



In Search of the Rain Forest (New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century)

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The essays collected here offer important new reflections on the multiple images of and rhetoric surrounding the rain forest. The slogan “Save the Rain Forest!”—emblazoned on glossy posters of tall trees wreathed in vines and studded with monkeys and parrots—promotes the popular image of a marvelously wild and vulnerable rain forest. Although representations like these have fueled laudable rescue efforts, in many ways they have done more harm than good, as these essays show. Such icons tend to conceal both the biological variety of rain forests and the diversity of their human inhabitants. They also frequently obscure the specific local and global interactions that are as much a part of today’s rain forests as are the array of plants and animals. In attending to these complexities, this volume focuses on specific portrayals of rain forests and the consequences of these characterizations for both forest inhabitants and outsiders.

From diverse disciplines—history, archaeology, sociology, literature, law, and cultural anthropology—the contributors provide case studies from Latin America, Asia, and Africa. They point the way toward a search for a rain forest that is both a natural entity and a social history, an inhabited place and a shifting set of ideas. The essayists demonstrate how the single image of a wild and yet fragile forest became fixed in the popular mind in the late twentieth century, thereby influencing the policies of corporations, environmental groups, and governments. Such simplistic conceptions, *In Search of the Rain Forest* shows, might lead companies to tout their “green” technologies even as they try to downplay the dissenting voices of native populations. Or they might cause a government to create a tiger reserve that displaces peaceful peasants while opening the doors to poachers and bandits. By encouraging a nuanced understanding of distinctive, constantly evolving forests with different social and natural histories, this volume provides an important impetus for protection efforts that take into account the rain forest in all of its complexity.

Contributors. Scott Fedick, Alex Greene, Paul Greenough, Nancy Peluso, Suzana Sawyer, Candace Slater, Charles Zerner

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