22)]. The passage, again making use of a vocabulary reminiscent (or, in reality, anticipatory) of battle, indicates that this is the region of origins, a region that can begin, violently, to be alive. Once again, this is a moment of encounter between death and life, bringing the two meanings together. The moment in which the stone-like ground is fertilized by lichens is the moment that marks the origin of the ruin, represented as the triumph of life. The recurrence of images of resurrection is eloquent: the war is described as the return of dead customs and of an extinguished people, as the previous quotations have shown.

Moments such as this are crucial signs of an idea that undergirds the entire book, recurring again and again: the identification of the resistant vegetation (which the narrator in the next line calls "flora of great resistance") with the Canudos rebels. Regarding the end of the war, Euclides titles one section with one of the most frequently quoted lines in the book: "Canudos não se rendeu" (p. 778) [Canudos did not surrender (p. 463)].⁶⁸ Throughout the book, resistance emerges as the only positive (or at least surprising, formidable) meaning of the ruinous element, of all presences that are seen by the narrator as vestiges of the past. In the opening pages, however, what predominates is uneasiness in relation to the *sertão*, a notion that for Euclides has connotations akin to those of ruins. Indeed, he describes the landscape as being reminiscent of castles in ruins: "As mesmas assomadas gnáissicas caprichosamente cindidas em planos quase geométricos, à maneira de silhares, que surgem em numerosos pontos, dando, às vezes, a ilusão de encontrar-se, de repente, naqueles ermos vazios, majestosas ruínas de castelos" (p. 88) [The gneissic summits, casually split into almost geometrical planes, like pediments, rising up at several points give the illusion sometimes that one has suddenly come upon the majestic ruins of a castle in those empty barrens (p. 18)].⁶⁹ At some points, even more clearly, traversing the landscape around Canudos is compared to walking through ruins, through a land that is the result of sudden destruction: "Entretanto, inesperado quadro esperava o viandante que subia, depois desta travessia em que supõe pisar escombros de terremotos, as ondulações mais próximas a Canudos" (p. 98) [There is an unexpected vista awaiting the traveler crossing this region. He will get the feeling that he is treading the ruins from an earthquake as he climbs now up the hills closest to Canudos (p. 24)].

The *sertão* is the setting for what Euclides calls "o martírio da terra" (p. 87) [the martyrdom of the land (p. 18)], a battle between the land and the climate, which ravages and abuses it.⁷⁰ This conflict in nature is a harbinger of the armed conflict, the war. The identification of the "land" with "nature" is gradually modified until, having started from the idea of a dull, unchanging nature, we arrive at the idea of a nature governed by conflict. The landscape changes and the vegetation becomes horrifying: at one point, various samples of the plant that Euclides calls "cabeças-de-frade" (monk's heads) are described as having the appearance of "cabeças decepadas e sanguinolentas jogadas por ali, a esmo, numa desordem trágica" (p. 124) [decapitated and bleeding heads scattered about at random in tragic disorder (p. 40)]. Naturally, other heads—human this time—will appear later.⁷¹ This warlike language infects the narrator's point of view and gradually permeates the text.

The backlands are conceived of in their climatic and geographic characteristics as being "contrapostos a este critério natural" (p. 137) [contrary to the natural criterion (p. 48)]. They need, therefore, to be "corrected" in order to become productive, to be incorporated into the

logic of the modern state. For Euclides, man has created deserts (here he uses the expression *fazedores de desertos*—or desert makers—in which this book's title is inspired), but he can also eradicate them (p. 134). Euclides introduces various examples of the ways in which humanity has, in the past, “corrected” nature by controlling the flow of water: he explains how in Tunisia it was possible to progress from a “povoado de traficantes ou nûmidas erradios” (pp. 143–44) [village inhabited by merchants and wandering nomads (p. 52)] to “a terra clássica da agricultura antiga” (p. 144) [the classic area of ancient agriculture (p. 52)]. Though the text describes the ravages caused by sun and drought, water does not seem to be the solution: water's arrival is excessive, out of control, and destructive, and it makes the soil barren and unsuitable for agriculture.⁷² The taming of the “savage waters” (p. 144) is a good example of Euclides's logic of landscape transformation, which can certainly be read as a form of sustainable understanding of land production. Humans must then “civilize” nature, providing a “corretivo destas disposições naturais” (p. 146) [correction of these natural dispositions (p. 54)]. The section titled “A terra” culminates with this project:

Abarreirados os vales, inteligentemente escolhidos, em pontos pouco intervalados, por toda a extensão do território sertanejo, três conseqüências inevitáveis decorreriam: atenuar-se-iam de modo considerável a drenagem violenta do solo e as suas conseqüências lastimáveis; formar-se-lhes-iam à ourela, inscritas na rede das derivações, fecundas áreas de cultura; e fixar-se-ia uma situação de equilíbrio para a instabilidade do clima, porque os numerosos e pequenos açudes uniformemente distribuídos e constituindo uma dilatada superfície de evaporação, teriam, naturalmente, no correr dos tempos, a influência moderadora de um mar interior, de importância extrema.
(p. 137)

[Damming up the gullies after choosing them intelligently at closely spaced points across the extensive backland territory would bring about three inevitable results: It would narrow the violent damage to the soil and considerably reduce its woeful consequences; rich areas of cultivation would be formed in the web of its flow; and a state of balance would be maintained against the instability of the climate because the numerous small pools, in their uniform distribution, would constitute a wide surface of evaporation and over the passage of the seasons would be a natural and moderating influence like that of an inland sea, and this would be of extreme importance.]

(pp. 54–55)

In this passage, fluidity and mobility must be directed, organized. This recalls the reading offered by Deleuze and Guattari of the ways in which

the modern state transforms spaces: “the state needs to subordinate hydraulic force to conduits, pipes, embankments, which prevent turbulence, which constrain movement to go from one point to the other, and space itself to be striated and measured, which makes the fluid depend on the solid and flows proceed by parallel, laminar layers.”⁷³

Euclides's project is an attempt to stop movement in order to subsequently direct and resignify it, making it useful and productive. Ultimately, a situation of stability and uniformity is achieved. Regarding the modern state's interventions in space in an effort to simplify it and make it “legible”, Scott notes, “The organization of the natural world was no exception. Agriculture is, after all, a radical reorganization and simplification of flora to suit man's goals.”⁷⁴ The importance of agriculture is therefore present in *Os sertões*: the need to organize the chaos of nature, to channel the waters' course and, in doing so, turn them into “resources.”⁷⁵ The simplification of movement extolled by this project reveals a subject who comes to profoundly reject that fluidity which is so alien to him and which must, as Deleuze and Guattari put it in the previous quotation, be thought of in terms of solidity in order to be controlled. At the end of the passage, the narrator states that the proposed changes will have a “natural and moderating influence like that of an inland sea”. Therefore, modern agriculture's drive to domesticate would in a way recreate the sea that, according to Euclides, originated the *sertão*. If the sea is still latent in the space, as discussed above, then constructing a new sea will mean a reemergence. Paradoxically, the modernization process, in the context of the book's rhetoric, can be read as bringing the past back. As has been frequently asserted, *Os sertões* is a text built upon contradictions, in which the argument is not always consistent and oxymoronic images are juxtaposed. In these juxtapositions, frequent throughout the book, several temporal dimensions appear together. This is why the ruin and images related to it such as that of remains or vestiges are particularly rich in the book. In addition, in a perhaps unforeseen way, Euclides's project suggests the fulfillment of one of the prophecies that the narrator attributes to Conselheiro himself: “Em 1894 há de vir rebanhos mil correndo do centro da Praia para o certão; então o certão virará Praia e a Praia virará certão” (p. 277) [In 1896 a thousand herds will run from the coast to the backlands; then the backlands will become the coast and the coast will become the backlands (p. 142)].⁷⁶ As we shall see, the references to the internal sea and to Conselheiro's prophecy acquire, in the present day, unsuspected and unsettling meanings.

Conceptualizing Displacement: Builders of Ruins, or *Desert Makers*

Later, the narrator applies the adjective “mobile” to this territory, and that mobility (parallel to the rebels' own movements) will be the principal

obstacle to the troops' advance and therefore the *sertanejos*' principal ally. When the narrator refers to "território inimigo" (pp. 447, 448, 449) [enemy territory (pp. 250, 251); enemy land (p. 252)], he is speaking literally. The *sertão* is not only the territory of the enemy, where that enemy lives, but in fact is itself the enemy, remaining, like its inhabitants, resistant and external to the state. All of the vocabulary used to describe the *sertão* will later be applied to the war and to military strategies. In other words, even if the protagonists change, the same tensions pervade the entire book, and the nomadic quality of the territory is that of the inhabitants of Canudos and their defensive fluidity.

In the second part of the book, the description of the *sertanejos* is again constructed in accordance with a space-time axis. This population's nomadism turns out to be a consequence of drought and the unpredictable climate. The complicated, winding roads described in the first part are now translated into the *sertanejo*'s manner of walking, which is just as disorganized and undirected. The man of the *sertão* is described in contradictory terms:

É desgracioso, desengonçado, torto. Hércules-Quasímodo, reflete no aspecto a fealdade típica dos fracos. O andar sem firmeza, sem aprumo, quase gigante e sinuoso, aparenta a translação de membros desarticulados. ... Caminhando, mesmo a passo rápido, não traça trajetória retilínea e firme. Avança celeremente, num bambolear característico, de que parecem ser o traço geométrico os meandros das trilhas sertanejas.

(p. 208)

[he is unsightly, awkward, and hunched. A Hercules-Quasimodo, he expresses in his posture the typical ugliness of the weak. His shaky, indecisive, swaying, and slightly weaving gait makes him look loose jointed ... When he is walking, even if at a brisk pace, he does not move forward in a straight line. He advances in a characteristic reeling, meandering way, as if following the twisted trails of the backlands.]

(p. 96)

This is an excellent example of the use of the oxymoron, and of the association between weakness and ugliness, part of the rhetoric of social Darwinism. The narrator seems uncomfortable because the *sertanejo* moves forward sinuously, which would be a sign of weakness, as the passage makes evident the continuities between the land and the way of traversing it.⁷⁷ Numerous words here point to an *unsteady* way of moving forward. From the point of view that organizes the text, movement should have clear, firm directionality. At times, even that "enemy land" will *move* too, complicating the advancement of the troops and

representing a concrete threat: "O terreno inconsistente e móvel *fugia* sob os passos aos caminhanes; remorava a tração das carretas absorvendo as rodas até ao meio dos raios; opunha, salteadamente, flexíveis barreiras de espinheirais, que era forçoso destramar a facão; e reduplicava, no reverberar intenso das areias, a adustão da canícula." (p. 446, emphasis added) [The terrain made walking difficult, as the shifting sand made the men slip, and the wagon trains sank to their axels. Sudden barriers of thornbushes would rise up before them, which they had to hack down with their machetes. All day the sand doubled the intensity of the heat (p. 249)]. The translation interprets Euclides's description as referring to the characteristics of the terrain, but in fact there is no mention of sand or a slippery surface in the Portuguese version. Literally, the beginning of the passage states that "the inconsistent, shifting terrain fled under the walkers' footsteps". All verbs (*fugia*, *remorava*, *opunha*, *reduplicava*) in the passage refer to the soil as the agent of all actions: it is the land that *moves away*, and that actively opposes, through various actions, the movement of the troops.

Toward the war's end, the only ones who are able to gain access to the last bastions of the settlement's resistance are a battalion made up of, precisely, *sertanejos* (the 10,000-man army was composed of Brazilians from all the regions of the national territory, including other parts of the backlands; the battalions were uniformly composed, each being formed by men coming just from one region).⁷⁸ The troop's movement is described in this way, reflecting once more the narrator's insistence on the importance of straight lines:

O batalhão de sertanejos avançou. Não foi a investida militar, cadente, derivando a marche-marche, num ritmo seguro. Viu-se um como serpear rapidíssimo de baionetas ondulantes, desdobradas, de chofre, numa deflagração luminosa, traçando em segundos uma listra de lampejos desde o leito do rio até os muros da igreja... O mesmo avançar dos jagunços, célere, estonteador, escapante à trajetória retilínea, num colear indescritível. ... Coruscou um relâmpago de duzentas baionetas: o 5º desapareceu mergulhando nos escombros...

(p. 762)

[The advance of the battalion was not a closed formation. Instead it was a long, fast-moving line that suddenly burst into flame, unfurling a gleaming ribbon of steel from the riverbank to the walls of the church. It was a quick, stunning movement, typical of the *jagunços* [*sertanejos*], an indescribable serpentine motion ... There was the glint of two hundred bayonets. Then the Fifth disappeared from sight into the ruins.]

(p. 451)⁷⁹

In this beautiful passage, all light and chaos, the narrator's bewilderment in the face of the swiftness of the attack is a manifestation of the vertigo provoked in him by the *sertanejo* troops' incomprehensible movement. Again, the movement is described as lacking a "trajetória retilínea", the same expression seen above to characterize the *sertanejo's* manner of walking. The velocity of the scene, the narration of war as a succession of lightning bolts and as incessant and disordered movement, accounts for the vertiginous impression caused in the narrator. At the end of the description the spatial logic of the *sertão's* inhabitants prevails, as the battalion's invasion is represented as its disappearance into the Canudos rubble, its merging into the resistant enclave. Like the space itself, that logic eludes the gaze and the rationality of the narrator; it demands a new technology of seeing.

The obsession with straight lines appears as a personal characteristic that Euclides even acknowledges in himself, attributing it to his perspective as an engineer.⁸⁰ His correspondence contains phrases such as "a linha reta em que sempre estive"⁸¹ [the straight line I have always adopted] and "porei de lado todas as afeições para seguir retilinearmente"⁸² [I will set aside all affections and continue on the right [literally, straight] path ahead]. There is a moral quality attributed to this straight behavior, as a result of which deviation, oscillation, and zigzagging are considered to be a sort of error, a sinful aberrance (Euclides makes a programmatic use of these associations, which exist in language). In the first part of *Os sertões*, the Vaza-Barris River, on whose shores Canudos was founded, is presented as a winding road that empties into Canudos: it moves forward "torcendo-se em meandros. Presa numa dessas voltas via-se uma depressão maior, circundada de colinas. ... E atulhando-a, enchendo-a toda de confusos tetos incontáveis, um acervo enorme de casebres" (p. 99) [twisting and meandering. A larger hollow can be seen caught up in one of these curves, surrounded by hill. ... Filling it completely is a crowd of shacks looking like a heap of roofs (p. 25)]. Although the river is sometimes described in *Os sertões* as just a dry riverbed (as a consequence of the periodic droughts), that is not the case here. The Vaza-Barris was actually Canudos' main source of water. Here Euclides is explicitly describing "os pequenos cursos d'água, divagando, serpeantes" [small watercourses [that] worm along slowly, scarcely visible, serpentine]. See how the Portuguese verb "serpear", to wind or meander, is, in the passage transcribed above, used to describe the movement of the *sertanejo* battalion that, as part of the national army, later attacks Canudos. Here it is as if the river flowed into Canudos, as if the town were the only possible result of its disorganized movement. There is, then, a fascinating description and understanding of movement in Euclides, embodied in the contrasting dialogue between rivers and seas that his prose repeatedly puts forward.⁸³

Euclides's corrective zeal reflects his aversion to sinuousness.⁸⁴ A few months after the first publication of *Os sertões*, in a letter to the literary critic Araripe Júnior, one of the first reviewers of the book, Euclides thanks Araripe for his positive review, which transformed him, he says, from a "lettered engineer" into a writer. He refers to *Os sertões* as a sketch that was thought of as such, in order to be "corrected" more effectively. Here, in order to describe his own writing, he uses images of oscillation and rectitude: "O meu esboço fez-se desenho. No apagado das linhas vacilantes que tracei, e propositalmente eu tracei de leve para facilitar a correção, correram firmes, intorcíveis em rigorismo de traçado geométrico, os contornos reais da agitação sertaneja"⁸⁵ [My sketch became a drawing. In the blurriness of the wavering lines I traced—and I traced them lightly on purpose to facilitate their correction—the true outlines of the *sertanejos'* rebellion flowed steadily, unbending in their strict geometrical lines]. As in his descriptions of the *sertanejo*, Euclides seems to perceive weakness and strength in his own act of writing, where an initial sinuosity stands in need of "correction". This description of the act of writing is also strikingly similar to the image of the stereotyped lines left by the moving sea in the sand discussed above, where the narrator significantly uses the expression "a agitação das ondas e das voragens", employed here to refer to the rebellion. Writing is conceived of here as an extremely complicated and arduous effort, full of errors and erasures, in a word, *ab-errant*.⁸⁶ The blurry quality of his writing (one of the meanings of *apagado* is "extinct"; it also means to have lost intensity—hence "blurry") leaves an imprint on the resulting work, and its simultaneous presence/absence aptly represents the *aberrant* movement of the Canudos insurgency itself. As such, the writing of *Os sertões* comes close to representing, in its very materiality, the almost illegible movement typical of the rebels (this writing is described as "vacilante" [wavering, and also precarious]). In this letter Euclides seems conscious of the oscillating (for him, difficult to follow, as we have seen) character of his own writing, and, more generally, of the difficulties of representing the Canudos rebellion, often referred to as the "agitação sertaneja". It is this blurriness, he suggests, that allows him, paradoxically, to offer a geometric and straight rendering of the events.⁸⁷

In the second part of the book, Euclides presents Conselheiro as a nomad: "continuou sem embaraços a sua marcha de desnorreado apóstolo, pervagando nos sertões" (p. 280) [Throughout his wanderings of the backlands, Antônio Conselheiro continued his aimless career as an apostle without any obstacles (p. 144)].⁸⁸ He *errs*, always disappearing and reappearing, and always founding something. In contrast with the foundation of nations, which operates at a symbolic level, he is a literal, material founder, since, in his perpetual movement, he is always setting things in place and building something: "Em quase todas deixava um traço de passagem: aqui um cemitério arruinado, de muros reconstruídos;

além uma igreja renovada, adiante uma capela que se erguia, elegante sempre" (p. 273) [In almost all of these places he left some reminder of his stay: in one place the ruined walls of a cemetery were rebuilt, in another a church had been repaired, and farther on a chapel had been constructed with a display of fine craftsmanship (p. 139)]. His attitude could be thought of as similar to that held by Moreno on his travels: he strives to leave traces of his own passage, to resignify space. These constructions are accompanied (as also happened, incidentally, in the case of Moreno) by words; these are, though, for the narrator, "barbaric and frightening" words ("uma oratória bárbara e arrepiadora" [p. 274]) spoken by a preacher who "está fora do nosso tempo" (p. 275) [is a being out of time (p. 140)].⁸⁹ The material marking of the villages is accompanied by a constant preaching aimed at recruiting followers. There is no real newness in these constructions; or, perhaps more precisely, all that is new is also old, accompanied by discursive elements that, for the narrator, are typical of extinct societies.

This movement from village to village culminates (both in Euclides's account and historically) in 1893, with the founding of Canudos. The journey then comes to a halt, but there is no real immobility because food and other supplies continue to be brought in from the outside (and commerce with the surrounding area grows strong), which requires roads, travel, and movement. The dynamics upon which the community that rebelled against the Brazilian Republic was founded have not been easy for historians and scholars to understand or interpret. Historian Marco Antonio Villa, working with different sources, reconstructs the economy and the mode of life of the Belo Monte community.⁹⁰ The very notion of community is important for understanding the way the settlement worked, as its economy was based on solidarity, sharing, and bartering. Villa suggests that Canudos had extensive commercial and social relationships with other communities in the *sertão* and that circulation of goods and peoples was intense. And he adds that the community established "commercial relations that were far from the traditional ones, characterized by exploitation".⁹¹ Edmundo Moniz, a Marxist intellectual who studied the Canudos insurrection, understands the town as a utopian socialist community in which equality and sharing were pivotal; like Villa, he points out that the forms of land ownership predominant in the rebel town opposed the interests of the region's powerful landowners.⁹² To simplify the territory through war meant also reinstating capitalist (but, in reality, almost feudal) forms of labor. While the etymology of the word *sertão* evokes the idea of the desert, in fact the association between the two terms is linked more to an ideological association than to the population statistics at the time: there is no doubt that the region of Canudos was no desert, being densely populated.⁹³

The flow of people to and from Canudos was constant too; *Os sertões* later shows, when the state armies approach the settlement, how the

sertanejos continually move around them. According to Euclides, the troops remain oblivious to the ubiquity and perpetual movement of Canudos' inhabitants—it is imperceptible to them. For Deleuze and Guattari, we should recall, the nomad opposes, through violence, the establishment of the nation-state. In opposition to the nation-state's effort to suppress movement and pin down identities, the nomad presents movement, incessant flow, and heterogeneousness. Even if Canudos is a community established in one place, the *sertanejos's* logic is clearly that of nomadism. Euclides himself describes the backlanders as nomads:

Insulado deste modo no país que o não conhece, em luta aberta com o meio, que lhe parece haver estampado na organização e no temperamento a sua rudeza extraordinária, nômade ou mal fixo à terra, o sertanejo não tem, por bem dizer, ainda capacidade para se afeiçoar à situação mais alta.

(p. 237–38)

[The sertanejo lives in isolation in a country that hardly knows who he is. His existence is defined by constant warfare with the environment, which imprints an extraordinary ruggedness on his physique and his psychology. He is a nomad, with shallow roots in the soil and he does not, in truth, have the organic capacity to attain a higher position in life.

(p. 116)

For Euclides, the idea of nomadic life is intrinsically opposed to civilized or modern life. For him, as we have seen, the problem is not just that they move but also, above all, the ways in which they do so.

The *sertanejos's* resistance to the very end, their refusal to flee to save their own lives, indicates a determination to cling to a point in space, a defense of immobility.⁹⁴ The residents' obstinate insistence on remaining in Canudos is a key form of resistance.⁹⁵ In fact, for Deleuze and Guattari, nomadism does not primarily involve movement:

We can say of the nomads, following Toynbee's suggestion: *they do not move*. They are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave ... what distinguishes the two kinds of voyages [smooth and striated] is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in place, of being for space.⁹⁶

Perhaps this rebellion is, to be more precise, a demand for the freedom to occupy space, to move (or not) in a space that is one's own. Thus, the *sertanejos's* nomadism should not be understood as lacking

all forms of settlement. Instead, a certain nomadic logic shapes their relationship with space and transforms them into a war machine. As Juan Pablo Dabove notes, "Even though [Canudos] represents the end of wandering for Conselheiro's followers (and life in a city is the opposite of nomadism), at its core it conserves a nomadic imprint, an air of the warrior's headquarters."⁹⁷ Even though the rebels resist *in* their town, it is also true that they are constantly leaving it, constructing the *sertão* as a space of war. Euclides not only calls the men of the *sertão* nomads, but the nomadism is also (and mainly) seen in the way they move across the territory, and wage war.

This different relationship that the *sertanejos* establish with the land has implications for thinking through the relationship between *nomos* and *polis*. Both from *Os sertões* and from the two historians' accounts reproduced above, it is possible to infer that Canudos does not have a relationship of dominance over the rural areas such as the one that cities impose on countrysides—decisively through war—during this period. This relationship is, rather, one of belonging, one that erases clear boundaries between the settlement and the environment. As Dabove argues,

the Latin American city was to be the denial of the space upon which it was built. ... [I]ts relationship to its hinterland is ... not one of belonging but one of domination. Canudos does not cancel the land from which it came, but it is an accomplished and faithful product of the land.⁹⁸

In this book we have been seeing examples of how the different logics of domination over resistant or "backward" hinterlands are envisaged from the city. One of the important contributions of Sarmiento's *Facundo* was the identification of cities with civilization and rural areas with barbarism. For Sarmiento, who was read and admired by Euclides, this tension between the two spaces would inevitably end up with the triumph of the city over the country. This operation of pitting one space against the other was a way to articulate a tension already existing in colonial times; this conceptualization acquired explanatory power and became more visible in different ways in the second part of the nineteenth century.⁹⁹ Ángel Rama explains that "the city of letters was making a determined effort to integrate and dominate entire national territories, to domesticate Nature and subject rural cultures to the modernizing norms of capitaline society" as a "project of domination that, for the first time in a militant way, was carried out by the modernized cities, seeking to integrate the national territory under the norm of the capital city".¹⁰⁰ The conflicts around which the texts analyzed in *The Desertmakers* are constructed are to a large extent processes of internal conquest carried out by the capitalist elites from the cities. These wars are waged against

alternative ways of understanding the relationship with the land and with the national space embodied in notions of community founded on a different relationship with the environment, as well as different understandings of belonging and productivity.

Canudos, then, like Conselheiro himself, is still the *sertão*. Hence the loathing of disorder that is apparent in Euclides's description of the place. For him, Canudos is the anti-city. In it, there is no cleanliness, nor order, nor separation between dwellings. It is—and this is the problem—a place that is not subject to the laws of the state, which strive to be all-encompassing; above all, the laws of the lettered city seek to be orderly:

A *urbs* monstruosa, de barro, definia bem a *civitas* sinistra do erro. O povoado novo surgia, dentro de algumas semanas, já feito ruínas. Nascia velho. Visto de longe, desdobrado pelos cômodos, atulhando as canhadas, cobrindo área enorme, truncado nas quebradas, revoltado nos pendores—tinha o aspecto perfeito de uma cidade cujo solo houvesse sido sacudido e brutalmente dobrado por um terremoto. Não se distinguíam as ruas. Substituíam-as dédalo desesperador de becos estreitíssimos, mal separando o baralhamento caótico dos casebres feitos ao acaso ...

(pp. 291–92, original emphasis)

[The monstrous aggregation of mud huts clearly defined the sinister *civitas* of wrongdoing. The new town arose in a few weeks, a city of ruins. It was born old. Seen from a distance, spread out over the hills over an enormous area, split by ravines and rugged slopes, it had the appearance of a city that has been shaken and thrown about by an earthquake. Streets could not be distinguished. Instead there was a desperate maze of alleys, barely separating the chaotic jumble of hastily built hovels.]

(p. 151)

Canudos is—in an almost systematic manner—the opposite of what Rama described as the lettered project of the city: the space reveals not a trace of what that critic called "*razón ordenadora*" [ordering reason]. Instead of an orderly city where it is easy to establish the spaces of power, Canudos is a city without streets, unplanned: "como se tudo aquilo fosse construído, febrilmente, numa noite, por uma multidão de loucos" (p. 292) [as if they had been feverishly constructed in a night by a crowd of lunatics (p. 151)].¹⁰¹ Disorderly, chaotic, it is perhaps a sort of *favela* within Brazil.

I mention this not by chance, since this connection has some historical grounding. In fact, sociologist Lícia do Prado Valladares has affirmed that the descriptions of Canudos in *Os sertões* constitute the "myth of origin" of what later would be the favelas.¹⁰² The word *favela* refers

to a type of plant that Euclides describes in *Os sertões* as being aggressive and resistant, qualities that also characterize the rebels.¹⁰³ He also describes the *Morro da Favela* [Favela Hill], one of the hills from which he looks out at the battlefields; he calls the place thus because the plant grows thickly there. And, in his writing, the hill becomes at times, synecdochically, a *favela*.¹⁰⁴ Significantly, the people who founded the first favelas in Rio de Janeiro, at the very beginning of the twentieth century, had been members of the victorious army returning from the Canudos War. These soldiers decided to occupy one of the city's hills when the government's promise of housing upon victory was not kept. Furthermore, the favelas in Rio are typically associated with the *morros* or hills that characterize the landscape of the city. The first favela, the one created by these soldiers, was located on the Morro da Providência [Providence Hill], but upon being occupied by them, it became known as the Morro da Favela.¹⁰⁵

The symbolic power of "infection" is at work in this phenomenon. While Canudos was construed by the media and the elites as a source of infection that threatened to spread across Brazil, it was their desperate and exaggerated reaction to the revolt which ended up prolonging Canudos in the very heart of the new Republic. The favela could be seen, in this sense, as a sort of ghost of Canudos, a ghost that has haunted the dominant Brazilian class ever since. Seen as disordered and dangerous, impenetrable and incomprehensible to the political elite, it remains a place with its own rules and dynamics. Many in the city, which turns its back on it, view it as a site to be wiped out completely; the favela is part of the city and, at the same time, its aberrant and disquieting contrary.¹⁰⁶

The passage plays with oxymoronic structures such as "*urbs monstruosa*" (not rendered literally in English) and "*sinister civitas*" (similarly, on page 296, "*cidade selvagem*" [savage city, p. 154]): these Latin words evoke the very etymology of *cidade*. Like these expressions, Canudos is an oxymoron, an aberrant, chaotic, and incomprehensible monster. Its space cannot be read or codified through maps, as happens in the case of the surrounding lands, where maps are included in the hope of giving a more detailed representation of the region. According to Rama, "the notion that the statutory order must be constituted at the outset to prevent future disorder alludes to the peculiar virtue of signs: to remain unalterable despite the passage of time and, at least hypothetically, to constrain changing reality in a changeless rational framework."¹⁰⁷ Canudos is presented as being impossible to pin down through such processes. Chance, disorder, and spontaneity reign, as the community eludes the stabilizing power of the sign. As a result, Canudos is protean, changeable, resistant to planning and organization. And so it remains the exact opposite of modernity to Euclides, who rarely calls the settlement a city (in the passage above, he uses adjectives that work as 'neutralizers' of the

term's associations with modernization). Instead, he uses frequently the Portuguese term *arraial*, which can be translated as a 'hamlet' or 'small village'. Whatever the actual size of the settlement, it looks like the term is not historically apt to describe it (historians have suggested that the population of Canudos ranged from 10,000 to 35,000, over the course of its brief existence), so it is likely that Euclides was trying to diminish the size of the resistant enclave in his writing.¹⁰⁸ And, in a few cases (the description above is actually one of perhaps three) Euclides would call it *povoado*—that is, 'town'.

It should be borne in mind that Canudos was formed through a massive migration to the interior of the *sertão*, thus creating an alternative population center to the coastal cities, which were by then booming. This new direction of migratory movement represented a deviation from the expected route produced by economic forces. The inhabitants of the *sertão* moved not toward the metropolitan centers of progress but toward something that the lettered elite considered their total nemesis. As viewed from the coast, this trajectory was not only off-course but heading in the opposite direction—"backward"—away from the "involuntary mobility" discussed by Pratt that has characterized the social history of Brazil and most other Latin American countries.¹⁰⁹ This was a subversive mobility that resignified migration, its causes, and its functioning.

The description of Canudos as a "city of ruins" harks back to the vestiges found in the soil of the *sertão* while the traveler moved across it, also described as a ruin (seen above).¹¹⁰ The simultaneity between new and old is evident. It is as if the product of the *sertanejos'* labor were itself ruin-like, as if the fact that those men lived in the past meant that everything produced by their hands would also have that archaic quality. The newest things in the *sertão* are also the most decrepit. The narrator therefore fixes the population of the *sertão* in time as a counterweight to their incessant movement in space.

In addition, the description identifies the Canudos residents' manner of building as being like an earthquake. This simultaneity of construction and destruction recalls the *sertão's* very origin. In keeping with the text's deterministic perspective, these men act the same way as the environment that fashioned them (and both through earthquake-like means): while the *sertão* is a desert produced by a natural cataclysm, the founding logic of the *sertanejos* produces ruins. There is, then, an equivalence in the way the desert and ruins are conceptualized in *Os sertões*, and throughout all of Euclides's texts. According to Edgar Salvadori de Decca, "[In Euclides's view,] just as the *sertão* is the degradation of nature over time, the *sertanejo* is the historical degradation of the race. Both are already ruins of time."¹¹¹ These ruined spaces remain outside the new modernizing order, which explains the narrator's revulsion. Being outside of time is, for progress, being off the map. These territories

and constructions are, from their very origin, unmappable. While Euclides's text, by describing them as space-time hiatuses, contradictorily situates them within the nation's spatial imagination for the first time, he is simultaneously announcing a new erasure. This erasure will, of course, be carried out through war. But when the narrator realizes the inevitable outcome of the conflict, the massacre of the *sertanejos* at the hands of the government troops, he is no longer able to distinguish between these two groups of *desert makers*.

This city, then, which is portrayed as unthinkable, over the course of the conflict is also conceived of as almost *invisible*. In the middle of the fighting, the city operates in a contradictory way. On the one hand, the houses are easily destroyed by modern weaponry; on the other, it is impossible to discern the enemy. The utterly fragile city is also utterly indestructible. This is consistent with the description of Canudos as ruined from its origins. If the city is a ruin, then it is *already* destroyed. How to destroy a ruin? The following description of the resisting city is eloquent:

Canudos ... tinha ilusória fragilidade nos muros de taipa que o formavam ... Na história sombria das cidades batidas, o humilde vilarejo ia surgir com um traço de trágica originalidade. Intacto—era frágilimo; feito escombros—formidável. Rendia-se para vencer, aparecendo, de chofre, ante o conquistador surpreendido, inexpugnável e em ruínas.

(pp. 468–69)

[The town, because of its mud construction, might have seemed fragile, but this was just an illusion. ... This poor backlands village stands out as a sobering example of invaded cities. It was just a pile of mud huts. It yielded in order to conquer].¹¹²

(p. 262)

This is why only soldiers coming from the *sertão* (*sertanejos*, themselves ruinous beings) can put up a fight against the town. Ruins are, significantly, another form of indecipherability. Thus, the town is invincible also because it is hard to read, since the enemy fighters are frequently nowhere to be seen. When they are, their appearances are fleeting and swift. Once again, the gaze that seeks to pin in place is made immobile by indecipherable movement.

Looking at War

The problems of adapting to what is seen do not end in the city; a rhetoric of bewilderment accompanies the gaze. This trip “inland” is, more evidently than Moreno's trip to southern Argentina, a movement through lands and men that are alien to the invaders' understanding

of the nation. Close to the end of the book, a section titled “Fora da pátria” [translated as “In Another Country”] appears. The backlands are conceived of not even as a frontier here, but as an utter exteriority, as a *desert*. The notion also implies exclusion from the logic of the modern era (Euclides would famously refer to the Amazon as a “land without history” or as a space existing “at the margins of history”). In this section, the conflict is portrayed as a “discovery” of an unknown land:

Convinha-se em que era terrivelmente paradoxal uma pátria que os filhos procuravam armados até os dentes, em som de guerra, despedaçando as suas entranhas a disparos de Krupps, desconhecendo-a de todo, nunca a tendo visto, surpreendidos ante a própria forma da terra árida, e revolta, e brutal, esvurmindo espinheiros, tumultuando em pedregais, esboroando em montanhas derruídas, escanceladas em grotões, ondeando em tabuleiros secos, estirando-se em planuras nuas, de estepes... O que ia fazer-se era o que haviam feito as tropas anteriores—uma invasão—em território estrangeiro. Tudo aquilo era uma ficção geográfica.

(p. 678)

[Surely it was a paradoxical country whose own native sons invaded it, armed to the teeth, and gutted it with their Krupp cannons. They committed these acts knowing nothing at all about the land. They had never seen it before. They looked in amazement at the dry earth, its rugged, brutal contours and thorny vegetation. The alien land was strewn with heaps of rock and crumbled hills torn by caverns and ravines, and all around were the parched, barren tablelands and the rolling plains. They were being asked to do what troops before them had done: to invade a foreign territory. It was a geographical fiction.]

(p. 400)

The Portuguese version's enumerative and chaotic structure effectively conveys the confusion in the minds of the soldiers entering a foreign land. It also suggests the difficulties for moving forward through a land that presents only obstacles to the troop's advancement. The images that appear in the first part of the book are now more explicitly linked to the war: the land appears as an already destroyed surface, where conflict is inveterate. This last invasion, and its likely success in wiping out the rebellion, did not imply a better understanding of the enemy. The paradox appears again at the end: the image of a geographical fiction suggests that the war did not solve issues of belonging and nationhood that are, for the narrator, essential.

But the *sertão* and the conflict also defy the narrator's understanding of the world: he has no instruments with which to observe what

appears before his eyes. In Euclides's travel diary from the front, published in newspapers and posthumously collected in book form with the title *Canudos. Diário de uma expedição* [1939; *Canudos: Diary of an expedition*], he confesses the inadequacy of his own training:

Eu, porém, perdi-me logo, perdi-me desastrosamente no meio da multiplicidade das espécies e atravessando, supliciado como Tântalo, o dédalo das veredas estreitas, ignorante deslumbrado – nunca lamentei tanto a ausência de uma educação prática e sólida e nunca reconheci tanto a inutilidade das maravilhas teóricas com as quais nos iludimos nos tempos acadêmicos.¹¹³

[I immediately and clumsily became lost amid the multiplicity of species, walking through the labyrinth of narrow paths, tortured as Tantalus, amazed at my ignorance—never had I lamented so acutely my lack of a solid and practical education, nor recognized more powerfully the uselessness of the theoretical marvels with which we are deluded in our academic years.]

The sincerity of Euclides's desire to understand shines through in his diary, which points to his willingness to acquire knowledge, even if this implies the extra effort of altering his conception of the process of nation building. This longing for knowledge is revealed in a sort of voluptuousness related to wonderment, a pleasure that is never satisfied, and the resultant suffering caused by the impossibility of taking in all that is before him. In the image of this self that becomes disoriented in the tangled, unruly vegetation around him, we witness the perception of a chaotic environment through a rhetoric similar to the one he will use later, when describing Canudos in *Os sertões*. The impossibility of seeing distinctly and the confusion that impossibility brings with it thus identify those two unsettling spaces, as the national lands are described as foreign.¹¹⁴ It is this bewildered look at the national territory that allows Leopoldo M. Bernucci to compare Euclides to foreign travelers: "Invested in his role as ethnographer and soil researcher, the author's astonished gaze recalls important moments experienced by Léry, Saint-Hilaire, Spix, Martius, and others. What we have is a new discovery by a bold *traveler*, who ultimately discovers himself."¹¹⁵ *Os sertões* inhabits the moment in which that foreignness is confirmed, both in terms of the inherently national that becomes alien, becomes *other*, and in terms of the self: the emergence of a certain internal foreignness within the most intimate space of the self.

In this sense, too, Euclides's travels and his subsequent writing offer an alteration of the self's relationship with the state. Despite having been published five years after the conflict, *Os sertões* retains this transitive, metamorphic sense, as it shows the difficulties of making use of the interpretative instruments for understanding Canudos provided by state

institutions. Therein lies one of the text's greatest complexities: having been conceived of as *the account of a journey*, it narratively preserves the learning that is the text's true starting point but that emerges gradually, being represented in its final pages as a tragic discovery. Though the narrator's voice largely adopts a learned and modernizing perspective, throughout the text that perspective is subjected to a constant self-critique that ultimately cuts through the homogeneity of the official discourse, which the author had originally identified as his own. The narrator's voice therefore eventually achieves a new critical position. In this sense, *Os sertões* narrates an increasing shift away from the state's legitimizing and simplifying discourse toward one of greater ambivalence and complexity. The convoluted and chaotic prose of Euclides, full of hyperbatons, is the material objectivization of this intellectual effort at interpreting (or seeing) and representing that is at the center of *Os sertões*.¹¹⁶ Herein lies a key difference between the narrator of *Os sertões* and the state whose destructive logic he seems set on reproducing. Whereas for the state war is the element that visibilizes the opaque space of the *sertão*, the crucial instrument for simplifying territory and population and making them legible,¹¹⁷ that same war leads the narrator to *look at himself* with bewilderment, losing all sense of orientation and ceasing to recognize himself in the state.¹¹⁸

This bewilderment leads Euclides to reconsider his relationship with the state, which can also be thought of as a starting place for travel. In this sense, to return becomes impossible in *Os sertões* because the starting point will no longer be the arrival point; one cannot return to the same origin, which has shifted, undergone an estrangement process that has made it alien.¹¹⁹ Returning will intensify that sense of distance from a "home" that has ceased to be such. Before his trip to Canudos, as we have seen, Euclides da Cunha was a strong supporter of the new republican system and saw the rebellion as a threat to it, one carried out by ignorant peasants opposing progress. In two articles published in *O Estado de São Paulo* on 14 March and 17 July 1897, both titled "A nossa Vendéia" [Our Vendée], he compares the Canudos rebellion to the 1793 War in the Vendée, in which peasants resisted the French Revolution. In the first of these articles he paints the Canudos rebellion as being akin to the monarchist forces that longed for restoration: "Como na Vendéia o fanatismo religioso que domina as suas almas ingênuas e simples é habilmente aproveitado pelos propagandistas do Império" [As in the War in the Vendée, the propagandists of Empire take advantage of the religious fanaticism that governs their [the *sertanejos*'] naïve and simple souls].¹²⁰ There is no disappointment in these articles, whose author shows an unbridled optimism with regard to the end of the conflict: he is certain that the Republic, which he unwaveringly supports, will triumph.

This enthusiasm disappears entirely once the conflict ends and the writer comes back. The first known text he wrote upon his return, a

poem dated 14 October 1897, is precisely about coming back from war. Euclides makes explicit the shock of having seen war, and the extent to which this experience affects his own writing.¹²¹ In a letter to his friend Francisco Escobar from December 1901, in which he says he has finished *Os sertões*, Euclides explicitly shows his distance from the triumphalism of the Republic: “vencidos somos todos nós. Neste país não há mais vitórias... Derrotas e esborrachamento em toda a linha ... Porque afinal, és como eu, um dissidente ... e nenhum de nós se pode escravizar a uma bandeira” [we have all been defeated. There are no more victories in this country... Crushing defeats everywhere ... Because in the end, you are, like me, a dissident ... and nobody can turn us into the slaves of any flag].¹²² The writer here portrays the Brazilian political situation as a widespread failure, reasserting his intellectual independence from any political project. Immediately after coming back from war, then, Euclides depicts writing as a painful task, devoid of all beauty; with *Os sertões* completed, he has become a true dissenter. In the “Preliminary Note” of his book, he calls the victory he had so longed for a crime, one that his book will vehemently denounce (p. 67). Euclides’s incorporation into intellectual society at the time was always a source of conflict in his relationship with that elite; always dissatisfied, always feeling misunderstood, he finally achieved his greatest successes and recognition only shortly before his premature death.¹²³

This rhetoric of bewilderment becomes most tangible in the invisibility that protects the rebels and the space they defend. The enemy’s invisibility (“não se via o inimigo” [p. 537]) [The enemy was nowhere to be seen (p. 306)]]¹²⁴ is especially evident in the descriptions of scenes of war, and is perceived by the government army as evidence of its own vulnerability. There are 22 explicit mentions of invisibility in the book, most of them appearing in the third part. If seeing is a way of understanding and dominating, and even destroying (three operations that complement one another in war, though fissures among them become apparent over the course of Euclides’s text), the impossibility of seeing suggests that power cannot be wielded over unfamiliar territory. Thus, invisibility becomes the *sertanejo* army’s greatest weapon. In this sense, they resist because they *do not* fight conventionally, because they *do not confront*, properly speaking (there is no face-to-face combat). This new way of waging war is a significant source of unease for the national army.

Invisibility is not, however, merely a guerrilla tactic; in Euclides’s writing the notion relates to different ways of understanding movement and the relationships between the subjects and the space they inhabit. References to invisibility are also an aspect of the book’s reflections on the technologies of seeing: on the one hand, following classical symbolism, seeing is related to understanding, to the acquisition of knowledge; on the other hand, these references are strategies for representing war.¹²⁵ The men of the *sertão* participate in the war in order to avoid the actual

clashes.¹²⁶ In the middle of the battle, Canudos’s inhabitants are described as invisible:

Quinze ou vinte mil almas—encafurnadas naquela tapera babilônica... E invisíveis. De longe em longe, um vulto, rápido, cortava uma viela estreita, correndo, ou apontava, por um segundo, indistinto e fugitivo, à entrada da grande praça vazia, desaparecendo logo. Nada mais. Em torno o debuxo misterioso de uma paisagem bíblica: a infinita tristura das colinas desnudas, ermas, sem árvores. Um rio sem águas, tornejando-as, feito uma estrada poente e longa. Mais longe, avassalando os quadrantes, a corda ondulante das serras igualmente desertas, rebatidas, nitidamente, na imprimadura do horizonte claro, feito o quadro desmedido daquele cenário estranho. (p. 592)

[There were about fifteen thousand to twenty thousand people dug into the Babylonian weed patch. They were all invisible. Occasionally they [the state army’s soldiers] were able to see a narrow alley branching off from the huge empty square, but then they lost sight of it. All this in a biblical landscape, set against sadly barren hills, where there were no trees. A dry riverbed, winding around the town, was turned into a long, dusty highway. In the distance, commanding the four points of the compass, was a rolling line of mountains, also deserted. They stood out sharply against the bright horizon, like the giant frame of a huge picture.]

(p. 342)

Strangeness and mystery predominate. An infinite desert that stretches out around a cluster of people, protecting them and identified with them, a series of undulations that are the landscape’s most distinctive (and perhaps its only) feature, rejecting any hint of straight lines. There are no men or streets, only “vultos” [shadows] and “vuelas” [alleys]. Above all, though, this is a ghostly realm in which, though there is life, no sign of it is visible to the describing eye; it remains “intangível” [intangible].¹²⁷ The enemy’s movement, rooted in his knowledge of the territory, always seems deceptive.

The passage also offers a good example of a scene of combat in *Os sertões*, where the clashes are in general absent from narration. From the perspective of the invading army, war is immobility, silence, and waiting. The inhabitants of Canudos never seek shelter in absolute stillness, though; they know the distances, the velocities, the nooks and crannies of the territory they are fighting to defend. It seems that despite the national army’s destructive drive, the military is unable to cause as much damage as it would like (see the example of the already destroyed ruin above), resulting in a space that hovers midway between life and death.

That spectral quality is inherent in nature, people, and combat. An army unit takes fire from one spot, but when soldiers go out looking for the shooter, they cannot see him. The fruitless search and the repeated gunfire continue until, when the latter finally ceases, the patrol decides to give up the search:

Volvem exaustos. Vibram os clarins. A tropa renova a marcha com algumas praças de menos. E quando as últimas armas desaparecem, ao longe, na última ondulação do solo, desenterra-se de montões de blocos—feita uma cariátide sinistra em ruínas ciclópicas—um rosto bronzeado e duro; depois um torso de atleta, encourado e rude; e transpondo velozmente as ladeiras vivas desaparece, em momentos, o trágico caçador de brigadas.

(p. 361)

[They return exhausted. The bugles sound. The troops continue their march, their numbers diminished. And when the last are out of sight, beyond the next hill, a figure rises up from the stone mounds—a sinister caryatid from cyclopean ruins—a hard, sun-burned face, then the body of an athlete, covered in rude leather. He swiftly traverses the steep sides of the ravine and then disappears. The terrible tracker of soldiers is gone in seconds.]

(p. 202)

In this passage, the *jagunço's* body remains beneath the soil, associated with it, as a continuation of it, and specifically of its undulation.¹²⁸ This is yet another scene of an emergence, in which the body literally rises, as a ruin, from the soil. The identification between the land and the *sertanejos* is strongly suggested here. This is highlighted by the fact that, furthermore, the hills are *alive* (this meaning has not been preserved in the translation). The backlander's velocity is paralleled by the moving territory. But perhaps the most important element of the account is that not only does a body emerge from the land, but that this is a body that comes from the past. The expression "sinister caryatid" is akin to the phrases used to describe Canudos ("urbs monstruosa", for example); the adjective acquires more significance if read in contrast to the description of the body that comes immediately afterward, and which highlights its mobility and unpolished character. The expression "cyclopean ruins" might equally refer to the land—the *sertão*—from which the figure is emerging. The emergence is narrated progressively: the man himself is described as such only at the very end of the quotation, as he finally, once unearthed, moves away. A poetic passage in Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* describes the identification between the soldier and the land, to the point that there is no way of distinguishing between them. The passage, while discussing camouflage, evokes images similar to those

found in the scene quoted above, helping us understand the profoundly material character of the *sertanejo's* belonging in the land: "he is the elms and the mud. ... He is dark blue like the sea. He is light grey like the air through which he flies. He is sodden in the green shadows of earth."¹²⁹ This continuity is temporal as well as spatial. The ruin with which this man is metonymically related offers a way of introducing time into that ghostly space, which alludes to death without naming it. Though the *sertanejo* survives because of and in nature, that "natural" state prevents him from being integrated into the space of the nation, from being legible to the civilized eye.¹³⁰ One of the most famous sentences in *Os sertões* (with biblical undertones), quoted also above, notes that the men who live there are "a rocha viva de nossa raça" (p. 766) [the very bedrock of our race (p. 454)] (the translation does not preserve this idea of living rock). It is the definitive discovery of the origin—but the origin as ruin (to the extent that a "living rock" conveys a simultaneity between life and death, as well as the image of the abandoned building on which vegetation grows). This sentence also stands in dialogue with that image, seen above, of the vegetation that is reborn in stone, and yet further introduces an impossibility that is encoded in the very idea of ruins: *Os sertões* points to the need to integrate the *sertanejos* into the national project even as it narrates their annihilation. The text inhabits that contradiction; this paradoxical quality gives rise to the text's representational richness and facilitates its continual generation of incomprehensible and impossible images.

Invisibility and ruins combine, then, to form an eloquent image: what is hidden emerges and appears to the gaze, making itself present. The dialectic between the invisible and what appears to view is a central pillar of the text. In the context of the discussion in this chapter, *Os sertões* is the narration of a crisis of meaning that leads to a radical *visibilization*, an encounter. Not unlike Walter Benjamin's metaphor in "Excavation and Memory" that posits the search into one's own past as a sort of excavation, *Os sertões* contains numerous images related to archeological activities and the discovery of buried objects. For Benjamin, "genuine memory must ... yield an image of the person who remembers, in the same way a good archaeological report not only informs us about the strata from which its findings originate, but also gives an account of the strata which first had to be broken through".¹³¹ This metaphor of excavation allows us to read the images of ruins alongside this theme of unearthing, the obsession with shedding light on what has been hidden, as it connects remains to the exercise of memory, to permanence.

A petrified body, camouflaged by the earth, becomes—like the earth itself—a ruin. The best example of this is Antônio Conselheiro himself. In the pages of "The Man" dedicated to the founder of Canudos, images of ruination and death constantly reappear. Like the new church he builds in Canudos, the leader of the uprising is described in his youth as

being already an old man: "Ao abeirar-se das rancharias dos tropeiros aquele velho singular, de pouco mais de trinta anos, fazia que cessassem os improvisos e as violas festivas" (p. 267) [When this unusual man of about thirty years appeared at the ranches of the pack drivers, all festivities ceased (p. 135)].¹³² But, at the same time, he is represented as a corpse that travels through the *sertão*. The comparison with mummies is explicit (p. 269) [p. 136], and the character's manner of walking carries ghostly connotations: "tornou-se logo alguma coisa de fantástico ou *mal-assombrado*" (p. 267, emphasis in original) [people thought of him as an apparition or a ghost (p. 135)]. On a few pages, the Conselheiro appears as an old man in spite of his youth, as a moving corpse, as a mummy, and as a ghost, all images that, like that of the ruin, have powerful temporal connotations, combining the old and the new, and sometimes life and death. The surface, that hard skin, the product of self-inflicted deprivations, conceals the absence of life:

O asceta *despontava*, inteiriço, da rudeza disciplinar de quinze anos de penitência. ... Não tinha dores desconhecidas. A epiderme seca rugava-se-lhe como uma couraça amolgada e rota sobre a carne morta. Anestesiara-a com a própria dor; macerara-a e sarjara-a de cilícios mais duros que os buréis de esparto; trouxera-a, de rojo, pelas pedras dos caminhos; esturrara-a nos rescaldos das secas; inteiriçara-a nos relentos frios; adormecera-a, em transitórios repouso, nos leitos dilacerantes das caatingas ...

(p. 271, emphasis added)

[His ascetic tendencies *arose* in full force out of the crude discipline he had practiced for fifteen years, ... His dried-out skin was a broken and withered shell over his lifeless flesh. Pain itself had become his drug. He bruised and injured his flesh with hair shirts more abrasive than any nettle. He dragged himself over stones, scorched himself in the embers of the drought, exposed himself to the rigors of the night air, and in his transitory moments of rest he slept on a punishing bed of brushwood.]

(pp. 137–38)

The chaotic enumeration of the Portuguese version gives a powerful impression of the accumulation of self-inflicted suffering. Each sentence begins with a verb whose direct object is the skin ("a epiderme"). It is Conselheiro's traveling—or, rather, his *erring*—through northeastern Brazil, his ongoing contact with the parched soil—that other ruin—that makes his body deteriorate. It is as if, during those travels through the *sertão*, the territory somehow penetrated his skin and infiltrated his flesh. The first verb is eloquent: it refers to the emergence of an object's tip, the gradual rising of a sort of iceberg that contains the resistive and suffering figure of the ascetic. Conselheiro is a destroyed object that arises out of a

fantastical space: "Ele surdia—esquálido e macerado—dentro do hábito escorrido, sem relevos, mudo, como uma sombra, das chapadas povoadas de duendes" (p. 267) [His squalid and emaciated figure, in a tattered robe, would emerge silently from the barren, haunted landscape, making the people think he was a ghost (p. 135)]. But that roving ruined body is itself the origin of the social phenomenon that produced Canudos. Thus, this journey through the desert gives rise to the very impulse that will found the city described above. That which is hidden in the body and has its origin in the territory is made manifest in a city described as a ruin.

What is new is also old, even after the war. The image of what is half destroyed becomes blood-curdling in the description of a little girl being carried by a wizened old woman:

Tinha nos braços finos uma menina, neta, bisneta, tataraneta talvez. E essa criança horrorizava. A sua face esquerda fora arrancada, havia tempos, por um estilhaço de granada; de sorte que os ossos dos maxilares se destacavam alvíssimos, entre os bordos vermelhos da ferida já cicatrizada... A face direita sorria. E era apavorante *aquele riso incompleto e dolorosíssimo* aformoseando uma face e extinguindo-se repentinamente na outra, no vácuo de um gilvaz. Aquela velha carregava a criação mais monstruosa da campanha.

(p. 775, emphasis added)

[She carried a small child in her thin arms, her granddaughter, great-granddaughter, or possibly her great-great-granddaughter. The child was in horrifying condition. The left side of its face had been torn away some time ago and the jawbone stood out from the wound. The right side of her face was lit up by a lovely smile, which obliterated the terrible gash on the other side. This was the most ghastly sight of the entire campaign.]

(p. 461)

The little girl, who in theory would represent youth next to her ageless grandmother, is in fact just like her: a decrepit novelty, another precocious ruin. She represents, as Ettore Finazzi-Agrò notes, "on the one hand, a deformed and unfinished future, and, on the other, a past that does not pass".¹³³ Again, incompleteness and what has been discarded coincide, as do the impossibility of the future—perhaps the nation's future—and the persistence of the past. At bottom, that face is also a scar that continues to *say*, that hinders forgetting.¹³⁴ The ruin, that realm of the unsayable, is also a macabre and contorted smile. The subaltern, it is true, does not speak in *Os sertões*—but she *smiles*.

In *Os sertões*, then, everything seems to be already destroyed, in ruins: the space (the *sertão*, Canudos itself, the land), the men (the bodies of the *sertanejos*, Antônio Conselheiro himself), the conflict (the prisoners, the soldiers, even the manner of waging war). Ruins are, together

with various images of remains and of past destructions, an embodiment of the impossibility of expression provoked by war—or, rather, they are the unthinkable embodiment of the struggle for representation that is at the core of *Os sertões*. These images are sites of contradiction par excellence, where past and present, death and life, destruction and resistance coexist. They are forms of impossibility, loci of all that exceeds the grasp of rationality and logic.¹³⁵

Dead Lakes: Precariousness and Contemporary Silences

As we have seen in previous examples, *Os sertões* symbolically introduces the ruin into a landscape to which it was foreign; the space is turned into a ruin, “ruined” by the discourse, read as a ruin. For this reason, the ruin can be read as a trace left by war, even in places the war has not reached. It is as if the environment, the land, nature, were being described *from* the perspective of the conflict, as if the conflict had acquired cosmic dimensions. The war, in the first two sections of Euclides’s book, is always simultaneously *before* and *after* what is being narrated. Thus, in *Os sertões* there is a notable play of tensions: through the construction of a rhetoric of travel, the theater of war is approached gradually, appearing to be at once postponed and anticipated. In the same way, the ruin finds itself in an intermediate or dual place, being a sign of both a before and an after. This ambivalence between presence and absence is a central element in the representation of Canudos.¹³⁶ There, the vengeful spirit that animated the conflict sought utter devastation, wanting to leave nothing behind, not even ruins. If ruins are also a type of permanence, a type of memory, their existence would indicate a partial, incomplete victory. Any trace might seem to threaten an attempt to create a supposedly homogeneous space, one form of which Lefebvre calls “abstract space”: “As a product of violence and war, it is political; instituted by the state, it is institutional. On first inspection it appears homogeneous; and indeed it serves those forces which make it a *tabula rasa* of whatever stands in their way, of whatever threatens them—in short, of differences.”¹³⁷

Canudos was burned with the aim of making it definitively invisible, of making it vanish from the surface of the earth and from memory, like a disease, like a cursed or polluted place. The continuities between what remains and what vanishes are illuminating if we read Euclides’s text from the perspective of the present day.

In the description of the landscape that appears in the first section, the narrator mentions certain “lagoas mortas” (p. 85) [dead lakes, p. 16] that he encounters in his travels. He describes them in this way:

Algumas denotam um esforço dos filhos do sertão. Encontram-se, orlando-as, erguidos como represas entre as encostas, toscos

muramentos de pedra seca. Lembram monumentos de uma sociedade obscura. Patrimônio comum dos que por ali se agitam nas aperturas do clima feroz, vêm, em geral, de remoto passado. Delinearam-nos os que se afoitaram primeiro com as vicissitudes de uma entrada naquelas bandas. E persistem indestrutíveis, porque o sertanejo, por mais escoteiro que siga, jamais deixa de levar uma pedra que calce as suas juntas vacilantes.

(pp. 85–86)

[Some places have evidence of the efforts of sons of the backlands. Crude walls of dry stone can be found skirting them and standing there like dikes among the hillsides. They bring to mind the monuments of lost peoples. They are the common heritage of those who opened up that fierce region. Their origins have generally been left in the remote past. For those of us who have ventured into these parts they are a mark of those who made an entry with all the difficulties it entailed. There they stand, indestructible, because the *sertanejo*, the backlander, no matter how unburdened he might be traveling, always carries a stone to help shore up that precarious structure.]

(p. 16)

And, almost immediately, he asserts that these places are “imperfeita cópia das barragens romanas remanescentes na Tunísia” (p. 86) [an imperfect copy of those stockades the Romans left behind in Tunisia (p. 16)]. This and many passages from *Os sertões* analyzed here (and, critically, also most of Euclides’s writings on the Amazon) can be read as essays on infrastructure, specifically on the politics and aesthetics of landscape and water management. This rhetoric is strongly informed by Euclides’s work as an engineer, naturally. In this case, the dead lakes are created by the inhabitants of the *sertão* through dams made of stone walls. The narrator previously notes that those places serve as an oasis in travels through the *sertão*, concluding that they are not dry. Nevertheless, the tone of the narrative immediately transforms them. The bushes on their shores become “espectros de árvores” (p. 85) [ghost trees (p. 16)]. This rhetoric of ghostliness runs through the whole book—including even the description of the women who have survived. The “monuments” that form the dam’s base are precarious structures that suggest ancientness and endurance. But even as that rhetoric turns the stones that the traveler encounters into ruins, it also introduces the idea of deterioration. The gaze ages those stones, making them ancient, fixed, permanent, and at the same time it describes them as constantly being restored, since the *sertanejo*, nomadic and on the move, always carries a stone with him. The monument is a sign of movement, of renewal; it is a manifestation of the presence of the men of the *sertão*, in their perpetual and ever-changing migration. This description is equivalent to that of

Antônio Conselheiro, who is represented as a true nomad who is also paradoxically a founder. But the stone walls that form these lakes lack any dynamism: they are deteriorating (infra)structures. Through a rhetorical operation, the adjective applied to the lakes is displaced, corresponding instead to what surrounds them, to what is beside them. As in the case of Canudos, it seems that the *sertanejo* has built only ruins and left behind traces of death. It is in this sense that war is present in Euclides's writing.

The "lagoas mortas" are also an unsettling phenomenon in the present day. A town called "Canudos" does exist today, but it is another town; Canudos was relocated. The town that had such a key role in the war no longer exists—it lies at the bottom of an artificial lake. In 1968, during the military dictatorship, the Cocorobó dam was built to combat drought, and the impounded water flooded the settlement. Today the place is a tourist destination for those looking for a day at the beach. A web page named *Visite a Bahia*, which promotes tourism in the state, informs us that the lake "is also used by the community for fishing, boat excursions, and swimming, and its waters still conceal the mythical village of Canudos and its history".¹³⁸ The macabre description, profoundly trivializing, invites us to swim in a tomb, in what now truly is a dead lake. In cheerfully mentioning that what has been submerged is not only the town of Canudos but also *its history*, the quotation grotesquely reveals the vastness of the state's imposition of silence and erasure regarding this place. The image is practically the inverse of the one in which the traveler crosses an entombed sea. The sea here is not read as the ruin of a buried cemetery. Now, water covers the surface; the ruins are no longer fossils but are instead symbolic. Conselheiro's prophecy has come true in a tragically ironic way: the *sertão* has become a sea. Yet even today, in the brutal summers of Bahia, when the drought is at its harshest, the ruins of the old church in Canudos emerge from the waters and stand visible to all, like a stubborn reminder of the massacre.

Notes

- 1 *The Authorised Version of the English Bible*. 1611, ed. William Aldis Wright, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), p. 106. I have slightly modified (modernized) the English in this and the following quotation.
- 2 *The Authorised Version of the English Bible*, p. 129. The Portuguese version of this psalm (at least the one on the prayer card I was given), would be translated as "never let me suffer/ the shame of defeat" [nunca deixes que eu sofra / a vergonha da derrota]. The necessity of avoiding defeat (and the imperative for resistance), evokes the war whose sites I was approaching more aptly than this English version.
- 3 The resistance to taxation, which might seem like an incidental detail, is, in *Os sertões*, the beginning of the end: "Decretada a autonomia dos municípios, as Câmaras das localidades do interior da Bahia tinham afixado nas tábuas tradicionais, que subsistem na imprensa, editais para a cobrança de impostos etc. Ao surgir esta novidade Antônio Conselheiro estava em

Bom Conselho. Irritou-o a imposição; e planeou revide imediato. Reuniu o povo num dia de feira e, entre gritos sediciosos e estrepitar de foguetes, mandou queimar as tábuas numa fogueira, no largo. Levantou a voz sobre o 'auto-de-fé,' que a fraqueza das autoridades não impedira, e pregou abertamente a insurreição contra as leis" (Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões [Campanha de Canudos]*, ed. Leopoldo M. Bernucci [São Paulo: Ateliê Editorial, 2001], p. 286. Further references included parenthetically in the text) [When the autonomy of the municipalities was decreed, local chambers in the interior of Bahia posted on the traditional bulletin boards, which were a substitute for the press, regulations regarding the collection of taxes ... Antônio Conselheiro was in Bom Conselho when these new procedures were instituted. He was irritated by these new intrusions of the government and he planned a quick retaliation. He gathered the people on a market day and, amidst seditious shouts and the popping of firecrackers, he ordered the bulletin boards to be burned in a bonfire in the square. Raising his voice over this "auto-da-fé" that the authorities had neglected to prevent, he began to preach open insurrection against national laws (Euclides da Cunha, *Backlands. The Canudos Campaign*, trans. Elizabeth Lowe [New York: Penguin Books, 2010], p. 148. Further references given parenthetically in the text). A small group of soldiers, sent from Salvador to quell the uprising, was quickly defeated. Though this event took place in 1893, four years before the war, it was Conselheiro's first defiance of the authorities' efforts to construct the republican state. His rebellion was seen as a serious threat because it entailed a rejection of the levying of taxes, a crucial element in the modern conception of the state.

- 4 Roberto Ventura, "Canudos como cidade iletrada: Euclides da Cunha na *urbs* monstruosa", in Benjamin Abdala Junior and Isabel M. M. Alexandre, eds., *Canudos. Palavra de Deus, sonho da terra* (São Paulo: Boitempo, 1997), pp. 89–99 (at p. 94). See also Bernucci, note 285, in *Os sertões*, p. 326. The state employed all of these strategies to emphasize its own presence by controlling and measuring bodies and movements within the national territory.
- 5 Robert Levine claims that the dead numbered some 15,000 (Robert M. Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893–1897* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992], p. 185).
- 6 Levine, *Vale of Tears*, p. 184. In his examination of the relationship between images and text in *Os sertões*, Roberto Vecchi, working in the context of biopolitics and subaltern studies, refers to the desert-making operation imposed on Canudos (Roberto Vecchi, "Intermittenti presenza: la traccia, l'immagine, il subalterno", in Silvia Albertazzi and Fernando Amigoni, eds., *Guardare oltre: letteratura, fotografia e altri territori* [Roma: Meltemi, 2008], pp. 195–213 [at p. 210]). Regarding the relationship between photography and text in *Os sertões*, see the section titled "The Optical Unconscious", in Jens Andermann, *The Optic of the State*, pp. 195–202. In an insightful essay, Natalia Brizuela connects the presence of photography in *Os sertões* with the imaginary of ruins that is at the center of Euclides's aesthetics and approach to the space of the backlands: "The temporality of photographs is always the 'folded time' of the ruin, or the image of history as ruins, but also because it may be the perfect image of immobility" (Natalia Brizuela, *Fotografia e Império. Paisagens para um Brasil moderno* [São Paulo: Companhia das Letras/Instituto Moreira Salles, 2012], p. 177).
- 7 *Os sertões* is without a doubt a central book in Brazilian literature. In a 1994 survey of Brazilian intellectuals published in the magazine *Veja*, it was named the most influential book in the country's culture (Roberto Ventura, *Os sertões* [São Paulo: Publifolha, 2002], p. 11). See also Berthold

- Zilly, "Sertão e nacionalidade: formação étnica e civilizatória no Brasil segundo Euclides da Cunha", *Estudos Sociedade e Agricultura* 12 (1999): 5–45 (at p. 37). Going back to one of my preoccupations in this book, it is interesting to ask why a book about a war that involved the massacre of thousands of people is considered the most influential book in Brazilian literary history. What does this say about Brazil's national imagination? This is not consistent with the extensive belief in the idea of Brazil as a peaceful country.
- 8 This enormous complexity has provoked an extensive and, in my view, largely fruitless debate over how to define the work's discourse and genre. I understand that such discussions arise out of the relationships between literature and history (or the slippery concept of "reality"), issues about which *Os sertões* allows deep reflection and which are at the center of the author's concerns. But I wonder whether the push to definitively assign the work to a genre (as carried out with impressive theoretical rigor by Luiz Costa Lima in *Terra ignota*) has methodological consequences for its study. The approach to the work as a literary text (which has been, after all, the most common way to approach it) should not be affected—even if it should be complicated—by the claim that literature is merely an aesthetic instrument, an "element that beautifies, or highlights scientifically arranged truths", as Costa Lima puts it (Luiz Costa Lima, *Terra ignota. A construção de Os sertões* [Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1997], p. 264). I am interested in marking a theoretical distance between the attempt to establish an intrinsic genre category for a text and the possibility of approaching a text as literary. It is this latter approach that I choose here, being dubious of the methodological usefulness of classifications that disregard the consequences of Euclides's discursive complexity for thinking about the relationships between history, science, literature, and society "outside" the text. On this topic, see Bernucci's original concept of the "impasse euclidiano" [Euclidean impasse] (Leopoldo M. Bernucci, *A imitação dos sentidos. Prógonos, contemporâneos e epígonos de Euclides da Cunha* [São Paulo: Edusp, 1995], pp. 19–24).
 - 9 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 23. Charles Tilly, too, points to the role of taxation in the process of defining the European state, alongside war and the imposition of the logic of capitalism: "War making, extraction, and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making" (Tilly, "War Making", p. 38). This combination is applicable at least in part to the process of consolidating the Argentine, Brazilian, and Uruguayan states in the nineteenth century. Oszlak has done in-depth work examining the changes in the Argentine tributary system in the latter half of the nineteenth century. See in particular chapter 4 of *La formación del Estado argentino*. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed analysis of the relationship between the state's extractive capacity and war in Latin America, but it is interesting to wonder which of these two elements is the cause of the other. Arguments can be made for both possibilities: although the new taxes were the cause of the war in Canudos, it is undeniable that taxation is a central component of the state's territorial appropriation that might follow a conflict (as happened in many of the cases studied here). We might read an individual's ability to be taxed as a sort of state interpellation, in the Althusserian sense. I thank Juan Ariel Bogliaccini for his encouraging and illuminating comments on the pertinence of my reading of Tilly in this context.
 - 10 Mara Loveman, "Blinded Like a State: The Revolt against Civil Registration in Nineteenth-Century Brazil", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42, no. 1 (2007): 5–39 (at p. 9).
 - 11 Zilly, "Sertão e nacionalidade", p. 15. I am using the word "cacique" here to indicate a powerful landowner, not a leader of an indigenous community (this was the meaning of the word in the previous chapter).
 - 12 In this sense it is not unlike Argentina's Conquest of the Desert (see Chapter 3 of this work), another act of expansion and appropriation at the cost of erasing other subjectivities that presented obstacles to the national homogenizing discourse and especially to the state's monopolistic control of spaces and movements. I hope that the reading of this chapter helps reveal the similarities between the modernization processes in the two countries.
 - 13 References to ruins are pervasive in Euclides's poetry and his writings on Amazonia. Ruins are also present in many of his essays and articles published in newspapers, arguably most clearly in "Entre as ruínas" [Among the ruins], included in his 1907 book *Contrastes e confrontos*, immediately following "Fazedores de desertos", the essay that inspired this book's title (Euclides da Cunha, "Entre as ruínas", in *Contrastes e confrontos*, pp. 192–97). Some scholarly works that discuss, at least partially, Euclides's representation of ruins, are Edgar Salvadori de Decca, "Literatura em ruínas ou as ruínas da literatura?", in Stella Bresciani and Márcia Naxara, eds., *Memória e (re)sentimento. Indagações sobre uma questão sensível* (Campinas: Editora Unicamp, 2004), pp. 149–73; Francisco Foot Hardman, "Brutalidade antiga: sobre história e ruína em Euclides", in *A vingança da Hileia*, pp. 113–29; Luiz Costa Lima, "Euclides: ruínas e identidade nacional", in Rinaldo de Fernandes and Trípoli Francisco Britto Gaudenzi, eds., *O clarim e a oração. Cem anos de Os sertões* (São Paulo: Geração, 2002), pp. 349–65; Juan Antonio Hernández, "Los residuos salvajes: multitud y máquina de guerra en *Los sertones* de Euclides da Cunha", *Revista Iberoamericana* LXX, no. 207 (2004): 443–53; Carlos Eduardo Schmidt Capela, "Euclides e a escritura em ruínas", in Ana Luiza Andrade, Rodrigo Lopes de Barros, and Carlos Schmidt Capela, eds., *Ruinologias. Ensaio sobre destroços do presente* (Florianópolis: Editora UFSC, 2016), pp. 289–336.
 - 14 Brazil was ruled by two emperors, Pedro I (1822–31) and Pedro II (1831–88). The latter was pivotal in Brazil's political history. On Emperor Pedro II, see, among several works, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *As barbas do imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2012). A classic book about the history of the Brazilian Empire is Viotti da Costa, *Da monarquia à república*. On the fall of the empire and the characteristics of the economy, society, and politics during the *República Velha*, see Raymundo Faoro's influential *Os donos do poder. Formação do patronato político brasileiro*. 2 [1959] (Porto Alegre: Globo; São Paulo, Edições da Universidade de São Paulo, 1975).
 - 15 "After the war with Paraguay, Brazil placed its hopes for the future in a homogeneous image, with a single language, unified by a symbology that, from the palace, Emperor Pedro II strove to provide" (Lourival Holanda, "Os sertões: o nascimento de uma nação", in Leopoldo M. Bernucci, ed., *Discurso, ciência e controvérsia em Euclides da Cunha* [São Paulo: Edusp, 2008], pp. 125–40 [at p. 132]). On the importance of the Paraguayan War in the history of the Brazilian army in the nineteenth century, see Peres Costa's *A espada de Dâmocles*. On the consequences of the war among the Brazilian soldiers who fought it, see Rodrigo Goyena Soares, "Gênese dos veteranos da Guerra do Paraguai", in Rodrigues and Gomes Pedrosa, eds., *Uma tragédia americana*, pp. 126–64. On the importance of the Paraguayan War in the context of this book, see the introduction and first chapter.
 - 16 The First Republic, or "the Old Republic" [República Velha], also ended with another military coup in 1930: the one known as the Brazilian Revolution, which installed Getúlio Vargas as dictator. An in-depth analysis of

- the role of the army during the Old Republic can be found in José Murilo de Carvalho, "As forças armadas na Primeira República: o poder desestabilizador", in Boris Fausto, ed., *História geral da civilização brasileira*. Tomo III, pp. 181–234.
- 17 Carvalho, "As forças armadas na Primeira República", p. 185.
 - 18 Maria de Lourdes Mônaco Janotti, *Os subversivos da República* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1986), p. 8.
 - 19 On the coverage of the conflict in the Brazilian press, see Walnice Nogueira Galvão, *No calor da hora. A Guerra de Canudos nos jornais. 4ta expedição* (São Paulo: Ática, 1974). In this superb archival work, the scholar collects and analyzes the debates about the situation in Canudos that took place over the course of the final months of fighting.
 - 20 The astronomical increase in Brazil's debt to Great Britain was the most immediate notable outcome of the Paraguayan War for the country. Richard Burton's reports as Brazilian consul make this clear: "Brazil incurred war debts of some £14,000,000 to British financial institutions" (McLynn, *From the Sierras to the Pampas*, p. 111). Nicolau Sevcenko adds that "In the thirty-one years from 1829 to 1860, Great Britain gave the Brazilian government loans totaling £6,289,700, but that amount grew to £37,407,300 in the following twenty-five years, from 1863 to 1888, and reached the astounding sum of £112,774,433 in the twenty-five years between 1889 and 1914" (Nicolau Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão. Tensões sociais e criação cultural na Primeira República* [1983] [São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1985], p. 45).
 - 21 Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão*, p. 49.
 - 22 Natalia Brizuela highlights the importance of the Canudos War in the process of state consolidation: "It was through that war that the modern state was constituted, even employing photography and visibility to carry out its project" (Brizuela, *Fotografia e Império*, p. 173). Naturally, the Canudos War did not signal the end of the state's territorializing logic. There was still the Amazon, frequently conceived of as the last frontier. Euclides dedicated his last book to the Amazon. In addition, several articles from *Contrastes e confrontos* explore the issue of borders in these regions, which Euclides himself visited on an official trip in 1905. In other words, the Amazon represents the persistence of the "problem" of the internal and external borders beyond the Canudos War. An essential book regarding Brazil's historical and cultural relationship with its own frontier is Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Caminhos e fronteiras* (1957).
 - 23 Roberto Schwarz, in a widely influential essay, has suggested that nineteenth-century Brazilian intellectual and economic elites suffered from a sort of schizophrenia, for the ideas they proclaimed were "misplaced". Roberto Schwarz, "Misplaced Ideas: Literature and Society in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil" [1973], in *Misplaced Ideas. Essays on Brazilian Culture*, ed. John Gledson (London: Verso, 1992), pp. 19–32.
 - 24 Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão*, p. 45. Regarding the railway's arrival in the country's most remote and unknown places, and the relationship of the railway to conceptualizations of travel and space, see Foot Hardman, *Trem fantasma*.
 - 25 A central character in this process was José Paranhos, Baron of Rio Branco, who was foreign minister of Brazil from 1902 to 1912. The Baron of Rio Branco exchanged correspondence with Euclides da Cunha and supported him when he sought to enter the country's intellectual circles. In 1904, Rio Branco appointed Euclides to lead the expedition to survey the territory of the Purus River, in the Amazon region, in order to demarcate the borders with Peru. Euclides continued to work for Rio Branco in Rio de Janeiro until the former's death.
 - 26 Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão*, p. 84.
 - 27 A similar distance between intellectuals and politics has been studied, especially with regard to Hispanic American *Modernismo*, by Ángel Rama and Julio Ramos (among others). See Rama, "Los poetas modernistas en el mercado económico", and Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina*.
 - 28 Historian Décio Saes has called the structure created in the transition from Empire to Republic a "bourgeois state". See Décio Saes, *A formação do estado burguês no Brasil (1888–1891)* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985).
 - 29 Nicolau Sevcenko's *Literatura como missão* describes the dissatisfaction caused by the increasingly bourgeois and mercantilist quality of social relationships at the end of the nineteenth century: "There appears in that whole process a curious shift from social value placed on the internal, moral, essential, ideal, to an emphasis on the external, material, superficial, mercantile" (Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão*, p. 96). Sevcenko also looks at the criticisms levied by several writers against a society that, in becoming more bourgeois and money oriented, relegated writers to the codified, routinized work of journalism—that is, they felt they were reduced to being "merely" journalists (Sevcenko, *Literatura como missão*, pp. 93–108). José Murilo de Carvalho also points to the "rapid growth of bourgeois values" and the "complete dominance of material values" as being characteristic of the First Republic (José Murilo de Carvalho, *Os bestializados: o Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi* [São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987], p. 42).
 - 30 Most of the biographical information about Euclides comes from Roberto Ventura, *Retrato interrompido da vida de Euclides da Cunha*, eds., Mario Cesar Carvalho and José Carlos Barreto de Santana (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2003).
 - 31 Euclides worked in Rio for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1906 to his death in 1909.
 - 32 Only the book's first part focuses on Euclides's writings on the Amazon. A recent partial English translation includes only the Amazon essays. See Euclides da Cunha, *The Amazon. Land without History*, ed. Lúcia Sá, trans. Ronald Sousa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
 - 33 José Brito Broca, *A vida literária no Brasil: 1900* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1960), p. 100. On that subject, Francisco Foot Hardman remarks, "His reference was never the capital city, but instead the arid or humid backlands, from scrubland to forest, and their inhabitants, strange to the body of the narrow country that forgot them" (Francisco Foot Hardman, *Trem fantasma: a modernidade na selva* [São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988], pp. 48–49).
 - 34 See for example his 1903 poem titled "As Catas": "Que outros adorem vastas capitais/ Aonde, deslumbrantes,/ Da Indústria e da Ciência as tri-unfais/ Vozes, se erguem em mágico concerto;/ Eu, não; eu prefiro antes/ As Catas desoladas do deserto,/ —Cheias de sombra, de silêncio e paz...", and one stanza later: "Não invejo, porém, os que se vão/ Buscando, mar em fora,/ De outras terras a esplêndida visão.../ Fazem-me mal as multidões ruidosas/ E eu procuro, nesta hora,/ Cidades que se ocultam majestosas/ Na tristeza solene do sertão" [Let others adore vast capitals/ Where, captivating,/ The triumphant voices of Industry and Science/stand in magical harmony;/ Not I; I prefer instead/ The solitary Catas of the desert,/ —Full of shade, silence, and peace...; I do not envy, though, those who go/out to sea, looking,/for the splendid vision of other lands.../ The noisy multitudes hurt me/ And I seek, in this moment,/ Majestic cities that hide themselves/ In the solemn sadness of the *sertão*] (Euclides da Cunha, *Poesia reunida*,

- eds. Leopoldo M. Bernucci and Francisco Foot Hardman [São Paulo: Editora UNESP, 2009], pp. 272, 274).
- 35 So, for example, in a letter sent a few months after the publication of *Os sertões*, he writes: "A minha engenharia rude, engenharia-andante, romanesca e estéril, levando-me em constantes viagens através de dilatado distrito, destrói a continuidade de quaisquer esforços na atividade dispersiva que impõe" (Euclides da Cunha, *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, eds. Walnice Nogueira Galvão and Oswaldo Galotti [São Paulo: Edusp, 1997], p. 158). [My uncultured engineering, traveling, romantic, and sterile, taking me on constant journeys through vast lands, imposes a dispersive activity that destroys the continuity of any effort]. In a letter to literary critic José Veríssimo, he refers to a "tired and erring engineering" (p. 166).
 - 36 He was named professor in 1908, being able to teach only 19 classes before his death.
 - 37 On the role that these racial theories played in Brazil, see Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, *The Spectacle of the Races. Scientists, Institutions, and the Race Question in Brazil. 1870–1930*, trans. Leland Guyer (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). While in his writings the presence of positivism is obvious, Euclides himself, in his letters, ironically denied his labeling as a *positivista* (Cunha, *Correspondência*, p. 93). Two important works dealing with the scientific versus the literary component of Euclides's prose are José Carlos Barreto de Santana's *Ciência e arte: Euclides da Cunha e as ciências naturais* (São Paulo: HUCITEC/Universidade Estadual de Feira de Santana, 2001) and Costa Lima, *Terra ignota*.
 - 38 Ventura, *Retrato interrompido*, p. 200. This structure recalls, in its descriptive zeal and its love of stereotypes, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845). The frequent comparison made between Euclides's text and *Facundo* is valid and relevant, though I will not focus on it here. On this comparison, see, among others, Bernucci, "Um continente chamado América Latina", in *A imitação dos sentidos*, pp. 39–50; Miriam V. Gárate, *Civilização e barbárie n'Os sertões. Entre Domingo Faustino Sarmiento e Euclides da Cunha* (São Paulo: Fapesp/Mercado de Letras, 2001); Roberto González Echevarría, "A Lost World Rediscovered: Sarmiento's *Facundo* and E. da Cunha's *Os sertões*", in *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 93–141; Elías Palti, "Visiones de lo inasible. Sarmiento y Euclides da Cunha en las fronteras de la civilización", *The Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies* 4 (2006): 19–33. In *Os sertões*, a good example of this is the section titled "Tipos díspares: o jagunço e o gaúcho" (pp. 211–16) [Different Types: The Jagunço and the Gaucho, Cowboy of the South (pp. 98–102)]. The two texts share a similar admiration for those beings whom the authors consider to belong to another era. The clear influence of the Argentine's writings is apparent in Euclides's ideas, and in his essay "Viação sul-americana", included in *Contrastes e confrontos*, he refers to Sarmiento admiringly. In this book I seek in part to shift the focus of the comparison, positing that the comparison between *Os sertões* and the writings of Francisco Moreno gives rise to elements that permit an equally complex consideration of the relationships between state, territory, and war, though I have found no explicit evidence of mutual readings between the two authors.
 - 39 Euclides's clearest influence in this respect was the Polish sociologist Ludwig von Gumplowicz, whose *Rassenkampf* (1883) he read in its 1893 French translation (as *La lutte des races*). On this topic, see Zilly's careful analysis as well as Barreto de Santana's *Ciência e arte*.
 - 40 Adriana Michele Campos Johnson, *Sentencing Canudos: Subalternity in the Backlands of Brazil* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), p. 44.
 - 41 In reality, the religious aspect of this community remained unknown to those who wrote about it, including Euclides. It is for this very reason that Berthold Zilly questions the notion that messianism was central to the community (Zilly, "Sertão e nacionalidade", p. 16). Zilly's view is shared by other critics. See, for example, Ataliba Nogueira, *Antônio Conselheiro e Canudos: revisão histórica* (São Paulo: Nacional, 1978), and Marco Antonio Villa, *Canudos. O povo da terra* (São Paulo: Ática, 1995). Many of the writings of Antônio Conselheiro have been recovered and published. This constitutes an interesting source for understanding the type of religiosity and beliefs that brought the Belo Monte community together. See Antônio Conselheiro, *Apontamentos dos preceitos da divina lei de nosso senhor Jesus Cristo, para a salvação dos homens*, ed. Pedro Lima Vasconcellos (São Paulo: É Realizações, 2017).
 - 42 The long list of books that have been considered essays of national interpretation includes Paulo Prado's *Retrato do Brasil: ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira* (1928), Gilberto Freyre's *Casa grande e senzala* (1933), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's *Raízes do Brasil* (1936), and Caio Prado Jr.'s *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo* (1942); more recent works that follow this line include Darcy Ribeiro's *O povo brasileiro* (1995) and José Miguel Wisnik's *Veneno remédio: o futebol e o Brasil* (2008).
 - 43 Marco Antonio Villa has disputed these dates, proposing that Euclides in reality remained in Canudos only until 1 October. This theory would imply that he did not see the eventful final days of the battle or the fall of the resistant enclave.
 - 44 Among the contemporary narratives of the Canudos War, it is worth mentioning Afonso Arinos's *Os jagunços*, Manoel Benício's *O rei dos jagunços*, and Dantas Barreto's *Última expedição a Canudos*, all published in 1898. Walnice Nogueira Galvão and Leopoldo Bernucci have examined the intertextual relations between *Os sertões* and Arinos's book. See Walnice Nogueira Galvão, "De sertões e jagunços", in *Saco de gatos. Ensaios críticos* (São Paulo: Duas Cidades / Secretaria da Cultura, Ciência e Tecnologia do Estado de São Paulo, 1976), pp. 65–85; see also Leopoldo M. Bernucci, *A imitação dos sentidos: prógonos, contemporâneos e epígonos de Euclides da Cunha* (São Paulo: Edusp, 1995), pp. 65–84. Adriana Campos Johnson has carried out a comparative study of *Os sertões* in relation to the works of Arinos and Benício, arguing that these two books give a very different representation of the rebellious town from the one found in Euclides's work—one that is grounded in everydayness (while Euclides emphasizes exceptionality). See Campos Johnson, "Another Canudos", in *Sentencing Canudos*, pp. 138–62. The European thinkers mentioned (and, in many cases followed) by Euclides are countless. In the two-page-long "Preliminary Note" alone, we find significant references to Gumplowicz, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and the French critic and historian Hippolyte Taine.
 - 45 Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões (Campanha de Canudos)* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert & C. Editores, 1902), p. 2. I consulted this edition at the Oliveira Lima Library of Catholic University in Washington, DC. I especially thank Thomas Cohen, the collection's director, for his hospitality and availability while I researched there. I also thank Joan Stahl, who patiently guided and helped me with my specific requests for materials.
 - 46 For the notion of telescopic perspective, see Leopoldo M. Bernucci, "Prefácio" to *Os sertões (Campanha de Canudos)*, pp. 13–49 (at p. 17). Campos Johnson also notes the presence in this opening of "a panoramic geological view of Brazil under the authority of a Foucauldian 'Speaking Gaze': surveying, classifying, representing" (*Sentencing Canudos*, p. 120,

original emphasis). Although a telescopic gaze might seem like the contrary of a panoramic one, both critics are thinking of a powerful textual construction that seems to be in control of the territory it surveys, whether it gives a general view or a detailed one. A note about Euclides's language: it is not just specialized but also makes use of numerous terms that were (and are) rarely used and, thus, are unfamiliar to Portuguese-language readers. Bernucci's useful Brazilian edition continually gives meanings and uses for several words.

- 47 No indication of the specific book is given, but the reference must be to Burton's *Explorations of the Highlands of Brazil* (1869). Euclides's journey through the *sertão* toward Canudos was published in the newspapers contemporarily to his trip. The articles were published in book form posthumously (1939), with the title *Diário de uma expedição*. Regarding the mapping strategies in *Os sertões* and Euclides's (manifold and sophisticated) political and aesthetic uses of geography, see Aarti Smith Madan's chapter "Euclides da Cunha's Literary Map, or Including *Os sertões*", in *Lines of Geography in Latin American Narrative. National Territory, National Literature* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 187–247.
- 48 There is even, at times, as part of this rhetoric of travel, an almost frenetic movement forward: "No entanto quem se abalança a atravessá-lo, partindo de Queimadas para nordeste, não se surpreende a princípio" (p. 84, emphasis added) [Nevertheless, one who is in a hurry to cross it, going from Queimadas to the northeast, will find no surprises at first (p. 15)].
- 49 Roberto Vecchi has referred to what he calls a "metaphysics of the desert" as a feature present in all of Euclides's literature (Roberto Vecchi, "Spazio, storia, classe nei *Sertões* euclidiani", in Vincenzo Arsillo and Flavio Fiorani, eds., *Sertão - Pampa: Topografie Dell'immaginario Sudamericano* [Venice: Cafoscarina, 2007], pp. 25–44 [at p. 29]).
- 50 As Deleuze and Guattari argue, the establishment of channels and conduits seems necessary for the establishment of the modern state (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 363).
- 51 Both the idea of penetration and the construction of a territory that resists the very concept of travel are present in the way the Paraguayan space is imagined over the course of the nineteenth century, and are discussed in Chapter 1.
- 52 There are some references to Humboldt in *Os sertões*, and Euclides was a reader of Sarmiento. On the evolution of the use of this trope in Argentine literature, see Prieto, *Los viajeros ingleses*. For the Latin American context, see González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive*.
- 53 José Carlos Barreto de Santana has explained that these statements by Euclides were disavowed by geographers who influenced him (Barreto de Santana, *Ciência e arte*, p. 113). This author goes on to explain that Euclides read with attention many treatises on the geology, botany, and climate of the region, but that he sometimes distorted or hid specific information for the sake of constructing powerful literary images.
- 54 Johannes Fabian's notion of *denial of coevalness*, discussed in the previous chapter, can also be read in *Os sertões*. See Campos Johnson, *Sentencing Canudos*, p. 116.
- 55 There is no translation for the word *propaganda*, which is referring to education as an alternative strategy to bridge the supposed temporal gap between the groups. I have shortened the English version so that it runs on grammatically from what precedes it.
- 56 This is another example of the use of "anachronism": "Insulado no espaço e no tempo, o jagunço, um anacronismo étnico, só podia fazer o que fez—bater, bater terrivelmente a nacionalidade que, depois de o

enjeitar cerca de três séculos, procurava levá-lo para os deslumbramentos da nossa idade dentro de um quadrado de baionetas, mostrando-lhe o brilho da civilização através do clarão das descargas" (p. 502) [Isolated both in space and time, the jagunço could only behave as he did. He was compelled to put up a terrible fight against the country that, after having ignored him for three centuries, tried to civilize him at gunpoint (p. 281)]. Much like Moreno and his critical references to the Remington as the instrument used by the government to deal with the indigenous peoples, Euclides ex post facto ironically criticizes the war against these rebel peoples by using references to *baionetas* as the wrong arm of deterrence, their shots being the only "illuminating" element of the "civilizers".

- 57 On this last issue, see the section "Euclides e a psicologia do fim do século", in Costa Lima, *Terra ignota*, pp. 60–85.
- 58 See, for example, this quite similar passage from *Viaje a la Patagonia austral*: "Inmediato al pie del cerro de basalto se ven varios pequeños troncos de árboles petrificados destruidos e innumerables fragmentos de ostras ... Éste es un descubrimiento precioso; estos troncos y estos moluscos ... revelan que, miles de siglos ha, la árida planicie dominada hoy por la negra lava de rugosos flancos ... ha alimentado frondosos bosques, y que estas tierras, donde hoy las negras *Nyctelias* se arrastran perezosas, fueron las riberas de un antiguo mar siempre agitado. Donde el viajero sediento no encuentra una sola gota de agua, se estrellaron inmensas olas contra murallas escarpadas. ... en las profundidades inmediatas vivieron las parásitas ostras cuyos calcáreos esqueletos cubren el suelo y se quiebran con la presión de la pata del caballo" (p. 416) [Very close to the base of the basalt hill, one can see several small trunks of petrified trees as well as countless shards of oyster shell ... This is an invaluable discovery; these trunks and these mollusks ... reveal that, thousands of years ago, the arid surface now covered by a black, coarse-flanked lava ... once fed leafy woods, and that these lands, where today the black *Nyctelius* idly crawl, were once the shores of an ever-rough old sea. Where the thirsty traveler can find not a single drop of water, immense waves used to crash against steep walls ... in the nearby depths used to live the parasitic oysters whose calcareous skeletons cover the land and shatter under the pressure of the horse's hooves]. The horse crushes the different vestiges of past life here, while in Euclides's description we see these remains, though paralyzed, still moving. The presence of the old "immense waves" is clearly haunting (or at least powerful) in *Os sertões*. This might be an indicator of how each of these writers grapples with war and its aftermath.
- 59 Other nearby expressions reinforce this idea: "os restos da fauna pliocena, que fazem dos *caldeirões* enormes ossuários de mastodontes, cheios de vértebras desconjuntadas e partidas, como se ali a vida fosse, de chofre, salteada e extinta pelas energias revoltas de um cataclismo" (p. 92, original emphasis) [the remains of Pliocene fauna, making enormous mastodon boneyards of the enormous potholes, full of disjointed and broken vertebrae, as though they had been unexpectedly attacked and their lives ended by the swirling energies of a cataclysm (p. 20)]. This is unquestionably a scenery of destruction, of original destruction, a field scattered with remains, with signs of death. I will return to the trope of the cataclysm below.
- 60 We will see how man attempts to intervene in this divide to correct it, interrupting the torturous rhythm of nature itself, which the narrator portrays as being aberrant, antinatural.

- 61 When the war is finally narrated, however, that initial confidence in the power of progress and modernization to give order to and interpret spaces will have been lost.
- 62 The translator opted to convey only this last meaning in the English translation reproduced above. All of the Portuguese language-related matters in this chapter were consulted in the *Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa*, available online (www.priberam.pt/dlpo/dlpo.aspx).
- 63 “Estereotipar”, in *Dicionário Priberam da Língua Portuguesa* www.priberam.pt/dlpo/dlpo.aspx (12 August 2012).
- 64 The Real Academia Española’s dictionary offers a nearly identical definition of “estereotipar”: “Fundir en una plancha, por medio del vaciado, la composición de un molde formado por caracteres móviles” (<http://dle.rae.es/?id=GqJNckO>) [To melt on a metal plate, through casting, the composition of a mold made up of movable type]. This is not currently one of the meanings of the verb “to stereotype” in English, according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. (See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stereotype.) Something closer to this meaning existed in English in the nineteenth century, though. According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, in 1819 the word was used with the meaning of “fix[ing] firmly or unchangeably”. See www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=stereotype.
- 65 Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* [1928], intr. George Steiner, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), p. 39.
- 66 As David Lowenthal claims in *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, “ruined buildings symbolized the triumph of nature over the transience of artifice” (David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985], p. 140).
- 67 Georg Simmel, “The Ruin”, in *Georg Simmel, 1858–1918. A Collection of Essays, with Translation and a Bibliography*, ed. Kurt H. Wolf (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1959), pp. 259–66 (at p. 262).
- 68 The translation does not transcribe this sentence as the title of a section in the book, but as an ordinary sentence that opens a paragraph. Alfredo Bosi uses this sentence as the title of an article centered specifically on the issue of resistance. See Alfredo Bosi, “Canudos não se rendeu”, in *Literatura e resistência* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002), pp. 209–20.
- 69 This is perhaps the clearest example of intertextuality between *Os sertões* and Sarmiento’s *Facundo*, where we read the following: “Al sur, y a larga distancia, limitan esta llanura arenisca los Colorados, montes de greda petrificada, cuyos cortes regulares asumen las formas más pintorescas y fantásticas: a veces es una muralla lisa con bastiones avanzados, a veces, créese ver torreones y castillos almenados en ruinas” (Sarmiento, *Facundo*, p. 86) [To the south, at a far distance, this sandy plain is bordered by the Colorados, mountains of petrified chalk, whose regular outline takes on the most picturesque and fantastic of forms: sometimes it is a smooth wall with projecting bastions, sometimes one can see towers and the battlements of castles in ruins (Sarmiento, *Facundo*, p. 103)].
- 70 One section of the book is titled “O martírio secular da terra” (pp. 145–47) [the age-old martyrdom of the land (pp. 53–55)]. The martyrs later identified in the text are others, but they are foreshadowed in this conflict, in the suffering character of the very soil.
- 71 The fourth (and final) expedition will be greeted by the displayed heads of the dead soldiers from the previous expedition: “os jagunços reuniram os cadáveres que jaziam esparsos em varios pontos. Decapitaram-nos. Queimaram os corpos. Alinharam depois, nas duas bordas da estrada,

- as cabeças, regularmente espaçadas, frondeando-se, faces volvidas para o caminho” (p. 492) [they collected the dead, decapitated them, and burned the bodies. They lined the heads up on both sides of the highway with the faces turned to the road (pp. 275–76)]. The leader of the doomed third expedition, General Moreira César, was known as “corta-cabeças” (p. 441) [Head Slicer (p. 246)]. Nevertheless, what this image prefigures most powerfully is the army’s systematically slitting the throats of all the Canudos prisoners when the war comes to an end. Antônio Conselheiro’s head “was taken to the School of Medicine in Bahia, where it was studied by Professor Nina Rodrigues, a phrenology expert. Antônio Conselheiro’s head was on exhibit in the institution’s Museum of Legal Medicine until 1905, when it burned in a fire” (“O corpo de Antonio Conselheiro”, *Achados de Canudos* www.josecalasans.com/downloads/achadosdecanudos.pdf [22 December 2016]). As with Argentina’s Conquest of the Desert, the museum serves as a continuation of the war, as a depository for its trophies.
- 72 On the importance of the theme of drought in *Os sertões* and in Euclides’s understanding of the *sertão* and the men who inhabit it, see Mark D. Anderson, “From Natural to National Disasters: Drought and the Brazilian Subject in Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões*”, *Hispania* 91, no. 3 (2008): 547–57.
- 73 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 363.
- 74 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 2.
- 75 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 13.
- 76 The translation reads “1896” instead of “1894”. Also the first edition reads 1896. I transcribe *certão* as it appears in the version of *Os sertões* with which I have worked. The revolutionary or resistant undertones of these sentences are especially powerful in Glauber Rocha’s extraordinary film *Deus e o diabo na terra do sol* (*Black God, White Devil*, 1964).
- 77 Interestingly, the translation states that the backlander follows the trails of the *sertão*, while the Portuguese version suggests that these trails seem to be drawn by the backlander’s manner of walking.
- 78 Dabove has noted the *canudization* of the state army as the only way to achieve victory. To triumph, the army must renounce its own logic, dispersing among the enemy: “Canudos devours the army. ... [T]his is the story of how the entanglement between the army and the jagunços meant the becoming-jagunço of the army” (Dabove, *Nightmares of the Lettered City*, p. 428).
- 79 For Euclides da Cunha, *jagunço* means largely man from the *sertão*. The term refers, more specifically, to an *armed* man who participates in battles. Perhaps for this reason, it also acquired a more negative connotation, close to that of bandit. The dictionary defines the *jagunço* as a person of bad character [*pessoa de mau caráter*]. The origins of the word are, according to the dictionary, unknown, but it was used originally in Brazil to refer to the people from the state of Bahia. The term is now not equivalent to that of *sertanejo*, though. When I visited Canudos in 2010 I used the word and was swiftly reprimanded by the woman who kept the very homely inn where I was staying, since that word was charged with negative undertones (at least in its popular use in Canudos). On the history of the term’s connotations, see the illuminating article by José Calasans, “Os jagunços de Canudos”, *Caravelle. Cahiers du monde hispanique et luso-brésilien* 15 (1970): 31–38.
- 80 Deleuze and Guattari mention the importance of the military engineer as a character who represents nomadic science and finds himself in an ambivalent position, nurtured by the war machine even as he is restricted by the orderly rationality imposed by the state (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 362).

- 81 Cunha, *Correspondência*, p. 121.
- 82 Cunha, *Correspondência*, p. 107.
- 83 This element also appears in Euclides's reading of the Amazonian rivers in *À margem da história*. The problem those rivers pose is the way they move, their nomadic character, infecting the man who inhabits that space. The narrator of *À margem da história* is, now perhaps more clearly than in *Os sertões*, a military engineer, convinced that the aim of engineering is to overcome all natural difficulties (Euclides da Cunha, *À margem da história* [1909] [São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1999], p. 77). Reading *Os sertões* from the perspective of Euclides's Amazonian writings, it is possible to visualize this connection between the meanders of the river and the production of barbarism. Regarding Euclides's representation of movement in *À margem da história*, see Javier Uriarte, "Rios e ritmos indisciplinados: Uma leitura da oscilação em Euclides da Cunha e Alberto Rangel", in Élida Rugai Bastos and Renan Freitas Pinto, eds., *Vozes da Amazônia III. Investigação sobre o pensamento social brasileiro* (Manaus: Universidade Federal do Amazonas, 2016), pp. 183–205.
- 84 For Lefebvre, too, the production of space—and its consequent legibility—is powerfully based on the imposition of geometry and straight lines: "In order to dominate space, technology introduces a new form into a preexisting space—generally a rectilinear or rectangular form. ... A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife. Dominated space is usually closed, sterilized, emptied out" (*The Production of Space*, p. 165). The role that roads took on in the twentieth century was held by the railway in the nineteenth, a crucial element in that space-producing logic that sought to "striae" South American spaces.
- 85 Cunha, *Correspondência*, p. 154.
- 86 This adjective is key for reading not just Euclides but all of the authors discussed in this book. According to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "aberrant" means "straying from the right or normal way"—that is, it is a word that fundamentally has to do with *movement*. "Aberrant", *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aberrant (13 September 2016). Etymologically speaking, the adjective is linked with the verb "to err", in the dual sense of "to make a mistake" and "to stray". "Err", *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/err (13 September 2016). This preoccupation with what moves "badly" is repeated in Euclides, as we will see. At the same time, wandering or straying constitutes precisely the logic adopted by Lamb for occupying territory in *The Purple Land*. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* establishes that originally *aberrant* was the present participle of the Latin verb *aberrare*, "to wander away, go astray". See "Aberrant", *Online Etymology Dictionary* www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=aberrant (13 September 2016).
- 87 I thank Leopoldo Bernucci and Denilson Lopes for their generous comments on my interpretation of this difficult passage.
- 88 The adjective "desnortado" means without a direction, but in the Portuguese version it refers not exactly to the Conselheiro's wandering, but to his supposedly apostolic role, to his prayers. This is because Euclides did not share them, did not find them serious (at this point in the book).
- 89 The possessive is missing in the translation, and it is important. Antônio Conselheiro is out of the narrator's (and his readers') time. The time of modernity, that is.
- 90 As explained above, the account produced by Euclides is not the only one about the war, and it differs substantially from others. Villa states that the

- enormous influence of *Os sertões* on the ways the conflict was interpreted for decades actually posed an obstacle for a true historical approach to the community and its dynamics (Villa, *Canudos*, p. 7). Campos Johnson compared Euclides's account of the conflict to that of his contemporaries, highlighting the important differences between them.
- 91 Villa, *Canudos*, p. 68. Villa adds that "the economic organization was based on communitarianism, that is, each individual was responsible for the upkeep of the community" (p. 65). Villa also explains that diverse crops were produced in the lands surrounding the settlement, that its main product was leather, and that money circulated and private property existed in it.
- 92 For example, Moniz explains: "But this attempt to create an egalitarian community would soon create uneasiness in local landowners, who lived off the exploitation of peasants. If Conselheiro's ideas were to expand all over the hinterlands, with the likely existence of other Canudos, the new production and consumerism system would threaten traditional land ownership, undermining the landowners' power" (Edmundo Moniz, *A guerra social de Canudos* [Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, 1978], p. 46). Villa criticizes this interpretation of Canudos as a socialist community. Nonetheless, these interpretations agree in highlighting the communitarianism and solidarity that characterized Canudos, as well as the town's strong opposition to *latifúndios* and capitalist forms of exploitation.
- 93 There has been some debate regarding the exact population of Canudos, which remains largely unknown. Levine affirms that "[Canudos's] population of 25,000 (at its height in 1895 probably closer to 35,000) made it the largest urban site in Bahia after Salvador, the capital" (*Vale of Tears*, p. 16). However, Marco Antonio Villa argues that such figures are impossible. He concludes not only that Canudos was not the largest city in Bahia's interior but that it never had 25,000 residents, having reached a population of 10,000 at most (Villa, *Canudos*, p. 220). On page 16, Levine connects the word *sertão* to the notion of the desert, but only in passing. The origins of the word seem to be quite obscure, and its meanings have shifted through the centuries. Nísia Trindade Lima studies its uses in the discourse of the Brazilian social sciences, and refers to "the conservative character, resistant to change, that has historically been attributed to the term *sertão*" (Nísia Trindade Lima, *Um sertão chamado Brasil*, p. 23). Victoria Saramago has explored the uses of the word among sixteenth-century Portuguese travelers and has suggested that some of the connotations of the word in later Brazilian works (including *Os sertões*) are already present in these texts. She uses the expression "a moving category" to explain the shifting in meanings of *sertão* (Victoria Saramago, "Sertão dentro: The Backlands in Early Portuguese Writings", *Portuguese Literary and Cultural Studies* 27 [2015]: 254–72 [at p. 255]). What seems quite clear is the word's connection with what is unexplored, unknown, impenetrable, and resistant to change or modernization, all notions that are central to the constructions of the desert that this book explores in relation to Patagonia, the hinterland of Uruguay, and the spatial imagination about Paraguay.
- 94 On the central issue of resistance in the Canudos War, present also in the epigraph that opens this chapter, see Bosi, "Canudos não se rendeu".
- 95 In this respect, see Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "stayer", which offers a countervailing model to the idea—widespread in the west—of mobility as freedom. See Mary Louise Pratt, "Los que se quedan", in Jean-Philippe Barnabé, Lindsey Cordery, and Beatriz Vegh, eds., *Los viajeros y el Río de la Plata: un siglo de escritura* (Montevideo: Lindari y Risso, 2010), pp. 356–78. Caren Kaplan has offered an insightful critique of the positive

contemporary reverberations of the notion of movement and travel as resistance and liberation as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995], pp. 85–91. James Clifford has also proposed the need to revisit the notion of the traveler (which is at its core built around notions of white male privilege and power) to make it more inclusive (James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997], p. 23).

96 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 482.

97 Dabove, *Nightmares of the Lettered City*, p. 223.

98 Dabove, *Nightmares of the Lettered City*, p. 222.

99 This tension and the ultimate triumph of the city toward the end of the nineteenth century are analyzed by José Luis Romero. He affirms that there was an evident disdain from the part of the city, which asserted its superiority and ended up subduing the countryside. According to Romero, the cities found it necessary to make peasants accept the authority of the state, or, more specifically, of the landowners, and force them into the new systems of production (José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: las ciudades y las ideas* [1976] [Medellín: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1999], p. 228).

100 Rama, *The Lettered City*, p. 60. The Spanish version refers, more bluntly (and aptly), to “la extinción de la naturaleza y de las culturas rurales” [the extinction of nature and of rural cultures] (Rama, *La ciudad letrada* [1984], pról. Hugo Achugar [Montevideo: Arca, 1998], p. 69).

101 This apparent absence of order, the spontaneous construction, and the “madness” of Canudos may be its most alarming features to official territorial imagination, which in that same year, 1897, founded Belo Horizonte, Brazil’s first planned state capital and one of the most important ones in the country. In 1902—the year *Os sertões* was published—Francisco Pereira Passos became mayor of Rio de Janeiro, carrying out the city’s largest urban reform project, wiping out precisely the narrow streets that so worry the narrator in Canudos and constructing grand boulevards like those of Haussmann in Paris (Pereira Passos was known, in fact, as the Brazilian Haussmann). Another key aspect of this reform was sanitation. One consequence was an increase in the size of the favelas and in the city’s inequality and social tensions. Lefebvre offers a critique of the Haussmann reforms in Paris, which are interesting for understanding the way the modern city was being conceived and imposed in Latin America. He refers to these reforms as “an authoritarian and brutal spatial practice ... the effective application of the analytic spirit in and through dispersion, division and segregation” (*The Production of Space*, p. 308). And he adds, in a vein similar to that expressed by Deleuze and Guattari, and central to my discussions of space here, “The space that homogenizes thus has nothing homogeneous about it” (p. 308). In this sense, Deleuze and Guattari note, “Homogeneous space is in no way a smooth space; on the contrary, it is the form of a striated space” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 370). Scott also discusses the Haussmann reforms as being guided by the same modernizing state logic that carried out transformations in nature: “There was the same emphasis on simplification, legibility, straight lines, central management, and a synoptic grasp of the ensemble” (Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 59). Scott adds that military control and sanitation were essential parts of these reforms (p. 61). For more about urban reforms in Rio, see the poetic descriptions in appendix 1, note 1, “O bota-abaiço”, in Brito Broca, *A vida literária no Brasil*, pp. 277–81. Two contemporary research works on Rio’s urban reforms at the beginning of the last century are

Teresa Meade, “Civilizing” Rio: *Reform and Resistance in a Brazilian City, 1889–1930* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), and Murilo de Carvalho, *Os bestializados*. About the cultural consequences of the *bota-abaiço*, see Bruno Carvalho, *Porous City: A Cultural History of Rio de Janeiro* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013). An essential cultural analysis of the “Vaccine Revolt”, as the popular resistance to the city government’s sanitation campaigns are known, is Nicolau Sevcenko, *A revolta da vacina: mentes insanas em corpos rebeldes* (São Paulo: Scipione, 1993).

102 In addition, Valladares claims that the first visitors to the favelas conceived of the city-vs.-favela binary as a prolongation of the centuries-old divide “coast vs. sertão”, one that structured Brazilian society and economy (Lícia do Prado Valladares, *A invenção da favela. Do mito de origem a favela. com* [Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 2005], p. 23).

103 This is the description: “As favelas, anônimas ainda na ciência—ignoradas dos sábios, conhecidas demais pelos tabaréus—talvez um futuro gênero *cauterium* das leguminosas, têm, nas folhas de células alongadas em vilosidades, notáveis aprestos de condensação, absorção e defesa. Por um lado, a sua epiderme ao resfriar-se, à noite, muito abaixo da temperatura do ar, provoca, a despeito da secura deste, breves precipitações de orvalho; por outro, a mão que a toca, toca uma chapa incandescente de ardência inatural.” (p. 121) [The favelas, still without a scientific name and unknown to scholars, but only too well known to greenhorns, are possibly members of a future genus *Cauterium* of leguminous plants. They possess in their leaves cells elongated into fuzz, which are a notable tool for condensation, absorption, and defense. On the one hand, their skin, as it grows cold at night with a great drop in temperature, will in spite of the dryness of the air collect tiny drops of dew. And on the other hand, whoever touches it has touched a fiery sheet of constant flame. (p. 38)]

104 See, for example, when Euclides narrates the movement of the national troops toward Canudos: “No último passo da ascensão se lhe antolhou um plano levemente inclinado, entre duas largas ondulações, fechado adiante por alguns cerros desnudos. Era o alto da Favela. Naquele ponto este morro lendário é um vale. Subindo-o tem-se a impressão imprevista de se chegar numa baixada.” (p. 535) [In the last stage of their climb they arrived at an inclined plain between two large elevations with a few bare hills obstructing the way ahead. They had reached the top of Mount Favela. At this point the legendary hill is really a valley. As one climbs it, the unexpected impression is of arriving in lowland (pp. 302–03)]. The *Morro da Favela* had already been mentioned by other witnesses and soldiers before Euclides (so, it is not Euclides who first gives it that name).

105 Valladares, *A invenção da favela*, p. 29.

106 On this fundamental relationship between Canudos and the favelas, see also Alba Zaluar and Marcos Alvito, eds., *Um século de favela* (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1998), and Miriam Gárate, “Argirópolis, Canudos y las favelas. Un ensayo de lectura comparada”, *Revista Iberoamericana* LXIII, no. 181 (1997): 621–30.

107 Rama, *The Lettered City*, p. 6. Marzena Grzegorzczuk has called Canudos an “improper city”, analyzing Euclides’s description vis-à-vis Rama’s ideas of the modern Latin American city (Marzena Grzegorzczuk, “Eclipse of Reason: Euclides da Cunha’s ‘Improper City’”, in *Private Topographies. Space, Subjectivity, and Political Change in Modern Latin America* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], pp. 115–29).

- 108 By doing this, however, he would be highlighting the settlement's extraordinary capacity for resistance and endurance—that is, its heroic character. It is also possible that, since Euclides witnessed only the very last weeks of the war, he might have actually *seen* a small village; that is, what at that point remained of Canudos.
- 109 Pratt, “Los que se quedan”, p. 363.
- 110 One passage can serve as an example that the *sertão* itself is seen as a ruin. Already in the first section of the book's first part, when the narrator is explaining the orography of the *sertões*, he describes the mountains of those regions using this image: “aqui apontam, rijamente, sobre as áreas de nível, os últimos fragmentos das rochas enterradas, desvendando-se em fraguados que mal relembram, na altura, o antiquíssimo ‘Himalaia brasileiro’, desbarrancado, em desintegração contínua, por todo o curso das idades; adiante, mais caprichosos, se escalonam em alinhamentos incorretos de menires colossais, ou em círculos enormes, recordando na disposição dos grandes blocos superpostos, em rimas, muramentos desmantelados de ciclópicos coliseus em ruínas.....” (p. 77) [In one place they stand stiffly over the level areas and are the last fragments of the buried boulders unveiled in pieces. A feeble attempt to recall their height has named them the Brazilian Himalayas, even though they have collapsed through continuous disintegration all through the ages. More capricious farther on, they rise up along the broken lines of colossal menhirs or in enormous circles to mimic in their disposition of great superimposed fissured blocks the collapsed walls of some coliseum in ruins... (p. 11)]. The image of an emergent antique element, discussed above, appears here as well. This is also a good example of the meandering prose of Euclides, and its continuous use of enumeration and accumulation: the Portuguese version does not present a single full stop until the paragraph's end.
- 111 Decca, “Literatura em ruínas”, p. 151.
- 112 The translation does not do Euclides's wording justice. It works as a synthesis of the main ideas of the passage, but a number of sentences are omitted altogether.
- 113 Euclides da Cunha, *Canudos. Diário de uma expedição* [1939] (São Paulo: Martin Claret, 2006), p. 70.
- 114 It would be interesting to approach this intimate foreignness following Jacques Alain-Miller's notion of “extimacy”, as proposed by Rachel Price: “Jacques-Alain Miller developed Lacan's notion of ‘extimacy’, the strange position of otherness within us: an exteriority within or an interiority without; a fear of others within ourselves” (Rachel Price, *The Object of the Atlantic: Concrete Aesthetics in Cuba, Brazil, and Spain, 1868–1968* [Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014], p. 102).
- 115 Bernucci, *A imitação dos sentidos*, p. 51, original emphasis. This foreignness with respect to the visited territories is also evident in Moreno, though he and Euclides engage in different rhetorical operations with regard to space. As I explained in the introduction, this shared foreignness in the face of their own countries facilitates these two travelers' dialogue with Burton and Hudson, who wrote in English and constructed their narrators as foreigners.
- 116 I am not entirely convinced by the two most extreme perspectives I have read regarding the portrayal of Canudos and its inhabitants. For her part, Campos Johnson interprets Euclides's position as being subalternizing, inserting the subaltern-constructing distance of an intellectual. This would erase all reference to what the author refers to as “everydayness” from the reality of Canudos, construing the massacre as an exceptional event and condemning it to the immobility of history (Campos Johnson, *Sentencing Canudos*, p. 4). On the other hand, Nogueira Galvão, Ronald de Melo e Souza, and Luís Fernando Valente claim that Euclides succeeds in evoking the losers' perspective. See Walnice Nogueira Galvão, “Os sertões: uma análise literária”, in Eduardo Diatary Bezerra de Menezes and João Arruda, eds., *Canudos: as falas e os olhares* (Fortaleza: UFCF, 1995), pp. 23–30 (at p. 30); Ronald de Melo e Souza, *A geopoética de Euclides da Cunha* (Rio de Janeiro: EdUERJ, 2009), p. 49; Luís Fernando Valente, “Brazilian Literature and Citizenship: From Euclides da Cunha to Marcos Dias”, *Luso-Brazilian Review* 38, no. 2 (2001): 11–27 (at p. 16). I argue that the book's most important achievement is precisely its account of a lack of understanding: it is the failure to recognize oneself, or to recognize oneself as being other, as unable to fully understand—the revelation of war as the inability to see.
- 117 Scott does not work with specific moments of war, but he does consider war to be an auspicious moment for the ordering intervention of the state. This intervention requires the presence of “an authoritarian state that is willing and able to use the full weight of its coercive power to bring these high-modernist designs into being. The most fertile soil for this element has typically been times of war, revolution, depression, and struggle for national liberation” (Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 5).
- 118 It is highly original, in this sense, that Mario Vargas Llosa decided to employ blindness as a narrative tool in his 1981 novel *La guerra del fin del mundo*, which rewrites—quite problematically, in my view—the Canudos War. The nameless character who may (or may not) represent Euclides da Cunha loses his glasses in the middle of combat (which he is not participating in, naturally) and can make out only blotches, shadows, blurry shapes. Indeed, this is one of the moments with the greatest narrative power in the whole book. Mario Vargas Llosa, *La guerra del fin del mundo* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1982), pp. 340–41.
- 119 As George Van den Abbeele has said, “the home that one leaves is not the same as that to which one returns. The very condition of orientation, the *oikos*, is paradoxically able to provoke the greatest disorientation” (Van den Abbeele, *Travel as Metaphor*, p. xix).
- 120 Cunha, *Canudos. Diário de uma expedição*, p. 124.
- 121 The title of the poem is “Página vazia” [Empty page]: “Quem volta da região assustadora/ De onde eu venho, revendo inda na mente/ Muitas cenas do drama comovente/ Da Guerra despiedada e aterradora,/ Certo não pode ter uma sonora/ Estrofe, ou canto ou ditirambo ardente,/ Que possa figurar dignamente/ Em vosso Álbum gentil, minha Senhora.....” (Cunha, *Poesia reunida*, p. 276) [He who comes back from the frightening region/ That I come from,/ still seeing in my mind/ Many scenes of the moving drama/ of relentless and appalling War,/ Certainly cannot write a sonorous/ verse, or an ardent song or dythiramb,/ That could be worthy of being part/ of your noble album, my lady ...]. In a letter dated 23 December 1897, one of the very few he wrote in the months that followed the conflict, he suggests he does not feel strong enough to write his planned book about the conflict. Here, again, the image of the empty page appears: “ando verdadeiramente acabrunhado e sem disposição para o trabalho—e olho para as páginas em branco do livro que pretendo escrever e parece-me às vezes que não realizaria o intento” (Cunha, *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, p. 113) [I feel truly depressed and with no inclination to work—and I look at the blank pages of the book I intend to write and it seems to me sometimes that I will not accomplish the plan].

- 122 Cunha, *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, p. 128.
- 123 On the subject of Euclides's efforts to fit in and his ambivalent relationship with intellectual and political circles as evinced in his correspondence, see the commentaries of Skidmore and Holloway on their transcription of his letters to Oliveira Lima. Thomas E. Skidmore and Thomas H. Holloway, "New Light on Euclides da Cunha: Letters to Oliveira Lima, 1903–1909", *Luso-Brazilian Review* 8, no. 1 (1971): 30–55.
- 124 I have selected this quotation at random, but the text contains countless references to invisibility. I will examine here only those that exhibit a certain dialogue between the gaze, space, and movement in the context of war.
- 125 Deleuze and Guattari, in comparing the games of chess and go, assert that the latter subverts the notion of open warfare: "Chess is indeed a war, but an institutionalized, regulated, coded war, with a front, a rear, battles. But what is proper to Go is war without battle lines, with neither confrontation nor retreat, without battles even: pure strategy, whereas chess is a semiology" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 353).
- 126 The idea of guerrilla warfare can nonetheless help illuminate the *sertanejos'* strategies in the first moments of the conflict. This was patent in the way that the rebel gauchos—and especially the protagonist, Richard Lamb—wage war in *The Purple Land*. This was also a characteristic of the Paraguayan army during the War of the Triple Alliance. The war testimony of the Paraguayan soldier Leandro Pineda shows the adoption of a strategy that avoids traditional clashes and organized warfare: "We continued our work mainly in guerrilla operations and ambushes" (Leandro Pineda, "A Chronicle of War", in Peter Lambert et al., eds., *The Paraguay Reader* pp. 90–95 [at p. 93]). Martín Kohan has studied the ways in which Colonel Manuel Prado, from the Argentine army, narrates his combats against the indigenous peoples during the Conquest of the Desert: "They go far away—very far away—yet they might easily appear all of a sudden quite close by. What is distant does not gradually move toward proximity; it suddenly becomes it" (Martín Kohan, "Paisaje de guerra", in Martínez-Pinzón and Uriarte, *Entre el humo y la niebla*, pp. 99–113 [at p. 101]). In all of these wars, the powerless, who resist the forces of the modern state and of global capital and empire, and end up being destroyed by them, resort to alternative ways of waging war, which surprise and disconcert those hegemonic forces.
- 127 Elizabeth Lowe translates this as "invisible". But according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, this can be "unable to be touched". Ghosts abound in the pages of the texts analyzed in this book: the skinny dog that, in Burton's *Letters*, wanders among the Paraguayan corpses scattered across the battlefields, and that escapes like an apparition when the narrator approaches; the dead son who comes back from war to his ruined house in order to narrate the fictitious story of victory in *The Purple Land*; the indigenous peoples described by Moreno as already dead, as spectral presences in their own lands as war approaches. Yet this spectrality, and its connection with a resistive force, is perhaps even stronger in *Os sertões*.
- 128 I find it useful to return to Jameson's ideas on the representation of war in terms of space, since what is portrayed here is not really a battle but instead a *space*, known to some and indecipherable to others. Spatializing the conflict is in some way not narrating it: there is no confrontation, struggle, combat. One of the persistent elements throughout Euclides's book is what Jameson calls "the complicity of nature in ambush ... in concealment as well, camouflage being a way that humans acknowledge the primacy of scene" (Jameson, "War and Representation", p. 1537).

- 129 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, p. 83. Sara Castro-Klarén has discussed in detail the connections between the body and the land in *Os sertões* (Sara Castro-Klarén, "In-forming the Body of Man in the *Caatinga*", *The Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies* 3 [2005]: 99–116).
- 130 This can also be read as a classical example of guerrilla warfare. In "War and Representation", Jameson discusses the relationship between state war and guerrilla warfare, and the way he describes the latter would be apt to illustrate this specific passage of *Os sertões* (and, indeed, several others explored in this book): "the horror of guerrilla warfare (whether urban or rural) seems rather to lie in the unidentifiability of its actors, who emerge from their surroundings without warning and just as unexpectedly disappear again" (Jameson, "War and Representation", p. 1533).
- 131 Walter Benjamin, "Excavation and Memory", in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2. (1931–1934), ed. Marcus Paul Bullock et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 576.
- 132 In the English version, *velho* is translated as "man", when it actually means "old man". Thus, the translation erases all contradiction.
- 133 Ettore Finazzi-Agrò, "'Como se extingue o deserto'. O vazio da Origem e a invenção da Forma na história literária brasileira", *Tempo brasileiro* 177 (2009): 5–24 (at p. 11).
- 134 In Sándor Márai's 1970 novel *Sad w Canudos* (I will refer to the Portuguese translation, *Verdicto em Canudos*), it is the head of Antônio Conselheiro himself that smiles at the triumphant officers. The mouth smiles because it recognizes a victory that goes beyond violence: "O certo é que a boca do Conselheiro começou a sorrir – não havia equívoco possível, a boca sorria irônica" (Sándor Márai, *Verdicto em Canudos* [1970], trans. Paulo Schiller [São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002], p. 65) [What is true is that Conselheiro's mouth began to smile. There was no mistaking it—the mouth smiled mockingly].
- 135 As Edgar Salvadori de Decca puts it, "In Euclides's literature, the ruin also marks the limit of one's capacity to perceive the other. ... Ruins reveal how the gaze of the civilized person observes them, and they are frightening in Euclides's work because at every moment they confront him with that other who remained at the margins of history" (Decca, "Literatura em ruínas", p. 158). Decca's analysis is correct in describing ruins as "frightening" because they are, for the narrator, an aberrant construction, something that produces horror and admiration at the same time, a spine-chilling revelation.
- 136 It is, in fact, central to the rhetoric of vanishing. On this topic, see the introduction to this volume.
- 137 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 285.
- 138 *Visite a Bahia* www.visiteabahia.com.br/visite/atracoes/esportes/leia_pesca.php?id=1. 2004 (3 December 2009).