

# *The Traveler and His Diary: Couto de Magalhães and Roger Casement<sup>1</sup>*

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this article is to reflect upon the process of construction of the travel narrative as a counterpoint to the traveler's experience. It focuses the travels of two public figures, General Couto de Magalhães and the Irish nationalist Roger Casement. Their intimate diaries written during their travels are analysed from a critical perspective that considers the tensions between the actual travel experience and its subsequent published account. The issues addressed along this text are genre, sexuality, narrative construction and travel literature.*

The aim of this article is to reflect upon the process of construction of the travel narrative from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Travel literature, as a literary genre that encodes social and ideological processes of discursive appropriation and conquest of non-white and/or colonial populations, became extremely popular both in Europe and the United States in the course of imperial expansion, and in peripheral areas such as Latin America, where this type of literature took a different, but not less important direction. In nineteenth-century Brazil, for instance, travel literature was not only esteemed, but it came to play a key role as a mirror for the national soul through which the elites of the newly founded nation, who sought to establish political and ideological hegemony, could search for traces of an identity that was still uncharted. Travel literature, as a narrative genre with roots in scientism and naturalism linked to geographical, ethnological or economic exploration journeys, sought primarily to establish a distance between the narrator and the narrative, which was built upon the foundations of rationalist and classificatory observation (Pratt 1992). Nevertheless, travel literature derived directly from the traveler's experience, an experience which is systematically expunged from the narrative of the journey. The traveler's experience appears cyphered in purportedly impartial and rational descriptions of the observed landscapes and peoples. The experience can be recovered when the published travel account is confronted with the travel journal, where more spontaneous notes on daily life in wild, foreign lands later would provide the author-traveler, once free from the vicissitudes of the journey, a base from which to filter his or her experience and establish

an account acceptable to the readers of this genre. The confrontation between these two genres provides a complex perspective for analyzing the tensions between the actual travel experience and its subsequent published account. Johannes Fabian (2000), in examining travel literature written by European explorers and ethnologists in Central Africa during the late nineteenth century, observed that the travel accounts of the period are usually considered products of rational observation, based upon scientific criteria. But behind this apparent rationality one finds a traveler of Victorian morality, vulnerable to hunger, fatigue, fevers, and opiates, while also exposed to sexual contacts and relationships with men and women who acted according to completely unfamiliar standards. To include this perspective to the analysis of travel literature produces new ways for understanding the topic, which is the purpose of this article.

With this in mind, we first address the private and intimate diary as a literary genre closely tied to the historical experience of the European and American bourgeoisies in the Victorian age, establishing links between the emergence of the bourgeois notion of individuality and the established genre of confessional diaries. Second, we introduce the genre of travel literature characteristic of this time in order to point out its connections with the literary project of appropriating colonial areas of the globe, accomplished through a specific kind of narrative; hence, this genre is understood as a translator of the historical process of colonial conquest, which took place between the second half of the nineteenth century and the First World War. While establishing the connection between these two narrative styles, this essay suggests a correlation between the geographic journey, the narrative journey and the journey as a confessional and intimate experience, pointing to the presence of deep interrelations between these two literary genres. In order to illustrate this analysis, we discuss two diaries, one written by Roger Casement and the other by General Couto de Magalhães, highlighting an aspect, which although barely visible from the analysis of the public work of the author-traveler, is characterized as a deeply significant experience of the traveler. It is in addressing the issue of sexuality as an intimate territory that the travel experience encodes another experience that is also about the domination and depersonalization of the savage or colonial other. By tracking the tensions present in the intimate notes from these travelers' journals, we are allowed to peer into territories of the travel account that, although invisible, were defining factors in the construction of the genre of travel literature itself. In trying to point out the articulation between these two aspects, the article suggests new possibilities for analyzing the travel literature of the era of imperialism and the way the author-traveler develops its motifs.

### **The Journal and its Writing**

During the nineteenth century, keeping a personal and intimate diary had become a practice both widespread and valued by the bourgeois historical experience. This practice involved characters as diverse and socially irreconcilable as the colonial explorers of distant lands – the Casements and Burtons – whose diary entries stood in

contrast to those produced in the bourgeois home, which reflected the intricacies of a newly created privacy and which included as authors young women and even children. What these people did share was the habit of spending a few precious minutes each day to record, in more or less unhindered tones, their daily experiences, impressions, and feelings. Peter Gay, a historian of the Victorian sensibility and, to some extent, its greatest enthusiast states that in studies of psychoanalytic and social history about the nineteenth-century European and American middle class, the emphasis on the division between the public and private spheres by the bourgeois culture of the Victorian century created the ideal conditions for the flourishing of the diaries (446).

Keeping a journal, as a private activity par excellence, on one hand functioned as an escape valve that allowed for the confession of feelings suppressed by the standards of the society of the time, which valued self-control and prudence. It would be in this context that the intimate and personal diary played the role of friend, confidant or companion by proxy, easing the tensions built up within the strict and repressive social order.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, there is no doubt that journal writing entailed a huge investment in social terms, which the literate and more or less illustrated person would deposit in his or her own individuality, which became a precious entity to be scrutinized, listened to, diagnosed, in distinction to a more expansive sociability that became relegated to the lower classes as a result of social cleavages.<sup>3</sup> Once a specific space for the exercise of privacy was demarcated, the bourgeoisie began to invest a great amount of energy in pursuing the expression of an individualized sensitivity, embedded in the space that began to separate the private from the public sphere. Issues as diverse as the architecture of houses, the novel, psychoanalysis, and journal writing reveal, each in its own way, the advent of bourgeois modernity and its investment in the self, establishing its place as distinctive from the outside world.

Finally, with its demand for truth, diary writing was part of a confessional tradition, as Michel Foucault noted, which in the nineteenth century, as today, imprisoned sexuality, or the complex bundle of knowledge called sexuality, in webs of discourse. Such knowledge can reflect the innermost personal experiences, conceptualizing them, defining them, tracing their fields of action, suggesting normality, institutionalizing morality, concomitantly singling out deviations and perversions (9-18). Confiding everything to the diary without being superficial, thinking of it as “a friend who offers truth, who demands truth”, it became an extension of recommendations proffered by doctors, educators, priests and police authorities.<sup>4</sup> This was how many people viewed their nineteenth-century journals, producing, thus, a valuable historical source.

This is how we could consider, for example, the eleven volumes of *My Secret Life*, written in the late nineteenth century by an anonymous Englishman, in one edition of only a few copies. Composed in a clearly confessional tone, in the format of a diary, it describes, with the minutiae and details that verge on obsession, the author’s unsettled sex life<sup>5</sup>. The authenticity of all its volumes remains a controversial issue. Gay sees it as a product of the development of the author’s fantasies that stem from a limited number

of real experiences. Alternatively, in the less likely case of proving its authenticity, Gay believes that the author of *My Secret Life* must have been a deeply neurotic individual, as well as an unparalleled sexual athlete. In either case, the work would not be representative of sexuality in the Victorian era, but only “of the sexual imagination of one Victorian Englishman” (Gay 468). Many other Victorian journal writers, such as Couto de Magalhães and Roger Casement, may have taken the same imaginative path, as we shall see. While recording sexual fantasies in an ambiguous tone on the border between reverie and reality, these authors sought to relieve the tensions generated by the repression of these intimate matters.

Steven Marcus adopts a different approach in his detailed analysis of pornography and “deviant” sexuality predominant in the Victorian era, with its brothels of children and homosexuals, with the flourishing of pornographic literature, and with the sanitary and legal control of prohibited sexual practices. Marcus considers this to be an example of bourgeois malaise with regard to marriage, affectionate relationships and to respectable sex, measured by the standard of the monogamous, reproductive couple, always established between equals. From this standpoint, pornography and deviant sexuality could only take place outside the circle of respectable bourgeois society, as protagonists would draw their not always willing partners from the lower classes. The role of the maids, nurses, guards, and sailors, in other words young men and women hailing from the working class, appears very clearly in the realization of this so called “deviant” sexuality in the abundant literature on the social life and sexuality of the times. Thus, the laboring classes emerged as a sort of amusement park for a non-conformist bourgeois sexuality, within the strict limits of the reassertion of class domination.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, experiences in colonial areas could function in a similar fashion, offering to those nineteenth-century male travelers the opportunity to engage in sexual practices considered deviant or depraved with non-white partners.

Back to *My Secret Life*, according to Foucault, the most bizarre aspect of the work in question would not be the manner in which the author dedicated his life entirely to sexual activities. Rather, in fact it was how this deep commitment to sex originated another activity, with an even more unusual fidelity, which was his unflagging dedication to confessional writing, resulting in a meticulous narrative of each and every episode he actually experienced or merely imagined. Foucault concludes that among all the practices experienced by the author, the strangest was to record them every day and in minute detail, revealing himself as an individual totally immersed in modernity (25). Hence, modernity, intimate diaries, and unconventional sexual practices appear to go hand in hand over the course of the nineteenth century, producing confessional journals replete with sexual tension.

We know, however, that not all diaries were written in such a confessional tone, nor did they approach such intimate matters. In fact, many of the known diaries of the period emerged under the specter of censorship, as they were to be read by a very specific circle of readers. A spouse, children, the circle of family and friends, or even

posterity, especially in the case of writers who belonged to a literary circle, established circumstances that transformed the journal into a complementary literary form, other than just a space for personal introspection. Potential readers – real or imagined – provide an index from which to judge the degree of openness with which the journal was written (Resende 1991).

As a complementary literary style, the journal went hand in hand with the production of numerous writers, and in some cases become their main work. This was, for example, the case of the famous diaries in which Anaïs Nin (1934-1939) systematically recorded her love affairs and reflected upon her own being, completing around 150 manuscript notebooks with her confessional writings, which, once published, became her major literary work. Expressing the intimate sensitivity of the most dedicated journal writers, for whom the division between the sphere of intimacy and that of the social world is emphatically established, Anaïs declared: “I have built a private world, but I fear that I cannot help build the world outside” (Vol.2: ix). Along with their more elaborate work, many other writers maintained diaries that were made public by friends or family who kept and published them even when it put them at odds with the authors’ wishes. In many cases the diaries became important sources for the study of the author and his or her work, since journal writing frequently offers a more intimate and varied counterpoint to the public work of the individual.

We must, therefore, tackle the issue of the potential reader, even in the cases of the most intimate and personal diaries. For, in the end, every piece of writing assumes there is a reader. Either imaginary or real, the target reader of the journal writer is often the author himself, placed somewhere in the future and under a more critical stance. Recovering the whole, retracing a life path, catching up on its sense and entirety; such are the goals of the diary. The restricted nature with which many journal writers have treated their diaries and the fear that they would be probed by unauthorized eyes is a recurrent feature in this type of writing. While working with diaries, letters, and other personal accounts, Peter Gay (445-460) points out the frequency with which the authors expressed their wish of preserving their intimacy and of destroying indiscreet material. Another symptom of the ambivalence between recording everything and confronting the possibility that chance – often “chance” that is not so fortuitous– would provide the opportunity for others to invade the author’s intimacy, raises the issue of self-censorship, turning the diaries either into confidants, or into heavy evidence of the author’s vicissitudes. For instance, this was how Virginia Woolf expressed herself at the time she reread her diary from the previous year. She made comments on the pitfalls of writing at a fast gallop: “Still if it were not written rather faster than the fastest type-writing, if I stopped and took thought, it would never be written at all ... If Virginia Woolf at the age of 50, when she sits down to build her memoirs out of these books, is unable to make a phrase as it should be made, I can only condole with her and remind her of the existence of the fireplace, where she has my leave to burn these pages to so many black films with red eyes in them” (Woolf 7).

In this sense, the case of Mabel Todd's uninhibited diary, widely used in Gay's aforementioned *Bourgeois Experience*, presents itself as both an exception, and as the fullest realization of the confessional trend found in any journal writer. This tendency appears as even more remarkable than a full confession, when what he confesses escapes the very possibility of the author analyzing and understanding it. This appears very clearly in the previously mentioned *My Secret Life*, in which, faced by the most embarrassing episodes, the author states: "...but I cannot attempt to analyse motives or sensations; I simply narrate facts" (qtd. Marcus 166).

However, despite the ambivalence faced by its authors, many of these intimate diaries have escaped destruction and were preserved, published and read by a much wider audience than the author had consciously wished. Maybe that is why an aura of "voyeurism", combined with a "mixture of prudence and the inability to absorb the recommended distance" (Resende 2) might hover over reading the diary. This occurs especially when there is a notably close association between the diary and the emotional, affective, and sexual life of the author.

### **Travel Literature and the Diary**

Although the journal remained in the literary panorama as a complementary form, placed on the periphery of the real work of the author and which was to serve as an opportunity for study and deepening of knowledge<sup>7</sup>, in terms of style it flourished in all its splendor as a kind of highly respected literature throughout the nineteenth century. Travel literature successfully expressed the nineteenth-century sensibility, and at the same time travel narratives found their most accomplished form in the diary style. Travelers always have a story to tell to their peers, through the development of a narrative. Walter Benjamin considered the merchant seaman to be one of the most emblematic figures in the art of narrating, going back to its most ancient origins<sup>8</sup>. In settled peasant societies, the traveler has a special significance, for it is assumed that he has acquired wisdom after having accumulated many experiences and is able to establish with his own words a full recollection of a timeless and human purpose. However, the wisdom acquired by the traveler in foreign lands is not gratuitous, rather it is his recompense for incorporating the existence of the other into his own life experience. Within this context, what one expects from the wandering figure of the wayfarer in strange lands is the epic of truth, produced not only by the recollection of his experience and the creation of an individual truth, but one that will also be the source to which he incorporates the experience of many lives and the knowledge of many experiences. Narrative construction in a traditional society is itself the fullest form of the artisanal production of communication as it involves a dialogical instance, a sense of sharing that would enrich both the narrator and his listener – both become identified with the story, which becomes part of their own life. Once told, this wonderful narrative became part of the lives of those who shared it, thus fashioned by many hands and many voices. "In fact, one might go on and ask oneself whether the

relationship of the storyteller to his material, human life, is not in itself a craftsman's relationship – whether it is not his very task to fashion the raw material of experience, his own and that of others, in a solid, useful, and unique way” (Benjamin 162).

A taste for wonder and mystery became ingrained in travel literature during the Age of Discoveries. It coloured the European imagination with visions of anthropomorphic monsters of the Ocean Sea, and later added brushstrokes with geographical narratives indicating the location of the Garden of Eden and through the meeting of fabulous people and places. The Republic of the Amazons, the mines of Vupabussu, the geography of the fantastic, and the prelapsarian visions of Indians all brought life to the stages of conquest and colonization and at the same time found a place in travel narratives, where the taste for adventure in faraway lands appears justified by the enrichment of states and the Church (Buarque de Holanda 3-18).

By the seventeenth century, narratives about indigenous peoples and colonial lands accompanied the birth of the scientific field of ethnology, based on notions of separation and estrangement. The principles upon which the field of ethnology would be built, according to Michel de Certeau (211), were those that of *orality*, communication typical of savage or traditional societies, *spatiality*, characteristic of a system devoid of history, *otherness*, whose scope was the cultural division defined by difference, and finally the *unconscious*, where knowledge is organized beyond the cognition of he who speaks (Certeau 211-142).<sup>9</sup>

Historically, the oral narrative recording the traditional traveler's itinerary came to be replaced by written accounts displacement of what was traditionally held by the oral narrative of the traveler's itinerary to the field of writing occurred through the establishment of scientific activities. In other words, this change takes place through the emergence of an instance that cuts off oral speech in its extension, revealing differences. From there, “in order to be spoken, oral language waits for writing to approach it and recognize what it says” (Certeau 212). Thus, between “they” who speak and “we” who gather and reveal a meaning for that speech, emerges a relationship of power that is characteristic of modernity (212-213).

The modern traveler, especially one in tune with the scientism of racial theories and colonial policy in the nineteenth century, protagonized a deep schism between experience and narrative. One cannot expect this naturalist traveler, whether an expert on plants, animals, language, or geography, to embody an expanded experience of the other, identified as a life story. Instead, it is within the scientist-traveler himself, where, since the beginning, one may find the awareness and appreciation of distance as an essential part of his activity; it is he who sees, hears, analyzes, understands and conveys the facts and landscapes of distant lands by writing a travel narrative – a travel diary. While writing, the traveler avoids as much as possible including himself as participant and character, for he becomes lost in time, the time when he was exchanging experiences. The modern traveler merely observes them objectively, that is, he displaces his own self and the space of his personal travel experiences to the shadows, as if the journey could be contaminated by the disastrous appearance of the traveler himself (Sussekind 11-35).

Here and there, one finds a short note about a singularly remarkable experience, an extremely beautiful and inspiring landscape, an embarrassing human scene that will inspire philosophical and personal reflections. Otherwise, this modernized traveler breaks into the narrative only with the somewhat tedious account of the material difficulties faced on the journey, of the physical discomforts, of the dangers overcome in the name of progress of science and knowledge. On the whole, it appears that a certain whiff of strangeness and misunderstanding is felt on the narrator's side. This is what we find, for example, in works as diverse as Bates' (1864) in the Amazon, and Serpa Pinto's (s/d.) in his crossing of Africa<sup>10</sup>. Later, the ethnographer-traveler, for instance, in the form of Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques*, while seeking to demystify both the journey as exotic and the traveler as an objective scientist, reflected upon the impossibility of experience, stating, among other observations, his disappointment with regard to the decayed landscape of the tropics, his hatred of explorers and of traveling, as well as his invincible boredom in the face of that impoverished reality<sup>11</sup>.

The nineteenth-century naturalist traveler reveals nuances between the roles of wanderer, explorer, and adventurer, whose romantic figures and rollicking adventures, always surrounded by the exotic and the remarkable, gave form to the heroic, civilizing character. Sometimes, reality surpassed fiction – at least this was the case of Richard Burton. This Victorian Englishman had a far more adventurous life than any novelist could ever conceive of, after covering almost every part of the globe, penetrating the esoteric doctrines of Sufism, making a pilgrimage to Mecca, translating the Kama Sutra and other texts that were considered unorthodox in his day, learning 29 languages, writing dozens of books, and avowedly having served as agent in Her Majesty's secret service<sup>12</sup>.

Alongside the complexity of Burton's character, what we would like to emphasize here is the fact that his life could be taken as representative of the most romantic expectations of his time. And indeed, Burton's adventurous amblings were followed, with greater or less brilliance, by a whole sequence of travelers, scientists, and adventurers during the nineteenth century.

It was at the intersection of two genres, the intimate private diary and the travel literature of the age of imperialism, that the travel journal flourished, witnessing tensions and ambivalences experienced by the traveler while exposed to the ways of life of primitive and/or colonial populations, thus recording situations and feelings that can only be glimpsed at between the lines of his travel writing. The travel journal is a document of extreme interest, as it enables new approaches to travel literature, allowing one to track the relations that are established between the European narrator and the colonial world from a perspective in which the traveler presents himself as being much more vulnerable, witnessing the ambivalence that characterizes the "modern" travel experience. Among the many "invisible" aspects that to come to light from this kind of approach, I would like to highlight the connection between travel and sexuality, a theme that is central to this analysis and to the understanding of the travel experience as an enterprise of theoretical and abstract achievement, in which the conquered other always emerges from projective processes and from descriptions that are based on absence (Pratt 1992).



In this sense, among the many degrading and exoticizing descriptions that are found in the travel literature about populations in colonial areas, the absence of sexual repression is one of the most frequently recorded, elaborated on and fantasized by the traveler. Witnessing the tensions and ambivalences of the traveler-narrator against the travel experience in colonial areas, the travel journal enables one to follow, from a different point of view, the experience of the journey and the narrative undertaking that resulted from it.

### **The Intrepid Explorer and his Diary**

Against this background, I would like to introduce two characters whose writings provide a context and a standpoint from which the history and sensitivity of the modern traveler can be recovered. To both, the journey appears as a geographic as well as an intimate enterprise. The first is Roger Casement, who was an Irishman at the service of the British government between the 1870s and the early twentieth century, in the Belgian Congo and in the Putumayo region, at the confluence of the Peruvian and Colombian Amazon, undertaking risky journeys and writing reports denouncing the extreme exploitation and decimation of native workers that was taking place in rubber extraction areas<sup>13</sup>.

Having spent almost a third of his life in Africa – especially in the Belgian Congo – and taking part in the huge investment of physical and imaginary energy that went into the imperialist conquest of the African regions, when the humanist and Christian precepts that prevailed in Europe were conveniently left aside – Casement fought against the greed and hypocrisy lurking behind the civilizing discourse. He denounced the exploitation, slavery, and torture suffered by native peoples, as well as the irrationality of the system and the incomprehensible decimation of the sources of wealth by its explorers. In the Putumayo region, in the early twentieth century, he wrote detailed reports on the unacceptable treatment of Indians, who were the rubber gatherers on Julio Cesar Arana's properties.

Although an Irishman, Casement's activities in colonial lands, always in favor of the indigenous populations, made him a popular figure in England, wrapped in a romantic aura as he gained the respect of the high British bureaucracy and the title of "Sir".

Reasserting the image of eccentricity, combined with humanism and physical endurance, Casement appears in one of the letters Joseph Conrad sent from Africa on December 26<sup>th</sup> 1903, in which he is described as a pious Irish Protestant, capable of venturing into the most dangerous jungles, in lands of unspeakable loneliness, carrying only a stick as a weapon, with two dogs and a boy, carrying his bundle. And – Conrad continues – "A few months afterwards it so happened that I saw him come out again, leaner, a little browner, with his stick, dogs and Loanda boy, and quietly serene as though he had been for a stroll in the park" (qtd. Singleton-Gates and Girodias 93).

However, the most controversial aspect of Casement's trajectory was his involvement with the Irish Nationalist movement and his imprisonment during the First

World War, which culminated in the seizure and disclosure of his diaries by Scotland Yard. Containing decidedly embarrassing material concerning a troubled sex life, marked by homosexuality and promiscuity, the diaries became his death sentence. In fact, convicted of high treason by an emergency law and a biased court, Casement was executed without the opposition of any consistent solidarity movement. The disclosure of his private life had him irretrievably compromised<sup>14</sup>.

The second character to be introduced is the General, who later, in 1889, became Marshall José Vieira Couto de Magalhães. Although he had developed his political activities as a statesman in the Brazilian Empire, serving successively as President of the Province of Goiás (1862-1863), Pará (1864-1865), and Mato Grosso (1865-1867), Couto de Magalhães became known for his connection with the world of traveling. It was from his knowledge of the hinterlands and river navigation that he developed intellectual, political and economic activities. Along with his important publications, including *Viagem ao Araguaia (Journey to the Araguaia River)* and *O Selvagem (The Savage)*, which constituted important contributions to the travel literature penned by Brazilian intellectuals in the nineteenth century, Couto de Magalhães also was a much disciplined diary writer throughout his life<sup>15</sup>. Although most of his intimate writings have been lost, two of his diaries have been identified and published. These are *Diário do General Couto de Magalhães*, covering 1887 to 1890, and *Diário Íntimo de Couto de Magalhães*, which spans the years of 1880 and 1881. The diaries covering the years from 1887 to 1890 clearly had been purged, with potentially damaging passages eliminated. Meanwhile, in my research, I located the diaries for 1880 and 1881 separately at the State Archives of São Paulo, and later transcribed and published them along with an introductory essay<sup>16</sup>. The variety of notebooks that Couto de Magalhães used for the same periods of time, with date sequences interspersed with annotations and entries from different and non-sequential years, suggests the use of notebooks as different types of diaries, each with a specific purpose. One of the notebooks consisted of a *Diary of Dreams*, with very intimate notes, from both memories of dreams and from his recording of daydreams and fantasies, most of them of a sexual nature. Another notebook seemed to be dedicated almost exclusively to entries recording the author's state of health, with systematic notes on bodily functions. This may suggest that journal authors like Couto de Magalhães, for whom diary writing had become a deeply ingrained habit, could have owned different notebooks, each dedicated to a different type of entry, ranging from daily activities, impressions on various issues, annotations for future publications, to an outlet for private tensions. This situation could, perhaps, explain the existence of the different diaries attributed to Roger Casement.

The identification of Couto de Magalhães with the unknown and inhospitable hinterlands, which in the nineteenth century still accounted for much of the Brazilian territory, and his familiarity with the Tupi-nhengatú stand in contrast to his resolutely modern profile. He was a shrewd businessman of river and railway transportation, a sector that commanded the country's main economic interests along with its richest

symbolism, during a century that progressed at the speed of trains, seeking to bolster a global market under the auspices of imperialism. In his writings, Couto de Magalhães revealed himself aware of the mechanisms of accumulation that were present in the context of imperial Brazil, especially when it came to the links between this nascent country seeking to modernize and the developed capitalist nations. Indeed, in his diary entry dated October 20, 1880, written during his residence in London, commenting on his success in the Rio Verde Railroad enterprise, Couto de Magalhães recollects his career as a businessman:

My honorable and good father has given me an excellent education, and through it provided me with the main instrument of my fortune, I, however, have built it myself: I saved from my wages, I formed a small capital of thirty thousand, which was what I had in 1869 when my father died; I put myself to work, I projected trips to the River Plate, and from there to the Amazon in three hours; I worked with my body as if it were a steel machine; I have done business with New York, Paris, and London, and facing danger, hunger, anxiety and huge jobs, I have built an annual income of one hundred contos, which, with the latest operations, is likely to rise to 136 contos de réis. (*Diário Íntimo* 151)

This passage is so suggestive that it hardly requires any comments. The speed that decisions were made, the body as a machine made of steel, the character of the traveler-adventurer who faces financial risks, the allusion to personal efforts totally independent from traditional family and patrimonial institutions that were still in force, and, ultimately, success as a reward – help the reader to construe the image of the self-made man through the accumulation of capital, active nineteenth-century expansion towards the integration of territories and markets.

As a writer since his student days at the São Paulo Law Academy in the 1850s, Couto de Magalhães rose to prominence as a member of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute, as well as an interlocutor of the Emperor, through publications about the hinterland and the Indians<sup>17</sup>. His two most memorable books – *Viagem ao Araguaia*, 1863, and *O Selvagem*, which came out in 1876 – both were written from his experience in the backlands. His studies about the integration of the Indians into the national population are full of passionate allusions about the freer world of desert lands<sup>18</sup>. In one passage, seeking to describe the splendor of nature, Couto contrasts the freedom of the interior to the bustle that is common to the cities:

After my soul regained concentration, I asked myself if happiness could not exist there, among those grand scenes of nature, the imposing peace, so unlike the restless and turbulent noise of big cities. . . There, man shall never set foot, but our strength is manifested even there, although these forests are inaccessible, a bird may see its flight suddenly interrupted by the accurate shot of a hunter from the backlands. (Magalhães, *Viagem ao Araguaia*, 93)

The freedom of the backlands, however, did not remain restricted to the open spaces and broader landscapes distant from the cities. In effect it also was connected to a masculine world that was located in schools, barracks, wars, and travel, a world looked upon with suspicion in the context of nineteenth-century morality, which remained based on the monogamous and nuclear family. This masculine world of single or solitary men remained on the periphery of a society organized around the established family, the procreation of legitimate children, and the gradual accumulation of assets based on systematic work. Opposed to all this was the adventurous space of travel. Michelle Perrot described the celibate world of bachelors, associating it with the enclosure and segregation characterized by disciplinary institutions<sup>19</sup>. However, these spaces of social exclusion became diluted in colonial territories, in zones of expansion, in jungles and hinterlands.

The scene of our lodging was fantastic: fires burning here and there outlined the giant shapes of the buriti palms and gave a wild look to the shadow of the soldiers who passed before them; the beds were hammocks tied to tree branches, and in curious groups. Only I enjoyed the privilege of a cot. Our roof has been the blue of the sky, which is beautiful and full of this melancholy enchantment that is usually provided by the moon, especially in the midst of vast and bare plains, as were those where we stood. (*Viagem ao Araguaia* 85)

In the Brazilian case, large segments of the population clearly remained on the margins of bourgeois morality, in relation to European and American middle classes. Likewise, in Brazilian society still bearing the marks of traditionalism, bachelors and celibates could still find a place in families that continued to accept and maintain solitary persons among their kin. However, the acceptance of bachelors in elite families ascribed them to quite restricted spaces: women were assigned the role of the spinster or confined in convents; men had to play the role of the rich uncle to nephews who cast them covetous eyes. And yet, the world of bachelors, whether in Brazil or in European societies, was indeed a space of restriction. Travel dissipated the imposed social constraints, creating a new space for excluded individuality.

If travel allows the breaking of barriers and restricted social roles, it is because it refers to an imaginary space that enables the existence of different standards, contrary to those prevailing in traveler's place of origin. Wild and explored nature constitutes a desert, an empty space that the explorer fills with the meanings of his desires. And the population he encounters there, which is linked symbiotically to nature, is also savage, mysterious, free, but above all, empty. In analyzing Jean de Léry's *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*, Michel de Certeau (226-236) shows how travel literature construed the savage as the body of pleasure. In opposition to western works, the Tupi world, with its own time and reasoning, emerged for Jean de Léry as that of pure pleasure and enjoyment. The eroticization of the body and of the universe of the other appears here as an almost natural development. It would be, in this sense, "the return to the aesthetic

and erotic form that the economy of production had to suppress in order constitute itself,” standing thus “*at the junction between pleasure and interdiction*” Certeau 228).

Casement’s writing illustrates de Certeau’s analysis. Amidst his predominantly concise and descriptive notes, Casement’s diary presents some gaps where the physical beauty of Indians and *Cholos* can be appreciated like a feast for the eyes. On September 8, 1910, on the shore of the Putumayo River during his stay in the region, Casement recorded:

Lovely day at 7 a.m. River risen fully 1 foot or more. Sandbank getting covered. ‘Huayna’s’ passengers all came up yesterday. Met some of them, out [undeciph] to Forest pool – Morona Cocha – fine types, one with shotgun, lovely and strong Indian Cholo in Brito works. Stayed at Brito’s house (£1,500 pounds) and I saw nice children, and then back at 11, a fearful hot day. Did little or nothing – it was too hot. At 5 out to shooting range but did not find it with Fox and Bell and then stupid dinner, and out again to Commission and played bridge till 11:30, winning two rubbers. Home at 12 and young Cholo policeman on Malecon – splendid young Indian . . . (Singleton-Gates and Girodias 235)

A feast for the eyes and other senses, sexuality emerges from these passages to break constraints and to become incised, realistically or imaginarily, in the body of the savage. While the virgin landscape is there to be conquered, dominated, and integrated into the march of civilization, the body of the savage, as an avatar of this nature while symbiotically linked to it, is part of a sexuality freed from the locks of repression. Sexuality, however, is itself one more metaphor of the conquest.

In Couto de Magalhães’ diaries for the years 1880 and 1881, written during his residence in London, one finds a movement of pure remembrance of the travel experience and its overwhelming sensuality.

The pleasures of his present life, at the moment when the diary was written, consist mostly of evoking distant landscapes and recalling past pleasures. The landscape of the present only awakens the senses insofar as it evokes others that remain very distant, irrevocably lost:

*Saturday, September 25th, 1880*

Today I had a very pleasant day – the sun was shining, the temperature was warm, João arrived at half past ten, and at eleven we went to the zoological gardens; the trees are already yellow and the leaves are starting to fall, it is like that melancholy autumn quatrain described by Millevoye. After walking in the gardens, I exited through the North Gate and I proceeded down that canal that I love so much, because it brings to mind scenes of wild rivers where I spent the most passionate years of my life. (*Diário Íntimo* 115- 116)

In the section entitled “Dream Diary”, one finds traces of sensuality evoked by the memory of pleasures of the flesh. Sensuality, when repressed, returns during the

night, with the freedom of landscapes, rivers, wild nature, collaborating characters, and a sweeping sensibility:

*Tuesday, February 14th to the 15<sup>th</sup>, 1881. Nighttime of February 14th to the 15<sup>th</sup>  
... (After falling asleep again)*

Afterwards, one of my negro slaves in the company of a simple mulatto in shirtsleeves, and both fifteen years of age, in my company, passed by a bar with bowls filled with sugar, and came upon a very large lake, very much covered with green scum, and the three of us bathed in that lake. (*Diário Íntimo* 199)

At this point, the narrative of the dream is written in Nhengatú, a version of Tupi, as if the change of languages would provide the necessary distance for him to write what he wished. In his biography of Sigmund Freud, Peter Gay explains the use of a foreign language as an artifice to establish greater distance between the writer and his narrative. By focusing on an episode of Freud's self-analysis in which he remembers the desire that he felt for his mother at age four, after seeing her naked during a train journey, Gay points out that even Freud had made use of Latin (*matrem nudam*) in order to place himself at a safe distance (Gay 1988, 11). This is how we interpret Couto's use of Tupi-Nhengatú, as provided an expedient for releasing repressed memories and inadmissible desires, which becomes clear in the translation of what follows in the dream sequence:

I want to have sex with a mestizo, with a black; I say that the black man's erect member was taken out from the inside.<sup>20</sup>

And in its sequence, the dream leaves no doubt of the scene that is idealized by the dreamer, and the kind of desire that is being fulfilled<sup>21</sup>:

On one side of the lake there was a little stream of very clear and transparent water and full of fish and between these two lambaris that wanted to eat the other fish that moaned and made noises with the lambaris thrashing their tails amidst them, and the part of the streamlet where the lambaris were was covered with grape leaves . . . (*Diário Íntimo* 200)

Obviously, an analysis of the dream sequence in all its complexity requires a number of other prerequisites to which we do not have access, and, furthermore, it is not our aim here to draw a psychological profile of the dreamer. Indeed, for a dream to be interpreted in psychoanalytical terms, the dreamer must be present and available to elaborate free associations that might clarify the distorted content resulting from the dreamer's censorship in his effort to recover the repressed content expressed during sleep<sup>22</sup>. This is a condition that, in our case, remains impossible to meet.

And yet, we would not necessarily have to stick to the analytical field of psychoanalysis. In his book *O Espelho Índio (The Amerindian Mirror)*, Roberto Gambini uses the Jungian concept of projection to perform an interesting analysis of a dream told

by a Terena Indian living on the Araribá reservation in São Paulo<sup>23</sup>. Nonetheless, at this point, our interest merely endeavors to shed light on a sensuality that is present not only in the traveler's dreams but also while he is awake. The images evoked in the following passage, somewhere between the Garças and Mortes rivers, that Couto de Magalhães reproduced in *O Selvagem*, are strikingly similar to those of his dream. However, the time span between the real life experience and its dream representation is of at least ten years:

. . . The stream of hot water descends hanging over a ridge of gentle terrain, and continues for more than a league, in a sequence of cascades: the traveler, arriving after a fatiguing march over a grassland lacking shade, exposed to extenuating sun and exhaustion, feels an ineffable delight in looking at those light blue waters, as transparent as a diamond, rushing over urns of green rocks, populated by numerous shoals of white fish that free themselves in the rapids, seeming to enjoy, in those pure waters, the pleasure of living happily. (*O Selvagem* 100).

In the landscape of pure pleasure, the savage, the mestizo, the Curiboca and the Tapanhuno play their roles. They are all presented as sensual beings, establishing an empathetic relation with the indigenous way of life, and with non-white populations in general. It is the feeling of sympathy, as well as of understanding, that relativizes (yet does not supersede) the rigid explanatory charts of scientism, expressing, in a remarkable way, a more optimistic view of the local inhabitant. Commenting on the freedom of the savage and his descendants, marked by independence, self-reliance and courage, as opposed to the sedentary lifestyle of the whites, who always depend upon their peers, Couto writes:

This wandering life, spent on horseback, running through fields, close to nature, feeling its impressions; the privations that are proper to this kind of life that would be unbearable for the white man, the frequent need to sleep outdoors; feeding exclusively on honey, palm, and game, which, for those not used to it, is equivalent to a diet of deprivation, are for the caipira, the gaúcho and the Caboré, among others, great sources of pleasure, elements of happiness and joy, that make their existence one of abundance and delight that would be unbearable for the white man. (*O Selvagem* 68)

It is the feeling of empathy that leads Couto to a certain relativism and personal reevaluation, mollifying the evolutionary paradigm:

No matter how rude and barbaric an institution might appear at a first glance, it must be studied with respect. The fundamental institutions of different peoples, whatever their degree of civilization or barbarism, are the result of eternal laws of morality and justice that God created in human consciousness, laws that, at heart, are the same to both savage and civilized man . . . (*O Selvagem* 84)

A similar process might be detected in Casement's trajectory. Having devoted his life to travel and to the accusations that pervade his report about the conditions to which the Indians and Blacks were subjected, Casement expressed his latent conflict with British imperialism. The empathy with which he lived his experiences in Africa and South America doubtlessly relate to his disguised homosexuality, his intimate secret. Hidden conflicts and a repressed sensuality are expressed in an attempt of identification with the other: the Black, the Indian, and the subjected Irish, who was actually himself.<sup>24</sup>

And yet, neither Couto de Magalhães, nor Casement, could arrive there completely. After all, the destination of the traveler is to remain in transit.

## Notes

- 1 The development of this essay began during my postdoctoral training in the years of 1993-4, supported by FAPESP, and it was completed in 2002, under the auspices of CNPq. Different parts of this text were presented at the Annual Meeting of ANPOCS (1993), the Regional Meeting of History ANPUH (1996), the National Symposium of History of ANPUH (1999), and in 1997 it was presented as a talk entitled "The Private Life of a Public Statesman in the Brazilian Empire" at the Center for Latin American Studies at Michigan State University in Lansing, USA. A version of this article was published under the title "Para uma História da Sensualidade. Notas sobre diários e viagens". *Revista da USP*, vol. 58, 2003. 134-148. This article was translated by Mariana Bolfarine and revised by John M. Monteiro.
- 2 On the excessive bashfulness and the suppression of reference to parts of the body, even in non-sexualized contexts, see Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class. The Bourgeoisie of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, which, on page 83, comments on the habit of ladies covering piano legs in order to protect them from prying eyes.
- 3 In E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, New York: Vintage, 1963, the chapter "Community" (401-47) shows both the persistence of a traditional community sociability among the nineteenth-century working classes and also the efforts by certain sectors to discipline their moments of leisure.
- 4 According to the excerpt taken from Frieda von Kronoff's *Töchteralbum* of 1902, quoted in Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*. 448.
- 5 *My Secret Life*, considered a classic of Victorian pornographic literature, was extensively analyzed by Steven Marcus in *The Other Victorians*, chapters 3 and 4. 77-196.
- 6 On England, see Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, as well as Jeffrey Weeks, "Inverts, Perverts and Mary-Annes: Male Prostitution and Regulation of Homosexuality in England in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century", in J. Weeks, ed., *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity*, London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991. 46-67. With reference to Brazil in this period, see Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988 and Luiz Carlos Soares, *Rameiras, Ilhoas e Polacas. A Prostituição no Rio de Janeiro do Século XIX*, São Paulo: Ática, 1992.
- 7 In *Diamantes*, Resende promotes an interesting discussion about the relation between literary works and the diary, providing examples of important authors of both Brazilian and foreign literature.
- 8 These ideas were inspired by reading Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov", in *Selected Writings, Volume 3, 1935-1938*. 143-166.
- 9 I recognize that in "Histoire et Anthropologie Chez Lafitau" in: Claude Blankaert, *Naissance de l'éthnologie*. Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1985. 63-89, Michel de Certeau establishes the eighteenth century, more precisely, as of the publication of *Moeurs des sauvages américains*



- comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps*, by the Jesuit J.-F. Lafitau em 1724, a landmark for the origins of modern ethnology.
- 10 In Sussekind, *O Brasil não é Longe Daqui*, there is a chapter that grapples with the theme of travel and its impact on the origins of Brazilian literature, called “A Literatura como Cartografia” (35-154).
  - 11 The points that are made here can be found in an essay by Fernanda Peixoto Massi, “O Nativo e o Narrativo. Os Trópicos de Lévi-Strauss e a África de Michel de Leiris”, *Novos Estudos Cebrap*, n. 33, July, 1992. 187-198.
  - 12 Cf. the biographical work of Edward Rice, *Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton: A Biography*, New York: Scribner, 1990, and Alexsander Lemos de Almeida Gebara, *A África de Richard Francis Burton*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2010.
  - 13 The controversial biography of Roger Casement came out along with an edition of his diaries in Peter Singleton-Gates and Maurice Girodias, *The Black Diaries of Roger Casement*, 1959.
  - 14 The controversy surrounding the diaries and the discussions about its authenticity are present in Singleton-Gates and Girodias, *The Black Diaries*. 15-35.
  - 15 Originally published as *Viagem ao Rio Araguaya*. Goiás: Tipografia Provincial, 1863 and *O Selvagem*, Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia da Reforma, 1876.
  - 16 The first diary was edited by Brasil Bandecchi and published as a special number in the journal *Revista de História* (History Department of the University of São Paulo, 1974) and the second was edited by me (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998).
  - 17 Couto de Magalhães was an active and precocious student, having contributed with his essays to many academic and student journals, such as: “O Estudante e os Monges”, a romantic short story, published in *Revista da Academia de São Paulo*, no. 1, April, 1859; “Destino das Letras no Brasil”, no. 1 and 2 of the same journal and under the same date; and other writings reprinted in José Aderaldo Castello, *Textos que Interessam à História do Romantismo*, São Paulo: Conselho Estadual de Cultura, n/d, entitled: “Fundação da Academia. Trabalhos da Mocidade”, pp. 16-27 and “O que é a Imitação em Literatura (A meu amigo Alvarenga Pinto)”, pp. 216-219, among others. In addition, Couto de Magalhães at a more mature age showed interest in writing pornographic literature. His diary includes entries on the process of writing his pornographic novel, “a licentious fantasy entitled Dr. Calmiru” (Couto de Magalhães, *Diário Íntimo*, 140).
  - 18 Here I use the term “desert lands” in its nineteenth-century meaning referring to the absence of civilization and population. Desert and *sertão* (wilderness) are almost synonymous, yet “desert” here refers to territories that were more isolated and distant than the *sertão*.
  - 19 Michelle Perrot, “À Margem: Solteiros e Solitários”, in *História da Vida Privada. Da Revolução Francesa à Primeira Guerra*, Michelle Perrot (ed.). Translated by Denise Bottmann and Bernardo Joffily. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1991. 287-304.
  - 20 In the original version, written in Tupi-nhenguatú: *Irxé oyuputar om. curiboca, tapayuna; anahen aiko tapayuna sak., opirariuana i pupé*. Couto de Magalhães, *Diário Íntimo* (200). About the translation and its difficulties, check pages 42- 44 of the same publication.
  - 21 Here we are guided by Freud’s classic interpretation of the dream as fulfilment of the dreamer’s desires. Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, edited and translated by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, corrected edition, London: The Hogarth Press, 1958 (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 4).
  - 22 Freud, *Interpretation*, above all, chaps. II, “The Method of Interpreting Dreams: an analysis of a specimen dream”, pp.96-121, III, “A Dream is the Fulfilment of a Wish”, pp.122-133, IV, “Distortion in Dreams”, pp.134-162. See also Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, edited and translated by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, corrected edition, London: The Hogarth Press, 1960 (The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. 6).
  - 23 The dream narrative: “I went to the old Guarani cemetery on the reservation and there I saw a large cross. Some white men arrived and nailed me to the cross, upside down. They left me there and I became desperate. I was very frightened when I awoke”. Roberto Gambini, *O Espelho Índio. Os Jesuitas e a Destruição da Alma Indígena*. Rio de Janeiro: Espaço e Tempo, 1988.

- 24 Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, chapter 2, Taussig tackles this issue.

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