

**B**oth rich realms of nature, the bio-diverse rain forest that appears in the headlines of countless newspaper articles and the mysterious lake within a lake of contemporary Amazonian folk stories are very different. The first is a distinctly terrestrial universe; the second is the aquatic equivalent of a Russian doll or Chinese box. A series of readily mappable habitats, the rain forest stands apart from the overtly fabulous waters that some storytellers describe as dwarfing the Amazon itself. “How can these lakes be still larger than the river? Well, of course, they are enchanted,” one older woman with a stiff cloud of silver hair patiently explains.

Once more, however, the division between these seemingly different portrayals turns out to be far less fixed than would first appear. Despite its concrete biological foundations, the Rain Forest encapsulates far larger fears and longings about the human place in nature. At the same time, it conceals considerably more immediate desires to possess and control distant resources for the profit of outsiders. As a result, the overwhelmingly “natural” Rain Forest becomes as much a giant as El Dorado or the Land of the Warrior Women.

Conversely, tales of a shape-shifting lake within a lake often turn out to be more rooted in concrete economic and political objectives than one might expect. These tales, which in this book stand in for a much wider array of Amazonian stories that give a prime—though not exclusive—place to water, are as contemporary in their own way as are news reports on an endangered biosphere. The storytellers’ insistence that the lake within a lake is a more genuine “biological reserve” than its official equivalents underscores the role of these folk accounts in urgent debates over land ownership and use. (“It is we who are the true environmentalists, not those people who are paid to throw us out of our

own homes,” declares one woman with an emphatic thump of a wooden cooking spoon.)

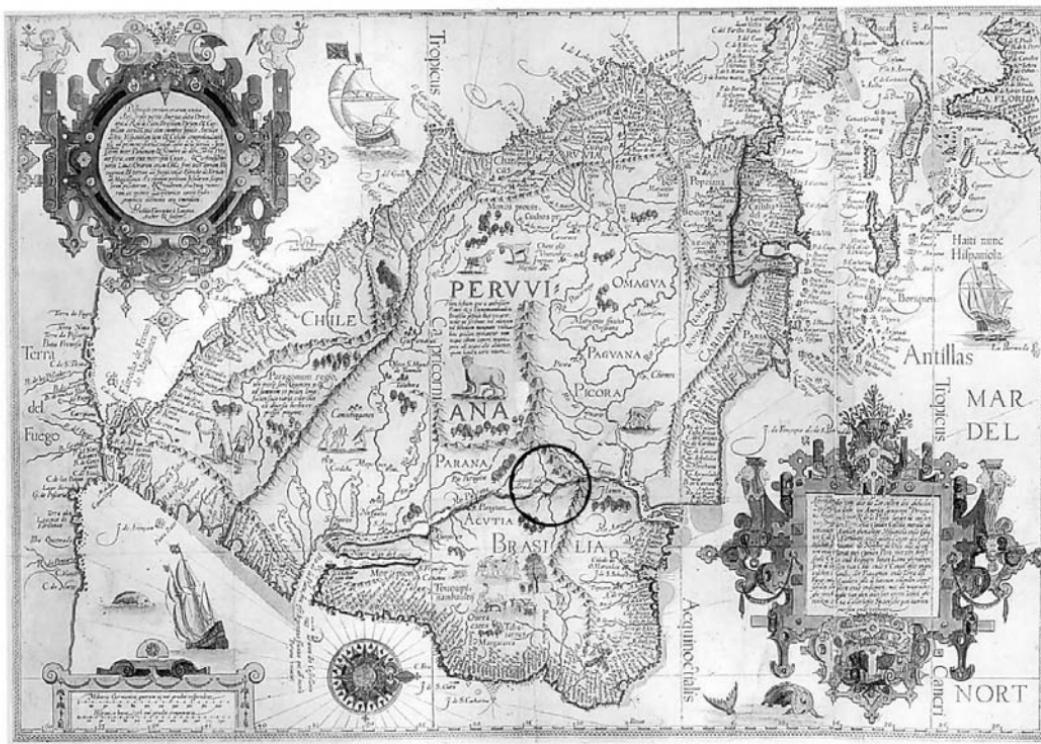
The first chapter in this section begins with a brief description of the emergence of the Rain Forest as a near-synonym for Amazonia. I then look at the gigantic features of three depictions of the Amazon Rain Forest. These examples highlight the scientific (or pseudoscientific) aura, the openness to use, and the sense of a fragile equilibrium that characterize a much larger group of Rain Forest representations. Finally, I consider various changes in portrayals of rain forests over time.

The second chapter looks at stories of a lake within a lake as a contrast to accounts of “our” Rain Forest. Tales of this enchanted lake teeming with fish and plant life are particularly popular among descendants of runaway black slaves on the Trombetas and Erepecuru Rivers, a region rich in bauxite and other minerals. Here, I am concerned both with the shifting meanings that storytellers give this particular outpost of the Encante and with the ways in which traditional and new environmentalist vocabularies collide and intertwine. Intriguing in their own right, the differences between gold miners’ stories and tales by the slave descendants bring home the multiplicity of an outwardly homogeneous narrative tradition.

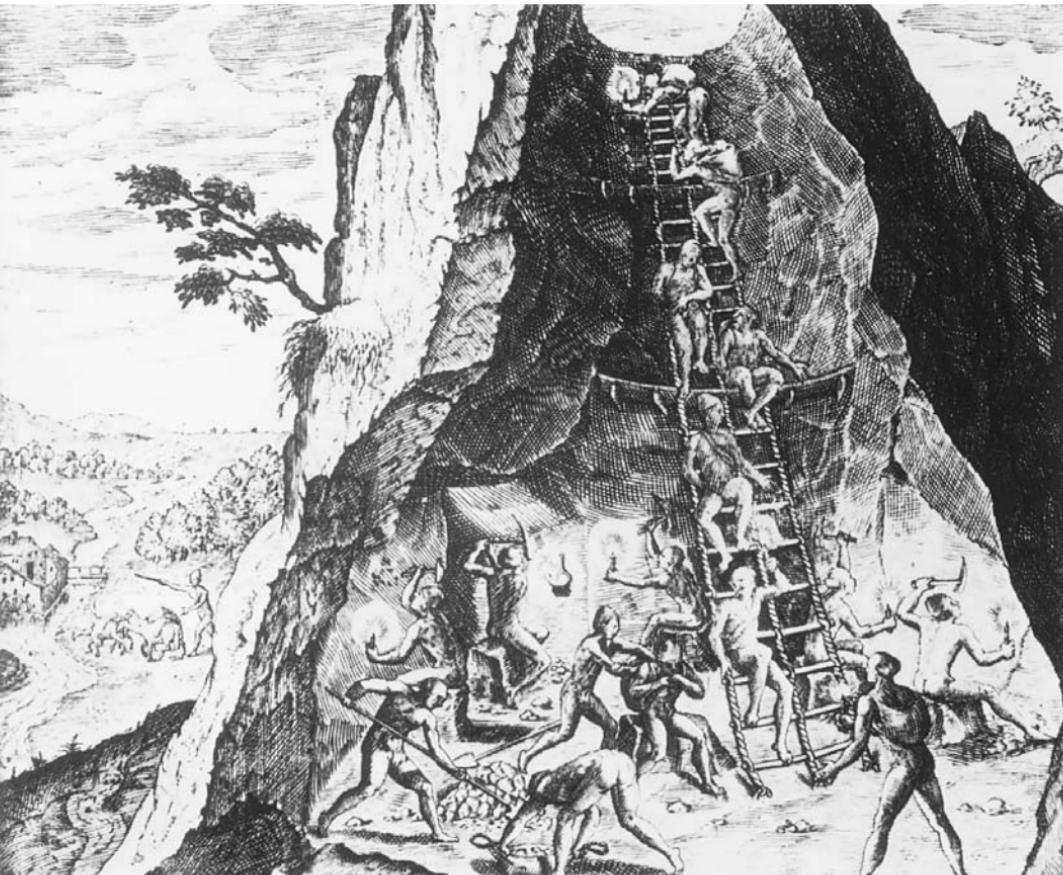
## **Illustrations**



"How the Nobility of Guiana would cover themselves in Gold when feasting," from an engraving in the Frankfurt edition of Theodor de Bry's *America*, 1599. One man (presumably a servant) blows gold dust from a pipe onto the naked body of a nobleman covered in oil. The image is based on text in Sir Walter Ralegh's *Discoverie of the Large, Rich and Bewtiful Empyre of Guiana*.



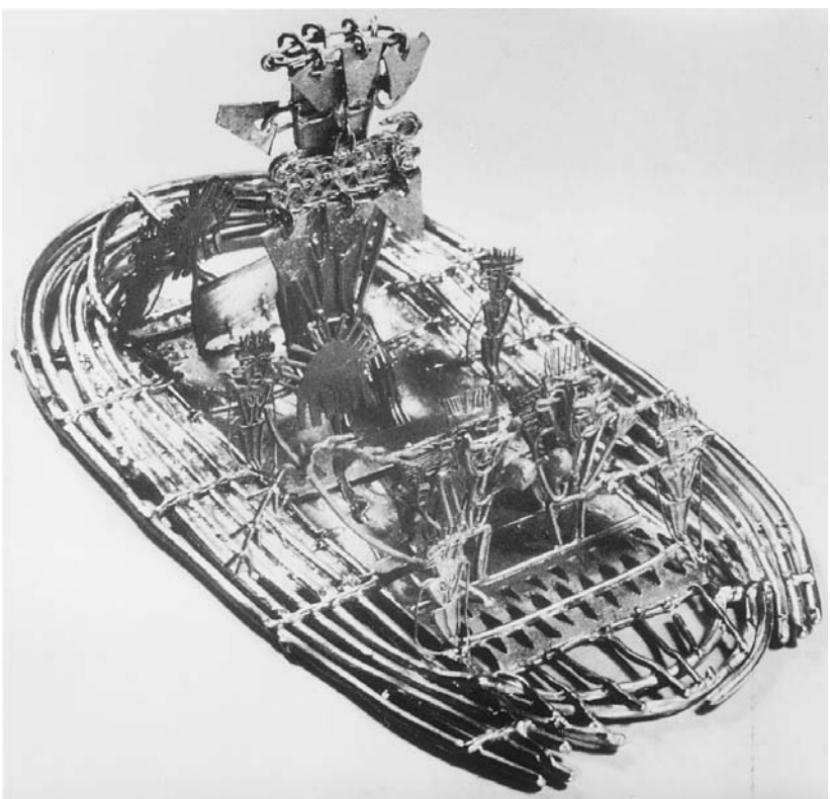
Map of America from a colored copperplate engraving by Arnold Florentin van Langren in 1596. The map shows El Dorado in the form of a lake connecting the Amazon and La Plata river systems, just south of the mountains. (Courtesy of the Staats und Stadtbibliothek, Augsburg)



"How the Indians mine Gold from the Mountain," from an engraving in Theodor de Bry's *America*, 1599, which served as an illustration to some editions of Raleigh's *Discoverie*.



Indians mining for gold. This de Bry engraving from the 1590s bears a striking resemblance to photographs of contemporary alluvial mining in the Amazon. It also appears as an illustration in some editions of the *Discoverie*.



Depiction of a ritual performed by a golden figure in a feather crown with ten attendants (also wearing crowns) on a golden raft, created by Muisca Indian craftsmen. The discovery of the golden object at the bottom of Lake Siecha, not far from present-day Bogotá, suggests a historical basis for the legend of El Dorado. Because the Muisca did not produce gold, but traded for it with other tribes, their gold objects tended to be small. (Courtesy of the Museo del Oro, Banco de la República, Bogotá, Colombia)



Panoramic wallpaper with a scene of El Dorado produced in 1848 from a design by E. Ehrmann, Fr. Zipelius, and A. Fuchs in Rixheim im Elsaß, Germany. (Courtesy of the Deutsches Tapetenmuseum, Kassel)



*Mobbed by Curl-crested Toucans*, an illustration from an early edition of Henry Walter Bates' *Naturalist on the River Amazons*, first published in 1863.

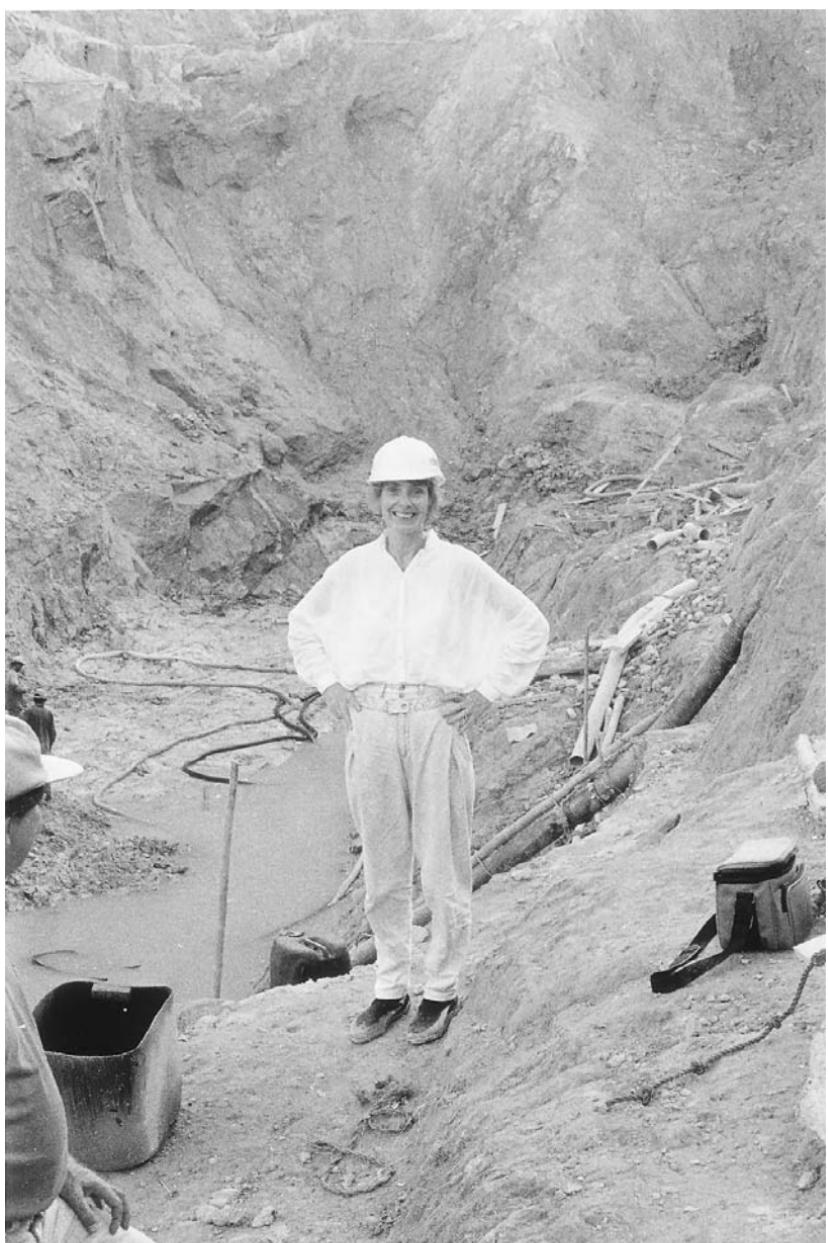


Claude Lévi-Strauss and his companion, the monkey Lucinda, seated at his feet, in the Amazon during his journey there in 1937. (Photograph from *Saudades do Brasil*, reprinted by permission of Claude Lévi-Strauss)



*Colonel Roosevelt and Colonel Rondon  
At Navaïté on the River of Doubt  
From a photograph by Cherrie*

Theodore Roosevelt (left) and Colonel Rondon on an outcropping at the falls of Navaïté on the River of Doubt in 1913. The photographer was George K. Cherrie, a naturalist at the American Museum of Natural History, which partially financed the expedition. (Frontispiece to Roosevelt, *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*)



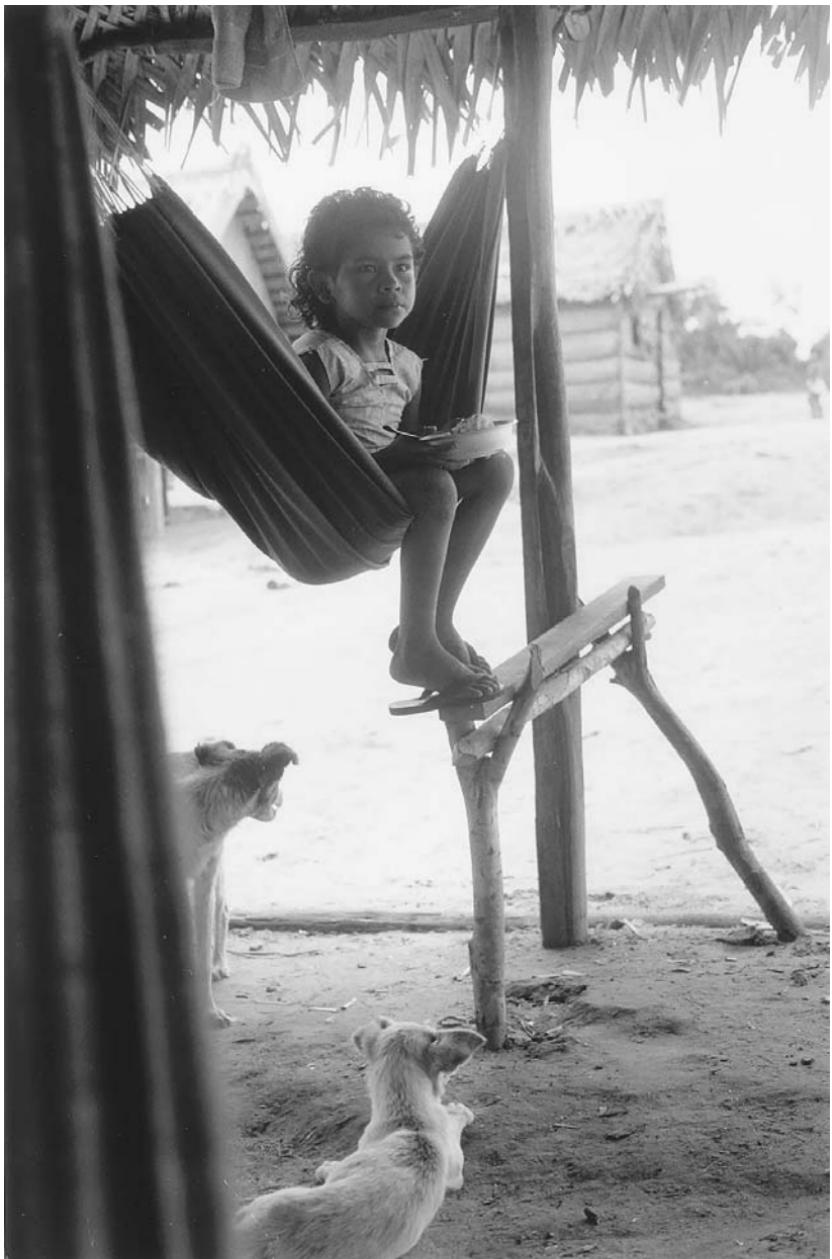
Candace Slater, in a similar pose and helmet, surveying a gold-producing gully in the Lucky River gold camp, on the Tapajós River, some eighty years later.



Father and son eating manioc, Parintins. The father is a taxicab driver who tells various stories of Cobra Norato.  
(Photo by Candace Slater)



Boy fishing with bow and arrow, Paraná de Abuí, Trombetas River. His straight black hair suggests Indian blood and underscores the ethnic mixture in some *remanescente* communities. (Photo by Candace Slater)



Girl on a hammock that serves as both chair and bed, countryside near Maués. Her mother has just told us a story of how the girl was almost carried off to the Encante. Her father has been working in the gold mines a day's journey from their home ever since she was born. (Photo by Candace Slater)



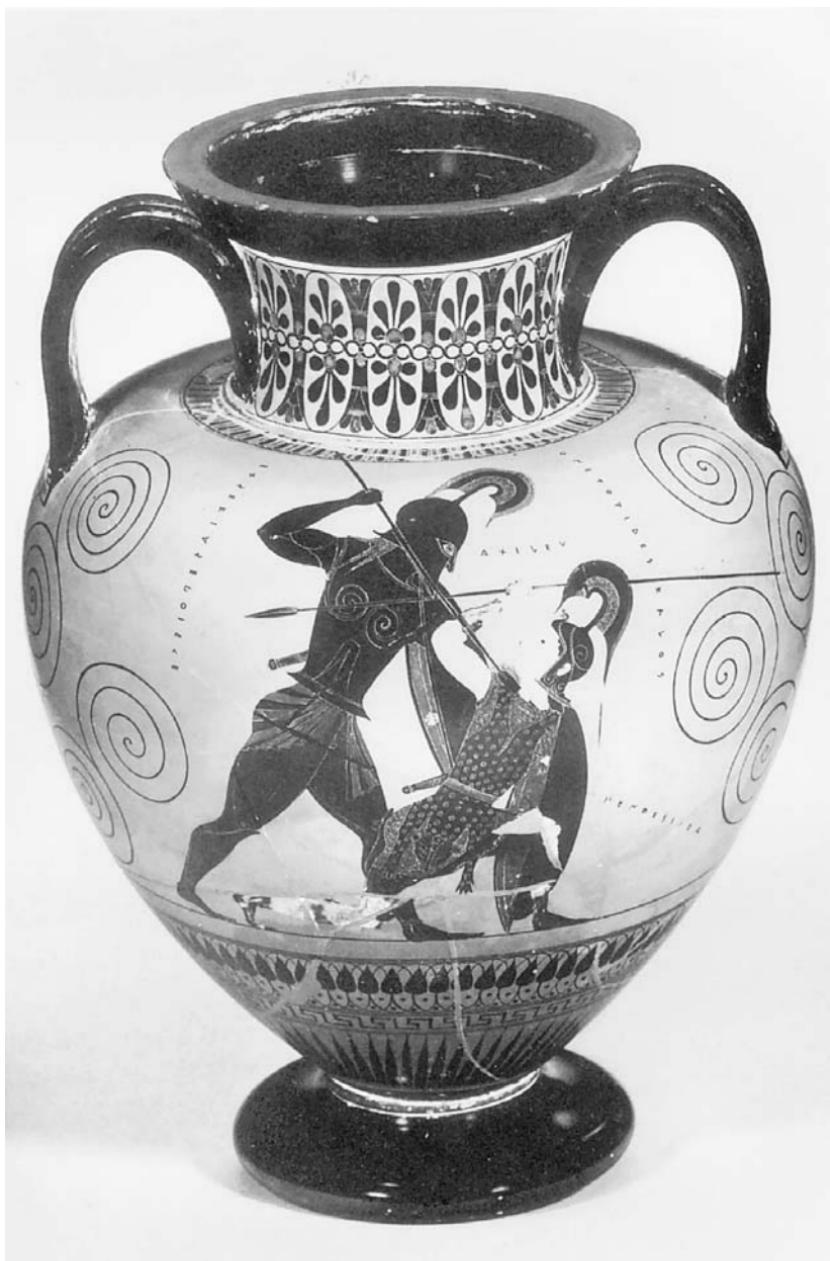
Boys outside an automobile repair shop in Parintins. Both participate in the Boi-Bumbá festival and have learned numerous stories of the Encantados from their grandmother, as well as from schoolbooks. (Photo by Candace Slater)



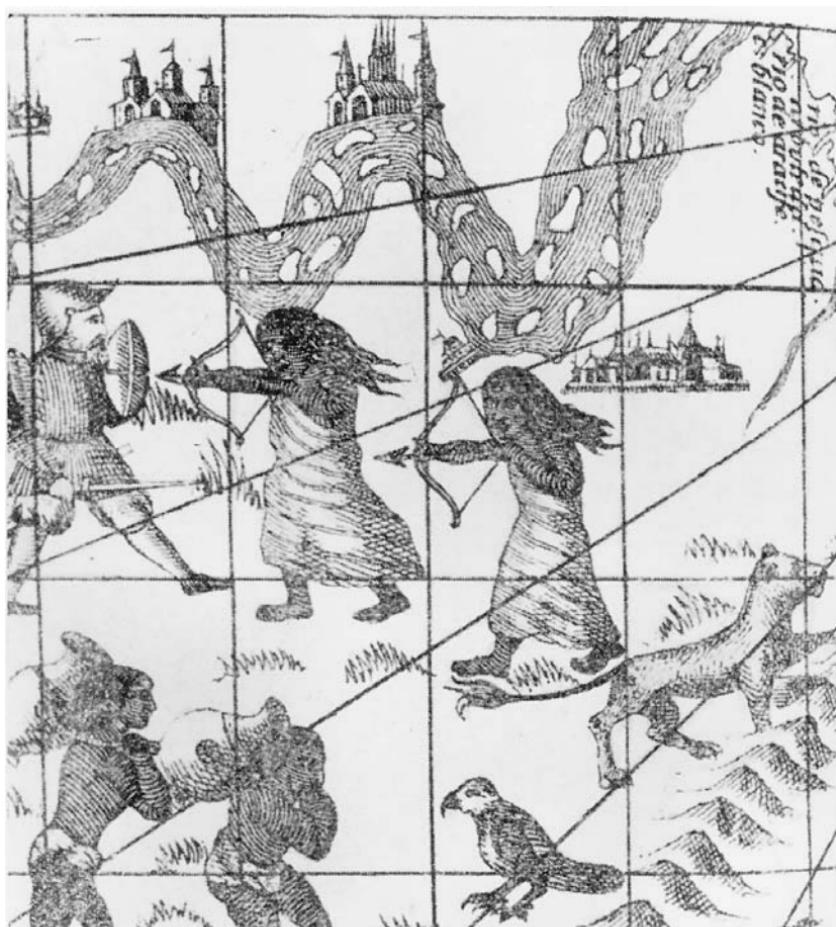
A teller of Encantado stories, Parintins. The woman claims to have once visited the Encante herself. (Photo by Candace Slater, previously printed in Slater, *Dance of the Dolphin*)



Old man in a doorway, rubber camp, Juruá River. The man was born in the northeast and intersperses stories about northeastern outlaws with others about Enchanted Beings.  
(Photo by Candace Slater)



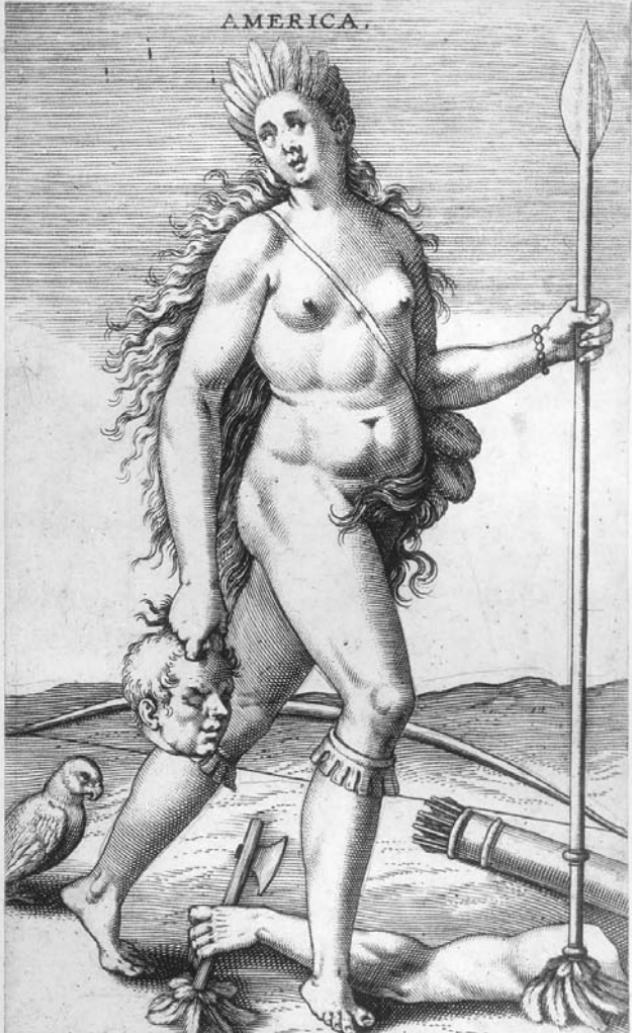
Duel between Achilles and the Amazon queen Penthesileia.  
Attic black-figure neck-amphora, by Exekias, ca. 530 B.C.  
(Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)



Detail from a world map by Sebastian Cabot, 1544,  
showing the fighting Amazons. From *El Patiti, El Dorado,  
y las Amazonas*, by Roberto Levillier. (Courtesy of Emecé  
Editores, S.A.)

L'Amérique.

AMERICA.



43. *Estrix dira hominum scatet auro America: pollet  
Arcu: psittacum alit: plumea ferta gerit.*

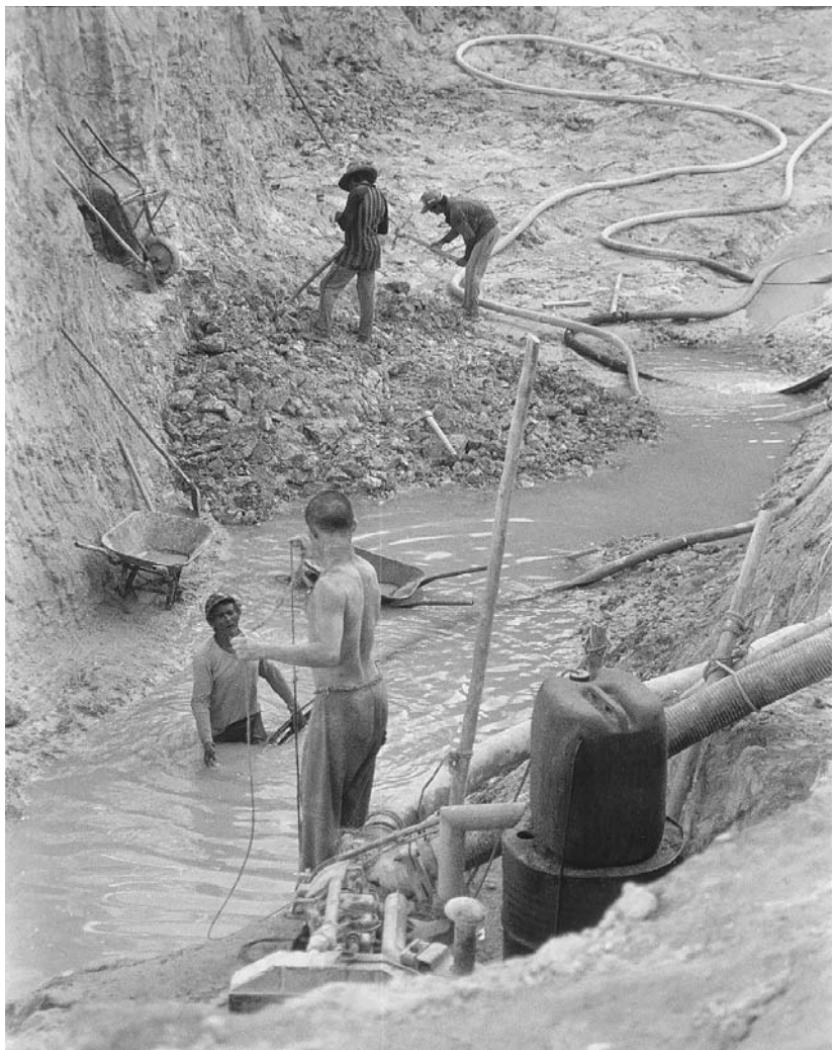
L'Amérique telle a dévoré beaucoup d'hommes, elle  
produit de l'or, est adroite à tirer l'arc; nourrit  
des perroquets et porte des ornements en plumes.

America, by Theodor Galle, from the series *Proposgraphia*, published by Philipp Galle around 1600. The personification is of an Amazon "devourer of men," who carries a feathered spear in her left hand and the head of a vanquished rival in her right. (Courtesy of the Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg)

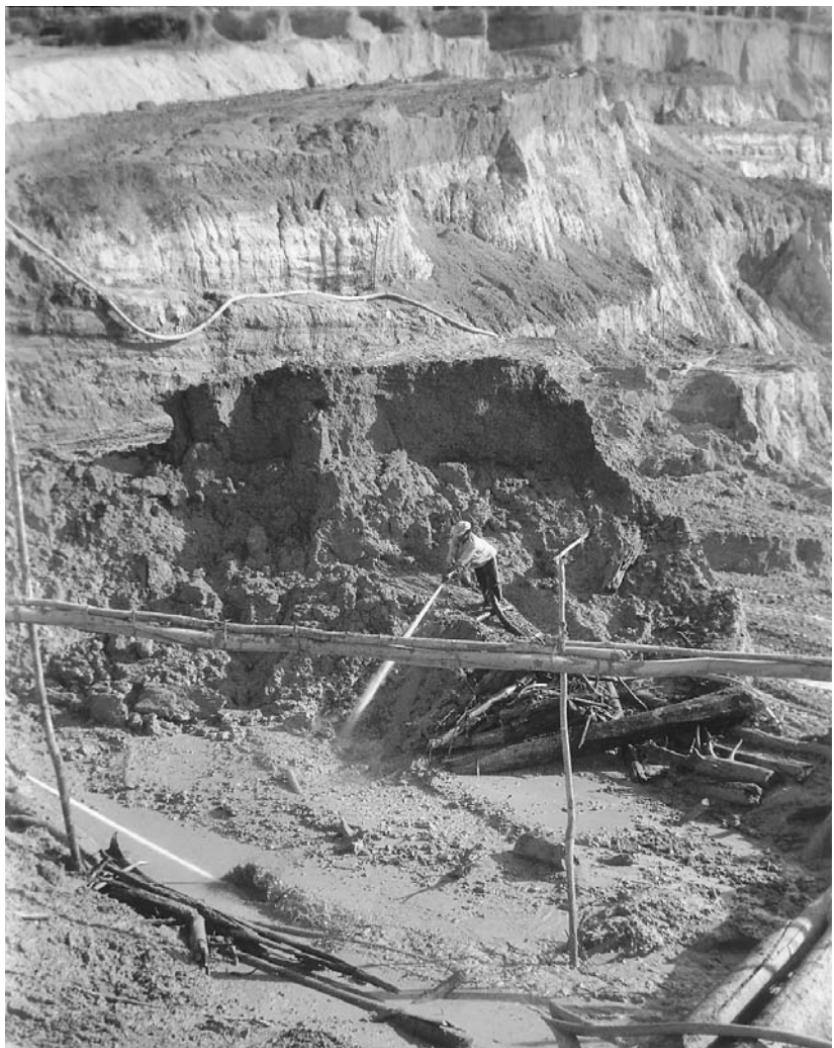
40 PAGES! ALL ART!!!



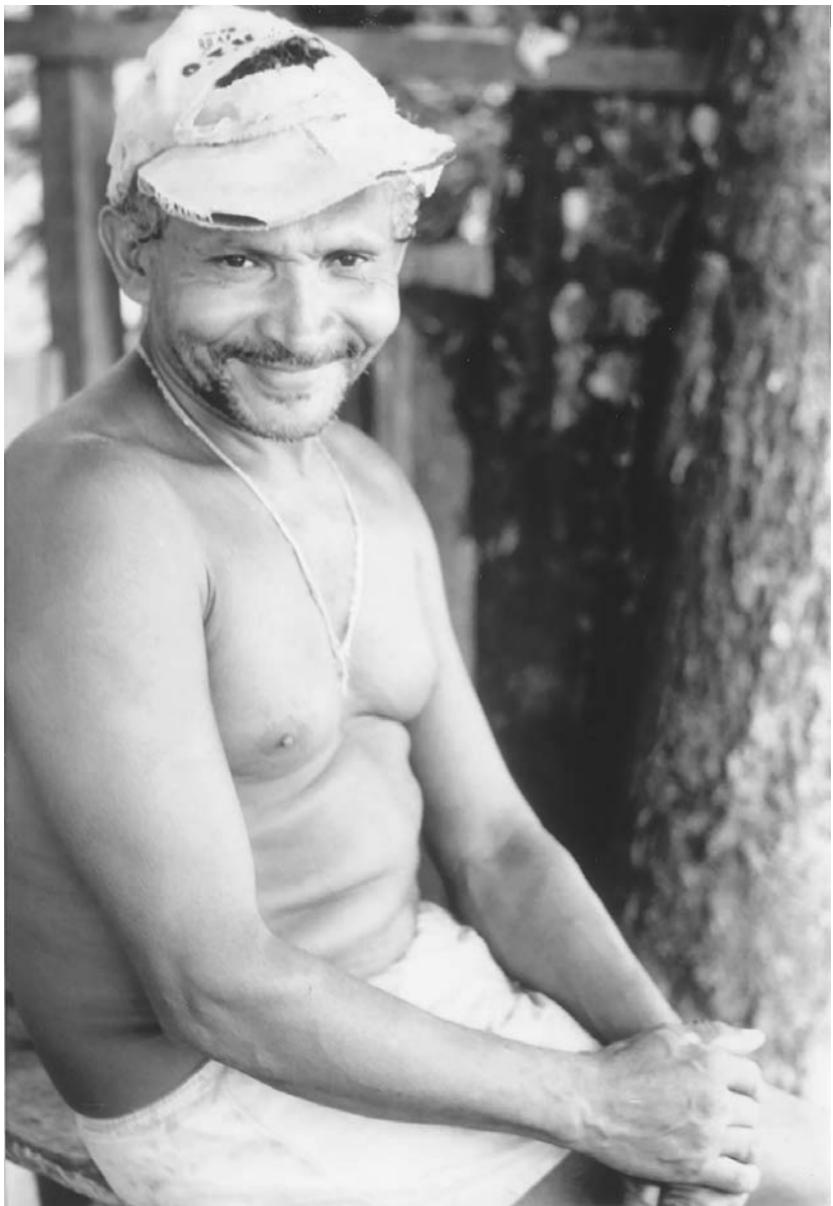
Cover illustration, AMAZON GAZONGA, BAD GIRLS OF THE JUNGLE, proves that the Amazons as a concept remain alive and well. (© JASON WALTRIP)



Alluvial mining in the Tapajós region. Miners may spend hours or even whole days up to their knees or waists in mercury-contaminated water that resembles curdled milk. (Photo by Candace Slater)



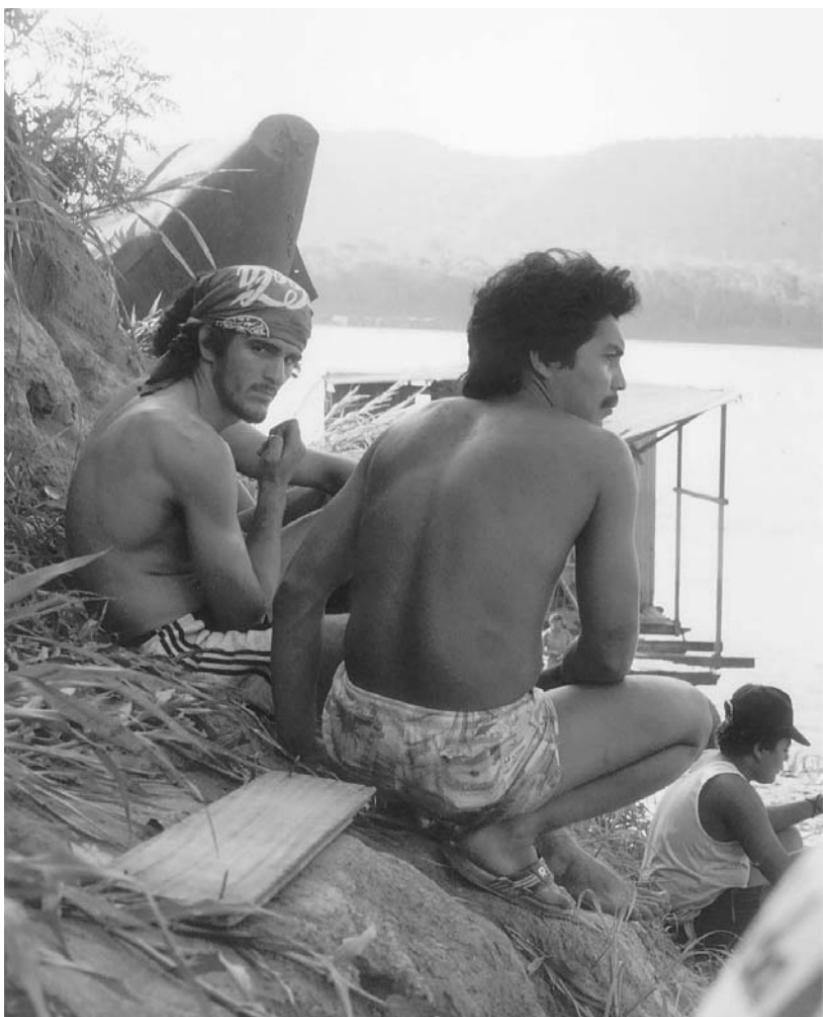
Blasting with a water jet. The water dislodges sediment that is then scrutinized for gold. It also erodes large chunks of previously forested land. (Photo by Candace Slater)



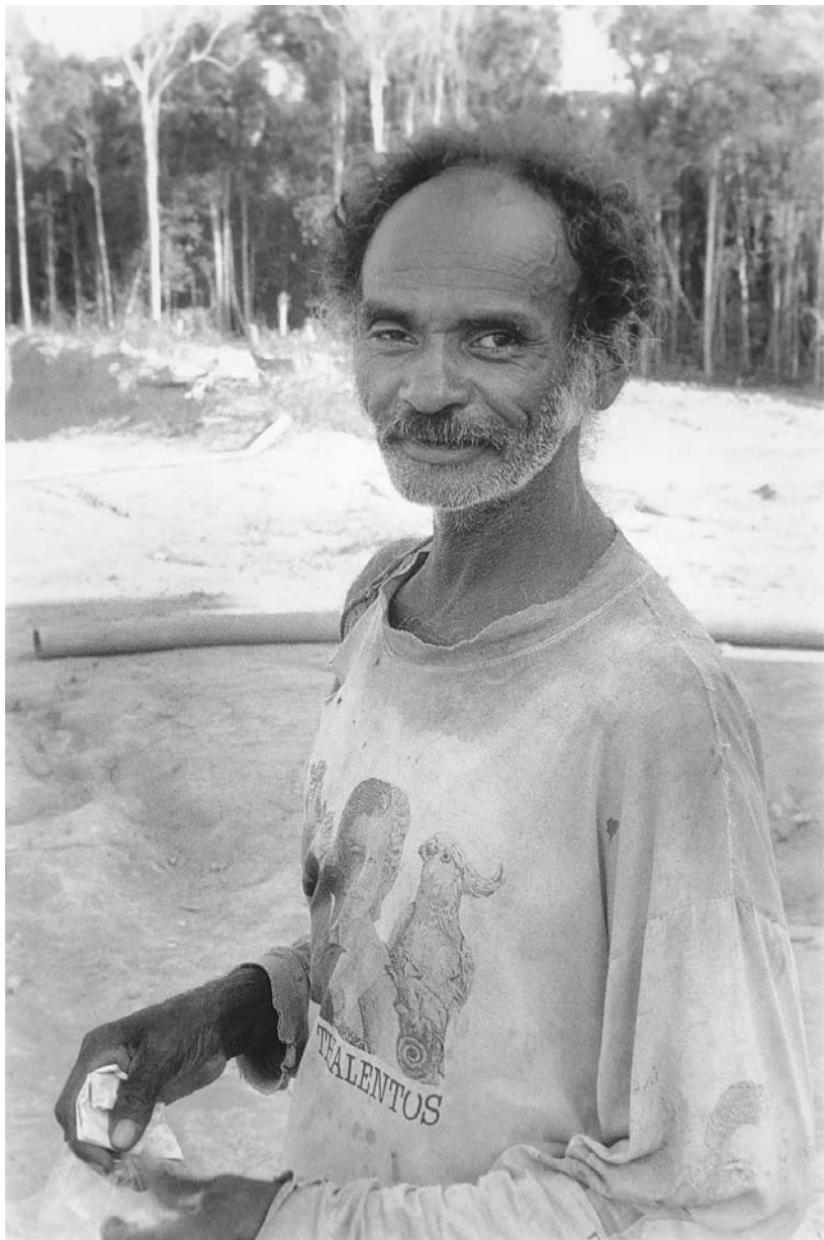
An older miner with a rosary around his neck. "White Rat" has worked in a succession of gold mines in different parts of the Brazilian Amazon and French Guiana for more than twenty years. "If things don't pan out here, my next stop is Suriname," he says. (Photo by Candace Slater)



Miners parked in front of the *remanescente* community of Pancada, on the Erepecuru River, attempt to load a horse into their small boat. (Photo by Candace Slater)



Young miners in Rondônia. During the 1980s and 1990s, raft mining, which employs divers who descend from platforms directly on (as opposed to on the banks of) a body of water, was common on the Madeira River. The man in the bandanna, a diver, died less than a week after this photo was taken when his air hose was cut by a jealous fellow miner. (Photo by Candace Slater, previously printed in Slater, *Dance of the Dolphin*)



Miner from the interior of Maranhão, Tapajós River. Note the rain forest images on his shirt. Although the man's mouth is closed here, his four front teeth are gold. (Photo by Candace Slater)

# Our rainforest policy.

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The two versions of the McDonald's Rain Forest flyer. The text on the flip side begins with the assertion

# Our rainforest policy.

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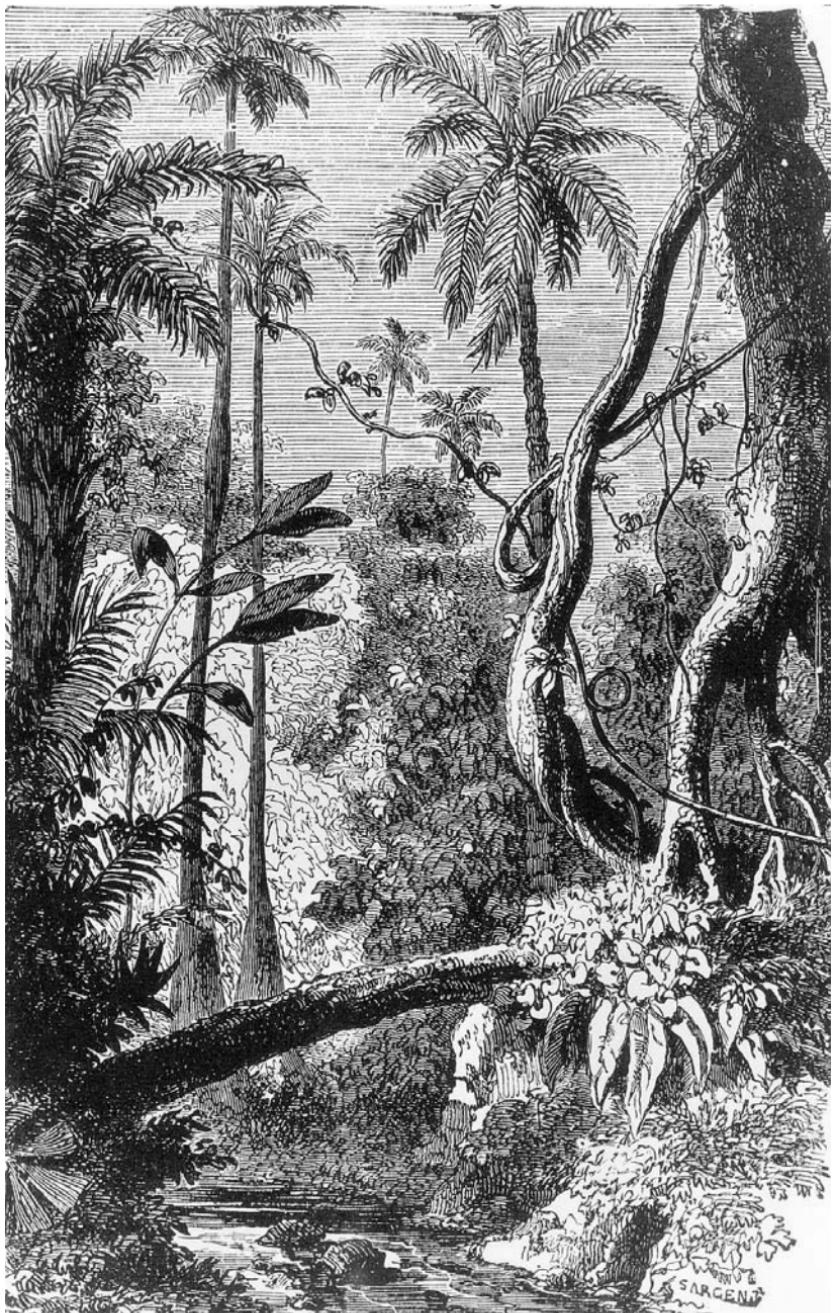


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"Tropical rainforests play an important role in the Earth's ecology." (Used by permission of the McDonald's Corporation)



A photograph of the rain forest taken in the late 1930s by Claude Lévi-Strauss and printed a half-century later in *Saudades do Brasil*. (Reprinted by permission of Claude Lévi-Strauss)



*A Stream in the Forest*, an illustration from *A Narrative of Travels of the Amazon and Rio Negro*, first published in 1853 by Alfred Russel Wallace, with whom Henry Walter Bates journeyed to the Amazon. Although the subject is ostensibly the water, it is the trees that dominate the scene.



(Top left and right) Simoniz car wax ad, featuring Chief Tunabi. The fine type at the bottom of the ad reads, "The harvest of carnauba wax does not damage the Brazilian carnauba palm." (Simoniz Corporation)

(Bottom right) Young Cashinawa Indians in the Peruvian Amazon looking through the photographs of Brazilian native peoples in Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes tropiques*. (Photo by David Allison, used by permission)

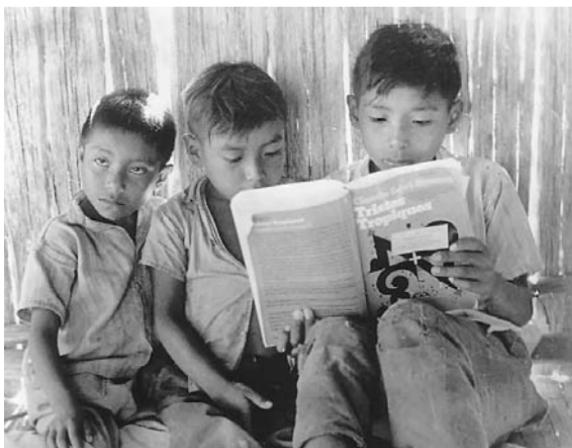
"I bring carnauba wax from  
the Amazon to new Simoniz.  
May it make your car's finish  
the envy of your village."

-Chief Tunabi



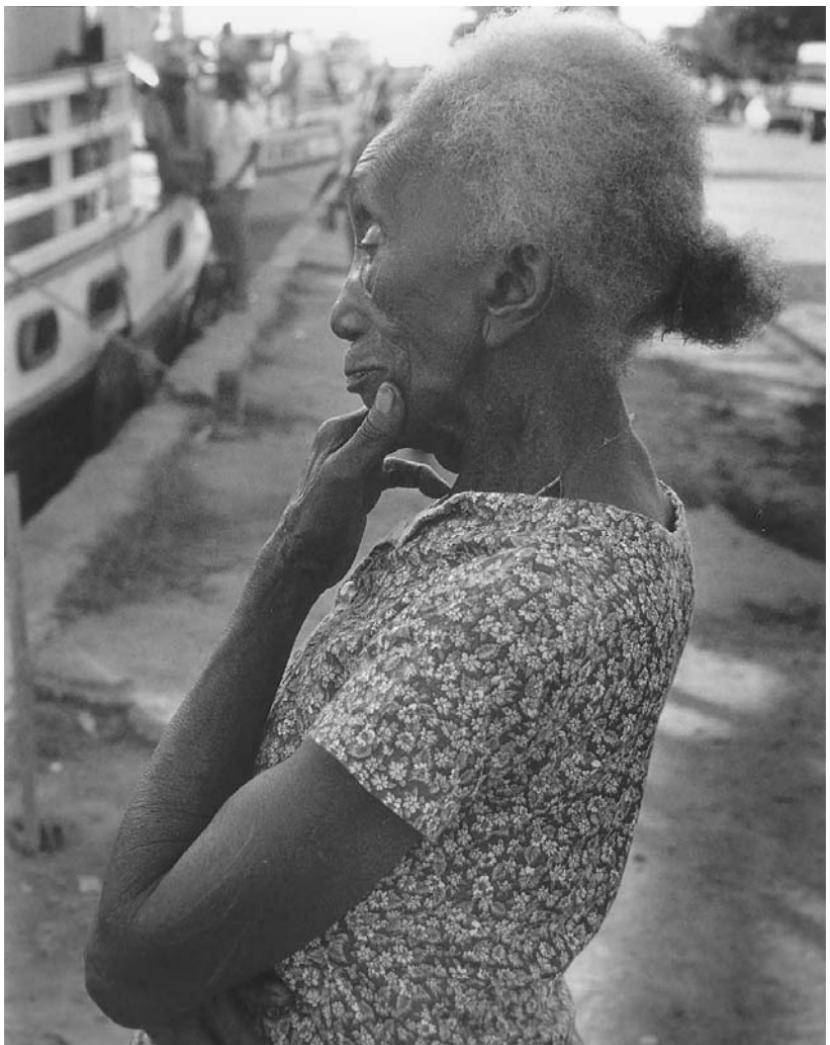
Easy-to-use wax and polish mysteriously unified in one.  
Transcendent total finish for all cars. No dust or streak demons. Magically beads rain.

The harvest of carnauba wax does not damage the Brazilian carnauba palm.

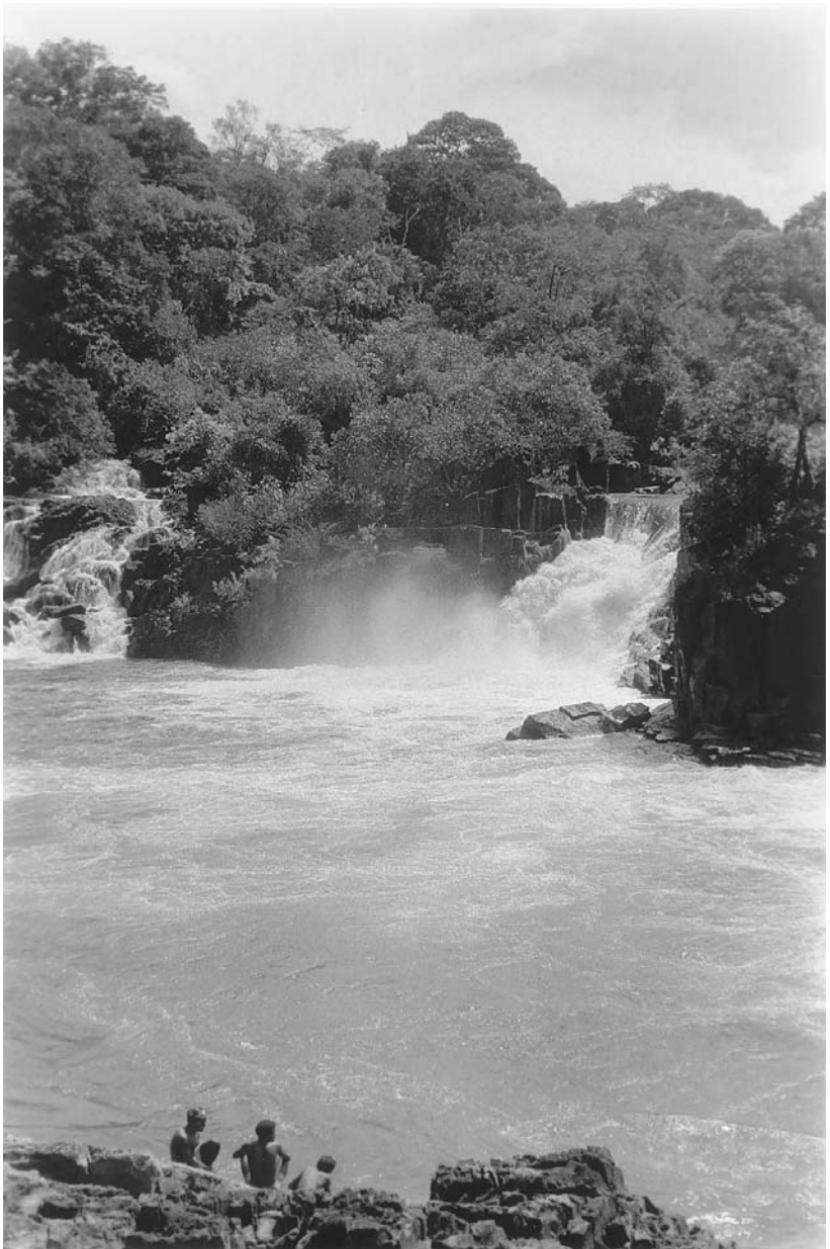




*Remanescente* paddling through the flooded forest on an *igarapé*, or seasonal stream, on the Trombetas River in an area that has seen violent land disputes. (Photo by Candace Slater)



*Remanescente* in the city of Oriximiná, waiting to embark on the boat that will take her back to her community on the Trombetas River. (Photo by Candace Slater)



The waterfalls called Chuvisco (Drizzle) and the accompanying rapids, Erepecuru River. (Photo by Candace Slater)



Old man from Abuí with his grandson in Boa Vista. It is he who tells the story of how he once entered the golden church. He also recounts how his father used to go to visit the old man named Higino, who had privileged access to the lake within a lake. (Photo by Candace Slater)



Family on Abuí Lake. The woman, who is smoking a hand-rolled tobacco cigarette, is a gifted storyteller who recalls her grandfather's accounts of how the *remanescentes* fled the pursuing soldiers with the help of Mother Waterfall.  
(Photo by Candace Slater)



Man in the community of Silêncio, on the Matá River not far from Óbidos. The basket on his back holds tobacco leaves, which he will hang up on the fence to dry in the sun.  
(Photo by Candace Slater)



Two sisters outside a home overlooking Abuí Lake. The women's mother is a healer whom people from miles around seek out, and the docking place before the house is always full of small boats. (Photo by Candace Slater)