

Amazonia as Palimpsest: Readings and Misreadings in Travel Books

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Naturalism

- Darwin's biological theories.
- Auguste Comte's reliance on scientific ideas of Positivism.
- Hippolyte Taine's application of deterministic theories on literature.

Inglês de Souza (Óbidos, PA, 1852-1918)



Taxonomy

- Environment
- Settlement Pattern
- Rites of Passage
- Music and Dance
- Religion and Magic
- Warfare
- Social Organization
- Mythology
- Fauna
- **Life Cycle**
- Domestic Activities
- Dress and Ornament
- Trading
- Feasting
- Hunting and Gardening
- Flora
- Language

Palimpsest

Definition:

A parchment or papyrus whose text was scratched and replaced by a new text, under which the old text sometimes still can be read.

Palimpsest



Couvade

Couvade = Hatching = Sympathetic Pregnancy

Edward Said, “The Poet as Oedipus”

“Interpretation fixes meanings more or less precisely and, like scriptural commentary, it enhances the secure presence of author and text. Common sense unfailingly assists reader and writer in believing that a vast positive order stabilizes authors and texts.”

Two modes of reading

- 1) the author tries to suspend his value judgment in order to “read” the meanings of that which is observed, with no other desire than that of fulfilling his professional duty with the utmost precision;
- 2) the author, by contrast, offers subjective and simplistic interpretations incurring in a misreading of cultural codes of the indigenous people.

Three Theoretical Concepts

- Palimpsest
- Reading
- Misreading

Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo

Tratado da Província de Santa Cruz (1576)

Gabriel Soares de Souza

Notícia do Brasil (1587)

Fernão Cardim

Tratados da terra e das gentes do Brasil (1625)

Frei Vicente do Salvador

História do Brasil (1627-1630)

Pe. Simão de Vasconcelos

Chronica da Companhia de Jesu do Estado do Brasil (1663)

Pe. Juan Rivero

Historia de las misiones de los llanos de Casanare y los ríos Orinoco y Meta escrita en el año 1736

Maximiliam, Prince of Wied-Neuwied

Reise in Brasilien (1821)

Carl Von Martius

Reise in Brasilien (1823)

Jules Creveaux

Voyage dans l'Amérique du Sud (1883)

Alfred Simson

Travels in the Wilds of Ecuador and the Exploration of the Putumayo River (1886)

Bento de Figueiredo Tenreiro Aranha

"As explorações e os exploradores do rio Uaupés". *Arquivo do Amazonas*, Ano I, vol. 1, no. 3 (1907)

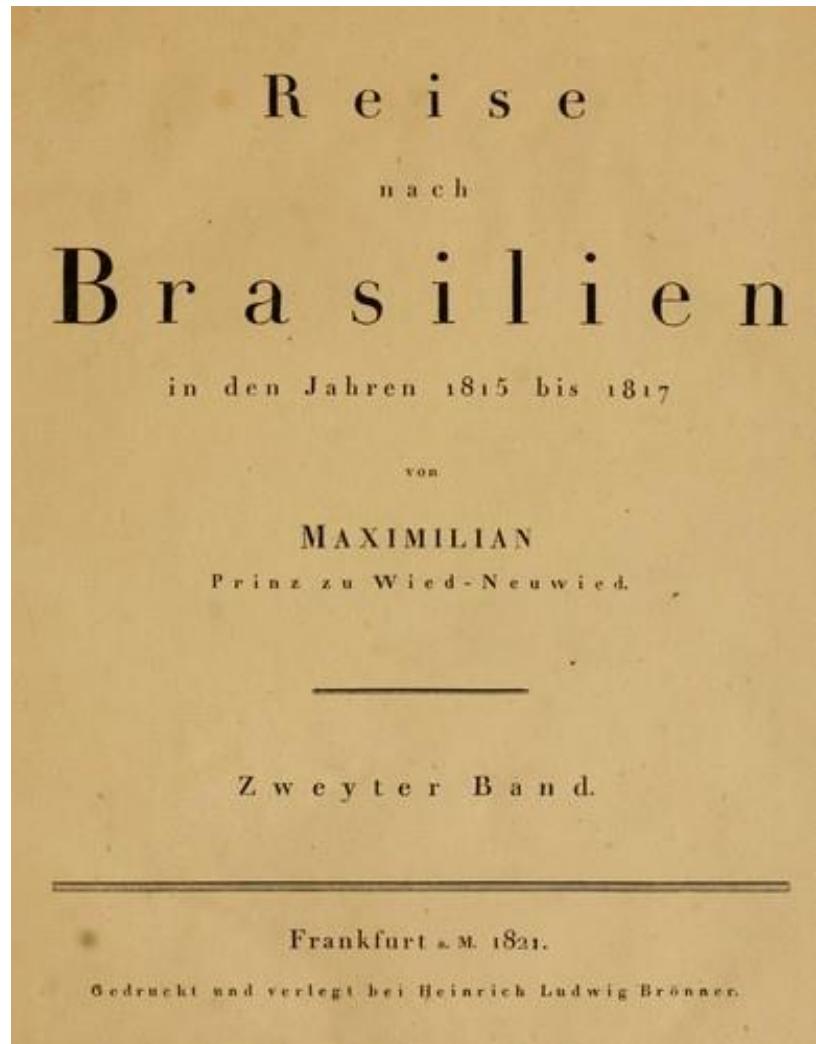
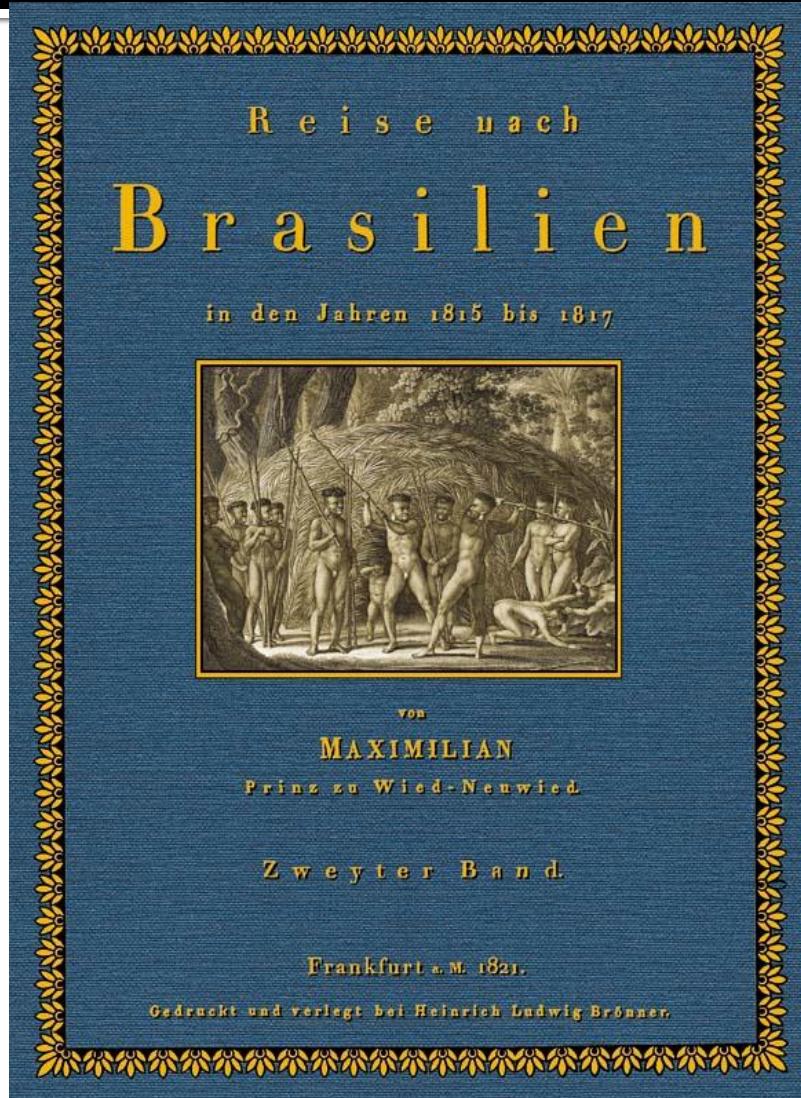
Hamilton Rice

"The River Uaupés." *The Geographical Journal* XXXV, 6 (January 1910)

Joseph Woodroffe

The Upper Reaches of the Amazon (1914)

von Maximilian, Prince of Wied- Nieuwied (Publ. 1821)

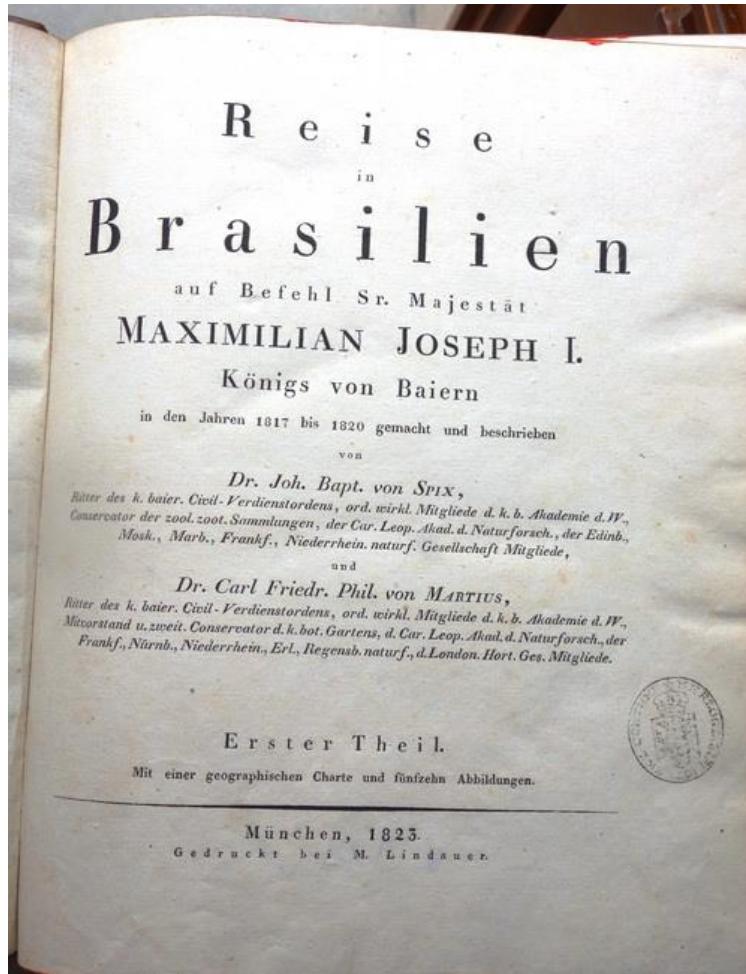


Couvade

After the child is born....

Among the great majority of the Amazonian Indians, the father adopts a diet in a type of quarantine, by remaining in his hammock for a number of days, while the mother goes about her domestic routine.

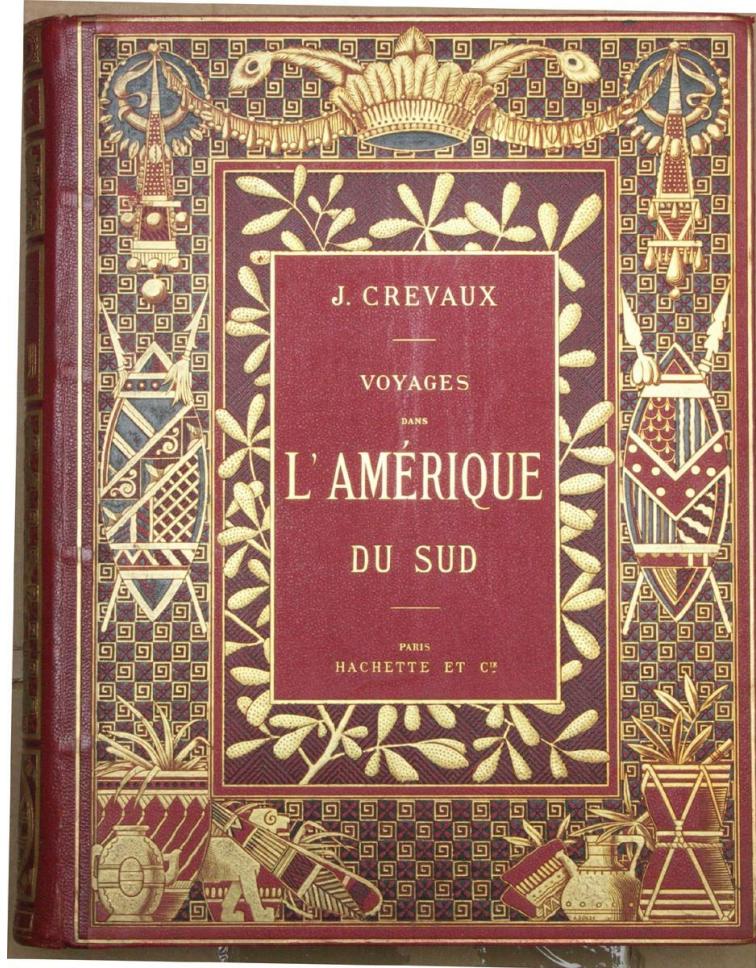
Carl von Martius (Publ. 1823)



Von Martius

“after giving birth to her child, the mother washes the baby in tepid water, rests in her hammock for a period of three months and, like her husband, eats only a porridge made of fish and manioc flour and certain types of birds or fish.”

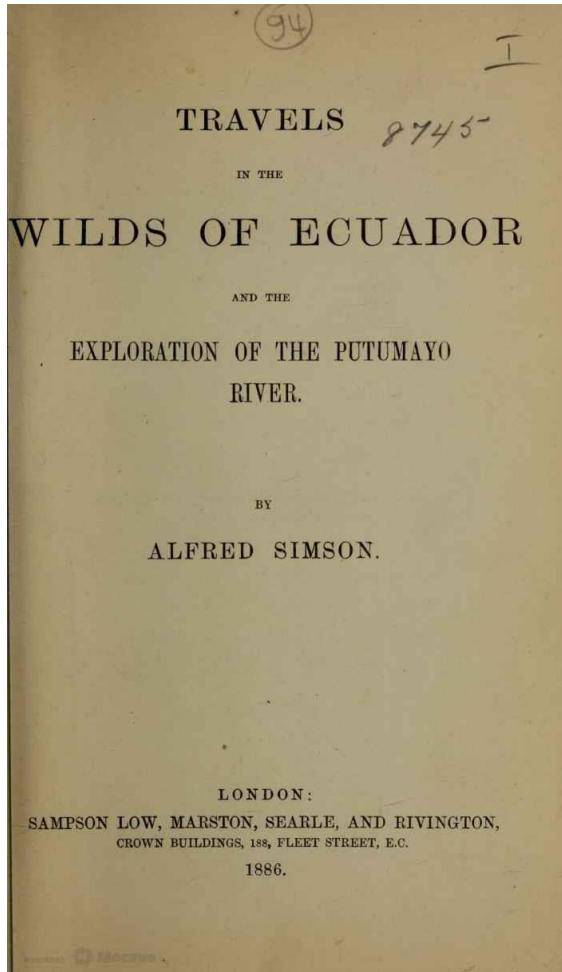
Jules Creveaux (Publ. 1883)



Jules Creveaux

- The husband displays such an austere face that anyone would think that he was sick. But that's not true. In the Rucuios' territory, the husband is the one who stays in the hammock resting, while his wife is always working. My pal Panakiki (the shaman) repeats the order that he had already given to his client, namely, to lie down during a moon cycle and not to eat fish or any game killed by arrow. He should limit his diet to manioc and little fish killed by a narcotic plant called *nicou*. If he disobeys this order, his son will die or will turn into a violent man."

Alfred Simson (Publ. 1886)



Alfred Simson

Couvade is a plague among the Jívaros; and during the child's birth, the mother has to suffer all the consequences outside of her home. She is exposed to the natural elements, while her husband, quietly, remains in his hammock at home, being pampered and on a diet for a few days until he is able to recover from the shock of accepting parental responsibility. To a certain extent his custom still survives today in many civilized Indian settlements along the Solimões. There the Tapuyos, and even in greater degree among the mestizos, after his son or daughter is born, the father remains resting in his hammock, from which he does not leave. During this period, he does not touch any cutting instruments either, afraid that a negative influence may fall upon the newly born

Hamilton Rice

When labor is about to start, the Indian woman retires to the forest. However, if this suddenly occurs at home, all utensils and other objects are removed causing great inconvenience to others. One or two women usually assist the mother. Both, mother and child, return home within a few hours, where they find the father in his hammock, because he feels victim of the fixed idea that he suffers from post-partum syndrome, which requires special attention. Further, he considers himself a patient, as others who also think he is. Whatever this type of laziness is, it would be difficult to determine whether it is associated to hysteria or some kind of curious process of sexual affinity