
SPR

SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE REVIEW

OPEN ACCESS

Mapping Masculinity on the Rio Roosevelt

Jessica Carey-Webb

Spanish and Portuguese Review 1 (2015): 46–58

Spanish and Portuguese Review files are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



Mapping Masculinity on the Rio Roosevelt

Jessica Carey-Webb
University of Texas at Austin

Abstract: The 1913 geographical and scientific expedition led by Theodore Roosevelt and Cândido Rondon in the Brazilian Amazon explored the previously unmapped River of Doubt, 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 people, and the claiming and naming of the Amazon region. I employ geographical feminism and ecocriticism to understand their depictions of the Amazon and its incorporation into the modern Brazilian state and global imaginary. Roosevelt's invented "wilderness wanderer" asserts a rugged masculinity in American adventurism abroad after the perceived end of US westward expansion. Rondon works to assimilate territory and indigenous groups via facilitated communication, transportation, and educational networks. Roosevelt seeks to reject the modernity and technological innovation of the United States, viewing the Amazon as a final frontier to conquer, where Rondon promotes technology through the telegraph and geographical exploration to incorporate the Amazon into the Brazilian nation. Ultimately, these two leaders demonstrate the tenuous nature of "discovery" and exploration—in mapping the unknown and contacting native peoples, destruction is inevitable.

Keywords: Brazilian Amazon/Amazonía brasileña, ecocriticism/ecocrítica, exploration/exploración, incorporation/asimilación, masculinity/masculinidad, wilderness/tierra salvaje

After a failed bid for a third term in the White House with the Bull-Moose Progressive Party in 1913, Theodore Roosevelt, known for an indomitable love of adventure and ruling with a "big stick," was defeated. At fifty-five, Roosevelt received an offer from the Museo Nacional de Buenos Aires to travel to South America to lecture and tour, after which he planned to join his son, Kermit, who was working on the railroad in Brazil for an Amazonian cruise. 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. Approached by the Brazilian government to accompany Roosevelt and offer expert guidance of the region, Colonel Cândido Rondon—one of the foremost Brazilian explorers of the Amazon who had been working for years establishing telegraph lines and "opening up" the Brazilian interior—agreed to help lead the quickly renamed Expedição Científica Roosevelt-Rondon. Rondon suggested exploring the Rio da Dúvida, the headwaters of which he had encountered during one of his telegraph missions, and whose route was unknown and unmapped.

In this article, I compare two complementary primary sources: Roosevelt's *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*—a 360-page travelogue written during the journey, the tone of which is at once an adventure novel and field-guide for

future wilderness explorers—and *Rondon conta sua vida*—Rondon’s life memoirs published in 1958, which include his reflections on the trip years later, as the travel diary he kept was never published.¹ *Through the Brazilian Wilderness* was originally released serially in the *Washington Post* before appearing as a whole in 1914. Rondon’s life memoirs, dictated in his own words, were recorded by Esther de Viveiros. Rondon dedicates just three small chapters of the 626-page life account to the trip, suggesting the importance of his work outside of this journey. Additional documentation of the expedition was extensive and includes a silent film, photographs, and travel diaries of all major participants (excluding Rondon), as well as the 2005 best-selling publication of *River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt’s Darkest Journey*, a dramatic historical retelling by Candace Millard.

I bring to the materials of this expedition an interest in mapping and national development, informed by theories of geographical feminism and ecocriticism. While ecocriticism is certainly a contemporary lens, it is, in some measure, explicitly anticipated in the source texts that extensively remark on and record the flora, fauna, and landscape of the Amazon. According to Gillian Rose, pioneering feminist geographer, landscape pleasures call to the male geographer to discover and conquer, taking a voyeuristic enjoyment in gazing on the Other and establishing a heroic narrative based on masculinity and ego. “[Geographers] see themselves as the ego-ideal hero in a landscape; they can assert and establish their manliness in the face of Nature” (Rose 108). This geographer’s gaze is precisely the blend of egoism, voyeurism, and constructed masculine rhetoric that is apparent in Roosevelt’s definitions of his exploratory practices. Roosevelt often remarks on his advanced perceptions and experience in the wilderness, and thus his almost super-human ability to appreciate what he sees: “Yet the desolate landscape had a certain charm of its own, although not a charm that would be felt by any man who does not take pleasure in mere space, and freedom and wildness and in plains standing empty to the sun, the wind, and the rain” (Roosevelt 150). Marisa Mies and Vandana Shiva deem dichotomies of nature “colonizations,” and examine 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” (251). 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.

The literal putting-on-the-map accomplished by Roosevelt and Rondon during this trip could be considered a synecdoche for the larger process of gradual incorporation of the Amazon region and peoples into the Brazilian state and the global economic system. The twenty-sixth US president famous

1 Diacon notes: “Curiously, all of his diary entries for the Roosevelt-Rondon expedition are missing, as is his unpublished account of the trip. Likewise, the official ‘Orders of the Day’ for the expedition are missing for the days of the descent of the River of Doubt” (44).

for embodying a sort of rugged masculinity through westward expansion and imperialism, Roosevelt understood adventure by his ideals of manhood, originality, and authority. As a traveler in South America, particularly in the Amazon, Roosevelt contends that there are still trails to be blazed in an era when great explorations and exploratory work was seemingly coming to an end. “There yet remains plenty of exploring work to be done in South America, as hard, as dangerous, and almost as important as any that has already been done. . . . Explorers and naturalists of the right type have open to them in South America a field of extraordinary attraction and difficulty” (Roosevelt 140). Rondon, in many ways an embodiment of the masculine explorer Roosevelt admired, worked to push modernity and assimilation of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon into the Brazilian state. Roosevelt’s motivation for participating in this project involved a need to reclaim his masculinity following his election defeat through domination of the wild in his own brand of tourism. In turn, Rondon guides Roosevelt through a jungle that he is not merely touring, but does not fully inhabit either. The difference in purpose between the two men, in some measure, underscores the North American’s expectation of dominance and superiority, along with an attraction to the supposedly unknown and savage, of which Rondon serves as mediator. For both men, there is a tension between the modern and the wilderness—the city and the frontier. Roosevelt seeks to reject the modern by wandering in an imagined wild while Rondon wants to bring modernization and technological innovation to the Amazon.

As westward expansion in the United States came to an end, and with the decline of Spain as a world power following the Spanish–American War of 1898, the ideals of Manifest Destiny turned outward. Roosevelt’s exploits abroad included a well-documented, Smithsonian-sponsored safari hunting tour in Africa in 1910, solidifying the former president’s image as an international big game hunter and explorer of the wild.² While Roosevelt’s domestic concerns turned toward conservation, his environmental interests abroad remained free to explore uninhibited. As part of an expansionist mission, supposed virgin territories took on increased importance, and exploratory trips of South America became well-funded missions of academics, geographers, adventurers, and expresidents alike who employed various new technologies of documentation and cataloging in their endeavors.³

At the turn of the century, Brazil was also in a moment of expansion and incorporation, as well as establishment in the international market through the Amazonian rubber boom (1879–1912). With the creation of the Rondon Commission in 1907, Rondon led the charge in establishing telegraph outposts

2 Roosevelt also published a travelogue during this journey entitled *African Game Trails: An Account of the African Wanderings of an American Hunter/Naturalist* (New York: Scribner, 1910).

3 For details regarding some of these technologies and exploratory journeys, see Salvatore.

in the Amazon Basin. As his commission set up these harbingers of modernity, the land was surveyed and mapped extensively, encouraging settlement of the interior. Drawing on his ideals of positivism and his experience as a militarily educated person of indigenous background, Rondon saw cultural integration of indigenous peoples and infrastructure development as equally important in the establishment of a modern Brazil. These positivist ideals of order and progress motivated Rondon in attempting to create a unified humanity and positivist utopia in his ideal new Brazil. Thus, Brazil depended heavily upon the use of technology in leading the way toward human progress, with Amazonia being the Edenic space to remedy errors of the initial conquest (Diacon 2004). Unification depended upon incorporation, which for natives and their land ultimately meant destruction of life as they knew it. In particular, the rubber boom had brought in a stream of transnational development that often depended on forced indigenous labor. Indigenous territory was (and is) incredibly attractive for the establishment of more industry, with little regard to preserving traditional ways of life or the land. The establishment of extractive industries in the Amazon was not necessarily new, but the first rubber boom set a precedent of international exploitation and state interest in the region, creating an increased anxiety and need to “civilize” or eliminate indigenous populations.

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 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, which increasingly descends into the unknown. 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 obstacles 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 Roosevelt suffering from malaria, the expedition finally reencountered “civilization,” having mapped over 1,000 miles of river.

Throughout this journey, as told in *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*, Roosevelt is a commanding North American traveler, a 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 on the “true wilderness wanderer” who would never trod the “beaten path.” 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 of spirit, a certain individualism, 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. Roosevelt’s term also encompasses the geographical explorer, whose gaze itself dominates the landscape he is surveying. This geographer/wilderness wanderer represents an idealized “manly-man” (a term previously coined by Roosevelt) who can aptly dominate through documentation and originality. It is both the ability to dominate and the act of domination that build the idealized masculine explorer.

As ecocritic William Cronon observes, wilderness itself is a construction of modernity dependent on the illusion of a dying frontier and the necessity of a dominating male to rediscover 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 push ideals of a wilderness abroad while domestic protection preserves the “myth of origin” of the nation—the undisturbed, Edenic value of nature. The anxiety of a vanishing frontier adds to the appeal of the Amazon, one of the areas in which Rivers of Doubt still existed. For Roosevelt, who had spent years exploring the American West, establishing national parks, and writing books about his exploits, the perceived lack of virgin territory in the United States presented a crisis of manhood. Where could a true wilderness wanderer wander if the wilderness did not exist?

The idea of the wilderness depends on the native peoples populating the area—another contrast to the modernity of civilization—whom both Rondon and Roosevelt believe must be gradually incorporated into the nation. For Rondon and his positivist ideals, humanity and universal fraternity are the only course toward incorporation:

A incorporação dos índios, sílvcolas, 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, as well as the “proletárias,” or those on the margins of civilization. Demonstrating his ideals of progress, the only truth lies in scientific exploration and humanism, relying on national brotherhood rather than exclusion. To accomplish this, Rondon asserts that Indians must be turned into Brazilians, the first step being mapping their land and establishing contact. Roosevelt, a champion of secular education, believes “sympathetic understanding” toward 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 (or, in Roosevelt’s case, colonialist) solution to the indigenous question. In both cases, this solution leads to a certain destruction of indigenous environments. By creating Brazilians out of Indians, the occupation and extraction from indigenous territory could come to be considered part of a common goal toward building a modern nation.

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!” Rondon was dedicated to nonviolence (Roosevelt notes with shock, “He never killed one!” [110]), and after setting up camp during his telegraph expeditions, he would spend time teaching natives the national hymn of Brazil, along with raising the Brazilian flag every morning, working towards incorporation through cultural anabolism (Diacon 123). Rondon also acknowledged Roosevelt’s agreement to his rules and deferment on treatment of the 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 imagined utopia: “Expulso 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 the Indians, the true owners of the land. Rondon’s mission is to repair the social mistakes of his predecessors. While these sentiments are reflective of Rondon’s positivist ideals, they are complicated by the act of bringing modernity into the forest, as the introduction of technology and placement on the grid lead to a reconquest of space and people. While Rondon sought to serve indigenous peoples and establish his authority through incorporation, Roosevelt was less concerned with the actual well-being of indigenous communities outside of reaffirming his own superiority and adding exotic adventure to his narrative.

Throughout Roosevelt’s account, he presents varying degrees of perceived indigenous civilization, ranging from the *camaradas* (quasi-citizens of mixed blood), “semi-civilized” natives (the Parecí Indians), and the completely “wild savages” (Nhambiquara). In film footage from *River of Doubt*, 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 in shambles. 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. . . . [O]ne 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 somewhat patronizing admiration of the *camaradas* is based entirely on their expertise of the forest, their bodily abilities, and experience in the wilderness. However, 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, that is still limited: “[O]ne 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.

While *camaradas* were already an established workforce, in descriptions of the Parecís Indians, a certain attraction based on future potential is apparent: “The Parecís Indians, whom we met here, were exceedingly interesting. They were to all appearance an unusually cheerful, good-humored, pleasant-natured people. Their teeth were bad; otherwise they appeared strong and vigorous, and there were plenty of children” (183). Roosevelt emphasizes the Parecís’s normalcy and potential as future workers. The Parecís have begun the process of incorporation by living in settlements around Rondon’s telegraph stations, laboring in small-scale farming, and dressing in “shirts and trousers” (184). Having already begun the process of civilization—despite their poor dental hygiene—they are presented as an interesting, childish people that the American imperial gaze can scout across continents. While these definitions appear overly simplistic, Roosevelt does demonstrate a type of respect for the natives he encounters, especially when they can be seen as a future workforce or as inextricable parts of their natural environment.

In contrast to the relatively “domesticated” *camaradas*, and the somewhat attractive Parecís, the Nhambiquara remain unsettled and are considered dangerous, yet still appealing. As Roosevelt writes about Rondon’s fair treatment of the Indians, he remains wary of the Nhambiquaras’s 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 Parecís. (173)

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” (Roosevelt 241). These “stages of culture” serve to categorize natives in the different zones that Roosevelt enters. In Africa, perhaps they are more developed or closer to US ideals of civilization, yet the indigenous groups of Brazil are more appealing due to their racial makeup and role in wilderness

creation and expertise. Roosevelt often details the Nhambiquara beauty at length, 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” (Roosevelt 209). 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 an attraction to the conviviality of the Nhambiquara—they are comfortable not only in their nudity, but with each other (as seen in their freedom with the same sex).

In contrast, Rondon seeks to affirm the humanity of these indigenous peoples and note their superior qualities. Rondon’s memoirs highlight the importance of the mixed-race Amazonian *caboclos*, 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 “eminete chefes” from North America never fully recuperate from the journey, Rondon states that the *camaradas* (“nossos homens”), although beat down and over-worked, show a resilience presumably unique to their skill as workers and racial makeup. From an ecocritical perspective, the place of native peoples in a supposed “wilderness for adventure” depends upon how much both nature and man submit to civilization. “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 should be allowed to flourish without our intervention” (Cronon 74). This Other constitutes not just the natives but the land itself, which serves as the challenge Roosevelt is determined to surmount, while Rondon is more concerned with the “flourishing” of the native peoples through the technologically led incorporation of the land.

As a wilderness wanderer, Roosevelt has very specific purposes. He declares: “Our trip was not intended as a hunting-trip but as a scientific expedition” (298). Roosevelt proposes to map and catalog, but in the spirit of travel and adventure, thus partaking in his own unique brand of tourism. In contrast, Rondon spent decades of his life working in the Amazon. At a pivotal moment in the expedition, after the loss of a *camarada* named Simplicio in the rapids, Roosevelt and Rondon convene and Roosevelt airs his concerns over the safety of the journey. Rondon, in the practical and pragmatic leadership style for which he was known, informs the former president of the impossibility of turning back, but 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)

Rondon speaks of Roosevelt in his memoirs with a tone of resigned annoyance, whereas Roosevelt repeatedly goes out of his way to compliment and praise Rondon. 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. As Todd Diacon notes: "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" (44). While this subservience is implicit in Rondon's narrative, it seems he is pushed into it by the Brazilian government, who is sponsoring the journey. Furthermore, Rondon 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 Rondon is rather wary of. It seems that the relationship between the two men was characterized by Roosevelt's unabashed adulation and Rondon's more reserved acceptance of Roosevelt as the leading name on the expedition.

Along with masculine authority and frontier skill, perceived danger helps create a true wilderness wanderer. Roosevelt's descriptions of the flora and fauna of the Amazon create a sort of femme fatale of the jungle. This space is described as not only delicate and beautiful but also violent, unforgiving, and irresistibly attractive: "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" (Roosevelt 221). Deep valleys hold the key to further industrialization (rubber-trees), while innocent butterflies flit forward from a "dark stillness." This depiction

of the wilderness is a contradiction of apparent beauty behind which lurks danger, all part of its seduction. While the female nature contains the power of the unknown, it waits for the masculine conqueror to overtake and tame it. In ecofeminism, the male geographer's relationship to the land is described as unproductive, indeed a complete waste: "Instead they use up and consume this wild nature or the land as a commodity, and having consumed it they leave only a heap of waste, as they do when they consume other goods. Therefore, the result of this yearning, which they hope to satisfy through consumption-based tourism is: They destroy what they yearn for" (Mies and Shiva 134). Roosevelt, as a wealthy, powerful outsider within the Brazilian interior, pushes towards an adventure that bolsters his masculine identity; yet, by putting this territory on the map, he self-defeatingly feminizes and destroys. The wilderness becomes a commodity, where wilderness wandering is something that cannot be sustained because of the very consumption of space.

Essential to spatial conquer is the naming and renaming project that the expedition carries out. 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 leading collector on the expedition), 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.

In one of the most famous photographs from the expedition, 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 (Figure 1; Lyra). 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.⁴ Not only physically disrupting the natural setting, this signpost becomes a declaration of territory for modernity, geography, and "civilized" man, and suggests the importance the Brazilian nation at this stage of development gives to the United States.

4 An expedition undertaken by George Miller Dyott, a North American Amazonian explorer and aviator, confirmed the route of the Roosevelt/Rondon Scientific Expedition thirteen years later in 1927. Footage was included in the film *River of Doubt: Roosevelt-Rondon Expedition*.



Figure 1. From left to right: George Cherrie, Lieutenant João Lyra, Dr. José Antonio Cajazeira, Theodore Roosevelt, Cândido Rondon, Kermit Roosevelt.

As Gillian Rose describes: “And this narcissism . . . also underpins the claim fully to know the land: it ‘apprehends an objective reality which is wholly manifest and exists solely for him: he misses nothing’—hence, once again, the authority of geographical knowledge of landscape” (Rose 108). The egoism of the explorer or male geographer is apparent in claiming ownership of the land, as it does with the renaming and implantation of Roosevelt on the Rio da Dúvida. 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 inseparable from the spatial order, as supposed virgin territories contain native inhabitants. This organization links Roosevelt not only to Rondon but also to Brazil for as long as the river is contained within the Brazilian map.

As the film *River of Doubt* announces towards its conclusion: “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.” 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 TÉODORO** in bolded capital letters covers the other rivers, naming and claiming the river. The Rio Teodoro thus takes on a dominating importance over the previously discovered rivers. While the official name of the river is the Rio Roosevelt, as Rondon describes, “E que, por ordem do Govêrno 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). 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 at least 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, as 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.

After the end of the voyage and Roosevelt's return to the United States, 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 the 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 Brazilian state of Rondônia bearing his name. The ways in which exploration links with both travel and Roosevelt's own self-described "wilderness wanderer" demonstrate the conquest of the unknown through the mapping and naming of uncharted territory. Common in conquest, Roosevelt's exploration and Rondon's push for order and progress demonstrate a lack of respect for not only native peoples but also the land itself. Fundamentally, the results seem to be that Roosevelt is defeated by the jungle while Rondon carries on his lifelong mission, albeit to the ultimate detriment of the forest and its peoples. Throughout this expedition, while Roosevelt seeks to eschew the shackles of a feminized modernity, Rondon wants to embrace the modern to move towards nationalistic progress and indigenous incorporation. Ironically enough, in the end, despite how self-directed and romanticized Roosevelt's (brief) trip was, it was far less destructive of nature and people's lives than Rondon's cumulative life work.

WORKS CITED

- Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History* 1.1 (1996): 7. Print.
- Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing Together a Nation: Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the Construction of a Modern Brazil, 1906–1930*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- Lyra, João. *Naming of the Rio Roosevelt*. 1914. Photograph. Museu Do Indio, Funai, Rio De Janeiro.
- Mies, Maria, and Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood, 1993. Print.
- Millard, Candice. *River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey*. New York: Doubleday, 2005. Print.
- River of Doubt: Roosevelt-Rondon Expedition*. Perf. Theodore Roosevelt and Cândido Rondon. *YouTube*. 25 Feb. 2010. Web. 8 Dec. 2013.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. *Through the Brazilian Wilderness*. New York: Scribner, 1914. Print.
- Rondon, Cândido Mariano da Silva, and Esther de Viveiros. *Rondon conta sua vida*. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria São José, 1958. Print.
- Rose, Gillian. *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993. Print.
- Salvatore, Ricardo D. "Local versus Imperial Knowledge: Reflections on Hiram Bingham and the Yale Peruvian Expedition." *Nepantla: Views from South* 4.1 (2003): 67–80. *Project MUSE*. Web. 1 Apr. 2014.