

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

~~THE CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES~~
in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

Elizabeth Lowe, Associate Professor and Director

“We translate sense, not words.”

St Jerome



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*Traveling from the language of Camões
to the language of Shakespeare (via the
language of Goethe):*

Terminology in Os Sertões

**A Case for the Study of Terminology in Literary
Translation**



Lessons from Terminology Theory that Map the Lexicon of *Os Sertões*: a Guide for the Translator

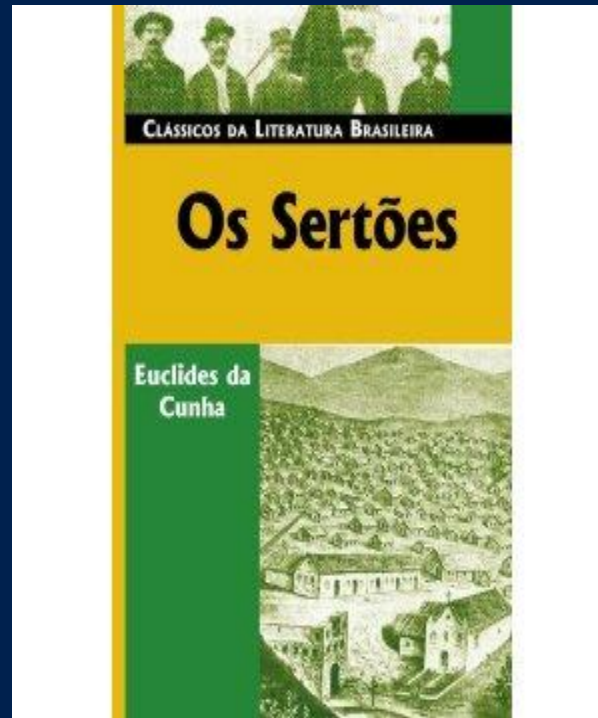
- Understanding the text type
- Decoding the registers of the text
- Defining the audience and purpose of the text
- Identifying the subject fields represented in the text
- Discovering borrowings, adaptations and neologisms
- Contrasting archaic and contemporary terms
- Understanding the role of concept formation in the work



Euclides da Cunha
1866-1909



Os Sertões: A Campanha de Canudos (1902)



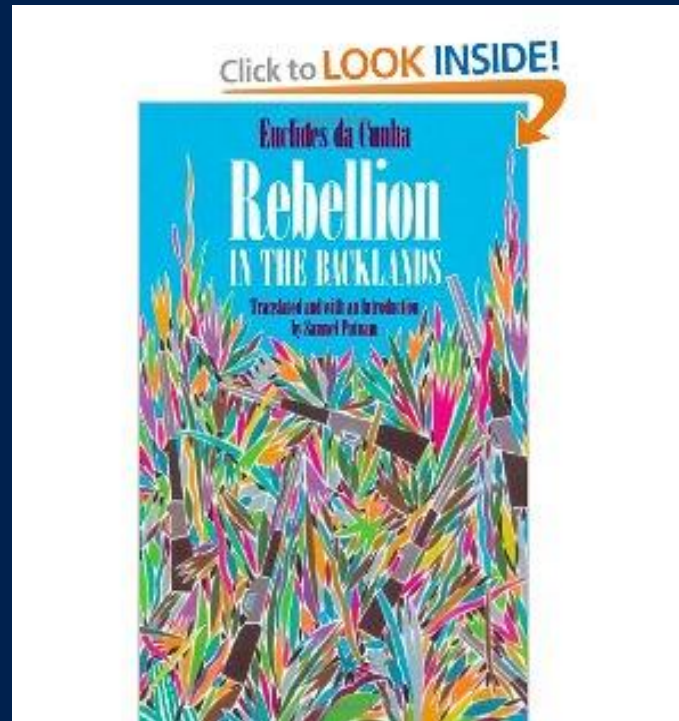
A Singular Biography

- On August 15, 1909, Euclides da Cunha was shot dead by his wife's lover at the age of 43. He was one of the main figures of Brazilian intellectual life, because of his book *Os Sertões*. First published in December, 1902, the first edition sold out in February 1903. It was a major success in a largely illiterate country. Da Cunha was elected in 1903 to a chair in the Academia Brasileira de Letras and to the Brazilian historical society.



Rebellion in the Backlands (1943)

Samuel Putnam, translator

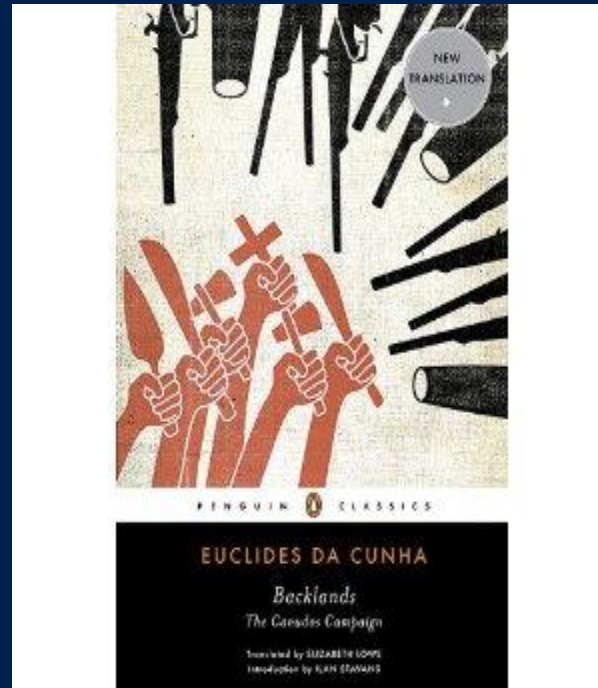


Krieg im Sertão (2000)

Berthold Zilly, Translator



Backlands: The Canudos Campaign (2010)



Map of Canudos, Bahia, Brazil



Background to *Os Sertões*: the Source Text

- Published in 1902, this is the story of the infamous War of Canudos, the deadliest civil war in Brazilian history, that took place from 1896-1897 in the backlands of the State of Bahia in Brazil's impoverished northeast. The battle raged between the government and the village of Canudos, settled by 30,000 followers of the religious zealot Antonio Conselheiro. This epic work, described as the Bible of Brazilian Nationality, shows the significance of the event and the implications for Brazil as a modern nation.



Social Science, History, Travel Literature, Treatise, Fiction?

- The book has been called a “novel” because of its narrative style and use of literary techniques such as narrative structure, metaphor, allusion, rhetorical devices, and poetic register. It could be understood as a celebration of fiction—particularly that of Latin America—in its capacity to change reality. The book has inspired many novels, among them Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The War of the End of the World* (1981)



A “Monumental Enterprise”

- “A history of Brazil that starts with the geological formation of the land, moves through the dynamics of climate and environment, and embarks on a minute description of flora and fauna based on the work of foreign and Brazilian scientific expeditions. This physical description is itself posited as a necessary preamble to the historical study of the regional cultures of the nascent republic. This multidisiplinary planoply of knowledges ...is the mere stage on which the canvas of an ethnohistorical psychological study of the *sertanejo* will be displayed in order to ...situate and narrate the massacre of Canudos.”
 - Sara Castro-Klaren, “In-forming the Body of Man in the Caatinga” (2005)



The Intended Audience: An International Court of Justice

- The intended audiences were the people of Brazil and its new government AND
- European audiences, present and future
- The author particularly desired a French audience because he wanted to expose “crimes against civilization” to an international court of justice.



Modernism vs. Barbarism

- The book is strikingly modern: barbarity is practiced in the name of modernity, progress and democracy.
- *Os Sertões* presents the clash of cultures that so frequently happens between rural, traditional groups and the secular, global focus of societies that trample them.
- Euclides is skeptical of man's ability to deal responsibly with technology and innovation.
- War is the most shocking product of civilization



The Origins of Da Cunha's Prose

- EC's language comes from traditional Lusitanian Portuguese on the syntactic and lexical levels.
- Knowledge arrived from Brazil through French, marked by Latin as an erudite language which left traces in his vocabulary, syntax and stylistic conventions
- Erudite Portuguese of the end of the 19th Century in Brazil was a symbiosis of three centuries of western culture, heavily latinized, and adapted to the Brazilian reality



Rhetorical Devices

- Elevated style: a hybrid register that dignifies the *sermo* and compares it to the killing fields of Troy
- The book as a substitute for speech (The Greek, Roman oral tradition)
- The book as an eternal monument (Biblical tradition)
 - Intensification (superlatives)
 - Antinomy (antithesis)



Task of the translator

- The hybrid nature of the book obliges the translator to seek maximum precision at the level of context, information and denotation—as well as on the aesthetic level (connotation)
 - *Berthold Zilly (1997)*



Landscape representation: Geological Features and Geology as Metaphor

- Landscape representation in *Os Sertões* are tied to a method that entails constant discipline shifting
- The dissatisfaction with disciplinary discourse points to the insufficiency of each science da Cunha summons to approach the phenomenon of Canudos
- The soil and buried layers of time explain the nature of man and historical events
 - “It is natural that the deep-laying layers of our ethnic stratification should have cast up so extraordinary an *anticlinal* [geological term=inclining downward on both sides from a median axis...(a pointed rock) as Antonio Conselheiro. Just as the geologist, by estimating the inclination and orientation of the truncated strata of very old formations, is enabled to reconstruct the outlines of a vanished mountain, so the hisotrian...will find it of value solely in considering the psychology of the society which produced him.”(Putnam,117-118)
 - “It is not surprising that our deep ethnic strata pushed up the extraordinary figure of Antonio Conselheiro, “the Counselor.” He is like a fossil. Just as the geologist can reconstruct the inclination and orientation of very old formations from truncated strata and build models of ancient mountains, so can the historian deduce something about the society that produced this man...” (Lowe, 124)



A Geologist's Dream

- Da Cunha imagines the possibility of what he calls a “retrospective philosophy”, citing the evolutionist Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895).
- In this section he links the destruction in the process of the earth's formation to the notion that the *sertanejo* is a fossil. He describes a landscape that is like a giant ossuary and he links this to the concept of the human ossuary represented by the people who live on the land.
 - “This is carried further by the strange denudation of the land; by the noteworthy alignment in which the fragments lie, bordering the flanks of the mountains in true level curves; by the cliffs off the tablelands as their perpendicular drops recall falaises; and up to a certain point, by 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 catclysm” (Lowe, 20)



Tupi and Tapuya Knowledge

- The book is a project to recover lost and suppressed knowledges and memories.
- Use of Tupi and Tapuya terms allows us a glimpse of the native peoples' understanding of the climate and environment of the sertão.
- The abundance of regional ,botanical, zoological, and geological terms required a bilingual glossary and notes, as well as parenthetical explanations in the body of the translation



Ascetic Discourse

- The ascetic tradition is central to the understanding of Antonio Conselheiro
- The dynamics of fluids in the *caatinga* (scrub forest land) and the body of man become the metaphor that organizes the flow of knowledges in the book [Conselheiro is a “striking example of *atavism*”(116)]
- A Christian discourse of deprivation and martyrdom is described with a geological narrative of erosion and destruction[“The accumulation of *alluvium* in the depressions, the dismantling of the hills, the winding of the river beds of intermittent streams, the constriction of the *defiles*, and the almost convulsive appearance of the *deciduous flora* lost in a maze of undergrowth—is in a manner of speaking, the martyrdom of the earth, brutally lashed by variable elements which run the gamut of climatic conditions” (Putnam, 13).]



Terminology of Disease

- The agony of the parched earth is described in the language of disease, alluding to the suffering of Christ
- In the section of the “*caatinga*” Da Cunha presents himself as a traveler who can marvel at the unique character of a contradiction of nature: a desert forest
- “The *caatinga* brusland engulfs him. It cuts off his field of vision. It attacks and stupefies him. It tangles him up in its thorny scheme of things and has no attraction for him. Rather, it repels him with its stinging leaves, its thorns, its dry wood standing up like lances. And it unfolds before him for mile upon mile, unchanging in its desolate look of leafless trees and twisted, dry branches, all curled around each other and pointing stiffly into space or bending over toward the ground as they recall some immense waving of arms, torture, or the death throes of vegetation.” (Lowe, 35)
- The *caatanduva* is the “sick forest, “the *silva horrida* of Von Martius” (Lowe, 41).



Discourse on Race

- The author weaves a discourse on body and mind that he presents in the chapter on Man.
- Da Cunha's theories are racist however he does not see himself as a racist and in fact offers a critical view of the anthropology of white racial supremacy prevalent in his time.
- He makes his famous assertion on the multi-ethnic characteristic of Brazil: "We do not have a unified race. We may never have one." (Lowe, 61)
- Da Cunha catalogs racial and social types in Brazil:
 - *Jagunço, tabaréu, sertanejo, caboclo, cafuzo, mulatto, curiboca*
- Abandoning modern scientific language of anthropology, da Cunha labels the *sertanejos* as the heir of "extravagant superstitions" and the bearer of "atavistic stigmata" (Putnam,112).



Psychoanalytical terms

- Da Cunha deploys psychoanalytical terms with the language that mystics used to speak of states of consciousness
- Da Cunha believes Conselheiro is a mad man, who should be in a hospital
- Relying on best science of the time he states that
“Conselheiro was, in fact, a very sick man, who would fit the profile of Tanzi and Riva’s concept of paranoia. His ideational hallucinations always focused on ethnic concerns. He was a rare case of atavism. His morbid personality led him to whimsical interpretations of objective reality, thereby altering his relationship to the external world.” (Lowe, 125)
 - Da Cunha’s discourse moves through several layers of his own ‘architecture of correspondences’...from the ethereal layer...to psychoanalysis...to the chemical, material basis of mind...to an evolutionary theory of retrogression of the species.



Other subject fields

- Archaic terms – (objects, practices, arms)
 - Revive the nature of premodern culture

Biblical references

Historical references

Philosophical terms

Climatology and meteorology

Archeology

Military terms (15th to 19th centuries)



Conclusions

- *Os Sertões* can be read as an extended metaphor of the body in pain (Castro-Klaren, 2005)
- This image allows da Cunha to weave into a single narrative the several scientific discourses he deploys to allow the reader to understand Canudos
- This act of communication is possible because of the reader familiarity with the story of the body of man is encoded in metaphors that cut across geology, biology, climatology, anthropology, sociology, psychology and medicine.
- Popular culture of Brazil, through the tradition of the Catholic Church in the Americas, is the rhetorical complex that marks the scientific discourses deployed to explain this moment of history with a degree of intelligibility.



A nationalist agenda

- A hundred years after Da Cunha's death, Brazil celebrated Euclides da Cunha national year. His writings survived and became a core of national tradition. He was “not just a Brazilian writer, but also a peripheral intellectual coping with the problems of nation building in a postcolonial society. As many other thinkers at the margins of the civilized world at the beginning of the twentieth century, Da Cunha was trying to articulate a nationalist agenda in terms of a scientific discourse produced in Europe.”
 - *João Maia, “Thinking from the South: Brazilian Social Thought and the Case of Euclides da Cunha” (2010)*



“O sertão é um paraíso...”

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5Vz1Tr8Ni8>



Discussion

- How do you think this book contributed to “concept formation and the need for a perspective about modernity that addresses its problems from the periphery”? (Maia)
- What role does terminology play in this process as illustrated in this example?



References

- Sara Castro-Klaren, “In-forming the Body of Man in the Caatinga,” *The Colorado Review of Hispanic Studies* (Vol. 3), Fall 2005: 99-116.
- Joao Maia, “Thinking from the South: Brazilian Social Thought and the Case of Euclides da Cunha,” *Global South* (Vol 6, No.1), January 2010:24-33.
- Berthold Zilly, “Um Depoimento para a Historia Universal: Traduzibilidade e atualidade de Euclides da Cunha,” *Estudos Sociedade e Agricultura* (Vol. 9), Outubro 1997: 5-15



Thank you!

Vielen Dank!

Merci! Gracias! Obrigada! Спасибо!

감사합니다!



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

THE CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES

in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics

Phone: 217-244-7455

Email: translation@illinois.edu

Dr. Elizabeth Lowe, Director

elowe@illinois.edu

www.translation.illinois.edu



www.uiuc.edu