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# Chimeras and Jagunços: Positivist Discourse in Euclides da Cunha's Os Sertões

Justin Barber

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Justin D. Barber

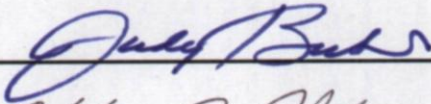
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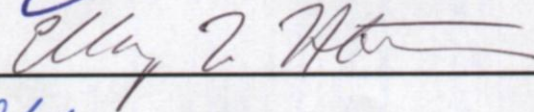
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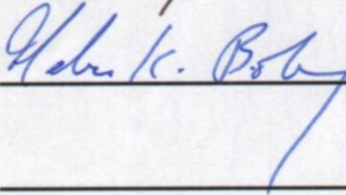
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**CHIMERAS AND *JAGUNÇOS*:  
POSITIVIST DISCOURSE IN  
EUCLIDES DA CUNHA'S *OS SERTÕES***

**BY**

**JUSTIN D. BARBER**

**B.A., History, University of New Mexico, 2006  
B.A., Religious Studies, University of New Mexico, 2006**

**THESIS**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Arts  
History**

The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico

**May, 2009**

**©2009, Justin D. Barber**

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my younger brother Sean Michael Barber, who died tragically on October 26, 2008. Unsurprised when I succeeded, jovial when I failed, Sean always believed that I was capable of achieving anything to which I devoted my heart and soul. This work represents an effort on my part to be the scholar that he imagined me to be.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An inexpressible amount of gratitude is due to Dr. Judy Bieber, who over the last two and a half years has steadfastly waded through my often turgidly opaque prose.

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My scholarly pursuits as both undergrad and master's student would have been impossible without the support of my family. My parents, Terry and Belinda Barber, have never failed to be there when I need them. I could not ask for better in-laws than Len and Anna Miller, who happily welcomed me into their home almost five years ago. Finally, and above all, I am grateful to my wife Allison. She is singularly responsible for my academic successes past, present, and future. She never fails to keep me on track. In tandem—and perhaps more importantly—she continues to prevent my descent into an academic life best suited to Faust.

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**ABSTRACT**

The present study elucidates the discursive practice of positivism, as particularly manifested in late nineteenth-century Brazil. Founded in 1889, the Republic of the United States of Brazil was constructed as a positivist state by republican idealists and pragmatic oligarchs; the political embodiment of *ordem e progresso* (order and progress). It was a form of government meant to overcome Brazil's imagined and concrete backwardness by strictly adhering to the Natural Laws identified by Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, and, in particular, Herbert Spencer. Positivist progress was, however, contingent upon the elimination of the pathological, amorphous "savage lower races." Non-white degeneration in Brazil, especially amongst its substantial mixed-race populace, was thus understood to be a progressive, equilibrating force of Evolution.

For close to a century Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões* has been treated as the literary instantiation of *mestiço* degeneration, a work best classified with the Spencerian "race science" of Arthur Gobineau and Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. This classification, however, is incorrect. In *Os Sertões*, Da Cunha incarnates the totality of Brazilian progress—progress utterly superior to that of European civilization—in the body of his chimerical *jagunços*, a perfectly miscegenated balance of what he identifies as Brazil's fundamental "ethnic elements": the African, the indigenous, and the Portuguese.



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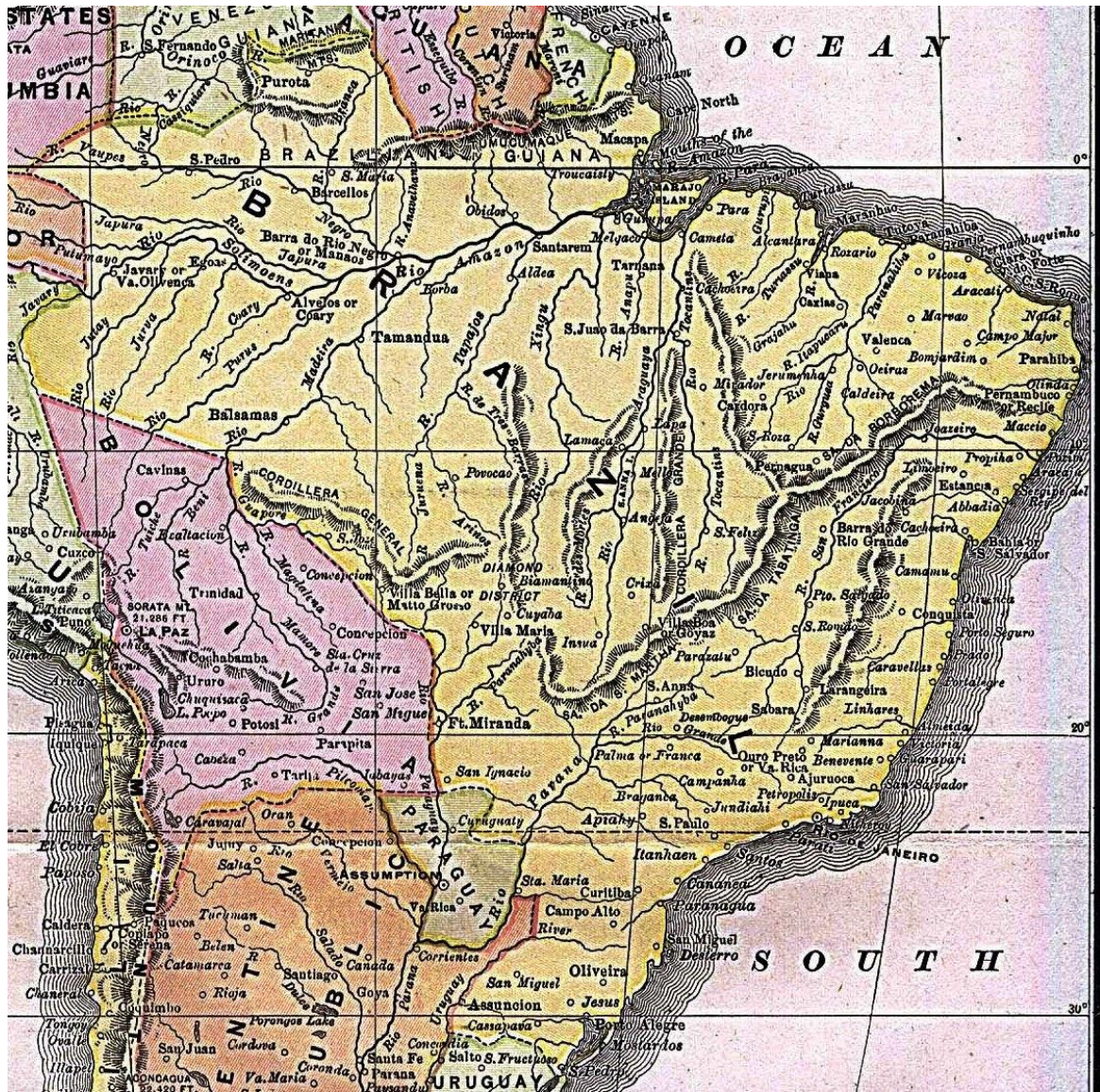
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### **Author's Note on Translation**

Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of the sources originally written in French or Portuguese cited in this work are my own. For the sake of clarity, I have attempted to translate the works of these authors as literally as possible. In the case of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*, I consulted Samuel Putnam's brilliant, if dated and at times simplified, translation, *Rebellion in the Backlands*.

Figure 1.



Map of the *República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil*, 1892

Courtesy of the Perry-Castañeda Library.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/south\\_america\\_1892.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/south_america_1892.jpg) Accessed 2/07/09, 12pm.

## Introduction

“The ancients used to suppose Order and Progress to be irreconcilable: but both are indispensable conditions in a state of modern civilization; and their combination is at once the grand difficulty and the main resource of every genuine political system. No real order can be established, and still less can it last, if it is not fully compatible with progress: and no great progress can be accomplished if it does not tend to the consolidation of order...”  
—Auguste Comte, 1865.<sup>2</sup>

On October 5, 1897, the last four defenders of the Bahian hinterland community of Canudos were killed by Brazilian troops under the command of General Arthur Oscar de Andrade Guimarães.<sup>3</sup> On the following day the corpse of the deceased leader of Canudos, the lay religious leader (*beato*) Antonio Conselheiro (1830-1897), was disinterred and decapitated, so that his head could be paraded along the Brazilian coast, then subjected to physiognomic examination.<sup>4</sup> Euclides da Cunha’s epic account of the four military campaigns undertaken to subdue Canudos and Conselheiro in 1896-1897, *Os Sertões*, was published in Portuguese five years later on December 1, 1902.<sup>5</sup> In lurid detail, with the memory of the campaign still fresh in the minds of literate Brazilians, Da Cunha elaborated upon the degenerate practices of the “millenarian” community of Canudos and its delusional atavistic founder, the “messiah” Antonio Conselheiro. As the first author to comprehensively illustrate the “backwardness, benightedness, and fratricidal religious mania” of the *sertanejo*, the previously obscure journalist Da Cunha was elected to the prestigious Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute and the

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<sup>2</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans. Harriet Martineau (New York: Belford, Clark & Co., 1880), 401.

<sup>3</sup> Euclides da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, in *Obra Completa* (hereafter *OC*), ed. Afranio Coutinho, 2 vols. (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Aguilar S.A., 1995), I, 99-515, here 512-513.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 514-515. See also Robert Levine, *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 39.

<sup>5</sup> Walnice Nogueira Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1981), 80. See also Samuel Putnam, “‘Brazil’s Greatest Book’: A Translator’s Introduction,” in Euclides da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, trans. Samuel Putnam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), iii-iv, xvi.



Brazilian Academy of Letters in 1903.<sup>6</sup> Though Da Cunha was killed in a duel of honor only six years later on August 15, 1909, the influence of his monograph upon Brazilian and millenarian studies, both those originating within and without Brazil cannot be overstated.<sup>7</sup>

Euclides da Cunha's evidence of superstitious fanaticism in the Old Republican *sertão* is, however, inseparable from his positivist depictions of the *sertão* and its *sertanejos* as the regressive products of progress. These contradictory evolutions instantiate Jacques Derrida's *différance*: they are pathological aberrations, anomalous physiological emblems that define the normative by contradictorily separating themselves from, yet always remaining delimited by, the ontological boundaries of the normal.<sup>8</sup> The evidence supporting this argument is fully elucidated within my analysis in chapter three, but a brief excerpt of Da Cunha's prose describing *sertanejo* religious praxes—"atavistic stigma" (*estigmas atávicos*)—in the *sertão*, provides a helpful introductory example:

Time stopped in the rustic society of the *sertanejo*; it has been removed from the general movement of human evolution...the soul of a [*sertanejo*] is inert before the influences which agitate it. According to these it can be moved towards extreme brutality or the utmost devotion...perverted by fanaticism ...[or] transfigured by faith...

From the consciousness of his inability to overcome [Nature] results, quite strongly, this constant call to the marvelous, this inferior condition of a stupid ward of divinity...[hence] the singular evangelists and messiahs, who, intermittently, traverse [the *sertão*]; mortifying flagellant ascetics,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., xvii-xviii.

<sup>8</sup> See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Idem (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3-25. See also Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), 1-27. See esp. below 119-134.

always pursued by a large, domineering mob of sycophants—crawling, maddened fanatics...”<sup>9</sup>

Whether it originated within *Os Sertões* or not, a model of deterministic pathology akin to Da Cunha’s pervaded studies of millenarianism and messianism throughout the twentieth century. For decades scholars in multiple fields relied almost exclusively on Da Cunha’s conclusions concerning Canudos and the *sertanejos* in general, failing to historicize his evidence and thus employing it as empirical fact, thereby increasing the perceived polysemous monstrosity of Antonio Conselheiro and his followers. This empiricization of *Os Sertões* began in 1944, when Samuel Putnam fully translated the sixteenth Brazilian edition of the work into English.<sup>10</sup> Putnam’s translation of Da Cunha’s “national epic” represents the first time that the literary manifestation of “Brazil’s intellectual coming of age” was made fully available to English speaking scholars unable or unwilling to read Portuguese.<sup>11</sup> Thus, according to Putnam, decades after social scientists had laid aside the various permutations of positivist theory as a deficient pseudoscience, Da Cunha’s illustration of life and religion in the *sertão* breathed new academic life into the theories of Comte, Buckle, Bryce, Taine, Renan, Ratzel, Gumpłowicz, and Gobineau.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, following the publication of Putnam’s

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<sup>9</sup> “Imóvel o tempo sobre a rústica sociedade sertaneja, despeada do movimento geral da evolução humana ...A alma de um matuto é inerte ante as influências que a agitam. De acordo com estas pode ir da extrema brutalidade ao máximo devotamento... pervertida pelo fanatismo...[ou] transfigurada pela fé...” “Da consciência da fraqueza para os debelar resulta, mais forte, este apelar constante para o maravilhoso, esta condição inferior de pupilo estúpido da divindade...[então] os evangelizadores e messias singulares, que, intermitentemente, o atravessam, ascetas mortificados de flagícios, encaçados sempre pelos sequazes numerosos, que fanatizam, que arrastam, que dominam, que endoidecem...” Da Cunha, *OC*, I, 197, 198, 200.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi. Although *A Brazilian Mystic: Being the Life and Miracles of Antonio Conselheiro* was written by R.B. Cunningham-Graham in 1920, it is evident that Cunningham-Graham simply copied and condensed the portrayal of Antonio Conselheiro presented within *Os Sertões*. See R.B. Cunningham-Graham, *A Brazilian Mystic: Being the Life and Miracles of Antonio Conselheiro* (London: William Heinemann, 1920). See esp. Levine. *Vale of Tears*, 1-10.

<sup>11</sup> Putnam, “Brazil’s Greatest Book,” iii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, xii.

translation many scholars studying this particular episode of Brazilian history, as well as those involved in the general interdisciplinary discourse concerning millenarian/messianic phenomena, were content to accept Da Cunha's illustration of violent interactions between the residents of Canudos (Canudenses) and the forces of the Republic as empirical facts, excising them from the overtly positivist context of *Os Sertões*.

Accordingly, Da Cunha's account of ostensibly degenerate *sertanejo* fanaticism has been almost unfailingly utilized—by sociologist, anthropologist, psychologist, and materialist historian alike—as proof of millenarian, messianic, and/or Sebastianist practices in the modern Bahian backlands and, more generally, as evidence of the reactionary/revolutionary character of all millenarian movements which originate in the pathological delusions of a messianic leader. Mid-twentieth century anthropologists Anthony Wallace, Donald Edward Curry, Vittorio Lanternari, and Bernard J. Siegel grossly essentialize their subjects in order to construct an ultimately materialist model that rendered millenarianism into a hermeneutically comprehensible pathology caused by an individual or collective psychotic break with reality amongst a fixed subculture/peasantry/proletariat incapable of expressing revolution by any means other than fanatical religious expression.<sup>13</sup> By treating ill- or non-sourced historical narratives as scientific fact, psychologists in the 1970s—specifically John Weir Perry, Joseph A. Dowling, and Leon Perez—thereby reified the idea of messianism-as-pathology to an

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<sup>13</sup> See Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Apr., 1956), 264-281; Donald Edward Curry, "Messianism and Protestantism in Brazil's Sertão," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 12, No. 3. (Jul., 1970), 416-438; Vittorio Lanternari, "Nativistic and Socio-Religious Movements: A Reconsideration," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Sep., 1974), 483-503; and Bernard J. Siegel, "The Contestado Rebellion, 1912-16: A Case Study in Brazilian Messianism and Regional Dynamics," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Summer, 1977), 202-213.



unparalleled extent, identifying it as a mental illness, an easily identifiable and curable schizophrenic syndrome: the product of an individual's psychotic delirium, rather than his culture.<sup>14</sup> In the late twentieth century, the reductionist model of Brazilian sociologist Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, predicated on the cyclical *anomie* produced by the violent *sertanejo* culture, was utilized by materialist scholars Eul-Soo Pang, Todd Diacon, E. Bradford Burns, and Patricia Pessar, all of whom identify the collective religious violence of Brazilian millenarian groups as their only means of communication—whether serving as bridge or barrier—with modern capitalism and progress.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Ralph della Cava's "Brazilian Messianism and National Institutions: A Reappraisal of Canudos and Joazeiro," written in 1968, though flawed by its reliance upon Da Cunha as an objective source for the actions and religious praxes of Conselheiro and his followers, successfully demonstrates the importance of religious and political context to the survival or destruction of communities such as Joazeiro and Canudos.<sup>16</sup>

More recent revisionist works concerning Euclides da Cunha and Canudos have successfully elaborated upon Della Cava's historicization. Published in 1991, Candace

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<sup>14</sup> See John Weir Perry, "The Messianic Hero," *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (July, 1972), 184-200; Joseph A. Dowling, "Millennialism and Psychology," *Quarterly Journal of Childhood and Psychohistory*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Summer, 1977), 121-140; and Leon Perez, "The Messianic Idea and Messianic Delusion," *Mental Health and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 5-6 (1978), 266-274.

<sup>15</sup> See Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, "Messiahs in Brazil," *Past and Present*, No. 31 (Jul., 1965), 62-86; Eul-Soo Pang, "Banditry and Messianism in Brazil, 1870-1940: An Agrarian Crisis Hypothesis," *Proceedings of the Pacific Coast Council on Latin American Studies*, No. 8 (1981-1982), 1-24; Todd Alan Diacon, *Capitalists and Fanatics: Brazil's Contestado Rebellion, 1912-1916*, PhD Dissertation (University of Wisconsin: 1987); E. Bradford Burns, "The Destruction of a Folk past: Euclides da Cunha and Cataclysmic Cultural Clash," *Review of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1990), 17-36; and Patricia R. Pessar, "Three Moments in Brazilian Millenarianism: The Interrelationship between Politics and Religion," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue: "Messianism and Millenarianism in the Luso-Brazilian World" (Summer, 1991), 95-116. See also Patricia R. Pessar, *From Fanatics to Folk: Brazilian Millenarianism and Popular Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Della Cava, "Brazilian Messianism and National Institutions: A Reappraisal of Canudos and Joazeiro," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Aug., 1968), 402-420.

Slater's "Messianism and the Padre Cícero Stories" and Lori Madden's "Evolution in the Interpretations of the Canudos Movement: An Evaluation of the Social Sciences," endeavor to remove Canudos, Joazeiro, and other Brazilian millennial movements from the "neo-Marxist" reductionism surrounding them.<sup>17</sup> In the particular case of Canudos and Antonio Conselheiro, Madden demonstrates that the identification of the community and its leader as messianic/millenarian stems directly, and only, from Da Cunha's excerpts of Canudense prophecy, the "origins" of which are "questionable."<sup>18</sup> In tandem, Slater concludes that Conselheiro and Padre Cícero were not delusional millenarian fanatics; on the contrary, they were the spiritual descendants of a religiously imagined "long line of charismatic leaders" in the *sertão*.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, rather than relying on Da Cunha, Robert Levine's *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897* illustrates the beliefs of Conselheiro by elucidating the *Missão abreviada* and the *Hours of Mary*—both of which were ubiquitous in the *sertão*—in addition to the two surviving collections of the *beato*'s writings.<sup>20</sup> Side-stepping Da Cunha and the materialist discourse surrounding millenarianism, Levine is able to more authoritatively illustrate Conselheiro's religious praxes. Significantly, there is no evidence of Sebastianism in his writings, suggesting

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<sup>17</sup> Candace Slater, "Messianism and the Padre Cícero Stories," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue: "Messianism and Millenarianism in the Luso-Brazilian World" (Summer, 1991), 95-116; Lori Madden, "Evolution in the Interpretations of the Canudos Movement: An Evaluation of the Social Sciences," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue "Messianism and Millenarianism in the Luso-Brazilian World" (Summer, 1991), 59-75. See also Idem, "The Canudos War in History," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2, Special Issue: "The World Out of Which Canudos Came" (Winter, 1993), 5-22.

<sup>18</sup> Madden. "Evolution in the Interpretations of the Canudos Movement," 69-71.

<sup>19</sup> Slater. "Messianism and the Padre Cícero Stories," 119-121, 123-124.

<sup>20</sup> These were copied by his personal secretary Leão de Natuba and preserved in the Núcleo do Sertão Archive in Salvador. Levine. *Vale of Tears*, 193-195. See esp. *Breviário de Antonio Conselheiro*, eds. Walnice Nogueira Galvão and Fernando da Rocha Peres (Salvador, BA: Centro de Estudos Baianos da Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2002).

that the sources referring to the Canudenses as Sebastianist are either mistaken or are simply conflating *sertanejo* folk religion with Conselheiro's more orthodox teachings.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, Levine concludes, Canudos is best understood as one of many religious-based movements with "millennial impulses" which occurred "in virtually every part of Brazil from the colonial period to the mid-twentieth century."<sup>22</sup>

The revisionism of Lori Madden, Candace Slater, and Robert Levine has yet to be challenged. Few works focusing on Canudos and/or the historicity of *Os Sertões* have been written in the eighteen years that have elapsed since the publication of *Vale of Tears*. In articles published in 2004 and 2006 respectively, Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury and Raúl C. Gouveia Fernandes scrutinize the literary construction of Da Cunha's work, thereby reaffirming its already fundamental status within early twentieth-century Brazilian literature.<sup>23</sup> In her 2005 article, "Subalternizing Canudos," Adriana Michéle Campos Johnson interprets the discursive meanings of Da Cunha's prose, concluding that in *Os Sertões* "the Republican, positivist and scientific codes of Da Cunha find their epistemological limits" in order to subjugate the insurgent *sertanejo* to the nascent hegemony of "Brazilian national life."<sup>24</sup> She does not, however, satisfactorily demonstrate how this "abstract function" of *Os Sertões* is engendered by its "specific" hermeneutic "attributes."<sup>25</sup> Thus, subject to anthropologist Marshal Sahlins' critiques

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 213-214, 217.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>23</sup> Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury, "Os Sertões, de Euclides da Cunha: Espaços," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41.1 (2004) 71-79; Raúl C. Gouveia Fernandes, "Euclides e a literatura: Comentários sobre a 'moldura' de Os Sertões," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 43.2 (2006) 45-62.

<sup>24</sup> Michéle Campos Johnson, "Subalternizing Canudos," *MLN*, Vol. 120, No. 2, Hispanic Issue (Mar., 2005), 355-382, here 381.

<sup>25</sup> Marshal Sahlins, "Two or Three Things that I Know about Culture," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Sep. 1999), 399-421, here 405-406. See also Marshal Sahlins. *Waiting for Foucault* (Cambridge: Prickly Pear, 1993).

concerning postcolonial interpretations, “Subalternizing Canudos” bears little historiographic utility in relation to its subject.

These works aside, in 1996 Emeritus Professor of English at the University of San Francisco Frederic Amory published “Historical Source and Biographical Context in the Interpretation of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*.”<sup>26</sup> Amory further developed his analysis of Da Cunha's academic career and works in his 1999 article, “Euclides da Cunha and Brazilian Positivism.”<sup>27</sup> Setting himself in opposition to the recent revisionism of Thomas Skidmore, Lori Madden, and Robert Levine, Amory devotes much space in these articles towards the end of legitimating Da Cunha as both the “undying voice of the defeated” and a “national historian of the first rank.”<sup>28</sup> These “North American” scholars have improperly “deprivileged” Da Cunha and his works, Amory argues, by characterizing Da Cunha and other “scientific-minded” members of his generation as racist positivists.<sup>29</sup> Hence he seeks to historically contextualize Da Cunha's ostensible positivism in order to reestablish the veracity of his works, most especially *Os Sertões*.<sup>30</sup>

In these articles Amory clearly shows that to simply categorize Euclides da Cunha or his progressive contemporaries as “positivist”—that is, to treat positivism as an easily cognizable monolithic ideology without first historicizing it—is a grievous error.

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<sup>26</sup> Frederic Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context in the Interpretation of Euclides da Cunha's *Os Sertões*,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3, “Brazil: History and Society” (Oct., 1996) 667-685.

<sup>27</sup> Frederic Amory, “Euclides da Cunha and Brazilian Positivism,” *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Summer, 1999), 87-94.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-94. Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 667-669, 682-685. See Thomas Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 103-109, 186-188; and Levine. *Vale of Tears*, passim, but esp. 3, 19, 60, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 668; “Euclides da Cunha,” 89.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88. Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 685.

Nonetheless, Amory's overall argument, while useful, is problematic. As I elaborate below in chapter one, his categories of "Comteism" and "Darwinism" are fixed: static ideologies which move unchanged through time and historical context, instantiating themselves in, and thereby becoming delimited by, the institutions and classes that adhere to them. Accordingly, the purpose of chapters one and two is to elucidate and rectify Amory's discursive errors by deconstructing Euclides da Cunha's pseudo-scientific canon, thus exhibiting the continuities, however contradictory, connecting the works of Auguste Comte, Henry Buckle, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Henry Maudsley, and Ludwig Gumplowicz. In other words, I will construct a kind of genealogy of Da Cunha's discourse by directly engaging with the texts which fashioned it. Following Nietzsche and Foucault, I will attempt to avoid the sort of "metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies" in which Amory engages.<sup>31</sup>

Chapter one, "The Genealogy of Determinism: I. Architectonics and the Positivist Apocalypse," demonstrates that Spencer's *First Principles* is incomprehensible outside the context of Comte's architectonic positive framework—at base a metaphysically static, ahistorical systematic arrangement of knowledge. By transforming Darwin's deductively derived, empirically based law of Natural Selection into the inductively derived, experientially based law of Evolution, Spencer at once innovates and legitimates Comte's transcendental framework. Lacking a normative constant, all three authors rely on physical anomalies—Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's "monstrous others"<sup>32</sup>—to define the "normal state," the "fittest," and "civilized man." These aberrations are Derridean

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<sup>31</sup> Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 139-164, here 140.

<sup>32</sup> See Cohen, "Monster Culture," 7-12.

“difference made flesh,” embodying an other that *must* be natural, thereby reifying the normal by expanding the chasm separating the normative from the ontologically liminal.<sup>33</sup>

The progress of all natural phenomena involves the gradual elimination of the polymorphous monstrous via a determinative equilibration, ultimately resulting in a perfect harmony which resonates throughout all social phenomena. For Comte and Spencer, this harmony is attainable only by means of a final positivist apocalypse, after which all progress will cease amidst the utopian equilibration of order and progress; an eternal suzerainty of man over nature by means of his complete knowledge of all natural laws. By means of this suzerainty, an absolute sovereignty that does not alter nature’s architectonic framework, human civilization will forever subsist in the perfectly natural—and therefore perfectly moral—positive utopia.

Chapter two, “The Genealogy of Determinism II: Nature Enthroned,” illustrates the tensions implicit in the relationship of Nature and Man within Comte’s discursive framework, and the diverse means by which Buckle, Maudsley, and Gumpłowicz explore this hierarchical association. Utilizing tautologically-derived generalizations, Buckle eliminates the possibility of linear progress together with the possibility of harmonizing with nature. Identifying the civilization of “European Man” as the only legitimate embodiment of progress, the only civilization capable of subjecting Nature—together with all other civilizations—to the order of his suzerainty, Buckle alters Darwin’s *Struggle for Existence* into a struggle of Man against Nature. His apocalypse, akin to Comte’s and Spencer’s, is the total annihilation of the monstrous by the normal, an equilibration of order and progress. For Buckle, however, European Man alone is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

capable of conquering and subjecting Nature in order to sustain the positivist utopia.

In any case Buckle's typologies of European Man and non-European Man are not physiological. They are the results of the agency of climate upon primordial man, a natural process that could be theoretically embodied by any people who develop in a quasi-European environment. Applying Spencer's inductively-derived theories to the physiology of the brain, psychologist Henry Maudsley widens the chasm separating European Man from non-European Man into an unfathomable abyss. Maudsley pathologizes all non-white races together with monstrous Europeans—criminals and/or the insane—in order to elucidate the normative virtue of the highly evolved European mental order. Religious superstition, together with intemperance, is the principal cause of affective madness and the progenitor of hereditary madness. Thus it must be eradicated in order to at once stymie devolution within Europe and stimulate the virtuous evolution, the “humanization,” of all non-white races. Following this psychological apocalypse European man, having utilized his perfect moral sense to discern the positive natural laws that direct all phenomena and eliminate all derivations from his singularly normal conscience, will in turn harmonize with nature in order to virtuously maintain the utopian morals of all.

In contrast to all of his predecessors, Gumplowicz unequivocally subjects Man to Nature. Indeed, for Gumplowicz the separation of the two is contradictory and irrational. Man is a natural being; therefore man is subject to nature and its laws. These architectonic laws are positively identifiable, and they affect (and effect) every aspect of human civilization via the only truly empirical natural law: Natural Selection. The Struggle for Existence between polymorphous modern peoples and states mirrors the

struggle between the autochthonous, polygenetic tribes of prehistory. By means of martial conquest, domination, and amalgamation, Nature impels all the social/ethnic assemblies of mankind towards a miscegenated utopia in which humanity's polysemy will be normalized. All human history is thereby rendered into an apocalyptic epoch wherein man—a polymorphic monstrosity—is normalized by the natural forces of order and progress. Consequently “progress” as envisioned by Comte et al is chimerical, an impossible contradiction.

In chapter three, “Degeneration and Apotheosis: Positively Constructing the *Jagunço*,” I conclude this essay by historicizing the various discourses of these positivists within the context of late-nineteenth century Brazil, specifically the Republican revolution of 1889 and the Republic's large-scale military campaigns against Canudos from 1896 to 1897. I elucidate the attempts by both republican elites and the Brazilian literati to demonstrate how Brazil had positively progressed away from its self-perceived backwardness, as ardently demonstrated by the works of Nina Rodrigues and Euclides da Cunha concerning Antonio Conselheiro and Canudos. In the context of their relative treatises concerning the Brazilian *mestiço*,<sup>34</sup> it will become evident that the body of the *jagunço*—an equally chimerical literary construction applied to the Canudenses in both cases—functions as the monstrous harbinger of Brazilian progress, a conflation of the polyvalent monstrosities of all the European positivists analyzed in this essay. For both, the *jagunço*'s annihilation is requisite in order for the Republic to truly instantiate *ordem e progresso*, a requirement ultimately demanded by all variants of the positivist

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<sup>34</sup> In the context of late nineteenth-century Brazil, *mestiço* of course refers to any person of mixed ethnic heritage, rather than the Spanish *mestizo*, a term generally employed to refer to a person of mixed indigenous and European ancestry.



apocalypse.

Rodrigues, a psychologist who utilizes the inductively-derived theory of Evolution developed by Herbert Spencer to scrutinize the “madness” of Canudos, constructs it is an epidemic. Discerning its devolutionary and monarchist components, Rodrigues concludes that Canudos illustrates the innate degeneration that characterizes all *mestiços*. He thereby limits the future of the *mestiço* in Brazil to degeneration, death, or the combination of the two: the obliteration of the Brazilian *mestiço* is inevitable, a condition that must be fulfilled for Brazilian civilization to advance to a quasi-European state. By contrast, Euclides da Cunha constructs a meta-history, *Os Sertões*, to comprehend both the advent and annihilation of Canudos. Utilizing and expanding upon Ludwig Gumplowicz’s work, Da Cunha applies Gumplowicz’s Struggle for Existence to the context of Brazilian ethnology, past, present, and future. As a result—in contrast to a characterization of *Os Sertões*’ treatment of race that began with Edgar Roquette-Pinto in 1917 and was most recently affirmed by Dain Borges in 2006<sup>35</sup>—all *mestiços* are, according to Da Cunha, the heralds and servants of progress; intermediate types driven by Gumplowicz’s ahistorical natural force of “syngenism.”<sup>36</sup>

This Natural Law will continue to miscegenate Brazilians through various means, and thus Da Cunha posits a distant future within which the equilibrated *mestiço* will emerge, a *pardo* in whom are perfectly balanced Brazil’s fundamental “ethnic elements”—“the black, the Tupi, and the white.”<sup>37</sup> Da Cunha instantiates this perfect *mestiço* in the bodies of his chimerical *jagunços*, the true “bedrock” of the Brazilian race

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<sup>35</sup> See below, 129-131.

<sup>36</sup> See below, chap.2, 47-48.

<sup>37</sup> For Da Cunha’s ethnology, see below 120-133, 141-142.

extinguished by the Republic in *Os Sertões*. Thus the tragedy of the War of Canudos is the paradoxical destruction of the singularly legitimate product of Brazilian progress by a Republic waving the banner of *ordem e progresso*: “the Brazilian race’s destroying itself.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, in contrast to the views of Skidmore, Amory, Borges, et al, Da Cunha takes pains to separate himself from Spencer and Rodrigues—the representatives of the indefinite “race science” that Borges attributes to Da Cunha.<sup>39</sup> In tandem, employing Henry Maudsley’s method of psychological analysis, Da Cunha frames the unmatched religiosity of the *jagunços* within the singular context of their “regressive evolution.” As a result, he demonstrates that the progressive rhetoric of the Republic is a vitreous façade—easily shattered by the pressure of a war waged by the state against its own people, generating a coastal descent into fanaticism that equivocates, and perhaps exceeds, the atavistic religiosity in the *sertão*. Thus while Da Cunha’s “political psychology” may indeed prescribe “national doom” for Brazil, still his ostensible “scientific diagnosis of racial degeneration” is as chimerical as his and Rodrigues’ *jagunços*—a scholarly caricature at best.<sup>40</sup>

Collectively, these elements demonstrate that for Da Cunha the destruction of Canudos operates as both continuity and rupture in the historical narrative of *Os Sertões*. Hence the work has been identified as by Richard Morse as “a pathology of Brazil, not

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<sup>38</sup> Dain Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View of Brazil’s Fractured Identity,” in *Brazil in the Making: Facets of National Identity*, eds. Carmen Nava and Ludwig Lauerhass, Jr. (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 29-44, here 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. See below, 129-130.

<sup>40</sup> For an opposing view see Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View,” 34, 37. For the historicization of the *jagunços* in relation to Canudos, see esp. Levine, *Vail of Tears*, 153-169.

merely of the *sertão*.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Richard M. Morse, "Brazil's Urban Development: Colony and Empire," in *From Colony to Nation: Essays on the Independence of Brazil*, ed. A.J.R. Russell-Wood (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 155-181, here 180-181.

## Chapter One

### The Genealogy of Determinism I: Architectonics and the Positivist Apocalypse

“The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of origin...[for] history is the concrete body of a development, with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spells; and only a metaphysician would seek its soul in the distant ideality of origin.”

—Michel Foucault, 1977.<sup>1</sup>

Frederic Amory relates that Euclides da Cunha’s positivist canon was limited to Auguste Comte’s *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (1830-1852) and *Subjective Synthesis* (1856), Henry Thomas Buckle’s *History of Civilization in England* (1857, 1861), Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Herbert Spencer’s *Education* (1861) and *First Principles* (1857-1862), and Henry Maudsley’s *Crime and Madness* (1874).<sup>2</sup> Contrary to assertions made by Thomas Skidmore and Robert Levine,<sup>3</sup> Amory clearly shows that Da Cunha did not have direct access to the anthropogeographic works of Ratzel, Vidal de la Blache, Agassiz, Gobineau, or Vacher de Lapouge.<sup>4</sup> Though he was probably familiar with these works, according to Amory Da Cunha’s own determinist treatment of race originates with the 1893 French translation of Ludwig Gumplowicz’s *Rassenkampf* (lit., “race-struggle”), originally published in 1883.<sup>5</sup>

The subject which concerns us here, however, is Amory’s identification of two European discourses of determinism—“Comteism” and “Darwinism”—and his assertion that Da Cunha abandoned the former for the latter after 1890.<sup>6</sup> As his usage of the term “Comteism” suggests, Amory demarcates the limits of positivism, abstractly as a

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” 144-145.

<sup>2</sup> Amory, “Euclides da Cunha,” 89-92; Idem, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 675-676, 679-680, n. 48, 683.

<sup>3</sup> Skidmore, *Black into White*, 186. Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 672-673.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Amory, “Euclides da Cunha,” 89-91.

scientific ideology and temporally in the form of contemporary Brazilian positivists, as fixed. For Amory, Brazilian positivism in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century is limited to the works explicitly cited by Miguel Lemos and Raimundo Teixeira Mendes, the founders of the *Templo da Humanidade* in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>7</sup> Hence Brazilian positivism was instantiated only by those *cariocas* and Paulistas who lauded the works of Comte while polemicizing all other determinist discourses. Amory follows João Cruz Costa, as well as Skidmore and Emília Viotta da Costa (both of whom cite Cruz Costa), arguing that positivist discourse was, at base, an alterist ideology easily disposed of by the progressive Brazilian literati in favor of Spencerian evolutionism.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, any person who claimed to be a positivist yet was not legitimated by means of his membership within a quasi-orthodox Comtean association in Brazil such as the Positivist Apostolate could not be identified as such.<sup>9</sup> The totality of Amory's conclusions—not the least of which is his assertion that the literary microcosm of Da Cunha's *Os Sertões* heralded the macrocosmic “paradigm shift” in the “ruling classes” within the Republic from French positivism to English evolutionism<sup>10</sup>—hinges on the rupture separating these two antithetical modes of thought. According to Amory's typology, the works of Comte are irrefutably positivist, while the works of Darwin, Spencer, Maudsley, and Gumpowicz are obviously Darwinist/evolutionist. Henry Buckle's non-Darwinian environmental determinism, however, eludes classification. Amory awkwardly

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 87-89.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 89-91. See João Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil: O desenvolvimento da filosofia no Brasil e a evolução histórica nacional* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editor, 1956), 146-151, 161-163, 165-167, 229-232, 298-301, 370-371; Emília Viotta da Costa, “Brazil: The Age of Reform, 1870-1889,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell. Vol. V (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1995), 725-777, here 749-752; Skidmore, *Black into White*, 10-13.

<sup>9</sup> Cruz Costa, “O Advento do Positivismo,” in *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil*, 138-286, see esp. 220-226; Amory, “Euclides da Cunha,” 87-89.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 90-91. Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 675.

acknowledges this omission in his typology before quickly turning to Da Cunha's reliance upon Gumplowicz's theories concerning race.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, Thomas Skidmore simply excises Buckle from the positivist/evolutionist dichotomy, presenting his determinism only in relation to the works of Gobineau and Sílvia Romero.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the work of João Cruz Costa and the various permutations thereof, the first two chapters of this thesis are not a search for the "origin" of positivistic thought in Brazil, nor are they an elucidation of the "truth" or "meaning" within nineteenth-century determinist thought.<sup>13</sup> Rather, they comprise a "search for descent."<sup>14</sup> By tracing the genealogy of those texts which influenced Euclides da Cunha and his fellow republicans, we may discover heretofore overlooked hermeneutic components of these determinisms that will help us to better understand Da Cunha and his context. Ultimately it will become clear that, both individually and collectively, the determinist discourses of August Comte, Herbert Spencer, Henry Thomas Buckle, and Ludwig Gumplowicz elucidate an architectonic, apocalyptic, and utopian system of thought in which the interactions of man are inimically bound to his complex relationship with nature. This relationship is defined by man's variant knowledge of, suzerainty over, and subjugation to, natural laws. In every case a violent apocalypse of some kind is required in order for

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 683.

<sup>12</sup> Skidmore, *Black into White*, 27-37.

<sup>13</sup> "The cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart; whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a *becoming master*, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated." Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1967), 449-599; here, 513.

<sup>14</sup> "The search for descent is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was thought consistent with itself." Ibid., 147.

man to attain a utopian equilibration of order and progress. In tandem, the works of Charles Darwin and Henry Maudsley empirically identify the natural laws that govern physiological and psychological development, thus contributing to and altering Da Cunha's multifaceted determinism, as particularly manifested in *Os Sertões*.

Figure 2.



**Auguste Comte (1798-1857), age unknown.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.<sup>15</sup>

### **Natural Laws I: Comtean Sacralization**

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b3/Auguste\\_Comte.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b3/Auguste_Comte.jpg) Accessed 2/07/09, 9:30am.

According to Frederic Amory, in 1905 Euclides da Cunha lauded Auguste Comte's *Subjective Synthesis* as "the most admirable" work of the nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> He suggests that Da Cunha's veneration of this work, and positivism in general, was solely predicated upon the "lifelong educational program" that Comte envisioned.<sup>17</sup> This program, as Amory presents it, would ultimately reconcile "science and art"—that is, order and progress.<sup>18</sup> Da Cunha, however, "outgrew" Comte's positivism.<sup>19</sup> Spencerian/Darwinian principles were based on empirical data derived from the social/life sciences—sciences which, according to Amory, "Comte had relegated to the bottom of his hierarchy of sciences."<sup>20</sup> Thus in order to judge whether or not Da Cunha was attracted to positivism by means of Comte's utopian educational program alone, and/or whether he abandoned positivist thought altogether due to its subjugation of sociology and/or biology to the physical sciences, it is necessary to examine certain discursive facets of the *Subjective Synthesis*. Before doing so, however, we must begin by analyzing Comte's "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society"<sup>21</sup> and *Cours de philosophie positive*.<sup>22</sup> These works, published in 1822 and 1830-1842 respectively, provided the discursive framework upon which the *Subjective Synthesis* was constructed in 1856.

Human civilization, even at the most primal level, is driven by progress in

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<sup>16</sup> Amory, "Euclides da Cunha," 90.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "Plan des travaux scientifiques necessaires pour reorganizer la société." Auguste Comte, "Plan of the Scientific Operations Necessary for Reorganizing Society," in *Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings*, ed. Gertrude Lenzer (New York: Harper, 1975), 9-67.

<sup>22</sup> I have chosen to use Harriet Martineau's rather free translation/condensation of the *Cours*, originally published in two volumes in 1853 as *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*. See *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, 69: "Comte enthusiastically approved of [Martineau's] work."



Comte's "Plan of the Scientific Operations."<sup>23</sup> All progress flows according to an as yet undiscovered "necessary law," following a "determined and invariable course."<sup>24</sup> The influence of this unidentified natural law upon groups of men results in the "social organization" of civilization; a process that is limited to three successive and progressive stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive.<sup>25</sup> This law "overrules *all* special human divergences," compelling every people, society, and nation to follow its "unalterable" progressive course.<sup>26</sup> It is therefore not feasible for a civilization to skip over any intermediate step and, conversely, the retrogression of any civilization is utterly impossible.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, all eminent philosophers, kings, emperors, religious leaders, etc.—all men responsible for the advances of civilization—have been guided by external "forces" which act in the favor of progress.<sup>28</sup> The historical contexts of individuals, whether illustrious or inglorious, are inconsequential; subjugated to the suzerainty of progress.<sup>29</sup> Thus "a sound political system" should strive after only the facilitation of human progress through the dissemination of knowledge: a flawless "positive polity" will supply its adherents with the singular means of "avoiding revolutions"—knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, progress aside, relativity is "the only absolute principle" according to Comte.<sup>31</sup> Hence "all action presupposes antecedent speculation" and, on a collective level, the improvements attained by each civilization are relegated to its relative "stage of

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<sup>23</sup> Comte, "Plan of the Scientific Operations," 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 21, 39, 40.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 38, 40-42.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 41, 42.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>29</sup> See *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 465-466.

<sup>30</sup> Comte, "Plan of the Scientific Operations," 44-45, 49, 56-57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 4.

development.”<sup>32</sup> Comte depicts this graduated advancement of all human civilization as a synchronic advance defined by the corresponding progress of the human mind and its power to manipulate nature.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, human progress through these stages is guided only by the order “prescribed by the nature of the human mind.”<sup>34</sup> Thus it is only when “all men” agree to the omnipotence of knowledge—when all civilizations forsake the histories which depict the past “as a tissue of monstrosities”—that man shall reach the positive stage, discerning true knowledge of the natural laws that impel him.<sup>35</sup> Synchronically developed, this true knowledge of the natural laws will be paralleled by man’s total suzerainty over nature. Thus man’s ultimate power according to Comte is not simply a repressive “force that says no”; rather it is a kind of “productive network” which pervades the entire social body, indeed the totality of humankind.<sup>36</sup> This power—a progressive knowledge of natural laws mirrored by the corresponding ability to manipulate them—is neither essentially “juridical” nor “negative,” but inherently “technical and positive.”<sup>37</sup>

An elucidation of civilization’s progress towards identifying the natural law(s) that guide its development, in addition to a concrete explanation of Comte’s “social physics,” are the two “inseparable” aims of his *Cours de philosophie positive*.<sup>38</sup> Foremost, Comte calls for a “new class of students” who will specialize in determining “the smallest

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 37, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 49, 55.

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 109-133, here 119. See also Michel Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned,” in *Discipline & Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House, 1979), 3-31, here 27-28.

<sup>37</sup> Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 121.

<sup>38</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 29-30.

number of general principles” that guide all astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena.<sup>39</sup> By following this singular “rational means” to detect the “logical laws of the human mind,” these students will “regenerate education” via their eradication of the “essentially artificial” barriers that separate the positive sciences from one another.<sup>40</sup> On a grand scale, the pursuit of “natural philosophy as a whole” will ultimately engender the final “social reorganization,” thereby shifting the totality of mankind into the third, positive stage of civilization.<sup>41</sup> Positivism properly implemented will thus sweep away every government by means of its power/knowledge, a unifying force which will forever abolish the need for violent revolution.

This utopian future will, however, only be possible if students are willing to append “social phenomena” to the accepted categories of empirically objective, scientific phenomena listed above and, with them, the superlative science of “social physics”:

...as positive as any other science of observation...a special kind of physics based upon the direct observation of the phenomena relative to the collective development of the human race. Its aim must be the coordination of the social past, and its result the determination of the system that the march of civilization tends to produce in our time...[social phenomena] demand a distinct classification, on account of both their importance and their difficulty. They are the most individual, the most complicated, the most dependent on all others...[thus] social physics...[are] what men have now most need of.”<sup>42</sup>

Thus social phenomena—indeed all phenomena, all forces, and all motions thereof—are concrete, quantifiable and, theoretically, subject to a set of absolute natural laws.<sup>43</sup> Even so, due to the limited faculties of contemporary man the majority of these laws constitute

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 32-35.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 35-37.

<sup>42</sup> Comte, “Plan of the Scientific Operations,” 65. *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 30.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 62-63, 111-129, 133, 307-308, 489.

problems that are too intricate, too complex to be reduced to “subjects of mathematical analysis.”<sup>44</sup> Hence nineteenth-century scientists are capable of such a reduction only in the “simplest” sciences: astronomy and physics.<sup>45</sup>

Comte’s “rational plan” of the sciences is not the “hierarchy” that Amory envisions; on the contrary, it is a spectrum which moves from the easily quantifiable and reducible to the extremely complex and irreducible.<sup>46</sup> Students of positivism will move along this spectrum by utilizing mathematics, the “true rational basis” of positive quantification and reduction.<sup>47</sup> The study of positivism therefore progresses from the simple to the complex: a student begins with mathematics, proceeds to astronomy, thence to physics, followed by chemistry (which includes geology), physiology (the combination of anatomy/biology), and finally social physics.<sup>48</sup> The parameters of these sciences are fixed, yet the means of each is dynamic: a perfect, positive degree of objective precision will be attained only after generations of scholars have followed the *cours*.<sup>49</sup> Comte and his contemporaries are able to quantify mathematics, astronomy, and, to a much smaller degree, physics, yet the sciences of chemistry, physiology, and social physics elude generalization due to their complexity.<sup>50</sup> The larger the number of phenomena, the more proportionately complex their relations become, obscuring the natural laws that direct them.<sup>51</sup>

Accordingly astronomy, as the least complex science (limited to the small number

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 58-61.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 46-47, 48-49.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 194-195.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 195.

of visible celestial bodies in the nineteenth century) demonstrates that “the most general phenomena are subject to invariable relations.”<sup>52</sup> It is these macrocosmic relations that provide the observable general framework, the natural order, which subjugates all microcosmic phenomena, from the astronomical to the social. As one moves across the scientific spectrum, each succeeding “order” of science is *always* subject to the laws of its predecessor(s).<sup>53</sup> Social phenomena are the most complex of all, and thus subject to the laws of all the preceding orders.<sup>54</sup> This utterly material conception of the universe eliminates the possibility of variation, rendering any sort of “superhuman” entity incomprehensible.<sup>55</sup> Mankind’s ability to “modify” all natural phenomena clearly shows that “the powers under which [natural laws] proceed are subordinated to our own.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, since chemists have proven that matter is indestructible, any questions regarding the origin or destruction of the universe are theological and/or metaphysical—all scientific hypotheses must concern “the laws of phenomena, and never...their mode of production.”<sup>57</sup> Thus the rational, “anti-theological influence” of positive science is “infallible.”<sup>58</sup>

Hence human civilization has the potential to dominate all natural phenomena through knowledge, yet in an apparent contradiction man is inextricably bound in a determinate relationship with his environment. Unlike Henry Buckle, who subjugates human development to nature’s bounty or the lack/excess thereof,<sup>59</sup> for Comte man and

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 186-187.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 198-200.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 256-258.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 198-199, 329-332.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 329-332.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 202-205, 262-263.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 261.

<sup>59</sup> See below, 51-55.

nature are constituent parts of the totality of natural phenomena, thereby subject to the same “invariable laws.”<sup>60</sup> Thus, amidst a multiplicity of races and climates, human development is “uniform...such diversities have no effect upon anything more than the rate of progress.”<sup>61</sup> This multiplicity impedes the quantification of “the normal state” of mankind.<sup>62</sup> All social phenomena, however, must be rational and thus the positivist is able to examine cases of pathology, not as aberrations, but as “a simple prolongation of the phenomena of the normal state.” That is, “the study of malady is the way to understand the normal state.”<sup>63</sup>

To identify the rational, normal state is inherently contradictory due to the *différance* implied by pathology: pathology is something other than the normal state, yet it is inextricably a component of the normal state, while the normal state is itself defined by the pathology which differentiates itself from the normal state. It is not necessary to extend this contradiction further, but it is important to note here the contradictions implicit in Comte’s simultaneous othering and normalizing of the pathological. Nor is this positive pathology limited to the individual; the greater complexity of a “social organism,” the more “inevitable” are the “maladies and crises” which tug at the borders of the normal state.<sup>64</sup> These

pathological cases are the true scientific equivalent of pure experimentation...[they are] applicable to all orders of social research, whether relating to existence or to movement, and regarded under any aspect whatever, physical, intellectual, moral, or political; and to all degrees of the social evolution...[maladies] in the social body exactly analogous to diseases in the individual

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<sup>60</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 325, 456-457, 465-466.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 394-395.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 472-473.

organism...in which the natural laws, either of harmony or succession, are disturbed by any causes, special or general, accidental or transient...”<sup>65</sup>

Hence while the individual and collective diversity of humans will require generations of positivist quantification and generalization in order to rationally discern the natural laws that direct civilization, individual and collective pathology can be identified in any given context.

The entire history of the human race, “past, present, and future,” comprises one “vast and eternal social unit, whose different organs, individual and national, concur, in their various modes and degrees, in the evolution of humanity.”<sup>66</sup> This aggregate human organism is, like every individual, governed by “imagination” in its early stages and, after its “faculties” have been suitably developed, governed “more and more by reason.”<sup>67</sup> The only means of discerning this aggregate organism’s sum progress—by means of identifying its normal state, and the “intellectual” and “moral” progress thereof—is to analyze its objectively derived pathology.<sup>68</sup> Positive pathology is thus best understood as a kind of “monstrous other”: it dwells at the “visible edge of the hermeneutic circle itself” (the boundaries of the normal state), deconstructing rather than destroying while revealing “that difference originates in process, rather than in fact.”<sup>69</sup> Accordingly, monstrous pathology functions as Comte’s singular means of avoiding the conflation of “the effects” of race, climate, and context. It is his only positively identifiable constant and therefore the only agency which enables him to maintain his panopticonic “view [of]

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 477-479.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 476-477.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 530.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 484.

<sup>69</sup> Cohen, “Monster Culture,” 14-15.

the positive conception of human development as a whole.”<sup>70</sup>

Having illustrated the utility of pathology within the science of social physics, Comte elaborates upon the progress that the aggregate human organism must make in order to attain its utopian and final positive state. He relates that every passage from “one social system to another” is inherently violent, is never linear, and inevitably produces “a transitional state of anarchy.”<sup>71</sup> The reigning political system of the nineteenth century, the liberal republic, embodies this anarchic state, hence its unavoidable final destination will be the total annihilation of the institutions and structures, “the systemizations” that maintain the penultimate “metaphysical” stage.<sup>72</sup> Comte is unable to elucidate the details of this apocalypse, but he is certain that the chaos it engenders will function at once as the ultimate “test of positive philosophy,” and the “stimulus to its social ascendancy.”<sup>73</sup> His reasons for this are fourfold. First, as human civilization collectively progresses, “intellectual” and “moral action” analogously predominate on an individual level.<sup>74</sup> The degree of positivity is thus equivalent to the degree of morality on both levels. Second, the positivist apocalypse will coincide with the rise of a class of positivists (Comte’s “new class of students”), all of whom will fully grasp the natural laws of social physics (and thus the natural laws guiding all phenomena).<sup>75</sup> Third, most men and all women “are naturally unfit for intellectual labor” due to the “intellectual mediocrity” of the former and the “incontestable...inferiority” of

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<sup>70</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 481-482.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 406-407.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 406-407, 835.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 430-431, 835.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 433-434.



the latter, yet regression on every level is impossible.<sup>76</sup> Hence “when the spirit of revolutionary destruction is abroad, the mass of the people [shall] manifest a scrupulous obedience towards the intellectual and moral guides from whom they accept direction.”<sup>77</sup>

Finally, the ability to know (and thereby manipulate) natural laws at once eliminates the possibility of politico-religious control via arbitrary will (whether human or divine) and is absolutely moral by means of its absolute positivity.<sup>78</sup> The complete suzerainty over the natural laws by the men who objectively control them will thus be “true liberty...[a] release from all arbitrary dictation.”<sup>79</sup> This utopian, positive, and global polity will endure forever—regression, tyranny, revolution, and anarchy will be relegated to their savage antiquity, and “the only charge that [will] be brought against it is that of novelty.”<sup>80</sup> Order and progress will exist in perfect, “constant and inseparable” harmony, generating “a social condition the most comfortable to human nature.”<sup>81</sup> This utopia is, however, limited to an impossibly distant future. Social physics, so crucial to the progress of civilization, has, according to Comte, “passed through the theological state, and has almost everywhere attained the metaphysical, while it has nowhere risen to the positive, except in this book.”<sup>82</sup>

Written fourteen years after the final volume of the influential *Cours de philosophie*, Comte’s *Subjective Synthesis, or, the Universal System of the Conceptions Proper to the Normal State of Humanity* is, as the title suggests, much more than the

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 431-432, 504-510.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 514-515.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 434-435.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 431-432.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 401, 837-838.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 522-523.

“lifelong educational program” described by Amory.<sup>83</sup> This work was intended to be the first volume in a series that would elucidate the positive laws within each science, laws discerned directly by Auguste Comte. Hence its subtitle: “System of Positive Logic, or, a Treatise on Mathematic Philosophy.” Comte died shortly after completing the work (1857). Nevertheless, in this ambitious and overtly religious first volume, he succeeds in altering the coldly deductive scientific schema of the *Cours de philosophie*.

At base, the *Subjective Synthesis* is concerned with the role of “moral unity” (*l’unité morale*) in the establishment and maintenance of the positivist utopia.<sup>84</sup> No longer is morality simply a development which parallels, and is engendered by, the progress of intellect. It is now a prerequisite to achieving “theoretical and practical unity,” that is, the subjective synthesis of “activity, intelligence, and sentiment.”<sup>85</sup> The means to attaining moral unity is a positive religion, which will be instituted by a universal church—an institution meant to guide humanity towards the positivist apocalypse and, in the midst of this final chaos, to formulate “the principal thoughts of our regenerated descendants” in order to establish “the affective harmony” (*l’harmonie affective*) necessary to maintain the utopia.<sup>86</sup> This synthetic religion will incorporate the “fetishism” (*fétichisme*) of those civilizations and individuals who remain in the theological or metaphysical stage into the “concrete order” (*domaine concret*) by anthropomorphizing “Space” (*l’Espace*), “the Earth/the World” (*la Terre/le Monde*), “the Great Being” (*le Grand-Être*)—that is, Nature; the totality of all natural laws—and

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<sup>83</sup> Auguste Comte, *Synthèse subjective, ou système universel des conceptions propres à l’état normal de l’humanité* (Paris: Victor Dalmont, 1856).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>85</sup> “...l’unité théorique et l’unité pratique... l’activité, l’intelligence, et le sentiment...” Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> “...les principales pensées de nos descendants régénérés...” Ibid., 1-3.

“Humanity/Man” (*l’Humanité*”/“*l’Homme*).<sup>87</sup> This concrete, “fetishist” (*fétichité*), and “systematic” (*systematique*) religious order will be necessitated by Man’s total knowledge of the natural laws, for

...seen in its entirety, the universal order naturally lacks a direct cult, needing a suitable milieu...[thus] the regenerate man feels the need to show his continuing gratitude to the immutable order upon which rests his entire existence. A just adoration of the Earth, erected as a Great Fetish [*Grand-Fétiche*], serving and supported by the Great Being...”<sup>88</sup>

During the final chaos the primary goal of this new religion will be the exploitation of those “*races*” deemed to be the most fetishistic.<sup>89</sup> The positivist “elite of the white race” will indoctrinate “the majority of the yellow race and the whole of the black race” into the Great Fetish.<sup>90</sup> Via their fetishistic natures these races will then “perfect the subjective synthesis” by acting as “intermediaries for the aid of Humanity” who will disseminate the Great Fetish to the limits of civilization, thereby “subjectively enveloping the World and Humanity in a common milieu.”<sup>91</sup> Once established, this “*Grande-Milieu*” will be altered by its leaders, who will employ positivism to “absorb fetishism while dismissing theologism.”<sup>92</sup> These leaders will then disengage themselves “from scientific empiricism,” abandoning the “domain of verifiable hypotheses” in order to “develop the sentiment without offending reason.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 12-13, 38.

<sup>88</sup> “...vu dans son ensemble, l’ordre universel manque naturellement d’un culte direct, faute d’un milieu convenable...l’homme régénéré sent le besoin de témoigner sa gratitude continue à l’ordre immuable sur lequel repose toute son existence. Une juste adoration de la Terre, érigée en Grand-Fétiche, siège et soutien du Grand-Être...” Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>90</sup> “...élite de la race blanche...la majorité de la race jaune et l’ensemble de la race noire...” Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> “...perfectionne la synthèse subjective...intermédiaires à l’aide desquels l’Humanité...subjectivement envelopper le Monde et l’Humanité d’un commun milieu.” Ibid., 36-38.

<sup>92</sup> “...absorbe le fétichisme en écartant le théologisme.” Ibid., 39, 54.

<sup>93</sup> “...de l’empirisme scientifique...domaine des hypothèses vérifiables...développer le sentiment sans choquer la raison.” Ibid., 40.

The harmony of order and progress will thus be attained via “positive logic...*inducing to deduce, in order to construct*,” that is, a means for positivists to engage with “the intermediary state according to theoretical means”—deductive for the theological, inductive for the metaphysical, and constructive for the positive.<sup>94</sup> This “unalterable harmony” (*inalterable harmonie*) will “bind the Great Milieu, the Great Fetish, and the Great Being, with the signs, images, and sentiments, fit intellectually to deduce, induce, and construct.”<sup>95</sup> Positivism will thus appropriate the “preponderance of heart over mind” which pervades the fetishistic state in order to synthetically systematize rationality/sentiment and order/progress.<sup>96</sup>

Interestingly, Comte here is providing the means to manipulate the future, in terms of both apocalypse and utopia: no longer is Man required to exist in chaos until *all* social systems are destroyed and *all* men, of their own volition, subjugate themselves to the positivist elite. On the contrary; positive logic bridges the abyss separating the positive from the theological/ metaphysical, serving as a kind of “field of knowledge” that instantiates the utopian “power relations” well in advance of the positivist apocalypse.<sup>97</sup> The elite positivist class is thus able to begin constructing itself *now*, without the aid of the knowledge of natural laws, and to spread its influence via the power relations enabled by positive logic. The spread of positivism will accelerate the progress of civilization, thereby hastening the apocalypse. Following the apocalypse, the utilization of positive logic will be paramount: by manipulating the races deemed to be in

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<sup>94</sup> “...*la logique positive...induire pour déduire, afin de construire...l'état intermédiaire suivant les besoins théoriques...*” Ibid., 44, 46-47.

<sup>95</sup> “...*lier le Grand-Milieu, le Grand Fétiche, et le Grand-Être, avec les signes, les images, et les sentiments, intellectuellement aptes à déduire, induire, et construire.*” Ibid., 54.

<sup>96</sup> “...*prépondérance du coeur sur l'esprit...*” Ibid., 89.

<sup>97</sup> See Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned,” 27-28.

the theological phase by means of the Great Fetish, the positivist elite will establish the global Great Milieu which, via the use of induction and, finally, construction, will bind Man in an eternal harmony of rationality/sentiment and order/progress through his religious submission to the Great Being.

There was, however, much work to be done before the first generation of positivists could complete their education, let alone confidently establish their universal religion. As I demonstrated above, mathematics is the first stage in the Comtean “encyclopedic education” (*instruction encyclopédique*).<sup>98</sup> Hence unsurprisingly, it is also forms the basis of all positive logic.<sup>99</sup> Numbers embody the most basic means to concretize the abstract, and all the permutations thereof must maintain this concreteness in order to structure positive logic.<sup>100</sup> Algebra—“the totality” (*l’ensemble*) of which is “composed of purely hypothetical notions” and thus “essentially metaphysical”—is of little material utility, yet it is able “to be overcome” only by positivism.<sup>101</sup> Conversely, geometry exhibits the empirical continuity of “concrete existence” (*l’existence concrète*), and establishes the fundamental laws of motion (“*mécanique*”).<sup>102</sup> By mechanistically viewing change over time, “we can sufficiently explain the slowness of geometric growth, following its necessary connection, with all intellectual and social movement.”<sup>103</sup> Hence Comte concludes that “when we judge, in its entirety, the western transition from theocracy to sociocracy, we see that it is always dominated by a universal instinct

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<sup>98</sup> Comte, *Synthèse subjective*, 61.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 63, 65, 68-69, 86, 683.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 126-165.

<sup>101</sup> “...composé de notions purement hypothétiques...essentiellement métaphysique...être surmontées...” Ibid., 166, 169-170, 172.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 196-200.

<sup>103</sup> “...nous pouvons suffisamment expliquer la lenteur de l’essor géométrique, d’après sa liaison nécessaire avec tout le mouvement intellectuel et même social.” Ibid., 270.

concerning the final advent of normal sociability.”<sup>104</sup> His invocation of “normal sociability” recalls the “normal state” of the *Cours de philosophie*, and here we can safely presume that Comte’s means of identifying the normal—given the aggregate nature of Man—is monstrous pathology. Thus even the law of geometric growth, which is rooted in (ostensibly) concrete numbers and physics, is predicated upon the agency of pathology. In a work of over eight hundred pages dedicated in large part to geometry, monstrous pathology lurks beneath every line: it remains Comte’s only truly positive constant.

It is unnecessary to delve further into the *Subjective Synthesis*. We have established that Comte’s positivism is predicated upon concretizations of abstract and universal forces. Akin to all philosophical systems fabricated via constructed abstractions such as numbers, language, etc., positivism is inherently metaphysical.<sup>105</sup> Thus Comte’s material system is in fact permeated by the transcendental. It is an attempt to vanquish metaphysics by reifying the transcendental and architectonic character of all natural phenomena and the laws that direct them in order to absolutely fix the meanings of all phenomena, thereby constructing static structures that move across time unaffected by context.<sup>106</sup> Accordingly, positivism envelops a spectrum of smaller architectonic systems—sciences—each of which contributes to a better understanding of its successor. Social physics, by far the most complex science, concretely eliminates the possibility of both variation and the existence of a superhuman entity. Man’s ability to manipulate that which he understands will ultimately lead to positive knowledge and total suzerainty over

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<sup>104</sup> “...quand on juge, dans son ensemble, la transition occidentale entre la théocratie et la sociocratie, on la voit toujours dominée par un instinct universel de l’avènement final de la sociabilité normal.” Ibid., 273.

<sup>105</sup> See Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl’s Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison and Newton Garver (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 10, 38. See also Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 292.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid. See also Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, 329.

natural laws/nature. Following a violent apocalypse in which every social system is laid waste, this productive network of power/knowledge will fashion a positivist utopia that will last forever, within which positivist logic will sustain mankind in an absolute harmony between order and progress, rationality and sentiment. The means to attaining this state are somewhat contradictory—on the one hand, humanity must wait until it progresses to the point of having the power/knowledge to control nature and harmonize itself; on the other, positivists act as agents of progress, manipulating the intellectual deficiencies of their fetishistic brethren to accelerate both progress and the apocalypse. In addition, according to the latter method abstractions that are anti-divine due to their ostensibly empirical bases—the anthropomorphized natural laws (the Great Being) in particular—are sacralized.

Nevertheless, the end goal of both modes of Comtean progress is the same, while regression of any kind, in either, remains an absurdity. More importantly, at no point in any of the works analyzed above does Comte identify an objectively derived and universally applicable natural law. Objective facts which constitute the “normal state” of all phenomena are in every case defined by what they are not intended to be: monstrosities, pathologies which distort the boundaries of both progress and normality. Above all then, Comte creates a rather skeletal a-historical hermeneutic structure that is by no means complete. Theoretically any natural law, following its identification, could be easily instantiated into this structure, thereafter transcending history to be universally applied by means of its static metaphysicality. Finally, the empirical nature of Comteism not only invests nature with unlimited power; it also sacralizes the power of all natural laws via its anti-theological and utterly empirical religious positivist logic.

Before proceeding to the works of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, it is imperative here to engage with Amory's argument that Da Cunha "outgrew" Comte's positivism, and that he was attracted to it only by the geometric analyses and educational program of the *Subjective Synthesis*.<sup>107</sup> It would be spurious to assume that Euclides da Cunha could not have separated Comte's conclusions concerning education and geometry from his positivist discourse. Nevertheless, if Da Cunha really had outgrown positivism in 1890 to explore the more "empirically" sound theories of Spencerian discourse, then he probably would not have equivocated, in 1895, both Comte and Spencer as "philosophers" (*os filósofos*)—the works of whom were antithetical to "the active life of an engineer... full of setbacks and dominated by the most passionate empiricism."<sup>108</sup> Conversely, if material evolutionism was his principal philosophy, one wonders why Da Cunha would have, again in 1895, referred to a certain group of Paulistas as "troglodytes who don overcoats, wear top hats, and read Stuart Mill and Spencer."<sup>109</sup> He presumably would not, in 1904, have referred to his intellectual generation as "held captive under the dominion of Auguste Comte."<sup>110</sup>

Finally, Da Cunha certainly would not have tried to reconcile Comtean sentimentality and rationality in the preface, dated July 24, 1908 (a little over a year prior to his death), to Osório Duque Estrada's *The North: Impressions of Travel*:

I believe...our mind and [our] matter [shall be] impenetrable...until two bodies more easily converge in the same space...two preoccupations, in the same brain...I planned, although in an

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<sup>107</sup> Amory, "Euclides da Cunha," 89-90.

<sup>108</sup> "...a vida ativa de engenheiro...cheia de troços e dominada...pelo mais ferrenho empirismo." *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, eds. Walnice Nogueira Galvão and Oswaldo Galotti (São Paulo: USP, 1997), 84-85. See also 405-406.

<sup>109</sup> "...trogloditas que vestem sobrecasacas, usam cartola e lêem Stuart Mill e Spencer." *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>110</sup> "...sob o domínio cativante de Augusto Comte." *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, 194.



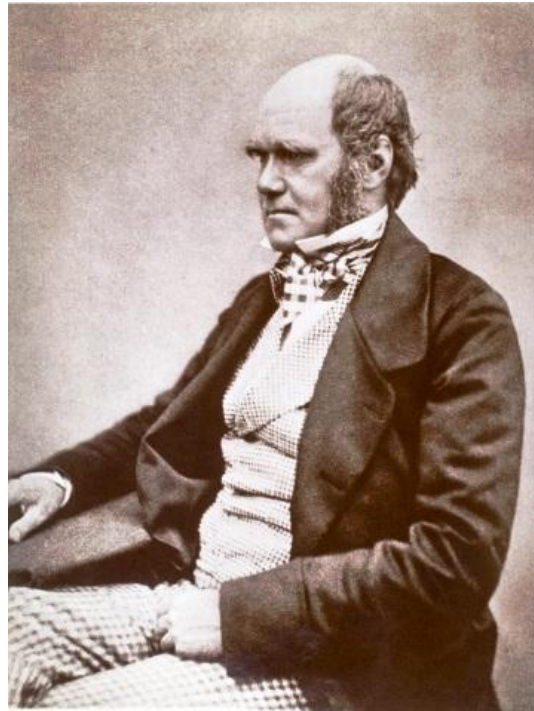
imperfect synthesis [*síntese imperfeita*], to characterize the contrast...between the two preponderant aspects of the Brazilian mind [*espírito brasileiro*—to reflect on this binary constitution, on one side, with the intelligentsia of the South, quite well prepared with an organic concept of reality; and concerning the other, with the powerful fantasy of the northerners, from within whom originates, essentially, the incomparable poetic genius...There is, in truth, an abyss between the logarithmic tables, or the dense calculations of the astronomic coordinates, and the enchanting rhymes of our compatriot *sertanejos*...”<sup>111</sup>

Here, not only is Da Cunha engaging with Comte’s synthesis of sentiment and rationality, but he is also having difficulty reconciling the concrete affairs of the southern intelligentsia with the less rational concerns of their northern *sertanejo* compatriots. These *sertanejos*, in the manner of Comte’s monstrous pathology, inhabit the margins of Brazilian identity. They too instantiate *différance*: they are Brazilian and yet they must be identified as the “other” (*outro*), thereby reifying the collective identity of the intelligentsia and the abyss separating each group from the other. Thus the above analysis demonstrates that Amory’s argument concerning Da Cunha’s intellectual pursuits, and the ostensible chronology thereof, is incorrect. It is evident that Da Cunha was intellectually engaged with the works of Comte throughout his academic career.

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<sup>111</sup> “O Norte: impressões de viagem...Creio...o nosso espírito é como a matéria, impenetrável...até...mais facilmente coincidirão dois corpos no mesmo espaço...duas preocupações, no mesmo cérebro...eu planeei, embora numa síntese imperfeita, caracterizar o contraste...entre os dois aspectos preponderantes do espírito brasileiro—a refletir-se no binário constituído, de um lado, pela inteligência do Sul, mais bem aparelhada de um conceito orgânico da realidade; e de outro, pela fantasia poderosa dos nortistas, de onde lhes advém, essencialmente, o gênio poético incomparável...Há, na verdade, um abismo entre as tábuas de logaritmos, ou os cálculos massudos das coordenadas astronômicas, e as rimas encantadoras dos nossos patricios sertanejos...” Euclides da Cunha, “Carta-Prefácio,” in *OC*, I, 584.

Figure 3.



**Charles Darwin (1809-1882), 1860.  
Studio photograph by Henry Maull and John Fox.**

Courtesy of University College London.<sup>112</sup>

### **Natural Laws II: Darwinian Identification, Spencerian Instantiation**

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* was published in 1859, three years after Comte's *Subjective Synthesis* and sixteen years after the final volume of the *Cours de philosophie*.<sup>113</sup> Though Darwin never directly engages with Comtean discourse, still his theory of Natural Selection comes quite close to concretizing Comte's strictures

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<sup>112</sup> Available at: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/86/Charles\\_Darwin\\_seated.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/86/Charles_Darwin_seated.jpg)  
Accessed 2/07/09, 9:45am.

<sup>113</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1875).

concerning the objective identification and metaphysical application of a natural law:

Natural Selection has been the most important, but not the exclusive, means of modification...silently and incessantly working, *whenever and wherever opportunity offers*; at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life...As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in profit to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be *naturally selected*...This preservation of favourable individual differences, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection, or the Survival of the Fittest.”<sup>114</sup>

The laws governing variation and inheritance are “infinitely complex” and “unknown,” hence the study of inheritance must be predicated upon understanding “non-inheritance as the anomaly.”<sup>115</sup> That is, gross “deviations of structure...called monstrosities” are a constant in any given genetic context.<sup>116</sup> Thus the laws governing genetic derivation remain indefinite, but normative inheritance can be defined, in the manner of Comte’s normal state, by analyzing monstrosities that contradictorily separate themselves from the normal while demarcating the bounds of the normative.<sup>117</sup>

Such monstrosities manifest “considerable” structural deviation—deviations which are always “injurious,” never “useful to the species.”<sup>118</sup> “Hybrids” or “mongrels” are thus inherently monstrous; their individual and/or collective destruction is a natural constant.<sup>119</sup> These forms, attained only via the “very difficult...inter-cross[ing]” of two

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 3, 4, 6, 63, 66. See also 102-103, 106, 411-414.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 131, 201.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 19.

“quite distinct races,” inhabit the protean “intermediate” space separating each race from the other.<sup>120</sup> The mongrel is thus “a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions.”<sup>121</sup> By means of its polymorphous “ontological liminality,” the mongrel’s structure becomes even less choate following several generations of reproduction, ultimately reaching a point of total variation in which “hardly two of them are alike.”<sup>122</sup> At all stages of monstrous development, hybrids/mongrels remain “perfectly fertile,” and thus, following the initial inter-crossing of any two distinct races, the mongrel offspring is free to enter into the general genetic population.<sup>123</sup> Hence while any collective “preservation” of monstrous forms in nature depends on “unusually favorable circumstances,” still monstrosities persist within the normative “larger genera.”<sup>124</sup> Monstrosity endures as a protean intermediate form: a repertoire of polymorphism, capable of sustaining survival or engendering extinction.<sup>125</sup> Monstrosity thus results from and structures the “Struggle for Existence,” which in turn is the motor for Natural Selection, “a power incessantly ready for action...and as immeasurably superior to man’s feeble efforts, as the works of Nature are to those of Art.”<sup>126</sup>

Darwin is, of course, interweaving the results from his experimentation on pigeons with data gleaned from the studies of various “animaliculturalists” and horticulturalists.<sup>127</sup> Nonetheless, he is careful to articulate the transcendental nature of the Struggle for Existence. The “key” to successful pigeon breeding is “man’s power of

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>121</sup> Cohen, “Monster Culture,” 6.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 15, 259.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 34, 47.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 34, 39, 47, 49, 261.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 8-40.

accumulative selection” and, on a macrocosmic scale, “slow though the process of selection may be, if feeble man can do much by artificial selection, I can see no limit to the amount of change...in the long course of time through nature’s power of selection.”<sup>128</sup> In nature, “every organic being” reproduces according to a universal “geometric tendency,” hence “fortuitous destruction” is as important a force as Natural Selection.<sup>129</sup> The former prevents “the progeny” of any species from populating and/or destroying the earth.<sup>130</sup> Conversely, Natural Selection sustains the balance by naturally refining species via “slight successive variations” which “make each organic being as perfect as, or slightly more perfect than, the other inhabitants of the same country.”<sup>131</sup> Generally, the competition with other species amidst the exigencies of climate maintains the life-sustaining balance, but in extreme conditions species are forced to struggle “exclusively with the elements.”<sup>132</sup>

This struggle with climate, if it takes place in an “isolated area,” tends to “modify all the varying individuals of the same species in the same manner.”<sup>133</sup> On a large enough time scale, isolated species will not only accumulate “beneficial variations,” but such variations will become “selected, accumulated, and fixed.”<sup>134</sup> Even so, in any given species the combination of Natural Selection and extinction will inevitably lead to the supplanting and extermination of the “predecessors” by their “improved descendants.”<sup>135</sup> Moreover, the improvements wrought by Natural Selection do not necessarily entail

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 22, 24

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 50-53.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 156, 163. See also 411-414.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 54, 60. See also 112-114.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>135</sup> Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 93, 96.

“progressive development”; a regressive development may in fact increase a creature’s aptitude for survival.<sup>136</sup> Thus Natural Selection at once preserves and separates “all the superior individuals, allowing them freely to intercross, and... destroy[s] all the inferior individuals.”<sup>137</sup>

Though Darwin describes the struggles of all organic beings with each other and their inorganic environment—human beings are never explicitly mentioned—still certain statements appear to tacitly legitimate the application of Natural Selection to the struggles of Comte’s aggregate *l’Homme*:

We can now understand how it is that dominant forms which spread widely and yield the greatest number of forms tend to people the world with allied, but modified descendants; and these will generally succeed in displacing the groups which are their inferiors in the struggle for existence... The inhabitants of the world at each successive period in its history have beaten their predecessors in the race for life...<sup>138</sup>

In addition, the concluding remarks of *On the Origin of Species* reconcile the “fixed” cosmic “law of gravity”—applicable to both astral bodies and microscopic organisms—with the progress effected by Natural Selection.<sup>139</sup> Thus Darwin has apparently identified a natural law which, in Comtean terms, is universally applicable to every form of biological life. Natural Selection is predicated upon the normative progress of every species through successive hermeneutic stages, which may or may not paradoxically involve a retrogression that *improves* any given species.<sup>140</sup> Also similar to Comte, relativity is a predeterminative absolute: the current phase of a species’ ever-progressing

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 314, 315.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 429.

<sup>140</sup> See below (124-129) for Euclides da Cunha’s application, via the theories of Ludwig Gumplowicz and Henry Buckle, of these ideas to the *sertão* and its denizens.

development is incomprehensible without knowledge of its prior phase. Moreover, amidst the efflorescent variation demonstrated by all organic phenomena and the impossibility of discerning the laws that guide them, Darwin utilizes the monstrous: structural deviations, protean mongrels upon whom depends the definition of the normal, and from whom descend all advantageous adaptations to environmental exigencies. Nevertheless, Darwin relies upon an almost exclusively deductive framework,<sup>141</sup> avoiding any sort of positivist application of his theory of Natural Selection. Such an application would involve both metaphysical induction and positive construction. According to Comte, all laws governing physiology (anatomy/biology) at once depend upon the mostly unidentified laws of all the *a priori* sciences (astronomy, physics, chemistry) and generate the unknown laws of the single *a posteriori* science: social physics.

Hence, if a positivist desires to apply the natural law of the Struggle for Existence—or something very similar—to social phenomena, he first has to elucidate its scientific antecedents. Only then can he deterministically demonstrate the application of this natural law to social physics, while the totality of his analysis must be necessarily limited to the Comtean framework described above. This is the overarching goal of Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*—first published in 1862, but as Spencer insists, originally “set forth” in 1857, thereby predating *On the Origin of Species* by at least two years.<sup>142</sup> In any case, unlike Darwin, according to Spencer metaphysical induction (the second positivist phase) is essential:

My aim has been to exhibit the more general truth...that between the most opposite beliefs there is

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<sup>141</sup> See Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 219-234, for his inductive reasoning concerning ants and instinctive slavery.

<sup>142</sup> Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1896), v-xii.

usually something in common,—something taken for granted by each; and that this something, if not to be set down as an unquestionable verity, may yet be considered to have the highest probability...And when, as in this case, the postulate is abstract—is not based on some one concrete experience common to all mankind, but implies an induction from a great variety of experiences, we may say that it ranks next in certainty to the postulates of exact science.”<sup>143</sup>

Following this process of inductive distillation, Spencer discerns that the most antique of the “antagonisms of belief” that effect social conflict is the distinction “between Religion and Science.”<sup>144</sup> Both, however, express “some eternal fact” and thus there must be “a fundamental harmony” which unites the two.<sup>145</sup> Inductively discerned, this harmony is “the most certain of all facts—that the Power which the Universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable.”<sup>146</sup> Hence “Space and Time,” “Matter,” “Rest,” “Motion,” and “Force” are unknowable, and therefore “ultimate religious ideas and ultimate scientific ideas, alike turn out to be merely symbols of the actual, not cognitions of it.”<sup>147</sup>

Accordingly “comprehension must be something other than comprehension, before the ultimate fact can be comprehended”: the unknowable nature of the “Absolute” requires that the “truth” of all knowledge is relative, involving only “*relation, difference, [and] likeness*.”<sup>148</sup> Denying the power to discern “*what* the Absolute is” assumes not only that the Absolute exists, but also “unavoidably presupposes an *indefinite* consciousness of it.”<sup>149</sup> Religion and science thereby compose the singular process of “continually seeking to know and being continually thrown back with a deepened conviction of the

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 11-14.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 16-30.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 52, 56, 60, 63, 65, 68-70. See also 89.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 75, 84, 87-89.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 90-91.



impossibility of knowing...the Unknowable.”<sup>150</sup> Hence scientific progress, the “evolution” of men, can be measured via the “motives and methods and passions” of the deities that a given race, however “barbarous,” worships.<sup>151</sup> Such evolution—predicated upon Spencer’s tri-fold architectonic postulates of “an Unknowable Power; the existence of knowable likenesses and differences among the manifestations of the Power; and a resulting segregation of the manifestations into those of subject and object”—constructs every aspect of our “relative realities.”<sup>152</sup> Moreover, so long as we admit that these are in fact relative, rather than absolute, realities, we can “deal with these relative realities as though they were absolutes instead of effects of the absolute.”<sup>153</sup>

Confusing epistemology aside, Spencer therefore legitimates the positive nature of Space, Time, Matter, et al by reducing them to the experiential rather than the empirical, concurrently legitimating his inductively transcendental system while depriving every materially-based deductive method of any objective authority.<sup>154</sup> Following this paradigm, Spencer explains that the quantity of Matter, Motion, and Force in the Universe are constant, while all three are discernable only via the analysis of Force’s interaction with Matter and Motion.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly the “Persistence of Force” is “the sole truth which transcends experience by underlying it,” for “any force manifested, implies an equal antecedent force from which it is derived, and against which it is a reaction.”<sup>156</sup> All differences of “proportion or relation” are generated only through the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 110, 116.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 118-119, 121.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 159, 165.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>154</sup> See Ibid., 168-200 for the reduction to “relative reality” and subsequent analysis of Space, Matter, Motion, etc. See also 234.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 193, 197.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 200.

“creation or annihilation of force”; hence all “uniformity of law” is likewise dependent upon the Persistence of Force.<sup>157</sup> A cosmic constant—all “physical forces undergo metamorphoses”—the Persistence of Force underlies all “the various changes exhibited to us by the organic creation,” including the social “forces expended in [the] organization” of man, in addition to all individual/collective “vital and mental” forces.<sup>158</sup>

“*Every motion*” thus proceeds “along the line of greatest traction, of least resistance, or of their resultant.”<sup>159</sup> This line becomes indirect only by means of a “change of relations to external forces...[wherein] the degree of indirectness increases with every addition to the number of influences at work.”<sup>160</sup> Astronomic and inorganic phenomena are subject to this natural law, but no less so are all organic phenomena, for “organic growth takes place in the direction of least resistance.”<sup>161</sup> The “formula” of organic motion is, however, useless unless it acknowledges the much higher number (in contrast to cosmic/inorganic phenomena) of “tractive and resistant forces” which directly influence organic growth and “function.”<sup>162</sup> Hence from this “dynamic point of view,” Natural Selection comprises basic “structural changes along lines of least resistance.”<sup>163</sup> Moreover, when

we contemplate a society as an organism, and observe the direction of its growth...we may say that these social units have jointly and severally to preserve themselves and their offspring from those inorganic and organic forces which are ever tending to destroy them;...that these forces are available in the shape of food, clothing, habitations, and appliances of defense, or are, as far as

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 203, 204.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 210, 219, 225-226.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 244.

may be, eluded; and that the population spreads in whichever directions there is the readiest escape from these forces, or the least exertion in obtaining the materials for resisting them, or both.”<sup>164</sup>

Spencer’s metaphysically induced Persistence of Force thus positively applies Natural Selection—or a theory very much akin to it—to all natural phenomena.<sup>165</sup>

Spencer’s inductive method authoritatively refutes any empirical data which might disprove his theory. Via his portrayal of all Matter, Motion, and Force as universally constant, he demonstrates that the Persistence of Force pervades astronomical, physical, chemical, and physiological phenomena, while the increasing complexity of tractive/resistant forces parallels the movement from inorganic macrocosm to organic microcosm. This Persistence of Force engenders Natural Selection and organic growth, thereby constructively directing social phenomena and comprising the basis for the positive science of social physics. By circumventing the Comtean need for empirical data, Spencer effectively identifies a natural law (possibly modifying Darwin’s) and instantiates it into Comte’s ahistorical positivist structure, thereby rendering it both static and applicable to all natural phenomena.<sup>166</sup> That he does so inductively merely demonstrates the correct application of positivist logic—“*inducing to deduce, in order to construct.*”<sup>167</sup> Moreover, in contrast to Comte and Darwin, Spencer’s induction allows him to abandon the monstrous, at least in very broad terms, to define the normal state of

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 249. See also 255-257, 283.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., See esp. 258: “Thus in all the changes heretofore and at present displayed by the Solar System; in all those that have gone on and are still going on in the Earth’s crust; in all processes of organic development and function; in all mental actions and the effects they work on the body; and in all modifications of structure and activity in societies; the implied movements are of necessity determined in the manner above set forth. Wherever we see motion, its direction must be that of the greatest force. Wherever we see the greatest force to be acting in a given direction, in that direction motion must ensue. These are not truths holding of one class, or of some classes, of phenomena; but they are among those universal truths by which our knowledge of phenomena is generally unified.”

<sup>166</sup> See esp. 547, 559-560.

<sup>167</sup> “...induire pour déduire, afin de construire...” See above, 28; and Comte, *Synthèse subjective*, 44, 46-47.

natural phenomena. It is thus inaccurate to assert, as Amory does, that there is a genealogical rupture separating Spencer's evolutionism from Comteism. Above all, it is evident that Spencer adheres to the architectonics of Comte's positivist system, reifying, and indeed ossifying, its overarching transcendental character.

Spencer's constructive application of the Persistence of Force to social phenomena thus exploits the positivist model to generate new Spencerian conclusions. All martial conquests can thereby be reduced to a force compelling a tribe or nation to press "outwards onto adjacent areas—a force antagonized by like forces in the tribes or nations occupying those areas."<sup>168</sup> That is, all wars are "instances of social movement taking place in the directions of least resistance."<sup>169</sup> All the "internal social movements" of humans—however complex, whether individual or collective—proceed according to the Persistence of Force.<sup>170</sup> Moreover, the Persistence of Force engenders the rhythmic motion of all phenomena, an instantaneous and constant "alteration of state," continuously redistributing matter and motion.<sup>171</sup> This eternal and dynamic process, an inversely related aggregation/diffusion of matter and motion, constructs both "Evolution" and "Dissolution":

Evolution under its simplest and most general aspect is the integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; while Dissolution is the absorption of motion and concomitant disintegration of matter... Incident forces work secondary re-distributions easily when the contained motion is large in quantity; and work them with increasing difficulty as the contained motion diminishes...the essential characteristic of living organic matter is that it unites this large quantity of contained motion with a degree of cohesion that permits temporary fixity of

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<sup>168</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, 250.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 250, 251, 253-254.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 263-287.

arrangement.”<sup>172</sup>

Figure 4.



**Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), age unknown.  
Anonymous studio photograph.<sup>173</sup>**

“Living aggregates”—flora and fauna, individual and collective—“contain... immensely greater quantities of motion.”<sup>174</sup> Hence Evolution, the integration of matter and dissipation of motion, is the motor of progress; the force which directs the accumulation of “the effects” of secondary re-distributions.<sup>175</sup> Evolution thus impels not only Natural Selection, but also the social “change from a less coherent form to a more coherent form”: the “ascending” progress of civilization from “undeveloped” to “developed,” that is, “the progress from rude, small, and simple tools, to perfect,

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 295, 303, 310, see also 407.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., ii.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 315, 325.

complex, and large machines...the ever-increasing co-ordination of parts.”<sup>176</sup> Evolution, a law no less natural/positive than the Persistence of Force, is likewise evident amongst all natural phenomena, from the earth to “all living things.”<sup>177</sup> Spencer inductively posits that every organism must pass “from a state of homogeneity to a state of heterogeneity” and, the empirically-derived “biological history of the globe” aside, argues that this process is most evident amongst nineteenth-century “Man,” as

The civilized man departs more widely from the general type of the placental mammalian than do the lower human races...the higher forms [of vertebrata in general] being distinguished by the relatively larger size of the bones which cover the brain, and the relatively smaller size of those which form the jaws, &c. Now, this characteristic, which is stronger in Man than in any other creature, is stronger in the European than in the savage...we may infer that the civilized man has also a more complex or heterogeneous nervous system than the uncivilized man...[due to the] developmental process by which the like traits of the barbarous races have been turned into those of the civilized races...a continuation of the change from the homogenous to the heterogeneous.”<sup>178</sup>

Evolution is evident in every facet of all societies, “all products of human thought and action; whether concrete or abstract, real or ideal.”<sup>179</sup> It is more than a mere shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity, however, for “diseases, death, and rebellions” collectively increase heterogeneity.”<sup>180</sup> Thus it is the “*absence of definiteness* which distinguishes the multiformity of *regression* from the multiformity of *progression*.”<sup>181</sup> This integral component of Evolution accordingly applies to all natural phenomena, most

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 325, 331-338.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 343-4, 346-347.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 351-352. See also 460.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid., 357-358.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 371, 373.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 375.

evident in the contrast between the heterogeneous thoughts of the “civilized man” and the “thoughts of the savage,” which are “nothing...he has no words for abstract ideas, and is found to be incapable of integrating the elements of such ideas.”<sup>182</sup> Collectively, this contrast manifests in “the military function”—a group of bellicose savages “making a joint attack severally fight independently, in similar ways, and without order,” while their civilized counterparts exhibit an increase in scale, “in multiformity, in definiteness, and in combination.”<sup>183</sup> Moreover, the combination of the Persistence of Force and Evolution, “the deepest of all truths,” relegate the habitats and control the “intermixture” of the human “races”:

The human races tend to differentiate and integrate, as do races of other living forms...[Thus] in tropical regions the northern races cannot permanently exist: if not killed off in the first generation, they are so in the second...the external forces acting equally upon the inhabitants of a given locality, tend to expel all who are not of a certain type; and so to keep up the integration of those who are of that type...though elsewhere, as among European nations, we see a certain amount of permanent intermixture, otherwise brought about, we see still that this takes place between races of not very different types, that are naturalized in not very different conditions.”<sup>184</sup>

Ultimately, however, “equilibration” will be reached by all the races of civilized men.<sup>185</sup> It will be a time in which “a perfect correspondence between ideas and facts” will preclude the need for “any further evolution,” as the “intellectual adaptation of man to his circumstances will be complete.”<sup>186</sup> There is no violent overthrow of all social systems in this Spencerian apocalypse, although there is the suggestion that a “superior race” may, through “artificial production” alter the limits “which external conditions put to

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 381-402, 404-405.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., 405-406.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 470, 489.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 497.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 518-519.

population,” thereby theoretically having the power to control both external conditions and the size of a population at will.<sup>187</sup> In any case, to attain a utopia of equilibration necessitates the destruction, integration, or evolution of the savage/lower races. For Spencer these humans, through their homogeneity and through their heterogeneous, multiform absence of definiteness, embody the monstrous protean intermediate forms described by Darwin. This paradoxical, polysemous nature of the savage/lower races at once adds to their monstrosity and excludes them from civilized “personhood,” thereby ossifying their “ontological liminality.”<sup>188</sup> In contrast to Comte and Darwin, Spencer elaborates that not only is regression possible, but it is a constant threat to progress/evolution. To maintain progress is thus to eradicate, over time, the sources of regression—disease, death, rebellions, and presumably the intermixture of civilized men with the lower races. Collectively these monstrous others threaten to “*erase* difference,” blurring the essential clarity of Spencer’s heterogeneous civilizations, thereby “revealing that difference is arbitrary and potentially free-floating, mutable rather than essential.”<sup>189</sup> This categorical loss of distinction would destabilize the entire construct that Spencer has wrought through his inductive positive logic, subverting both the Persistence of Force and Evolution, both of which have been derived from a relative and experiential, rather than material, reality.

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Taken together, these mid-nineteenth century works demonstrate, above all, continuity: each text attempts to uncover the fundamental natural law(s) that guide the

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 521.

<sup>188</sup> Cohen, “Monster Culture,” 6, 11.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 11-12.



progress of all natural phenomena, however simple or complex. In each case the identification of a monstrous other—whether individual/collective pathology, protean mongrel, or the regressive and savage/lower races—provides fixity in a universe pregnant with variation. For Comte and Darwin, the monstrous fulfills the need for a static, material means to identify the normal; the objective basis for the totality of their deductively derived theories. Conversely, Spencer's inductively derived theory of Evolution—a constructive application of positive logic—is wholly contingent upon the invariable conquest of the polysemous forces of homogeneity by the rectifying forces of equilibrating heterogeneity. To provide these hermeneutic constructs with a fixed structure, all three authors elaborate that relativity is a predeterminative absolute: each stage in the progress of the cosmos/species/man is unintelligible without knowledge of the immediate stage which precedes it. Indeed, for Spencer relativity not only directs all progress, but also destabilizes empirical reality *in toto*, thereby legitimating his inductive method.

The positive apocalypses of Comte and Spencer represent the final defeat of these chaotic, protean forces of the monstrous. For Comte this involves the total destruction of all social systems, engendered either by the inevitable progress of aggregate Man from the metaphysical to the positive stage or by the manipulation of less developed civilizations/races via positivist logic. Spencer's apocalypse, though ostensibly less violent, necessitates the annihilation—via physical destruction, integration, or evolution—of the savage/lower races. Only when all civilizations exhibit the heterogeneous, definite multiformity of nineteenth century European man will a utopia of equilibration come into being. Moreover, in the utopias of both Comte and Spencer

progress/evolution ceases: man will attain perfect knowledge of the natural laws, thereby possessing the sovereign power to manipulate nature and maintain a perfect harmony of order and progress.

In sum, the architectonic, transcendental character of these works is predicated upon the sacralization, identification, and instantiation of natural law/nature. In the *Cours de philosophie*, Comte creates a framework within which any natural law, following its positive identification, is an absolute and universally applicable force of limitless power. The deductive process of positive identification is thus a sacralizing ritual which elucidates the empirically-derived omnipotence of a natural law. In the *Subjective Synthesis* this process develops into the anthropomorphizing deification of all natural phenomena, the most powerful of which is, Nature itself (*le Grand-Être*), the totality of all natural laws. Though Darwin does not engage with Comte's positivist framework, still the potential clearly exists for a positivist to utilize his work as the basis of a positively derived unified theory. His identification of an ahistorical natural law, Natural Selection, thereby provides the means for a positivist to instantiate Darwin's material theory into the architectonic framework of Comte. Hence *First Principles* is an instantiative text. Spencer constructively applies positivist logic in order to reshape Natural Selection into Evolution; by inductively transforming empirical reality into experiential reality Spencer demonstrates Man's ability to control those phenomena of which he possesses positive knowledge.

It is therefore very difficult, if not impossible, to disengage Spencerian evolutionism from its Comtean origins. The former discourse is an innovation of the latter, but it at all times adheres to the basic hermeneutic framework constructed in the

*Cours de philosophie*. Frederic Amory's binary, predicated upon the rupture separating "French positivism" from "English evolutionism," is the only evidence which supports his argument that the first leaders of the *República Velha*, following a "paradigm shift" away from Comteism, were steadfast "Spencerians."<sup>190</sup> Amory's harbinger of this paradigm shift, Euclides da Cunha, was, however, apparently ignorant of any ideological rupture or collective paradigm shift. His illustration of the liberal ideology which prevailed, at least among *cariocas*, on the morning of the Republican Revolution (November 15, 1889) blurs all distinctions between Comteism, Darwinism, et al:

The new currents forcibly combined all the principles of all the schools—from orthodox Comteism to the freer positivism of Littré [*sic.*], from the restricted conclusions of Darwin to the *audacious generalizations* of Spencer—what we [discovered], in fact, were not their abstract principles, or laws, [which were] incomprehensible to the better majority, but the greatest liberal conquests of our century...<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Amory, "Euclides da Cunha," 90-91. Amory, "Historical Source and Biographical Context," 675.

<sup>191</sup> "As novas correntes, forças conjugados de todos os princípios e de todas as escolas—do comtismo ortodoxo ao positivismo desafogado de Littré, das conclusões ousadas de Spencer—, o que nos trouxeram, de fato, não foram os seus princípios abstratos, ou leis incompreensíveis á grande maioria, mas as grandes conquistas liberais do nosso século..." Euclides da Cunha. "À Margem da História," in *OC*, I, 247-425, here 415. Emphases mine.

## Chapter Two

### The Genealogy of Determinism II: Nature Enthroned

Figure 5.



**Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), 1857.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Buckle: Environmental Hegemony, Tropical Monstrosity**

“And what is it but the progress and diffusion of knowledge which has given us our arts, our sciences, our manufacturers, our laws...our civilization; in short, everything that raises us above the savages, who by their ignorance are degraded to the level of the brutes with which they herd?”

—Henry Thomas Buckle, 1857.<sup>2</sup>

Henry Thomas Buckle’s *History of Civilization in England* tends to defy classification according to the strictures of any positivist/evolutionist binary akin to that

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4f/Buckle\\_1857.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4f/Buckle_1857.jpg) Accessed 2/07/09, 10am.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, 4 vols. (New York: Hearst’s International Library Co., 1913), vol. I, 509.

constructed by João Cruz Costa and Frederic Amory. Normally cited for its ostensible “ethnogeographic” influence upon Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões*,<sup>3</sup> Buckle’s work eludes easy categorization due to its complex, positivistically-derived environmental determinism. *History of Civilization* presents neither a Comtean nor evolutionist method. Rather, it is an utterly contradictory positivist system of tautologically derived inductions.

The first volume of this unfinished work was published in 1857—the same year that Herbert Spencer began to formulate his *First Principles*—one year after Comte’s *Subjective Synthesis* and two years before Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. The second and final volume was published in 1861, one year prior to the first edition of Spencer’s *First Principles*.<sup>4</sup> Comprising 1144 pages, these two works were merely the preface to an ambitious, cyclopean work, the *raison d’être* of which was to illustrate the unified history of all civilization.<sup>5</sup> Buckle died in 1862, but his *History of Civilization*, particularly its determinist conclusions concerning the monstrous nature of the environment and its affects upon the inhabitants of Brazil, had a lasting resonance amongst Brazilian literati, including Euclides da Cunha and Sílvia Romero.<sup>6</sup>

Citing Comte’s *Cours de philosophie* and Spencer’s *First Principles*, Buckle argues that human history is the product of “fixed laws,” that is, the natural “principles which govern the character and destinies of nations.”<sup>7</sup> Separating himself from Comte (who “confus[es] clearness with certainty”) as well as Spencer (his “moral and social importance [is] superior to [his] scientific value”), Buckle asserts that there is enough

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<sup>3</sup> See Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 683; Skidmore, *Black into White*, 27-37.

<sup>4</sup> Buckle, *History of Civilization*, vol. I, iii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., iii, 672.

<sup>6</sup> For Da Cunha and Buckle, see below, 125-126. For Sílvia Romero, see Skidmore, *Black into White*, 32-37.

<sup>7</sup> Buckle, *History of Civilization*, vol. I, 4, 6; vol. II, 384-385, 394.

empirical data available to identify the natural laws of social physics.<sup>8</sup> Compiling the objective histories<sup>9</sup> of all nations and tribes that have ever existed, he asserts that he is able “to compare the condition of mankind in every stage of civilization, and under every variety of circumstance... grasp[ing civilization] in the whole of its natural relations.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, he declares that man performs all actions based upon “motive or motives,” but motives remain historically incomprehensible unless the historian is “acquainted with the whole of the antecedents, and with all the laws of their movements.”<sup>11</sup> Hence there are no Comtean predeterminative absolutes which derive from the relative linear progress of a given society: there are only transcendental, universal absolutes.<sup>12</sup>

Variation results from, but never engenders, the context of any historical moment; change is the result of the interplay of two ahistorical actors—“the fruit of a double action...man modifying nature, and nature modifying man; while out of this reciprocal modification all events must necessarily spring.”<sup>13</sup> Buckle’s social theory is thus “exclusively inductive.”<sup>14</sup> Cognizant of the natural laws, he is capable of inserting the context (derived from empirically accurate data) of any given event into his tautological framework, whereby he may induce the historicity of said event, thenceforth constructing a universally applicable architectonic model.<sup>15</sup> The metaphysical lens constructed by

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 601, n. 2; vol. II, 394.

<sup>9</sup> “...they have been put together by men who, being for the most part government officials, had no interest in distorting the truth of the reports they were directed to make.” Ibid., 16.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 1, 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 15-16. See also vol. II, 1-2.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 22-23. See 595, 600: “...in all the highest branches of knowledge, the main difficulty is not to discover facts, but to discover the true method according to which the law of the facts may be ascertained...the true history of the human race is the history of tendencies which are perceived by the mind, and not of the events which are discerned by the senses...The death of a prince, the loss of a battle, and the change of a dynasty, are matters which fall entirely within the province of the senses; and the

models such as “crime,” “suicide,” and “marriage” permits the historian to set aside individual heterogeneity altogether, since all variation is effected only via “the state of society.”<sup>16</sup> Collectively these models structure “one vast scheme of universal order” that replicates societies according to natural context.<sup>17</sup> Natural context in turn generates cultural typologies concerning “popular character” and “national religion” that are “impossible to efface.”<sup>18</sup>

The natural context of each civilization derives from the concurrent actions of four “physical agents...Climate, Food, Soil, and the General Aspect of Nature.”<sup>19</sup> As soil regulates “the returns made to any given amount of labor” and climate regulates “the energy and the constancy of the labor itself,” the optimal combination of the two inevitably leads to the “accumulation of wealth.”<sup>20</sup> The “progress of civilization” thereby rests upon the ideal combination of soil and climate, for “without wealth there can be no leisure, and without leisure there can be no knowledge.”<sup>21</sup> For example, while limited to the arid Arabian Peninsula the Arabs had “always been a rude and uncultivated people,” yet when placed in richer environments following the Islamic conquests of the seventh and eighth centuries, men from “this mere race of wandering shepherds...became the founders of mighty empires.”<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, the proper mixture of climate and soil is key, for according to Buckle an abundance which originates in the soil—as in all Asian and African civilizations—limits the “almost spontaneous...capacity of development” to

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moment in which they happen can be recorded by the most ordinary observers.” See also vol. II, 418-420 for the possible applications of Buckle’s model to “organic science.”

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 18-23. See also vol. II, 216-217.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 31, 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 31-32.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 34.

the “limited and stationary...powers of nature.”<sup>23</sup> Conversely the “Civilization of Europe” was guided “in its earliest stage” by the “agency of climate,” and thus attained its wealth by means of mentally “stimulating” all physical labor.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, a balance of soil/climate weighted towards climate engenders progress, rather than limiting it as in the case of soil-rich Africa and Asia: “for the powers of nature...are limited and stationary...but the powers of man...are unlimited.”<sup>25</sup>

Climate is particularly important in developing the fixed “character” of a civilization during its primal stages. The colder a climate is, the greater amounts of nitrogen-free, temperature-regulating, “non-azotized” (oxygen-rich), and “highly carbonized” food is required by humans to survive.<sup>26</sup> Procuring such food involves “great risk” and “great labor,” for “it is not, like vegetables, thrown up by the soil; but it consists of the fat, the blubber, and the oil of powerful and ferocious animals.”<sup>27</sup> Hence in “nations” where frigidity requires a highly carbonized diet, “a bolder and more adventurous character” develops, “even in the infancy” of its progress.<sup>28</sup> The amount of food that a civilization produces determines its population density, and that population density in turn “determines the rate of their wages.”<sup>29</sup> As the “food essential to life” is scarcer in colder climes, greater amounts of it are required to endure, whereby “the labor pool” is always extremely limited while wages remain relatively high.<sup>30</sup> Thus it is only in Europe “that everything worthy of the name of civilization has originated...there alone

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 41, 44-45.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 48.



have attempts been made to preserve the balance of its relative parts.”<sup>31</sup> Consequently, in the nineteenth century Europeans alone “live in that advanced state of society, in which wealth is both the cause and the effect of progress, while poverty is the fruitful parent of weakness, of misery, and of crime.”<sup>32</sup>

Inversely, within a hot, soil-dependent, and enormously wealthy civilization such as India, the labor pool is so vast that “an immense majority of the people...remain in a state of stupid debasement...only fit either to be slaves themselves or to be led to battle to make slaves of others.”<sup>33</sup> “Condemned to poverty” and degraded by the physical laws of their climate,” Indians are thus inherently “tame and servile”—embodying the effects of climate upon any nation “subjected to these conditions.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, ancient Egypt was “nothing of much moment.”<sup>35</sup> Citing Herodotus as a source of “unquestioned credibility,” Buckle concludes that “in Egypt the people multiplied rapidly, because while the soil increased their supplies, the climate lessened their needs.”<sup>36</sup> Hence only tyranny and slavery could have produced the pyramids—“structures so stupendous and yet so useless...evidence of a state of things altogether depraved and unhealthy.”<sup>37</sup> Overall, Egypt was merely the African counterpart to India, both of which exhibited the “highest type” of civilization possible within their relative, non-European, environmental exigencies.<sup>38</sup>

Just as the tandem natural forces of climate, food, and soil affect the material

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., vol. II, 128.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 50-53.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 61, 65-66.

accumulation of wealth, so too do the “Aspects of Nature” in any given locale affect the “accumulation and distribution of thought.”<sup>39</sup> Natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, in addition to the general degree of “Man’s” struggle against Nature to survive, comprise the “Aspects of Nature.”<sup>40</sup> These “dangers” effect in men “a conviction of their own inability, and of the poverty of their own resources,” increasing “the activity of the imagination,” and thereby allowing superstition to dominate reason.<sup>41</sup> Over time this domination degenerates into “religious sentiment” whereby “the danger is submitted to [and]...worshipped.”<sup>42</sup> Most educated Europeans are immune to such superstitions, with the exception of the Italians, the Spanish, and the Portuguese.<sup>43</sup> Due to the superstitious human character unavoidably engendered by the inhabitation of a peninsula—Italian or Iberian—prone to “sublime” and “terrible” disasters, these peoples willingly submitted to and continue to maintain the “firmest hold” upon “the worst corruptions of Christianity.”<sup>44</sup> Even so, the religious sentiment of any European people, measured via an increased ratio of “imagination” over “understanding,” will never be on par with that of any people(s) inhabiting “the tropics,” in which the Aspects of Nature are

...most sublime, most terrible, and where Nature is in every respect, most dangerous to man...constant and serious dangers produce effects analogous to those caused by the sublimity of nature...[while] health is more precarious, and disease more common, in tropical climates than in temperate ones...[generating] an immediate tendency to strengthen superstition, and aggrandize the imagination at the expense of the understanding...[Thus] the real mischief was that there were engendered in the mind, associations which...encouraged a disposition to neglect the investigation

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 87, 88-89.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 87, 88. See also vol. II, 148, 182.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 89-90.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 88-90.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. For the barbarous “loyalty” and “superstition” of the “benighted” Iberians, see esp. vol. II, 2-122.

of natural causes, and ascribe events to the operation of supernatural ones...[Moreover] there are no barbarous peoples who do not ascribe to their good or evil deities, [both] extraordinary diseases...[and] many of the ordinary ones...”<sup>45</sup>

Thus, regarding “those cruel diseases” which afflict European peoples, “scarcely one is indigenous; and the worst of them were imported from tropical countries.”<sup>46</sup>

Tropical civilizations of any locale are therefore capable of producing only the physically degenerative phenomena of poverty and disease, in addition to the mentally degenerative phenomenon of superstition. Across the Atlantic in the Americas, particularly in South America, “Nature” works on a “much larger scale” than in any other locale. In this *entirely* tropical climate heat and moisture, “the two causes which regulate the fertility of every country,” cooperate to an extent unparalleled anywhere in its northern counterpart.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, there are few American locales in which Nature is not “overpowering”: limited regions of Mexico, Peru, and Mesoamerica.<sup>48</sup> In these areas arose the three rather rudimentary American civilizations which predated the arrival of Christopher Columbus.<sup>49</sup> The rest of the New World, however, “was peopled by wild and ignorant barbarians.”<sup>50</sup> Hence above all the fecund Americas function as the Other to Buckle’s fertility-deficient Old World. His normative European civilization embodies a kind of purity—engendered by the human development necessary to create and sustain it in a soil-deficient climate. Conversely the soil-based Asiatic, African, and Mexican/ Peruvian/ Mesoamerican societies—though incapable of attaining a level of civilization

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., vol. I, 87, 90-92.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 68.

equivalent to Europe's—are at the very least capable of creating and sustaining civilizations, no matter how degraded.<sup>51</sup>

Buckle distills and instantiates the fecund, tropical otherness of Nature in the New World within the borders of Brazil. Rendered monstrous by its superlative fertility and, therefore, inhospitable to human civilization of any kind, Brazil completely inverts the normative relations between European “Nature” and “Man,” for it is

nearly as large as the whole of Europe...[wherein] the flow of abundance of life [places] Brazil...above all the other countries of the earth... so rank and luxuriant is the growth, that Nature seems to riot in the very wantonness of power...the physical causes are so active, and do their work on a scale of such unrivalled magnitude, that it has hitherto been impossible to escape from the effects of their united action...Nowhere else is there so painful a contrast between the grandeur of...the energies of Nature...and the littleness of the...spirit of Man.”<sup>52</sup>

Just as the cold, sterile climate of primal Europe gave rise to a people characterized by their progress, so inversely has the monstrously hot, fertile climate of Brazil hindered the progress of its savage inhabitants:

The whole of Brazil...has always remained entirely uncivilized; its inhabitants wandering savages, incompetent to resist those obstacles which the very bounty of Nature had put in their way...in the whole of Brazil there are no monuments even of the most imperfect civilization; no evidence that the people had, at any period, raised themselves above the state in which they were found when their country was first discovered.”<sup>53</sup>

Hence the inept Portuguese, incapable of surmounting their own naturally-engendered superstitions, were powerless to establish a civilization amongst the cyclopean ecology of Brazil:

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<sup>51</sup> For more on “extra-European” degeneration, see *Ibid.*, 97-102, 105-113.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 74, 75, 76.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 75, 77.

Along the coast of Brazil, there has been introduced from Europe, a certain amount of [Portuguese] civilization, which the natives by their own efforts could never have reached. But such civilization, in itself very imperfect, has never penetrated the recesses of the country; and in the interior is still found a state of things [in which]...the people, ignorant, and therefore brutal, practicing no restraint, and recognizing no law, continue to live on in their old and inveterate barbarism.”<sup>54</sup>

Buckle thereby concludes that although Brazil’s “productive powers” overwhelm the “imperfect” mental capacity of “uncivilized man,” still the perfect European man would be capable of utilizing his knowledge of “the laws of the human mind” to conquer the heretofore irrepressible “physical laws” which pervade Brazil.<sup>55</sup>

Clearly, the superiority of Buckle’s Europe rests upon the hegemony of the European mind over all “organic and inorganic forces of nature,” a wealth-derived power that permits European Man to tame “the energies of nature.”<sup>56</sup> In all the civilizations of all human epochs, Europe alone has “subordinate[d] nature to man”—“non-European civilization” is thus identified via the “subordinat[ion] of man to nature.”<sup>57</sup> Since civilizations are reduced to Buckle’s inductive system of architectonic typologies, the history and progress/degeneration of each is predetermined by its natural exigencies (climate, food, soil, and the Agents of Nature) and the collective mental ratio of imagination to understanding engendered thereby. Accordingly, of all historical climates, Europe alone was/is capable of birthing a civilization capable of overcoming all natural exigencies. In contrast, therefore, to the “productive network” of positivist power/knowledge elucidated by Auguste Comte and instantiated by Herbert Spencer, European

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 77, 113.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 109. See also 175, 279.

Man's total suzerainty over nature as Buckle illustrates it *is* a repressive “force that says no.”<sup>58</sup> The “great division”—a static, ontologically transcendental boundary separating European Man from non-European Man in a hierarchical fashion—is “the basis for the philosophy of history.”<sup>59</sup> Eternally incapable of subduing Nature, non-European Man's ahistorical subjugation to Nature's “physical laws” bears little, if any, historical merit; he will never have access to the hegemonic powers of the European mind.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, to maintain his ostensibly unified theory,<sup>61</sup> Buckle encircles this architectonic hegemony with the ultimate ontological border, civilization, molding it into the shape of an ahistorical abyss separating Man from Nature.

The bounds of any civilization are demarcated by the relationship, no matter the form and shape of power dynamics, between Man and Nature. This relationship defines, sustains, and, above all, manipulates the development of Man. Here again, in contrast to Comte and Spencer, Buckle defines pathology by distinguishing between his inductively-derived ahistorical “normal functions” of European Man and the “aberrations” that non-European Man exhibits through his dominance by Nature, since “the aberrations of the human mind are governed by laws as unfailing as those which determine the condition of inert matter.”<sup>62</sup> Hence the tropics function as ontological borderlands within which the inverted suzerainty of Nature over Man produces the twin pathologies of superstition and disease. Still, the liminality of the tropics attains monstrous proportions *only* in the case of Brazil. It is the antithesis of European civilization in geographical, historical, and

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<sup>58</sup> See above, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Buckle, *History of Civilization*, vol. 1, 109.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>61</sup> See esp. *Ibid.*, vol. II, 257.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 363, n.1: “the more aberrant any people have been, that is...the more they have been interfered with [by Nature], the lower they must be placed in an arrangement of the history of various countries.”

cultural terms. Roughly the size of Europe, Buckle's Brazil is unimaginably hot, humid, and monstrously fecund—so inverted is the relationship of Man and Nature that the native inhabitants of Brazil remain in their savage, primal state, as the imperfect Portuguese colonizers were prevented from penetrating beyond the coast. Thus, given that the tropical hegemony of Nature over Man brings about only degenerative pathologies, the regression of any non-European people who would attempt to settle in the Brazilian interior is a certainty. Above all then, Brazil's monstrosity serves to normalize and to affirm Buckle's identification of the suzerainty of European Man over Nature and, presumably, non-European Man. Moreover, as monstrous other, Brazil functions as a hermeneutic corpus upon which Buckle inscribes "fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion...in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space."<sup>63</sup>

Although Buckle constructs an architectonic hierarchy of European/non-European civilization, physiology (i.e., race) is neither cause nor effect of progress/degeneration. "External advantage" alone shapes the "intellectual progress" of peoples, and it is therefore incorrect to assume that "there has been any permanent [physiological] improvement in the moral or intellectual faculties of man," whether European and/or civilized or not.<sup>64</sup> Conversely a civilization's religious praxes—the direct product of man's dominance of/subjugation to his external advantages/disadvantages—"forms one of the best standards by which the spirit of any one age can be measured."<sup>65</sup> An ahistorical indicator of collective progress/degeneration, religion is always "the effect" of

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<sup>63</sup> Cohen, "Monster Culture," 16-17.

<sup>64</sup> Buckle, *History of Civilization*, Vol. I, 127-128, 421-422.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

mankind's "improvement" and/or degeneration, never "the cause of it."<sup>66</sup> Thus "every ignorant people" will continually "incline towards a religion full of marvels," thereby reaffirming its own retrogression.<sup>67</sup> Such degeneration in turn engenders religious persecution and religiously-based wars. These "most widely spread evils which have ever been known" are pathological symptoms of the degeneracy that inevitably accompanies a collective lack of rational "intellectual activity."<sup>68</sup>

Hence in Europe, "according to the natural order, the most civilized countries should all be Protestants, and the most uncivilized ones Catholics."<sup>69</sup> The most uncivilized "Dark Ages" (ca. 500-1000 CE), during which Catholicism pervaded Europe, created the conditions that engendered this regressive, "grotesque and hideous" faith, for

the adoration of idols was succeeded by the adoration of saints...not only the mummeries of idolatry, but likewise its doctrines, were quickly added...[and] from...the legends of saints, and the homilies of the fathers...they drew those lying and impudent fables, of which the theology of that time is principally composed. These miserable stories were widely circulated, and were valued as solid and important truths."<sup>70</sup>

The early medieval rise of Catholicism thereby first accompanied, and then contributed to the Dark Age degeneration of European Man, inverting Buckle's natural order. The only histories that survive from this period are thus

histories of omens, prodigies, apparitions, strange portents, monstrous appearances in the heavens; the wildest and most incoherent absurdities, [which] were repeated from mouth to mouth, and copied from book to book, with as much care as if they were the choicest treasures of human

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 129-131, 185, 269.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 188, 195-196.



wisdom...refer[ing] to supernatural causes all the phenomena by which it [was] surrounded.”<sup>71</sup>

Catholicism is therefore best understood as a retrogressive pathology, an ahistorical symptom of unparalleled degeneration: according to Buckle there is no “condition of a society more unfavorable to [Man’s] progress” than a pervasive Catholic theology.<sup>72</sup> All clergy, Catholics in particular, are merely “convenient tools to ensnare the ignorant and control the vulgar”—whereby any increase in their power “is incompatible with civilization.”<sup>73</sup> Thus if a religion seeks to adopt said increase “as its creed,” it then “becomes the bounden duty of every friend of humanity to do his utmost, either to destroy the creed, or...to overturn the religion.”<sup>74</sup> Lest we forget that positivism—even in Buckle’s tautological permutation thereof—must inevitably result in an apocalypse after which order and progress will be equilibrated in an eternal harmony, he reminds us that

this age, haply, may not witness the emancipation; but so surely as the human mind advances, so surely will that emancipation come...the ancient empire shall be subverted; the dominion of superstition, already decaying, shall break away, and crumble into dust; and new life being breathed into the chaotic and confused mass, it will be clearly seen, that, from the beginning...all the events which surround us, even to the furthest limits of the material creation, are but different parts of a single scheme, which is permeated by one glorious principle of universal and undeviating regularity.”<sup>75</sup>

The final conquest of this polysemous antique empire of superstition instantiates the global hegemony of European Man over all other civilizations—European Man alone is capable of subjugating Nature to his suzerainty. As the only legitimate civilization,

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 223, 270.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 549, 619.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. See also 573. For Buckle’s personal, anti-atheist deism, see Ibid., 619-621.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., vol. II, 471-472.

Buckle's central European Man, not his peripheral non-European counterpart, embodies *différance*: European Man is something other than Nature, yet his subjugation of Nature is enabled only via the unique conditions by means of which Nature first produced, and then manipulated European Man. Still European Man—and non-European Man for that matter—are defined only by the civilization that separates them from Nature, yet civilization itself is incomprehensible beyond the bounds of the interconnected relationship of Man to Nature. Thus, once more in contrast to Comte and Spencer, Buckle contradictorily others and normalizes his protagonist, European Man, rather than the pathological or the savage/lower races. Physiological diseases and the degenerative mental pathology of superstition clearly originate in peripheral, non-European areas (Africa, Asia, the Americas, the tropics), but the eternal wellspring from which they flow is Nature itself. Once enthroned Nature subordinates Man through natural disasters and constant hardships which compel him to worship his sovereign, but no less so does it subjugate him through its fecund soils and sweltering climes that offer no opportunity to strive towards progress. Above all then, the linchpin in the *History of Civilization's* framework is not a Darwinian Struggle for Life; rather it is a Struggle for Hegemony.

Furthermore, in Buckle's architectonic framework both Man and Nature are ahistorical actors, incapable of true variation or change. For both actors physiological regression of any kind is impossible, and thus all progress/degeneration is cognizable only through a lens that focuses upon the struggle for hegemony. Hence Bucklerian "retrogression" does not equate to Spencerian devolution. Retrogression is not a return to polymorphous savagery; rather, it is a hermeneutic indicator that the struggle of European Man against Nature will continue until he succeeds in eradicating all pathology, all

superstition, and quite possibly all non-European men. Buckle's apocalypse, however, does not seem to rely upon genocide as an end. Nature's tools of dominance—the twin pathologies of poverty and ignorance, which underlie superstitious retrogression—are all that separates European Man from non-European Man. Natural exigencies, not race per se, determine the character of any civilization. Accordingly, given enough time, fully ascendant European Man could ostensibly alter the exigencies of Nature to mirror those of Europe, thereby transforming the civilization of non-European Man into a European equivalent. Buckle's utopian equilibration of order and progress thus relies on the fundamental obliteration of superstition, which will be achieved via the totalizing and thereafter eternal suzerainty of European Man over Nature. *L'Homme* does not worship and/or harmonize with *le Grand-Être* and *la Terre*; on the contrary he utilizes the former to enslave the latter.

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How then, do we reconcile Henry Buckle's tautological environmental determinism with Auguste Comte's inimically deductive framework and Herbert Spencer's inductive innovation thereof? If we follow Foucault, the answer lies not in plotting Buckle's place within/outside the bounds of positivism/evolutionism, but in the foggy ontological abyss that separates "science" from "discursive practice."<sup>76</sup> A science, in a sense, is ahistorical, for

the act that founds it is on an equal footing with its future transformations; this act becomes in some respects part of the set of modifications that makes it possible...in other words, the founding act of a science can always be reintroduced within the machinery of those transformations that

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<sup>76</sup> Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, ed. John Searle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 162-174, here 117.

derive from it.”<sup>77</sup>

Conversely, a discursive practice is polysemous, cognizable only when it is contextualized, as

the initiation of a discursive practice is heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations...unlike the founding of a science, the initiation of a discursive practice does not participate in its later transformations...”<sup>78</sup>

Discursivity is thus a continual process of gleaning from the “founding act” of the discursive practice an

eventually restricted number of propositions or statements to which, alone, one grants a founding value, and in relation to which certain concepts or theories...might be considered as derived, secondary, and accessory...the work of initiators of discursivity is not situated in the space that science defines; rather, it is the science or the discursivity which refers back to their work as primary coordinates...[this] return constitutes an effective and necessary task of transforming the discursive practice itself. Reexamination of Galileo’s text may well change our knowledge of the history of mechanics, but it will never change mechanics itself. On the other hand, reexamining Freud’s texts modifies psychoanalysis itself...”<sup>79</sup>

Thus by identifying positivism as a discursive practice, rather than a science/pseudo-science, we are able to isolate Comte’s *Cours de philosophie* as positivism’s “founding act.” Its “founding value” resides within its architectonic framework, which at base argues (1) that there are transcendental natural laws controlling all natural phenomena; (2) that man has/will have the power to manipulate these laws to his own advantage; and (3) that man will have a complete utopian hegemony over these laws and the natural phenomena they direct only after an apocalypse serves as the final

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

means to equilibrate order and progress. These are the “primary coordinates,” discursively altered by Comte in his later *Subjective Synthesis*, by Spencer in his *First Principles*, and by Buckle in his *History of Civilization*. The ontological borders of positivism thus encompass deductive Comteism, inductive Spencerianism, tautological Bucklerianism, and any variation thereof that adheres to the discursive practice’s primary coordinates. The *History of Civilization* is therefore incomprehensible when excised from the discursive practice that constitutes its essential framework: positivism. Accordingly, it is inaccurate, in the manner of Thomas Skidmore,<sup>80</sup> to reduce Buckle’s model to an environmentally-engendered “determinism.”<sup>81</sup> It is equally inaccurate to depict Buckle as an “ethnogeographer” as does Frederic Amory.<sup>82</sup> Buckle’s European Man and non-European Man are ahistorical categories constructed by Nature and its laws, not the biological results of the variable, naturally regulated physiology of Man. Finally, given the discursive connections between the works of Comte and Buckle, it should come as little surprise that, as late as September of 1904 Euclides da Cunha continued to identify Auguste Comte and Henry Buckle as members of the same “intellectual order” (*ordem intelectual*).<sup>83</sup>

### **Maudsley: Insane Microcosm, Rational Macrocosm**

“In the savage state of man’s infancy...everything appears supernatural because he knows nothing of the natural; palsied with fear, he cannot observe and investigate; himself he feels to be insignificant and helpless, while to nature he looks up with reverential awe as mighty and all-powerful...[such is the] extreme mental prostration of primitive mankind...”  
—Henry Maudsley, 1872.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Skidmore, *Black into White*, 34.

<sup>81</sup> “1. The philosophical doctrine that human action is not free but necessarily determined by motives, which are regarded as external forces acting upon the will. 2. gen. The doctrine that everything that happens is determined by a necessary chain of causation.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “determinism.”

<sup>82</sup> Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 679.

<sup>83</sup> *Correspondência de Euclides da Cunha*, 197.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1872), 1-2.

British psychologist Dr. Henry Maudsley's *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* was published in 1867, six years after the final volume of Buckle's *History of Civilization*. His later work, *Crime and Madness*, was published in 1874. Euclides da Cunha, who had access to the French translation of *Crime and Madness*,<sup>85</sup> not only refers to Maudsley's text in the second book of *Os Sertões*,<sup>86</sup> but also concludes his monograph by lamenting, "Yet there exists no Maudsley for the madness and crimes of nationalities..."<sup>87</sup> Frederic Amory limits the possible influence of Maudsley's work upon the discursive construction of *Os Sertões* to these two references, concluding that Maudsley served as nothing more than Da Cunha's—and the republican literati's—"model of medical-legal expertise on criminal insanity."<sup>88</sup> Amory's gross reduction of Maudsley to an "obscure English forensic psychologist," is, however, erroneous. As I demonstrate below, Maudsley is no less positivist, no less determinist, and no less capable of structuring a unified theory through discursive—rather than scientific—means, than any of his nineteenth-century antecedents.

Although there is no evidence that Da Cunha had access to *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, even so *Crime and Madness* does not aver from the framework constructed in the earlier work. Hence it will be of great utility to briefly illustrate this framework, for by employing the theoretical constructs that Maudsley fashions in *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* as a discursive lens of analysis, it will become clear that these ostensibly physiological and objective clinical texts are delimited by the

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<sup>85</sup> Henry Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie* (Paris: Bibliothèque Scientifique Internationale, 1874).

<sup>86</sup> Da Cunha, *OC*, vol. II, 207.

<sup>87</sup> *É que ainda não existe um Maudsley para as loucuras e os crimes das nacionalidades...* Ibid., 515.

<sup>88</sup> Amory, "Historical Source and Biographical Context," 680.

ontological boundaries of positivism. Maudsley amalgams Herbert Spencer's inductive evolutionism with Henry Buckle's environmentally-based tautological positivism, thereby instantiating Buckle's physiological and psychological pathologies into Spencer's devolutionary framework. As a result, the distinctions separating Buckle's ahistorical retrogressive non-European Man from Spencer's monstrously primal regressive lower races are blurred. All pathologies of the mind, however engendered, are identified as ahistorical, architectonic agencies that threaten to devolve even the most developed Europeans into insane criminals—European beings who correspond to the monstrous non-European savages inhabiting the fringes of civilization.

Mirroring Buckle, Maudsley asserts that only European civilization has been protected through the ages from the “indolence” engendered within men by “the luxuriance of nature...in the sunny climes of the south.”<sup>89</sup> Finally forsaking “the barbarian’s reverence for a dead body,” nineteenth-century England is the first civilization to have internalized the skills developed in reaction to the climatological exigencies of the “the rugged north.”<sup>90</sup> Europeans, via their superlative environmentally-based development, are thus uniquely capable of overcoming “the extreme mental prostration” of non-Europeans.<sup>91</sup> Through the dissection of his physical body, European man shows himself to be “a concrete being,” subject to “positive science.”<sup>92</sup> European progress must thereby lead to the application of positivism to “human life,” for it is “the necessary consequence of the inductive philosophy.”<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, Maudsley employs

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<sup>89</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 4.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6, 8-9.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

Spencerian Evolution—the equilibrating integration of matter and dissipation of motion—to analyze the physiology of the human brain, as

the minutest molecule that vibrates within the microcosm of an organic cell...is bound as a part of a mysterious whole in an inextricable harmony with the laws by which planets move in their orbits, or with the laws which govern the marvelous creations with godlike genius.”<sup>94</sup>

Maudsley’s “empirical psychology” thus results from the microcosmic application of an inductively derived Comtean/Spencerian empiricism in tandem with the Bucklerian struggle of individual man against his environment:

...empirical psychology [is] founded on *direct* consciousness as distinguished from the *transcendental* consciousness on which metaphysics is based...[for] as the various organs of the body select from the blood the material suitable to their nourishment, and assimilate it, so the organ of the mind unconsciously appropriates, through the inlets of the senses, the influences of the surroundings...[thus] an acquired nature may ultimately govern one who is not at all conscious that he has changed.”<sup>95</sup>

The mind is subject to the natural conditions surrounding the body, but no less so is this “natural force” influenced by the natural exigencies of the body itself.<sup>96</sup> The mind “cannot be observed and handled and dealt with as a palpable object” and thus “it is appreciable only in the changes of matter which are the conditions of its manifestation.”<sup>97</sup> The most basic attribute of “mental action, the essential principle on which thinking depends” is therefore an unconscious, physiologic process, “mental activity.”<sup>98</sup> Man is limited to the imperfect knowledge generated by this natural process—“perception is the

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 9, 14-15.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 38-39, 93.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 20.



*effect* which the object produces...an effect on which we can exercise no influence.”<sup>99</sup>

Hence human consciousness, an utterly material “quality or attribute of the concrete mental act,” is incapable of objective analysis.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the “mental development”—whether “in the individual or in the race”—required to discern man’s unalterably concrete state constitutes the end of a “process of organization” akin to Spencer’s heterogeneous equilibration of order and progress.<sup>101</sup> Since the brain and the mind respond only to the “internal stimuli” received “unconsciously from other organs of the body,” the “morbid state” of any given “internal organ” degenerates the intellectual faculties of the brain and, thereby, the reasoning abilities of the mind.<sup>102</sup>

The natural laws that guide the life of each man seek to undermine his progress; his struggle to avoid degeneration is a Bucklerian struggle against nature at both collective and individual levels:

“by nature sinful above everything, and desperately wicked, man acquires a knowledge of good through evil; his passions are refined and developed through wider considerations of interest and foresight; the history of mental development begins with the lowest passions, which circulate as an undercurrent in every life, and frequently come to the surface...evil is good in the making as vice is virtue in the making.”<sup>103</sup>

When the lowest passions reign supreme in the individual, degeneration—“the formless ruin of carefully fashioned form”—ultimately leads to an unevolved, polymorphic state.<sup>104</sup> Citing Spencer, Maudsley asserts that non-European “savages” physically

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 24, 61-62.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 31, 33, 35.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 20, 41, 292.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 282.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 292.

embody “the earliest stages of human development.”<sup>105</sup> Thus

“the intellectual differences which exist between the Bosjesman, or the Negro, and the European are attended with differences in the extent and complication of the nervous substance of the brain...[these] differences...are unquestionably of the same kind as, though less in degree than, those which exist between the ape’s brain and that of man...the weight of the male Negro’s brain is less than that of the average European female; and the greater symmetry of its convolutions, and the narrowness of the hemispheres in front, are points in which it resembles the brain of the ourang-outang [*sic*]... the ideas of virtue and vice, for which the Australian savage...has no words, cannot be implanted or organized in his mind, until, by cultivation continued through generations, he has been *humanized* and *civilized*...[for] it is certainly true that we find the evidence of a correspondence between the development of the cerebral hemispheres and the degree of intelligence when we examine the different races of men, as we do when we survey the scale of animal life.”<sup>106</sup>

Amongst Europeans, however, “the brain is commonly very small” only “in idiots; the parts being not only smaller, but less complex, and the convolutions in particular being simpler and less developed.”<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless the European idiot is but one of several “*theroid* degenerations of mankind.”<sup>108</sup> All theroid men are evolutionary anomalies, inchoate Darwinian monstrosities,

pathological specimens, which, not being serviceable for development, are cast off by the stream of progress, and are on their way to destruction for re-issue by nature under better form. Let them not pass by in decay, however, without their uses, that we, profiting by the experiments which their failures afford, may form for ourselves true generalizations adapted to the successful conduct

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 49-50, 51, 110. Emphasis mine.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 291. “Theroid,” a term invented by Maudsley, is defined as “like or having the form of a brute; of bestial nature or character.” *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “theroid.”

of life, and therein the promotion of nature's development."<sup>109</sup>

Theroid man is thus a monstrous other who "stands at the threshold of becoming," instantiating *différance* as "the harbinger of category crisis."<sup>110</sup> No matter which pathology engenders his monstrous state, theroid man is contradictorily architectonic and contemporaneous: he is a return to the polysemous, savage, and unevolved state of the non-European races, yet he is the product of continually progressing European development. Though he defies categorization—he is unevolved and therefore cannot be entirely European, yet he is European and therefore cannot be entirely savage—still theroid man's otherness can, and according to Maudsley should, be scientifically exploited to maintain European progress. Moreover, theroid man's regressive failure to properly function within his civilized environment affords Maudsley the opportunity, in the manner of Comte, to identify the positive components of the normal mental state by means of its pathological permutations.

Maudsley thus interweaves Bucklerian retrogression (which always originates within the pathological habitats of non-European Man) with Spencerian devolution (wherein any civilization faces the threat of regressing—via disease, death, rebellions, and/or miscegenation—into the incoherent polymorphism instantiated by the savage lower races). By means of identifying the climatologically-induced, yet intrinsically physiological, differences separating Europeans from non-Europeans, Maudsley ossifies the border separating the two. Maudsley, like Buckle, eliminates the possibility of change over time: race and pathology are ahistorical typologies.<sup>111</sup> Only by means of

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<sup>109</sup> Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 291.

<sup>110</sup> See Cohen, "Monster Culture," 6-7, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 314, 316, 330, 349.

European manipulation will a non-white race be *humanized*. Accordingly, the boundaries of the “healthy mental life” of humanity are demarcated by normative European civilization—“unsoundness of mind is that degree of deviation from healthy mental life which it is agreed by the common consent of mankind to regard as morbid.”<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless these ontological boundaries are inhabited by Maudsley’s European theroid man, a being who functions as a Darwinian intermediate form, legitimating the dominance of his properly evolved brethren over all unevolved non-European races by means of his existence alone.

Figure 6.



**Henry Maudsley (1835-1918), age unknown.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of Getty Images.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 409.

<sup>113</sup> Available at: <http://cache.gettyimages.com/xc/3243114.jpg?v=1&c=ViewImages&k=2&d=DCB332A6E7C66BD36B463911EFA0CF86A55A1E4F32AD3138> Accessed 2/07/09, 10am.

It is unnecessary to subject *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* to further analysis. As I noted above, there is no evidence that Da Cunha read this work, and thus there is little reason to fully divulge its contents. Da Cunha was, however, enveloped in the discursive method of positivism, while we remain far removed from the intellectual milieu that birthed the works analyzed in this thesis. Thus in order to better understand *Crime and Madness*, it is helpful to recognize that its hermeneutic structure never deviates from the tautologically derived inductions of *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*. The latter text's physiologically-based "positive" natural laws of "mental science" distill Maudsley's hybridized Spencerian/Bucklerian threat of savage, monstrous devolution into a theroid pathological state: insanity.<sup>114</sup> Elucidating this Maudslian form of regressive insanity is, as the title suggests, the principal focus of *Crime and Madness*.

Madness/insanity according to Maudsley is ahistorical, a pathological constant that only the "inductive science" (*science inductive*) of the nineteenth century has been able to correctly identify and treat.<sup>115</sup> The identification of madness and the treatment of the insane function as emblems of the state of progress, or the lack thereof, in any given civilization. Following Buckle, Maudsley identifies the degenerate, superstitious Dark Ages as "one of the saddest chapters of human history."<sup>116</sup> For Buckle, Catholicism itself is an ahistorical and retrogressive pathology; wholly incompatible with progress, its destruction is a prerequisite for any civilization's advance. Maudsley's analysis of the insane and the "cruelty" (*cruauté*) of their treatment in early medieval Europe

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<sup>114</sup> Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 27, 250-253. See also Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 31.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 10-11.

<sup>116</sup> "...un des chaïptres les plus tristes de l'histoire de l'humanité." Ibid., 6.

psychologically legitimates Buckle's tautology, for cruelty

was born from the ignorance and superstition, in the Dark Ages of Christian Europe...[when the] tendencies of intellectual activity were joined, graced by the detestable spirit which inspired the education of monks and monastic practice, with a somber and hard religious asceticism. The body was only regarded with contempt as a vile and degraded object: it was the temple of Satan, the abode of carnal pleasures which wage war with the soul; thus one had to be vigilant and hold it in a constant subjection, crucifying it each day..."<sup>117</sup>

Dark Age asceticism, or any Christian permutation thereof, ahistorically inverts progress, regressing society by dualistically treating the body as an inherently corruptive material abode for the transcendental soul; a microcosmic theater of war between the supernatural forces of good and evil.

There is no room for the study of natural laws in this superstitious schema, and therefore madness is

attributed to a supernatural operation, divine or diabolic according to the case; to a real possession of the individual by some superior power from outside [the body]...most often [madness is] attributed to possession by the devil or another malign spirit, or even to the degradation of a soul held in bondage by sin."<sup>118</sup>

The goal of *Crime and Madness* is thus to finally excise insanity from a supernatural context, "to rectify, directly or indirectly, the means which place the nervous elements in

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<sup>117</sup> "...naquirent de l'ignorance et de la superstition, au temps des ténèbres de l'Europe chrétienne...a ces tendances de l'activité intellectuelle se joignait, grâce au détestable esprit qui inspirait l'enseignement des moines et la pratique monastique, un sombre et dur ascétisme religieux. Le corps n'était plus regardé qu'avec mépris comme un objet vil et dégradé: c'était le temple de Satan, la demeure des plaisirs charnels qui font la guerre à l'âme; aussi fallait-il veiller et le tenir dans une sujétion constante, le crucifier chaque jour..." Ibid., 6, 8-9.

<sup>118</sup> "...attribuait à une opération surnaturelle, divine ou diabolique suivant le cas; à une possession réelle de l'individu par quelque puissance supérieure du dehors...le plus souvent, son état était attribué à la possession du diable ou d'un autre malin esprit, ou encore à la dégradation d'une âme tenue en esclavage par le péché." Ibid., 9.

disorder.”<sup>119</sup> These pathological means, “like the orbits of the planets,” adhere to the positive natural laws, and thus madness per se is the result of a perversion “of heredity and education.”<sup>120</sup> Pathological heredity and/or an improper education determine the “nature of the total individual” and inexorably lead to the improper mental interpretation of external stimuli—the result of a single morbid organ perverting the process of cognition, thereby engendering pathological neuroses that “embrace the entire life of the body”.<sup>121</sup>

Generations of pathological heredity have created a degenerate and savage theroid criminal class in nineteenth-century Europe. The product of a regressive dehumanization, “*criminels*” are

a distinct class of beings dedicated to evil, in which the horde assembles in our great cities in quarters of thievery, surrendering themselves to intemperance, to brawls, to debauchery, without concern for marriage lines or the obstacles of consanguinity, and all propagating a criminal population of degenerate beings... the criminal class constitutes a degenerate or morbid variety of the human species, marked by the particular characteristics of physical and mental inferiority...often deformed, the head angular and badly shaped, they are stupid, lazy, grumbling, devoid of vital energy and often epileptic...their intelligence is mediocre and defective...most among them are weak of mind or imbeciles. The women are ugly of face...the children, who become criminals in good time, do not show the aptitude for education of the superior classes...”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> “...de faire agir, directement ou indirectement, les moyens dont il dispose sur les éléments nerveux en désordre.” Ibid., 15-16. See also Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 374.

<sup>120</sup> “...comme les orbites des planètes... de l’hérédité et de l’éducation...” Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 26, 54.

<sup>121</sup> “...naturel de tout individu...embrassant toute la vie du corps.” Ibid., 16, 20, 26, 261, 264. See also Maudsley, *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind*, 382, 386, 392.

<sup>122</sup> “...une classe distinct d’êtres voués au mal, don’t la horde se rassemble dans nos grandes villes au quartier de voleurs, se livrant à l’intempérance, aux rixes, à la débauche, sans souci des liens du mariage ou des empêchements de la consanguinité et propageant toute une population criminelle d’êtres

This “defectiveness of physical and mental organization” in criminals “positively” determines “the course of their life,” wherein “an extreme reduction or total absence of moral sense” causes crime to function as an “emunctory” (*émonctoire*).<sup>123</sup> For the theroid criminal class, crime is a vital means “to discharge their unhealthy tendencies,” as “they would become insane if they were not criminals, and it is because they are criminals that they shall not become insane.”<sup>124</sup> An ontological borderland, the “neutral zone” (*zone neutre*), separates the criminal from the lunatic: “on one of its borders” in the criminal “we observe only a little madness and much perversity; on the opposite limit the perversity is smaller and madness dominates.”<sup>125</sup> This borderland, however, is merely the outermost fringe of another much larger ahistorical frontier, “the dividing zone” (*la zone mitoyenne*).<sup>126</sup>

The dividing zone, an intermediate realm that separates “sanity and insanity,” is a “neutral terrain” inhabited by all persons who have inherited “a certain *neurosis* and some similarly a temperament more particularly insane, a *vesanic* neurosis.”<sup>127</sup> This is the degenerative frontier upon which pathology, guided by natural laws, can reduce a slightly

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*dégénérés...la classe criminelle constitue une variété dégénéré ou morbide de l'espèce humaine, marquée par des caractères particuliers d'infériorité physique et mentale...souvent difformes, la tête anguleuse et mal conformé, ils sont stupides, fainéants, rechignés, dénués d'énergie vitale et souvent épileptiques...beaucoup d'entre eux sont faibles d'esprit ou imbeciles. Les femmes sont laides du visage...les enfants, qui deviennent criminels de bonne heure, ne montrent pas l'aptitude à l'éducation des classes laborieuses supérieures...” Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 27-28.*

<sup>123</sup> “...défectuosité de l'organisation physique et mentale...positivement...le cours de leur vie...un dénuement extreme ou une absence totale de sens moral...” Ibid., 30. “b. that has the function of conveying waste matters from the body.” *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “emunctory.”

<sup>124</sup> “...s'écoulent leurs tendances malsaines...ils deviendraient fous s'ils n'étaient pas criminels et c'est parce qu'ils sont criminels qu'ils ne deviennent pas fous.” Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 30.

<sup>125</sup> “...sur un de ses bords...on n'observe qu'un peu de folie et beaucoup de perversité; à la limite opposée la perversité est moindre et la folie domine.” Ibid., 32.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>127</sup> “...la santé et l'insanité... terrain neutre...une certain névrose et quelques-unes même un tempérament plus particulièrement fou—une névrose vésanique” Ibid., 38-40. “*vesanic*. ...of or pertaining to vesalia...[the] derangement of the intellectual and moral faculties, without coma or fever.” *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “vesanic.”



neurotic European man to his monstrous theroid counterpart, since “those who have inherited a tendency or predisposition to insanity are...much less favorably equipped than the others in the *struggle for existence*.”<sup>128</sup> On a collective level, this process would tend towards the “retrogression of the race,” if not for the natural extinction of the mad.<sup>129</sup> For, if degeneration “is not halted by favorable circumstances” (*n’est pas arrêtée par des circonstances favorables*), it will intensify as it is passed “from father to son,” (*de père en fils*) finally leading to the ultimate “idiot” (*idiotie*), after whom “very happily follows the extinction of the degenerate variety, because with him comes impotence and sterility.”<sup>130</sup> The dividing zone, however, is not only inhabited by the progenitors of the mad. The same “intensity of sentiment and energy,” the same “profound faith in the opinion which they adopt” tends also to produce “the mental state of inspired genius” exhibited by Socrates, the prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus Christ, Paul of Tarsus, and Muhammad.<sup>131</sup> Accordingly, no matter how inspired or beneficial to mankind, still these figures instantiate pathology, yet no less so do their antitheses, the “monsters” (*monstres*) of history.<sup>132</sup> Both should thus be regarded “as the fatal victims of some morbid disposition.”<sup>133</sup>

Maudsley identifies “moral sense” (*le sens moral*), or, “*conscience*”—extremely reduced/nonexistent in the case of the criminal/insane—as “the instigator” (*l’instigateur*)

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<sup>128</sup> “...ceux qui ont hérité d’une tendance ou d’une prédisposition à l’insanité, sont...bien moins favorablement munis que les autres dans la lutte pour l’existence.” Emphasis mine. Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 44-45.

<sup>129</sup> “...abâtardissement de la race...” Ibid., 46.

<sup>130</sup> “...fort heureusement survient l’extinction de la variété dégénérée, car avec elle arrivent l’impuissance et la stérilité.” Ibid., 46, 265.

<sup>131</sup> “...intensité du sentiment et de l’énergie...foi profonde dans l’opinion qu’ils adoptent...l’état mental de génie inspire...” Ibid., 47-52.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>133</sup> “...comme les victimes fatales de quelque prédisposition morbide.” Ibid.

of European progress.<sup>134</sup> A superlative “concomitant effect of evolution” engendered by the Bucklerian exigencies of Europe’s singular climate, conscience enabled Europeans to “raise themselves...from a nomad existence to the dignity of a nation.”<sup>135</sup> Conscience, “the highest and most delicate function of the highest and most complete organic development...the last faculty acquired in the progress of the evolution of man,” is “entirely lacking” (*entièrement défaut*) in non-European peoples.<sup>136</sup> Conscience is the motor and emblem of progressive European man’s ordered superiority; to detect its “perversion” in the form of “moral degeneration” (*le dégénérescence morale*) is to identify “a positive malady” (*une maladie positive*)—the regression of the mad to a theroid and chaotic non-European state.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, the pathological nature of moral degeneration in Europe legitimates the normative European moral sense. Only pathology will lead “the modest man” to presumption, “the chastest man” to lechery/obscenity, “the most honest man” to thievery/robbery, and the “the sincerest man” to perjury.<sup>138</sup>

Thus for Maudsley modesty, chastity, honesty, and sincerity are ahistorical indicators of the final evolution of man. A lack or distortion thereof indicates both the subhuman state of non-European races and the increasingly devolved state of the European criminal class and/or their theroid counterparts. Consequently, the pathological nature of these two groups affirms the normative progress of European man, as instantiated by his superlative moral sense. A lack of moral sense denotes mental incapacity, yet, as Maudsley reiterates, this is a positive disease generated by and subject

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 60, 61.

<sup>135</sup> “...*effet concomitant de l’évolution...s’élever de...existence nomade à la dignité de nation.*” Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>136</sup> “...*la plus haute et la plus délicate fonction du plus haut et du plus complet développement organique...la dernière faculté acquise dans le progress de l’évolution de l’homme.*” Ibid., 60, 61-62.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 61, 63.

<sup>138</sup> “...*l’homme modeste...le plus chaste...le plus chaste...le plus honnête... le plus sincère...*” Ibid., 61.

to natural laws—“a malady *which cannot exist without* a disorder of the organs and the physical functions.”<sup>139</sup> The means to identify such a physical disorder necessitate the inductively metaphysical cognition that the madman lacks/distorts the normative structures that underlie European morality. Contradictorily, the pathological state and the psychological analysis thereof are subject only to the positive natural laws and the material exigencies that created it, for

it is not in our power to *psychologically* explain the origin and the nature of these [disorders]; it is enough for us to establish that they exist, that they are facts of observation, determined by those pathological conditions which produce them...[hence] this analysis...will not be substantiated by the moral but by the physical; it shall become thus the study of *neurosis* and not an analysis of *psychosis*.<sup>140</sup>

Accordingly, having traversed Maudsley’s dividing zone as well as the ambiguous borderlands that separates criminal from madman, the neurasthenic theroid European inhabits the furthest periphery of the natural, positive condition: he is “difference made flesh.”<sup>141</sup> Instantiating the antithesis of the normal European mental state, his conscience is structured only by *immoral* sense, whereby he values presumption over modesty, lechery over chastity, etc.

Nevertheless, every pathological state of insanity must be qualified as either “l’imbécillité,” that is, the “absence or weakness of mind” or the “mental derangement”

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<sup>139</sup> “...une maladie qui ne peut pas exister sans un désordre des organes et des fonctions physiques.” Ibid., 75.

<sup>140</sup> “N’est pas en notre pouvoir, d’expliquer psychologiquement l’origine et la nature de ces [desordres]; il nous suffit d’établir qu’elles existent, que ce sont des faits d’observation, et de déterminer dans quelles conditions pathologiques elles se produisent...[donc] cette explication...ne sera pas fournie par le moral mais par le physique; on la devra à l’étude de la névrose et non à l’analyse de la psychose.” Ibid., 146.

<sup>141</sup> Cohen, “Monster Theory,” 6.

of “*madness* itself.”<sup>142</sup> In the mind of an imbecile “the passions are the strongest and the intelligence the weakest,” hence “many crimes such as arson, rape, robbery, and homicide” are committed by “positively imbecilic individuals.”<sup>143</sup> Collectively these individuals comprise a degenerate subclass of insane criminal who “have fallen still lower” than those criminals who merely “border on a type of imbecility.”<sup>144</sup> Conversely the deranged madman may suffer from “madness with delirium” called “Intellectual Madness,” and/or an “insanity of sentiments and of acts, but without delirium” called “Affective Madness.”<sup>145</sup> Affective Madness is further subdivided into “impulsive madness and moral madness,” the latter of which may lead to either “suicidal madness” or “homicidal madness.”<sup>146</sup>

Having qualified these forms of insanity, Maudsley carefully defines the “internal disorder” (*désordre intern*) of madness in evolutionist terms:

...when, by means of an *internal disorder*, an organism has ceased to be in harmony with conditions of its necessary milieu, it has within it a tendency to die out all by itself; and often does not hesitate to obey this tendency if it is not carefully protected against the destructive action of its fatal propensities. The persistent impulsion to suicide indicates that the instinct of conservation has been replaced by an analogous instinct of personal destruction. The impulsions to arson, to rape, to murder, are similar occasional symptoms of troubles with the nervous elements, and there is nothing in their nature more exceptional or more amazing than all the other impulsions of

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<sup>142</sup> “...absence ou de faiblesse d’esprit... dérangement d’esprit... la folie proprement dite...” Maudsley, *Le crime et la folie*, 64.

<sup>143</sup> “...les passions d’autant plus fortes que l’intelligence est plus faible... beaucoup de crimes tels que l’incendie, le viol, le vol et l’homicide... des individus positivement imbécilles...” Ibid., 66.

<sup>144</sup> “...est descendue plus bas encore... voisins du type de l’imbécillité...” Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> “...folie avec délire... Folie intellectuelle... insanité des sentiments et des actes, mais sans délire... Folie affective...” Ibid., 67.

<sup>146</sup> “...la folie impulsive et la folie morale... folie suicide... folie homicide...” Ibid., 126. For suicidal madness see 127-133; for homicidal madness see 133-143.

madness.”<sup>147</sup>

Madness, a pathological internal disorder, thus weakens the harmony of European man with his civilized environment. All cases of insanity demonstrate “a discordance in the universe,” thereby exhibiting “the proof” (*la preuve*) that madness is “the result of a *lack of harmony* between individual human nature and the ambient nature in which it takes part.”<sup>148</sup> The misanthropy it engenders in all cases belies progress through violence, replacing order with chaos and hindering any sort of Spencerian equilibration. That is, madness destroys natural harmony at every level, stymieing further European development. Moral madness is therefore the most perverse, the most insidious of these pathologies, for it is a

certain disorder of the mind, without delirium, without illusions, without hallucinations, in which the symptoms principally consist in the perversion of mental faculties collectively referred to as active and moral faculties: sentiments, affections, penchants, characteristics, morals, and conduct.”<sup>149</sup>

Hence the lunatic who suffers from moral madness is “reasonable in his unreason, sensible in his madness.”<sup>150</sup> He not only subverts European civilization by simply being insane, but his devolved immoral sense actually compels him to commit *reasoned* acts of violence against himself and others. His monstrous otherness, if not properly

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<sup>147</sup> “...quand par suite d’un désordre intime, un organisme a cessé d’être en harmonie avec les conditions de son milieu nécessaire, il y a chez lui tendance à disparaître de soi-même; et souvent il ne tarderait pas à obéir à cette tendance si l’on ne le protégeait soigneusement contre l’action destructive de ses funestes propensions. L’impulsion persistante au suicide indique que l’instinct de conservation est remplacé par un instinct analogue de destruction personnelle. Les impulsions à l’incendie, au vol, au meurtre, sont de meme des symptômes occasionnels de trouble des éléments nerveux, et il n’y a rien dans leur nature de plus exceptionnel ou de plus surprenant que dans toutes les autres impulsions de la folie.” Ibid., 146.

<sup>148</sup> “...une discordance dans l’univers...le résultat d’un manque d’harmonie entre une nature humaine individuelle et la nature ambiante don’t elle fait partie.” Ibid., 274. Emphasis mine.

<sup>149</sup> “...certain désordre de l’esprit, sans délire, sans illusions, sans hallucinations, don’t les symptômes consistent principalement dans la perversion des facultés mentales appelées communément facultés actives et morales: les sentiments, les affections, les penchants, le caractères, les mœurs et la conduite.” Ibid., 162.

<sup>150</sup> “...raisonnable dans sa déraison, sensé dans sa folie.” Ibid., 93.

treated/exploited in the name of European progress, thus threatens to devolve European civilization en masse, not through superstitious savagery or imbecility, but through reasoned immorality.

Moral madness most often manifests in a member “of the inferior classes” who possesses a “hereditary predisposition to madness.”<sup>151</sup> Following “some strong moral shock or a profound physical trouble,” an inferior man is pushed past the far edge of the dividing zone into the realm of moral madness.<sup>152</sup> His “misdeeds” (*méfais*) are inevitable, for “the ordinary progression” (*la marche ordinaire*) of the ailment compels him to satiate his “melancholic frenzy” (*raptus melancholicus*) via suicide or homicide.<sup>153</sup> Once insane, the madman’s illness may facilely degenerate further into a form of Intellectual Madness identified via the “physiological” (*physiologique*) symptom of delirium.<sup>154</sup> Delirium, however, does not imply a loss of reason, as it is “monstrous...[to] suppose that a belief of which the existence is a violation even of all the laws of reason, must conform, in action to the laws that govern action in the completely sane man,” and thus “insane reason *madly* follows” the insane context of its “mad premises.”<sup>155</sup>

Interestingly, nature tends to aggrandize the population of “the nervous type of individuals.”<sup>156</sup> While the pathological processes of individual/collective degeneration are guided by natural laws, still there exist three “important causes of aggravation of the nervous type” which, via their identification, can be manipulated by “science and human

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<sup>151</sup> “...des classes inférieures...predisposition héréditaire à la folie.” Ibid., 164, 171.

<sup>152</sup> “...quelque forte secousse morale ou un trouble physique profond...” Ibid., 164.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 179-180.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 187, 194, 209.

<sup>155</sup> “...fou raisonne follement d’après...folles prémisses...monstreux...[de] supposer qu’une croyance dont l’existence est la violation meme de toutes les lois de la raison, doive se conformer, dans l’action, aux lois qui gouvernent l’action chez l’homme d’entendement sain.” Ibid., 205-206, 210.

<sup>156</sup> “...le type nerveux des individus.” Ibid., 266-267.

power.”<sup>157</sup> Hence the remedy for inveterate abstinence is marriage; for “*l’intempérance*,” sobriety; and for “mental anxieties,” a “wise mental culture.”<sup>158</sup> Though “hereditary influence” is the “strongest factor...in the etiology of madness,” still alcohol sustains and even initiates most cases thereof, for it

operates as an original cause of cerebral and mental degeneration...producing the malady *de novo* [Latin., “from the beginning”]. If we could trace all the hereditary causes of madness, and if the malady was by some means destroyed...it could not delay being created anew by intemperance and other excesses...[as] each crime, suicide, attack of madness, each malady produced by it represents an infinity of sufferings, inflicted and endured...”<sup>159</sup>

Thus “it is to the perfection of humanity” to develop and maintain an educational system that at once demands “the propagation of science” and generalizes “the faculty of self-restraint.”<sup>160</sup> The institution of this curriculum in Europe would, “in a single generation,” not only vastly reduce the population of those subject to Affective Madness, but also “prevent the propagation of madness from fathers to sons.”<sup>161</sup> Maudsley acknowledges, however, that such progress in a single generation is untenable, since the collective progress of humanity is a painfully slow process.<sup>162</sup> Still, to continue to evolve Europeans must pursue the goal of “an education founded on truly scientific psychology” —for this goal

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<sup>157</sup> “...causes importantes de l’aggravation du type nerveux...la science et du pouvoir humain...” Ibid., 267.

<sup>158</sup> “...les anxiétés de l’esprit...sage culture mentale...” Ibid., 267-268.

<sup>159</sup> “...l’influence héréditaire...le facteur le plus puissant...dans l’étiologie de la folie...opère comme cause originelle de la dégénérescence cérébrale et mentale, comme productrice de la maladie *de novo*. Si l’on pouvait anéantir toutes les causes héréditaires de la folie, et si la maladie était par ce moyen détruite...elle ne tarderait assurément pas à être créée de nouveau par l’intempérance et les autres excès...[comme] chaque crime, chaque suicide, chaque accès de folie, chaque maladie produite par lui représente un infini de souffrances, infligées et endurées...” Ibid., 269, 270.

<sup>160</sup> “...c’est au perfectionnement de l’humanité.. de répandre la science...la faculté de l’abstinence volontaire...” Ibid., 272.

<sup>161</sup> “...dans une génération ...d’empêcher la propagation de la folie de pères en fils.” Ibid., 272, 289ff.

<sup>162</sup> “...des siècles ne sont que des secondes dans l’évolution de l’espèce humaine...” Ibid., 272.

is the highest evolution of which human beings are physically, morally, and intellectually capable; by striving to know and to perform those natural laws that govern not only the physical world, but also and no less surely all the thoughts and all the sentiments that it is in the mind of man to conceive.”<sup>163</sup>

The development of an objective psychological education will thus generate the means to discover the natural laws that direct all physiological and psychological phenomena, and each new discovery will progressively lead to the next. Ultimately this will produce the perfect human being. Through his positive knowledge of all natural phenomena and the laws that direct them, his “well-furnished will” will have suzerainty over every thought, sentiment, and action, thus microcosmically instantiating the macrocosm of natural laws guiding natural phenomena.<sup>164</sup>

Accordingly, the first step in this process must be the “*exacte subordination*” of sentiment, whether “mundane” (*mondaine*) or superstitious, to positive reason.<sup>165</sup>

Religious praxes need not be entirely eliminated, though any “habit of supplication” must eradicate all “formal or a sentimental invocation[s].”<sup>166</sup> Fervent, formulaic prayers to supernatural beings effectively “ruin the intelligence and the will,” producing *maladies de novo* almost as often as intemperance, and thus must be abolished.<sup>167</sup> Ultimately this will prevent the regression embodied by Dark Age religious praxes, thereby preventing the degeneration which ahistorical, pathological asceticism always engenders. Moreover, this will allow insanity to be rendered wholly material; the result of positive mental laws

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<sup>163</sup> “...une éducation fondée sur une psychologie vraiment scientifique ...C’est l’évolution la plus haute dont l’être humain soit capable, physiquement, moralement et intellectuellement, en s’appliquant à connaître et à accomplir ces lois naturelles qui gouvernent non-seulement le monde physique, mais aussi et non moins sûrement toutes les pensées et tous les sentiments qu’il l’esprit de l’homme de concevoir.” Ibid., 273.

<sup>164</sup> “...volonté bien façonnée...” Ibid., 284-292.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>166</sup> “...l’habitude d’une supplication...invocation[s] formelle ou sentimentale...” Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> “...ruiner l’intelligence et la volonté...” Ibid., 266-272, 283-285.



interacting with the natural phenomena of the human brain. Wholly excised from any immaterial context, the correct understanding of mental pathology—and the collective inculcation thereof—will thus initiate the final progress of European man: the only human capable of discerning the utterly empirical nature of all phenomena, and the only being capable of manipulating those laws via his knowledge of them.

Hence the final, irreversible elimination of the insane European classes—whether criminal, theroid, or both—through this physiologically-based psychological apocalypse will successfully harmonize European man with his civilized environment. He will eliminate all hereditary mental pathology—and all the natural causes of affective mental pathology—by manipulating the natural laws that generate them according to his utopian conscience; a moral sense that is perfectly modest, chaste, honest, and sincere. The dividing zone that separates criminal from lunatic will be rent asunder, and with it the ontological border separating the normal from the theroid: Maudsley's utopia will be irrevocably healthy, superlatively "normal." Moreover, since the bounds of healthy, normative mental life are demarcated by white, European civilization, the naturally legitimate elimination and/or assimilation—that is, the *humanization*—of all non-white, unevolved races will be an unavoidable consequence of European progress. For Maudsley, in the manner of Buckle, all civilizations are ahistorical, incapable of progressing beyond the ontological limits established by their environment. Maudsley, however, biologically legitimates, and thereby ossifies, the differences between civilizations. These variations are physiological—naturally engendered, architectonic racial divisions that either facilitate or hinder human evolution. To at once prevent regression and stimulate humanization, all non-European superstitions and any other

pathological cause of Affective Madness must therefore be eliminated. Given the ahistorical nature of race as Maudsley constructs it, this would presumably entail the extinction—via humanization—of all non-white races, since only white Europeans are capable of instantiating the final form of utopian human evolution.

Henry Maudsley is thus much more than the simple English forensic psychologist imagined by Frederic Amory. Maudsley, no less than Spencer or Buckle, draws from the primary discursive coordinates of Comte's *Cours de philosophie*. By first blurring the imprecise line separating Spencerian induction from Bucklerian tautology, then biologically instantiating the theories of both within the scientific discipline of mental pathology, Maudsley creates a unified theory of his own, in which the microcosmic universe of the human mind functions as the singular means to unravel the Gordian knot of nature's laws. As a result, the physiology of humankind—unimaginably variable for Comte, Darwin, Spencer, and even Buckle—is amalgamated with Buckle's ahistorical categories of European and non-European Man, biologically legitimating the dominance of the former over the latter. Within Europe, the ordered operation of conscience/moral sense demonstrates the evolution of European man. Any perversion of moral sense, via the moral disorders of crime and/or madness (both affective and hereditary), therefore represents a specifically European evil that must be struggled against in the present in order to vanquish it in the future.

Maudsley's mental order thus equates to mental virtue. In order to continue its progress towards the ultimate evolution of European man, mental order/moral sense must

be “imposed by force on all those suspected of evil.”<sup>168</sup> The superstitions and pathologies of the inhabitants of the dividing zone and the insane fringe that lies beyond must be assimilated/eradicated in order to perfectly harmonize the moral obligations of European man with the positive natural laws. While the humanization of all non-white races is not a prerequisite to this final positivist apocalypse (confined to Europe, the only civilization to have evolved far enough to generate the positive need for it), nonetheless it remains a vital component within the utopian European civilization to follow—the simplest means to prevent degeneration. Above all then, neither *The Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* nor *Crime and Madness* are intelligible outside of their discursive context, for neither Maudsley’s pseudoscientific psychology nor his racial determinism are cognizable if removed from the architectonic discursive framework of positivism. This is particularly important in the context of Euclides da Cunha’s *Os Sertões*. For as I demonstrate below, it is not Comte’s positivism, not Spencer’s evolutionism, nor Buckle’s tautology, but Herbert Maudsley’s “empirical” amalgam of all three that most informs Da Cunha’s construction of the degenerative religious praxes of the *sertanejos* and their pathological offspring, the atavistic *jagunços*.<sup>169</sup>

### **Gumplowicz: the Chimera of Progress**

“One thus has reason to say...that today there does not exist a single race on the globe, if one gives to the word *race* the signification (naïve as it remains) which implies the unity of *descent*.”

—Ludwig Gumplowicz, 1883.<sup>170</sup>

Born in the city of Cracow in 1838, Jewish sociologist Ludwig Gumplowicz’s

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<sup>168</sup> See Michel Foucault, “The Great Confinement,” in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965), 38-64, here 62-64.

<sup>169</sup> See below, 134-140.

<sup>170</sup> “On a donc raison de dire...qu’aujourd’hui il n’existe aucune race sur le globe, si l’on donne au mot *race* la signification (naïve du reste) qu’implique l’unité de souche.” Ludwig Gumplowicz, *La lutte des races: recherches sociologiques*, trans. M. Charles Baye (Paris: Librairie Guillaumin et C, 1893), 255.

*Rassenkampf* was published in 1883 and translated into French as *La lutte des races* (The Struggle of the Races”) in 1893. Gumpłowicz also authored the slightly more successful *Grundriss der Soziologie* (“Outlines of Sociology”) in 1885.<sup>171</sup> Recently Gumpłowicz has been lauded by Polish sociologists Wojciech Adamek and Janusz Radwan-Pragłowski as “one of the major creators of sociology,” having distinguished it from other contemporary “sciences” by employing the “prevailing model of [positivism] whose canons had been laid down by Auguste Comte.”<sup>172</sup> As I noted in chapter one above, however, Frederic Amory identifies Gumpłowicz as the creator of a “crude theory of human evolution whereby racial struggle becomes the *force motrice* of history,” the “key source of European racism” for Euclides da Cunha.<sup>173</sup> Thomas Skidmore categorizes Gumpłowicz with Vacher de Lapouge, stating that the theories of these sociologists comprise “an indictment of mixed blood.”<sup>174</sup> Both scholars, however, seem to be adhering to the tendency described by Adamek and Radwan-Pragłowski common “among the main currents of sociological interpretation of Gumpłowicz’s ideas”—that is, “to include his conceptions within the race-anthropological orientation and to interpret him in line with...de Lapouge, Arthur Gobineau and Huston Stewart Chamberlain.”<sup>175</sup> “From the very beginning” this tendency “involved and led to” the misapprehension of Gumpłowicz’s theory, whereby it was conflated with the racism of Gobineau et al.<sup>176</sup> Hence *Rassenkampf* has been and continues to be regarded as “anachronistic,” thereby

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<sup>171</sup> Ludwig Gumpłowicz, *The Outlines of Sociology*, trans. Frederick W. Moore (Philadelphia: American Academy of Political and Social Science, 1899).

<sup>172</sup> Wojciech Adamek, Janusz Radwan-Pragłowski, “Ludwik Gumpłowicz: A Forgotten Classic of European Sociology,” *Journal of Classical Sociology*, Vol.6 (2006), 381-398, here 384.

<sup>173</sup> Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 672-673.

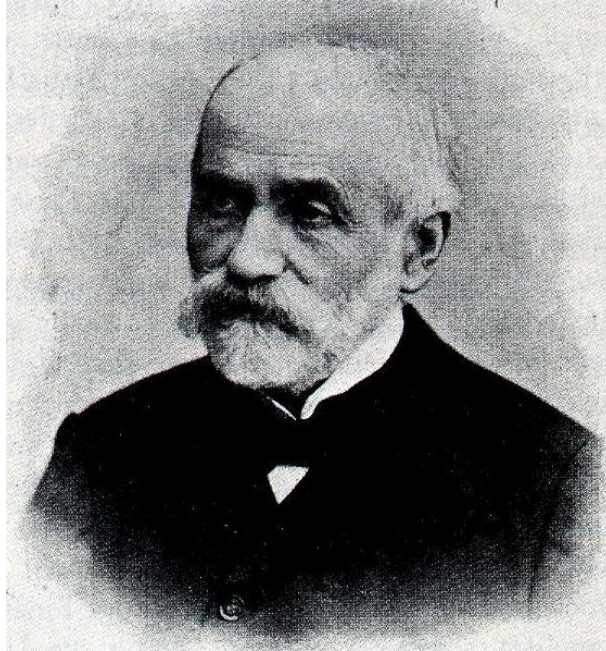
<sup>174</sup> Skidmore, *Black into White*, 107.

<sup>175</sup> Adamek, Radwan-Pragłowski, “Ludwik Gumpłowicz,” 394.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

“deprived of value.”<sup>177</sup>

Figure 7.



**Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909), age unknown.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of McMaster University.<sup>178</sup>

Therefore, before take on Amory’s conclusion that Da Cunha “modified” Gumplowicz’s theory “by extending it from external physical conflicts between ‘stronger’ and ‘weaker’ races to internal psychological and mental imbalances” developed via miscegenation in Brazil, it is necessary to elucidate Gumplowicz’s sociology.<sup>179</sup> It will become clear that for Gumplowicz “race” is a fluid social construct, a

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Available at: <http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/gumplowicz/gumplowicz.jpg> Accessed 2/07/09, 10:30am.

<sup>179</sup> Amory, “Historical Source and Biographical Context,” 673.

“social fact” subject to the absolute hegemony of the “brute facts” of the natural world: autochthonous ethnic/social groups and the architectonic natural social laws that direct them.<sup>180</sup> Humanity itself is monstrously polysemous: its entire history is an apocalyptic epoch; a millenarian means to attain natural, homogenous normality. Hence for Gumplowicz miscegenation—heretofore a singular force of positive devolution—functions as the singular harmonizing means to achieve an equilibration of order and progress.

Gumplowicz opens *La lutte des races* by categorizing the discourses of Hegel, Comte, and Buckle as “systems of the philosophy of history” concerned with “all the historic processes through which humanity has passed.”<sup>181</sup> Successively these theorists have constructed “the deist theory, the free-rationalist theory, and the naturalist theory,” and Gumplowicz argues “that the first belongs to the past, the second to the present, the third to the future.”<sup>182</sup> The theories of all three men remain either misguided or incomplete: Hegel is guilty of reducing the “philosophy of history to simple phantasmagoria,” Comte’s work remains unfinished; and Buckle is guilty of simply “researching what the role of nature in its reciprocal actions,” thereby rendering man something other than a natural being.<sup>183</sup> While theoretically useful, these antecedents therefore contribute “nothing positive” (*rien de positif*) to social science; hence their

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<sup>180</sup> For the ontology of social construction, see esp. John Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 4-13, 31-37, 45, 56-57, 60-66.

<sup>181</sup> “...les systems de philosophie l’histoire...tout le processus historique par lequel passent l’humanité.” Gumplowicz, *La lutte des races*, 2-3.

<sup>182</sup> “...la théorie déiste, la théorie, libéro-rationaliste et la théorie naturaliste...que la première de ces théories appartient au passé, la seconde au présent, la troisième à l’avenir.” Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>183</sup> “...philosophie de l’histoire à une simple fantasmagorie...recherchant quel est le rôle de la nature dans cette action réciproque...” Ibid., 8-13.

works should be relegated to the category of “natural sciences.”<sup>184</sup> Accordingly, Gumplowicz constructs his own positive unified theory, a theory more explicitly concerned with the social dynamics of human civilization than with the Spencerian laws that guide all natural phenomena.<sup>185</sup>

Still, human history remains a natural process: subject to the precise [natural] laws, invariable and accomplished with an invincible necessity.<sup>186</sup> All “modern sociologists” agree with this “*conviction*,” but Gumplowicz recognizes that “this conception remains subjective in as much as it has not been scientifically established.”<sup>187</sup> Hence it is necessary “to *prove* and to *demonstrate* that human history is a [natural] process.”<sup>188</sup> Gumplowicz follows Comte and Spencer, establishing “four species” of natural processes, including (1) the astronomic forces of “*l’attraction et de la gravitation*,” (2) the “chemical forces predicated upon affinity,” (3) the “higher and more complex...natural *vegetable* processes,” and (4) the “natural *animal* processes: man observes these among all animate organisms...in the animal kingdom and in himself.”<sup>189</sup> Collectively these four species of natural processes “have a decisive and determinate influence upon all human Thinking.”<sup>190</sup> Following his positivist antecedents, Gumplowicz argues that since the human “will is not free” there must be a fundamental

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<sup>184</sup> “...les sciences de la nature...” Ibid., 14.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> “...obéissant à des lois précises, invariables et s’accomplissant avec une invincible nécessité.” Ibid., 20.

<sup>187</sup> “...les sociologistes modernes cette conception reste subjective tant qu’elle n’est pas scientifiquement établie.” Ibid., 21.

<sup>188</sup> “...de prouver et de démontrer que l’histoire humaine est un processus [naturel]” Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> “...quatre espèces... forces chimiques reposant sur l’affinité... plus élevés et plus compliqués... processus naturels végétaux... processus naturels animaux: l’homme les observait sur les organismes animés... sur le règne animal et sur lui-même.” Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>190</sup> “...ont une influence décisive et déterminante sur tout le Penser humain.” Ibid., 24.

“unity of nature and the mind.”<sup>191</sup> All human thought “depends on the impressions which it receives,” for just as “materially, we are that which we eat,” likewise “intellectually,” we are “that which we perceive through our intellect.”<sup>192</sup>

Gumplowicz thus adheres to the discursive tenets first set forth in Comte’s *Cours de philosophie*, declaring that the natural laws of social physics are beyond the ken of nineteenth-century science due to the brevity of human history (in contrast to geologic history) and the concomitant inability of science to identify fixed laws amidst so much human variation.<sup>193</sup> In contrast to his discursive predecessors, however, Gumplowicz concludes that

one law alone rules over all the domains of nature, those of material phenomena as well as those intellectual phenomena: it is entirely incorrect when one conceives nature from a dualistic point of view, when one speaks of special laws for the material world, of special laws for the intellectual world.”<sup>194</sup>

Aggrandizing this idea of an ahistorical, absolute unity between Nature and Man, Gumplowicz elaborates that throughout human history there have always existed stable, calculable “ethnic and social groups,” that is, “substrata...in which the development and movement are subject to fixed laws, mirroring the course of the planets.”<sup>195</sup> It is the “régularité” demonstrated by the “mouvements” of these social groups that forms “the

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<sup>191</sup> “...volonté n’est pas libre... l’unité de la nature et d l’esprit...” Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>192</sup> “...dépend d’impressions qu’il reçoit...matériellement, nous sommes ce que nous mangeons... intellectuellement... ce que nous percevons par notre intellect...” Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 28-30.

<sup>194</sup> “Une seule et même loi règne dans tous les domaines de la nature, ceux des phénomènes matériels comme ceux des phénomènes intellectuels: on se trompe du tout au tout lorsque l’on conçoit la nature à un point de vue dualiste, lorsque l’on parle de lois spéciales au monde matériel, de lois spéciales au monde intellectuel.” Ibid., 31.

<sup>195</sup> “...groupes ethniques et sociaux...Substratums...don’t le développement et le mouvement sont soumis à des lois fixes, comme le sont le cours des planètes.” Ibid., 36.



content of history.”<sup>196</sup> The goal of the “science of history” should thus be to analyze these social groups by “observing and studying their origin and their development, their diverse species and their diverse forms, their movements and their evolutions.”<sup>197</sup>

The origins of all contemporary ethnic/social groups, according to Gumplowicz, were autochthonic and polygenetic:

Everywhere, from the beginnings of known history, we encounter a *very great number* of human races, who regard themselves as strangers through blood and through differing lines of descent.

This multiplicity [of races] disappeared over the course of history, some through ‘amalgamation,’ some through ‘extinction’...[for] the authentic history of all the States of antiquity, of the middle ages, and of modern times show us how a great number and great variety of tribes and social elements were reduced more and more to a unity and a homogeneity, and how most of these primitive and different elements abandoned their particularities in favor of the unitary

All...[producing] everywhere...these ethnic amalgams.”<sup>198</sup>

It follows that this process of homogenizing ethnic amalgamation is an ahistorical

“*natural social law*” (*loi sociale naturelle*) that clearly predates the earliest human

histories and continues unabated in the nineteenth century.<sup>199</sup> The prehistorical “*fusion*” of “the plurality of bands of primitive men” into “large communities” was accompanied

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<sup>196</sup> “...le contenu de l’histoire...” Ibid., 38, 39.

<sup>197</sup> “...science de l’histoire ...observer et étudier leur origine et leur développement, leurs diverses espèces et leur diverses formes, leurs mouvements et leurs évolutions.” Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>198</sup> “Partout, dans les commencements de l’histoire connue, nous reconstruisons un très grand nombre de races humaines, qui se regardent entre elles comme étrangères par le sang et de descendance différente. Cette multiplicité [des races] disparaît dans le cours de l’histoire, soit par ‘amalgamation’, soit par ‘extinction’...[car] l’histoire authentique de tous les États de l’antiquité, du moyen-âge et des temps modernes nous montre comment un grand nombre et une grande variété de tribus et d’éléments sociaux se rapprochent de plus en plus de l’unité et de l’homogénéité, et comment la plupart des éléments primitifs et différents abandonnent leurs particularités en faveur du Tout unitaire...[produisant] partout...ces amalgames ethniques...” Ibid., 43, 54, 56-57.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

by the fusion of the spontaneous development of the “plurality of primitive languages.”<sup>200</sup> The origins of man and his language were therefore polygenetic.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, both were concurrent developments. Language was necessary for human communities to form, while human communities constituted the only milieu capable of engendering language, hence “languages begin as humanity itself begins.”<sup>202</sup>

While this notion of polygenetic human origins invalidates the earlier monogenetic theories of Voltaire and Goethe—which were in any case derived from the book of *Genesis*—it does not necessarily refute Darwin’s theory of Natural Selection.<sup>203</sup> If it is acknowledged that the processes of Natural Selection can be accomplished over several lines of neighboring development, rather than limited to a single genetic pair, then it is probable that human evolution could have taken place “over numerous series of lines of development, distributed over the surface of the earth.”<sup>204</sup> Since all natural laws are architectonic, the Struggle for Existence continuously shapes societies at the communal level through various “organic” (*organique*) developments within the collectivity, in particular language and religion.<sup>205</sup> Religion was thus no less polygenetic than language, generated by the “intellectual reflection produced” by natural phenomena upon ignorant “human Thinking.”<sup>206</sup> Religious “*conceptions*,” however, function much differently than languages, for they are

much more vivacious than languages; they are more easily adopted by strange peoples, they

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<sup>200</sup> “...*la pluralité des bandes d’hommes primitives... grandes communautés... pluralité des langues primitives...*” Ibid., 86, 92, 94, 97, 114-117.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>202</sup> “...*langues débutent comme débute l’humanité elle-même.*” Ibid., 114-117, 129-131, 133.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>204</sup> “...*sur nombreuses séries de lignes de développement, réparties à la surface de la terre.*” Ibid., 67.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 63-64, 135.

<sup>206</sup> (“...*reflet intellectuel produit... Penser humain...*” Ibid., 137, 139.

disappear comparatively more difficultly when a new religion is in the course of being adopted and propagated...for the domination of a divinity is always caused by the domination of the tribe within which that divinity is honored, and...accordingly, a dethronement of gods corresponds to the subjection of one people to another...[all] tribal divinities, coordinated by origin, enter with the times into a hierarchy corresponding to the true social condition and the power of their tribe...<sup>207</sup>

Monotheism thus demonstrates the dominance of a single tribe over one or more other tribes, yet the Struggle for Existence continues unabated—both externally (war/conquest) and internally (domination/amalgamation)—in any given community.<sup>208</sup> Hence monotheism “always degenerates into polytheism,” for there is “a perpetual struggle between vulgar polytheism in its diverse forms and monotheism or monism.”<sup>209</sup>

The Struggle for Existence does not, however, privilege one race, one language, or one religion. It naturally produces physiological diversity amongst human social groups by means of “the various effects of the diversity of a geographical situation,” in tandem with the “influences of heredity” exerted by the force of amalgamation.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, concerning the biological identification of static races, “all is arbitrary, all is appearances and subjective opinions...[for] these divisions are not based on any real ethnological fact.”<sup>211</sup> Since the total population of “the earth always remains equal to

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<sup>207</sup> “...bien plus vivaces que les langues; elles sont plus facilement adoptées par les peuples étrangers, elles disparaissent très difficilement même lorsqu’une novella religion est en train d’être adoptée et de se propager...car la domination d’une divinité n’est jamais causée que par la domination de la tribu chez laquelle cette divinité était en honneur, et...souvent un détronement de dieux correspond à l’assujettissement d’un peuple par un autre...[toute] divinités de tribus, coordonnées à l’origine, entrent avec le temps dans une hiérarchie correspondant à la véritable condition sociale et à la puissance de leur tribu...” Ibid., 140, 141, 145.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

<sup>209</sup> “...dégénéré toujours en un polythéisme...une lutte perpétuelle entre le polythéisme vulgaire sous ses diverses formes et le monothéisme ou monisme...” Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> “...les effets variés de la diversité de situation géographique...influences de l’hérédité...” Ibid., 72-74.

<sup>211</sup> “...tout est arbitraire, tout est apparences et opinions subjectives...[car] ces divisions ne reposent sur aucun fait ethnologique réel.” Ibid., 186, 189.

itself,” certain social groups are impelled to “augment themselves at the expense of other groups” in order to maintain the fixed population of mankind.<sup>212</sup> Nature alone—not the advantages afforded by European climactic exigencies, nor the inherent genetic advantages of one race over another tied to said exigencies—generates and sustains victorious conquerors through the “*inductive*” and “eternal...*natural social law*,” that is,

a formula to which cannot be refused a *certitude and a complete generality, nearly mathematical*, because it presents itself to us always and everywhere, in the most irrefutable fashion, in the domain of history and of actual life. This formula is very simple: Every ethnic or social element can seek to make every weak element—which it finds within its dominion or wherever it penetrates—to serve its own ends...the more powerful ethnic or social element is thus compelled to *become master* of the weaker in order to make it *work* for it...a *rapport of domination* is produced between the heterogeneous ethnic elements, a *great progress* is realized: *slavery and servitude*.<sup>213</sup>

At no point in *Rassenkampf*, or at least in the French translation thereof, does Gumpłowicz employ “miscegenation” as a term to describe the process of ethnic amalgamation. Nonetheless, he presents the drive to amalgamate ethnicities through conquest and domination—the processes which compose the “perpetual struggle of the races” (*lutte perpétuelle des races*)—as the singular “law of history” (*loi de l'histoire*)<sup>214</sup> Comtean progress as envisioned by Gumpłowicz’s positivist antecedents is thus an ethnocentrically-engendered chimera, for

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<sup>212</sup> “...la terre restant toujours égal à lui-même...s’augmentent aux dépens d’autres groupes...” Ibid., 63-64.

<sup>213</sup> “...éternelle...loi naturelle sociale...une formule à laquelle on ne peut refuser une certitude et une généralité complètes, presque mathématiques, car elle se présente à nous toujours et partout, de la façon la plus irrefutable, dans le domaine de l’histoire et de la vie actuelle. Cette formule est très simple: Tout élément ethniques ou social puissant cherche à faire server à ses buts tout element faible qui se trouve dans son rayon de puissance ou qui y pénètre...l’élément ethniques ou social plus puissant s’efforce donc de devenir maître du plus faible afin de le faire travailler pour lui...un rapport de domination se produit entre les éléments ethniques hétérogènes, un grand progress se realize: l’esclavage et le servage.” Ibid., 157, 158-159, 161.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 261.

ethnocentrism in all its forms...produces the conception of progress; each people and each epoch imagine themselves to be better than other peoples and other epochs...[yet] there is no progress, nor regression: it is always the same thing and can never be otherwise, because men are always the same, because social forces are always animated by the same forces, because the quality and quantity of these forces always remain the same. It is an illusion...to believe that we have made and that we make today greater inventions than there have been for thousands of years...this is why one cannot perceive any trace of *moral* progress in *humanity*...”<sup>215</sup>

By means of “the struggle that they sustain,” wars function as “the propagators of the processes of history.”<sup>216</sup> Conquest in order to expand suzerainty is the motor of progress, yet progress itself consists only of the reduction of heterogeneous ethnic elements via constant domination and amalgamation.<sup>217</sup> The natural rapport of dominance binding the conquering master element to the slave element compels the latter “to serve” the former as “a means of satisfying its specific needs.”<sup>218</sup>

This subjugation is the catalyst for the amalgam of the two (or more) ethnic elements into peoples, nations, and states.<sup>219</sup> The ahistorical natural force of “syngenism” (*syngénisme*) in tandem facilitates the sentiment of solidarity amongst social/ethnic groups and drives them to dominate and incorporate other social/ethnic groups.<sup>220</sup>

Accordingly, in the late nineteenth century “there is no State in which the population is

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<sup>215</sup> “...l’ethnocentrisme sous toutes ses formes... produit la conception du progrès, chaque peuple et chaque époque s’imaginant être meilleurs que les autres peuples et les autres époques...[mais] il n’y a ni progrès, ni recul; c’est toujours la même chose et il n’en peut être autrement, car les hommes sont toujours les mêmes, car les éléments sociaux sont toujours animés des mêmes forces, , car la qualité et la quantité de ces forces restent toujours les mêmes. C’est une illusion...de croire que l’on ait fait et que l’on fasse aujourd’hui de plus grandes inventions qu’il y a des milliers d’années...viola aussi pourquoi on n’aperçoit aucune trace de progrès moral dans l’humanité...” Ibid., 346, 348-349, 350.

<sup>216</sup> “...la lutte qu’elles suotienent...les propagatrices du processus de l’histoire...” Ibid., 191-192.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>218</sup> “...se server...un moyen de satisfaire ses propres besoins...” Ibid., 175.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 176, 179.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 238-239, 242-243, 244, 245.

not composed of heterogeneous ethnic elements.”<sup>221</sup> Nature, via the Struggle for Existence, pervades all social phenomena, and thus the “perpetual changing of things, this perpetual fusing and perpetual transformations...makes the formation of [any] immutable notions difficult.”<sup>222</sup> In other words, all human social constructions (race, language, religion, etc) are utterly *historical*, incomprehensible if removed from their historical context due to their inherent fluidity.

If we define the apocalypse as “a disaster resulting in drastic, irreversible damage to human society or the environment, esp. on a global scale; a cataclysm,” and if we understand millenarianism to be the “belief in a future [utopian] age of peace, justice, and prosperity, typically posited on an end to the existing world order,” then it is evident that according to Gumpłowicz’s unified social theory the entirety of human history functions as the positivist apocalypse.<sup>223</sup> Following its autochthonous and polygenetic birth, humanity has been driven by Nature to eliminate its monstrous polysemy—both biological and cultural—through the Struggle for Existence. The totality of human knowledge, in particular the modern ethnocentric pretensions to order and progress, are meaningless social constructs that serve only to create more war, to further domination, and to increase the scale of amalgamation. Ultimately, impelled by the brute facts of nature—the natural laws that guide all natural phenomena—the apocalypse will come to a decisive and final end. A total and perfect miscegenation, an orderly utopian “unification,” will result and the homogenizing natural progress of amalgamation will cease. Gumpłowicz, however, has little to say concerning this end to the perpetual

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<sup>221</sup> “Il n’y a aucun État don’t la population ne se compose d’éléments ethniques hétérogènes.” Ibid., 179.

<sup>222</sup> “...perpétuel changement des choses, ce perpétuel fusionnement et les perpétuelles transformations...rend difficile la formation de [toute] notions immuables.” Ibid., 185.

<sup>223</sup> OED, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “apocalypse,” s.v. “millenarianism.”

struggle that has thus far directed all human history, and he makes no effort to foretell how the utopia will function.<sup>224</sup>

Frederic Amory is thus correct in his identification of “racial struggle” as the “force motrice” of Ludwig Gumplowicz’s historical model. He is completely mistaken, however, with his portrayal of Gumplowicz as a quasi-Gobinean sociologist.

Gumplowicz denies the static positivity—that is, the possibility of exploiting the “brute facts”—of all socially constructed phenomena, race above all. The sovereign natural force of *Rassenkampf* (the Struggle for Existence) is structured by the syngenistic impetus to conquer, to dominate, to amalgamate, and ultimately to unify. Social groups/ethnicities are physiologically fluid; so variable that any attempt to identify architectonic biological qualities is either misguided or driven by the ethnocentrism created by syngenism.<sup>225</sup> Amory’s conclusion regarding Da Cunha’s possible utilization and/or modification of Gumplowicz’s theory is thus rendered completely invalid through his total misapprehension of “race” as the Polish sociologist defines it. All hierarchies of race, however constructed, are scientifically invalid social facts: Nature alone is cognizant of the normal state. There is no normality, no pathology, no apparent monstrosity in Gumplowicz’s positivist system because humanity itself instantiates *différance*. Created by Nature as polygenetic, it has always been polymorphous and, accordingly, the linguistic, religious, and racial phenomena it socially constructed are polysemous. Thus the progress of human history is driven by the concurrent struggle between, and homogenization of, these diverse elements via domination/amalgamation. Contradictorily, Man is a natural being, autochthonously created by Nature, yet Nature

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<sup>224</sup> Gumplowicz, *La lutte des races*, 261.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 195-196, 209, 213-214.

impels Man to destroy his polysemy, to achieve an unknown normal state by means of constant violence. Climatological exigencies contribute to the diversity of civilizations, but Nature alone forces ethnic groups to believe that they are physiologically different, thereby engendering war, domination, and ultimately amalgamation. Gumpłowicz's *force motrice* of racial struggle is thus an architectonic millenarian force of apocalypse that exploits the totality of Man's polysemous social constructs, civilization itself, in order to progressively eliminate variety, to achieve utopian equilibration by means of a perfect and total, homogenous, miscegenation. Hence for Gumpłowicz the mixing of the races—constructed by Spencer, Buckle, and Maudsley as a positively degenerate process intermingling the highly evolved European and unevolved non-European—functions as the ultimate positive means for humanity to harmonize order and progress.

As I demonstrate in detail in the following chapter, this idea of miscegenation as a positive, apocalyptic force of natural evolution functions as da Cunha's framework for ethnological analysis in *Os Sertões*, for

...contrary to the thoughts of the capricious constructors of the Aleutian bridge, the autochthonism of the American races...seems definitely established...among the races has been erected, autonomous, *Homo americanus* [i.e., the abstract 'Brazilian']...By availing oneself, however, to the actual historical conditions, differing in different areas of the territory; the climactic disparities, which occasioned diverse reactions diversely carried by the constituent races; the greater or less density with which they crossed in various parts of the country; and...the intrusion—by means of arms in the colonial period and by means of immigration in our days—of other peoples, a factor that for its part was not and is not uniform, one sees quite clearly that the existence of this [*Homo americanus*] is highly doubtful, if not absurd.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> ...contravindo ao pensar dos caprichosos construtores da ponte Alêutica, o autoctonismo das raças americanas...parece definitivamente firmado...Erige-se autônomo entre as raças o homo



In *Os Sertões*, the social groups that result from miscegenation are therefore inherently historical, welded to context. Miscegenation alone functions, as we shall see, as an architectonic force that *always* progresses *all* ethnic groups by means of amalgamation.

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Our genealogical exploration of the texts which directly influenced Euclides da Cunha's construction of *Os Sertões* is complete. It is evident that these works by Comte, Spencer, Buckle, Maudsley, and Gumplowicz are bounded by the ontological limits of the discursive practice of positivism. To reiterate, all of these authors in some way engage with the primary coordinates elucidated within Comte's *Cours de philosophie*. For each there are positively identifiable natural laws that control all natural phenomena, metaphysical components that structure these inherently architectonic, apocalyptic, and utopian unified theories. All social phenomena, all the interactions of human civilization(s) are defined by man's variant knowledge of, suzerainty over, and subjugation to, these natural laws. For all but Gumplowicz, Man has or will have the power to manipulate Nature via his power-knowledge of its natural laws, though it is only after an apocalypse that he will be able to exploit them in order to utopically harmonize order and progress within human society.

Regression of any kind is impossible for Comte, while the objective facts that structure his "normal state" are demarcated by what they are not. These pathological monstrosities contradictorily define and distort the limits of normalizing progress.

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*americanus...Avaliando-se, porém, as condições históricas que têm atuado, diferentes nos diferentes tratos do território; as disparidades climáticas que nestes ocasionam reações diversas diversamente suportadas pelas raças constituintes; a maior ou menor densidade com que estas cruzaram nos vários pontos do país; e...[a] intrusão — pelas armas na quadra colonial e pelas imigrações em nossos dias — de outros povos, fato que por sua vez não foi e não é uniforme, vê-se bem que a realidade daquela formação é altamente duvidosa, senão absurda.” Da Cunha, Os Sertões, 146, 148.*

Within this deductive and empirical schema, Nature's power is limitless and holy—sacralized by the process of logically discerning its anti-theological omnipotence. The final progress of man must therefore involve the complete destruction of all pathological social systems to positively—and thereby virtuously—harmonize order and progress. Spencer's inductive theory of Evolution at base rests upon the invariable conquest of the protean forces of the savage lower races by the rectifying forces of European civilization. Thereafter progress ceases; its function has been fulfilled. Ascendant, man's sovereign power to manipulate nature will eternally sustain a perfect harmony of order and progress.

For both Comte and Spencer, who rely on deduction/induction, relativity is a predeterminative absolute: positive knowledge of every stage in the progress of the cosmos/ species/man is necessary to understand the successive stage that follows. Bucklerian progress, however, is not linear. By utilizing tautologically-derived generalizations, Buckle incorporates Spencerian evolution into his ahistorical schema, at once identifying all natural laws and eliminating the possibility of change over time or variation from his absolute typologies. Progress is defined by the Struggle for Existence of Man against Nature, a struggle that only European Man—via his development in a climate exclusive to Europe—is properly equipped to win. European Man is thus naturalized as a normative, ahistorical category; his conquest of both Nature and non-European Man are inevitable components of the apocalypse, after which European Man will create and sustain order and progress through his suzerainty over—not his harmony with—Nature.

Still, for Buckle the categories of European Man and non-European Man are not

inherently biological: any people, given enough time in climatological exigencies akin to those of Europe could embody European Man. Biologically legitimating Buckle's binary of European and non-European Man by means of the microcosmic application of Spencer's Persistence of Force to the wholly empirical human brain/mind, Maudsley not only ossifies the border separating Buckle's categories, but also pathologizes non-European Man. Maudsley's architectonic racial divisions delineate progressive and normative white European civilization from the regressive and monstrous non-white, non-European civilizations. The mental order of normative European civilization must equate to mental virtue, and thus to stimulate the virtuous evolution, or "humanization," of the non-European races, all non-European superstitions and any other pathological cause of affective madness/theroid devolution must be eradicated. Within Europe this will entail the apocalyptic destruction of the insane criminal classes and its causes, whether hereditary or affective. Thereafter a perfectly "normal" white moral sense (modest, chaste, honest, and sincere) alone will structure the utopian conscience of the European and his society as it *humanizes* all unevolved, non-white races.

Gumplowicz's *Rassenkampf* thus offers an interesting counterpoint to his positivist predecessors. Stripping the social theories of his predecessors to their positivist frameworks, Gumplowicz adheres to the Comtean notion that there are positive absolutes, natural laws that control all phenomena—an omnipresent hegemony to which man is eternally subject. Unlike his antecedents, however, he does not set aside the problems that inscrutable human variation offers to a fully empirical unified theory in order to offer a solution akin to Spencerian induction or Comtean tautology. Instead, Gumplowicz fundamentally alters Comte's positivist framework, citing human variation

as evidence of the subjugation of human history to the only deductively-derived natural law: the Struggle for Existence. The entirety of human history thus comprises a slowly unfolding apocalypse, a millenarian age in which the primal polymorphic monstrosities are overcome by the natural forces of order and progress. These natural forces of domination/amalgamation are guided only by syngenism—the means by which conquest and domination unfold are inimically tied to the ends of any given historical context, and the results are always the same. The “progress” so lauded by Comte et al is thus a chimera, a ruse to further the dominance of one social group over another/others. Hence in the nineteenth century, war remains a law of nature according to which all variation and all socially constructed phenomena—race in particular—are artificial constructs that inexorably drive polysemous humanity towards natural homogeneity and unity.

Finally, it is evident that for Buckle, Maudsley, and Gumpłowicz, the sacral power of Nature first described by Comte—as manifested via the effects of climatological exigencies upon the development of civilizations—is a predeterminative absolute. In Buckle’s case this is clear, as climate alone drives the progress of European man. Maudsley not only adheres to this schema, but also biologically legitimates it. He demonstrates the physiological differences between white Europeans and the unevolved races of men, all of whom are vulnerable to the naturally-engendered pathologies of their environments. Even Gumpłowicz, who distances himself from the arguments of Buckle and Maudsley, acknowledges the power of climate, not to engender biological variation, but to distill the ethnocentric artifice thereof—that is, to create the appearance of biological “racial” distinctions.

## Chapter Three

### Degeneration and Apotheosis: Positively Constructing the *Jagunço*

“...the preservation of order and the guaranties of progress will be the consequence of the free propagation of all the theories, which will inevitably lead the country to adopt the single doctrine capable of satisfying Brazilian aspirations, exhibiting the scientific demonstration of the greatest social and moral qualities of our race. And when the victory is completed, the patriotic bond shall be converted into a moral federation, by means of the unity of beliefs, customs, and origin, which will be [our] immortal characteristic...”

—Raimundo Teixeira Mendes, 1902.<sup>1</sup>

Comtean thought began to permeate into the most Brazilian educated classes during the 1860s.<sup>2</sup> Originating in France, the wellspring of progressive elite culture in mid-nineteenth century Brazil, Comte’s works called for economic development without social mobilization; a regeneration of society by means of a moral revolution that would ultimately ossify, not overturn, existing hegemonic structures.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the omnipotence attributed by Comte to those scholars possessing suzerainty over the natural laws by means of their knowledge of them, in addition to the natural laws already identified by Darwin and Spencer, attracted many scientifically-minded intellectuals, particularly officers in the military and students in the *Academia Militar*.<sup>4</sup> According to Miguel Lemos, by 1874 students in the Rio de Janeiro Polytechnic School were reading the *Cours de philosophie positive* and

preoccupied above all with the *political reaction of science*, they satiated with [the *Cours*] the

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<sup>1</sup> “...conservação da ordem e garantias ao progresso que será a consequência da livre propagação de tôdas as teorias, que há de conduzir fatalmente o país a adotar a única doutrina capaz de satisfazer as aspirações brasileiras, apresentado a demonstração científica das grandes qualidades sociais e morais de nossa raça. E quando a vitória fôr completa, o laço patriótico se terá convertido em federação moral, pela unidade de crenças, de costumes e de origem, que será o imortal característico...” Raimundo Teixeira Mendes. *A Pátria brasileira*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Templo da Humanidade, 1902), 57, in Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil*, 202.

<sup>2</sup> At the same time, approximately seventy-eight percent of the national population of Brazil remained illiterate. Viotta da Costa, “Brazil: The Age of Reform, 1870-1889,” 749.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 750. Skidmore, *Black into White*, 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Nogueira Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 66. Viotta da Costa, 750-751.

civic ardor which revolutionary declarations would seek to feed. Sincere republicans, they glimpsed in the new science founded by August Comte the basis for a *rational politics*, and they foresaw, in his philosophical coordination, the basis for the final reconciliation of order and progress.”<sup>5</sup>

The republicans who shaped the government and constitution of the *República Velha*, the intellectual elites whom, as I demonstrated above,<sup>6</sup> were wholly immersed in the discursive practice of positivism, were thus from their earliest interactions with Comtean thought concerned with the final reconciliation of order and progress. In other words, these Brazilian positivists wanted to leapfrog past the metaphysical stage currently exemplified by European civilization, advancing Brazil from the backwards theological stage it continued to embody to the final positive stage by means of a Comtean revolution.<sup>7</sup> Hence according to the positivist discourse with which the most educated members—the “intellectual vanguard...of the dominant class”<sup>8</sup>—of the revolutionary government were ostensibly engaged, republican Brazil would somehow become a positive Brazil, rendered absolutely moral via its absolute positivity.<sup>9</sup>

As I previously elucidated, however, there are three progressive stages of human civilization according to Comte: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive.<sup>10</sup>

Without exception, Comte’s unidentified “necessary law”—later identified as the various permutations of Darwin’s Natural Selection utilized by Spencer, Buckle, Gumplowicz, et

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<sup>5</sup> “*Preocupados sobretudo da reação política da ciência, fartaram aí o ardor cívico em que em vão procuravam cevar em declamações revolucionárias. Republicanos sinceros, entreviram na nova ciência fundada por Augusto Comte as bases de uma política racional, e pressentiram, em sua coordenação filosófica, o conagraamento definitivo da ordem e do progresso.*” Miguel Lemos. *1ª Circular Anual do Apostalado Positivista do Brasil*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Templo da Humanidade, 1900), 13, in Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil*, 165.

<sup>6</sup> See above, 55-56.

<sup>7</sup> See Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil*, 147-157, 200-203.

<sup>8</sup> “...[a] vanguarda intelectual...da classe dominante...” Nogueira Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 66.

<sup>9</sup> See Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 434-435.

<sup>10</sup> See above, 17-19; and Comte, “Plan of the Scientific Operations,” 38, 40-42.

al—predetermines the “invariable course” of all civilizations.<sup>11</sup> A civilization, regardless of context, must pass through each stage to reach the next, while collective retrogression is impossible.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, progressing from one stage to another is brutal, disjointed, and chaotic; it is never peaceful.<sup>13</sup> Finally, only the annihilation of all social systems, Comte’s apocalypse, will herald the perfect equilibration of order and progress.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, the positivism which shaped liberal ideology in late-nineteenth century Brazil began, from its inception, to drift away from its ontological Comtean moorings. Following the coup led by Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, republicans and positivists employed Comtean, Darwinian, and Spencerian terminology while advancing the interests of those elites—an oligarchy comprised mostly of plantation owners and bourgeois technocrats—who stood to benefit the most from Brazilian “progress.”<sup>15</sup> The liberal discourse of positivism had been transformed into a hegemonic façade. There was no significant break in Brazil’s dependence on foreign investments and exports, while the patronage of powerful oligarchs continued to structure the lives of the urban middle classes of the coast.<sup>16</sup> Thus continuity rather than rupture characterized the first years of the *República dos Estados Unidos do Brasil*. The monarchy was, of course, relegated to Brazil’s past, a relic of the theological stage that positivism had finally vanquished. Hence rigid faith in the intransience of Brazilian progress (after all, according to Comte regression was impossible) entailed that in the immediate aftermath of 1889 inter-elite conflicts over political and economic dominance precluded the Comtean stricture calling

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 41, 42.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, 406-407.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 406-407, 430-431, 835

<sup>15</sup> See Viotta da Costa, “Brazil: The Age of Reform, 1870-1889,” 776-777.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 777.

for the integration or destruction of the pathological, the proteiform, and the monstrous. For a brief period Brazil's non-white "lower races" were thereby protected from the evolutionary and equilibrating forces of *ordem e progresso*.

While politicians and *patrões* utilized the vocabulary of positivism to advance their own aims, urban middle-class technocrats—engineers, army officers, medical doctors—continued to study the discursive practice of positivism, and to scientifically apply the determinisms of Comte, Darwin, Spencer, and others to a specifically Brazilian context.<sup>17</sup> As noted by both Cruz Costa and Amory, "Evolutionism" and "Spencerianism" were particularly en vogue amongst this population during the last decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most famous representative of these technocrats was Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. A medical professor from the state of Bahia, Rodrigues was singularly responsible for formulating the scientifically accepted application of Spencer's theory of Evolution to the Brazilian populace.<sup>19</sup> Ultimately Rodrigues concretized the degeneration, madness, and monstrosity—the antitheses of progress elucidated by Spencer, Maudsley, and others—in the physiology of the Brazilian *mestiço*.

Euclides da Cunha, as we shall see, not only engaged with Rodrigues' theories but dedicated a large portion of *Os Sertões* to overturning the doctor's conclusions concerning miscegenation in Brazil. Hence the purpose of this final chapter is twofold. First, I will elucidate Rodrigues' overtly Spencerian determinism and Da Cunha's rather

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<sup>17</sup> Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 66-68. Cruz Costa, *Contribuição à História das Idéias no Brasil*, 142-144, 272-275.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 184-185, 228. Amory, "Euclides da Cunha," 90-91. Amory, "Historical Source and Biographical Context," 675.

<sup>19</sup> For Rodrigues' academic/medical career, see esp. Skidmore, *Black into White*, 57-62.



byzantine positivism as they relate to the ontologically constructed qualities and characteristics of all Brazilian *mestiços*, in particular the *jagunços*, the *Canudenses*, and Antonio Conselheiro. It will become clear that for Rodrigues all *mestiços* are monstrous anomalies, ahistorical beings that are irreconcilable to Brazilian progress. They are therefore capable only of degenerating into the insane, fanatically monarchist *jagunços* who followed Conselheiro, or of being slowly degenerated and annihilated by the progressive forces of Evolution itself. In either case degeneration and death are all that Rodrigues' *mestiço* is physiologically capable of attaining. By contrast, following Gumpłowicz in *Os Sertões*, Da Cunha's *mestiço* is, to varying degrees, the embodiment of Evolution. This is most often a regressive evolution, a progressive pathology engendered, in the case of the *sertanejo*, by the singular pathology of the climate in the Bahian backlands. Finally, I will conclude the chapter and this essay by elaborating upon Da Cunha's utilization of Henry Maudsley to analyze the psychology of the *sertanejo*, the life and actions of Antonio Conselheiro, and the specific psychospiritual conditions that created Canudos and influenced the Republic's response to the phenomenon.

### **Rodrigues: *Mestiço* Degeneration, *Jagunço* Annihilation**

“All the facts clearly confirm today the opinion following Spencer...”  
—Nina Rodrigues, 1899.<sup>20</sup>

Nina Rodrigues was purportedly a mulatto, yet the works of this founder of the *Revista Médico-Legal*, published between 1894 and his untimely death in 1906,

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<sup>20</sup> “Tous les faits confirment pleinement aujourd’hui l’opinion suivante de Spencer...” Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” in *Archives d’anthropologie criminelle*, 14 (1899), 477-516, here 497-498.

scientifically legitimated the continuing strife of all Brazilians of color.<sup>21</sup> Whether indigenous, black, or *mestiço*, all non-white Brazilians were, according to Rodrigues, incompatible with the progress of Anglo-European civilization.<sup>22</sup> Rodrigues encapsulated his clinical diagnosis of inevitable *mestiço* degeneration in his 1899 study, “Miscegenation, Degeneration, and Crime” (*Métissage, dégénérescence et crime*). The article gained him the international acclaim so coveted by his peers, thereby increasing his own prestige in addition to the perceived veracity of his work.<sup>23</sup>

Figure 8.



**Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862-1906), age unknown.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of A sociedade Brasileira de História da Medicina.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Skidmore, *Black into White*, 57-60. Dain Borges, “‘Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert’: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought, 1880-1940,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (May, 1993), 235-256, here 240-243.

<sup>22</sup> See esp. Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, *O animismo fetichista dos negros bahianos* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1935); and Idem, *As raças humanas: a responsabilidade penal no Brasil*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (São Paulo: Companhia editora nacional, 1938).

<sup>23</sup> See Afrânio Peixoto, “Prefácio,” in Rodrigues. *As raças humanas*, 11-26. See also Skidmore, *Black into White*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> Available at: [http://www.sbhm.org.br/medicos/foto\\_nina.jpg](http://www.sbhm.org.br/medicos/foto_nina.jpg) Accessed 2/05/09, 4:24pm.

The main concern of natural scientists studying human “crossbreeds” has been, according to Rodrigues, to positively determine the relative degree of their “fecundity.”<sup>25</sup> The “exuberant eugenesis” of these “products” has, however, been deductively proven, hence Rodrigues asserts that, unconcerned with their fertility, he seeks to discern whether “they are a normal product, socially viable, or if, to the contrary, they have been constituted from the degraded races as inferiors, an incapable and degenerate offspring.”<sup>26</sup> Following the inductive psychological parameters established by Spencer in 1875, Rodrigues endeavors to correct the error(s) of the Lamarckian psychiatrist Bénédict Augustin Morel, “the creator of the clinical conception of degeneration...[who] could not reconcile the belief in the perfect social viability of the *mestiço* with the recognition of a degenerative influence in human crossings.”<sup>27</sup> Morel’s failure to authoritatively prove whether or not *mestiços* are compatible with civilization has, Rodrigues declares, enabled “miscegenation in Latin America...[to be] in turn invoked by the partisans and adversaries of miscegenation as complete, absolute proof of the legitimacy of their

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<sup>25</sup> “...des métis...fécondité...” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 477-478.

<sup>26</sup> “l’eugénésie exubérante...produits...s’ils sont un produit normal, socialement viable, ou si, au contraire, ils constituent des races abâtardies, inférieures, une descendance incapable et dégénérée.” Ibid., 478. Eugenesis: “The quality of breeding well or freely; the production of young by the union of individuals of different species or stocks.” OED, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “eugenesis.”

<sup>27</sup> “Morel, le créateur de la conception clinique de la dégénérescence...il ne pouvait concilier la croyance en la parfaite viabilité sociale du métis avec la reconnaissance d’une influence dégénératrice dans les croisements humains.” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 479. See Bénédict Auguste Morel, *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles, et morales de l’espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (Paris: Baillière, 1857). Rodrigues had access to the 1879 French translation, of Spencer’s *Essays: Moral, Political, and Aesthetic*. See Herbert Spencer, *Essais de morale de science et d’esthétique. III. Essais scientifiques suivis de réponses aux objections sur les premiers principes*. Traduits par M.A. Burdeau (Paris: Baillière, 1879).

contradictory conclusions.<sup>28</sup>

Asserting that his own position has perennially been to favorably judge “the physical vigor” and “mental sanity” of Brazilian *mestiços*, Rodrigues relates that he limited his current study to the arid backland district (*comarca*) of Serrinha, Bahia, and that it took place from 1885-1886.<sup>29</sup> Unlike the cities of the coast, in this region—as in much of the Bahian backlands—the predominant *mestiço* population is “the *pardo* type, which combines, in quite variable proportions, the three races.”<sup>30</sup> The next largest ethnic population is mulatto, followed by blacks (perhaps not wanting to offend the sensibilities of his international audience, Rodrigues does not indicate the number of slaves and/or manumitted individuals in either of these two groups), then a “weak minority” of whites, some *curibocas* (the offspring of indigenous and white pairs), and, finally, the “extremely rare...genuine Indian.”<sup>31</sup> Transcending both profession and class, “neurasthenia” in its “hereditary form” prevails amongst Serrinha’s *mestiço* inhabitants.<sup>32</sup> Neurasthenia—a positive and physiological, rather than psychological, pathology<sup>33</sup>—engenders a number of “organic maladies of the nervous system.”<sup>34</sup> These include, but are not limited to, debilitating exempla of “*physical and mental degeneration*”—a plethora of physiological “monstrosities,” “numerous” cases of epilepsy and madness, and the “quite common

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<sup>28</sup> “...le métissage de l’Amérique latine...sont tour à tour invoqués par les partisans et les adversaires du métissage comme complète, absolue, de la légitimité de leurs conclusions contradictoires.” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 479-480.

<sup>29</sup> “...la vigueur physique...la santé mentale...” Ibid., 481-482.

<sup>30</sup> “Le type pardo, qui réunit en proportions très variables les trois races...” Ibid., 482.

<sup>31</sup> “...une faible minorité...fort rares...générales d’Indiens...” Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> “La neurasthénie...la forme héréditaire...” Ibid., 484-485.

<sup>33</sup> Neurasthenia: “A disorder characterized by feelings of fatigue and lassitude, with vague physical symptoms such as headache, muscle pain, and subjective sensory disturbances, originally attributed to weakness or exhaustion of the nerves and later considered a form of neurotic disorder.” *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “neurasthenia.” See also above, 74-76, for Henry Maudsley’s treatment of madness and degeneration.

<sup>34</sup> “Les maladies organiques du système nerveux...” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 491.

malady” of *tabes dorsalis*, the final stage of syphilis, in which nerve tissue is demyelinated.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 9



**Map of Northeastern Bahia, ca. 1896**

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> “...dégénérescence physique et mentale...monstruosités...nombreuses...une maladie fort commune...” Ibid., 487, 489, 491.

<sup>36</sup> Available at: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/81/Canudos-map.jpg> Accessed 2/07/09, 12:12pm.

Rodrigues admits that he is unable to eliminate syphilis and alcoholism (both are apparently rampant in Serrinha) as causes of “a good portion” of these symptoms, yet he deems the “local climactic conditions” of the Bahian *sertão* as empirically “*inadmissible*.”<sup>37</sup> Hence in contrast to his co-Spencerian psychologist Henry Maudsley—who interweaves Henry Buckle’s pathologic climatology with Herbert Spencer’s ahistorical devolutive racial typologies in order to identify, via his “empirical psychology,” all non-European peoples as the equivalent of insane Europeans<sup>38</sup>—Rodrigues is compelled to construct a different origin for the degenerative pathologies plaguing the Serrinhenses. Thus he grossly reifies Spencer’s application of the inductively-derived theories of the Persistence of Force and Evolution to the “intermixture” of disparate, ahistorical racial categories<sup>39</sup> in order to scientifically *deduce*, via a number of case studies, that

the real causes of the morbid or degenerate manifestations studied in the population of Serrinha must be still deeper and more powerful, and these causes are none other than the poor conditions by which are effected the crossings of races...the crossing, anthropologically [speaking], of such very different races—including the white, the black, and the red—has given the product a bad *equilibrium* and by means of this weak physical and moral resistance they cannot acclimate to the Brazilian climates, nor to the conditions of the social struggle with superior races.”<sup>40</sup>

Rodrigues acknowledges that while certain individual *mestiços*, “superior degenerates,”

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<sup>37</sup> “...une bonne part...conditions climatériques locales...” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 492.

<sup>38</sup> See above, 59-73.

<sup>39</sup> See above, 46-47.

<sup>40</sup> “*Les causes réelles des manifestations morbides ou de dégénérescence étudiées dans la population de Serrinha doivent être plus lointaines et plus puissantes, et ces causes ne sont autres que les mauvaises conditions dans lesquelles se sont effectués les croisements de races...Les croisement de races aussi différentes, anthropologiquement, que le sont les races blanche, noire et rouge, a donné un produit mal équilibré et de faible résistance physique et morale ne pouvant se faire aux climats du Brésil ni aux conditions de la lutte sociale des races supérieures.*” Rodrigues, “Métissage, dégénérescence et crime,” 494. Emphasis mine.

possess the capacity to demonstrate “brilliant manifestations of intelligence,” such manifestations are always “superficial.”<sup>41</sup> When faced with the exigencies of civilization, it is much more common for the *mestiço* to engage in acts of criminality.<sup>42</sup> The act of committing a crime is a physiological “anomaly...truly equivalent with [the] other forms of degeneration” predominant in the *mestiço*.<sup>43</sup> Criminality then, is yet another “simple manifestation of the degeneration produced by miscegenation.”<sup>44</sup>

Overall, Rodrigues’ multivalent variants of *mestiço* degeneration are engendered by a physiological lack of Spencerian equilibration. Spencerian devolution involves the movement from heterogeneity to homogeneity in all natural contexts; hence the process of miscegenation devolves the offspring, regardless of the races involved. The product of the pairing of members from two heterogeneous races will be a homogenous blend of the two, utterly incapable of maintaining the harmony of its mental and physical states due to its “proteiform” (*protéiforme*) nature.<sup>45</sup> Rodrigues’ *mestiço* thereby embodies Darwin’s protean intermediate forms; a being utterly irreconcilable with legitimate civilization. For Spencer, however, true regression is an absurd impossibility. Dissolution, that is, devolution, merely functions as a secondary re-distribution of Force in the unalterable progress generated by the omnipotence of Evolution.<sup>46</sup> Thus Rodrigues is compelled to at once justify the singularly widespread miscegenation within Brazil and to illuminate its beneficial effects regarding the absolute suzerainty that progress exercises over humanity.

Hence miscegenation is, via the inevitable degeneration and death it brings about,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 494, 496.

<sup>42</sup> Here, once again, Rodrigues cites Spencer. Ibid., 502-503.

<sup>43</sup> “*Cette anomalie est un véritable équivalent d’autres formes dégénératrices...*” Ibid., 502.

<sup>44</sup> “*...la criminalité... est aussi une simple manifestation de la dégénérescence produite par le métissage...*” Ibid., 504, 515.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 494.

<sup>46</sup> Spencer, *First Principles*, 315, 325. See also above, 44-45.

an abortive effect of Spencerian Evolution:

This elimination of the inadaptable races is naturally effected by the processes of degeneration which have as their intermediaries the abnormal or morbid states, the frequency of which in the Brazilian *mestiço* seems, to us, excessively demonstrated by this study.”<sup>47</sup>

In other words, the *mestiço*’s degeneration is merely a manifestation of Evolution’s beneficent, unalterable progression of mankind *in toto*.<sup>48</sup> Having eliminated environment as a cause of pathology, Rodrigues discredits the possibility of Maudsley’s “humanization” of the *mestiço*—a generations-long forced acculturation of European civilization, ultimately altering the regressed neural pathways of the “lower” race(s) into a semblance of European intelligence.<sup>49</sup> A being akin to Maudsley’s theroid man, Rodrigues’ *mestiço* instantiates *différance*: his physiological constitution renders him atavistic and proteiform; he is the monstrous embodiment of “category crisis,” contradictorily created by Evolution in order to be unequivocally destroyed for the purposes of humanity’s final equilibration.<sup>50</sup> The *mestiço*’s degeneration and destruction thus reaffirms the identification of Brazilian progress as limited to its civilized, republican—ostensibly white/“Aryan” and therefore European—citizens.<sup>51</sup>

As I noted above, this article was published in 1899, two years after the destruction of Canudos. As Rodrigues relates, however, this psychological study took place in the Bahian *sertão*, amongst a population of individuals he identified as principally *pardo* in ethnic composition, from 1885 to 1886. His characterization of the

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<sup>47</sup> “Cette élimination des races inadaptables se fait naturellement par des procédés de dégénérescence qui ont pour intermédiaires les états anormaux ou morbides dont la fréquence chez les métis brésiliens nous paraît surabondamment démontrée...” Ibid., 501.

<sup>48</sup> See above, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Maudsley, *Physiology and Pathology*, 49-50, 51, 110. See above, 71.

<sup>50</sup> See Cohen, “Monster Culture,” 6-7, 20.

<sup>51</sup> See Skidmore, *Black into White*, 60; and Borges, “Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert,” 240-241.



*mestiço* as an absolutely degenerate, pathological monstrosity in “Miscegenation, Degeneration, and Crime” thus provides a fitting framework for the two works he produced in 1897 concerning the *mestiço* population of Canudos and their deluded leader, Antonio Conselheiro. These include his article “The Madness Epidemic of Canudos,” and his physiognomic analysis of Antonio Conselheiro’s skull, published in a separate work titled *Abnormal Collectivities*.<sup>52</sup>

Completed on October 6, 1897, the same day that Conselheiro’s corpse was exhumed and decapitated, “The Madness Epidemic of Canudos: Antonio Conselheiro and the *Jagunços*” was written while “The War of Canudos” permeated Brazilian newspapers.<sup>53</sup> Canudos and its messianic leader appeared daily in front page headlines, humor sections, editorials, and even advertisements for “chic felt hats.”<sup>54</sup> For the first time the telegraph was used to link a warzone of the Brazilian military—envisioned to be the defensive force of the Republic, a modern, citizen-soldiery—with the progressive urban littoral.<sup>55</sup> Heavily censored dispatches from the campaign melded with rumors of a monarchist plot and, in a still-novel republic riven by the struggles of regionalist oligarchs and economic depression, Canudos became “the flash point for Brazil’s last battle between monarchism and republicanism.”<sup>56</sup> Most Brazilians remained illiterate, but those who could read and had access to newspapers—twenty-nine of which, in 1897

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<sup>52</sup> Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, “A loucura epidêmica de Canudos,” in *Revista Brasileira*, 2 (October 1897), 129-144; Idem, *As collectividades anormais* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1939).

<sup>53</sup> Rodrigues, *As collectividades anormais*, 131.

<sup>54</sup> “A vitória da quarta expedição foi devida ao nome Moreira César posto nos chics chapéus de feltro, para homens, que tem a loja Mateus, a 18\$000.” *Jornal de Notícias* (Bahia), June 15, 1897, cited in Walnice Nogueira Galvão, *No calor da hora: a Guerra de Canudos nos jornais, 4ª expedição* (São Paulo: Editora Ática, 1974), 51. See also Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 71.

<sup>55</sup> Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

alone, were founded in Rio de Janeiro<sup>57</sup>—found themselves members of an “imagined community” of progressive republicans.<sup>58</sup>

Suddenly, these citizens of progress were faced with a collectivity of fanatic monarchists who threatened to devolve Brazil, to retrogress the Republic to the primitive theological stage from which it had so recently emerged. Perhaps most damning of all for the Canudenses, printed on the front page of the September 22, 1897 edition of the Salvadoran *Diário de Notícias da Bahia*, was the pseudonymous “Creed of Antonio Conselheiro” (*Credo de Antônio Conselheiro*):

I believe in Emperor Dom Pedro II, ex-emperor and perpetual defender of Brazil, creator of the constitutional monarchy of the Empire, of the Army, and of the Armada that deposed him; I believe in Princess Dona Isabel, who is his daughter and legitimate heir to the crown...who was born in Rio de Janeiro and was banished from there with her old father, suffering this...under the power of the wicked Republic, represented by the provisory government of Deodoro da Fonseca...I believe in the courage and fidelity of my *jagunços*...[and] in the restoration of the Monarchy and in the eternal life of my dreams. Amen.”<sup>59</sup>

By 1897, therefore, the monarchism of the Canudenses was taken for granted, while the identification of them as “*jagunços*” mythologized them, rendering them “totally and indiscriminately” into “*cangaçeiros*”; lawless bandits who, as imagined by the literate denizens of the coast, indiscriminately terrorized and pillaged the beleaguered towns of

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 24. See also Alfred de Carvalho, “A imprensa baiana de 1811 a 1899,” *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Bahia* 6, no. 6 (1905), 21-22, cited in Galvão, *No calor da hora*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> For the relationship of print capital to the formation and maintenance of an “imagined community,” see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-7, 37-46.

<sup>59</sup> “*Creio no Sr. D. Pedro segundo, ex-imperador e defensor perpétuo do Brasil, criador da constituição monárquica do Império, do Exército e da Armada que o depuseram; creio na Princesa D. Isabel que é a sua filha e legítima herdeira da coroa...que nasceu no Rio de Janeiro e foi dali banida com seu velho pai, padecendo este...sob o poder da malvada República, representada pelo governo provisório de Deodoro da Fonseca...creio na coragem e fidelidade dos meus jagucos...[e] na restauração da Monarquia e na vida eterna dos meus sonhos. Amém.*” Galvão, *No calor da hora*, 47.

the backlands.<sup>60</sup>

Rodrigues' analyses of Canudos and its denizens extended the metonymy of their identification as *jagunços* still further, merging their ostensible violent monarchism with the degenerate pathologies of the *mestiço*. Conselheiro, it seems, was afflicted with "vesalia" (*vesania*), a relatively "simple" (*simples*) derangement of the moral and intellectual faculties.<sup>61</sup> Though he is incapable of examining Conselheiro's psychological behavior directly, still Rodrigues is confident that the *beato*'s inherited degenerate *mestiço* "quality" (*qualidade*) brought about "the bellicose temperament which caused madness to reveal itself in [him]."<sup>62</sup> Conselheiro's inability to integrate with civilization compelled him to cross the Bahian backlands and preach against "all the objects that were not conducive to a rigorously ascetic life."<sup>63</sup> Thus, via his madness, he alone

extraordinarily abnormalized the pacific life of the believing, agrarian populations of the province, distracting them from their habitual occupations to an errant life of communism in which the most well-off abandoned their recourses in favor of the minimum protection of fortune."<sup>64</sup>

Citing Spencer's *First Principles*, Rodrigues concludes that Conselheiro's ability to induce these reactions resulted from the inability of these *mestiços* to fully comprehend "religious abstractions."<sup>65</sup> Hence, when presented with "a tangible and material divinity" in the form of Conselheiro, a pathological chain reaction commenced, continuing

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<sup>60</sup> "...a todos e indiscriminadamente..." Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 74-75. For the etymology of "jagunço" see esp. José Calasans, "Os jagunços de Canudos," *Caravelle, Cahiers du monde hispanique et luso brésilien*, no. 15 (1970), 31-38.

<sup>61</sup> Rodrigues, "A loucura epidêmica de Canudos," 130. For the definition of "vesalia," see above, chap. 2, 27, n. 128.

<sup>62</sup> "...o temperamento bellicoso que a loucura poz em relevo em Antonio Conselheiro." Rodrigues, *As collectividades anormais*, 133-134.

<sup>63</sup> "...todos os objectos que não pudessem convir a uma vida rigorosamente ascetica." Rodrigues, "A loucura epidêmica de Canudos," 132.

<sup>64</sup> "...anormaliza extraordinariamente a vida pacifica das populações agricola e criadora da provincia, distraindo-as das suas occupaões habituaes para uma vida errante e de communismo em que os mais abastados cediam dos seus recursos em favor dos menos protegidos da fortuna." Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> "...as abstracções religiosas..." Ibid., 142.

interminably thereafter.<sup>66</sup> This communal degeneration effected a vibration in the “atavistic...warrior instincts” of these *mestiços*, leading to “a true vesanic epidemic” during which the monarchist “insubordination” against the republic was followed by a “revolt” against the Catholic Church.<sup>67</sup>

These violent struggles in turn exacerbated “all the atavistic qualities of the *mestiço*,” and it is in these qualities that the “characteristics of the *jagunço*” were revealed, for

the *jagunço* is the product, as much *mestiço* in body, which reproduces the anthropologic characteristics combined from the races of which it is a product, as a hybrid in its social manifestations, which represent the almost inviolable fusion of extremely unequal civilizations...he is represented in force by the *mestiço* of the *sertão*, who learned to accommodate the virile qualities of his savage ancestors, Indians or blacks, to the social conditions of free life and the rudimentary civilization of the interiors...[thus] in the *jagunço*... are revealed, intact, the indomitable characteristics of the savage Indian: the desire for the errant nomadic life; the resistance to physical suffering, to hunger, to thirst, to bad weather; and the decided tendency [towards]...war...”<sup>68</sup>

The atavist *jagunço* thus struggles in the name of monarchy because “monarchist convictions”—brute faith in a quasi-divine martial power greater than himself—are all

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<sup>66</sup> “...uma divindade tangível e material...” Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> “...atavicos...instinctos guerreiros...uma verdadeira epidemia vesânica...insubordinação...revolta...” Ibid., 133-134, 136, 137.

<sup>68</sup> “...todas as qualidades atávicas do mestiço...característicos do jagunço...O jagunço é um producto tão mestiço no physico que reproduz os caracteres anthropologicos cominados das raças de que provém, quanto híbrido nas suas manifestações sociaes que representam a fusão quasi inviável de civilizações muito desiguaes...Representa-o em rigor o mestiço do sertão que soube acomodar as qualidades viris dos seus ascendentes selvagens, indios ou negros, ás condições sociaes da vida livre e da civilização rudimentar dos centros...No jagunço...revelam-se inteiriços o caracter indomável do indio selvagem, o gosto pela vida errante e nomade, a resistencia aos soffrimentos physicos, á fome, á sède, ás intemperies, decidio pendor [pela]...guerra...” Ibid., 137-138, 139.

that he is capable of manifesting.<sup>69</sup> The madness epidemic of Canudos simply illuminated this most basic component of the *sertanejo* psyche: “the secret of the bravery and the fanatic dedication of the *jagunços*, who, in fact, were fighting for their king and for their faith.”<sup>70</sup>

Rodrigues contrasts the vigorously belligerent *jagunço* to the “*mestiço* of the coast”—most often the product “of the simple crossing of anthropologically disparate races,” whereby the *mestiço* quickly degenerates due to an inability to harmonize with the exigencies of a “superior civilization.”<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the savage qualities of the *jagunço* are not “peculiar to the troops of Antonio Conselheiro” and thus, if subjected to the pathological conditions suffered by the Canudenses, the *mestiços* of the coast are equally capable of exhibiting the savagery of their *sertanejo* counterparts.<sup>72</sup> Accordingly, there is nothing that suggests—as Robert Levine and Dain Borges do—that Rodrigues’ physiognomic diagnosis of Antonio Conselheiro’s skull as a “*normal*” *mestiço* skull, utterly lacking in aberrations, contradicts his conclusion that he suffered from a “chronic delirium of a systematic evolution.”<sup>73</sup> For Rodrigues, every *mestiço* is a pathological monstrosity, and thus a “*normal*” *mestiço* skull is every bit as degenerate as one that displays the “atavistic abnormalities of fanaticism.”<sup>74</sup>

Rodrigues’ lawless *jagunço* therefore perfectly inverted the republican attributes of the imagined community that gazed upon the *sertão* through the lens of Comtean

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<sup>69</sup> “...convicções monarchicas...” Ibid., 139-141.

<sup>70</sup> “...o segredo da bravura e da dedicação fanatizada dos jagunços que, de facto, se batiam pelo seu rei e pela sua fé.” Ibid., 144.

<sup>71</sup> “...mestiço do littoral...do simples cruzamento de raças anthropologicamente muito diferentes...civilização superior...” Ibid., 137.

<sup>72</sup> “...peculiaris ás tropas de Antonio Conselheiro...delirio chronico de evolução systematica.” Ibid., 139.

<sup>73</sup> Rodrigues, *As collectividades anormaes*, 131-133. See Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 207-208; and Borges,

“‘Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert,’” 242-243.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

progress in 1897. As both an artifact and product of Brazil's prolonged existence in the backwards theological stage, the *mestiço* of the *sertão*'s degeneration and eventual annihilation is a natural process—a by-product of Spencerian Evolution. The events leading up to the final destruction of Canudos serve only to reify all of Rodrigues' conclusions concerning the *mestiços* of Serrinha, limiting all *mestiços* to a degenerative binary of *sertão/litoral*. They can regress into insane *jagunços* or they can be slowly crushed by the exigencies of civilization, but their degeneration and extinction is inevitable; it is impossible for these monstrous anomalies to progress *and* live. Hence Antonio Conselheiro is, according to Rodrigues, a madman; his actions lead to the degeneration of tens of thousands of *sertanejos* into *jagunços* and their deaths at the hands of republican forces, yet this sequence of events ultimately contributes to Brazilian *progress*. Conselheiro is at all times guided by Evolution, as are all great leaders who act in the favor of progress.<sup>75</sup> Finally, the relative degree of progress—effected on the coast via the intelligence of its pseudo-Aryan inhabitants, thereby lacking in the backlands due to the prevalence of inferior racial stocks—is relative to the Spencerian heterogeneity of each civilization. The environment of either locale has no bearing in Rodrigues' scientifically legitimate diagnoses concerning *mestiços*, *jagunços*, or Antonio Conselheiro.

### Euclides da Cunha: Apocalyptic Chimeras, Pathological Positivists

“We are predestined to the formation of a historic race in the distant future, as long as the time of our autonomous national life endures to permit it. We invert, in this respect, the *natural* order of things. Our biological revolution requires the guarantee of our social evolution. We are condemned to civilization.

Either we progress or we disappear. The assertion is infallible.”

—Euclides da Cunha, 1902.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> See above, chap. 1, 5.

<sup>76</sup> “*Predestinamo-nos à formação de uma raça histórica em futuro remoto, se o permitir dilatado tempo de vida nacional autônoma. Invertemos, sob este aspecto, a ordem natural dos fatos. A nossa evolução*

On March 14 and July 17 of 1897, Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909) published two articles regarding Canudos, both of which were titled “Our Vendée,” in the ardently republican *O Estado São Paulo*.<sup>77</sup> The first article, instigated by the disastrous defeat of the third expedition against Canudos, is a geographical treatise on the Bahian *sertão*, while the second comprises a series of analyses and suggestions concerning the actions of the fourth and final expedition against the *sertanejos*. Within both articles one is able to discern “the embryo of *Os Sertões*,” yet, as indicated by Walnice Nogueira Galvão, Da Cunha at all times adheres to the general trends of the Brazilian press of 1897 concerning Canudos: “the sertanejo is still an unknown, to whom is applied a comfortable stereotype—he is ‘the enemy’—and the Brazilian soldier is still the hero.”<sup>78</sup> Neither of these articles were eyewitness accounts, and they reflect the personality of the same vehemently republican positivist who was expelled from the *Academia Militar* in November of 1888 for insulting the War Minister.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, contrary to an assertion by Robert Levine,<sup>80</sup> Da Cunha originally chose to title the articles “Our Vendée” due to the similarities he saw amongst the ostensibly monarchist revolt of the *jagunços* and the French counter-revolutionary forces seeking the restoration of the *Ancien Régime* in

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*biológica reclama a garantia da evolução social. Estamos condenados à civilização. Ou progredimos, ou desaparecemos. A afirmativa é segura.*” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 149-150. Emphasis mine.

<sup>77</sup> Euclides da Cunha, “A nossa Vendéia,” in *OC*, II, 605-612.

<sup>78</sup> “...o embrião de *Os Sertões*. ...o sertanejo ainda é uma incognita à qual se aplica um reconfortante estereótipo—ele é ‘o inimigo’—e o soldado brasileiro ainda é o herói.” Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 69-70.

<sup>79</sup> See Celso Castro, *Os militares e a República: Um estudo sobre cultura e ação política* (Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar, 1995), 146-149.

<sup>80</sup> See Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 20: “Da Cunha was no apologist for the military...publish[ing] two successive articles under the same title...referring to the appalling slaughter of rural promonarchy stalwarts following the French Revolution...”

1793.<sup>81</sup>

Figure 10



**Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909), 1906.  
Anonymous studio photograph.**

Courtesy of Museu da Imagem e do Som de São Paulo.<sup>82</sup>

In any case, the success of these two articles compelled the publisher of *O Estado* to send Da Cunha to the *sertão* to observe the actions of the fourth expedition led by General Arthur Oscar de Andrade Guimarães. The diary Da Cunha maintained throughout his venture into the *sertão*, particularly his entries dated following the military's completion of its siege lines on September 24, demonstrate the conflation of sentiments—from ardent patriot, to objective journalist, to horrified observer—that

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<sup>81</sup> Galvão, *Gatos de outro saco*, 68-69. Dain Borges agress. See Borges, "Euclides da Cunha's View," 30.

<sup>82</sup> Available at: <http://www.cmcantagalo.rj.gov.br/imagens/fotos/euclidesdacunha.gif> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:40pm.



characterizes much of *Os Sertões*.<sup>83</sup> Together with other reporters and soldiers, Da Cunha witnessed “the inhabitants of Canudos being burned alive; they saw bodies in flames, [and] observed women with their children around their neck, shot down in the fire.”<sup>84</sup> The “educated sector” (*setor ilustrado*) of Brazil keenly felt the “*trauma*” of the end of the war, whereby the dead Canudenses “were turned into humans and compatriots.”<sup>85</sup> *Os Sertões* is thus an effort on Da Cunha’s part to understand the “fanatic” motivations of both the *jagunços* and the representatives of *ordem e progresso*, of atavists and republicans. It is, above all, a text that welds coast to *sertão*; it does not instantiate Levine’s “*visão do litoral*.”<sup>86</sup>

### ***Syngenism and Struggle: The Ethnology of Brazil***

*Os Sertões* is comprised of eight books, the first two of which, “The Land” (*A Terra*) and “Man” (*O Homem*) individually expand upon the two parts of “Our Vendée.” Although “The Land” is geological in its impetus, Da Cunha comes quite close to anthropomorphizing the *sertão*. The region Bahia encompasses is itself a kind of geological *mestiço*, within which “discordant stratifications” intertwine in order to form “the variable features of the physiognomy of the land.”<sup>87</sup> Along the coast, east of the Grão Mogul mountain range, the *Recôncavo* exceeds even the “inspired extravagances of Buckle” in terms of fecundity.<sup>88</sup> The lushness of this area is misleading, however, for once the traveler crosses the “capricious” and “cyclopean” Grão Moguls, he arrives at

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<sup>83</sup> Da Cunha, *Canudos (Diário de uma expedição)*, OC, II, 519-600, here 579-601.

<sup>84</sup> “...os habitantes de Canudos serem incinerados, viram corpos em chamas, viram mulheres com os filhos no colo se atirando no incêndio.” Galvão. *Gatos de outro saco*, 78.

<sup>85</sup> “*Mortos, tornam-se humanos e compatriotas.*” Ibid., 78-79.

<sup>86</sup> See Levine, *Vale of Tears*, 17-18.

<sup>87</sup> “...estratificações discordantes...os traços variáveis da fisionomia da terra.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 102.

<sup>88</sup> “...extravagâncias geniais de Buckle...” Ibid.

“the entrance to the *sertão*.”<sup>89</sup> This desolate “gap” (*hiato*) referred to as the “*Terra Ignota*” (Unknown Lands), a geographical expanse roughly the size of “Holland,” stands apart from both time and civilization, for

None settled there. None could settle [there]. The strange territory, less than forty leagues from the ancient metropole [i.e., Salvador], was predestined to traverse the four hundred years of our history, absolutely forgotten...nor was it changed, later, [by] civilization...[for] the structural conditions there are bound with a maximum of violence [exerted] by the external agents...preparing scenarios in which are predominantly emphasized the tormented aspect of the landscapes...[it is] the martyrdom of the land, brutally lashed by the variable elements bestowed upon it by all the climactic modalities.”<sup>90</sup>

Here, in the northern backlands, “the morphology of the earth violates the general laws of climates,” causing Nature to delight “in a game of antitheses,” moving seamlessly “from extreme aridity to extreme exuberance.”<sup>91</sup> Man’s initial and continuing impact on the area has served only to exacerbate the climatological pathology of the region. Via his slash-and-burn agriculture along the borders of the *sertão*—before, during, and after the colonial era—the Brazilian has perennially collaborated “with the meteorological elements.”<sup>92</sup> Hence the land was “transmuted and aggravated by him,” whereby “man became a maleficent component amongst the forces by which the climate was

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<sup>89</sup> “...caprichosos...ciclóticos...A entrada do sertão.” Ibid., 104-105, 106.

<sup>90</sup> “Nenhuma lá se fixou. Não se podia fixar. O estranho território, a menos de quarenta léguas da antiga metrópole, destinava-se a atravessar absolutamente esquecido os quatrocentos anos da nossa história... Não a variou, mais tarde, [a] civilização... As condições estruturais da terra lá se vincularam à violência máxima dos agentes exteriores... dispendo-se em cenários em que ressalta predominante, o aspecto atormentado das paisagens... o martírio da terra, brutalmente golpeada pelos elementos variáveis, distribuídos por todas as modalidades climáticas.” Ibid., 106-107, 108, 111.

<sup>91</sup> “...a morfologia da terra viola as leis gerais dos clima...compraz-se em um jogo de antitheses...Da extrema aridez à exuberância extrema.” Ibid., 135, 136-137.

<sup>92</sup> “...com os elementos meteorológicos.” Ibid., 137-139.

demolished.”<sup>93</sup> Other regions of the Earth, including portions of Australia and the Central Asian steppes, exhibit a similar breach in the natural laws, yet it is only in the “*singular*” *sertão* that the land has undergone a “regressive evolution” (*uma evolução regressiva*).<sup>94</sup> Geologic time has reversed and stagnated in this “shapeless pile of ruined mountains” wherein “the remains of Pliocene fauna” lie exposed, offering mute testimony to the incompatibility of the “dolorous” northern backlands with civilization.<sup>95</sup>

Thus the Bahian *sertão*, as Da Cunha portrays it, operates as a Comtean frontier; an ontological borderlands instantiating positivist pathology, wherein the natural laws are inverted only through man’s agency. It does not, however, instantiate “something magical mixed in with the science.”<sup>96</sup> Rather it is man’s ignorance of the natural laws and his interactions with a morphology that violates climatological laws without his agency which has regressively evolved the land. The discursive practice of positivism is, however, wholly contingent upon the absolutism of all natural laws—above all those macrocosmic laws pertaining to the relations of astral bodies and climatology, laws *deduced* both prior to and as a direct result of the efforts of Comte.<sup>97</sup> Thus although he has always lacked positive knowledge of the natural laws, the Brazilian has nonetheless, manipulated them, if only inadvertently. These macrocosmic laws, by definition, affect *all* natural phenomena; from ethereal forces to the social organization of human societies.<sup>98</sup> Hence, as a result of his own misguided ecological efforts, the Brazilian has

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<sup>93</sup> “...transmudou-o, agravando-o...o homem fez-se uma componente nefasta entre as forças daquele clima demolidor.” Ibid., 140.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>95</sup> “...informe amontado de montanhas derruídas...os restos da fauna pliocena... dolorosa...” Ibid., 114, 115, 137.

<sup>96</sup> Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View,” 33.

<sup>97</sup> See above, chap. 1, 6-7.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

subjected the *sertanejos* to a “martyrdom” (*martírio*) equivalent to that of the land: “it is a reflection of a greater torture, more extensive, comprising the general economy of Life. It is born from the age-old martyrdom of the land.”<sup>99</sup> Still, generalized devolution is a positive absurdity. The regression of both *sertanejo* and *sertão* therefore constitutes an evolution: it is a rationally pathological progression. Finally, since pathology/monstrosity instantiate *différance*—functioning as the other that *must* be natural in order to reify the “normal” in a Comtean/ Darwinian/Spencerian framework by expanding the chasm separating the normative from the ontologically liminal<sup>100</sup>—the progress of Brazil is contingent upon the gradual elimination of the monstrous *sertão* and its denizens by the forces of equilibration. That is, the destruction of Da Cunha’s *sertanejos* by the forces of *ordem e progresso*, a myopic version of the positivist apocalypse, is necessary for Brazil to progress as a whole.

Da Cunha opens “Man” by engaging with existing scholarship, including that of Nina Rodrigues, concerning the attributes and effects of miscegenation. As I suggested above,<sup>101</sup> Da Cunha follows the ethnological framework of Ludwig Gumplowicz to refute the theories of other Brazilian intellectuals, including Nina Rodrigues. Hence his opening remarks deny the utility of a Spencerian approach to *mestiço* analysis, for “restricted to the influences that, in varying degrees, are exchanged by the three ethnic elements, the genesis of the *mestiço* races of Brazil is a problem which will, for a long

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<sup>99</sup> “...é reflexo de tortura maior, mais ampla, abrangendo a economia geral da Vida.” Da Cunha. *Os Sertões*, 143.

<sup>100</sup> See above, 48.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 100-101.

time, defy the [collective] effort of the *best* minds.”<sup>102</sup> After deriding the counterfactual efforts of Brazilian anthropologists to demonstrate the autochthonous origins of the indigenous “*Homo americanus*,” Da Cunha relates the primary characteristics of the three fundamental Brazilian ethnic elements:

...[1] “the indigenous element...our forest-dwellers...the Tupi...with their scintillating anthropological characteristics...evanescent types of the old [pre-Columbian] races of our land”...[2] “the African branch...*Homo afer* [lit., bearing-man or carrying-man], son of the scorched and barbaric lands, wherein Natural Selection, more than any other land, is engendered via the intensive exercise of ferocity and force...[3] “the aristocratic factor of our *gens*; [it] has always characterized the Portuguese...in spite of the complicated amalgam from which it emerges...”<sup>103</sup>

These three ethnicities, the Tupi, the African, and the Portuguese, constitute the “essential elements” (*elementos essenciais*) of Da Cunha’s study: each represents an imperfect generalization, an ill-defined Comtean “social organism.”<sup>104</sup> Thus he acknowledges that the architectonics of these elements—their polygenetic origins and the “intermediary phases” of ethnic amalgamation that gave rise to these ethnicities “under the influences...of diverse climates”—must remain beyond the scope of *Os Sertões*.<sup>105</sup>

Race for Da Cunha, in the manner of Gumpłowicz, is historical and dynamic; a wholly contextual social fact. The three essential ethnicities are not the heterogeneous

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<sup>102</sup> “*Adstrita às influências que mutuam, em graus variáveis, três elementos étnicos, a gênese das raças mestiças do Brasil é um problema que por muito tempo ainda desafiará o esforço dos melhores espíritos.*” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 145. Emphasis mine.

<sup>103</sup> “...o elemento indígena... os nossos silvícolas... os tupis...com seus frisantes caracteres antropológicos... tipos evanescentes de velhas raças autóctones da nossa terra... o ramo africano... *homo afer*, filho das paragens adustas e bárbaras, onde a seleção natural, mais que em quaisquer outras, se faz pelo exercício intensivo da ferocidade e da força... o fator aristocrático de nossa *gens*, o português... malgrado o complicado caldeamento de onde emerge, de todo caracterizado.” Ibid., 146.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 146-147. See above, chap. 1, 10-11.

<sup>105</sup> “...fases intermédias...sob os influxos...de diversos climas...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 146-147.

races—social facts masking as positive brute facts—upon which the totality of Rodrigues’ conclusions rest.<sup>106</sup> Rather they are the most basic elements that Da Cunha is willing to utilize; amorphous progenitors that function as positive constituents only because each has contributed to the genealogy of Da Cunha’s Brazilians. Accordingly, the characteristics of their *mestiço* progeny are variable and unpredictable. The miscegenation of any two of the three ethnic elements never produces perfectly equilibrated

binary combinations, through an immediate fusion in which their characteristics are juxtaposed or summarized, unified and converging into an intermediate type. On the contrary...the initial elements are not condensed, nor are they unified; they are distributed; originating an equal number of subformations—replacing themselves with derivatives, without any reduction, in a muddled miscegenation, among which the mulatto, the *mameluco* or *curiboca*, and the *cafuso* stand out as the most characteristic products...And the study of these subcategories is substituted for that of the elementary races, rendering it increasingly difficult, as one considers that these comprise, in turn, innumerable modalities consonant with the variable portions of blood.”<sup>107</sup>

Nevertheless, Gumpłowicz’s singular law of history, “the perpetual struggle of the races,” requires that at an unfathomably remote point in the future will be produced a perfectly equilibrated *mestiço*, the first truly heterogeneous race—contradictorily rendered thus

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<sup>106</sup> See above, 87.

<sup>107</sup> “...às combinações binárias, numa fusão imediata em que se justaponham ou se resumam os seus caracteres, unificados e convergentes num tipo intermediário. Ao contrário ...os elementos iniciais não se resumem, não se unificam; desdobram-se; originam número igual de subformações — substituindo-se pelos derivados, sem redução alguma, em uma mestiçagem embaralhada onde se destacam como produtos mais característicos o mulato, o mameluco ou curiboca e o cafuz...E o estudo destas subcategorias substitui o das raças elementares agravando-o e dificultando-o, desde que se considere que aquelas comportam, por sua vez, inúmeras modalidades consoante as dosagens variáveis do sangue.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 147. According to Da Cunha, “[mulattos are] the products of the black and the white; [mamelucos/curibocas are products] of the white and the Tupi...[and cafusos are products] of the Tupi and the black” (*Respectivamente, produtos do negro e do branco; do branco e do tupi; ...do tupi e do negro*). *Ibid.*, 147, n. 9.

through the final homogenization of all ethnicities.<sup>108</sup> Applying this theory in the context of Brazil, Da Cunha foresees that Brazilians are “predestined to the formation of a historic race in the distant future.”<sup>109</sup> So long as Brazil maintains an “autonomous national life” (*vida nacional autônoma*), Brazilian progress will ultimately incarnate itself in the form of the “Brazilian” race (*o brasileiro*): “theoretically he would be the *pardo* type, in whom converge the successive crossings of the mulatto, the *curiboca*, and the *cafuso*.”<sup>110</sup> At present, however, the extremely diverse “climatological and historical circumstances” of Brazil seem to have relegated such a being to the realm of “wistful metachemistry.”<sup>111</sup>

Da Cunha thereby distances himself from Spencer’s binary of the civilized European and savage/lower races and, even more forcefully, from Nina Rodrigues. Rather than consigning the *mestiço* to a future of degeneration and/or death, torn asunder by the forces of progress, Da Cunha anoints the tripartite *mestiço* as the supreme embodiment of Brazilian progress. Da Cunha reinforces this “infallible” assertion by once more following Gumpłowicz, mirroring the unmatched ethnic diversity of the Brazilian people with the diversity of its climate.<sup>112</sup> Defining a climate as “the physiological translation of a geographic condition,” Da Cunha elaborates upon his earlier description of the *sertão*, concluding that the *entire* climate of Brazil is “subject to its geographical features” and thus cannot be categorized according to standard

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<sup>108</sup> See above, 96-98.

<sup>109</sup> “*Predestinamo-nos à formação de uma raça histórica em futuro remoto...*” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 149.

<sup>110</sup> “*Teoricamente ele seria o pardo, para que convergem os cruzamentos do mulato, do curiboca e do cafuz.*” Ibid., 147-148, 149.

<sup>111</sup> “*...circunstâncias mesológica e histórica...metaquímica sonhadora...*” Ibid., 148.

<sup>112</sup> “*A afirmativa é segura.*” Ibid., 150.

climatological criteria, since it “violates the general laws that regulate it.”<sup>113</sup> Mirroring its populace, Brazil’s meteorology is

subdivided into three clearly distinct zones: the frankly tropical, which extends from the states of the north to the south of Bahia...the temperate, [extending] from São Paulo to the Rio Grande, through Paraná and Santa Catarina...[and] the subtropical, extending itself from through the center and north of some states, from Minas to Paraná.”<sup>114</sup>

Predictably, each of these “distinct habitats” contains within itself “disparate modalities, which diversify them further.”<sup>115</sup> After reiterating his dolorous description of the *sertão*, Da Cunha relates that the temperate southern plains demonstrate a Bucklerian “manageability of nature” on par with southern Europe, while, by contrast, in Mato Grosso “all the savage impressiveness, all the inconceivable exuberance, united in the maximum brutality of elements...meet the exaggerations of Buckle.”<sup>116</sup> Da Cunha thus agrees with Buckle’s assessment concerning the “*sui generis* pathology...of the Amazonian regions”: it “depresses and exhausts” human physiology, engendering “continuous decay” ( ) that leads only to “a regressive evolution” (*uma evolução regressiva*) in the offspring of those foreigners who refuse to mix with the indigenous inhabitants.<sup>117</sup> Thus Buckle’s error was to apply this single generalization to the whole of Brazil, not his assessment of the tropics per se. In any case, Da Cunha clearly demonstrates that via the sustained nature of its “various climactic aspects,” all of which

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<sup>113</sup> “...a tradução fisiológica de uma condição geográfica...subordinado aos facies [sic] geográficos...viola as leis gerais que o regulam.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 150.

<sup>114</sup> “...subdividem em três zonas claramente distintas: a francamente tropical, que se expande pelos Estados do Norte ao sul da Bahia...a temperada, de S. Paulo ao Rio Grande, pelo Paraná e Santa Catarina...[e] a subtropical, alongando-se pelo Centro e Norte de alguns Estados, de Minas ao Paraná.” Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> “...habitats distintos ...despontam modalidades, que ainda os diversificam. Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> “Toda a imponência selvagem, toda a exuberância inconceptível, unidas à brutalidade máxima dos elementos... balanceia os exageros de Buckle.” Ibid., 151-152. See also above, 58-61.

<sup>117</sup> “...patologia sui generis...das paragens amazonenses... deprime e exaure...esvaecimento continuo...” Ibid., 156-157.



adhere to “the periodic character immanent in the inviolable natural laws,” Brazil functions as an ecological macrocosm unto itself.<sup>118</sup>

During the early colonial period the climatological disparities between the “Norte” (with its fertile, litoral Recôncavo and its desolate backlands) and the “Sul” (with its temperate, quasi-European agriculture) brought about dramatic differences in the development and miscegenation of their relative inhabitants.<sup>119</sup> Accordingly the *mameluco* “Paulista,” a category of *mestiço* encompassing “the sons of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and the southern regions,” emerged from the “progressive” and “heterogeneous” society of the South.<sup>120</sup> By contrast—indeed, the “greatest contrast in our history”—the “amorphous...sparse and incoherent captaincies” of the North languished “without a clear objective,” and the “three formative races” (*três raças formadoras*) remained “completely divorced from one another.”<sup>121</sup> The seventeenth century *bandeiras* of the Paulistas thus instantiate the progress engendered by an optimum confluence of environment and miscegenation, for

this admirable movement reflects the influence of climatological conditions...in the south the vital force in the temperament of those who came by breaking the obdurate sea remained, not wasted in an enervating climate [i.e., the north]; it had a new component in the strength of the earth; not dispersed through difficult adaptations [necessary in the tropics/backlands]. Altered, improved...a strange populace of rebellious *mestiços*, spreading other tendencies, guided by other purposes, resolutely treading forth.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> “...vários aspectos climáticos...a feição periódica imanente às leis naturais invioláveis...” Ibid., 156.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>120</sup> “...os filhos do Rio de Janeiro, Minas, São Paulo e regiões do Sul...progressista...heterogêneo...” Ibid., 157-158.

<sup>121</sup> “...contraste maior na nossa história...amorfas...capitanias esparsas e incoerentes...sem objetivo certo...de todo desquitadas entre si...” Ibid., 158, 160.

<sup>122</sup> “Este movimento admirável reflete o influxo das condições mesológicas... no Sul a força viva restante no temperamento dos que vinham de romper o mar imoto não se delia num clima enervante; tinha nova

Lacking “a physical environment which equipped him with an equal amount of physical energies,” the northerner’s concurrent attempts at *entradas* into the interior were turned back by “Nature” itself.<sup>123</sup> The “advent of different subraces” in Brazil is therefore contingent upon the “particular diversity of the conditions for adaptation,” for the “body in fusion” (*corpo em fusão*) is easily influenced by the milieu within which it is produced.<sup>124</sup> Above all then, the efflorescence of ethnic diversity in Brazil exemplifies Gumpowicz’s Struggle for Existence, whereby Nature produces physiological diversity by means of the influences exerted by geographical situation and heredity, thus eliminating the possibility that “races” could ever have been architectonic.<sup>125</sup> In Da Cunha’s Brazil, this process is a reciprocating cycle, within which the ethnic elements of *mestiços* manifest in varying degrees in order to best adapt them to a specific habitat, which they in turn alter to best suit their needs, thereby altering their offspring even further, in accordance with the natural laws of the positive cosmos. Hence in Bahia the fecundity of the *Recôncavo* inevitably resulted in the cultivation of sugarcane and the extensive importation of African slaves.<sup>126</sup> This at once “liberated the indigenous” from the coast and “determined the oblivion of the backlands” ensuring the numerical dominance, amongst *mestiços*, of the *mulatto* on the coast and the *curiboca* in the *sertão*, since “the white element” remained the “common denominator” in both areas.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless, the “genesis of the *sertanejo* population” was not complete; further

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*componente na própria força da terra; não se dispersava em adaptações difíceis. — Alterava-se, melhorando... Um povo estranho de mestiços levantadiços, expandindo outras tendências, norteados por outros destinos, pisando, resoluto, em demanda de outros rumos, bulas e alvarás entibiadores.” Ibid., 159.*

<sup>123</sup> “...um meio físico que o blindasse de igual soma de energias...natureza...” Ibid., 160.

<sup>124</sup> “...advento de sub-raças diferentes...própria diversidade das condições de adaptação...” Ibid., 161.

<sup>125</sup> See above, 94-95.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>127</sup> “...libertando o indígena...determinara o olvido dos Sertões...o elemento branco... denominador comum...” Ibid.

development was required to develop the unmatched “originality” in this population’s physiological and psychological composition.<sup>128</sup> *Sertanejo* genealogy begins with the “extraordinary” (*extraordinário*) *mameluco* Paulistas of the seventeenth century, some of whom led *entradas* into the *sertão* and remained, “crossbreeding” (*cruzamento*) with indigenous women to produce “a race of pure *curibocas*.”<sup>129</sup> The Jesuits, who had penetrated the *sertão* prior to the arrival of the Paulistas, found allies in these *mameluco bandeirantes*—the goals of both were limited to “wealth” (*riqueza*), “power” (*poderio*), and integration.<sup>130</sup> This population avoided the decadent “degeneration” (*degeneração*) of the Paulistas who remained in the South, and thus

there was established...evolving in a closed circle over three centuries...a lavish populace, in which the aborigine stood out, amalgamating with the white and the black...forgotten in a corner of the backlands [it] remained there until this day, reproducing itself, free of extraneous elements, insulated, and therefore carrying out the maximum intensity of the uniform crossbreeding capable of justifying the appearance of a well-defined, complete *mestiço* type...[for] the man of the *sertão* seems to have been fashioned from a single mold, revealing nearly identical physical characteristics, varying slightly from the bronze *mameluco* to the swarthy *cafuso*...and expressing the same moral characteristics through the same superstitions, the same vices, the same virtues.<sup>131</sup>

Consequently, unlike any of his fellow Brazilian *mestiços*, Da Cunha’s “*sertanejo* of the

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<sup>128</sup> “...gênese da população sertanejo...originalidade...” Ibid., 166.

<sup>129</sup> “...uma raça de *curibocas puros*...” Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 172-173.

<sup>131</sup> “...se estabeleceu...evolvendo em círculo apertado durante três séculos...um farto povoamento, em que sobressaía o aborígine amalgamando-se ao branco e ao negro...perdida num recanto dos sertões lá permaneceu até agora, reproduzindo-se livre de elementos estranhos, como que insulada, e realizando, por isso mesmo, a máxima intensidade de cruzamento uniforme capaz de justificar o aparecimento de um tipo *mestiço* bem definido, completo... o homem do *sertão* parece feito por um molde único, revelando quase os mesmos caracteres físicos, a mesma tez, variando brevemente do *mameluco* bronzeado ao *cafuz trigueiro*...e os mesmos caracteres morais traduzindo-se nas mesmas superstições. nos mesmos vícios, e nas mesmas virtudes.” Ibid., 169-170, 174-176.

north is, unequivocally, a type of an already constituted ethnic subcategory.”<sup>132</sup>

Before further elucidating the characteristics of the *sertanejo*, Da Cunha summarizes the accepted views, derived from Spencer and developed by Rodrigues, concerning the effects of miscegenation in a short section entitled “An Irritating Parenthesis.”<sup>133</sup> Failing to properly contextualize this section, in *Black into White* Thomas Skidmore quotes an extensive passage—including Da Cunha’s description of the *mestiço* as a “hyphen between the races”—drawn from it, concluding that

Euclides wrote what he revealingly called an ‘irritating parenthesis’...where he repeated the indictment of mixed blood which can be found in European sociologists such as Gumpłowicz and Lapouge...like most of his contemporaries, Euclides lacked a satisfactory definition of race; each of which had distinguishing characteristics...the danger arose when races mixed. Such mixture produced personal and social instability...Brazil thus faced the gravest of all racial problems: large-scale miscegenation...<sup>134</sup>

Skidmore mistakenly conflates Da Cunha’s usage of the term “parenthesis” (an “explanatory aside”) with his usage of “hyphen”—“a small connecting link.”<sup>135</sup> In tandem, he conflates Gumpłowicz and Lapouge, which is wholly incorrect.<sup>136</sup> Worse, and this is perhaps understandable—given the thus far unchallenged acceptance of Edgar Roquette-Pinto’s misguided analysis of *Os Sertões*,<sup>137</sup> Gilberto Freyre’s quite literal

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>133</sup> “*Um parêntesis irritante*.” Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>134</sup> Skidmore, *Black into White*, 107-108.

<sup>135</sup> OED, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “parenthesis,” s.v. “hyphen.”

<sup>136</sup> See above, 88-89.

<sup>137</sup> See Edgar Roquette Pinto, “Euclides da Cunha, Naturalista,” in Idem, *Seixos rolados (estudos brasileiros)* (Rio de Janeiro: Mendonça, Machado & C, 1927), 263-301. See also Skidmore, *Black into White*, 187-188, for a summary of Roquette-Pinto’s assertions concerning *Os Sertões*. A similar view was recently expressed in: Dain Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View of Brazil’s Fractured Identity,” 33.

interpretation of “An Irritating Parenthesis,”<sup>138</sup> and its subsequent reiteration by Samuel Putnam<sup>139</sup> (three scholars who seem to have overlooked Da Cunha’s penchant for sarcasm when engaging with Spencerian evolutionism and its adherents<sup>140</sup>)—Skidmore does not include the final passage of the section, in which Da Cunha problematizes Spencerian notions concerning the ahistorical nature of race:

Such are the *inviolable* laws of the development of the species; yet if all the *subtlety* of the missionaries was powerless to attach to the mind of the savage the simplest concepts of a *superior* mental state; if there are no forces to compel the African, entrusted to the *solicitude* of the *best* masters, to approach at least the average intellectual level of the Indo-European—since every man is above all an integration of efforts of the race, a heritage to which his brain appertains—how then does one comprehend the normality of the anthropological type which appears, suddenly, fashioned from such *contrary* tendencies?”<sup>141</sup>

Moreover, Da Cunha follows this section with “A Strong Race” (*Uma raça forte*) wherein, he explicitly contradicts the “inviolable” laws elaborated in “An Irritating Parenthesis”:

The observation of the *sertanejo* of the north, however, demonstrates an attenuation of this antagonism of tendencies and a quasi-fixity in the physiological characteristics of the emergent

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<sup>138</sup> See Gilberto Freyre, *Atualidade de Euclides da Cunha; conferência lida no salão de conferências da biblioteca do Ministério das relações exteriores do Brasil, no dia 29 de outubro de 1940* (Rio de Janeiro: Edição de Casa do estudante do Brasil, 1941).

<sup>139</sup> See Da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, 84-85, n. 64.

<sup>140</sup> See above, 32, 48-49, 122. Dain Borges is guilty of this as well, a fact that likely stems from his citing of Frederic Amory’s articles for Da Cunha’s positivist framework. See Borges, ‘Euclides da Cunha’s View,’ 31, 41, n. 9. Borges’ conflation of “retrograde” with “degenerate” likely stems from the same source. *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>141</sup> “É que são invioláveis as leis do desenvolvimento das espécies; e se toda a sutileza dos missionários tem sido impotente para afeiçoar o espírito do selvagem às mais simples concepções de um estado mental superior; se não há esforços que consigam do africano, entregue à solicitude dos melhores mestres, o aproximar-se sequer do nível intelectual médio do indo-europeu — porque todo o homem é antes de tudo uma integração de esforços da raça a que pertence e o seu cérebro uma herança —, como compreender-se a normalidade do tipo antropológico que aparece, de improviso, enfeixando tendências tão opostas?” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 177. Emphases mine.

type. This fact, which seemingly contradicts the previous lines, is their clear counterproof.”<sup>142</sup>

Hence the “abnormal character of the *mestiços* from very different races” results from the “accommodation” of whichever “ethnic element” predominates in order to best adapt the *mestiço* to the principal “conditions of life.”<sup>143</sup> Thus, for example, when the *sertanejo* is confronted with “the intellectual and moral overload of a civilization, his disequilibrium is inevitable.”<sup>144</sup> The “incoherent, uneven, and indignant nature of the *mestiço*” does not, therefore, constitute a degenerative state; on the contrary, it “denotes an intimate and intense effort to eliminate the attributes which impede him in a life within a more advanced and complex environment.”<sup>145</sup> Every *mestiço* thus embodies a microcosmic adaptation to his environment, mirroring the macrocosmic adaptation of multivalent Brazilian *mestiços* to their equivalently variable environment, thereby instantiating the “impressive and eternal struggle characterized by the beautiful axiom of Gumplowicz as the *force motrice* of History.”<sup>146</sup> *Mestiços* are thus at once the heralds and servants of progress; intermediate types driven by Gumplowicz’s ahistorical natural force of “syngenism.”<sup>147</sup> Since syngenism at once facilitates the sentiment of solidarity amongst social/ethnic groups and drives them to dominate and incorporate other

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<sup>142</sup>“*Entretanto a observação cuidadosa do sertanejo do Norte mostra atenuado esse antagonismo de tendências e uma quase fixidez nos caracteres fisiológicos do tipo emergente. Este fato, que contrabate, ao parecer, as linhas anteriores, é a sua contraprova frisante.*” Ibid., 177. Putnam’s translation is, predictably, somewhat incomprehensible: “Meanwhile, painstaking observation of the man of the north shows a distinct attenuation of this interplay of antagonistic tendencies and almost a fixation with regard to the physiological characteristics of the emergent type. This fact, which would appear to contradict what has just been said above, affords on the contrary the most striking counterproof of these assertions.” Da Cunha, *Rebellion in the Backlands*, 86-87.

<sup>143</sup> “...a feição anormal dos mestiços de raças mui diversas...acomodação...elemento étnico...condições de vida...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 177.

<sup>144</sup> “...sobrecarga intelectual e moral de uma civilização, o desequilíbrio é inevitável.” Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> “...índole incoerente, desigual e revolta do mestiço...denota um íntimo e intenso esforço de eliminação dos atributos que lhe impedem a vida num meio mais adiantado e complexo.” Ibid., 177-178.

<sup>146</sup> “...luta comovedora e eterna caracterizada pelo belo axioma de Gumplowicz como a força motriz da História.” Ibid., 178.

<sup>147</sup> See above, 97-98.

social/ethnic groups, “the inevitable [Brazilian] mutations of the conflict” will endure, “imperceptible, spreading throughout the ages” until the final production of the perfectly equilibrated *mestiço*.<sup>148</sup> Consequently, “a strong race does not destroy the weak by means of arms; it crushes it by means of civilization”: dominating, amalgamating, and ultimately unifying with the weaker “*raça*” until yet another *mestiço* is produced.<sup>149</sup>

Indeed, it is the natural exigency of civilization that separates the *mestiço* of the backlands from his counterpart on the coast. The isolation of the *sertanejos* enabled the normally “inferior” (*inferiores*)<sup>150</sup> ethnic elements of the black and the Tupi to predominate, whereby the normally “preeminent” (*preeminente*) white element “transmitted to them the civilized tendencies without imposing civilization upon them.”<sup>151</sup> This permits the *sertanejo* to possess a singular “intimacy with the physical environment, which rather than weakening, toughens his powerful body, reflecting in his nature only those attributes most adaptable to his incipient social phase, gleaned from the other formative races.”<sup>152</sup> Accordingly, the key factors that distinguish “the miscegenation of the backlands from that of the coast,” fashioning their products into “distinct formations,” are not the ethnic elements, but “the conditions of the environment.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> “...os mutilados inevitáveis do conflito...imperceptível, pelo correr das idades...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 178.

<sup>149</sup> “...a *raça* forte não destrói a fraca pelas armas, esmaga-a pela civilização.” Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Note that this inferiority is in the context of Gumpłowicz’s *syngenism*—i.e., proportionately inferior in a *mestiço* compelled to adjust to the context of European civilization, a context that naturally permits the “white” element to predominate.

<sup>151</sup> “...transmitindo-lhes as tendências civilizadoras não lhes impôs a civilização.” Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> “...a *mestiçagem* dos sertões da do litoral...formações distintas...pelas condições do meio.” Ibid.

Figure 11



**General View of Canudos, September 1897**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=123> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:45pm.



Figure 12



**Canudense and Residence, September 1897**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>155</sup>

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Clearly, Brazilian miscegenation as illustrated by Da Cunha, regardless of habitat or ethnic composition, proceeds according to Gumpłowicz's *force motrice*—*Rassenkampf*—an architectonic natural law that, by means of its positivity, fashions every *mestiço* as an embodiment not of Spencerian degeneration, but of Comtean progress. Da Cunha's *sertão*, however, stands apart from any other Brazilian habitat, and from any other on Earth. The *sertanejo*'s antecedents' naive attempts at agriculture

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<sup>155</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=117> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:47pm.

resulted in an intensification of the violence already exerted by morphology upon the natural climatological laws. This total inversion of the natural laws thereafter maintained a primal climate of unmatched pathology, a regressive ecological evolution. Adapted to this environment the *mestiço* of the *sertão*, tautologically progressed by the pathology he haplessly renews and intensifies, is best understood as “a retrograde [type]; “he is not a degenerate.”<sup>156</sup> His general appearance as an enervated “*Hércules-Quasímodo*” simply instantiates the habitat against which he constantly struggles, for

he is the perennially enfeebled and exhausted warrior, perennially audacious and strong; always prepared for the *rencontre* which he will not win and in which he will not allow himself to be overcome; passing from the utmost quiescence to the most extreme agitation...he reflects, with these contradictory appearances, the peculiar habitat which surrounds him—passive before the play of elements and passing, without a discernible transition, from one season to another, from a major exuberance to the penury of the incendiary deserts...he is as inconstant as [Nature]. It is natural that he should be. To live is to adapt himself. She has carved him in her image: barbarous, impetuous, abrupt.”<sup>157</sup>

In addition to its penchant for these antitheses, the *sertanejo*’s physiology parallels the temporal reversal and stagnation of his milieu. Abandoned for three centuries to a life sustained by greedy *fazendeiros*,<sup>158</sup> these *pardo sertanejos* have had the time necessary to

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<sup>156</sup> “É um retrógrado; não é um degenerado.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 178.

<sup>157</sup> “É o batalhador perenemente combalido e exausto, perenemente audacioso e forte; preparando-se sempre para um encontro que não vence e em que se não deixa vencer; passando da máxima quietude à máxima agitação... Reflete, nestas aparências que se contrabatem, a própria natureza que o rodeia — passiva ante o jogo dos elementos e passando, sem transição sensível, de uma estação à outra, da maior exuberância à penúria dos desertos incendiados... É inconstante como ela. É natural que o seja. Viver é adaptar-se. Ela talhou-o à sua imagem: bárbaro, impetuoso, abrupto...” Ibid., 179-180, 182-183.

<sup>158</sup> “Like the opulent *seismeiros* of the colony” (*como os opulentos seismeiros da colônia*) the coast-dwelling *fazendeiros* “parasitically” (*parasitariamente*) enjoy the fiscal rewards generated by their “submissive servants... the *vaqueiros*” (*servos submissos...os vaqueiros*) who maintain their vast herds of cattle, unseen by the *fazendeiros*. Ibid., 185.

regressively evolve into an organically integral, heterogeneous ethnic element.<sup>159</sup> Hence this type reemerges, according to Da Cunha, in the late nineteenth-century, “complete and robust, immune to foreign mixtures, capable of evolving, differentiating itself, accommodating itself to newer and greater destinies, because it provides a solid physical base for later physical development.”<sup>160</sup>

### **Atavism and Fanaticism: Religiosity and Madness in Brazil**

Euclides da Cunha relies upon the work of Herbert Maudsley to elucidate the psychological composition of not only the *sertanejos*, the Canudenses, and/or Antonio Conselheiro, but of Brazilians in general—including those who took part in the war with Canudos, on either side, as well as the imagined community of litoral-dwelling, print capital consumers. His study of religiosity in the *sertão*, as we shall see, offers a stark contrast to Dain Borges’ characterization thereof as a means for Da Cunha to privilege “modern republican rationality” over its degenerate *sertanejo* counterpart.<sup>161</sup>

Da Cunha commences this analysis in the midst of his discourse concerning the *sertanejo* in “Man” with a section entitled “*Mestiço Religion*” (*Religião mestiça*). Due to his moribund, regressive evolution, the *sertanejo* remains

in a religious phase of an incomprehensible monotheism, permeated by extravagant mysticism, in which the fetishism of the Indian and of the African contravert one another. And the primitive man, audacious and strong, yet at the same time credulous, easily allows himself to be drawn to the most absurd superstitions...his religion is like him—*mestiço*...the fusion of distinct emotional

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid. See also 253.

<sup>160</sup> “...inteiriça e robusta, imune de estranhas mesclas, capaz de evolver, diferenciando-se, acomodando-se a novos e mais altos destinos. porque é a sólida base física do desenvolvimento moral ulterior.” Ibid., 179.

<sup>161</sup> Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View,” 38.

states.”<sup>162</sup>

This “miscegenation of beliefs” amalgamates the “savage’s anthropomorphism,” the “African’s animism,” and ““all the terrors of the Middle Ages [which] had crystallized in peninsular Catholicism’...during the epoch of discovery and colonization.”<sup>163</sup> Following Buckle and Maudsley, Da Cunha asserts that the latter component, “a notable case of historical atavism,” constitutes an ahistorical symptom of unparalleled Portuguese degeneration: the “apex of a complete moral disequilibrium.”<sup>164</sup> This moral disequilibrium, replete with “insane messiahs...devoted to martyrdom,” traversed three centuries in the *sertão*, remaining “exact, complete, [and] without flaws” in the late nineteenth century.<sup>165</sup>

For Buckle, Catholicism must be eradicated in order for civilization to progress.<sup>166</sup> For Maudsley, who reifies this paradigm, to engage in ascetic praxes is to ahistorically invert progress at the microcosmic level of individual psychology, ultimately eliminating the possibility of Spencerian equilibration as the ascetic descends into “moral madness.”<sup>167</sup> The *sertanejo*’s “atavistic stigma” which comport his “special psychology”—his “constant call to the marvelous, [his] inferior condition as a stupid ward of divinity...[his] fatalistic indifference towards the future, and [his] religious

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<sup>162</sup> “na fase religiosa de um monoteísmo incompreendido, eivado de misticismo extravagante, em que se rebate o fetichismo do índio e do africano. E o homem primitivo, audacioso e forte, mas ao mesmo tempo crédulo, deixando-se facilmente arrebatar pelas superstições mais absurdas... A sua religião é como ele — mestiça... a fusão de estádios emocionais distintos.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 196-197.

<sup>163</sup> “...mestiçagem de crenças...antropismo do selvagem...animismo do africano...todos os terrores da Idade Média tinham cristalizado no catolicismo peninsular” [citing Oliveira Martins]... na época do descobrimento e da colonização.” Ibid., 197.

<sup>164</sup> “um caso notável de atavismo...fastígio de completo desequilíbrio moral...” Ibid., 197. See above, chap. 2, 12-13.

<sup>165</sup> “...messias insanos...devotados ao martírio...exata, completa, sem dobras...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 198.

<sup>166</sup> See above, 61-62.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., 74-75, 81.

exaltation”<sup>168</sup>—are thus the result of his anachronistic *European* “religiosity,” rendered even more monstrously “indefinite” via the admixture of “African *candombles*” and “Tupi *poracês*.”<sup>169</sup> This atavistic, proteiform religiosity remains “inert before the influences that agitate it.”<sup>170</sup> Hence the relationship of *sertanejo* psychology to its religious milieu parallels the relationship of *mestiço* to *sertão*: the miscegenated religious sentiment of the *sertanejo* has the equivalent capacity to be “perverted by fanaticism” or “transfigured by faith,” as both processes are contingent upon the *moral* climate that reacts upon, and is therewith reacted upon by, his miscegenation of belief.<sup>171</sup> Moreover, this predominantly Catholic atavism is limited to the regressively evolved backlands, produced only by the pathological and contradictory relationship of *sertanejo* to *sertão*.

Da Cunha’s characterization of Antonio Conselheiro as a “living document of atavism,” thus invalidates Skidmore’s conclusion that the *beato*’s atavism contributes to *Os Sertões*’ ostensible “indictment of the mixed blood.”<sup>172</sup> Conselheiro’s atavism—his quasi-Catholic *mestiço* religiosity—was originally generated by the “white” ethnic element, and it has pervaded into modernity only by means of the isolated, *sertão*-specific pathological relationship of *sertanejo* to his habitat. Moreover, Conselheiro’s ethnic composition is, according to Da Cunha, singular by means of its own regressive evolution: “it is natural that these deep layers of our ethnic stratification were stirred up

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<sup>168</sup> “*estigmas atavicos...psicologia especial...pelar constante para o maravilhoso, esta condição inferior de pupilo estúpido da divindade...a indiferença fatalista pelo futuro e a exaltação religiosa.*” Da Cunha. *Os Sertões*,

<sup>169</sup> “*...religiosidade...indefinida...candomblés africanos...poracês do tupi...*” Ibid., 198-199.

<sup>170</sup> “*...inerte ante as influências que a agitam.*” Ibid., 200.

<sup>171</sup> “*...pervertida pelo fanatismo...transfigurada pela fé...*” Ibid., 200.

<sup>172</sup> “*...documento vivo de atavismo.*” Ibid., 203. Skidmore, *Black into White*, 108.

in an extraordinary anticlinal [formation]—Antonio Conselheiro.”<sup>173</sup> An anticlinal formation, according to nineteenth-century geology, applies “to strata which dip in opposite directions from a common ridge or axis,” resulting in a convex, “roof-shaped bend” that has its oldest strata at its core.<sup>174</sup> Conselheiro’s actions are thereby driven by the dominant characteristics of his primal psychological core, fundamentally composed of “Catholic aberrations,” but the formation of which—the anticline—has through its production condensed all the *sertanejo*’s atavistic “naïve beliefs” and “barbaric fetishism[s]” into the *beato*’s “fierce and extravagant mysticism.”<sup>175</sup>

Nevertheless, da Cunha asserts, aided by the psychological climate of the *sertão*, Conselheiro avoided both the descent into Maudslian moral madness and the vesalia attributed to him by Rodrigues. Though born in 1830 into a *sertanejo* family with the “physiological predisposition” towards the brutal violence common to the *sertão*, Antonio Maciel was brought up by his stern father, “somewhat isolated from the turbulence of the family.”<sup>176</sup> Following the rape of his wife by a police officer and her subsequent abandonment of him in 1861—a “moral shock” that should have pushed an individual with a “hereditary predisposition” to criminality/madness such as he past the edge of the “dividing zone” into the realm of moral madness<sup>177</sup>—Antonio fled to the

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<sup>173</sup> “É natural que estas camadas profundas da nossa estratificação étnica se sublevassem numa anticlinal extraordinária — Antônio Conselheiro...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 203.

<sup>174</sup> “Anticlinal,” in David Page, *Handbook of Geological Terms: Geology and Physical Geography*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1865), 88.

<sup>175</sup> “...aberrações católicas...crenças ingênuas...fetichismo bárbaro...se condensaram no seu misticismo feroz e extravagante.” Ibid., 204. Borges explicates this passage in terms of Levine’s *visão do litoral*, whereby the anticlinal nature of Conselheiro represents the archaic backlands bursting through the “progressive, civilized coast.” Borges, “Euclides da Cunha’s View,” 38.

<sup>176</sup> “predisposição fisiológica...de algum modo o isolou da turbulência da família.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 207-208, 211.

<sup>177</sup> See above, 82.

Bahian *sertão*.<sup>178</sup> This proved to be his salvation, for with “his fragile consciousness” (*frágil consciência*) on the verge of collapse,

he halted there indefinitely, on the oscillating frontiers of madness, in that mental zone where one confounds criminals with heroes...[where] one jostles with geniuses and degenerates. [Yet] he did not cross over. Depressed by a civilized society, his neurosis would have exploded in revolt, his repressed mysticism crushed by reason. There, [in the *sertão*]...he was normalized...<sup>179</sup>

Traversing the Bahian backlands thereafter as a “somber anchorite” (*anacoreta sombrio*), Antonio—now reborn as the Conselheiro—preached to the *sertanejos*, inadvertently diffusing his mysticism into the moral climate, where it reacted upon their miscegenated religious sentiments.<sup>180</sup> Thus commenced an endless chain-reaction of atavistic religiosity, yet another cycle of progressive pathology in Da Cunha’s *sertão*, whereby Conselheiro inadvertently altered the fabric of the religious milieu only to be altered by it:

There, his insanity was externalized. Reflecting itself in the intense admiration and the absolute respect, turning him in a short time into the unconditional arbiter...The multitude...remodeled him in their image. They created him...to translate their indefinite idealization...[hence] the evangelist arose, monstrous, but an automaton. This dominator was a puppet.”<sup>181</sup>

Removed from “our time” by the pathology of the *sertão*, while incarnating its ambient “millenarism,” Conselheiro preached not only “religious messianism,” but “the

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<sup>178</sup> Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 212-213.

<sup>179</sup> “*Parou aí indefinidamente, nas fronteiras oscilantes da loucura, nessa zona mental onde se confundem facínoras e heróis,.. se acotovelam gênios e degenerados. Não a transpôs. Recalcado pela disciplina vigorosa de uma sociedade culta, a sua nevrose explodiria na revolta, o seu misticismo comprimido esmagaria a razão. Ali... se normalizaram.*” Ibid., 207.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>181</sup> “*A sua insânia estava, ali, exteriorizada. Espelhavam-na a admiração intensa e o respeito absoluto que o tornaram em pouco tempo árbitro incondicional... A multidão... Remodelava-o à sua imagem. Criava-o... lhe traduzisse a idealização indefinida... O evangelizador surgiu, monstruoso, mas autômato. Aquele dominador foi um títere.*” Ibid., 214.

messianism of the race” in the form of an “insurrection” against the Republic.<sup>182</sup> The movement, a communal regressive evolution, physically manifested itself “in the mud-walled Troy of the *jagunços*,” Canudos.<sup>183</sup> A “monstrous *urbs* of clay,” Canudos as Da Cunha illustrates it is “born old,” distilling the pathology generated by Conselheiro’s influence upon “the moral character” of the *sertão* and vice-versa.<sup>184</sup> Hence, through an unparalleled force of collective atavist religiosity in this “stereograph” (*estereografar*) of the ambient psychological milieu

the simple *sertanejo* was transmuted, via his entering [Canudos], into the fearless and brutal fanatic. He absorbed the collective psychosis. And he adopted, in the end, the name that was until then consecrated for the disorderly individuals at the market, for the troublemakers of the electoral melee, and the pillagers of cities—*jagunços*.<sup>185</sup>

This Canudense psychosis further exacerbated Conselheiro’s messianism, providing him with a “proteiform appearance” which in turn impressed itself upon the population, causing the community of the “most disparate elements...[including] all ages, races, types, [and] colors” to become

homogenous and uniform, an unconscious and brute mass, growing without evolving...completely immersed in the religious dream; living under the unhealthy preoccupation of the next life, reducing the world to the line of mountains which encircled them. They did not think about [republican] institutions guaranteeing them a destiny on the earth. It was useless to them. Canudos was the cosmos.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> “nosso tempo...milénarismo...messianismo religioso...messianismo da raça...insurreição...” Ibid., 218, 220, 225.

<sup>183</sup> “...na Tróia de taipa dos jagunços.” Ibid., 227.

<sup>184</sup> “...*urbs* monstruosa, de barro...nascia velho...a feição moral...” Ibid., 228-229.

<sup>185</sup> “O *sertanejo* simples transmutava-se, penetrando-o, no fanático destemeroso e bruto. Absorvia-o a psicose coletiva. E adotava, ao cabo, o nome até então consagrado aos turbulentos de feira, aos valentões das refregas eleitorais e saqueadores de cidades — *jagunços*.” Ibid., 233.

<sup>186</sup> “mais dispareos elementos...todas as idades, todos os tipos, todas as cores...homogênea e uniforme, massa inconsciente e bruta, crescendo sem evolver...imersa de todo no sonho religioso; vivendo sob a



Overall, Da Cunha's Canudos is the result of three hundred years of a pathologically regressive evolution on a number of levels—ecological, physiological, and psychospiritual—the amalgam of which creates a *sertanejo* in the person of Antonio Conselheiro, a being capable of intensifying all of them, if only to prevent his own descent into madness. His mysticism permeates the moral character of the *sertão*, reproducing itself time and again until it finally coalesces as the community of Canudos. Here, finally, the centuries-long regressive evolution finds its summation, reducing its extremely diverse population to amorphous *jagunços*; polysemous beings at once embodying Comte's positive pathology, Darwin's protean monstrosities, and Spencer's homogenous savage/lower races. The inevitable "antagonism" (*antagonismo*) between Conselheiro's *jagunços* and the Republic does not, therefore, result from some Canudense inability or refusal to adhere to republican political structures.<sup>187</sup> Rather, it is brought about by their incapacity to comprehend *all* political structures more complex than "the *imperium* of a sacerdotal or warrior chief" to which they are subject.<sup>188</sup> Thus Da Cunha's Canudense *jagunços*, though ultimately no less chimerical than Rodrigues' illustration,<sup>189</sup> remain wholly irreconcilable with the degenerate, easily replicable, monarchist *mestiços* depicted by the psychologist.

Having positively elaborated the positive genealogy of Canudos, Da Cunha turns to the Brazilian intelligentsia, bringing "Man" to a close by elucidating the causes for the vitriolic reaction of republican Brazilians, including himself, to the resurrection of this

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*preocupação doentia da outra vida, resumia o mundo na linha de serranias que a cingiam. Não cogitava de instituições garantidoras de um destino na terra. Eram-lhe inúteis. Canudos era o cosmos.*" Ibid., 240, 254.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>188</sup> "...o império de um chefe sacerdotal ou guerreiro..." Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> See esp. Levine, *Vail of Tears*, 61ff.

“dead society” (*sociedade morta*):

Living four hundred years on the vastest coast, upon which, palely reflecting civilized life, we had improvised, like an unhopd for inheritance, the Republic. We ascended suddenly, drawn into the slip-stream of modern ideas, abandoning a third of our folk [*gente*] to the age-old obscurity in which they remain. Deluded by a borrowed civilization; gleaned, from the blind labors of copyists, all that is best in the organic codes of other nations, we turned, *revolutionarily*, fleeing from the slightest compromise with the exigencies of our own nationality, deepening the contrast between our way of life and that of our rude compatriots, more foreign to our lands than European immigrants. Because we were not separated from them by a sea, but by three centuries... And when through our unequalled improvidence we permitted a nucleus of maniacs to be formed amongst them, we did not see the deeper significance of the event... We had a compromising fright in the face of these *monstrous aberrations*; and, with boldness worthy of better causes, we struck them with the cartridges of bayonets, republishing in our own time, in an inglorious *entrada*, reopening in unfortunate steps the faded trails of the *bandeiras* ...”<sup>190</sup>

The Brazilian Republic was, therefore, self-consciously established through the organically-developed tenets of other peoples from other climates. In order to protect the tenuous existence of this foreign-born polity, its coast-dwelling adherents chose to first ignore Brazil’s own organically-developed populace, thereby permitting the growth of Canudos, and then to characterize them—in the manner of Rodrigues and, to a lesser

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<sup>190</sup> “Vivendo quatrocentos anos no litoral vastíssimo, em que palejam reflexos da vida civilizada, tivemos de improviso, como herança inesperada, a República. Ascendemos, de chofre, arrebatados na caudal dos ideais modernos, deixando na penumbra secular em que jazem, no âmago do país, um terço da nossa gente. Iludidos por uma civilização de empréstimo; respigando, em faina cega de copistas, tudo o que de melhor existe nos códigos orgânicos de outras nações, tornamos, revolucionariamente, fugindo ao transigir mais ligeiro com as exigências da nossa própria nacionalidade, mais fundo o contraste entre o nosso modo de viver e o daqueles rudes patrícios mais estrangeiros nesta terra do que os imigrantes da Europa. Porque não no-los separa um mar, separam-no-los três séculos... E quando pela nossa imprevidência inegável deixamos que entre eles se formasse um núcleo de maníacos, não vimos o traço superior do acontecimento... Tivemos um espanto comprometedor ante aquelas aberrações monstruosas; e, com arrojo digno de melhores causas, batemo-los a carga de baionetas. reeditando por nossa vez o passado, numa “entrada” inglória, reabrindo nas paragens infelizes as trilhas apagadas das bandeiras...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 244. Emphasis mine.

extent, Da Cunha himself in “Our Vendée”—as monstrous aberrations. In other words, the Canudenses were construed as Spencerian degenerates in the minds of republicans in order to concretize a then ephemeral republican identity. For if, on the contrary, the *jagunços* were the legitimate products of Brazilian progress, then the progressive culture of the coast would find itself deprivileged, and the Republic would be stripped of the *ordem e progresso* with which it was cloaked. Hence, fearing that this “local disorder” would expand, becoming the “nucleus of a conflagration” spreading throughout the entirety of the northern interior, “the entire nation intervened.”<sup>191</sup>

Accordingly, the remaining six books in *Os Sertões* offer a narrative of the four campaigns waged by the Brazilian state against its own citizens. Interestingly, as the account unfolds, the ontological boundaries separating the *jagunços* from their coastal brethren begin to blur. By 1897 “the superior significance of the democratic principles” that upheld the Republic had “decayed into sophistries—they were inverted [and] annulled.”<sup>192</sup> The defeat of the third expedition on March 6, 1897 is in large part attributed to the inept leadership of republican General Moreira César, who suffers from a more degenerative mental illness—epilepsy<sup>193</sup>—than Antonio Conselheiro himself.<sup>194</sup> *Mestiço* soldiers of the republic and the *jagunços* are depicted as being “fashioned from the same [ethnic] mixture.”<sup>195</sup> Indeed, in the former “the struggle for the Republic...against its imaginary enemies” causes a quasi-*jagunço* “fanatic aberration” to

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<sup>191</sup> “*desordem local...núcleo de uma conflagração...A nação inteira interveio.*” Ibid., 271.

<sup>192</sup> “*...a significação superior dos princípios democráticos...decaía — sofismada, invertida, anulada.*” Ibid., 298.

<sup>193</sup> Da Cunha cites Maudsley in order to correctly diagnose César’s condition. See Ibid., 304.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 300-302.

<sup>195</sup> “*...feitos da mesma massa.*” Ibid., 336.

manifest.<sup>196</sup> In addition, “ravenous” (*faminto*) deserters from earlier campaigns and other soldiers who linger in the area surrounding Canudos become pathologically regressed; “a variant of the *jagunço*.”<sup>197</sup> Finally, the continued successes of the *jagunço* forces instigate a newspaper-inspired furor over imagined monarchist conspiracies: a “national commotion” (*comoção nacional*) in the form of a “general paroxysm” (*abalo geral*) accompanying César’s defeat, whereby “patriotic passion was clearly perverted into insanity.”<sup>198</sup> Thus, viewed through the fanatic, xenophobic lens of these “utter troglodytes,” Canudos is “merely symptomatic” of a much larger “disease...not confined to a corner of Bahia. It was engorging itself. Violating the capitals of the coast.”<sup>199</sup>

Hence Da Cunha’s fourth expedition is a struggle of fanatics. Ideologies—in the form of atavistic religiosity and insane patriotism—replace ethnicities as the primary syngenistic impetus.<sup>200</sup> During the final days of the campaign following the death of Conselheiro on September 22, 1897, as most of the Canudenses are killed or flee, Da Cunha portrays the remaining *jagunços*—the death of Conselheiro having ended the pathological chain reaction of atavistic religiosity—as defending their “invaded home, nothing more.”<sup>201</sup> Slowing bringing *Os Sertões* to its conclusion, Da Cunha returns to the ethnological framework of Gumpowicz to describe the now ethnically antithetical soldiers and *sertanejos*. On October 2, the last prisoners to be taken before the war’s end are marched through the army’s camp and the officers

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<sup>196</sup> “...a luta pela República...contra os seus imaginários inimigos...aberração fanática...” Da Cunha is careful, however, to reiterate the relative climactic exigencies that generated the disparities between two groups. Ibid., 346-349, 416-417.

<sup>197</sup> “...uma variante do jagunço...” Ibid., 434, 486-487.

<sup>198</sup> “A paixão patriótica roçava, derrancada, pela insânia.” Ibid., 343-345, 351.

<sup>199</sup> “...trogloditas completos... sintomática apenas ...O mal...Não se confinara num recanto da Bahia. Alastrara-se. Rompia nas capitais do litoral.” Ibid., 346.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 515.

<sup>201</sup> “...o lar invadido, nada mais.” Ibid., 419.

saw, thus, for the first time, en masse, the population of Canudos, and... a rare uniformity in the most characteristic physiognomic lines. Rarely a white or pure black... [they] all stood out, individual, the perfect fusion of three races. The legitimate *pardo* predominated, mixed from Kafir,<sup>202</sup> Portuguese, and Tapuia—faces bronzed, hair stiff and straight or curly, inelegant torsos; and here, and there, a perfect profile, denoting the superior element of miscegenation. Around them, victorious, disparate, and disunited, [stood] proteiforms, the white, the black, the *cafuso*, and the *mulatto*, with all gradations of color...<sup>203</sup>

The *jagunços*, rarified to their ethnic core, are “the living bedrock of our race.”<sup>204</sup> That is, they are Gumpłowicz and Da Cunha’s singularly equilibrated *mestiço*, a true Brazilian race, heterogeneous by means of its perfectly homogenous fusion of the three elements. Tragically, as Da Cunha relates, this race, the authentic creation of four centuries of Brazilian progress in the unmatched habitat of the *sertão*, has been “reduced, down to a square of indefinite and craven *mestiços*. It was entirely broken by the struggle. Humiliated.”<sup>205</sup> Hence the execution of these singularly legitimate embodiments of Brazilian progress is, for Da Cunha, almost an afterthought, a mere aside in comparison to the enormity implicit in the conclusive defeat of his heterogeneous *jagunços* by the proteiform representatives of a disingenuously *progressive* Republic.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> “...one of a South African race belonging to the Bantu family.” *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “kafir.”

<sup>203</sup> “Via-se, então, pela primeira vez, em globo, a população de Canudos; e...de uniformidade rara nas linhas fisionômicas mais características. Raro um branco ou negro puro...todos delatando, iniludível, a fusão perfeita de três raças. Predominava o pardo lídimo, misto de cafre, português e tapuia — faces bronzeadas, cabelos corredios e duros ou anelados, troncos deselegantes; e aqui, e ali, um perfil corretíssimo recordando o elemento superior da mestiçagem. Em roda, vitoriosos, díspares e desunidos, o branco, o negro, o cafuz e o mulato proteiformes com todas as gradações da cor...” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 511-512.

<sup>204</sup> “...a rocha viva da nossa raça.” *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>205</sup> “...batida dentro de um quadrado de mestiços indefinidos e pusilânimes. Quebrara-a de todo a luta. Humilhava-se.” *Ibid.*, 512.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 513.

Figure 13



**Soldiers with a *Jagunço* Prisoner, September, 1897**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=124> Accessed 2/05/09, 4:02pm.

Figure 14



**Corpses in the Ruins of Canudos, October, 1897**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=131> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:52pm.

Figure 15



**Canudense (“jagunço”) Prisoners, October 2, 1907**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=126> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:55pm.



## Conclusion

For Nina Rodrigues and Euclides da Cunha, the body of the *jagunço* functions as a site of disruption. The *jagunço* materially instantiates a “violent dissolution of continuity”—it is ontologically liminal, rendered monstrous by its historical function as a harbinger of Brazilian progress.<sup>1</sup> The annihilation of this *jagunço*, however chimerical its depiction, is therefore necessary, demanded by the overtly apocalyptic discursive practice of positivism. For Rodrigues, who rigidly adheres to Herbert Spencer’s inductive theory of Evolution, the revolt of the insane Conselheiro and his delusional, monarchist *jagunços* is indicative of the inherently degenerate nature of all *mestiços*. Their “eradication functions as an exorcism,”<sup>2</sup> whereby the ideologues of an imagined Brazilian Republic—a totalizing, panopticonic machine of *ordem e progresso*, within which Rodrigues’ scientific analyses give structure to an organ of normalization<sup>3</sup>—construct the aberrational *jagunço* in order to ensure the rational development of its civilized, “Aryan,” citizenry, a development inversely accompanied by the degeneration and death of the *jagunço*’s brethren, the Brazilian *mestiço*.

Conversely, Da Cunha constructs the Republic as an adversary to genuine Brazilian progress. Following and expanding upon the positivist theories of Ludwig Gumplowicz, he reduces the habitats, ethnicities, and religiosities of Brazil to three primordial elements—fabricating an origin while acknowledging that it is a fabrication. He then traces the progress of each, wholly contingent upon the interactions of the three

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<sup>1</sup> *OED*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., s.v. “disruption.” See also Cohen, “Monster Theory,” 6-12, 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>3</sup> See Foucault, “The Eye of Power,” in *Power/Knowledge*, 146-165, here 156. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 48.

categories, which ultimately reproduces and intensifies the multiplicity within the singularly diverse macrocosm of Brazil. Da Cunha's *force motrice* of Brazilian history is thus not only the struggle of races (*Rassenkampf*), but a struggle of singularly efflorescent ethnicities and their combinations within habitats that shape their development. True degeneration is impossible—Da Cunha does not deviate from Comte's notion that absolute regression is absurd—and thus he turns to the Spencerian psychology of Herbert Maudsley in order to analyze the atavistic religiosity of Conselheiro and the Canudenses.

Figure 16



**Exhumed Corpse of Antonio Conselheiro, October 6, 1897**

Courtesy of Museu da República and Flávio de Barros.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Available at: <http://www.portfolium.com.br/Sites/Canudos/Fotos.asp?ID=130> Accessed 2/05/09, 3:59pm.

Canudos is, accordingly, an irruption, a historical event that cannot be replicated—at once very different from and much more than Rodrigues’ distillation of *mestiço* degeneration. For *Os Sertões* is not merely “a pathology of Brazil,”<sup>5</sup> but a pathology of the aggregate, Comtean *L’Homme Brésilien*, as discerned through Da Cunha’s meta-historical positivist lens. He outlines the geological fecundity and pathology of Brazil, traces the history of the North and the South, of the Portuguese, the African, and the Tupi, of their variant *mestiço* offspring, and elucidates their atavisms, their progress, and their madness—distilling all of this, however chimerically, in Canudos, so that it can be *laid waste*. The Canudense apocalypse thus contradictorily functions as both historical continuity and historical rupture in Da Cunha’s history of Brazil. It forcefully reunites the coast to the interior, while rending the basis for that reunion asunder. It legitimates the Brazilian *mestiço* as capable of unparalleled evolution by first identifying, and then annihilating the perfectly equilibrated version thereof.

Ironically, the Republic’s war against Canudos is, for Euclides da Cunha, a war fought in the sophistic name of *ordem e progresso* in order to destroy the ultimate Brazilian evolution—the perfectly harmonized *mestiço*, in which are equilibrated the three most basic Brazilian ethnic elements. Above all, the war demonstrates the extremely ephemeral nature of the order the Republic was meant to instantiate, and how easily its thin veneer of progress gave way to an ideology as fanatic and insane as any that ever pervaded the *sertão*. Nevertheless, however chimerical Da Cunha’s ethnically singular *jagunço* is, its destruction/amalgamation is inevitable according to Gumpowicz’s *Rassenkampf*. After all, Brazil and its *mestiços*—regardless of how they

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<sup>5</sup> Morse, “Brazil’s Urban Development,” 180-181.

are constituted—are only syngenistic social constructs, destined to be dominated or incorporated by one or more nations/peoples/races that are stronger than they, etc. Conversely, the destruction of Canudos is demanded by progress as defined by Comte and Spencer; a diminutive apocalypse that will constitute an authentic origin for Brazil's positive stage. *Os Sertões* is, therefore, “an exorcism” of the monstrous *jagunço*, yet through its original retelling of the events, and its century of commercial success, it has become much more than that; the “eradication” of the *jagunço* functions as the architectonic “catechism” of Brazilian order and progress.<sup>6</sup> Finally, if November 15, 1889 instantiated the birth of the progressive *Velha República*, then—following Da Cunha—the brutality of October 1-6, 1897 was its anointment, and the study of the festering head of Antonio Conselheiro, by none other than the Spencerian Nina Rodrigues, was its apotheosis:

They disinterred it carefully. Precious keepsake—the only prize, the only spoils offered by such a war!...They photographed it afterward. And they drew up rigorous minutes affirming its identity: it was important that the country be quite convinced that this most terrible antagonist was, finally, extinguished...They thought, however, later, in order to protect his head—so often cursed—and, as it was a waste of time to exhume [the body] once more...it was cut off; and the horrendous face, plastered with scabs and pus-secreting ulcerations, appeared before those victors. They then brought it to the coast, where multitudes raved in celebration, *at the skull*...”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Cohen, “Monster Theory,” 18.

<sup>7</sup> “Desenterraram-no cuidadosamente. Dádiva preciosa — único prêmio, únicos despojos opimos de tal guerra!... Fotografaram-no depois. E lavrou-se uma ata rigorosa firmando a sua identidade: importava que o país se convencesse bem de que estava, afinal, extinto aquele terribilíssimo antagonista...Pensaram, porém, depois, em guardar a sua cabeça tantas vezes maldita — e, como fora malbaratar o tempo exumando-o de novo...cortou-lha; e a face horrenda, empastada de escaras e de sânie, apareceu ainda uma vez ante aqueles triunfadores... Trouxeram depois para o litoral, onde deliravam multidões em festa, aquele crânio.” Da Cunha, *Os Sertões*, 514-515. Emphasis mine.

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