Fevered Returns: Indigeneity and Modernity in *A febre*

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Abstract: This article examines the portrayal of Indigenous people and the environment through film in Brazil. *A febre*, or *The Fever*, the 2019 Brazilian film written and directed by Maya Da-Rin, tells the story of a Desana man, Justino, who migrates to the Amazonian city of Manaus and works as a security guard at a cargo port. His daughter, an aspiring physician, lives with and takes care of him. As the film progresses, Justino experiences an intermittent fever with dreams and visions that call him back to his village at the edge of the forest. In this sense, modernity becomes a disease that pushes Justino to seek a closer relationship with nature. As a meditation on modernity and Indigeneity, the film reveals the toll of capitalism and the possibility of an alternative path. This article explores how, in using Indigenous concepts to question the rhetoric of modernity, *A febre* points to the uneven and unequal processes of modernity itself, and instead puts forward the possibility of rejecting modernity and consumerism entirely through a return to nature.

Keywords: Amazonia, Brazilian film, Indigeneity, modernity

Surrounded by shipping containers and a cacophony of industrial noises that overtake the distant sounds of a forest, the camera cuts through the dark and, in an extreme close-up, focuses on the tense, exhausted face of a man in a hardhat and work vest. He closes his eyes and briefly rests his head against one of the massive containers before being abruptly called back to reality by the metal cranes sweeping overhead. In contrast, a relaxed man dressed in a striped shirt and shorts paddles his canoe through a canopy of trees over a green-hued river. He beaches

his vessel and steps into the forest, slowly disappearing into the verdant jungle, the sound of his footsteps drowned out in birdsong.

These scenes bookend a snapshot of the life of a Desana Indigenous man, Justino, the protagonist of Maya Da-Rin's masterful 2019 film *A febre,* or *The Fever*. The scenes also emphasize the underlying impetus of the film: questioning the unequal impacts of modernity for Indigenous people in Brazil. In the film, Justino lives with his family in the outskirts of one of the Amazon region's largest cities. Located in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, Manaus has long been a hub of commerce, and in *A febre*, the modernization and industry of the city is readily apparent. The audience meets Justino working at the port Chibatão, one of Manaus's main shipping hubs. His job is to monitor the shipping containers, giving him a firsthand view of the diverse material goods imported to the Amazon from around the world. His work provides the viewer with a vantage point on the materiality of twenty-first-century globalization.

Justino's daughter, Vanessa, is training to be a doctor in a local hospital. She passes her exams and is accepted to study medicine at the University of Brasilia—a program of at least five years. At this moment of his daughter's transition and departure, the film focuses on Justino and his experience of a mysterious fever and subsequent fever dreams. The mystery is intensified by an elusive creature that lurks in the background of the film, attacking wildlife and creating media attention. Without his daughter to tie him to his life in Manaus, Justino's fever grows along with his disillusionment, ultimately calling him back to his native village. It is a film of stark yet subtle contrasts, encapsulated in scenes where Justino is at his job and scenes in his home on the outskirts of the city. The film stands apart from others set in the Amazon as Indigenous characters are given complexity and depth and can be both Indigenous and urban.

A febre was Brazilian director Maya Da-Rin's first feature film.[1] Basing herself in Manaus, Da-Rin cast locals with Indigenous backgrounds, most with little to no acting experience.[2] The Indigenous actors she cast came from the Desana—a subgroup of the Tukano people who primarily reside in the Amazon

[1] *A febre* was produced in Brazil, France, and Germany.

[2] For example, the actor who plays Justino, Regis Myrupu, is the president of an Indigenous association dedicated primarily to promoting traditional dances. He also started a project called Floresta Cultural that works to conserve and disseminate ancestral knowledge, which is how he originally connected with Da-Rin. Due to his participation, dialogues were rewritten in Tukano and Desana cultural practices were incorporated into the film. The film is thus rooted in real cultural practices and language despite its otherworldly elements.

regions of Colombia and Brazil and most commonly speak the Tukano language.[3] The dialogue is primarily in Tukano and Tikuna with Portuguese subtitles. Throughout *A febre*, the characters strategically shift languages depending on their environment. Outside of their home and in the hospital, where Indigenous languages are stigmatized, characters speak Portuguese. Da-Rin's background in documentary filmmaking as well as the improvisation and linguistic knowledge of the cast provide a certain realism to the film.[4]

The representation of Indigenous characters in *A febre* is significant. Instead of portraying Indigenous peoples as part of a wild, encompassing Amazonian nature, *A febre* showcases the humanity and inner everyday world of a twenty-first-century Indigenous family. This article examines this representation, along with the role of Indigenous practices and understanding layered into contemporary Brazilian reality. *A febre* represents a shift from previous filmic representations of Indigenous people in Brazil and helps us to explore the confluence and conflict between Indigenous and Western viewpoints toward the environment, particularly through the ways the characters understand medicine, disease, hunting, and material consumption.

A febre offers a vision of Indigenous understandings set in an urban environment. Consumption is a theme throughout the film, particularly as Justino meditates on life in Manaus and translates his Indigenous cultural history for his children and grandchildren. The film subtly critiques different modes of consumption, including Justino's job at the shipping port and his contemporary urban life, where he is separated from the means of production (such as buying meat from a grocery store, for example). I first give a brief overview of how the film can be situated within the history of filmic representations of Indigenous peoples and the Amazon, how the director has positioned the film as a specifically political intervention, followed by the ways in which it offers a reorganization of Western assumptions through mobilizing Indigenous viewpoints. In using Indigenous concepts to question the rhetoric of modernity, *A febre* points to the uneven and unequal processes of modernity itself, and instead puts forward the

[3] The Tukano people have traditionally lived on the banks of the Uaupés River and its tributaries. There are at least sixteen different languages within the Eastern Tukanoan language family, Tukano being the most widely spoken.

[4] Like *City of God* or *Iracema: Uma transa amazônica*, casting locals with little acting experience is marketed to add authenticity to the work (Freire-Medeiros 25).

possibility of rejecting modernity and consumerism entirely through a return to nature.

Filmic Representations of Indigenous People and the Amazon

Almost since the advent of film, there have been attempts to capture Indigenous people and customs on the platform.[5] Hollywood has long exported American Indians in popular Westerns that had an influence on portrayals of Indigenous people across the globe. As Paul Chaat Smith explains, Westerns set up a frontier narrative where Indigenous people form part of a savage past—a symbolic clash between wilderness and civilization. In this contact zone, "civilization" usually beats out the savage (the so-called golden age of Westerns spans the 1940s–60s). As he remarks, the Western is "encoded in our cultural DNA" (45). Westerns place Indigenous peoples as extinct or moving toward extinction: "It says with perfect consistency that we are extinct, were never here anyway, that it was our fault because we couldn't get with the program. It says we are noble, are savage, and noble savages" (Smith 52). As Marisol de la Cadena and others explain, Indigenous peoples have been portrayed as populations in rapid decline for decades, erasing not only their humanity but their very existence: "A century ago, the idea of indigenous people as an active force in the contemporary world was unthinkable. It was assumed that native societies everywhere would be swept away by the forward march of the West and its own peculiar brand of progress and civilization. Nothing could be further from the truth" (Cadena and Starn 1). Even contemporary representations of Indigenous people on film are often rooted in the past, rather than the present-day diversity of Indigenous peoples around the world.[6] Westerns propagate a narrative of dominance by white settlers, or in the case of blockbuster films like *Dances with Wolves* (1990), showcase a kind of noble savage ideal, where the Indigenous characters are portrayed as more pure and closer to nature.

In *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Phillip J. Deloria examines the history of Indigenous people in the United States, and positions Indigenous peoples as active participants in modern culture, despite representations, primarily from film, of only

[5] Early silent films and quasi documentaries such as *Land of the War Canoes* (1914) and *Nanook of the North* (1922) have been critiqued for their artificial realism.

[6] With several important exceptions including shows like *Reservation Dogs* (2021–2023) and the film *Smoke Signals* (1998).

one way of being "Indian." As he explains, "The key ideologies describing Indian people—inevitable disappearance, primitive purity, and savage violence, to name only a few—have brought exactly this kind of uneven advantage to the social, political, economic, and legal relations lived out between Indians and non-Indian Americans" (10). The conflicts and portrayals played out on screen carry a political weight that establishes and repeats stereotypes of where Indigenous people fit (or not) into the nation. In these portrayals, Indigenous people, rooted in the past, lack agency in shaping or imagining contemporary life or worldviews.

As in Hollywood, in Brazilian film, 90 percent of which is produced in São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, Indigenous people are often portrayed as "noble savages" or are confined to narrow ways of being Indigenous. Tracy Devine Guzmán examines how dominant Brazilian society has used Indigeneity as a popular trope, while ignoring Indigenous people as citizens or human beings. Within this larger idea is the question of Indigenous authenticity, or how Indigenous peoples can self-identify in an increasingly modernized world that calls for a certain performance of Indigeneity itself. In that sense, the urban Indigenous experience is often ignored in popular representations that instead feature portrayals of Indigenous peoples in traditional clothing and living in remote, forested villages.

Like Devine Guzmán, Sarah Sarzynski finds that portrayals of Indigenous people of the Brazilian Amazon are limited by stereotypes of what it means to be Indian. Portrayals of Indigenous people in film tend to fall into that of a "good" or "bad" Indian, where the "good" encapsulates an Indigenous person who is an environmental steward, or closer to nature with an innate innocence, while a "bad" Indian is a cannibal savage. This "good" Indigenous person is considered an "ecologically noble savage," a positive, even needed representation, yet one that stereotypes and limits the agency of Indigenous people. In analyzing films like *Iracema: Uma transa amazônica* (1974), and others that came out during the years of Brazil's military dictatorship (1965–84), Sarzynski finds that "The message is clear: modernity and progress associated with multinational capitalist development and the so-called economic miracle of the Brazilian dictatorship endanger indigenous people, traditional culture, and the Amazon Forest" (57).[7] Indeed,

[7] During the 1970s military dictatorship, the Brazilian government turned to the Amazon's resources and how to exploit them, and as a result proposed the Trans-Amazonian highway that would pave the way for increased export of goods like timber, ores, and minerals. The government offered free land along the highway, sparking a land rush of immigrants from other regions of Brazil who were

filmic representations like *Iracema: Uma transa amazônica* transmit a direct environmental and anticapitalism stance through showing some of the issues that Indigenous people and the environment have faced as a result of the capitalistic development pushed by the military dictatorship.

In the context of Amazonia, documentary and feature films portray the region as an exotic Other and document robust flora and fauna and Indigenous groups in remote corners of the jungle. Modern European and American as well as Brazilian feature films have followed tropes of exploration, colonial contact, or intensified exoticism with films like Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* (1982), *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972), or even *Anaconda* (1997), which all highlight the Amazon as an exotic (and oftentimes dangerous) contact zone. Recently, some Latin American films have centered Indigenous protagonists and Indigenous stories such as *El abrazo de la serpiente* (2015), *A chuva é cantoria na aldeia dos mortos* (2018), *O sussurro do jaguar* (2018), *Ex-Pajé* (2019), and *Antes o tempo não acabava* (2016).

The history of filmmaking in the Amazon demonstrates the peripheral place of the region within the Brazilian nation. As Maite Conde explains, Brazilian modernity, encapsulated in the dawn of Brazilian cinema, placed foreign ideas and representations onto a public that did not correspond to them (3). Film, as Conde argues, was a means to project and organize the First Republic's vision of modernization—its "particular invention of modern life" (5). Early film and photography of the Amazon were part of the First Republic's way of integrating the hinterlands into the nation by showing coastal populations a different environment and population, in the process bringing far-away lands and peoples into the cultural imaginary. However, these representations at once brought the Amazon region into the national imaginary while contrasting the forest with the bustling cities of the Southeast.[8]

given grants to settle the land. These migrants turned their land into pasture and as land was rendered unproductive, they moved onto neighboring plots, creating an arc of deforestation along the southern border of Amazonian territory. As international demand for meat grew, Brazil began using this land to produce soybeans and raise cattle, pushing the arc of deforestation farther north. Relatively quickly these migrants abandoned their lands due to low crop yield, distance to markets, poor soils, and lack of credit, among other challenges. As migrants retreated, the Brazilian government gave cheap credit and tax breaks to large-scale enterprises, paving the way for the creation of massive cattle ranches and soy farms within the Legal Amazon ("Contemporary Settlement Patterns").

[8] Many of these initial filmic representations of the Amazon were created as part of state-sponsored missions led by Colonel Cândido Rondon to set up telegraphic communication and document the opening of the frontier along with the "civilizing" of Indigenous peoples through technology and gradual contact (Carey-Webb).

Early depictions set the stage for later portrayals that continued to showcase the Amazon as a site of contrast with modern centers, one that held a certain amount of splendor and intrigue, or conversely, contained a hostile wilderness (Slater). These films went hand in hand with the work of anthropologists seeking to catalogue the region and visually capture its Native inhabitants. Indeed, many of these films took on the contours of the travel narrative genre, taking viewers on a "armchair adventure" by following tropes found within travel narratives of naturalists and explorers who had produced versions of the Amazon for readers since times of initial colonial contact (Conde 163).

Contemporary films set in the Brazilian Amazon often correspond with foreign influence and a particular vision of modernization. Patrícia Vieira examines what she deems the "rainforest sublime" in cinema, characterized by sweeping aerial and landscape shots of the Amazon rainforest found in documentary films. These kinds of shots, she argues, create an increased separation between humans and the environment: "Aerial images of the Amazon embody the concurrent processes of secularization and valuation of the environment. A view of the earth from the sky, which was for centuries conceived of as God's prerogative, became available to humans, now able to register it with a movie camera and thus to contemplate it artistically" (534). These shots are entirely absent in *A febre*, where the viewer is taken through the daily interactions of an Indigenous person experiencing life in the city.

Da-Rin's *A febre* is distinct from these past portrayals—there is no performance of Indigeneity, but rather a glimpse into the day-to-day life of an Indigenous person as he navigates work, family, repeated microaggressions from non-Indigenous peoples, a lengthy commute, and a mysterious fever. In *A febre*, modernity and progress are part of the daily life of the Indigenous protagonist. "Multinational capitalist development" in *A febre* has progressed even further, shown with the shipping containers and globalized port where much of the story unfolds. However, the film demonstrates how Indigenous people have adapted and engaged with the process of modernization, even if, ultimately, the protagonist rejects it for a return to his native village. The film highlights the modernization of the Amazon region, showcasing the city rather than the forest. Instead of portraying Indigenous inhabitants as pristine, exotic Others, *A febre* pulls the viewer into the life and viewpoint of its Indigenous protagonists. It is in

interactions with non-Indigenous Brazilians that the viewer experiences a sense of discomfort—a tug at Westernized assumptions about humanity.

Production and Reception

After several years of production, *A febre* was screened at festivals in late 2019 just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and officially released in November 2020, during the pandemic. Manaus, at the height of the pandemic, reported that 76 percent of the population was infected with the virus, and Indigenous peoples were drastically affected (Ferrante et al.). While the timing of the film's release was perhaps inopportune for a large popular reception, its pre-pandemic production seems prescient. As a film about health, disease, Indigeneity, and fevers, watching it seems a representation of the toll that the pandemic took on the Amazon region.[9]

Along with connections within the film to the pandemic, Da-Rin directly calls attention to *A febre* as a political and environmental commentary ("Fever Q&A"). She has expressed her identification with the daughter in the film, Vanessa, as part of a generation of Brazilians who have little to no memory of the military dictatorship, yet who are currently living through challenges to democracy with massive corruption scandals, increased environmental destruction, and the election of far-right Jair Bolsonaro in 2018. As such, her intervention carries an explicit political message and weight. Da-Rin explains how attempts by the Brazilian government to force assimilation on Indigenous peoples have been on-going since the dictatorship (I would argue since far before then), and that current pressures stem from the agricultural lobby that wants to further open Indigenous land to mining and monoculture agribusiness. As she explains: "Existe um interesse econômico muito forte por trás do discurso de que somos todos iguais e que os índios não se diferem dos outros brasileiros. Mas de que brasileiros, os ricos ou os pobres? Porque no momento em que perderem suas terras e não tiverem mais seu

[9] The effects of COVID-19 on Indigenous communities throughout the world and in the Amazon has resulted in a loss of invaluable knowledge and leadership but has also demonstrated once again the resilience of Indigenous communities. In Peru, for example, Indigenous organizations advocated through public protest in front of government offices to demand their right to participate in COVID-19 response efforts. Other groups organized early to block off their lands and ensure that there was limited contact at the height of the pandemic. The impacts of COVID-19 on the Amazon basin (and the world) will remain for years to come but they also grant an opportunity to rebuild and reconfigure the ways that we interact with nature and how we consider humanity.

território demarcado como reserva indígena, não restará aos indígenas senão passar a ser mão-de-obra, mal paga, muito barata, a serviço de uma elite escravocrata" ("Fever Q&A"). Da-Rin calls attention to the cultural differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Brazilians and points out how in imposing a Western viewpoint without considering Indigenous perspectives, the government has historically denied land rights and equal political representation. In so doing she also acknowledges the importance of designated, demarcated, and protected Indigenous land. This commentary relates to Justino's low-paying job at the port within the film, as well as the interactions he has with his coworkers, who regard him as at once a differentiated and untrustworthy Other and an assimilated "not real Indian."

Furthermore, Da-Rin explains her film as a meditation not only on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people but on the topic of environmental destruction, which in Brazil can hardly be separated from Indigenous land rights.[10] It is important to note, however, that Da-Rin herself is not Indigenous. As Da-Rin comments:

> O filme é sutil, mas deixa bem visível a questão do desmatamento da Floresta Amazônica. . . . São interesses muito fortes. Faz parte da história das Américas. Os interesses econômicos estão sempre na frente, movendo tanto os projetos sociais quanto os econômicos. Os dados oficiais do desmatamento, este ano, são quatro vezes maiores que os dos anos anteriores. A situação se torna preocupante. ("Fever Q&A")

Economic interests have contributed to the ever-increasing deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, a topic that she points to within the film. Justino, working at the port among shipping containers, feels disillusioned by the concrete and metal surrounding him—representations of the modernization and globalization of the

[10] Recent studies show that it is only on Indigenous held and managed land where carbon sink potential—one of the Amazon region's key environmental contributions—is reached (Walker et al.). Da-Rin herself also points this out: "As reservas indígenas são ainda as preservadas sem desmatamento, e isso torna essas reservas muito mais importantes, porque são o lar onde vivem diferentes povos brasileiros, com suas culturas e seus idiomas. É muito importante que esses povos tenham o direito de viver com suas línguas e culturas, muitas das quais já foram exterminadas" ("Fever Q&A").

Amazon. It is only in his return to his village that the viewer sees the stereotypical image of the Amazon as a green haven.

Perhaps because of its subtle political commentary, *A febre* has been well received. The film has garnered international attention and has been released in Europe and the United States as well as across Latin America. Additionally, the film has been selected for over fifty film festivals around the world and to date has won more than twenty international prizes ("Beleza indígena").[11] The framing of the film as well as the Indigenous actors who heavily shaped the language and script create a kind of archival snapshot where the film itself can serve as a documentation of Tukano language and some aspects of Desana culture.

Modernity and A febre

A febre is a poignant meditation on modernity that reconstitutes an Indigenous experience for a non-Indigenous audience, through employing aspects of an Indigenous, and in this case, Desana worldview. Specifically, the film uses its protagonist's lived experience to question modernity. Modernity is built out of power and conflict and depends not only on economic and political processes, but also on ways of knowing, understanding, and being. In many ways, modernity and coloniality form two sides of the same coin, and modernity, as an epistemological framework, is entirely connected to the legacies of colonialism. In Latin America, Aníbal Quijano describes these processes as the "coloniality of power," where the legacy of European colonialism continues into the present through systems of hierarchies, knowledge, and culture.[12] The coloniality of power depends on the erroneous idea that certain societies and places should be subjugated—that the savage, racialized Other needs the subjugation and taming of Western societies—where civilizing and civilization cohere into a single perspective (Said 9).

[11] It is available for streaming on Netflix in Brazil, greatly expanding its potential audience, and has been picked up for international distribution by KimStim in North America, and others in Europe.

[12] As Walter Mignolo explains, a decolonial politics is necessary to understand processes of modernity and expose the Eurocentric coloniality of power. However, to move from a decolonial politics that questions knowledge production into concrete actions requires applying decolonial politics to world-making. This means a "reconstitution, resurgence, reemergence, and re-existence to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery" ("Interview—Walter Mignolo"). For Mignolo, decolonial analytics and decolonial enactment are two sides of the same coin. Epistemic disobedience becomes a way to dismantle the pillars of coloniality and delink with colonial practices.

Challenging this single civilizational perspective is a central theme throughout *A febre*. In one of the more aggressive clashes between Indigenous and Western perspectives seen in the film, Justino is called in to speak with his manager at the port, a woman who tells him that he has been distracted and unfocused in his work. She begins interrogating him about his mental state. She offers to refer him to a psychologist and asks him to imagine what it could cost the company if he dozed off on the job and caused an accident. She then suggests that he could be granted some benefits because of his "condition." This condition is being an Indigenous person. Justino quickly shuts the conversation down and the audience gains the sense that he is quite accustomed to these types of interactions heavily tinged with an ingrained, systemic, and at times overt racism. Justino's work at the port is also ironic in the sense that as an Indigenous person he is tasked with protecting the same modern objects that have altered his people's traditional lifeways.

For the manager, protecting the company's finances is more important than Justino's health. In another example, his port coworker remarks: "At the farm I had to sleep with one [a gun] under my arm. There are a lot of Indians around there. Real ones. With arrows and sticks. There are none like that around here anymore. They're all tame now" (0:45:00). As in his interaction with the manager, Justino says nothing and walks away. The coworker who calls Justino "not a real Indian" (despite referring to him as "Índio" rather than by his name throughout the film) denies his identity, while also repeating stereotyped tropes about "dangerous Indians" with arrows and sticks. After these interactions, Justino's return to his village is an act of defiance—he is asserting that he is, indeed, a "real Indian." Despite these racist encounters, and his ultimate choice to leave the city, Justino is both Indigenous and urban and provides his children, particularly his daughter, with options regarding how she wants to live in the world.

Justino never seems overtly upset or angry with the racist commentary he experiences or the long commute that awaits him after his monotonous job. However, these comments and Justino's experiences point the viewer toward questioning the racial hierarchies visible in his lived experience. He has acclimated to his city lifestyle yet is gradually worn down. The deep toll and impact of this way of living manifests in his fever and ultimately in his return to his community of origin. Justino's non-Indigenous coworkers, in relatively small interactions, attempt to strip away his Indigeneity and simultaneously weaponize it as a

"condition." In either case, Indigeneity seems to have no place (or nuance) within the modern world of his coworkers.

In bridging the port and Justino's life at home with his family, the film employs a transitory period in the form of his commutes. He engages in lengthy and numerous commutes from the port to his home, where he takes multiple buses and then walks on the side of the highway, through a heavily industrialized Manaus, sometimes stopping to watch TV, or grabbing a snack, at one point seeing a news report about neighborhood residents attacked by a mysterious jaguar-like creature—seemingly the same one who plagues his fevered dreams. These commutes, always done in the dark, reveal the distance between Justino and his surroundings, not only physically but also emotionally. He is always on the outskirts—the margins of the highway, the window of a church looking in. It is only when he arrives to his home and interacts with his family that he seems fully integrated into and engaged with his surroundings. These commutes are the bridge between Justino's two lives: the shipping container city and space of anti-Indigenous rhetoric baked into everyday living (the representation of modernity), and his life in his own home on the outskirts of the city surrounded by family. These commutes, which are shown at least three times throughout the film, demonstrate the disillusionment that modernity has wrought on Justino's life.

Within the space of his home, Justino and his family interact in Tukano and comment on their views of the city, their culture, and the mysterious creature that is creating a stir in the area. For example, as Justino's family eats a meal, the television news reports on a small pig attacked by the mysterious animal. Some say it's a jaguar, others a pack of dogs. An expert, interviewed on a news program playing loudly in the background, reports that "exotic invading species can adapt so well to a new ecosystem that they dominate the environment and end up eliminating native species. In nature reserves, domestic dogs have attacked species that are a lot bigger than them. If we don't take measures our biodiversity will be reduced to just a few species" (1:08:45). This commentary makes a not-so-subtle point about settler colonialism, easily relatable to the history of Indigenous peoples within Brazil.[13] Justino explains that the animal on the loose seems different without elaborating on why. Indeed, this creature is left open to interpretation, but

[13] Like another film that nods to the deforestation of the Amazon region, *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980), much of the explicitly environmental content comes from diegetic television commercials or the radio that characters listen to in their daily lives.

it appears that Justino has a particular connection with it and its attacks. As such, it seems that the creature itself could be either a manifestation of Justino's fever or an animal that draws him back into the hunt, which ultimately calls him back to his village. In either scenario, Justino seems to take on the perspective of the creature, while at the same time pursuing it. Or, perhaps, the creature could be representative of the larger problems pointed to throughout the film: a separation between people and their surroundings, or a broader separation between nature and culture.

Western thought has long portrayed a separation between nature and culture, while many Indigenous cosmologies have a holistic, dynamic view of the relationship between humans and their environment. Phillipe Descola examines this approach, finding that "In contrast to modern dualism, which deploys a multiplicity of cultural differences against a background of an unchanging nature, Amerindian thought envisages the entire cosmos as being animated by a single cultural regime that becomes diversified, if not by heterogenous natures, at least by all the different ways living beings apprehend one another. The common referent for all the entities that live in the world is thus not Man as a species but humanity as a condition" (11). In other words, the human condition is part of a broader way of being that is intricately interconnected with all living things, human or not. As Eduardo Viveiros de Castro notes on the relationship between nature and culture, or what he deems an Amazonian perspectivism, there is a malleability between human, animal, and spirit within Amazonian ontologies (*Cannibal Metaphysics* 471). This way of knowing is based in nature where "relations between society and nature are themselves natural" and "human society is one natural phenomenon amongst others" (473). Considering the nonhuman is one way of rethinking the hierarchies of modernity through understanding and respecting not only ecologies, plants, and animals as potential soul-bearing beings, but also in recognizing the diversity of humanity itself.[14]

Tukanoan cosmology follows a perspectivism where the world is made up of different scales of existence and different levels of experience, within three basic layers of the sky, earth, and underworld. Beings belong to their own world that makes up the layers. Thus, the perspective of each being in their world depends on

[14] As Donna Haraway explains from a posthumanist lens: "The discursive tie between the colonized, the enslaved, the noncitizen, and the animal—all reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution—is at the heart of racism and flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism" (15).

what layer they occupy: "what is 'sky' or 'underworld' depends not only on scale and context but also on perspective: at night the sun, sky and day are below the earth with the dark underworld above" (Hugh-Jones et al.). The Desana have a high level of engagement with the senses, as they believe that each sense carries a powerful source of energy that works with the others to create a network. As they move through the world, the Desana must carefully interact with each sense to thrive in a forest environment (Classen 275).

Drawing on Desana cultural practices, *A febre* often alludes to food and consumption to question modern life in the city. After repeated prompting from his daughter, Justino goes into the hospital to see a doctor, although he protests taking medicine as it "thins the blood," and doctors cannot see into his dreams like a shaman from his village would. At the hospital, the doctor asks him a series of questions, and Justino explains that his fever comes and goes, as if on a fixed schedule. During Justino's visit to the hospital, when the doctor asks about his diet, he explains bluntly that he eats food. The doctor asks what kind of food, to which Justino responds: "The kind you find in the supermarket" (0:50:00). The viewer already knows that this is a painful point for Justino, whose brother, in town visiting from their village, criticizes the perceived Westernization of his family in Manaus, because they shop at the grocery store rather than hunt for their food. These questions and answers with the doctor softly expose the different worldviews of Justino and the physician. Justino is living in the modern world and knows how to do so, yet he raises questions and points to the fallacies of this lifestyle. Indeed, a supermarket represents a kind of fast overconsumption. While the doctor's line of questioning may appear normal from a Western point of view, for Justino, despite his years of living in the city, these questions do not reach the root of his problem, which would instead need to consider his dreams, relationship with his surroundings, and inner world.

The doctor only understands a hierarchy of knowledge with Western medicine at the top, which dismisses more abstract concepts like dreams or the personal connection someone could have to their sources of nourishment. According to anthropologist Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff:

> The structure of Desana thought is in large part determined by the activity of the rain forest hunter, and the form in which his fundamental ideas are developed reflects the deep preoccupations

> that are felt concerning the relationship between man and animal. According to the Desana, human society and the fauna of its habitat both participate in the same great potential of reproductive energy, a large circuit that animates the biosphere in a continual ebb and flow. (218)

While speaking with his brother, Justino remarks that working at the port is like "hunting with no prey," which, when taking the importance of hunting from a Desana perspective into account, helps explain just how much Justino's job lacks the spiritual connection with the animal and object of the hunt. For Justino, living in Manaus and shopping at a grocery store, the inability to connect with what he consumes represents a painful separation and loss, and it seems like he attributes his sickness to this lack of connection. As the story unfolds from Justino's perspective, the audience is cued into these differences in small ways that expose the larger differences between a Western and Indigenous cosmovision.

In another moment of translating an Indigenous worldview, Justino invites his grandson onto his lap to tell him a story, in Tukano, as they eat their dinner. He explains how, long ago, a hunter and his family were also eating, and even though they had enough food for their family he decided to hunt more, despite his wife's objections. Upon reaching the woods to go hunt, he aimed his blowpipe at monkeys, and it started to rain. He waited, holding his blowpipe close, until he fell asleep, and the monkeys brought him into the Encante or world of enchanted beings. Several peccaries came by with various illnesses that the hunter diagnosed, making him important to the monkeys. The story ends with a monkey agreeing to lead the man home even though he had been greedy by overhunting in the forest. The man in the story actively speaks with the animals around him and is ultimately spared from capture by the monkeys because of other skills that he uses to help the animals. The hunter's relationship to his environment is emblematic of the important relationship between man and animal: "According to the Desana, human society and the fauna of its habitat both participate in the same great potential of reproductive energy, a large circuit that animates the biosphere in a continual ebb and flow" (Reichel-Dolmatoff 218). Thus hunting, rather than a competition for food or the sport, is a negotiation of energy and life itself. Hunting is extensively prepared for following a set of intricate and important rituals, often led by a *payé* or shaman who conducts invocations to find game animals.

The relationship between humans and animals is of vital importance to Desana cosmology. Lúcia Sá examines creation stories from different Indigenous groups, including the Desana. In each story, there is a central theme: "Differently from the Judeo-Christian genesis, animals in native Amazonian creation stories were not made to be ruled by man: they are an active part of the process of transformation of the world" (129). As she explains, animals and humans are linked by a basic idea of "gentitude" or personhood. As Justino tells his grandson this story, the audience learns about this idea of gentitude, like perspectivism, where each being carries a soul or personhood. In a sense, then, the audience is like the grandson, learning about how the world works through a culturally specific story. This story, again related to hunting, also demonstrates a worldview in which one should not hunt more than necessary and should be aware of the potential dangers when doing so. This oral account within the film, based on actual Desana stories, is used to educate the audience about these traditions while also demonstrating an equal relationship with the natural world.[15] The ways that the film employs Indigenous concepts to question the hierarchies of modernity demonstrates how these alternative viewpoints can be presented subtly and intelligibly to a mostly non-Indigenous audience.

***Conclusion**: A Fevered Return*

On the day that his daughter leaves for Brasilia, the camera follows Justino as he paddles a canoe through a lush, forested waterway. Finally, Justino pulls ashore, sighing as he parks his canoe. With a small duffel bag slung over his shoulders and carrying a plastic bottle filled with a drink, he slowly disappears into the greenery as the camera rests. This final return is an autonomous act where Justino makes the choice to abandon the life he has built in Manaus for his place of origin, a return brought on by his fever, which in turn, was brought on by his lifestyle in the city. His return is also caused by his daughter's move to Brasilia to study medicine.

[15] Emblematic of the symbiotic relationship between animals and humans in Tukano culture is a story in Daniel Munduruku's *Contos indígenas brasileiras*: "A proeza do caçador contra o curupira," or "The Hunter's Feet against the Curupira." A curupira is, broadly speaking, a mythological dwarf with feet that are turned backwards. In the story, a Tukano hunter leaves his family to find food, and in the process meets the curupira, who appears as a forest protector. The man lies to the curupira and tells him that he is lost, rather than hunting. Ultimately, the man joins with the curupira, who offers him an infallible arrow that he uses to become an even better hunter. This short anecdote is meant to again illustrate the absolute centrality of hunting and the process of acquiring food for Desana people.

Justino has provided her with choices about how to forge her future, and with that accomplished, he can retire back to his preferred way of life.

This ending where Justino abandons the city life that he has built is a rebellion against the commute, the fluorescent lights of the hospital, the racist remarks of his coworkers, and the soulless movements of the shipping containers. Regis Mayrupu, the actor who plays Justino, remarks on the tranquility his character finds at the end of the film: "Sim, finalmente, depois de minha experiência na cidade, eu retorno para minha casa, com minha mochila, com minhas poucas coisas, mas feliz porque retorno para minha origem, minha natureza, junto da água e com toda tranquilidade. Deixo o estresse para trás e levo minha vida em frente, feliz" (Martins). Justino's return home is essentially an act of self-preservation. It is also, most importantly, an active *choice* that Justino makes. Despite his relative success in the city (job, home, children who have gone on to successful careers), it is not a fulfilling life on a deeper level—it does not seem to be where Justino feels he belongs.

The political turmoil of present-day Brazil explicitly frames and informs *A febre* as an important intervention on Indigeneity, modernity, and the environment. As Mayrupu explains about the situation of Indigenous people in Brazil when the film was premiering: "Ele [Bolsonaro] acha que matar e eliminar os povos indígenas seria a solução para a futura humanidade e sua melhoria de vida. Mas não é assim; eliminando os povos indígenas, ele está eliminando indígenas, não indígenas, a natureza em geral e o próprio planeta. Não haverá mais o passado, nem o presente e nem o futuro" (Martins). As Mayrupu puts it, the political moment in which *A febre* premiered makes the film itself an explicit act of resistance. Justino's final act of leaving the city and returning to his village also becomes a consideration of the modern world in general, one that Indigenous people can choose to live in, critique, and reject.

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