TRACES OF THE UNSEEN: PHOTOGRAPHY, WRITING AND CONTACT IN THREE EXPEDITIONS IN THE TROPICS

Carolina Sá Carvalho Pereira

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**Dissertation Abstract**

*Traces of the Unseen* examines the presence of images of ruins, scars, and ashes in the archives of early twentieth-century encounters between western travelers and local communities in remote regions of Brazil and Peru. It considers the use of photographs, field-notes, and diaries in government reports, travel-books and monographs related to three voyages: journalist Euclides da Cunha's 1897 venture to Canudos in Northeastern Brazil; British Consul Roger Casement's 1910 expedition to investigate the abuses suffered by Putumayo indigenous communities during the Amazonian rubber boom; and French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic research in central Brazil in the 1930s.

Chapter one centers on da Cunha’s use of field-notes, manuscripts, and photographs in his canonical book *Os sertões*. It considers his efforts to inscribe Canudos and its archives into a historical narrative of a nascent Republic and its modernizing impulse. In chapter two, Casement’s challenge is to produce material proof of crimes committed in the Peruvian Amazon. While da Cunha constructed a national event from the ruins of Canudos, Casement concludes that the visibility of marks of torture depended on the onlooker’s “point-of-view.” Lastly, chapter three analyzes Lévi-Strauss's Brazilian archive to engage debates on the phenomenology of the photo-ethnographic encounter and the scientific value of the written, drawn, and photographed materials produced in encounters between western travelers and non-western communities.

These travelers, who carried cameras and published photographs alongside their texts, reflected upon questions of knowledge, perception, and memory in order to interrogate the role of technologies of inscription. I argue that each traveler developed a distinct concept of “evidence,” which do not entirely conform to an empirical logic of the encounter. Second, I consider the afterlives of the material traces of these encounters. I investigate these texts and
images were woven into narratives that build historical, legal and humanitarian, and anthropological arguments that marked the formation of a transnational imaginary of the Amazon or the sertão. Finally, I suggest ways in which the trajectories of these materials conflict with political or intellectual projects at stake. More specifically, I read these “official” narratives alongside the photographs cropped, reframed, or forgotten in the archive.
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# Table of Contents

Dissertation Abstract .............................................................................................................. iii

Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1

Chapter I .................................................................................................................................. 14

**Corpses, Images and History in the Archives of Canudos** .................................................. 14

1. In the Eye of History: Conselheiro as Celebrity ................................................................. 24
2. Photographic Contact, Truth and History ........................................................................ 36
3. Flavio de Barros, Fotógrafo Expedicionário ................................................................. 45
4. Os Sertões .......................................................................................................................... 55
5. The Return of Canudos’s Ruins ...................................................................................... 71

Images ....................................................................................................................................... 75

Chapter II ................................................................................................................................ 86

**The Putumayo Affair: Scars, Beautiful Bodies and Visible Evidence** ................................. 86

1. The Putumayo as Devil’s Paradise .................................................................................... 95
2. Archive and Law in the Putumayo ................................................................................... 107
3. The law written in the body: photography, writing and corporeality ............................... 119
4. The Humanitarian Gaze: Between Fact and Point of View ............................................ 128
5. The Beautiful Body ......................................................................................................... 141
6. The Return of the Evidence ............................................................................................ 150

Images ....................................................................................................................................... 153

Chapter III .............................................................................................................................. 161

**The Shadow and the Object of Anthropology in Lévi-Strauss’s Ethnographic Archive** ....... 161

1. Photography and the Question of Representation ............................................................. 169
2. Anthropology and Photography ....................................................................................... 178
3. Photography and the Invisible Object of Anthropology .................................................. 186
4. Shadows and Ashes in *Tristes Tropiques*. ..................................................................... 192
   a. Light and Shadows ...................................................................................................... 202
   b. Referentiality and Performance ............................................................................... 209
   c. The Center, the Picture and the Other ...................................................................... 214
   d. Past and Future ....................................................................................................... 230

Images ....................................................................................................................................... 236

Works Cited ............................................................................................................................. 246
# Index of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Barros, Flávio. <em>Bom Jesus Antônio Conselheiro, depois de exumado</em>. 1897.</td>
<td>Museu da República</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pinheiro, Rafael Bordallo. <em>Paginas Tristes. Scenas e aspectos do Ceará</em></td>
<td><em>O Besouro</em>, 20 July 1878</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot;Guerra de Canudos (Bahia)&quot;</td>
<td><em>Jornal Gazetinha</em>, 1896: 1. Print.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot;O fanático e bandido Antonio Conselheiro&quot;</td>
<td><em>Don Quixote</em>, 13 February 1897</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Barros, Flávio de. <em>Flávio de Barros, fotógrafo expedicionário</em>. 1897.</td>
<td>Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Barros Flávio de. <em>Corpo Sanitário e uma jagunça ferida</em>. 1897.</td>
<td>Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Barros Flávio. <em>7º Batalhão de Infantaria nas trincheiras</em>. 1897.</td>
<td>Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 15 Barros, Flávio. 400 jagunços prisioneiros. 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. .................................................................................................................................................. 82

Figure 16 Barros, Flávio. Igreja do Bom Jesus (Nova). 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. .................................................................................................................................................. 82

Figure 17 Barros, Flávio. Flanco esquerdo da igreja do Bom Jesus. 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. .................................................................................................................................................. 83

Figure 18 Barros, Flávio. Cadáveres nas ruínas de Canudos. 1897. Casa de Cultura Euclides da Cunha, São José do Rio Pardo. .................................................................................................................................................. 83

Figure 19 Barros, Flávio. Igreja de Santo António (Velha). 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. .................................................................................................................................................. 84

Figure 20 Detail view: Barros, Flávio. Igreja de Santo Antônio (Velha). 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. .................................................................................................................................................. 84

Figure 21 Teixera, Evandro. Conselheiristas nas ruínas de igreja na segunda Canudos (BA), 1999.................................................................................................................................................. 85

Figure 22 Texeira, Evandro. Ruínas de igreja na segunda Canudos (BA), açude de Cocorobó, 1994.................................................................................................................................................. 85

Figure 23 Viggiani, Ed. Pedestal do cruzeiro da canudos conselheirista, açude de Cocorobó Canudos (BA), 1996. .................................................................................................................................................. 85

Figure 24 An Incident of the Putumayo. .................................................................................................................................................. 153

Figure 25 Robuchon, Eugenio. Chorrera – cargando materiales de construcción. .................................................................................................................................................. 153

Figure 26 Indios Caníbales del Putumayo. 1913.................................................................................................................................................. 154

Figure 27 Casement, Roger. Man holding spear in Putumayo region of Peru/Columbia. circa 1910-1911. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. .................................................................................................................................................. 155

Figure 28 Casement, Roger. Man holding spear, surrounded by onlookers, Putumayo region of Peru/Columbia. circa 1910-1911. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ........ 155

Figure 29 Casement, Roger. Young boy with his back to the camera, Putumayo region of
Figure 30 Casement, Roger. *Man and three boys, two holding rifles*, Putumayo region

Figure 31 Casement, Roger. *Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall*. circa 1864 - 1916.
Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ............................................................. 157

Figure 32 Casement, Roger. *Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall*. circa 1864 - 1916.
Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ............................................................. 157

Figure 33 Casement, Roger. *Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall*. circa 1864 - 1916.
Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin. ............................................................. 157

Figure 34 Casement, Roger. *Man standing, wearing rolled-up trousers and carrying shirt*,

Figure 35 Casement, Roger. *30,000 lives: 4000 Tons of Rubber: The Putumayo Revelations*. ....... 158

Figure 36 Casement, Roger. *Ricudo*. 1910-1911 ................................................................ 159

Figure 37 Rothenstein, William. *Unfinished portrait of Omarino and Ricudo*. 1910. ............ 159

Figure 38 Thomson, John. *Omarino and Ricudo*. circa 1911. Photograph. University of Cambridge, Cambridge. ............................................................. 160


Figure 40 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Virgin Forest in Paraná*. 1935 ........................................... 236

Figure 41 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Caduveo women with painted faces*. 1935 .......................... 237

Figure 42 Boggiani, Guido. *A Caduveo belle in 1895*. circa 1895. Illustration .......................... 238

Figure 43 Boggiani, Guido. *Facial painting: an original drawing by a Caduveo woman*. circa 1895. Illustration .......................................................... 238

Figure 44 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Kunhatsin, Taperahi's chief wife, carrying her child*. circa 1935-1936.......................................................... 239
Figure 45 Lévi-Strauss. *Of his four wives Kunhatsin was the most beautiful.* circa 1935-1936. 239

Figure 46 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The native method of carrying a baby.* circa 1935-1936. ...... 240

Figure 47 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The author's best informant, in ceremonial dress.* circa 1935-1936................................................................................................................................................................................. 240

Figure 48 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The siesta.* circa 1935-1936.............................................. 241

Figure 49 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Maruabai, the co-wife (with her daughter, Kunhatsin) of Chief Taperahi.* circa 1935-1936........................................................................................................................................................................ 241

Figure 50 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Taperahi, the Tupi-Kawahib chief.* circa 1935-1936............ 242

Figure 51 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Kunhatsin, Taperahi's chief wife, carrying her child.* circa 1935-1936........................................................................................................................................................................... 242

Figure 52 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *...mocking, provocative...* circa 1935-1936......................... 243

Figure 53 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *A Nambiwara Smile.* circa 1935-1936. .............................. 243

Figure 54 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *...most often merry...* circa 1935-1936. .............................. 243

Figure 55 Fric, Alberto Vojtech. *Self-portrait as caduveo.* ....................................................... 244

Figure 56 Malinkowski, Bronislaw and Billy Hancock. *...the ethnographer's phallus...* 244

Figure 57 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *An epidemic of very painful, suppurating eye inflammation struck the Indians while we were there. Several members of the expedition were contaminated. We witnessed some distressing scenes.* circa 1935-1936............................... 245

Figure 58 Allison, David. *Many years later, in Amazonian Peru, an American colleague took this photograph of young Cashinawa Indians looking at some of these pictures.* ...................... 245
Introduction

Demeurai-je donc le seul à n'avoir rien retenu dans mes mains, que des cendres?
   (Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques 31)

The horror of Amazonian travel is the horror of the unseen.
   (Whiffen, The Northwest Amazon 78)

Era um parêntese; era um hiato; era um vácuo. Não existia.
   (Da Cunha, Os sertões 464)

To reencounter what no longer exists, what perhaps never existed, what will probably not exist – an idea, a necessary hypothesis. To leave a visual, material trace of something that no one could have believed, something imaginable but that until then had not been conceived as possible: an excessive, monstrous reality. To reproduce what one did not see in its entirety, or to bear witness to its ruin. The problem exposed in the three epigraphs that open this introduction is not only how to accurately represent what is before one's eyes, but how to bear witness to something that one is not immediately and entirely able to experience, but of which it seems necessary to leave a trace.

Traces of the Unseen examines images of ruins, scars, shadows, and ashes. I consider the afterlives of written and photographic archives of modern travelers who crossed long distances in order to encounter and gain insight into the lives and deaths of “non-civilized” peoples in remote regions of Brazil and Peru: the Amazon, a dense tropical forest, and the sertão, the arid hinterlands of Northeastern Brazil. Whether they searched for the “eruption of the past” in the form of a retrograde community, a “primitive” form of life untouched by civilization, or the criminal scene of this community's destruction, at the end of these journeys these travelers had gathered only partial traces, fading shadows, or broken debris of what they expected to find.
More specifically, I investigate photographs, field-notes and diaries, and their re-arrangements in different reports, books, and monographs related to three voyages: photographer Flavio de Barros's and journalist Euclides da Cunha's 1897 venture to the messianic community of Canudos in the Northeast of Brazil in the wake of its decimation by the republican army; British Consul Roger Casement's expedition in 1910 to investigate the abuses suffered by the Putumayo indigenous communities of Peru during the Amazonian rubber boom; and French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss's ethnographic research in central Brazil in 1935 and 1936. On the one hand, I show how these travelers, who were equipped with cameras and published photographs alongside their texts, reflected upon questions of knowledge, perception, and memory in order to interrogate the role of technologies of inscription. I argue that each one developed a different concept of “evidence,” which cannot be reduced to the general idea of “objectivity.” On the other, I consider the trajectory, or afterlives, of the material traces of these encounters, which often conflict with the expectations of their authors.

The term “traces” refers to this temporal dimension of the archival material, which evokes both contact and memory, presence and absence. A “trace” is a mark, an inscription left on a material surface through contact. It is a vestige of something that has passed, even if it was never seen, or is on the verge of disappearing but does not do so completely.¹ Walter Benjamin related the question of memory to that of the photographic image.² In doing so, he built on Sigmund Freud’s concept of the “memory-trace,” which he describes as a kind of material inscription devoid of any intentionality (“Beyond the Pleasure Principle”), and Marcel Proust’s

¹ See Eduardo Cadava’s *Words of Light*, particularly the section in which the author explores the relationship between the *tropos* of the trace and Benjamin’s concept of history (64-66).
² In “Little History of Photography,” Benjamin suggests a parallel between the invention of photography and psychoanalysis: “it is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis” (510-512).
“involuntary memory.” As with memory, photography relies on the non-linear temporality of the trace, in which the past is inseparable from the present in which reading takes place. In this work, I adopt the word “trace,” as well as other terms like “technologies of inscription,” in order to engage with recent studies on the photographic image that move away from the question of the “representation” of the “past” (Cadava; Didi-Huberman; Baer). Instead, I consider the “absent other” as an integral part of how traces are read in the present, in which both past and future find their nest (“Little History” 510). These terms also highlight my dialogue with works that take into account the materiality and circulation of photographic images (Edwards; Pinney; Poole). In contrast with most studies on how images circulate, however, I consider the articulation of both written and photographic archives, from their physical storage and organization to the different ways in which they are presented, described, or published.

In accounts of expeditions to “distant places” in Latin America, it may be tempting to define the “absent other” preserved by these photographic traces as the “primitive” subjects encountered by the “modern traveler.” Indeed, a large part of the materials that I analyze in the following pages comprise photographs of Brazilian sertanejos as well as the indigenous peoples of central Brazil – the Kadiveu, Bororo, Nambikwara, and Tupi-Kawahib – or of the Putumayo region, such as the Bora and the Huitoto. The travel accounts of Roger Casement, Euclides da Cunha, and Claude Lévi-Strauss can be seen, in this respect, as emblematic of the urgency with which nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers attempted to document the so-called relics of a prehistoric age, seen as doomed to disappearance with the expansion of civilization.³

³ The tropos of the “vanishing primitive” has been widely criticized by anthropologists such as James Clifford and Marshall Sahlins. It is difficult to find a work about ethnographic photography and, more broadly, travel writing and photography in the turn of the nineteenth century that does not mention the role of visual documents in “preserving” the memory of “vanishing primitives.” For more about this subject see Elizabeth Edwards’s Anthropology and Photography: 1860-1920.
These ethnographers, journalists, photographers, and writers not only thought that what they had in front of them would no longer exist in a near future, but treated what they encountered as already an absence, vestige, ruin, or shadow. Euclides da Cunha, for instance, insisted that Canudos could not be seen, or understood, even by those who travelled there (Backlands 520). He affirmed that “the city was invisible from a distance and could not be distinguished from the earth” (153) and that the canudenses were “able to disappear in the labyrinth of trenches and lure” (427). This hazy impression of Canudos is applied, too, to the only photo of its leader, the prophet Antônio Conselheiro, which Da Cunha described as an unrecognizable image of a decomposing body with the “eyes full of dust.” The disappearance of Conselheiro’s (and Canudo’s) image in Da Cunha’s Os sertões was necessary to make way for Euclides da Cunha’s reflection on the present and future modernization of the Republic.

Where da Cunha saw the barbaric violence of a republican army reflected on a decomposing body, Roger Casement saw the encroachment of modern capitalism in the scars on the bodies of indigenous workers exploited for the sake of rubber exports. Casement’s first notes in his Amazon Journal, written before his arrival in Peru, expressed his disbelief that he would be able to witness any crimes committed in the Putumayo, even though he did not doubt the veracity of the accusations made against the Peruvian Amazon Company in newspapers and magazines at the time. Although he insisted that it was necessary to register, in writing and photography, the visible traces of torture – like the scars on the bodies of Huitoto and Bora men, women, and children – Casement also admitted that seeing these marks was a question of “point of view.” Because the visible signs of violence were not visible to everyone, Casement concluded that it was necessary to teach the public how to read them.

Instead of seeing scars on the bodies of indigenous subjects, Claude Lévi-Strauss saw the
indigenous groups he encountered in Brazil themselves as mere traces of “primitive” forms of life on the verge of disappearance. Lévi-Strauss’ notorious criticism of a phenomenology of the anthropological encounter in *Tristes Tropiques* is conveyed through his narration of a series of missed encounters with the marveled object of anthropology: the “untouched primitive.” Through images of ashes, ghosts and debris, Lévi-Strauss transforms his travel memoir into a narrative about the impossibility of narrating the past and encountering the other.

At the same time, field-notes, transcribed interviews, and photographs were still used as “evidence,” “proof,” “data,” or “illustration” of what these travelers did (not) see, or of the categories they used to define the other. One of the objectives of this dissertation is to excavate the alternate and diverse concepts of “evidence,” “proof,” or “data” that have been obscured by general claims as to photography’s use by Western travelers as a way to get closer to a pure and unmediated contact with the “other.” The works analyzed here challenge this view by exposing fissures in the empirical logic of the encounter and suggesting different articulation between the observer and the observed, perception and memory, and the sensible and the intelligible dimensions of knowledge.

Through these three very different cases, the thesis hinges on three general fields of knowledge – history, law and humanitarianism, and anthropology – that were fundamental for the formation of a transnational imaginary of the Amazon or the Sertão. In other words, *Traces of the Unseen* investigates how the texts and images produced in these three expeditions into the remote regions of Latin America were woven into narratives that purport to make a contribution to specific fields of knowledge. I take seriously da Cunha’s suggestion that his book *Os Sertões* – in which some of Flavio de Barros’s images are printed – is designed for “the eyes of future historians” (*Backlands* 1) and read his use of language, archives, and images against a selected
bibliography that questions the role of different technologies of inscription in the making of historical narratives. Roger Casement, in turn, arrived in Peru in search of evidence of crimes committed against indigenous communities. The chapter dedicated to his Putumayo expedition is structured as a counterpoint to a debate on the relationship between writing, photography, and justice. Casement was on a mission: to prove that the rubber trade depended on the enslavement of indigenous communities. His documents had to be convincing enough to both influence public opinion and support the prosecution of the perpetrators. Lastly, Lévi-Strauss's Brazilian archive is analyzed in the context of the anthropologist's contribution to a more general reappraisal of so-called “data” in anthropology, as well as the broader debate on the scientific value of countless pieces of written, drawn, and photographed material that are appraised as the remnants of repeated encounters between western travelers and non-western communities.

The other objective of this dissertation, however, is to go beyond what these authors wanted to convey. By exploring the trajectory of the material traces of these encounters, I suggest ways in which they both exemplify and undermine their historical, humanitarian or anthropological projects. I suggest, for example, that the photograph of the prophet Antônio Conselheiro – described in the final pages of Os sertões as unrecognizable and not printed in its pages – haunts Euclides da Cunha’s historical narrative of progress. I also analyze how Roger Casement’s depiction of the scarred bodies of Huitoto men in order to mobilize public opinion relates to other texts and photographs in Casement’s archive: a series of erotic images and diary entries about indigenous subjects. This erotic archive was later used as evidence to turn Casement himself into a culprit. Finally, I argue that Lévi-Strauss’s use and description of photographs in Tristes Tropiques reveals a struggle against the traces of a phenomenological encounter between anthropologist and natives that is at the same time necessary and
inconvenient for the abstractions he intended. This interaction between anthropologist and “native” is at times too theatrical, while in other instances too intimate; at times it reveals an excess of unprocessed details, and in other moments a lack of perspective. My aim is not to define what these photographs are, but to trace the tensions and contradictions they embody in these specific works.

That is why *Traces of the Unseen* is also about concealed photographs: those left in the darkness of the archive, cropped, reframed, or described through words. In my analysis of travel writings, which involve a montage of images and texts, field-notes and photographs are not taken as the source from which a narrative emerges, but rather as fragments that have to be carefully selected and arranged in order to convey a new meaning. Which images are published and which are not? How are they framed? If they were cropped, what was left out in the published version? Do they have captions? How do those captions relate to the central narrative? Do they affirm or contradict it? Are the images described in words? How does the prose describe these photographic encounters?

I read these books that publish written and photographic materials produced in the field, such as *Os sertões* and *Tristes Tropiques*, not only as narratives, but as montages of photographs and texts. These material traces of the encounter are both part of a larger assemblage (or narrative) and an unstable force that threatens to destroy meaning, always at the verge of opening up a different montage. This approach builds upon Roland Barthes’s suggestion, in “The Third Meaning,” that montage works not only in favor of a narrative, but also against the disruptive force of the still.⁴ Although Barthes referred to film stills, he provides an important insight that

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⁴ In this text, Barthes articulates for the first time an aspect of the image that he will later call, in *Camara Lucida*, the “punctum.” Instead of a sharp point of the image that “pricks” or “wounds,” Barthes suggests that every image, even the most commonplace, has an “obtuse meaning” (56-65) that opens up other meanings.
applies to other types of montages, such as that of travel-books, which frequently bring together image and text. The film photogram, he argues, must be read both as part of the diegetic dimension of the film, thus, as its fragment, and as an excess; both part of the narrative and its obstacle, to which the montage acts as its necessary opposition. Similarly, the archival fragments, or the photographs, reproduced in travel accounts also work both in favor of the narrative into which they are woven and against it.

According to Georges Didi-Huberman, who suggested, based on Aby Warburg’s work, that montage is the mode of reading photographs: “Montage is valuable only when it doesn't hasten to conclude or to close: it is valuable when it opens up our apprehension of history and makes it more complex, not when it falsely schematizes” (Images in Spite of All 121). The counterpart to this dangerous openness or instability of montage as a reading method is the fact that every montage necessarily involves a dis-montage, or the interruption of a series of images (121). Each of my chapters include an epilogue that points to possible dis-montages of the archives analyzed, and their uses beyond the canonical works that have for so long ossified their readings.

Chapters

The first chapter, Corpses, Images and History in the Archives of Canudos, explores the afterlives of archives related to the “Canudos Campaign.” This military expedition was organized by the fledgling Brazilian Republic in order to subjugate the community of Belo Monte, founded by the preacher Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel, in the backlands of Bahia, Brazil. It centers on journalist Euclides da Cunha and his use of field-notes, manuscripts, and photographs, particularly his inclusion of Flavio de Barros's now-infamous photograph of
Antônio Conselheiro in the canonical *Os sertões*. I reassess his efforts to control the multiple meanings of these materials and to inscribe the event of Canudos into a national historical narrative.

The massacre of Canudos was inextricably linked to the role of telegraphy and journalism, which aided the massive circulation of varied, and sometimes contradictory, rumors about the outburst of an anti-republican rebellion led by an eccentric messianic leader. Reacting to this public interest in Canudos, writer Machado de Assis called the prophet Antônio Conselheiro a celebrity of his time. Da Cunha's and Barros's voyages, the first as a war correspondent for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* and the second as the official photographer of the army, were in part a response to this public curiosity about the exotic community. Euclides da Cunha was an ardent supporter of republican ideals when he set off for the battlefield. The “savage” destruction of this community, however, led him to revise, or at least muddle, some of his prior convictions. Using his field-notes as well as photographs taken by Flavio de Barros and texts from canudenses and soldiers alike, he published in 1902 a best-seller that accused the Brazilian Army of atrocious crimes.

*Os sertões* quickly became the official account of the events in Canudos and remains a veritable part of the canon of Brazilian literature. In it, da Cunha claimed that for Brazil to truly rise to the ranks of “modern” nations, it needed to come to terms with both the appearance of this “atavist” religious community and the “barbarity” of the army. *Os sertões* attempts to inscribe the true image of the birth and death of Canudos for the gaze of future historians, in order to open the path for the birth of a modern and unified nation. In his effort to fix the last image of Canudos, Euclides da Cunha pays particular attention to the image of prophet Conselheiro and describes Flavio de Barros’s photograph of the prophet’s dead body in the final pages of *Os
sertões. He does not, however, publish the photograph. Conselheiro’s “faithful portrait” can only reveal the truth of Canudos through his defacement, which transformed the prophet – and, metonymically, the whole community – into a mirror in which the (modern and republican) readers could see the specter of their own backwardness.

The second chapter explores another kind of archive of the contact between western travelers and local communities in Latin-American backlands: that of the atrocities of capitalist exploitation and that of transnational humanitarian campaigns, each based on the circulation of goods, people and images between the West’s peripheries and its centers. When Roger Casement traveled to the Putumayo, he did not have doubts as to the existence of crimes committed by rubber exporters. The account of US traveler Walter Hardenburg, published in 1909 by the watchdog magazine Truth, had described the ways in which a British company used torture and murder to coerce members of local indigenous communities to gather rubber. Casement, who was a British consul in Brazil at the time and was well-respected among anti Slavery activists for his participation in the Congo Reform Campaign, was appointed to find material proof of the crimes.

During his trip to the Putumayo region, Casement shot seventeen rolls of film, wrote two diaries, transcribed hundreds of testimonials and sent many letters to his British counterparts. In his reports and diaries, he constantly refers to the impossibility of gathering evidence of crimes; in Putumayo, according to Casement, there was no paper trail and the employees of the company he was appointed to investigate had mounted a cover-up during his visit. As with anti-slavery and humanitarian campaigns elsewhere (Laqueur; Boltanski; Scarry; Twomey), Casement relied on the marks inscribed on the bodies of the indigenous peoples; these were the only material traces, the sole archive, of the heinous crimes. In Casement's travel diaries, however, another
The dimension of the concept of “evidence” seems to complicate this first reading of the body of the other as an objective language of torture. Casement's account of his encounter with the indigenous peoples of the Putumayo casts doubt on the belief that vision can be objective. Rather, he suggests that in order to see the crime inscribed in these scars, one has to look at it from a certain “point of view,” a perspective determined by past experiences and sensible dispositions. As an Irishman, hence a victim of British imperialism, Casement was in a privileged position to see the traces of otherwise unimaginable horror. Perception and memory are entangled, creating a tension within Casement's own official mission: to write an objective account and gather evidence that could convict those accused of the atrocities in a court of law.

In an irony of sorts, Casement’s rectitude and objectivity was later compromised by the rumors that swarmed around his sexual habits. This chapter also discusses Casement’s emphasis on “point of view” and the materiality of the traces of violence in relation to his sexual writings and photographs. As part of his own personal archive, these were not intended for the public eye. Yet they nevertheless circulated as proof of Casement’s deviance and were used to mount a case against him for treason against Britain in 1916.

The third chapter investigates the trajectory of the written and photographic archives of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s ethnographic voyage in Brazil in 1935 and 1936 to question the relationship between writing, photography, and anthropological knowledge. Again, I focus on the archive itself and its trajectory: the different destinies of Lévi-Strauss's field-notes (which can be consulted at the French National Library in Paris) and his photographs (archived and largely inaccessible at his son's house in Paris), and their selective uses in his more testimonial accounts on the encounter with Brazilian tribes – mainly *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) and *Saudades do Brasil* (1994).
Claude Lévi-Strauss’s ethnographic expeditions in Brazil mark his début as an ethnographer. Twenty years later he wrote *Tristes Tropiques*, an account of his voyage in which the encounter with the indigenous groups was narrated as a failed search for primitive forms of life. This narrative of mis-encounter is part, on the one hand, of the author’s epistemological concerns and his attempt to experiment with a mode of representation that challenges the phenomenology of the ethnographic encounter (Imbert; Debaene). On the other, it reflects a historical argument, for the ruination seems to be produced by the expansion of civilization itself. Lévi-Strauss’s 1935 and 1936 expeditions followed the telegraph line built by the Rondon Commission in the end of the nineteenth-century, which he later defined as a failed civilizational project. It is in this context that Lévi-Strauss expresses for the first time his mistrust and even hostility towards the photographic medium. Lévi-Strauss’s denounces “modern technologies” of representation, especially photography, both as paradigms of an empiricist form of knowledge and as agents in the destruction of non-Western communities and primitive modes of existence.

In this chapter, I contrast Lévi-Strauss’s view on the photographic image with the way in which images are published both in *Tristes Tropiques* and in *Saudades do Brasil*, his photographic memoir published decades later in 1994.

The dissertation is united by more than its focus on travel accounts of Latin American hinterlands: each chapter considers a different aspect of the relationship between photography and evidence. The first chapter centers on the relationship between photography and truth, in the ontological sense of revelation. In dialogue with the works of Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Eduardo Cadava, and Didi-Huberman, this section follows theoretical debates on the linear and anachronistic tendencies that have marked the relationships between history and photography. The second chapter concerns the debates on the “corporeality” of photographic knowledge
(David MacDougall) and the material circulation of images (Edwards; Pinney). The question in Casement’s case is not so much that of revealing the truth, but of moving the spectator so that he/she can empathize with the suffering of the other and understand the system of oppression in which we are all involved. The body of the “indigenous victim” literally circulates, for Casement not only photographs them but also takes two Huitoto young men to Europe. Finally, the third chapter brings up the question of the phenomenology of the photo-ethnographic encounter. I contrast Lévi-Strauss’s view that photographic technology is complicit with the West’s empiricism to the concepts of *pose* and theatricality, inspired by Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida*. In dialogue with anthropologists such as Tomas David and Michael Taussig, the chapter also explores the affinities between magic, ritual and technology.
Chapter I

Corpses, Images and History in the Archives of Canudos

On February 2nd 1898, A Gazeta de Notícias, one of the main newspapers in Rio de Janeiro, published in its last pages an advertisement for the first public exhibition of Flavio de Barros' photographs of the so-called Campanha de Canudos (1896-1897), the fourth and last military expedition by the newborn Brazilian Republic to the community of Belo Monte in the north of Bahia. The prophet Antônio Vicente Mendes Maciel, known as Antônio Conselheiro [the Counselor], and his followers had settled in the region in 1893, after almost two decades of pilgrimage through the semi-arid backlands of the northeast region of Brazil, the sertão. The settlement, strategically located on the banks of the Vaza-Barris River, attracted thousands of people; estimates vary between 6,000 and 25,000 inhabitants. It incited the interest, fear and anger of local politicians, landowners, the church and, ultimately, the nascent republican government, which saw the military expedition as an opportunity to unite the country against a common (regressive) enemy and to intervene in the rural interior. After resisting three of the army's expeditions, Belo Monte (as the village was called by its inhabitants), or Canudos (as it

5 Republican government was established in Brazil after a little-resisted military coup against the ruling emperor D. Pedro II on November 15th, 1889 – nearly seven decades after most of its Latin American neighbors. As historians have shown, the period that followed was marked by political instability and a series of struggles between different political forces: politicians who represented a new bourgeois class, the military, old landowners and aristocrats. A good historical overview of the social and political context of the so-called “Velha República” [Old Republic] is Brazil: Empire and Republic 1822-1930, edited by Leslie Bethell. For a historical contextualization of Canudos, see Robert Levine's Vale of Tears. While Levine and other historians recognize the importance of national and local political forces for understanding the violent actions of the Brazilian republic, other historians remind us of the need to take the global context into consideration. By the end of the nineteenth century, similar resistance communities in countries including the United States, Argentina and Mexico clashed with modern states in expansion. Mike Davis, for example, argues that violent repression was a common result of the process of incorporation of peripheries into national territories and global capitalist economies. Additionally, even at the local level, as Ralph della Cava and Adriana Campos Johnson have pointed out, Canudos was not the exceptional event that an overview of Brazilian 20th century historiography seems to suggest, but one of many revolts and rebellions related to the processes of modernization and the foundation of the Republic.
came to be known), was completely destroyed in October 1897. The Republican Army
demolished and torched its buildings and killed most of its denizens.

Historical accounts of “Canudos” have for decades interpreted the events as resulting
from a clash between a backward, poor, and mystically-inclined backland and a national
modernity emerging in the progressive costal urban centers. A Another representation, which
 gained prevalence in the 1950s, framed the emergence of the settlement as a revolutionary
attempt to found a communist utopia, a community where private property and exploitation did
not exist. Since the 1960s, however, revisionist historiography has turned its attention to the
non-exceptionality of Canudos. Through an investigation of sources previously largely
overlooked, such as manuscripts, popular poetry and oral history, researchers suggested that,
apart from the excessive attention accorded to religious rites and ideas, and the efforts made to
construct a monumental church, the patterns of daily life in Canudos were similar to those in
other northeastern Brazilian villages. Among the canudenses there were not only poor people,
but also people of some means who had sold cattle and land in order to join Antônio Conselheiro,
as well as religious figures and apostles, teachers, merchants, bandits, indigenous peoples, and
ex-slaves. In Canudos they founded a relatively prosperous and self-sufficient economy. The
community refused the payment of taxes and did not recognize civil marriage and other
regulations imposed by the state, but it had its own hierarchical and economic divisions. Despite

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6 At the turn of the century the backland's supposed backwardness was largely attributed to racial or
environmental characteristics, as one can see in works of Nina Rodrigues or Euclides da Cunha. In the 1930s,
social theories such as those of Gilberto Freyre focused on the cultural aspects of this backwardness, relating it to
the feudal forms of economy and the isolation of the population.
7 This interpretation can be exemplified by the emergence, in the 1950s, of Marxist materialist works, such as
those of Rui Facó and Edmundo Moniz, suggesting that Canudos was born from class struggle and revolutionary
impulse, culminating in the establishment of an egalitarian community. For a more detailed overview of changes
in the interpretation of Canudos in the social sciences see Lori Madden's “Evolution in the Interpretations of the
Canudos Movement: An Evaluation of the Social Sciences.”
8 For more on this revisionist historiography see Dain Borges, Robert Levine and, in the field of literary studies,
Adriana Campos Johnson.
these scholarly efforts to reconstruct a historical representation of the settlement, “Canudos” – which from being a village came to signify an event – survives in collective memory, culture and art as an exceptional phenomenon, whether seen as wonderful or terrible, the result of extreme poverty and religiosity or of heroic resistance and revolutionary impetus.

“Canudos” was an invention, and was also a battle fought through telegraphs and newspapers (Levine, Vale; Nogueira Galvão, No calor da hora), which helped to circulate fantastic – and often conflicting – stories about the canudenses, those “backward fanatics,” “monarchists,” “bandits” or incredibly resilient “starving souls” who had defeated three military expeditions before their final destruction in October 1897. Special attention was given to Antônio Conselheiro. The prophet appeared so frequently in chronicles, articles and caricatures that the writer Machado de Assis⁹ called him a “celebrity” of his time (“A Semana, 14 de fevereiro de 1897”, 185). For the first time in Brazilian history, reporters were sent to the “front,” promising to “bring back” this distant and exotic community to the urban public and to “document” the victory of the Republic. Evidence suggests that there were at least three photographers in Canudos during the fourth expedition, although Flavio de Barros’ images were the only ones to survive the conflict.¹⁰

Four months after the destruction of the community, A Gazeta de Notícias announced the public projection of 25 life-size images featuring “scenes” of the “extraordinary event.” The advertisement in A Gazeta de Notícias emphasized one specific image, the “faithful portrait of the fanatic Conselheiro.” This so-called faithful portrait, which would become one of the most

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⁹ Machado de Assis is still today considered (one of) the most important writers in Brazilian literature. By the time his chronicle of Canudos appeared, he had already published twenty works, among them novels, theater, poetry, collections of short stories. In 1987 he was named the first president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, founded this same year.

¹⁰ The other two photographers were the writer Euclides da Cunha – according to his field notes and the newspapers of the time, the writer had taken a camera to the field – and a military and professional photographer named Juan Gutierrez.
notorious photographs of the war, is an image of Antônio Conselheiro's corpse lying on the earth from which it had been exhumed by the soldiers. According to the writer Euclides da Cunha, the body was “in a condition of advanced decomposition [… and] would not have been recognized by those who had been closest to him in life” (464). If, as Susan Sontag suggests, “all photographs are memento mori” (15), both death and survival, bearers of a trace of what no longer exists, the image – or “faithful portrait” – of the already disfigured Conselheiro is also both portrait and ruin, fixation and defacement (see figure 1). It has appeared at times as the promise of positive knowledge of the true aspect of Conselheiro's “fanaticism” and of Canudos as a past event; at others as the image of the disappearance (decomposition) of Antônio Conselheiro in the earth of the sertão, connected to the fear (or hope) of his rebirth at any time, from this same earth, reanimating dreams of an alternative future.

It is as both document and ruin of Canudos that Antônio Conselheiro's photograph reappears – or, as we will see, disappears – in the last pages of Euclides da Cunha's notorious Backlands: The Canudos Campaign, published in Portuguese as Os sertões in 1902. This book strives to account for the origins and the meaning of the conflict, which da Cunha had witnessed as a news reporter. Influenced by Hippolyte Taine's environmental determinism, the book is divided into three parts: The Land (A terra), The Man (O homem), and The Rebellion (A luta). While the first two parts are dedicated to examining the messianic community that was decimated, and to providing a post-Darwinian inflected analysis of the dry landscape, the mestiço people and the social and psychological conditions that supposedly gave birth to the community, the final one aims to rewrite the official narrative of the event of the destruction of Canudos, denouncing it as a barbarous crime. In da Cunha’s account, Canudos and the sertanejos are not the enemies of the Republic, but its mirror, the revelation of its own backwardness. “Canudos” –
the community and the event of its destruction – have, for da Cunha, a revelatory value.

Although, as we will see, other contemporary writers also suggested that the canudenses were victims of the disproportional violence of the state, it was Euclides da Cunha's version that would become paradigmatic. In his account, da Cunha combines the use of geographical and racial determinism to explain the emergence of the “backward” community in the sertão with a belief that the sertanejo mestiço provides the base for the consolidation of a national unity. The book, written by a little-known war correspondent, was an immediate bestseller in a country where 85 percent of the population was illiterate. Between 1902 and 1909, Os sertões sold 10,000 copies in three successive editions, published by Laemmert. The book claimed to address itself to “the eyes of future historians,” and would play a formative role in the incorporation of the event of Canudos into the official historical narrative of the country, and even of Latin America. Still today, Os sertões is the book of reference for Canudos, even as historians aim to deconstruct or denounce the shadow it casts the event.

My aim in this chapter is not to add yet another entry to the list of those searching for the truth of Canudos in Os sertões – not even one written between the lines. Instead, I focus on da Cunha's uses of archival texts and images, and particularly of Flavio de Barros' photograph of

11 Mainly through Euclides da Cunha's Os sertões, Canudos crossed borders, becoming an important reference in Latin American culture and even globally, through the works of philosophers and political theorists such as Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Zizek, and Antonio Negri. In Spanish it was popularized in Mario Vargas Llosa's novel La guerra del fin del mundo (The War of the End of the World), which is in great part based on Llosa's reading of Os sertões.

12 The substantial history of Os sertões' reception begins just after its publication, with José Veríssimo and Araripe Júnior, who praised the book for combining superior artistic form and historical-philosophical elevation. One of the only critics to go against the grain was the army officer Moreira Guimarães, who suggested the book had many imprecisions, and was more the product of a poet and artist than of an observer. It would be impossible to give even an impressionistic summary of the critical history of this canonical work, but I would like to remark that throughout, and continuing today, the question of truth remains important in the analysis of Os sertões. The avant-guard writer Mario de Andrade, for example, wrote: "I can guarantee that Os sertões is false" (qtd in Bernucci). Mainly in the second half of the twentieth century, historians began to challenge long-lasting assumptions based on the reading of Euclides da Cunha (Villa; Levine, Cabral Barreto), and deconstructionists such as Costa Lima have discussed the presence or pressure of the referent in da Cunha's text. The book has also been adapted for the cinema and theater, and has given birth to other novels.
Antônio Conselheiro, in relation to his effort to control the multiple meanings of these materials and to inscribe the event of Canudos in a national historical narrative. Adriana Campos Johnson, one of the cultural critics who have taken the theme of the inscription of Canudos in history as a subject in the context of literary studies, has argued that the ability to inscribe events, descriptions and traces is a site of social power – a means for some social groups to impose their will over others. My reading of Os sertões is indebted to her suggestion that the book plays a role in effacing other possible stories of Canudos, and that it is important to move beyond the prolonged effort of reading the truth of Canudos in Os sertões. Writing in dialogue with the Subaltern Studies Group,13 Campos Johnson criticizes views of Euclides da Cunha as providing the “voice of the voiceless,” and proposes reading archives excluded from this established narrative. My approach differs from hers in that I do not pursue the reading of Canudos' “subaltern” archives, but aim to explore how, in da Cunha's effort to build the definitive historical document of Canudos, Os sertões makes use of parts of the archive of Canudos, a set of images and texts that had and continue to have a life beyond the canonical book. In this unique arrangement, or montage, the photograph of the dead body of Canudos's messianic leader Antônio Conselheiro occupies a central position.

This chapter is structured around the trajectory of Antônio Conselheiro's image. It begins before the photograph was taken, when Conselheiro was beginning to appear in the news. It then follows the first references to Flavio de Barros's photographs, and ends with the description of

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13 The Subaltern Studies Group is a collective of mainly South Asian scholars interested in the postcolonial and post-imperial societies, with a particular focus on South Asia although also covering the developing world in general sense. These scholars had an important influence on the reading of popular insurgences “from below,” arguing that the archive through which events such as peasant insurgency are registered almost exclusively comprises of documents that reflect the perspective of power; that is, they were produced by regimes that aimed to suppress the insurgency. The initial assumptions of the group have been, of course, subjected to debates and alterations. Later debates, such as those raised by historian Florencia Mallon in the realm of Latin American studies, for example, question further the construction of subalternity.
this image in Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões* and its relation to the effort to fix the “truth of Canudos” in the aftermath of the massacre.

By reading Machado de Assis' insights in the newspaper chronicles of the time, the first part of this chapter explores the transformation of Canudos into a media event, the sort of phenomenon that would gain substantial critical attention after the First World War from thinkers such as Kracauer and Junger. I call it a media event not only because it was the first event to receive daily coverage by the Brazilian press (Levine, *Vale* 24), but also because it is impossible to conceive of its existence without the role of technologies of communication, such as telegraphy and newsprint, in circulating rumors about the emergence of an anti-republic rebellion guided by a “fanatic” messianic leader in the backlands of Bahia. Both Da Cunha's and Barros' voyages, the first as a correspondent for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* and the second as the army's official photographer, were connected to this public desire to consume images of the exotic community.

In order to introduce the circulation of Flavio Barros' images in the aftermath of the conflict, the second part of this chapter focuses on the articulations between photography and historical knowledge. Engaging the work of authors including Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Eduardo Cadava, and Didi-Huberman, this section follows theoretical debates on the linear and anachronistic tendencies that have marked the relationships between history and photography. These will guide my reading of the tension that marks the use of Antônio Conselheiro's image in *Os sertões*.

The third part of the chapter focuses on the making and the early appearances of Flavio de Barros's photographs, the only remaining photographs of Canudos. These were taken by Flavio de Barros at the very end of the conflict and were developed in its aftermath. I discuss the
usual interpretation of Barros' photographs in relation to his official mission in the field, namely, recording the victory and registering the competence of the army. In this reading, da Cunha's text is frequently used as a counterpoint to the images, a revelation of what the photographs disguise (or reveal only in their occasional and uncontrollable excesses) – the violence and barbarity of the state. I argue that in framing the pictures using da Cunha's critique of the army, one frequently ends up reinforcing his reading of the event.

The first public exhibitions of Flavio de Barros' photographs point to another dimension of these images. Evidence suggests that the images were exhibited in at least two publicly screened electrical projections in 1898, but they were not published until their printing in da Cunha's *Os sertões* (1902). While the projections promised the momentary spectacle – the life-size fleeting appearance – of Canudos, the publication of the images in the pages of *Os sertões* takes part in the making of a definitive document “addressed to the gaze of future historians.” Each implies a different type of montage and support. In the case of the electrical exhibition, however, analysis is restricted to the only evidence available today: its description in newspaper announcements. From these announcements it is possible to infer that the images, more than simply being seen as a document of the war front, were also marked by the public's desire and curiosity to see the images of the *canudenses*, and especially the only existing photograph of Antônio Conselheiro.

These exhibitions serve as a counterpoint to the fourth section, which deals with the articulation between photography, writing, and history in *Os sertões*. By “writing” I refer to the captions – a frequently analyzed aspect in the relationship of image and text\textsuperscript{14} – as well to the relation of the use of field photographs and texts to the narrative as a whole, in its arguments,

\textsuperscript{14} See, for example Barthes' “The photographic Message.”
language and structure. As the product of da Cunha's effort to build the definitive document of Canudos for the "gaze of future historians," Os sertões is not only, as many scholars have pointed out, the exegesis of a varied theoretical apparatus, constructed from the geological, climatic, sociological, and racial theories of the time and recounted through literary imagery and metaphor. It is also a montage of images and texts, field-notes and photographs.15

As a correspondent for the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo, Euclides da Cunha revealed himself as an ardent republican. In contrast to other reporters, such as Favila Nunes or Manuel Benicio, who – although restricted by censorship – managed to circulate news about the mismanagements and cruelties that were the cause of deaths on both sides of the conflict, da Cunha remained faithful to the cause of the Republican Army. After the conflict, however, he redefined his view on the war: the canudenses were not enemies of the state, but the product of local racial and geographical specificities that kept this population in a state of atavism and

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15 It has often been argued that Os Sertões was simultaneously the work of a poet and a scientist, a work at once symbolist and positivist. As Lilia Schwarcz noted, the end of the nineteenth century in Brazil was marked by a veiled dispute between "professionals of science" and "men of letters" (The spectacle of races). Ever since José Veríssimo's "Campanha de Canudos," the first critical work on Os Sertões, the hybrid character of the book and the relationships between its scientific and literary dimensions have been a theme of ongoing debate. Da Cunha's contemporary Araripe Júnior, Antonio Candido later on, and more recently Leopoldo Bernucci are a few authors who have read Os Sertões as a work at the border between science and literature and tried to give an account of the way these facets affect one another. The book's duplicity is frequently described as a tension between a scientist who sees and examines the surface of the land and the people of the sertão, both their origin and their future, and a poet who creates, imagines, and, without being able to visualize and fix what he encounters, describes the sertão through extremely metaphorical language and symbolic correspondences. António Candido, Francisco Foot-Hardman and Walnice Galvão and others have suggested that Os sertões should be read primarily in relation to its literary references. Luiz Costa Lima situates the book through a discussion of the role of visuality in Os Sertões. He analyzes Os Sertões as a text split by not two but three modes of expression: first, the scene or center ruled by da Cunha's scientific models and characterized by a mode of "description"; second, the text's ornamental and literary dimensions; and finally, the text's "subscene," dominated by mimesis. This third mode of expression is formed by the what is not is not totally controlled by the author: "The subscene is less a scene of a phantasmal order than a condensation in which the ghostly acquires form" (Terra Ignota 172). This third dimension, Costa Lima stresses, characterized by impasses, silences, aporias, threatens the science that rules the text. In this dissertation, I do not aim to enter this specific debate, opposing the literary and the scientific, the text and the "out-of-text," but to recast Os sertões in terms of its engagement with the archival material of Canudos. It is the archival material itself that is at the same time in and out of the narrative, woven into it but also on the verge of freeing itself from it.
ignorance. Os sertões is at once a pessimistic critique of the (not sufficiently) modern Brazilian republic and an affirmation of the belief in the need for progress. As some authors have argued, it is a prescriptive text, one that points out the necessary steps to be taken towards progress (Campos Johnson); but it is also a book that announces the imminent catastrophe of this project (Costa Lima; Antelo). I will take this tension further and argue that Os sertões should be understood in the context of a struggle to define temporality itself. What is in play is the confrontation between a linear progressive concept of history and a non-linear, disruptive, one, and the role played in them by technologies of inscription.

My hypothesis is that Conselheiro's image – which appears at the very end of the book – can open up a tension that permeates not only Da Cunha's book, but also the long-lasting struggles over and appropriations of the image and memory of Canudos. On the one hand, I retrace the positivist search for truth in an image of the past, as faithful representation – a double or perfect copy of the object that precedes it – while on the other, I expose the emergence of truth in the strongest messianic sense, that of apparition, of encountering the past or bringing it to presence, making redemption seem like an historical possibility.

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16 It is interesting to compare da Cunha's version of Canudos to that of César Zama, a doctor from Bahia who had served in the field and who wrote, in 1889, an account in which he defends the right of the canudenses – as Brazilian citizens - to oppose the Republic, thus inscribing Canudos in the political arena.

17 I am not implying here that Canudos' millenarism represents the opposite of modernity's progress. As Rachel Price has noted, based on Michael Walzer's work, ideologies of progress can be traced back to millenarian thought. Moreover, in doing so I would be reinforcing the dichotomous discourse that has represented Canudos as the opposite of modernity. What I will suggest, following Benjaminian theories of modernity, is that both temporalities traverse modernity itself, as well as its beliefs and practices of inscription.
1. In the Eye of History: Conselheiro as Celebrity.\textsuperscript{18}

And the telegraph lines wired the news of an incipient backlands war to the entire country.

(Da Cunha, \textit{Backlands} 196)

Eu também telegrafei / A minha família querida / Dizendo atravessei / O tal Canudos com vida.

(João Melchiades Ferreira da Silva qtd in José Calasans, \textit{Canudos na literatura de cordel} 40)

In a chronicle published in a Rio de Janeiro periodical \textit{A Semana}, on February 1897, the writer Machado de Assis commented on the public fuss about Canudos. Rumors about the emergence of an anti-republic rebellion guided by an eccentric messianic leader in the backlands of the province of Bahia spread throughout the country, but no one could have foreseen that Belo Monte – or Canudos, as the community became known – would fight a war against the still-fledgling Brazilian republic for an entire year, between 1896 and 1897, and would defeat the first three of the army's expeditions. The fourth expedition to Canudos – a veritable display of power, which gathered resources from the entire Brazilian army, including twenty-five line battalions, cavalry, machine guns, a Krupp field cannon and three thousand soldiers from ten Brazilian states – gained unprecedented press coverage\textsuperscript{19} and ended in the massacre of the \textit{canudenses} and the ruin of the village.

Speaking about the torrent of images and stories in the coastal urban centers portraying the distant and exotic preacher of the \textit{sertão} and his “fanatic” army, Assis' chronicle, published during the third military expedition, reflects on an experience that is proper to the rise of a “mass


\textsuperscript{19} For an overview of the press coverage during the Canudos Campaign, as the fourth expedition became known, see Walnice Galvão's \textit{No calor da hora}.
culture”: “I learned yesterday what celebrity is. I was buying newspapers [...] when I saw a common woman approach the vendor and say in a dimmed voice: - give me a paper that brings the portrait of the man who fights out there.”

Although the woman did not remember his name, the man could not be other than Antônio Conselheiro, about whom many stories “with a lot of mysterious details, much aura, and myth” had been circulating. The woman, who “probably could not read,” had heard that some periodical published the portrait of the “Messiah from the sertão” and decided to buy it. In his narrative, Assis did not specify if the printed portrait was a photographic or drawn image of Conselheiro, but as far as we know, there were no photographs of the prophet at the time.

According to Assis, "The name of Antônio Conselheiro will end up entering in the memory of this anonymous woman and it won't ever leave [...] One day she'll tell the story to her daughter and then later to her granddaughter." Circulating through telegrams, newspapers, visual representations, and rumors, later passed along as memory and oral history or inscribed in a future book, the image of Conselheiro was inseparable from the invention of Canudos as a historical event – an event that, as Assis could only suspect, would become an “indelible referent in Brazilian history” (Campos Johnson 4). Maybe in a hundred years, Assis continues, another author will write a few more valuable paragraphs about the conflict, and a remnant believer will

20 All in-text citations which have not been published in English are translated by the author. “Conheci ontem o que é celebidade. Estava comprando gazetas [...] quando vi chegar uma mulher simples e dizer ao vendedor com voz descansada:– Me dá uma folha que traz o retrato desse homem que briga lá fora.”

21 “Com muito pormenor misterioso, muita auréola, muita lenda.”

22 “O nome de Antônio Conselheiro acabará por entrar na memória desta mulher anônima, e não sairá mais [...] um dia contará a história à filha, depois à neta.”

23 This book would be written, according to Assis, by a chronicler named Coelho Neto, who was then publishing a collection of short stories called Sertão. Machado de Assis' chronicle comments on three contemporary “events”: Canudos; Coelho Neto's recently released book; and the centenary of the top hat. The book that would “sentence Canudos to history,” in the words of Adriana Campos Johnson, ended up being Euclides da Cunha's Os Sertões (1902). There were, surely, other forms of transmission of the stories of Canudos not mentioned by Machado de Assis. Canudos was present in flyers or cordel literature (see Calansans' Canudos no literatura de cordel) – popular and inexpensively printed booklets of stories-in-verse produced and sold in fairs and by street vendors – and even carnival costumes.
celebrate the centenary of the extinct “sect.” There might even be a celebration of Conselheiro's cabeleira [head of hair] “as now, according to the Jornal do Comércio, the centenary of the invention of the top hat is being celebrated in London.”

With his distinctive irony, Machado de Assis weaves together the many dimensions of the transformation of Conselheiro into a “celebrity,” and his inscription in a language of image reproduction, circulation and consumerism. Among these is the important role of the press and telegraphy at the end of the nineteenth century in shaping the idea of a simultaneous, synchronic “present,” shortening distances and connecting the remote sertão to the Rua do Ouvidor (Ouvidor Street) in downtown Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil. In the late nineteenth century it was there, among the European-style cafés and elegant shops, that the elite would go to see and to be seen, to discuss politics and other themes of the day or to spread rumors about the latest private dramas.

Machado de Assis perceived what twentieth-century scholars would later conceptualize as the role of technologies of communication in changing our perception of time and space, through the creation of the idea of a present as “novelty” (Koselleck) or “event” shared among people who, although having nothing to do with each other, imagine themselves as partaking in the same reality (Anderson). Besides the role of technologies of communication in forging “national imaginaries” (Anderson), Assis also refers to the increasing importance of a

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24 “Como agora, pelo que diz o Jornal do Comércio, comemoraram em Londres o centenário da invenção do chapéu alto.”

25 Rua do Ouvidor – which literally means “street of the hearer” – appears in Machado's novels and chronicles as the symbol par excellence of rumor. In the novel Esaú e Jacob, for example, it is on Rua do Ouvidor that the character Ayres learns about the “Revolution.” For a more detailed account of the city of Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the century, see Chalhoub's Trabalho bar e botequim; Carvalho's Os bestializados: o Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi; and Jeffrey Needell's A Tropical Belle Epoque.

26 In The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918, cultural historian Stephen Kern similarly claims that a new way of experiencing and conceptualizing time and space emerged in Europe and in America from 1880 to the end of World War I, and that this change is best understood in terms of the technological innovations in transportation and communication that occurred during this period.
transnational economic system in shrinking distances and shaping the imaginary of an interconnected world. He suggests that through the narrow streets of downtown Rio, the “echoes” of Canudos reached London and New York, where “the name Antônio Conselheiro,” this “little man” from the poor Brazilian backlands, “caused our stock prices to decline.”27 In the same nineteenth century that had witnessed the consolidation of a global capitalism (Sevcenko), “Canudos” – like the chapéu alto [top hat], which, as Assis reminds us, could also have been called canudo (which means, literally, a long cylinder, such as a straw or pipe) – was being invented and consumed by a fin-de-siècle urban public avid for novelties.28

Thinking of Conselheiro's cabeleira, one could adopt Ernst Jünger's words, and say that, in the modern technological age, the advent of the event was being “subordinated to its broadcast” and thereby turned “to a great degree into an object” (On Pain 40). Even though there were probably no photographs of Conselheiro yet (photographers, as well as reporters, arrived in the settlement a few months after the publication of Assis' chronicle, along with the fourth military expedition), Assis alludes to media culture in order to highlight the objectification and commodification of the prophet's image. What Machado de Assis seems to have understood was that “Canudos” as a national event did not exist outside its representation, circulation and consumption.

I will talk more about the specificity of the photographic image in the next section. For now, I would like to remark that Assis's comparison of Conselheiro's hair and the top hat, as if one had stumbled upon them together in a fin-de-siècle shop window, is not specious. Placed side by side, they constitute what the urban population – the minority of literate newspaper

27 “Onde o nome de Antônio Conselheiro fez baixar os nossos fundos.”
28 For studies of the last decades of the nineteenth century in Brazil in relation to the growth of a new bourgeoisie, financial capital, and the enthusiasm about new technologies and consumption of international products see Costa and Schwarcz; and Sevcenko.
readers, but also those who shared the news through visual and oral communication, such as Assis' anonymous woman – could recognize as being “the present,” a world detached from its context, at the same time both distant and available to the public. Commenting on a different but analogous type of arrangement – the arrangement of images in the pages of illustrated magazines – Siegfried Kracauer suggests that “the contiguity of these images systematically excludes their contextual framework available to consciousness” (Kracauer, “Photography” 432).

The decontextualization of Conselheiro’s image in Machado de Assis's somewhat incongruous arrangement is purposefully meaningful. The montage evidences the contradictions that lie in modernity itself, or, more specifically, in the adoption, by a lettered elite, of liberal ideals and discourses in the context of a society whose structure of privileges was marked by a recently abolished system of slavery (1888), a constant theme in Machado de Assis's work.29 The contradictions proper to this “peripheral capitalism” (Schwarz) – which is not to say that the “central” capitalism does not have its own contradictions – manifest themselves in Machado's chronicle in two dimensions: the elite's desire to adhere to liberal and bourgeois ideals while simultaneously rejecting everything that represented the colonial era, and its apparently contradictory aristocratic urge towards distinction through fashion. The top hat – a sign of both bourgeois consumerism and of Europeanized aristocratic distinction – seems to express one side of this “contradiction.” As Jeffrey D. Needell has argued, aristocratic values, anxiety about social status, and an expanding urban market combined to explain the centrality of fashion in bourgeois culture (156-171). Knowing how to choose a hat was, as others of Machado de Assis' texts

29 The most famous formulation of such argument is Roberto Schwarz's Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo. The author argues that, working in the tension between cosmopolitan and a regional space, Machado de Assis constantly stresses the contradiction of the adoption by a Brazilian elite of liberal discourses in the context of a non-liberal social structure of power. One can also add, following Foucaultian scholars such as Ann Stoler, that modernity was not incompatible with slavery, but that slavery plantation systems were the condition of possibility of modernity's disciplinary system.
show, a question of distinguishing oneself not only from the poor, but also from a tropical petit bourgeois who had no “good taste,” thereby coming closer to a European aristocratic model.

Conselheiro's cabeleira, in turn, becomes an object of curiosity for an opposite, though complementary, reason. It is one of the marks of what is seen as Brazil's undesirable “belatedness” in relation to the European modern world. Images of this belatedness, such as popular (and particularly afro-Brazilian) religiosity, music and festivities often appeared in the pages of newspapers, accompanied by emphatic words of reproach. About a religious pilgrimage in downtown Rio, for example, Olavo Bilac wrote: “the savage times were returning, as a spirit from another world coming to disturb and bring shame to civilization” (qtd. in Costa and Schwarcz 93). Progress and belatedness were also, in positivist scientific theories as well as in popular imaginary at the time, related to race. In 1901, for example, the presence of indigenous groups in the carnival parades was prohibited, for, as Fon-Fon magazine ironically commented, “the exhibition of that tribe through the city's modern streets would speak against our proclaimed civilization” (qtd. in Costa and Schwarcz 92).

In the press, Conselheiro and the rural, miserable, mixed-raced, religious people of the backlands appeared as one of these ghosts of the past, bearing witness to the newly born republic's failure to be truly modern. But unlike the urban manifestations of “savagery,” to use Bilac's words, Canudos also posed the problem of how to control, modernize and integrate the still largely “unknown” and “inhospitable” backlands in the project of a nation that was being

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30 See, for example, Machado de Assis’s “Capítulo dos chapéus.”
31 “Era a idade selvagem que voltava, como uma alma do outro mundo vindo perturbar e envergonhar a vida da idade civilizada.”
33 “A exibição daquela tribo pelas modernas ruas da nossa cidade deporia contra a nossa proclamada civilização.”
invented. This territorial dimension will be particularly important in our reading of Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*.

The representations of Conselheiro in the press can be traced prior to his establishment in the region of Canudos, when the preacher and his followers wandered through the *sertão*. The sporadic appearance of pilgrims and religious preachers was not uncommon in the area, as Machado de Assis himself recognizes in one of his chronicles. But Conselheiro ended up becoming more than just one more of these “ghostly appearances” of the past. Settling in the backlands of Bahia, he founded a large and fully functional community that became the second largest city of Bahia. Canudos, as other movements and communities have done and continue to do (one could cite the *Quilombos*, communities founded by fugitive and former slaves and their descendants), invented an alternative form of political and social organization. In doing so, Canudos not only affected the local labor economy, as landowners complained that workers were leaving their farms to follow the prophet, but resisted and confronted the powers that tried to exterminate it for a whole year. The *canudenses* resisted, defending their right to occupy the space, and in this resistance they also became central to the process of the "conversion of the military campaign into the revolutionary crusade for the consolidation of the regime" (Ventura, "A Nossa Vendéia" 114).

It is not surprising then, that, counter to the view of Canudos as the irruption of religious barbarism in an enlightened and modern age, the preacher emerged in some accounts as an active

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34 As Robert Levine (*Vale of Tears*) has shown, the attack on Canudos was ultimately the consequence of a larger, conflictive process of state intervention into the rural interior, which clashed with the established power of local landlords even as it reinforced traditional patterns of coerced labor and herd vote.
35 His first appearances in the press date from 1874.
36 See Javier Uriarte (“Through an enemy land”) for a discussion of nomadism and immobility, and the struggle of the people of Canudos to freely occupy the space.
negation of the capitalist bourgeois society which was fiercely defended in the urban press\textsuperscript{37} and which was now turning him into a commodity. In one of the many interpretations of Canudos that contributed to fueling the crusade against the community, Conselheiro and his followers were described as part of a “monarchic” or “regressive” movement. This is the case in Euclides da Cunha's first article on the conflict, entitled “A nossa Vendéia.” The metaphor of the \textit{Vendeé} – which da Cunha himself would abandon in \textit{Os sertões}, where he questions the hypothesis that the \textit{canudenses}, as atavist primitives, had any clear political project – incorporates Canudos into the history of the French Revolution, as relived in the imagination of the Brazilian Republicans of the time. Some rumors went as far as declaring that Canudos was financed by foreign countries interested in destabilizing Brazil's new regime.

The community was also described as anti-capitalistic, with much discussion of how Conselheiro prohibited the use of Republican money in the community. An account of a pastoral mission sent to Canudos in May 1895 to bring Conselheiro and his people under church control\textsuperscript{38} – the only extensive written eyewitness account of the village before the military expeditions – suggested that private property did not exist in Canudos: " Whoever had goods disposed of them and handed over the product to the good Conselheiro, reserving for themselves only twenty percent" (qtd. in Campos Johnson 1429). A local landowner accused Canudos of being a threat to private property, ending a letter by exclaiming that Conselheiro's doctrine was communism (qtd. in Campos Johnson 876).

The portrayal of Conselheiro as a negation of the modern-bourgeois state was also thematized by Machado de Assis in the chronicle entitled “Canção de Piratas” [Pirate's song].

\textsuperscript{37} For more details on the defense of cosmopolitan bourgeois ideals and life style in the press see Nicolau Sevcenko's \textit{Literatura como Missão}.
\textsuperscript{38} The mission stayed there for one week and, having failed to exert any influence over the inhabitants, was then suspended.
This was the first of the four chronicles in which the writer mentions the prophet. It was published in 1894, one year after the foundation of the community of Belo Monte and before the so-called “War of Canudos.” Assis compares the preacher and his followers – not without some irony – to the pirates described by the poets of 1830, who criticized a life regimented by calendars, watches, and taxes, and who “shook their sandals at the gates of civilization, and left in search of free life.” The community – this imagined Canudos – could inspire the “poets of 1894” in their critique of disciplinary control and free them from the “hard prose of the end of the [nineteenth] century.” In another chronicle, published in January 1987, after the army's second expedition to Canudos, during which, although hundreds of conselheiristas were killed, the soldiers were surprised by the unexpected resistance and force of the sertanejos and decided to retreat, Assis wrote protesting the persecution of Conselheiro, a man “who founded a sect of which no one knows the name or the doctrine.”

Despite being the object of relentless attention – or, rather, because of this – Conselheiro remained unknown. Assis counsels the reader to imagine what strong and extraordinary links united the conselheiristas to their leader, and what powerful doctrine he preached. After all, Assis writes, despite the attention of the media, Conselheiro's discourse remained unknown.

This is important, as it poses the questions of what kind of knowledge of the sect was being produced, what voices had to be silenced in this production, and who was given the right to speak. As more recent works on Canudos have shown (Calasans, *Canudos na literatura de*

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39 “Fundou uma seita a que se não sabe o nome nem a doutrina.”
40 In his effort to write the definitive book on Canudos, Euclides da Cunha used oral sources, popular poems and writings found in the ruins of Canudos in order to interpret the movement. He criticized the manuscripts, highlighting their “barbarous orthography” and “irregular and ugly writing” that showed the “tortured reasoning” of the sertanejos. As the historian Roberto Ventura (“Canudos como cidade iletrada”) has already shown, Da Cunha did not, however, have access to Conselheiro's own manuscripts. More recent works (directly in the vein of “subaltern studies” or not) have made an effort to tell the story of Canudos through alternative sources including as these manuscripts, oral history, and poems (Calasans; Ventura; Campos Jonhson).
cordel), some voices, ignored by the “lettered city” (Rama), have survived and circulated – especially in more rural areas – through oral history and popular poems. From the capital of the republic, Machado de Assis declared that the public could only imagine what wonderful promises the preacher was making. Hence, the “romantic pirates” were no more detached from the reality of Canudos then the “fanatic criminals” who now appeared in the news. Both were sides of the same coin, the transformation of Canudos into an extraordinary event.41

In Assis's February 1897 chronicle, the effort to picture Conselheiro's own imagination fades away, and the prophet appears as a caricature of himself, a celebrity being consumed by the same system that he refused. It is in the context of the reproduction and circulation of images of the exotic prophet Antônio Conselheiro and his followers that Machado de Assis seems to have grasped both the invention of Canudos as a historical event and, in the same gesture, the effacement of the experience of Canudos. There was no possible knowledge of Canudos that was not already a knowledge of the spectacular historical event of the birth and (future) death of this backwards “fanatic” and “fantastic” preacher.

Significantly, Machado de Assis refers, in the same February 1897 chronicle, to both the event's actuality and its memory. Assis seems to have realized that, in the same moment when Canudos was being born as an image for the consumption of the urban public, as soon as it was turned into an image it was dying, it had to die. The extraordinary birth and unavoidable death of Canudos can also be found in Euclides da Cunha's writings, from the reports – in which he affirms that “the Republic will emerge triumphant from this final test” (“A nossa Vendéia”)42 –

41 This is why one of the ways in which revisionist historiography after the 1960s has attempted to rewrite the historical archive of Canudos is to challenge the image of Canudos – whether in a positive or negative sense – as “extraordinary,” an exceptional space and time that broke or interrupted a normal, “everyday” time. For a debate about this shift see Dain Borges and Adriana Campos Johnson.
42 “A República sairá triunfante desta última prova.”
to *Os sertões*, which, although revising the author's judgements regarding the war and condemning the massacre committed by the army, affirmed that “we are condemned to civilization, either we progress or we disappear” (62).

In this sense, Machado de Assis's text is simultaneously comical and somber. It is about the making of a celebrity and of a corpse. The comical effect is mainly the result of the de-contextualization of Conselheiro, or of Conselheiro's head of hair and its re-contextualization in the sphere of fashion. In a passage in which he compares fashion and photography, Kracauer suggests that images of the past are always comical, like a grandmother's clothes in a photograph. According to Kracauer, as well, fashion accessories (like photographs) are also frightening, for they refer to what was once alive and, thus, to its death. The comical effect of Conselheiro's *cabeleira* also takes on a somber dimension at the end of Machado's chronicle, when he reminds the reader that whether one chooses *chapéu alto* or *baixo* [low], what is important is to preserve one's head.

Machado's reference to the head might refer to the reputation of the leader of the third military expedition to Canudos, Colonel Moreira Cesar, popularly known as “cutter-of-necks” (*corta-cabeças*). Although the infamous Colonel Moreira César died in the field a few days after the publication of Assis's chronicle, leading to another defeat of the republican army, the outcome of the *Campanha de Canudos* would actualize the expectations suggested by Moreira Cesar's sobriquet. As we can read in post-conflict accounts (Zama, Benício, da Cunha), the army adopted the practice of beheading the *conselheiristas* captured during combat. The most famous beheading was that of Conselheiro himself. In contrast with the other *conselheiristas*, however, Conselheiro was already dead when the militaries found his body. They photographed it and then decided to cut off its head – and with it those “features” which Machado de Assis's anonymous
woman wanted to see. The skull was taken to Salvador, the capital of the province of Bahia, where the famous doctor Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, an enthusiastic publicist for Lombroso's criminal anthropology, would measure and analyze it in the search for signs of madness and degeneration. Despite the disappointing findings of the medical evaluation, Conselheiro's skull was preserved as a relic in the Escola Bahiana de Medicina (Medical School of Bahia).

We will come back to this scene later, for it is by beginning from this dual gesture of the Brazilian army – photographing and beheading, also detaching and preserving – that I will explore the afterlife of the photographs of Canudos, their publication in Os sertões, and their relationship to knowledge and history. Publishing five years after the end of the conflict, Euclides da Cunha wrote in order to immobilize the memory of Canudos, to give it a meaning and put it to rest. That this meaning necessitated a broader critique of the Republic and an understanding of the nation's specificities has been widely discussed. I would like to highlight the fact that, in its mobilization of the archives of Canudos, Os sertões is written against their multiplication, their wildness, by fixing a kind of last image of the sect, which, as Machado had already suggested, would bring to light the features of Conselheiro. This image would be both the last image, the final one, and a lasting image, unchangeable and therefore dead. For now, it suffices to say that what is in play in Euclides da Cunha's attempt to fix the memory of Canudos, and his use of photography in Os sertões, is a dialectic of fixity and mobility.

43 Os sertões has been considered foundational of the Brazilian tradition of the national essay (essays that aim at interpreting the meaning and formation of a supposed national identity), a genre represented in Brazilian 20th century letters by authors such as Gilberto Freyre and Sergio Buarque de Holanda. In the words of Regina Abreu, the large-scale diffusion of Os sertões was responsible for inaugurating the genre of “Brazilian studies.” Through a Bourdieu-inspired analysis, Abreu shows the importance of the social and political conditions of the Vargas Regime in the thirties – when Da Cunha became a "model writer" for the regime – in the consolidation of Os sertões as a national classic.
2. Photographic Contact, Truth and History

The analogy between Kracauer and Machado de Assis might sound anachronistic. Neither the photographically illustrated magazines nor the compact light-weight photographic cameras, such as the German Leica (1925) that made possible the “snapshot” and, with it, the modern photographic experience Kracauer described in the 1920s, existed at the end of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it is possible, by relying on the technological and material history of photography, to trace the emergence of the phenomenon of mass circulation of images of “present events” to the 1870s, with the adoption of dry plates, which were about 60 times more sensitive than Collodion plates or wet-plate photographs, allowing for a significant reduction in exposure times and increased mobility for the photographer. With this new technology the plate could be prepared in advance and developed long after exposure, thereby eliminating the need for a portable darkroom. It was also at the end of the 1880s that a great variety of smaller hand-held cameras, such as George Eastman's Kodak (1888) became available.45

As for the publication and circulation of photographs, technological advances in photomechanical reproduction – which allowed a printing plate to be produced without the intervention of an artist or copyist – consolidated the connection between newsprint and photographic images. In the United States and some places in Europe, for example, the halftone process, which allowed images to be printed at the same time as type, contributed to the regular use of photographs in magazines starting in the 1880s. The illustrated press in Brazil, however, did not change with the same rhythm, and daily periodicalsa were almost exclusively text up until

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44 The phenomenon of illustrated magazines began in Germany in the 1920s. In the beginning of 1930s there were seventy illustrated magazines and twenty photographic companies in Berlin alone (Ledo 84).
45 For more details see Giselle Freund's *Photography and Society*. 
the end of the 19th century.\textsuperscript{46} This does not mean that the imaginary and material relations between photography and “current events” were completely inexistent. Starting in the 1860s, illustrated magazines, such as \textit{Semana Illustrada}, occasionally published, along with drawings and caricatures, lithographies (and less frequently woodcuts) based on photographs of current events (Ferreira de Andrade 6-10).\textsuperscript{47}

Among the first lithographs based on photographs to appear in Brazilian illustrated magazines were images of the War of the Triple Alliance – which involved Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay – which where printed in 1865 in \textit{A Semana Ilustrada}, edited by Henrique Fleiuss, a supporter of Emperor D. Pedro II. Another “event” which merited lithographic illustrations based on photographs was the Ceará drought in 1878. The magazine \textit{O Besouro} published an illustration showing a human skeleton holding two \textit{carte de visites} – the 2 1/2-by-4-inch portraits that dominated commercial photography in the 1860s\textsuperscript{48} – portraying starving children (see fig. 2). It is interesting to note that the \textit{carte de visites}, a format that allowed the manufacturing of multiple images in a cheaper and smaller format, increasing the circulation of photographs, were themselves portrayed in the magazine as material objects held in death’s hand. At the same time, the published photographs were also presented as the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{46} See Ferreira de Andrade for some exceptions, which included woodcut or lithographic portraits printed in loose pages, separate from the text itself.

\textsuperscript{47} Although there were some attempts to implement the use of woodcut in the press – which, unlike lithography, had the advantage of being compatible with typography – they were soon abandoned due to the lack of expertise in producing woodcuts, which had to be imported from Europe. Photo-mechanical prints appeared for the first time at the end of the 1890s, used sporadically, but \textit{A Revista da Semana – fotografias, vistas instantâneas, desenhos e caricaturas}, founded in 1900, was the first illustrated magazine to regularly use the halftone process (Andrade 240). For a detailed history of the nineteenth century antecedents of photojournalism in Brazil see Joaquim Marçal Ferreira de Andrade’s “História da fotorreportagem no Brasil : a fotografia na imprensa do Rio de Janeiro de 1839 a 1900.”

\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{carte de visite}, a format patented by the Frenchman André Adolphe Eugène Disdéri in 1855, played an important role in the democratization and greater circulation of photographs. The use of a four-lensed camera made it possible to produce eight negatives on one full-sized plate, which were later mounted on cards measuring about 4 by 3 inches and circulated. These cards were inexpensive relative to other forms of portraiture and became a booming business world-wide. According to Maurício Lissovsky, around 90% of the photographs made in Brazil in the nineteenth-century were portraits and most of them in the \textit{carte de visite} format.
\end{footnotesize}
representation of “scenes and aspects from Ceará.” The subtitle that accompanied the images emphasized the faithfulness of the lithographic copy, for the faithfulness of the photograph did not need reassurance: “faithful copies of the photographs sent by our friend and colleague José do Patrocínio.” It was a common practice to announce when a lithographic image was based on a photograph – i.e. copied manually to a block of porous limestone – so that the viewer knew that the image he was seeing had the stamp and authority of photographic contact.

One could argue, following Walter Benjamin, that the era of illustrated magazines “lay hidden” (Benjamin, “Work of Art”, 253) in these earlier technologies. Writing in the 1930s on themes similar to those Kracauer analyzed in his “Photography” essay – how processes of technological reproduction came to affect, in an unprecedented way, our relation to the world – Benjamin considered the invention of new material technological devices to be, rather than part of a linear progress (or decadence), a model by which to think a singular form of cognition that

49 “Páginas tristes – Scenas e aspectos do Ceará”; “cópias fidelíssimas das fotografias que nos foram remetidas pelo nosso amigo e colega José do Patrocínio”

50 In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Brazilian public was quite familiar with photographic technology, which was often used in exploratory expeditions, making visible distant lands, exotic landscapes and racialized bodies. It is often argued that Brazil had a very early relationship with photography, starting before the official announcement of its invention by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre in 1839 (Schwarcz and Kossoy; Kossoy, Hercule Florence; Brizuela). Brazil had its own inventor of photographic technology, the French-Brazilian Antoine Hercule Florence, who, in 1833, made the first experiments with photochemical images in the Americas in Campinas, in the interior of São Paulo. Florence was also the first one to coin the name *photographie* to refer to the results of his experiments. Equally highlighted by the historians of Brazilian photography was the fact that the Emperor D. Pedro II was a great enthusiast of the medium, becoming a photographer and collector of photographs himself. But maybe most remarkable, as historian Lilia Schwarcz (As barbas do Imperador 330) has shown, was the fact that D. Pedro II, who saw himself as a modern monarch with a vocation for the sciences, chose to be represented mainly through the modern photographic apparatus, while other monarchs preferred oil paintings. Finally, the Emperor also played an important role in encouraging the work of foreign photographers in Brazil. The *Comissão Geográfica e Geológica do Império*, for example, included one of the most famous photographers of Brazil’s nineteenth-century, Mac Ferrez. Dozens of other itinerant photographers travelled the country, participating in expeditions such as that organized by the naturalist Louiz Agassis. For more detailed information on photography during the nineteenth century and, more specifically, during the Empire, see O século XIX na fotografia brasileira, by Rubens Fernandes Junior and Pedro Corrêa do Lago; “O guia prático das fotografias sem pressa”, in which Mauricio Lissovsky discusses the carte-de-visite format and the formation of a bourgeois imaginary; Sandra Koutsoukos' Negros no estúdio do fotógrafo; and Natalia Brizuela's discussion of landscape and photography during the Brazilian Empire in Fotografia e Império.
interrupts the linearity of history itself. In his widely discussed essay on the “Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility,” commonly interpreted as a text about the loss of a world of “tradition,” “uniqueness” and “originality” – the “aura” of the work of art – through the advent of technologies of reproduction, Benjamin affirms that “in principle, a work of art has always been reproducible,” and that technologies of reproduction have “appeared intermittently in history, at widely spaced intervals” (252). In his reading of the “Work of Art” essay, Eduardo Cadava (Words of Light) suggests that if Benjamin sees anything new in the modern technologies of reproduction, such as photography and cinema, their novelty relies on the “ever increasing intensity” (“Work of Art” 252) and “acceleration” of this process. Seizing an image with the instantaneity of a flash, suggests Cadava, photography corresponds to a form of representation that brings together production and reproduction, subverting the usual temporal order of representation in which one first has an object and then afterwards its representation. This blurs the borders that had separated the concept of the original from its copy.

The acceleration brought about by the photographic technology is also related, according to Benjamin, to the modern experience of shock, and the camera's capacity to make visible what is not seen or consciously experienced by the subject (“Little History” 512) – what he calls the “optical unconscious” of photography. Through the concept of the optical unconscious, Benjamin challenges the linearity of history in at least two ways. First, he conceives photography, as scholars such as Eduardo Cadava, Ulrich Baer and Mauricio Lissovsky have shown, as a figure for history composed not of a sequence of past facts, but “posthumous shocks” that connect present and past through the appearance of what had never been consciously experienced: “the inconspicuous spot where in the immediacy of that long-forgotten moment the future nests so eloquently that we, looking back, may rediscover it” (“Little History” 510).
Second, he writes an anachronistic history of photography in which photography itself is placed before its invention. This second aspect is better explored in the third chapter of this dissertation, which follows anthropologists such as Alfred Gell, Michael Taussig, and Christopher Pinney who have emphasized that photography is not, for Benjamin, as modern as historians have argued. In its capacity to make visible the invisible, and to reveal “image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things—meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams,” photography makes “the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable” (“Little History” 512).

Although not marked by the “flood of photos” (Kracauer, “Photography” 432) witnessed and theorized by German authors such as Walter Benjamin, Siegfried Kracauer and Ernst Jünger in the 1920s and 1930s, in his February 1897 chronicle Machado de Assis inscribes the image of Canudos and Antônio Conselheiro in the language of reproduction, circulation and consumerism. Assis wrote before any reporter or photographer had gone to Canudos – news arrived through telegrams sent by members of the army, or by reporters, who, as Assis remarked, were based in the capital of Bahia (A Semana, January 31, 1897). Like news articles, drawn portraits reproduced in the press at the time were based on a mix of oral testimony, rumors, and collective imaginary, frequently relating Conselheiro to religious and pre-modern figures (see figs. 3 & 4). However varied the drawings were, Conselheiro was always pictured “with hair to his shoulders, a long matted beard hiding an emaciated face [...] wearing a blue homespun robe and leaning on the classic staff that supports the pilgrim’s halting steps” (Da Cunha, Backlands 134).

As much as Conselheiro and the conselheiristas occupied the news and the imagination

51 Research on periodicals of the time, however, reveals that most of the actual lithographies published recall images of non-modern figures related to religion and madness, such as colonial friars and el Quijote.
of the urban public, they also remained, according to Assis, “out of reach,” still “too far” away. No one knew the prophet's doctrine, or what the powerful words were that kept his followers so faithful to him. Conselheiro's invisibility and his over-visibility, that is, his transformation into a media phenomenon, seem to be inextricably related. The flood of representations of Conselheiro, in turn, is related to another desire – of which Machado de Assis is even more critical – namely, the desire to capture one definitive truth about “Canudos.”

In the same January 1987 chronicle in which Machado de Assis protests against the persecution of Conselheiro, he suggests that a “patient and clever reporter, part photographer and part illustrator” should go to Canudos “to bring back the features of the Conselheiro […] and thus collect the truth about the sect.” Assis is mocking the desire of the urban public – or, in his words, of “industrial and bourgeois society” – to possess (and consume) the truth of Conselheiro's through a “faithful” reproduction of his facial traits. This is desire marked by the popularization of photography in nineteenth-century anthropological criminology and psychiatry, of which Machado de Assis was a fierce critic. After all, one of the hypotheses used at the time to explain the phenomenon of Canudos, defended by the previously mentioned doctor Nina Rodrigues, associated race and phenotype to religious atavism and to innate tendencies to commit crimes (Levine, *Vale of Tears*; Schwarcz, *Spectacle of Races*).

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52 Defining this truth was also a question of politics. During the fourth expedition some news about the mismanagement of supplies and about excessive and systematic brutality by the army was starting to spread through the press, and it became important to gather public opinion in favor of the army. The arrival of reporters in the field was supervised by the army, which controlled the telegraph lines and frequently censored telegrams sent by journalists to the newspapers. In a letter, the reporter Flavila Nunes suggested that all the information sent out was carefully revised by the army: “The telegraph remains blocked. It is necessary not to tell the truth” (“No calor da hora” 114). Thus, only reporters who were sympathetic to the decisions of the army were allowed to stay. Among these was Euclides da Cunha. In contrast to the book he would later write, his reports for the *Estado de São Paulo* contain almost no serious critique of the army and the destruction of Canudos.

53 See, for example, the novella *O Alienista*, in which Machado de Assis tells the story of a renowned doctor who searches for a scientific way to separate lunatics from the sane. Once he realizes he had put his whole town in the asylum, the doctor concludes that he himself must be the abnormal one, liberates all the “lunatics” and locks himself up.
Besides his discrediting of scientific positivism, it is not likely that Assis himself believed that a photograph would fix a truth of Conselheiro, or dispel the ghosts and fantasies of Canudos. In an article in which I trace the appearances of references to photography in Assis' work (Sá-Carvalho, *Photography and Fantasmagoria*), I find that the photographic image never corresponds to Assis' characters expectations that it will bring back the truth of the past. Instead, as happens to the jealous protagonist in the novel *Dom Casmurro*, the photograph only confirms what the characters feared about its subject – here, the infidelity of the protagonist's wife – and so ultimately confirms nothing. Given Machado de Assis' earlier references to photography, as well as his critique of positivism and the frequent use of irony in his writing, it is more likely that the passage in his chronicle refers to the desire of “industrial and bourgeois society” for photography to take hold of Conselheiro through a mix scientific objectivity and public entertainment.

“To bring back the features of the Conselheiro”: what Assis refers to here is not just any kind of representation, but the production of a “resemblance through contact” (in the double sense of contact as encounter and inscription), containing both the likeness of the portrait and the magic or technical efficacy of the trace, which would reveal the true aspects of Canudos. Machado de Assis does not say the reporter-illustrator-photographer will picture, but that he will “collect” and “bring back” the features of the prophet, as if one could separate the fantastic prophet from the *sertões*, and bring him face to face with the urban spectators. When *The New*...
York Times reported on October 20, 1862 that photographer Matthew Brady had brought bodies from the American Civil War “and laid them in our dooryards and along the streets,” it stressed this double fascination (and horror) for photography as semblance and vestige: “It seems somewhat singular that the same sun that looked down on the faces of the slain, blistering them, blotting out from the bodies all semblance to humanity, and hastening corruption, should have thus caught their features upon canvas, and given them perpetuity for ever.” It is exactly in this double gesture of contact and separation that Georges Didi-Huberman (La Resssemblance) identifies the dialectical character of the image produced through contact: while always detached from its referent, it at the same time carries an indelible connection to it.

Contact and resemblance are both important in the search for the truth of Canudos. The idea of an image produced through the supposedly direct imprinting of light on paper, the same light that emanated from the object that was in front of the camera and which, for that reason, maintained its exact form, had an important impact on discourses of truth in the nineteenth century, from history and anthropology to physiognomy, criminology and psychiatry – all of which are related to the belief that the features of Antônio Conselheiro could reveal the meaning of the rebellious community.56

56 It has often been remarked that in the nineteenth century the belief in photography's capacity to testify to a presence, to be a true event in itself – the event of the inscription of the light that emanated from the forms in front of the camera, which later, drawing on Peirce's theory of the sign, was called the “indexical” characteristics of the image – was combined with the sense that it created perfect doubles of reality. In 1901, a leading Brazilian journalist and writer, Olavo Bilac, predicted that his profession was doomed because the photograph would soon replace the description in writing of any recent occurrence (qtd in Burke). Photography's indexicality, however, did not do much throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century – as well as, although this is not our concern here, throughout most of the later twentieth century – to turn photography into an object for the historian. As different scholars have noticed (About and Chéroux; Burke; Schwarcz and Kossoy), very few attempts at studying history through photographs were made until the last decades of the twentieth century. In “L'histoire par la photographie,” About and Chéroux suggest that if “photography resists so much the historian, it is exactly because of the fascination with the referent that it provokes.” That is why, according to them, the more prolific encounter between photography and history occurred when photography appeared as a theoretical model to think a non-positivist history, identified in Kracauer's 1927 essay “Photography.” The thirties also gave birth to the Annales School and its conception of history, which refuted the idea of an objective history that aims to
But resemblance and contact also have important temporal implications. If, as Benjamin and Kracauer have suggested, the reproduction and circulation of images has contributed to a fading away of the original, this has occurred through a certain survival of the origin, and, to use Benjamin's vocabulary, of the “aura.” In Kracauer's text “Photography,” images of the past haunt the present like ghosts because they have a connection to a past context, the spatial continuum photographed by the camera. As for Benjamin, he speaks of the fading away of the “aura” – of the uniqueness and originality of works of art - but not of its disappearance. As Didi-Huberman has suggested, through his reading of Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (which carries the “origin” in its title), the “origin” in Benjamin fades away as source, but remains in another sense. Origin is “that which emerges from the process of becoming and disappearance [...] a whirlpool in the river of becoming [that] pulls the emerging matter into its own rhythm” (qtd in Didi-Huberman *The Supposition of the Aura* 4). Here, decline and origin, appearance and disappearance, are part of the same system – and have always been so, as I argued before when I emphasized that the work of art has always been reproducible. Origin is a kind of “crisis of time” (Didi-Huberman, *La Ressemblance* 17) that brings together destruction and survival, present and past.

represent the chronology of events. This “New History” defended a subjective and discontinuous approach to history, and some of the more recent representatives of this reform of the discipline, such as Pierre Nora, evoke photography to describe their own mode of seeing history. The reformed discipline also aimed at including a range of non-textual materials as historical documents. Still, these types of sources were little used in comparison with written documents. In the last decades more attempts to use photography in historiography have been made, although they are still timid in comparison with the use of textual documents. In the context of the United States, one can recall Alan Trachtenberg's classic “American Photographs,” in which the author does not attempt to read photographs as illustrations of the past, but to read the past through the point-of-view of the photograph itself, the reality it enacts and the interpretation it allows viewers to make of its subject. In the context of Latin America, Robert Levine's *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* is both a book of history through photographs, which identifies the main “themes” present in Latin American photographic iconography, and a manual on how to read Latin American photographs historically, exposing the common challenges faced by historians. A more recent experiment made by historian Lilia Schwarz and historian and photographer Boris Kossoy, *Um outro olhar*, which unlike the others has more images than text, tells the history of Brazil – its main photographed events, characters and costumes – through photographs.
It is in this sense that I will suggest that the portrait of Antônio Conselheiro carries in itself both the death of the prophet, the overcoming and the effacement of Canudos, and, at the same time, the survival of Canudos, as the risk of catastrophe in the heart of modernity brought about by the imminence of the interruption of the linearity of time.

3. Flavio de Barros, Fotógrafo Expedicionário

Before discussing the inclusion of Flavio de Barros' photographs in *Os sertões*, we should look more closely into the photographer's voyage to Canudos, the nature of his mission there and the ways this has affected the usual interpretations of his images. We will also briefly review his albums, including photographs not used by Da Cunha. These albums have played an important role in the memorialization of Canudos. In 2014, while I was carrying out research at the *Museu da República*, where the two albums are kept, the museum had an exhibition of de Barros' 69 photographs of the conflict. Associating the fight of the *canudenses* with other struggles, such as that of Rio de Janeiro's *favela* dwellers against the constant threat of eviction, the museum provided a didactic example of how the trajectory of these photographs has gone beyond the aims of those involved in their making. The original purpose of these images was to register the victory of the Republic after three failed military expeditions, and to attest to the legitimacy of the military venture.

Barros was not the only photographer in Canudos. According to evidence from Euclides

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57 The photographs of Canudos at the Museu da República are divided into two albums of images made by Barros, one containing 15 and the other 54 photos, plus three platinum prints of Canudos whose authorship is contested (they might have been taken by Juan Gutierrez’s, the photographer who died in the battlefield), which show the army’s base of operations at Monte Santo. Other collections – where one can find copies of the same images – can be found at the Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, and the Casa de Cultura Euclides da Cunha de São José do Rio Pardo (SP).
da Cunha's field notes and from newspapers of the time, the writer had taken a camera to the field. His photographs, however, were never found. Besides da Cunha and Barros, Canudos had another (official) photographer, Juan Gutierrez, a military and professional photographer who owned a photographic studio in Rio de Janeiro called Companhia Photographica Brazileira. Gutierrez, who had previously documented the Revolta Armada in Rio de Janeiro (1893-1894), the first photographed armed conflict in Brazilian territory, died on the Canudos battlefield on June 28 (Marçal Ferreira de Andrade 256-257), two months before Flavio de Barros arrived. In the beginning of 1898, when Flavio de Barros' exhibition was announced, João Gutierrez's name appeared in the news for a different reason. The Companhia Photographica Brazileira had been destroyed by a fire. It is likely that almost all of his Canudos photographs were destroyed in the incident.

Flavio de Barros was not, like Juan Gutierrez, a military man, but he was appointed "fotógrafo expedicionário" by the military command, arriving at the scene just days before the final attack on October 1, 1897, together with a force of five thousand soldiers and the Brazilian minister of war. Most of Barros' photographs portray routine military scenes, group portraits of the different battalions (which make up by far the largest number of prints) and a few portraits of officers, in accordance with the conventional representation of war as a collective and hierarchical enterprise.

It is not surprising that photography would be chosen as a means of constructing an official memory of the Republican operation, given the allegedly modern and authoritative character of the medium. At the beginning of September 1897, an article in the newspaper A Notícia announced that among the new weaponry, such as the “Canet” – a type of cannon developed by the French engineer Gustave Canet (1846-1913), frequently mentioned in reports
at the time, and even in advertisements\textsuperscript{58} – and the “illustrious soldiers” arriving at Monte Santo, the army's base of operations, there was also a photographer, who had traveled with the “aim to acquire portraits of all members of all the battalions as well as multiple views of the road that leads to Canudos” (qtd in Almeida, “O album fotográfico”).\textsuperscript{59} Photography, together with canons and soldiers, served as a means of attesting the power and modernity of the state. Tellingly, the last image to appear in Barros' album is a self-portrait of the “expeditionary photographer”: he appears in profile, one leg raised, gazing towards a space outside of the frame,\textsuperscript{60} fearless and determined (see fig. 5). The image echoes a portrait of the photographer Mathew Brady during the American Civil War, taken after the photographer returned from Bull Run in July 22, 1861 (see fig. 6). Both take a place within a larger body of portraiture with parallels in painting, as well as in the conventions of studio photography.\textsuperscript{61} Although Barros is characterized as an explorer (or expeditionary figure), his being photographed against a military tent and having the dry landscape around him responds as well to the invention of a new character: the undaunted war photographer.

\textsuperscript{58} O CANHAO CANET /que aí vai chegar, com o seu /diâmetro de 10 centimetros e /o seu calibre superior ao 32, /não causará o espanto que /causa o variado sortimento de /calçados baratos da grande loja /O MONUMENTO” (qtd in Galvão, No calor da hora 52).

\textsuperscript{59} “O Canet e o obus ostentam-se na praça Marechal Floriano, tendo à retaguarda armadas barracas em que se acha acampada a sua guarnição composta por ilustres e distintos militares, que da Bahia vieram acompanhados por um fotógrafo, que tem a intenção de adquirir os retratos da oficialidade de todos os batalhões, como também diversos golpes de vista no percurso até Canudos.”

\textsuperscript{60} As Trachtenberg's study of Mathew Brady has shown, what to do with the eyes was an important question for the photographer at a time when cameras demanded a long exposure time. It was important to avoid blank of expressions, and to gaze at a distant object. The sitter should occupy themselves with a serious or pleasing thought, according to the expression they wanted to convey (26).

\textsuperscript{61} Alan Trachtenberg has suggested that while chemical and mechanic equipment for photography during the civil war was hardly designed for recording real-time fighting, the way in which war was being carried out also defied attempts to represent it according to the chivalric conventions of painterly Romanticism. Staged scenes of everyday life on the front therefore became the way that former studio photographers could use the techniques in their aesthetic arsenal to respond to this new kind of mechanized long-range warfare. I am indebted to Jens Anderman for this reference.
Contrary to Brady, however, or even Gutierrez, who had a well-known studio in Rio de Janeiro and was already recognized for his photographs of the *Revolta Armada*, little is known about Flavio de Barros. All historians can say about the photographer is that he worked in the capital of Bahia, having used at least two different addresses. A few references about Barros' services start appearing in Bahia newspapers only after the beginning of the twentieth century (Almeida, *Canudos*; Kossoy, *Diccionário Fotográfico*).

Although Barros' other works remain unknown, there has not been much doubt regarding the original purpose of Flavio de Barros' *Canudos* photographs. From historian Ana Maria Mauad's pioneering article on Barros's albums, which follows a strict semiological methodology of analysis, to Antônio Cícero de Almeida's historical overview of Barros' venture or, more recently, Jeans Andermann's Agambenian reading of the *Canudos* images in *The Optics of the State*, writers take as given that Flavio de Barros' images reflect the mission he was endowed with, namely that of registering the victory and value of the army.

By the time Barros arrived in Canudos, despite the military command's control of telegraph lines, news of mismanagement of supplies, the soldiers' lack of discipline, the inefficiency of the commanders and the excessive and systematic brutality of the army were already spreading through the press. It is not surprising, thus, to see some photographs, for instance, showing soldiers having a plentiful meal (see fig. 7). The photograph counterposes this positive image to the reports about the extreme scarcity of food in Canudos: "I have seen..."

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62 Juan Gutierrez was a Spanish photographer. In 1880 he was already working in Rio de Janeiro, and soon became one of the most recognized portraitists and landscape photographers in the capital. He became, in the 1890s, the only Brazilian representative of the prestigious *Société Française de Photographie* (Kossoy, *Dicionário*).

63 See, for example, reporters Flavila Nunes' and Manuel Benício's reports (Galvão, *No calor da hora*). Such negative aspects are omitted or disguised in Euclides da Cunha's news reporting. Cícero Antônio de Almeida ("O álbum fotográfico"), author of the book that reproduces Flavio de Barros album in its entirety, was one of the first authors to counterpose the critical comments about the *Campanha de Canudos* in the news to the edifying images made by Flavio de Barros.
battalion commanders humbly request a handful of manioc flour,” wrote the reporter Manuel Benício in a telegram published in the *Jornal do Commercio* in August 8 1897: “I do not exaggerate. When this is over, thousands will attest everything that I have been describing here.” One evidence of the effort made by military commanders to avoid negative representations of the army is the fact that the writer of this text, Manuel Benício, was later obliged to leave the battlefield.

Two other clearly staged photographs emphasize the legality and humanity of the military enterprise. While reports at the time revealed that “life was worth very little” and later accounts emphasized that the prisoners were usually executed when (rarely) they were captured alive, these pictures portray the body of the *jagunço* – a word that at the time became synonymous with both northwestern bandits and Canudos combatants – as the object of a legal and just state. The first one, captioned *Corpo sanitário e uma jagunça ferida* ["Medical Staff and Injured Female Bandit"], suggests that the army was providing medical treatment to the wounded enemies (see fig. 8). The other image, entitled *Jagunço preso* [“Captured Bandit”], shows a *conselheirista*, his hands behind his back, being presented to the camera, which has become, in the words of Jens Andermann, “the eye of the law” (see fig. 9).

Based mainly on these two images, Jens Andermann's analysis of the photographs of Canudos in *The Optic of the State* emphasizes the fact that the frame organizes of a space of legality, while excessive violence and death – the suspension of law, thus, the war itself – is necessarily “out of frame.” This externality, according to Andermann, is in truth the original violence to which the frame necessarily relates. In the case of the first image, of the “injured *jagunça*,” the excess of bodies, attempting to “wrestle their way into the image,” explodes “the

64 “Comandante de batalhão já tenho visto pedir humildemente um punhado de farinha. I do not exaggerate. When this is over, thousands will attest everything that I have been describing here.”
“frame on both ends,” undermining “the claims of order and control.” This argument seems to be similar to that of Euclides da Cunha himself, who, in his “vengeful book,” “reveals” the chaotic and barbaric character of the Brazilian army.

The second image's “out of frame” would be, according to Andermann, in an even more direct relation to Euclides da Cunha's text. Building on Berthold Zilly's suggestion (“Flavio de Barros”) that Euclides da Cunha bases some of his descriptions on Flavio de Barros' photographs, Andermann argues that by describing (what seems to be) the jagunço photographed by Barros – “erect and rigid, in a beautiful pose that expressed his pride” (Backlands 433) – and later narrating how the prisoner was decapitated, da Cunha reinscribes the “violence of origin […] into Barros's photograph”. Hence, Andermann concludes, da Cunha denounces the insufficiency of photographic realism.

Andermann's argument is based on two assumptions. First, following Zilly, he assumes that the writer of Os sertões has “recaptioned many of the photographs it did not reproduce visually” (8). Although this is possibly true, it is hard to know whether we, contemporary viewers, are not the ones who inscribe da Cunha's words into Barros' photos. His words seem rather to have sedimented, or been woven, into Barros' images of the sertão (and maybe into all other images of the sertão produced throughout the twentieth century). The first book to publish all of Flavio de Barros's images, for instance, used fragments of Os sertões to describe each of them (Almeida, Canudos). It is undeniable, in any case, that Barros' photographs and Da Cunha's words have become (almost) inextricably linked. The second assumption is that, in overwriting Barros' photographs, da Cunha overwrites the regime of visuality of the state, pointing to a critique of both diegesis and of photographic realism.

Complementing but also inverting Andermann's reading, I suggest we begin from the
afterlife of the image, rather than its coincidence with an “optic of the state.” Let us assume, with Andermann, that what is at stake in this photograph is the preservation of the life (shown in the photograph) or the assassination (described in *Os Sertões*) of the *jagunço*. If we depart from the fact that *Os sertões* became the official interpretative frame for Canudos, the foundational fiction, to use Doris Sommers's expression, of the Brazilian Republic, we might understand why this image had to remain a “false” image, an example of Barros' manipulation and his belonging to the wrong side of history. In *Os sertões*' critique of the state, Canudos' destruction – or Da Cunha's (now widely contested) affirmation that Canudos had no survivors – allows for the most notable interpretative movement of the book: the final “inversion” in which soldiers are equated with *jagunços*. For it is by killing the *jagunços* that the soldiers reveal their own barbarity; they look just like the ones they kill.

Barros's photograph represents a double problem for da Cunha's history of Canudos: first, it leaves the question of the life and death of the *jagunço* undecided; second, it represents the *jagunço* and the soldier as occupying clearly different positions, with different aspects and clothing. In *Os sertões*, on the contrary, the *jagunços* can never occupy a fixed position or be entirely visible. But if they resist the gaze – “able to disappear in the labyrinth of trenches and lure” (*Os sertões* 423) – they do so like a mirror, or a glass that allows the truth of the nation to appear through them. The body of the *jagunço* becomes indiscernible from Brazil's earth, geography, and landscape, and from the soldiers themselves. Thus, according to da Cunha, it is necessary to foment the progress of knowledge, and not of weapons. While *Os sertões* begins as an attempt to scrutinize the body of the *jagunço* using all the technological and scientific – racial, geographical, migratory and social – apparatuses available at the time, it ends by asserting that these apparatuses are “not yet” capable of accomplishing their mission.
Before any knowledge, however, it was necessary to go through death. Only through the
death of Canudos could this truth be revealed. Death in *Os sertões* allows for the transformation
of Canudos into the distorted mirror of the “Brazilian” type, for it is in the massacre of Canudos
that the Republic turns into its other. It allows for the effacement of the many survivors of
Canudos, and for the beginnings of the emergence of a truly civilized nation. Not even the
orphans of Canudos are mentioned in *Os sertões*, although Da Cunha himself wrote in his diaries
and letters about an orphan he took to São Paulo and who later became a teacher, fulfilling da
Cunha's own creed concerning the civilizational mission of education. Two of these children
appear, for instance, on the lower right-hand side of the image showing the soldiers' meal
mentioned above (see fig. 7).

Instead of reading the photographs of Canudos through the frame of *Os sertões*, as so
many exhibitions and publications have done and continue to do, I will focus in the next section
on Da Cunha’s direct use of or reference to Flavio de Barros’s images. Although this has been
mentioned by a few authors, such as Bertold Zilly and Natalia Brizuela, no attempt has yet been
made to interpret this use, or to analyze each of the photographs published in *Os sertões*.

Before starting the analysis of these photographs, however, it is worthwhile to highlight
that, although they were considered important at the time by newspapers, which mentioned the
presence of a photographer in the field, there is not much evidence of their circulation in the
aftermath of the conflict. As we know, contrary to most examples of war photography in the
nineteenth century, Barros' photographs were not exhibited during the conflict. Although flexible
negative film had been introduced in 1888 by Eastman Kodak, Barros used dry plates. While
these considerably reduced exposure time compared to traditional collodion plates, thus allowing
capture of somewhat moving scenes, they made it difficult to process the photographs on site,
due to the extreme variations of temperature in the sertão. Barros thus only developed and selected his prints upon his return to Salvador.

Back in Bahia, the photographer probably initiated an effort to publicize his images. Even for someone appointed the official photographer of the army, photography was still a private enterprise. According to Cícero de Almeida it is likely that Flavio Barros sold some of the photographs to the officers he portrayed (“O sertão pacificado” 285). But his public was wider than this, composed of the urban population that had closely followed the final phases of the conflict in the news, like the anonymous woman in Assis' chronicle. On October 30, the newspaper *O País* revealed that the photographer had organized a private screening of lantern-slide versions of his pictures for journalists, and disclosed the photographer's intention to organize “a public exhibition of his works, which are the object of great curiosity.” Evidence suggests that the exhibition indeed happened. According to an advertisement in *A Gazeta de Notícias*, on February 2nd 1898, an electrical projection featuring 25 life-size images of Canudos would bring to the urban public “scenes” of the “extraordinary event” that had ended, four months before, in the ruin of the village.

Although the announcement promised the dreadful exhibition of “scenes of war,” “taken at the battlefield,” what we see in Barros' images, besides the military portraits, would be better described as the remnants of the war: ruins and bodies. An interesting exception is an image that simulates action, captioned “Attack and fire in Canudos” [Ataque e incêndio em Canudos] (see fig. 10). Framing the artillery on the left and the settlement in flames on the right, the photograph suggests an attack, although at this point in the conflict the army had set fire to Canudos, but the
artillery confrontation was over (Almeida, “O sertão pacificado” 296). Another “action” simulated for the camera was the enactment of the arrest of a jagunço. The “actors” are likely all soldiers (see fig. 11).

While it is undeniable that Flavio de Barros' work was linked to the conventions and aims of the military enterprise, it was not exclusively so. Besides documenting (or re-enacting) the victory of the fourth military campaign, Flavio de Barros' presence in the battlefield, and, even more, the later exhibition of the images, was also marked by a combination of ethnographic interest and journalistic enterprise. Barros' photos reflect, for instance, an interest in the “mode of life” of Canudos. An image of a typical house is photographed with a man to its side providing scale, so the public could be impressed by how miserably small the house was (see fig. 12). The newspaper announcement of the public electrical projection of Barros' images promised to present the urban public of the coastal region with not only a military event, but also an exotic village in the remote backlands of the country. It was realist entertainment (with “free entrance” for kids), a common kind of optical spectacle in the nineteenth century. Entitled “Curiosity! Wonder!! Horror!!! Misery!!!!”, it promised the ghost-like return “in natural size!” of the fanatics who had been the object of so much speculation. It is not surprising, then, that among the 25 photos to be exhibited, the announcement emphasized – besides the already mentioned “Attack and fire in Canudos” – three photographs that portray the jagunços: (1) “the imprisonment of the commander of the fanatic forces,” which is either the enacted confrontation or the Jagunço prisioneiro; (2) 400 jagunços prisioneiros [“400 captured jagunços”]; and, of

65 The prevalence of ruins and posed scenes are, as we have already seen, related to technical aspects of nineteenth century photography, which still demanded relatively long exposures – even though Barros was already using dry negatives, which shortened photography’s exposure time to less than a minute – as well as to the aesthetic conventions of the time. Photography was not so much related to the idea of the instantaneous, to the interruption of movement, as to the construction of a scene. The ruins relate as well to the fact that, when Flavio de Barros arrived in the field on September 26th, the war was almost over.
course, the “truthful and faithful portrait of the fanatic Conselheiro.” The last two images appeared in Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*, and became two of the most famous images of the conflict.

In the same month as this exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, in February 1898, the newspaper *Diário do Espírito Santo* announced the photographer's intention to organize a similar exhibition in the province of Espírito Santo (qtd in Almeida, *O sertão pacificado*). No other trace of these photographs can be found until their publication in the first edition of *Os sertões* in 1902.

4. *Os Sertões*

The campaign looked at here was a regression to the past.
And in the most basic meaning of the word, it was a crime.
(Euclides da Cunha, *Backlands 2*)

Even though Euclides da Cunha's analysis of Canudos overshadowed all other published accounts at the time, he was in the area of the conflict only for the last third of the fourth expedition, and most of his time was spent in Monte Santo, a village located half-day’s march from Canudos. Invited by the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* to cover the “Canudos Campaign,” Da Cunha left São Paulo on August 1st, 1897, arriving in Salvador, the capital of the province of Bahia, on August 7th. During the twenty three days he stayed in Salvador, da Cunha investigated historical, geographical and climatic aspects of the backlands, interviewed people who had returned from the front, including a fourteen-year-old boy, took notes in his *Caderneta de Campo*, and wrote articles for *O Estado de São Paulo* in which he supported the army's endeavor against what he saw as an “anti-Republic” regressive uprising. Da Cunha arrived in the field on September 6th and left it on October 3rd, after falling ill. He did not, therefore, witness the last days of the conflict, narrated in *Os sertões*' notorious final pages – including the discovery of
Conselheiro's body, which was then photographed by Flavio de Barros.

Five years later, da Cunha published *Os sertões*, his monumental account of the conflict, the “vengeful book” in which he accuses the republic, “armed by the German industry” (2), of committing a crime against the poor *sertanejos*. Writing in a framework of positivism, progressivism, and race science, but at the same time torn by multiple ambivalences, Euclides da Cunha portrayed the events as a tragic encounter between the backward barbarity of the interior and the progressive civilization of the coast, a confrontation in which civilization itself reverted to barbarism. Canudos is reframed as an epistemological problem, the opportunity to understand and, thus, to “correct the flaws” of Brazilian incipient modernity. According to Da Cunha, faced with the “eruption of the past into our present,” the Republic failed to show its own superiority, revealing in itself “all the cracks and fissures of our [Brazil's] evolution as a society” (*Backlands* 281). This reversal, through which the republic reveals its barbarism, was notoriously narrated in the last pages of *Os sertões*, in a series of very short chapters – almost snapshots – of scenes that Euclides da Cunha had not himself witnessed, including the photographing and beheading of Antônio Conselheiro.

At the same time that it is framed as an eyewitness account, *Os sertões* is also a collage of scientific, historical, journalistic and fictional texts. Situating it in relation to the Brazilian modernist movement, Leopoldo Bernucci calls it the first great “cannibalist” work in Brazilian literature (“Pressupostos historiográficos” CXL). The book includes Da Cunha's own field notes and articles, but it also paraphrases newspaper reports, diaries and telegrams from other journalists and soldiers, sometimes citing its sources and sometimes not. *Os sertões* can thus be read thus as a kind of montage, or weaving – a kind of patchwork – of the images and texts that are part of the archive of Canudos, many of which had been circulating during the war. It aims at
building a last image of the “event,” but also an amalgam of all its images – which explains the simultaneously monumental and fragmentary character of the book. It constitutes a grandiose narrative, but it is also a series of snapshots, small chapters that frequently contradict one another. The sertão – and its exemplary image, the village of Canudos, which is described as a ruinous space made of debris left after an earthquake – is written through a piecing together of the fragments or debris of texts, literary images, scientific theories, and also of photographs.

The first edition of Euclides da Cunha's Os Sertões printed three of Flavio de Barros's photographs (see figs. 13 - 15). The photographer had named them Divisão Canet [Canet Division], 7º Batalhão de Infantaria nas trincheiras [7º Infantry Battalion at the trenches] and 400 jagunços prisioneiros [400 captured jagunços], but da Cunha changed their names to Monte Santo (Base das operações) [“Monte Santo (Base of Operations)"], Acampamento dentro de Canudos [“Camp site inside Canudos”] and As prisioneiras [“The female prisoners”]. In the first two photographs, which portray the army, the change in caption recasts the image as more representative and less specific, while simultaneously locating them geographically. Monte Santo, the operational base of the army, was a day and a half march away from Canudos (Levine). This village is described in Os Sertões as a pleasant landscape seen from above, appearing to the reporter's eyes as soon as he arrives there:

Tucked at the base of the only mountain in the region, the town provides a contrast to the otherwise sterile landscape. [...] The sudden ascent of the wind up the mountain wall provides a cooling effect and condenses the scant moisture it holds, regularly depositing it as rain. This creates a better climate than that of the neighboring backlands where the wind blows dry after its descent from the highlands. (206)
Monte Santo figures, in the beginning of the third part of *Os sertões* (“The Battle”), which narrates the armed conflict, as a kind of final step before the reality of the conflict and of the dry and inhospitable *sertão*. When narrating the second military expedition to Canudos, Euclides da Cunha ironically described the misleading optimism of the troops:

> The rebels would be destroyed by iron and fire. Like the wheels of Shiva’s chariot, the treads of the Krupp cannons would roll over the vast plains, over the high ridges and down into the broad valleys, leaving behind furrows filled with blood. It was important to teach these barbaric criminals a lesson. These backward heathens had committed the grave sin of stupidly clinging to ancient traditions. Energetic corrective measures were needed to drag them out of the barbaric behavior that was a stain on our country. They should be prodded into civilization at sword point. Everyone was convinced that an example would be made of these people. (210)

According to da Cunha, “Monte Santo got the impression that victory was guaranteed” (211). As we advance through the text, we learn that the problem was not only optimism, but a lack of knowledge, organization and tactics, a “total ignorance of the basics of warfare.” The troops departed without proper information about the terrain or the enemy, and, thus, without a plan for a corresponding distribution of units. The commanding officers thought they could win the “war” with a set of obsolete formulas for warfare and a set of modern weaponry that were “completely inappropriate for the current situation” (213).

In the second photograph, named by the photographer 7º *Batalhão de Infantaria nas trincheiras* and re-captioned by da Cunha as *Acampamento dentro de Canudos*, we get closer to what the battle, according to Euclides da Cunha, was really like: “the brutal manhunt beating
through the brush for the target at Canudos, was going to be reduced to a series of fierce attacks, agonizing delays, and sudden skirmishes” (214). This is the only one of Barros' photos in which the soldiers are not in lines or formation, are disorganized and ragged. There is no hierarchy and there are so many of them that they fade away into the back of the photo. Curiously, this disorganization of bodies, which seems to exceed the frame, is comparable to the third photograph reproduced in Os sertões, the 400 female prisoners, which we will discuss in more detail later. For now, it suffices to say that the image of the soldiers in Canudos is more similar to the image of the jagunças than to the ideal of military order we see in the first photograph.

By emphasizing the division between Monte Santo and the army camps, the new captions chosen by da Cunha suggest a correspondence between the images and the author's double critique of the Brazilian army. As an engineer trained in a military school, he suggested, on the one hand, that the army was barbarously chaotic and precarious, lacking rationality and strategy: “they were going to face the unknown with the fragile armor of their impulsive bravery, so typical of our people” (203). On the other hand, he criticized it for trying to mimic the European model, following books and manuals and using well-drilling equipment improper for the sertanejo terrain: “The commanding officer of the expedition borrowed a few principles of Prussian tactics as if he were leading a small army corps through some meadow in Belgium” (213).

While da Cunha's use of the first photo seems to refer to the plentiful but useless weaponry that was sent to Monte Santo but could not serve in the field, the second one shows the precariousness and disorganization of the brave but savage battalion that fought in the trenches. Brazil's lack of a modern army is part of Os Sertões' core argument: that the Campanha de Canudos was not a victory of the republic over a monarchic insurgency (as Da Cunha himself
believed at the time of the conflict), but evidence that the nation wasn't modern enough. Modernity, in this sense, is not just a set of rules that can be applied to the Brazilian geographic and cultural reality, it is the capacity to rationally adapt to this reality:

The scouts should have gone through the caatingas clad in the leathern armor of the sertanejos.... One or two corps so clad and properly trained would have ended by imitating the astonishing movements of the jagunços [...]

Bright-striped European dolmans and highly polished boots are a good deal more out of place among the brushwood of the caatingas (283).

The kind of adaptation the narrator envisions suggests that the army strategically imitate the jagunços' relationship to the environment and the ways the rebels used their knowledge of the land to fight: “Given the nature of the land and the people, this war should have been in the more capable hands of a guerrilla warfare strategist—someone who could innovate on the spot” (214).

As I have suggested, Euclides da Cunha's rewriting of the history of Canudos has two dimensions. First, there is the retelling of the event of the “war,” denounced as a crime committed by the Republic, and, second, there is the invention of the sertanejo, the man of the Sertão. The “core” of a future Brazilian modernity would be found, according to Euclides da Cunha, in this sertanejo, or, rather, in some of his characteristics. While at certain moments, inspired by evolutionist theories, the sertanejos are described as “the fast-disappearing descendants of older races native to our land” (58), in others they are depicted as the “strong race,” the only one capable of surviving in the sertão. Here I refer to da Cunha's notorious

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66 In the preface to Os sertões, da Cunha cites the German sociologist Gumplowicz's evolutionary belief in “the inevitable crushing of the weak races by the strong.”
adaptation of racial theories of the time\textsuperscript{67} – which identified miscegenation with degeneration –
to the particular case of the \textit{sertões}. The \textit{mestiço}, in his words, is an “intruder in the marvelous
process of evolution […] a disruptive and destructive element that appears without any
characteristics of his own, caught between the opposing influences of his conflictive ancestry” (93).

In identifying the population of Canudos as mixed-race – although Canudos' population
was in fact varied, of all origins and ethnicities, including indigenous peoples – da Cunha uses
racial degeneration to explain the fanaticism seen in Canudos. On the other hand, the author
declares that the \textit{sertanejo} is a better mixed-raced type than the \textit{mestiço} from the coast.\textsuperscript{68}
Because of the geographical isolation of the backlands, the \textit{mestiço} race there “developed outside
the sphere of influence of other elements” (90), thus preserving “a notable uniformity among the
populace,” “a fully developed ethnic subcategory” (92). If the value of the \textit{jagunço}, the fighter,
was his knowledge of the land, here again it is through a kind of perfect adaptation to the
environment that the \textit{sertanejo} can be seen as a “strong race.”

As Adriana Campos Johnson has noted, the anthropological preoccupation with studying
and defining the \textit{sertanejo} does not figure much in the reports that da Cunha wrote as a
correspondent to \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, but it appears in the fragmentary notes he jotted down in
his personal notebook, which was published in 1975 as the \textit{Caderneta de Campo}. The \textit{Caderneta}
contains a range of study notes and observations, from temperature readings to lists of
miscellaneous \textit{sertanejo} expressions and words; from first drafts of articles he sent to \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, to transcriptions of soldier's diaries, \textit{jagunços}' letters, Conselheiro's prophecies,

\textsuperscript{67} For more on the different strands of evolutionary thought in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century see Nancy Stepan's \textit{The Hour of Eugenics} and Lilia Schwarz's \textit{The Spectacle of Races}.
\textsuperscript{68} For more on the racial question in \textit{Os sertões} see Adelino Brandão's \textit{Euclides da Cunha e a questão racial no Brasil}. 61
popular poems and varied rumors. Although a fragmentary and heterogenous text, it has a quasi-anthropological quality that is not as evident in the newspaper articles. From this observation, Campos Johnson concludes that Os sertões is a combination of the Caderneta and the news reports. She then extends this gesture of separating the two sources of Os sertões to propose a solution to the problem of representation, the double insistence on the visibility and invisibility of the canudenses: while the reports, by narrating the “war,” had invented the “invisible” jagunço (the bandit), the notebooks had pictured the sertanejo (the sertão dweller), inventing him as a Brazilian character. Although Euclides da Cunha does not seem to make this nomenclature differentiation between sertanejo and jagunço – in many passages the jagunço is the core of Brazilianness – this division is an interesting attempt to understand the double problem of the representation of the canudense in Os sertões.

This leads us to the third photo published in the book, which is the only image printed by the author that exhibits the other side of the conflict and the anthropological subject of Os sertões – the canudenses. None of Barros' photographs of the village that Da Cunha described with so many metaphors and adjectives – “sinister civitas,” “monstrous aggregation of mud huts,” “grotesque parody of ancient Roman dwellings” – are printed. Nor is the image of the church built by Conselheiro, which according to da Cunha, had the form of Conselheiro's irrationality. The only photograph of Canudos printed in Os sertões shows a multitude of destitute men, women and children surrounded by standing soldiers. The change in the third photo's caption from 400 jagunços prisioneiros to As prisioneiras is revealing. It at the same time erases the word jagunço – the pejorative term to talk about the Canudos combatants – and changes the gender from masculine to feminine. If we follow Campos Johnson's suggestion, it is easy to see how these changes also seem to reflect Os sertões' critical aim. In a letter to his friend Francisco
Escobar in early 1902, da Cunha presented *Os Sertões* as an "avenging book": "I am heartened by the ancient conviction that the future will read it. That is what I want. I will be an avenger and will have played a great role of advocate for the poor sertanejos assassinated by a ... cowardly and bloody society" (Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha 133). As we have already seen, Da Cunha's version of the outcome of the military expedition stressed the fact that none of the Canudos combatants survived. In this letter, we can also see that he aimed to be the voice of the poor sertanejos. *As prisoneiras*’s images are the ones that should survive Canudos.

The prisoners photographed had surrendered on October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, a few days before the end of the conflict, as part of a strategy by the canudenses. Aiming to gaining time and strength, they surrendered only the “harmless, crippled, mutilated, starving souls” (460) to the army. Although this is not made explicit in *Os sertões*, we know that Da Cunha did not witness this moment. It is interesting to note that, in order to describe the scene, the author says that he transcribes “without changing a single line, the final notes from a journal written as these events were taking place” (460). The passage goes as follows:

There was not an able-bodied man among them, no one able to carry a weapon.

There were nothing but women, ghosts of women, young girls prematurely aged, the young and old alike in their ugliness, filth, and state of extreme malnourishment. The children could barely stand on their bowed legs. They clung to their mothers’ backs or to their withered breasts. [...] There were few men among them, only invalids, who had swollen waxy faces, bent over double, wobbling as they walked (460).

These ghosts, stony faced, mute subjects, as if already dead or already images, these women and children (and invalid men) are described by a double recourse to the archive:
someone's journal and the photograph. Testimony and image confirm each other at the same time that keep these remnant, reckless others woven into Euclides da Cunha's narration. They are the ghosts of the Brazilian Republic, but also those in the name of whom Da Cunha claims to speak. They could be the subject of a pastoral state, to use Foucault's term (*Discipline and Punish*), the other whose existence legitimates the state.

The connection between archival fragment and narrative seems to be a key to understanding the fourth photograph, the image that wasn't shown by Euclides da Cunha, but which, nonetheless, takes a central part in *Os Sertões*: the picture of the corpse of Antônio Conselheiro. Conselheiro was, in Da Cunha's words, the “barbarous and incomprehensible enemy,” the messianic leader who spoke but whose incomprehensible words were unassimilable by the republic. Although acknowledging that Conselheiro had produced written texts, oral discourses and architectural works, Euclides da Cunha cannot refer to them except as illogical and indecipherable. About the church that was being constructed in Canudos, for example, da Cunha says: 69

> The enormous disproportionate facade stood facing the east, with its mask of grotesque friezes, impossible volutes, its delirium of curves, horrible ogives, and embrasures. It was an indecipherable, shapeless mass, something like an exhumed crypt, as if the builder had tried to capture in stone and limestone the disorder of his own diseased mind. This was his masterpiece, and he spent days at a time on the high scaffolding (161).

Not mute, but incomprehensible, the figure of Conselheiro is described in a geological metaphor: he is an “anticline” that has been “cast up” by “deep-lying layers of ethnic

69 Roberto Ventura gives an account of both Conselheiro's writings and his skill at architecture.
stratification.” Conselheiro is the sertão itself, its earth and its people. But he is not a representative character. He is its deep layer, “like a fossil” (123). But he is also like a “seed.” He is the potential disruptive force that could emerge from the earth itself. It is revealing, thus, that the image of Conselheiro's corpse, which was exhumed, literally extracted from the heart of the earth, “olhos fundos cheios de terra” [deep eyes filled with dust], is verbally described at the end of Os Sertões.

In order to talk about surface and depth, face and truth, I would like to refer to a poem written by Euclides da Cunha in 1905. In the poem, called Dedicatória, da Cunha uses a photographic vocabulary to talk about the desire to bring together depth and surface, inscribing soul and face on the skin of a photographic plate.

SE ACASO uma alma se fotografasse
De sorte que, nos mesmos negativos,
A mesma luz pusesse em traços vivos
O nosso coração e a nossa face;

E os nossos ideais, e os mais cativos
De nossos sonhos... Se a emoção que nasce
Em nós, também nas chapas se gravasse
Mesmo em ligeiros traços fugitivos;

Amigo! tu terias com certeza
A mais completa e insólita surpresa
Notando — deste grupo bem no meio —

Que o mais belo, o mais forte, o mais ardente
Destes sujeitos é precisamente
O mais triste, o mais pálido, o mais feio.

(Obras Completas Vol.1 508)

The hope that an interior life or an individual's character could be made visible in a painting, and later a photograph, had been explored by artists, portraitists and scientists alike, and has roots in the discipline of physiognomy. Dedicatória itself refers to this tradition, through a reference, as Paulo Leminski\(^70\) suggested, to an earlier poem, written by Raimundo Correia and entitled Mal Secreto:

Se a cólera que espuma, a dor que mora
N'alma, e destrói cada ilusão que nasce,
Tudo o que punge, tudo o que devora
O coração, no rosto se estampasse;
Se se pudesse, o espírito que chora,
Ver através da máscara da face,
Quanta gente, talvez, que inveja agora
Nos causa, então piedade nos causasse!

Quanta gente que ri, talvez, consigo
Guarda um atroz, recôndito inimigo,
Como invisível chaga cancerosa!

\(^70\) I owe Nathaniel Wolfson for this reference to Paulo Leminski's comment about Euclides da Cunha's poem published in Revista Codigo in 1980. In this same text, Leminski suggested another revealing presence of photography in Dedicatória. According to Leminski, photography is not only the theme of the poem, but also its form. As a “translation” or “parody” of Raimundo Correia's poem, Dedicatória is a kind of photograph itself, same and different, an icon, but also an index that carries another contiguous sonnet with it.
Quanta gente que ri, talvez existe,
Cuja ventura única consiste
Em parecer aos outros venturosa!

While *Mal Secreto* uses the romantic thematic of the expression of tormented passions, da Cunha, at the turn of the century, talks about photographs, ideals and dreams. Moreover, instead of a true *expression* of internal passions – which would replace the false smile – the poet-photographer imagines a double *register* “em traços fugidios” of both body and character. In this ideal technological world, all is inscribed at the surface\(^{71}\) (even the dreams of future), and the place where truth would be revealed is not the face but the photographic negative.

In contrast to the romantic poem by Raimundo Correia, in which the mask has to give place to a deeper truth, in Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* everything is reduced to the level of perception. Canudos itself is described as “a city that has been shaken and thrown about by an earthquake” (151). In this ruinous landscape, different strata are visible, bringing together past, present and future. If Canudos emerged as ruin, the settlement was built in an area that seemed already “uma vala comum enorme” [an enormous common grave], as if its birth and death were contemporaneous, and time could be read in the space itself.\(^{72}\)

This inscription of everything at the level of the surface is, contradictorily, what makes the *sertão* resist the scientist's gaze:

> O arraial não se distingue prontamente ao olhar, como as demais povoações, falta-

\(^{71}\) In this sense, Rachel Price's *The Object of the Atlantic* locates *Os Sertões* and other turn of the century authors in the genealogy of the concrete, as part of a shift “toward privileging inscription” instead of a lyric interior.

\(^{72}\) Walnice Galvão (*Euclidianas* 38-9) called attention to the recurrence of death images throughout *Os Sertões*, suggesting that the two first parts of the book, in which the author explores, respectively, the climatic and geologic aspects of the region and the anthropological formation of its inhabitants, serve as a kind of prologue to the third part, *A Luta*, in which he narrates the combats between the *jagunços* and the army. Galvão's argument is that da Cunha inscribes the conflict into nature, dramatizing it.
lhe a alvura das paredes caiadas e telhados encalçados. Tem a cor da própria terra em que se erige, confundindo-se com ela na mesma tinta de um vermelho carregado e pardo, de ferrugem velha, e, se não existissem as duas grandes igrejas à margem do Vaza-Barris, não seria percebida a 3 km de distância. [Without the brilliance of whitewashed walls or calcite roofs, the city was invisible from a distance and could not be distinguished from the earth. (*Backlands* 153).]

Similarly, it is only when Conselheiro's body is “in a condition of advanced decomposition” and “would not have been recognized by those who had been closest to him in life” (*Os sertões* 464), that it can, in fact, reveal its “true features,” or, in Machado de Assis' words, the “truth of Canudos.” The truth searched for by da Cunha – the earth, or soil, of the *sertão* – covers Conselheiro's eyes, the eyes that, in Romanticism, would be the window to a character's soul. Antônio Conselheiro’s corpse, thus, is already an image of the *sertão*, it is resemblance through contact. Conselheiro is also described as a “negative” or a “highly impressionable” surface that carries the inscriptions of its surroundings. Euclides da Cunha suggested that Canudos – with its “desperate maze of alleys, barely separating the chaotic jumble of hastily built hovels facing every point of the compass” – is a “living document.” So is Conselheiro.

But if this living document is not only a “faithful portrait” but also a reproduction through contact, the problem for the narrator is how to allow this document, which is at once a fossil and a seed, to be put to rest. The problem the narrator faces in the last pages of the book is that of the future of the nation, and, thus, of how to deal with the ruins of Canudos, and, ultimately, with the *sertanejo* terrain itself. In order to make a claim for progress, and to design the path for Brazil's entrance in a “true” modernity, the narrator has to break with this ruinous temporality and to put
history back in the track of progress. This leads us back again to the photograph of Antônio Conselheiro (see fig. 1).

The reference to the photograph appears in the penultimate chapter of *Os Sertões*. In the chapter that precedes it, named “Canudos has not surrendered,” Euclides da Cunha announces the end of his book by refusing to narrate the last days of the conflict, because “they are impossible to describe.” (463). After this short chapter on the impossibility of narrating the cruelty of the final moments of the conflict, he writes another short chapter, named “The Counselor’s Corpse.” The narrator tells how the soldiers found the place where Conselheiro was buried and carefully exhumed the body: “a valuable relic and the only prize this war had to offer. They took care that it did not fall apart. If it had, they would have had nothing but a disgusting mess of rotting flesh on their hands. They photographed it and drew up a document certifying its identity” (464).

*Os Sertões* ends with a description of a photographic gesture that fixes the other, turning Conselheiro into a relic. But the book does not end there. The narrator tells us that photography was not sufficient, and so the soldiers decided to take his head:

The corpse was decapitated and the horrible face, running with scars and pus, again faced the victors. Afterward they took it to the coast, where it was greeted by crowds dancing in the streets in impromptu carnival celebrations. Let science have the last words. There, in plain sight, was the evidence of crime and madness (464).

Photograph, corpse and skull seem, at first sight, to be put on the other side of an objectifying and fixing vision, capable of turning the other into an object of study. But they are not objects to be gazed upon. Like Medusa, decapitated and horrible, they gaze back, exposing
the reader's own barbarity and backwardness, personified by the crowd in the carnival celebrations. Thus, through the presence of the absence of Conselheiro's body and image, after the death and total extermination of Canudos, and the description of Conselheiro's body as decomposed matter (almost indistinguishable from the earth), the narrator can lead us to finally see what is most important: the barbarous other in ourselves. Hence *Os sertões*’ subsequent and final chapter, named *Two Lines*, suggests it is “humanity” that needs to be examined: “É que ainda não existe um Maudsley para os crimes e loucuras da humanidade.”

As Foucault reminded us (*Discipline and Punish*), modernity's mode of construction of alterity aims not at excluding the other from the real, but at creating an ethical negative at the heart of the real. Such creation leads ultimately to careful examination and constant vigilance against the other in ourselves. In telling the tale of the birth and death of Canudos – the fanatic, barbarous, and illogical “enemy” of modernity – Euclides da Cunha ends up seeing the barbarity of the Brazilian state itself. Only then can he foresee a solution: to study, correct and, finally, obliterate it. I transcribe a passage of *Os sertões* in Portuguese, for the English translation misses its grandiloquence:


73 Literally, the sentence could be translated as: “For we do not yet have a Maudsley for the crimes and madness of humanity”. The English version of this phrase re-captions it in the context of humanitarian narrative, avoiding the strangeness and ambiguity that the phrase carries in the Portuguese version: “It is truly regrettable that in these times we do not have a Maudsley, who knew the difference between good sense and insanity, to prevent nations from committing acts of madness and crimes against humanity” (466).
[We failed to comprehend the significance of the event.

This eruption of the past into our present, baring all the cracks and fissures of our evolution as a society, should have alerted us to the opportunity to correct those flaws. But we did not understand the lesson. In the capital of our country, citizens were happy with burning a few journals at the stake and the government then began to act. That meant calling up new battalions (281).]

If Conselheiro's corpse must remain invisible, this is because the reader ought to look at the “nation” itself. The unburying of the corpse – and of the photograph – is at the same time revealing and dangerous.

In *Picture Theory*, W. J. T. Mitchell suggests that ekphrasis – the verbal representation of visual representation – puts into play a dynamic that is not only aesthetic but also social. It involves the hope of overcoming the borders between the text and its other, as well as the fear of this same thing. By creating the final moment of visibility in the book through the description of a photograph in writing, even after having said that words are not enough to describe the horrors of the war, Da Cunha restitutes power to his words. He is enacting the possibility of effacing thresholds and avoiding the excess of information that this image might contain. This image, according to him, is “unrecognizable,” and should remain as such. Moreover, if the future that Euclides da Cunha envisions is a reformatory one, it is important that all the other possible meanings of Canudos be erased, including the alternative futures imagined by the *canudenses*.

5. **The Return of Canudos's Ruins**

Among the photographs of Canudos that were left out of *Os sertões* are images of the ruins of the new and old churches. As was common in photographs of war – it suffices to look at the images made by Juan Gutierrez at the Revolta Armada – they are “occupied” by people,
probably soldiers and servants posing for the photographer's lens, to give scale to the building. In an image of the old church – which was meant to be Antônio Conselheiro's great architectural work, and which became the last bastion of the conselheiristas – what calls attention is not the small size of the construction, as in the picture of the house in Canudos (see fig. 12), but its immensity. The living bodies almost disappear in the enormity of the impressive ruins (see fig. 16). In another photograph, the church appears in the background, less imposing. Now the Republicans occupy the whole image, as if concretizing the victory over the rebels and the occupation of the “other” space of Canudos (see fig. 17). This image is one of the few in which the frame is not carefully organized by the photographer (or is it organized to look spontaneous?), and blurred bodies can be seen in movement.

If one examines this photograph closely it is possible to see, among the abundance of living bodies, a corpse. According to the last telegram written by reporter Flavila Nunes, on October 8, Canudos was “transformed into a large cemetery, with thousands of buried corpses, other thousands barely covered with earth and, the worst, thousands completely unburied” (qtd in Galvao, *No calor da hora* 314). Military officers did not encourage taking photographs of this tragic scenario, but among Barros' photographs we find another, strangely framed (maybe the photographer did not have enough space to act, maybe he did not have enough time). Here we see parts of a construction, debris and bodies. In the background we see blurred soldiers moving among the corpses. For its framing, its movement, its showing of the bodies, this image is an exception in Barros' albums (see fig. 18).

The fourth photograph of ruins I would like to examine portrays the other church of

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74 "A permanência aqui é insuportável em vista da situação de Canudos, transformada em um vastíssimo cemitério, com milhares de cadáveres sepultados, outros milhares apenas mal cobertos com terra e, o pior de tudo, outros milhares completamente insepti."
Canudos (see fig. 19). Barros's caption tells us that this is the “old church” of Canudos. Moreover, as if to reinforce the importance of this information, the photograph is usually exhibited – in museums as well as in the most important catalogues of the Canudos photographic archives – beside the image we have seen of the “new church.” The captions that accompany this photo also frequently explain that the building photographed was called the “old church” by the inhabitants of the village because it was repaired (some historians, such as Calasans, say it was entirely rebuilt) by the messianic leader Antônio Conselheiro and his followers before they settled in the area.

The reopening of the “old church,” in 1893, coincided with and marked the foundation of the village, a community that, according to Antônio Conselheiro's preachings, would obey primarily the law of God, not of the secular republican State. This date, the year of the reopening of the sacred building and of the holy community, can be partly seen inscribed in the church's façade (see fig. 20). The men who stand there, providing scale and posing statically for the photographic camera, repeat the feeling of conquest that, as we have seen in other images, marks the end of the conflict.

The ruins of the new and the old churches are, still today, what remain in the space once called Monte Santo, or Canudos. Soon after the end of the conflict, another village started to flourish among the ruins of Antônio Conselheiro's Monte Santo, occupied by survivors of the massacre who insisted in staying there. As I have mentioned, accounts of the war have, following the narrative of Os sertões, disregarded the existence of these survivors for a long time. This effacement was later duplicated: the new village was flooded, in 1968, by the construction of a dam. Its inhabitants were moved to a new village, which was later called the “Third Canudos.” It is interesting to note that “Canudos” – the name by which the historical event of the massacre
became known – named the region around the old and abandoned farm where the *conselheiristas* settled and where they were later killed and buried. As Campos Johnson suggested, renaming “Belo Monte” as “Canudos” was part of the double gesture of inscribing it in history and of effacing it as an experience. The images of Conselheiro, too, as I have tried to argue, were responsible for creating and effacing the history of “Canudos.” Both the name and the images, however, have been re-appropriated. And the ruins of the old and the new churches, which are now visible only in times of drought, have been re-photographed many times (see figs. 21 - 23).

I have mentioned before that in a 2014 exhibition of Barros’ photographs in the Museu da República, the curator claimed a relationship between Canudos and the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro. This connection is not new. First, there is a historical reason: one of the versions of the history of the emergence of the first slum in Rio begins with the soldiers’ return from the Canudos battlefield. Without money or support from the state, they occupied a hill in the city center of Rio de Janeiro called Favela. Beyond this historical anecdote, Canudos has also re-emerged at the center of the struggles for the recognition of vernacular architecture and communitarian ways of life in informal communities. If the struggles for defending the permanence of the favelas against the constant threat of their removal can appropriate the image of Canudos, this is not only as a way of denouncing a past atrocity, but of rescuing its imagined future and recovering it as an alternate history.
Images


Figure 2 Pinheiro, Rafael Bordallo. "Paginas Tristes. Scenas e aspectos do Ceará (Para S. Magestade, o Sr. Governo e os Srs. Fernecedores verem)". *O Besouro* 20 July 1878: 120. Print.
Figure 3 "Guerra de Canudos (Bahia)", *Jornal Gazetinha*, 1896: 1. Print.

Figure 4 "O fanático e bandido Antonio Conselheiro" *Don Quixote*, 13 February 1897: 80. Print.
Left:

*Figure 5* Barros, Flávio de. *Flávio de Barros, fotógrafo expedicionário.* 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. *Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos.* 85.

Right:

*Figure 6* Brady, Matthew. *Brady, the photographer returned from Bull Run.* 1861. Library of Congress. Washington D.C.
Figure 7 Barros, Flávio de. Bóia na Bateria do Perigo. 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos. 77.

Figure 8 Barros Flávio de. Corpo Sanitário e uma jagunça ferida. 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos. 78.


Figure 13 Barros, Flávio. Divisão Canet. 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos. 72.

Figure 14 Barros Flávio. 7º Batalhão de Infantaria nas trincheiras. 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos. 75.
Figure 15 Barros, Flávio. 400 jagunços prisioneiros. 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. 
*Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos*. 82 - 83.

Figure 16 Barros, Flávio. Igreja do Bom Jesus (Nova). 1897. Museu da República, Rio de Janeiro. 
*Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos*. 68.


Figure 20 Detail view: Barros, Flávio. Igreja de Santo António (Velha). 1897. Instituto Geográfico e Histórico da Bahia, Salvador. Cadernos de Fotografia Brasileira: Canudos. 67.
Top Left:


Bottom Left:


Right:

Chapter II

The Putumayo Affair: Scars, Beautiful Bodies and Visible Evidence

His report might have been written by a machine - a painfully eloquent machine - so judicious, and free from bias and prejudices is its tone.

(Morel, King Leopold's Rule in Africa xix)

The immediate success of Os sertões transformed the previously unknown engineer Euclides da Cunha into a renowned writer. In December 1904, he departed on a new trip, this time as part of a binational survey commission of Brazilians and Peruvians sent to the convulsive region between the recently incorporated state of Acre and the Peruvian territory.75 Once again, the writer was engaged in the question of integrating the national territory and population, but instead of visiting the dry and sterile backlands – where he had seen the ruins of past climatic and geological battles – he headed up the great rubber River Purus into the wet, young, and “incomplete” Amazonian territory.76 Writing at the height of the Rubber Boom, Euclides da Cunha described a space where not only nature, but the human population as well, was fast-changing. While the sertão – its land and its people as isolated and preserved as “seeds [...] since pharaonic times” (Da Cunha, Folha de São Paulo, 15 Aug 1987) – revealed itself to the traveler as the “core of our nationality,” the Amazon presented him with a land in the process of formation, a land “without history,” invaded and “brutalized” by men before it was ready, complete.

Following his return to Rio de Janeiro, da Cunha started preparing Paraíso Perdido [Lost Paradise], which, as the author stated in a letter to his friend Francisco Escobar, would be “his

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75 A thorough account of Da Cunha's travel to the Amazon, Euclides da Cunha e o paraíso perdido, was published in 1966 by the historian Leandro Tocantins. See also Francisco Foot-Hardman' A vingança da Hileia and Susana B. Hecht's The Scramble for the Amazon.

76 Building on the works of Alfred Wallace and Frederick Hatt, Euclides da Cunha saw the Amazon as a kind of work-in-progress. For a concise account on the scientific references in Da Cunha's writings on the Amazon see José Carlos de Barreto Santana's “Euclides da Cunha e a Amazonia: visão mediada pela ciência.”
second vengeful book” (Da Cunha, *Obra Completa Vol.2* 1011). The sertanejo – who appears at the end of *Os sertões* as the “the bedrock of our race” (471-2) – returns as the migrant worker who, attracted by the promises of the rubber industry, becomes responsible for the reoccupation of the northwest region of the country, which had been drastically reduced by a rebellion that decimated its population in the 1830s. Rather than to a victorious “march to the west” from over-populated areas towards new frontiers, the occupation by sertanejo immigrants of the strategic region of Acre is described as a “disordered flight” of “all the weak, the useless, the worn out, the sick, and the suffering” from the great droughts of the northeast. Many died in the perils of the jungle and the cruelties of rubber tapping, but with time the remnant reckless beings, abandoned by the government in the Amazon wilds, had “risen from the dead, sprang from nowhere, and reclaimed their national heritage in a novel and heroic way, extending the fatherland to the new territories that they occupied” (qtd. in Hecht 431). This forgotten people, shaped within the core of the nation, would now, according to Da Cunha, reshape its frontiers.

This chapter will approach these disputed border regions of the West Amazon in the first decade of the twentieth century, when the rubber extraction was at its highest. We will be following, however, a different gaze – one in search of evidence, in the sense of proof, rather than of truth, and less concerned with the views of future historians than with contemporary (mainly European) public opinion, policymakers and parliamentary investigative committees. I

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77 The Cabanagem Revolt (1833-1840) was the largest rebellion in Brazilian history. The name "Cabanagem" refers to the wooded hut [cabanas] used by the poorest people living at the rivers banks, mostly Indians, mestizos and freed slaves. The conflict resulted in the death of approximately thirty to forty thousand people (both cabanos and the white elite), a huge impact on a population roughly estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand people.

78 See Hecht for a discussion of Euclides da Cunha's *Social History of the Amazon*.

79 In the first years of the twentieth century, a war between Brazil and Bolivia over the Acre Territories had changed the configuration of the northwest Brazilian frontiers, and at the time of Da Cunha's voyage a series of armed conflicts between Peruvian caucho gatherers and Brazilian seringueiros spread throughout the Peruvian border region. Da Cunha's mission was in part a border survey.
will focus on the written and photographic archives of the Irishman, and British consul, Roger Casement, who traveled with an investigative commission in 1910 to the Putumayo, an Amazonian region drained by the Igaraparaná and Caraparaná rivers. The Putumayo formed part of an unstable territory at the borders of Peru, Colombia and Ecuador, where rubber was commercially exploited by a British registered company accused of torturing and enslaving native communities.

Like Da Cunha, Casement denounced the destruction and brutality brought by civilization to the local nature and population – Casement's Amazon carries the scars of the violent encounter with civilization. But unlike Da Cunha, Casement did not picture the violence in the Putumayo as an event to be revealed and so overcome, but as a part of a continuous history of exploitation and enslavement crossing frontiers, from Peru and Brazil to the Congo and Ireland. Attentive to the encounter between the modern global circulation of commodities and a colonial-type system of rubber extraction and slavery, Casement is not so much concerned with revealing (and fixing) the true image of a past event, so as to signal the path for the construction of a future modern nation, as he is with producing material evidences that, like the rubber itself, could cross the Atlantic, linking the discourse of law with that of horror, legal evidence with humanitarian sentiment. The “document” of history had in Da Cunha an ontological dimension,

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80 In using the term “humanitarianism” throughout the chapter, I follow authors who consider that, although the history of humanitarianism dates back to the emergency of moral sentiments in philosophical reflection from the eighteenth century onward – connected to shifting notions of pain (Amato), the rise of sentimental literature, and the spread of capitalist markets (Haskell) – it was in the nineteenth century, with anti-slavery and missionary movements, that humanitarianism became prominent among cosmopolitan publics in Western capitals nations and empires (Barnett; Burroughs; Haskell). The term “humanitarian” was used for the first time in 1844 in England. Although Casement's task and position as British consul was not strictly humanitarian, he worked directly in connection with the Anti-Slavery Society and E. D. Morel, who “served as a center of calculation, receiving and redistributing firsthand testimonies through humanitarian networks” (Burroughs 9). Moreover, Casement saw the mobilization of the public opinion as a crucial aspect in the success of the Putumayo case (i.e. in any chance of reform to ameliorate the working conditions of the Indigenous populations) – having even worked personally as an advocate and fundraiser for a missionary expedition to be sent to the region.
aimed at revealing a final image of Canudos; in Casement, “documents” are material, embodied proofs, capable of convincing the powerful and making them interested in the suffering of the Putumayo populations.

Casement compares himself to Sherlock Holmes, the famous detective created by his friend the Scottish writer Arthur Conan Doyle, navigating “colonial space” – the space marked by the violent encounter between Europeans and “natives”, but also, as Casement judiciously categorizes, “Peruvian white men” and “half-breeds”, “Barbadian black men”, and “civilized Indians” – as the scene of a crime. In this space, however, the normal frontiers between right and wrong, and criminal and victim, are blurred, inverted, or entirely inexistent. Casement describes Putumayo as entirely lawless, a disputed piece of the jungle in which not even the “corrupt” Latin American states ruled, and as a threat to logic and language. In Putumayo, crimes are committed in the name of civilization, victims are described as killers, slavery is named trade, bodies are treated as goods and investigators have to act like criminals. If, on the one hand, Casement searches for visual traces of the crimes committed against the indigenous populations, on the other, he affirms that nothing should be taken “at face value” in the Putumayo.

Anthropologist Michael Taussig has defined Casement's report on the Putumayo as an “objectivist fiction”. I intend, here, to explore what sort of concepts of objectivity and evidence appear in the archives of Putumayo atrocities, and what role is played in these by technologies of inscription. More than empiricist reproduction of a visible reality, both writing and photography appear in Casement's archive as gestures that simultaneously show and teach how to see, collecting and organizing, preserving and transforming the bodies and things he encounters. Casement thought that his task involved not only the referential gesture of repeatedly pointing to very obvious marks of violence, but also teaching the European public to read these marks –
providing, in the historian of photography Alan Trachtenberg's words, a pedagogy of the gaze.\footnote{In \textit{Reading American Photographs}, Alan Trachtenberg uses the concept of “aesthetic pedagogy” to refer to Lewis Hine's social photography. I will develop the relationship between Casement and Hine, who were both photographing in the 1910s, later in this chapter.}

The first of Casement's lessons concerns how to see the Putumayo natives' bodies. Situating Casement in the debates on the representation of distant suffering and the constitution of humanitarian discourses (Laqueur; Boltanski; Scarry; Fassin), I examine how the body of the “native” is turned into an object of pity and identification, both partaking in a common humanity and appealing to the spectator’s humaneness.\footnote{Here I follow Didier Fassin's emphasis on the double meaning of humanitarianism.} Observation alone, however, is not enough. The marked body of the “Indian” must be connected to a larger picture, one inhabited by causes and solutions, culprits and benefactors. Here, Casement's own position as both a British consul and an Irishman critical of British imperialism will play an important role. As he crosses the space of the Putumayo, going from one rubber station to another, Casement not only creates an archive of criminal evidence, he also tries to come to terms with the contradictions of his own position, obliged to work on the threshold between the objective and the subjective, legal reasoning and moral sentiment, imperialism and humanitarianism. The inscription in/of the body of the native will emerge as the site of these tensions.

Casement shot seventeen rolls of film during his 1910 Putumayo investigation. Most of them are lost, but the surviving photographs can be consulted today at the National Library Photographic Archive in Dublin. He also wrote two “diaries,” widely known today as the Black and White Diaries, and many letters to his British counterparts. Including transcriptions of testimony, Casement wrote several pages each day, working far into the night, sometimes drafting three versions of the same event. The so-called White Diary, or Amazon Journal, comprises his writings from 23 September to 6 December 1910, and was offered by Casement as
evidence to the Chair of the Select Committee on Putumayo atrocities in 1913. The Black Diary – written in 1903, 1910 and 1911 – contains more fragmentary and rushed notes, and was strictly private. The same events appear at times in both logs.

The Black Diary contains, within its unsorted pile of information, sexually charged notes revealing that Casement liked to have casual sex with men. The sexual content of the Black diary made it the center of a controversy that I cannot avoid mentioning. Since the diaries only emerged after Casement's arrest for treason in 1916, on account of his having attempted to recruit Irish soldiers and to provide German arms for the Easter Rising in Dublin, many have denounced them as British forgeries. The diaries did indeed help to silence appeals for clemency after Casement was sentenced to death. Extensive debate and forensic analysis, however, have formed a relative consensus that the diaries are not fake. Having no reason to see the Black Diaries as forgeries, I assume their authenticity. The transformation of the Black Diary into “evidence” against Casement also takes us back, as Robert M. Burroughs has suggested, to an old trope of travel writing that Casement tried to avoid: the so-called “mal de la selva”, which would link Casement's nationalist radicalization, his homosexuality, and a natural degeneracy of the tropics. According to some, Casement was corrupted during his expeditions in the Congo and the Putumayo, becoming doubly dangerous, both a pervert and a revolutionary.

Throughout the chapter, I will focus mainly on the analysis of Casement's White Diary – his writing “on the spot”, as he called it, in which he develops his ideas about contact, evidence, writing and, to a lesser extent, photography. In my occasional references to the Black Diary, I am interested not only in the sexual content and its later use as evidence against

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83 I rely mainly on Angus Mitchell careful and thorough published version of the Amazon Journal, as well as Mitchell's publication of the 1911 documents. For the Black Diaries, I use Roger Sawyer's edition. Some documents and letters are cited directly from Casement's archive at the National Library of Ireland.
Casement, but in the difference of its form and function in relation to the White Diary or Amazon Journal. While the first was a notebook where Casement jotted down information, things seen and done during the day, the latter contains more elaborate narratives and reasonings of the events; while the first was private, the second was probably written with publication in mind. I also eventually refer to Casement's letters from 1910 and 1911, and to the 1912 official report, also known as the Blue Book or "Correspondence Respecting the Treatment of British Colonial Subjects and Native Indians Employed in the Collection of Rubber in the Putumayo District," which includes pages of transcribed testimony from Barbadians who were employed by the PAC.

In the first part of this chapter I give a brief contextualization describing the Amazonian Rubber Boom, the slavery system established in the Putumayo, and the first appearances in the press of stories of the atrocities committed by the Peruvian Amazon Company (PAC), which led the British Foreign Office to appoint Casement to an investigative mission in the region. He traveled with three other Englishmen, who represented the English shareholders of the PAC. I am indebted to Michael Taussig's classic *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, in which he examines the role of terror in the creation a colonial reality, “nourished by the intermingling of silence and myth.” I follow Taussig's suggestion that Casement's “objectivism” should be read in relation to the proliferation of fantastic stories of atrocities being committed in the Putumayo circulating at his time. As much as da Cunha, Casement wrote not only in order to reveal an unknown reality, but in response to a “war” of images and texts on the region. Throughout the chapter, I take this suggestion further by exploring what Casement meant by “objectivism,” and more particularly by empirical proof, and how this affected questions of perception and inscription.
While Taussig's analysis focuses on Casement's Blue Book, his report for the Foreign Office, and its attempt to explain terror through a theory of labor scarcity, I focus on Casement's *Amazon Journal*. There the traveler-narrator appears as a more complex and developed character, a traveler both impressed and outraged by what he sees, and haunted by doubts and questions regarding British imperialism's role, and his own responsibility, in the state of things in the Putumayo. In this sense, Casement can be seen as part of a tradition of travel writing that Mary Louise Pratt defined as the anti-conquest – the employment of sentimentalism to claim new progressive knowledge with which to guide colonialist goals – although his engagement in the Irish cause complicates the idea of a univocal “imperialist gaze.” Building on the work of some of Casement's biographers, including as Brian Inglis and Ó Séamas Ó Siochàin, as well as Robert M. Burroughs' *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, I suggest that, in reading his Diaries, one should take into consideration not only Casement's background as an anti-slavery activist but also his engagement in the Irish nationalist movement. Burroughs, in particular, makes an insightful statement on the importance of Casement's growing involvement in the Irish cause and the role of the White Diary in expressing a critique of imperialism. This is an important point for the chapter's hypothesis regarding the primacy of Casement’s notion of “point of view”, or “way of seeing”, in his concept of “evidence.”

The second part of the chapter explores the relationship between archive and law, taking into consideration Derrida's notion of writing as inscription. I argue that Casement defines the supposed lawlessness of the Putumayo in relation to its lack of an archive or “book keeping.” I then analyze Casement's own compulsive writing as way to compensate for this absence. This

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84 Taussig's argument is that, in claiming a rationality of business, Casement is “obscuring our understanding of the way business can transform the use of terror from the means into an end in itself” (Taussig, “Culture of Terror” 479).
section also traces Casement's references to photography and its multiple “functions.” Photography first appears in the Amazon Journal as either, like writing, a technology of inscription and archivization, or as a distracting toy for making innocent images of ethnographic subjects.

The third part discusses Casement's emphasis on the body of the native as the site of truth, of the inscription of violence. If, on the one hand, Putumayo lacks a modern bureaucratic archive, it has, on the other, a barbarous mode of writing on the body. Many authors who have written on humanitarianism or, more broadly, on political discourses and images based on the suffering of the others, call attention to the centrality of the body of the victim as the place of an inscription (Laqueur; Boltanski; Scarry; Fassin and D'Halluin; Twomey). Casement is not an exception, spending great part of his report, diary and photographs pointing to scars on the bodies of the indigenous men and women of the Putumayo. The referential gesture, however, should not be taken as an empiricist creed, and Casement realizes that not everyone is able to see these, as seeing is a question of point of view.

The fourth part develops Casement's concept of point of view in relation to photography. The discussion hinges on two main photographic debates: the first regards the problem of photographic realism and the ghost of forgery that has marked its use in the context of humanitarian, reformist or missionary campaigns. The second aims at shifting emphasis away from a discussion of the truth value attributed to the indexical nature of photography to focus instead on the materiality of photographs (Edwards, *Material Beings*), their “volume, opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world” (Batchen 2), and the “corporeal” (MacDougall) dimension of photography-making. I begin from MacDougall's concept of embodied knowledge to suggest that Casement considered both the material and immaterial aspects of photography as
“evidence.” The excess of this embodied experience can be found in Casement's somewhat erotic photographs. Through them, the space of terror also reveals itself as a space of pleasure, populated by beautiful bodies.

The importance of “point of view” in the pedagogical project of humanitarian campaigns, will lead us to the final section, in which I discuss the story of the journey of the Huitoto young men Omarino and Ricudo to London. Through following Omarino and Ricudo's trajectory, the relationships between aesthetic and evidence, as well as humanitarianism and imperialism, will gain more defined contours.

One last issue regarding the structure of this chapter is related to the relationship between writing and photography. Rather than separating the two, I follow the ways that different dimensions of “evidence” and “document” are manifested in both technologies of inscription. For Casement's emphasis on the materiality of evidence itself challenges a narrative that separates the verbal and the visual, ascribing the first to writing and the second to photography. In Casement's archive, writing and photography acquire different meanings and functions, but both are united by their capacity to link the material and the imagined, simultaneously reproducing, signifying and circulating the traces of the seen and the unseen crimes of the Putumayo.

1. The Putumayo as Devil's Paradise

   We three, late last night, agreed that the situation was really incredible — that no one could believe it.

   (Casement, Amazon Journal 172)

   By the end of the nineteenth century, rubber was catalyzing local, national and global images of progress and catastrophe, of virtue and moral decay. One sees this captured in Werner
Herzog's filmic portrayal of Fitzcarraldo, the opera lover who, in order to access a rich rubber territory that would provide him the money to build an opera house in Iquitos, Peru, decides to transport a steamship over a steep hill. The movie, which claims to be based on the true story of a 19th-century Irish rubber baron, is about the delirious dream of a civilized man in the jungle; it also includes a scene in which an Indian dies underneath the ship, crushed by the dreams of civilization. These rubber legends marked the growth of the modern Amazon towns of Manaus and Iquitos – the opera house in Manaus is still held high as the great symbol of the civilizing of the jungle – and also the deadly conflicts that occurred throughout the vast Amazonian territory.

Along with the Acre that da Cunha visited and the Putumayo witnessed by Casement, other parts of the northwest Amazon became strategic in the wake of the vertiginous growth in demand for latex in the second half of the nineteenth century. From 1870 to 1909, British finance drove the Amazon rubber industry forward and pushed the rubber frontier farther west. Deadly confrontations between Peruvian and Bolivian caucheros popped up in the upper Amazon, at the borders between Peru, Colombia and Ecuador, until some rubber barons – among them Julio Cesar Arana, who founded the company that would later be registered as the Peruvian Amazon Company – achieved a relatively stable monopoly over the rubber extraction in the region (Hecht 183-184).

The bicycle craze of the 1890s and the popularization of the automobile after 1900 further increased the market demand for rubber, which began to outstrip the means of supply (Weinstein 8-9). Given that it was not until 1910 that rubber plantations became economically viable, the rubber trade in this first decade of the twentieth century depended heavily on the extraction of wild Amazonian rubber. While this process was not significantly different from the traditional

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85 My historical overview of the rubber boom relies mostly on the accounts of historians Barbara Weinstein, Michael Stanfield and Richard Collier and geographer Susanna Hecht.
indigenous modes of rubber harvesting, the system of exchange employed resembled the one that
had marked the commercial exploitation of the Amazon in colonial times. What perplexed
travelers like da Cunha and Casement was the striking contrast between the technologically
advanced, highly capitalized rubber goods industry and an Amazonian primitive system of
rubber extraction based on colonial – and “criminal,” in Da Cunha's words – modes of
exploitation of the work force. In 1907, one year after the magazine Kosmos published da
Cunha's article describing the debt peonage system in the Brazilian Amazonia (Entre os
seringais), the Iquitos newspapers La Sanción and La Felpa published articles denouncing the
atrocities being committed by the rubber company owned by Casa Arana against the Indigenous
communities of the Putumayo, which far exceeded the violence the Brazilian traveler had
described.

In the same year, Arana attracted British investment to his business and registered the
company in England under the name Peruvian Amazon Rubber Co. The word “Rubber” was
(“tactically,” according to Burroughs) taken out of the name in 1908. Scandal only reached
British public opinion in 1909, when an article by the young American railroad engineer Walter
Hardenburg appeared in a London-based financial watchdog magazine called Truth, accusing
rubber traders of, in Casement's words, “devilish things” (Amazon Journal 73). Hardenburg and

86 It is important to note that there was a significant difference between the methods of extraction for the two main
types of Amazonian latex: the caucho (from Castilloa trees) and the seringueira (from the Hevea braziliensis),
the first predominant in the upper parts of the Amazon region and the latter primarily but not exclusively in the
Brazilian territory. Caucho extraction required killing the tree, so exploiting it was a nomadic but highly
profitable activity. The total latex extracted from one caucho tree could be compared to the returns of one year of
tapping seringueiras. The tapping of Hevea trees, on the other hand, was less profitable in the short term but
more sustainable in the long run. They were tapped for only a few days a year by a sedentary population. Caucho
was largely worked by native labor under varying forms of coercion. Hevea trees were tapped by migrants in
more or less stable settlements under many forms of labor deployment, including debt peonage (Hecht 183-184).
The Putumayo contained both types of trees. It was the Castilloa that “first attracted itinerant Colombian rubber
traders to the region in the latter part of the nineteenth century. […] In only twenty years the caucheros had
destroyed most of the Castilloa stands. They then turned their attention to Hevea” (Goodman 31).
his American workmate Walter Perkins had been to the Putumayo in 1908, in the middle of the conflicts between Arana and the Colombian caucheros. Their trip, which began in Colombian territory, was part of a project to construct a railway that would link the Brazilian town of Madeira with Mamoré in Bolivia. The Americans, however, never reached their destination. While hosted in a Colombian rubber station they witnessed an attack by the PAC's employees, and ended up being detained by the Peruvian rubber traders and stripped of all their belongings.

The same day that Hardenburg got back to Iquitos, a Peruvian newspaper published an article celebrating Peru's victory against the Colombian invaders, and mentioned that an American engineer had arrived safely on one of the PAC's boats (Goodman 24). During his stay in Iquitos, while working to pay for his return trip home, Hardenburg collected information and affidavits from witnesses of the criminal activities of the PAC. These included not only the violence against the Colombian traders that he had witnessed, but also rumors of horrible actions being committed against indigenous populations. Hardenburg's manuscript, describing an incomparable regime of terror, torture and slavery, ended up in the hands of Reverend John Harris, an important figure in the Congo Reform Association, who recommended him to the editors of Truth. Although Hardenburg himself had not witnessed any mistreatment of Indigenous subjects, his texts reproduced accusations of enslavement, death from starvation, inhumane flogging, castration, dismemberment, and the worst kinds of torture. Some testimonies were given by men who had travelled from Barbados to the Putumayo, under a formal agreement to work for the PAC. Entitled "The Devil's Paradise: A British Owned Congo," the series of articles published by Truth were to a great extent, as Michael Taussig has shown, an elaboration of the articles published by the investigative journalist Benjamin Saldaña Rocca in the Iquitos newspapers La Sanción. Hardenburg’s manuscript was published in book form in 1912, together
with a fragment of Casement's report which had come out this same year.

In the weeks following the publication of the *Truth* article, many British periodicals, including *The Saturday Review, The Spectator, The Economist, The Nation*, and specialist magazines such as *The India Rubber Journal* and the *Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines’ Friend*, published texts on the Putumayo (Goodman 187). Given the scandal, the pressure from the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, and the public outrage that a British-owned company could be involved in, and British men from Barbados employed for, such atrocities, the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey was persuaded to send a representative to verify the truth of the nightmarish stories narrated by Hardenburg. The dramatic stories seemed too incredible – as Casement himself would note – to be true. More specifically, Arana was already attempting to deny the allegations, presenting the shareholders of the company with “documentary proof” – a check from a Iquitos bank – that Hardenburg was a “forger” and had tried to blackmail him.

Sir Roger Casement, who was the British Consul in Brazil at the time, seemed the perfect figure to take on the mission. Not only he was already based in Latin America, he had the necessary experience and credibility. His travel in 1903 to the upper Congo to investigate stories of abuse related to the rubber trade was a crucial part in the British humanitarian – and pro-free trade – campaign that helped to change the Congo's situation, and culminated with its annexation to Belgium in 1908. Unlike other travel accounts of atrocities at the time, Casement's Congo report was written, according to government officials, in a “quite dispassionate style,” “free from all traces of exaggeration” (qtd in Burroughs 70), and was the first to provide testimonies from

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87 In *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, Michael Taussig has explored in detail the role of myth in the creation of terror.
88 This was studied as a genre in Burroughs *Travel Writing and Atrocities*, which offers a more comprehensive historical exploration of the different moments of the British humanitarian Campaigns.
local Congolese victims. Both the Congo Report's “objective” style and its use of testimonial accounts from Congolese subjects\textsuperscript{89} – which transferred the description of scenes of torture and suffering into the supposed words of victims themselves – was a good fit for the official, diplomatic role Casement was asked to perform. According to Robert Burroughs's historical analysis of British humanitarian campaigns of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Casement's Putumayo report represented a move from a style of travel writing on atrocity that focused on the subjectivity of the traveler, based on the “confession of ‘darkest’ secrets and ‘inner savagery’” into a more legal language (47). If Casement's Putumayo report can be described, as Michael Taussig suggested, as an “objectivist fiction,” capable of turning the dramatic narrative published by Hardenburg (as well as others that circulated at the time) into a credible document, he had been developing this style at least since his Congo mission.

In the Putumayo case, however, British participation in the crimes was more intricate than in the Congo, for not only had the English shareholders failed to acknowledge what had been going on for years, while they profited from the forced labor of the natives, but, in addition, British subjects from Barbados, employed by the PAC, were themselves implicated in the atrocities as both victims and perpetrators. In the Congo, despite the delicate diplomatic situation, Casement could be the representative of a more humane empire accusing another imperial regime of truculence and barbarism. In Casement's Congo report, it is not imperialism per se that is questioned, but only an inhumane version of it.\textsuperscript{90}

But in Putumayo Casement not only faced a different scenario but had himself become more involved in the discussion and criticism of British Imperialism (Inglis; Burroughs). After

\textsuperscript{89} Robert Burroughs has argued that Casement's report on the Congo was the first to include testimonies of local victims.

\textsuperscript{90} In his correspondence with the acting secretary of the Congo Reform Association, E.D. Morel, both seemed to agree that free trade was an antidote to the tyrannical regime of Leopold II.
his time in the Congo, Casement returned to Ireland, where he became involved with nationalist representatives, joined the Gaelic League, read the literature of the Irish Cultural revival and published his first articles critical of British rule in Ireland. In her article “With the eyes of another race, of a people once hunted themselves,” Margaret O’Callaghan refutes biographers who tend to see Casement's consular years as separate from his nationalist last years, arguing that “the relationship between Casement’s British consular career, his mounting anti-imperialism, and his increasingly more self-conscious nationalism, is complicated and dialectical, not linear and sequential” (49). The publication of his *Amazon Journal* by Mitchell importantly showed that Casement's diplomatic career and nationalist tendencies were much more contradictory and intertwined than had been previously thought.

I do not intend to bring a new contribution to the debate over Casement's biography, but it seems important to take it into consideration when analyzing the many different documents Casement produced during his Putumayo trip, particularly his *Amazon Journal*. Casement's dedication to the Irish cause and his resentment against British imperialism certainly contributed to making his work as a British consul full of contradictions. On the one hand, he maintains in his texts a vehement criticism directed towards Iberian colonialism in general, which, in contrast to the British version, “came not to till the soil, or possess it or found a great civilized people — but merely to grow individually rich on the forced labor of the Indians whom they captured and have held for centuries.” The “Black Legend”, the demonization of the Spanish empire,

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91 The phrase “The Black Legend” was coined in 1912 by a Spanish journalist in protest of the characterization of Spain by other Europeans as a backward country whose history is marked by its violent conquest of the Americas. Casement not only draws upon the Black Legend, but in many passages refers to a natural violence of Spanish races. It is interesting to note that, during the Putumayo Affair, a Peruvian magazine *Variedades* published a caricature of the crimes of the Putumayo (Indians hanging as in a meat market, scenes of flogging etc) entitled: “How the English see us” (Chirif and Chaparro 183). For a debate on the Black Legend and its relationship with race see Walter Mignolo's *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires*. 

provided at the time a powerful ideological sanction for the English involvement in the New World. Casement's official Putumayo report for the Foreign Office carries little traces of his discomfort with British Imperialism. This could hardly be different, since this document was not only produced under the aegis of the Foreign Office but was literally edited by its personnel. In Casement's Amazon Journal, on the other hand, the narrator takes a slightly different position. The opposition between a more civilized British and a more barbarian Latin Empire does not disappear, but a new one emerges along with it. Through the distinction between himself (as an Irishman) and his English counterparts (the representative commission of the PAC who traveled with him), Casement distinguishes colonized and colonizers, implicating the British empire in the oppression of both Amerindians and the Irish people.

According to the consul, the representatives of the PAC were more worried about financial issues than the suffering of the natives. In the Amazon Journal, Casement frequently rages at their lack of humanitarian sensibility, and even their blindness, for they seemed to not see what to him was very clear: that there was no factory and no labor in the Putumayo, only slavery and extermination. His central task seems to be to convince the commission of the veracity of this account. But one is never sure if this “truth” is the one that was most visible, or instead a reality told in testimonies and circulated in stories but never given to the eyes. This is because the two “figures” of Putumayo – the factory and the site of extermination – seem, rather than in static opposition, to switch according to the viewer's point of view. This “point of view,” however, is not only spatial, but also historical.

In a passage from a letter he sent to his friend Alice Green in April 1907, Casement affirmed that, while still in the Congo, he had realized that his knowledge of Irish history helped him to understand what was going on there:
I knew the Foreign Office would not understand the thing, for I realized that I was looking at this tragedy with the eyes of another race of people once hunted themselves, whose hearts were based on affection as the root principle of contact with their fellow men, and whose estimate of life was not something eternally to be appraised at its market price. And I said to myself, then, far up the Lulongo River, that I would do my part as an Irishman, wherever it might lead me to personally. (MS 36,204/1)

Seeing empirical evidence is not so obvious as it would seem, and perception is affected by moral and historical variables. In *Techniques of the Observer*, Jonathan Crary argues that the nineteenth century invented the post-Kantian notion of “subjective vision”. Beginning from Goethe's experiments with colors and his discovery of the retinal after-image – an image that prescinds from an external referent – Crary discusses the abandonment of a model of vision and epistemological principle based on the camera obscura and the emergence of the body of the observer, in all its contingency and specificity, as “the active producer of an optical experience” (69). Vision becomes a complex of elements belonging both to the observer's body and to external data. If perception, on the one hand, becomes physiologically embodied, it also becomes inseparable from memory and desire.

We will further discuss this embodied view later on. For now, I would like to remark that Casement relates the incapacity of the British to see the truth to an imperial history, and thus to their own participation in atrocities. The imperialist point of view manifests itself in the individual character as “greediness.” This contrasts with the Amazonian Indian's lack of a “competitive streak.” According to the quasi-ethnographic piece “The Putumayo Indians” written by Casement for the *Contemporary Review* in 1912, Amazonian indigenous tribes are
morally superior, “averse to bloodshed,” “brave, intelligent and capable,” “exceedingly modest,”
“cheerful and courteous,” “submissive,” and “socialist by temperament, habit, and possibly, age-
long memory of Inca and pre-Inca precept.” Later, he would refer to the Irish peasants of
Connemara as "white Indians" (qtd in Inglis 46). He also compared, in 1914, the debt-peonage
system used in the Americas with the Ireland-England relationship:

The hacendade holds the peon (indentured Peruvian or Putamayo slave) by a debt
bondage. His palace in Mexico city, or on the sizal plains of Yucatan, is reared on
the stolen labour, whose bondage is based on a lie. The hacendade keeps the
books and debits the slave with the cost of the lash that scourges him into the
fields. [...] Ireland is the British peon, the great peon of the British empire.

(O’Callaghan 46)

This positioning is an important aspect of the construction of the narrator in the diary as
swinging between his role as British consul condemning Peruvian savageness, and that of an
Irishmen who identifies with all the victims of British greed. Robert Burroughs has already
suggested that Casement's Amazon Journal allowed him to express what he could not in the Blue
Book, namely, “his discovery of a British complicity with murderous colonial regime, and to
portray himself as an Irishman” (123). Maybe the most radical comment Casement makes in this
direction occurs in his description of a conversation with one of the station chiefs, who showed
him on a map where Indians had set fire to Colombian houses, and the “last risings” against his
authority had taken place: “I only said ‘more power to the Indians,’ but as he is not an Irishman,
in spite of his name, he did not follow” (Amazon Journal 229).

There is some evidence to suspect that Casement was thinking of the future publication of
the White Diaries. Very early on in his investigation, on August 24th 1910, after a conversation
with a Mr. Victor Israel, a trader from Iquitos with whom he happened to share the same boat trip, Casement expresses a preoccupation regarding the future readers of his notes: “Should he ever read this conversation — supposing I were to some day publish a book on my travels in the Amazon — he will doubtless deny every statement I here attribute to him, and probably accuse me of being a drunkard because I drink Irish whiskey at table and he never takes anything stronger than Appolinaris” (*Amazon Journal* 81). In the following years, he received offers of publication from firms like Heinemann and T. Fisher Unwin, which he declined (Wylie 82), probably because he was not authorized by the Foreign Office to do so. The consul did offer, however, a copy of the Diary to Charles Roberts, Chairman of the Parliamentary Select Committee enquiry (P.S.C.), along with other documents of evidence he felt might be relevant to the enquiry: “The diary is a pretty complete record and were I free to publish it would be such a picture of things out there, written down red hot as would convince anyone” (qtd Mitchell, *The Amazon Journal* 36). It is as a particular kind of evidence, a document made to persuade and educate, that I believe the diary should be read, rather than merely an *aide-mémoire*.92

Differently, the Black Diary, which carries the phrase “PRIVATE DIARY” boldly written twice in Casement’s hand on the front, and was also written “on the spot,” has no reader in mind but himself. Burroughs' reading of the diaries begins from the idea that while the White Diary was thought to be a semi-private document in which Casement, not so constrained by his role as a British consul, could express his Irishness,93 Casements' homosexuality was kept private

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92 A different view can be found in Leslie Wylie's *Colombia's Forgotten Frontier: A Literary Geography of the Putumayo*.

93 One interesting example of Casement's desire to portray himself as an Irishman is the fact that, when requested by Travers Buxton of the Anti-Slavery Society to send a picture for use in the Putumayo campaign, Casement sent one taken in Tory. In the letter, he wrote: “Everyone save myself in the picture speaks Irish as their mother tongue. The old men, the girl next to me and the young man on the opposite side (brother and sister) are all wonderful Irish speakers, singers and dancers.” Should Buxton make use of it, “you must include all the rest of
in his Black Diary. I would add that the differences between the Amazon Journal and the Black Diary also reflect Casement's double task: that of inscribing what he saw, what he perceived and what impressed him, and that of teaching how to see. These different dimensions of the humanitarian “document” are reflected in both the diaries' form and use.

The so-called Black Diary is a kind of log in which the consul jotted down, in a more careless, rushed and abbreviated fashion, varied information – from work-related issues, which reappear in a more elaborate form in the Amazon Journal, to sexual matters. Instead of complete phrases, with subject, verb and object, one frequently finds only the object, usually accompanied by an adjective: “young choclo with erection.” Whether describing a muchacho who bears a scar of flogging or a man with whom he had a sexual encounter, the Black Diary seems to respond to an urge to document: names, places, times, the amount he paid for sex or the size of a man's member, such as in “Down left leg about 6–8″.94

In a letter to Charles Robert, Casement mentions the existence of two different logs: “Notebooks” composed “when I was actually on the march & away from the table & pen, and a “Diary” written “far into the night” (Casement, Amazon Journal 128). If the first log is marked by a desire to inscribe, to repetitively leave the mark of bodies carrying the signs of pain and desire, the second is driven by the political task of classifying, elaborating, and weaving things and events jotted down “on the march” into narratives and economic, political or ethnographical analysis that could connect an European public to the suffering of a far-away people. The White Diary both purifies and complements the content of the Black Diary, leaving out the forbidden desire and also the trivia. There are not many moments of relief in its dense and painful reading,
and nothing seems to be left without connection to a broader meaning. The White Diary contains many subjective and self-referential passages, but these usually refer to the investigation, and express Casement's outrage and despair, or hope and conviction – prompting readers' sentiments in two distinct ways, leading towards political action, pity and indignation. Casement becomes an important character in a travel narrative that does not focus on the usual obstacles and adventures of the jungle (shipwrecks, mosquitoes, etc.) but on the obstacles imposed by men: lies, farces, or blind indifference.

2. Archive and Law in the Putumayo

Writing is on the side of the law; law lives in writing. Free compulsory schooling is the modern means to assure the memory of the severity of the law. Thus, no one can plead forgetting.

(Pierre Clastres)

“There was no Law, no Authority on the Putumayo,” Casement wrote down in his diary on September 25th (129). Upon his arrival, after a nine-day river journey, at La Chorrera, the headquarters of the Peruvian Amazon Company in the Putumayo, the consul was told by one of the Company's employees, Mr Tizon, who had been sent out to the district a few months before in preparation for the Commissioners’ visit and was a well-respected citizen of Iquitos, that there was no authority to which he could report if ever he needed to:

We had been informed categorically in London that the charges against the Company were impossible, because the Peruvian Government maintained an efficient administration in the Putumayo, and here was Mr Tizon admitting that

95 See Luc Boltanski's Distant Suffering.
96 Tizon is described by Casement as the only employee of the company who is not a criminal, who acknowledges the misdeeds practiced there and who has a “good heart” and genuine desire to change things: “Tizon is not strong, but he is honest. He is not self-seeking or money-grubbing.”
nothing could be done, even to investigate the terribly grave statements made by these British subjects against Peruvian citizens, because this was “a very peculiar region,” and lay practically outside the jurisdiction of civilized authority (*The Amazon Journal* 129).

Although in this passage the author expresses surprise in the face of this affirmation of Putumayo's externality from the space of civilization, it should be no shock for anyone familiar with accounts of expeditions in the tropics, as Casement himself was. For example, Rafael Reyes, the future president of Colombia, whom Casement cites frequently, affirmed in 1874 that his pioneer voyage to the Putumayo had brought “hundreds of steamers carrying industry and civilization to the virgin forests where cannibals formally wandered” (qtd in Wylie 5X). Furthermore, the consul was aware that the description of the space of Putumayo as barbarous or uncivilized had been an important artifice in the legitimation of the use of force to convert its “savage” populations into civilized “laborers.” Similar discourse relating the savagery of the jungle to the cannibalism of the “Indians” was used as part of the PAC's own propaganda to protect its monopoly and to defend its activities in the region. On a letter from December 1909, archived with Casement's papers at the National Library of Ireland (MS 13,087), the rubber baron César Arana defends himself from the accusations published in *Truth*, saying that some of the PAC's employees “were sacrificed at the cannibal feasts of certain tribes.” The British consul not only underlines the passage, but ironically notes, on its margin: “How naughty!” Casement knew, even before going to the Putumayo, that his work involved defending the humanity, innocence and even docility of the indigenous population, as well as convincing the public

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97 For a historical account on travel writing in the Putumayo see Wylie's *Colombia's Forgotten Frontier*.
98 Mary Louise Pratt named this traveller who saw nature as raw material – and natives as laborers – the “capitalist vanguard.”
opinion that barbarity was brought by the “‘civilized’ intruders” (Casement, Correspondence Respecting the Treatment 227). Putumayo, for Casement, was not an isolated case, but part of a history of “400 years of Latin American dealings with the conquered” (The Amazon Journal 83-4). Evocatively, Joseph Conrad suggested that “some particles of Las Casas' soul had found refuge in his indefatigable body” (Burroughs 66-7).

At the same time, the supposed externality of Putumayo from civilization, its “peculiar” lack of any legal apparatus – which set Putumayo apart even from the Congo, where “sometimes Congolese justice intervened, and an extra red-handed ruffian was sentenced” (183)99 – also appears in the above quote as the condition of possibility for affirming the truth of the singularly horrid stories of barbarity and atrocity that had been circulating in the newspapers and were published by Hardenburg. As Michael Taussig (Shamanism) has notoriously suggested, the “horror of the jungle” – the reaffirmation of the “space of death” that constitutes the space of the colonial encounter – was still a way of making sense of what was happening there. In this context, Casement had to concern himself both with gathering evidences, concrete traces of the horror, and with correctly and effectively distinguishing victims from perpetrators, a task which, according to the French sociologist Luc Boltanski, is a crucial step in the formation of public “causes” based on the observation of suffering of others.100

If public opinion was to be mobilized and political action taken, it would be necessary to

99 Casement affirms that while Congo “was Slavery under Law, with judges, Army, Police and Officers, often men of birth and breeding even, carrying out an iniquitous system invested with monarchical authority, and in some sense directed to public, or so-called public ends,” what he found in the Putumayo was “slavery without law, where the slavers are personally cowardly ruffians, jail birds, and there is not authority within 1200 miles, and no means of punishing any offense, however vile” (183).

100 In Distant Suffering Luc Boltanski begins from Hannah Arendt's concept of “politics of pity” to argue that the “public sphere” was not solely constructed around debates on the important questions of the moment, but also around causes based on the spectacle of the suffering of distant others (30-1). Based of the observation of a distant suffering, the “politics of pity” is not based on direct help or charity, but on a political commitment to act against the causes of the suffering.
strictly identify who was the “criminal” and to attribute responsibility. In the case of the lawless space of the Putumayo – a border region, disputed by two states and, according to Casement, ruled by none – this seemed to be a peculiarly difficult task, for roles were frequently inverted, and the truth was never given easily. As important as collecting evidences of the maltreatment of the Indians was gaining control of the narrative that explained it. This is obvious, for example, in one of the iconic images of the horror of the Putumayo's, the photograph of a squalid dead body which was published in Hardenburg's *Putumayo: The Devil's Paradise*. The image had been circulating in the previous years both by Peruvians and by Colombians as a proof of each other's crimes (see fig. 24).

In her discussion of images of pain, Susan Sontag (*Regarding the Pain of Others* 36) shows that the exploitation of the volatility of photographic images by different sides of violent conflicts is a common practice, reminding us that an image that evokes pain and death is not necessarily capable of attributing political responsibility. Both Arana and his detractors seem to have believed in the importance of controlling this instability of photographs to mobilize the public opinion. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Arana commissioned different photographers to portray the region controlled by his Company. Among these was Portuguese documentary filmmaker Silvino Santos, whose shootings of staged performances by the Huitoto and other Indigenous groups was referred by Santos as “the most beautiful film I've ever taken in my whole life” (qtd Martins). As Luciana Martins recounts in *Photography and Documentary Film in the Making of Modern Brazil*, “The negatives were shipped to Lima to be sent off to the United States, where they would be developed for showing in cinemas, in addition to being incorporated into an official report. But a German submarine put paid to these plans, sinking the ship and sending Araña's visual ‘evidence’ to the bottom of the Pacific Ocean” (18). Silvino Santos, who would become one of Brazil's pioneer filmmakers, also left photographs of the Putumayo, some of which were published by Carlos Rey de Castro – then Peruvian consul in Manaus, and an advocate of the PAC. In their careful composition and posing, they show simultaneously exuberant and ordered nature and natives, as well as a peaceful harmony between “whites” and “Indians.” They are the exact opposite of a savage image.

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papers – which were partly recovered after the explorer's disappearance in the jungle – caused one more controversy regarding the evidences of Putumayo horrors. While some attribute responsibility for Robuchon's disappearance to Casa Arana, whose employees supposedly killed the traveler after he had taken photos of flogging and torture, Arana argued that Robuchon was killed by Indians. In 1907, Casa Arana and the Peruvian consul in Manaus, Carlos Rey de Castro (who played an important role in Arana's defense), published a version of Robuchon's diary accompanied by a selection of his found photographs, both of which stressed the civilizing role played by the Company (see fig. 25).

In Casement's diary narrative, the investigator crosses the space of the Putumayo – which coincides with the geographical spread of the PAC's rubber stations – as a space occupied by conflicting images, ghosts of starving, flogged Indians, but also of cannibal tribes (see fig. 26) and disappeared explorers. That is why he must discriminate between false and true images, constantly describing characters and their physiognomic traits, judging intentions and “hearts,” identifying culprits or levels of culpability. Everyone's position must be determined. Casement reminds himself of his own responsibility in the enslavement of the natives when he realizes that his clothes are being washed by unpaid women or that the house where he stays is the product of indigenous forced labor:

I said that it was all very well for Tizon to say I was his guest, or the Company’s guest, I was really the wretched Indians’ guest. They paid for all. The food we eat, and the wine we drank, the houses we dwelt in, and the launch that conveys us up river — all came from their emaciated and half-starved, and well flagellated bodies (161-2).

This gesture of recognition of his own role in the exploitation of indigenous work is also
what differentiates Casement from the other commissioners. The culpability of the Englishmen is usually described as being based on omission and greediness. The PAC's English shareholders ignored the accusations that had been circulating in the press against their own company, and in the meantime they profited from the Indians' work. They averted their gaze because they had an interest in doing so. This connection through omission also allows, as Luc Boltanski has shown, for a way of consolidating distant responsibility with the public: “the most distant spectator continues to draw a personal or collective profit from the suffering of the unfortunate to the extent the he is a member of a nation whose collective wealth is the result of the exploitation of poor nations” (16-17).

Then there were the local agents. The Barbadians had been participants in past crimes, but they were also themselves victims, obliged by the debt-peonage system and the use of force to flog and even murder Putumayo natives. Their guilt is further expiated by their testimony: they are the brave men “who brought their accusations on the spot, who were prepared to submit them to investigation, and to make them in the presence of those they accused” (Casement, Correspondences 216). The true criminals are the Peruvians who obliged their employees to commit brutal acts against the local tribes, and the “government of Peru, far off, uncaring” (The Amazon Journal 278). Even among the PAC's Peruvian managers, however, there were different levels of monstrosity, the worst of them being Normand – the manager of the last station Casement visited – who is described as a “sickly, pale, lame youth, flushing easily, with a washed out skin and a profile and nose like Lefroy, the murderer of my boyhood” (197).

The true victims are, evidently, the “docile Indians.” But to make the whole system of labour exploitation even more perverse and confusing, some young indigenous men, the so-called muchachos, were “armed and exercised in murdering their own unfortunate countrymen,
or, rather, Boras murdering Huitotos and vice versa for the pleasure, or supposed profit, of their masters. And this is called ‘civilising’ the wild savage Indians!” (136). Casement mentions in his diary having taken a photograph of an Indigenous boy only to find out later he had been involved in the bloodshed: “The boy I photoed on Saturday was the muchacho de confianza of Flores, and he, I was told by Donal Francis on Friday, has ‘killed plenty of men’, although only a lad, and was not yet ‘fully civilised!’” Was the boy a murderer or a victim, Casement asked, and “when later on he ‘revolts’, who will kill him?” (136). Nothing in the Putumayo is simply what it is, but must be connected to a story that explains its positioning in a hierarchy of horror.

The only absolute victims are the “uncivilized Indians,” the same ones who, in the popular imagination, are dangerous cannibals. They are also, as we will see in the next section, the ones who did not speak, or whose voice could not be heard in the process of the investigation. As is not uncommon in humanitarian campaigns, it is in their bodies – in the body of the victim – that Casement will read the truth of Putumayo.

After “convincing” Casement of the lawlessness of the Putumayo, Mr. Tizon convinced Casement and the other members of the commission that, given the absence of legal authorities, they should not confront the chiefs of station with the crimes they were accused of. They should not break the appearance of normality and “bring to light a state of things that cannot openly be tolerated” (120). There could not be any doubt, however, as to why Casement was there and what the rubber traders were being accused of, since the (incredible and now intolerable) accusations were being published in Peruvian and international newspapers alike. Why then was it important to pretend?

According to Casement, once evidence came to light, it would be immediately effaced or re-signified: either through some subterfuge or by turning the Barbadians (the main sources of
testimony) into scapegoats. Roles would be inverted, words misplaced, and speech obliterated. Not only photography but words as well were dangerously unstable. The problem, in the Putumayo, seemed to be the lack of a law in language, guaranteeing its logic and permanence. Anything in the Putumayo seemed dangerously imprecise, nothing should be taken “at face value,” and the truth should not come to light at the cost of losing its truth-value.

The investigators had, therefore, to play their part and navigate this “atmosphere of crime, suspicion, lying and mistrust” (124). Casement found himself having to act as a criminal, disguising his own intentions as an investigator and “afraid of being found out” (121). Every time he registers in his diary any kind of innocent activity – which often coincides with what would be expected of an European traveler in the tropics, such as observing “the plants, sugar cane etc, with butterfly nets, camera, etc., as if just off for a stroll” – this is presented as an attempt to “keep up appearances” (153), as if he were pretending to build a botanical or ethnographic archive rather than a criminal one. In fact, among what remains of Casement's photographic archive in Dublin, there are a handful of images that could be part of any Amazonian expedition, picturing “a big Indian dance” (which was staged for the commission by the chief of station Velarde) or portraying a Huitoto man in traditional costume (see figs. 27 & 28).

Gielgud, the English commissioner, also took photographs, but Casement expressed criticism of his taste. The commissioner – a kind of auditor of the PAC – plays the part, in Casement's narrative, of the greedy English businessman who is incapable of seeing the evidences of torture. Not surprisingly, Gielgud's photographs are nothing more than clichés:

The Commission are now “inspecting” outside, and Gielgud taking happy snapshots of interesting natives with painted faces and sticks in their noses. What
I should like would be a photograph of all the female staff of the establishment,
and then their names, capacities, salaries, and cost to the Company or surrounding
Indian population given below each place. Not a difficult thing to do (193).

In this passage, Casement seems to suggest that whether or not photography could be
useful for the PAC's British investigative commission depended on its inclusion in a bureaucratic
archive. Analysis of modern bureaucratic archives inspired by the work Foucault – such as those
of Alan Sekula and John Tagg – have focused on how the invention in the nineteenth century of
these systems of identification, which join visual and written information, was an essential
part of modern governmentality. If it is necessary, according to Casement, to reframe the
space of Putumayo as a factory and its population as laborers, this is in order to inscribe the
“Indians” in a legitimate modern bureaucratic apparatus, and maybe even to compensate for their
exclusion from, according to Casement, “a common bond of citizenship” (503) in Spanish
American countries. By being identified as “laborers,” and individually identified in terms of
their contract, their salary and function, they would exist in a certain space – an international
space – subject to certain laws.

But Casement's suggestion that Gielgud's role, as a representative of the PAC, should be
to build a bureaucratic archive is merely a rhetorical one. In fact, Putumayo's lack of
documentation serves as evidence of its externality from civilization, its lawlessness: “They say

102Roughly between 1880 and 1910 photographic archives became central to a growing number of disciplines, from
anthropology to psychiatry, from art history to criminology.
103For a detailed study of the invention of systems of archival cataloguing and systematization of photographs, such
as that of Bertillon, see Sekula's The Body and the Archive.
104One of the first connections between law and photography was made by Talbot, referring to his famous calotype
of shelves containing “articles of china”: “should a thief afterwards purloin the treasures – if the mute testimony
of the picture were to be produced against him in court – it would certainly be evidence of a novel kind.” In fact,
according to law scholar Jennifer L. Mnookin, among the most common uses of photographs in the courtroom by
the end of the nineteenth-century were images of properties, forged signatures visible in enlarged exemplars of
handwriting, and other types of images capable of “proving” presence, ownership and identity.
that there are no books, no documentary proof, practically of anything. When they ask for a
certain account or paper required here to elucidate the matter under discussion, Sr Velarde says
it’s gone to Chorrera” (168). Casement is referring to payroll, accounting statements, bills, and
contracts. If there are no employment records in the Putumayo, there is not only no modern law,
but also – and this functions to demystify the PAC’s use of the vocabulary of modern labor to
refer to their slavery system – no “work”: “Here are no books at all, they say, nothing but
blancos lolling in hammocks, idle (often absent) muchachos, who go and come into the forest
armed, but never a stroke of work of any kind done on this so-called factory. No one works”
(168).

Casement begins his official report by stating the terms of the contract between the
Barbadians and the Company. If the making of modern archives is related, as Sekula has
suggested, to the dream of a universal language, the contract establishes a kind of legal ground, a
written document, from which to define the illegality of the activities of the PAC. The exclusion
of the natives from this bureaucratic archive – due to the nonexistence of any written contract –
confirms the inapplicability of the modern notion of labor in the region. What is found there,
says Casement, is not labor, and not even slavery, for, as property, “a slave was well-cared for
and well-fed, so as to be strong for his master’s work” (142-3). It is instead “extermination”.
This is the obliteration not only of human beings, but of the memory of their obliteration:

I pointed out to Tizon, returning from the Indian house, that it seemed to me the
“pay sheets” should include all the numerous lower class personnel of each
station. He said they already knew at the Chief Stations all this local staff. I asked
if they were sure of names and capacities, and he said yes. I then asked if they
ever enquired what had become of, say, a muchacho, whose name might
disappear from the list. He talked a little, but it had evidently never struck him, and it was clear that no enquiry is ever made, even if these lists exist in anything like correct form. The pay sheets of the higher staff are clearly inaccurate, as even I can see (160).

Casement's critique of the lack of a bureaucratic archive contradicts, however, his critique of imperialism, for it somehow assumes that the Putumayo could or should be a British factory. While in some passages Casement points to the fact that the Indians would not work for rubber if they were not forced (because they do not understand the logic of accumulation), dictating that all labor in the Amazon is necessarily imposed through violence, in other passages Casement's contradictory adhesion to the binary of civilization versus barbarism leads him believe that atrocities would not happen if the Putumayo were a modern bureaucratized space.  

The threat of the disappearance of the natives, the lack of a bureaucratic archive and the supposed lawlessness of the Putumayo all seem to influence Casement's decision to moderate his own investigation and accusations against the Station Chiefs. He is convinced by Tizon that the best thing for the future of the Indians would be a reform of the PAC that Tizon himself would carry out, firing all the wrongdoers. An explosion of scandal and a consequent withdrawal of the British company from the Putumayo would be a disaster:

If the company failed him, or if, by reason of these charges, the Company were to disappear, and he saw that the fate of the country lay with the Commission, then the last state of the Putumayo Indians would be far worse than the first. In the place of a powerful British Company, able to insist on change, there would be left these desperadoes up country, who would “form themselves into companies” —

105It was only after the Second World War that a modern rational and systematic logic of extermination – Hannah Arendt's Banality of Evil – would become systematically thematized.
they would not go, they would unite, and make 20 companies of freebooters and robbers, where today one only existed. Let the Company be preserved; let the Company back him up (131).

Hence in the name of the relatively benign presence of a modern apparatus, a British commercial enterprise in the region, Casement agreed not to confront the rubber traders directly and to “shake hands with” every “monster” he encountered. Even though the Commission played the role of harmless explorers very well, there was one “suspicious” activity that Casement could not avoid: “my constant writing in my bedroom” (173). While going for a stroll with a camera and a butterfly net in hand could be seen as an innocent activity, his compulsive writing “in his bedroom” – thus analytical writing, not note-taking – could not: “I cannot help it. I try to do as much as I can at night, but one gets very tired in this climate, and often I give in and go to sleep” (174). In contrast to the lack of written documents in the Putumayo, the consul writes compulsively, day and night, even as he starts to feel the effects of an eye infection that obliges him to bandage the left eye and threatens him with blindness. Curiously, when referring to the implications of a possible blindness, Casement never mentions a fear of not being able to see the evidences of crimes, but instead dwells on the effects of eye disease on his writing.

He writes to “keep track of things” and to let an unstable experience leave an indelible mark:

So much depends on noting at the time and writing down at the time, leaving as little as possible to memory and the vague chances of recalling correctly, or not recalling at all. Much is lost in any case, and all I can do is try and record as promptly and as clearly as may be my thoughts, my perception of things and such facts as arise (279).
Contrary to Euclides da Cunha, who frequently expresses his insecurity about writing at the moment, and for whom truth unfolds gradually, with and in time, even if it remains contradictory, Casement instead sets out from the truth – however incredible or intolerable it may be – and must then find its traces in the world, and collect, classify and elaborate them. But instead of building an archive of empirical data, what he inscribes is already mediated, already his thoughts and perceptions. For perception and memory, as well as fact and impression, seem to be, in Casement's case, always intertwined.

3. The law written in the body: photography, writing and corporeality

Everywhere and without exception, the reinvented writing directly bespeaks the power of the law, be it engraved in stone, painted on animal skin or drawn on papyrus. Even the quipu of the incas can be regarded as a type of writing. (Pierre Clastres 177)

But what does Casement see in the Putumayo? What he does not see are the tortures and assassinations narrated in the testimonies of the Barbadian men. On September 4th, while still in Iquitos, he states: “The Barbadian, Frederick Bishop, informed Mr Cazes and myself that when Captain Whiffen was in the Putumayo all his movements were known and wherever he was going things were ‘cleared up’ before he arrived” (98). Casement's travel to the Putumayo to verify the veracity of testimonies previously published by Hardenburg begins, contradictorily, with the conviction that he will not see any crimes. So what evidences or documents of torture does he find?

Contrary to what Casement himself initially suggested, he came to acknowledge that the Putumayo had its law, even if it was, according to him, a barbarous one: “In a region so remote, where no civilized jurisdiction existed or government authority was exercised, the agents of the
so-called trading bodies had and have supreme control” (226). And if the law, according to the anthropologist Pierre Clastres, is always written, because it rests on memory, Casement finds the law of Putumayo inscribed in the bodies of the natives. This section discusses two gestures contained in Casement's writing: the transformation of the oral testimony of Barbadians into written texts, and the re-inscription of scars through the referential and repetitive gesture of pointing to and photographing them – as well as the ways in which Casement weaves these two together.

Before departing to La Chorrera, the headquarters of the PAC, the consul spent two weeks in Iquitos, where he began to gather evidence against the company, mainly testimonies from their former Barbadian employees. Among these was Frederick Bishop, who, besides having served at several different rubber stations in the Putumayo, could speak Spanish and “a ‘bit’ of Huitoto” (Casement, *The Amazon Journal* 103). Bishop ended up joining the investigative commission as Casement's servant and interpreter. In the first entries of his Amazon Journal, the consul mentions that the commission was unable to find an interpreter in Iquitos who could understand the different dialects spoken in the Putumayo region. He bemoans this fact many times throughout the trip, frequently alluding to what the “uncivilized Indians” – the only completely innocent victims in the situation – might say, and the horrors they could reveal. Along with his lack of a better interpreter, Casement's position as British consul did not allow him to interrogate the Amerindians – which would be seen as an interference in Peruvian autonomy – but only subjects of Barbados. More than as a translator, Bishop ends up appearing in the Irishman's Amazon Journal as a kind of second narrator, a character who punctuates Casement's observation of people and things with a story – usually retelling scenes of torture or murder that he either witnessed or heard about.
But, conversely, the testimonies of the Barbadian men need confirmation from “the evidence of our own eyes and senses” (Casement, *Correspondences* 216). As evidence, the testimonies are haunted by a problem of credibility, for, as Casement himself stated, they sound “incredible and unreal, and a gross exaggeration” (163). In the case of Putumayo – as in other examples of atrocities, genocide and torture – witnesses have usually been part of a group historically persecuted and identified as the “other,” the moral negative of the social body to which the testimony is addressed. What provided the Barbadian testimonies with their truth value – the fact that they were given by those who participated in the criminal events because they had no other option, because they themselves were survivors of the history of Atlantic slavery – was simultaneously what made their voice less credible.106 “It is evident that men of this class, some of them illiterate, all of humble calling, many demoralized by long years of savage indulgence, would sometimes be untruthful from fear or unworthy motive” (*Correspondences* 288), says Casement in his Blue Book. Adding to their status as semi-uncivilized and illiterate (again, one can see the relationship between law and writing), their narratives suffered from a downside common to all testimonies of atrocities, namely, the passage of time, forgetting, and systematic obliteration.107

Thus, Casement must confirm the charges *in loco*, and find material proof, resistant to the

106 Many of the issues raised by John Beverly in his analysis of Latin-American Testimonial literature (a genre born in the 60s, but whose precursors can be traced back to abolitionist and humanitarian texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth-century) apply to Casement's use of the testimonies of the Barbadian men. Although not in the context of a gesture “against literature,” the affirmation of their truth value is based on the sincere intentions of the narrators despite (or because of) their simplicity, and authenticity can be seen in a supposedly direct transcription (without mediation) from the witnesses' speech. Casement repeatedly emphasizes the sincere intention of the simple Barbadians, their urge to speak as the cause of the testimony and his effort to transcribe their exact words. At the same time, the same criticism made of the "unmediated" character of the testimonials of the 60s can be applied to Casement's: he is evidently the co-author of the testimonies that he not only wrote down himself, but conducted, through questions and even pressure on those who he thought were not speaking the truth.

107 Secrecy and obliteration were largely thematized in the debates about Auschwitz. See for example Didi-Huberman's *Images in Spite of All* and W. Laqueur's *The Terrible Secret.*
mediation of time and free from the uncertainties of speech: the direct inscription of violence in the bodies of the victims. “The condition of these people was itself the best proof,” said Casement, “of the truth and often of the singular accuracy of the Barbados men's declarations” (Correspondences 288). The double inscription of testimonies and visual evidence was the only guarantee that the memory of the men from Barbados would not be effaced. Nonetheless, as we will see later, nothing can truly guarantee this, and even the visibility of the scars, for Casement, ends up being as subject to doubt as are the testimonies.

For now, let us stay with the plan that Casement had set up since before his departure, and his confidence that he would see in “the condition” of the Putumayo peoples the visual evidence he needed. The presence of the scar in Casement's diary is almost redundant. Its force lies in the repetition of the gesture of pointing to, inscribing and simply recognizing its presence. If Bishop's narration punctuates Casement's observations with a memory of torture, the inscription of the scar usually interrupts the scenes and actions – a walk, an indigenous ritual, an encounter – as the reminder of the “real,” the invisible horror, that lies in the background every event and permeates all the relationships in the Putumayo. The power of the scar – or of the wretched body of the “Indian” – to cause a fissure in the farcical spectacle of peace could not be better exemplified than in the scene of a Huitoto ritual dance the chief of Occidente prepared for the arrival of the commission. The whole scene begins as an ethnographic spectacle: “From 11 a.m. the Indians began to arrive for the dance. Men, women, boys, girls and children ‘on back,’ not children in arms, the women mostly stark naked and generally painted, sometimes quite

108The debates on the representation (or irrepresentability) of the Nazi extermination camps, in which Claude Lanzmann has been a central figure, have put testimony and archival images on opposite sides. The latter, according to Lanzmann would do more harm than good to the memory of atrocity, rendering it banal. In his response to Lanzman, Didi-Huberman argues that the problem is asking from the image more than it can give, demanding that it represent the entire event, when it is only a trace, a vestige of history, but which for that reason can teach us something about it.
artistically in yellow and red, and feather fluff on their legs” (141). Briefly, the description of body paintings and costumes start giving way to the signs of violence, and the parade gains a somber tone: “The men are all under-sized, some half skeletons, at least very underfed, and with wretched arms and legs” (141). A longer quotation gives a better idea of how Casement skips from one gaze to the other:

The dance began irregularly in parties and processions, and gradually enlarged and developed. We photographed many — Gielgud and I. We visited the Indians’ house (the muchachos house) where the Indians were dancing both in afternoon and evening. I saw many men, and boys too, covered with scars, and often drew the attention of the others to this, but they were looking for themselves. Some of the men were deeply graved with the trade marks of Arana Bros, across their bare buttocks, and the upper thighs, and one little boy of ten was marked. I called Bishop and we both verified it, and I tried to photo him. One boy had red weals across his backside quite recent. The Commission was more than ever convinced by Velarde’s lying to them yesterday. He had declared that no one had been flogged at Occidente since he took charge in January last, and that only one “labourer” (that is to say only one forest Indian) had run away (142).

I will return to Casement's ethnographic gaze later. But first, I would like to remark how the bodies of the indigenous men and women become the place of an inscription: an inscription of power and an inscription of truth. In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry calls “analogical verification” this recourse to the visible, material body, in discourses that aim at transforming pain into a political argument. “Humanitarian narratives,” as Thomas W. Laqueur has argued, have focused on details of victims' individual bodies as both “signs of truth” and “as the object
of the scientific discourse through which the causal links between an evil, a victim, and a benefactor are forged” (177), since upon the sight of a suffering victim one either speaks out or becomes complicit with the violence. In this sense, the French sociologist Luc Boltanski has similarly argued that the individualization of suffering and its visibility in singular bodies has become an important way to “affect the sensibility” of the modern viewer, an appeal to its commitment to a cause. The wretched body of the victim is not only the proof of a crime, but the moral imperative to undertake ameliorative action (179).

That the scarred body becomes a sign to be read and a trigger for political action is related to what Foucault called the “modern economy of punishment” (75), which relegated the public ritual of torture to the sphere of the deviant, inhumane and barbarous.109 In “Of Torture in Primitive Societies” Pierre Clastres, whose work, like Foucault's, is largely inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogical critique of modern values, proposes an alternative reading of torture that exposes the contingency of western modernity's way of dealing with the body. He argues that scars in “primitive societies” are a sign that the individual went through a ritual of passage that gave him access to the group.110 The marks of torture left on his body remind him that he is equal to all. Scars are the unspoken memory of the secret imparted by the tribe, which is the consent to membership, and, thus, to equality. This is obviously not the case in the Putumayo, where torture was used to impose the power of the rubber traders over the indigenous people. In

109 For a discussion of the modern concept of "torture" and its relationship to what it means to be human in modern times see Talal Asad. For more on modern ways of conceptualizing suffering see Joseph Amato's Victims and Values, and Ian Wilkinson's Suffering: a sociological introduction.

110 In Clastres we hear the echoes of Nietzsche, whose Genealogy of Morals is one of the most vehement criticisms of the Christian/modern way of dealing with pain: “[i]f something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory. […] Man could never do without blood, torture, and sacrifices when he felt the need to create a memory for himself; the most dreadful sacrifices and pledges (sacrifices of the first-born among them), the most repulsive mutilations (castration, for example), the crudest rites of all the religious cults (and all religions are at the deepest level systems of cruelties), all this has its origin in the instinct that realized that pain is the most powerful aid to mnemotics” (61).
both cases, however – or in any case, according to Pierre Clastres – the body is the memory of law. For the “civilized” (humanitarian) gaze, the scar should be read as the sign of crime, a mark that binds terror and tortures of civilization to the horror of savagery.

In Casement's diary, the scrutiny of the indigenous' bodies seems to work with the mechanical rhythm of a factory, or of photography, through the machine-like reproduction of the same gesture. The gesture of the traveler is that of pointing to a referent: “I saw,” “I showed,” “There were,” “I photographed.” This gesture becomes the mark of his encounter with the local populations. Hence in one rare instance when he is alone with them – described as a cheery and intimate moment, full of laughter, patting of the shoulder, holding hands “again and again” – the “Indians” themselves “pointed to the stripes and scars over their hips and thighs” (267). There is an obvious sensuous character to this encounter, and to the referential gesture of pointing to the scar. In the impossible oral communication between the Irishman and the Boras and Huitotos, it is this gesture that gives access to bodies of the Putumayo – their buttocks, limbs, and arms, which are described in detail by the consul – and legitimates the gaze of the humanitarian benefactor over them.

Casement's most iconic image of the Putumayo is a photograph of a young indigenous boy, standing up, his back turned to the camera and showing marks of flogging (see fig. 29). This boy is an incontestable victim, not only a child but a thin, vulnerable one. One can see the young boy's bones as he stands still. But there is something more in this photo, a less obvious positioning. In the background, a horizontal tree trunk crosses the image, at the exact height of the boy's scarred buttocks. The texture of the fallen tree, which serves as a bench to two men, the horizontal lines of its bark, mirror the texture of the boy's scars. These are the only horizontal elements of the image, which has four planes: at the front, the boy; then a tree stump on the left,
followed by the trunk-bench where two men, possibly Barbadians, sit; and, lastly, the blurry forest, the unknown horizon to which the gaze of the boy – who is otherwise trapped between the photographer and the Barbadians – can escape. It is a quite geometrical composition that ends up emphasizing the boy's tree-like verticality. He stands between the Barbadians and the photographer (spectator), but we do not know what he is gazing at (maybe the forest?). The stump on the left duplicates his legs. Also vertical are the two machetes that lie beside the Barbadians, who remain there as policing figures. The machetes used by Barbadians to cut their way through the forest were also, according to testimonies, used to “flog” the Indians.

Regardless of his own insistence on the lawlessness of the place, Casement seems to have understood the specificities of the law of Putumayo inscribed in the bodies of the natives. If he calls the scars the “mark of Arana,” it is because the bodies where they are engraved are treated as property. This treatment is evident, as Casement points out, in the local use of the term conquistar to refer to their method of gathering indigenous work-force: “An Indian tribe once ‘conquered’ becomes an extensive property of the successful assailant” (Correspondence Respecting 254). If this is so, the lash, machetes, Winchesters and cepos (leg stocks) are their main instrument.

While explaining the system of exploitation of rubber in the Putumayo, Casement explains that the “Indians,” rather than the trees, are the main object of the trader's quest:

[R]ubber centers situated in the heart of the forest – wherever, in fact Indians, and not necessarily rubber trees, were most numerous. The true attraction from the first to Colombian or Peruvian "caucheros," as the rubber collectors or traders are termed in the upper Amazon regions, was not so much the presence of the scattered Hevea braziliensis trees throughout this remote forest as the existence of
fairly numerous tribes of docile, or at any rate of easily subdued Indians

(\textit{Correspondences} 227).

In his diary, after the commission left the station to see rubber gathering and returned without having seen one single rubber tree, Casement expresses his rage at the Englishmen's blindness to the obvious reality of the Putumayo: "The whites in the station did not care a damn where the trees were, all they troubled about was where the Indians were," he says, adding that it was evident that “the only system was one of sheer piracy and terrorization, and if you lifted the lash you stopped the supply of rubber” (150). Under this non-civilized system, the question is “which will be exhausted first, the Indians or the rubber trees” (167). The poor condition of the men and that of the trees are, for Casement, indissociable, and they show the irrationality of the so-called “rubber trade.” Although Casement does not spend much time describing nature in his diary,\textsuperscript{111} the wretched trees, as much as the Indians’ bodies, become signs of men's deeds. He sees “branches and creepers they had torn down in their search for food”: “it was only when Señor Tizon and O’Donell assured me that this was done by Señor Normand’s Indians in their hunger desperation that I could believe it was not the work of wild animals” (qtd Wylie 87).

Casement's photograph of the young Huitoto boy is both a register of the “mark of Arana” and an image of the subjugation of man and nature by force. This subjugation is somewhat contradicted by the necklace worn by the child (a sign of his history and belonging to the Huitoto group) and by the wild forest, almost out of sight, but it still a powerful and unknown presence in the background.

\textsuperscript{111} In this, I disagree with Leslie Wylie's reading of Casement's fear of the jungle and its hellish nature. I believe Casement humanizes the jungle, reading it as the scene of a crime and avoiding the usual travel literature metaphors of docile or sublime, idyllic or hellish nature (in contrast with Euclides da Cunha, who made recourse to dozens of those metaphorsto the point that they contradicted each other).
4. The Humanitarian Gaze: Between Fact and Point of View.

The images which surround us will appear to turn toward our body the side, emphasized by the light upon it, which interest our body. (Bergson, *Matter and Memory* 36)

It is not surprising that Casement would take a photographic camera to the Putumayo as a way to register visual evidences of atrocities. In the first decade of the twentieth century, portable cameras had been available for almost three decades – Kodak released its first in the 1880s – facilitating a broad use of photography in reform movements and humanitarian campaigns by travelers around the world, or by reformist photographers in local slums and factories. Moreover, photography, as we have seen in the last chapter, had already been adopted in a range of different fields at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a tool to generate, with minimal human intervention, empirical knowledge of distant and unseen worlds.

Jonathan Crary, who studied the emergence of a subjective concept of vision in the nineteenth century, relates this phenomenon to the development of different optical technologies. Photography, according to Crary's account, would be part of a desire to build a machine capable of generating empirical knowledge and bypassing the limitations of human body. Though relevant, this account of the scientific search for objective knowledge is only one, and not the only, way of telling the history of photography. Casement's own uses of photography reveal different dimensions of this history.

In this section, I will begin by tracing the debates surrounding the representational power of photography in humanitarian campaigns, and identify where Casement seems to stand in this debate. Then I will suggest another, completely different, frame through which to understand Casement's photographs, one that takes into consideration the materiality of both images and bodies, rather than discussing how images represent bodies.
Regarding the “realist” effect of photography, we have seen in the last chapter that even as photography was employed to produce “evidence” it was simultaneously recognized as a volatile and unstable medium. In the courtroom, as law scholar Jennifer L. Mnookin has shown, photographs were commonly present by the end of the nineteenth-century, though their use was limited to illustrative purposes, rather than providing independent proof (Mnookin).

“Humanitarian photography”112 or anti-slavery campaigns, and other kinds of images of the suffering of others which were used in connection with campaigns to gather financial and/or political support for humanitarian, missionary, reformist or philanthropic work, became very early subject to public mistrust and accusations of forgery.113 American writer and journalist Julian Hawthorne, who reported on the Indian famine for the magazine Cosmopolitan in the 1890s declared that “photographs are incredible - we don’t believe them” (qtd in Curtis 24).

Maybe the most famous forgery scandal involved an Irishman, Doctor Barnardo, who ended up himself in court accused, among other things, of “issuing fictitious photographs” of street children he sheltered in his philanthropic Homes:

The girls of Mrs. Holder were sent by her to the Home, poorly but decently clad.

The eldest girl has been represented in photography in strong contrast with another representation of her as she appeared in the Home. In the first of those she is made to appear with bare foot and head, disheveled hair, and tattered dross, selling newspapers in the street. In this condition and employment she never was

(The Spectator 27 October 1877).

Other polemics regarded, as we have seen in the case of the photograph of a “starved

112 As Fehrenbach and Rodogno have noted, the term “humanitarian photography” itself has only been employed since 1990s.
113 This is one of the arguments of Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno in Humanitarian Photography: A History.
Putumayo Indian” published in Hardenburg's *The Devil's Paradise*, the question of the attribution of responsibility: although the image showed the suffering of an individual, this image could be appropriated by different parties and causes. Interestingly, besides this image, the only other photograph in *The Devil's Paradise* presented as an evidence of violence, the cover photograph of Indigenous men chained by their necks, was clearly retouched and has no information regarding its precedence, date, authorship or location. For Hardenburg, the shock caused by the evidence seemed to be more important than its “correctness.”

In *Picturing Pain*, an analysis of late-nineteenth century humanitarianism on display in American evangelical print journalism, Heather D. Curtis shows that many of the ethical debates about humanitarian imagery famously thematized by Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others* – such as whether it aids identification with the victim or results in a feeling of indifference and disgust, or whether it triggers action or disbelief – are well over a century old. In this context, different strategies of display and circulation of images of suffering were developed – lecture slides, pamphlets, books, graphics – with the aim of effectively triggering engagement into a given cause.

Casement could not have been unaware of these debates. The Congo Reform Campaign, for example, gained an important photographic corpus after engaging of the missionaries Alice Harris and her husband, the Reverend John Harris. This might have been the first systematic use of photography in a campaign to raise awareness to “crimes against humanity.”114 Presented in lantern-slide lectures, published in books and pamphlets, the Harrises' photographs and texts were a combination of a Christian rhetoric of salvation and the exhibition of sometimes

114 This expression, not common at the time, was interestingly used by Casement in his diary.
dramatized images of suffering. Kevin Grant has called attention to the fact that the Harris' methods and their religious representation of Congo crisis were initially a problem for Morel, who spearheaded the Congo Reform Association and became Casement's close friend. But he eventually united forces with the Harrisses, who “agreed to combine their secular and religious principles and goals in a single humanitarian narrative in the hope of reaching a wider spectrum of British society.” According to Grant, John Harris explained to Morel, “you appeal to the more educated classes and politicians, what I want to do is to appeal to the popular mind” (76).

Among Harris' photos, one encounters reenactments of flogging, a dramatic pose of a father looking at a daughter's amputated hand, and a missionary exhibiting the wounded body of a Congolese. Another device, not uncommon in propaganda material aiming to encourage financial or other types of contributions to charity or humanitarian work, was to stage before and after pictures of the subjects, showing they were being “saved” by the work done by the missionaries.

Casement's use of photography, which did not aim at a large public or adaptation into lantern slide lectures but circulated mainly among a select group of politicians and people connected to the Aborigines and Anti-Slavery Society, contrasted both with the Harrisses' and with Hardenburg's. This was not only due to his role as British consul, which restricted the scope of his mission and public, but because he aimed to portray himself as standing somewhat outside of the “war of images in the Putumayo,” as Alberto Chirif and Manuel Cornejo Chaparro have called the use of images to accuse different actors – Arana, the Colombians, or even the cannibal Indians themselves – of horrid deeds, and the mutual accusations of forgery that followed.

In opposition to the melodramatic style of the stories that had appeared denouncing the

115 See Kevin Grant's “The limits of Exposure: Atrocity Photographs in the Congo Reform Campaign”; and Christina Twomey's “Severe Hands: Authenticating Atrocity in the Congo, 1904-13”.

131
crimes of the Putumayo, including the one published in La Felpa and Hardenburg's article for Truth, Casement invented, according to Taussig, an objective, “exact” use of language. Casement's search for “exactness” can be seen in his obsessive treatment of his archive, which contains a massive amount of newspaper clippings, papers about the region, letters, and reports. Almost all of the documents are partially underlined and have comments written into their margins, and some are further discussed on loose pieces of paper. At the margins of an article published in the Inca Chronicle, for example, the consul points out its many factual errors: “For instance, it is incorrect to speak of Indian Villages being blown off the map,” while “there are no Indian villages on the Putumayo.” According to the consul, although the article was essentially true, in that the atrocities described occurred in the Putumayo, it contained so many refutable references, so many imprecisions, that it would be not hard for Arana to refute them (National Library of Ireland, 13087 / 8). About Hardenburg's article attacking the PAC, he wrote: “There are obvious exaggerations and misstatements, and often no doubt actual falsehoods, but on the whole we believe it gives a faithful enough rendering of the class of crime and the evil of the system these men were mixed up in” (Amazon Journal 198).

As I have been arguing, Casement's “objectivist fiction,” however, is not based on a pure empiricism. His most empirical “proof,” the marks of violence in the naked – Casement stresses this – bodies of the Indians are visible and obvious, shouting out “a tale” of torture; but they still must be pointed at: “Indeed the two broad patches on one man’s buttocks looked like burns. They were the scars of an extra deep cutting of the lash. All of us saw them, but I broke silence, and said, at large, ‘Two very incontrovertible burns, I must say’” (198). These images, or traces, are not only, to use Didi-Huberman's words, snatched from the “real,” but “from human thought in general, thought from ‘outside’” (Images in Spite of All 6). They are exposed, and yet they
have to be made visible, for to see them is a question of being able to imagine the worst kinds of torture. The question that remains, then, is what, for Casement, would be an exact image?

Although he could not be unaware of opinions regarding the representational powers of photography in relation to writing, including the discussions about forgery, this debate alone does little to reveal Casement's own conception of “evidence of the senses” and the role in it of technologies of inscription. For Casement, both writing and photography seem to be important, first of all, as inscriptions, as a memory or impression of Putumayo crimes in a material support. But they also seem to draw their legitimacy from the material conditions of their making, hence Casement's constant references to his writing throughout the night, his use of pen or pencil, the presence or absence or people around him, whether or not he had his camera with him, or the circumstances of his gesture of photographing – which sometimes followed a charitable gesture of giving food, or was followed by the reaction of a scared Indian.

In *The Corporeal Image*, ethnographic filmmaker David MacDougall advocates for an understanding of images that takes into consideration the embodied dimension of seeing, which involves not only the body of the other, but the body behind the camera and the body of the film itself: “Before films are a form of representing or communicating, they are a form of looking” (6-7). His reflections are part of a broader tendency in social sciences and the humanities to challenge the division between the material and the immaterial, or the material and the cultural. Derrida's attention to the primordiality of writing in language and Deleuze's concept of assemblages, which avoids a distinction between reality, representation and subjectivity, are at the roots of these tendencies. More recently, Bruno Latour has challenged the division between man and things in terms of a conception of the social as “path building” and “order making” activities of a network formed of both humans and non-human elements (4). There have been
multiple developments of these works in literary and visual studies,\textsuperscript{116} but MacDougall's emphasis on “modes of looking” seems to provide an interesting suggestion for thinking Casement's own emphasis on the material or corporeal gesture of “producing evidence” in his diary.

On the one hand, there is the question, that we have briefly discussed, of inscription, of the materiality of both writing and photography and their implications for the preservation of the memory of victims and witnesses. On the other hand, Casement speaks of a “way of seeing” that would ultimately determine the outcome of the investigation. Casement seems to put in motion not only a knowledge of the other's body, but a kind of corporeal knowledge, a knowledge generated by the body of the observer in the moment of the encounter and in the act of inscription.

Casement's conception of evidence in his diary combines the idea of an empirical proof and a non-empirical conception of perception, which we could call, using his own words, “point of view.” When narrating a conversation he had with Colonel Bertie, a participant in the Company's commission who had to return to England before their departure to the Putumayo due to medical reasons, Casement explains the intrinsic relationship between fact and point of view:

> When I said to him at Manaos “Do, please, impress this point of view on the others” and he answered “But it is fact, not opinion we want,” I had said “Yes, but much, very much depends on what point of view a man holds of this sort of thing.

\textsuperscript{116} These include, for example, Ariella Azulay's notion of the “contract of photography,” which “takes into account all the participants in photographic acts — camera, photographer, photographed subject, and spectator — approaching the photograph (and its meaning) as an unintentional effect of the encounter between all of these,” and Andrea Poole's notion of “visual worlds”. Scholars have also recently argued that the emphasis on truth value attributed to the indexical nature of photography has long obfuscated the materiality of photographs (Edwards, \textit{Material Beings}), their “volume, opacity, tactility and a physical presence in the world” (Batchen 2), not only their archival dimension — accumulation, circulation and organization of documents — but in the corporeal act of their inscription.
Facts fit in with it, or can be made to. There are fixed principles to be held fast to, and once you let go your grip of them, acceptance of anything becomes possible in the end, and there are your facts (182-3).

In this sense, one can compare Casement to his contemporary, the American reformist and photographer Lewis Hine, who became well-known for his photographs of child labor and immigration. According to historian Alan Trachtenberg, Hine, who would be identified \textit{a posteriori} as a father figure of 1930s American “documentary photography,” photographed not only to produce evidence of inhuman exploitation, but “to teach an art of social seeing” (Trachtenberg 192). The non-interventionist creed that underlined the “documental” in the thirties does not fit entirely with the photographic aesthetic developed by Hine.

Hine's aim was similar to that of the British anti-slavery society, but within the American national scope: to appeal to the consciousness of a liberal public opinion to pressure for legal reform. Evidently, Casement did not have the experience or the dedication to photography that Hine did, nor had he developed an aesthetic and a theory of reformist photography, but his conception of the ability to see the suffering of others as something learned parallels Hine's “concern with the process of seeing within the larger process of social ‘betterment’.” The context of imperialism and Casement's concept of seeing as “point of view,” however, have different implications, especially when considered in relation to Casement's involvement in the Irish nationalist movement.

In the context of global capitalism, imperialism and humanitarianism, point of view emerges as both a spacial and historical concept, for it refers to the place from which one looks and to the history one inherits through the places one has been. Perception, thus, as the philosopher Henri Bergson also suggested at the end of the nineteenth century, is not separate
from memory, and it is not only individual, but cultural and historical. In this embodied perception, the Barbadians, the English, the Peruvians, and Casement, the Irishman, each look at the indigenous body, and look at each other, from a different place. The “Indian” has remained until now the object of the gaze, as in the photograph of the young Huitoto standing between Casement and the Barbadian men, between the photographic camera and the machete.

But Casement also occasionally figures his own position through the projected gaze of the Indian, as in a photograph in which Casement puts together a Barbadian and three muchachos (see fig. 30). Explaining in his diary how this photo was made, Casement writes that, during an Indian dance, he wanted to photograph together some of the biggest Indians and a “typical negro, Sealy, standing between.” He wanted to show “how much bigger the stature of the negro is and illustrate the different build” (242), maybe in order to corroborate his argument that the Indians were fragile and not built to carry such an amount of weight:

Two members of the Guamaraes “family” were brought by him, with painted and designed bodies, and guns — trade shotguns — in their hands. Both looked more than disconcerted. It was not that they could not understand it, but they were afraid; there was the whole thing. To be called out from their fellows by a man they had often been flogged by and brought before the Viracucha (the white man) meant trouble. I told Bishop several times to reassure them, and when I had taken two photos of Sealy standing in between them they were told they might go. They went as they had come, without a word or a glance. Had I ordered them to be shot, to be cut up with machetes the thing would have been quite the same, I believe, and among the muchachos around, accustomed to these tasks, one could have found instant executioners (242).
This description fits well with Casement's desire to portray the Putumayo people as terrorized, as well as, even when armed, victims. If they killed, according to Casement, it was because their nature was naturally obedient. This photograph, however, echoes another situation of exchanging gazes that happened during another indigenous ritual organized by the Peruvians. During the spectacle, the commission was surprisingly surrounded “by gazing and smiling bands of both boys and men” and “Barnes, who is 6’4’’ (almost) was actually measured by one elderly Indian man with a thin rod.” Instead of him measuring the Indians, the Indians “carried off his measure of the tallest white man, or any other man, who has ever been in the Putumayo probably. He measured Gielgud and myself too” (143).

If knowledge is embodied knowledge, then the given (inherited) point of view is not fixed. What counts, for Casement, is the moving power of the image-body. If, as Luc Boltanski suggests, “the critical moment” of a politics based on the observation of the suffering of a distant other is “the swing to commitment,” Casement is in search of an image-body capable of leading spectators to take this leap towards commitment. Hence, to have a point of view, for Casement, also means to “take a position”, which, as Didi-Huberman has reminded us, is always to take a position (prendre position) in relation to something. And to take a position, you must know what surrounds you. According to Casement, “intelligence” and a “humane heart” are both necessary to understand how the Putumayo system works, and both affect the ability to see clearly. Unsurprisingly, Gielgud, the greatest example of blindness given by the consul, is described as someone who “cannot think very clearly”:

This is very much the point of view of Gielgud, so far as I can gather, that he has

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117 In a passage of Matter and Memory (1896) in which he explains how perception is entangled with memory, and image with matter, Henri Bergson describes the body as an optical machine: when it moves, the whole world moves, like kaleidoscope.
any fixed point of view at all. His powers of observation are certainly not acute, and he cannot, so far as I can see, think very clearly. His heart may be all right, but his mental powers are distinctly deficient when it comes to a human problem of this kind, for his heart and head must balance each other. [...] They say in one breath it is slavery, and then that it is a “commercial transaction,” that the Indian “owes” money to the Company. And this in face of all the lashes and scars, to say nothing of the murders, we have witnessed the last few days, or have been directly informed of. [...] An Englishman educated at an English University should be able to smell right and wrong in a case of this kind. This thing we find here is carrion — a pestilence — a crime against humanity, and the man who defends it, is consciously or unconsciously, putting himself on the side of the lowest scale of humanity, and propagating a moral disease that religion and conscience and all that is upright in us should uncompromisingly denounce (176).

Interestingly, Gielgud is the only other character in Casement's diary who carries a camera with him. In Casement's diary, most references to photography are above all related to the material gesture of making photographs. Until now we have seen three of such photographic gestures: first, there is the bureaucrat's gesture of building a factory's archive (which Casement suggests would be the role of the company's employees, particularly Gielgud, if Putumayo were really a factory). If he were to build this archive, Gielgud would be truly taking on his official position of an English manager of a legal business. This remains, however, only a hypothetical gesture.

Second, there is the ethnographic gesture, which in the diary narrative is frequently related to a “farce,” a scene set up either by Casement himself when he pretends to go for a stroll
or by the traders who organize a ritual in order to impress the commission. It also refers to Gielgud's lack of desire to see the ugly reality, preferring to take happy snapshots of the Indians. Nonetheless, a great part of Casement's archive is comprised of this type of photo. In the next section, we will discuss these in more detail.

The third photographic gesture that Casement refers to in his diary is the gesture of replicating the marks left by lashes. This gesture of photographic inscription is described as one among other gestures: seeing, pointing at, showing to others, counting. In one passage, for example, Casement affirms that about “90% of the Indians bore marks of flogging,” a estimate that his colleagues considered overtly exaggerated. In order to prove that he is right, Casement decides to carry out an experiment, asking his interpreter to ask the Indians present whether they had scars, after which all but one of them “exhibits their scarred limbs” (262). Neither a totally objective, empirical image, nor a subjective, expressive one, the gesture of pointing to and inscribing scars, in its redundancy, tells us something about our ability to see, to form images, and to be touched by them. In this group of photographs, I would include some which show Amerindians at work, carrying loads of rubber, and one image of a very squalid woman with her two children.

There is still a fourth group of photographs, among those that survived in Casement's archive, which shows another form of affection and knowledge (see figs. 31 - 34). Although they focus, like the ethnographic images and the photographs of scars, on the body of the native, these images are born out of more personal encounters, and seem detached from the whole setting of the rubber station. They are posed portraits of men (both “civilized” and “uncivilized” Indians, and “half-breeds”, to use Casement's categorization) in different places – possibly in Brazil and Peru – and they do not entirely fit the iconographic tradition either of the picturesque or of
ethnography. Unlike the photographs of Putumayo natives in the rubber station, there usually are
two or more photos of the same subject, with slight changes in light and pose, showing that
Casement, and the models who posed, took time in making them. In this sense, they can be
described as “studies” in portraiture. Some of them resemble other portraits, for instance the
bourgeois portraits Casement made of European men, revealing individual personalities, and
playing with shadows and the revelation of individual character. Others have a particularly
sensual and theatrical aspect. They are made in isolated scenarios (we cannot tell where and
when they were made) and in them the young men pose, shirtless, sensually, to Casement's gaze.

These photos were obviously not publicized by Casement, and only came to light in the
1990s, without gathering much scholarly attention. They reveal how Casement's gaze, or point of
view, was charged by the same sexual drive that one can also see in his Black Diary, through
which the body of the other is not only the place of inscription of a crime, but is desired and
desiring.  

It is interesting to note that even these photographic gestures are registered in writing, this
time in the Black Diary:

Sat down & I stroked knee & gave 10/- & cgttes & photos. Would like it I am
sure. Caressed hand too. His is a big one I know. To come on Saturday to passear
with me & get his photo taken. He is beautiful’ (qtd in Ó Siocháin, loc 10962-
10964).

The exchange of objects, the touch, the photograph, the visual impressions all determine

\[118\] In fact, the presence of desire in the nineteenth-century versions of the subjective gaze makes an interesting
appearance in Goethe's studies of the retinal after-image: "I had entered an inn towards evening, and, as a well-
favored girl, with a brilliantly fair complexion, black hair, and a scarlet bodice, came into the room, I looked
attentively at her as she stood before me at some distance in half shadow. As she presently afterwards turned
away, I saw on the white wall, which was now before me, a black face surrounded with a bright light, while the
dress of the perfectly distinct figure appeared of a beautiful sea green" (qtd in Crary 104).

140
the relationship between the two men. In this private written and photographic archive, the humanized space of Putumayo is not only charged with pain, but also with pleasure.

5. The Beautiful Body

I never saw gentler faces, or more agreeable expressions on any faces than on those of the two young men in their truly extraordinary garb. I shall get Arédomi painted and clothed in it at home, and have him photographed and presented to Dilke and the Anti-Slavery people at a great meeting! That will be an idea to enlist sympathy.

(Casement, The Amazon Journal 449-450)

Casement was cautious regarding the circulation of his photographs. In one instance, he had a “stand up fight with the Intelligence Bureau” for publishing a photo of him in the Putumayo: “I object very strongly to publicity and the idea of one’s photo in the papers is nauseous to me” (Ó Siochán Loc 6934-6936). A letter sent by Percy Browne, secretary of the Putumayo Mission Fund committee, also shows that Casement was reluctant to publish any of his photos of the Putumayo, although we do not know which photos he is referring to, or the reason for his reluctance. One reason might be related to Casement's having traveled as a British consul, subordinate to the Foreign Office. When Alfred Mitchell Innes, of the British embassy in Washington, suggested that the Blue Book should include the photograph of the scarred Huitoto boy – which had made the ambassador nearly cry – Sir Arthur Nicolson, the permanent undersecretary of state, felt that it was “inappropriate for a Blue Book to have photographs in it” (Goodman 188).

The “inappropriateness” of photographs in the Blue Book shows that emotional impact – more than value as evidence – was the usual measure of humanitarian photography. If Bryne, the ambassador, reportedly nearly wept at the sight of the image of the scarred boy, Roberts, in a
letter in which he praised Casement for explaining the system at work in the Putumayo, added:

“Some of your photographs haunt me, like the child with the load of rubber” (qtd. in Ó Siocháin, Séamas Loc. 12944).

If they were inappropriate to include in the Blue Book, they were also held back from press until the report was published, which due to political negotiations only happened two years after Casement's voyage. In 1912, after the publication of the Blue Book, some of Casement's images of the Putumayo appeared in a few newspapers (though no authorship was attributed), including the Daily Mirror and the Illustrated London News. In the Illustrated London News, images of “natives” were accompanied by quotations from Casement's report (see fig. 35). One photo shows, according to the caption, “a native boy, man and woman […] the last with palm fiber leg ‘bindings,’” and the others portray a group of painted men standing against an indigenous house and a Huitoto dressed for a ritual. There are also images of the rubber stations and the rubber boats. Instead of photos of scarred or underfed Indians, we see images of men and women in typical costumes and ritual situations (see fig. 27).

The afterlife of the photographs with ethnographic or picturesque interest – which in the investigative narrative of the Amazon Journal appear as a diversion from his main mission – reveals that they had a more positive dimension in Casement's Putumayo archive than the diary seems to suggest. Although Casement described the ethnographic spectacle as distracting, he took a good amount of photos of indigenous ritual costumes and body painting. Along with the scarred or starving body (which is also the tree-body, the main property of the PAC) and the desired body, the ethnographic body constitutes the third series of photographs of natives taken by Casement (for the laborer's body that would be the object of the bureaucratic archive did not exist, proving that Putumayo was not a factory).
This interest, as well as the later publication of these photographs, can be better understood by taking into consideration Casement's quasi-ethnographic paper, “The Putumayo Indians,” published in the *Contemporary Review* in 1912. In this piece, Casement presents a defense of the tribes of the region, portraying them as morally superior, “averse to bloodshed,” “brave, intelligent and capable,” “exceedingly modest,” and “socialist by temperament, habit, and possibly, age-long memory of Inca and pre-Inca precept.” This defense is a response, on the one hand, to the long-lasting representation of the Putumayo tribes as dangerous cannibals, and to the use of this allegation to justify the presence of the PAC in the region. On the other hand, Casement's ethnographic construction of “the Putumayo Indians” also contributes to the construction of a moral opposition. Contrary to the Peruvians, the Indians were averse to bloodshed. But also, contrary to the English (and thus maybe to the reading public), and the other imperialist nations, the Indians lacked a “competitive streak.” Through an aesthetic of the “exotic,” the photos were meant to appeal to the viewers' highest moral impulses. In this section we will see how Casement draws from both the picturesque and the ethnographic to develop an aesthetic of the “Indian body” aimed at provoking the most humane, disinterested support from the British public opinion.

Again, Casement focused on the material body, through physical encounter with the other, as a force of mobilization. Hence it is not surprising that he decided to take “two boys,” the Huitoto young men Omarino and Ricudo, alias Arédomi, to England upon his return. Early in his trip, on 8 October 1910, he had already mentioned that he intended “taking a boy home to try

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119 In this, Casement was not alone. Arana himself supported the publishing of photographs of the Indians of the region. In an ethnographic-style publication entitled "Los pobladores del Putumayo: Origen, Nacionalid," for example, Rey de Castro published an interesting photo-montage in which he compares the stature of an “Indian from the Putumayo” to a Peruvian Sargent born in Cuzco (Chirif and Chaparro 50). His aim was to suggest the Peruvianness of the Indigenous groups that inhabited the Putumayo region, and thus to claim its territory. In another photo-montage, a decapitated head appears among very young Indians, insinuating a cannibal feast.
and interest the Anti-Slavery people” (*The Amazon Journal* 203). In a letter to Henry Nevison, he said that he might bring the Indians not only so that the English could see them, but also so that they might “feel that touch of fellow feeling that makes one’s work better and fuller” (qtd Wylie, *Rare Models* 320). During their stay in London, from June to August 1911, the two young Huitotos, Omarino and Ricudo, attended many social events, including meetings in the Foreign Office, with the Archbishop of Canterbury, and with the Anti-Slavery Society. On 6 June, Casement brought Omarino and Ricudo with him to see the Duchess of Hamilton. As he stated in a letter to Gerald Spicer, a Foreign Office clerk: “I dressed the big Indian up – or undressed him up – at the Hamiltons – in his bark loincloth, his yellow and crimson plumes and leopard’s teeth. He looked splendid” (qtd Ó Siocháin Loc. 10821-10823).

The exhibition of “native specimens” in Europe was not an uncommon colonial practice, and Casement's actions seem to fit this mold exactly. At least this is what Leslie Wylie argues in the first thorough study of Omarino and Ricudo's stay in London. According to Wylie, Casement's exhibition of these young men reveals his complicity with imperialism, in opposition to a humanitarian gaze:

Despite Casement’s active involvement in pro-indigenous organisations such as the Aborigines Protection Society and the Anti-Slavery Society and his deserved reputation for humanitarianism, his exhibiting of the Putumayo youths as living curiosities and “native types” was consistent with what Timothy Mitchell has called the “machinery of representation” dominant in European imaginings of its racial and cultural Others (*Rare Models* 316).

There is no doubt that Casement participated in colonialist practices, as is evident in his

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120 See Roslyn Poignant's *Professional Savages*. 
infantilization of the Indians, who he portrays as docile and obedient, needing the help and patronage of a European man. His own methods of “acquiring” the natives – Omarino was “bought” with “a shirt and a pair of trousers,” and Ricudo, a married 19 year old, was won at cards – are revealing of his complicity with the colonialism he criticized. Casement's plain affirmation that he “bought” the natives in the Black Diary, however, is not without an ironic awareness of the Indian's status as “things” that he so vehemently criticized: “It is really buying the freedom of a slave” (*The Amazon Journal* 342), Casement said, adding that his intention “is that by getting some of these unknown Indians to Europe I may get powerful people interested in them and so in the fate of the whole race out here in the toils” (342-3). My main focus is not to discuss Casement's hidden complicities with the exploitation of the natives – although I cannot avoid mentioning these issues – but to examine how the circulation and exhibition of the commodity-body is one more side to the numerous facets of Casement's concept of evidence. I would like to stress that Casement was not displaying the scarred, suffering body, but rather the ideal image of the beautiful, romantic, Indian, in order to, according to him, touch people's hearts and minds.

Notably, the trajectory of Casement's interest in Omarino begins with a photographic encounter:

I sent to the store for a case of salmon and distributed tins galore to men, women, boys and mites […] They clicked their tongues and lips with joy poor souls and I photo’d a good many of them. They are nice bright-looking people – and I picked one dear little chap out and asked if he would come with me. He clasped both my hands, backed up to me and cuddled between my legs and said ‘yes.’ After much conversation and crowding round of Indians it is fully agreed on, he will go home
with me. His father and mother are both dead, both killed by this rubber curse. 

[…] The captain asked for a present on the agreement – virtually the sale of this child – of a shirt and a pair of trousers which I gave him, and Macedo [manager of the rubber station] with great unction made me a “present” of the boy (Amazon Journal 340).

Casement's encounter with Ricudo, which happened a little later, also begins with an image. He reveals that upon seeing the young man he immediately thought that he “would make a fine type for Herbert Ward,” a sculptor Casement had met in the Congo. Ward, who had made statues of Congolese chiefs, was a close friend of Casement's, who he asked to be his child's godfather. Ward was also responsible for introducing Casement to Morel of the Anti-Slavery Society. Ricudo, who Casement also photographed in the Putumayo “in necklace of ‘tiger’ teeth, armlets of feather plumes and a fono,” (see fig. 36) seemed to translate the ideal aesthetic of the Amazonian native:

He has the fine, long strong hair of the Indians, the cartilage of the nose and the nostrils bored for twigs and a handsome face and shapely body […] a splendid shape of bronze and I thought of Herbert all the time and how he would rejoice to have the moulding of those shapely limbs in real bronze (342).

In addition, Ward, who had been engaged in the Congo Reform movement, also seemed perfect to join the Putumayo cause: “This has been for some time in my thoughts, to enlist Ward (and France) on the side of these poor Indians and to do it through their artistic sense” (342).

Casement ended up not taking the Huitoto boys to Ward, but he did not give up his plan of turning them into a work of art and instead took “these splendid bodies” to be painted by William Rothenstein. This painter, widely known for his portraits of prominent figures of the
time – including Joseph Conrad and Casement himself – also had experience with the exotic. In 1911 he had an important exhibition of drawings made during a trip to India. In the unfinished painting (Omarino and Ricudo left England before its completion), the Huitoto young men appear in native clothing, standing against a pale landscape, in an atemporal image (see fig. 37). Ricudo, the older one, wears the same necklace of tiger teeth Casement photographed him with in the Putumayo. While taking that earlier photograph of Ricudo Casement had already talked about his desire to “get Arédomi [alias Ricudo] painted and clothed in it at home, and have him photographed and presented to Dilke and the Anti-Slavery people at a great meeting!” (449). As Leslie Wylie has noted, a third image of the boys, a photograph taken by Casement in England, portrays Ricudo in similar clothing and posture as in the painting.

While sitting at Rothenstein's studio, Omarino and Ricudo were interviewed by the Daily News as ambassadors of their people's cause. The article began: “Yesterday I heard from the lips of two young Indians who have escaped from this ‘inferno in a paradise’ a plain tale of the sufferings of their people, the Witota [sic] tribe” (qtd Goodman 153). The location of the meeting at Rothenstein's studio was convenient. The journalist could describe how he “found them in native dress” and appreciate “their brown bodies [...] finely built, and their faces bright and intelligent” (qtd Wylie, “Rare Models” 321). Hence the “interview” already contained in itself Rothenstein's the painting of the Indians. Once more, the act of representation, in its materiality, is itself represented.

As Wylie points out, despite its insistence on the physical, direct presence of the Indian's body, the interview was in fact a compilation of testimonies that the Huitotos had given to Bishop in Pará in December 1910 (109). The “interview,” published as “Inferno in a Paradise,” told, among other things, the history of the assassination of Omarino's and Ricudo's relatives. A
note written by Casement on his cutting of the newspaper article confirms the obvious: that the journalist did not speak with the boys, he “did not see the boys except for a minute to shake hands with as they speak scarcely any English” (qtd Wylie 109). Casement, who did not speak the Huitoto language, is cited in the article as the Huitoto men's interpreter. Again, Casement not only relegates the Huitotos to silence, but confirms that the truth has already been given.

While Rothenstein's painting would appeal to the aesthetic senses and artistic taste of the public, the two Huitotos were subjected, in another studio, to an ethnographic photo shooting. These images were recently found and identified by Leslie Wylie at the Cambridge Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. The Indians were stripped this time of all props, and had front and profile portraits taken against a plain backdrop, as prescribed by the globally distributed anthropometric photography systems of the time (see figs. 38 & 39). 121

Casement did, after all, include the Huitotos in a broader scientific archive. Instead of presenting the picturesque Indian, anthropometric photography involved the use of a strict methodology that aimed at creating homogeneous surfaces, in a project of assimilating bodies as data in a vast system of comparison. Besides their racial classification and physiologic vision of culture, such archives were also related to a desire for completeness: the mapping of all human types and cultures. This was the era of ‘salvage anthropology’ among ethnographers who felt their subjects were rapidly disappearing from the globe as a result of the expansion of civilization, and photography was a way of preserving “difference,” even if only in the archive. 122 Casement's anthropological interest is partly related to this savage dimension of the

121 One of the most influential anthropometric systems, produced by J.H. Lamprey in 1869, advocated the use of a wooden frame with silk threads hung so as to form two-inch squares against which each subject would be photographed. In addition, the photographer had to guarantee still and homogenous poses from the subjects, eliminating the 'noise' of the body, and rendering it spatially readable.
122 For a critique of salvage anthropology see Clifford, Rosaldo, and Sahlins.
field. In his own experiences and voyages through Ireland he had manifested an ethnographic interest in the recollection and preservation of colonized cultures. But this anthropological impulse of preservation was also influenced by racial theories of the time. Although not in a systematic way and often contradicting himself, Casement frequently criticized the Peruvian “halfbreeds” who were, according to him, morally inferior to “pure” Blacks and Indians. Mitchell suggests that Casement’s antithetical physical description of evil, monstrous perpetrators and timid victims are influenced by Cesare Lombroso’s studies of inherent physical traits of criminality (134). Anthropology and its relationships with scientific racial theories, thus, formed a privileged discursive and iconographic field that combined the debates on the negative effects of colonialism, the desire to save non-Western peoples from extinction and the “scientifically” based defense of the “pure” races.123

Omarino and Ricudo were to be “exploited,” in Casement's words, “for what all they were worth, if it ever comes to raising the question in public campaign against this hellish slavery and extermination” (342-3). The exploitation of their bodies and images that we discussed in this section did not appeal directly to political sentiment, but to two supposedly disinterested gazes, the aesthetic and the scientific. Instead of a scarred body, the Huitotos were presented as beautiful bodies, the exotic remnants of a dreamed world and mirror against which civilization saw its own flaws.

However, since the world of Putumayo seemed to have no way back to its idyllic past, and civilization did not seem to be avoidable, Casement's plan for these men was to provide them

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123 If Wylie is right in her hypothesis that John Thompson was the author of these photographs, one could say that he himself embodies the relationship between anthropology and reform. Part of the ethnological society of London and having photographed in many countries, including Ceylon, Thailand, Cambodia, Hong Kong and China, Thompson was also the photographer responsible for the images in the project “Street Life in London” (1878-1879), one of the first endeavors to document and raise awareness of the life of “the poor.”
with the “better” side of civilization. He wrote to the Irish poet and political activist Patrick Pearse regarding the possibility of sending the Omarino to a progressive, Gaelicist school, St Enda’s College in Rathfarnham, Dublin. When Casement left for Peru, however, he decided to take the Huitotos back with him. Even before going to London, when they had spent a few months in Barbados learning English and adapting to life outside of the forest under the care of a Reverend Frederick Smith, they had, according to the Reverend, expressed a desire to go back to the Amazon. Casement does not refer to this desire, and we have no traces of their view of London, only that Casement feared that with him gone “they might not understand things and give great trouble – and there is the far off, later future to think of too” (qtd Wylie, “Rare Models” 326).

According to Wylie’s research, Casement left the two men in the care of the British consul in Iquitos, Peru, where they could be “useful”. One of the last written documents that mentions the pair is from September 1912. The consul’s wife wrote to Casement to say that Ricudo “hated work” and had told her that he “must go away to the woods.” Like the boy in Casement's photograph of scar, the forest was the horizon into which they disappeared away from the imposition of labor.

6. The Return of the Evidence

Casement and Da Cunha's paths crossed at least once in the years between the Brazilian engineer's return to Rio de Janeiro and Roger Casement's departure to the Amazon. Da Cunha had been working on *Paraíso perdido*, which he expected to be a kind of companion volume to *Os sertões*. The book, however, remained unfinished after the author's tragic death. It has been

124 Francisco Foot-Hardman has suggested that the form of the late work can be read a metaphor of the author's Amazon, described as an infinite kaleidoscope. In a preface to Alfredo Rangel's *Inferno Verde*, da Cunha wrote that, despite its immensity, the Amazon could only be seen fragmentarily, as if through microscopes. Like the
argued that Da Cunha never recovered from the pressures he suffered during the trip – which was “fraught with accidents, shipwrecks, humiliating penury, disease and starvation” (Hecht 9) – and lived constantly haunted by the “images incorporated in the Amazonian experience” (Foot Hardman loc.450). The relationship between the jungle, madness and death is a common *topos* in travel writings in the tropics in general and about the rubber boom in particular, and is no better translated than in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of the Darkness*. Three years after his return from the Amazon, Da Cunha borrowed a friend's gun and went to Piedade, the suburb where his wife's long-term lover, also the father of one of her children, lived, with the intention of killing or being killed. He ended up fatally shot by the young cadet, who then married the widow.

The British consul Roger Casement – who had befriended Conrad while representing the British Foreign Office in the Congo Republic – wrote a much less dramatic analysis of the case in his private papers. Interested in the repercussions of what became known as “tragédia da Piedade,” Casement argues in six handwritten pages dated August 18th 1909 that Euclides' death, “a case that has convulsed all Brazil from President down,” was “indescribably stupid, squalid and bloodthirsty.” He calls attention particularly to the repercussion of “tittle-tattle” details and the fact that the newspapers “speak of his ‘assassination,’ while to anyone who can read it is plain that Da Cunha far from ‘assassinated,’ rather was shot in self-defense by two young men, cousins of his wife whom he has furiously attacked.” The cause of the notorious litterateur's horrid crime and his own death was, according to Casement, not uncommon in Brazilian life: “jealousy bred of a base suspicion of his wife fed by secret slander and suggestion of the peeping

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125 See Michael Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*; Robert M. Burroughs' *Travel Writing and Atrocities*; and Charlotte Rogers' *Jungle Fever: Exploring Madness and Medicine in Twentieth-Century Tropical Narratives*. 

151
‘friends’ of the household” (qtd Mitchell, Roger Casement in Brazil 69-70). Passions, according to him, were highly appreciated in this country, and always a good excuse for any crime. Going into details of the crime, Casement rages at the imprecise and unjust vocabulary used by the newspapers, the bloodthirsty Brazilian taste for gossip, in particular passionate and dramatic private dramas, the fact the Brazilians usually take suspicion for evidence, and, finally, the tendency for their sympathy to go out to the criminal and not to the victim, especially if the criminal is of a higher social strata. This imprecise language of passions and rumors marked, for Roger Casement, a world of lawlessness and injustice. Later, he would repeat his diagnosis, but this time characterizing lawlessness as a trait of Latin America in general: “to obtain justice in Peru or Brazil, or any other of these Latin States of the New World one must bribe and lie, cheat and corrupt, terrify and threaten so that your justice won leaves the soil rank with misdeeds” (Amazon Journal 112).

This chapter discussed Roger Casement's search for exact words and evidences and the need to clearly distinguish victims and perpetrators in order to do “justice” in the North-West Amazon region of the Putumayo. I argued that Casement's concept of evidence, however, complicates the idea of empirical evidence. The image, the scar, or the mark is as much thought as it is thing, and depends on where it is viewed from. I would like to finish remembering that Casement's sexual writings also ended up being turned into evidence – as far as it is known, his erotic photographs were not made public then – as proof of deviance. They were used against Casement in his trials for treason in 1916. In so doing, his accusers also ended up uniting Casement's radicalization against Britain and his secret sexual life, condemning him for both, as well as relating both to a degeneration of character brought on by his voyages in the tropics.
Images


Figure 25. Robuchon, Eugenio. Chorrera – cargando materiales de construcción. En el Putumayo y sus afluentes. Lima: Imprenta La industria, 1907. 35. Print.
La leyenda dice: «Los indios de este distrito, incluso muy jóvenes, se hacen la guerra entre ellos, y comen la carne de los que han matado. Los dientes son llevados como trofeos, como se ve en la fotografía».
(En la tinaja, se ve una cabeza sobresaliendo).

En: Customs of the world, Londres 1913.

Figure 26 Indios Canibales del Putumayo. 1913. Customs of the world, London. Imaginario e imágenes de la época del caucho: los sucesos del Putumayo. By Alberto Chirif and Manuel Cornejo Chaparro. 66.
Left:


Right:

*Figure 28* Casement, Roger. *Man holding spear, surrounded by onlookers, Putumayo region of Peru/Columbia.* circa 1910-1911. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
Left:

Figure 29 Casement, Roger. *Young boy with his back to the camera, Putumayo region of Peru/Columbia.* circa 1910-1911. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Right:

Left:

Figure 31 Casement, Roger. Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall. circa 1864 - 1916. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Center:

Figure 32 Casement, Roger. Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall. circa 1864 - 1916. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.

Right:

Figure 33 Casement, Roger. Unidentified man standing in front of stone wall. circa 1864 - 1916. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
Figure 34 Casement, Roger. *Man standing, wearing rolled-up trousers and carrying shirt, Putumayo region of Peru/Columbia.* circa 1864 - 1916. Photograph. National Library of Ireland, Dublin

Figure 35 30,000 lives: 4000 Tons of Rubber: The Putumayo Revelations. Casement, Roger. *Sir Roger Casement’s Heart of Darkness: The 1911 Documents.* Print.

Figure 37 Rothenstein, William. *Unfinished portrait of Omarino and Ricudo*. 1910. Painting. "Rare models: Roger Casement, the Amazon, and the ethnographic picturesque". *Irish Studies Review*, 18:3

Chapter III

The Shadow and the Object of Anthropology in Lévi-Strauss's Ethnographic Archive

In Euclides da Cunha's account of the Canudos massacre, the photographic body becomes the site of the revelation of truth, but only through its disappearance, its merging with the earth of the Brazilian *sertão*. This true image, however, instead of fixing the past – in both senses of fixing, as settling and mending – risks interrupting the linearity of *history*, re-emerging in the present and producing ever renewed projects of the future. Roger Casement relied on material bodies (human and nonhuman), images and inscriptions as evidences of crimes committed against indigenous populations of the Amazon. But he realized that these material bodies were seen from different “points-of-view”, and that, in order to read the “obvious tale” they told, people had to be moved by them. To read and write was to “take a position” and so was to photograph. What Casement did not fully acknowledge, what was a blind spot in his images of the Putumayo natives, was their point-of-view, and their capacity to create escape routes from both the forced labor and the piteous imperial gaze.

This chapter discusses an anthropologist's effort to take the focus away from the body of the “other” as a source of knowledge, challenging the phenomenology of the ethnographic encounter itself. I examine Claude Lévi-Strauss's archives of his ethnographic voyages in Brazil in 1935 and 1936 and his suspicion of the photographic image as a deceptive medium that

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127 One could also say “lines of flight” in Deleuze and Guattari's terms.
reinforces the modern illusions of empiricism. More than a search for material evidences of crimes or true documents for history – although all of these figures permeate each one of the archives studied in this dissertation – Lévi-Strauss's encounter with Brazilian indigenous tribes – the Kadiveu, Bororo, Nambikwara, Mundé and Tupi-Kawahib – is discussed in relation to his reflection on the role of the experience of contact in the creation of valuable “data” in anthropology. The chapter focuses, more specifically, on the different uses of his written and photographic archives in the travel memoirs Tristes Tropiques (1955) and Saudades do Brasil (1994). As with Da Cunha and Casement, I read Claude Lévi-Strauss memoirs as montages of images and texts, taking into consideration the archive that Lévi-Strauss shows as well as the one he refrains from showing.

During his four years in Brazil, from 1935 to 1939, Claude Lévi-Strauss took approximately three thousand photographs. Until today, most of those photographs have remained unseen, kept separate from the anthropologist's main archive, including hundreds of field-notes, drawings, and letters, which can be consulted by any interested researcher at the French National Library. Stored in a suitcase at Lévi-Strauss's son's house, what one expects to be his most “ethnographic” photographic series is instead part of a personal patrimony. Passed down from father to son, they became a kind of family legacy, such as the interest in the photographic practice itself, which Claude Lévi-Strauss learned from his father, a painter who took photographs on which to base his portraits, and passed along to his son.

My hypothesis is that the partial invisibility of those images as well as the way in which some of them become visible – their re-framing and re-captioning in different works – should be understood, first, in the context of Lévi-Strauss contribution to what Claude Imbert referred to as “a more general reappraisal of what was formerly called data in anthropology” (Imbert 125), and
consequently to one chapter in the history of the debate about the scientific value of millions of pieces of written, drawn, and photographed material, all of which are remnants of repeated encounters between western travelers and non-western communities.

The beginning of Lévi-Strauss's career is marked by two symbolic travels: the first is his trip to Brazil, in 1930s, when he is invited to participate, with other French professors, in the foundation of the University of São Paulo. Then a philosophy professor and tired, as he affirms in *Tristes Tropiques*, of the “claustrophobic, Turkish-bath atmosphere in which it [his mind] was being imprisoned by the practice of philosophical reflection” (59), he saw the invitation as an opportunity to make a turn towards the recently founded academic discipline of ethnography. It is in the encounter with Brazilian indigenous tribes that he becomes an ethnographer. The second is the Jewish anthropologist's exile in New York during the Nazi occupation in France. In New York, where Lévi-Strauss arrived carrying as “his sole wealth” his field documents, he encountered the American anthropological tradition as well as Jacobson's concept of structural linguistics. This second voyage is usually placed at the origin of Lévi-Strauss more explicit concerns with the epistemological aspects of anthropology.

What follows Lévi-Strauss's second return to France is a reformulation of the meaning of the ethnographic encounter: an effort to abandon the usual temporal order of phenomenology, in which the ethnologist is pictured as a receiver of sense data that should be later organized as knowledge. More than physical or mental, objective or subjective, he suggests that the cognitive

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128 See, for example, Fernanda Peixoto's “Lévi-Strauss no Brasil: a formação do etnólogo” and Patrick Wilcken's *Lévi-Strauss: The Poet in the Laboratory*.

129 In this respect, Claude Imbert argues it was in the fifties that Lévi-Strauss explicitly focused on anthropological knowledge: “When Lévi-Strauss came back from New York, he might have decided either to start new fieldwork in the Pacific or to pursue his theoretical research, turning to some non-elementary structures of kinship. These would have supplied a link of sorts to confront contemporary social constructions of family relations in post-war Western societies. Although he never forgot his concern for civil life, he finally chose a third option, precisely to reconsider anthropological knowledge as such.” (Imbert 118)
process functions within the intermediary realm of signs. This reconsideration of the ethnographic encounter, in its turn, was followed by Lévi-Strauss's attempt to rethink his own experiences of contact, on which he has given a few testimonies, starting with *Tristes Tropiques*. As James Boon suggests, the result of Lévi-Strauss experiment with ethnographic writing will resemble a symbolist narrative. The narrator describes the desire of a young ethnologist to encounter alterity, just to find out that this is an impossible dream: the “other” he encounters is either too similar (too acculturated, like the Kadiveu) or too different (like the Mundé) to be understood by the anthropologist, who ends up contemplating his own history in their opaque eyes.

The second important axis in Lévi-Strauss's writing on the experience of contact is the condemnation of the violence of the expansion of civilization. Claude Lévi-Strauss and his wife, Dina Lévi-Strauss, participated in two expeditions in Brazil: the first, during the summer vacations of 1935-1936, in which they contacted the Kadiveu, at the Paraguayan border, and the Bororo, in central Mato Grosso; and the second and larger trip, in 1937, financed by France and Brazilian institutions. Reproducing this desire to “expand civilization” that the narrator himself condemns, this later expedition was planned to go further deep in the Brazilian backlands, in order to encounter the less known nations Nambikwara and Mundé. Together, the geographical itinerary of the two expeditions follow the telegraph line built by the *Rondon Comission* by the end of the nineteenth-century as an attempt by the newly established Republican Government to connect the vast territory of the country, modernize its backlands, and establish “peaceful” contact with indigenous tribes.

Following Rondon's telegraph lines, which Lévi-Strauss describes as a failed civilizational project, the anthropologist does not see “primitive” peoples or “modern” cities, but
remnants of indigenous communities, and poor villages. Hence the ruins of *Tristes Tropiques* have a double character: first, epistemological, since an encounter is always a mis-encounter; and, second, historical, for the ruination seem to be produced by civilization itself. If the “true” documents that Casement saw in the Putumayo were scars, Lévi-Strauss's account on his formative ethnographic experience in Brazil, and more specifically his written and photographic memoirs *Tristes Tropiques*, is marked by figures of shadows, ruins, and ashes. It is constructed as a narrative about a missed encounter with both the past and the “other”.

These two axis lead us to the third debate, and the most central in the scope of this dissertation, which concerns Lévi-Strauss's denunciation of “modern technologies” of representation, especially photography, both as paradigms of an empiricist form of knowledge and as agents in the destruction of non-western communities and primitive modes of existence. Photography not only takes part in the “elimination” of “savage life”, but responds to the West's need to “appease the nostalgic cannibalism of history with the shadows of those that history has already destroyed” (*Tristes Tropiques* 41). Two main theoretical references guide me through these debates: first, following the discussion initiated in the first chapter, I rely on Benjamin's anachronistic history of technologies of reproduction and its impact on contemporary reflections on ethnographic photography that avoid the dichotomy modernity *versus* primitive practices. Second, I turn to Roland Barthes' discussion of referentiality of the photographic image in *Camera Lucida*. Barthes' study is a crucial reference in the debates surrounding the phenomenology of the photographic encounter for its double affirmation of the indexicality and anti-empiricism of the photographic image. The “referent” in *Camera Lucida* is neither the object that had been placed in front of the camera, nor the projection of the viewer's desires and the photographer's intentions, but what Barthes calls “*eidolon*”, already an image. Through these
readings, I explore how the tensions between objectivity and affect, as well as between the
anthropologist (modernity) and the native (primitive) mark Lévi-Strauss's use of his ethnographic
archives in his two memoirs of his travels in Brazil.

The first part of this chapter deals specifically with Lévi-Strauss's view on different
technologies of representation and knowledge. Through his writings on painting and
photography, we will see that Lévi-Strauss identifies photography with unmediated, un-
constructed forms of knowledge, which correspond to a modern desire to “possess” instead of
“signify” the world. These forms and their corollary desires would explain photography's
affinities with both a positivist knowledge and the commercialization of the “exotic”.

The second part contextualizes Lévi-Strauss's critique of technologies of representation in
relation to anthropology. I depart from Christopher Pinney's suggestion that Lévi-Strauss “brings
us a full circle from a nineteenth century anthropology, uncertain about reliability of speech and
seeking in photography the stability of fixity and writing” (Photography and Anthropology 105),
and begin with an examination of the nineteenth century's optimism in regards to photographic
representation. In the third part I thematize the decay of this optimism in the first decades of the
twentieth century. I follow the accounts of scholars such as Elizabeth Edwards, Rosalind
Poignant, Christopher Pinney, and Vincent Debaene, who documented and analyzed how, with
the rise of the field-base approach in anthropology, photography started fading away from
anthropological monographs. I then experiment with some hypotheses as to where the field
photographs migrated, particularly in the case of Lévi-Strauss.

The fourth section offers a close reading of Lévi-Strauss's famous travel memoir Tristes
Tropiques. If Tristes Tropiques is the work in which Lévi-Strauss experiments with the genre of
travel writing or ethnographic monograph, focusing on the experience of the encounter, if this is
the text in which he most uses his field documents, it is also where he faces more directly the question of representation – of both writing and photography. Not surprisingly, it is in *Tristes Tropiques* that he expresses for the first time his mistrust and even hostility towards the photographic medium. Photography figures as the personification of what appeared then to have gone wrong with anthropology: its preoccupation with external facts and visual information, as well as its participation in the commodification of the exotic. But it is also there that he tries out a solution to the problem of the representation of the encounter in writing.

A few authors have already explored a connection between Lévi-Strauss's epistemological concerns and the language of *Tristes Tropiques*, such as James Boon, Carol Jacobs, Boris Wiseman and Vincent Debaene. Similarly to these authors, I read Lévi-Strauss's account of his ethnographic experience, and more specifically the book *Tristes Tropiques*, as an experiment with and reflection upon the relationships amongst language, perception and memory. Focusing more specifically on the double problem of referentiality and of temporality in the context of the anthropologist's attempt to move away from the previous image of the ethnographer as the gatherer of data, I explore Lévi-Strauss's use of the figures of shadows, ruins, and ashes. However, I differ from the authors previously mentioned in that I also maintain the importance of examining both the use of field-writing and photography in Lévi-Strauss's memoir, and the relationship between them.

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130 In *From Symbolism to Structuralism*, released in 1972, James Boon presents Lévi-Strauss's theory of knowledge as the act of re-encoding a previous text in a new one, and argues that in *Tristes Tropiques* “Lévi-Strauss most clearly demonstrates his own personal basis of symbolist sensitivity” (148). More recently, Boris Wiseman stated that “the geological allegory contained in *Tristes Tropiques* conceals a theory of aesthetic perception” (Wiseman 52). Wiseman, who in this follows Yvan Simonis, not only shows “the connected nature between the aesthetic and anthropological dimensions of Lévi-Strauss's thought”, but also reveals the latter's attempt to grasp this connection through the question of language; “what kind of ‘language’ is best suited to the carrying out of the programme of structural anthropology, ‘metonymic’ or ‘metaphorical’?” (Wiseman 10). Vincent Debaene, in his thorough study of the relationship between literature and ethnography in France argued that *Tristes Tropiques* is 'the result of an experience in writing' (Debaene 220) that 'offers the opportunity for an initial experience of the logic of sensation' (212) which will later be developed in the *Savage Mind* and the first volume of *Mythologiques*. 

167
The fifth section explores Lévi-Strauss use of photographs to picture the encounter. Even though, as I emphasized before, the majority of the images remained invisible until today, some photos were printed in *Tristes Tropiques*. They appear in the more descriptive sections of the book, usually illustrating details of indigenous paintings, costumes or appearance that the author also describes in words, or accompanying other kinds of documents. There are fewer works situating Lévi-Strauss's photographs in the epistemological debate (Novaes, Prosser). Jay Prosser's Barthesian *Light in the Dark Room* is one of the few to approach the question at length. In the chapter dedicated to the anthropologist, Prosser argues that in *Tristes Tropiques* the photographs are “over-codified”, published side-by-side with graphs and drawings and other encoded forms, in order to be suitable for a structuralist work.\(^{131}\) In the opposite direction, Vincent Debaene argues that the photographs in *Tristes Tropiques* are on the side of Lévi-Strauss's pessimistic view of history, as a way to balance his structuralist narrative with a historical commentary on the disappearance of indigenous communities. Through a reading of the photographs published and some of those not published in *Tristes Tropiques*, I argue that, as much as the ethnographic contact itself, the photographs both sustain and threaten the book's project. At the same time necessary to, and unavoidably inscribed in, the anthropologist's analytical work, the photo-ethnographic encounter (its negotiations, illusions and temptations)

\(^{131}\) In his recent book on the history of the relationship between “Photography and Anthropology”, Christopher Pinney also mentions Lévi-Strauss's critiques on photography and briefly refers to its possible analogy to his critique on writing – famously analyzed by Derrida. Other works, although not dealing directly with the question of knowledge, bring to light important aspects of Lévi-Strauss's photographs. In *Photography and Documentary Film in the Making of Modern Brazil*, Luciana Martins offers an analysis of one of those images, featuring a Bororo Indian, to criticize a tradition of portrayals of the ethnographic subject as being out of real time. She counterposes this portrait to an insightful analysis of the history of the encounters with the Bororos, emphasizing evidence that they “were accustomed to being in the spotlight, performing their roles as ‘isolated primitives’ with considerable flair” (187), and thus agents in the construction of this ideal anthropological image. I will go back to her analysis in the last part of this chapter, situating it in the context of the tensions present in the way Lévi-Strauss's inserts himself in at the same time that distances himself from a tradition of picturing the indigenous primitive other.
also troubles the author's critique of the photographic image.

It was, however, only in 1994, 60 years after the ethnographic expedition, and 44 years after he wrote *Tristes Tropiques*, that Lévi-Strauss published a book in which the images were a central concern. Named *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*, the book was co-authored by his son Matthieu Lévi-Strauss, who affirms having been responsible for the enlargement of each image. *Saudades do Brasil*, which is beyond Lévi-Strauss theoretical and anthropological framework, has a very “subjective” tone, distancing itself from the objectifying vision of photography that Lévi-Strauss criticized until then. I will propose a reading of these images that goes beyond the dichotomy objective versus subjective, revealing other dimensions of the photographic contact, in which the referent itself is part of the image-making, or, as Barthes would put it, in which the referent is already an image.

### 1. Photography and the Question of Representation

In *a series of radio interviews with Claude Lévi-Strauss* from October to December 1959 (*Conversations with Claude Lévi-Strauss*), broadcast four years after the publication of *Tristes Tropiques*, we find the basic principles of Lévi-Strauss's critique of representation. They come up during a conversation about modern art, the first exposition of his views on the topic. Asked by George Charbonnier what is the difference between Primitive and Modern Art, Lévi-Strauss begins by listing two main aspects that separate them. The first is the individualization of the artistic production. He explains that this individualization is not so much that of the artist, conceived as an individual creator – for this figure can also be found in some primitive societies – but above all that of the public, which ceases to be the totality of the group in order to become the individual 'amateur' (59-60). The second aspect, which is intrinsically related to the first, consists in art's increasingly 'figurative or representative' character (60). While in primitive
societies, artists don't aim to 'reproduce' the model, but to 'signify it' (61), in modern forms of art – which, according to Lévi-Strauss, can be found in Greece after the fifth century and in Italy from the Quattrocento (60) – there prevails a tendency to reproduce the world, and the desire to 'posses' it through its representation.

In the next few pages, I will go through the series of dichotomies that appear in Lévi-Strauss's discussion of the differences between modern and primitive art – signification versus reproduction; collective versus individual; to communicate with the world versus to possess the world – in order to understand the place of technologies of representation in his critique of representation. We will see how photography in particular is related, first, to the West's quest for a direct, non-mediated knowledge of the world, and, second, to western society's desire to possess the world as an object to be consumed. If Lévi-Strauss's interviews and writings about art are relevant to my readings of Tristes Tropiques and Saudades do Brasil, it is not only because in them we find most of his references to photography but also because they help us understand what kind of aesthetic, political, and epistemological choices are put into play in his own effort to “represent” his encounter with the Brazilian tribes.

In his interview with Charbonnier, which aimed at a wider, non-specialized audience, Lévi-Strauss considers it important to warn his interlocutor against a residual evolutionism that permeates Western responses to the art of non-literate societies that interprets the capacity to reproduce the world as a result of the progress of knowledge, techniques or technologies of representation, all of which are viewed as the final accomplishments of a long pursued

132 In this sense, as some have pointed out (Wiseman, Merquior), art for Lévi-Strauss resembles language itself, although the latter differs from the former due to its essentially arbitrary character.
He challenges the temptation of a linear history by shifting the question from technical development to the concept of the referent. As he explains, the point is not that primitives lack the technique to represent reality, but that reality, for them, is not a reserve of things standing by, waiting to be represented. On the contrary, objects in the primitive world – a world charged with the supernatural – are “by definition non-representable, since no facsimile or model for it can be provided” (84), and “the model is always wide of the representation” (84). That is what in French he calls an “excès d'objet” (*Entretiens avec Claude Lévi-Strauss* 81). In contrast, the art of mechanical civilization departs from the conviction “of being able not only to communicate with the being, but also to possess it through the medium of the effigy” (64).

Moreover, if “this avid and ambitious desire to take possession of the object for the benefit of the owner or even of the spectator” (64) is related to the loss of the collective process of signification and the individualization of production, it is also related to the appearance of social disparity. The “monopolization vis-à-vis the object” corresponds to a kind of possessiveness of certain men over others. Here, the analysis gains both sociological contours and a clear historical argument; this double possessiveness is made evident, according to Lévi-Strauss, by the fact that the appearance of writing and caste or class regimens are concomitant. Thus, although not the result of a progressive development of the means of representation, this

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133 Boris Wiseman relates Lévi-Strauss's view of ‘primitive’ art as the 'outcome of a positive aesthetic' (Wiseman 29) to a broader shift that led to the creation of museums or pavilions in museums dedicated not to ethnography, but to non-western art: “It was in 1960, at more or less the same time that Lévi-Strauss was writing *The Savage Mind*, that André Malraux decided to convert the Musée Permanent des Colonies, built in Paris for the 1931 Exposition Coloniale into a Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie, which he divested of its earlier ethnographic function that Malraux saw as the prerogative of the Musée de l’Homme. This was the sign of a deep cultural shift that is still ongoing. The most recent episodes in its story were the opening, at the Louvre, of the Pavillon des Sessions (to date, it has had more than 3.5 million visitors), and in June 2006 of an autonomous museum of non-Western art, the Muse’e du Quai Branly (it was going to be called ‘Musée des Arts Premiers’). Lévi-Strauss’s writings on art have doubtless played their part in this ‘pantheonisation’ of ‘primitive’ art, as one initiator of the Quai Branly project puts it.” (28) This movement, however, had already started in the beginning of the twentieth century, when “culture was being extended to all of the world's functioning societies, an increasing number of exotic, primitive, or archaic objects came to be seen as “art.”” (Clifford, *Predicament of Culture* 235). This can be seen, for example, in 1920s avant-garde artists' appropriation of “African” art’s forms.
shift, responsible for the weakening of modern art's source of signification, is nonetheless indelibly linked to the appearance of technologies of representation: “since writing taught men that signs could be used not only to signify the external world but also to apprehend it, to gain possession of it” (63).

This affirmation is related to another more empirical version of Lévi-Strauss's negative theory of writing which appears in Tristes Tropiques' chapter entitled “The Writing Lesson.” In this famous passage, the scene of the introduction of writing in an illiterate society is enacted in the encounter between the anthropologist and the Nambikwara, pictured by him not only as the most dispossessed tribe of all those he encountered during his field work in Brazil, but that which seemed closer to “a society reduced to its simplest expression” (310). The scene goes as follows: one day, while writing in his notebook, Lévi-Strauss observes the Nambikwara drawing various wavy lines in pieces of paper, mimicking what they see him do with writing implements. The chief of the tribe, however, had further ambitions, since “he was the only one who had grasped the purpose of writing” (296). After scribbling lines on a paper, the chief attempted to read to fellow Nambikwara, a farce that went on for two hours and which Lévi-Strauss interprets as an attempt to demonstrate his alliance with the white man, by which he could show that he “shared his secrets” (296). What the chief Nambikwara grasped was not how to write, but the fact that writing itself is a source of power, a secret that creates social difference within the group.

I will go back to this relationship amongst technology, power, and representation, but first I will turn to some of Lévi-Strauss's texts on Western art, such as his collection of essays

134 For a critique of Lévi-Strauss's historical account of the birth of writing see Derrida's Of Grammatology. Derrida accuses Lévi-Strauss's 'phonocentrism' of sentimental ethnocentrism fueled by an oversimplified reading of Rousseau. Instead of a vision of writing as a perverse supplement to natural speech, Derrida argues for the necessary recognition of writing in speech.
entitled *Listen, Look, Read* and the short essay *To a Young Painter*, focusing more specifically on his comments about the visual arts, in order to better understand what he means by “representation.” Lévi-Strauss's critique of art should be understood in relation to the affirmation of its cognitive function. Art is evaluated as a way of knowing, and good art is that which – like primitive art – does not seek knowledge through the representation of an external world “as it is.” Such a stance is made very clear in his complimentary essay on the German painter Anita Albus: “the primary role of art is to sift and arrange the profuse information that the outer world is constantly sending out to assail the sensory organs.” (*To a Young Painter* 248).

In *The Savage Mind*, Lévi-Strauss argues that what singularizes works of art as objects of knowledge is the fact that they function as reductions “in scale or properties” (23) of their models. By renouncing certain dimensions of the object – size, volume, color, smell, tactile impressions, or the temporal dimension – “they are therefore not just projections or passive homologues of the object: they constitute real experiments with it” (24). This “thoughtful

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135 See José Guilherme Merquior's works for a more detailed analysis of Lévi-Strauss's writings on art. Merquior's *A Estética de Lévi-Strauss*, the first book entirely dedicated to the anthropologist's aesthetic thought, focuses on the passages Lévi-Strauss writes directly about art, situating them in the context of other contemporary aesthetic theories in order to evaluate the contribution of structuralism to aesthetics. Another important book published about the theme, Boris Wiseman's *Lévi-Strauss, Anthropology and Aesthetics* departs from the hypothesis that Lévi-Strauss's work as a whole is an aesthetics, in the philosophical sense of the term, and not only an anthropological theory of art. In this he follows Yvan Simonis, who, in 1968, identified structuralism with a logic of aesthetic perception. My aim is not to enter this specific debate, although all of them give important insights concerning the relationship between Lévi-Strauss's ideas on art and his critique of photographic representation.

136 This is one of the fundamental principles of Lévi-Strauss’s aesthetic theory. Its importance has been emphasized by a number of critics, among them Boris Wiseman, José Guilherme Merquior, and Marcel Hénaff, the last of whom remarks: ‘If we had to define the function of art according to Lévi-Strauss, we could say without hesitation that it is primarily a function of knowledge’ (Hénaff 191). Merquior relates Lévi-Strauss’s thesis regarding the ‘cognitive function’ of art to the proposition that is made in *The Savage Mind* that art is to be situated ‘half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical or magical thought’ (Lévi-Strauss 17). Merquior is concerned with the system of resemblances and differences that relate art, as a medium of knowledge, to myth and science, exploring the specificity of art in this domain. Bringing in theoretical considerations from the *Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss* and the *Tristes Tropiques* essay on Kadiveu body painting, Merquior further relates Lévi-Strauss’s theories on the cognitive function of art to the position of the artist in society as an ‘outsider’.

137 For a comparison between Lévi-Strauss's and other aesthetic theories see Merquior. The author argues that this emphasis on the “reduced model” puts Lévi-Strauss in the tradition of Lessing's *Laocoon* (23-24).
selection” is followed by a “method of construction” (24). Hence art's double bind: always at the same time at the level of the sensory, for it requires an attempt to grasp “nature;” and of the intellect, for this attempt takes the form of an ordering, and selection, of sense data (Wiseman 38). It is important to remark, in order to understand why his thoughts on art are relevant for a reading of his ethnographic writing and photography, that the primary criteria for Lévi-Strauss's aesthetic judgments are the fulfillment of such a cognitive function. When discussing the work of Poussin in Listen, Look, Read (32-33), for example, he calls this process a “recomposition”; and in his essay about Albus, he stresses that the artist “takes the liberty of placing them [objects of nature] in unforeseen arrangements that enrich our knowledge of things by making us perceive new relationships among them” (To a Young Painter 253). Second, such a characterization of the cognitive process of art is not far from the anthropologist's more general theory of knowledge, in which nature often appears as a “storehouse of sensible qualities from which the mind draws some elements to be transformed into signs” (Descola 22). The same claim can be found with regard to native myths. Based on the idea that knowledge begins in the sensible world, Lévi-Strauss refuses the break between art,

138 Thus, what characterizes the aesthetic cognition according to the theory of the 'modèle reduit' such as it appears in The Savage Mind is the fact that instead of working analytically, artworks enable the world to be apprehended as a totality. And it is this totalizing effect that Lévi-Strauss puts forward as the source of aesthetic pleasure: “To understand a real object in its totality we always tend to work from its parts. The resistance it offers us is overcome by dividing it . . . In the case of miniatures, in contrast to what happens when we try to understand an object or living creature of real dimensions, knowledge of the whole precedes knowledge of the parts. And even if this is an illusion, the point of the procedure is to create or sustain the illusion, which gratifies the intelligence and gives rise to a sense of pleasure which can already be called aesthetic on these grounds alone.” (23–4)

139 Following these criteria, he detracts the high value attached to figuration, in particular since the Renaissance; but at the same time, he places great value on the trompe-l'oeil and has a marked predilection for an art of minute observation, as one can see from his fascination with the lace ruff painted by Clouet. He is also highly critical of Cubism and abstract art, both of which, on the surface of things, seem closer to the ‘primitive’ art forms he loves and defends than, say, classical representational art, Lévi-Strauss’s views on Western art, however, are conflicting only in appearance. In the case of Cubism, for example, he affirms that in moving away from the object seen, the pure sensible dimension, to the conceptual, it did not succeed in fulfilling the collective function of a work of art. In Wiseman's words, “although Cubism aspires to becoming a new aesthetic language, it is condemned to being no more than an idiolect (a private language).” It becomes a mimesis of a second order, a mimesis of a manner of painting, i.e. academicism. This is discussed in more detailed in Wiseman (123-126).
myth and science: “the work of the painter, the poet or the musician, like the myths and symbols of the savage, ought to be seen by us, if not as a superior form of knowledge, at least as the most fundamental and the only really common to us all; science thought is merely the sharp point” (*Tristes Tropiques* 123).

As James Boon has suggested (28), while Lévi-Strauss views art as an experiment with sensory information and native myth as the ordering or classification of man in nature, his own analytic procedures are seen as the ordering of those classifications. The work of the anthropologist – or that of the artist – is not, thus, just a question of a rearrangement at the surface, and *a posteriori*, of raw data, but something which should function beyond the separation between objective and subjective, in the intermediary realm of signs.

Such a cognitive theory of art, and its relationship to Lévi-Strauss’s more general theory of knowledge, mark the way he reflects upon technologies of representation, such as writing itself and photography. We begin to understand his attack on forms of representation, which seem, to him, to exemplify the desire to apprehend the object as it is, in its natural, unmediated reality. This becomes clear in Lévi-Strauss's comparison between two forms of realism, *trompe l'œil* and photography: “with *trompe l'œil* one does not represent, one reconstructs. This requires knowledge (even of what is not shown) together with reflection” (*Look, Listen, Read* 29). While with *trompe l'œil* the artist “grasps and displays what was not perceived,” photography, “as the term snapshot suggests,” thoughtlessly “seizes this moment [of beauty] and exhibits it” (29). In this defense of *trompe l'œil* – which at first sight seems to contradict his opposition between signifying and figurative art – the difference between representation and reconstruction is accompanied by the opposition between two different conceptions of the referent. For photography, the referent would be the totality of the external world, the surface of objects that
are out there, while in the case of the *trompe l'œil*, the referent is neither subjective nor entirely objective, but that which is given in the mediated process of cognition.

That is why, for Lévi-Strauss, photography and *trompe l'œil* are not comparable, and it would not make sense to ask which one is a better representation of reality:

[R]ather than seeing photography as the death of the *trompe l'œil*, it would be better to recognize that they possess diametrically opposed virtues. One only has to consider the miserable productions of neofigurative artists who paint portraits or still lifes, not from life, but from color photographs they slavishly try to copy.

(29-30)

If writing inaugurates for the anthropologist the representative power of inscription, it is photography that comes to better exemplify the desire to possess the world - “as it is” - through its representation. Since *Tristes Tropiques*, written in the 1950s up to *Look, Listen, Read*, published in 1993, Lévi-Strauss's direct references to photography consistently portray it not only as the opposite of a process of cognition, but as a direct threat to knowledge. For Lévi-Strauss, photography is thoughtless: “Photographic realism does not distinguish accidents from the nature of things, but places them both on the same level. There is certainly a process of reproduction, but the part played by the intellect is minimal” (*Look, Listen, Read* 29). The photographic apparatus – “the physical and mechanical constraints of the camera, the chemical constraints of the sensitive film, the subjects possible, the angle of view, and the lighting” - restricts the “freedom” of the photographer to process the data he receives (*To a Young Painter* 249). In sum, a photograph is unmediated, unprocessed; it is, in Elizabeth Edward's terms, “raw data” (*Raw Histories*). And if because of that it fails to be a work of art, it also fails, as Lévi-Strauss argues in *Tristes Tropiques*, to be a source of anthropological knowledge.
Exploration has become a profession; not, as one might suppose, that it's a matter of unearthing new facts in the course of several years laborious study, not at all! Mere mileage is the thing; and anyone who has been far enough, and collected the right number of pictures (still or moving, but for preference in color), will be able to lecture two packed houses for several days running. Platitudes take shape as revelations [révélations] once the audience is assured that the speaker has sanctified them by traveling to the other side of the globe. (Tristes Tropiques 18)

I will leave aside for a moment other important aspects of this passage, such as his reference to traveling, as the process of going abroad and coming back that sanctifies the images, turning them into revelations. We will go back to them in a closer analysis of Tristes Tropiques. What I would like to remark on now is how Lévi-Strauss emphasizes the illusion of photography and “for preference in color,” dissociating its mimetic power from the capacity of giving valuable knowledge of things. Equally noteworthy is the opposition between surface and depth, instantaneity and duration, contained in the way he distinguishes the “exploration” of facts that are mere “platitudes” from those which are unearthed through time, “in the course of several years laborious study.” If knowledge is a question of mediation and time, photography – and especially modern, instantaneous and colored photography – is its enemy. It transforms non-western cultures into an image to be consumed.

It is evident how photographic technology, thus conceived, would be, first, a problem for Lévi-Strauss's reformulation of ethnographic knowledge, marked by his attempt to dissolve the frontier between sense data and language into another syntactical organization, for the photographic technique would be supposedly incompatible with a process of cognition that functions beyond the opposition between subject and object, the mental and the physical.
Second, through the technique’s objectification of the world, it would partake in the desire to consume the other, hence its important role in the commercialization of the “exotic.” These two enemies impersonated by the photographic technology – an anthropological narrative based on the gathering of objective data, separating observer and observed, and the mass trade of travel books and “exotic” photography – will appear, in *Tristes Tropiques*, as the two obstacles encountered by the narrator in writing an ethnographic memoir.

### 2. Anthropology and Photography

Comments on photography’s – either wonderful or dreadful – power to generate thoughtless, mechanical, images of the world are not new. In Lévi-Strauss's assumptions we can hear the echoes of the first photographically illustrated book to be commercially published, Talbot's notorious *Pencil of Nature*: “the plates of the present work are impressed by the agency of Light alone, without any aid whatever from the artist's pencil” (5). We can also find another version of it more than a century later in Susan Sontag's critique of photography. In some of her many – and sometimes contradictory – statements about photographic technique she describes it as a practice through which we hope “to appropriate the thing photographed” (*On Photography* 2) but which might work against the understanding of the world; a technology that can generate an infinite amount of information without engaging thought, and which, for that reason, should be subjected to a “conservationist remedy”: an ecology of images (141).

In this sense, Lévi-Strauss – or at least his direct comments on the photographic image – can be read as part of a tradition partaken by both supporters and detractors of photography. A genealogy could be traced from the nineteenth century through late twentieth-century (even though they can be found until today) which makes epistemological remarks on the unprocessed nature of photographs. If Talbot and Sontag can serve as two broad examples of such a tradition,
this view is particularly pervasive in works that advocate for the scientific use of photography – more commonly found in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century – or those which criticize it by pointing out the dangers and illusions of relying on photography's supposed unmediated character.

Among the detractors of the idea of photography as a source of unmediated facts we find, besides Lévi-Strauss himself, a more recent critique of photography as a tool in the West's quest for visibility and objectivity. In *The Vision Quest in the West, or What the Mind's Eye Sees*, the anthropologist Stephen Tyler, for example, relates writing and photography to the “prevalence of *expositio* over narration, simultaneity over sequentiality” (33); a “preponderance of 'things'” over process, of “representation over communication, of science over common sense, of the visual over the verbal” (37). What he is implying, and what can also be read in Lévi-Strauss's own assumptions, is that these technologies of inscription are on the side of the West's pervasive mode of knowledge in detriment of other cultures' oral based knowledge.

The advocates of the use photography as a source of unmediated facts in anthropology, however, would probably have to be searched for in the nineteenth-century. We could cite, for example, C. Read's defense of the use of photography in anthropology in the 1898 and 1899 editions of *Notes and Queries*, arguing that they provided “facts about which there can be no question” (qtd. in Poignant 61). There was a generalized confidence that photography – literally, the inscription of light (photo-graphy) – was capable of suspending time, creating, in Elizabeth Edward’s words, “immutable mobiles” (*Raw Stories* 32): fragments of time and space that could travel from distant lands to the archives of anthropology. This confidence largely supported the

140 Similar to other newborn sciences whose object of study was man, anthropology faced the problem of how to turn subjects into objects: “Man cannot be secluded from disturbing influences, and watched, like the materials of a chemical experience in a laboratory: (qtd. in A. C. Haddon 128).
use of the camera in a discipline that, in a period that extended from the late nineteenth century
to the first decades of the twentieth century, aimed to combine the gathering of facts in a distant
land with later work of contextualization, comparison and analysis. That is, a discipline that
had the encounter with the other – as gathering of data – separated in space and time, from the
intellectual work.

In other words, according to the most common version of this history, the idea of
photography as the recording surface of its objects fulfilled in science the desire for what John
Tagg characterizes dismissively as a “pre-linguistic certainty” (The Burden of Representation 4),
for a signified that exists prior to attempts to represent it. In the case of anthropology,
photography's indexicality – its chemical connection with what it depicts – was seen as an
important tool to overcome the two obstacles of the newborn science of man: on the one hand,
 anxiety about native speech, on the other hand, the defective immediacy of the ethnographer's

141When one aims to exemplify this use of the camera in anthropology, the first type of image that comes to mind is
the frontal and profile portrait of the primitive against a neutral backdrop, sometimes accompanied by a
measuring device. One of the most influential anthropometric systems, produced by J.H. Lamprey in 1869,
advocated the use of a wooden frame with silk threads hung so as to form two-inch squares against which each
subject should be photographed. In addition, the photographer had to guarantee the still and homogenous poses
of the subjects, eliminating ‘noise’ of the body, and rendering it spatially readable. Even if highly constructed,
such images became the “signature image for the discipline or practice” (Raw Histories 12), the privileged
example of a history of the relationship between photography and anthropology that emphasizes the search for ‘a
kind of evidence, an irrefutable testimony to the existence of facts’ (Green 8), as well as the perfect image of the
deadly desire (of both practices) to transform their object into an object in a museum. According to Edwards:
“Such photographs have come to stand for a whole range of photographic practices, which cohered momentarily,
and constantly shifting, around anthropology” (12).

142More detailed accounts on the history of the defense of photography's objectivity can be found in diverse books
on the theme, many of which are guided by a Foucault-inspired investigation of how photographic objectivity
functioned within certain regimens of truth. Nélia Dias' investigation of the development of photographic
portraits of 'types' through anthropological manuals and debates in nineteenth century France, and David Green's
exploration of the relationship between “photography and eugenics,” argue that what assured photography a
position within the scientific domain was its “apparent consistency with the empiricist assumptions and
methodological procedures of naturalism,” which “assumed the existence of pure facts beyond, or prior to, their
identification” (Green 3), as well as the belief that true knowledge comes from the effacement of the subject
(Dias 41). See also Lorraine Daston et Peter Galison's historic account of the invention of Objectivity.
senses—expressed as a suspicion in relation to the subjective verbal data and “personal observation” sent by the seldom untrained observer to the arm-chair anthropologist.

It is in this sense that, in a brief comment on Lévi-Strauss's attack on photography's supposedly unmediated nature, Pinney (in Anthropology and Photography) suggests that the author—and more specifically the book Tristes Tropiques—“brings us a full circle from a nineteenth century anthropology, uncertain about reliability of speech and seeking in photography the stability of fixity and writing” (105). While in the nineteenth-century, photographic technology was praised as a valuable tool for documenting facts without the interference of the too-defective and subjective human senses as well as the mediation of language, Lévi-Strauss in the 1950s rejects it for the same reasons. It is as if, moving away from a previous mode of anthropological knowledge based on the correct representation of the material world or the primitive other, he had to move away from photography itself. But why is photography necessarily an agent of the division he wanted to surpass? As Christopher Pinney suggests, the interpretation of photography as the final culmination of the West's “quest for visibility and scrutiny”—photography as the “emulative metaphor for all ways of knowing”—is just one way of telling the history of the relationship between anthropology and photography.

143 As in other sciences which had man as its object of study, anthropology faced the problem of how to observe members of one's own species, of how to turn subjects into objects: “Man cannot be secluded from disturbing influences, and watched, like the materials of a chemical experience in a laboratory” (qtd. in A. C. Haddon 128). For more on the relation between the crises of representation and the hope that the invention of the photographic technique would be able to eliminate the mediation of language, as well as the contingencies and specificities of vision, see Crary.

144 This double anxiety is also noted by Poignant, who says: “Photography not only produced a filable fact but also seemed to offer the solution to the problem of the faulty interpreter and the recalcitrant informant - the 'savage', who because of the 'the limited range of his vocabulary and ideas ... Timidity... Desire to please... Will give the answer he thinks is wanted’” (62).

145 Many compilations have explored alternative accounts of the relationship between anthropology and the visual, from the widely disseminated Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920, edited by Elizabeth Edwards or From Site to Sight (Banta and Hinsley), to the more recent Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual
It is remarkable that Lévi-Strauss neither in his texts nor in his use of photography alludes to the avant-garde photographic experiments occurring at the time of his travels to Brazil, which questioned the view of photography as an act of recording. In the 20s and 30s, photo-montages and surrealist photography highlighted the capacity of photographs, as Benjamin wrote in “Little History of Photography”, to reveal new ways of seeing. Lévi-Strauss did not seem to partake of the avant-garde excitement for the camera’s eye. But even if considering only the nineteenth-century model of anthropology focused on the gathering of “data” – against which Lévi-Strauss wrote – one finds different photographic practices and aesthetics that complicate this idea of photography as unprocessed, objective knowledge. We have seen an example in Roger Casement's photographs, and we can find others in the field of anthropology.

In an illustrated talk at the Anthropological Institute in 1893 entitled “The Anthropological Uses of the Camera,” the anthropologist and colonial administrator in Guiana Sir Everard Im Thurn, for example, criticizes ethnographic images that focused on “mere bodies” of the natives, which, rendered visible for inspection and measurement, might just as well have been dead or alive, and encourages the anthropologists, “especially [...] the traveling anthropologist” (Im Thurn 184), to make a better use of the “power of photography” (185).

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*Anthropology. In Photography, Anthropology, and History Expanding the Frame*, Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards point to a kind of genealogy of this kind of exploration, which starts in the 70s and 80s. Although Lévi-Strauss befriended Breton and contributed to avant-garde magazines, he rarely cites them. In fact, in a response to commentaries made by Roger Callois, in which the latter accused Lévi-Strauss of “inverse ethnocentrism,” a veneration of preliterate cultures at the expense of the West, as a part of his critique of a twentieth-century disease of decadence and cultural malaise. Callois suggests Lévi-Strauss had been part of a group that was surrealist before being ethnographic; Lévi-Strauss denied the affiliation. He “said that he had never really collaborated with them; he knew Breton, but their ideas were ‘completely different.’” (Wilcken 200-201). Moreover, Lévi-Strauss references in his writings are mostly classical: he recognizes himself in Rousseau and Montaigne, for instance. At most, he identifies with nineteenth-century artistic and intellectual figures. About Lévi-Strauss contradictory affinity and negation of modernism thought and aesthetic, Vincent Debaene wrote: “Classique, donc, Léavi-Strauss l'est jusque dans le tempérament e ce n'est pas le moindre paradoxe de cette oeuvre que d'avoir incarné la pensée la plus avant-gardiste, la pointe la plus novatrice de sciences humaines triomphantes et de s'être toujours située comme en retrait, poursuivant son chemin indifférente aux échos qu'elle suscitait, reticente à se reconnaître dans ce qu'elle engendrait, et résolument arrimée culturellement au moins, à un XIXe siècle “élargi”: jusqu'à Proust en littérature, Debussy et Stravinski en musique...” (*Oeuvres* xxxii-xxxiii).
Following a broader shift in the last decade of the nineteenth century anthropology towards the concept of “culture,” Im Thurn suggests that the camera should be used to register the “primitive phases of life” in their “natural state.” As opposed to the “stillness” of the supposedly more “artificial positions” (188) of anthropometric photography – which could be attained with the intervention of apparatuses that helped to hold and measure the body – Im Thurn’s “natural” seems much more exposed to contingencies. The anthropologist tells the story of his first attempt to photograph a Carib “red man” at the mouth of the Barima River. While he “focused and drew the shutter,” the native sat quite still high up on a mangrove root. Then, as he took off the cap, “with a moan he fell backward off his perch on the soft sand below him” (188).

In order to outline how a photograph of a “living being” could be obtained, Im Thurn turns his attention to the moment of the encounter between the anthropologist and the native, the photographer and the photographed. The conditions and space of this encounter determine the emergence of the true, natural image. Some other important variables are the technical ability of the ethnographic photographer, the time he spends among the natives, his familiarity with them and with their “natural” (habitual) gestures and poses, and their confidence in him, all of which would contribute to making his presence transparent enough to register the natives in their “natural state.” Thus, instead of being conceived as a series of protocolar procedures, which – followed by any person who possessed technical skills - should guarantee the production of

147 Im Thurn's articulation of anthropology, photography, and death in “The Anthropological Uses of the Camera” should be understood, at least partially, within the context of late nineteenth century debates on the subject of anthropological knowledge, and simultaneously on the referent of photographic representation. In her thorough account on the photographs of the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI), Poignant reminds us that the last decade of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of a shift from an anthropology that treated only the human “body” to one that embraced “culture.” The first anthropological definition of culture emerged in 1871, in Edward Burnett Tylor's Primitive Culture. For an account on the relationship between this anthropological shift towards “culture” and the use and theorization of photography see Pinney's Photography and Anthropology. While not condemning photography itself, im Thurn's allusion to dead bodies in his critique of anthropometric and physiological photography calls attention to their relationship to a visual-scientific order whose analogue was pathological anatomy: this “investigation of mute, intemporal bodies” (Foucault 126).
standardized surfaces, the contact is characterized as the decisive space where the “natural truth” should be put to work by the knowledgeable anthropologist in front of the camera.

Knowledgeable, on the one hand, because he must already know something about his subjects and their habits, expressions and poses; on the other, because he needs the skill – in handling both the photographic apparatus and the natives – to capture these moments of truth.

Another nineteenth-century anthropologist, Alfred Cort Haddon, produced a series of photographs of re-enactments of ceremonies and of mythical events during his Cambridge Torres Strait Expedition in 1898. In her analysis of Haddon's images, Edwards suggests that these re-enactment photographs involve a total collapse of “temporalities,” of “mythic, historical and contemporary time.” If the objects of ethnography were rituals and events that existed in the collective memory of the tribe, how to guarantee their future preservation? They had to be played out, experimented, to become part of an archive of knowledge (Raw Histories 166-180). Both Haddon and Im Thurn affirmed the importance of photography's indexicality, which indexicality Barthes refers to as the indelible fact that the film preserves the traces of the past. But their photographic practices also reveal more complex temporalities, pointing to what, in the photo-ethnographic encounter, exceeds the empirical object placed in front of the camera.

In the last decades of the twentieth-century, different anthropologists started to systematically explore the history of the relationship between anthropology and photography through a series of ambiguities and fissures in the discourse of objectivity criticized by Lévi-Strauss. In 1982, the anthropologist and visual artist Tomas David, for example, building on

148 A piece of evidence of this systematic exploration can be found in the recent proliferation of compilations published concerning the relationships between anthropology and the visual, from the widely disseminated Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920, edited by Elizabeth Edwards, or From Site to Sight (Banta and Hinsley), to the more recent Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology. In Photography, Anthropology, and History Expanding the Frame, Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards point to a kind of genealogy of this kind of exploration.
Lévi-Strauss's concept of myth as “a reorganization of sensory experience within the context of a semantic system,” (*Structural Anthropology* 95) suggested that photography itself can be described as a ritual in which “the reorganization of sensory experience is caused by the desire for a satisfactory solution to the paradox of permanence” (*The Ritual of Photography* 6). Through the transformation of the momentary into the permanent, and the notion of endless reproduction, the ritual of photography would operate through “the transformation from a subject’s status of visual presence to the subjects visually present non-presence or absence” (4).

Relying on Benjamin's history of photography and the photographic understanding of history,¹⁴⁹ anthropologists Michael Taussig and Alfred Gell also identify similarities between photographic mimesis and primitive practices. Taussig suggests a relationship between anthropology, photography and ritual. He argues that, as sympathetic magic, photography is a form of sensuous, embodied knowledge that works by contagion, or, like anthropology, by contact. Christopher Pinney, Elizabeth Edwards, Rosalind Poignant and others have also alluded to photography's “indexicality,” the random inclusiveness (and hence visual excess) of photographic inscription, its fixity of appearance and yet its instability of meaning, in order to describe photographs as contested sites of encounter and cultural exchange.

Although the author of one of the most remarkable anti-positivist and anti-evolutionist attempts to rethink the relationships between modern science and myth, Lévi-Strauss is reticent to deign as credible the knowledge generated by photographic technology. As we will see, Lévi-Strauss does recognize, in *Tristes Tropiques*, the similarities between photography and primitive magic, just to identify a singular element of falsity and destructiveness in the first:

> The savages of the Amazonian forest are sensitive and powerless victims, pathetic
creatures caught in the toils of mechanized civilization, and I can resign myself to understanding the fate which is destroying them; but I refuse to be the dupe of a kind of magic which is still more feeble than their own, and which brandishes before an eager public albums of coloured photographs, instead of the now vanished native masks. (41)

Emphasizing the “mechanized” nature of the medium, Lévi-Strauss seems to keep it on the side of a historical narrative of decadence. This “mechanical” element, and the contingent character of the photographic image, is also what seems to put photography on the opposite side of the human intellect and symbolic constructions. As we will see, however, Lévi-Strauss's own description of certain photographic encounters he had in Brazil as well as his use of photographic metaphors in *Tristes Tropiques* contradict such a perspective, alluding to alternative histories of photography. These histories and languages of photography, which can be found in the examples we saw, but also, as Eduardo Cadava showed in *Words of Light*, in writings of authors and photographers as different as Félix Nadar and Marcel Proust, hinge on much of what has been usually considered as the opposite of “modern empiricism,” such as magic, spectrality, and subjective memory.


If nineteenth-century anthropology is marked by an optimism regarding the capacity of photographs to provide knowledge of distant worlds, in the first decades of the twentieth-century photography started fading away from anthropological papers and monographs, migrating to other sites or at least acquiring different functions. This process has been largely documented and interpreted, especially in the case of British and American anthropology. Rosalind Poignant calls attention to the fact that, with the growth in the importance of the fieldworker and a call for
more intensive field-based approaches, “the avalanche of ethnographic facts could no longer be accommodated within the theoretical frame of the discipline” (64). Pinney calls the emergence of the fieldworker as the central validator of this enterprise was also part of a shift to a “re-Platonizing” tendency in anthropology: the “gradual displacement on to an invisible internalized world of meaning … such as concern with social structures” (78). Banks and Ruby add that, together with “the development of long-term fieldwork, with its Malinowskian emphasis on “the imponderabilia of everyday life,” and the subsequent rise of interest in the comparative study of abstract institutions such as 'kinship,' 'the economy,' […] the costs and difficulties of publishing photographs in books and journals contributed to a decline in the perceived value of the photomechanical image” (Made to Be Seen Kindle Locations 97-101).

Moreover, the fact that photographs of “others” were firmly positioned within the travel genre, documentary and photojournalism was seen to compromise the discipline's use of photography with anthropological intention. The newly-trained ethnographer was invented not only in opposition to both the armchair anthropologist and the amateur traveler or colonial administrator, but also to the newly-emerging market of travel memoirs. As Vincent Debaene put it, while other sciences, during their period of consolidation, “had to fight against rhetorical abuses and the lack of seriousness on the part of would-be connoisseurs, anthropology was faced with an entirely new opponent: the sensational” (36). Not in vain, Lévi-Strauss opens Tristes Tropiques with a critique of this mass “phenomenon,” positing it simultaneously as the context in which and against which he is writing: “Amazonia, Tibet and Africa fill the book-shops in the form of travelogues, accounts of expeditions and collections of photographs, in all of which the desire to impress is so dominant as to make it impossible for the reader to access the value of the evidence put before him” (18).
This was surely a complex and not a homogenous process. Vicent Debaene explains how in France, for example, contrary to most countries where “the link that existed at the outset between anthropology and museums weakened during the twentieth century,” the exhibition of ethnographic documents in museums played a central role in making the new science “fundamentally popular, accessible, and edifying” (38). According to Debaene, against both the model of the cabinet of curiosities and the museum of fine arts, the aim of the new anthropological museum in France, which became evident in the reorganization of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, was to present artifacts to the wider public in a meaningful and scientific way, situating the concrete object among charts and explanations designed to instruct the public. Alongside with the specialist’s description and charts, photographs, audio recording and other “accessible representations” were used to “situate an object in its milieu and its everyday life and [...] lend it a didactic purpose, preventing it from becoming something dead and lost in the glaciers of abstraction” (Leiris 11).¹⁵⁰

More than a fragment of the real, or a visual fact for the scientific gaze, the photograph in the museum functioned as a way to evoke the original context of contact of which the visitor was deprived: “Although located in a display case thousands of kilometers from its place of origin, [the object] must remain wrapped in the reflection of its everyday life” (Leiris 11). Seen as a way to connect the past and the present, the artifices used to “wrap” the object in the museum in the context to which only the ethnographer had access can be compared to another phenomenon peculiar to France: the recourse to literature. In what Vincent Debaene's called the “second books” written by the fathers of French ethnography, narratives were written to “complement scientific documents and to house evocations of the 'atmosphere' of societies under study”

¹⁵⁰ The museum was one of the privileged spaces in which a relationship between French anthropology and the Surrealist movement took place. For a more detailed account on this relationship see Debaene.
Photographs are also present in some of these narratives, which triggered the imagination of the public and serving as a kind of affidavit of the presence of the anthropologist in the field. The need of anthropology to “communicate” with a wider public, or educate the masses, was a common justification for both the publication of these “literary” works and the investment and reformulation of the museum in France (Debaene 79). In its first decades, French anthropology took as one of its roles that of opposing the harmful and stereotyped images of primitives commercialized in vulgar travel narratives. But to communicate also means to pass along a context, an atmosphere and an experience of the lived encounter with the subjects that these documents lacked. Métraux observes that “[i] n order to make sense of a historical event, it does not suffice to understand the way in which it came about and the causes that determined it. It is also necessary to recreate its psychological atmosphere” (31).

Given the importance placed on museums and documents, the role of the French fieldworker in the interwar period – when Lévi-Strauss made his own trip to Brazil – was two-fold. On the one hand – as Rivet highlighted, and newspapers publicized – the ethnographer's mission was to bring artifacts “home” to museums (Debaene, L'Estoile). Lévi-Strauss's expedition in Mato-Grosso was not an exception. It was in great part justified by the collecting of artifacts from the indigenous populations to be shared between the recently founded Musée de L'Homme and Brazilian Institutions. On the other hand, a very different kind of description of fieldwork experience, more in tune with what was happening in British-American anthropology, was to become a precondition for the gathering of ethnographic information with the advent of

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151 For different discussions on the epistemological character of the literary accounts of expeditions see Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*; and James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.

152 The more than 300 objects that stayed in Brazil were divided among three institutions and later reunited at the Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the University of São Paulo.
academic anthropology in France. In this version, emphasis was put on the subjective experience of fieldwork. Although, as L'Estoile and Debaene have shown, French anthropology lagged behind in terms of methods and instructions for travelers, the new prescriptions for ethnographic work, found in works by Leiris, Métraux and especially Mauss, started to emphasize the importance of long exposure of the ethnographer to their subjects of study.

This new ethnographer was essentially different from the common traveler, and as Marcel Mauss argued, should be trained “to observe and classify social phenomena” (420). As was already happening in other anthropological traditions, the break with the traditional division of intellectual labor between the armchair scholar and the observer responsible for collecting data in France “placed central importance on the body of the ethnographer as a transactional site where the shift from theory to practice took place” (Debaene 49).

Overall, then, even if photographs were losing importance in ethnographic monographs, they did not disappear completely. In Poignant's reading of Malinowski’s photographs, she suggests that they entered the ground “between the brute and material information and the ethnographers' final version” (65) coordinated with the use of field notes. They could help the anthropologist remember a certain detail of painting or artifact, which would acquire importance within the more elaborated and comprehensive narrative of the anthropologist. This can be a possible historical explanation for the migration of images from the anthropological archives, to private archives – which is the case with Lévi-Strauss's – or to universities.

In a second hypothesis, photographs would have migrated, as Tomas David suggested, from the pages of the monographs to its language. Anthropology would have absorbed the idiom of photography to the point of rendering the latter redundant. The indexical “being there”

153 More details of this hypothesis can be found in Pinney's *The Parallel Histories of Anthropology and Photography*. Pinney affirms having heard the idea for the first time through Tomas David.
of photography is transposed onto the figure of the anthropologist, who must be exposed for a recognized period of time to this contact with the other. The ethnographer/anthropologist would, like a strip of film, receive this information in a negative form, and reveal it, after processing, in the positive form of a monograph. In this case, it is the body of the anthropologist that is capable of making a revelation. Although he went to the field furnished with a Leica and an “oval shaped miniature 8mm filming camera,” Lévi-Strauss declared, in Saudades do Brasil, he “hardly ever used” the filming camera, “feeling guilty if I kept my eye glued to the viewfinder instead of observing and trying to understand what was going on around me” (22). This affirmation reminds us of Casement's own relationship with ethnographic photography as it appears in his Travel Journal, in which photography was related to a less legitimate, because more trivial – touristic – gaze.

However, this hypothesis of the migration of photography to the language used in anthropological monographs still relies on a fundamental difference between sense data and intellectual labor that Lévi-Strauss begins to question in his anthropological work. If the incorporation of the language of photography appears in crucial epistemological passages of Tristes Tropiques, written in the 50s, it could not be based on the model of the anthropologist as a “strip of film.” Instead of figuring the process of gathering data about the inhabitants and landscapes of the tropics as first fixation, and later revelation, the photographic language appears in Tristes Tropiques to reveal the image of the natives as fragmentary, ruinous, or as phantoms that haunt the ethnographer's dream of encountering for the first time a primitive other, untouched by civilization. In Words of Lights, a study about language, photography and history in Benjamin's writings, Eduardo Cadava remembers that Benjamin relates that the decline of photography to “the forgetting of its ghostly or spectral character” (13), which was an intrinsic
part of its experience in its first decades, and that the fragments, shadows, ruins, and ghosts had been part of photography's vocabulary since its invention.

In the next section, I will explore, first, Lévi-Strauss use of figures of shadows, ghosts and ruins in the lines of a book whose particular purpose is to criticize the form of the anthropological monograph, or, in the words of Carol Jacobs, to expose the “fundamental unknowability of the anthropologist's scientific object either as past or as other” (10). Second, I will analyze the contradiction between Lévi-Strauss's criticism of photography, his representation of the photographic encounter and his use of photography in *Tristes Tropiques*.

4. Shadows and Ashes in *Tristes Tropiques*.

I hate travelling and explorers. Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions. [...] It is now fifteen years since I left Brazil for the last time and all during this period I have often planned to undertake the present work, but on each occasion a sort of shame and repugnance prevented me making a start. Why, I asked myself, should I give a detailed account of so many trivial circumstances and insignificant happenings? (*Tristes Tropiques* 16-17)

Much has been said about the opening of *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss's famous disparagement of travel narratives “in form of travelogues, accounts of expeditions and collections of photographs” (17).¹⁵⁴ We have seen nonetheless that the denunciation of tourists, adventurers, and reporters is an old trope, in vogue at least since the end of the nineteenth-century. Lévi-Strauss’s “fond farewell to savages and explorations” (414), however, opposes not only the sensationalist subjectivism of the amateur adventurer's tales but also the “insipid details”

¹⁵⁴ “I hate traveling and explorers” (17), the book's first sentence, has been widely criticized for being a purely rhetorical gesture in a narrative which reproduces the most common conventions of travel writing and, consequently, which does not escape what it seeks to denounce (Geertz 25-48).
or “insignificant events” found in ethnographic monograph, which was usually subjected to the chronological and contingent order of the field-diary.\footnote{155In this respect, Vincent Debaene compares Lévi-Strauss's denial to narrate “insipid events” to Paul Valéry's critique of writing as a form of recording or note taking: “indeed, it is difficult not to see in the entrance of the boat at 5:30 an allusion to the Marquise going out at five. In his Manifesto of Surrealism, André Breton scoffs at the “realistic attitude” that poisons the novel of his time and evokes a secret Paul Valéry once told him: he would always refrain from beginning a novel with the words “The Marquise went out at five.” It is not fiction as such so much as the arbitrary nature of the narrative that Valéry (and Breton) denounce in this way.” (201)} That is why Lévi-Strauss starts out backwards, confusing departures and returns, beginnings and ends. His ethnographic narrative is, in the first place, constructed as remembrance, not as reportage. Instead of a chronological progression, or a diary, narration brings together apparently incongruous events, periods and places. While the chapter about the first time Lévi-Strauss crossed the Atlantic on his way to Brazil ends up focusing on the description of his escape, in 1941, from occupied France, the memory of a big hotel in Goiania takes the narrator to his experience in Karachi, in Pakistan.

In this remembrance, the narrator presents his past self as a lonely traveler in search of the “exotic,” following the path of the great adventurers of the colonial history. The presence of the other participants in the expedition – among them his wife Dina Lévi-Strauss, an ethnologist herself, the tropical-medicine specialist Dr. Jean Vellard and the Brazilian anthropologist Luis de Castro Faria – is barely noticed in this subjective account of a much expected encounter with the Brazilian indigenous groups. 

Tristes Tropiques begins with the young Lévi-Strauss's search for a pure form of alterity, which he will later discover to be an impossible enterprise. The issue addressed by the author is not only the impossibility of narrating something that happened years before it was written, when the ethnologist was involved in his field work in Brazil, it is also the question of searching for “what we think of somehow as a return to an earlier era of humankind, to our own point of origin” (Blanchot 78). The traveler is described as the young Indian of the puberty rite, who leaves his own society in search of a revelation, but, in this case, brings back
nothing but a “handful of ashes” (41).

Although more directly thematized in the beginning and final chapters of the book, the narrative of failure also figures in its middle chapters, which, nonetheless, follow a more chronological order, recounting the narrator's successive encounters with Indigenous groups in the backlands of Brazil. In its structure *Tristes Tropiques* seems to be in tune with Michel de Certeau's depiction of travel narratives' “rhetoric of distance” (*Montaigne's 'Of Cannibals'*) 69. According to de Certeau, travel narratives are composed of two dimensions – a meta-discursive history and a descriptive depiction - that empower each other. The descriptive dimension – the ethnological “picture” described by de Certeau as an “ahistorical image” (69) - emerges at the center of the accounts of the outward journey and of the return, establishing simultaneously the “strangeness of the Other” and the authority of the text. In depicting a frame that separates center and borders, de Certeau characterizes the picture as a double exteriority – it is both the other of the narration, and the body of the other.157

As if confirming Lévi-Strauss's own affirmations about the photographic medium, the photographs published in *Tristes Tropiques* do not partake of the unforeseen correspondences of remembrance, but emerge exactly at the center of the text, along with the chapters that narrate the anthropologist's encounter with indigenous communities. I will analyze these central chapters and the role of the photographs in them later. First, I will approach the “borders” of *Tristes*...

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156 Some scholars, as Carol Jacobs, read these middle chapters – especially those from Parts Five to Eight – as the anthropologist’s attempt to regain control of his object of study, as a moment of forgetting of the epistemological impasses he enacts at the borders of the book. However, Lévi-Strauss will still remark, especially in the sections pertaining to the Nambikwara and Tupi-Kawahib, the aimlessness of the search for humanity's past or civilization's other.

157 Such a connection between image, otherness and atemporality has been established many times. In *Time and the Other*, one of the seminal books of historical critique of anthropology that came out in the 70s, Johannes Fabian, for example, argues that the subordination of anthropology to the visual – which he identifies with spatial distance and objectivism – is at the roots of the “allochronism” of anthropology. On the persistent anxiety towards the visual in 20th century French critical theory see Martin Jay.
Tropiques, in particular the first part, called “Setting Out,” in which Lévi-Strauss discusses the limits of anthropological knowledge, representation and memory.

This discussion is marked by the theme of reproduction, or of the relationship between present and past: the search of the narrator for his past self, and the search of the anthropologist for a primitive form of existence. But it also unfolds itself throughout anthropology’s own history, in the sense that the passion for reconstituting past and exotic times is closely linked to the equally impossible desire to repeat the moment of the “first contact”: “Never had humanity experienced such a harrowing test, and it will never experience such another (74). When crossing the same doldrums, the “last mystical barrier” (74) between two worlds, that had made Columbus stray from the path that would have led him to Brazil, Lévi-Strauss relives this exceptional moment when “everything would be called into question (74). It is, thus, through the eyes of the first travelers that Lévi-Strauss crosses this imaginary line, where nothing is left as it once was, and where the indirect reflex of the sunrays reverses “the normal relationship of luminosity between air and water” (73): “It was more or less in the area where we were now sailing that Columbus encountered mermaids” (76).

Likewise, it is with Jean de Léry’s book in his pocket that he enters Rio de Janeiro for the first time: “I walked up the Avenida Rio-Branco, once a site occupied by Tupinamba villages, but in my pocket I carried Jean de Léry, the anthropologist’s breviary” (81). Like Casement, who sees the indigenous peoples of the Putumayo through Irish (even if simultaneously British and thus contradictory) eyes, Lévi-Strauss's carries with him the Atlantic colonial archive. Hence the

158 Anthropologists’ obsession with the “first contact” was criticized by late twentieth-century anthropologists such as Marshall Sahlins (Goodbye to Tristes Tropes 16), who suggests that European narratives depart from the idea that any traditional community will necessarily change in contact with western civilization: “As an attack on the cultural integrity and historical agency of the peripheral peoples, they do in theory just what imperialism attempts in practice” (7). The notion of the "vanishing savage" has also been explored by James Clifford, who points out that the pattern extends beyond ethnography.
act of crossing the Atlantic appears to him as a repetition of the inaugural colonial encounter, and
the point of view, or rather, the body of the anthropologist does not cease to recognize in itself all
the other bodies that have sought the same object of desire. It is as a memory, with his own body
bearing the traces of all the encounters between Europeans and Native Brazilians, that the
anthropologist is able to recognize, in the Rio Branco Avenue, the memory of the Tupinambá
(even though the modernist urban development project in downtown Rio de Janeiro consisted in
completely erasing that memory).

But again, Lévi-Strauss remembers that rigorous repetition is impossible: “What they saw
then, no Western eye will ever see again” (326). That is why he can do no more than try to
“recreate” what the first travelers supposedly saw in all its splendor through fragments and
broken pieces. If the problem of reproduction is, from the beginning, located in different gaps of
time – between the writing and the travels, the civilized and the primitive, the contemporary
traveler and his predecessors, the first contact and the last – it is because it addresses the
disjunction between a present and an original past, which is irrecoverable in its imagined
wholeness. Shadows, ghosts, fragments, ashes, ruins and debris are strongly present in Lévi-
Strauss’ writing, though frequently evoking the persistent fetish of a primeval and original
reality, which precedes or is exterior to the series of contacts. If, on the one hand, Tristes
Tropiques’s emphasis on loss replicates much of what Johannes Fabian has called as
anthropology’s “denial of coevalness” - the denial that anthropologist and interlocutor exist in the
same time – the narrator’s insistence on colonial nostalgia is also played out, deliberately staged
by an almost naïve Lévi-Strauss in the beginning of the book: “There is no more thrilling
prospect for the anthropologist than that of being the first white man to visit a particular native
community” (325-326).
In denying the possibility of encountering the dreamed object of his search, however, the anthropologist still encounters something - ashes, shining particles, ruins: “Dreams, ‘the god of the savages,’ as the old missionaries used to say, have always slipped through my fingers like quicksilver. But a few shining particles may have remained stuck, here and there” (42). As we will see later, these fragments are the raw material for both the ethnologist, who is described as an “archaeologist of space, seeking in vain to recreate a lost local colour with the help of fragments and debris” (43), and the writer, who mobilizes his archive in order to give an account of the encounter.

And time, which brings loss and forgetting, is at the same time the condition of possibility for writing and understanding. According to the narrator, giving an account of the experience of contact is possible because time has passed.\footnote{In an interview with Didier Eribon, Lévi-Strauss emphasizes again the question of time. Asked what led him to write the book, he says that, although when invited by Jean Malaurie to contribute to the series \textit{Terre Humaine}, he had never desired to write about his travels, as “time went on” he had gained a “certain distance” and “it was no longer a matter of transcribing a journal of [his] expedition”: “I had to rethink my old adventures” (58). He adds that did it also because he thought he had no future in the academic system.} After “twenty years of forgetfulness” (44) the writer witnesses a reorganization experience. Through the disappearance of certain events, the concatenation of others, patterns start to appear and a meaningful structure, which surpasses his subjective will, gains form:

I have constantly reproached myself for not seeing as much as I should. For a long time I was paralysed by this dilemma, but I have the feeling that the cloudy liquid is now beginning to settle. Evanescent forms are becoming clearer, and confusion is being slowly dispelled. What has happened is that time has passed. Forgetfulness, by rolling my memories along in its tide, has done more than merely wear them down or consign them to oblivion. [...] Sharp edges have been
blunted and whole sections have collapsed: periods and places collide, are juxtaposed or are inverted, like strata displaced by the tremors on the crust of an ageing planet. Some insignificant detail belonging to the distant past may now stand out like a peak, while whole layers of my past have disappeared without trace. Events without any apparent connection, and originating from incongruous periods and places, slide one over the other and suddenly crystallize into a sort of edifice which seems to have been conceived by an architect wiser than my personal history. (44)

In the moment of writing, he realizes that past debris and fragments have been relocated and transformed, echoing Proust's description of the moment of awakening, that peculiar stage between sleep and awareness in which everything revolves around the individual – the furniture, the countries, the years – before going back to immobility (Swann's Way 6). But the moment of the ethnographic contact (of any contact) is also mediated by time and memory, composed of a personal and collective archive of images – of France, Pakistan, Indian, West Indies, the United States, Jean de Lery's Rio de Janeiro, or Columbus' Atlantic. In Tristes Tropiques, the two encounters – the contact with the Indians and the re-encounter with the memory of the contact with the Indians – mirror each other. If, in both of them, the belated anthropologist finds only ruins of an imagined complete image, he also finds out that his belatedness is the condition of possibility of understanding. For time and memory work on both encounters through transformation and fixation, preservation and destruction of their objects.

As a reader of Proust and Freud, Lévi-Strauss knows that forgetting plays an important role in memory. His spatial, geological description of the relationship between present and past, which, as Lévi-Strauss himself affirmed (Tristes Tropiques 55-57), is related to his interest in
psychoanalysis, also reveals the way in which the author uses his material archive, which use avoids turning the archive into a chronologically-ordered diary. To open an archive is to deal with fragments, to work in the gaps between documents, to find unforeseen connections between images. In his Freudian *Archive Fever*, Derrida suggests that the figure of the archive “is at once institutive and conservative” (12), totalizing and fragmentary, accumulative and destructive. An analysis of the Lévi-Strauss archive at the French National Library reveals that *Tristes Tropiques* was constructed in great part from collages and montages of previous lectures, papers, unpublished manuscripts, and field writings – some authored by him, and others by his former wife Dina Lévi-Strauss. In some cases, the transcription of a previous text remains heterogeneous with regard to the narrative. Visible thresholds keep the fragments at once inside and outside the narrative, suturing past and present, without completely blurring the fractures between them.

One of the most evident of these archival pieces appears in Chapter 7, “Sunset.” The passage is a word-by-word transcription – in the form of a citation – of a few pages he wrote in the boat during his first voyage to Brazil. “The state of grace” of the young (not yet) anthropologist is recovered through his attempt to capture a sunset in writing. As in photography, the written record takes on the temporality of the instant: “notebook in hand, I jotted down second by second the expressions which would perhaps enable me to fix those evanescent and ever-renewed forms” (*Tristes Tropiques* 62). The sunset – the object that he tries in vain to “fix” – is described as simultaneously unique and already a reproduction, not only because, as anyone

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160 In the folder named “Tristes Tropiques” at Lévi-Strauss's archive (French National Library), one can find most documents used by the author in the making of the book. Among them, there are pages detached from the field notebooks, which illustrate the process of unmaking the chronological writing of the field-book and re-arranging it in another form. For a detailed description of the manuscripts used in *Tristes Tropiques* see Debaene's “note to Tristes Tropiques” in *Oeuvres* (1690–1698).
knows, it repeats itself daily – in procedures “always identical but unpredictable” (67) – but also, according to the author, because it is a repetition of the day that comes to an end. Lévi-Strauss describes the twilight as “a complete performance with a beginning, a middle and an end […] a sort of small-scale image of the battles, triumphs and defeats which have succeeded each other during twelve hours in tangible form; but also at a slower speed” (63). Therefore, the object of the anthropologist's gaze is already a non-mimetic repetition. An image of a different nature, like memory: “Memory is life itself, but of a different quality” (63). It is also an illusion, a game of mutable lights and shadows that finish in the dark negative of a “photographic plate of night” (68).

Vincent Debaene argues that this piece of writing stands exterior to the narration, as a product of an older self: a naïve anthropologist worried about external appearances, a self which contrasts with Tristes Tropiques' Proustian writing. Thus interpreted, the description would be a perfect example of the early twentieth-century use of photographic language in ethnographic monographs, in which the anthropologist himself becomes a strip of film that reveals the world (“The Parallel Histories”). However, in his attempt at fixing the sunset, Lévi-Strauss also seems to recognize the signs of his future theoretical preoccupations, as if his younger self had seen in the sunset more than the “fleeting appearances” that the ethnographer-as-data-gatherer would have to fix. Described as memory, both an objective and subjective image, the event of the sunset is not only of external appearances. If in Proust's work, memory is like the moment of awakening, here memory appears in the form of a sunset disappearing completely into darkness.161

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161 Not by accident, the description of the sunset recalls the Tristes Tropiques passage in which memory is compared to a geological picture, a momentary petrification of what were previously images in constant transformation. Years later, in Naked Man, Lévi-Strauss alludes once more to his attempt at fixing the sunset as
If, in the encounter with the Indians, Lévi-Strauss describes himself as an archeologist trying to recreate the past through broken pieces, *Tristes Tropiques* is constituted as the work of a bricoleur, who puts together past writings – which are already a kind of organization of experience, like the attempt to describe the sunset – and rearranges them into a new form. Thus, the moment of writing enacts an encounter of the present and the past authors, the younger and older Lévi-Strauss, which confirms him as both the same and different, both the bearer of those memories and the one who was transformed by them. That is why this encounter with the past is also a partially failed encounter, an encounter with shadows, fragments, and debris. One should not forget, however, that what characterizes Lévi-Strauss's thought is the belief that behind these transformations, between himself and the other, there is something that does not change, a common logic, an “architect wiser than [his] personal history” who governs both the moment of perception and the work of memory.

As we have seen, it is this architect, this mediator or common structure that, for Lévi-Strauss, is lacking in the case of photographs. Photographs would “seize” the moment, not allowing for selective perception and memory. Thus, it comes as a surprise that the language which Lévi-Strauss uses to criticize photography in *Tristes Tropiques* is exactly the temporal language of shadows and ghosts, death and survival. As we will see, the author criticizes photographic images, on the one hand, for not being able to bring back the past, for being nothing but shadows of the Indians, ghosts that try to substitute for an absent body, pale yet another premonition of the future, this time connected to his studies on myths. While on the boat in which he crossed the Atlantic for the first time, he would have realized that his fragile object of study was like the phases of the sunset, “a complex edifice which also glows with a thousand iridescent colors as it builds up before the analyst's gaze, slowly expands in its full extent, then crumbles and fades away in the distance” (*Mythologiques* 693-694).

162 In this sense, there is also a debate regarding the extent to which Lévi-Strauss's formalistic approach to anthropology would conceive of a final picture or an immutable structure of humanity's myths or, on the contrary, if a constant rearrangement and understanding is inherent to his method, which has no pretension to arrive to a final image (Descolas, Imbert).
fragments of a former spectacle. On the other hand, the problem with the photographic shadow is also described as being its illusionary and seductive excess of light. To sum up, photography seems at the same time too objective to give valuable anthropological knowledge, nothing more than a pale shadow of the ethnographer's experience, and, finally, the dangerous agent of an illusion. Correspondingly, photography's referents are at times described as raw and insignificant details, lost objects to be mourned, or falsified exotic spectacles.

a. Light and Shadows

In these deplorable times, a new industry has developed which has helped in no small way to confirm fools in their faith, and to ruin what vestige of the divine might still have remained in the French mind. [...] the present-day credo of the worldly wise, specially in France (and I do not believe that anyone whosoever would dare to maintain the contrary), is this: 'I believe in nature, and I believe only in nature' [...] An avenging God has heard the prayers of this multitude; Daguerre was his messiah. [...] From that moment onwards our loathsome society rushed, like Narcissus, to contemplate its trivial image on the metallic plate. A form of lunacy and extraordinary fanaticism, took hold of these new sun-worshippers. (Baudelaire 87)

When reading Lévi-Strauss's first published reference to photography, one cannot help but recall the famous critique published by Baudelaire on the Salon of 1859. Besides presenting the problem in a very similar way, as part of a contemporary moral and social phenomenon which is especially peculiar to France" (Tristes Tropiques 18), the anthropologist and the poet

163 As Lévi-Strauss must have known, the commercial phenomenon of travel books is much older. For a more detailed account and numbers on the commerce of travel accounts see Vincent Debaene.
use analogous terms to describe the stupidity of the spectacle: that it is kept up “mainly for effect” (18); that it exploits the audience’s eagerness “for more such pabulum” (Lévi-Strauss 17); and that its artists use tricky techniques (or travelers, in Lévi-Strauss’ case) to please the public, “to draw its attention, its surprise, stupefy it, by unworthy stratagems” (Baudelaire 86). In both Lévi-Strauss and Baudelaire’s cases, the desire for what is real is joined by the folly of believing photography is reality.

In the spectacles criticized by Lévi-Strauss, it is anthropology which is mystified: “scraps of hackneyed information which have appeared in every textbook during the past fifty years” (18) are transformed, as if by some cheap trick, or some optic illusions – “lantern-slides or motion pictures, preferably in colour” (18) – in “revelations” (18) \[miraculeusement transmutées en révélations (4)\]. Révélations, a word used to signify both disclosure (of meaning) and development of a negative – the step in the photographic process in which the latent image is transformed into a visible image – is used here to describe what photography would be unable to bring to presence: the photographed other, the past and its meaning. The “revelation” that is brought forth by the image would be nothing but illusion, made possible by a mixture of the “effrontery” of the traveler-photographer-mystifier and the “ignorance and naivety of his hearers” (18).

As I have argued before, in dissociating development – the photographic process of light inscription – from truth, Lévi-Strauss is rejecting a nineteenth-century tradition that considers the photographic camera as a tool for anthropologists in the production of a documentation supposedly capable of preserving, comparing and transmitting visual information with a minimum amount of human intervention. However, in talking about the deception behind travel photographs the author also evokes photographic imaginaries that go beyond their scientific use.
The miraculous photographic “revelation” is described in connection with the public events in which the travelers exhibit their treasures. In contrast with what is expected from a scientific solemnity, the environment is theatrical, halfway between a circus and a fair. The presence of the technical apparatus and the crowd, eager for the simultaneously exotic and exact images that it produced, reminds us, at first glance, of the spectacles and optical games – panoramas, dioramas – that were so common in Paris at the end of the 19th century,164 and with which Baudelaire was certainly familiar. The mixture between entertainment; consumption; and fascination with technology, the real and the exotic seems to be characteristic of the dawn of western modernity. In the midst of nineteenth-century technological development, realist aesthetics, and positivist science, Lévi-Strauss stays on the side of the symbolist poet.165

But, if we move forward a few paragraphs, we will see that the theatricality Lévi-Strauss describes in photographic spectacles is not so different from the author’s description of the “extraordinary performances” (19) that made up the classes of his teacher Georges Dumas, “ce savant un peu mystificateur” (6) who was present at the dawn of Lévi-Strauss’ own career, and whose style also seems to come from a western, and now pre-modern, past, in particular the time of the great navigations and the arrival of Europeans in the New World. Dumas reminded Lévi-Strauss of “those sixteenth-century humanists, who were simultaneously doctors and philosophers, and of whom he seemed to be, both physically and mentally, a descendant” (20). As is the case with photography, the illusion and the false revelations of Professor Dumas’ class were built on a mixture of seduction and cunning, aesthetics and bluster:

164 See Schwartz.
165 Christopher Pinney, in *Photography and Anthropology*, had already made an association between Lévi-Strauss’s vision on photography and the nineteenth-century anthropology, saying that he “brings us a full circle from a nineteenth century anthropology, uncertain about reliability of speech and seeking in photography the stability of fixity and writing” (105). In building all these associations with the nineteenth-century, Lévi-Strauss ignores that surrealists, constructivists and other twentieth century photographers he knew so well were experimenting with the medium.
There was not much to be learned from his lectures; he never prepared them, since he was aware of the physical charm exercised over his audience by the expressive movements of his lips, which were twisted in a constantly flickering grin, and above all by his voice, which was at once hoarse and melodious. It was a real siren’s voice. (19)

By placing Dumas in the sixteenth century (as simultaneously the humanist and the siren), the scene echoes the colonial encounter. In the hospital room, “covered with gay paintings by lunatics” (19), Lévi-Strauss felt exposed “to a peculiar kind of exotic experience” (19). The exotic figure, however, the object of the narrators' gaze, is the French Dumas himself, with “his sturdy, angular frame, crowned by a knobby head resembling a large root that has been bleached and stripped through a long stay on the sea bed” (19). The narrator goes on to explain the extraordinary performances “involving the crafty practitioner and certain inmates,” who knew “what was expected of them, and could produce symptoms when required” (19).

We will find a similar attention to deception in the central part of the book, during the author’s description of the Bororo’s religious ceremonies. In chapter 23, the Living and the Dead, where Lévi-Strauss addresses the rituals intended to establish a communication with the dead, the ethnologist pays special attention to the musical instruments used by the indigenous men to produce a low roaring noise attributed to the visiting spirits of whom the women are supposed to be terrified. So that the spectacle could work efficiently, the women were not allowed to see the instruments under any circumstances. Therefore, the making of the musical instruments, called rhombe – a technology aimed at calling ghosts into presence – was surrounded by so much secrecy that the natives had resisted revealing it to the anthropologist. Its similarity to the role of photography, according to what Lévi-Strauss himself writes about the
medium, is notable: making visible the dead, thus establishing a power relation inside the group itself. According to the anthropologist, by excluding the women from the secret that explains the “illusion of a visit from the spirits”, the men are not just sanctioning a divide that grants them power and privileges, but providing “for the benefit of both sexes, an affective and intellectual content to fantasy-figures which might otherwise be altogether less meaningfully manipulated.” (244)

In the chapter “A Quest for Power,” Lévi-Strauss elaborates on the relationship between the modern spectacles of photographic illusions, and the primitive spectacles of religious illusions, based on the desire for power. The association between primitive and modern rituals is initially very similar to the ones that appear decades later in Michael Taussig’s Mimesis and Alterity. Lévi-Strauss interprets the “powerful psychological demands” motivating the French and contemporary phenomena, which he had started to describe in the first chapter, through the myths connected to the rituals of puberty. The contemporary “explorers” would be similar to the indigenous youngsters who risk themselves in physical and moral trials to return to their villages as adults, for “in this unstable border area, there is a danger of slipping beyond the pale and never coming back, as well as a possibility of drawing from the vast ocean of unexploited forces surrounding organized society a personal supply of power” (40). If the natives endure all kinds of sacrifices in order to achieve “a vision”, a spiritual révélation that will gain them their privileges and position amongst their social group, the révélations that the western travelers bring from their “adventures” are the anthropological souvenirs, the pictures of exotic peoples. The traveler's power will be expressed in the “writing of newspaper articles and bestsellers and in lecturing to packed halls.” (41). According to Lévi-Strauss, there are neither science nor poetry in these

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166 See Tomas Davis for an anthropological analysis of photography as ritual.
empty spectacles.

Despite the structural similarity (the dialectic between society and its exterior, the necessity of risking leaving the group in order to find a place within it, or the dynamics between sacrifice and reward), Lévi-Strauss has a more generous view of the indigenous ritual, as if the western ritual were marked with an essential element of falsity and violence that the other is not. While, in Lévi-Strauss’ description, the “revelation” achieved by the Indians comes from their state of commotion caused by “the intensity of their sufferings and their prayers” (40), the western travelers’, created by technology, is, as we have seen, nothing but deceit and destruction.

Contemporary anthropologists who are readers of Benjamin, such as Michael Taussig and Christopher Pinney, have noted that the first writings on photography already pointed out its relationship with magic. The French photographer Felix Nadar (5), for example, suggested that the “most brilliant star in the constellation of inventions” that made the 19th century “a Golden Age of Science” (7), the one which seemed to finally give man the power to create, was also the most disturbing and appalling of them all, “smelled strongly of witchcraft”, of “sympathetic magic, the conjuring up of spirits, ghosts.” (7) For Benjamin, what the photographic spectacle reveals is that the “difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable” (“A Short History of Photography” 279).

If this last revelation remains unproductive to Lévi-Strauss – for whom photography can only be considered a “dupe of a kind” of magic – this could be, at least in part because the withering of the frontier that divides technology and magic threatens the author's usually overlooked historical argument, which involves the critique of the expansion of technological society and denunciation of the extermination of primitive societies. According to Lévi-Strauss, the turning point from primitive to modern societies is, as we have seen before, the emergence of
technologies of inscription, first writing, then photography.\textsuperscript{167} Focusing on the specificity of the destructive and decaying power of the technological “realism,” and its possessive relationship to the world, he denounces photography as a means to “appropriate” the “charms of the savages” “through the medium of these photographs,” and “the shadows of those that history has already destroyed” (41).

As a counterpoint to this recent phenomenon of massive consumption of images of the exotic, the author talks about the time when people almost did not travel at all. When only the “small, gloomy, icy and dilapidated amphitheater” (18) housed the rituals in which the adventurers unwrapped their treasures. Only in this somber environment, where nothing was precise – from the ghosts projected by excessively weak lights that could not be distinguished from the patches of damp on the walls, to the sparse silhouettes of the few audience members – was it possible to rid oneself – in this case, without rewards, applause or illusions – of the shadows of the experience of the encounter with the primitive. Only there, amongst the “moth-eaten ghosts” (18), could the anthropologist and the public find themselves a little more protected from photographic deception, from the illusion that the photographic technique presents us with an access to the other, an other that it helped destroy.

Lévi-Strauss was not the only one who suggested that the excessive light, or mimicry, of the photographic image, contradictorily, makes it less faithful. Directly or indirectly, he follows a long tradition that includes Baudelaire himself, who related the problem represented by photography to realism, and not only to the passion for realism, but to the “foolish” belief that photography is reality. Kracauer, for his part, while commenting on a spectacle of his time, the

\textsuperscript{167} This division of an oral society from a writing society was criticized by Derrida in \textit{Of Grammatology}, who argues for a recognition of writing in speech. Before him, in the thirties, Walter Benjamin had already proposed a history of photography that begins much earlier than 1839, when photography was invented (“Short History of Photography”).
mass consumption of illustrated magazines, warns us about the dangers of identifying the image with the object that had been in front of the camera (432). Kracauer claims that, the closer we try to get to the events through the images, the further we get from them, and the further we get from the image’s own nature, from its technological character. Lévi-Strauss's two spectacles suggest something similar: while the improvement of technology, by dissimulating its presence (by effacing the mediation of the camera, the projector and the amphitheater itself), creates the illusion that we are face to face with a real object that had been in front of the camera, the dark and dilapidated amphitheater might at least bring us closer to something less elusive.

b. Referentiality and Performance

The danger of the illusion of photography takes us back to Lévi-Strauss’s more specific problem: the phenomenology of the encounter itself. In the last two sections, we saw a contradiction supported by the text: photography, at first, is criticized, because it is perceived as “revelation,” when in truth it is merely a shadow, or a fragment, of the past (a double past: that of the voyage and that of the primitive). On the other hand, the primordial spectacle, of which a photograph would be nothing but a shadow, proves to also be nothing more than shadow, ashes, debris, fragment. The photographic register and the anthropological object are, therefore, the same thing: the specter – ghost – of a spectacle that was seen by nobody. But, after all, what does the photographer want to photograph? Who is this “primitive” who stands before the camera?

In order to explore this question, let us return to the first scene of encounter, witnessed by Lévi-Strauss before his departure to Brazil, in George Dumas' classes. Dumas' spectacular classes were crafted as a duet between the lecturer and the veteran patients, who “after years of confinement, were well used to this kind of drill, knew what was expected of them, and could produce symptoms when required or would put up just enough resistance to give their tamer the
opportunity for a dazzling display of skill” (20). Far from being passive objects of representation, Dumas’ patients take on their role in the spectacle, acting out what they are: mental patients in the Sainte-Anne hospital.

This episode is reminiscent of another, this time directly linked to photography. In chapter 20, *A Native Society and its Life-Style*, Lévi-Strauss narrates an episode in which the ethnographer loses control of the performance:

Young anthropologists are taught that natives are afraid of having their image caught in a photograph, and that it is proper to overcome this fear and compensate them for the risk they think they are taking by making them a present in money or in kind. The Kadiveu had perfected the system: not only did they insist on being paid before allowing themselves to be photographed; they forced me to photograph them so that I should have to pay. Hardly a day went by but a woman came to me in some extraordinary get-up and obliged me, whether I wanted to or not, to pay her photographic homage, accompanied by a few milreis. Being anxious not to waste my film, I often just went through the motions and handed over the money." (176)

Earlier in the chapter, Lévi-Strauss had already manifested a certain skepticism towards the fact that, in the puberty ritual of a Kadiveu girl, she was dressed in traditional clothing, had her face and body painted, and had “all necklaces that they could lay hands on” (176) heaped round her neck. Let us compare this passage to the one we have discussed previously, in which Lévi-Strauss, recognizing the presence of the myth of puberty in both western travelers and Indians, nevertheless differentiates them, declaring his preference for the broken masks,
threatened as they were by the “photographic albums.” In this case, is the mask purer than the photograph? Was it purer before being contaminated by it? Lévi-Strauss raises here a problem faced by ethnologists at least since the last decades of the nineteenth-century, with the emergence of the concept of culture in anthropology: the authenticity of the ethnologic spectacle. In this sense, it is interesting to remember nineteenth-century anthropologist Everard im Thurn's writing on how to obtain “natural images” of natives, which goes from taking photos without their knowledge (a candid camera before avant la lettre) to making sure the image is set in the subject's natural habitat.

It is remarkable that the problem of the authentic savage, which does not seem to be a problem in a book that challenges the discourse of objectivity, is only raised in such a direct manner through the photographic encounter. As if through photography, the separation between observer and observed (that otherwise Lévi-Strauss aims at challenging), had necessarily to come back.

However, if photography, as Barthes claimed, “always carries its referent with itself” (5), always attests to a presence, this referent, as Lévi-Strauss's anecdote suggests, cannot be thought as separate from the photographic event itself. In Camara Lucida, the book in which Barthes shifted from a view of photography as encoded form and turned to its indexicality, the author at the same time disassociates “indexicality” from “objectivity,” or, more broadly, from the temporal understanding of representation as gathering of data, in which there is, first, an external referent which is later transformed into an image. According to Barthes, what adheres to the image cannot be considered to be something alien to it:

In front of the lens, I am at the same time: the one I think I am, the one I want others to think I am, the one the photographer thinks I am, and the one he makes
use of to exhibit his art. In other words, a strange action: I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture (comparable to certain nightmares). (13)

The indigenous girls and the anthropologist, similarly, cannot help but imitate themselves, enacting their own roles, when they are face to face. But is there a moment when they would stop imitating and just be themselves? According to Barthes, “it is the contrary that must be said: 'myself' never coincides with my image; for it is the image which is heavy, motionless, stubborn (…) and ‘myself” which is light, divided, dispersed” (12). By inverting the mimetic process, and addressing the incapability of the subject (it is important to point out that the “myself” is placed between quotation marks) of coinciding with his image, and not the contrary, Barthes questions the oneness of the referent himself: “my body never finds its zero degree” (12).  

Barthes' definition of the referent as “a kind of little simulacrum, any *eidolon* emitted by the object, which I should like to call the Spectrum of the Photograph” (9), recalls Lévi-Strauss's own description of the ethnographic object as a kind of sunset, which, in its turn, is already a repetition, an image of the day that just passed. However, in the episode involving the photographic performance of the Kadiveu women, it is implied that they misunderstand what the anthropologist expects from them. The women hope that, by acting as an anthropological object, they will get something valuable in return, so they pose. They disenfranchise themselves for the photographic moment, becoming an anthropological image before the “click” of the camera. But

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168 Cadava e Cortés-Rocca's reading of Barthes stresses his argument that photography put in crisis the temporal order of representation: “the relation between the represented object and its representation, between reference and image, does not presuppose an object whose being and existence precede, or remain outside, the process through which it becomes an image.” (7)
in doing so, according to Lévi-Strauss, they also “falsify” themselves, ceasing to be an “authentic” anthropological object.

Thus, the other side of Lévi-Strauss refusal of photography's “objectivity” is contradictorily the dangerous “falsity” of the photo-ethnographic encounter itself. The surface, or the image, is not only a trap to knowledge – for one shouldn't find relevant answers for anthropology's questions in the individual body – but also susceptible to the corrupting power of the camera, and to the dangers of the performative and seductive games played by the natives. Besides the positivist risk of staying at the level of the particular description of “insipid details,” or the danger of the illusion of exoticism and the seduction of images, another risk of the photo-ethnographic contact seems to be the performative native, who threatens observation by re-inventing himself for the eyes of the anthropologist.

That is why, in response to the Kadiveu women's performance, Lévi-Strauss refuses to photograph them. By refusing to waste his film, the ethnologist seems to hang on to the idea of photography as an instrument that can generate objective documents of this authentic anthropological object, which is the exact reason why he dislikes photography in the first place. However, not only does he refuse to take a photograph, but he also pretends to do so. Similar to the event with the Kadiveu women, who wanted a reward for posing as “native,” the ethnologist wants to avoid losing films with falsified documents. Only by acting out their own roles can each side can gain something from the encounter. Even though it is presented as an anecdote, the episode is metonymic. Does it not, after all, speak of all photography and of every ethnographic encounter?

This could also be an alternative lesson on the photo-ethnographic encounter. However, as in a maneuver to reclaim his role as an ethnologist, and to reencounter his lost object, Lévi-
Strauss restores the positions of each player in the game of representation:

However, it would have been bad anthropological practice to resist this behaviour, or even to consider it as a proof of decadence or money mindedness. It represented the re-emergence, in a transposed form, of certain specific features of Indian society: the independence and authority of women of high birth, ostentatious behaviour in front of strangers and the insistence on homage from ordinary mortals. The attire might be freakish and improvised, but the behaviour which prompted it was no less significant because of that; it was my business to see how it fitted into the framework of traditional institutions. (176-177).

c. The Center, the Picture and the Other

As I suggested in the beginning of this chapter, *Tristes Tropiques's* major structure replicates Michel de Certeau's description of travel narratives as composed of two main parts – a meta-discursive history in the margins and a descriptive depiction in the center. We saw that what characterizes *Tristes Tropiques's* meta-discursive borders is a non-chronological, symbolist-like narrative that thematizes the impossibility of narrating the past and encountering the “other.” At the center emerges, in de Certeau's words, the descriptive dimension, the ethnological “picture” (de Certeau 69), and, in Lévi-Strauss's case, the ethnographic photographs.

These photographs are divided into four series, which, similarly to the chapters, are named after the four main groups Lévi-Strauss encountered in Brazil: Kadiveu, Bororo, Nambikwara and Tupi-Kawahib. None of the photographs he took in the city of São Paulo or Cuiabá, in India or Pakistan, are shown. Thus, besides following the chronological order of the voyage, there is no effort to liberate them from the particularity of each phenomenological encounter. Most of the
images included are portraits of the Brazilian Indians, and one can find very few landscapes. The photographic series begins with one of such landscapes, named “Virgin Forest in Parana” (see fig. 40). The picture shows two men in horses, wearing hats, and surrounded by an enormous and dense forest. The photograph evokes those made by nineteenth century adventurers, in which heroic men appear small in relation to the wild and sublime nature around them. Following this image, the second photograph - *The Pantanal* - shows the back of another man on a horse – a sign of domesticated nature – and the Pantanal landscape ahead of him. The explorer seems to be advancing in the territory, winning over the distance. In the third photo, we can see three indigenous houses, which the caption identifies as “Nalike, capital of the Kadiveu country.” In sequence, the three images narrate a chronological voyage and the arrival at Nalike (although the first two were part of two different trips). The point-of-view is initially distant and gradually closes in until it frames the painted face of a Kadiveu woman (see fig. 41).

A similar structure that joins chronology and gradual approximation is repeated in the ethnographer's encounter with the Bororo and the Tupi-Kawahib. In terms of the portraits, endorsing the structure of travel narratives, as described by de Certeau, Lévi-Strauss's portraits of indigenous subjects – which compose the majority of the photographs published – are framed in a way that the indigenous body appears at the center of the picture. Comparing the original framing of some of these photos with the published versions, one finds that the background and possible “disturbances” to the centrality of the body are cropped out (see figs. 44 & 45).

This cropping out of background details is especially interesting in that it echoes a critique made by Lévi-Strauss of the adventurer's photographs. According to him, in their spectacles, adventurers would make tribes already decimated by diseases look exuberant, and assimilated groups look like isolated primitives by glossing over signs of the contact with white men, “but
the existence of the latter can be deduced by a practiced eye from small details in the illustrations, since the photographer has not always been able to avoid including the rusty petrol cans in which this virgin people does its cooking.” (39).

Photography’s “rawness,” its indexical nature, as shown in this brief passage, is responsible for an excess of information that can reveal the vestiges of the encounter and betray the false exoticism that the adventurer wants to sell. But contingent information does not help to constitute the object of Lévi-Strauss's anthropological gaze, for the cognitive process, as we saw, should involve “selection” and “construction.” Between the “unthought” excess generated by the indexicality of the image and the isolation of the body of the native, the author of *Tristes Tropiques* chooses the later. If, in Elizabeth Edwards words, “there is a dialectic between boundary and endlessness; framed, constrained, edged yet uncontainable,” and the boundary of the photograph is in tension with the openness of its outside, its context, or the “uncontained” (Photography and the Performance of History 17), then Lévi-Strauss's cropping of the photographs are a way of exerting control over this wildness of the outside.

Although investing in a subjective narrative, Lévi-Strauss also chooses to not publish any photograph of himself in *Tristes Tropiques*. The very few images revealing the presence of the expeditionaries there are only three images of trips by horse and boat and one photo in which we can see parts of their camping setup. In this last photograph, the tent is seen from afar, disguised in the middle of trees. This almost invisible presence of the expedition contrasts with photographs left out of the book, which portray, for example, Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss having a meal, or the classic scene of the exchange of gifts. It contrasts, as well, with a mode of using photographs in ethnographic accounts that stresses the presence of the ethnographer in the field, such as Malinowski’s staged photographs in the 1910s.
Let us go back to the question of the structure “image/narration” in relation to Lévi-Strauss's use of photographs in *Tristes Tropiques*. In regards to narration, my argument is that *Tristes Tropiques* replicates or at least plays with this separation between center and borders – ethnographic picture and travel narrative - at the same time that it subverts it. I am not suggesting that Lévi-Strauss completely subverts the structure, but that the persistence of the formula and its challenge cohabitate in the text.\(^{169}\) While the borders, as we saw, follow a fragmentary and non-chronological temporal logic – that of remembrance – at the center emerges – in chronological order – a series of different figures of otherness. Each one teaches the narrator a lesson.

The first encounter\(^{170}\) is with the Tibagi and Kaingang Indians, in Paraná, during a quick trip about which Lévi-Strauss wrote, in a letter to Marcel Mauss, that it had had “unfortunately, a more touristic than ethnographic interest. … the cultural, and above all physical, decay is terrifying.”\(^{171}\) Different from what he wrote in his letter to Mauss, in *Tristes Tropiques* the trip is portrayed as a useful lesson on the true state of indigenous communities in the twentieth-century, to which he will return in further encounters: “external appearance” might be misleading, for there is always something to learn even from these Indians who were not “true Indians,” for there is always a memory, a vestige of what they once were (154-55). Lévi-Strauss did not publish any photo of the Kaingang in *Tristes Tropiques* (although he did, forty years later, in *Saudades do Brasil*). He did not show photographs of this “apparent” failure, as he did not publish other photos of Indigenous groups that, according to him, lived like “Brazilian peasants” (some of

\(^{169}\) That is why neither Clifford Geertz's claim that Lévi-Strauss reproduces exactly what he denounces nor Vincent Debaene's effort to read Lévi-Strauss's writing in accordance with his broader project is wrong. What Lévi-Strauss declares, what he performs in writing and the contradiction between both are related in complex ways.

\(^{170}\) The account given in *Tristes Tropiques* relies partly in the article the anthropologists wrote to the newspaper *Estado de São Paulo* “Entre os Selvagens Civilizados”.

\(^{171}\) “malheureusement un intérêt plus touristique qu’ethnographique. [… ] la dégénèrescence culturelle, et surtout physique, est effrayante”. 

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these appear in *Saudades do Brasil*).

After this initiation, Lévi-Strauss made two different trips – the first in 1935-1936 and the second in 1938 – which stand for his “true” field-work experiences, and which are illustrated by photographs. As Debaene remarked, although they were separated in time by more than one year, what happens in between them is not emphasized and they are portrayed as one symbolic journey or itinerary, in which the traveler goes deeper into the territory in the search for an “untouched primitive society.” Contributing to the construction of this heroic search is the fact, which I have mentioned before, that he glosses over the presence of his wife Dina and his other fellow expeditionists. The drivers, the herders, the missionaries and the canoeists also appear only fleetingly. Dina Lévi-Strauss's absence is particularly remarkable, since the author relies on her notes to recount parts of the expedition. Her presence is betrayed only one time throughout the entire book, when the narrator says his “wife” was the first to catch an eye disease that affected the Nambikwara, the whole crew, and forced her to leave the field before the end of the expedition. Also mentioned a single time is Luis de Castro Faria, the Brazilian anthropologist whose presence was imposed on Lévi-Strauss by the *Museu Nacional* in Rio de Janeiro, since the Brazilian state required the presence of a Brazilian participant in any international mission in the country.

172 In this respect, Vincent Debaene (Far Afield) suggests an interesting reading of Tristes Tropiques in which the narrative moves from a Conradian “symbolic itinerary [...] that pushes the anthropologist ever farther toward the unexplored territories of the Brazilian northwest” to a Proustian denial of experience and adventure: “The shift from Conrad to Proust is, finally, a shift from the search for a sense of individual accomplishment and meaning (that of Kurtz or Lord Jim) to the acquisition of a particular form of intelligibility in which the self of the knowing subject is canceled out.” (37) Debaene's argument is convincing in that there seems to be a movement from a more Conradian to a more Proustian narrative, though a it appears to me that there is also a desire to summarize valuable anthropological findings and results.

173 In interesting declarations to the French newspaper *Libération* on September 1st, 1988, Luis de Castro Faria criticized Lévi-Strauss for having a non-collaborative comportment during the trip. He also emphasizes that while Dina Lévi-Strauss was a true ethnographer who made valuable findings and observations, her husband was more of a philosopher who did not seem very comfortable in the field. Castro Faria's notes and photographs were published in *Um outro olhar: diário de expedição à Serra do Norte.*
Castro Faria's papers, held today at the Museu de Astrologia e Ciência Afins, show the difficult process of gaining authorization for Lévi-Strauss's expedition from the Brazilian Indian Protective Service – a Federal agency entrusted with protecting the Indians. The avant-garde writer Mario de Andrade, who had a keen interest in ethnology and was the director of the Department of Culture of São Paulo at the time, played a key role in the negotiations. In ignoring the role of his Brazilian counterparts in *Tristes Tropiques*, Lévi-Strauss also ignores a great part of the political context and historical framework of the relationship between indigenous groups and the Brazilian state, which has an important role in the history and politics of contact in the region. In *Tristes Tropiques*, the narrator is portrayed as a lonely adventurer, and his experience of contact is isolated from a broader context.

The first trip (1936-1937), in which Lévi-Strauss established contact with two native communities – the Kadiveu, along the Paraguayan frontier, and the “better-known but still promising” Bororo, in the central Mato Grosso – is recounted as a fruitful experience in anthropological analysis. According to Lévi-Strauss, the Kadiveu in many aspects had reached a similar state of cultural and material destitution as the Tibagi and the Kaingang, plagued by alcoholism, and reduced to the impoverished life of Brazilian peasant ranchers. Although far removed from “the prosperity that Guido Boggiani had found there forty years before” (173), however, some elements of their material culture had survived. Lévi-Strauss took many of the Kadiveu decorated ceramics to the recently founded Musée de L'Homme and was especially intrigued by the enigmatic nature of the symbolism at work in Kadiveu body painting (10), for

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174 The trip was made during the university holidays and lasted four months, from November 1935 to March 1936.
which he interprets in *Tristes Tropiques*.\(^{175}\)

The chapter begins with the affirmation that “the customs of a community, taken as a whole, always have a particular style and are reducible to systems” and that "the number of such systems is not unlimited and that – in their games, dreams or wild imaginings – human societies, like individuals, never create absolutely, but merely choose certain combinations from an ideal repertoire that it should be possible to define” (179). This structure establishes beforehand the interpretative framework for the Kadiveu paintings, which the Kadiveu themselves could still perform but no longer explain. Lévi-Strauss's interpretation is made possible through two different points of comparison: Western card games (through a reading of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*) and neighboring societies’ social organizations.

Even the use of photographs seems to work well in the context of this chapter, which focus on the visual representations produced by the Kadiveu. The anthropologist not only took many close-up portraits of the Kadiveu women's painted faces, two of which are reproduced in *Tristes Tropiques*, but also reproduced one of Boggiani's 1985 drawings of a Kadiveu face painting, showing the persistence of the same motifs throughout the decades (see figs. 42 & 43). Moreover, drawings made by the Kadiveu Indians themselves in a piece of paper are reproduced. The combination of images of the Kadiveu motifs in varied media and made by different actors takes the focus away from the individual Indian, and even from this singular experience of contact, and directs it to the drawing itself.\(^{176}\) The main argument exposed in one of the longest commentaries on Lévi-Strauss's photographs in the context of *Tristes Tropiques*, Jay Prosser's

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175 See Claude Imbert regarding the importance of the encounter with the Kadiveu in Lévi-Strauss's philosophical inquiry into the provenance of the mathematical structures that underpin kinship exchange (in societies that often do not possess a formalized mathematics).

176 The fact that the drawing can be reproduced by the Kadiveu on a sheet of paper, prescinding the contours of the human face, is an important aspect of Lévi-Strauss's analysis.
Light in the Dark Room, is that this assemblage of photographs, along with other “encoded forms,” such as drawing, diagrams or writing, is an attempt to “transubstantiate” photographic’s referent into code.

Still, there are two historical aspects of the photographic encounter with the Kadiveu that should be noted. The first regards Guido Boggiani, an Italian painter, photographer, and ethnologist who traveled through the interior of Brazil, Bolivia, and Paraguay at the end of nineteenth-century and whose name evokes his tragic death. Boggiani’s work on the Kadiveu Indians are constantly cited by Lévi-Strauss. His photographs, which reflect his artistic formation, resemble more the conventions of painting than those of anthropometry. There is an effort to portray the Indians in natural looking poses and to convey a certain personality (see fig. 46). Lévi-Strauss – whose photographic practice began by observing his father, a professional painter who took photographs after which to paint his portraits – was also a talented portraitist. What is not mentioned by Lévi-Strauss is that Boggiani was killed in 1902 by Kadiveu Indians who, according to the legend, believed his use of photographic camera, a magic instrument that captured souls, was responsible for the plagues that had fallen upon the tribe (Reyero).

The second information that we have been relating to the Kadiveu and to photography comes from Tristes Tropique's anecdote that I have previously discussed. The habit of paying the natives in exchange for a photograph, according to Lévi-Strauss, would be a way to compensate for the fear that photography supposedly inspired in the primitives (which fear was also thought to be the cause for Boggiani's death). According to the narrator, his initial intention was to collect all the different Kadiveu painting designs, by photographing their faces, “but the financial demands of the ladies of the tribe would soon have exhausted my resources” (186), so he started to ask the Indians to draw the patterns in pieces of paper. In both Boggiani's and Lévi-Strauss's
cases, the photographic encounter reveals a tense negotiation on the right to the image that forms part of the ethnographic encounter itself.

On the one hand, as we have seen, by interpreting the event as characteristic of Kadiveu system of relations, Lévi-Strauss blurs the scene of the encounter. On the other hand, the co-presence of this passage narrating the performance of Kadiveu women and the published photograph of “[a] Kadiveu girl made ready for her puberty rites” generates a sub-text. The subtext implies that the anthropologist has to deal, in the case of the Kadiveu, with the danger of their non-authenticity: they are bad performers of their own habits also because they have been corrupted by contact with civilization. Among these remnants of primitivism, where “external appearance” might be misleading (173), the anthropologist has to surround the photograph with drawings and words that confirm the immutability of the forms that constitutes the anthropologist's object, re-establishing his control over the authenticity of the image.

The second group, the Bororo, among whom Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss stayed for only one month, is described as “a society which is still alive and faithful to its traditions” (215). Lévi-Strauss subjects the Bororo to a detailed anthropological analysis, susceptible to both universalization and comparison. The description of an intensive ceremonial activity during both day and night, the display of fantastic adornments and the help of an ideal informant, make the perfect setting for valuable ethnographic work.

In the third volume of Enciclopédia Bororo, Lévi-Strauss explains how “that brief encounter” has marked his entire career:

The Bororo offered me not only the contemplation of a wonderful spectacle. The entirety of my theoretical thinking, the way it has developed in the last thirty years, maintains the crux of what I seemed to have understood amongst them: the
extent to which a human society could attempt to unify in a vast system – social and logical at the same time – the whole of the relations among their own members and those relations they keep, as a group, with the natural species and the world that surrounds them. (160)

While the Kadiveu's body paintings were an enigma, at the same time remnants of a past and a window that opened to a system of social relations that no longer existed, the Bororo presented a complete spectacle. In *Photography and Documentary Film in the Making of Modern Brazil*, Luciana Martins argues that in making reference to eighteenth-century idylls, Lévi-Strauss “turn[s] a blind eye to Bororo’s recent history” (170) and obliterates a certain logic of self-representation of a group who was portrayed by a series of travelers, from Nicolas-Antoine Taunay, Hercules Florence and Marc Ferrez to Karl von den Steinen and documentarist Aloha Baker.

In an interview in the 1960s, Lévi-Strauss affirmed that he saw in the Bororos “a society that had abolished time, and after all what greater nostalgia could we have than to abolish time and then to live in a sort of present tense which is a constantly revitalized past and preserved as it was dreamt in myth and belief” (Wilcken 71). This seems to translate very well to what Johannes Fabian called the allochronism of ethnographic writing. This spectacle is translated in the image *The author’s best informant, in ceremonial dress* (see fig. 47). This is one of the most famous photographs taken by Lévi-Strauss, which appeared also in an article on the social organization of the Bororo in the *Journal de la Société des Américanistes* in 1936. It was used as a front cover in many editions of *Tristes Tropiques*; and later published in *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*. The sumptuous image, portraying the informant in grandiose and exotic ceremonial dress, incarnates what Lévi-Strauss himself criticized in *Tristes Tropiques* as being
the illusory and predatory function of photography.

However, another interpretative frame arises if we consider who was Lévi-Strauss's “ideal informant,” Roberto Ipureu. Ipureu served as an informant to other travelers, including the German-Brazilian anthropologist Herbert Baldus in 1935, and played the role of a weaver in the film *A vida de uma aldeia Bororo*. Luciana Martins, who carefully recapitulates the different roles Roberto Ipureu has played to the eyes of travelers, calls him a “performing primitive.” This performativity is not without relation to the Bororo's historically resilient way of dealing with contact, which, as Sylvia Caiuby Novaes has shown, was also a strategy to preserve their own traditions. If the Kadiveu were bad performers, Ipureu impersonates with skill the untouched primitive.

Disregarding Ipureu's effective performance, the lesson Lévi-Strauss learned among the Bororo seems to be a lesson on structuralism. In the early nineties, Lévi-Strauss explained to a documentary crew:

> I have the feeling now when I try to reconstitute my intellectual history—it’s very difficult because I have a terrible memory—I have the feeling that I was always what later became known as “structuralist” even when I was a child. But meeting the Bororo who were the great theoreticians of structuralism—that was a godsend for me! (qtd in Wilcken 72)

Although one could argue that the particularities of the history of contact between the Bororos and western missionaries is not what Lévi-Strauss would consider the most valuable anthropological data, this experience of contact, as well as the images and objects he collected

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177 In Steinen's *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral Brasiliens* the “primitive” mind of the Bororo was put forward as an exemplary object of knowledge for modern ethnography and anthropology, establishing a tradition of inquiry that culminated in the influential work of Lévi-Strauss. (Novaes, Martins)
during this expedition, were crucial to legitimate his own history as an anthropologist: “One year after my visit to the Bororo, all the required conditions for turning me into a fully fledged anthropologist had been fulfilled” (*Tristes Tropiques* 249). It is, hence, after the relative success of these encounters, and their instructive lessons on anthropology, and after publishing a praised article on the Bororo and organizing, with Dina Lévi-Strauss, a successful exhibition of their collection, that the anthropologist departs for what he planned to be a much longer voyage into the deep backlands of Brazil, where he hoped to find the Nambikwara and the Tupi-Kawahib. The expedition would start where the previous one had ended, following the telegraph line constructed by the Rondon Comission.  

178 Dina and Claude Lévi-Strauss's expectation was to go deeper in the territory and encounter untouched, uncivilized Indians. The outcome of this second voyage, however, was much more somber than the previous one, and its lesson brings us back to the narrative of failure. Together, the Nambikwara and the last tribe they visit, the Mundé, teach the young anthropologist a double lesson: one cannot know the object of anthropology as past or as other. A pure exteriority would be, ultimately, incomprehensible.

The Nambikwara represents the narrator's hope to find “the infancy of the human species” (274): “I had been looking for a society reduced to its simplest expression. That of the Nambikwara was so truly simple that all I could find in it was individual human beings” (30).

The language to describe the Nambikwara – and the proliferation of adjectives – is saturated with

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178 During 1889-92, under the recently established Republican Government, Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, a military engineer, led what became known as the Rondon Commission in building telegraph lines connecting Brazil’s vast interior with its coast. Its route included 360 miles across the backlands. In 1910, Rondon became the first director of the Indian Protective Service – a Federal agency entrusted with protecting the Indians – and devised a plan for establishing relationship with the Indians through a process of pacification through acculturation (Diacon, Antunes Maciel). Lévi-Strauss decide to follow Rondon’s telegraph lines, which he described as a failed civilizational project: when it was finally being completed it was quietly superseded by shortwave radio. All that was left of Rondon’s grand project, as described by Lévi-Strauss, was a handful of employees stranded in lonely telegraph stations, unable to leave because of the debts they had racked up to backland traders.
affectivity. Ethnographer and primitive are close to a point in which the distance required to see patterns and similarities is abolished. The Nambikwara, for Lévi-Strauss, remained as this romantic and sad expression of human precariousness and "the most truthful and moving expression of human love" (293). The amount of published photographs of the Nambikwara, twenty eight images in total, is significantly greater than that of any other group (six for the Kadiveu, eight for the Bororo, and sixteen for the Tupi-Kawahib). In the photographs, the bodies of the Indians touch each other, the gaze of the camera almost touches their skin, suggesting an affective or erotic contact (see fig. 48). In Triste Tropiques, nonetheless, Lévi-Strauss still presents the pictures as “useful” information, emphasizing this through the captions, typical costumes, activities, family relations and body postures (see figs. 46 & 49).

Among the Mundé, Lévi-Strauss is presented with the “thrilling prospect of being the first white man to visit a particular native community” (60): “After an enchanting trip up-river, I had certainly found my savages. Alas! They were only too savage. [. . .] They were as close to me as a reflection in a mirror; I could touch them, but I could not understand them” (31). In the selection of images of the Mundé and Tupi-Karahib, almost all portraits have a blurred background and are cropped so as to show its subject in the middle. The subjects do not gaze back to the viewer, absorbed in his/her own activity or thought, as if no reciprocity were possible (see figs. 50 & 51).

Besides the ashes, particles and debris, Lévi-Strauss's text also explores, as in the case of the Mundé, the metaphor of the mirror. The confusion of beginning and departures is, as Carol Jacobs suggested, a confusion of self and other, of the ethnographer and his or her object:

179 In “O “pessimismo sentimental” e a experiência etnográfica: por que a cultura não é um “objeto” em via de extinção,” Marshal Sahlins criticize the sentimental rhetoric present in Lévi-Strauss among other anthropologists to mourn the extinction of Indigenous cultures. See also Mary Louise Pratt’s discussion of the anti-conquest and the sentimental traveler as one of the tropes in travel literature.
“Perhaps, then, this was what travelling was, an exploration of the deserts of my mind rather than of those surrounding me?” (378). Throughout his return trip from field-work – which was briefer than Lévi-Strauss had expected, due to illnesses and accidents - the anthropologist, who had faced the mirror of the Mundé's inscrutable eyes, finds himself immersed in images and sounds of his youth:

On the plateau of the western Mato Grosso, I had been haunted for weeks, not by the things that lay all around me and that I would never see again, but by a hackneyed melody, weakened still further by the deficiencies of my memory – the melody of Chopin's Etude no. 3, opus 10, which, by a bitterly ironical twist of which I was well aware, now seemed to epitomize all I had left behind. (376-377)

In the last pages of Tristes Tropiques, Lévi-Strauss returns to the epistemological questions he discussed in the beginning, presenting a solution to its impasses through a reading of Rousseau, whom he names “the father of anthropology.” Lévi-Strauss reminds us that far from idealizing the “state of nature,” as Rousseau conceived it, first of all, as a necessary hypothesis. Like his predecessor, Lévi-Strauss argues that the knowledge of man's beginnings is not a knowledge of man outside of society – for such a creature would, ultimately, not be a man anymore – but of this common state in which all possible societies are contained. Responding to accusations of being both an a-political relativist and a naïve primitivist, he returns to Rousseau to argue that the state of nature is not historically or geographically located, but is rather a human virtual potential for creating social orders. Thus, the primitive state is what, in us, would allow for the creation of an alternative society. This political stance, however, is accompanied by a historical pessimism: by creating a monoculture, modern man is destroying what allows for the recognition of this common ground, which is the existence of diversity itself. By following the
Among the few interpretations of the use of photographs in *Tristes Tropiques* I briefly highlighted two in the introduction to this chapter. The first, presented in one single paragraph of Vincent Debane's *Far Afield*, argues that *Tristes Tropiques* has two main objectives: the first, to experiment on a mode of narration that follows the logic of sensible qualities; the second, to denounce modern history as entropy, self-destruction. The presence of photographs in the book, for him, is a sign of this latter historical entropy – showing that the “pleasures of recollection […] cannot reverse the course of history” and is intended to correct “an overly Proustian reading of *Tristes Tropiques*” (219). Jay Prosser's analysis comes to a very different conclusion: for him, Lévi-Strauss's choice to publish the photographs in *Tristes Tropiques* along with other forms of representation (paintings, clothes, and other encoded forms), would transform its referent into a code and, thus, subjugate it to the structuralist text. According to Prosser, only in *Saudades do Brasil*, which is a work beyond structuralism, published in 1994, after Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, would Lévi-Strauss have focused on the mournful character of photographs.

In favor of Debaene's interpretation is the fact that Lévi-Strauss only publishes photographs of Indians, whose disappearance he mourns in *Tristes Tropiques*. Prosser's argument, in its turn, works especially well in the case of the Kadiveu facial paintings, or of the organization of the villages (which are further and best conveyed in the diagrams that accompany them). In any case, it is undeniable that there is an attempt on the part of Lévi-Strauss to put the photos under the control (as illustrations) of the narrative. What is explicitly shown is always something that has already been described in words, and Lévi-Strauss does not explore photography's formal specificities.
In fact, both uses of photography – to register Indigenous cultural and symbolic expressions, paintings or rituals (instead of their bodies), or to preserve the image of disappearing communities – are present in the late nineteenth-century anthropological uses of photography that Lévi-Strauss criticized. In keeping the photographs under the control of the text, in its middle, where the anthropological analysis resides, or in using captions which point to the referent of the image (whether this referent is a tool, a painting, the chief of the group, or the way of carrying a baby), Lévi-Strauss seems to be reproducing its role as a document.

While a personal evaluation appears in the text (for example, Lévi-Strauss writes that his opinion about the Tupi-Kawahib chief's wife, Kunhatsin, coincides with that of the natives: “extremely beautiful” (354)), under the photograph of this same woman Lévi-Strauss's caption elides the personal: “Kunhatsin, Taperahi’s chief wife, carrying her child.” Later, in Saudades do Brasil, he publishes the same photo with the caption: “Of his four wifes, Kunhatsin was the most beautiful” (see figs. 44 & 45).

In order to explore Lévi-Strauss's choices in the publication of his photographs in Tristes Tropiques, it is also important to think of what he did not do, or what he omitted. He did not include, for example, an image of a Kadiveu boy, with the face painted just “for fun,” as traditionally only the women were painted (Saudades do Brasil 73). Another photograph that, instead of focusing on the Bororo ceremony, frames an audience – among which a few Bororo people are distracted by the photographic camera – turns the technology itself (as well as the anthropologist and the viewer) into the spectacle to be looked at. Excluded also are all the photos of different places and times – such as an image of a boy, in the Germanic south of Brazil, doing the Nazi salutation – images of peasants, mixed-race Brazilians and urban environments. Lévi-
Strauss also excludes all the self-portraits, all the blurred images, ruins and failures. Not to mention the other thousands of photographs to which we do not have access today. In *Tristes Tropiques*, which is a book about the encounter with the past, Lévi-Strauss did not seem to believe in photography's capacity to take part in the game of montage and correspondences that characterizes remembrance – which capacity was extensively explored by his French surrealist friends during the 30s.

**d. Past and Future**

It was only in 1994, sixty years after the ethnographic expedition, that Lévi-Strauss published a photographic book. Named *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*, the book was co-authored by his son Matthieu Lévi-Strauss, who was responsible for the enlargement of each of the 176 images. The texts, written by Claude Lévi-Strauss himself, presents *Saudades do Brasil* as a subjective book, in contrast to the objectifying vision of photography Lévi-Strauss criticized until then. The prologue has a biographical tone; we are told that Lévi-Strauss learned how to photograph from his father, a portrait painter who routinely photographed his subjects to “guide him in the placement of their principal features” (22). His parents would visit him in São Paulo in 1935, where father and son would go out to take photographs together in São Paulo, competing “to see who could obtain the sharpest images” (22). They had shopped for photographic supplies in São Paulo, acquiring a twin-lens reflex Voigtlander and a Hugo-Meyer F1.5 with a 75mm lens. This turned to be “practically unusable because of its weight” (22). Two Leicas, by contrast, made him “marvel how such a small format […] could produce such precise

180 In this sense, it is interesting to compare Lévi-Strauss's photographs to those taken by Mario de Andrade during his travels in Brazil. Taking a Kodak, Mario de Andrade, who was also an amateur photographer and ethnographer, made ironic images of himself as an adventurer, focusing on everyday images, instead of exotic ones, as well as on miscegenation instead of purity (*Fotógrafo e Turista Aprendiz*).

181 According to Matthieu, he was responsible for doing a first selection of photographs, but would consult with his father regarding the final decisions.
Subjective also are the captions that accompany the images: in a picture of a Nambikwara girl, for example, he changes the previous subtitle published in *Tristes Tropiques* from “A Nambiquara smile” to “...mocking, provocative.” “A Nambiquara smile” is the anthropological description of a referent, while the second subtitle tells us much more about the person who wrote it (see figs. 52 & 53). Moreover, if the article generalizes it – a Nambikwara smile is perennial, or rather outside of time; it could be part of an collection, such as an arrow or a bowl – the verb in the gerund locates it in the present, the present of the encounter (with the image). This photograph is part of a sequence of five images of Nambikwara women. In the first one, the photographer, from behind what appears to be some palm leaves, snapshots a happy conversation between two Nambikwara who seem unaware of or indifferent to the presence of the camera. Their naked bodies figure at the center of the image, and we can partially see at the lower left corner a basket and what seems to be a plate – trace of the presence of the anthropologist. The caption talks of the attractiveness of the some young Nambikwara women and comments on their “figure.”

Another photo, not published in *Tristes Tropiques*, shows the breast of an Indian girl right in its center, her body inclined in the direction of the camera, while her head is outside of frame (see fig. 54). The photograph presents us not only an object, but the gaze that falls upon it. A gaze that gets so close to its object risks becoming tactile. Almost abolishing the distance that separates the camera and the photographed, this image points to the danger of a sensuous contact that threatens to deny vision itself. The image reminds us that photography, simultaneously

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182 In an interview with Matthiew Lévi-Strauss, he affirmed that none of the pictures published in *Saudades do Brasil* were cropped, which is visible when we compare to the image to the corresponding one in *Tristes Tropiques*.
optical and chemical, bodily triggered and optically framed, is both contact and distance, vision and touch, much like the ethnographic contact itself. It also speaks of the desire and fascination involved in the experience of contact, the desire for the other and the desire to “become Other” that Michael Taussig (Mimesis and Alterity xiii) has identified as part of mimetic activity. This desire to merge with the other can be seen, for example, in the image of the Czech botanist Alberto Vojtech Fric painted as a Kadiveu (see fig. 55). Fric, who followed Boggiani's steps in the region of the Chaco and recovered the more than 400 images that had been considered lost with the photographer's death is a testimony to the enchanting and dangerous power of photographic mimesis.

For Lévi-Strauss, the Nambikwara, who represented his desire to encounter the beginning of humankind, are described as happy, kind, child-like, innocent victims to the advances of civilization, but also, extremely seductive:

It was difficult, for instance, to remain indifferent to the sight of one or more pretty girls sprawling stark naked in the sand and laughing mockingly as they wriggled at my feet. When I went bathing in the river, I was often embarrassed by a concerted attack on the part of half-a-dozen or so females – young or old – whose one idea was to appropriate my soap, of which they were extremely fond.

(286)

In another photograph published only in Saudades do Brasil, this bath scene, described in the text of Tristes Tropiques, is incorporated as its theme. The photo could have been taken by someone else, or on a self-timing mechanism by Lévi-Strauss's himself. In any case, Lévi-Strauss had probably set to be photographed. He appears having a bath among Nambikwara Indians, his white torso turned to the camera contrasting with the dark bodies around him. Lévi-
Strauss's white body glows as does his white towel on the upper left corner of the photo, while the natives merge with the dark color of nature in the background. The image enacts the desire both to merge into the other and to remain different. The photograph also recalls other images of the encounter, but especially a famous series of photos of Malinowski among the Trobriand. In a suggestive reading of them, Taussig (*What Color is the Sacred*) stresses the “spectral dizziness” of Malinowski's whiteness, the “erotic and magical” enchantment of the man in white, who at times pose as the masculine ethnographer or as one of the Trobiand (see fig. 56). In Lévi-Strauss's bath, however, the white man appears vulnerable and exotic in his nudity.

It is also among the Nambikwara that the episode of the writing lesson takes place. Among the most primitive people, writing is introduced in its crudest form: pure domination. Christopher Pinney (*Photography and Anthropology* 102-104) called attention to the fact that just after the “writing lesson” episode, Lévi-Strauss's party left the campsite in a hurry. Still disconcerted by the farce he witnessed and of which he was an instrument, Lévi-Strauss lost track of the others. He decided to fire shots in order to call his colleagues' attention and ended up scaring his mule, which ran away. As in a comedy film, in which we know where the sequence of actions is going to end, the anthropologist divested himself of his “weapons and photographic equipment and laid them all at the foot of a tree, carefully noting its position” and ran off to recapture his mule. When he did gain control over the animal, he could not find his equipment anymore. After hours alone, unarmed and terrified, he was finally rescued by two Nambikwara, for whom recovering his equipment was “child's play” (297). He slept poorly, reflecting on the episode of writing. At the end of a large digression on the negative historical consequences of writing, the text goes back to the narrative: “While we were still at Utirary, an epidemic of putrid ophthalmia had broken out among the natives. The infection, which was gonorrheal in origin, spread to the whole
community, causing terrible pain and temporary blindness which could become permanent” (300).

Pinney interprets the sequence as a kind of “mythic punishment for the transgression of natural order of speech” (104). Disease and writing mirror each other, bringing to the fore the fragility of the primitive state, which can cease to exist at any time due to the contact with civilization. In an image, published in Saudades do Brasil but not in Tristes Tropiques, we see two women on the ground (see fig. 57) with their eyes closed and their hands on their faces, in a gesture of pain. We can also see a child's back, for the child is facing the sad spectacle of blindness. No one looks at the camera, which becomes an invisible eye gazing at the blindness of the other. Within this episode, the photographic apparatus (which exists hand-in-hand with writing) performs Lévi-Strauss's own fear: it is registering and substituting for the subjects that it helped to destroy.

Sixty years after his voyage, Lévi-Strauss declared that he decided to publish these 176 images because the world that they portray “does not exist anymore” (9). Rather than faithful representations of the Indians – for photographic technology has no ability “to bring them back” (9) – they are presented as the remnants of an extinct world, both its absence and presence, death and survival. This absence appears in the title, “Saudades,” which is a subjective way of talking about the past. Lévi-Strauss was 86 when Saudades do Brasil was published, and his work, which departed from this first encounter, had changed the paths of European thought. From this book, pregnant with affectivity, in which the images can emerge with little constraint, we can also learn something about the fears and joys, dangers and erotics, of contact and photography.

But the photographs tell us not only about a past contact. Let us finish with the last picture of the book. The photograph, taken by the North-American anthropologist David Allison in Peru,
shows three young indigenous Cashinaua boys reading *Tristes Tropiques* (see fig. 58). According to the caption, they are “contemplating some of these images,” looking at what we just saw. This is the only photograph in *Saudades do Brasil* not taken in Brazil. The Indians, wearing clothes and looking at the book, contrast with the scene of blindness. The image also escapes the overly subjective tone of the book and its melancholic tone. It is crossed by a series of temporalities: Lévi-Strauss's experience of contact, the moment he re-encounters his memories in writing *Tristes Tropiques*, Allison's encounter with communities in Peru, and the Cashinaua boys’ encounter with the images in *Tristes Tropiques*. Thus, the image also speaks of the future. First, it speaks of the future of Indigenous communities, in affirming their survival in spite of Lévi-Strauss's pessimism. Second, it speaks of all the future encounters with these images (the ones which escaped from the archive) in a world where circulation and contact will continue to happen.
Images

Figure 40 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Virgin Forest in Parana. 1935. Photograph. Tristes Tropiques.

All the photographs from Tristes Tropiques were copied in Cia das Letras’s Tristes Trópicos edition, due to the highest quality and condition of the print, as well as the fact that this edition is faithful to the way the images were printed and disposed in Tristes Tropiques’s first edition, by Plon in 1955. The owner of the copyrights Matthieu Lévi-Strauss authorized their reproduction. The English captions are reproduced from Peguing Classics’s 2012 edition unless pointed out. The image “Virgin Forest in Parana” is not included in the Peguin’s edition, thus the caption is translated directly from the French (Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Tristes Tropiques. Paris: Plon, 1955).
Figure 41 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Caduveo women with painted faces. 1935. Photograph. Tristes Tropiques.
Left:

Figure 42 Boggiani, Guido. *A Caduveo belle in 1895*. circa 1895. Illustration. *Tristes Tropiques*.

Right:

Figure 43 Boggiani, Guido. *Facial painting: an original drawing by a Caduveo woman*. circa 1895. Illustration. *Tristes Tropiques*. 
Left:

Figure 44 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. Kunhatsin, Taperahi’s chief wife, carrying her child. circa 1935-1936. Photograph. Tristes Tropiques. Print.

Right:

Figure 45 Lévi-Strauss. Of his four wives Kunhatsin was the most beautiful. circa 1935-1936. Photograph. Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir. 201. Print.


Figure 49 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Maruabai, the co-wife (with her daughter, Kunhatsin) of Chief Taperahi*. circa 1935-1936. Photograph. *Tristes Tropiques*. Print.
Left:


Right:

(Captions from Saudades do Brasil and Tristes Tropiques)

Figure 52 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. ...mocking, provocative... circa 1935-1936. Photograph. Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir. 201. Print.

Figure 53 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. A Nambiwara Smile. circa 1935-1936. Photograph. Tristes Tropiques. Print.

Right:

Figure 54 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. ...most often merry... circa 1935-1936. Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir. 201. Print.
Figure 55 Fric, Alberto Vojtech. *Self-portrait as caduveo*. Photograph. Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. circa 1907.

Figure 57 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *An epidemic of very painful, suppurating eye inflammation struck the Indians while we were there. Several members of the expedition were contaminated. We witnessed some distressing scenes.* circa 1935-1936. Photograph. *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*. Print.

Figure 58 Allison, David. *Many years later, in Amazonian Peru, an American colleague took this photograph of young Cashinawa Indians looking at some of these pictures.* n.d. Photograph. *Saudades do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*. 201. Print.
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