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# Travels to the center of the periphery: reading the texts of Osvaldo Cruz and Euclides da Cunha about the Amazon between 1905 and 1913

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In the early twentieth century Brazilian government sponsored several scientific trips to the country's interior. At that time, the main interest was to incorporate these areas into the larger national project begun during the Brazilian Empire and that continued when Brazil became a republic in 1889. It was in this context that the Brazilian bacteriologist Osvaldo Cruz (1872-1917) visited the Amazon on four occasions between 1905 and 1911. In the following year, in 1912, he coordinated from a distance the medical team that went to the region to evaluate the public health policy in areas where rubber extraction was highly concentrated. Two reports were published related to these expeditions. The first was delivered in 1910 to the Madeira-Mamoré Railway Company, responsible for building the railroad in the region. The second report was submitted to the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce in 1913.

In the same period of these expeditions, another Brazilian visited the region commissioned by the government. In 1905, the writer Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909) headed the Brazilian Boundary Commission of Upper Purus River. After this mission, the author of *Rebellion in the backlands* (1902) intended to write another epic book. A project he never finished, as he was killed in August 15, 1909. The book *À margem da história (At the margins of History)* with Euclide's Amazonian essays was published posthumously at the same year. Beside the texts of this book, the author also left a vast material about the Amazon: the reports he did for the Purus River Commission, many newspaper articles, interviews, speeches and letters.

This paper proposes a comparative approach between the reports of bacteriologist Osvaldo Cruz and the texts produced by the writer Euclides da Cunha, investigating in what extent these two Brazilians contributed to draw a more accurate overview of the Amazon of the early twentieth century. It is a first approach of the research I develop at the Research Center of Lusophone Countries (CREPAL) at Paris 3 University (Sorbonne Nouvelle) whose title is "The Amazon and the civilization limits: a critical reading of travel texts from the early twentieth century" in which I will investigate texts of Brazilians travelers to the region in the period.

The reports's version used here was edited by the *Getúlio Vargas Foundation*, in Rio de Janeiro, and published in Manaus, Amazonas, in 1972. The edition's foreword was written by Arthur Cezar Ferreira Reis, Amazonian historian and former governor. The introduction was written by the Amazonian physician and writer Djalma Batista.

Before reading the bacteriologist texts, I would like to present a short biography of Osvaldo Cruz and to describe the circumstances of the missions he conducted in the Amazon.

### *Who was Osvaldo Cruz*

In the last pages of the biographic novel about Osvaldo Cruz *Sonhos tropicais (Tropical Dreams)* the Brazilian writer Moacyr Scliar (1937-2011) quotes extracts of the physician's will, highlighting theater-related words, as if he was abandoning life in the same way an actor leaves the stage. So, in the first phrase Osvaldo Cruz says (in Scliar's quotation). "*I deeply wish that my death will not be presented with the usual formalities that society have arranged the last act of our lives*".<sup>1</sup>

This will was written some days before the bacteriologist's death, in February 1917. By coincidence, this was the same month and year that it was recorded the first samba song for Carnival celebrations in Brazil. The song "On the telephone" was a great success and its authorship was reinvalidated by Ernesto dos Santos, known as "Donga".<sup>2</sup> During Carnival celebrations of that year, the famous bacteriologist looked around him and wrote in another extract of the will:

"I would like that my family would be spared of the ceremony of dressing the body, as it can very well be covered with a simple blanket. No invitations nor announcements for the burial shall be made, as well as any mess of the celebration of the first week of my death.<sup>3</sup> Neither mourning habits. We keep this in our hearts, not on our clothes. I genuinely demand to my people to not make longer the natural feeling that my death will raise. I urge them to go out and have fun and to help time in its useful capacity of making forget. There is no advantage to fill out with bitterness and prolonged tears the short days of our existence. Therefore, they shall not wear black mourning clothes,

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<sup>1</sup> SCLiar, Moacyr, 1995, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> SANDRONI, Carlos, 1996. "Mudanças de padrão rítmico no samba carioca, 1917-1937". TRANS – Revista Transcultural de Música (artigo 12). <http://www.sibetrans.com/trans/published-issue/14/trans-2-1996>. Accessed in Jul 1, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> In Brazil, people are buried at the same day or the following day of their death, so the first-week mess of death celebration is an important event.

because they are above all anti hygienic to our **clime (climate?)**. They shall look for distractions, theater, parties and travels in order to dissolve this little cloud that came to disturb the regular order of every day life. We need to accept Nature's law."<sup>4</sup>

“Desejaria que se poupasse aos meus a cena de vestimenta do corpo que bem pode ser envolvido em simples lençol. Nada de convites ou comunicações para enterro, nem missa de sétimo dia. Nem luto tão pouco. Este traz-se no coração e não nas roupas. Peço encarecidamente aos meus que não prolonguem o natural sentimento que trará a minha morte. Que se divirtam, que passem, que ajudem o tempo na bemfazeja obra de fazer esquecer. Não há vantagem alguma de amargurar com lágrimas prolongadas os tão curtos dias de nossa existência. Portanto, que não usem roupas negras que, além de tudo, são anti-higiênicas em nosso clima; que procurem diversões, teatros, festas, viagens, a fim de que desfaçam essa pequena nuvem que veio empanar a normalidade do viver de todos os dias. É preciso que nos conformemos com os ditames da Natureza.”<sup>5</sup>

After these two extracts, we can notice some aspects of Osvaldo Cruz's personality. He was a scientist of his time, a practical man, able to understand and manipulate the theatrical elements of our society. Someone who puts science above conventions (*“my death will not be presented with the usual formalities”*, *“they shall not wear black mourning clothes, because they are above all anti hygienic to our clime”*, *“We keep (the mourning) in our hearts, not in our clothes”* etc. But beyond the image of the impartial scientist, we can notice that he was also conscious of his gestures, as it is required by a politician of any time, here in his last effort to impose upon others his power of persuasion.

Osvaldo Cruz was born on August 5, 1872 in São Luiz do Paraitinga, a small town in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. At 20 years old, he received his medical degree at Rio de Janeiro, with a specialization on a field in its infancy: microbiology. The following year he married Emilia da Fonseca. In 1896 Osvaldo Cruz moved to Paris to pursue his studies in microbiology at the Pasteur Institute where he stayed for two years. When he returned to Brazil, President Rodrigues Alves appointed him the country's Director of Public Health (the similar today of a Health Minister). It was in this context that Osvaldo Cruz travelled for the first time to the Amazon, in a long trip he did to supervise the ports of Brazil going from the South to the North of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> CRUZ, Osvaldo. *Testamento*, site da Academia Brasileira de Letras. <http://www.academia.org.br/abl/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?infol=352&sid=112>. Accessed in Jun, 6, 2015.

<sup>5</sup> CRUZ, Osvaldo. *Testamento*, site da Academia Brasileira de Letras. <http://www.academia.org.br/abl/cgi/cgilua.exe/sys/start.htm?infol=352&sid=112>. Acessado em 30/06/2015.

### *Trips to the Amazon*

At this time, the Amazon region was in the middle of the rubber boom, when the ports of Manaus and Belém received hundreds of immigrants each week. Since the American chemist Charles Goodyear developed the vulcanization method in 1839, rubber began to be a high-valued commodity. From 1840 to 1910, the price of rubber increased more than 1,000%, attracting a population of half a million immigrants into the Brazilian Amazon. The great part of these immigrants were people from the Northeastern part of Brazil who fled the drought. The rubber extraction industry generated wealth and promoted the development of the cities of Manaus, Belém, and Porto Velho (Daou, 2000, pp.18-23).

Oswaldo Cruz travelled accompanied by his secretary João Pedroso. They visited 24 harbors during 68 days, from September 27 to December 6, 1905 (Cruz, Chagas e Peixoto, 1972, Introduction, w.p.). There is no report from this expedition at Oswaldo Cruz Foundation archives.

In 1910, Oswaldo Cruz did another trip to the Amazon, together with his assistant Belisário Penna. The mission had the purpose to investigate the health conditions of the workers that were building the Madeira-Mamoré Railway.

This railroad was an important clause of the treaty signed between Brazil and Bolivia on November 11, 1903, as a compensation for the irregular occupation by Brazilian rubber tappers of a Bolivian territory at upper Purus river margins.

After two failed initiatives to build the railroad, the contract was awarded to the American entrepreneur Percival Farquhar in 1907. Since the beginning, the area's sanitary conditions posed the main obstacle to the project. In the medical team of Madeira-Mamoré Railway Co. there were five physicians who had also worked on the Panama Canal that was being built at the time (Cruz, Chagas e Peixoto, 1972, Introdução, s.p.). To work with the medical team of the railway the company engaged Oswaldo Cruz.

In this mission's report Oswaldo Cruz exposed his indignation in view of the poor sanitary conditions of the area, writing that "*the attempts to build this railway have been marked by real hectacombs*" (Cruz, Chagas e Peixoto, 1972, p.6). He was not exaggerating, only in the third phase of the railway building, from 1907 to 1912, the official death rate was 1,593 (Hardman, 1988, p. 105). However, it is possible to estimate a higher rate, considering that it was in the third

phase that the it was made the sanitation of the region. In view of that, Madeira-Mamoré was named the “Devil’s Railway”, and it was said that each railroad tie costed a life.

Oswaldo Cruz listed the main diseases he found: malaria, yellow fever, tuberculosis, beriberi , dysentery, hookworm infection, pneumonia, measles and alcoholism. However, among all diseases, malaria was the great terror of the region. According to the bacteriologist, malaria infection was so common that “*to people (of that area) the condition of being sick was normal*”. (Cruz, Chagas e Peixoto, p.32). He observed that there was no preventive action against malaria. Besides, the population’s access to treatment was expensive and difficult, as there were some traders that delivered a mixture of starch and baking soda in place of quinine, used in the disease’s prevention (Ibidem, p.12).

At the end of the report, Oswaldo Cruz established a series of twenty measures that had to be executed in order to improve the sanitation of the area. Thanks to this systematic plan, the railroad could be finished and opened on August 1, 1912 (Ibidem, p.42-44).

The last trips of Oswaldo Cruz to the Amazon happened between 1910 and 1911. He was commissioned to fight a yellow fever epidemic in Pará.

On September 7 1911, the governor João Antunes Luís Coelho published the results of yellow fever campaign in the annual report sent to the Congressmen of Pará. According to this report, yellow fever was finished in the state.

Oswaldo Cruz’s name was definitively associated with the progress that Brazil needed. After sanitation improvements, the country’s development was just a matter of time. However, the last sanitation campaign conducted by Oswaldo Cruz would reveal it would be more challenging than expected.

In 1910, the Asian rubber from British colonies entered in the international market, ending the Amazonian rubber boom. In 1912, the Brazilian government tried to revert the market loss of the rubber trade in the region by creating the *Superintendence of Rubber Defense*. The superintendence commissioned Oswaldo Cruz to organize the sanitation efforts in the Amazon. The area covered by the commission was the state of Amazonas and the territories of Acre and Roraima (now states).

A medical team travelled to the Amazon between October 1912 and March 1913. This commission was composed of the physicians Carlos Chagas, João Pedroso de Albuquerque, and Pacheco Leão. They travelled to Amazonas between October 1912 and March 1913. On September

11, 1913, Osvaldo Cruz presented a report to the Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce Pedro de Toledo, entitled “Sanitation conditions of the Amazon Valley”. Although he had not traveled to the Amazon at this time, Osvaldo Cruz coordinated the work of the medical team from a distance and signed the first and the fourth parts of the report.

In this report, Osvaldo Cruz presents similar conclusions to the previous report of 1910, drawing attention to the need of fighting malaria. However, with the market growth of the rubber from British colonies, the *Rubber Defense Superintendence* was extinguished in less than two years.

### *The Amazon at the margins of Brazil: confluences between Euclides da Cunha and Osvaldo Cruz*

The content of Osvaldo Cruz’s reports was published on many newspapers of the time and it confirmed to the public opinion the observations that have been made by Euclides da Cunha a little earlier during his trip to the Amazon. In order to investigate boundary issues with Peru, Brazilian government sent a commission to the Amazon region in 1904, headed by the engineer and writer Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909). The Treaty of Petrópolis, signed in 1903 to solve a series of armed conflicts between Brazil and Bolivia had brought discontentment to other countries, as they also had limits problems with Brazil in the Amazon region. Peru was among those countries.

In 1903, following the success obtained with the publication of the book *Rebellion in the backlands* (1902), Euclides da Cunha became member of the National Historical and Geographic Institute and the Brazilian Letters Academy. However, although he had fame and recognition, he found himself without a job in 1904 (Santana, 2000, p. 902). With the purpose of getting the position of chief of the Purus River Commission, Euclides da Cunha wrote four articles about the subject, before going to the Amazon. These articles were published in the newspapers *O País* and *O Estado de São Paulo* in 1904 and, later, in the book *Contrastes e Confrontos* (1907) *Contrasts and Conflicts*.

As it was said earlier here, after he arrived in the region, Euclides da Cunha wrote other texts published posthumously in the book *Land without history*, in 1909. The original idea

of the author of *Rebellion in the backlands* was to produce a book about the Amazon similar to the one he had written about Canudos' conflicts in the interior of Brazil. This second book would be named *Lost Paradise*, after the text of the British writer John Milton, from the seventeenth century. I quote an extract of a letter from Euclides to his friend Arthur Lemos, where he details his intentions:

“If I would write now I would draw an unintelligible and turbulent miniature of chaos, a perfect mixture of flooded forests and vast brilliant skies. Between such extremes, there is a new world, with its infinite forms, that was entirely unknown to me. Furthermore, this Amazon reminds us the genial space definition of Milton: it hides in itself. The foreigner contemplates it without seeing it, through a vertigo. It only partially appears to him, slowly, anxiously. It is a greatness that demands the microscopic subtle penetration and the extremely precise and short observation of the analysts; it is an infinity that demands to be measured.”

« Se escrevesse agora esboçaria miniaturas do caos, incompreensíveis e tumultuárias, uma mistura formidável de vastas florestas inundadas e de vastos céus resplandescentes. Entre tais extremos está, com suas inumeráveis modalidades, um novo mundo que me era inteiramente desconhecido. Além disso, esta Amazônia recorda a genial definição do espaço de Milton: esconde-se em si mesma. O forasteiro contempla-a sem a ver através de uma vertigem. Ela só lhe aparece aos poucos, vagarosamente, torturantemente. É uma grandeza que exige a penetração sutil dos microscópios e a visão apertadinha e breve dos analistas; é um infinito que deve ser dosado”.

Euclides da Cunha, carta a Artur Lemos, de 1905. (Cunha, 1995, p. 696)

The book remained a project as the writer was killed by gun in 1909 by his wife's lover, in self-defense. Euclides da Cunha's texts about the region represents a vast material preserved in different places in Brazil. It can be partially found at the National Historical and Geographic Institute, the Brazilian Academy of Letters, *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper's archives, as well as the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Relations (known as “Itamaraty”).

As reference works about the subject we can find in Portuguese the Euclides da Cunha's *Complete Works Edition* under the coordination of Afrânio Coutinho, published in 1966, 1995 and 2005. There is also the book of Leandro Tocantins *Euclides da Cunha e o paraíso perdido (Euclides da Cunha and the lost paradise)* (1966), the commented edition of Euclides' letters by Walnice Nogueira Galvão and Oswaldo Galotti, (1997) and the book *Vingança da Hileia, Euclides da Cunha, a Amazônia e a Literatura*, about the literary project of Euclides in the Amazon, by Francisco Foot Hardman (2009). In English, *À margem da história* was published in 2006 under the title *The Amazon: land without History*, translated by Ronald W.Sousa. I would like to mention

the book *The scramble for the Amazon and the lost paradise of Euclides da Cunha*, by professor Susanna Hecht of the University of Chicago, published in 2013, a 632-pages book that brings Euclides da Cunha's life and works about the Amazon.

To write about the Amazon, Euclides surrounded himself with the opinion of foreign travelers and naturalists such as Alexander von Humboldt (Germany), Louis Agassiz (Switzerland), Walter Bates (GB), Carl von Martius (Germany), Johann von Spix (Germany) and many others. The problem of Euclides influences is an issue the permanently occupies the author's mind, as we can see when he writes about Theodor Roosevelt's book *American Ideals (1904)*, in which he quotes the American politician on this matter:

“Those severe and strongly ironic pages seem to have been written for us – because among us it shall be constantly, even exhaustively said that ‘it is better to be an original than an imitation, even when the imitation is something better than the original’. Moreover, to be a first-class Brazilian, however modest the title were, ‘is fifty-fold better than to be a second-class imitation of a Frenchman or Englishman’”. (Cunha, *Obras Completas*, p. 195)

In view of that, with the project of being a genuine Brazilian, Euclides da Cunha finds in the Amazon his main *raw material*: the rubber tapper, original from the migrations flows from the Northeast. He was the logical continuation of Canudos's victims, killed by the government army, described in *Rebellion in the backlands*. In the article “This accursed climate”, published in the book *The Amazon: land without History*, Euclides da Cunha writes about them:

“When the great droughts of 1879-1880, 1889-1900, 1900-1901 scourged the arid sertões (backlands) and in a few weeks the coastal cities filled with a population of refugees, starving, overcome with fever and smallpox, the single concern of the public powers consisted of liberating the cities as soon as possible from that invasion of moribund barbarians infesting Brazil. Steamboats were quickly crammed full of those troublesome cargoes consigned to death. They were sent to the Amazon - vast, unpopulated, almost unknown –, which amounted to expatriating them within their own country. That martyred multitude, all rights lost, family ties severed, torn apart in the tumult of forced departure, in effect set out bearing sealed marching orders to the unknown. And it went with its starving, its fever victims, and its pox infected, in conditions that would contaminate and corrupt the healthiest locales in the world. And once this purgative task was performed, no further attention was paid. Government intervention ceased. Never, down to our own days, has a single government agent, or doctor, been involved in the case. The banished bore with them the single, sorrowful mission of simply disappearing.”

(Da Cunha, *The Amazon: land without History*, p.36)

“Quando as grandes secas de 1879-1880, 1889-1890, 1900-1901 flamejavam sobre os sertões adustos, e as cidades do litoral se enchiam em poucas semanas de uma população adventícia, de famintos assombrosos, devorados das febres e das bexigas – a preocupação exclusiva dos poderes públicos consistia no libertá-las quanto antes daquelas invasões de bárbaros moribundos que infestavam o Brasil. Abarrotavam-se, às carreiras, os vapores, com aqueles fardos agitantes consignados à morte. Mandavam-nos para a Amazônia – vastíssima, despovoada, quase ignota – o que equivalia a expatriá-los dentro da própria pátria. [...] Mas feita a tarefa expurgatória, não se curava mais dela. Cessava a intervenção governamental. Nunca, até aos nossos dias, a acompanhou um só agente oficial, ou um médico. *Os banidos levavam a missão dolorosíssima e única de desaparecerem...*”

(Cunha, Op.Cit., p. 276)

Five years after Euclides da Cunha's trip to the Amazon, in the 1910 report, when he was working for Madeira-Mamoré Railway Company, Osvaldo Cruz wrote about Santo Antônio do Madeira village, the place where the company's workers were settled. The village is now the city of Porto Velho, capital of Rondônia state and it was founded by the railroad building company.

“The village has no sewage, no running water system, nor lighting of any kind. Garbage and all vegetative life products are thrown onto the streets, if those narrow, undulating alleys that cross this unfortunate village deserve the name. There are hills of trash against the walls of the houses. Large holes in the center of the village receive rainwater and water from the flood and become dangerous swamps from which clouds of anophelines<sup>6</sup> arise, spreading death throughout the village. There is no slaughterhouse. Cattle is slaughtered in the middle of the street, by gunshot, and the undesired parts, like the head, viscera, leather, shells, etc, are abandoned at the same spot of the sacrifice, lying in a lake of blood. Everything is rotting near the houses and the fetid smell it has is indescribable. On the organisms living in such an environment, malaria executes the greatest devastation. There is no child population and the few children that can be seen have a very short life. There are no native people known among the inhabitants of Santo Antônio: they all die.”

“A vila não tem esgotos, nem água canalizada, nem iluminação de qualquer natureza. O lixo e todos os produtos da vida vegetativa são atirados às ruas, se merecem este nome vielas esburacadas que cortam a infeliz povoação. Encontram-se colinas de lixo apoiadas às paredes de habitações. Grandes buracos no centro do povoado recebem as águas das chuvas e da cheia do rio e transformam-se em pântanos perigosos, donde se levantam aluviões de anofelinas que espalham a morte por todo o povoado. Não há matadouro. O gado é abatido em plena rua, à carabina, e as porções não aproveitadas: cabeça, vísceras, couro, cascos etc., são abandonados no próprio local em que foi a rês sacrificada, jazendo num lago de sangue. Tudo apodrece junto às habitações e o fétido que se desprende é indescritível. Sobre os organismos que vivem em tal meio o impaludismo faz as maiores destruições que se conhecem. A população infantil

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<sup>6</sup> Malaria mosquitos.

não existe e as poucas crianças que se vêem têm vida por tempo muito curto. Não se conhecem entre os habitantes de Santo Antônio pessoas nascidas no local: essas morrem todas”.

(Cruz, Chagas & Peixoto, 1972, p.10.)

Banished in their own land, the moribund barbarians that had migrated to the region accomplished the “single, sorrowful mission of simply disappearing”, in the words of Euclides.

In the same article “This accursed climate”, Euclides da Cunha details the food conditions of rubber tappers:

“Year after year, he is deprived of nutrition, which is the solidest base of tropical hygiene, for he does not engage in even the most rudimentary cultivation to provide himself with it. Indeed, in contradiction of all precept, his diet is limited to various kinds of suspect and harmful canned goods supplemented by meat according to the luck of the hunt.”

(Cunha, *The Amazon: land without History*, p.39)

“ A alimentação, que é a base mais firme da higiene tropical, não lha fornece, durante largos anos, a mais rudimentar cultura. Constitui-se, ao revés de todos os preceitos, adstrita aos fornecimentos escassos de todas as conservas suspeitas e nocivas, com o derivativo aleatório das caçadas.”

(Cunha, *Ibidem*, p. 278)

In the report of 1910, Osvaldo Cruz writes about the food diet of the inhabitants of Madeira River and its tributaries:

“In the region below the waterfalls, where there are many transport facilities, the rubber tappers’ feeding is extremely poor and of terrible quality. Addicted to alcohol, of which they incredibly abuse, they don’t have proper food and they pay fabulous prices for it. The base of the food is dried meat and manioc flour. The first usually arrives damaged, which is very easy, in view of the terrible conditions of storage and the humidity of the region. The ones who feed better themselves make use of canned food coming most of the times from Manaus and Pará. These preserves are sold without scruple and largely deteriorated. The fraud comes to a point that the import houses have an employee called box sealer, whose work consists in stick deformed cans, in order to give out the putrefaction gases and to weld the opening made”.

(Cruz, Chagas & Peixoto, *Ibidem*, p.11)

“Na região abaixo das cachoeiras, onde as facilidades de transporte são grandes, é deficientíssima e péssima a alimentação dos seringueiros. Viciados pelo álcool, de que abusam de maneira incrível, não têm alimentação conveniente e por essa mesma pagam preços fabulosos. A base da alimentação é a carne seca e a farinha d’água. A primeira quase sempre chega deteriorada, o que é fácil à vista de seu péssimo acondicionamento e da umidade da região. Os que melhor se alimentam fazem uso de conservas que vêm em grande parte de Manaus e Pará. Estas conservas são vendidas sem escrúpulo e em grande parte deterioradas. E a fraude vai a tal ponto que as casas de importação de conservas têm um empregado denominado caixeiro da solda e cujo mister consiste em furar as latas deformadas pelos gases da putrefação, a fim de dar saída a esses e soldar a abertura feita.”

(Cruz, Chagas & Peixoto, Ibidem, p.11)

The texts of Osvaldo Cruz and Euclides da Cunha echo the same problems and the same diagnosis: climate or nature are not the great evil in the Amazon, but the absolute absence of public services. Osvaldo Cruz says in the report of 1913, about the sanitary conditions in the Amazon valley:

“Epidemiological elements, however, are always the same and in the Amazon, as everywhere else, they can be reached through the adoption of measures that can mitigate them. The cause of an immense hecatomb and the origin of prejudices against the natural conditions of the Amazon is the absolute absence of medical assistance. It is the complete lack of prophylaxis against malaria. It is the abandonment of proletarian to a perfectly avoidable morbid state, or the fatality of death caused by a curable disease. What, in short, constitutes in the Amazon valley the greatest fatality is the disregard for human life on the part of the public authorities and the rubber farm owners. In a place where the wealth brought by the results of an extractive industry depending only on the human labor, there is not the very notion of a life!”

(Cruz, Chagas & Peixoto, Ibidem, p.122)

« Os elementos epidemiológicos, porém, são sempre os mesmos e na Amazônia, como em toda parte, acham-se ao alcance de medidas muito capazes de atenuá-los. O que aí existe, ocasionando imensa hecatombe e malsinando as condições naturais de toda a Amazônia, é a mais absoluta ausência de assistência médica e medicamentosa, é o desconhecimento completo das medidas de profilaxia individual contra a malária, é o abandono do proletário a um estado mórbido perfeitamente atenuável ou a fatalidade da morte por uma moléstia perfeitamente curável. O que, em fim, constitui no vale do Amazonas a maior fatalidade é esse desprezo pela vida humana da parte dos poderes públicos e dos possuidores de seringais, não existindo lá, onde a riqueza, trazida pelos resultados de uma indústria extrativa, só depende do trabalho humano, a noção exata de uma existência”!

(Cruz, Chagas & Peixoto, Ibidem, p.122)

The similar analysis can be found in “*The Amazon: land without History*”, from Euclides da Cunha:

“Although painful examples could be adduced to accompany this overview, going through them would be useless. What comes definitively to the fore is the urgent need for measures to rescue this hidden, abandoned culture: a work law that ennobles human effort; an austere justice that curbs excesses; and some form of homestead provision that definitively links man and land”.

(Cunha, *The Amazon: land without History*, p.261)

“Esta resenha comportaria alguns exemplos bem dolorosos. Fora inútil apontá-los. Dela ressalta impressionadamente a urgência de medidas que salvem a sociedade obscura e abandonada: uma lei do trabalho que nobilita o esforço do homem; uma justiça austera que lhe cerceie os desmandos; e uma forma qualquer do *homestead* que o consorcie definitivamente à terra”. (Cunha, *À margem da História* p. 261)

## Conclusion

To make a conclusion, I would like to clarify an idea that this paper evokes. The question I would like to make is, in which extent the texts of the physician Osvaldo Cruz and the writer Euclides da Cunha contribute to create a critical view about the Amazon?

As an attempt to answer to this question, I would like to bring the thoughts of Brazilian literary critic Antonio Candido about dialog. In the article “Literatura e Subdesenvolvimento” (Literature and Underdevelopment) Candido suggests the adoption of a systematic dialog between both external and internal influences, in order to create what he calls a national critical thinking. I quote him:

“A fundamental step to achieve independence (of thinking) is the ability of producing first-class works influenced, not by immediate foreign models, but by previous national examples. This means the establishment of what one might call a little mechanically an inner conversation, which makes it more useful loans taken to other cultures”

(Candido, 2011, p.184)

“Um estágio fundamental na superação da dependência é a capacidade de produzir obras de primeira ordem, influenciadas, não por modelos estrangeiros imediatos, mas por exemplos nacionais anteriores. Isto significa o estabelecimento do que se poderia chamar um pouco mecanicamente de causalidade interna, que torna inclusive mais fecundos os empréstimos tomados às outras culturas”.

(Candido, 2011, p.184)

In this sense, the external content is always decoded in a national articulation. Thus, reporting to the Amazon, the texts of Osvaldo Cruz and Euclides da Cunha mentioned in this paper,

together with other Brazilians that went to the region at the early twentieth century, such as writers Alberto Rangel, José Veríssimo and Manuel Bandeira and the engineer Cândido Rondon can help to create a national approach about the region. Furthermore, following Euclides da Cunha's steps, it is important to consider foreign influences, in order to build a dialog. To read these texts together and to place them side by side constitute the establishment of a fertile dialog. It helps to build a new way of thinking not only in historical or political terms, but also in the literary and cultural fields, which is the space I want to explore later in my research.

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