

Constructing a Supernatural Landscape through Talk: Creation and Recreation in the Central Amazon of Brazil

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This study considers narratives collected among fishing populations, known locally as *caboclo*, in the central Amazon of Brazil. The article utilizes these narratives to oppose prevailing conceptions of the riverine populations of Amazonia as derivative of former aboriginal cultures. The issue raises the larger problematic of identifying any group as “a culture,” defined as a collectivity that recognizes a shared set of meanings. Such a definition presents a “culture” as a perceivable and tangible entity, having inflexible features and boundaries. It raises implicit assumptions among anthropologists that mystify and simplify ethnogenesis as a finite process, fixed in time and space. As Amazonian *caboclo* society has always invented and reinvented itself, it is a clear example of the ongoing historic processes of social formation. The narratives collected here reference this very dynamic. Just as these narratives recount formations and transformations in a landscape undergoing infinite permutation, the narratives stand for *caboclo* society itself—likewise undergoing perpetual change. The study argues that the application of the concepts “traditional” and “native” are misapplied and limited. As the *caboclo* case so well illustrates,

human beings create the traditions to which they subscribe. In so doing, they become native to their own newly created traditions.

The point is especially salient for the peoples of the Amazon mainstem where events, regarded as acts of creation, continuously recur in the present, collapsing the “traditional” and the “contemporary.” For inhabitants of the Amazon floodplain in Brazil, the landscape is an ever-fluctuating terrestrial-aquatic zone, a changing “landscape-in-time.” The narratives presented here, gathered among riverine dwellers of the town of Silves in the central Amazon in Brazil,¹ convey a world in ongoing transformation. In them we find the linkage between narrative event and space to be especially salient, effectively producing a “supernatural landscape” constructed through narrative.

The Portuguese-speaking inhabitants of the Amazon River and its tributaries in Brazil are known locally by the label *caboclo*. The term was initially used to refer to persons of indigenous origin who, according to both official denotation and informal connotation, had “lost their aboriginal roots.” In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries many indigenous peoples were brought downriver to large mission settlements known as *aldeias*, where they were prohibited from speaking their native languages and were educated in European customs. The term *caboclo* derives from *lingua geral*, a variant of Amerindian Tupi-Guarani that was utilized by the Jesuits in South America in the seventeenth century. Although the language is only spoken in a few locations today, numerous terms from *lingua geral* have entered the common Brazilian vocabulary. Among these are ethnic and racial terms whose meanings undergo change in relation to historic circumstance. The term *caboclo* was initially used to refer to the former residents of *aldeias*, who were regarded as “de-tribalized Indians.” By this designation, *caboclo* society was defined by what it was not.

A later usage of the term that was equally pejorative depicts the *caboclo* as a hodgepodge of races and cultures: combining too many attributes, rather than too few. This characterization follows the migration and assimilation into the Amazon basin of immigrants of mixed heritage from former plantation areas of the northeastern littoral. Combining, but fitting neither native American, African descendants, nor European, the *caboclo* fell outside all recognized categories.² The status of “between,” as Victor Turner’s work (1974, 1982) reminds us, is regarded as anarchic and disorderly to those seeking essentialist categories. This may account for the representations of *caboclo* society and identity as “inauthentic” (Pace 1998).

¹The fieldwork on which this article is based is part of a long-term interdisciplinary study begun at Silves in 1999 by coauthor Janet Chernela. Besides coauthor Patricia Pinho, other participants in this interdisciplinary study are Robert Meade and Robert Stallard. Descriptions of the landscape here rely heavily on findings collected by the latter two contributors.

²With populist uprisings in the Amazon between 1835 and 1840 that followed the abdication of the Emperor Dom Pedro I, the term *caboclo* took on further pejorative connotations.

In spite of several studies, including Charles Wagley's classic work *Amazon Town* (1976), the Portuguese-speaking populations of the Amazon remain relatively ignored by both urban intellectuals, through whom a Brazilian national identity is forged, and state policymakers alike. Having been denied any legitimation of collective identity, the *caboclo* is excluded from rights and privileges that would accrue to individuals on the basis of membership in a publicly recognized category. For example, Amazonian river dwellers are exempt from communal land title available to descendants of both indigenous inhabitants and African slaves.³ These and other considerations led the author Stephen Nugent to refer to the *caboclo* population as an "invisible people" (Nugent 1993).

The view of *caboclo* society as degraded contributes to the notion that the products of the *caboclo*, such as narrative, are removed from that which is viewed as "authentic." These products have been attributed to so-called source cultures—at times native Amerindian, at others, European. Having no culture of his own, the *caboclo* and his narratives have been regarded as residual. Lacking a belief system other than Catholicism, the *caboclo* is thought to "recite" the tales, not to "believe" them. The treatment of *caboclo* narrative as received rather than created contributes to the location of the *caboclo* several steps removed from his or her creative product. The suggestion is a separation between meaning and belief.

However, we find that narratives collected by the authors in the middle Amazon between 1999 and 2002 constitute a vital corpus of cultural material and verbal art no less authoritative than those of neighboring aboriginal cultures. We found the telling of these narratives, as well as the learning and transfer of them, akin to other mythopoetic performances observed and recorded among indigenous peoples in Amazonia. We found commonalities, for example, with the narratives collected by Ellen Basso among the Kalapalo of Brazil (1973, 1985, 1986, 1987); Joanna Overing (1985) among the Piaroa of Venezuela; Janet Hendricks among the Shuar of Ecuador (1993); Janet Chernela (1988, 1997) and Janet Chernela and Eric Leed (2001, 2003) for the Eastern Tukanoans; Jonathan Hill (1993) for the Wak[u]jenai of Venezuela; and Robin Wright (1998) for the same group (known as Baniwa) in Brazil.

Our fieldwork findings among fisherfolk living in villages in the region of Silves in the central Amazon make the strong case that these narratives are part of intact belief systems that make sense of the world and impact peoples' perceptions and behavior. Insofar as the narratives are based in notions of veracity and perform the function of explaining natural phenomena, they fulfill criteria considered by some folklorists to characterize "myth." At the same time, the narratives contribute to questions regarding theories of mythical time in creation narratives.

³Most lands adjacent to the Amazon mainstem belong to the state and may not be titled.

The narratives collected at Silves appear to be based in realities recognized collectively and individually. The texts reveal important postulates underlying the world, the processes that explain it, and the processes that change it. It is in this latter class of explanation that we find greatest divergence from and contrast with both indigenous Amazonian myth and Western cosmogony. The profound linkage between everyday lived experience and the creation narratives blurs distinctions between the ordinary and the extraordinary, breaking with received notions of a distinct, and past, creation period. Instead of recounting creation that was *then*, these narratives recount creation that is *now*.

Realities

Myths are rich repositories of causal interconnectivities. As Rapport and Overing summarize, anthropologists use the label “myth” to refer to the narrations “told by indigenous peoples about the origins of the world, and all the beings and elements that populate it . . . the amazing events of these narrations also tell of the circumstances in which all features of the world and forms of life came to be. . . . It is through myths that cosmogonic events are unfolded and explored, and thus they relate to a people’s particular metaphysical understanding of why things are as they are” (Rapport and Overing 2000:274). In the anthropological exercise, there is no need to reconcile what and how “they” understand from what and how “we” understand. Each is an alternative form of cognition. The apparent irrationality in myth is regarded by analysts as a different, but equally valid, way of knowing.

Although there may not be complete agreement among scholars, the criterion of “truth” as a characteristic of myth has a long pedigree in studies of myth and folklore. The anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski noted that for those who engage in myth-telling, myth is “reality lived” (1948 :18). The well-known scholar of comparative folklore, William Bascom (1965), put forth a definition of myth as a form of prose narrative, believed to be true by the members of the society whose culture holds the myth (Farrer 1997:576). Alan Dundes, another prominent analyst of folklore, contrasted myths with “other forms of narrative such as folktales, which are ordinarily . . . fictional” (Dundes 1984:1). For the theoretician Ernst Cassirer, the mythical symbol is a self-contained interpretation of reality, with a truth of its own. Myth differs from art insofar as “there is always implied an act of belief. Without the belief in the reality of its object, myth would lose its ground” (Cassirer 1944:75).

A separate but related attribute of myth is its explanatory role. There is widespread agreement among authors that myths *explain* the world as it is found. Rather than the creation of the world being haphazard, it is given a “first cause.” Cassirer argued that, from an epistemological point of view, myth is said to be “indispensable because it is a primary and unique way of

apprehending reality” (1944:9–10). Dundes’s definition of myth foregrounds this explanatory function: “A myth is a sacred narrative explaining how the world and man came to be in their present form” (Dundes 1984:1). Implicit in these discussions, however, is the assumption of a past, framed period of creation—a “mythic time.” Events in “mythic time” are governed by principles of temporality that differ from and do not impinge upon those of the present. The “formative” period of creation may be unspecified, yet it remains qualitatively separate and discontinuous. It does not merge with the present. Hansen, for example, writes, “. . . mythologies commonly recount a special period of time early in the history of the world when it received its basic physical nature and features” (Hansen 2002:20). Mircea Eliade also treats mythic time as closed and apart: “In general, there is a belief in the possibility of recovering the absolute ‘beginning’—which implies the symbolic destruction and abolition of the old world. Hence the end is implied in the beginning and vice versa” (Eliade 1998:187). The notion of a formative “beginning” of the world is at odds with the ongoing transformations of the world presented in the narratives collected among fishermen at Silves. Instead, the tales presented here relate an ongoing creation of the world that extends into, and, indeed, may be encountered, in the present. The tales presented here raise fundamental questions about experience, time, and creation. The narratives counter the notion of a time in the distant past, contrasted with the present, “when the world was in the process of being made” (Farrer 1997:576). For the Amazonian *caboclo*, the creation of the world is an ongoing phenomenon, a part of peoples’ lived lives. Conveyed in the first person, the tales utilize the language of sentient, first-hand experience to place creation *in the present*. Man, like all beings, is caught up in this creation, and “navigates”—in several senses—his way within and through it.

Historical Context

The Brazilian Amazon has long been characterized by slow economic growth interrupted by brief intervals of economic prosperity. Over five centuries, from the sixteenth through the early twenty-first, wealth in rural Amazonia was derived principally from the export of forest products. The most lucrative extractive resource to originate in the Amazon basin was the milky sap collected from *Hevea brasiliensis*, the Brazilian rubber tree. Worldwide demand for extractive resources remained low until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when first vulcanization and then the nascent automotive industry, catapulted world demand for rubber to unprecedented levels. By 1890, Amazonia contributed over 16,000 tons of rubber to European and North American industries, and the “Tropical Renaissance” was underway. At its height in 1909, Amazonia provided 94.4 percent of the world’s rubber supply.

The economic boom came to an abrupt end only four years later as managed plantations in Malaysia out-performed Brazilian extractors. By 1920 Amazonian rubber constituted a mere 1.4 percent of the world market.

The rubber boom brought new populations and cultural influences into the Amazon, including overseas migrants from Europe and the Middle East and domestic migrants from the impoverished northeast, where the former sugar plantation economy was in ruins. Many of the newcomers remained, marrying and contributing to the rich blend of people and cultures that gave rise to the present-day population. Many northeasterners, for example, who arrived as rubber merchants or collectors, remained in the area as small-scale agriculturalists or river traders.

With no export commodity to replace rubber, rural Amazonia entered a sustained period of stagnation. The few economic stimuli, such as the revived rubber market during World War II and the federally sponsored development programs of the 1970s and 1980s, brought about brief economic upswings, yet left no lasting legacies for the majority of rural inhabitants of the Amazon basin, who remained impoverished and marginalized. Two important studies, one by Charles Wagley in 1953 and another by Richard Pace in 1995, show a community characterized by high unemployment and underemployment (Wagley 1976, Pace 1998). These studies, conducted forty years apart in the same vicinity, bracket, like two bookends, a period of greater prosperity than either of them witnesses. Despite intermittent fluctuation, poverty is the persistent feature—the common thread uniting Amazonian fisher-farmers, rubber extractors, and Brazil nut collectors over decades.

Silves

Silves is a municipality of approximately 4,000 persons located 250 kilometers east of the urban center of Manaus. Like that of other Amazonian riverine communities, the economy of Silves is based on fishing, cultivation, and, in small portions, animal husbandry, rubber collection, and Brazil nut extraction. Fish, provided by local fishermen using rudimentary fishing technologies, is a dietary staple, accounting for 50 to 75 percent of all animal protein consumed.

Rural life along the river edge is synchronized with the rise and fall of the Amazon's flood regime. Throughout the annual cycle, the margins on which people live are in flux, alternately submerged and emerged. Following a period of heavy rains, water levels begin to rise in December. Between March and July local rivers inundate the inner and central portions of the floodplain. By May the Amazon's muddy waters flow from the mainstem across the floodplain, covering former margins with a water depth of five or six meters during typical years, and up to eleven meters in an extremely wet year. Homes that are within range of inundation rest on stilts or floating platforms. As the river

overflows its banks, owners of animals move them to high ground or on to raised platforms in the floodwaters. There, the aquatic ranchers deliver food to their animals by canoe.

When water levels are very low, as they typically are in October and November, the rivers are confined to their permanent channels, and the great floodplains, between five and eight kilometers in width, cover most of the area between Silves and the Amazon River. During these periods rivers and lakes disappear or shrink to a portion of their former size (Chernela 2003). Cattle graze where watercraft once traveled.

A few isolated permanent pools deep in the river floor, known locally as *poços*, contain water throughout the year. These pools, whether visible, as they are in the dry season, or submerged at the bottom of the river, as they are in the highwater season, are the subject of talk and the sites of extraordinary events and creatures. The *poços* are home to a supernatural snake, known throughout the Amazon as “Cobra Grande.”

The Narratives

Cobra Grande, a snake of enormous proportions, is at the center of the stories narrated here. Narratives of Cobra Grande are found throughout the Amazon basin; they are well known along the eastward-flowing mainstem, as well as along its principal effluents.

The narrator in the four accounts presented here was Sr. Nestor Monteiro Nogueira, an elderly fisherman and renowned storyteller. The narratives were taped in the field, then later transcribed and translated.⁴ Both the Portuguese transcriptions and the English translations presented here try to capture the regionalisms and colloquialisms of the original speech. Where necessary we present explanatory or clarifying comments in brackets. We use upper case to indicate a performative emphasis signaled by volume or pitch. The narratives were requested by the authors, and recounted to them while being recorded. We include the authors’ comments and questions in our transcriptions and translations.

ACCOUNT 1

I was traveling . . . I was spearing fish way over there—me, my stepfather, and one of my uncles. He was in the prow and suddenly he saw something over on the side. He said, “Compadi [compadre]—I see a huge caiman!” He said, “Where, compadi?” “Over there,” he said. “Yeah. It’s here.” And that’s the way it was.

⁴The narratives presented here were collected on tape recorder in October 2000 by coauthor Patricia Pinho in the community Santa Luzia do Sarabani. Patricia Pinho’s transcriptions preserve the regionalisms of the original performance. Janet Chernela translated the accounts into English.

Then he went over and SAW it—it was lying a meter below the water . . . and so, like this, *I looked, and said*, “Cumpadi—this is no caiman—it’s a Cobra Grande! So he looked and said, like this, “Cumpadi—it’s Cobra Grande herself!” She was . . . on the sand, with her mouth to the side like this. Now the front—her front was like this . . . the mouth in front! Now her eye was about this big [gesturing]. Each eye was ROUND. Each eye was the size of a dinner-plate! So he looked harder and he said, “Ah cumpadi, she’s sleeping.” She really WAS asleep. She was asleep. So he said, “Cumpadi!” I looked over there . . . he moved his flashlight over there . . . to the side, it was clean [of brush] . . . he showed it again and there she was! like where this stick is—here. Between here and there it was DEEP! And [its body] was above the water level from here to over there! He pointed the flashlight again . . . and what showed in the beam of the flashlight was . . . it was SHINING. It was shining like this—all out there in the middle of the beach—from here to there it was deep. About half of it was above water, and half below. She had her mouth on the land. So then he said, “Cumpadi, let’s get out of here. Let’s get out of here because she’s sleeping. If she awakes, here, when she moves, when she moves, she will take us with her all the way over there!” So we left. And he shined the light [toward her] again. She had a huge mark like this—in the middle it was black, the mark was wide, and there in the middle like this it was red, her mark. So we left. We left and she stayed there. We left here—because if she would have awakened, she would have taken us with her, and we would have gone WAY over there!

Now, I saw Cobra Grande! Because there are many people who say that she doesn’t exist. But she does. Because I have seen her. For this reason I . . . tell this story about the Cobra Grande because I ACTUALLY saw her . . . like this, up close. And because many people don’t believe that the Cobra Grande exists. [But] I SAW and so I tell this story for anyone who wants to hear, because I saw her here with these, my eyes, I saw her . . . that’s it.

This was many years ago. I was still a boy, like this boy here.

Patricia:—Have you seen it since?

Nestor:—No, she stays there, down below. No one has seen her. She was very big. That snake was very big! She lives in this river. She exists, she exists. Anyone who has eyes—a lot of people come here late at night—suddenly find themselves raised up on top of her . . . she’s down deep, right? Well the motor hits her and gets stuck and she’s there underneath in the depths. Right here on this river, too—look! Right here there’s a Cobra Grande.

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ACCOUNT 2

Once I was fishing. Over there. I crossed that bridge and there it was. She was floating there. . . . I had a small dugout . . . you know? So, would you know I was climbing right up on top of her?! The dugout was stopped. I looked, and I paddled, paddled, paddled. The dugout wouldn't move. That's when I knew I'd climbed up on her. When I was right on her back . . . then, thank God, I paddled, then, then, I paddled and escaped. When I escaped, I paddled to the side, at this bridge right here. I was lifted up with [just a] stick raised up—I didn't have anything. I was scared! I was stuck, you know? I paddled and paddled, and then at last I entered that narrow stream. The forest banks over here were scraping me, and I just stayed where I was—over there—scared that she would swallow me up. So I left to cross [the river]. I crossed over, and went home. I arrived about one o'clock at night . . . there at home . . . all wet! Yeah—that's the story of the Cobra Grande.

Patricia:—Do the boats hit her at night?

Nestor:—Yes. Because she floats. That's why late at night people don't go on this river, no. They used to go out at night. Until there was this boy there . . . he came from over there in Silves. When he arrived there at home, with his little motor that he had . . . when he got close the motor went climbing like this—you know? He thought he was moving. When he paid attention the motor was stopped. Then he realized what had happened! So he pulled on the motor . . . and he came [over here, demonstrating]. Then when he came to the port he called me. It was midnight, more or less. He said, "Ah, my friend," he said. "My friend, my friend, the Cobra Grande almost swallowed me whole!" Yes, indeed! He went to sleep. . . . In the morning he came out of the house, cuz he lived here, you know, he came out, but at night he never came out again. And they say the Cobra Grande doesn't exist!

ACCOUNT 3

Over here, near the town . . . when I was a boy . . . over there at the town there was one . . . that Cobra was very BIG! We went to look like this. She was stranded—every time we looked over there, there she was—she was over here!

Patricia:—this was at night?

Nestor:—Day! Any time! It was a *poço*, a kind of deep pool—you know? And there lived that snake. At a certain time she left from there and, you know, it was very deep [while she lived there], and after she

left it became more and more shallow. I think she left here for the big river. In this *poço*, there was mud. . . . There were a lot of turtles in there with her . . . fish . . . everything was there. And when she left there, nothing else was found there, the fish left after the dry period, you know? When she was there, there was water, you know? Now when the river rises it creates water, but when it's dry it becomes land. That's why she was there, this way, rolled up. And more or less, she was, the width of that snake, it was this width or larger—thick! From over there she came and went away. She buried herself in another part . . . here, wherever, and there, over there where there is a field . . . I tell you this. There is a field there, and there we worked, on top of her. She was below the earth and we worked there. We gardened there. We worked and . . . when a certain time came, the owner sold the land to another one. So there was a Senhor that lived right in front of that land. When it was night, once, there was a heavy, frightening rain, and when the rain passed, he said to his wife, "I am going to get some fish for supper," you know? So he left. He got in the canoe and crossed over to the other side. There he went, and when he arrived near the grove—at that time there were a lot of trees there that today have all died. They died, you know? They had a kind of little fruit, like this. So they had a kind of tree there. So he went and when he got close he said that the thing came: "jjjjjaaarrrrrr!" He grabbed a flashlight . . . and he pointed it on her. When he focused [the light] he saw the creature coming above the water, crossing, you know? So he paddled to the bank and grabbed his shotgun and shot her, in her eye. So he shot her and he paddled . . . he got right in the middle of the tree clump—he was so afraid of her. From there he crossed over to the side where he lived. He lived there, you know. Over there, there's a stream just like this one, LOOK! There she embedded herself and she is still there today! Even today there is a track that shows where she left, it is still there in the field—the trail she left. She left. She was under the earth where we were working, and she is there where she left . . . the trail still appears today, there, where she left.

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Patricia:—She left that *poço* . . . ?

Nestor:—She left that one for another one. . . . A headwater just like this one. She moved from there to the other side. And there she lives. She lives there so people don't mess with her. She is fine in that place, you know. And these are the stories of the Cobra Grande that I know. She is big, yes. Eyes? Oh, yeah—BIG—the size of this straw hat, very big!

Now it's shallow. She was under the earth and when she came out she left quite a hole! Now it's [dry] field there, cattle graze on top, it's a field now. That's the way the Cobra is.

ACCOUNT 4

Once I was on a hunting trip and I heard a sound. . . . I went, went, went, when I realized I was by myself in the same place where I had been. I turned to leave to find my way. So I went. I walked, walked, walked, when I thought that I would continue forward, you know? And when I saw I was where I was, I said, “what’s going on?” Three times I went. On the fourth, she was as far as this pole (gesturing to demonstrate the distance), oh, with her front over here and her tail over there. In the middle of this whirlpool she was there . . . she had brought me, you know? She wanted to push me now, she pushed to swallow me, you know?

Well, they had a dog, so he went over there and even he couldn’t deal with her . . . so he went and gave it to her on the end of her tail, you know? And when he got her on her tail, he barked . . . my vision cleared and when he barked, she was more or less this wide, oh, it was her. She was from here up to that stake there [showing distance]—look at the length of her! Well, I grabbed for my [gun] and shot her . . . I shot her and she went rolling over. It made the earth tremble—rrrrhhrrrr. She rolled over there, she rolled, rolled, until she died.

I could see my road clear, I turned from my trip and went away—I arrived at home with a terrible headache. It was all I could do not to scream. This is the story of the Cobra Grande. I saw it while I lived. These stories, I . . . I think that many people don’t know what I saw over there. In this, my life. This is the story of the Cobra Grande. And there are many other stories.

Discussion

The motif of Cobra Grande is widespread in Amazonia, corresponding to the full east–west expanse of the river, from the western Andes in Peru to the Brazilian city of Belém, where the river empties into the Atlantic. Tales of Cobra Grande are reported from numerous native Amerindian populations, among them the Arapaço and speakers of other Tukanoan languages in the Upper Rio Negro (Chernela 1988; Chernela and Leed 2001, 2003; Slater 2002), and from rural and urban⁵ populations (Faulhaber 1987; Galvão 1955; Slater 1994; Smith 1981, 1996; Ypiranga 1995). Extended, fictionalized versions have become immersed in popular Brazilian literature. An epic poem by Raul Bopp considers the legend to emblemize not just Amazonia, but Brazil itself.

⁵Cobra Grande narratives are found in every major city, town, and village of Amazonia. In centers such as São Luis, Maranhão, Belém, and Santarém, the city is mapped by the passage and trace of the Cobra’s body.

For Amazonia, the scholar Candace Slater has created a hierarchy of authenticity in which the legendary *boto*, a supernatural dolphin, becomes an archetypic Amazonian *Ur*-legend from which others, like the many cobra legends—have evolved (Slater 1994). Slater sees the *caboclo* legends of the *boto* and Cobra Grande tales as examples of resistance—narratives of a population politically and economically disenfranchised (Slater 1994). Perceived as neither Indian nor white in a context where personhood is based upon a narrow classification of racial characteristics, the *caboclo* are presented as half-hearted participants in a society in which they wield neither power nor wealth. We too find the *caboclo* to be a mediator living a liminal existence on the margins of white society, and, as in Slater's own narrative collection, we find an abundance of oral and literary culture, not an absence of it. We argue that *caboclo* traditions constitute a vital corpus of cultural material with verbal arts no less authoritative than those of neighboring aboriginal cultures.

All versions of Cobra Grande narratives share a number of recurrent characteristics. Accounts agree on the following points: (1) the cobra appears at night; (2) the snake is of inordinate size, thus the name Cobra Grande; (3) the snake is dangerous to humans, overturning boats and drowning fishermen; (4) Cobra Grande inhabits the deep points (*poços*) on the river floor and floodplain. Another recurring motif, present in indigenous and *caboclo* narratives alike, is the association of the Cobra Grande with a brilliant illumination—a light that may originate outside it, as in a flashlight, or may emanate from within the snake itself. The light associated with the snake and the shooting in the eye appear both in narratives recounted by native Tukanoan speakers (Chernela 1988, Chernela and Leed 2001, 2003) and in narratives collected among *caboclo* near Itacoatiara by Nigel Smith (1981, 1996) and along the Upper Rio Negro by Candace Slater (2002).

Belief, Truth, and Credibility

The narratives collected in *Silves* and presented here center on a belief in a “reality” that is supported by sentient experience. A number of discourse devices are devoted to building credibility in the narrative performance. The narratives clearly link being to place and explain “real-world” phenomena, considered by some analysts to be fundamental criteria of myth.

In the versions presented here, the narrator draws on a number of discursive and rhetorical devices to convince listeners of the truthfulness of his accounts. The narrator emphatically repeats the bases of his accounts, signaling firsthand evidence by referring to his own sensory experience or to that of other witnesses. Sentient reality is intended to build and enhance credibility. We point to four principal narrative devices: (1) “witnessing,” consisting of firsthand observations; (2) specifying detail, measurement, and comparison; (3) the use of reported speech or citation; and (4) the linkages between events in the tales and specific features in the natural world.

Witnessing: Use of the Firsthand Account

A problem for a narrator is to convince the listener of the credibility of the narrative. This is especially challenging if the listener is an outsider who does not subscribe to the same set of ontological beliefs as the speaker.

In the accounts collected at Silves, the authority of the speaker derived from his experiential knowledge of the events recounted. Firsthand accounts were given greatest credibility. The speaker always located himself spatially and temporally in relation to the narrative. He repeatedly emphasized his bases for authority, reminding us with the metacommentary, “I saw,” or “Here, where you see X,” intended as evidence.

Implicit in the discourse style is an epistemology in which *seeing* is granted a privileged, evidentiary power: “I know, I saw.” The closer the speaker was to the events, the more authorized the narrative. Witnessing the events narrated constructs them as close, reliable, and “truthful.” The placement of the speaker in spatial or temporal relation to the subject matter was always elaborated with detail.

The narrator references the site, the time, and the location where Cobra Grande was witnessed. This brings the Cobra into proximity, “Here lives a Cobra Grande”: “I ACTUALLY saw her . . . like this, up close. And . . . many people don’t believe that the Cobra Grande exists. [But] I SAW and I tell this story for anyone who wants to hear, because I saw here with these, my eyes, I saw her . . . that’s it.” The code reaffirms the authority of observation. Thus, “*I could see my road clear*, I turned from my trip and went away—I arrived at home with a terrible headache. It was all I could do not to scream. This is the story of the Cobra Grande. I saw it while I lived. These stories, I . . . I think that many people don’t know what I saw over there. In this, my life.”

Account 1 closes with this statement: “*Quem tem olha, muita gente que vem di noiti aqui alta hora da noiti, monta as veiz por cima dela, que ela ta no fundo ne . . . ai motor qui vem i bati i pul. . . ela qui esta d’i no fundo . . . Aqui oh, bem aqui nesse rio aqui tam’em tem . . . aqui tem . . . mora uma cobra aqui. . .*” Translation: “Anyone who has eyes—a lot of people come here late at night—suddenly find themselves raised on top of her . . . she’s down deep, right? Well the motor hits her and gets stuck and she’s there underneath in the depths. Right here on this river, too—look! A Cobra Grande lives right here.” The narrative may end with an emphatic reiteration of the visual evidence, such as, “I SAW the Cobra Grande!” (“Eu ja vi a Cobra Grandi!”).

Measurement, Detail, and Comparison

Measurements and comparisons also contribute to the credibility of the narrative account. For example, the eyes of the Cobra are compared to the sizes of dinner plates and straw hats. Distances are demonstrated with datum points within view of speaker and hearer: “. . . she was as far as this pole (gesturing

to demonstrate the distance) . . . with her front over here and her tail over there.” Such detail and precision of dimensions contributes to the veracity and reality of the account. These, in turn, lend power to the description and draw the listener into the tale, inviting the listener to share vicariously in the extraordinary experience.

Citations

Passages may be attributed to different raconteurs, allowing the speaker to attribute portions of an account to an observer other than himself. Citing events places the speaker at an “intermediate” distance from the events referenced. Finally, vague recollections, or hearsay, receive the least credibility and are granted the least authority.⁶

For example, citing a friend, the narrator quotes, “He said, ‘Ah, my friend,’ he said. ‘My friend, my friend, the Cobra Grande almost swallowed me whole! Yes, indeed! He went to sleep. . . . In the morning he came out of the house, cuz he lived here, you know, he came out, but at night he never came out again. And they say the Cobra Grande doesn’t exist!’”

In a different instance, the narrator cites a speaker who is socially distant from him, but close to the events recounted: “. . . there was a Senhor that lived right in front of that land. When it was night, once, there was a heavy, frightening rain . . . he said to his wife, ‘I am going to get some fish for supper.’” The tale continues, “. . . he went and when he got close he said that the thing came: ‘jjjjjaaarrrrrr!’ He grabbed a flashlight . . . and he pointed it on her. When he focused [the light] he saw the creature coming above the water. . . .” The use of detail and quoted speech, a narrative within a narrative, provides authorization and increases the narrator’s persuasive impact.

Signifying the Landscape

The narrator links the Cobra Grande to definitive topi. The placement of the Cobra is described with precision; its location was “witnessed” and is recorded. “He lived there, you know. Over there, there’s a stream just like this one, LOOK! There she embedded herself and she is still there today.”

Through these accounts space is demarcated and provided with a history. Signs of that history are read into the landscape: “Even today there is a track that shows where she left, it is still there in the field—the trail she left. She left. She was under the earth where we were working, and she is there where she left. . . . the trail still appears today, there, where she left.” Topographical features in this ever-changing landscape are the signs of history (see Parmentier 1987).

⁶This form of deixis, or positioning to knowledge, is also found in Amerindian systems of knowing.

The narratives reference the landscape, demonstrating traces of the events that account for present conditions. In this way space is represented and mapped. Thus, the cumulative body of lore links the phenomena of specific places with the Cobra Grande and its dangers. This deliberate contextualization contrasts with the decontextualization of supernaturals in Western cosmogony.

Constructing a Supernatural Landscape through Talk: Creation and Recreation

Caboclo accounts of the Cobra Grande connect people, things, and time in locatable events. The narrative itself maps the landscape with signification, attributing to it names, powers, and events-in-time. Thus are the contours of a supernatural landscape sculpted through talk.

The narrator wants to convince his audience of two different points: first, that the enchanted snake being exists, and, second, that it is a source of tremendous power in sculpting the landscape. The *caboclo* narratives presented here demonstrate strong conviction, not only in the existence of the Cobra Grande, but also in its efficacy and supernatural power. Events in the narratives, said to have taken place in the past, explain the present. Past events, involving the supernatural acts of the Cobra Grande, explain the world in which both narrator and listeners live. At the same time, they disclose premises about existence in the world, premises that differ from Western systems of thought.

The narratives reveal postulates underlying the existence of the natural world, the processes that explain it, and the processes that change it. It is in this latter class of explanation that we find greatest divergence from and contrast with both indigenous Amazonian myth and Western cosmogony. Unlike Western accounts of world “creation,” *caboclo* narratives contain no single act of “creation,” no moment of world “origin.” Instead, these mythic narratives are the cosmogenic forces of a world in flux. The basic postulates of reality reveal that the active forces shaping the world are not fixed in time; they are ongoing.

For riverine dwellers along the margins of the Amazon mainstem, the landscape is an alternating, and overlapping, terrestrial-aquatic zone. The river margin on which people live is in constant flux—neither wholly aquatic nor wholly terrestrial, but a mediating category incorporating temporal change. To some extent, the tales may be read for the insights they lend into *caboclo* perceptions of this landscape. This ever-fluctuating landscape is shaped by supernatural beings, whose presence and whose own dynamism can be experienced. The principal architect of this landscape is the Cobra Grande.

Smith, for example, describes a report from a fisherman near Manaus: “Ajenor claimed that a cobra grande had carved out the sinuous canal and had

even bulldozed aside logs lying in its path. A muscular cobra grande is reputed to have gouged a one-meter-deep trough up a bank of the black-water Uatuma, a tributary of the Amazon, near the tiny settlement of Sebastião. Cobra grande thus actively shapes the ever-shifting morphology of aquatic environments in Amazonia” (1996:68).

The Cobra Grande, then, is the great sculptor of Amazonian fluvial topography. The Cobra carves the terrain, creating undulating river channels, floodplains, and deep pools. The acts of creation are perpetual.

The sites said to be favored by the Cobra Grande are the deep points of the river and its subsidiary channels, as well as the permanently inundated wetlands that lie on the top of the floodplain. In the dry season the latter are the only remaining pools of water on the otherwise emergent floodplain. Conversations with fishermen at Silves suggest that the pools, known as *poços*, may serve as refugia for fish, turtles, and other aquatic life when waters elsewhere have receded and drained. Because the Cobra is thought to create and favor these sites, and because she is dangerous, fishermen report that they fear and avoid places of this kind, despite the likelihood that they may contain concentrations of aquatic food supply during periods of greatest food scarcity. (If this is so, the avoidance of permanent pools by fishermen suggests the role of the Cobra Grande beliefs in protecting vulnerable wildlife in areas that may be fundamental to their sustainability.)

Typical of myth, cosmogony is the subject of the narrative. The tales contextualize events within a space–time continuum that recognizes the coming-into-being of different landscapes. The tales of the Cobra Grande rely on epistemological contours, qua events, that can be experienced in the practical world. The narratives relate events in which causal contingencies connect supernatural beings with the specifics of place and imbue the place with powers—powers derived from a historical consciousness.

Moreover, the dynamism of the landscape, captured in *caboclo* narrative, may be said to characterize *caboclo* culture itself.

A Caboclo Culture?

The issue of a *caboclo* culture raises the larger problematic of identifying any group as “a culture,” defined as a collectivity that recognizes a shared set of meanings and a shared identity. Such a definition freezes that which is processual. It presents a “culture” as a perceivable and tangible entity, having describable features and boundaries. As we have said, it raises implicit assumptions among anthropologists that mystify and simplify ethnogenesis as a finite process, fixed in time and space. As *caboclo* society has always invented and reinvented itself, it is a clear example of the ongoing historical processes of social formation. The *caboclo* narratives of the Cobra Grande reference this very problematic. Just as these narratives recount formations and transformations in

a landscape undergoing infinite permutation, the narratives stand for *caboclo* society itself—likewise a subject undergoing perpetual change.

If social scientists, notable among them Durkheim and Turner, are correct in holding that myth-telling is itself an act of identity-creation, defining and reifying a community through the public processes of narration, then the *caboclo* cannot be exempt from this phenomenon. If these presumptions are correct, the very telling of the myths published here and elsewhere testify to the vitality of *caboclo* creativity and lifeways. These narratives provide strong evidence that *caboclo* society, rather than nonexistent, is vital. That which appears “unreal” to the outsider is “the world as the ‘native’ understands it.” In this context, the native is the *caboclo*. The ethnographies by Wagley (1953), Nugent (1993), and Pace (1998) reposition *caboclo* society as central, not peripheral, to the dominant culture of the vast Amazonian region of Brazil. In the narratives collected at Silves we find Amazonia itself reflected and refracted.

Conclusions

In this article we have presented a narrative genre from the central Amazon in which a fisherman encounters a dangerous supernatural being, known as Cobra Grande, capable of transforming landscapes. We find that the linkage between event and space effectively produces a “supernatural landscape,” constructed through narrative. Describing river margins that are in constant flux, the narratives explain, through personalized, testimonial accounts, the landscape’s ever-changing form.

Whereas the narratives of indigenous peoples are considered fundamental sources of explanatory models of the world and processes of formation and identity, those of the *caboclo* are assumed to be “merely” performative. For some analysts, the “mythic” narratives of indigenous peoples are thought to be more authoritative and rooted in nature and experience than the “fabulous” narratives of *caboclos* in which a commitment to truth is not a necessity. The identity of the *caboclo* as somehow “false” becomes attached to the products, thus reproducing the notion that the *caboclo* is without, rather than with, cultural features. The dismissal of *caboclo* narratives as watered-down or abridged versions taken from truer, aboriginal sources establishes the *caboclo* narrative as a form of “false consciousness,” and the *caboclo* narrator as distanced from his message. By attributing to the narratives of *caboclos* a “prior” and aboriginal source—from so-called intact cultures—observers have reduced the rich constructs of interconnected meanings created by *caboclos* to that which is “received” rather than generative, and to something devoid of meaning and belief rather than imbued by it.

Thus, *caboclo* narratives, like *caboclo* culture, are regarded as second- or third-hand products—recreations of a received narrative from a distant past

with little truth or relevance in contemporary times. They are, by definition, anachronistic. But, to consider these narratives as invalid today would be to underestimate their credibility.

We argue that the “received” or second-hand argument is false, based upon the mistaken presumption that the epistemological framework of the *caboclo* is either indigenous or European. If *caboclo* culture or “tradition” were lacking, *caboclo* narratives should lack mythic cosmologies that might link them temporally and spatially to the place in which *caboclos* live. Yet, working among *caboclo* tale-tellers, we find that the linkage between narrative event and the natural world is especially salient, effectively producing a “supernatural landscape,” constructed through narrative. Instead of recounting rhetoric, devoid of daily meaning, we found *caboclo* narrators to be as committed to the truth of these stories as indigenous narrators. The specialized discourse tradition practiced by riverine dwellers in the central Amazon situates the speaker and the events both temporally and spatially within a spectrum of natural, supernatural, and cultural entities. Among these discourse traditions are stories of the Cobra Grande, whose powers are to be feared and whose home in the river is imbued with power.

Appendix

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Narrator: Nestor Monteiro Nogueira

Interviewer: Patricia Pinho

Locale: Santa Luzia do Sarabani, municipality of Silves, Brazil

Date: October 2000

ACCOUNT 1

Nestor: . . . intão um viagi . . . nós tava zagaiandu pexi né . . . ali fora . . . era eu, o meu padastru e um tio meu. I nós . . . ele ia na proa i aí ele focou pra esse lado assim . . . aí ele disse, cumpadi eu vi um jacaré grandi . . . aí ele disse, cadê cumpadi, aí ele disse, tá aqui i focó assim . . . i aí ele foi i espiou assim cum um metro dentru d’agua assim, i focó i disse assim, cumpadi isso num é jacaré . . . é uma Cobra Grande! Aí ele viu . . . i disse assim, cumpadi é a Cobra Grande mesmu ela tava com u queixu assim na areia né . . . assim ela tava cum u queixu na areia, cum a boca pra beira assim . . . agora a frenti dela . . . a frenti dela era isso memo . . . a boca dela, . . . é a frenti dela . . . agora o olhu dela era assim mais ou menos, cada um olho redonu . . . é tamanhu dum pratu o olho dela. Aí, e aí ele focou bem i disse, ah cumpadi, ela

tá dormindu . . . ela estava mermu dormindu . . . ela tava dormindu . . . aí ele dissí, cumpadi foqui inda pra lá . . . aí ele focó assim pru ladu di fora qui era limpo né . . . aí ele focou i, daí ela tava, daí cumu dessi pau aí . . . di lá pra cá tava nu fundu né . . . i di lá pra lá tava in cima d'agua. Aí ele focou aí eu fui . . . i nu qui deu o focu da lanterna daí pra lá . . . ela tava di fora d'agua assim . . . aquilu tava assim brilhandu . . . toda fora, é du meio pra lá, di lá pra cá tava no fundu . . . ela tava cum a boca na terra. Aí ele disse, cumpadi nos vamú embora . . . vão “bora” porque ela tá durmindu . . . si ela si acordá aqui, quando ela puxa ela . . . ela, ela vai puxá a gente cum ela pra lá.

Aí, Aí nós saimu né . . . aí ele focó . . . ela tinha umas malha grandi assim, nu meio assim era pretu a malha assim bem larga, e bem nu meu assim era vermelhu, a malha dela. Aí nois saimu, viemu embora i ela ficó lá. É . . . deixêmu aí parô né, qui podia ela si acordá né, naqueli i ela puxava aí acumpanhava i aí puxava a genti pra lá tamém.

Patrícia:—e aonde que era isso?

Nestor:—era ali fora. Lá bem ondi tem uma casa, bem lá memo nu porto da lá dá ondi mora é até meu vizinhu ele, ela, pois é bem lá qui ela estava, na praia. É mais aí isso já faiz muitos anos aí . . . intão é isso, eu já vi a Cobra Grandi, porque tem genti qui diz qui num existi né . . . mais tem . . . purqui eu já vi né. Por isso eu . . . intão é pur isso qui eu contu a istória da Cobra Grandi porque eu já vi ela mesmo assim di pertinho né . . . é . . . porque tem muita gente qui não acredita qui existi a Cobra Grandi, qui eu já vi mesmo i eu conto a istória pra qualqué um qui quisé eu conto a istória, porque eu já vi mesmu, cum esse meu olhu qui eu já vi ela . . . intão é isso.

Isso já faiz um bucadu di anos, ainda era garoto, tamanhu desse meninu aqui é . . .

Patrícia:—o senhor viu essa cobra depois?

Nestor:—Não, assim cumu nós vimú ela no baixu, ninguém nunca mais viu. . . . Ela era muito grandi, era muito grandi essa cobra. . . . Ela existi aqui nesse rio . . . ela existi . . . ela existi . . . ai. . . . Qui tem olha, muita gente que vem di noiti aqui alta hora da noiti, monta as vez por cima dela, que ela ta no fundo ne . . . ai motor qui vem i bati i pula ‘e ela qui est’a a’i no fundu. . . . Aqui oh, bem aqui nesse rio aqui tam’em tem . . . aqui tem . . . mora uma cobra aqui. . . .

ACCOUNT 2

Uma vez eu tava pescandu . . . pra ali ai eu atravessei daquela ponta pra essa aqui olha . . . i ela tava aboiada la. . . . Ai eu vinha num casco pequeno ne, ai sabe eu monteí cima dela . . . ai o casco ficou parado . . . ai olha eu remava, remava, mais quando tava siguro na costa dela . . . ai, ai, mandado por Deus, ai eu remei sempre i iscapuliu, quando escapuliu eu remei de lado, nessa ponta aqui mermo, eu fui levadu com pau ai nao teve nada, com

medo como eu fiquei ne, ai eu remei, remei i entrei nesse igapo qui fui me firindo tudo por aqui, ralado . . . ai eu fiquei ali olha, cum medu . . . dela me engoli ne . . . ai eu sai por aqui travessei ai, fui la pra casa . . . cheguei era bem uma hora da noite . . . la em casa, todo molhado . . . i ai . . . essa e a istoria da Cobra Grandi . . .

Patricia:—Quando vem os barcos aqui a noite e que batem nela?

Nestor:—e . . . porque ela e . . . boia . . . alta hora da noite a genti nao anda nesse rio nao. . . Vinha, ate ai tinha um . . . rapaz ai . . . que ele vinha la di Silves, quando chegou pra la di casa . . . ai ele vinha num vinha num motorzinho la dele que ele tinha . . . quando chego certa parte ai . . . o motor foi trepando assim ne . . . i ele pensava qui ia andando ne . . . quando ele presto antencao tava parado o motor. . . Ai sabe o qui ele fez . . . ai ele puxô todo o reguladô do motor sempre iscapuli, ai ele veio, ai quando ele vinha parô la no porto, me chamô ne . . . era meia noite mais ou menos, ai ele disse ah meu amigo ele disse, meu amigo, meu amigo cobra quase me ingole . . . e mermo e . . . i eu agora nao vô, você nao mi da um garralho aqui, por nao meu, podi dormi ai . . . i di manha quando foi, di manha assim, ele veio imbora pra ca, qui ele mora aqui ne . . . ai ele veio imbora, mas di noiti ele nao veio mais nao. . . E a Cobra Grandi tem! E diz e nao tem Cobra Grandi!

ACCOUNT 3

Aqui pro centru . . . quando eu era garoto . . . ai pro centru tinha uma . . . aquela cobra era muito grandi . . . a genti ia olhava assim . . . ela tava enroskada, tudo a vez pra la a genti olhava la i ela tava la, era por aqui. . .

Patricia:—de noite isso?

Nestor:—de dia, qualquê hora que a genti . . . era um poço, tipo um poço ne . . . i ali la vivia essa cobra . . . ai di certo tempo ela saiu di la . . . e . . . ai sabe era muito fundo ne . . . i depois dela sai . . . ai fico razinho, razinho . . . acho que ela veio imbora aqui pro rio grandi. . . Nesse poço o que tinha era . . . barro, muito tracaja la dentro dela ne . . . peixe, tudo tinha la . . . i depois dela sai ai num apareceu mais nada ne . . . os peixes foram, depois de seca ne. . . Durante ela esta la tinha agua ne . . . agora quando enche cria agua ne, mas quando seca fica terra. . . Purque ela tava assim, enrolada ne . . . e mais ou menos, parecia ne . . . a grossura daquela cobra, era dessa grossura ou maior, grossa. De la ela saiu, veio embora, si enterrou pro outra parte ne . . . aqui, onde e ali, tem um campo, ali, e . . . conta essa pra voces . . . la tem um campo la ne . . . i la nos trabalhava, por cima dela, que ela tava embaixo da terra i nois trabalhava la, rocava e ai . . . nois trabalhava e ela la, quando foi um certo tempo, ai o dono de la vendeu pra outro ne . . . o terreno, ai tinha um senhor que ele morava bem di fronti du terreno ne . . . ai quando foi numa noiti deu um temporal cum chuva, medonho, e ai quando passa o tempo, ele disse ah mulhe eu vo pega uns peixe pra janta ne . . . ai ele saiu

ne . . . dali ele embarco na canoa dele e travessou pro lado di la ne . . . ai ele ia andando, i quando chego assim perto do aracazal, qui naquele tempo tinha muito aracazal vivo qui hoje num tem mais morreu tudo . . . ne, si acabo ne . . . da tipo uma frutinha assim oh . . . deve di te alguma arvore ai . . . ai ele foi chegado qui quando ele chega perto assim ele disse qui aquilo vinha . . . jjjjjjaarrrrrrr, ai ele pega a lanterna ne . . . ai ele foco era ela . . . ai ele foco e a bixa vinha em cima d'agua travessandu ne . . . ai ele remo pra beira assim ai ele pego a espigarda i atiro nela, nu olho dela . . . ai ele atiro i ai ele remo se meteu no meio do aracazal cum medo dela ne . . . mas . . . e ai ele se meteu la cum medo ne . . . ai ele foi i ela travesso pra banda do porto onde ele mora, morava ne . . . la tem uma cabeceira igual essa aqui olha . . . la ela se infio i ate hoje ela ista la . . . i ate hoje da ondi ela saiu aparece u caminho da ondi ela saiu, ate hoje inda aparece la no campu o caminho da onde ela saiu, ela saiu . . . ela tava embaixo da terra la por onde nos trabalhamo i esta la da onde ela saiu aparece ate hoje inda aparece o . . . caminho que ela saiu.

Patricia:—como chama esse lugar?

Nestor:—eu num sei nem cumo e o nome e ali tem um campo, e bem no campu sabe, ta la . . . i hoje ja faz num sei nem quantos anos faz, mas ainda aparece . . . di longe . . . assim incherca di onde ela saiu i la por onde nos trabalhava, rocando, plantandu, carpino, ela ta embaixo da terra . . . mas ela e muito grande . . . da ondi ela saiu . . . i ai, a Cobra chego la i ela esta la, ela mora la naquela cabeceira, ela saiu de la travesso pra la i si interro i hoje esta la. . . .

Patricia:—ela mudou desse poço . . . ?

Nestor:—ela mudou de la pra outro . . . 'e com agua 'e . . . uma cabeceira igual essa aqui oh. . . . Ela mudou di la pro outro lado . . . i la ela vive ne . . . ela vive la porque a genti nao vai mexe com ela . . . ela ta bem la no lugar dela ne . . . i essas sao as historias da cobra qui eu sei ne . . . ela 'e grande sim, igual esse chapau di palha assim. . . . Muito grandi. . . . Agora ta razinho, ela tava imbaxo da terra i quando ela saiu arrio a terra . . . agora e campo la, boi anda por cima . . . e um campo agora . . . 'e a Cobra. . . .

ACCOUNT 4

Uma viagem eu tava cacando i o rumo assim, nu mato ne . . . i tirei meu rumo i fui, ai fui, fui, +fui . . . quando eu dei comigo eu tava no mesmo luga qui ondi eu estava ne . . . ai eu tornei a sai . . . ah, meu rumo e pra ca . . . ai fui, andei, andei, andei, quando pensava qui eu ia seguindo pra frente ne . . . i quando eu vi eu estava la onde eu tava i digo, mas qui negocio e esse . . . tres vezes eu fui, na conta da quarta vez, ela estava da distancia desse esteio ai oh . . . com a frente pra ca e o rabo dela pra la . . . no meio dessa rodinha, ela tava la ne . . . ela ja tinha me traido ne . . . ela ja queria me pula, ela me pula pra me engoli ne . . . ai, ai tinha um cachorro ne . . . ai ele vai por ali i nem ele dava

cum ela . . . ai ele foi e deu na ponta do rabo dela ne . . . i quando ele deu na ponta do rabo dela . . . ele latiu ne . . . ai parece qui minha vista clareou assim ne . . . ai que quando ele latiu e ela tava, ela era mais ou menos dessa grossura assim oh . . . ela era, era comu daqui ate la naquele esteio ali olha di comprimento ela . . . bom ai o . . . sabe, ai eu peguei, ai eu atirei nela ne . . . ai eu atirei ela i ela fico pulando, aquilo tremia a terra qui fazia ate rrrrhrrrrr . . . ai ela viro la, viro, viro ate que ela morreu, ai foi o tempo qui eu fui acertei meu caminho ne . . . virei pra minha viagem i fui me imhora, cheguei em casa com uma grandi dor de cabeça, so faltava grita . . . essa e a estoria da cobra grandi . . . qui eu ja vi durante esse vivo, essas estorias eu . . . acho que muita gente num cunhece o qui eu ja vi por ai ne . . . nessa minha vida ne. . .

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