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Rubber Boom Narratives and the Development of the Amazon

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Dedication

To my dad for his limitless advice and positivity.

To Nate, for being my rock and best friend.

To my mom for her kindness.

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Rubber Boom Narratives and the Development of the Amazon

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This dissertation examines how race and gender inform structures of imperialism in the Amazon during a period of heightened national and international attention from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Representations of the Amazon at this crucial period both during and later depicting the rubber boom, are full of ambiguities between civilized and savage, center and periphery, nature and culture. The Amazon emerges as a distinct region, a natural paradise devoid of civilization and in need of preservation, a place of promising riches, and/or a blank screen on which to project western ideas of progress. The material I consider includes natural histories, travelogues, biography, fiction, photographs, and film. These texts represent many different genres and all aim to define, categorize, represent, or collect Amazonian territories and peoples in ways that transform territory to establish modern national societies, economies, and authorities. At the heart of this study is the project of modernization, the coming into being of modern nation states and citizens participating in global and national capitalist economies with all of the gains and losses this process implies. Modernity is built out of power and conflict and depends not only on economic and political processes, but also on ways of knowing, understanding, and being. These diverse and complex documents, the knowledge they

created about landscapes and people, and the way that they inscribe relations of power and ideas about economic, cultural, and national development worked to establish the contemporary Amazon. I look at the layered discursive and visual languages that produce the Amazon as a space of conflict representative of anxieties about modernization.

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Introduction: Rubber Boom Narratives and the Development of the Amazon

At the turn of the 20th century, the Amazon basin experienced a moment of increased exploration, mapping, border creation, and contestation as a result of the international demand for rubber. The first rubber boom (c. 1875-1912) was characterized by the emergence of modernizing states, and national territorial interests. While outsiders had been exploring Amazonia since initial colonial contact, these interests inspired a flurry of exploration-production as naturalists and cartographers scrambled across the globe to be the “first” to place various tributaries, plant and animal species, and native groups on the map, staking territory and claims. Many of these exploratory trips were written or rewritten into travel narratives that overflowed bookshelves in colonial centers in Europe and the United States. Beyond the obvious economic interest in the Amazon, the region was coming to represent a last bastion of “wilderness” – a final frontier for exploration in the international imaginary, fueled in part by the popularity of travel narratives. These narratives worked to establish the Amazon as a national frontier in contrast to rapidly modernizing centers. The Amazon was portrayed as undiscovered, and unmapped, which was used as a means for justifying the colonization of the land. This perceived remoteness made the mapping and photography projects at the turn of the 20th century in Amazonia part of the visual process of modernity. Travel narratives and natural histories produced knowledge supported by a multitude of maps, photographs,

and statistics that facilitated the nationalization of territories, ecologies, and peoples, while also demonstrating the position of the Amazon in neo-imperial formations.

The historical precedent of extraction from the Amazon was that of “collecting expeditions,” where plants and other natural resources found in the region were desired yet the environment was considered uninhabitable by most colonizers. The inaccessibility of the region made it difficult to bring African slaves, and indigenous populations escaped further into the jungle, thwarting initial colonization (Weinstein 30). However, with the vulcanization of rubber by Goodyear in 1839, international demand increased and rural workers from the Brazilian Northeast migrated in large numbers to the region looking for work. Due to the dispersed growth of rubber trees, rubber gatherers, scattered throughout the jungle, were less likely to engaged in collective organization.¹ Rubber barons rounded up indigenous people, removing them from their homes to tap rubber trees, in some areas wiping out more than 90% of the indigenous population and asserting power through violence and coercion (Brooke). Henry Wickham’s now famous biopiracy, (stealing Brazilian rubber seeds and bringing them to Asia to set up plantations) effectively helped to bust the demand for Amazonian rubber (Musgrave 173).²

¹ As Weinstein notes, “Rather than eroding existing relations of production, the Amazon rubber trade built upon them, reinforcing traditional modes of extraction and exchange” (15).

² However, there was a brief resurgence in the economic importance and international demand for rubber when Asian markets were shut off to Allied forces during WWII. Garfield (2013) constructs a history of the Amazon that focuses on a diverse set of characters and numerous transnational interactions between the United States and Brazil during the Vargas era through WWII (1930-1945). He also highlights his goals of linking the United States and Brazil during this critical time period and demonstrating the inseparability of nature and society, key aspects that I explore in this dissertation, particularly in Chapters Three and Four.

During the rubber boom, the Amazon became an especially internationally contested area. Susanna Hecht in *The Scramble for the Amazon: The Lost Paradise of Euclides da Cunha* contextualizes and traces the history of the Amazon to the height of the rubber boom in 1903. She situates the “scramble for the Amazon” amongst other international competitions for land, namely the scramble for Africa and subsequent division of the continent by colonizing countries. These scrambles advanced the “three ‘c’s” – commerce, civilization, and Christianity (87). Contestations over territory and culture were internationally important and reflected the context of the time period. This period included the Spanish-American war in 1898, seating the U.S. as a verifiable imperial power in Latin America, and the exploration and exploitation of various countries in Africa.³ The scramble for Africa, new imperialism,⁴ and impulses in the global north of civilizing missions throughout the world form a global backdrop for cultural representations that reflected and dialogued with political projects. The rise of the United States as a global power, particularly in relation to Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century marked a power shift where U.S. intervention in the region was seen as justifiable, often based on “ethnocentric and racist positions” (Escobar 28).

³ This moment was also characterized by the seminal jungle and human rights narrative, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Raising questions about imperialism and racism, *Heart of Darkness* details the slavery and abuse of rubber workers in the African Congo. An Anglo-Irish diplomat, Roger Casement, was also active in the human rights struggle in the African Congo, as well as personal friends with Joseph Conrad. After his experience in Africa, Casement was commissioned to investigate rubber era abuses in the Peruvian Amazon. His diaries created an international stir and increased attention and some reform to rubber boom atrocities. Casement’s role in the Amazon has recently been written into a novel by Mario Vargas Llosa.

⁴ Different from the era of direct imperial control, new imperialism refers to the period of economic and political expansion in foreign countries during the 19th and 20th centuries by Europe and the United States (Roger 30).

This dissertation examines how race and gender inform structures of imperialism in the Amazon during a period of heightened national and international attention from the late 19th to the early 20th century. Representations of the Amazon at this crucial period both during and later depicting the rubber boom are full of ambiguities between civilized and savage, center and periphery, nature and culture. The Amazon emerges as a distinct region, a natural paradise devoid of civilization and in need of preservation, a place of promising riches, and/or a blank canvas on which to project western ideas of progress. The material I consider includes natural histories, travelogues, biography, fiction, photographs, and film. These texts represent many different genres and all aim to define, categorize, represent, or collect Amazonian territories and peoples in ways that transform territory to establish modern national societies, economies, and authorities. At the heart of this study is the project of modernization, the coming into being of modern nation states and citizens participating in global and national capitalist economies with all of the gains and losses this process implies. Modernity is built out of power and conflict and depends not only on economic and political processes, but also on ways of knowing, understanding, and being (Berman 1983). These diverse and complex documents, the knowledge they created about landscapes and people, and the way that they inscribe relations of power and ideas about economic, cultural, and national development worked to establish the contemporary Amazon. Furthermore, in closing one of the final frontiers in the Americas, they helped establish the ubiquitous world order. I thus look at the layered discursive and visual languages that produce the Amazon as a space of conflict representative of anxieties about modernization.

The Amazon and its inhabitants have been central to Latin American cultural identity, economy, and global politics, as well as a hub of both internal and external migration. The Amazon basin, comprising 40% of South America, and including significant portions of eight countries, is an enormous and diverse region. As others have addressed (Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Conklin 1995; Maligo 1998; Slater 2012), more recent international representations of the Amazon put forward an idea of a rainforest in peril, with the occasional group of indigenous peoples who have been recently “contacted.” The contemporary and pervasive “lungs of the earth” metaphor serves to convey the importance of the region, primarily for its density and diversity of plants that can either sustain or, with its loss, jeopardize life on earth. I am interested in using texts related to an era of extraordinary economic importance for the region to examine how representations of the Amazon either ignore or display the people and development of the forest. These works explore relationships between race, space, and power on both a localized and international scale that reverberate into the present.

The texts I examine create a narrative of the Amazon as a transnational space. As such the Amazon both transcends national borders far from urban centers, and is a space in which competing international actors and interests are thrust into conflict. In part due to its transnational claims, the Amazon is often represented within the narratives I examine as a space in flux. Within this space, movement plays a crucial role. That movement includes peoples migrating to and from the Amazon, movement of international travelers through the region, and movement in terms of extraction and circulation, such as in the case of rubber. I engage in an analysis of exploration,

exploitation, and representation of the Amazon that resulted from such movement. These texts afford us insights into the workings of colonialism and imperialism in the development of Latin American nation-states in an age of emerging global capitalism. They portray differing visions of the transnational contact zone of Amazonia. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) defines contact zones as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (5). As such, I understand the Amazon as a space with competing national and international claims that provides a prism through which to recognize how raced and gendered subordinations across differing contexts produce modernity.

While I examine the Amazon as a transnational and globally important region, I use case examples primarily in Brazilian territory, as the majority of the forest (over 60%) is contained within the Brazilian nation. As Pedro Maligo in his analysis of popular representation and discourse about the Brazilian Amazon points out, the common international discourse about the Amazon uses it as a stand-in for all tropical rainforests, with the Brazilian example as lead. Furthermore, within a Brazilian vision of the Amazon, as part of a manifestation of control and progress, national myths serve to project desire and justify nation building projects. In “Dreams Come Untrue,” (2000) José Murilo de Carvalho argues that myths and heroes help nations to “develop unity, organize the past, and face the future” (61). In Brazil, Carvalho argues, there is an overwhelming pride in nature that equates the country itself to an earthly paradise. The sheer size of the country leads into the national myth of *grandeza*, or greatness. As the

Amazon River basin is home to the largest forest on earth, and the rainforest so resource rich, Brazil must inevitably become a great empire through development (67). Utopia forms a central part of this national myth in Brazil; which feeds into the myth of greatness and future promises of prosperity.

Narratives such as Octavie Coudreau's *Voyage au Cuminá* (1901), Euclides da Cunha's *À margem da história* (1909), Theodore Roosevelt's *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (1912), Cândido Rondon's *Rondon conta a sua vida* (1957), and Mario de Andrade's *O turista aprendiz* (1927) served in their own time to establish and mold the jungle in the international imaginary as a place of wild flora, fauna and people -- harsh and uninhabitable (and at times utopic) yet necessary as a resource for the development of modern Amazonian nations (including most prominently Brazil but also Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and French Guiana). Along with their narratives, many of these authors (Coudreau, Roosevelt, Rondon, and Andrade) include striking photographic and cartographic productions that also serve to categorize, collect, or establish the jungle. Furthermore, several of these narratives, or themes apparent in these narratives, have had contemporary resurgences in fiction, film, and television including Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), the Brazilian soap opera *Amazônia* (1991), Candace Millard's *River of Doubt* (2005), David Grann's *The Lost City of Z* (2009), Mario Vargas Llosas' *El sueño del celta* (2010), and Ciro Guerra's *El abrazo de la serpiente* (2015), among others. This renewal of interest in exploration demonstrates the lasting impact of turn of the century adventurers on the popular imaginary.

Using a varied corpus of primary narratives, I examine the workings of imperialism (Octavie and Henri Coudreau, Roosevelt) and internal nation building (da Cunha, Rondon, Andrade). Octavie and Henri Coudreau were geographers and explorers contracted by the French and later Brazilian government to map rivers in the Amazon basin. Henri, already an explorer of the region, was joined by his wife Octavie in 1899 to map the Trombetas River in the state of Pará. Mid-way through their trip Henri died of malaria and Octavie continued writing, photographing, and mapping the region under contract for the Brazilian state. Her collected texts are the focus of my analysis in Chapter One. As another excursion in a foreign land, and the basis of Chapter Two, Theodore Roosevelt, former United States president and renowned big game hunter/adventurer journeyed to the Amazon in 1912 after his failed bid for a third term in office. With intense media coverage, Roosevelt was joined on this expedition by Cândido Rondon, a Brazilian military officer and explorer of the Amazon region. The juxtaposition of these two leaders demonstrates the sometimes-conflicted vision of modernity in an Amazonian context from North American and Brazilian perspectives. Roosevelt views the Amazon as an arena to showcase his level of rugged masculinity and a space to develop for transnational resource extraction. Rondon, however, seeks to bring modernity to the Amazon through technology and the incorporation of indigenous peoples into the new Brazilian nation.

In another well-publicized journey that is the basis of Chapter Three, Euclides da Cunha, a Brazilian author, journalist, sociologist, and engineer, traveled to the Amazon in 1902 and wrote a short collection of essays and notes compiled and published

posthumously in 1909 as *À margem da historia*. A primary preoccupation of intellectual elites in Brazil at this period was how to create a “civilized nation,” (Zilly 3) which appears in Euclides’ essays that highlight the barbarism of abuse toward *caucheros* (rubber workers) and the perceived disorganization and chaos of the region. Mário de Andrade, a Brazilian modernist, author, musicologist, and art historian, traveled to the Amazon in 1927 to photograph and write a travel diary that mixes ethnography with songs, poems, and photography. By comparing Euclides and Mário’s works, I examine the place of race in nation building projects during two periods of national development in Brazil. To bring issues of utopian representation and rubber boom exploitation into the present, I conclude in Chapter Four with Colombian director Ciro Guerra’s recent (2015) film *El abrazo de la serpiente* that depicts thematic issues of exploration, extraction, and culture during and after the rubber boom. This film is based on the travel diaries of two prominent Amazon explorers, and uses an indigenous protagonist as well as a fictional plant to raise questions about knowledge production, preservation, and empire.

These narratives occur across different contexts and time periods, however, questions of travel, knowledge production, and resource extraction thematically connect them. Furthermore, differences of us and them, male/female, center/periphery, and most importantly nature/culture described in these narratives often tend toward artificial binaries that become most illuminating in their ambiguity. These binaries form part of the western production of knowledge in the service of the capitalist nation state. This categorization and collection was profoundly destructive, while simultaneously portraying the Amazon as rapidly disappearing and in need of conservation. As such

there is a sense of wanting to capture spaces and cultures in maps, photography, and prose. I re-read this turn of the century literature as re-occurring and relevant themes of racial subordination, resource extraction, and environmental anxiety that accompany nation building in the Americas.

Hierarchies of Power: Imperialism, Modernity, and Developmental Frontiers

One of the key features of the era of new imperialism, in terms of cultural thought, is the production of a static identity and the establishment of an “us” and “them” – or a differentiated other, as Edward Said argues in *Orientalism* (1979) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1994, 18). I argue that these Amazonian narratives rely on the propagation and dissemination of representations of the “other” through categorization, photography, and exotified voyeurism – outsider, explorer, scientific, and tourist’s gazes. Nationalism, like imperialism, also depends not just on economic expansion but on the inherent idea that certain societies and places should be subjugated – that the savage, racialized other *needs* the subjugation and taming of western societies (Said 9). In Latin America, Aníbal Quijano formulated such processes as the coloniality of power, where the legacy of European colonialism continues into the present through systems of hierarchies, knowledge, and culture. In the case of the Amazon, Latin American nation-states had already earned their independence from European empires. However, both they and international capital extended themselves into the region, using modern tools to also dominate and incorporate the landscape and peoples.

Modernization emerges from empire, built on economic expansion, the subjugation of others, and as a discursive field of knowledge (Tuhiwai Smith 21).

Quijano discusses the portrayal of the New World as a blank space on which to project utopia and define Europe in contrast. He argues that through the “discovery” of Latin America, Europe could project a utopia in which the future was “always, not quite” – or just out of reach, caught in a process of ongoing modernization. In other words, Latin America was founded on, and remains in a state of modernization that never reaches that of imperial centers in the West. Modernity is rooted in the idea of utopia, the possibility to reclaim the “dreams and nostalgia of humanity” that had been lost in the Old World (171). Quijano makes a distinction between modernity and modernization, where modernity is a category rooted in historical change stemming from Europe that was created as a result of the discovery of the Americas. Thus, Latin America could be seen in a constant state of development toward a goal of modernity rooted in whiteness. A utopian modernity is inseparable from ideals of whiteness yet complicated by the need for a savage other with which to define the civilized “center” in contrast (173). Modernity in the Amazon is based on racial and social class distinctions that privilege the subjects over the objects – where the subject is the bearer of reason, rationality, order (and whiteness), over the object – the other, lying outside of imperial centers in the periphery. The narratives that I examine produce knowledge about the region that systematically categorizes landscape and peoples. This prioritized and normalized Eurocentric ways of knowledge production, and thereby cultural and political domination.

The implantation of a western grid of knowledge over landscapes and peoples forms a pillar of imperialism and as such is also a guiding force behind modernity. Ideas of modernity form the “modern ontology” (Escobar 9) where imperial visions shape ideas of domination and knowledge production in the present. The dominant ideology of modernity is the pervasive European belief in objective knowledge based in science and reason. Development also focuses on domination, and is dependent on the social production of space.⁵ These imperial projects in the Amazon depend on the control of product and forces of production (people). In some ways, this may mean through the incorporation of Amazonian peoples, land, and ecologies into the heart of national identity (however limited), while in others this may mean physical and environmental destruction. Escobar describes development as a historically singular experience based on three axes: “the forms of knowledge that refer to it and through which it comes into being and is elaborated into objects, concepts, theories, and the like; the system of power that regulates its practice; and the forms of subjectivity fostered by this discourse, those through which people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped” (10). I am primarily concerned with the first axis, specifically the production of forms of knowledge, as the implications of knowledge formation and representation reverberate in political and individual lives. These forms of knowledge are a technique of power and the representations I analyze carry hierarchical differences across race, class, and national lines. Indeed, many of the narratives I examine themselves fall into an in-between genre

⁵ Embedded in contemporary terminology such as first and third world, center and periphery, development occurs in relation to “differences, subjectivities, and social orders” (Escobar 9).

that portrays knowledge as scientific and objective in natural history/travel narratives while including elements of fiction and creative representation. I use these narratives to illuminate how each author in their specific context contested, challenged, or contributed to imperial/national formations and modernity.

The narratives I analyze report on the space of the Amazon, documenting, and as such claiming various frontiers. The Amazon has often been regarded as a frontier territory, or a land in a processual change (Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Anderson et. al. 1991; Cleary 1993; Garfield 2001; Caviglia-Harris et. al. 2013). Amongst others, the Brazilian writer Márcio Souza acknowledges the Amazon as a frontier, particularly in terms of historical representation in the twentieth century. The Amazon was portrayed as a ‘land without history’ (by da Cunha and others both before and during his time) due to the perceived lack of progress of indigenous tribes, considered a result of climactic challenges of the tropical rainforest. Thus, the Amazon region was considered a marginal space, especially when compared to the indigenous societies of Central America or Peru (41). Stephen Nugent, in *Imagining the Amazon*, also argues that the Amazon has been characterized as a frontier space, something that simplifies, “naturalizes,” and dehistoricizes indigenous populations. “These simplifying characterizations are enhanced by the tendency for Amazonia to be continuously nested within a recurrent, and often mythologized, notion of the frontier: the colonial frontier, the frontier of green hell, the frontier of Brazilian nation building, the advancing frontier of commercial agriculture, pastoralism, and extraction, conjuring up a pristine remoteness just out of reach that overwhelmed indigenous societies are seen to exemplify” (222). These frontiers blend

people and landscape and seemingly evade history while moving from one category of frontier to the other. The Amazon thus remains shrouded in mystery, lacking in history or historicization, a means to justify developmental processes and erase native peoples. As a frontier space, one that is in a state of flux and development, the land is portrayed as unfinished. The Amazon, as a “final frontier” upon which to project modern desire, is then only useful in its productivity. That productivity is linked to capital production and the twin preoccupation with developing a utopia. However, the ultimate paradox lies in that in being rendered “productive” its other value -- that of being the representation of a nostalgic, innocent past -- is destroyed.

The frontier narrative of racialized and masculine domination that propels modernity explicitly feminized or infantilized land and people and thus allowed – or even inherently called for dominance through representation -- to bring the unknown from unknowable and un-representable into groomed, manageable places (McClintock 193). In the Amazon, the feminization of land and peoples was used as a tool of racialized domination. A feminization of space was often extended to the bodies within that space and thus used to justify exploitation and control over populations in “wild” settings. I use theories of gendered geography to examine the highly masculinized approaches to the jungle and feminized representations of the space of the forest and indigenous peoples. In particular, western thought links masculinity with civilization, mobility, and forward progress (Massey 56). Male exploratory tradition seeks to catalogue “purity” – a virgin, untouched landscape. This male must also be a meticulous categorizer and able to accurately document his findings – embracing a model of imperialism as the collection of

information. The authors I examine are concerned with collecting information through travel. They travel outside of their normal spheres, in a somewhat or completely foreign environment. As Alison Blunt acknowledges in *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism* (1997) travel is experienced differently “along lines of race, class, and gender” (16). In these narratives exploration involved both literal and figurative mapping of nature, gender, and race. The modern nation must not only have its own borders and a monopoly of violence within them, but the space must also be mapped, controlled, and developed. This demonstrates a certain ambiguity in gendered representations where nature – consistently aligned with the feminine – is insurmountable and dominant.

Portrayals of the land as a feminine frontier create the opportunity for a virile frontiersman to act as an agent of change and establish dominance and industry. As Stam and Shohat discuss about portrayals of the Amazon, “The fact that a densely populated and culturally remolded land was seen as ‘virgin’ reflects a kind of mental ‘ethnic cleansing,’ a discourse of imaginary removal. The idea of the ‘vanishing Indian’ had its own colonial productivity, shaping a widespread impression that Indians had already disappeared or were about to disappear with the next hot breath of conquest” (6). The idea of a “vanishing Indian” therefore connects to discourses of a feminized land and people in need of submission as well as the push toward “progress.” In conceptualizing the land as a virgin, unspoiled wilderness, the potential “colonial productivity” of the land excludes its inhabitants. Furthermore, as Marisol De la Cadena points out, “Letting Indians die was necessary to achieve progress; moreover, it was achieved through cultural technologies, via *alfabetización* and *urbanización*. Presented as literacy and

urbanization, the death of Indians was, in fact, their birth as mestizos and, only as such, citizens of the nation...What from an indigenous viewpoint expresses a denial of ontological difference, the state phrases as progress, protection, and cultural improvement” (347). Death in this sense is both literal and cultural. The state, in the name of progress or development mobilizes discourses of education and modernization as goals. The idea of the Amazon as a virgin land and its peoples as rapidly disappearing creates a narrative of justifiable political and cultural dominance, where progress, loosely defined as modernization is implanted onto others. Cultural technologies, or as I discuss throughout this dissertation, the mapping and making of knowledge, is ultimately destructive of indigenous ways of life, and very often of indigenous people themselves.

Interpreting the Landscape: Ecocriticism and Inscriptions of Utopia

I seek to develop an ecocritical lens towards the Amazon that takes into account the limitations of western interpretations of landscape and instead addresses the coloniality of power and historically peripheral position of the region. I perceive ecocriticism as a form of spatial analysis that can work together with gendered geographies to examine imperial narratives. Ecocriticism is concerned with deconstructing dichotomies such as nature/culture, animal/human, urban/rural, male/female, and examining how colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy have impacted and constructed the very idea of nature, ultimately reflecting on cultural productions about the environment. Ecocriticism thus highlights the value of addressing environmental themes in texts. Meaning is derived from the description of place, and in

an ecocritical reading of my primary texts, I pay close attention to descriptions and the visual representation of nature. As Laura Barbas-Rhoden explains in *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction* (2011), ecocriticism in Latin America is an emerging area of study, although many critics and authors in Latin America have been using ecocritical approaches without necessarily naming them as such. Barbas-Rhoden argues for the importance of expanding this area of study, as existing ecocritical scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on the global North. I build on Gisela Heffes' (2013) application of ecocriticism to Latin America, where she argues that ecocritical analysis of the region should keep in mind Latin America's historically peripheral position in the global economy, and its long history of exploitation for resource extraction by foreign powers.

Reflecting upon a human-ecological relationship is a way of deconstructing the nature/culture divide in western interpretations by examining how the natural environment and plants in particular contribute to and interact with different cosmologies. In thinking about the role that plants and the landscape play throughout this collection of narratives, another avenue opens up: the role of plants in the creation of empire. As I detail in Chapter Four, following Londa Schiebinger in *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*, the role that plants play in the formation of culture and conversely the formation of empire is important, yet under-examined. Particularly in the Amazon, where rubber spurred a wealth of representation and capital for the international market, the collection of plants and information gathered by naturalists formed part of a hierarchy of knowledge. *Hevea brasiliensis*, in the hierarchical Linnaean

taxonomy of plant classification, or the Pará rubber tree, was the most commercially valuable for its rubber. “Europe’s naturalists not only collected the stuff of nature but lay their own peculiar grid of reason over nature so that nomenclatures and taxonomies, as we will see in what follows, often also served as ‘tools of empire’” (Schiebinger 11). Scientific knowledge, particularly at the turn of the twentieth century, was seen as a way to exert power and control over nature. Garfield (2013) also examines the international importance of plants during wartime, particularly in U.S. and Brazilian relations during WWII. He traces views of the region from an empty and neglected space requiring colonization, to a region of nationalistic pride during the Vargas regime (1937-45). This changing representation seems emblematic of the region where differing definitions of nature are used for political and extractive purposes, while rubber is used to fuel empire.

As another means of interpreting the relationship between nature and culture, critical posthumanism, or the active questioning and deconstruction of western humanist ideals (the tendency toward false dichotomies) is useful for examining imperial binaries. A posthuman alternative, which I explore through an analysis of *El abrazo de la serpiente* in Chapter Four, seeks to explore other ways of thinking and being in the world. In *Writing the Earth, Darkly: Globalization, Ecocriticism, and Desire*, Elizabeth Hoving uses Caribbean depictions of nature to question oppressive notions of what is natural or not when it comes to race, gender, and desire. She argues that rather than the pure, pristine view of nature that many US ecocritics have discussed, nature is political, messy, and tangled. Colonial separation of nature and culture defined and categorized what was perceived as natural as lacking, or devoid of culture. She relates nature and race,

explaining that the two are often used categorically to mark difference. “Writing about race *is* writing about nature; nature is often theorized as the ever-expanding network of varieties and diversities, of which some are identified and categorized as species or races” (5). Throughout this dissertation, I seek to understand how environment and race are intertwined in the making of knowledge about the Amazon. A social and juridical discourse is “naturalized;” where inequality and hierarchy become seen as “part of nature,” and a western grid of knowledge is implanted on nature to justify racial inequality.

Interpretations of the natural environment carry a political weight, and the Amazon region has often been characterized as either an Earthly Eden or a Green Hell, as a means to justify either preservation or development. In her analysis on representations of Amazonia, *Entangled Edens*, Candace Slater articulates this dichotomy, and addresses how the Amazon as a symbol has been used to mobilize political and environmental action. Early conquistadors characterized the region as an El Dorado of precious metals, while later nineteenth century naturalists such as Bates based their Edenic representations in the wealth of species and subspecies (Slater 40). Defining nature into categories became a way of taming it, while expressing the region as in flux made it a site of possibility. As an Edenic space, the Amazon can be seen to hold a hope for humanity, a garden before original sin where the modern world can seek respite from an increasingly globalized and complicated reality. In the hellish version of Amazonia, the remote and crowded nature of the jungle pushes humanity out, creating a shroud behind which violence and destruction can occur. An Eden can be an environment that is valued for

beauty, for serving human needs, for an abundance of resources, whereas a hellish version creates a place where nature is a threat, a source of pain, discomfort, confusion, and lack of order. In neither formulation is nature understood as a diverse ecological system that native peoples through their intimate knowledge of nature can live in successfully. In some ways, both Eden and hell resist and invite modernity. As Slater notes, most of the literature about Amazonia uses some measure of both of these tropes, as is also evident in the narratives I discuss.

The projection of utopian ideals on the Amazon space carries a long precedent, with initial explorers reporting back to the Iberian Peninsula about the immense riches of the region,⁶ or Sir Thomas More's influential 1516 book *Utopia* which coined the term referring to an island just off the coast of present day Amazonia. Initial inscriptions of the Amazon showcased the impulse to transform and guide this "Eden" into a utopia, hence the Amazon came to be considered a "demi-Eden," where man could still maintain and manage the landscape (Hecht and Cockburn 4). Eden is a natural paradise that only has two humans (before they spoil it), whereas utopia is about creating a harmonious society. The New World gave Europe a renewed hope for reinventing itself as a utopia, which depended on the subjugation of racialized bodies for the purpose of labor – making a racialized other necessary to construct a hierarchical power structure (Quijano 1989). Again, the implantation of western knowledge to guide the region into modernity characterizes utopian thought toward Latin America. These initial first explorations and

⁶ As José Murilo de Carvalho explains about founding myths of the Brazilian nation, initial inscriptions of the Amazon area as a utopia were transmitted from the Medicis *Mundus Novus* in 1503, showing the Amazon region's abundance, and thus creating a sense of inherent greatness rooted in nature.

their representations of an Amazonian Eden shifted toward an Amazonian El Dorado as a site of potential wealth in the 18th century (Hecht and Cockburn 5). Wealth could be found in plants like indigo, cacao, wood, and eventually rubber and even gold. Toward the 19th and 20th centuries, these representations moved toward scientific, fact finding, and collecting missions that sought to implant western knowledge and finish the “unfinished” Eden.

Violence, Race, and Visuality

Along with environmental, gendered and geographical approaches, I situate race at the center of imperial literature and production in the Amazon. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), Rob Nixon points to how ecocritical approaches have generally neglected reading race into the environment and have overwhelmingly focused on North American and European texts. Nixon also argues that “progress” often means environmental damage with long-term consequences suffered by the poorest and least powerful (a “slow violence”). I engage this critique by focusing on how the Amazon’s discursive production shaped views of development and preservation of the region that continue to resonate. While many of the texts I analyze are relatively anthropocentric (regarding humankind as most central element in existence), they all describe and characterize the natural environment, and in some cases map and photograph it. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley put forward the idea of a postcolonial ecology that merges the fields of ecocriticism and postcolonial criticism to look at both history and nature, engaging in a wider dialogue that takes into account the

ways in which colonialism ravaged the landscape. Nature here has value beyond the aesthetic and is represented as a character in itself.

Nature's character, then, is often portrayed as hellish and violent. In *Culture of Terror, Space of Death*, Taussig explores how abuses perpetrated during the rubber boom created a culture of violence that was shrouded in uncertainty because of nature itself. The tangled nature of the jungle, Taussig argues, was used as a shield behind which violent acts could occur. The supposed lack of knowledge about this space, the purposeful denial of history and historization, and the representational darkness surrounding indigenous peoples in the jungle made their subjugation more easily justifiable and contributed toward creating a "space of death" and a "culture of terror." "To an important extent all societies live by fictions taken as reality. What distinguishes cultures of terror is that the epistemological, ontological, and otherwise purely philosophical problem of reality-and-illusion, certainty-and-doubt, becomes infinitely more than a 'merely' philosophical problem. It becomes a high-powered tool for domination and a principal medium of political practice" (Taussig 492). It seems that there is a particularity to the type of violence that can occur in the space of the jungle. This is the proverbial "heart of darkness" where violent acts are perpetrated without consequences, out of sight from those reaping the benefits of this exploitation, consumers in the center. As Taussig explains, the constructed image of Amazonian Indians was never in focus, shrouded in the jungle, Indians could be portrayed as whatever best fit

differing political systems.⁷ This violence forms part of the ‘green hell’ representation of Amazonia. Key here is that indigenous peoples are being interpreted by others, without self-representation. The narratives I examine lack an indigenous voice, which in some cases authors invented (Andrade, Guerra) or blatantly ignored (da Cunha).

Indeed, the supposedly unknown is constructed as such, despite being well-known and inhabited. These narratives are working to delineate space, a key project in the work of controlling nature and people in the imperial project. As Achille Mbembe observes, “Colonial occupation itself was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area – of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations” (2003, 25). He deems the writing of new spatial relations as territorialization, and within this territorialization, the primary tools are the categorization of different populations, resource extraction, and the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries (26). Furthermore, Mbembe examines how “savage life” is seen as “another form of animal life” (24) and how “savages” are equated with nature in the eyes of the conqueror. This can be seen in different and often conflicted ways in the narratives I examine. For example, for both the Coudreaus and Roosevelt, unsettled native groups form part of their ideal of wilderness where natives deserve some degree of preservation (another manifestation of dehumanization where indigenous peoples are fixed outside of

⁷ “But of course it is not the jungle but the sentiments men project into it that is decisive in filling their hearts with savagery. And what the jungle can accomplish, so much more can its native inhabitants, the wild Indians, like those tortured into gathering rubber. It must not be overlooked that the colonially constructed image of the wild Indian here at stake was a powerfully ambiguous image, a seesawing, bifocalized, and hazy composite of the animal and human” (Taussig 483).

narratives of progress that shape the modern world). In mapping and categorizing indigenous territory they are asserting control over the geographical area.

Another way to assert control is through visual representation, however, visibility also reveals ambiguity in both subjects and photographers. The photographs produced in several of these narratives (O. Coudreau, Roosevelt, Rondon) demonstrate a racial categorization of Amazonian populations, by fixing them within a hierarchy based on comparative difference. Poole (1997) describes these processes by identifying how ethnographic photography and film establishes norms of look, dress, behavior, environment and cultural setting. Such visual representations fix the other in a static norm in contrast with a changing and advancing center. In the case of the Amazon, this racial difference is circulated via photography both within the region and abroad. Photography works in narrative histories to increase international attention and visually describe, establish, and fix the Amazon within the international popular imaginary while also creating a “centralized model for the control of remote populations” (Mirzoeff 483). This visually establishes the Amazon as a center of primitive otherness that in becoming “known” can be controlled. Furthermore, visibility is part of the process of modernity. Supporting a western desire to control Latin American territories and peoples, the photographs of these narratives become “conflated with the known” or assumed to accurately depict reality in modernity (Rose 6). This modernity is ocularcentric, based on not just imagining difference but also and more importantly, on seeing it visually.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter One examines the production of the French *explorateur* and geographer Octavie Coudreau through analysis of the natural history/travel narrative, *Voyage au Trombetas* (1899), and her subsequent narrative *Voyage au Cuminá* (1901). These travel narratives include suggestions for increased colonization along with observation of local populaces, supported by a multitude of maps and photographs. Using feminist approaches to the historiography of travel, empire, and geographical work, I look at the female European explorer's view of imperialism during this significant period in Amazonian history and development. I examine the unfixing of gender identity as it relates to movement within a liminal space. I think of this as the in-between place in which Octavie finds herself -- as a grieving widow, thrust into a position of power abroad, while still dealing with the limitations of her gender during this time period, and the space of the Amazon itself, a region in flux where multiple races and imperial powers interact in a contact zone. I use Henri Coudreau's narratives as a point of comparison where a primary question is how the imperial gaze changes when it comes from a woman. Octavie's depiction and transformation throughout her narratives and visual production depend on her movement through a liminal space as a semi-liminal character. What spaces does she travel through and how does her interpretation of these spaces (both textual and visual) and her self-identification differ according to place? Octavie, despite taking geographical measurements and producing detailed maps of Amazonian tributaries, rationalizes her authority by continually identifying with a male exploratory tradition and justifying her

reasons for exploration as a wifely duty. Furthermore, Octavie Coudreau's landscape and cultural descriptions, narratives of exotic adventure, photographic images, and hand drawn graphic maps point to revealing intersections of race and gender in colonial territorialization. The Coudreaus are perhaps the most directed in their objectives – mapping the region for the explicit purpose of resource extraction. While their narratives do not speak as explicitly about the rubber industry as Euclides da Cunha and others, their maps and extensive reports on *quilombos* (settlements established by escaped slaves) and indigenous populations produce knowledge about the region for future development.

As another example of an external incursion in foreign lands, and the basis of Chapter Two, Theodore Roosevelt comes to the Amazon just as the rubber boom is fated to bust in 1912. This chapter focuses on ideas of masculinity and wilderness, building on the gendered geography lens of the previous chapter. In 1913 Cândido Rondon and Theodore Roosevelt led a geographical and scientific expedition in the Brazilian Amazon and explored the previously unmapped Rio da Dúvida, encountering an often-hostile environment full of diverse indigenous tribes and perceived danger. Roosevelt's travelogue *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* and Rondon's memoirs *Rondon conta sua vida* set forward contrasting representations of wilderness, exploration, indigenous peoples and the claiming and naming of the Amazon region, elements which define their visions of leadership and masculinity. Throughout their joint journey the two leaders stage encounters both textually and visually with the landscape, and more importantly, indigenous populations. These encounters depict the Amazon and its incorporation into

the modern Brazilian state and global imaginary at the turn of the twentieth century. Roosevelt's invented "wilderness wanderer" asserts a rugged masculinity in American adventurism abroad after the perceived end of U.S. westward expansion. Rondon works to assimilate territory and indigenous groups via communication, transportation, and educational networks. These encounters are experienced differently via the distinct identities and aspirations of Roosevelt and Rondon, on the one side for exotic novelty and, on the other, for Brazilian modernity based in miscegenation and gradual, systematic incorporation of indigenous populations and Amazonian landscapes.

Chapter Three moves from international incursions to internal colonialisms through the works of two foundational authors of the Brazilian literary tradition. I situate the Amazon within Brazilian national identity through the works of Mário de Andrade and Euclides da Cunha. Both authors come from the urban South of Brazil and travel to the Amazon with the intention of describing their experiences to a wide audience. Euclides was appointed as the head of the Brazilian-Peruvian commission to demarcate a border between the Peruvian and Brazilian Amazon. After these experiences, Euclides wrote a set of essays collected as *À margem da história*, partially as a denouncement of abuses in the extraction of rubber. Euclides was particularly concerned with nation building. As such, Euclides' descriptions of nature and his observations on the Amazon work to at once denounce the rubber trade for its barbarism and write the Amazon into the national imaginary. Both Euclides and Mário are establishing Amazonian cultures and peoples at the heart of Brazilian national identity, bringing them from periphery to center. However, they come at very different stages in the process of Brazilian nation building.

Euclides visits the Amazon at the height of the rubber boom and reflects on the potential for future development of the region, where he sees it as inherently doomed because of its tangled, busy land and river scape. Mário travels during the modernist movement that sought to distinguish Brazil through its unique characteristics – such as *mestiçagem* and indigeneity. Mário also produced over 500 photographs of his trip, along with indexes of Amazonian languages and descriptions of his travels to the Northeast. Traveling for three months in 1927, Mário experiences the Amazon during a relative lull in terms of resource extraction. As a region representative of both Edenic hopes and inherent backwardness or challenge for Brazilian modernity, the Amazon is a frontier where race, territory, and national identity have continually been at battle. Both Euclides and Mário attempt to bring the region into the fold of Brazilian nationhood. Euclides, motivated by scientific and geographically determined racism, writes the Amazon as overwhelming nature whose future depends on the migration of sturdy backland characters. Mário, on the other hand, employs a critical primitivism where he pictures the Amazon and its peoples as at the heart of Brazil.

Chapter Four links my previous chapters to one of the more recent representations of Amazonia that has captured international attention and criticism, *El abrazo de la serpiente*, the 2015 Oscar nominated Colombian film by director Ciro Guerra.

Throughout *El abrazo de la serpiente*, the viewer is prompted to question western structures of narrative, nature, and culture. Using two prominent Amazonian explorers, German Theodore Koch Grunberg in 1912 and American Richard Evan Schultes in 1940 to frame and inform the film, *El abrazo de la serpiente* rewrites the traditionally linear

travel narrative and centers on an indigenous man named Karakamate who comes into contact with both explorers. The characters in the film are connected in their search for the fictionalized *yakruna* plant, a mystical cure-all that both explorers seek and of which Karakamate, as a shaman, has advanced knowledge. The movement and circulation of plants, particularly in the Amazon basin, has developed, destructed, and formed the region. In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, characters have purpose through their relationship with plants, and the indigenous actor has equal billing because of his plant-based knowledge. In this chapter I examine the relationship between nature and culture with a posthumanist lens, while also critical of its limits. Posthumanists argue that this separation is part of the project of colonialism, and that by thinking in terms of this separation we continue to perpetuate a western discourse built on the subjugation of the other. Within posthumanism I am interested in the role that plants play in opening up a new approach to representing the Amazon as seen in *El abrazo de la serpiente*, leading toward the question of how to represent the other, particularly from the outside. The material I consider in this chapter goes back to travel narratives or diaries to create semi-fictional accounts of travelers who shaped the Amazonian landscape in the international imaginary. In this return the progression is taken out of order, and fact and fiction blend.

This final chapter builds toward an overarching issue of this dissertation – power and the production of knowledge. While turn of the twentieth century literature used the Amazon region as a political tool, many of these projects also created valuable information that has been reused in unexpected ways, as I briefly examine in my conclusion. These transnational imperialisms in the Amazon build onto western

epistemologies and implant a humanistic grid of reasoning over nature and culture that does not necessarily fit. Building on Aníbal Quijano's notion of coloniality, Walter Mignolo explains that the first step toward decolonial thinking and research is questioning western epistemologies.⁸ This, however, is considered "necessary, rather than sufficient" (45). The next step, then, would be an epistemic disobedience, or rather de-linking a chronology rooted in western ideals and focusing instead on the "spatial sites of struggle" of colonized peoples. This necessitates working with indigenous peoples, taking into account the role of nature in the production of culture, and actively questioning existing dichotomies. In this dissertation, I at least take that first step toward thinking decolonially about the production of knowledge and the relationship between nature and culture by offering a critique of western knowledge formations in the Amazon region.

⁸ While Mignolo's theorization of decolonial thinking has been contested by scholars such as Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (which I briefly explore in Chapter Four), his notion of decolonial thinking as a spatial practice and the steps toward creating epistemic disobedience inform my theoretical approach.

Chapter One: Gendered Politics of Empire: The Female *Explorateur* and Natural Histories of the Amazon Basin 1899-1901⁹

“My wife is amazing, voilà, she has become an Indian! She is barefoot along the river, under the sun and fishing! I feel as if I should send for her, I’m afraid she’ll get sunstroke.” – Henri Coudreau, on his wife Octavie, *Voyage au Trombetas*, 1899

At the age of 28, Octavie Coudreau joined her husband on what was to be his last voyage, the 1899 exploration of the Trombetas River, a northern Amazon tributary in the Brazilian state of Pará. The Coudreaus and their crew traveled through a particularly rich contact zone as the Trombetas basin was home to a multitude of escaped slave communities or *quilombos*, along with a variety of different indigenous tribes. Octavie’s husband, Henri, a Geography and History professor, had moved to French Guiana years earlier, where he explored and mapped the region, working for both the French and Brazilian governments at the height of rubber boom disputes. Octavie,¹⁰ trained in France as a geographer (Souza Filho 2008), initially came to help her husband and serve as his cartographic assistant for their exploration of the Trombetas River. Within this context of contention and cultural contact, a female explorer appeared as an anomaly. In contrast to Henri, little is known about Octavie’s past, and little after her seven years of service in Amazonia. Toward the end of the Coudreaus’ journey and mapping project, Henri died at 40-years-old from malarial fever. After Henri’s death, Octavie picked up the pen, continued moving to finish the Trombetas journey, and wrote the last half of *Voyage au*

⁹ Portions of this chapter were published in the journal *Gender, Place, and Culture* in June 2017.

¹⁰ In this chapter I use Octavie and Henri’s first names rather than last to distinguish them.

Trombetas (1899). Henri's death launched a substantial career for Octavie in her own right, as she went on to further explorations contracted by the Brazilian government, four subsequent publications, and official recognition by the French geographical society.

Octavie Coudreau's gender while traveling in Amazonia limits her; yet her race and nationality offer her a separate set of privileges. The ways that she represents and travels through the Amazon, particularly through small black communities, offers a point of departure to discuss wider implications of race, gender, and imperialism in this transnational space. Octavie's geographical training sets her apart, however her contributions and narratives are almost unreported on. As Avril Maddrell addresses in *Complex Locations*, women have largely been ignored in the writing of geographical history and their contributions unacknowledged in the field, particularly before 1970. As suggested by the title, Maddrell, following Domosh (1991), seeks to establish a more inclusionary historiography of Geography by acknowledging the complex relationship of female geographers to the discipline. Through a critical examination of Octavie Coudreau's geographical fieldwork as detailed in her natural history narratives, I recognize Coudreaus' contributions while unpacking her role in the production of empire. In particular, I analyze her self-identification, photography, and descriptions of indigenous and black populations in the jungle in their restrictions and implications towards identity and place. Each category works within Octavie's imperial vision where movement – in the sense of travel as well as between social categories – plays a major role.

Henri's description of Octavie in the epigraph to this article from his portion of *Voyage au Trombetas* portrays Madame Coudreau as being comfortable, yet still out of place, in the physically demanding Amazon jungle. Apparently Octavie waded barefoot in Amazonian waters, much like the indigenous populations that her husband Henri admired. This brief passage both indigenizes Octavie and points to her (European) feminine fragility in the tropical sun. Octavie must still be "sent for" – managed under her husband's authority -- albeit somewhat self-mockingly, pointing to Henri's own difficulty exerting control over her in this foreign environment, where Octavie could move at least somewhat freely. As a female explorer in the jungle, Octavie Coudreau's narratives and geographical work illuminate a young woman taking on authority and leadership and demonstrating significant skills in map-making, photographic documentation, and travel and ethnographic writing. Indeed, Octavie becomes perhaps the first female photographer in the Amazon basin (Valente 2).

In this chapter I engage in a gendered analysis of Octavie's unique perspective, while examining her role in the exercise of imperial power through territorial conquest and the project of knowledge production. Octavie's identity is in movement as she becomes a grieving widow, thrust into a position of power abroad, while still dealing with the limitations of her gender during this time period. Furthermore, she travels through the Amazon, a rapidly changing region where multiple races and imperial powers interact in a contact zone. I thus examine the unfixing of gender identity as it relates to movement within a liminal space. Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones and transculturation, as developed in her critical survey of travel literature *Imperial Eyes* (1992), particularly

have some relevance to understanding this context. The Coudreaus' interactions with their crew and the varying indigenous tribes and *quilombos* they came across shape their narratives and reflect the question of how to deal with different races in an increasingly modernizing Amazon. Not only outsiders to the region, but outsiders to Brazil itself, the Coudreaus attempt to offer guidance for the state, from their perspective as subjects of the colonial center. Their advice privileges and pushes for the increased migration of whites to Amazonia. Furthermore, while Henri promotes land conservation, Octavie is primarily concerned with eliminating black populations in the region. The asymmetrical relationship that the Coudreaus' have with their crew and the black and indigenous populations they come across demonstrate the conflict within this contact zone.

Octavie Coudreau (1870-1938) was an author, explorer, cartographer, photographer and adventurer who produced four captivating narratives detailing subjugation, categorization, and collection in the Amazon region at the turn of the 20th century. Female geographer's historiography has been studied (Domosh 1991; Rose 1993; Blunt 1994 and 1997; Kearns 1997; McEwan 1998; Maddrell 2009), however, as Mona Domosh (1991) notes in her analysis of female Victorian journeyers, women are often examined as "travelers," rather than institutionally recognized and supported geographers. In *Travel, Gender and Imperialism* (1994), Alison Blunt examines the intersection of race, class, and sex, and emphasizes the need to move beyond dichotomies of male and female travelers, finding her point of analysis in the ambiguity and ambivalence of racial constructions. She argues that analyses of difference should avoid "artificial binary oppositions" through contextualization and complication (26). These

dichotomies are a pillar of empire, separating not just races and genders but nature and culture, human and non. Drawing on Blunt, I seek to address the liminal areas of Octavie's identity and trajectory, where she occupies a space that is in-between but not marginal, she has authority but it is an authority that must be brokered and managed as a white, female, widowed explorer traveling in what is itself a liminal space – the Amazon rainforest. As a site in which new possibilities unfold for the grieving widow, the Amazon jungle at the turn of the century was in a state of flux due to the rubber boom and increased efforts to develop the area into the Brazilian nation. This multi-racial context forms the backdrop that Octavie moves through where there is also a certain liminality to the identities she prescribes to both indigenous and black populations. Impelled by personal events along with a contested zone as context, Octavie Coudreau's landscape and cultural descriptions, narratives of exotic adventure, photographic images, and hand drawn graphic maps point to revealing intersections of race and gender in colonial territorialization.

Natural histories of the Amazon written by white male explorers around the turn of the 20th century are not uncommon (Spruce 1850; Bates 1863; DaCunha 1909; Roosevelt 1913; among others). Conversely, female explorers during the same period are rare and their accounts of independent voyages even more so. Following Anne McClintock's analysis of the intersections between race, gender, and sexuality in imperial projects as told in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Imperial Context* (1995), this chapter examines the workings of coloniality and imperialism through the gaze and actions of a female explorer (a self-described "explorateur") whose narratives

and material production offer insight into women as protagonists within an imperialist adventure narrative. As an author, geographer, photographer and adventurer Octavie Coudreau (1870-1938) produced four captivating narratives detailing subjugation, categorization, and collection in the Amazon region at the turn of the 20th century. Furthermore, as Maddrell (2009) addresses, female travel writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were overlooked as legitimate geographers (generally based on whether they took geographical measurements). Octavie, however, was producing geographical measurements, and census information of local populations. Accompanying this production, Octavie's prose follows sentimentalism (Kearns 1997) often found in turn of the century women's travel writing and in contrast to the scientific writing employed by her husband and other male explorers. In some ways this style could be used to soften the harder scientific findings that Octavie exposes – demonstrating a sliding gender/power scale where Octavie includes sentimental prose next to geographical measurements and census data, in order to work from a position of (relative) power. Through a negotiation of gender, she both self-identifies and negates her position as a geographer-explorer, moving within limitations. This gender negotiation also depends on a sense of racial superiority, particularly over black populations in the jungle. For example, she often writes about black populations in contrast to indigenous peoples and in relation to women. “We see everywhere the runaway slave that has the same moral characteristics: meanness, deceit and treachery vis-à-vis the white if it arises, and insolence and tyranny toward the Indian...in their *mocambos* [smaller *quilombos*] they unite to rob women [from neighboring indigenous groups]” (Coudreau 1899, 134). By

pointing out that black populations have targeted women and children, Octavie uses her position as a woman to project racial superiority and as such control, framing herself as an almost patriarchal protector of indigenous peoples.

As both Kearns and Blunt examine in their different analyses of famed female explorer Mary Kingsley traveling in Africa, a perceived racial superiority gives female travelers a sense of authority in a foreign land. Furthermore, as Kearns addresses, in an imperial power structure, anything outside of a white male subject formed part of the complex of the primitive, where other subjectivities were immediately more primal, and othered (451). As a woman, then, Octavie was already an other, particularly while her husband was alive. However, in his death, she begins to bend the rules by positioning herself as a scientific and racially superior authority, moving upwards in the imperial hierarchy. Thus, when categories become un-fixed, there is not only instability, there are new possibilities. This un-fixing depends on movement and travel as that is what bolsters Octavie's authority and is the tradition with which she identifies. Octavie, despite taking geographical measurements and producing detailed maps of Amazonian tributaries, rationalizes her authority by identifying with a male exploratory tradition, a perceived racial superiority, and by justifying her reasons for exploration as wifely duty.

When the Coudreaus set off for the Trombetas River in 1899, the Brazilian Amazon was experiencing a moment of heightened national and international interest and attention. Rapidly expanding global capitalism during this period now referred to as "the second industrial revolution" (Landes 1969, 56) included the development of steam power, railways, machinery, chemistry, automobiles, and the vulcanization of rubber,

which fueled a frenzy of exploitative development in colonies and former colonies in Asia, Africa, and South America. By 1899, Brazil had only recently abolished slavery (1888), and become an independent republic (1889), fostering national and international development. Furthermore, the first Amazonian rubber boom accelerated interest in natural resource mapping and a flurry of exploration-production with naturalists and cartographers across the globe scrambling to be the “first” (white men) to place varying exotic locales on the map. In Europe, geographical societies were formed to sponsor and train geographers for expeditions. The Société de Géographie de Paris, established in 1821, was the first of its kind and one of the first such societies to admit women. As a female leader of expeditions, Octavie’s narratives indicate a longing for imperial dominance through racial superiority, unfettered movement, travel and access, and the production of scientific knowledge – all elements of modernization based on the European model.

Framing Imperial Practices

In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock examines what she deems the three themes of western imperialism: “Transmission of white, male power through control of colonized women; emergence of a new global order of cultural knowledge; and the imperial command of commodity and capital” (3). Producing cultural and geographical knowledge for the command and control of capital production, Octavie Coudreau is certainly complicit in the domination of colonized subjects, even as she experiences domination herself within the gendered power structure of early 20th century Europe. While

McClintock's study primarily addresses the ways in which gender forms a crucial point of subjugation within an imperial hierarchy, she acknowledges that, "White women were not the hapless onlookers of empire but were ambiguously complicit both in colonizers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting" (8). While recognizing the agency of women in the creation of empire, McClintock argues that no matter their race or class, women reaped far fewer benefits of imperialism than men (7). Initially offered the chance to travel and explore due to her position as Henri's wife and later widow, Octavie is not of the elite – she has to continue to work since Henri left her with few financial resources. Yet due to her force of character, commitment and ultimate enjoyment of exploration and cartography she takes on four more substantial expeditions. While the Coudreaus are emblematic of imperial explorers, in some aspects they are resistive and indeterminate in their relationship to this both imperial and commercial project. In particular, Octavie's material productions and Henri's views of conservation complicate their position as liaisons of modernity, development, and subjugation.

In order to briefly analyze the direct narrative switch between Octavie and Henri, I primarily examine *Voyage au Trombetas* (1900), a fascinating 134-page travel diary started by Henri and finished by Octavie. Henri Coudreau's travel narratives were translated in 1977 in a collection of other travel/adventure literature about Brazil, collectively called *Reconquista do Brasil*. The forward promotes the importance of Henri's narratives for learning about the indigenous groups and landscapes of Pará. I also discuss Octavie's next publication after *Voyage au Trombetas*, *Voyage au Cuminá* (1900), which provides a wide range of photographic and cartographic material produced

exclusively by Octavie after her husband's death. There is little analysis of Octavie Coudreaus' work¹¹, however, there are several sources that reference Henri Coudreau including a biography (Benoit 2000) and a chapter in Susanna Hecht's *The Scramble for the Amazon* (2013).

The Coudreau's journals include, in addition to narration, their own maps and Octavie's photography. In imperial projects maps and photographs provide modern representations authorized as scientific "truth" that serve as tools in the naming, describing, and controlling of subject territories and peoples. Map-making precedes and helps to legitimize territorial conquest (McClintock 112). The Coudreaus' production demonstrates a modality of visibility as set forth by Nicholas Mirzoeff in "The Right to Look" (2011). Mirzoeff argues that through classifying (naming and mapping), separating, and aestheticizing, imperial visualities created a "centralized model for the control of remote populations" (483). The Coudreaus' maps, photographs, and accompanying documents attempt to organize the social behavior of black and indigenous populations, establish control over resource extraction, and facilitate industrial development, while tracking the movements of their trip. By identifying the "other" ethnographic photography and film establish norms of look, dress, behavior, environment and cultural setting. These tools establish and fix cultural, racial, and sexual hierarchies (Poole 15). Photography works within narrative histories to increase

¹¹ With the exceptions of a historical analysis in the form of a PhD dissertation from the Brazilian academy (Souza Filho 2008, a two-page cultural news bulletin from a small town in Pará (Valente 2011) and a website sponsored by the French government (Leroy 2010).

international attention and visually describe and establish the Amazon as a peripheral wilderness within the international popular imaginary.

Transition from -trice to -teur



2. Expédition Henri COUDREAU

Figure 1.1: Octavie and Henri Coudreau before their expedition on the Trombetas River, (*Voyage au Trombetas 1*).

As shown in this photograph taken before their first joint expedition, Henri sits in the middle, looking straight at the camera with his arms commandingly crossed, dressed entirely in black. Nonetheless, the distinguishing element in this photograph is Octavie, at once out of place yet at ease in the left center of the photograph. Her arms rest passively on her lap, her face seemingly scowling not quite directly at the camera, making her appear impatient, ready for action, yet still constricted, confined, and static. Her clothes

are bulky and impractical for a jungle environment, in contrast with the pants and loose hanging shirts of the men. Here Octavie's attire suggests an adherence to sartorial conventions of female dress, despite her foreign environment. The crew appears in sailor attire, their matching hats distinguishing their secondary role on the expedition. Their crew was made up of local guides, most of whom were from nearby *mocambos*. It is immediately clear where the authority lies – with Henri. As the focal point, Henri, with his relaxed yet authoritative stance and direct gaze is notable from the rest of the crew. This photograph is quite obviously taken in a studio, where the curtains and manicured backdrop capture the moment before departure. This voyage included nine men (and one woman), in two large canoes.

Several months after this photograph was taken, Octavie Coudreau became a widow, bringing her to identify as a masculinized *explorateur*, rather than *exploratrice* as might have been expected. As the sole European and expedition leader on subsequent journeys, Octavie immediately takes on a dominating role, a shift upward in the imperial hierarchy, however, one that still requires careful navigation. Octavie begins her part of *Voyage au Trombetas* by detailing Henri's death from malaria. She worked as a nurse along the trip and also at Henri's side on his deathbed. Henri often describes her pulling teeth, hemorrhaging blood and mending wounds along the journey. The last chapter of *Voyage au Trombetas* begins like previous sections with an overview of where the chapter will take the travelers (and the reader): "Descent of Porteira – the Death of Henri Coudreau – Painful separation – Dark funeral." This spatial trajectory outlines the story of the chapter, a sort of tour before the map. Octavie describes in anguishing detail her

frantic search for help along the river. In the immense darkness of remote Amazonia, she held her lantern high cutting the night, with Henri dying in the back of their canoe, as she finally pulled ashore at the *mocambo* Cachoeira Porteira. In the style of other travel narratives, she adds a touch of literary flare – chronicling the night sky on the night of her husbands’ death: “It was a sad spectacle -- a funereally terrible yet beautifully illuminated and star-studded sky above the black water and our heads” (130). By the time the crew arrived ashore, it was tragically too late.

After pages of laments and mourning for her husband, Octavie begins to document her surroundings in a somewhat similar style to Henri. However, the subject is immediately less about the particular geography of the region and more about the inhabitants and her own feelings of isolation. “I have longed for this departure and now that I am in the middle of this vast Amazonian forest, I feel alone, sorry, and almost desperate” (Coudreau 1901, 5). Octavie’s sense of isolation is amplified as the only European on her journey, within the vast forest, she longs to continue moving. As Susan Morgan notes in her analysis of Victorian women’s travel books about Southeast Asia, “The feminine rhetoric of imperial domination is understood to repeat, copy, imitate, mimic the masculine rhetoric its function is to serve. Their cultural aims are similar – in fact, his defines hers – but their specific positions and content are different” (17). Morgan finds that, like Pratt’s analysis of female travel writers, there is an emphasis on the domestic sphere by women versus an emphasis on the city and outside world by men. Morgan also finds that many female travel writers used their position abroad to express a sense of power, imperialism and “racial and national superiority” (13) not felt in their

daily lives. Despite moving outside of the domestic sphere, Octavie feels a sense of isolation because of her racial position, gender, and the loss of her husband. For Octavie, in the middle of the jungle, the domestic is gone – although an emphasis on a sense of racial and national superiority is not.

Octavie's narratives and geographical endeavors, in particular in *Voyage au Cuminá*, differ from most other female travel writing as she was entirely outside of the urban centers, in a multi-racial context far from a traditionally conceived “domestic sphere” and was working to create maps along with narrative. While identifying as an “explorateur” is not necessarily unique to Octavie -- many female travelers almost inevitably chose to identify with male exploratory traditions (Domosh 99) -- she continually comes back to this designation that helps to define and bolster her mobility and authority. Octavie's explicit choice to identify as a female *explorateur* situates her in a role that is neither fully masculine, yet decidedly not feminine.

If I am an *explorateur* – this word cannot stand to be feminized – it is not for love of glory, which is far too fickle a goddess, and blinder than Fortune. It is not for the love of Geography, I think I will like Geography enormously once I am done with it. If I explore it is to allow me to bring the remains of my husband to his elderly parents so that Henri Coudreau does not forever remain in a foreign yet friendly land, it is to finish work begun five years ago, because all useful work is primarily to raise awareness of countries still ignored by the masses. (5)

Here Octavie hesitatingly refers to herself as an explorer (“if”), calling attention to her femininity as out of place in this role. Octavie is a reluctant geographer, however, through geographic production, Octavie’s gender can be ignored, or more importantly, shifted. This shift means that she can move forward within an ambiguous gender construction. Rather than explicitly contributing to a geographical canon of knowledge, Octavie positions her knowledge production as duty to Henri and also in the wider, universal frame of enlightening the masses. Octavie explains her objective as above all dutiful to her husband by finishing his work on the Trombetas and secondarily practical and scientific, from traditional female to male roles. However, even this secondary objective carries a sense of duty not only to Henri but to the production of scientific material, another manner of expressing a desire for control over place (Kearns 455). This position as a reluctant geographer allows her, like her male counterparts, to create an adventure narrative and photographic legacy (Figure 1.2) that transmits knowledge of unknown lands to imperial powers and audiences, despite her gender. The death of Henri in fact gives Octavie the opportunity to continue traveling and to receive official contractual appointments as a lead geographer. Indeed, it is only after Henri dies that Octavie finds a voice in writing and begins publishing her travel journals.



Figure 1.2: Octavie the *explorateur* (Leroy).

Figure 1.2 demonstrates an Octavie significantly changed from the woman who set off down the Trombetas by her husband's side – a genuine *explorateur*. As McClintock notes, “Clothes are the visible signs of social identity but are also permanently subject to disarrangement and symbolic theft” (67). In Figure 1.2 Octavie appears alone, in trousers, her clothing and glasses (as seen in Figure 1.1) no longer limiting her, or restraining her movement. She has seemingly taken on a separate social and gender identity, re-arranging her sense of self for the world to see. Octavie was often mistaken for a man while traveling, and left this misconception uncorrected to legitimate her position as expedition leader and avoid potential questions to her authority (Souza

Filho 162). In this photograph Octavie nonchalantly places her hand in her pocket, staring off into the distant West, with her left leg positioned dominantly atop the studio landscape in the background. On her breast is a watch chain, presumably with a watch tucked inside – evidence of her ability to manage activities of others -- an emblem of the modernization and the forward progress of her exploratory work. Octavie presents herself as a heroic *explorateur*, figured alone, dominating, taking an authoritative and visionary command over her manicured surroundings. This photograph shows a more active, virile, masculine persona than the Octavie of Figure 1.1. There is a certain sense of Octavie’s agency transmitted through both her dress and stance – although the role of *explorateur* came about due to her husband’s death, Octavie has *chosen* to continue, commit, and fully inhabit this new role.

Documenting the Other

Octavie’s gender does, however, shift the gaze of the imperial explorer, evident in a comparison between Octavie and Henri’s material productions, both narrative and photographic. Narratively, there is a similarity between Henri and Octavie of both theme – enjoyment of the landscape and indigenous peoples – and style – a travel diary that records the day-to-day actions of the adventurers. However, Henri’s narratives leave out many of personal impressions and descriptive language that Octavie uses. Kearns (1997) differentiates between three categories of writing that imperial subjects implemented – objectivity, sentimentalism, and anti-historicism. Octavie’s writings demonstrate a sentimentalism that renders the writer “impotent” (451) by feeling lost in nature, or, in

Octavie's case in lamenting her husband's death. In this imperial sentimentalism, writers express feeling together with fact. Conversely, Henri's writing falls into the realm of objective where the geographer stands apart – a seemingly unbiased observer -- from the imperialist scene through classifications of flora and fauna, land, and peoples. As Domosh examines, a sense of self-discovery rather than just a discovery of the unknown was more apparent with women travelers (98). While Octavie's narrative in some ways repeats her husband's chronological style, there is the disappearance of the invasive masculine gaze on indigenous women, an immediate perceived threat from *quilombos*, and a varying sense of self in relation to both of these populations and the landscape not seen in her husband's work.

In order to fully understand Octavie's explorations a brief overview of her husband's work and trajectory is necessary. Having worked in the Brazilian Amazon since 1895, and the French Amazon since 1884, Henri was a seasoned veteran of the geography, landscape and ethnic makeup of the region. In 1895, he began service explorations of the northern Brazilian state of Pará, contracted by the state government of Brazil. After each voyage, he published a natural history complete with maps, drawings, and detailed observations of his surroundings. Different from other naturalists with similar projects, Henri's political belief was in anarchy, supporting "colonization for the people" rather than a "colonization of exploration" (Coudreau 1897, 45). Along with being an anarchist-naturalist, Henri spoke multiple indigenous languages and fluent Portuguese, at times serving as an interlocutor between indigenous groups of the region.

He was also active in demarcating borders between French Guiana and Brazil and even served as a colonial advocate in a brief utopian refuge called Cunani in French Amazonia (Hecht 131).

As apparent in their writing, Henri and Octavie viewed indigenous populations as a sort of primitive ideal – although still in need of protection and cultivation (or miscegenation). Henri Coudreau lent his services as a geographer during the *Questão do Amapá* (or the *Contesté Franco-Brasilién*), an 1895 border dispute between French and Brazilian governments over a territory division at the Oiapoque river (eventually settled in favor of the Brazilians). Having proven his skill in cartography and language during the *Questão do Amapá*, Henri Coudreau was commissioned by the Brazilian government in the same year to map three rivers in Pará state, causing rumors in France of a possible role as a double agent for Brazil (Benoit 120). Henri tends to favor the “wild” Indians they encounter on their journey. For Henri, the “untouched” Indians are attractive due to their supposed ease and ability to travel freely within their environment. Native women have a particular allure:

The arara Indians are the most excellently mysterious of the Xingu region. Those that I saw had a clear complexion and elegant comportment. They seem to be the most mobile indigenous group of the region: now on the Iriri, now on the Curuá de Ituqui, today on the banks of the Xingu, tomorrow on the right edge of the forest -- they don't seem to stay in any

fixed place. The tribe is famous, especially for their beautiful women.
(1896, 38)

The Arara Indians, always in motion, form the ideal indigenous tribe: they have an “elegant” comportment that moves them easily in a jungle environment. The fact that this particular tribe is always out of reach -- despite Henri’s efforts to locate them adds to their “mystery.” The Arara are seen as particularly attractive because of their “clear” complexion in contrast to other, darker, populations in the jungle. Furthermore, indigenous women, semi-nude and mobile, create an appealing contrast with European women covered and confined. As evidenced by other male travel narratives and romanticist ideology at this time, including José de Alencar’s indigenous romances such as *Iracema* (1865) and *O Guarani* (1857), the ideal of a beautiful, welcoming indigenous woman unsullied by the drudgery of civilization formed part of the appeal of the “noble savage” (Devine-Guzman 67). Attraction coupled with mobility harkens back to the epigraph of this article in which Henri refers to his wife as an Indian wading in the Amazon.

Like her husband, Octavie admires wild, mobile Indians, whom she documents extensively. Once Octavie becomes the leader of her own crew of men, she comes to consider herself a defender of indigenous people. In a moment of relative ennui on the Cuminá River, Octavie references a frequent argument between the crewmembers and herself: “To make me change my mind they continually try to impress me. They repeat their eternal phrase -- ‘Indians aren’t people, they are bugs of the forest’ – to which I reply: ‘You [crew members] are brutes, there is no doubt that the Indians are better and

superior both morally and intellectually” (1901, 100). Here Octavie exhibits high praise for the mental and moral capacity of indigenous peoples – in contrast to the Brazilian crewmen who see Indians as undesirable parts of the forest. Rather, the Brazilian crewmembers are brutish and savage, not the “wild” Indians, who are praised for their natural superiority, as of yet uncorrupted by civilization. Unlike Henri, Octavie references the intelligence rather than physicality of Indians. Octavie asserts her own superiority through telling the crewmembers they are wrong. As an educated, white European, Octavie’s interpretation of the nobility of indigenous populations bolsters her own position of authority over her “brutish” crewmembers.

Further demonstrative of the ways in which Octavie views the peoples of Amazônia are the photographs she produces. In Figures 1.1 and 1.2 Octavie is a subject, but in *Voyage au Cuminá* and following narratives Octavie is the photographer. This shift is especially important as Octavie has the opportunity to represent her surroundings from her perspective, while Henri included detailed sketches, but few photographs.



Figure 1.3: Pianocotô Indians (*Voyage au Cuminá* 152).

Octavie's photographs of indigenous populations demonstrate their mobility, and their alignment with the landscape, similar to Henri's narrative descriptions. Octavie's photographs often display indigenous peoples actively engaged in various pursuits – building canoes, eating, or moving through the forest. Figure 1.3 shows three members of the Pianocotô tribe squatting near brush and branches, almost blending into the forested background. These particular Pianocotô are obviously not in a settled area, and they appear barely clothed, not in the least Europeanized. The photograph seems candid, as some of the subjects look at Octavie while others continue about their routine, demonstrating a certain comfortable, or at least accepting relationship. Through Octavie's lens, Indians outside of settlements are viewed as in sync with their environment – worthy of preservation and protection yet not quite fitting in with ideals of order,

progress and modernization. Indeed, settlement and modernization would seem to diminish the mental and moral superiority that Octavie attributes to indigenous peoples.



Figure 1.4: Pianocotô man in his canoe (*Voyage au Cuminá* 161).

In Figure 1.4, a Pianocotô man sits in his dugout canoe. This man sits waiting, rather than crouching like the Pianocotô in Figure 1.3. The placement of the canoe is ready to launch, another indication that there is freedom in motion. These canoes are different than what Octavie and her crew members travel in, partitioned off wooden boats that are wider than these crafted vessels. Here the separation between nature and culture is blurred as the man is cocooned within a tree that he has also wielded. Movement and motion through the landscape creates the appearance of a symbiotic relationship between this man and his surroundings. As Peter Wynn Kirby notes, “Human lives unfold over socio-cultural terrain where history and language and experience congeal, and the liaison

of bodies and environs brings endless adaptation and growth, with the land influencing denizens and travelers as much as the reverse. Movement is central to this engagement between being and surroundings” (15). The trees together with the river scape determine how the man has chosen to wield them. While seated and posed, motion is a current in this photograph, that demonstrates wider implications about indigenous populations in the jungle. There is a freedom of movement and interaction with the environment that disappears in Octavie’s photographs of *mocambeiros* and her crewmembers.



Figure 1.5: “My guide Guillermo” (*Voyage au Cuminá* 9).

This photograph, of Octavie’s guide Guillermo, is the only close up portrait of a man included in *Voyage au Cuminá*. It appears that this photograph was taken in a studio. Guillermo looks directly at the camera, his brow furrowed and his look somewhat concerned. His tilted head seems to indicate a kind of pleading with Octavie, the

photographer. His expression reveals at once an intimacy and barrier. Guillermo plays a central role as Octavie's guide and informant throughout her trip. As McClintock notes, in these manicured, immobile portraits there is a certain violence, "The immobility of the sitter conceals behind the surface of the photography the violence of the colonial encounter" (126). Motion or the possibility of it disappears in this photograph. The camera, wielded by Octavie, freezes her subjects, while the blank backdrop takes Guillermo out of context. Furthermore, Guillermo's striped and buttoned shirt indicate a certain westernization, in contrast to the shirtless Pianocotô. While Guillermo serves as Octavie's "guide" indicating a superior sense of surrounding and adaptability to the environment, he also serves as an intermediary between different cultures through his ability to communicate with Octavie, while remaining her subordinate.

In contrast to Octavie's progressive and almost reverent view of indigenous peoples, her sentiments and documentation of black populations in the jungle are racially marked and numerous in comparison to Henri's. Octavie's vision for development of the Amazon region revolves around white migrants coming to the area to civilize black settlements: "If this European colonization and national colonization in the settlement of Pará does not begin soon on a large scale, I wonder if the Pará region will not fall prey to negro races of the Caribbean, whose rapid swarm may well threaten to transform the Amazon not into a Wild West, but a sort of Sudan" (127). Again, Octavie situates her mission on a global scale, warning of the perceived threat to white settlers through reference to Sudan (most likely a nod to the Mahdist War of 1881-1899). Here Octavie herself describes black populations as insects, they "swarm," presumably taking over a

place, moving together in large number. In contrast, European populations should move to immigrate and settle Pará, ending the frenzied “swarm,” and demonstrating a different type of voluntary, controlled movement. As Domosh notes on female explorers, “Their authority in the field was derived from their role as outsiders – as representatives of the white race – yet the basis of that authority is what made them insiders in a culture in which they had no authority” (99). This struggle to define and prove her authority can be seen as Octavie situates herself as morally superior to her crewmembers through her acceptance of indigenous populations, while black populations in the jungle appear as out of place and in need of control.

Figure 1.6 appears toward the beginning of Octavie’s travel on the Cuminá River. In her journal, Octavie describes *mocambos* on the Cuminá as similar to those on the Trombetas – small and abject -- yet in this section of the narrative she focuses much less on them than indigenous communities.



Figure 1.6: Figena, a *mocambeira* woman.

The only photograph capturing a *mocambeira* (female resident of a *mocambo*) is above of a woman named Figena. Figena sits looking away from the camera – in contrast to photographs of indigenous peoples looking directly or candidly at the lens. This woman seems to be waiting passively, almost patiently. She is wearing western attire, and in the background a cleared settlement and a self-sustaining economy are apparent. This is the only photograph from *Voyage au Cuminá* in which a woman appears alone – in particular a black woman. There seems to be a certain refusal to engage with the camera, yet Figena is seated and clearly posed, perhaps, in a manner similar to Octavie in Figure 1.1. This representation fixes Figena in a primitive domestic sphere and in some culturally intermediate yet clearly hierarchized space between indigenous and European. While Octavie has control over the creation of the image, and its selection and publication,

questions still arise: is the subject looking away from the camera at the request of the photographer or is it an act of resistance to the photographer? The photograph silences its subject, but is the angle of Figena's chin and the set of her jaw also a refusal to speak?

In comparison with the photographs of indigenous populations (often demonstrating a sense of movement or an active involvement with their environment) that make up the bulk of Octavie's photography, this image strays. This construction of racial difference shows a feminization of the gaze where Figena, while seated passively, is not overtly or immediately sexualized. However, the photographs produced by Octavie show the racial categorization and hierarchy of Amazonian populations, where black Amazonians are distinctly out of place, and static. Poole, drawing from Poignant suggests that photographs taken in a studio took on increased appeal as the subjects could be pictured alone, and thus could appear rare, that their large number (in this case Native American Indians) was rapidly going into disappearance. Octavie's photographs show indigenous peoples in action shots, or in groups, while pictures of *mocambeiros* are alone, isolated, and clearly posed for a shot. This supports several arguments. One, that in their isolation, black populations can perhaps be swept out of the jungle. Secondly, indigenous populations, who are busily employed and part of a larger network should be left alone.

Henri's pays less attention to his crewmembers in his narrative, fleetingly commenting on their origin and *mocambos* in general. Henri begins *Voyage au Trombetas* with the journey setting off from Cachoeira Porteira as they take four men

from this community on the trip as regional guides and oarsmen. This *mocambo* was formed, according to Henri, when slaves ran away attempting to escape a draft for the Paraguayan War (1864-1870). Throughout Henri's portion of *Voyage au Trombetas*, *mocambos* are often described in passing, or as a source for potential crewmen to guide them on their voyage. Often, the racial characteristics not just of the *mocambos*, but their interactions with indigenous tribes are described. "Fifty of these *mocambeiros* and their descendants live there today, peaceful but quite miserable citizens, in the part of Trombetas immediately downstream of the first waterfalls" (20). In this passage, Henri refers to the *mocambeiros*' life in peace, albeit "miserable" in terms of poverty, they are seen to live in harmony with both the environment and indigenous groups, which comes in stark contrast to Octavie's descriptions of the same communities. All of the communities that the Coudreaus' encounter are formed around the geography of the region – especially in the case of *mocambos*, where slaves were able to find some refuge in the forest and were able to subsist off of the land. The large waterfalls of Cachoeira Porteira, the *mocambo* to which Henri refers here, blocked slave-catchers from capturing escapees.

In contrast to Henri's passing and neutral descriptions, when Octavie picks up the pen later in *Voyage au Trombetas*, she writes extensively about the black populations she encounters. Octavie gives her own history of how *mocambos* formed, describing *mocambeiros* as "negres marrons du Brésil" -- who rule themselves in the jungle. Octavie finds these *mocambeiros* offensive, because they have captured and enslaved Indians

(especially women and children) living outside of their settlements: “In their *mocambos* they unite on issues of mutual insubordination to rob women. They tried to turn to the practice of slavery, searching for captives from neighboring Indian groups where they attempt to remove the women and children” (1901, 120). This paints a picture of a violent contact zone where whites are needed to manage these conflicts. This comes in contrast to Henri’s “peaceful” designation toward the same *mocambo*. Octavie’s description of *mocambeiro* settlements attends to the condition of native women – the perceived attempts by *mocambeiros* to take indigenous women and children may have alerted Octavie to her own vulnerable position as a white woman in the jungle. Octavie expresses concern that runaway blacks threatened the “superior” indigenous populations. In regard to indigenous people Octavie is as paternalistic as her husband, though with more attention to the experience of women. In regard to black inhabitants her position moves from her husbands’ paternalism toward an assertive control and management, perhaps in a racialized perception of personal risk. Octavie’s vision for an ideal development of the Amazon region centers on white settlement to protect Indians and to keep blacks more closely monitored. While the groups are viewed differently, both require increased social discipline modeled and organized by people of European ancestry.

As shown in Octavie’s photographs and narratives in the Amazon, there are at least three modes of mobility in the jungle: the ability to travel and document through identifying as an *explorateur*, the freedom of mobility within the jungle for indigenous peoples and the forced migration of black populations. For Octavie herself, movement

becomes how she interprets her environment and copes with the loss of her husband and her perceived isolation. The moments when Octavie remains sedentary and inactive are what she deems the most dull and tiresome. “The most boring moments of the trip are those where we’re not moving forward. These forced stops are always of a great sadness. Any force that stops us fills me with sadness” (1901, 27). This sense of action for Octavie seems to offer contrast with Figures 1.1 and 1.6, where activity is the realm of a European *explorateur* – the privilege of mobility, of whiteness, and masculinity – steamrolling forward toward modernity and industrialization while black bodies sit waiting or are forced to migrate.

Mapping Virgin Landscapes

While Octavie’s ideals for Amazonian development revolve around white migration, in terms of natural resources she is more directed than Henri¹² in reporting on areas for settlement and industrialization. Octavie as *explorateur* offers guidance for where plantations could be set up for the production of coffee and nuts (“In Rio Cachorro timbers abound, the land is excellent for growing and there is the *castanha*” (1900, 115)). In *Voyage au Cuminá*, Octavie expresses a longing to go back to France, however she again emphasizes her dedication to her mission, as working, movement, and a forward trajectory help her grieve and justify her identity as *explorateur*. “But here it is

¹² According to Henri in *Voyage au Trombetas*: “Within colonized settlements, one can come to distrust those adventurers who come to rob one of a virgin land full of natural resources and, after having made their fortune, leave a broken and bruised earth, returning to enjoy peacefully the fruit of their thefts in Europe” (100). This ideal of conservation is admirable, although coupled with the feminized trope of “virgin” earth.

truly about the dreams of my imagination. I have other things to do than literature or feeling. I am here to draw an accurate survey as comprehensive as possible of the Cuminá River, a sub-tributary of the Amazon” (74). The challenging environment and circumstances of Octavie’s exploration offer her stimulation and excitement. Although she argues that she has other things to do than “literature and feeling” her prose is demonstrative of the effect that her travels had on her sentimentalist style. Ultimately, however, a sense of dedication to geographical accuracy and an exploratory mission is used to at once justify and masculinize her position and assert control.

While Octavie offers suggestions and justifications, Henri stresses a care and guardianship of the landscape – part of his perceived duty as a patriarch: “...and as the supporters of progress and Brazilian civilization decide to try [to develop the Amazon], beware of falling into the error that ruined many countries, a mistake of deforestation, therefore depriving a country of the freshness essential to equatorial climates” (112). Henri’s warning against deforestation demonstrates a tension between conservation and development. This tension is similar to the contradictory desire to at once “civilize” indigenous populations while maintaining “uncivilized” qualities, as tokens of an unspoiled, unsullied past, that does not quite fit with the imperial project of the present. He also situates himself as an authority for the developing Brazilian nation. As a French explorer with extensive experience in the Amazon and a level of renown, he paternalistically gives advice to Brazil. With both conservation and the indigenous population, Henri exhibits an intense attraction and awareness of their importance, never explicitly pushing for assimilation or destructively industrial projects. Ideally, Henri or

someone like him could remain a patriarchal keeper of both the forest and indigenous peoples.

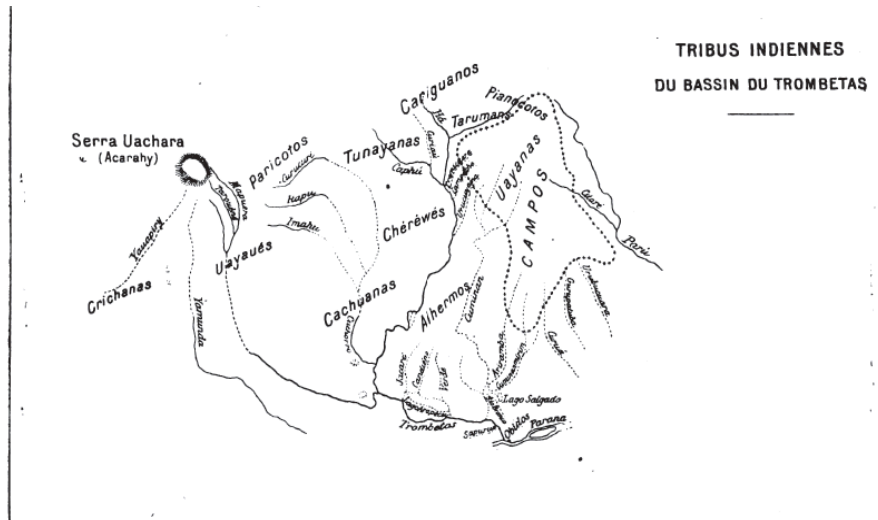


Figure 1.7: Indigenous tribes of the Trombetas Basin. This area is now a designated natural reserve, still housing some of the same tribes, and multiple recognized *quilombo* communities (1899, 120).

In a hand-drawn map from *Voyage au Trombetas* of “Indigenous Tribes of the Trombetas River Basin,” names of different indigenous tribes appear throughout the basin, at times overlapping. The indigenous ethnographic project undertaken by Henri during *Voyage au Trombetas* experienced multiple setbacks, due to geographical difficulties where the crew was blocked by large rapids from going further into indigenous territory. “We are powerless before this natural beauty, we welcome it and we bow down; then continue, sadly forced to give up the project to go to the Indians where I had intended to have a great geographical, ethnographic, photographic and linguistic harvest, all because I cannot pass these rapids!” (86). Henri’s regard for the natural

environment of the Amazon is apparent and even humbling, despite being blocked from a natural historian's ideal "harvest," a crop of linguistic and ethnographic knowledge.

Figure 1.7 shows Henri's best guesses as to where different indigenous populations are located and often overlap. In the case of this map, these fluctuating territorial borders become colonized in their documentation. This ethnographic map asserts knowledge of both bodies and place, or particular bodies in place – a combination of ethnographic and cartographic production. Both landscape and ethnographic descriptions are anchored in natural history – the difference being that "one produces land as landscape and territory, scanning for prospects; the other [ethnographic] produces the indigenous inhabitants as bodyscapes, scanned also for prospects" (Pratt 64). This map demonstrates a production of both ethnography and cartography, bodyscapes within landscapes.¹³

The cataloguing, mapping, and classification of the landscape and peoples in this region forms part of a larger colonial project, of which Henri serves as a somewhat bizarre negotiator. Within his narrative he is highly critical of extractive industries and other adventurers out to make a quick profit and return to their easy lives in Europe. While this serves to legitimize the longevity of his work in Amazonia, he also has landscape preservation in mind. According to Henri, "Within colonized settlements, one

¹³ Following DeCerteau's definitions of space and place, where a place indicates a sense of stability in a defined location, and space consists of various mobile elements – a mobile act of the present (DeCerteau 117), the Coudreaus' map and write a particular place in their material production. In speaking on the differences between representations – illustrations, tours, or other describers, the map ultimately asserts an all-encompassing knowledge other forms leave out. "But the map gradually wins out over these figures; it colonizes space; it eliminates little by little the pictorial figurations of the practices that produce it" (121). Maps serve to exhibit the products of knowledge, taken and presented to the public as the absolute truth, where space is a practiced place.

can come to distrust those adventurers who come to rob one of a virgin land full of natural resources and, after having made their fortune, leave a broken and bruised earth, returning to enjoy peace in Europe, living off of the fruit of their thefts” (100). Somewhat settled indigenous areas and *mocambos* must have been distrustful of Henri and his mission, making work for him more difficult. Not to mention, the earth itself, perhaps given more consideration than the populations living there is being threatened, left broken and bruised. Thus Henri’s direct advice for the way in which Brazil should colonize the Amazon emphasizes a care and keeping of the landscape. As an anarchist/colonist Henri also recommends migration to Amazonia to settle the land and begin to harvest its’ wealth.¹⁴

Voyage au Cuminá ends with 20 of Octavie’s cartographical productions, a visual showcase of the movements of the trip, in full color and exhibiting different scales of detail on areas of the river basin. These maps, like descriptions, photographs, and stories, serve to organize and “know” the region. Henri’s previous narratives include black and white ink-drawn maps of different indigenous territories (such as Figure 1.7), making Octavie’s cartographical production appear especially esthetically pleasing in contrast (Figure 1.8).

¹⁴ This is a vision which he elaborates in depth in his publication *La France Équinoxiale* (1886) he details an anarchist utopian vision for a republic in the French Amazon called Cunani (today in the Brazilian state of Amapá) whose official statehood lasted from 1886 to 1891, later becoming a short-lived free state (from 1904-1912). “Ahead of his time, Coudreau viewed the region as especially important for extractive goods of rubber, cacao, and Brazil nuts; in short, he viewed Cunani as an economic powerhouse, not even counting the gold in the alluvium” (Hecht 133).

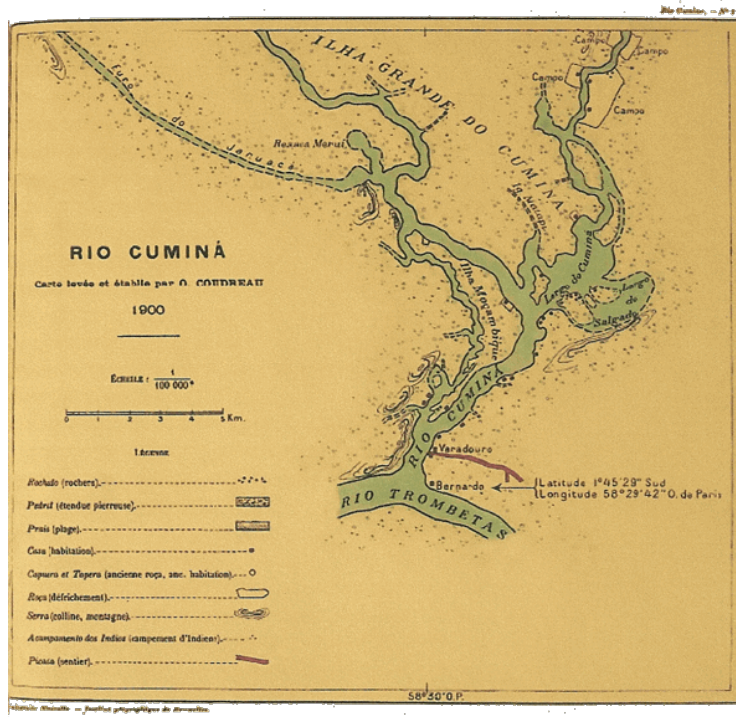


Figure 1.8: Map of the Rio Cuminá (*Voyage au Cuminá* 163).

As McClintock notes of the role of map-making in coloniality, “The map is a technology of knowledge that professes to capture the truth about a place in pure, scientific form, operating under the guise of scientific exactitude and promising to retrieve and reproduce nature exactly as it is” (27). These maps, as part of the body of natural history materials created by Octavie function as scientific knowledge – providing a “truth” that can legitimize and aid in the construction and reinforcement of empire. The map provided here is hand-drawn and scaled, a representation of Octavie’s journey. The act of tangibly graphing these places serves in some ways to ‘de-virginize’ the landscape – mapping onto the grid a previous unknown. Often, male exploratory traditions explicitly feminized land and people and thus allowed – or even inherently called for

dominance through representation -- to bring the unknown from unknowable and unrepresentable into groomed, manageable places (McClintock 193). Furthermore these maps, narratives and photographs are then used as representational tools that as Felix Driver examines, “serve to sustain more directly colonial and imperial projects...to explore unknown country was in this sense also to subdue it” (22). As a woman involved in “subduing” the constant justification of actions through racist diatribe and movement between gender norms justify Octavie’s role in the imperial project.

Conclusion

Octavie’s writings, photographs, and maps transmit a frank intimacy with the reader – as we textually bear witness to the loss of her husband and her transformation into an *explorateur*. In a telling moment from *Voyage au Cuminá*, Octavie becomes overwhelmed upon arrival at one of the waterfalls that her crew passed during *Voyage au Trombetas*. Next to the waterfall she sees the same table and tablecloth from months before when she was there with her husband. Her reaction to this familiar scene demonstrates a certain sense of survival, self-preservation, authority, and perseverance. “I gave the order to immediately remove the table and relieved myself by smoking a cigarette” (10). Octavie is a complex character – a grieving wife, a bold and determined explorer, geographer, and expedition leader, a racist appreciative of native peoples, a skilled cartographer, ethnographer and adventure-writer who can be seen wading in the waters of the Amazon, or smoking a cigarette.

Octavie Coudreaus' interactions with her crew and the varying indigenous tribes and *mocambos* they came across both challenge and reflect imperial ideologies of race, gender, and modernization in an especially resource-rich contact zone in a state of flux. In particular, Octavie's photographic productions complicate her position as a liaison of modernity, development, and subjugation by feminizing the gaze yet masculinizing herself to gain authority. However, her trajectory, both literally as she goes forward on her expedition, and theoretically as she moves between different identities, shows the ways in which gender and identity become unfixed through movement within context. As seen in the photograph of Figena (Figure 1.6), there is a challenge to the sexualized male gaze while an imperial racial hierarchy remains intact. Ultimately, Octavie's subjectivity is that of an imperialist abroad; and her constructions of racial difference, emblematic of her time, demonstrate the tenuous place of black populations in the Brazilian Amazon. In many ways, Octavie perhaps relied on a more explicit racism than her husband to give herself a more masculine authority. White women were complicit (or in this case explicit) in racism as long as, or indeed because, they had some access to masculine privilege abroad through their race. However, this position still had to be constantly negotiated, as Octavie the *explorateur* and writer demonstrates. Furthermore, Octavie's visuals lead to a more acutely perceived racial and social hierarchy and the invitation to exploit. Octavie's photography showcases her personal evolution, the progress of her trip, and the imbricated racialized and gendered position of herself and her photographic subjects in motion toward modernization.

Octavie Coudreau died in 1938 at 68-years-old seemingly disappearing from the archives after her last publication, *Voyage au Rio Curua* (1903) and return to France in 1906 (Leroy 2014). Although Octavie's role as a female geographer and *explorateur* in this region at this time is exceptional, her vision of race and power fits within other imperialist projects. Her identification as an *explorateur* demonstrates a struggle to assert dominance over her surroundings through a particularly masculine gender identification. While Octavie's self-identification as an *explorateur* feeds into the overt masculinity of exploration, she also demonstrates the constant negotiation that this role entails. Her legitimacy is tied to a masculinized identity founded upon both a racial identity but also the ability of mobility, which she inhabits, but never fully. To end as she begins *Voyage au Cuminá*: "Now is the time to shake off the torpor that overwhelms me, the active life begins" (15).

Chapter Two: Wandering Wildernesses: Race and Nation Building on the Rio Roosevelt

After a presidential bid for a potential third term to lead the United States in 1912, Theodore Roosevelt, the indomitable lover of nature and adventure, was defeated. At fifty-five Roosevelt received an offer from the Museo Nacional de Buenos Aires to take a speaking tour in South America, after which he planned to join his son Kermit who was working on the railroad in Brazil for a leisurely Amazonian trip. As the planning for this journey gathered speed, the itinerary changed from a simple trek through known areas of South America into a geographical and scientific exploration of previously unknown territory in the Amazon. Approached by the Brazilian government to accompany Roosevelt and offer expert guidance of the region, Colonel Cândido Rondon, the foremost Brazilian explorer of the Amazon, who had been working for years establishing telegraph lines and opening up the Brazilian interior, agreed to help lead the re-named and re-routed Expedição Científica Roosevelt-Rondon. This trip called Rondon away from his Telegraphic Commission project, yet the explorer recognized the publicity and big-name opportunity that a joint expedition could give his other work. Rondon suggested exploring the Rio da Dúvida or River of Doubt, the headwaters of which he had encountered during one of his telegraph missions, and whose route was as of yet un-mapped.

This chapter explores the relationship between landscape and power – the external

imperial power of Roosevelt and the coloniality of power represented by Rondon's civilizing mission. Roosevelt and Rondon were both prominent, indeed emblematic figures in their respective countries, and both shared the vision that their countries participate in the global economy as superpowers through resource extraction and industrialization. Roosevelt, the 26th American president and member of a wealthy family descended from mid-17th century Dutch immigrants, and Rondon, a Brazilian military officer of mixed Portuguese and Native descent (*caboclo*) express distinct modalities of empire and modernity in their textual and visual representations of the Amazon. I address trans-national masculinities and race within the Amazon basin by examining documents and photographs from the Roosevelt and Rondon Scientific Expedition. Exploration within the Amazon is a highly gendered enterprise, as we have seen with Octavie Coudreau in Chapter One. It is a familiar trope that male exploratory traditions typically feminize or infantilize land and people in transforming supposed "wilderness" areas from the unknowable and un-representable into groomed, manageable, known places (McClintock 193). Roosevelt and Rondon perform their own forms of gendered and racial superiority as they implant technologies, establish dominion, and lay down laws. As he explores the Amazon, Roosevelt describes himself as a "wilderness wanderer." In fact, both men "wander" in different "wildernesses," created by their distinct mobilities and imaginaries of the space. Roosevelt's representations of the Amazon produce a wilderness based on travel and movement that foregrounds the adventurous masculine self. Rondon's vision of and mobility through the Amazon serves toward the building of a modern nation.

From the earliest periods of exploration, textual and photographic representations of the Amazon have established the region as a global final frontier of rugged, uninhabited wilderness. As scholars such as Maligo (1998), Stepan (2001), Slater (2002), Nugent (2008), Viera (2016), and others have addressed, the Amazon is represented as either a “green hell” replete with hostile flora and fauna, or a worldly Eden, beautiful and untouched. With Roosevelt in particular, Slater argues that he exaggerates perceived danger to develop a sense of the Amazon as the “last great wilderness on earth” (47). Roosevelt’s portrayal of the Amazon as a hostile wilderness stands in contrast to Rondon who thinks of the Amazon as an Eden where civilization can expand and flourish. For Rondon the Amazon offers the possibility of realizing the country’s dream of modernity through territorial domination and technological innovation. Roosevelt values precisely this lack of technology that makes the wilderness an exotic, pre-modern space for the staging of his masculinity. Desperate to experience an “authentic” wilderness, the American Roosevelt rejects modern forms of travel, the Brazilian Rondon, however, travels with the explicit purpose of introducing technology and establishing settlements of acculturated indigenous peoples.

I compare two complementary primary sources: Roosevelt’s *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, a 360-page travelogue that Roosevelt writes during the 1912-13 journey, and *Rondon conta sua vida*, Rondon’s life memoirs published in 1958, which include his reflections on the trip years later. *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* was originally published as a series of essays for a North American audience in *Scribners arts and culture magazine*, before appearing in its entirety in 1914. Rondon’s memoirs were

recorded by Esther de Viveiros, who wrote Rondon's detailed life story as dictated in his own words (first person). Despite the international fame that the journey with Roosevelt brought him, Rondon dedicates just three brief chapters of the 626-paged account of his life to the trip. I also draw on other parts of this narrative to build a fuller picture of Rondon. Documentation of the expedition was extensive and includes a silent film, photographs, news articles, and travel diaries of all major participants (excluding Rondon). The photographs that I analyze are found in *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, and from the Rondon Commission's work during the same time period.

The visual documentation of this trip creates a narrative of conquerable frontier through the representation of indigenous populations and the geographical mapping of space. On this journey and in Rondon's previous and subsequent missions in the Amazon the camera is a form of surveillance over land and populations. Photography is a tool of the masculine, imperial gaze that fixes certain meanings to the Amazon and those who inhabit it, with a particular and invasive focus on indigenous women. The camera works as a tool of documentation and preservation while also demonstrating a technological superiority that categorizes, collects, and generates knowledge. Photography and exploration together, therefore, open up frontiers and respond to a desire to visualize and to know. Poole argues that photography, through its wide circulation "participated in the formation of the racial culture of European modernity" (15). She explains how by identifying the "other" ethnographic photography and film establish norms of look, dress, behavior, environment, and cultural setting. These tools fix cultural, racial, and sexual hierarchies. Mirzoeff describes the ways in which these 'othered' subjects return or resist

the gaze as counter-visibility. This ability to exercise control over visual representation is used to maintain western hegemony, however, as Mirzoeff explains, historically oppressed populations have claimed a “right to look,” a counter-visibility, and thus some autonomy. The photographic archive of the expedition participates in the creation of modernity and otherness through visually presenting difference. That difference was necessary to construct a hierarchical power structure that racialized other bodies to serve the labor needs of Europeans in the New World (Quijano 1989, 150). The photographs produced in these narratives showcase a racial categorization of Amazonian populations, meant to demonstrate a hierarchy based on comparative difference. The links between photography, race, and imperialism have been well studied (McClintock 1995; Poole 1997; Ryan 1997; Mirzoeff 2011; Rose 2012), but in this chapter I seek to contribute to such scholarship with an analysis of the staging of empire in a transnational comparative frame.

Rubber Boom Frontiers

At the turn of the twentieth century, as discussed in Chapter One, Brazil was attempting to incorporate its lesser-known regions of the interior, particularly Amazonia. The rising popularity of the bicycle and, later, Ford’s Model T, unveiled in 1908, led to a demand for rubber that helped propel the first Amazon rubber boom and the region took on increased importance. With the creation of the Rondon Commission in 1907, Rondon began establishing telegraph outposts in the Amazon Basin. Setting up these harbingers of modernity, the Commission also surveyed and mapped the land, encouraging

settlement of the interior and the gradual incorporation of indigenous populations into the Brazilian nation. In 1910 Rondon helped found the Serviço de Proteção ao Índio (SPI, later FUNAI) based on his principles of gradual integration and “non-violence” toward indigenous peoples. Born in Mato Grosso in 1865, Rondon was a descendent on his mother’s side of Terne and Bororo peoples (his mother died when he was two years old) and his heritage informed his policy (Diacon 158). As Diacon notes, Rondon was proud of his indigenous ancestry despite frequent attacks by other government officials and the press who thought that his heritage made him uncomfortable in “civilization” (185). While Rondon acknowledged his indigenous heritage he never openly self-identified as a *caboclo*, a rural, often derided figure with mixed Portuguese and indigenous heritage, and a pejorative marker of racial difference (Pace 82; Monteiro Lobato 25).

At the turn of the century, Brazilian nationalism and social thinking became increasingly intertwined with public health concerns (Borges 10). The concern with sanitation that so preoccupied the nation builders also implied a racial “cleansing,” a gradual move toward whiteness, and the modernity associated with white civilization (Skidmore 103; Hochman and Lima 494). However, even as Brazil was, in accordance with contemporary racial “science,” attempting to establish a national, pure, racial identity, the *caboclo* came to be seen as “redeemable” because of his preponderance of white blood (Skidmore 120). The *caboclo* became the focus of national debate over Brazil’s racial future, in some cases even the basis of a future Brazilian race in formation (Leu 16). As a *caboclo*, Rondon could serve as a sort of cultural ambassador and face of indigenous protection in Brazil, a stepping-stone toward modernity. Rondon can be

considered both a “backward” *caboclo*, yet redeemable because he lacked black blood and because of his leadership position. Drawing on his Positivist ideals, his indigenous background, and his military education, Rondon saw cultural integration (a breakdown of racial frontiers) of indigenous peoples and infrastructure development as equally important in the establishment of a modern Brazil. Unification meant incorporation, which for natives and their land ultimately equated to assimilation and destruction.

Within Brazil, Positivism at the turn of the twentieth century shaped the national approach toward the Amazon and played a large role in the ideology of Cândido Rondon. Positivism tends to be equated with a belief in science and facts over religion. Beginning with the French philosopher Auguste Comte, Positivism is a philosophical belief system based on scientific verification and logical or mathematical proofs. This dismisses many religious practices, (in the Brazilian case, a staunch rejection of Catholicism), while creating hierarchies of branches of knowledge. Within positivism, there are progressive stages of (European) intellectual history with epochs of theology, metaphysics, and progression (Amory 88). In Brazil, where the elite were educated in European and particularly French philosophy and language, Positivism took hold mid-way through the 19th century, before Brazilian independence. Toward the end of the century, positivism went in two diverging directions: “towards science and education under the inspiration of Benjamin Constant, and towards a secular spirituality and national mystique under the twin leadership of his successors” (Amory 88). At the turn of the twentieth century, Positivism was extremely important in the development of the Amazon, playing out on the republic’s flag as “ordem e progresso,” and as an approach toward the Amazon of

strategic incorporation.

To the North, as westward expansion in the United States came to an end, and with the Spanish American War of 1898 erasing Spain as a world power, ideals of Manifest Destiny turned outward. Roosevelt set up the United States as an imperial power, with the Roosevelt Corollary (1904) to the Monroe Doctrine (1823) that allowed the United States to intervene in Latin America in the case of “wrong-doing by a Latin American nation,” essentially paving the way for future U.S. intervention in the region. With the perceived closure of the U.S. western frontier, Roosevelt turned an imperial eye South. Roosevelt’s exploits abroad included a well-documented, Smithsonian sponsored, safari-hunting tour in Africa in 1904, solidifying the reputation of the former president as an international big game hunter and explorer of the wild. Roosevelt’s brand of masculinity reflected an ideology of imperial domination over the other where adventure was meant to tame or defeat (Nagel 251). While Roosevelt’s domestic concerns turned to conservation, abroad, his environmental interests tended more towards expansionist missions, in which the goal was to obtain knowledge of so-called virgin territories. Exploratory trips of South America were well-funded missions of academic institutions, geographers, adventurers, and even ex-presidents who employed various new technologies of documentation and cataloguing in their endeavors. The former president considered himself a naturalist due to his initiative to record, measure, document, and eventually bring back specimens of flora and fauna. Following previous naturalist explorations, Roosevelt intended his trip as a fact finding geographical mission, as he states: “Our trip was not intended as a hunting-trip but as a scientific expedition” (298).

This idea of scientific expedition helps to legitimize Roosevelt's role as a naturalist, giving him authority to collect, observe, and record. For Roosevelt, people had become products of over-civilization and the jungle was then a place where man could face a challenge and ultimately emerge triumphant from the wilderness.

The literal putting-on-the-map accomplished by Roosevelt and Rondon during this trip can be considered symbolic of the larger process of gradual incorporation of the Amazon region and peoples into the Brazilian state and the global economic system. The twenty-sixth U.S. president famous for embodying a rugged masculinity through westward expansion and imperialism, Roosevelt had long been preoccupied with definitions of manhood (white, heterosexual and American) as he sought to create a nation and purvey a global ideology that rejected effeminacy and degeneracy through physical challenge, violence, and exclusion (Watts 20). As Felix Driver argues, scientific exploration was also a means to legitimize colonial and imperial practices "... to explore unknown country was in this sense also to subdue it" (22). Roosevelt's motivation for participating in this project involved a need to reclaim masculinity post-election defeat through domination of the wild and of the other. Rondon, in many ways perhaps an embodiment of the masculine explorer Roosevelt sought to be, worked to implement modernity and assimilate the indigenous peoples of the Amazon into the Brazilian state as a form of paternalistic control. Technological superiority and surveillance forms part of the masculine identity of both explorers in the Amazon, and informs their perception and representation of othered peoples in the jungle. To analyze and compare these two men within this journey I first turn to their self-described identities and a few

photographs that encapsulate the ways they embody imperial control. Next, I look at their observations on race and their staging of racial otherness. I finish by examining their mapping endeavor – how they express a superior knowledge over the landscape that feeds into a racial superiority. Thus I move from the self, to the other, to the land, all aspects that make up the “wandering wilderness” of Rondon and Roosevelt respectively.

A Wilderness Wanderer and an Accomplished Frontiersman

With support from the Brazilian government and plenty of international press, the Roosevelt-Rondon expedition took off in 1913, reaching the mouth of the Rio da Dúvida in February 1914. In the short film *River of Doubt: Roosevelt/Rondon Expedition*, Roosevelt and his men are initially shown in Rio de Janeiro, hobnobbing with Brazilian elites and receiving the royal treatment, riding in carriages over cobbled city streets. This opening is a stark contrast to the rest of the film and narrative that increasingly descends into the geographical space of the Amazon as “the unknown.” This contrast, however, provides vital information to the audience: there is potential for European style cities and civilization in the tropics. As the crew moves to less “civilized” zones, encountering a jungle of naked natives and wild animals, footage shows Roosevelt handling a dead jaguar, reminiscent of his big game hunting trips in Africa. The film culminates in a shot of the Brazilian map and the announcement of the accomplishments of the journey. According to Roosevelt and Rondon’s narratives, as the travelers went down the uncharted river, they confronted obstacle and adventure, including run-ins with indigenous tribes, hostile animals and insects, multiple diseases and injuries and the death

of three men in their party. After months of travel, and with Roosevelt suffering from malaria, the expedition finally re-encountered “civilization,” mapping over 1,000 miles of river. In this section I examine Roosevelt and Rondon’s self-described personas through their narratives and photographs. Their self-perceptions form a crucial point of entry for understanding the ways in which their raced, classed, and national identities inform their goals and visions of wilderness in the Amazon.

On this journey, as told by *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, Roosevelt is a commanding traveler, maverick, pioneer, and leader. Amidst descriptions of flora and fauna and the thrill of observation and hunting, Roosevelt creates a set of definitions which center around the “true wilderness wanderer” who never travels the “beaten path.” This wilderness wanderer exemplifies the masculine identity that Roosevelt seeks to reclaim post-election defeat as his legacy and image. A “wilderness wanderer,” says Roosevelt, is someone with the capacity to confront any unanticipated danger and the wherewithal to document it.

The man does little; he merely records what he sees. He is only the man of the beaten routes. The true wilderness wanderer, on the contrary, must be a man of action as well as of observation. He must have the heart and the body to do and to endure, no less than the eye to see and the brain to note and record. (67)

A “wilderness wanderer” is transformed into something beyond just an ordinary man, he can act *and* actively observe. It is this agency -- a certain individualism -- of spirit along with the danger of his destination that establish him as superior. By writing *Through the*

Brazilian Wilderness, Roosevelt is enacting the wilderness wanderer, demonstrating the brawn and the brains required to fulfill this definition. The act of categorization and collection, half the definition of the ‘wilderness wanderer,’ is one of the key strategies of imperialism, through incorporating otherness into a western model of knowledge, imperial powers can justify their conquest. The wilderness wanderer must be physically strong, while also managerially inclined, able to record and manage the actions of others. The wilderness wanderer thus embodies a “blending of rationality and physicality...creating an ideal figure that was both the lone, romantic frontiersman whose rugged physical vigor enabled him to escape the stultifying feminine influences of civilization and to master (female) nature, and simultaneously the educated professional who mapped and civilized the wilderness” (Cronin 336). In this way a wilderness wanderer, a frontier surveying, masculine explorer, could both reject technologies that stripped a sense of active masculinity while also employing technology to map, civilize, and manage. There is a technical superiority implied in the act of recording while a true wilderness wanderer must be able to wield the tools of imperial surveillance while moving through difficult terrain. This involves repeatedly emphasizing the danger and hostility of the Amazon that requires taming through knowledge and observation.

Roosevelt, as a wealthy, powerful outsider in the Brazilian interior, pushes towards adventure that contributes to his masculine identity; yet by putting this territory on the map -- shifting the very wilderness that defines his manliness into the known -- he self-defeatingly destroys. As Walter Cronon observes in his essay “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1996), wilderness itself is a

construction of modernity dependent on the illusion of a dying frontier and the necessity of a dominating male to re-discover it. “In the myth of the vanishing frontier lay the seeds of wilderness preservation in the United States, for if wild land had been so crucial in the making of the nation, then surely one must save its last remnants as monuments to the American past and as an insurance policy to protect its future... To protect wilderness was in a very real sense to protect the nation’s most sacred myth of origin” (70). The supposed “vanishing” North American frontier serves to promote ideals of a wilderness abroad while domestic protection preserves the “myth of origin” of the nation -- the undisturbed, Edenic, virginal, value of nature. For Roosevelt, who had spent years exploring the American West and writing books about his exploits, the perceived lack of virgin territory in the U.S. presented a crisis of manhood. Where could a true wilderness wanderer wander if the wilderness did not exist? As Slater writes about *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, Roosevelt considered the Amazon a wilderness “because it was not known or mapped, nor in existence among books and scholars whose lives were far from the place itself. Adventure was the clear and only avenue to knowledge” (26). Adventure here becomes a means to collect knowledge, bringing the supposedly unknown and unmapped Amazon into the light, or stripping the River of Doubt of doubt itself. Danger feeds into an idea of adventure fueled by travel and movement which make up the landscape of Roosevelt’s wandering wilderness.



Figure 2.1: Photograph from the inside cover of *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* (originally captioned “Colonel Roosevelt and Colonel Rondon at Navaite on the River of Doubt from a photograph by Cherrie”).

Figure 2.1, from the inside cover of *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, shows Rondon and Roosevelt together, captioned as equal-ranking colonels. Throughout this trip Roosevelt chooses to go by his army title rather than “former-president,” portraying a sense of identity based in combat. The explorers stand as though on a pedestal on a rock above the River of Doubt, surveying their surroundings with authority, while also glancing down towards the photographer, Lieutenant Cherrie, another North American on the journey. This places the two men on an equal plane (even their outfits match), but

above the rest of the crewmembers of the trip and the landscape itself. From this elevated viewpoint, the intrepid explorers can presumably see and do all. Rondon here carries the big stick, ready to lead down the unknown river. Their stances with arms akimbo appear robust, confident, and authoritative. This photograph demonstrates a masculine power that Roosevelt in particular seeks to project along with the colonialist mindset of domination. Elevated above the landscape, their surveying gaze and explorers' garb invoke the very image of the imperial explorer. Roosevelt's white American masculinity is in some ways troubled by the very presence of Rondon as a partly indigenous man who is a joint leader of this expedition and the expert on the trip. As Poole explains, the native was constituted as an object, while conversely the ethnographer could be a reasoned, thinking subject (160). Rondon is both native and non-native, somewhere between subject and object. Rondon, in his role as an Amazonian explorer on behalf of the Brazilian military, has adapted and thrived in a difficult land, and thus embodies the hope that the Brazilian nation had in miscegenation and incorporation. This demonstrates a position of tension in Rondon's identity as he is a bearer of civilization while at the same time an outlier of the very nation he represents.

As historian Todd Diacon has discussed (2002, 2004), Rondon is a polarizing figure often derided by historical revisionists who believe that he was actually intent on the extermination of indigenous populations. Diacon centers his study of Rondon on Positivism, the ideology that propelled Rondon's exploratory work and life trajectory. In setting up telegraph poles throughout the North and Northwest of Brazil, Rondon believed that technology and exchange would lead to the nationalization of indigenous

peoples living in the region. Non-violence was mandatory for Rondon and his troops. Rondon believed that indigenous peoples were simply at a lower developmental state that required gradual, paternal guidance toward civilization. He rejected the idea of religiously converting indigenous peoples, instead expecting that they would eventually adopt the enlightened, technology driven ideology of Positivism. However, in this gradual adoption of Positivism the ultimate goal is the destruction of indigeneity (Diacon 187). The implementation of technology and development in the Amazon region, of clear economic interest due to the rubber boom and other potential development projects, would lead to the civilization of indigenous peoples. While Rondon's policies paved the way for future development and ultimate destruction of the way of life for many indigenous civilizations, his policy of non-violence is often lauded as ahead of his time. As Diacon acknowledges, "General Cândido da Silva Rondon firmly believed that he could both protect Indians living in the Brazilian Northwest and at the same time develop the region through infrastructural expansion, colonization and support for the rubber industry" (189). Thus a problematic coupling of development and paternalistic protection formed the basis of Rondon's mission in the Amazon.

Rondon's use of technology is two-fold; first his missions revolve around the idea of opening up communication with the frontier by establishing telegraph outposts. Secondly, he made sure that everything was extensively documented both on film and in photographs. The establishment of telegraphs conquers distance and opens up communication with the interior, while photography visualizes this process and those involved. The films and photographs Rondon helped produce in his missions create a

vision not just of the Amazonian landscape, but of peoples in the process of becoming Brazilians – the process of nationalizing (and modernizing) the Amazon. As Luciana Martins argues in her article on Hamilton Rices’s Amazonian expeditions in the 1920’s: “Such expeditions were not simply bringing modernity to the Amazon; they were re-locating modernity itself, offering the possibility of a new way of imagining both the region and the nation of which it was a part” (287). Through photography and film produced in his explorations, Rondon helps to create an image of the Amazon as part of a new, emerging, modern nation. In so doing, as Tacca notes, he created a vision of indigenous peoples ready and willing to be pacified: “...images show docile Indians subject to changes thanks to civilizing progress. Thus, an image of subjection is constructed, rather than an impediment to the territorial occupation of the nation” (quoted in Haag 77). An image of subjugation could serve Rondon’s non-violence and incorporation message while of course this “civilizing progress” ultimately leads to elimination of the other. As the ‘civilizer,’ Rondon is emblematic of the hope that the Brazilian nation at this time placed in the redemption of *caboclo* or mixed indigenous populations.



Figure 2.2: 1913 photograph of Rondon with Paresi Indians by Major Thomaz (Museu do Índio).

In this image, there is a clear message of gradual incorporation that draws on the sexualized exotic, moves to the semi-civilized, and focuses back in on Rondon as the guiding light of (social and racial) progress. We see Rondon with a group of Paresi Indians, involved in a seemingly staged-for-the-camera exchange. Centered are naked indigenous women, while those with clothing frame the image. Rondon, again in exploratory garb, hands a naked woman a gift, enacting a key trope of empire, the bestowment of goods. The interaction appears convivial, while a clear message is portrayed: in exchange there will be a gradual move towards incorporation. All of the men are clothed in shirts and trousers while the women are naked besides the two women

dressed in a full gowns to the left and right of the photograph, demonstrating both the sexualization of indigenous women and the capacity of incorporation (and thus economic usefulness) of the men. As McClintock notes, there is a long history of fetishization of foreign lands by imperial powers who looked at land and women in Asia, the Americas, and Africa as part of a ‘porno-tropics.’ This fetishization is coupled with “Enlightenment metaphysics that sought to “know” a female interior – converting it to a scientific, open male exterior” (25). This conversion requires a male, paternal figure as the bearer of knowledge and reason. The focal point of the image, Rondon, actively reaching over and staging exchange, shows us a *caboclo* who has whitened himself through territorial conquest and his work in civilizing other indigenous populations, at once the subject and the object. While there is another explorer next to Rondon, it is important that he is the one handing over the gift, passing the baton of progress, suggesting that he has attained a level of civilization that the Paresi can perhaps achieve.

The Paresi interact with the camera’s gaze in a variety of ways. In particular, the woman to the far right of the photograph gazes at the camera, at once playful and questioning. She smiles back directly at the camera, uninterested in the exchange, demonstrating her own “right to look” (Mirzoeff). This playfulness suggests a subtle subversion of the seriousness of the civilizing moment, and an unwillingness to participate in the staged encounter of the rest of the image. Her mocking counter-gaze echoes the gaze of the woman seated in the middle of the photograph who also stares back at the camera. Her gaze appears somewhat disdainful, and also un-interested in the exchange going on behind her. As with Octavie Coudreau’s photographs of black and

indigenous populations in the jungle, there is an assumed fixing of racial hierarchies in the visuality of the photograph itself, with the white explorer as the default standard of civilization; followed by the redeemed *caboclo*, now an agent of civilizing history; then the assimilated Indians; and the still “savage natives” at the bottom of the pecking order.

Images such as these work as a part of Rondon’s agenda of gradually encouraging native peoples to abandon their culture and become Brazilians, showcasing potential while at the same time preserving a way of life that is being pushed toward an end. Similar to the tension between wilderness preservation and development, native peoples are something to preserve (spare life) while slowly changing.¹⁵ In *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, James R. Ryan describes photography of native peoples as a means of preservation as civilization threatened to swallow up these authentic cultures (140). “Such photographs and the project of which they were part, may be read as a form of imperial surveillance; part of the imperial desire for the total visibility of peoples and places” (Ryan 158). Often taken at face value for their authenticity, these images created an idea of on the one hand an exotic other, and also a population that was receptive, known, and ready for modernity.

Roosevelt’s wilderness wanderer uses indigenous populations to build a case for exotic adventure. As a wilderness wanderer, Roosevelt has a very specific purpose -- not to just hunt but to map and catalogue in the spirit of travel and adventure -- partaking in his own brand of tourism. In contrast, Rondon spent decades of his life *working* in the

¹⁵ As Cronon explains, “In the broadest sense, wilderness teaches us to ask whether the Other must always bend to our will, and, if not, under what circumstances it [the wilderness] should be allowed to flourish without our intervention” (74).

Amazon. Rondon in many ways embodies the wilderness wanderer of Roosevelt's fantasy, and Roosevelt dedicates a good deal of *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* to outlining his respect for Rondon. "Three times he penetrated into this absolutely unknown, Indian-haunted wilderness, being absent for a year or two at a time, and suffering every imaginable hardship, before he made his way through to the Madeira and completed the telegraph-line across" (Roosevelt 124). Rondon's "penetration" into the unknown landscape and the danger of these foundational journeys earn him respect from Roosevelt, a respect of which Rondon is rather wary. Again, the sexual element of conquest is explicit and penetration is shown to both maintain the heroism of male explorers, while also demonstrating the abundance and fertility of native land and peoples (Blunt 28).

At a pivotal moment in the expedition, after the loss of a *camarada* (a local assistant to the expedition) named Simplicio in the rapids, Roosevelt and Rondon convene and Roosevelt airs his concerns about the safety of the journey. Rondon, in the practical and pragmatic leadership style he was known for, informs the former president of the impossibility of turning back, but instead compromises in shortening the journey as much as he can.

E assim chegámos ambos a um acôrdo, concluindo o Sr. Roosevelt:

-- Conheci, em minha vida, dois grandes coronéis: o que resolveu o problema do canal de Panamá e...Rondon...

Lembrando-me de que era êle *verista*, nada lhe respondi...

Prosseguia o levantamento topográfico, sem que a necessidade de andar

depressa nos permitisse tirar todo o proveito de nossos recursos técnicos.

(411)

There is perhaps a tone of resigned annoyance whenever Rondon talks about Roosevelt in his memoirs whereas Roosevelt repeatedly goes out of his way to compliment and praise Rondon, even dedicating *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* to him as a “gallant officer, high-minded gentleman, and intrepid explorer” (1). This passage demonstrates a theme of the expedition where Rondon attempts to talk Roosevelt down, somewhat allowing for Roosevelt’s demands to be met in the creation of his adventure. However, Rondon is always sure to press the importance of “recursos técnicos” and the mapping of the river above all else. “Thus, while Rondon’s on-going task was to display the authority of the central state and explain the power of his vision of the Brazilian nation to those in the interior, at this point he faced his own and his country’s subservience to a more powerful nation, as well as to the powerful personality of Theodore Roosevelt” (Diacon 44). As the journey continues, and the North Americans continually fall ill, Roosevelt and Cherrie push for shortening the route and taking less time to survey the land, much to the dissatisfaction of Rondon for whom the mapping of the river is the goal, rather than the novelty of adventure. The admiring tone with which Roosevelt writes about Rondon can perhaps demonstrate a patronizing attitude where Roosevelt has nothing to lose as a symbol of the superiority of white civilization and Rondon has to work towards whiteness through his success as an explorer. It seems that the relationship between the two men was characterized by Roosevelt’s unabashed adulation and Rondon’s more resigned acceptance of Roosevelt as the leading name on the expedition. The tension

evident in Rondon's body language, facial expressions, and in his writings about his dealings with Roosevelt reflect the liminal position that he occupies between subject and object of the civilizing project.

The two explorers' self-fashioned identities demonstrate their national concerns as well as racialized positions within this contact zone. Rondon's position as a redeemed *caboclo* and bearer of order and progress gives us some insight into an internal coloniality that works towards assimilation. On the other hand, we see with Roosevelt's "wilderness wanderer" a character whose purpose is engaging in adventure, enjoying a position of privilege and ultimately signifying a civilizing, external, force. As we will see in the next section, Roosevelt and Rondon's staging of varying encounters in the jungle on this trip showcases their relationships with race, technology, and representation.

Encountering and Staging Otherness

Moving from Roosevelt's idealized wilderness wanderer and Rondon's embodiment as such, in this section I examine how the two men's representations of indigenous peoples demonstrate their ideas about technology, masculinity, and imperialism. An inextricable part of the idea of the wilderness depends on the native peoples populating the area, whom both Rondon and Roosevelt believe must be gradually incorporated into the nation, although in varying ways. Rondon, as a *caboclo* civilizing force, represents indigenous peoples as malleable, able to be brought into the fold. Rondon's views on the *camaradas* highlight their grit and ability to survive under duress, as a point of pride in contrast to the supposedly racially superior North Americans.

Rondon's memoirs highlight the importance of the Amazonian *caboclo* or mixed-race Indian, suggesting their role as settlers.

O eminente chefe da Comissão Americana não mais voltou a gozar a saúde com que iniciara a expedição; seu filho Kermit estava também muito combalido pelos acessos de febre. Lira e Cherrie, com afecções gástricas; nossos homens, atacados de febres, esmagados de cansaço, enfraquecidos, estariam literalmente derrotados se não tivessem a têmpera de nossos admiráveis caboclos. (421)

While Roosevelt and the other “eminente chefes” from North America never fully recuperate from the journey, the *camaradas*, “nossos homens,” although beat down and over-worked, show a resilience presumably unique to their skill as inhabitants of the Amazon and racial makeup. While we are not privy to the identitarian drama going on in Rondon's head, the figure of the *caboclo* represents (and Rondon embodies) the possibility of racial progress. Rather than degenerate, they are surviving, even thriving in tough landscapes and as such can encapsulate racialized hopes for the ultimate progress of Brazil as a nation, an ideal we will return to in Chapter Three with Euclides da Cunha's vision of the Amazon. In the *caboclo* designation there is also a stage of settlement that other indigenous peoples have not attained. As Richard Pace notes, “In a sense an evolutionary sequence is introduced where civilization (superior) and semi-savagery (inferior) are distanced (the Native American Amazonians would be the true savages). Ideologically, this aids in the unquestioned continued political-economic domination of the urban over the rural” (85). *Caboclos* could be seen as a higher step on

the evolutionary ladder towards civilization or whiteness. They have the temperament to survive the harsh jungle environment and the rigors of an exploratory adventure.

Rondon's goal in settlement and acculturation was to turn indigenous groups into small-scale farmers (Diacon 2002, 175). People become productive workers, cogs in a capitalistic machine bent on developing the raw power of a workforce and developing the forest.

In Roosevelt's account, there are varying degrees of perceived indigenous civilization -- ranging from the *camaradas*, the "semi-civilized" natives (the Paresi Indians) and the completely "wild savages," (Nhambiquara). In film footage from *River of Doubt: Roosevelt/Rondon Scientific Mission*, one shot shows the *camaradas* lined up next to each other as the camera pans from man to man. The men are all of indigenous and African descent, wearing clothing that at the beginning of the expedition is already dirty and falling apart. Charged with most of the heavy lifting of a journey that lasted more than six months and faced constant setbacks and challenges, the *camaradas* at the lowest level of the trip's hierarchy had the most difficult tasks. In Roosevelt's descriptions of *camaradas*, they are skilled, experienced, and hardworking.

The paddlers were a strapping set. They were expert rivermen and men of the forest, skilled veterans in wilderness work. They were lithe as panthers and brawny as bears. They swam like waterdogs...one or two of them were pirates, and one worse than a pirate; but most of them were hard-working, willing and cheerful. (225)

Roosevelt's patronizing admiration of the *camaradas* is based entirely on their expertise of the forest -- their bodily abilities and experience in the wilderness. In Roosevelt's description the *camaradas* are not men, but animals. As the journey continued, one of the *camaradas*, after months of arduous travel, even murdered another porter and was left behind in the jungle. Rondon had previously faced issues of recruitment for his telegraphic missions as no one wanted to brave the harsh jungle atmosphere for little pay. These *camaradas* are not voluntary "wilderness wanderers" seeking adventure -- they are either Army recruits who have been assigned, or rubber tappers in need of money, risking their lives for the sake of Roosevelt's adventure. Roosevelt seems to want to refute possible stereotypes of "laziness," as the work ethic of the *camaradas* elevates them to a higher level of humanity, citizenship or whiteness: "...one could not but wonder at the ignorance of those who do not realize the energy and the power that are so often possessed by, and that may be so readily developed in, the men of the tropics" (245). Thus, the bodies of the *camaradas* are worthy of praise and further development or civilization in order to harness their "easily developed" raw power. Their skill in the wilderness, similar to that of Rondon, makes them developable "others" for the former president.

For Roosevelt, while the *caboclo camaradas* are already an established workforce, in descriptions of the Paresis Indians, a certain attraction based on future potential is apparent. "The Paresis Indians, whom we met here, were exceedingly interesting. They were to all appearance an unusually cheerful, good-humoured, pleasant-natured people. Their teeth were bad; otherwise they appeared strong and vigorous, and

there were plenty of children” (183). Roosevelt emphasizes the Paresis’ normalcy and possibility as future workers. The Paresis have begun the process of incorporation by living in settlements around Rondon’s telegraph stations, small-scale farming, and dressing in “shirts and trousers” (184). They are an interesting, childish people that have begun the “civilizing” process with success. In processes of national incorporation there is a general paternalism wherein natives are children of the land that require a strong, masculine leader to take an interest and fashion them into children of the nation.

In contrast to the relatively “domesticated” *camaradas*, and the somewhat agreeable Paresis, the Nhambiquara remain unsettled and considered dangerous -- yet still appealing. As Roosevelt writes about Rondon’s fair treatment of Indians he remains wary of the Nhambiquaras’ chances of incorporation:

In spite of their good nature and laughter, their fearlessness and familiarity showed how necessary it was not to let them get the upper hand. They are always required to leave all their arms a mile or two away before they come into the encampment. They are much wilder and more savage, and at a much lower cultural level, than the Paresis. (173)

Despite a good nature and future potential, the Nhambiquara are still not to be trusted, in coming to camp, in contrast to Roosevelt and Rondon in Figure 3, they must leave their weapons behind. Roosevelt seems to almost respect the insubordination of the Nhambiquara, while also wishing to assert his dominance and make them bend to his will. Furthermore, the former president’s attraction to Brazilian “savages” elevates them above the Africans of his previous experience. “Nowhere in Africa did we come across

wilder or more absolutely primitive savages, although these Indians were pleasanter and better-featured than any of the African tribes at the same stage of culture” (241). These “stages of culture,” categorize natives in the different zones that Roosevelt enters. In Africa perhaps they are more developed or closer to U.S. ideals’ of civilization, yet the Brazilian Indian is more appealing due to their racial makeup and role in wilderness creation and expertise. Roosevelt often details the Nhambiquara beauty at length in his “porno-tropical accounts,” especially focusing on unabashed nudity and good-looking women. “They did not have on so much as a string, or a bead, or even an ornament in their hair...The women and girls often stood holding one another’s hands, or with their arms over one another’s shoulders or around one another’s waists, offering an attractive picture” (209). The imperial male gaze sexualizes and transforms this otherwise quotidian scene into “an attractive picture.” This attraction is linked to the idea of the Amazon as distinctly feminine, unknown, and ripe for conquest, and the inseparability of the forest from its peoples. There is also of course the sexual element to conquest, and an attraction to the conviviality of the Nhambiquara -- they are comfortable not only in their nudity, but with each other (as seen in their physical intimacy with the same sex).

In an article published in *The Outlook* in February 1914, just after his Brazilian adventure, Roosevelt delves into his observations on racial issues in Brazil. He begins by stating diplomatically that he is not condemning the Brazilian or North American attitude toward black populations but rather setting forth and stating, “what the Brazilian attitude is in fact” (409). He compares Brazil to the United States in terms of how they have dealt with the indigenous and “negro problem.” He expresses surprise at how Brazil has

created an environment of miscegenation to gradually work towards whiteness but is concerned that this will actually lead to the contamination of Brazil. “In Brazil...the idea looked forward to is the disappearance of the Negro question through the disappearance of the Negro himself – that is, through his gradual absorption into the white race” (409). The United States, on the other hand, treats other races with the respect that each man deserves, but prefers to keep the races separate, according to Roosevelt. Roosevelt’s view on indigenous populations as expressed in this essay is a point of comparison and illustrates, perhaps, how Roosevelt views Rondon as someone of indigenous heritage. “If I were asked to name the one point in which there is complete difference between the Brazilians and ourselves, I should say that it was in the attitude toward the black man. As the Indian becomes civilized he is absorbed into the population, as is the case with us in Oklahoma, and whoever has Indian blood in him is proud of the fact. The president of Brazil is one of these men, and there are a number of others among the leaders whom I met” (408). There is a certain pride that comes with indigenous blood, despite the continual insistences that Roosevelt makes that the majority of leaders he met in Brazil were as white as any elite class in North America or Europe. “The evident Indian admixture has added a good, and not a bad element” (409). This can be seen in the ways that Roosevelt talks about indigenous populations on his trip and his admiration of Rondon. There is a certain ability to survive in the wilderness and at the same time assimilate for which Roosevelt lusts. Roosevelt’s written perceptions of race in the Amazon and Brazil at large stand next to the following photograph that stages an encounter between Roosevelt, Rondon and the Nhambiquara.

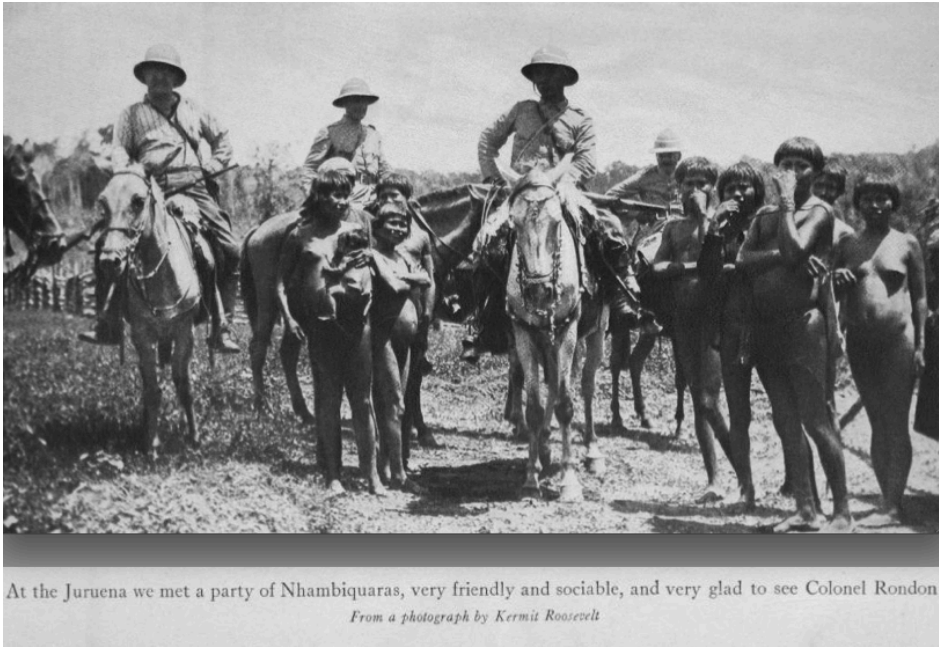


Figure 2.3: Roosevelt and Rondon meeting a “party of Nhambiquaras, very friendly and sociable and very glad to see Colonel Rondon.”

In Figure 2.3 the colonels are shown seated on horseback, noticeably above the Nhambiquara who circle around, unclothed and looking at the camera. Rather than staring up at Roosevelt or Rondon, those to the right of the photograph are all covering their mouths, staring at the camera, seemingly concerned or intrigued by the camera and photographer. Meanwhile, Roosevelt and Rondon pose their arms back in the same manner as Figure 2.1. The Nhambiquara include men and women, and one small baby. The caption lets us know that the Nhambiquara were “very glad” to see Rondon, despite looking with concern or curiosity toward the camera. Again elevated above the landscape and people next to them, Roosevelt and Rondon carry guns on their laps; perhaps this is the big stick with which to ensure a happy greeting. The background shows what appears

to be a clearing, as the forest has been opened up in one of Rondon's telegraph settlements. This sparse background stands in contrast to Octavie Coudreau's photographs of indigenous people who appear in the midst of a stereotypical jungle environment with visible lush flora. This settlement can perhaps show the ultimate tameability of Nhambiquara. The photograph demonstrates a staging of the imperial encounter that is once again unsettled by the gaze back at the camera. Rather than engaging, in a "very friendly and sociable" manner, there is a posed, even tense aspect to this meeting. There is a dynamic of counter-visibility similar to Figure 2.2, where in gazing towards the camera there is a perhaps a refusal to interact and happily greet these explorers. Furthermore, following Poole, this photograph can serve as a technology of spatialization (214). This image visually frames difference in dress, stature, class, and race, while suggesting a possibility of integration through the landscape and caption. This photograph demonstrates a key manifestation of both racial and technological superiority in the supposed wilderness. As Roosevelt and Rondon sit mounted, guns on display and in full explorer garb, there is a factor of violence and intimidation that the caption glibly ignores.

Throughout his memoirs, Rondon asserts his dedication to the cause of indigenous pacification and incorporation, embodied in the motto his troops knew by heart: "Morrer se preciso for...matar nunca!" As mentioned previously, Rondon was dedicated to his notion of non-violence that involved gradual assimilation (Roosevelt notes with shock "He never killed one!" (110)), and after setting up camp during his telegraph expeditions would spend time teaching natives the national hymn of Brazil, along with raising the

Brazilian flag every morning, working towards incorporation through building a national culture (Diacon 123). Rondon also acknowledged Roosevelt's agreement to his rules and deferment on treatment of natives:

Era perfeito nosso entendimento. Compreendeu o Sr. Roosevelt qual fôra o meu incentivo, o que me empolgara acima de tudo -- a obra político-social, a pacificação dos índios pela bondade, pela justiça e pela compreensão, o trazêlos á civilização gradualmente, com a orientação que me davam as luzes do Positivismo, preocupado em melhorar o material humano, em educar, no sentido lato da palavra. (385)

Rondon sought to “pacify” the Indians through good will, bringing native peoples into the “light” through degrees of citizenship, order and education. Thus, contact and courtesy form the first steps towards indigenous incorporation into Rondon's wandering wilderness. Rondon's broad sense of education meant gradually pacifying indigenous populations through an exchange of gifts (Figure 2.2) such as clothing and a show of technological superiority with tools such as the camera, firearm, and gramophone. These three technologies represent a trifecta of imperial rule – the camera serves to survey and document, categorizing and collecting native populations, the firearm carries the big stick symbolism as a threat of violent dominance, and the gramophone projects the sounds of cultured civilization through the jungle, a trope we shall return to in Chapter Four. After establishing peaceful contact with tribes along telegraph lines, the Rondon Commission would sometimes use more settled tribes to then help in the construction, maintenance, and operation of the lines. This became another way to technologically integrate tribes

into the modernizing Brazilian nation (Machado Domingues 13) and also demonstrates the degrees of civilization represented by Rondon as a *caboclo*. As Martins remarks on the role of photography as a technology of change, “Later in the nineteenth century, in the positivist spirit of the New Republic, faith in the documentary power of photography gained momentum; pictures of engineering works, new roads and railways, urban improvements and sanitary campaigns were thus used to promote the possibility of a new civilization in the tropics” (287). Not only a new civilization, for Rondon, this could be a better civilization, an Amazonian utopia.

Wielding these tools of empire on his previous expeditions, on this journey Rondon has the task of appeasing Roosevelt’s thirst for adventure while maintaining his ideals and policy towards indigenous populations and checking in on his advances in the interior. For Rondon and his Positivist ideals, humanity and universal fraternity are the only course toward incorporation:

A incorporação dos índios, sílvícolas, aborígenes -- nunca porém bugres, descabida injúria de origem francesa -- assim como a das massas proletárias, ainda acampadas a margem da civilização, constituem casos particulares -- de angustiante importância e urgência -- do problema geral, problema religioso imposto com veemência cada vez maior. (328)

Rondon rejects and heavily criticizes attempts at conversion of the natives, and the “proletárias” or those on the margins of civilization. Demonstrating his ideals of progress, the only truth lies in scientific exploration and humanism, national brotherhood rather than exclusion. To accomplish this, Indians must be turned into Brazilians with the first

step being mapping their land and establishing contact. Rondon believes this must be gradual as indigenous peoples are just at a lower level of development and need to be brought into the national fold through exchange and acculturation. Roosevelt, a champion of secular education, believes “sympathetic understanding” towards the Indians is an essential tool of colonization. “The Indians must be treated with intelligent and sympathetic understanding, no less than with justice and firmness; and until they become citizens, absorbed into the general body politic, they must be the wards of the nation, and not of any private association, lay or clerical, no matter how well-meaning” (128). The absorption of Indians into the Brazilian state is crucial in nation building, but the native population will need to remain “wards of the nation” that are not yet deserving of autonomy. Both men seek a nationalistic, paternalistic, and ultimately destructive methodology for policy towards indigenous peoples. Furthermore, this absorption is of course highly destructive, in assimilating indigenous cultures into the Brazilian nation, those cultures are lost and eliminated. Although Rondon may have never killed an Indian, the policies and actions that he implemented led to the destruction of their way of life.

Justifying his approach, and offering his view of history, Rondon expresses remorse for the way that indigenous peoples were treated during the conquest. “Expluso da terra, de que era legítimo dono, pelo invasor que viera, com mostras de paz, trazer sangue, ruínas, destruição, é êle o mais digno de benemerência. Trata-se do resgate da mais sagrada dívida de honra, da reparação das mais dolorosas culpas e erros sociais de nossos antepassados” (326). For Rondon, the contact and conquest of the Americas led to

the destruction and blood of indigenous peoples as the true owners of the land. Rondon's mission is then to repair the social mistakes of his predecessors. There is a hint of the idea of the noble savage here – that indigenous populations are innately good, closer to nature, and as such, uncorrupted by civilization. While these sentiments are reflective of Rondon's Positivist ideals, they are complicated by his goal of bringing modernity into the forest. These same technologies and placement on the grid lead to a re-conquest of space and people, paving the way for future development.

Furthermore, all of these projects are involved in the collection and documentation of geographical space, physical characteristics and census data of native populations, a manner of surveillance and control based on a western model. As Rondon notes in his memoirs: “Quebrando a tradição dos penetradores das selvas que, em caráter de aventuras industriais ou de estudos científicos, atropelavam sempre os índolas da região, varou tal reconhecimento as terras dos parecis, nhambiquaras, quep-queri-uates, orumis, jarus, urupás, ariquêmes, caritianas e caripumos, sem lhes causar a menor perturbação ou violência” (597). According to Rondon, his telegraphic missions broke with the traditional trampling mission of industrial adventure to give acknowledgement to indigenous territories, never causing them bother or violence. This also means nation building based on a Positivist model which “argued for the protection of indigenes and the defense of their lands, and taught that indigenes were not racially inferior, but merely living in a different (earlier) stage of social evolution” (Diacon 2002, 165). However, rather than acknowledge indigenous territory, the goal was to create Brazilian territory

out of indigenous lands and Brazilians out of indigenous peoples, again, nationalizing the Amazon. The arch of social evolution, for Rondon, would lead to progress based on a Positivist model of technology and development based on racial inferiority.

Wilderness Mapping, Development, and Masculine Environments

Along with masculine authority over the other, a vision of progress and potential helps make up a part of both Roosevelt and Rondon's wandering wildernesses. Mies (1993) examines the reasons for man's desire of landscape as a reaction to society's industrialization, leading to the creation of a cult of nostalgia around Nature or the "wilderness." Nostalgia provokes a return to nature that in turn destructs it, much as Roosevelt and Rondon's journey does to the jungle they are exploring. In this section I examine how Roosevelt and Rondon's imagined wandering wildernesses represent the land. Roosevelt's wandering wilderness is a space described as delicate and beautiful but also violent and unforgiving. "In the deep valleys were magnificent woods, in which giant rubber-trees towered... Great azure butterflies flitted through the open, sunny glades, and the bell-birds, sitting motionless, uttered their ringing calls from the dark stillness of the columned groves" (221). Deep valleys hold the key to further industrialization (rubber-trees), while innocent butterflies flit forward from a "dark stillness." There is developmental potential in the unenlightened emptiness. This wilderness is a contradiction of apparent beauty behind which lurks danger, a part of its seduction. Roosevelt's descriptions of the flora and fauna of the Amazon create a sort of femme fatale of the jungle. While the female nature contains the power of the unknown,

it is waiting for the masculine conquering power to overtake and tame it. The takeover of this imagined wilderness involves a sexual element where native peoples and lands are initially represented as unknowable. The landscape itself, often feminized by the former president, represents a riddle that in enacting a wilderness wanderer, Roosevelt seeks to solve.



From a photograph by Kermit Roosevelt.

Colonel Roosevelt and the first jaguar.

Figure 2.4: “Colonel Roosevelt with his first jaguar,” photographed by his son Kermit.

In many cases, landscape domination is a violent process spurred on by (masculine) technologies of conquest, perhaps the most important of which is the firearm. Both Rondon and Roosevelt are almost always pictured with rifle in tow, ready to shoot at any menace. Throughout his narrative, Roosevelt often complains about the lack of big game in Amazonia in comparison to his previous trips in Africa. At the same time he

makes sure to emphasize the amount of smaller pests including blood sucking bats, vicious piranhas, gnats and mosquitoes that contribute to this hostile wilderness (Slater 45). The ability to hunt and dominate game in this pre-animal conservation era is quite obviously associated with masculinity. Through hunting, man can establish dominance over nature. In this picture Roosevelt, in his exploratory garb, holds up his prey's face, demonstrating mastery over the already dead jaguar. The background is dense in foliage, hinting towards the difficulty in acquiring the animal, and standing in contrast to photographs featuring indigenous peoples with a background demonstrative of potential progress (Figures 2.2 and 2.3). "...but the jaguar was a formidable beast, which occasionally turned man-eater, and often charged savagely when brought to bay. He [Rondon] had known a hunter to be killed by a jaguar he was following in thick grass to cover" (Roosevelt 52). As an occasional man-eater, the jaguar is all the more of a prize to subdue, and legitimizes its killing. This is one of the very few big game animals that Roosevelt was able to snag on his journey. Hunting can be seen as another arena where Roosevelt in some way fails to demonstrate the masculinity he seeks. Due to the nature of the jungle, Roosevelt cannot kill enough big game to prove his dominance, instead he is continually bit by smaller pests and nature, it seems, dominates him. The imperial project depends upon the subjugation of land, people, and animals. As Sinha points out in her analysis of hunting scenes in the imperial novel *She*, "Hunting and imperialism went hand in hand because both projects shared a belief: that wild lands, capable of being tamed and rendered economically productive, must be allowed to remain so [wild], even at the cost of violent confrontations" (38). Thus, there is the tension between

conservation and preservation where a sense of wild danger or a place to participate in the sport of big-game hunting must remain sustainable to be dominated in the first place. The wilderness becomes a commodity, where wilderness wandering is something that cannot be sustained because of the very consumption of space.



Figure 2.5: From left to right: George Cherrie, Lieutenant Lyra, Dr. Cajazeira, Theodore Roosevelt, Cândido Rondon, Kermit Roosevelt. (Image João Salustiano Lyra/Museu do Indio/Funai).

Throughout the journey, Rondon, sanctioned by the Brazilian government, gives names to freshly discovered rivers, rapids, and plains as they come across them. One tributary becomes the Rio Kermit (after Roosevelt's son), another Rio Cherrie (after the North American naturalist George Cherrie), a group of rapids is renamed Simplicio after

the death of the eponymous *camarada* on them, and eventually the Rio da Dúvida is renamed the Rio Roosevelt, moving from doubt and the unknown into the rational known. In one of the more famous photographs from the expedition, Figure 2.5, a significantly less hefty Roosevelt stands next to a large wooden signpost with the Rio Roosevelt carved into it, the other leaders of the trip stand around him, hats off as a sign of respect, with Rondon staring brazenly into the camera. Roosevelt appears reverent (and tired), with his hand over his heart, seemingly moved to have this river bear his name. In contrast, Rondon's hands are relaxed nonchalantly in his pockets with his gaze suggesting the confidence and remove of a self-possessed leader. The signpost has been thrust into the forest ground, claiming the area for the expedition and changing the Brazilian map and landscape until today. One of the few physical records of the expedition, this signpost is what verifies their trek years later. Not only physically disrupting the natural setting, this signpost becomes a declaration of territory for modernity, geography, "civilized" man, and suggests the importance the Brazilian nation at this stage of development gives to the United States. The river itself moves from unenlightened darkness (doubt) into the mapped, known, civilized world through this journey. Furthermore, there is the monumentality and phallogocentric nature of the signpost itself, as this left behind monument claims and disrupts the territory. Naming serves to organize the wild, entering the landscape into a new degree of civilization through being placed on the grid. In this case the social is inextricable from the spatial order as supposed virgin territories contain native inhabitants. As McClintock notes, the desire to name demonstrates a desire for a uniform, single origin, "alongside a desire to control the

issue of that origin” (27). In mapping and re-naming, an idea of superior control is enacted and the wilderness stops being a place of wandering, becoming fixed. This organization links Roosevelt not only to Rondon but to Brazil for as long as the river is contained within the Brazilian map.

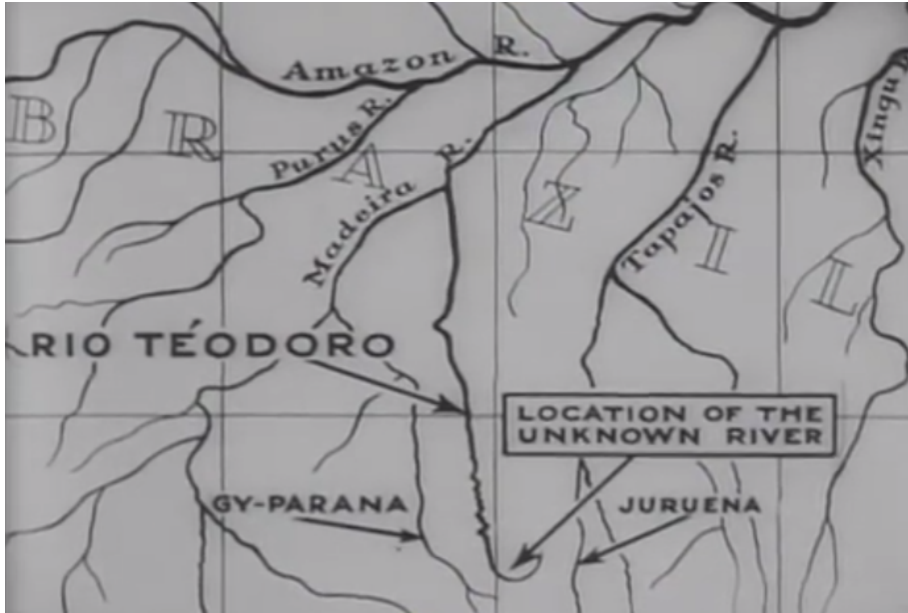


Figure 2.6: Still of map from *River of Doubt*.

As the film *River of Doubt: Roosevelt/Rondon Expedition* announces towards the end in a still: “For the first time this great river has been explored from its source, and geographers are busy tracing upon maps, what looks like an elongated fishhook” (01:35). The camera focuses on a map of the area of exploration, showing the Madeira, Tapajos, Gy-Parana and Juruena rivers until the River of Doubt is (re)mapped in bold, the contours of the river traced over the existing map. Next, **RIO TEÓDORO** in bolded capitals covers the other rivers, naming and claiming the river. The Rio Téodoro thus takes on a

dominating importance over the other, previously discovered rivers. While the official name of the river is the Rio Roosevelt, as Rondon describes, “E que, por ordem do Governo Brasileiro, êsse rio, o maior afluente do rio Madeira, com suas nascentes a 13 grados e sua foz a 5 grados de latitude Sul, inteiramente desconhecido dos cartógrafos e até, em grande parte, das próprias tribos locais, tinha recebido o nome de rio Roosevelt. Modestamente, sugeriu êste que se chamasse rio Theodore...” (421). Rondon emphasizes the previous mystery of the river that even local tribes did not truly understand. In contrast, through scientific measurements, the Brazilian Government has obtained direct coordinates. It is through their journey, then, that the river officially becomes a part of Brazil. Roosevelt “modestly” proposes naming the river Theodore over the Brazilian government’s suggestion of Roosevelt. While the river is successfully named Roosevelt, his recommendation of Theodore is put into the film and some initial maps of the journey. Presumably, this show of modesty seeks to separate Roosevelt’s name at least partially from the river since Teodoro would be less immediately recognizable as belonging to Roosevelt. However, the Brazilian government actively seeks this explicit connection, suggesting that they had planned the renaming of the river since the beginning of the voyage, and demonstrating a certain ideal of progress through name recognition with the United States. This naming and mapping can be seen as representative of the larger project of incorporation and documentation, bringing the Amazon from wilderness into landscape, developing the frontier, and turning indigenous peoples into Brazilians.

Throughout *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, Roosevelt sets forward

suggestions for how the Amazon can harness its natural potential and immense landscape for future development. As others have discussed (Slater 2002; Enright 2012; Vieira 2016), Roosevelt viewed the Amazon with a frontier ideology, it was valuable not only as a playground for this grand adventure, but also as a place to develop and settle in a similar manner to the western United States. Furthermore, ever with an imperial eye, rumors abounded that Roosevelt was intent on staking claim in the Amazon for the U.S. and some of his appearances were met with harsh criticism from Brazilians wary of outside control (Diacon 2004). As Roosevelt observes, “There is much fertile soil in the neighborhood of the streams, and the teeming lowlands of the Amazon and the Paraguay could readily – and with immense advantage to both sides – be made tributary to an industrial civilization seated on these highlands. A telegraph-line has been built to and across them. A railroad should follow” (183). Paying homage to the technological advancements led by Rondon, Roosevelt notes the potential of the river-scape, and in the areas where he perceives the most possible development, begins to downplay the harshness of the environment, remarking that the area could be relatively pleasant for settlers. Both sides of the river or perhaps both civilization and wilderness could benefit from the industrialization of the area. Through developmental potential the area can be transformed from a green hell (constructed to showcase Roosevelt’s manliness) into an industrial Eden (Vieira 124).

Rondon envisions the Amazon as a place for technological advancement, Brazilian nation building, and scientific exploration, all of which work together to form modernity and a more civilized wilderness. In putting up telegraph lines, the Rondon

Commission was mapping and delineating previously murky territory between countries, initiating contact with indigenous tribes, and working towards further colonization of the area. Ultimately, civilization or a general taming of the wilderness was the goal. In their telegraphic and exploratory missions the Rondon Commission was laying the foundation for future development: first comes the telegraph, then the railroad, and then true order and progress. As Laura Maciel explains, “Depois do telégrafo, acreditava-se que haveria de vir, cedo ou tarde, a estrada de ferro, o progresso das cidades, os braços do imigrante, o povoamento e a incorporação definitiva de Mato Grosso à pátria brasileira” (16). The telegraph would lead the way to technological and territorial advancement, much as Roosevelt also predicts. Technology would lead to social development and a modern Brazil. The creation of telegraph posts of course alters the surroundings, once dense forest is felled and outposts like those pictured in the background of Figures 2.2 and 2.3 become small settlements that gradually grow. As Rondon describes: “A ciência transforma o mundo, e o paraíso sonhado pela gente de outras idades começa a se delinear aos olhos da moderna geração, com possibilidades com que o passado não ousava sonhar. O aquecimento central e o ar condicionado resolveram o problema do ‘espaço vital’, porque é possível obter, por tôda parte, agradável ambiente, com a temperatura desejada” (327). Here remarking on the advent of the air conditioner, we can see the faith and dedication that Rondon has in technology and technological advancement. Things that previous generations could only dream of are now possible for the modern generation, and these tools serve to make the Amazon increasingly livable. The best way to work towards incorporation begins with the mapping, photographing, or

knowing process, continues with the implementation of new technologies until, at last, the wildest areas become managed and conditioned.

Conclusion

After the end of the voyage and Roosevelt's return to the United States, the Rio da Dúvida, renamed the Rio Roosevelt, officially became part of the Brazilian (and world) map. In 1919, Roosevelt died of cardiovascular disease, the roots of which some attribute to malaria he contracted during the trip. Rondon, on the other hand, carried on his telegraphing mission and died of old age at 92 in 1958, with the Northwestern state of Rondônia bearing his name. In their self-descriptions, Rondon and Roosevelt spout an explorer ideology where Rondon seeks technology and Roosevelt seeks adventure, however both within the sphere of the perceived unknown. Rondon, as a *caboclo*, serves as the ideal force behind gradual conquest, embodying the racial progress of the Brazilian nation. Their descriptions and photographic representations of populations in the jungle demonstrate Rondon's belief in assimilation and racialized progress along with Roosevelt's imagined wilderness and future potential of native groups. While wanting to patronizingly bring indigenous peoples into the Positivist light, Rondon embodies the same contradiction of the wilderness wanderer – the impulse toward preservation and protection, together with the perceived need for development that can only truly occur with destruction. While Roosevelt's imagined Amazon is based in ideas of movement and travel, Rondon's Amazon seeks fixity as a settled frontier. In “penetrating” the jungle, or mapping, recording, re-naming throughout their journey, there is a sense of

enlightenment, bringing the feminized backlands into the world of the known, and the transformation of the River of Doubt into a mapped and knowable space.

Chapter Three: A Novice Traveler in a Land Without History: Race, the Environment, and Building the Brazilian Amazon

“And the Amazon, in constructing its actual delta in such remote areas as another hemisphere, bespeaks the unrecognized voyage of earth in motion, changing with the passage of time, never stopping even for a second, and shrinking, in an uninterrupted process of deterioration, the great land surfaces over which it travels”

–Euclides da Cunha, *The Amazon: Land Without History* (9)

“Aquele bote do jacaré me deixou num estado de religiosidade muito sério. Palavra de honra que senti Deus no bote do jacaré. Que presteza! Que eternidade incomensurável naquele gesto!” -- Mário de Andrade, *O turista aprendiz* (170)

The Brazilian Amazon is a frontier where race, territory, and national identity appear in conflict. The Amazon is often represented as grandiose, awe-inspiring, challenging, and ultimately unknowable territory. It is a land in motion, in a continual process of change. Writing about this nature in flux serves as a way to write about culture in contrast, and shape a region within the national imaginary. As evident in the epigraphs to this chapter, Euclides da Cunha and Mário de Andrade spend much of their time in the Amazon remarking on the awe-inspiring nature of nature itself. For Euclides,¹⁶ in his set of essays, *À margem da história* (published in 1909), the river and landscape form a grandiose backdrop that a burgeoning Brazilian nation can develop and bring into the fold. The inhabitants of the land take on a secondary role faced with the seemingly unstoppable forward motion of the Earth and the overwhelming force of the river.

¹⁶ In this chapter I used Euclides' and Mário's first names following Brazilian tradition and in order to distinguish Mário de Andrade from other famous Mários of the modernist movement.

Despite this overwhelming nature, or perhaps because of it, the river destroys what it touches. For Mário, in his travel narrative *O turista aprendiz* (1928), the forward thrust of an alligator becomes a divine experience emblematic of where he seeks to situate the region in his vision of Brazil – as a site of cultural and natural exceptionality. Both authors remark on nature as constantly in motion but also static, indestructible, and representative of the greatness contained within the national territory of Brazil. Nature and culture interact within these foundational authors' depictions of the Amazon, demonstrating differing visions for the development of the region.

This chapter addresses the Amazonian journeys of two prominent Brazilian literary figures, moving from a transnational comparison to a transregional focus on internal coloniality with particular attention to the intertwining of race and territory. I examine Brazilian visions of the Amazon several decades apart through Euclides' set of travel essays collected in *À margem da história* and Mário's travel narrative *O turista aprendiz*. Euclides, writing about the Amazon during his 1904 trip at the height of the rubber boom, conceptualizes the region as a land in chaos and disarray, yet ripe with future potential based on the environment itself. Mário, traveling to the Amazon post rubber boom in 1927, portrays the space as central to Brazilian national identity in its diversity of flora, fauna, and most importantly, people. Their representations show a changing region that they characterize and use for their differing national agendas. These agendas depend on movement and migration. Euclides believes that through migration the Amazon can transform and develop into an integrated part of the Brazilian nation, while Mário seeks to make sense of a modern Brazil made up of groups moving from one

place to another (Gabara 49). Since both authors experience the Amazon through movement and travel rather than rootedness, they present an Amazonian snapshot – a brief view of the region. In this chapter I analyze the authors’ portrayals of nature and culture to demonstrate the representational power of the Amazon as emblematic of two key moments of Brazilian nation building.

Euclides da Cunha and Mário de Andrade had personal lives fraught with rumor and intrigue, wrote foundational fictions of Brazil, and demonstrated certain progressive notions about race, culture, and national identity. In their most famous works, these authors focused on two prominent peripheral regions of Brazil – the North (Amazon) and Northeast. Euclides, in *Os sertões* (1902), writes an epic narrative of the Canudos rebellion in the backlands of the Northeast, while Mário both in *Macunaima* (1928) and in *O turista aprendiz*, moves trans-regionally, from the Amazon to the Northeast, and in the case of *Macunaima* to the Southeast. Mário and Euclides come from the urban South of Brazil and travel to the Amazon with the intention of describing their experiences to a wide audience, having found national fame before their respective journeys. They demonstrate a fascination with the “primitive” and as such travel to the Northeast and Amazon to “discover” a land and culture that resists or even defies modernity. In their narratives, Euclides and Mário work to establish Amazonian cultures and peoples at the heart of Brazilian national identity, bringing them from periphery to center. As Schelling notes, since the early colonial period in Brazil, elite and ruling classes used European culture as a way to emphasize difference and maintain control over the races that made up the nation. This helped to align elites with the “dominant metropolis,” who continued

to view Brazil as backward and peripheral (110). This peripheral position is exactly what Euclides and Mário attempt to re-align in their depictions of Amazonia. What are the implications when both authors are from Brazil, traveling within a national border but far outside of the perceived borders of civilization? How did the two authors, separated by 24 years, portray visions of modernity and nationhood in their descriptions of Amazonian land and peoples?

To address these questions, I begin with Euclides, unpacking how his portrayal of the landscape demonstrates an imperial vision of development, progress and Brazilian greatness. For Euclides, the Amazon region represented Darwinian notions of the time as well as “a territory to be developed as part of the effort to strengthen the Brazilian nation” (Maligo 37). Euclides portrays the Amazon as an area with great environmental potential, yet inherently damned. He writes essays that include titles such as “Rivers in Abandon,” and “This Accursed Climate.” I center my argument on how Euclides’ anxieties and representations of the Amazon as a potential environmental utopia demonstrate racialized ideals about miscegenation, building on the idea of the redemption of the *caboclo* explored in the previous chapter. Euclides’ representations reveal both anxieties and aspirations for the nation. The second part of this chapter examines how Mário’s attempt to play with and break from traditional travel narratives diverges from Euclides’ perception of the Amazon in its characterization of individual actors that make up the diverse fabric of peripheral regions. Mário portrays the landscape of the Amazon as already modern and as a space at the heart of Brazilian identity. In particular, Mário’s

modernist photography of his journey offers a departure from the posed and manicured photographs of the two previous chapters.

Euclides, born in Rio de Janeiro state, was educated in military school and became a journalist, engineer, and many consider him to be one of the first sociologists in Brazil. Euclides' epic *Os sertões*, about the Canudos rebellion in Bahia, formed a fundamental part of the Brazilian literary canon and made a major contribution to thinking on national identity (Costa Lima 1988; Levine 1992; Abreu 1998; Johnson 2005). In *Os sertões*, Euclides represents the backlands as a study of contrasts where the coastal populations will eventually defeat "less competent" (Maligo 33) groups such as the *sertanejo*. This publication catapulted him to fame and in 1904 he traveled to the Amazon, writing 8 essays that make up *À margem da história*, eventually collected and published in 1909, the same year as Euclides' death at the hands of his wife's lover. Euclides traveled to the Amazon for nine months after he was appointed as the head of the Brazilian-Peruvian commission to demarcate a border between the two nations. His narrative thus carries an explicit geopolitical agenda: to situate a historical and cultural precedent to Brazilian territory in the Amazon (Hecht 25). His descriptions of nature and his observations of the Amazon work to at once denounce the rubber trade for its barbarism and write the Amazon into the national imaginary. In particular, Euclides argues for the settlement of *cauchero* workers in order to end nomadism and spur development, linking man to land. "The man who dwells there invests no effort to improve a place from which he can be expelled at any time with no right of appeal" (17). This presents *caucheros* as debt-peons and is used to advocate for more systematized

government regulations to work toward the settlement and racial advancement of the country as whole. A primary preoccupation of intellectual elites in Brazil and South America in general at this period was how to create a “civilized nation” (Zilly 3). This appears in Euclides’ essays that highlight the cruelty of *cauchero* (rubber worker) abuse and the general disorganization and chaos of the region. Euclides visits the Amazon at the height of the rubber boom and reflects on the potential for future development of the region, which he sees as inherently doomed because of its tangled and over-abundant land and river scape. In the Amazon, Euclides constructs racialized ideals of miscegenated Amazonian workers, while generally ignoring indigenous populations. This can conveniently fit into Euclides’ argument throughout *À margem da história*, that the incorporation of the Amazon is dependent on the migration of a more ideal racial type, rather than the integration of existing groups.

During this period, bringing order and progress particularly to the peripheral regions of Brazil were key aspects of forming a united nation, and Positivist ideals guided many intellectuals and politicians, as seen with Rondon in the previous chapter. Euclides and Rondon were educated in military school together, where they were both exposed to the ideas of Positivism. In contrast to Rondon, who fully adopted Positivism throughout his life, Euclides became more skeptical and along with other prominent intellectuals of the time, moved toward evolutionary ideas. Frederic Amory traces Euclides da Cunha’s relationship with Positivism, positing that while he was interested in the philosophy during his schooling and in relation to mathematics, yet he never fully subscribed to the full Positivist vision of humanity (that the only reasonable knowledge must be

scientifically verified or mathematically proved). Instead, Euclides veered toward social Darwinism and the idea of the survival of the fittest, coupled with environmental determinism, which is evident in his writings about different racial and social groups. “Da Cunha nonetheless really outgrew both French and Brazilian Positivism in his maturity, through his adherence to Darwinian principles of evolution and his empirical reliance on the social and the life sciences which Comte had relegated to the bottom of his hierarchy of sciences” (Amory 89). Euclides argues that the environment itself debilitates human development in the Amazon. To adapt to the environment, Amazonians have remained nomadic, as such hindering progress. “Adaptation is exercised through nomadism. Hence, in great part, the paralysis, simultaneously disordered and sterile, of the people who for three centuries have wandered here” (14). This is used to argue for the migration of outsiders to the region, a kind of purposeful evolution led by workers. This evolutionary perspective is important to note in *À margem da história*, particularly in Euclides’ vision for the development of the Amazon – evolving toward whiteness through the influx of migrants who will go on to settle.

Long after the ideas of Positivism were part of the prominent governing ideology in Brazil, Mário de Andrade traveled in the Amazon and Northeastern regions of Brazil in 1927-28, writing short columns that were published along with his photography in *O Diário Nacional* and eventually compiled as the travel narrative *O turista aprendiz*. As a founding member of the Modernist movement in Brazil, Mário created poetry, photography, ethnography, song, and critical analysis that mirrored conflicts of racial and national identity of both the author and the Brazilian nation. Furthermore, Mário, writing

as a *mestiço* yet part of the intellectual elite of the South of Brazil, is himself a conflicted character. Mário's racial identity is not directly addressed in *O turista aprendiz*.

However, he vocalizes his race in a poem he wrote near the end of his life called "Meditação sobre o Tietê" and there distinguishes himself as a "bardo mestiço" (Moreira 223). As a *mestiço* yet part of the intellectual elite, Mário laments his cultural whiteness. In his poem "Improviso do mal da América" (1928), he begins with the line "Grito imperioso de brancura em mim" (19). This line sets the poem out as a struggle of personal identity, where whiteness assumes power or authority without justification, dominating Mário. He ends the poem outlining his internal conflict and decrying his cultural whiteness, saying he feels neither black, nor red, but with a soul riddled with races, ("Me sinto só branco agora, só branco em minha alma crivada de raças!"(19)). Perhaps this internally conflicted position offers him a way to write a more inclusive vision of race and peripheral territory in Brazil that focuses on the individual experience.

Brazilian *modernismo* was itself a conflicted movement. As Vivian Schelling argues, it was defined by two intersecting ideas: synthesizing a European avant-garde together with the discovery and affirmation of a differentiated national identity (110). Traveling for three months in 1927, Mário experiences the Amazon during a relative lull in terms of resource extraction, as the rubber boom busted in 1913 and would only take on more significance in the context of WWII. Rather than describing rubber boom migrations and processes, Mário thus seeks to distinguish Brazil through its unique characteristics. As Gabara notes on Mário's relationship with modernism: "Not satisfied with nineteenth-century, utopian nationalist representations of Brazilian natural

phenomena nor convinced by Futurism's hyperbolic proclamations about the city, Mário combined experimental lyrics with photographic vision to create a modernist ethos" (46). This ethos, in the Amazon, relies on a narrative that blends personal experience and imagined encounters, a blend of travel narrative and fantasy that includes a variety of personal drawings, poems, and photography. For example, throughout his narrative he mentions the Do-Mi-Sol Indians, an imaginary group that he "documents" for their unique use of sounds rather than words. "Aliás, força a notar que o número de sons que eles possuíam era muito maior que a nossa pobre escala crômatica" (129). Mário positions the imaginary tribe as sonically superior to the use of Portuguese as a language for poetry and song. This demonstrates his blend of the imaginary in a sardonic manner that positions Amazonian culture, albeit imagined, as inspiring, and perhaps even culturally superior.

The modernist movement in Brazil began in São Paulo, a burgeoning and relatively wealthy city due to the recent coffee boom. Beginning in 1922 with the Modern Art week, the first phase of modernism (1922-1930) marked a shift from cultural representations of the past and a move toward defining a Brazilian cultural tradition in the breakdown and destruction of previous forms (Resende). While taking influence from the European avant-garde, the first phase of modernism sought to create a uniquely Brazilian literary and intellectual tradition. It is during this first phase, one of breaking from the past and defining the present that Mário travels to the Amazon. The second phase of modernism (1930-45), focused on construction, and was seen as somewhat softer than the combative reorganization of cultural norms from the generation of 1922. As a first wave

modernist, Mário sought to break from representations of peripheral regions that simplified or copied a European primitive ideal. Instead, he engages with local culture through a self-reflective mixture of prose and photography. Mário produced over 500 photographs of his trip, along with indexes of Amazonian languages and descriptions of his travels to the North and Northeast that play with the structure and form of a travel narrative, while on a broader level exhibiting peripheral regions as central to the Brazilian nation.

Grandeza, Race, and Brazil

In putting these texts together, I examine two views of Brazilian nationhood and national development through the ways in which the Amazonian periphery is written into the center by travelers to a foreign, although domestic, region. Both Euclides and Mário are internally colonizing the space of the Amazon, one that they acknowledge as difficult, exotic, and enticing. Both authors are on missions of knowledge production about the region that originate or are inspired by European epistemes. However, this is of course not quite so simple. These authors are attempting to create a new, Brazilian way of thinking that engages with the unique landscape (particularly in Euclides' case) or the people and cultures of Amazonia (as with Mário), aspects that can only be found within Brazil. These productions thus attempt to produce something unique, drawing from a history of western knowledge production. In particular, I understand both Euclides and Mário's projects as inherently racialized and depicting national projects that both accept and reject differing and overlapping notions of utopia. In order to put these narratives in

dialogue, several key concepts of Brazilian nationhood must be explored. First, the Brazilian national myth of *grandeza*, and secondly, a brief overview of Brazilian racial thought at these different historical moments. Furthermore, I will use ecocriticism to examine both texts for the ways in which the environment is represented textually and visually and what this can tell us about nation building in the Amazon.

As part of a technology of control and progress, borders along with myths form part of the project of nation building. In “Dreams Come Untrue,” José Murilo de Carvalho argues that myths and heroes help nations to “develop unity, organize the past, and face the future” (61). In Brazil, Carvalho argues, there is an overwhelming pride in nature that equates the country itself to an earthly paradise. The sheer size of the nation contributes to the national myth of *grandeza*, or greatness. As the Amazon River is the largest on earth, and the rainforest so resource rich, Brazil must inevitably become a great empire through modernity and development (67). Eden is found within Brazil, feeding into the myth of greatness and future promises of prosperity. As Carvalho explains, this myth originates in the first colonial gazes upon and writings about the “New World,” when European modernity begins to be implanted in Brazil. For example, in Pero Vaz de Caminha’s 1503 letter to Lorenzo de Médici known as the *Mundus Novus*, he describes Brazil as an “earthly paradise” (Carvalho 61). This helps to explain some of the motivation for Euclides’ and Mário’s projects in the Amazon. For Euclides an idea of *grandeza* is reinforced through the landscape itself (“It is [the Amazon] nonetheless, doubtless the greatest sight in the land” (3)), and the possible implantation of heuristic models of backland characters – the *sertanejo*, *seringueiro*, and *cauchero*. “The

overwhelming impression I conceived – perhaps corresponding to a positive truth – is this: humankind is still an impertinent interloper here. We have arrived uninvited and unprepared for, while nature was still in the process of setting up this vast, magnificent salon” (4). The Amazon appears as unfinished, yet grandiose, presenting a challenge for man. The Amazon, for Euclides, is on thus on the cusp of *grandeza*, dependent on migration, settlement, and incorporation. His view of Brazilian progress in the hinterlands hinges on internal migration and gradual racial cleansing and as such environmental taming. However, there is a constant anxiety of a peripheral modernity where Brazil, despite containing landscapes ripe with potential, does not achieve the modern, imperial status of nations such as the United States.

Since early colonization, as Carvalho explains, in contrast to American visions of utopia, where it was man’s duty to build the “city on the hill,” in Brazil paradise was seen as entirely based in the environment and its riches. “In the Luso-Brazilian tradition, paradise was of a purely natural character; it was not linked to the creation of a new religious community. It was not something to be built by human effort; it was God’s gift, from which nobody could be excluded” (Carvalho 64). Brazilians were blessed with natural gifts of the land – namely the coast and the Amazon region. These natural riches could serve as a source of wealth for the Brazilian people (of course negating the ways in which this land was “conquered”). Key here is the idea that “nobody could be excluded,” since in a landscape of inherent greatness, everyone can supposedly partake, creating a utopia based on inclusion. This sense of paradise could primarily be found in the Amazon, and both Euclides and Mário envision the Amazon as a somewhat utopian

arena, necessary and essential to imagining the nation of Brazil. These utopias were at odds with a Brazil seeking to expand and realize its goals of modernization based on growing city centers and increased development. Furthermore, they were both inspired by the populations that made up the interior areas. Mário centers these populations in *O turista aprendiz*, focusing on their particularly Brazilian brand of beauty that highlights black and mixed-race peoples. Euclides instead focuses on the strong sturdiness of rural workers particularly men, using them as an example of Brazilian exceptionalism. Another way to capitalize on inherent greatness, and create a utopic, modern space, was through migration. Euclides argues for the importance of internal migration to the jungle from other regions of Brazil. As Lesser explains, “thinking of immigration as the first step in the creation of “better” Brazilians allows us to move away from the strict and often replicated black/white or Indian/white paradigms of race and nation...” (12).

Immigration, particularly at the turn of the twentieth century, was a political tool to create a better, modern Brazil that could gradually move toward whiteness through the immigration of “desirable” immigrants (Lesser 20).

To examine racial thought in these two different time periods, I draw on Dain Borges’ “Puffy, Ugly, Slothful and Inert: Degeneration in Brazilian Social Thought 1880-1940” which provides an overview of Brazilian discussions of race during both Euclides and Mário’s times. Borges emphasizes the importance of hygienization, or the medicalization of racial thought. Degeneration, or deterioration, was “a psychiatry of character, a science of identity, and a social psychology” (235), meaning that much more than just being conceived as racial, it was tied to and backed up by the science of the day,

shaping policy and the social-welfare state into the present. The move toward scientific racism during the 19th century is apparent in travel narratives that categorized indigenous and black populations, particularly in remote regions. Treated as specimens, native peoples were seen as biologically inferior. Both Euclides and Mário contest and also reflect these racial representations. Euclides subscribes to ideas of “anthropogeography” (Skidmore 186) where human conditions and behavior depend on their geographical location. In the Amazon, Mário works to create a complicated patchwork of different racial identities that make up the fabric of the Brazilian nation. Euclides and Mário’s narratives explore how to conceptualize and incorporate a land and people marked as degenerate.

The Amazon: Land without History

In the introduction to the English translation of *À margem da história* (*The Amazon: Land without History*), Lúcia Sá traces Euclides’ travels and ideas about the Amazon to an imperialist nostalgia (citing Renato Rosaldo), where in the process of modernization, or under imperialism people “mourn for the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (xiii). Euclides, traveling on a mission to delineate territory for the Brazilian government and help settle a border dispute, works to transform the territory both literally and figuratively. However, as Sá notes, in Euclides’ Amazonian essays he begins to move away from the blame involved in “imperialist nostalgia” and towards more straightforward imperialism – “instead of blaming himself or his own country for eliminating cultures and the environment, he blamed other

countries or the victims themselves” (Sá xiv). In blaming other countries for Brazil’s internationally peripheral position, Brazilian dominance of South America becomes justifiable, as it is the largest nation, yet has been held back from harnessing its full potential. Euclides, traveling in a bi-national (Peru and Brazil) border expedition, conceives the Amazon as a space for Brazil to take over, it is a land whose “destiny is to be colonized” (Sá xv). In the case of Euclides traveling in Amazonia, he is not only writing essays but also working on geographical mapping projects, part of the process of moving the unknown wilderness into the known. He argues for the colonization of the Amazon based on environmental potential that requires the organized, gradual settlement of immigrants to the region who can work to tame unruly nature. In writing essays that expound upon the different elements that make up the Amazon, Euclides is, similar in some ways to Rondon, working to nationalize the region. The ambiguity of Euclides’ project is found in how the land and people that he aims to nationalize also, according to him, defy categorization and collection. The episteme with which he attempts to taxonomize and produce knowledge encounters resistance in this space. However, as I will explore, Euclides uses nature as a means to write the Amazon into the Brazilian nation and reinforce a sense of *grandeza*.

Throughout his narrative, Euclides focuses on the *cauchero/seringueiro* (rubber workers), who were generally *caboclos*. The value of Amazonian inhabitants depends entirely on their ability to function within the difficult landscape, as with the *sertanejos* in *Os sertões*. As Quijano (2007) notes, visions of utopic modernization often depend on racial hierarchies. Euclides lays out an Amazonian wilderness that can be tamed with the

right migrations and a gradual racial “hygiene.” “Euclides’ evolving approach to social reality suggested that the struggle between individuals, or even the existential, internal conflict of the individual with the self, was less important than the result of that struggle for society since the replacement of individuals was perceived as a necessary step in the advancement of the group” (Maligo 34). Rather than focusing on individuals, Euclides chooses certain stereotypical characters to stand as representative of a stage of Brazilian social evolution. Euclides’ perceived idea of the greater good for the Brazilian nation characterizes his Amazonian essays where he takes himself out of the narrative (as compared to Mário’s highly self-reflective journal) and focuses instead on the implications of the landscape and the importance of internal migration to the region.

Euclides begins his narrative with a chapter entitled “General Impressions,” where his first response to the Amazon is its lack of history (a fresh, disorganized Eden): “Such is the river then, and such its history: tumultuous, disorganized, incomplete” (11). This perceived disorder and incompleteness of history demonstrates the shroud of uncertainty and un-knowability surrounding the Amazon. Despite writing about the lack of history in the Amazon, Euclides is himself fascinated by the regional (environmental) history and in his travel, works to write a history that can justify the region as part of the territory of Brazil (Hecht 2013). That the region is incomplete suggests that under the right guidance the Amazon could fulfill its destiny as a source of great wealth and neo-imperial power for the emerging Brazilian nation. The disorganization of the river itself suggests that Euclides sees the environment as impenetrable and difficult, yet in need of organization from the outside. The lack of history presents both a hope and challenge: a

blank slate to create a worldly Eden, and a vacuum that defies the settled march toward progress. This preoccupation with the historical representation of the region is something that Euclides continually goes back to, perhaps in an attempt to write the history and geography of the region himself. As Ventura notes, “Povoar, colonizar e escriturar são os instrumentos de tal transplante da civilização para os territórios bárbaros. Fora da escrita e da história, não há salvação: só existe o deserto” (135). A land considered history-less or not yet written into history is perceived as a wasteland. In writing about the Amazon, much as Euclides previously did with the *sertão*, he is writing the backlands into existence within a national identity. In *Os sertões*, Euclides also calls the *sertão* history-less, a region in constant change that is modified by the environment, linking the *sertão* with Amazonia as abject, or condemned ecologies (Anderson). This representation as a wasteland creates a further justification for Brazilian claim to the land as it is empty and unclaimed, thus, Brazil, as a neo-imperial power can claim, harness, and develop this wilderness (Hecht 2013, 30).

While voicing a sentimentality toward nature, Euclides feels overwhelmed by the disorganization or chaos of the jungle and calls for a “hygenification of the land.” Dislocated in time by nature, Euclides can remark on the role of land and nation. “The concept of time is abolished, for the succession of uniform external phenomena does not disclose it. This soul withdraws into a nostalgia that is the longing not merely for native land but for Land, for the natural forms traditionally linked to our contemplations” (32). Immersed in the jungle, there is a nostalgia for home (native land), meaning in Euclides’ case the Southeast of Brazil, but there is also something further, a longing for Land with a

capital “I.” This Land with a capital “I” is a space devoid of perceived civilization where man could come to reflect on or experience the wilderness. This employs both connotations of wilderness – that of an empty wasteland, and that of a paradisiacal place for reflection. The ideas of cleanliness or hygienification continually link man to land and longs for a “native land” and “Land” with a capital “I” (34). Ideas of degeneracy, pervasive at the dawn of the Brazilian Republic, characterized miscegenation within Brazil as part of the backwardness of the nation, partially through the tropical environment that “reduced individuals to unproductive laziness and society to a parasitical organism” (Leu 3). However, as discussed with Rondon in the previous chapter, the “redemption of the *caboclo*,” was used as a political tool to encourage miscegenation toward whiteness, and as such a racial cleanse. This demonstrates the tension and imaginary border between civilized and racialized (hygiene) and a nostalgic, utopic vision of the “L”and. This tension is part of a larger, political justification for Brazilian *grandeza* and as such claim to the land. It is only with the increased internal immigration of Brazilian workers that the Amazon’s unharnessed potential can be reached.

Euclides describes not only the strangeness of the Amazon itself but his own feeling of being a stranger, estranged from the central Brazilian state, lost in an encompassing wilderness. “He feels dislocated in space and in time; not outside his country but nonetheless estranged from human culture, lost in the hidden recesses of the forest and an obscure corner of history” (da Cunha 32). This dislocation in time and space, in a land perceived as evasive of previous implantations of a western history,

points to new possibilities as a new history, according to Euclides, remains to be written. However, this vacuum still exists within his country, it is at once foreign, new, and exciting, while contained within the nation. As Rex Nielson notes: "...on the surface da Cunha makes a case for considering the Amazonian territory as essential to the Brazilian national project, his writing simultaneously focuses on the strangeness, the otherness of this landscape that by its very nature seems to resist identification with the Brazilian nation" (22). Nature in the Amazon seems to dislocate culture, making Euclides' project one of the ways to civilize, or colonize, the land. This land is at once a wasteland, and partially because of this lack of development and as such need for guidance, Euclides writes the region into a Brazilian part of the nation. This conflict demonstrates the discord between Euclides' political project of border creation with his personal impression of the wilderness.

As a response to these contradictions, linking race and environment, Euclides explains the great potential of miscegenation in the harsh landscape of Amazonia. According to him, it is the climate itself that determines who can survive or who is worthy to populate the wilderness. "It [The Amazon] has policed, it has cleansed, it has moralized. It has selected – and continues to select – the most worthy for life. It has eliminated – and continues to eliminate – the less fit, through flight or through death. It is a climate to be admired that prepares new regions for the strong, for the steadfast, and for the good" (43). The climate polices and chooses who will survive. Here Euclides very explicitly lays out his ideology of a survival of the fittest in the wilderness, an environmental determinism that naturally evaluates who belongs and who does not.

Again, he ignores indigenous populations (those who have persisted and thrived in the tough Amazon environment), and instead focuses on the *caboclo*, who in their mixture of white and indigenous blood, can survive and transform the landscape. This is reflective of the value Euclides places on the idea of backland characters, it is the *caboclo* who, according to him, “come in spite of the environment...they have been victorious in a battle to the death...” (42). While the climate may be accursed, abject, indeed murderous, it is the *caboclo* as racially emblematic of Brazil as a whole who can withstand and ultimately transform the wilderness. The *caboclo* has *chosen* the difficult terrain, creating a legitimate claim to the land. Mark D. Anderson examines literary tropes of abject landscapes, primarily the Brazilian interior (*sertões*) and Amazonia. He looks at *Os sertões* next to *À margem da história*, arguing that the Positivist ideals of the turn of the century lent themselves to conceptualizing abject landscapes as areas to be developed, or lost paradises that must be reclaimed. This conceptualization reflects racialized ideas about the populations in these abject ecologies. “Therefore, the indigenous either became part of non-human nature, or they too required expulsion from the garden, or at the least infusion with European genes and culture to transform into civilizable, mixed-race *caboclos*” (212). In order to successfully become a part of the Brazilian nation, immigration from the interior as well as miscegenation would have to occur. Immigration and miscegenation again point to a land in transition, in a state of becoming.

Euclides, in his chapter “This Accursed Climate,” further elaborates on the challenges facing the development of the Amazon as he recounts the history of imperial powers that have previously colonized in harsh conditions:

Open any regulation book of colonial hygiene. What stands out even to a cursory reading are the incomparable efforts of modern colonization and its complex mission which, in complete contrast to that of its predecessors, do not contemplate introducing the transformed barbarians to civilization but rather transplanting civilization integrally to the primitive and adverse barbarian territories themselves. (35)

Euclides expounds this strategy for colonization of the Amazon region, following a model of colonialism that gradually “transplanted” civilization onto the other. This echoes Rondon’s Positivist model for gradual indigenous incorporation examined in the previous chapter. Different from Rondon is Euclides’ focus on the “barbarian territories themselves,” where in migration, the landscape can become civilized. Here hygiene, part of the project of literally cleaning up or a systematic whitening of the population, is gradually introduced to the periphery of the nation, in the process transforming (or getting rid of) perceived savagery.

Euclides goes on to use this argument to distinguish Brazil as particularly adept at colonizing, briefly mentioning cases of unsuccessful models of hygenification in English, German, and Belgian colonies where official agents have to return home after just a few years. Using Acre as an example, he argues that through the settlement of *sertanejos* fleeing drought in the Northeast, and coming to the Amazon, the colonization of a particularly difficult land has been successful and a model of progress not just for Brazil but for the entire world. This is a racialized argument of Brazilian exceptionalism where because of the ability of *sertanejos* to survive in harsh landscapes, there is the possibility

of successful gradual racial cleansing through miscegenation that those coming from colonial centers could not manage. This also reinforces the idea of the redemption of the *caboclo*, where with more immigration a racial cleansing could occur. This depends on the immigration of supposedly racially superior populations, from areas outside of the Amazon itself, rather than those already living in the area. As Jeffery Lesser, scholar of immigration in Brazil explains: “Immigration was one of the main components in the improvement and, thus, the experience of movement did not end with the physical arrival of foreigners. Immigration was, and is, about creating a future, superior Brazil” (3). Immigration thus works within an idea of *grandeza*, that by importing people and allowing them to improve the already great landscape, Brazil could move beyond the process of becoming, into the future, modern Brazil. Of course, these immigrants would need to be “desirable,” that is, white. While the nation sought immigration from white, European countries, Euclides advocates for the internal migration of Brazilians to homestead in the Amazon, beginning the challenging work of incorporating the region. He seems to believe that it is only through the migration of sturdy workers that the greatness of the region can be harnessed. The great challenge of colonizing the Amazon required surviving the Amazon, a skill that Euclides argues through linking both abject territories and abject bodies.

Traveling at the height of the rubber boom, where the Amazon was in a moment of increased attention and migration, Euclides spends a large part of his narrative denouncing violence against *caucheros* (rubber tappers) and suggesting ways that the Amazon can truly become settled. *Caucheros* are one of Euclides’ idealized types for

Amazonian settlement. “What comes definitively to the fore is the urgent need for measures to rescue this hidden, abandoned culture: a work law that ennobles human effort; an austere justice that curbs excesses; and some form of homestead provision that definitely links man and land” (17). Here Euclides remarks with paternalistic concern toward the “hidden, abandoned” culture of the *caucheros*, frontier workers who have come as debt-peons to work in rubber plantations. Euclides continually expresses a disdain toward nomadism, suggesting that the best way to settle the Amazon is to import settlers from the outside, offer them a simple, regulated system that will facilitate settlement and “definitively link man and land.” While Euclides focuses on the *grandeza* and unconquerable nature of the Amazon River and landscape, it is through policy and controlled immigration that he suggests development.

Despite suffering abuses, Euclides describes the *cauchero* as cunning and intelligent enough to mobilize the environment to their benefit. “He [the *cauchero*] is a case of psychic mimetism: a man who pretends to be a savage in order to defeat the savage. He is a gentleman and a Wildman according to circumstance” (da Cunha 52). Euclides shows a certain respect for the *cauchero*, an admiration of his adaptability and traits necessary in the wilderness. The character trope of the Brazilian *cauchero* represents a racial type ideal for the Amazon – he can be a man who (pretends) to be savage while also someone who can behave in polite, civilized society. Furthermore, it is the *cauchero* who can fully defeat the “savage,” a step perceived as necessary to fully colonize the Amazon. This respect echoes his previous portrayals of the *sertanejo* where these figures are ideal-types that connect nature and culture. This halting admiration

builds to Euclides' point – that with the right guidance, the Amazonian frontier is destined for greatness. Euclides goes on to say, “A Brazilian discovered *caucho*, or, at least, established the industry of its extraction. I do not go alone in my reconstruction of this chapter in our History, which, if fully developed later by a historian, might be entitled: “Brazilian Expansion in the Amazon” (70). Brazilians “discovered” rubber, and thus were able to control and expand into the Amazon. This also establishes Brazilian precedent to the land, and credits Brazil with “discovering” *caucho*, further justifying Brazilian claim to the region. Coming ten years before the rubber boom busted, Euclides, much like other travelers, prospectors, and locals, believed the economic prosperity of the Amazon would be never-ending. Euclides, in suggesting this reconstructed chapter of history is producing western knowledge about the region while also inserting a neo-imperial lens. Brazil, due to its historical precedent and discovery of the wealth of the Amazon (rubber), deserves to expand and lay claim to the contested territory – expanding into the Amazon.

To further his argument, Euclides turns to the state of the rubber industry in neighboring Peru. Due to the nature of Amazonian rubber trees that defied plantation style growth and instead required rubber workers to increasingly move deeper into the forest, the rubber industry faced numerous difficulties of settlement and control (Weinstein). As Euclides explains: “The exploitation of *caucho* as the Peruvians practice it, with its felling of the trees and the constant movement in search of undiscovered stands of *Castilloa* in an endless professional nomadism, leads them to practice all manner of abuse in the inevitable confrontations with the natives, and thus brings with it

the systematic disruption of society” (71). In Peru (and to be sure, also in Brazil), there is a constant movement that leads to nomadism and disarray. If modernity is based on ideas of settlement, containment that leads to growth and structure, the rubber industry represents the polar opposite. The nomadic nature of the industry itself leads to abuse and “disruption” or lack of, society. In presenting Peru as an example of abuse and mismanagement, Euclides politically maneuvers for Brazil’s claim to Amazonian land.

Euclides offers a paradox throughout *À margem da história*, where he argues for the fortitude and ability of Brazilians to develop the Amazon while also continually invoking the impossibility and lack of organization of nature itself. Only a particular racial type of Brazilian man can resolve this paradox, under the management of governing, white elites. In her article “Provincializing World Geography,” Aarti Madan argues that in *Os sertões*, Euclides combines poetic language with a geographical consciousness in order to mobilize Humboltian (or occidental) geographical knowledge through a Brazilian lens. This, she explains, demonstrates the complicated relationship between the draw of western knowledge and the impulse to re-write and make this knowledge distinctly Brazilian. Through his use of language and metaphor, Euclides equates Brazilian people with a land of which he stands in awe. In *À margem da história*, Euclides follows this same impulse, focusing on the geography and complicated landscape of the Amazon where he finds himself cut loose, dislocated from what he knows. While repeatedly mentioning his sense of estrangement, and removal from “human culture” (32), this land, he argues, is still irrevocably Brazilian. “In such places the Brazilian, albeit a foreigner, would be treading Brazilian land. Which leads to an

astounding perplexity: to the fiction of extraterrestrial law – country without land – is counterposed another basic physical concept – land without country” (9). The Amazon, for Euclides, is an overwhelming utopia where Brazil can exert its imperial potential and harness its natural *grandeza* towards development. However, this land also has an aesthetic quality and defies man, development, and imperial powers, which Euclides acknowledges. Man is lost in the jungle – which is at once freeing and terrifying.

The Novice Traveler with a Camera in Hand

Many of the anxieties about modernization, race, environment, and development expressed by Euclides at the turn of the 20th century appear in Mário de Andrade’s *O turista aprendiz* (1928). Positioning the Brazilian nation as at once able to reflect and use European models of imperialism and intellectual discourse while differentiating the nation through its distinct characteristics, both Euclides and Mário produce knowledge about the Amazon for the development of a Brazilian national identity. As Zilly notes, the anxiety about whether indigenous and African populations could or should be citizens was a large part of building the Brazilian nation. Mário specifically uses peripheral regions, peoples, and landscapes to showcase a uniquely Brazilian identity. While Euclides focuses on the need to import and mix outsiders to create a manageable, written, and historicized region, Mário, in his travel narrative of the Amazon and Northeast, situates peripheral regions as the most authentic and emblematic of Brazilian identity.

Mário’s narrative style differs from Euclides’ sober essays and observations and he also uses photography to showcase Amazonia. Mário mixes poems, imagined and real

indigenous folklore (for example the Do-Mi-Sol Indians whose language and culture he invents and documents), and songs with travel observations akin to other travel narratives popularized in the 18th and 19th centuries, which he often cites. *O turista aprendiz* is divided into two parts, the first of which documents his journey to the Amazon from May-August 1927, the second of which is his journey to the Northeast of Brazil from November to February 1928-29. These two journeys were only compiled and published as a whole in 1976. For the purposes of this chapter I focus on Mário's Amazonian journey. Mário presents his life on-board a steamship, highlighting the Amazonian landscape in motion while also writing about cities and architecture. There are several photographs of the author himself and people living along the river. This variety of photography and narrative represents the diversity of both Mário's experience and the area itself. Mário also characterizes the Amazon region in movement, however, this movement, different from Euclides' vision, is not in a straightforward trajectory, but rather made up of a variety of crossings.

The travel narrative and visuals Mário created give insight into the ways a Brazilian Modernist viewed the Amazon. Travel narratives, in their surveys of foreign lands deemed exotic by those from the colonial center, worked within the imperial project to map, photograph, and document in an assertion of control. Mário's use of the camera and insistence on his position as a tourist in the Amazon point to how both the camera and the tourist experience frame and transform his idea of self and nationhood. As Nancy Stepan notes, "By becoming an apprentice tourist, Mário experiences a transformation much like Macunaíma's, from racialized peripheral modernist looking toward Europe

into ‘whitened’ city dweller in the interior of Brazil. Perhaps because of his occupation of multiple racial categories, Mário creates a genre of Brazilian primitivist portraiture in which he includes himself as both subject and object” (82). Having already culturally whitened himself as a member of the intelligentsia, in travel to a peripheral region, Mário whitens himself further through travel. In becoming and explicitly calling attention to his role as a tourist in the Amazon, along with photographing himself, Mário relocates the idea of center. However, in Mário’s case, as Stepan notes, he is both subject and object, a self-described tourist but one who also occupies these peripheral spaces.

The modernist movement in Brazil sought to create a national cultural identity to differentiate from European cultural models, often drawing from the periphery. In *Errant Modernism*, Esther Gabara focuses on the modernist aesthetic created by Mário in *O turista aprendiz*. She deems this modernism “errant” as it critiqued nationalism, set up a new way of thinking nationality based in the periphery and strayed from conventional, colonial representations. “Errant modernism therefore pictures a broad and varied set of practices that continue to circulate among artists at the beginning of the twenty-first century. No longer contained by objects, these practices actively engage popular culture, decenter the authorial subject, undermine scientific truth, and interrupt the forward motion of progress – social, individual, and even narrative” (15). This interruption of a forward progression can be seen in the disruption of the traditional travel narrative that Mário creates. In *O turista aprendiz*, Mário, in inventing entire cultures (Do-Mi-Sol Indians), undermines the supposed scientific truth of indigenous documentation and instead focuses on these cultural crossings. For Mário, modernism made up a ‘critical

nationalism' that "critiqued the colonial history of the Americas and its twentieth-century formation, yet did not obediently serve the interests of the increasingly centralized and homogenizing modern state" (Gabara 5). Through critique and a concentration on underrepresented regions and peoples, *modernismo* could reform Brazilian national culture and thus contest turn of the century anxieties about racial degeneracy. However, as Stepan notes, "Modernismo operated politically through the composition of an ethos that simultaneously counteracted a history of colonial oppression and the contemporary ideas that threatened to reproduce its effects of racism and poverty" (73). *Modernismo*, in designing an explicitly Brazilian culture through the use of previously ignored peoples and regions thus could reject a "history of colonial oppression." However, as a movement generated by the intellectual elite, it was "innovative but inaccessible," (Resende 205), a critique that Mário himself made of the movement in a 1942 lecture. This innovation yet lack of accessibility speaks to the travel experience, where travel is a bourgeois activity only achievable by the select few. In experiencing the Amazon through travel, Mário is a step removed from his surroundings, able to portray them through photography and prose, yet not fully accessing life in the Amazon. Conversely, his portrayals are also innovative yet the experience is inaccessible to the bulk of the population.

As Mário invents indigenous tribes, documenting them linguistically, playing with previous accounts of the Amazon, there is a rejection of the scientific truth that was continually sought in fact-finding missions such as Euclides' journey. Mário engages with local populations, while at the same time being removed by his status and literal position on board a traveling vessel. Furthermore, in his self-designation as an apprentice

tourist, Mário negates his own authority – he is in the process of learning how to be a tourist, photographer, and traveler. Indeed, Mário critiques Euclides, as Gabara notes: “Mário explicitly rejects da Cunha’s philosophy of identity grounded in these landscapes, and writes a scathing condemnation of this foundational text of Brazilian national identity” (63). In Mário’s critique of Euclides’ we see the shift of idealized national identity between the two authors. Euclides concentrates on the environment and its effect on people, while Mário concentrates on the people who make up the environment of Brazil. Euclides focuses on specific backland characters that can be portrayed as heroic, where Mário’s characters, including himself, are often flawed and multidimensional, in personal processes of becoming.

In his collection of stories and images of the Northeast and Amazon, Mário begins to create national heritage. In the 1930s, after this journey, he worked for Brazil’s Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional, an agency that listed and preserved buildings and sites of national heritage (Resende 212). In the Amazon, he appears as a consumer rather than a creator of heritage, even though he is photographing and cataloguing, he is gazing from the other side. In his later work as an archivist, Mário vocalizes his approach to preservation as picking up on specifically Brazilian elements, such as a watermelon added to a depiction of the Last Supper in a church in São Paulo (Resende 213). Cultural hybridity and the multiple elements that composed Brazilian culture across the racial and class spectrum formed part of Mário’s vision of modernism. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett remarks on the relationship between heritage, tourism, and preservation: “Heritage is a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse

to the past...Heritage not only gives buildings, precincts, and ways of life that are no longer viable for one reason or another a second life as exhibits of themselves. It also produces something new” (150). Through his travel and documentation as an “apprentice” tourist, Mário creates the Amazon as a destination and brings back emblems of cultural heritage in the form of his photography and travel diary.



Figura 9 – “A bordo do S. Salvador em pleno Peru com Sol na cara/ 22-VI-27” (notação no verso). Acervo do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo.

Figure 3.1: Mário on board the S. Salvador (Andrade 15).

Mário collected over 500 photographs during his travels in the North and Northeast, contradicting his self-designation as a “novice.” His photography is wide-ranging and often features himself or his shadows as part of the landscape of Amazonia. As seen in Figure 3.1, Mário leisurely rests on board the S. Salvador ship with “sun in his

face in the middle of Peru.” In photographs of Mário on this trip he either creates self-portraits with his shadow blending into the landscape or is shown in this type of pose, usually with a smile on his face. Mário dominates the scenery, differentiating himself through his dress, stance, and use of technology. Mário’s ability to travel and document (being a tourist) positions him as an outsider. His clothing draws on typical explorer garb (similar to the outfits worn by Roosevelt and Rondon as seen in the previous chapter) but rather than a military pith helmet he dons a wide-brimmed hat, underlining his leisurely position as tourist. Mário’s work is centered on photography and tourism and he even creates a neologism for photographing – *fotar*. While photography had been in existence in Brazil since the mid-nineteenth century, and documentation of the Amazon was taking off, a major difference in the 24 years between his voyage and that of Euclides was the creation and propagation of a visual culture (Mirzoeff 2011) that encouraged and fueled travel itself.

The photographs of Mário communicate his ease and enjoyment of the trip and his images at once appear artistic and modern, and at times flippant and ironic. In the captions, he plays with the themes of his narrative – what constitutes culture, beauty, and nature? For Mário, it seems, beauty, and Brazilian identity, lie in the people he begins to know in Amazonia. His approach to the region aims to produce a historical knowledge that differentiated from broader observations of high culture. Mário’s experience is grounded in individual meetings and experiences, versus Euclide’s sweeping narrative that focuses on types and forces. As Schelling argued, Mário works to open up ideas about high culture to include the Amazon and its peoples, amidst Amazonian culture and

peoples, thus addressing his own later critique of the modernist movement. Modernist primitivism seized on indigeneity as a marker of differentiation, a culture that could compare with or even exceed western forms of knowledge and culture. In a similar fashion to Euclides, Mário found that European models did not fit the Brazilian experience and thus wrote towards a particularly Brazilian brand of culture.¹⁷

Before taking off for his months long trip, Mário, in reference to other travel narratives of the Amazon, reflects on what he expects upon beginning the journey. He continually voices a reluctance to travel, characterizing himself as a homebody. This reluctance sets up his experience as tourist as a sort of self-sacrifice – he is actively pushing himself beyond his comfort level to incorporate Amazonia and the Northeast into the Brazilian nation. Traveling with other modernists, he spends time not only in the Northeast but across the Brazilian and Peruvian Amazon. Before leaving his home in São Paulo, Mário expresses his travel expectations:

Sei bem que esta viagem que vamos fazer não tem nada de aventura nem perigo, mas cada um de nós, além da consciencia lógica possui uma consciência poética também. As reminiscências de leitura me impulsionaram mais que a verdade, tribos selvagens, jacarés e formigões. E a minha laminha santa imaginou: canhão, revólver, bengala, canivete.

(51)

¹⁷ Of course, he (and other modernistas) could not escape their European thinking and educational formation entirely, hence creating concepts such as anthropophagy, or cultural cannibalism.

This imagined violence and excitement point to the landscape of the Amazon itself. The Amazon is a place to demonstrate man's potential to dominate the wilderness, and an area where violence could reign supreme. Mário dialogues with previous travel narratives of the Amazon, the focus of which have been savage tribes, alligators, and fire ants. These elements make up an imaginary, exotic wilderness. As a response, Mário then imagines weapons with which to confront the wilderness, the outlier of which is certainly the "bengala," or cane, often used for promenading in urban public space. Associated with both elegance, why should a bengala be listed amongst these other tools? Perhaps this points toward the self-referential, tongue in cheek approach to his journey that Mário takes, and the public, city image that he invariably carries.



Figura 17 – "Bom-Futuro bonita/ O II é um igrejo gótico/ 6-VII-27/ rio Madeira/Ver as
sumanúmas dos dois lados/ água de Narciso" (notação no verso). Acervo do Instituto de Estudos
Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo.

Figure 3.2: Bom-Futuro bonita (Andrade 52).

Once on his journey, Mário also uses his camera to showcase Amazonian landscapes. This photograph of a small town on the Madeira River gives us a different vision than that set forth by Euclides. Rather than a land without history, tangled and complicated in its very nature, this town is a picturesque, managed landscape. This photograph of a town called Bom-Futuro, in Rondônia, captioned for its gothic church, yellow flowers (sumanúmas) and “agua de Narciso.” The photograph, along with the caption, describe the beauty of the landscape to the point that the viewer can perhaps fall into the trap of Narcissus, gazing at themselves until drowning. Or perhaps the caption refers not to the viewer but instead the town itself. Picturesque despite a slight rightward tilt, the town, gazing at its reflection, could drown in its own beauty. Once again, it appears that Mário ironically engages with European art and architectural periodization, along with Greek mythology, in so designating a humble building and landscape in the furthest reaches of the Amazon. The name of the town and his description in the caption seem to play with temporalities – modern/pre-modern, future and progress/stagnation, and spaces – civilization/wilderness. In this reflection a separation between the town and the water, culture and nature, blurs and ultimately disappears. While Euclides sees the Amazon as a harsh, unforgiving landscape, Mário showcases a softer side. The dark, tangled wilderness has been transformed into civilization in the form of a pretty, quiet town on the banks of a calm river (although this town is located about as far down the Brazilian Amazon as one can travel). This can also be seen to harness classic western ideals of the picturesque, yet featuring typically Brazilian flowers, a specifically Brazilian piece of natural patrimony.

Mário and Euclides' depictions of the natural environment demonstrate their attitudes toward the individuality or collectivity of the region, respectively. André Botelho (2013) offers an interesting point of comparison between Euclides and Mário. While analyzing *O turista aprendiz* as a travel narrative in which Mário attempts to create an image of Brazil in which he recognizes a cultural plurality and conceptualizes civilization as multi-faceted, Botelho compares Mário and Euclides in their portrayals of the river itself. Both remark on the monotonous nature of the Amazon and a certain sense of build-up and then personal disappointment rooted in previous representations of the Amazon, yet there is an important distinction in the outcomes of Euclides' and Mário's commentary. Mário remarks on the monotony of the river to highlight the intrigue of Amazonian populations and cities. Euclides, on the other hand, imagines the Amazon as a monumental (albeit mundane) landscape coupled with a land (and people) without history. Thinking back to the epigraphs of this chapter we can again see distinctions in how Mário and Euclides treat the idea of the river, and more generally the wilderness of the Amazon. Mário characterizes the *jacaré* as bringing him closer to God, while Euclides concentrates on the overwhelming, destructive, and all-powerful force of the river. Nature, for Mário, is representative of an approachable part of the nation as he focuses on an alligator, and his personal, spiritual connection to the animal. Conversely, for Euclides, the land is a resource into which man intervenes to facilitate development.

For Mário, the underlying idea in both his landscape and portraiture is the beauty and elegance of the Amazon region and its peoples. In his photography and descriptions of the riverscape, Andrade continually characterizes the Amazon as feminine, and also

largely features women as his photographic subjects. Amazonian beauty, according to *O turista aprendiz*, revolves around the feminine body. This comes in stark difference to Euclides, whose depictions of nature (while still following the trope of nature as feminine) demonstrate an overwhelming anxiety about man's potential and also impotence when faced with the task of harnessing and developing the wild. It is the sturdy backland character of the (male) *cauchero* who can tame the jungle. Mário instead highlights the attraction of the feminine space of the forest. In 1920s Brazil, the unerring standard of beauty was white (Leu 6), thus in Mário's photographs and descriptions of beauty in the Amazon as black, indigenous, and *mestiço*, he departs quite radically from convention.



Figura 23 – "Margem do Solimões/ Junho – 1927/ Sobre as ondas" [notação no verso]. Acervo do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros da Universidade de São Paulo.

Figure 3.3: Margem do Solimões (Andrade 52).

Figure 3.3 showcases life on the riverbanks of the Solimões as well as life in transit for Mário. Framed by a dark doorway, we see a mother and child gazing directly at Mário's lens, sitting on their porch elevated from the river by *palafitas*. Geometric shapes of dwelling usually index modern planning and construction, but here they appear in the context of a *palafita* – an unregulated, unplanned housing structure, integrated closely to the river, and sitting directly atop the water. The lifestyle of this family is thus defined by the proximity between nature and culture. This mother and child can sit and watch the world float by. The caption, “sobre as ondas” directly references both where the subjects are (above the waves) while also possibly pointing to their position above or away from the chaos of city life. This woman and child appear unamused or uninterested in being documented, their frowns in contrast to Mário's subtle smile in Figure 3.1. The mother and child's position “above the waves” also causes them to gaze down on Mário. This is a different perspective than we have seen with photography from the previous chapter in which grandiose characters such as Roosevelt and Rondon gaze on the landscape while indigenous subjects look up toward the camera. Here Mário's subjects look down on him, elevating them to a position of power. However, while Mário moves on, creating this tourist snapshot, they are static. The image does not appear posed, although it is also not entirely candid. Here we can also see the mobile tourist gaze – a shot taken while in transit itself (Urry 41). These are “glances” that passersby can achieve through the creation of modern technology that showcase the photographer's mobility. Mário, aboard a steamship, can create these images with a quick snapshot, capturing a moment of quotidian life, with or without the need to interact with his subjects.

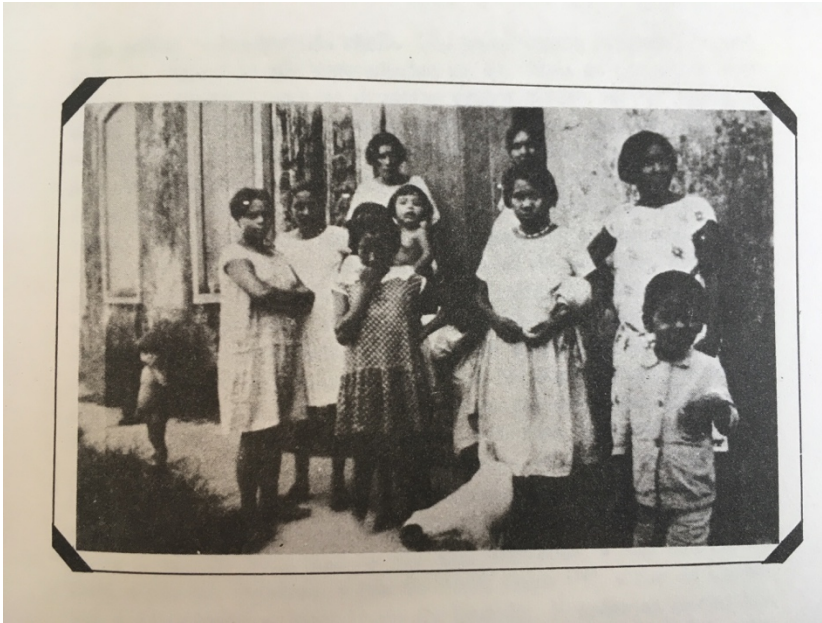


Figure 3.4: Tapuias de Parantins – junho 1927 (Andrade 120).

In Figure 3.4, similar to Figure 3.3, Mário photographs women and children in a semi-candid manner. While clearly posed, there is the same element of uncoordinated snapshot that lends to a feeling of candid photography. Captioned as *tapuias*, a term used to describe Indians who did not speak tupi, Mário's subjects are located on the banks of the Parantins, a tributary to the Amazon. This positioning against a semi-rural backdrop, where the building appears made out of stone rather than on *palafitas* or with thatched roofs of straw, shows a rural, but more developed, even planned built environment. The women in the photograph have adopted language and dress of the center, while remaining peripheral subjects. The focal point of the image, a young girl in a polka dot dress, breaks up the rest of the family wearing white. Framed by two little boys, the women appear proud and in charge, despite the children seemingly scattered about. Again, the imagery

is female driven. These images show an Amazon made up of a wide variety of peoples, against backdrops in various stages of development.

Mário's journey through the Amazon took him down several different rivers, where he describes the monotony of life aboard a steamship, but he also details city life in the Amazon, breaking from previous travel narratives where the journey only begins when the city is left behind. Along with these images of the Amazonian interior, Mário spends much of his narrative detailing the pleasures of Amazon capitals, in particular Belém and Manaus. Mário writes Amazonian places into comparisons with world capitals (linking Belém to a tropical Paris, for instance) to incorporate the region into a global discourse and also showcase its cultural production and charm. This situates these capitals as a center of cultural production comparable to western tradition. Mário includes a photograph of a colonial building on stilts on the Tapajós River that he captions "Veneza em Santarém." These links with high culture imagine an Amazon not entirely rooted in wilderness but a place with a culture worthy of esteem and as part of a nation. In describing Belém, the capital of Pará state, Mário writes a poem again comparing Amazonian capitals to the United States and Europe.

Lá se goza mais que em New York ou Viena!
Só cada olhar roxo de cada morena
De tipo mexido, cocktail brasileiro,
Alimenta mais que um açazeiro,
Nosso gosto doce de homem com mulher!
No Pará se pára, nada mais se quer!

Prova Tucupi! Prova tacacá!

Que alegre porto,

Belém de Pará (186)

Reading almost as an advertisement for potential tourists, this poem invites guests to try the Amazon – as they will undoubtedly like it and stay. Mário portrays the Amazon as a bustling metropolis, filled with beautiful women whose gaze makes the traveler drunk on a distinctly Brazilian cocktail. He writes in the most important food staples of the region – açai, tucupi, tacacá – distinguishing the region from the rest of Brazil, a way to entice future travelers to the region. Here an idea of Amazonia revolves around the fruits of the landscape, the culture of its inhabitants and the cities. “Indeed, as a result of his voyages to the north of Brazil and his studies of the primitive, Andrade came to the conclusion that, due to their social integration and their superior accomplishment relative to their social environment and level of technology, primitive peoples were more cultured than their civilized counterparts” (Schelling 121). Different from Euclides who neglects to describe the cities of the Amazon, Mário sees regional urban landscapes and their peoples as Brazilian.

While in Belém, Mário passes through markets, meets with local politicians, and remarks on the beautiful mangroves that line the city, creating what he deems a tropical Cairo. On one of his walks he details a woman he comes across:

Sentada no chão, era uma blusa branca branca numa preta preta que
levantando pra nós os dentes os olhos e as angelicas da trunfa, tudo
branco, oferecia com o braço estendido preto uma cuia envernizada preta

donde saía a fumaça branquinha do munguzá branco branco...Tenho gozado por demais. Belém foi feita pra mim e caibo nela que nem mão dentro de luva. (67)

A woman, seated on the ground (a marker of her lower social class), looks up towards Mário and his party with “angelic” eyes and teeth, extending out a gourd with food (presumably to sell). While the woman offers food to be consumed, Mário instead consumes with his gaze. The gaze of the woman, in contrast to Figure 3.3, is up at Mário rather than down. However, the gaze is described as angelic, again creating a spiritual element, and balancing the power scale. Furthermore, this is not the usual consumption of the black female body by the lighter skinned heterosexual male, the gaze is exchanged both ways and the entire scene is more of an apparition that gives Mário a sense of spiritual well-being, contradicting the subordinate position the woman occupies on the ground looking up. His repetition of black black (preto, preto) against white white (branco, branco) places emphasis on the colors that make up the Amazonian and Brazilian landscape as a study in contrasts. In this momentary exchange, Mário prostrates his “civilized” self before the purity of beauty that he communicates through repetition. Mário concludes his remarks on this interaction by stating that Belem suits him perfectly, perhaps because of these contrasts. It is in between contrasts, the grey area of identity and cultural production that Mário situates the Brazilian periphery. This in turn highlights aspects of culture that were previously deemed undesirable. Mário’s trip in the Brazilian interior highlights individual peoples and their unique identities. Whether it be a pineapple in Christ’s last supper, typically Brazilian flowers, or the angelic gaze of a

black woman offering food, Mário portrays the Amazon as an area more “Brazilian” than the cities of the South, and a study of appealing contrasts.

Conclusion

Both Mário and Euclides write the Amazon for similar purposes – to differentiate and distinguish Brazil as a superior nation. However, they go about this in strikingly different ways. Euclides uses an explicitly internally imperial agenda for dominating and using Amazonian resources to develop Brazil into an imperial power. He focuses on male backland characters who can work hard to develop the backwards land. Euclides’ idea of imperialism is somewhat at odds with his depictions of an impenetrable landscape that rejects modernization. Mário, also working towards a collective idea of Brazil, concentrates on the ways in which the Amazon connects to known cultural production, while conceptualizing the space as unique because of its socio-culturally diverse inhabitants. Mário challenges ideas of racial degeneracy in peripheral areas by conceptualizing people and land as mythic and vital to a uniquely Brazilian experience. Through an attempt at engagement with local culture, Mário sought to highlight the individual and create a complex quilt of the Brazilian nation.

Ultimately, both Mário and Euclides see the Amazon as a hesitant utopia on which to establish and differentiate a national identity. Euclides’ concentration on the landscape of the Amazon versus Mário’s focus on its peoples demonstrate two different yet similar preoccupations. The question is how to fully incorporate the region into a national identity that in Euclides’ case is marked by territorial borders and internal

migration, and in Mário's case patches together a nation of different racial makeups and identities. Underlying these projects is an anxiety about both the landscape of the Amazon and its inhabitants. Euclides' encouragement of migration and settlement to lead to the development of the Amazon is used as a justification of Brazil's claim to territory (Hecht 2013). At least partially due to Euclides' previous journey, the Amazon borders are marked as a solidified part of the Brazilian nation by the time of Mário's trip. Euclides demarcates Brazilian borders while Mário creates cultural patrimony. Mário's position then is somewhat different, as rather than justifying Amazonian land as part of Brazil, he tasks himself with representing Amazonians as Brazilian.

Chapter Four: The Geopolitics of Plants: Posthumanism and *El abrazo de la serpiente*

Bursting forth out of black and white, light emerges from a young man's eyes and mouth, drowning the screen in white. His large stone necklace fades as the scene shifts from human face to an otherworldly nature. Images of the starry cosmos pan in and out while swirling multi-colored shapes against a black backdrop slowly move forward. The colors are particularly bright, their vibrancy shattering the previous two hours of grey Amazonia. However brief, the viewer is transported into the cosmos, or perhaps to another dimension. The universe opens up through a gatekeeper, Karakamate, whom we see as both a young and an old man, and whom we learn is the last of his fictionalized tribe, the Coahuiano. He guides two semi-fictionalized western explorers through the jungle in pursuit of the mystical *yakruna* plant during the first rubber boom and later WWII era secondary boom, two periods of heightened economic importance of the Amazon rainforest. As the travelers move through the Amazon jungle, the viewer is prompted to question western structures of narrative, nature, and culture.

Colombian director Ciro Guerra's 2015 epic film *El abrazo de la serpiente* uses two outsiders as a point of entry to the Amazon. The first explorer, German Theo Van Martius travels in 1909, during the height of the rubber boom, and attempts to enlist a young Karamakate to help him find the *yakruna*, the only cure to the disease Theo has contracted while going down the river. Karamakate travels for a while with Theo, who is

already familiar with Amazonian territory, and has been writing diaries and taking pictures to document plant life in the region. Theo also travels with a formerly enslaved Indian named Manduca, who provides some points of conflict with Karakamate. The film flickers back and forth between Karakamate's interactions with Theo and into the "present day" of the film based in 1940 with the American Evan, who has come to the Amazon also in search of *yakruna* (along with disease-free rubber trees) to aid the American war effort. The *yakruna* drives the plot, and it is through Karakamate's association with the plant that he gains importance for the explorers.

Using two prominent Amazonian explorers to frame and inform the film, *El abrazo de la serpiente* rewrites the traditionally linear travel narrative (as examined by Pratt 1992; Driver 2001; Hecht 2013) and creates a fictionalized alternate Amazon. The characters in the film are connected in their search for the *yakruna* plant, a mystical cure-all that both explorers seek and of which Karakamate, as a shaman, has advanced knowledge. The *yakruna* is what induces the aforementioned other-worldly trip and what propels the travelers throughout the film. By following the *yakruna*, the travel narrative's chronological form is stripped, and instead cycles back and forth between times, resisting a western, humanist order. Past, present, and future blend in a synchronous contact zone. The Amazon of this film is portrayed as apparently distanced from national territorial interests, but not separate from the economic interest of foreigners. The Amazon region, in *El abrazo de la serpiente*, is between or without national borders, and for Karakamate, its key inhabitant, nature and culture interact in a symbiotic and evolving relationship. The region also serves as a repository from which to mine plants for a variety of uses.

Within this space, what unites the three main characters, Karakamate, Evan, and Theo, is a desire for knowledge and discovery – of both the self and other. The production and preservation of this knowledge is central to the film and more broadly central to representations of the Amazon.

In this chapter I focus on the geopolitics of plants as part of a posthuman approach in the analysis of representations of indigenous peoples, land, and exploration in the Amazon. Geopolitics is the study of the effects of geography on politics and international relations, while the geopolitics of plants focuses on the specific role of plants in global power dynamics. As Londa Schiebinger describes in *Plants and Empire*, plants play an important and often unrecognized role in the production of culture and the project of empire. Schiebinger explains the importance of botanists and collectors in the circulation and production of knowledge, noting how these knowledges were passed on from indigenous peoples. Yet these collectors implanted “their own peculiar grid of reason over nature so that nomenclatures and taxonomies...also served as ‘tools of empire’” (11). The collection of plants and the circulation of information is also considered by Mirzoeff in *The Right to Look*. Mirzoeff traces the history of racialized visibility in plantation systems of surveillance and control. He explains how culture and cultivation were intertwined on French colonies in the Caribbean, and how these systems of cultivation became codified and globalized (52). Furthermore, he examines how the plantation system brutalized the environment quickly due to soil depletion and deforestation. This is another example of the role of plants in the creation of empire and the systemization of racialized control. The demand for a particular cash crop developed

systems of slavery, organization and control, all based on the subjugation of peoples and landscape. Thus, plants serve as a point of analysis from which to understand the relationship between empire and knowledge production as well as nature and culture.

The abundance of the Amazon region has continually been considered as a repository of plants and as such, wealth. The movement and circulation of plants, particularly in the Amazon basin, has been an impetus to development and migration in and to the region (Weinstein 1983; Maligo 1998; Diacon 2004; Hecht 2013; Garfield 2013). The international demand for rubber at the turn of the 20th century and later during WWII impacted the region with internal and external migrations and the decimation of peoples and cultures, all while fueling wartime demands. In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, characters have purpose through their relationship with plants, and the indigenous actor has equal billing because of his plant-based knowledge. The two explorers are interested in collecting and circulating information about plants, while throughout the film rubber fuels a backdrop of violence. In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, I consider the use of plants as a narrative tool in a posthuman analysis. I began this chapter with the end of the film to open up a discussion of posthumanism – the interrogation of the western dichotomy between nature and culture. Some posthumanists argue that this separation is part of the project of colonialism, and that thinking in dichotomous terms continues to perpetuate a western discourse built on the subjugation of the other. Within a posthumanist frame I am interested in the role that plants play in creating a new approach to representing the Amazon as seen in *El abrazo de la serpiente*, leading toward the question of how to represent the other.

Production on *El abrazo de la serpiente* took place in the Colombian Amazon where Ciro Guerra consulted with local tribes and cast several indigenous actors to play central roles. Young Karakamate was played by Níbio Torres, from the Cubeo tribe, and Antonio Bolívar, from the Ocaina tribe, was cast as old Karakamate. The tone of the movie is dark and somber, the dialogue is limited, and where it exists is presented in indigenous languages with the occasional Portuguese or Spanish expression. Overall, it is an art-house film: black and white, with subtitles, reaching an international but specialized audience. The film received many accolades including an Academy Award nomination for best foreign film in 2016 (the first ever Colombian film nomination). It has elicited frequent comparisons to Amazonian travel films such as Werner Herzog's *Aguirre, Wrath of God* and *Fitzcarraldo*, or narratives that explicitly decry abuse or focus on the rubber boom era atrocities such as *La vorágine* (Guerra 2016; Kearney 2016; Páramo 2016; Rueda 2017). Yet, *El abrazo de la serpiente* has a sustained and explicit focus on an (imagined) indigenous perspective. In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, Karakamate is skeptical, critical, and discerning about the imperial project. However, Karakamate's persona in the film appears as dependent on his interactions with the two explorers that bookend his life in youth and maturity. The film begins and ends with the first and final encounters with western explorers, constructing Karakamate always in relation to these outsiders. He ultimately never fully exists on his own terms, serving instead as a point of contrast to western civilization.

Plants and Posthumanism

The signification of nature has changed throughout human history. The western idea of nature is based around a false ideal of a wilderness, as discussed in Chapter Two, that often ignores the people who find their home in forest areas (Seeland 1997). This wilderness becomes an area that those from the colonial center seek out of nostalgia, a longing for inspiration, or as an escape from encroaching modernity. At the same time, the other connotation of wilderness is that of a wasteland, a no-man's land or a place of general disfavor (as discussed in Chapter Three). Fundamentally, the jungle is used as a contrast to civilization and demonstrates man's lack of control when confronted with the unknown. These definitions and the division between nature and culture in western epistemologies have been used as a political tool to justify domination of the other.

Modern man (and only man) can enter nature for adventure, solace, or resources, but in turn tends to find rejection, violence, and unexpected difficulties. As William Cronon describes, the wilderness is conceived of as a frontier space hinging on nostalgia for a lost era that never really existed: "Seen as the frontier, it is a savage world at the dawn of civilization, whose transformation represents the very beginning of the national historical epic. Seen as the bold landscape of frontier heroism, it is the place of youth and childhood, into which men escape by abandoning their pasts and entering a world of freedom where the constraints of civilization fade into memory" (Cronon 80). In a frontier space, men can first become "free" of the rules or laws of civilization and then heroes by facing or encountering primitive remains of a left-behind era. The Amazon as a

frontier can be seen in foundational fictions such as José Eustasio Rivera's *La vorágine*¹⁸ that describes the journey of Arturo Cova into the vortex of the jungle where he witnesses abuse and torture perpetrated in the extraction of rubber in the Colombian Amazon. Cova goes to the Amazon to avoid the demands and laws of the city, and also in pursuit of his lover, Alicia. However, in the jungle, they are literally swallowed up by an overwhelmingly powerful nature. In this case, the Amazon as a frontier appears to offer a potential escape, yet the jungle ultimately emerges triumphant. Representations of the Amazon as a frontier are multifaceted; containing at once the rhetoric of a "green hell" that can swallow up civilization, and of "earthly Edens" that offer respite and escape (Slater).

As a way to interpret nature and "wilderness," posthumanism seeks to blur supposedly static boundaries between the human and non, opening up a dynamism between nature and culture. Pramod Nayar, in *Posthumanism* (2014), explains that there are two strains of posthumanism, the "popular" where humans can be improved upon through technology, and the "critical" that rejects anthropocentric views and "calls attention to the ways in which the machine and the organic body and the human and other life forms are now more or less seamlessly articulated, mutually dependent and co-evolving" (12). Humanism centers the white European male, while other categories including ethnic groups, women, animals, and the environment are categorized as sub-human in order to establish domination or deny rights (Nayar 12). For the purposes of

¹⁸ *La vorágine*, along with other foundational fictions such as Euclides da Cunha's *Os sertões*, Juan León Mera's *Cumandá* and Rómulo Gallego's *Doña Bárbara*, to name a few, use wilderness as territory to be conquered.

this chapter I focus on a “critical” posthumanism that interrogates western epistemologies and reconfigures oppressive categorizations. In using a posthuman approach to read this film, I reflect on the extent to which it pushes the limits of possibility and begins a discussion of non-dichotomous or linear trajectories, as well as its considerable limits and shortcomings.

A critique of the nature/culture dichotomy and its role in modernity and development first requires a critique of western epistemologies. Posthumanism as a theoretical approach follows an already established method of indigenous decolonial theorizing. Posthuman studies have recently come into theoretical and academic prominence, yet the practice of interrogating western systems of knowledge and research has been a part of indigenous methodologies for decades. Scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Marisol De la Cadena, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and others have been analyzing the nature/culture divide and the importance of indigenous research methodologies for decolonizing western epistemologies. Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonial Methodologies* (1999) argues for a decentering of western research methods and a more nuanced idea of the very definition of human. She sets out a decolonizing framework for indigenous studies by first defining imperialism as the economic expansion and the subjugation of others and explains how it has been embedded in western ideals of organization and order, or systems of classification that make up the pillars of western knowledge (10). She explains how in pitting nature against culture in different categories, humanity is put on a higher plane (47). Since colonized peoples were defined as less than human, they are

“compelled to define what it means to be human” (26). This definition, through necessity and resistance, differs and separates from humanistic categorizations. Thus, because of imperial processes that separated and subjugated based in part on these categorizations, a decolonial methodology requires thinking outside of a western framework and re-examining taken-for-granted separations. This in turn is meant to open space for alternative voices and approaches to research that give equal billing to both nature and culture and historically underrepresented peoples.

Such an approach is evident in Silvia Rivera Rivera Cusicanqui’s book *Las fronteras de la coca: epistemologías coloniales y circuitos alternativos de la coca: el caso de la frontera boliviano-Argentina* (2003), which focuses on plant frontiers and indigenous cosmologies in the production of coca. She outlines the surveillance and violence of the state’s internal colonialisms for regulating the growth and sale of coca leaves. This internal colonialism is based on feeding a demand from the global North that has turned coca leaves from part of a sacred ritual into a satanic drug (162). She contributes a multi-faceted research approach that uses ethnography with coca workers and archival research, as well as documentary film making, all in the hopes of bringing to light the violence created in the appropriation and vilification of the coca leaf. This study is important as a decolonial methodology for recognizing the violence and globalized forces at work in the production, sale, and representation of plants. Rivera Cusicanqui’s argument demonstrates the global reverberations of western demands on localized cultures. Further elaborating on decolonial methodologies, in her article “Ch’ixinakax

utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization,” Rivera Cusicanqui takes theorists located in the global North such as Walter Mignolo to task for the dilution of ideas originally formulated by indigenous communities, and using them within academic arenas of exclusion under the guise of inclusivity. “Through the game of who cites whom, hierarchies are structured, and we end up having to consume, in a regurgitated form, the very ideas regarding decolonization that we indigenous people and intellectuals of Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador have produced independently” (103). This valid critique of Mignolo’s take on decoloniality again begs the question of the generation and circulation of knowledge. Rivera Cusicanqui notes that “the possibility of a profound cultural reform in our society depends on the decolonization of our gestures and acts and the language with which we name the world” (105). True decolonial thinking would necessitate speaking the world differently. Part of this process is renaming and reconfiguring current streams of knowledge that flow from South to North (100).

One way of speaking the world differently is through engagement with decolonial practices such as the pluriverse. Marisol De la Cadena in “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics’” interrogates the nature-culture divide by looking at current indigenous social movements and elaborates on the emergence of the pluriverse as a political tool. This plural political engagement uses indigenous epistemologies to understand nonhumans as actors in the political arena – including animals, plants, and the landscape (341). She deems these relationships “earth-

practices” that do not fit the “dominant ontological distinction” (341). Opening up the political sphere to incorporate alternative vocabularies would give space to indigenous peoples rather than “the leftist politicians [who] impose conditions to accept Indians (e.g., to articulate their demands with the vocabulary of gender, ethnic, economic, territorial, or environmental struggle)” (349). For example, De la Cadena explains a Peruvian protest about a potential mining project in the Ausangate mountain, outside of Cusco. Beyond viewing the mine as environmentally destructive, indigenous protesters were wary of the destruction the mountain itself would cause as a reaction to human intervention at a sacred site. Articulating the sentience of nature and its importance within an established system of laws that does not use the same vocabulary or understand the world in the same way demonstrates the importance of opening up a dialogue across different vocabularies.

De la Cadena uses an “Amazonian perspectivism” to theorize the pluriverse, drawing on the work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Viveiros de Castro examines “Amazonian perspectivism” precisely to put forth an indigenous world view that does not create a dualism between nature and culture. Within Amazonian ontologies, perspectivism explains how different beings “see,” that is to say, how human/animal/spirit all perceive each other as different things (470). “In sum: European ethnocentrism consisted in doubting whether other bodies have the same souls as they themselves; Amerindian ethnocentrism in doubting whether other souls had the same bodies” (479). In the Amerindian ethnocentrism he describes, human, animal, or spirit can be seen to have a soul, creating less of a categorical distinction based on the human body. An Amazonian perspectivism thus privileges all beings (plant, animal, human) as

potentially soul-bearing bodies. This opens up a possibility of environmental equity where land can be considered a being of equal status.

In line with Rivera Cusicanqui's critique of Mignolo's recycling of decolonial thinking from the place of western academia, I agree that much posthumanistic inquiry does not engage existing and relevant theoretical production on decoloniality that has emerged from indigenous thinkers (Sundberg 2014). A decolonial posthuman approach would mean further collaboration with indigenous populations and engagement with alternative ways of thinking, writing, and being in the world. One such example is Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington's collaborative study of practices of indigenous knowledge (IK) through hunting practices in Alaska. Watson partnered with Huntington, an indigenous man, and the way they write demonstrates an example of collaboration where both voices speak. In this study, they define "becoming" within posthumanism, where they equate "becoming with performing an identity, the identity of being a temporal phenomenon" (265). This grounds posthumanism in an alternative temporality, again moving beyond a western idea of time and place. The type of collaborative effort of Watson and Huntington is a topic that Joanne Rappoport explores in "The Challenges of Indigenous Research." She cites several Latin American indigenous researchers whose work is grounded in grassroots activism. In so doing, she presents the idea of *interculturalidad*, or how indigenous movements have selected specific cross-cultural concepts "in the interest of building a pluralistic dialogue among equals" to create a more equitable society (9). Rappoport considers initiatives that bring

together indigenous activists and the academy to work on alternative research strategies. These projects use *interculturalidad* as both a goal and a tool, incorporating ideas from academia and indigenous cosmovisions to create horizontal conversations and political change.

Posthumanism seeks to open up the nature/culture dichotomy by decentering humanist tendencies. However, as Juanita Sundberg points out, this dichotomy is often taken as universal when in fact many societies do not separate nature and culture. Furthermore, these distinctions are often used to further separate “us” and “them,” or a modern “us” and a primitive “them” (38). To move posthumanism toward a decolonial methodology, she suggests using ideas of “walking the world into being” put forward by the Zapatistas, where “the journey is the destination, and the world is brought into being through everyday praxis” (40). *El abrazo de la serpiente* is a journey story, where there is no particular destination beyond increased enlightenment. In some ways, *El abrazo de la serpiente* marks a representational shift where western chronology is reworked and plants and indigenous peoples are given equal billing with the white explorers, and certainly there is at the very least a questioning of the rhetoric of modernity and imperialism. However, the framing of the story around imperial tropes, and the vehicle of an international film almost explicitly for export written and directed by an outsider in the Amazon does not present a decolonial alternative.

Within posthumanism, plants can serve as a way to begin to interrogate the nature-culture divide. Rather than focusing on the geopolitics of plants, Patricia Vieira

examines literary representation of plants as an entry-point for understanding how humans interact with the non-human world. Vieira puts forward phytophilia, or the idea of plant writing, where representations of plants serve to mediate plants' role in human life. Phytophilia describes the encounter between nature and culture or plants as seen through a human representation, or "the coming together of the wordless, physically inscribed language of plants with an aesthetically mediated form of human language in literature" (223). Drawing on the notion of phytophilia, we can understand *El abrazo de la serpiente* as a meditation on the role of plants in creating contact between different cultures. The *yakruna* facilitates interaction of western and indigenous cultures, while rubber creates a violent backdrop within the contact zone represented in the film. Plants play a central role throughout *El abrazo de la serpiente*, as the *yakruna* moves the story forward and the international thirst for rubber looms in the background, only sometimes rearing its ugly head. A posthuman approach toward *El abrazo de la serpiente* enables a reading of the film as having plants as its protagonists. This can open the possibility of new perspectives, while still succumbing to limitations.

Throughout *El abrazo de la serpiente*, the fictional Karakamate seems to stand in for all indigenous peoples, while also speaking for the Amazon forest itself, as an emissary of insider knowledge about the land. This begs the question of how nature and underrepresented peoples should be represented. In many ways Karakamate occupies a space between dichotomies, as he is critical and skeptical of the westerners and others he encounters, while still taking the time to recognize their humanity and interact. However,

he is tasked with speaking as a stand-in for all native peoples and the land. *El abrazo de la serpiente* is one of the few contemporary representations with relative commercial (and abundant critical) success where an indigenous character even has a name, let alone a full story and equal billing. At the same time, how can stories that center an indigenous character avoid tasking the subaltern with demonstrating their value through ties with westerners' thirst for knowledge or a potential product? Perhaps more than anything, the film as neither a self-representation nor a collaborative directorial project chronicles an inevitable failure in this regard.

Theodore Koch-Grunberg, Richard Evans Schultes, and a Plant-based Cosmivision

Ciro Guerra drew inspiration for *El abrazo de la serpiente* from two Amazonian explorers who worked in different periods and capacities to expand western plant-based knowledge of the rainforest. Knowing that he wanted to shoot a film in the Amazon, Guerra consulted with an anthropologist friend who suggested he look at travel narratives for inspiration (Llano 2016). In so doing, Guerra landed on Theodore Koch-Grunberg and Richard Evan Schultes, who according to him demonstrated the most humane approach to the jungle and indigenous peoples. Koch-Grunberg was a German ethnologist and explorer who died in the Amazon in 1924 and spent years documenting indigenous peoples of the region. Koch-Grunberg particularly focuses on the healing power of plants in his various narratives. Schultes was an American botanist who came to the Colombian Amazon looking for different varieties of *hevea* (rubber) to experiment with new crops as the Malaysian rubber market was controlled by the Japanese army during WWII.

Schultes, in particular in his later publications, argues for working with traditional populations who can guide westerners in their use of remedies and plants in the forest (Schultes 179). He also is notably credited with introducing LSD to the West.

Guerra explains how he chose to fictionalize the explorers in order to have creative freedom:

Es ficción, pero los eventos están inspirados en hechos reales. Los personajes de Koch-Grunberg y Schultes tampoco son ellos exactamente; están inspirados en ellos pero son una construcción que parte también de otros antropólogos. Es una obra de ficción...A través de la ficción uno crea para poder hablar. No es un documental, es una historia inspirada en eventos y también un modo de acercar a quien no entiende de esto. (Llano 1)

In using creative license and taking bits and pieces of travel diaries and photographs, Guerra is able to reject a fact-based approach. Guerra uses these diaries as a point of reference, as outsider informants about indigenous cultures that in many cases no longer exist. Together with these diaries he employed the local men cast as Karakamate to shape the indigenous languages and their portrayal in the film. In fictionalizing these characters, Guerra is divesting authority from the imperial project by envoicing them differently. However, Guerra is a white, middle class film maker, part of the social group that continues to wield power in the neo-empire.

The film plays with a layering of information and informants, using photography as evidence and recorded “truth.” With exploration and travel narratives of the Amazon

basin at the turn of the 20th century, the local informant is often used without being fully characterized. They become disembodied voices whose knowledge the westerner exploits.¹⁹ Theodore Koch-Grunberg's travel diaries were a source of information and inspiration for a wide range of intellectuals and authors, namely Mário de Andrade who used Koch-Grunberg's *Vom Roraima zum Orinoco* as a primary source of information for *Macunaíma* – a founding fiction of the Brazilian nation inspired by Mário's ethnographic work in the Amazon and Northeast. As Kimberle López notes about the use of informants in creating Koch-Grunberg's diaries, he begins to refer to his indigenous informants as “my Indians,” adopting a patriarchal standpoint that recreates an imperial dynamic. He begins his narratives by decrying western influence on Amazonia and questioning the presence of white men in the region. However, he goes on to treat “his informants neither as equals nor as employees, but rather as children whom he reserves the right to punish. He accuses them of indolence and disobedience, and even threatens them on one occasion with retribution for their unwillingness to act as docile informants” (López 31). As *El abrazo de la serpiente* rewrites it, Theo's informants, namely Manduca and the indigenous tribe he meets down river, are shown as equals and friends (despite Karakamate's discerning and skeptical eye that detects Manduca's servile relationship to Theo, where his very freedom is therefore a debt he owes to the explorer). Guerra's fictionalizing of Koch-Grunberg perhaps misses or only hints at some of the key problematics of imperial exploration.

¹⁹ For more on the ethical debates around informants in anthropology and the imperial baggage of the term see Medina 2004; Metcalf 2002; Rosaldo 1993; Tobin and Hayashi 2017; Weingrod 2004.

Richard Evans Schultes centers many of his later publications on the importance of indigenous informants. He argues for conservation of indigenous land and peoples because of the latter's knowledge of the different medicinal properties of local flora and fauna. "It behooves scientists who are interested in biological diversity to seek out the knowledge of local natives and country people who live and work with their flora. In many instances, this valuable knowledge will not long be available; for it will soon disappear with westernization. It is for this reason that ethnobotanical conservation is so urgently significant as a vital link in the conservation of biological diversity" (205). It is for their knowledge of the forest that indigenous peoples are valuable. Conservation of knowledge itself is imperative, yet not necessarily the bodies of the bearers of this knowledge. This is emblematic of the relationship that Evan and Karkamate have in the film – Karkamate's value to Evan is his knowledge of plants, his lack of westernization. This moves a step out from Koch-Grunberg's paternalistic standpoint while still arguing value of human life on plant-based knowledge. This also offers an important point to which the film nods: the westernization of knowledge of the Amazon and the rapid disappearance of indigenous worldviews.

In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, Koch-Grunberg and Schultes are Guerra's informants that he then uses to translate to a wider audience, much as the explorers did in their initial writings. As Watson and Huntington explain, in a posthuman research methodology, informants take on increased importance. "Throughout their histories, natural and social sciences have relied upon the local knowledges of informants—they became assembled in the making of knowledge. Representing multiple perspectives

within the assemblage is one way toward a post-humanist politics—and one not often reflected by other depictions of human – nonhuman assemblages” (Watson and Huntington 276). Giving voice to local informants through actually having their voices heard works toward upsetting the western order. However, as Rosaldo points out, even the most well intentioned, linguistically competent and trained ethnographer (which Guerra is not), is an outsider representing the other, and as such their analysis is never complete. “All interpretations are provisional; they are made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others” (8). Coming in with a certain set of expectations, based on old daguerreotype images, Guerra is prepared to see a singular side of the Amazon and create a particular work of art and commercial product. The dreamlike quality of the film and the blending of fact and fiction create an illusion rather than a reality. Guerra seems to seek to open up the space of imperial conquest to competing visions, languages, and sounds and in the process, relativizes the notion of western scientific truths.

This alternate reality Amazon is further grounded in Ciro Guerra’s use of two indigenous based concepts to guide the film, the *chullachaqui* and the *yakruna*. The *chullachaqui* is an actual Amazonian myth, however Guerra changes its meaning in the film. According to Juan Carlos Galeano in *Folktales of the Amazon*, a *chullachaqui* is generally thought of as a short, ugly man who uses trickery to lure people deep into the forest where they lose their way. He seeks out people who have disrespected the forest in some manner and is seen as a protector of the animals and trees. In *El abrazo de la serpiente*, the *chullachaqui* is a reflection of an actual person and Karakamate worries

that he has become one, a soulless spirit wandering the forest rather than an actual human with tangible memories. Another central term in the film is the *yakruna*. The *yakruna* is a fictional plant that serves as a metaphorical stand-in for the Edenic hope of plants in the Amazon. The *yakruna* is sacred to Karakamate's fictionalized tribe and Karakamate is essentially the gatekeeper to the plant. It has medicinal and hallucinogenic properties and grows as a flower that resembles an orchid. Guerra is recasting indigenous knowledge for the purposes of the film, so this knowledge is rearticulated through his own worldview and the artistic demands of the film itself. This in-between Amazon demonstrates some posthuman aspects that push the boundaries of nature and culture. The *chullachaqui* wavers between human and spirit, while the *yakruna* is part of a wider ecosystem of knowledge, mysticism, and a plant-centered narrative. The *chullachaqui* is thus between being and non-being and the *yakruna* between knowledge and mysticism, occupying liminal spaces that confound the dichotomies of traditional western knowledge production.

Karakamate's initial encounters with both Theo and Evan demonstrate why the explorers seek him, and how he is able to wield his power over the two, upsetting a narrative of immediate western dominance. The first shot of *El abrazo de la serpiente* opens on a young Karakamate staring at his reflection in the Amazon river water. He hears something in the wind, stands alert, at attention, as a canoe comes slowly toward him. Aboard is an indigenous man in western clothing who asks what languages Karakamate speaks. The paddler introduces himself as Manduca and asks if Karakamate is a shaman, a healer of the world. He presents Theodore Van Martius, saying that

Karakamate is the only hope of curing the man, and that they have traveled far and wide consulting with other shamans who have recommended him. Theo also tells Karakamate that he has seen members of his tribe, the Cohuiano, downriver and will lead Karakamate to them if he agrees to help. Theo's life is placed in Karakamate's hands, shifting power to his plant-based expertise. Throughout the film there is not much interaction between Karakamate and other non-westernized indigenous peoples, indeed he seems to be the last hold out against western encroachment, thus embodying a "final frontier" in the film. Karakamate initially refuses to help the explorers, saying that both Manduca and Theo killed the last of his people. This shows a depth of character to Karakamate who is angry and vocal about the ravages of colonialism the western world has wrought on his home. Despite this anger, he is willing to listen and dialogue with Manduca and Theo. After their initial pleas, Karakamate walks away as the camera follows to his solitary life. He lives in a large, open hut with a palm frond roof and markings on the sides. Karakamate is shown preparing his meal, sitting, watching the forest as night falls. Karakamate makes an entrance as a solitary, complex character, both flawed and otherworldly, and also constantly changing.

The next day Karakamate returns to Theo and Manduca and agrees to help them based on a set of conditions. These conditions include asking permission to each animal they eat, not cutting down any trees, and if they encounter a woman, waiting until the moon cycle changes for intercourse. With this arrangement, Karakamate agrees to help the ailing Theo find the only plant that has a hope of curing him, the illusive *yakruna*. Karakamate uses instinct, experience, intuition and dreams to lead the explorers. In

setting the terms of their agreement Karakamate demonstrates control. He asserts his language, and his rules, while also having something to gain for himself. His rules reflect a worldview that is characterized by interaction with the environment. The travelers can only move forward if they move in agreement with the larger ecosystem. As Viveiros de Castro notes on an Amazonian perspective, there is a malleability between human, animal, and spirit within Amazonian ontologies (471). This ontology is cosmocentric and based in nature where “relations between society and nature are themselves natural” and “human society is one natural phenomenon amongst others” (473). Karakamate’s set of conditions demonstrates a reciprocal relationship between the environment and the ways in which they as humans interact with it. The travelers will be able to move forward if they respect and pay attention to the world around them, asking permission to move carefully through the environment.

As the film moves forward to the 1940s, we see another complex manifestation of a human/nature interaction. In the next scene, the camera focuses on a snake in the water, writhing its body toward a small cove where we see large rocks covered in carvings (10:40). The music is ominous as the camera slowly pans out revealing more carvings on the rock side. The snake reaches the shore, and we see old Karakamate carving until he suddenly drops his tool, gazing up the river towards Evan who enters the scene paddling a canoe. Evan holds up a book with young Karakamate on the cover – written by Theo Van Martius, the protagonist from the 1909 part of the story. He explains that he is following Theo’s tracks to find the plants that he wrote about 30 years before. Evan has come to verify if the writings are true, stating that he has “devoted his life to plants.”

Karakamate responds with “That’s the most reasonable thing I’ve ever heard a white say” (11:55). The plant Evan seeks, of course, is the *yakruna*. Karakamate agrees to help Evan find the *yakruna* although he says he has forgotten how, but believes that Evan will lead him there. Their relationship is based on a curiosity and interest in the plant world. However, the two men have entirely different motivations. Evan wants to monetize and extract the *yakruna*, while also searching for rubber that could be used in the war effort. Karakamate, conversely, wants to remember and rekindle his relationship with the environment through the *yakruna*.

Before they leave, Evan photographs the rock surface that Karakamate has been writing on and questions the meaning of the inscriptions. Karakamate explains that he is empty, with no memory, but that the rocks used to speak to him, and in an attempt to regain some memory he continues to draw on them. In this sense, Karakamate is performing an interactive phytographia through inscribing the land around him with his voice. This lack of memory and overall confusion makes him a *chullachaqui*. Karakamate produces and stores precious knowledge in his body and in nature itself through his inscriptions on the rock and the way he reads the river. As Schiebinger explains, plant based knowledge and potential cures moved up a food chain, so to speak, where Indians learned from observing animals interact with plants, the Spanish learned from Indians, and then that knowledge was transferred to the rest of Europe (74). This was used to demonstrate the supposedly natural link between indigenous peoples, animals and plants – subjects that could serve as potential sources of knowledge when it came to forms of life that were considered “less perfect than animals and humans” (Gagliano ix).

The search for the mystical *yakruna* makes the land, trip, and relationship with Karakamate productive for both Theo and Evan. However, Karakamate also stands to gain from this relationship by being led back to his people or regaining some memory. Stam and Shohat link initial New World colonization with production and present-day marketability. “Just as European colonizers saw indigenous land as ‘empty’ because it had not been made ‘productive’ of commodities – even though it had successfully nourished native peoples for millennia – transnational corporations do not recognize indigenous peoples’ title to biodiversity unless it has been turned into a marketable product” (Stam and Shohat 10). Evan seeks the *yakruna* and strains of rubber trees to take back to America during the war effort. The *yakruna* is the product within the film, while the film itself is the product that is marketed. While capitalism and modernity place little value on the animal and environmental world unless it can be rendered economically productive, the *yakruna* resists becoming a commodity since Karakamate, as its keeper, destroys it rather than seeing it turned into a “marketable product.” This marketability carries a long precedent of the rhetoric of modernity where supposedly civilized cultures must tame “barbaric customs” and “a wild and unruly nature” to modernize (Vieira 217). In creating a product, wild nature is tamed, put to productive use, and employed in a western march toward progress.

Karakamate is understandably and immediately skeptical of both Theo and Evan. He begins to let his guard down when Evan explains how he is only interested in gathering knowledge about plants. Karakamate is concerned about recuperating and maintaining his language, memory, and heritage. As the last of his tribe he has the

responsibility or burden of writing on a wall, creating symbols that fascinate both explorers. He creates knowledge in relation to the environment, where the environment is intertwined with his memory and actions. The texts that Karakamate writes are thus inscribed within nature, creating a type of pluriverse. However, he is still shrouded in mysticism, otherworldly, something that is amplified by the black and white filming and sudden hallucinogenic break into color through the eyes and face of Karakamate at the end of the film. Here discovery is both the idea of self-discovery for Karakamate who, as his older self, says he has lost his memory and sense of identity, along with the idea of discovery of new plants, drugs, and experiences by the white explorers. Ultimately, Karakamate's relationship with the yakruna mediates his relationship with the two outsiders.

Time, Knowledge, and Space

These first meetings initiate the overarching narrative of the malleability of time within the film. As Quijano explains, "The past runs through the present, in a manner distinct from the way it existed in the European imagination before modernity. It is not the nostalgia of a golden age, because of being, or having been, the continent of innocence. Among us, the past is or can be an experience of the present, not its nostalgia. It is not lost innocence, but integrated wisdom, the union of the tree of knowledge with the tree of life which the past defends within us against instrumental rationalism as the form of an alternative proposal of rationality" (158). The New World, upon initial "discovery" was viewed by Europeans and outsiders as inscribed with a utopic identity,

and presumed innocence. In reality, as Quijano argues in a Latin American context, because of the region's historical particularity, time is malleable. The film moves between times, with the past informing the present but never separated from it. A humanistic, western approach to time sees it as linear and straightforward, where knowledge grows as a practice in incremental learning. In a posthuman approach, time is cyclical and rather than being, the world is in a constant process of becoming.

El abrazo de la serpiente plays with these ideas of becoming through time, knowledge production, and how knowledge is stored. Thirty minutes into the film, Theo, Manduca and Karakamate encounter a tribe that Theo knows. After a happy night exchanging food and talking, Theo goes to leave only to realize his compass is missing. Theo confronts the chief and gets very angry, saying to Manduca that he cannot leave without his compass. Karakamate, watching this exchange, responds with "You are nothing but a white." Theo then explains, "Their orientation system is based on the winds and the position of the stars. If they learn how to use a compass, that knowledge will be lost." Karakamate responds with "You cannot prevent them from learning. Knowledge belongs to all men. But you can't understand that, because you're nothing but a white" (31:03). This brief scene opens up a discussion about preservation, knowledge, and paternalism. In attempting to "save" this tribe from the use of a compass and thus loss of their traditional knowledge, Theo is preventing an exchange of ideas. Young Karakamate argues that knowledge is for everyone and stopping the spread is futile. However, because of the proliferation of western knowledge about the jungle, he has lost his own memory in the 1940s era of the film. While gathering and preserving information,

explorers like Theodore Koch-Grunberg, through contact alone, are in some senses destroying how things were before. This is an instance of imperial nostalgia where the narrative of progress laments the loss of traditional societies while actively destroying them. As Rosaldo explains, “Mourning the passing of traditional society and imperialist nostalgia cannot neatly be separated from one another. Both attempt to use a mask of innocence to cover their involvement with processes of domination” (86). In this exchange Theo is not interested in a reciprocal exchange of ideas, rather he wants to preserve this tribes’ knowledge in an unrealistic time capsule.

The portrayal of space in the jungle of *El abrazo de la serpiente* takes on increased significance from a posthumanist perspective. As Theo, Karakamate, and Manduca continue to travel with each other, Theo and Karakamate seem to develop a trust and respect over time. This occurs in scenes where Karakamate eases Theo’s interactions with the environment. For example, Karakamate explains how a serpent and jaguar came to him in a dream and told him to help Theo. Every morning, he blows a plant based powder in Theo’s face to help him through his fever, because of what the jungle has told him. He also teaches Theo how to paddle with more proficiency by listening to the river. Instead of Theo’s disruptive, broad strokes, Karakamate encourages him to literally go with the flow. This is essentially the teaching of a posthuman knowledge, where Theo’s haplessness in the jungle, despite his interest in plants, stands in contrast to Karakamate’s understanding of the environment. Karakamate’s interpretation of his environment and the ways that he translates this for Theo show a different vision of space where land and environment are meant to be interacted with

rather than controlled²⁰. Karakamate offers an important stance against the colonization of space. Although the Amazon has become an area where enclaves of religious zealots and nationalist armies destroy and indigenous people are forced toward assimilation, he pushes the two western travelers to listen to the land, to understand their lack of control yet follow certain ideas in attempts to manage their fate together with an indomitable nature. Furthermore, in his control of the *yakruna* plant, he uses the local flora to fight against a system of capital exploitation.



Image 4.1: Young Karakamate as captured by Theo's camera (30:02).

Towards the beginning of their relationship, Theo takes a photograph of Karakamate that he then goes to develop in the river. The river water slowly reveals the above image, the natural world giving way to the representational. Theo tells Karakamate

²⁰ As Tuhiwai Smith explains, “For the indigenous world, Western conceptions of space, of arrangements and display, of the relationship between people and the landscape, of culture as an object of study, have meant that not only has the indigenous world been represented in particular ways back to the West, but the indigenous world view, the land and the people, have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the West. In other words, indigenous space has been colonized. Land, for example, was viewed as something to be tamed and brought under control” (51).

that he must take the photograph with him which Karakamate protests, as it is his likeness. However, as Karakamate explains to Theo, the image is not him, but rather his *chullachaqui*, an empty, hollow capsule of himself. Theo explains to Karakamate that the photograph is “A memory. A moment that has passed,” to which Karakamate responds, “A *chullachaqui* has no memories. It only drifts around in the world, empty, like a ghost, lost in time without time” (50:54). This explains Karakamate’s worldview of a *chullachaqui*, a captured, memory-less spirit. Within Amazonian perspectivism following Viveiros de Castro, where individual points of view are located within the body, (but that body could be plant, animal, or spirit), the concept of time is also mutable. Time, taken from a variety of perspectives, does not follow a positivist logic. In this sense, bodies are merely a vessel that the spirit performs through, where a *chullachaqui* could be the inner spirit escaping the body. This is a process, a becoming, and relates to the way the western explorers are portrayed in the film. Separated by 30 years, they seem to spiritually carry on in a similar manner, where their bodies are only their souls performed, their own *chullachaquis* exchanging bodies. Thus, not only does Karakamate embody an Amerindian cosmology, but the entire structure of the film puts forward this posthuman ethos. The image circles back around and serves as an introduction between Evan and an aged Karakamate when Evan holds up Theo’s published travel narrative that has this same picture on the cover. Western knowledge production, particularly in Karakamate’s perspective is extractive, where although the image is of himself, Theo has ownership of it, visually exemplifying a problematic power dynamic.

Biocontact Zones and Reading the Environment

The disparate power dynamics of a cultural contact zone carry over to the economy of plants. Schiebinger presents the idea of biocontact zones, as a place of contact “between European, Amerindian, and African naturalists in a context that highlights the exchange of plants and their cultural uses” (83). Throughout *El abrazo de la serpiente*, Karakamate’s interactions with other indigenous characters and the white explorers revolve around plants and their cultural usage, creating an Amazonian biocontact zone within the film. Karakamate’s identity is grounded in his solitary being, in contrast to other indigenous characters who have in some ways assimilated in religious missions or rubber plantations, and the white explorers with whom he engages. However, this being is only solitary in the western sense as he is in constant dialogue with the natural world around him. Hence when Karakamate witnesses human intrusions on the jungle or interacts with others, it stands out. In interactions with Manduca and with first a Spanish mission in the 1909 portion of the film, and later a Christian cult in the 1940s portion, Karakamate grapples with representations of culture and ideologies about power, domination, and assimilation. He attempts to fight back against these cultural enclaves, but more often than not is defeated. Instead, he is able to create change on a smaller scale through his relationships with Theo and Evan. The scenes in which Karakamate is confronted with these outside characters are emblematic of a conflicted and sometimes violent biocontact zone.

In the geopolitics of plants, rubber is an exemplar of the imperial project. Rubber created immeasurable wealth and conversely poverty, racialized violence and the ruination of peoples. In a scene 35 minutes into the film, we see Manduca, dressed in linen pants and a shirt, walk into the jungle where he encounters several makeshift crosses and trees that have been tapped for rubber. Accompanied by Theo, Manduca becomes angry and reacts to the marked trees, dumping out the rubber tap. As he does so a man, missing an arm, runs over to them with the three spilled buckets, extremely distraught and begging for help. He asks (in an indigenous language that Karakamate interprets) to be killed (38:16). On the forest floor and begging, Manduca runs over to the man with a rifle, saying that if he does not kill him the rubber barons will torture and murder him. Theo and Karakamate plead with Manduca not to kill the man and Manduca replies that “No one deserves this hell.” The man then takes the barrel of the gun and points it to his forehead. The depiction of the Amazon as a green hell, particularly poignant in this scene, is of course more of a reflection of what humans create in the jungle rather than the innate nature of the land itself. As Vieira notes, “Life in the forest is hellish due to the exploitative labor conditions that reduce workers, many of them migrants from other regions, to de-facto slaves, who give their lives for the enrichment of rubber lords” (227). The scene is gripping, horrific, palpable with violence and desperation. Manduca fires the rifle on the ground rather than at the man and begins to sob. The scene ends as Karakamate, Theo, and Manduca get back into their canoe, leaving behind the rubber tapper. As they continue down the river, they hear a shot and scream, as the fate of the tapper is decided. The shroud of the forest can perhaps enable

this type of violence to occur out of sight, yet rubber boom atrocities loom as a subtext throughout the film, demonstrating the violence of this biocontact zone.

In the next scene after these horrific events, Karakamate, in reaction to the shotgun and previous tension tells Theo that he will not continue on the voyage. He sits down and refuses to carry on as he says: “Whites can’t be trusted...Is this your knowledge? Shotguns? All your science only leads to this, violence, death” (39:19). Here Karakamate takes a stand against the violence of the rubber trade, linking science and thus the type of exploration that Theo is engaged in with violence and death. As Theo tries to reason with him, Manduca interjects and tells Karakamate to treat Theo with respect. In response, Karakamate, addressing Manduca says: “And you? Look at your clothes. The same as the white men. How could you let them culture you like this? You think like the white man, you think nothing. What side are you on? You’re a caboclo” (40:00). Karakamate chastises Manduca for his supposed conformity. For Manduca, acculturation means a loss of knowledge about plants, but he can speak and write German which is essentially useless to him in the forest besides in his role as Theo’s servant. In the end, he is the one who ensures that the travel diaries are published in Germany after Theo disappears. Manduca thus creates the link between Theo, Karakamate, and the rest of the world, bringing Evan to Karakamate’s shore. Manduca’s acculturation marks a shift in what knowledges can serve him. Rather than a plant-based world-view, Manduca has adopted aspects of the westernized preservation of knowledge that revolve around creating a text rather than interacting with the environment – reading words rather than landscapes.

Of course, this knowledge and cataloguing is complex; part of the project of empire yet also a way of preserving knowledge. Karakamate's memory loss would seem to justify the written and photographed knowledge that Theo creates and works to store. However, Karakamate's preference for reading the environment is how he preserves his culture. Just as they get ready to go back into the canoe, Manduca yells out to Karakamate "I ain't no caboclo" (41:45). There is a sense of self-reflection for both Manduca and Karakamate as they grapple with their place in the world. Theo is not necessarily interested in the equal exchange of ideas but rather in simultaneous extraction and preservation. Ultimately, this knowledge is preserved for westerners, which both explorers are clear about, as their anxiety seems to stem from thinking that no one will believe them if they do not bring back evidence. Karakamate and Manduca's native wisdom can be extracted and translated for a broad audience via Theo's prestige and the written word.

The lines between identities are continually blurred as Manduca, Karakamate, and the two foreign explorers encounter others in the jungle. With each interaction within the biocontact zone, they are forced to examine why they are there and what their intentions are, at least to an extent. In one of the next scenes, they come across what Theo at first thinks is another rubber plantation while Karakamate intuits otherwise. They decide to stop in order to get more supplies. What they find is a mission, and a group of four boys dressed in white run forward to meet them. They take the travelers to the priest, who is leading a larger group of boys in song. The priest, speaking peninsular Spanish, charges at Theo, Manduca, and Karakamate with a rifle, yelling that he does not have rubber and

ordering them to go. Appealing to the religious sensibilities of the priest, Karakamate begins saying a lord's prayer in Spanish to appease the priest's request of "no pagan languages," while Theo explains that they are men of science, and will adhere to the only Spanish rule. Once again, the rubber boom serves as a violent backdrop to another violent project: religious conversion and forced assimilation. Rubber extraction and the international economy attempted to tame and harness unruly nature, while religious missions sought to save souls, working on a system of hierarchies.

While the film develops across borders in a liminal Amazon, there are small nods to different nationalistic interests in the area – with the Spanish priest, a later Brazilian cult leader, and on a plaque that Karakamate notices at the mission. After dinner in the mess hall (where fish is served, in direct defiance of the conditions Karakamate proposed upon agreeing to travel with Manduca and Theo) he comes across a plaque that reads: "En reconocimiento del valor de los pioneros colombianos del caucho, quienes, arriesgando su vida y bienes, traen la civilización a tierras de canibales y salvajes, mostrándoles el camino de nuestro señor y su santa iglesia" – Rafael Reyes, presidente de Colombia, Agosto 1907" (1:00). This demonstrates a rewriting of history, particularly in the way that Karakamate (and Manduca) have lived it. It also grounds the mission within a national border and wider international interest. According to this plaque, the rubber workers are the heroes of the Colombian frontier, evangelizing and bringing civilization. The plaque itself serves as a western method of knowledge preservation and national memory. Rather than storing knowledge in the physical body or reading the landscape, the plaque publicly puts forth an official history and disrupts the landscape.

The mission becomes a biocontact zone as Karakamate teaches a group of young boys about their natural environment and cultural heritage. After stopping to read the plaque, Karakamate takes a group of boys living at the mission to some of the plants growing on the outskirts. He points out a plant called *chiricaspi* and tells the origin story of how the gods intended it to be used. They begin a fire and Karakamate tells the boys his story. “Priests picked me up too, when the rubber barons killed my people. They didn’t surrender to them, they fought. Don’t believe their crazy tales about eating the body of the gods. They give you food, but they don’t respect the prohibitions. One day they will finish all the food of the jungle” (1:01). This demonstrates the importance of listening to the prohibitions and the hypocrisy of what was written on the plaque. While missionaries were sent to evangelize cannibals, Christian tradition revolves around the Eucharist, symbolically eating Christ’s body and drinking his blood, a truly crazy tale. This speech by Karakamate is meant to empower the next generation of indigenous boys who have been subjected to the strict life of the mission. Furthermore, Karakamate is able to bond with the boys through plants, and this demonstrates how he can actively work to pass along knowledge. Karakamate mediates the silent world of plants for the next generation, fighting against the imposed Spanish rule and helping them remember their culture and read the environment around them. The audience also learns that Karakamate has not always lived in isolation, and has deep, personal experience with the so called civilizing process. The boys do not respond to Karkamate, but watch him diligently and silently. However, just a few minutes later, the priest violently whips the boys after being told that Karakamate was teaching them about plants and not addressing them in Spanish.

Upon seeing this, Manduca tussles with the priest, eventually knocking him out. They release the boy and tell him to run into the jungle. Manduca, Theo, and Karakamate take off in their canoe into the night. This scene shows both Karakamate and Manduca actively fight against assimilation and the tyranny of the priest, attacking acculturation. The improvised, transient community that Karakamate creates with the boys around plants becomes the focus of imperial violence, first, by the priest's actions, and then becomes symbolic of indigenous resistance in Manduca's reaction.

This same mission, marked in violence and assimilation in the 1909 scenes, maintains its spiritual connection as a site of disturbance in the 1940s portion of the film. By the 1940s, the mission has become a syncretic cult of terror. The lines between human and non-human are blurred and Karakamate is once again compelled to use plants to mediate a difficult situation. Evan and Karakamate encounter what appears to be the same indigenous boys from the 1909 encounter, now in late middle age and part of a new religious enclave in the jungle. The travelers are escorted by a few men in hoods and grass skirts to the center square where they see a young boy in a state of decay nailed to a crucifix with the label "caboclo" on top. A group of men flagellate themselves in front of it and their guide says: "He was invited to suicide for causing with his betrayal the sickness that saddens our Eden" (1:12). This frightening scene, supposedly an "Eden" within the jungle takes aspects of Christianity, while condemning "caboclos," and celebrating overall hedonism – it is syncretism gone horribly wrong. Karakamate and Theo are escorted to the main building, a sort of jungle court, where they see a young Brazilian man with a crown of thorns who resembles Jesus sitting upon a throne of

antlers. He asks if they are the wise men of the East and if they can cure his wife. The first woman in the film is a very young indigenous girl, the wife of the “messiah” who lies dying. Karakamate attempts to cure the girl and begins by putting his necklace on her and breathing some powder into her face. Evan, meanwhile, looks on, visibly shaken and afraid. At each turn things become stranger – the people in the cult pray in front of the messiah, and are continually “invited” to suicide. As Karakamate says, “It is the worst of both worlds” (1:18). This blend of indigenous and western cultures represents destruction, mania, and the rise of a tyrannical charismatic leader.

In a nighttime ceremony, Karakamate prepares a drink for the entire encampment as they celebrate the at least temporary recovery of the messiah’s child bride due to Karakamate’s plant-based cure. As the party turns to debauched chaos, everyone becomes sick and Evan and Karakamate escape into the night. Evan accuses Karakamate of poisoning the encampment, to which Karakamate replies “I didn’t poison them, I just gave them something to think better. They are Makús they were not born of the anaconda. They are less than human.” Evan replies with “You sound like one of those rubber barons. You’re just like them” (1:22). Once again, this dialogue and scene complicates a black and white, good versus evil narrative. In poisoning the entire cult, Karakamate believes he is wiping the jungle clean of its craziness yet this makes him tyrannical, as Evan points out. Rather than colonized people defining who is human, Karakamate flips the script and defines others as “less than human.” The 1909 mission scene coupled with the 1940s cult scene suggest that the jungle is inherently damned when outsiders attempt to change nature. The worst of both worlds, rather than a forced

assimilation, the 1940s cult has been chosen and actively participated in, and nature has been completely ignored. This also blurs the boundaries between human and animal, culture and nature. In the hedonistic revelry of the nighttime ceremony, the cult members descend into darkness, writhing and appearing entirely animalistic. Just as Karakamate and Evan enter the jungle cult, Karakamate remarks that he is beginning to remember and that perhaps he is no longer a *chullachaqui*. While playing with materiality, temporality, and memory throughout, the final scenes create some ambiguity as to the existence of Karakamate at all.

Materiality, Preservation, and the Elusive *Yakruna*

Material goods within the film point to separate visions of how to produce and store knowledge. Issues of materiality are the source of a consistent clash between Karakamate and his western travel partners. This surfaces in how the two westerners place value on material things while Karakamate seems to have no material possessions. Ultimately, there is an unknowability, an elusive quality to Karakamate. For Karakamate, as previously mentioned, knowledge is tied to the natural environment. Even as his memory falters, he seeks to store knowledge by inscribing on the rock face and reading the river and trees. Both Theo and Evan, conversely, cart around their books, cameras, photographs, or record players, symbols of connection and also preservation, as well as proof that they have actually experienced and witnessed their time in the Amazon.

After the episode in the jungle cult, Evan accuses Karakamate of faking amnesia and Karakamate accuses Evan of being greedy and too attached to his material things.

Evan throws his suitcase into the water, leaving behind only one small box. In separating from his material goods, Evan works to gain Karakamate's trust. Similar to how Theo tried to hold on to his books and letters at all costs, Evan attempts to keep his material goods that offer a source of comfort, and a sense of connection in this new strange place. Karakamate demonstrates some curiosity about Evan and asks him what is in the remaining box. Evan opens up a portable record player. He begins to play Handel's "Creation," explaining that it takes him back to his father's house in Boston. This metaphorical transport spurred on by an attachment to an object seems somewhat confusing to Karakamate who then says: "What do you see? The world is like this, huge. But you choose to see just this. The world speaks. I can only listen. Hear the song of your ancestors. This is the way you're looking for. Listen for real. Not only with your ears" (1:45). Karakamate urges Evan to move beyond the world in front of him, to listen not only to the record of Handel but to the way the earth responds to it. Here he is Evan's guide, opening him up to the possibility of the cosmos. There appears to be a growing conviviality between Karakamate and Evan, and the music, although out of place within the broader cacophony of insects, monkeys, and distant birds, seems to sooth both of them. In this scene, sound connects Evan and Karakamate, while also working as a conduit to ancestors. Where Karakamate uses the natural environment as a source of connection and a path toward memory, Evan's material goods offer a similar purpose.

Films such as *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), also work with themes of imperial designs on the Amazon and the implantation of "high" culture into the otherwise savage space of the jungle. In an iconic scene that *El abrazo de la serpiente* quite obviously pays homage to,

Fitzcarraldo, a foppish, Irish rubber baron commissions a ship to survey the jungle to later build an opera house. As the ship forays deeper into indigenous territory and the crew begins to hear the distant cries and beating drums of as of yet invisible tribes, Fitzcarraldo puts Caruso on the gramophone, projecting opera into the jungle, partially drowning out the cries, while the drum beat remains. A shot shows Fitzcarraldo behind the large gramophone, leaning back slightly with a face completely captivated by the sounds. Through the juxtaposition of the indigenous cries with Caruso's booming voice, a remix of sounds portrays the wish of Fitzcarraldo to dominate and subdue the howl of the wild in the sonic sphere of the opera. An attempt to dominate the green hell of the jungle, the melodrama of the opera seems to reflect the unruly and passionate nature of the jungle itself. However, what is accomplished becomes a sound in between -- neither sound drowns the other out -- and the jungle becomes a space where both the would-be rubber baron and Indians exist in a type of re-mix. In some ways similar to Evan's relationship with Karakamate, Fitzcarraldo believes he will be bettering the lives of local peoples by bringing them opera. This is another form of domination and conquest that ignores the indigenous population's existing culture and, in the case of Fitzcarraldo, employs them as a workforce to accomplish the goals of western capital. Music seems to signal a soft violence, or the assumption that in hearing the high cultural artifacts of the West, the forest and its peoples will fall into harmony, or obedience. The sonic dominance of *Fitzcarraldo* is rewritten as a peaceful, bonding process in *El abrazo de la serpiente*.

Classical music in the jungle announces the presence of an outsider and in the case of Fitzcarraldo wages an aural assault on the natural environment, while in *El abrazo de la serpiente*, Karakamate hears the music and is transported to another time. As the camera pans toward the sky, Handel playing, Karakamate goes to the water's edge where he sees a bedraggled Theo stumble forward. He begins talking to the image, explaining what Cohiuano men do to become warriors:

On that journey he has to discover, in solitude and silence, who he really is. He has to become a vagabond of dreams. Some get lost and never come back. But those that do, are ready to face whatever may come. Where are they? Where are the chants that mothers used to sing to their babies? Where are the stories of elders, the whispers of love, the chronicles of battle? Where have they gone? (1:27)

This lament about memory, time, and tradition wavers between dreams and so-called reality. Cohiuano men must take the *yakruna*, altering their state of mind with nature, imbibing and becoming in the process. A key aspect of becoming is the journey and solitary movement, following dreams and learning to listen to the environment. The voices of the Cohiuano, standing in for a host of indigenous groups in the Amazon have been lost to the wind. Within a western view of history and memory where development is defined as progress, history can be written as a chronological, forward process. Narratives that fall outside of these ideas of process are lost. As Tuhiwai Smith remarks on the act of remembering as part of a decolonizing methodology: "The remembering of a people relates not so much to an idealized remembering of a golden past but more

specifically to the remembering of a painful past, and importantly, people's responses to that pain" (146). Here Karakamate does not necessarily seek to remember the violent processes of colonization, but rather laments the loss of his culture through the colonizing process. As Old Karakamate says this, Evan passes out and in the next scene we are back in the 1909 version of the story. This juxtaposes classical music with the lacuna of indigenous voice. Where are the songs that grounded Karakamate's soul and provided a connection between time and memory?

In the last scene of 1909, Theo grows increasingly sick, convulsing and occasionally delirious. They finally arrive at the settlement of the last of the Coahuano, only to find a forest burned and what remains of a settlement. Karakamate wears a full headdress which stands out against the cleared ground and western attire of the remaining Coahuano. In the center square, a group of villagers drinks the *yakruna*, toasting to the end of the world, and Karakamate leaves in disgust. Karakamate witnesses his own people disrespecting nature's rules by getting high on the *yakruna*. Theo, Karakamate, and Manduca find *yakruna* on the outskirts of the village, where villagers have been growing it. Karakamate becomes visibly angry and screams that *yakruna* must not be cultivated, blaming Theo (1:38). Karakamate, as a military group of Colombians come, shooting and scattering villagers, sets the orchid-like *yakruna* on fire. Violence based on national interests continually threatens, gradually closing in on Karakamate. As the town erupts into chaos and flames, Manduca paddles away with a sick Theo, leaving Karakamate. Karakamate actively chooses to destroy the *yakruna* rather than see it misused and exploited. This demonstrates a preservation in destruction. Through

destroying the *yakruna*, its sacred qualities are preserved. However, in this act of destroying, it seems that Karakamate forgets, as his memory and very being are tied to the mystical plant. As Schiebinger explains, many of the specimens gathered by Europeans in the New World were collected without a full knowledge of how they were used and the cultural systems of which these plants played a central role (89). In just collecting, a wide range of information was lost. Karakamate understands the cultural implications of the *yakruna* and is the only one who can translate it. Karakamate, as the last of his people, is the voice of the *yakruna*.

The *yakruna* again moves the plot forward as the flower burning gives way to Evan and old Karakamate reaching a mountain in the jungle. They climb to the top of the mountain and the terrain changes completely, instead of being engulfed in the river scape, they gain perspective and Evan sits in awe. The jungle appears flat from above. They find one *yakruna* flower that Karakamate plucks to make *caapi*, a drinkable *yakruna*. This *yakruna* is the last in the world, according to Karakamate, and he tells Evan that this preparation will be his gift. Evan admits that this is not what he actually came to the Amazon for, and that there is a war going on and his people need high-purity rubber, finally admitting his economically driven purpose in the jungle. Evan demands the *yakruna* and Karakamate pushes him to the ground where Evan pulls out his knife and Karakamate dares him to actually do something, as the *yakruna* will die with him. Karakamate's power in this relationship comes from his role as the keeper of the *yakruna* and his knowledge of how to prepare it.

As night falls, the two travelers unceremoniously make amends over a fire where Karakamate prepares the plant. Evan says, “I tried to kill you, I don’t deserve this,” and Karakamate responds with: “I killed you too, before, in time without time, yesterday, 40 years, or maybe 100. But you came back, I wasn’t meant to teach my people. I was meant to teach you” (1:54). This explicitly connects Theo with Evan, and points to the cyclical nature of history and Karakamate’s memory. Furthermore, harkening back to Manduca’s reasons for helping Theo, Karakamate realizes that in teaching Evan he can perhaps reach others. The harmonious resolve between the two men, representatives of their respective civilizations, appears easy, as Evan has achieved what he set out for – the *yakruna*. While Karakamate retains control of the last flower, Evan still gains the knowledge and the experience of the *yakruna*. Evan takes a sip of the *caapi* and Karakamate breaths some powder into his face. The camera spans up and over the tree tops, down to the river, over to the mountains, pulling together an entire Amazonian topography as the calls of different birds drown out the ominous score. The last shot in this series shows the river winding like a serpent before focusing on young Karakamate’s face where he opens up into a galaxy of a thousand pieces.

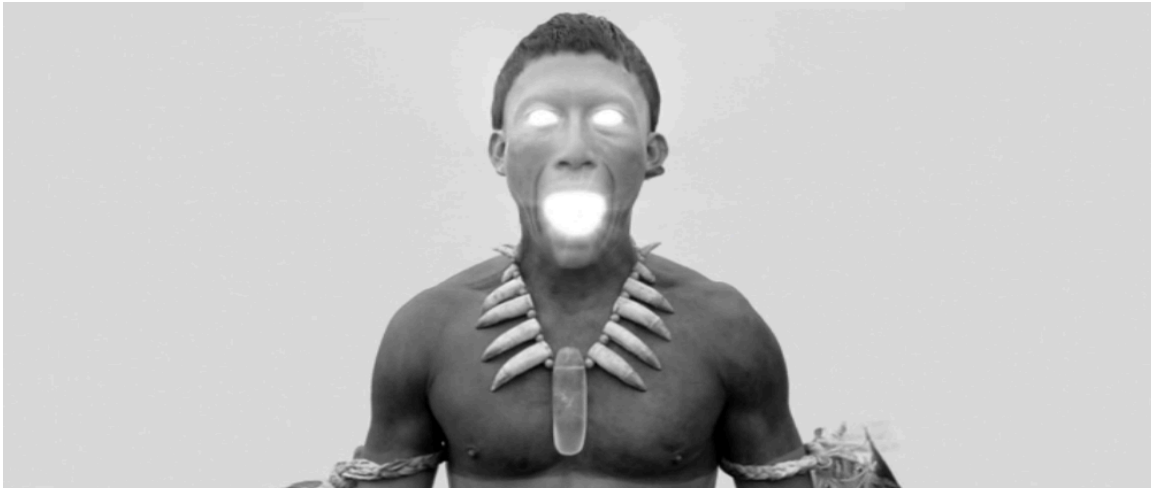


Image 4.2: Young Karakamate at the beginning of Evan's psychedelic trip (1:57).

The camera concentrates on a young Karakamate's face and a blinding light bursts through until the screen is drowned in white and then fades to black with different shots of stars, as slowly rotating symbols in color against a black backdrop appear. This scene breaks from the rest of the narrative in its trippy, non-narrative form. A visual rhetoric emerges and explodes the rhetoric of empire that produces the body in a western imaginary. The body literally explodes, becoming non-existent. Music that sounds like a heartbeat throbs slowly as what appear to be the carvings that Karakamate put into the side of the rock come to life and pulsate with color. This brief scene further pulls apart ideas of linearity and narrative, breaking into a cosmos of color. It reminds us of the smallness of humans within the larger universe, and the lack of claim that we have on the world. The film becomes a game between being and knowing, decentering the human experience. This drug trip is about seeing beyond what is immediately there and engaging

with light, enlightenment, color, and knowledge. Seeing comes into being through the visual exploration of the cosmos.

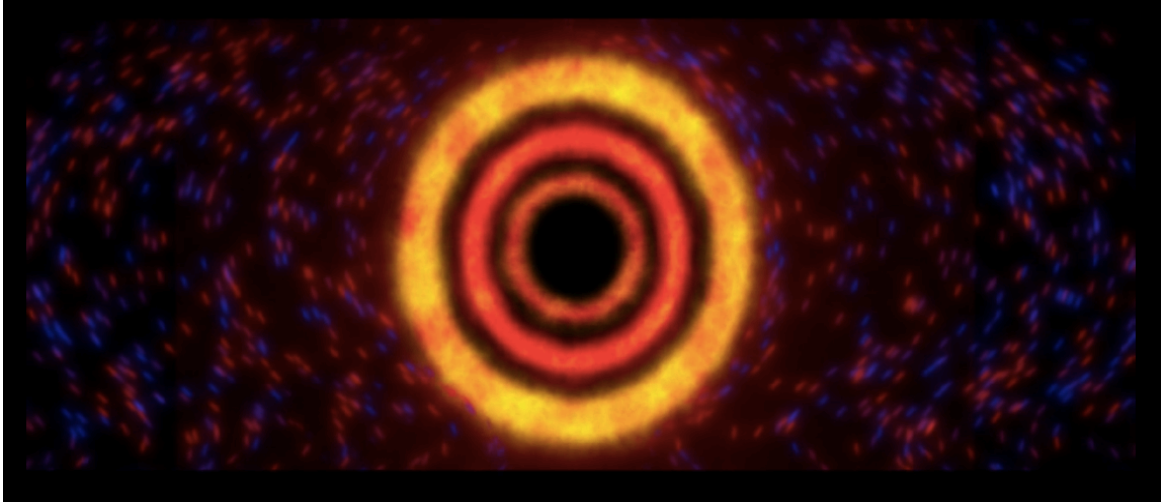


Image 4.3: Still from the psychedelic drug trip (1:58).

This 30-second interlude ends and Evan slowly comes to in the middle of the day, the previous nights' fire dying next to him. He begins walking around the barren mountaintop, yelling for Karamakate. Evan rows his canoe back to the initial spot where he encountered Karamakate, looking fruitlessly for him until he is engulfed in a flood of white butterflies. It appears that Karakamate is entirely ephemeral and maybe never even existed. This suggestion is strengthened by the psychedelic drug sequence where the audience goes on a trip with Evan, as perhaps all of this was just a product of imagination, a nostalgic trip back to a lost world. Is Karakamate just part of an Amazonian fever dream for the two western explorers, guiding them in their various pursuits?



Image 4.4: Evan (bottom right) engulfed in white butterflies (2:00).

Ultimately, Evan finds and participates in the knowledge he sought (without the benefit of being able to extract it) and the Indian disappears. This connects to the same frame of colonialism and extraction where knowledge, plants, and bodies are taken and used, ultimately leading to their destruction or disappearance. As DiNovelli-Lang notes on posthumanism, modernity, and indigeneity, “The hallmark of modernity's destructiveness is its treatment of other nature-cultures, who must become modern or perish” (10). Karakamate does not become modern, nor does he necessarily perish, although he certainly does disappear. His entire being is based in non-being, and while he has human emotions and actions, he appears as a non-human figure, a gatekeeper of nature and the cosmos. This is perhaps reflective of indigenous ontologies, as Viveiros de Castro explains, “The performative rather than given character of the body, a conception that requires it to differentiate itself ‘culturally’ in order for it to be ‘naturally’ different, has an obvious connection with interspecific metamorphosis, a possibility suggested by

Amerindian cosmologies” (481). Bodies, in Amazonian Amerindian perspectives are performed rather than given. A body is part of a larger metamorphosis where spirits or souls move through bodies, in the process of becoming. Image 4.4 shows Evan as a miniscule part of the larger environment. Butterflies that surrounded Karakamate at the beginning of the film fly around him, creating an image of abundance as well as man’s isolation within the natural environment. Butterflies, a creature that itself goes through metamorphosis, suggest that Evan has experienced a life cycle of growth. In this last scene Evan is engulfed by white butterflies, Karakamate is one with the land itself, yet throughout the film we see him as the guide and key to knowledge about the flora and fauna of the forest. Thus he wavers between being a complex human character while also being decidedly non-human – a mystic capable of transformation, in dialogue with the cosmos as seen in the psychedelic trip he induces.

After this final scene, as the credits begin to roll, several photographs from the original journals that inspired the film appear and a caption explains how “Estos diarios son lo único que hoy se conoce de una gran cantidad de culturas amazónicas. Esta película está dedicada a la memoria de los pueblos cuya canción nunca conoceremos” (2:01). This explicitly frames the film in a sense of loss, a nostalgia for a bygone era. This film is about the non-existence of indigenous people’s voices in the archive and perhaps Karakamate’s disappearance at the end is a nod to the fact that the film could never fully recapture an indigenous voice. The documentation of travel journals and ethnographies, while part of a larger system of western dominance and control, can also be important

ghostly traces of indigenous knowledge. As the film suggests, when Karakamate's physical body disappears, or nature is destroyed, what is left?

Conclusion

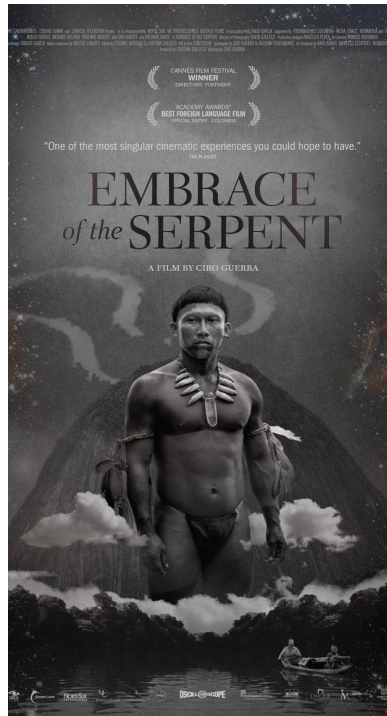


Image 5.5: Film poster from *El abrazo de la serpiente*.

In the official poster for the film, a young Karakamate played by Níbio Torres looms larger than life above the Cerros de Mavecure in Colombia where the final scenes of the film were shot. Centered with small touches of mist and clouds around him, Karakamate appears mythic and otherworldly. Referencing both the ending psychedelic trip and the mystery surrounding representations of the Amazon jungle, the sky above the mountains and behind Karakamate's face swirls and sparkles in black and white. While

Karakamate is the focal point of the image, the foreground showcases the Amazon River heading into an ultimate “heart of darkness.” To the right we see Evan with old Karakamate on a dugout canoe moving away from the past. There is a mysticism, a magical realism surrounding the figure of Karakamate, he appears otherworldly, an answer to the quest that Evan in his canoe seeks. Karakamate’s ephemerality casts him as a non-human character, running the risk of reformulating a narrative of indigenous peoples as less than human. The film gestures to the posthuman approach that attempts to move beyond western categorizations of human and non, yet centuries of the denial of humanity makes this de-humanizing problematic. The existence of a mythical cure-all plant and the loss of indigenous cultures demonstrate a touch of imperial nostalgia. “Such forms of longing thus appear closely related to secular notions of progress. When the so-called civilizing process destabilizes forms of life, the agents of change experience transformations of other cultures as if they were personal losses” (Rosaldo 70). In showing Karakamate as the last of his fictionalized tribe, there is a sense of loss and nostalgia that both Theo and Evan engage in, and presumably the audience as well. While this impulse is present, the film questions the humanistic, imperial order through a restructuring of time, an alternative cosmovision and a plot that protagonizes indigenous knowledge.

El abrazo de la serpiente attempts to create a more nuanced indigenous character with the presence of indigenous language, critical thinking about the imperial project by the native and a consideration of ways to respond, reject, and survive it. Karakamate is the self-proclaimed last of his people, and as an old man he struggles to remember his

culture, representing an overall loss of indigenous knowledge. Despite constant threats posed by missionaries, rubber barons, and others who would seek to change Karakamate, he remains the same, living off of the land and using his advanced knowledge of plants to guard the *yakruna*. Furthermore, Karakamate lives through two key eras of Amazonian history, represented by Theo and Evan. Theo experiences the Amazon with a utopian idealism that is frequently marred, and Evan comes to the Amazon driven by capitalistic pursuits. Considering the Amazon as a final international frontier is another explanation for its appeal. As Candace Slater remarks, every day it seems that a new article appears touting the sighting of an “uncontacted” indigenous group, or a reminder of the importance of the Amazon as the “lungs of the earth” (11). The danger here is ignoring the ways in which colonialism displaced and rerouted human interaction with earth, thus repeating the same cycles of exploitation and violence. Both Theo and Evan search for remedies in the jungle, only to ultimately be defeated by nature and a lack of insider knowledge -- Theo dies in the jungle and the last shot of Evan shows him languishing on top of a mountain after taking hallucinogenic drugs. There is the narrative of the film itself which lusts after Karakamate’s exclusive knowledge. While Karakamate is the key to salvation for Theo, he also is the gatekeeper to Evan’s potential economic gain.

The dreamlike quality of the film and the fictionalization of real events creates a separation that can allow the viewer to at once think critically about colonialism without engaging further with present-day realities²¹. The final caption that marks indigenous

²¹ For example the September 2017 news of the massacre of an uncontacted tribe by Brazilian gold miners who came across them in the jungle (Darlington 2017).

cultures as lost negates the thousands of groups who are alive, and fighting. *El abrazo de la serpiente* is an example of an engagement with posthuman theory and indigenous knowledges to create a marketable product. While playing with posthumanism, the film, however, does not follow a decolonial strain. As Juanita Sundberg notes, posthumanism, in dissecting a nature/culture dichotomy and ideas of wilderness falls short. Posthuman theory itself draws on the work of indigenous scholars, calling it something new that can then be used by the North American academy. A decolonial posthuman approach is a project that requires decentering western forms of knowledge and working together with those traditionally excluded in the nature/culture divide. Focusing on imperial travel narratives to frame a story supposedly about indigeneity once again centers a white western outsider. Solving these issues would mean creating an entirely different film; one that rewrites western epistemologies completely, perhaps ignoring the need for marketability and beyond just using native languages, incorporating unscripted native voices in a way that acknowledges their present-day life.

Chapter Five: Conclusion: Towards a Popular Geographical Knowledge of the Amazon

“A Amazônia estará libre quando reconheceremos definitivamente que essa natureza é a nossa cultura, onde uma árvore derrubada é como uma palavra suprimida e um rio poluído é como uma página censurada” (Souza 27).

Every object of cultural representation is a product of its time, inseparable from the social, environmental, and political history of its production. Obviously, the way we read those objects depends upon our own temporality and positionality. In choosing my objects of analysis I was attracted to characters that demonstrated a complexity in both their own identity and representational choices. Thus I examined people such as Octavie Coudreau, who previously had escaped most scholarly attention, and who shows an ambiguity of gender and race in the Amazon as well as a photographic and cartographic project that lent itself to a gendered geography analysis and demonstrated the importance of movement as relates to identity. Theodore Roosevelt, another imperial incursion in the Amazon with a dedication to an active lifestyle, shows a masculine persona committed to at once preserving and exploiting a wilderness that defeats him and instead is home to Cândido Rondon, an indigenous frontiersman dedicated to acculturation and technological progress. Demonstrating some of the same impulses of simultaneous development, awe, and conservation as Rondon, Euclides da Cunha presents the Amazon as an area of conflict ripe with potential dependent on migration, while Mário de Andrade

showcases the Amazon through his modernist photography and prose as an area central to Brazilian identity. Finally, I critiqued ecocritical and posthuman studies through an analysis of *El abrazo de la serpiente*, where an indigenous actor is elevated to protagonist, yet unfairly tasked with speaking for the subaltern and the environment itself.

This dissertation examined how race and gender inform structures of empire in the Amazon using narratives that produced knowledge supported by a multitude of maps, photographs, and statistics. These narratives facilitated the colonization of territories and peoples, while also demonstrating the ambiguity and complex nature of imperial formations. I have critiqued the process of knowledge production about an area that challenges categorical fixity by analyzing a variety of different mediums including travel narrative, biography, cartography, photography, and film. I have brought theory across different disciplines including gendered geographies, ecocriticism, visibility, race and colonial studies to key narratives of the Amazon region during a crucial period of cultural transformation, development, and modernization. I have examined the role of the explorer/story-teller, looking at the ways that their stories are told and their use of narration and images in constructing the Amazon for their various political purposes. I looked at the imagining of history, not only the past and present of the narratives, but also the future – where the region is going, and how it will be developed. I analyzed the representation of nature and how it was mapped and explored, simultaneously shown as frightening and overwhelming, yet also a magical, healing, and sustaining source of plants.

Each of these narratives grappled with the place of the Amazon within a world geography and increasingly globalized culture. While Rondon, Euclides, and Mário attempt to situate the Amazon's place within Brazil, the mapping and photographic projects of Roosevelt and Octavie move the Amazon into an international discourse that operates on the "known." As Ciro Guerra re-reads travel narratives and natural histories to construct *El abrazo de la serpiente*, this literature is retold while still falling into tropes of where and how the Amazon fits into a global culture. This dissertation contributes a reading of these narratives as emblematic of the relationship between nature and culture, which perhaps is central to the Amazon region itself. Nature is culture and vice versa, and as Mário Souza states in the epigraph to this conclusion, the Amazon will be "free" when we can definitively say that nature is our culture, and recognize the importance of the environment in making meaning.²² While correcting the errors of a colonial past is impossible, moving toward a more equitable, just, and rounded way of thinking, speaking, and representing the world around us is possible.

Along with the role of nature in creating culture and the intertwining of the two, a key contribution of this dissertation has been to examine the production of knowledge and the power of representation in the Amazon region. Let us briefly return to Chapter One and the fascinating yet problematic figure of Octavie Coudreau. Octavie explored, mapped, and wrote about the Amazon not only during a time of highly circumscribed

²² With the constant threat of climactic destruction, the fate of the Amazon is in question, and rightly so. The impacts of climate change in the Amazon, a climate changed spurred on by industry and development, threaten plants, animals, and humans alike, who can expect increasing drought and deforestation to keep up with increased demands from industrial farming ("Impacts of Climate Change in the Amazon").

roles for women but at a time of remarkable historical significance. I showed that her narratives in many ways are a metonym for imperial discourse about resource exploitation and black and indigenous populations in the jungle. Her travels, narrative, photography, and maps detail *quilombo* and indigenous populations, and she left behind a considerable amount of material. In her narratives *Voyage au Trombetas* (1899) as well as *Voyage au Cuminá* (1901), Octavie explored the Trombetas River basin. This basin housed (and continues to be a home to) a large number of *quilombo* communities. In the case of Cachoeira Porteira, a small *quilombo* (designated a *mocambo* due to its size during Octavie's time) community on the Trombetas River, Octavie Coudreau included detailed census information, maps, and photographs in her travel narrative published in 1901. Ironically, her documents are now being used as a tool of political advocacy by the descendants of the very same Afro-Brazilian people marginalized in her writings. As a (brief) counter balance to the imperial literature I examine in this dissertation, I would like to offer an example of decolonial, grassroots research that represents an important step toward bridging activism and academia through the incorporation of spatial approaches.

In my research on Octavie, I came into contact with an Amazonian NGO called Projeto Nova Cartografia Social da Amazônia (PNCSA), associated with public universities in the Amazon region (and the University of Texas) and headquartered in Manaus. The PNCSA uses social and cultural mapping to establish and defend the rights of marginalized communities. As I gathered information about Octavie, I began corresponding with one of the PNCSA's researchers who works with Cachoeira Porteira,

Emmanuel Farias Jr. In fact, Emmanuel informed me that they frequently use Octavie's maps in workshops with local communities. These historical, cultural texts, created as part of the initial process of Amazonian exploitation, for the most part lost to scholarly attention, are now being re-read (in Octavie's case in community-based workshops) to better define and defend native and minority communities, their culture, land, and rights. This type of community action and academic collaboration will form the basis for my next project, where I hope to work with the PNCSA and elaborate an oral histories project with Cachoeira Porteira.

The small community of Cachoeira Porteira offers an example of the intersection of social and imperial mapping projects, as well as intercultural initiatives and the lasting impact of imperial documentation. Cachoeira Porteira was formed when enslaved peoples sought to escape the Paraguayan war draft at the end of the nineteenth century. When white men came after escaped slaves who had found their way to the waters surrounding the community, they were unable to pass because of the large waterfalls, and thus considered the falls a "porteira" or a door that only black people could pass through ("A comunidade").²³ I spent the Summer of 2016 working with the PNCSA, where I learned more about Cachoeira Porteira from one young woman from the community doing research for her undergraduate thesis. She told me a story that still circulates there about the fateful night of Henri's death on the river, which I had previously read in Octavie's

²³ The ethnic makeup is primarily of African descent although the surrounding areas are heavily populated by indigenous groups and former rubber tapping communities, made up of people of *caboclo* descent. These different ethnic groups have a long history of interaction – at times peaceful and at times violent (as mentioned with Henri's descriptions in Chapter One).

narrative. She described how the image of Octavie in distress, holding up a lantern, its yellow glow cutting the immense darkness, is passed down orally through generations. Descendants of the crewmembers who accompanied Octavie and Henri on their journey still live in Cachoeira Porteira today.

The PNCSA is a collaborative organization of geographers, ethnographers and other researchers who teach mapping and cartography techniques to local indigenous and black communities in the Amazon.²⁴ They use social mapping (a visual method where participants draw relative locations and tell spatial or symbolic stories) to help participants think about their personal histories in a place-based tangible manner. Through this work they support indigenous communities, developing critical knowledge, skills, and historical understanding to gain land and resource rights. The PNCSA, drawing on a partnership between researchers and community members in a reciprocal and horizontal manner, develops and publishes pamphlets, articles, and books about the history and geography of particular villages, created by the communities themselves.²⁵ These documents can help communities advocate for land rights and establish a historical

²⁴ They also have initiatives throughout the rest of Brazil and in urban contexts, but their hub is in the Amazon.

²⁵ Emmanuel grew up relatively close to Cachoeira Porteira, and was familiar with the community when they sought out the PNCSA. Emmanuel's initial anthropological fieldwork in Cachoeira Porteira was done over a period of two months, although he has been conducting research in the region with an emphasis on *quilombo* communities since 2005. Once a community decides to do a mapping project, the PNCSA sends a group of researchers and academics to help give workshops, teach Geographic Information System Mapping (GIS) technology, and record the history of the community. Given these types of real world interactions that involve marginalized communities, outsider advice or intervention is often problematic due to historical precedent, lack of transparency, and a tendency to privilege western knowledge and approaches. However, the PNCSA's model of using a space based approach to reinforce ongoing community initiatives is meant to counter this imbalance. This is intended to create a reciprocal relationship and sustain projects. PNCSA researchers from the academy work to foster development by and for the community, rather than implementing a development model where it is not necessarily wanted.

precedent to natural resources. After teaching visual and GIS workshops, indigenous activists are given the tools to self-represent and delineate their own territory.

Researchers also share final products (pamphlets/maps/oral histories) with the community and online once they are finished. In initial workshops with the community, Emmanuel presented the maps and census information made by Octavie as examples of how the community had been historically represented by outsiders. The maps and other publications that the PNCSA works to produce include markers of culturally important locations such as churches, schools, or places that carry a certain historical significance. They can include markers of where different indigenous groups have historically lived, or other ethnic markers. In the case of Cachoeira Porteira, the PNCSA helped communities to identify areas of import.

Cachoeira Porteira's case of having historical domain over the land to the government of Pará included collective history, census data from Octavie Coudreau, and community made maps, among other proofs of territorial occupation. With the help of Emmanuel and the PNCSA, this community collected the documents needed to make their case and went through the process of mapping, and then re-mapping their land. After years of fighting off first slave catchers, and then developmental projects such as a highway, hydroelectric dam, as well as conservation initiatives that sought to block the community's ability to hunt and farm the land, this is a huge victory.²⁶

Image 5.1 is the most recent map produced with the community. The red outline marks the limits of Cachoeira Porteira as decided in talks with other groups and the *quilombolas*. Furthermore, you can see markers of significance that include garden plots, nut trees, historic sites, and indigenous territory. These visual symbols point to areas that are important to daily life. This type of map serves to visually locate sites of import for the community while also delineating territory that is essential to the survival of locals. The PNCSA helped to create and distribute these maps, as well as navigate bureaucratic systems of oppression. Maps such as these visually show the interaction between nature and culture, where territorial limits are defined by the ways that nature is used to sustain and fuel the community. Ultimately initiatives such as the PNCSA demonstrate projects that utilize a variety of methods to achieve territorial and cultural autonomy in

²⁶ The community itself presented their territorial limits using GPS and mapping techniques they learned from workshops with the PNCSA. There were some conflicts of territorial designation between indigenous groups and the *quilombolas*. Several meetings between the two groups were organized by the public minister until they reached a collective land agreement.

marginalized spaces. This also demonstrates the evolution of cartography and the intersection of modern technologies with traditional communities, where instead of imperial explorers commissioned to delineate territory without the cultural knowledge needed to fully understand potential conflict and the role of natural resources in local cultures, the community itself is able to present their own story. I am interested in continuing work with Cachoeira Porteira to develop an oral history project, and sharing the story of their advocacy, fight, and ultimately historic success across languages and digital platforms.

In Chapter Four I discuss the limitations of representation as well as decolonial turns in knowledge production. Part of a decolonial approach, as Joanne Rappaport argues, is *interculturalidad* (“the selective appropriation of concepts across cultures by the indigenous movement in the interest of building a pluralistic dialogue among equals and, ultimately, a more equal society” (9)). This presents a method of interaction between academics and activists for horizontal research with the goal of political change. Rappaport gives case examples of ongoing indigenous research initiatives -- that of the Universidad Autónoma Intercultural (UAIIN) and the Casa del Pensamiento Çxab Wala Kiwe (Casa), two groups in Colombia. She examines the idea of *interculturalidad* within these contexts, where teaching and research teams are made up of indigenous and mestizo participants with the goal of dialogue and merging concepts indigenous cosmovisions as well as academia (9). Some challenges to this model include bridging literacies and respecting differing epistemologies as well as languages. Ultimately, however, she argues for the malleability of ideas across contexts, and the importance of sharing research. With

interculturalidad as a goal, initiatives such as the PNCSA offer some hope of a dialogue that rethinks hegemonic hierarchies. As a way of creating and disseminating knowledge, this is a decolonial approach that focuses on spaces of historic and contemporary resistance. Initiatives such as the PNCSA also demonstrate an Epistemology of the South, or ES, as elaborated by Escobar in “Thinking-feeling with the Earth.” This study addresses how modern problems evade modern solutions, and that we must turn to alternative ways of thinking and being to address current crises. Most importantly, a fuller understanding of the world is much broader than a western understanding of the world (16) and these worlds are constantly in motion, in processes of becoming through movement, overlap, and convergence. ES along with *interculturalidad* are “efforts of thinking beyond the academy” (29) and offer an attractive inclusivity and model of future research that moves beyond binaries and with which I seek to engage.

The importance of cultural production that gives meaning and increased representation to the forest and its peoples can create a widespread impact that begins to halt, or at the very least call attention to practices of destruction. I am interested in exploring what happens when that representation comes directly from those living in the Amazon. Issues of preservation in the current context of globalization and expanding access shape not only the advancement of knowledge in the field but also the role of educators and cultural heritage institutions in archiving and making information and knowledge attainable. While this dissertation represents Mignolo’s first step in terms of questioning western knowledge production and deconstructing narratives that stage the power relations that produced coloniality in the Amazon, my next project will engage

with the process of de-linking with a focus on spatial sites of struggle. I will conduct interviews about community members' personal histories and familial ties to the land, as well as their feelings now that the land is under *dominio colectivo*. I will record the oral histories of community members and compile them in MP3s and PDFs on the PNCSA's website, helping to contribute to a digital humanities archive. By collecting a collaborative history of the community, that focuses on places as well as voices of historical and current importance, I hope to help reinforce social movements in Cachoeira Porteira and disseminate a story of success that could be used as a model for similar communities. The human element or real-world applicability of humanities projects can often be difficult to identify. I want to engage with voices of communities that could potentially utilize historical and geographical knowledge to address ways they have been marginalized and silenced in the past and in the present. As I begin work on my next project I will build on my previous research to examine how these imperial stories can be retold from a different perspective and put to the service of defending the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

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