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Tradução e retradução de *Os Sertões* de Euclides da Cunha: Análise de duas traduções em Inglês

Translation and Retranslation of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*: An Analysis of two translations in English

The reader may well become the author's adversary, seeking to make the text over in a direction the author did not anticipate.

(BOLTER, 1991:154)

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Resumo: O objetivo deste artigo é comparar as traduções para o inglês da obra prima *Os Sertões* de Euclides da Cunha publicada em 1944 por Samuel Putnam com a retradução elaborada por Elizabeth Lowe em 2010. Três trechos retirados do original são comparados com as respectivas versões com o intuito de propor uma análise baseada em dados, evitando impressões subjetivas. Os dados levantados indicam que as duas traduções são competentes, mas ambas apresentam pontos fortes e fracos. A análise comparativa mostra casos de omissão por parte de Lowe de conteúdos presentes no texto fonte. Putnam tem sido criticado por Straile and Fitz (1995), e também assinalado por Lowe (2014), por ele ter suprimido muitas das elipses constantes do texto original. Argumenta-se que um critério único para o assessoramento de traduções não é suficiente e um *close reading* de textos baseada na análise de dados conduz a uma avaliação persuasiva.

Palavras-chave: Melhoramento; original; subcapítulos; supressão; estudos da tradução; omissão.

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SCHMITZ, J. R. - Tradução e retradução de *Os Sertões* de Euclides da Cunha: Análise de duas traduções em Inglês

Abstract: The aim of this paper is compare the English translations of Euclides da Cunha's masterpiece *Os Sertões* published in 1944 by Samuel Putnam with the retranslation prepared by Elizabeth Lowe that appeared in 2010. Three excerpts from the original are compared with their respective renditions in order to present an analysis based on data, avoiding subjectivity. The data indicate that both translations are competent, yet both have their strengths and weaknesses. The analysis of the translations points to instances of omission by Lowe of some material present in the original Portuguese edition. Putnam has been criticized by Straile and Fitz (1995), and duly subscribed to by Lowe (2014), for his having suppressed many of da Cunha's ellipses. It is argued that a single yardstick for translation assessment is not sufficient and a close reading of texts based on the analysis of data can lead to a persuasive evaluation.

Keywords: Enhancement; original; subheadings; suppression; translation studies; omission.

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1. Introduction

The objective here is to compare the two English translations of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*. The first translation was published in 1944 by Samuel Putnam (1892-1950) (*Rebellion in the Backlands*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press) and the retranslation published in 2010 (*Backlands The Canudos Campaign*, New York: Penguin Group) was prepared by Elizabeth Lowe.

Putnam is a celebrated translator-scholar of many classics of world literature in different Romance languages, namely CERVANTES' *Don Quijote*

(1949); Putnam also wrote one of the first books in English on Brazilian literature: *Marvelous Journey: Four Centuries of Brazilian Literature*, a text that enjoyed 13 editions between 1948 and 1971¹. He presents a well-documented introductory essay with over seventy footnotes that point to his stature as an early Brazilianist. He considered *Os Sertões* to be part of universal literature “... unique not only in Brazilian but in world literature as well.” (pp. iii). As a translator-scholar, Putnam related to da Cunha’s encyclopedic knowledge and prepared glossaries of botanical, zoological and regional terms used in Northeastern Brazil that were not defined in the Portuguese original. Lists of specialized terms prepared by the translator contributed to the enhancement of the work for the English-reading public. Da Cunha himself was indeed a forerunner in the field of terminology for his book is replete with zoological, botanical and regional terms. He added many footnotes to his text as well as eight endnotes in order to answer his critics. Both Putnam and Lowe had to provide more detailed information about Brazil for they were addressing themselves to readers unfamiliar with the country and the plethora of historical references found in the original. No doubt da Cunha assumed that his readers, who were part of the 19th century elite, would be familiar with the references cited in the course of his text and if not, they would investigate on their own.

Lowe has translated an impressive number of Brazilian authors to English, namely Clarice Lispector, Rubem Fonseca, Néida Piñon, Darcy RIBEIRO, and Machado de Assis. She holds a PH.D from the City University of New York (CUNY) in the field of Comparative Literature. Author of *The City in Brazilian Literature* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), Dr. Lowe is Director of the Center of Translation Studies at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign, USA).

¹ Those interested in the work of Samuel Putnam in the fields of translation and literature can find a wealth of material on-line: “Samuel Putnam Papers”, 1908-1950, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, USA.

Both translators have their respective introductions. Putnam invited Alfrânio Peixoto, a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters to write an introduction while Lowe invited Dr. Ivan Stavans, member of the faculty of Amherst College (Massachusetts), who has published widely in Latin American Studies from a book on Gabriel García Márquez to one on Pablo Neruda and another on Cesar Chavez.

2. The Language of Euclides da Cunha

There is no doubt that da Cunha was deeply familiar with his language for he read widely in different areas of knowledge, a truly interdisciplinary scholar. His writing attests to this intimacy with the resources of Portuguese, both syntactically and lexically. His vocabulary is cultured. He avoids language that might be viewed as “pedestrian”, with overused and trite ways of expression. Da Cunha’s prose, in many instances, is poetic, and complex with learned vocabulary as well as scientific and technical terms, long sentences interspersed with short ones. The celebrated Brazilian lexicographer Antonio Houaiss (GALVÃO 2009: 19) praises da Cunha’s rich vocabulary. Indeed material that is a challenge for those who undertake to translate *Os Sertões*. Peixoto (1944: xix), the author of the preface to Putnam’s translation praises da Cunha’s style of writing: “That freshness of imagery and of concepts which came to him from his exact and experimental knowledge of science stood in contrast to the artificial flowers of rhetoric to be found in other writers”. For Stavans (2010: xviii), the author of the introduction to Lowe’s retranslation observes that da Cunha’s “... imagery is colored with the earth tones of the desert, the blood reds of its sunsets, the blacks of the mudholes, and the grays of its rock formations.”

3. The Original and the two translations: The *Corpus*

The data here is arranged in three charts marked (Excerpts **A**, **B**, and **C**). Each one presents initially the original followed by Putnam's translation and then Lowe's retranslation. Owing to space limitations, the excerpts do not follow the diagramming of the Brazilian original and the translators' renditions.

In the case of Putnam's translation of *Rebellion in the Backlands*, the edition consulted for this study is dated February 1944, third impression July 1945. Lowe's retranslation is the first edition published in 2010. They are duly labeled in the specific headings of each chart so as to permit consultation of the original and the target language translations by prospective readers. With respect to the original, the *Círculo do Livro* edition published in 1975, with its very moving illustrations of the forgotten backlanders by artist Alfredo Aquino serves as a base for comparison with the two English versions. Numbers in bold type ([1], [2]), etc. are inserted in the body of each of the three texts (the original and the two translations and function as links to the list of numbered comments with regard to the original and the two translators. The three excerpts from the original and the translations presented will hopefully facilitate an objective analysis of the material and avoid an impressionistic view of the translation and the retranslation. The different excerpts have been selected on the basis of their appearance in anthologies of da Cunha's writings that are most likely familiar to readers; in addition, the motivation for the selection of other parts of da Cunha's narrative is based on the esthetic quality of the many scenes in the Brazilian masterpiece. The first excerpt (**A**) "Processo dos Jiraus" describes a funeral procession where the backlanders proceed to bury their dead. This poignant scene ends the chapter

where da Cunha describes how the backlanders surrounded the soldiers and forced the army to retreat with heavy losses. Excerpt B “As Caatingas” describes the hardships endured by the backlanders in the sertão and contrasts with Excerpt C “O Umbuzeiro” where the same land contributes to their survival and fleeting happiness. These two excerpts characterize da Cunha’s use of antithesis throughout *Os Sertões*. Let us look now at the very moving description of the funeral procession:

Excerpt A:

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1975. Chapter 4, Travessia Do Cambaio, (1) 196-223. Part 6: Procissão dos Jiraus, pp. 223.

“Lentamente, caminhando para Canudos, extensa procissão derivava pelas serras (2). Os crentes substituíam os batalhadores e volviam para o arraial (3), carregando aos ombros, em toscos pálios de jiraus (4) de paus roliços amarrados com cipós (5), os cadáveres dos mártires da fé (6). O dia fora despendido na lúgubre pesquisa, a que se dedicara a população inteira (7). Haviam-se esquadrinhado todas as anfractuosidades (8), e todos os dédalos rasgados entre pedras (9), e todos os algares fundos (10), e todas as taliscas apertadas (11)...” [pp. 223]

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões, Rebellion in the Backlands*. Translation by Samuel Putnam, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1945. Chapter 4, pp. 198-224, The Crossing of Mount Cambaio, (1) Part 6: Procession of the Litters, pp. 223.

“Slowly, bound for Canudos, a long procession came down the mountain (2). These were not warriors, but believers (3), bearing on their shoulders, in rude litters (4) made of round wooden stakes bound with liana stalks (5), the bodies of the martyrs for the faith (6). The entire day had been spent in the search for these bodies, a sorrowful task in which the entire population took part (7). They had explored every winding nook and crevice (8), every bit of tangled underbrush between the rocks (9), all the deep caverns (10) and open clefts”. (11)[pp. 223]

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões, Backlands The Canudos Campaign*. Translation by Elizabeth Lowe. New York: Penguin Books, 2010. Chapter 4, Trapped at Mount Cambaio (1), pp. 205-230. Part 6, The Procession of Litters, pp. 229.

“Slowly a long procession headed for Canudos came down the mountain (2). These were not fighters, but the faithful, (3) carrying their dead in crude litters (4) made of wooden poles tied with liana stalks. (5) They were honoring the martyrs of the faith. (6) They had spent the day searching for the bodies, a sad task that occupied the entire settlement (7). They had searched every crevice (8), the tangled underbrush (9), the caverns (10) and crevasses” (11) [pp.229].

Comments on Excerpt A:

(1) Translation of the title of Chapter 4

With regard to the translation of Chapter 4, Putnam maintains the same title of the original, respectively “Travessia do Cambaio” and “The Crossing of Mount Cambaio”. Lowe changes the title to “Trapped at Mount Cambio” that has the merit of informing what the final outcome was. The army was surrounded by the backlanders in a struggle and forced to retreat and contrasts with the poignant scene of the backlanders burying their dead. Putnam’s title of the book that features the word “Rebellion” is based on a mid-twentieth century view of the inhabitants of Canudos as aggressors; research at the present time points to the view the backlanders desired simply to control their own destiny; the real aggressors were the elites in power in the late nineteenth century (GALVÃO 2009). Lowe’s title avoids the word *rebellion*. Her use of the notion “campaign” is appropriate for from the very beginning, the government was intent on annihilating the entire populace.

(2) “Lentamente, caminhando para Canudos extensa procissão derivava pelas serras.”

Putnam maintains the comma after the adverb *slowly* and follows da Cunha’s punctuation. While a comma is not obligatory in English (in this case), it serves to mark, for prospective readers, the slow movement of the mourners in their descent to Canudos. Da Cunha places the adjective *extensa* before the noun *procissão*; both the translator and the retranslator employ the adjective *long*. In her retranslation, Lowe might have chosen the adjective *extended* or perhaps *lengthy* for there were many bodies to be buried in the town of Canudos and the painstaking search for the dead in the rugged terrain took a long time. Da Cunha employs the verb *derivar* and employs it in the imperfect tense which depicts repeated or continued action while the two translators use the past tense of the phrasal verb *come down*. This verb contains the Latin root *rivus* “river” (*Dicionário Houaiss da Língua*

Portuguesa 2009: 944) (henceforth, DHLP); one might conjecture that da Cunha wanted to compare the “stream of litters” slowly descending the mountain with water emanating from a spring and trickling downwards. The DHLP registers meaning no. 5 (pp. 944): “dislocate (liquid), flow, run, emanate” (translation by the author of this article), [*derivar (líquido), fluir, correr, manar*]. This scene evokes, with the presence of the verb *derivar* the flowing or running of water from the fountain head down to the valley. Putnam chooses “bound for Canudos”; Lowe selects “headed for Canudos”.

(3) “Os crentes substituíam os batalhadores e volviam para o arraial,...”

Da Cunha tells his readers that the burial procession was made up of people with religious beliefs and not combatants. The underlying religious motives are highlighted, thereby downplaying the belief that all those present were warriors, lunatics or criminals. Da Cunha states that the faithful substituted those involved in the battle, possibly suggesting that others who did not partice in the procession remained on the mountain. Both translators introduce in their respective translations the words *warriors* (PUTNAM) and *fighters* (LOWE). The verb *volver*, in the imperfect tense, stresses the ongoingness of the scene for the backlanders slowly descend the mountain to bury their dead in the *arraial*, that is, in Canudos. The two translators omit the second part of da Cunha’s sentence “e volviam para o arraial”, (pp. 223) that is, “they were returning to town”.

(4) “carregando aos ombros em toscos pálios de jirau”

Putnam employs the word *shoulders* while Lowe, for the sake of brevity, omits the word. Putnam chooses “rude” and Lowe “crude” that modify the noun “litters”. The word *jirau*, from the Brazilian indigenous language Tupi (*yu’ra*), present in Portuguese since 1587 (DHLP, pp. 1683), has numerous meanings and may refer to “a platform for a bed or a shelf to hold household objects...” [“... palanque que pode ser usado como cama, depósito de utensílios domésticos...]. The DHLP does not register the meaning *litter* for *jirau*.

(5) “de paus roliços, amarrados com cipós.”

Putnam translates this selection as “made of round wooden stakes bound with liana stalks”; Lowe retranslates “made with wooden poles with liana stalks” but she does not translate *roliço*. Putnam’s use of “round” is correct for the word *roliço* refers in Portuguese to cylindrical objects and is registered in the language since 1624 (DHLP, pp. 2470). Both translators use the word *liana* that entered English and Portuguese from the French *liane*. According to the DHLP, the word *cipó* from the Tupi *isipo* dates from 1587 (pp. 723).

(6) “Os cadáveres dos mártires da fé...”

Lowe amplifies the tragic scene by the addition of another sentence: “They (= the backlanders were honoring the martyrs of the faith”. Putnam maintains the phrase “the bodies of the martyrs for the faith”.

(7) “O dia fora despendido na lúgubre pesquisa, a que se dedicara a população inteira.”

Putnam uses the compound past perfect tense “had been spent” and Lowe employs the past perfect “had spent” for “fora despendido”. Putnam chooses “sorrowful task” and Lowe “sad task” for da Cunha’s “lúgubre pesquisa”. She might have chosen synonyms as *undertaking*, *mission*, *burden* in order to avoid the word *task*. The noun *pesquisa* according to DHLP dates from the 13th century (pp. 2200); the search for the deceased was arduous owing to the ruggedness of the mountainous terrain. For the phrase “... se dedicara a população inteira” (pp. 223), Putnam translates it as “the entire population took part” while Lowe renders the words as “that occupied the entire settlement” (pp. 229); the word *settlement* is a good choice for Canudos was indeed that, a place where families lived and hoped for a better life; they had no choice but to defend themselves from the invading army.

(8) “Haviam-se esquadrihado todas as anfractuosidades,”

Da Cunha employs the verb *esquadrihar-se* found in formal registers in Portuguese and present in the language since the 14th century (DHLP, pp.

1239). Putnam chooses the verb *explore* while Lowe selects *search*. Da Cunha in his reference to the ruggedness of the terrain employs the technical term *anfractuosidades*. English has the equivalent *anfractuositie*s. No doubt both translators considered this word too technical for their respective readers. Putnam's rendition "every winding nook and crevice" captures nicely the meaning of the word *anfractuositie*s that refers to something that has many twists and turns, that is "a winding passage or channel" according to *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1988: 34, henceforth NLWDEL). Lowe fails to describe adequately the ruggedness terrain for she does not examine the meaning of *anfractuosidades* in English or Portuguese and renders to the scene with the words *every crevice*.

(9) "e todos os dédalos rasgados entre pedras,"

Quite frequently, da Cunha employs the word *dédalo* that is both eponymic and toponymic in origin for it refers to the Grecian mythological figure Daedalus, the constructor of the Labyrinth, built to imprison the Minotaur. According to the DHLP, the word entered Portuguese in 1858 (pp. 923). Figuratively, it refers to any entity that is complicated or intricate.

The English equivalent *daedal* while registered in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, on-line edition, henceforth AHDEL) is not frequent in English and both translators have had to look for other solutions. For *dédalo*, Putnam renders the description as "every bit of tangled underbrush between the rocks". Lowe resorts to "every crevice".

(10) "e todos os algares fundos,"

Putnam translates the noun *algares* as "all the deep caverns" and Lowe refers to them as simply "caverns". The DHLP dates the word from the 13th century (pp. 153).

(11) "e todas as taliscas apertadas..."

Putnam considers the *taliscas apertadas* to be "open clefts". It would appear that he confused the verbal adjective *apertadas* with the adjective *abertas*. Lowe does not translate the adjective and employs in this instance

the noun *crevasses*. According to the DHLP (pp. 2662) *talisca* dates from the closing years of the 16th century (1589).

Having examined the section “Procession of the Litters”, we turn in excerpt B to da Cunha’s detailed description of the *caatinga*, essential part of the Brazilian sertão.

Excerpt B

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1975. Chapter 1, A Terra, pp. 9-46. Part 4, As Caatingas, pp. 38-40.

“Então, a travessia das veredas sertanejas é mais exaustiva que a de uma *estepe* nua (1). Nesta, ao menos, o viajante tem o desafogo de um horizonte largo e a perspectiva das planuras francas (2). Ao passo que a *caatinga* (3) o afoga (4); abrevia-lhe o olhar (5); agrida-o e estonteia-o (6); enlaça-o na trama espinescente (7) e não o atrai (8); repulsa-o com as folhas urticantes (9), com o espinho, com os gravetos estalados em lanças. (10); e desdobra-se-lhe na frente léguas e léguas, (11) imutável no espaço desolado (12): árvores sem folhas, de galhos estorcidos e secos, (13) revoltos, entrecruzados, apontando rijamente no espaço (14) ou estirando-se flexuosos pelo solo, (15) lembrando um bracejar imenso, de tortura, da flora agonizante...” (16) [pp. 38]

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões, Rebellion in the Backlands*. Translation by Samuel Putnam: Chapter 1, The Land, pp. 3-49. Part 4, The Caatingas, pp. 30-33.

“The traversing of the backland trails is then more exhausting than that of a barren steppe (1). In the latter case, the traveler at least has the relief of a broad horizon and free-sweeping plains (2). The *caatinga* (3), on the other hand, stifles him (4); it cuts short his view (5), strikes him in the face, so to speak, and stuns him (6), enmeshes him in its spiny woof (7), and holds out no compensating attractions (8). It repulses him with its thorns and prickly leaves, (9) its twigs sharp as lances (10); and it stretches out in front of him, for mile on mile, (11) unchanging in its desolate aspect (12) of leafless trees, of dried and twisted boughs (13), a turbulent maze of vegetation standing rigidly in space (14) or spreading out sinuously along the ground, (15) representing, as it would seem, the agonized struggles of a tortured, writhing flora” (16) [pp. 30]

Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões, Backlands The Canudos Campaign*. Translation by Elizabeth Lowe, Chapter 1, The Land, pp. 5-55. Part 4, The Caatinga, pp. 35-44.

“Crossing the backland trails is more exhausting than crossing a naked steppe (1), however. In the latter case the traveler has at least the relief of a broad horizon and the perspective of open plains. (2) Here the *caatinga* brushland (3) engulfs him (4). It cuts off his field of vision (5). It attacks and stupifies him (6). It tangles him up in its thorny scheme of things (7) and has no attraction for him. (8) Rather, it repels him with its stinging leaves (9), its thorns, its dry wood standing up like

lances (10). And it unfolds before him for mile upon mile (11), unchanging in its desolate look (12) of leafless trees and twisted, dry branches (13), all curled around each other and pointing stiffly into space (14) or bending over toward the ground (15) as they recall some immense waving of arms, torture, or the death throes of vegetation...”(16) [pp. 35]

Comments on Excerpt B

(1) “Então, a travessia das veredas sertanejas é mais exaustiva que a de uma *estepe* nua.”

There is a problem with both translations with respect to the word *então* that functions as a continuation of da Cunha’s thoughts in the preceding section “Hipóteses sobre a Gênese das Secas” (Edição Circulo do Livro, 1975: 34-38) where he ends that section with an ellipsis (marked by author in the form of three dots, hence ...). Lowe, different from Putnam, maintains, for the most part, da Cunha’s ellipses: “... beginning once again the inflexible cycle of droughts...” (DA CUNHA, translation by LOWE, pp. 35). The word *however* that occurs at the end of her translation would be better employed at the beginning of the sentence to serve as a transition to the section entitled “The Caatingas” (pp. 38). Putnam’s use of *then* is not an intensifier of the words “mais exaustiva que”, as he would have it: “then more exhausting than”.

With respect to da Cunha’s use of the adjective *nua* “estepe nua”, Lowe’s rendition follows the Portuguese, but Putnam’s use of *barren* also captures the lack of vegetation of the Siberian steppes.

(2) “Nesta, ao menos, o viajante tem o desafogo de um horizonte largo e a perspectiva das planuras francas.”

Putnam’s *free-sweeping* as well Lowe’s *perspective of open plains* point to the possible resources in the target language. The comparison of the *steppe* and the *caatinga* is an example of da Cunha’s fascination with antithesis (DA CUNHA, ed. didática de A. BOSI, 1975: 17).

(3) “Ao passo que a caatinga”

The neologism *caatinga* in the case of English is made clearer to readers owing to the addition of the noun *brushland* in Lowe's translation.

(4) “o afoga”; (5) “abrevia-lhe o olhar”; (6) “agrida-o e estoneia-o; (7) “enlaça-o na trama espinescente e não o atrai” (8); “repulsa-o com as folhas urticantes”, (9)

Da Cunha resorts to six different verbs in Portuguese and repeats the pronouns *o* and *lhe* in order to emphasize the hardships that the inhabitants of the sertão face in that inhospitable environment. Putnam's choice of *stifle* and Lowe's “engulf” are good options in English for “o afoga” (4). Both translators resort to phrasal verbs *cuts short* and *cuts off* that capture the sense of the original but Lowe's “field of vision”, more formal in style, amplifies the original (5); Putnam's rendition of *agrida-o e estoneia-o* (6) with the English expression “strikes him in the face, so to speak” functions as an amplification of the text; the verb *stun* as well as *stupefy* are good translations for the Portuguese *estonteiar -se* (6). O DHLP registers (pp.1258) the spelling *estontear*.

The noun *trama* is used quite frequently by da Cunha (7). This word is from the Latin “trama” and refers to the weaving of fabrics and the crisscrossing of threads. Figuratively, nature for da Cunha is involved in “tramas”. Both Putnam's and Lowe's translation for “trama espinescente” respectively “spiny woof” and “thorny scheme of things” are felicitous translations for the word *woof* refers to “the threads that run crosswise in a woven fabric” (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language -on-line electronic edition, henceforth AHDEL) and the word *scheme* depicts the ways in which the flora resist the arid climate of the sertão. The verbs *enmesh* and *entangle* (7) respectively express the hardships faced by the backlanders in their struggle with nature.

With regard to da Cunha's “e não o atrai”, the words follow the original while Putnam adds the adjective *compensating* and the phrasal verb *hold out*. Lowe's insertion of the adverb *rather* provides cohesion to her translation (8).

da Cunha's "folhas urticantes" is rendered by Putnam as "thorns and prickly leaves"; Lowe selects "stinging leaves". The adjective stinging is appropriate here for the urtica (urtiga), a member of the genus *Urtica* has "toothed leaves" and "stinging hairs that cause skin irritation on contact" (AHDEL) (9).

(10) "com o espinho, com os gavetos estalados em lanças;"

Da Cunha's description of the thorns and twigs "com o espinho, com os gravetos estalados em lanças" is rendered simply by Putnam as "its twigs sharp as lances"; Lowe's translation is more elaborate with "its thorns and dry wood standing up like lances". The word *twig* according to the AHDEL refers to "any small leafless branch of a woody plant"; the word *graveto* is defined by the DHLP as "um galho fino de árvore ou arbusto", (pp. 1480) that is, a branch, larger than a twig. The word *branch* would be preferable rather than *twig* for the latter is smaller. Lowe's translation of *estalados* as "standing up" is not accurate for the verb *estalar* semantically entails some piercing noise in contact with a potential victim in this hostile environment aptly described by da Cunha (10). A possible rendition would be "branches that have burst into lances."

(11) "e desdobra-se-lhe na frente léguas e léguas,"

The verbs *unfold* and *stretch* are good choices for da Cunha's *desdobra-se-lhe na frente léguas e léguas*. This instance of mesoclysis was quite frequent in Portuguese at the time when *Os Sertões* was written. It is used less today but the form is far from being archaic. The translators could have substituted *kilometers* or could have maintained *league* since the two translations are replete with Brazilianisms that contribute to the (inevitable) foreignization of the versions in English. Readers know they are reading a text translated into English and would be surprised if they did *not* encounter words from the source language.

(12) "imutável no espaço desolado:"

Lowe, in her retranslation, had to vary her work. She changed Putnam's use of the word *aspect* (where he followed the original) to the noun *look*.

Lowe might have gone further for she could have altered the two adjectives of da Cunha's *imutável* and *desolado*. For *imutável*, possible synonyms are "immutable", "constant", "enduring", "persistent", "unwavering"; for *desolado*, she might have considered "*bleak*", "*dismal*", "*forsaken*", "*wild*" (12).

(13) "árvores sem folhas, de galhos retorcidos e secos,"

Both translations are similar. Putnam chooses the word "boughs" while Lowe opts for "branches".

(14) "revoltos, entrecruzados, apontando rijamente no espaço"

PUTNAM'S wording, "a turbulent maze of vegetation", is interesting for it brings to mind da Cunha's frequent use of the word *trama*. The word *turbulent* also recalls the Portuguese *revolto*, another lexical item employed frequently by da Cunha. Lowe's "all curled around each other" is a good translation for "entrecruzados".

(15) "ou estirando-se flexuosos pelo solo,"

Putnam's choice of sinuously for "flexuosos" points to the ways nature struggles to survive in the harsh climate; Lowe's selection of the verb "bending over" permits her to maintain the imagery of da Cunha's representation of the vegetation suffering from the intense heat.

(16) "lembrando um bracejar imenso, de tortura, da flora agonizante..."

Lowe maintains da Cunha's charming *bracejar imenso*. Her rendition as "some immense waving of arms" would be accurate if the *caatingas* were windy. According to the DHL, *bracejar* is a verb with the metaphoric sense of "trabalhar duro, lutar, pelear" [struggle, fight, contend]. Da Cunha uses *bracejar* as a noun. Putnam's "agonized struggles" is appropriate in this case.

Both translators reproduce the agony of the flora. For Lowe, it is "torture or the death throes of vegetation" while Putnam renders the scene as the "agonized struggles of tortured, writhing flora". The use respectively of the noun *throe* (by Lowe) and the verb *writh* (by Putnam) from Old English exploit the varied etymological resources of the language. Putnam adds a

footnote (see above Excerpt B, translation by Putnam where the last word *flora* is followed by two asterisks (**)) to provide information about the *caatingas* for his readership: “For a definition and description of the *caatingas* see Richard Spruce, *Notes of a Botanist on the Amazon and Andes*, ed. Alfred Russel Wallace (London, 1908), I, 206-7.” With respect to footnotes, Putnam presents in Chapter 1 eighty footnotes while Lowe has thirty four, all relegated to the section “Notes” (pp. 467-476) where she retranslated footnotes, placing them with da Cunha’s endnotes all together at the end of her book.

Let us turn now to the third excerpt.

Excerpt C

Euclides da Cunha, <i>Os Sertões</i> . São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1975. Chapter 1, A Terra, pp.10-55. Part 4: O Umbuzeiro (1), pp. 44-45.
“Alimenta-o e mitiga-lhe a sede (2). Abre-lhe o seio acariciador e amigo (3), onde os ramos recurvos e entrelaçados parecem de propósito feitos (4) para a armação das redes bambolantes (5). E ao chegarem os tempos felizes (6) dá-lhe os frutos de sabor esquisito para o preparo da <i>umbuzada</i> tradicional.” (7) pp. 44.
Euclides da Cunha, <i>Os Sertões, Rebellion in the Backlands</i> . Translation by Samuel Putnam: Chapter 1, The Land Land, pp. 3-49. Part 4: The Umbú Tree, (1) pp. 37-38.
“It feeds him and assuages his thirst (2). It opens to him its friendly, caressing bosom, (3) and its curved and interlacing boughs appear especially made (4) for the fashioning of bamboo hammocks (5). And, when happy times arrive (6), it gives him fruit of an exquisite savor for the preparation of the traditional drink known as <i>umbusada</i> .” (7) [pp. 37]
Euclides da Cunha, <i>Os Sertões, Backlands The Canudos Campaign</i> . Translation by Elizabeth Lowe. Chapter 1, The Land, pp. 5-55. Part 4: The Caatinga (sub-heading not featured) (1), pp. 35-44.
“It feeds him and slakes his thirst (2). It opens up its soothing and friendly breast for him (3), where the curving and entwined branches seem to have been especially made (4) for the frame of a swaying hammock (5). And with the arrival of the good season (6), it gives him its strange-tasting fruits so he can prepare his traditional <i>umbuzada</i> drink.” (7) [pp. 43]

Remarks on Excerpt C

(1) “O Umbuzeiro”

The Cículo do Livro edition (1975) includes the sub-heading “O Umbuzeiro” to identify the tree dear to the backlanders. Putnam includes the sub-heading while Lowe opted to omit it as well as others in this chapter.

(2) “Alimenta-o e mitiga-lhe a sede.”

Putnam selects *assuage*, a verb used in formal registers, while Lowe employs the verb *slake*, a verb of from Old English, part and parcel of modern English (*The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language*, henceforth NLWDEL, pp. 933). Another word that could have been used is *quench*, possibly more frequent in spoken English, formal and informal.

(3) “Abre-lhe o seio acariciador e amigo,”

Putnam’s translation “friendly, caressing bosom” and Lowe’s “soothing and friendly breast” are creative renditions of da Cunha’s description of the benevolence of the *umbú* tree for the backlanders.

(4) “onde os ramos recurvos e entrelaçados parecem de propósito feitos”

To describe the tree, Putnam and Lowe offer respectively “curved and interlacing boughs”/ “curving and entwined branches” for da Cunha’s “ramos recurvos e entrelaçados”.

(5) “para a armação das redes bambolantes.”

Putnam confuses the word “bamboleantes” with the noun *bamboo*. Lowe is correct in translating the word as “swaying”. The hammocks are not made of bamboo, but branches of the umbu tree. The DHLP (pp. 390) registers the verb *bambolear* and the verb *sway* is appropriate here.

(6) “E ao chegarem os tempos felizes.”

The translators’ respective renditions “happy times” and “good season” make it apparent that nature for those who live in the *caatinga*, while indeed arduous, helps them in their struggle with nature. (Compare Excerpt B with this one).

(7) “dá-lhe os frutos de sabor esquisito para a *umbuzada* tradicional.”

Putnam is correct in his translation of the adjective *esquisito* “exquisite flavor”. The *umbuzada* is not “strange-tasting” as Lowe translates

the adjective for the drink is far from being strange, at least to the backlanders. This is a case of a false cognate in English for the meaning is “fine”, while in Portuguese the meaning is “strange” or “odd”. Da Cunha used the word in its positive meaning, duly registered by the DHLP (meaning no 5, pp. 1241) “que denota requinte; delicioso, refinado, delicado” [“that denotes refinement; (something delicious, refined, delicate”]. Not all speakers of Portuguese today would employ the word in sense no. 5.

3. Discussion

Both Putnam’s and Lowe’s translations are competent renditions of the Brazilian classic. However, based on the data analyzed in the four excerpts, both versions have their strong points and weaknesses. As the data point out, both translators err at certain points in their work. Certainly, it is easy to criticize the work of others, but writing in all its forms is indeed an excruciating process, translation included. The two translations do indeed carry over to other cultures the tragic events that occurred in the 19th century Brazil leading to the decimation of downtrodden and excluded peoples from Northeastern Brazil.

An examination of the excerpts challenges Stavans’ statement that Putnam’s translation “in spite of its colloquialisms, feels somewhat archaic” (Introduction to the translation by Lowe (2010: xx) for the author of the preface presents no examples of colloquialisms or archaic words. Indeed Stavans’ use of the adverb “somewhat” is a hedge. The data do not indicate that one translation is “more direct, less artificial” (pp. xx) than the other, or that Lowe’s is “more modern” than the earlier translation as Stavans contends. English has not changed dramatically since the time of Putnam’s work in the mid-forties of the last century and the publication of Lowe’s

retranslation toward the end of the first decade of the present century. Let us suppose that Putnam used archaic or words considered colloquial in English at the time of his writing. No doubt his editors would have called his attention to supposed “antiquated” or “old-fashioned” let alone “archaisms” as well as informal or colloquial expressions in their review of his work. One can find some supposed “archaic” words in da Cunha’s Portuguese written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A word search on the on-line version of *Os Sertões* (www.nead.unama.br), readers encounter the words *empós* “depois” [after] and *adrede* “de propósito”, “com antecipação” [on purpose] used quite frequently in the text. The DHLP registers both items and does not label them as archaic words. Both lexical items may not be present in contemporary Portuguese or be frequent; what is important is that words do not offer the translators any difficulty whatsoever.

It is not a question of whether or not one translation is “more this or more that”. There are, in fact, other concerns, for the analysis points to several omissions of material in Lowe’s translation.

The first omission is a small but surprising one since the material omitted from the original deals with language variation observed by da Cunha in the course of his coverage of the campaign. In the opening pages of da Cunha’s Chapter 7, “Nova Fase da Luta”, *Círculo do Livro* (pp. 401-15), Section 1 “Fora da Pátria”(pp. 402-3) he remarks on the the differences between the coastal cities and the Bahian *sertão*:

Viam-se em terras estranhas. Outros hábitos. Outros quadros. Outra gente. Outra língua mesmo, articulada em gíria original e pinturesca. Invadia-os o sentimento exato de seguirem para uma guerra externa. (pp. 402)

Putnam, in the corresponding chapter in English entitled “New Phase of the Struggle” (Putnam’s Chapter 9, pp. 404-34), Section 1 “Beyond the Bounds of the Fatherland” (pp. 405-6), the translator does not omit material:

They were in a strange country now, with other customs, other scenes, a different kind of people. Another language even, spoken with an original and picturesque drawl. They had precisely the feeling of going to war in another land. (pp. 405)

A look at Lowe's translation ("A New Phase of the Struggle", Chapter 7 pp. 397-425), Section 1, "In Another Country", (pp. 399-400) points to omission of da Cunha's observation on language variation:

The new fighters were in a strange country now, with other customs, scenes and a different kind of people. [] They had the feeling of going to war in another country". (pp. 399).

A more serious omission is observed in the case of da Cunha's Chapter 3, Section IV "Autonomia Duvidosa" (pp. 192-93). Lowe reduces this section ("Doubtful Independence") to half of a page (pp. 104) while Putnam's ("Doubtful Antony", pp. 196-197) is complete. Suppression of material represents a loss for those who depend on translations.

Putnam's translation has had its critics over the years. Straile and Fitz (1995: 46) criticize his use of subtitles or subheadings ("The Procession of Litters", "The Caatinga", "The Umbú Tree") for their presence, according to them, turns da Cunha's text into a "Brazilian History Book". It would seem that Straile and Fitz were under the impression that it was Putnam who invented subheadings. The truth is that subheadings have been present in many original versions of *Os Sertões*. Galvão (1985: 23) informs that it was Fernando NERY who added subheadings beginning with the 12th edition and the practice has continued in subsequent editions, but not in all of them. Galvão recognizes that the subheadings enhance the reading and guide the reader, but in the case of her edition, she opts to eliminate them respecting the wish of Euclides da Cunha. Galvão adds to her text paragraph numbers at every fifth line, indeed an enhancement for those searching for specific sentences. The criticism by Straile and Fitz of Putnam's use of subheadings can apply to

Lowe's retranslation as well, but to be fair to her, she omits some of them but writes headings that are different: for example, Putnam's "En Route to Monte Santo" is rendered "The Road to Monte Santo" by Lowe.

Another criticism leveled at Putnam's work by Straile and Fitz (1995: 49) is based on their belief that he failed to carry over the many pauses or ellipses employed by da Cunha featured by the use of Putnam three dots (...) at the end of sentences. These authors contend that da Cunha's pauses "... provide a space for the reader to enter into the narrative and contemplate its implications" (pp. 43). Lowe (in BERMANN and PORTER 2014) subscribes to S and F's view and argues that the presence of ellipses is a "very important to the style of da Cunha's book" and the absence of pauses in Putnam's translation contributes to its weakness. One difficulty with this line of thinking is the use of the word *reader* in the singular. There is no guarantee that the many readers will necessarily stop their reading and reflect on what da Cunha had in mind. While Putnam preferred not to carry over da Cunha's instances of ellipsis, to be fair to him, he does respect them when they are, in his view, textually significant. In Chapter VIII "The Assault", Putnam maintains the pause: "He is demoralized and if... " (pp. 353) for he understood why da Cunha resorted to ellipsis for Putnam also thought it an error in terms of military strategy to attack the backlanders in the morning of the 18th of July rather than in the evening of the same day when the troops would have had a tactical advantage. One drawback in insisting that the translator be faithful to the original by maintaining ellipses is that both Straile and Fitz as well as Lowe run the danger of falling into a "worshipful reading" of the original (BOLTER 1991: 162). The difficulty with the position espoused by Straile and Fitz is that it fails to provide a close reading of the *language* of the original and the first translation. Merely criticizing a translation for not carrying over the ellipses of the original or presenting subheadings (when many Brazilian editions contain them) is not enough.

Indeed Putnam as a master translator did not view himself as a slave to the original; he enhanced the original by his own research that led him to prepare for his readers copious footnotes related to historical events and personages, remarks about the fauna and flora of the Brazilian northeast, and many geographical and geological references that da Cunha did not consider in need of clarification for *his* readers (this authors' emphasis).

Lowe retranslated da Cunha's endnotes (BERMANN and PORTER, eds., 2014) and retranslated some of Putnam's footnotes, but, in some cases, wrote her own notes.

Putnam showed his independence and "authorial" stance by dismembering two parts of Chapter VI "The Fourth Expedition" of the original into two separate chapters, namely "The "Savaget Column" (Putnam's Chapter VII) and "The Assault" (his Chapter VIII). The result is that the original has eight chapters whereas Putnam's translation has ten. In addition, Putnam did not follow the original by translating the different outlines or list of topics that precede each chapter. He may have considered the presence of chapter outlines to be redundant owing to his use of subtitles initiated by Fernando NERY in the 12th edition. This translator and his editors may have thought that topic outlines to each chapter would lengthen the size of the text and not be expected by the English-reading public.

4. Summing up: The translators and their view of translation

A thorough reading of "*Brazil's Greatest Book: A translator's Introduction*" (pp. iii-xviii) provides a scholarly account of Euclides da Cunha as a writer and his place in Brazilian life and letters. He does not comment at

all on his translation, but he does state that a reading in English of *Os Sertões* is important for it deals with a war against excluded peoples of the backlands, a “crime” and “an act of madness” (pp. 5) and was pertinent to that time when Putnam was completing his translation, that is, during the closing days of World War II that entailed mass extermination of peoples as in the case of the Canudos Campaign.

Putnam received feedback in the form of letter dated December 14, 1944 with respect to his translation from Sr. Argemiro Rodrigues Pinto, inspector of the Brazilian Ministry of Education and Health. Rodrigues Pinto presents fifteen observations with corrections². While Putnam was aware of the problems, and sent a list of corrections to his publisher, it appears that he was not able to make all the changes in his translation for it went to press in February 1944 with a third impression in July 1945; as a result not all the corrections were actually made. The point here is that Putnam was working on his translation in the age of the typewriter and what today we call “snail mail”. He was indeed conscientious in his endeavor for he listened to his reader (Argemiro Rodrigues Pinto) at the Ministry of Education and did the best he could in the mid-forties of the 20th Century with his editors and publisher.

Lowe published her translation more than 60 years after Putnam’s work. All those who embark on a retranslation have an advantage for they can easily compare their own work with the initial translation. In addition, one can conjecture that Lowe consulted the “Samuel Putnam Papers” deposited in

² I am indebted to Mr. Aaron M. Lisec, research specialist at the Special Collections Research Center, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University for his kindness in sending me via attachment two documents. First, a listing of Putnam’s corrections to his publisher and secondly, a copy of a letter dated December 1944 sent to Putnam by Sr. Argemiro Rodrigues Pinto with a list of listing of Putnam’s translation mistakes.

the Special Collections Research Center (Southern Illinois University at Carbondale).

One can indeed agree with Elizabeth Lowe that a retranslation “enriches the source text, the receiving language and a new audience.” (2010: xxvi). In her later text (2014, in BERMANN and PORTER, eds.), she argues that her retranslation brings to the surface a “new voice that perhaps was not fully revealed in the first translation”. This voice, one could contend, is manifest in the words of Stavans who confesses his own feeling about Antonio Conselheiro, the charismatic leader of the backlanders. Here are his words: “But we feel attracted to him as a multifaceted character, one no novelist would have been able to create on his own accord” (2010: xx).

It is interesting that Brazilian scholarship has taken advantage of many of da Cunha’s “narrative masks” (GUIMARÃES 2007: 240) for scholars have perceived a “new voice” or reading with regard to Antonio Conselheiro, not as a fanatic nor as a demented person, but as a supportive leader of forgotten people, who listened to his people, resolved disputes among them, built churches and cemeteries (cf. José CALASANS, *In*: GALVÃO 2009: 86-87). The “Conselheiro” was an author of religious texts, far from being illiterate (NOGUEIRA 1997). Da Cunha expressed a desire in his lifetime to be remembered as an historian. His contribution to history lives on after him for research by “conselheiristas”, those who propose an alternative reading of the backlands leader), particularly the research of Calasans (1915-2001), are indebted to da Cunha, for his research after his brief stay in the *sertão* enabled him to revise his thinking about the charismatic leader (NASCIMENTO, 2008).

Lowe’s retranslation (LOWE, 2014 *In*: BERMANN and PORTER) indeed follows in the footsteps of the early pioneering translation as was her wish from the beginning of her project. A retranslation, however, often replaces the earlier one and this may be a loss for the readership, particularly with respect to Putnam’s informative footnotes. Yet Putnam’s and Lowe’s renditions

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contribute to the memory of Euclides da Cunha who suffered physical hardships in his struggle for social justice; his work contributed to the unveiling of Brazil --- that *terra ignota* (DA CUNHA 1975: 9) to the world in the last years of the 19th Century.

The impressive growth of the discipline of Translation Studies and Comparative Literature in different universities in the world in the last thirty years will hopefully contribute to continued study and comparison of da Cunha's original work with translations in English as was attempted here and, of course, in other languages.

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