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EXPLORING ECO-TRAUMA REPRESENTATIONS IN WESTERN SOCIETY'S AYAHUASCA DOCUMENTARY FILM



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ABSTRACT

Through this research, I intend to investigate the fascinating domain of Ayahuasca documentary films. This emerging subgenre showcases explorers and scientists reconnecting with nature and spirituality, which I introduced to the reader through my explorative one-year master's thesis, *A Study of Ayahuasca Documentary Film* (2020). Furthermore, in the present study, I further my research by looking for representations of eco-trauma in three chosen case studies: *Shamans of the Amazon*, *Other Worlds*, and *Ayahuasca*, which is part of the UN-Well docuseries on Netflix. The study analyses physical and psychological harm caused by human- and nonhuman/nature-induced eco-traumas representations. The main finding of the research is that the physical eco-traumas caused by humans are the major problem these films represent. The study uses eco-criticism, globalisation, and world systems theory, shedding light by western filmmakers, scientists, and artists on indigenous communities' implicit and explicit marginalisation, highlighting the need to confront personal and collective harm. The methodology employs an explorative qualitative critical approach, as Rose Gillian pointed out, emphasising the context in which words, images, and interpretations are utilised. This research may provide valuable insights into the field by shedding light on an overlooked and understudied area and suggesting the need for further research to address the physical eco-traumas caused by humans.

Keywords: Ayahuasca documentary films, Eco-Trauma, Physical eco-traumas, Psychological eco-traumas, Human-induced eco-traumas, Western filmmakers, World-System Theory, Globalisation, Eco-Criticism, Indigenous Communities, Case Studies: Shamans of the Amazon, Other Worlds, and Ayahuasca UN-Well docuseries Netflix

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Objectives

The primary objective of this master's thesis is to investigate the depictions of eco-trauma in Ayahuasca documentary films. This research will situate these representations' significance within the broader film historical context of the genre while exploring their social, political, and psychological implications. Specifically, the study aims to shed light on the physical and psychological harm caused by eco-traumas, whether induced by human or non-human/natural factors. By examining how eco-trauma is represented in these documentaries, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of the environmental challenges facing our planet and how these challenges are reflected in contemporary cultural production. An additional objective of this research is to provide valuable insights that can benefit scholars, filmmakers, and environmental activists alike. The discoveries from this study can potentially be of practical use and relevance to these diverse groups, offering valuable knowledge and perspectives.

1.2 Research Question

The research question for this master thesis is: How are eco-trauma representations depicted in Ayahuasca documentary films?

1.3 Background

Breaking New Ground: Academic Evaluation of the Ayahuasca Documentary Subgenre

In my previous one-year master's thesis, titled "A Study of Ayahuasca Documentary Film" (2020), I explored an emerging and developing subgenre of documentary film in the digital age. This subgenre, which I named after its famous cultural moniker, had yet to be previously subjected to academic evaluation. In my thesis, I contextualised the Ayahuasca documentary subgenre and its significance as a reflection of a growing Western cultural interest in plant medicine and ancient Amazonian scientific knowledge. Through my research, I discovered over fifty Ayahuasca documentary films on various streaming platforms, including YouTube, Vimeo, Gaia, and Netflix. As these films are not yet systematically categorised, there may be concealed statistics regarding the number of such films produced up to 2022.

Ayahuasca documentaries have become increasingly popular in recent years, with the digital age allowing for a broader audience to access these films. *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) and *Jungle Trip* (2001), for example, provided fascinating insights into the spiritual practices of Amazonian shamans and were among the first documentaries on this topic. The proliferation of digital media has since facilitated the emergence of numerous other documentaries on Ayahuasca, such as *The Sacred Science* (2011), *From Shock to Awe* (2018), *Metamorphosis* (2009), *Vine of the Soul* (2010), *The Last Shaman* (2016), *The Reality of Truth* (2016), and *Other Worlds* (2004). These films have contributed to increased awareness and understanding of Ayahuasca's cultural and spiritual significance, highlighting the power of digital media to disseminate knowledge and facilitate meaningful discussions.

To provide clarity, it is essential to specify that by "film," I am referring to digital technology as a new medium for filmmaking. It is not surprising that, most documentaries today are produced in digital format. This technological evolution provides valuable insight into the production era for these films, notably as digital filming has become increasingly prevalent. By doing so, I aim to provide context for the research conducted for my year-long master's thesis.

Deconstructing the Ayahuasca Documentary Genre: Key Themes and Characteristics

Several notable characteristics within this genre can aid in gaining a deeper understanding of its underlying themes. We can better comprehend the genre and its thematic elements by examining these traits.

- 9 out of 10 filmmakers and producers are men.
- Ayahuasca, as an entity, is always one of the main protagonists in these documentaries.
- Most films are by filmmakers, English native speakers, or of European descent.
- The messages contained in Ayahuasca documentary films frequently imply a traditional Amazonian worldview.
- There seems to be a political agenda regarding the legacy and globalisation of Ayahuasca consumption.
- Criticism of Western materialism and ways of life and the need to reconnect to the spirit world.
- A discourse that science and spirituality can intertwine through the testimonial representations of Ayahuasca ceremonial participants and scientists.

- Ayahuasca documentary filmmakers often intertext interviews or sound recordings with scientists and academicians to back up their discourse about Ayahuasca science and culture.
- These documentaries feature poetic, participatory, observational, and performative components, to name a few styles or approaches.
- How these films strive to base their depictions on "reality" reflects a common rhetorical approach.

Furthermore, these documentaries represent western contemporary explorers and scientists of ancient Amazonian narratives who are from various fields and whose aim appears to contribute to constructing a better-imagined world in various ways through reconnection with nature and a spiritual world. Through this mobility, Eco-critic scholars, Amazonian shamans, and Ayahuasca devotees shed light on the conversation about the West's current disconnection or rejection of nature, especially in how people think, pointing to the heart of our human problems. Based on previous observations, I discovered that the Internet and the digital world were instrumental in disseminating the Ayahuasca trend in the 21st-century and developing Ayahuasca tourism and incitement to Ayahuasca ceremonies in and beyond the Amazonia over the last two decades in western society.

Especially after the 2005 introduction of YouTube, filmmakers and any Ayahuasca tourist, seeker, or traveller can publicly obtain knowledge and submit their personal experiences from partaking in Ayahuasca ceremonies. The nonfiction Ayahuasca film has enabled viewers to think freely about other regions of consciousness and historic cultural traditions in a contemporary language.¹ The growing trend of utilizing native medicinal plants and practices in the West without proper supervision or adherence to rules can lead to harm. This thesis aims to explore the potential harm caused by this trend through analysis of cultural audio-visual images in documentaries, shedding light on fundamental issues in western civilisation.

These documentaries feature diverse individuals and communities working together to promote peace and ecological consciousness. However, my research uncovered that this subgenre has also contributed to a growing Western trend known as the "Ayahuasca

¹ Nalvarte Nunez, Gwendoline. 2020. "A Study of Ayahuasca Documentary Film." Master Thesis. Lund University.

experience,” characterised by a rhetoric of a paradigm shift in consciousness. This trend needs to be approached with cultural sensitivity and respect for Indigenous communities, and respect for Indigenous knowledge systems.

With the arrival of Internet and digital film in the 21st century, knowledge has been democratised, making it accessible and shareable within minutes. Although this is a positive development, the broad content of these films needs to be verified and examined. As film and media researchers, it is our responsibility to review Ayahuasca documentaries and any content humans create, for that matter, which is not only intriguing but also fascinating and essential.

The trend of seeking for alternative paths of consciousness was underground when the boom of Ayahuasca documentaries began in the first decade of the millennium. Some documentarists worked through grassroots, establishing a good relationship with the shamanic communities, and growing their Ayahuasca community. In a prior interview with Rak Razam², he told me how he would borrow shooting materials from one another and how the Internet would facilitate communication. When he needed an interior establishing shot of Lima's airport, he would "shut out" about it to the community, and someone would send the digital footage to him immediately. To me, it is fascinating, following the ongoing technological transformation and its impact on our society.

Ayahuasca's Paradoxical Journey: From Colonial Disregard to Global Interest and the Impacts of Christian Conversion

The Amazon rainforest is home to a unique plant called Ayahuasca, which is revered by indigenous communities and is often referred to as, *La Madre de todas las plantas*, or "The Mother of all plants." Despite its traditional use for centuries, European colonisers regarded Ayahuasca as a dangerous and evil organism. This paradox highlights the cultural differences and misunderstandings between different groups of people. What was considered sacred and beneficial by one group of people was deemed dangerous and diabolical by another due to colonial perspectives that viewed Amazonian indigenous beliefs as primitive and inferior.

Despite this historical paradox, Ayahuasca's healing potential has been studied and validated, and its use has been shown to lead to significant psychological and emotional healing. However, the adoption of conventional Christian beliefs by some native populations

² Nalvarte Nunez, "A Study of Ayahuasca Documentary Film".

in the Amazon has resulted in a paradoxical situation where traditional scientific advancements and knowledge have been lost or suppressed. This paradox arises because Christianity is often associated with modernity and progress. Yet, its adoption by some native populations has resulted in deviating from traditional knowledge and practices, hindering traditional scientific advancements.

This paradox highlights the complex and often conflicting ways different belief systems can shape our understanding of the world and how adopting new beliefs can have unforeseen consequences. Ayahuasca, a traditional plant with spiritual and medicinal properties, has gained the interest of western audiences in recent decades. Thanks to the research and portrayal of Ayahuasca in documentaries, a subgenre of documentaries has emerged that explores the plant's potential for personal transformation and spiritual communication. It is fascinating to consider Ayahuasca as a healing medicine and a medium of communication that has inspired humans to create documentaries and movies about her.

There is a certain sense of humour in the idea of a plant being in power and encouraging humans to tell her story. In this way, Ayahuasca is expanding her influence beyond the traditional contexts in which she has been used for generations and helping people worldwide to awaken their potential for personal and spiritual growth. However, it is essential to approach these discussions with an awareness of the complex cultural and historical dynamics surrounding using traditional plant medicines like Ayahuasca. The paradoxes and contradictions in these discussions only add to the complexity of navigating these topics with sensitivity and understanding.

Some scholars and people in the West are "suddenly" interested in an old vine from the Amazon and open to its benefits. While Christian scholars and religious organisations (as we speak) are doing their best to "civilize" native Amazonians helping them to forget to practice their traditional languages, rituals and using medicinal plants. Is it not captivating enough to keep our interest and pique our curiosity?

Exploring the Emergence of a New Subgenre of Films: Ayahuasca Documentaries and Their Relevance in the Broader Context of Western Film and Media History

As explained in my earlier research and why I find it essential to investigate this category of documentaries, they represent a manifestation of something occurring in cultures of the west,

with complex consequences in the indigenous cultures of the Amazon. It is in a way, a postmodern crisis centred on climate change and the welfare and future of Westerners. Likewise, a crisis of post-colonial problems caused, among other things, by globalization and unregulated consumption that Westerners bring concerning Ayahuasca. Postcolonial problems concerning unresolved colonial issues which continue to harm the well-being and future of many people in the Amazon. Thus, it becomes so much crucial to study these documentaries from a perspective of social change, examining those crises as traumatic depictions.

With great enthusiasm and eagerness, I present my second thesis, which utilises an ecological trauma framework to explain the emergence of a new subgenre of films that has arisen in response to the ongoing climate change crisis. The investigation of this genre represents an exciting avenue for exploring its relevance and significance within the broader context of western film and media history. Essential within this subgenre of Ayahuasca documentaries, whose filmmakers have harnessed our present era's technological and emotional milieu.

Guerin and Hallas note a critical shift in the study of documentary film, from focusing on the successful or failed imitation of reality to emphasising the language, techniques, and broader issues at play in documentary production. They say that scholars like Bill Nichols and Michael Renov were the ones who started this drive towards a more poetic and rhetorical way of thinking about the documentary form. Noting that the shift began in the early 1990s, as scholars moved away from a narrow preoccupation with truth and honesty towards appreciating the discursive production of documentary films. Today, the interdisciplinary field of documentary studies draws on various fields, including film, performance, communication, rhetoric, philosophy, anthropology, history, and art history, serving to provide a more comprehensive understanding of this vital form of cultural expression,³ which are some of the elements constructing this thesis.

In this manner, studying Ayahuasca documentary filmmaking would ensure our devotion to resembling documentary cinema's evolution to other nonfiction film designs. As Guerin and Hallas suggest in their book *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory, and Visual Culture* that a documentary film is comparable to actualities, amateur films, travelogues, ethnographic

³ Guerin, Frances, and Roger Hallas, editors. *The Image and the Witness: Trauma, Memory, and Visual Culture*. (London and New York: Wallflower Press, 2007) 4–5.

films, radio, television, photography, video art, and digital media, providing an environment across media settings where they are better comprehended and analysed.⁴ I see that happening to this research as it has initially required me to look across different media settings to understand better how the Ayahuasca trend may have begun, eventually influencing, and inspiring the filmmakers.

The early Ayahuasca documentaries, including Jan Kounen's *Other Worlds* (2004), catalysed filmmakers seeking to explore the psychedelic scientific renaissance of the 1990s and the ancient traditions of Amazonian shamans and explorers. This creative movement gave rise to various workshops, gatherings, rituals, seminars, visual art, music, and literature that have since defined the Ayahuasca documentary subgenre. To dismiss these works would be to overlook their rich and diverse contents, which reveal a profound interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. By examining the eco-trauma representations of this subgenre within the broader context of social, cultural, and environmental change, we can gain a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of these films and the artists who created them.

Exploring the Paradoxes of Ayahuasca and Eco-Trauma: How Documentary Filmmakers are Shedding Light on the Complexities of Traditional Plant Medicines

According to John Durham Peters, survivor-witnesses have been encouraged to play an active role in telling their story since the end of World War II. This trend is evident in the Ayahuasca documentary subgenre, where personal survivor-witness narratives play a vital role in conveying the experiences of those who have undergone Ayahuasca ceremonies. Or those impacted by Ayahuasca tourism. However, witnessing is a complex and convoluted process that raises fundamental questions about communication, truth, and perception.⁵

Ayahuasca filmmakers have chosen to abandon the luxuries of Western living and delve deep into the heart of the Amazon rainforest to express their art, explore their curiosity, or share their newfound knowledge. They aim to capture the essence of Ayahuasca and document the

⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

⁵ Peters, John Durham. "Witnessing." *Media, Culture & Society* 23, no. 6 (November 2001): 707. doi:10.1177/016344301023006002

experiences of those who have partaken in its effects. Some early Ayahuasca documentaries presented a narrative that entheogens such as Ayahuasca could offer solutions to the problems of Western society, highlighting issues like political unrest, social injustice, and environmental degradation. For instance, these films criticised the overconsumption of natural resources without regard for the ecosystem and the other species.

Ayahuasca documentaries also address various mental health issues such as depression, trauma (including post-traumatic stress disorder), drug abuse, and alcoholism, as well as diseases prevalent in Western societies, such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Examples of such documentaries include *"The Sacred Science"* (2011) by Nicholas J. Polizzi, *"Jungle Prescription"* (part of the television series "The Nature of Things") by Mark Ellam, and *"The Reality of Truth"* (2016) by Laurent Levi and Mike Zapolin. These documentaries shed light on the impact of Ayahuasca on these health issues and how it can potentially be used as a treatment option.

Furthermore, the Ayahuasca documentaries challenge us spectators to analyse representations of an Amazonian vine, its cultural diaspora in the West, and its scientific evolution through its visual culture, which I find intriguing. Only in 2020 did Netflix's commercial production of an Ayahuasca documentary present the viewer with issues raised by the globalisation of Ayahuasca, including not only its beneficial impacts in the West but also its harmful repercussions on the indigenous populations of the Amazon. (See case study 3).

Navigating the Complexities of Ayahuasca Globalization: Examining Visual Culture and Eco-Trauma in Early Documentaries and Contemporary Challenges

In the 1990s, Western and Latin American academics collaborated to revive entheogenic research. The first Ayahuasca medical trial showed promising results in treating depression, PTSD, and drug addiction,⁶ leading to a growing interest in visual culture for traditional indigenous ceremonies and rituals employing sacred entheogenic medicines.

⁶ Callaway, JC, DJ McKenna, CS Grob, GS Brito, LP Raymon, RE Poland, EN Andrade, EO Andrade, and DC Mash. "Pharmacokinetics of Hoasca Alkaloids in Healthy Humans." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 65, no. 3 (June 1, 1999): 243–56. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=edsWSC&AN=000080931100008&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

Ayahuasca is a sacred drink from *Banisteriopsis caapi* stems and *Psychotria Viridis* leaves. *Banisteriopsis caapi*, endemic to the western and northern Amazon, its use has spread worldwide.⁷ *Ayahuasca* has drawn more than just scientists who have wanted to learn more about its purported health benefits. An influx of people from the arts and entertainment industries and those who could initially afford the trip to the Amazonian rainforest to pursue the *Ayahuasca* experience began to grow towards the end of the 1990's. Once organizers recognized a considerable demand from the Western world, these ceremonial customs began to shift.

The most significant modification appears to be the patient taking the *ayahuasca*, as opposed to the medicine man, during the ritual. Since the medicinal doctor or "shaman" was once the only one who drank *ayahuasca*, he would act as the patient's interpreter and serve as the patient's conduit to the spirit world through visions and *Icaros* (healing songs). In the westernised variant, the patient consumes *Ayahuasca* alongside other *ayahuasca* recipients. The patient decides how to interpret their cure or the responses to their pre-ceremony questions or intentions. However, due to the risks and the fact that *Ayahuasca* is not for everyone, it contradicts the information presented in early *Ayahuasca* documentaries, compared to later *Ayahuasca* documentaries.

The rhetoric of the early *Ayahuasca* documentaries appeared to be in a hurry to transmit healing benefits to as many westerners as possible, a mass production of media content without considering the potential risks in populations with mental health problems such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Or another disregard was the reality that westerners would travel to the Amazon in search of a cure for whatever ailment or trauma they were suffering from, paying enormous sums of money that would enable the exploitation not only of the region's natural resources but also of the natives' traditional practises.

Based on our current understanding, both the filmmakers and scientists involved in promoting the benefits of *Ayahuasca* during the initial boom could have exercised more caution and responsibility in their public advocacy. However, it is also worth noting that at the time, they may not have been aware of the potential dangers of using *Ayahuasca* in combination with

⁷ Fotiou, Evgenia. "The Globalization of *Ayahuasca* Shamanism and the Erasure of Indigenous Shamanism." *Anthropology of Consciousness* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 151–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/anoc.12056>

antipsychotic medication due to the lack of research available. Lack of knowledge led to irresponsible use, cultural appropriation, and dangerous consequences for those with mental health problems. Only in the years following the 2010s did studies begin to reveal these risks, as demonstrated in recent Ayahuasca documentaries.

With the accessibility of audio-visual content, promoting the safe and respectful use of entheogenic medicines is crucial, emphasising cultural sensitivity and responsible preparation. Evgenia Fotiou explores Ayahuasca (shamanic) tourism and its challenges in the twenty-first century from the perspective of ethnic tourism and cultural appropriation. Her anthropological results match some of the present images evoked by Ayahuasca documentaries, in contrast to the portrayal these documentaries included during the first decade of the 21st century's Ayahuasca documentary boom.

For example, she brings up different scholars on the subject who would argue for and against Ayahuasca tourism, stating that Ayahuasca tourism emphasises indigenous spirituality while downplaying Amazonian customs, which mirrors what one of the shamans in *Ayahuasca* (2020) says when criticizing the Ayahuasca tourism by the West (See Case study 3).

In contrast, others say native-run tourism can aid in preserving native culture instead. Consequently, some indigenous organisations anticipate that attracting tourists will assist them in achieving their political goals. The truth is contextual and variable. Fotiou asserts that none of these considerations applies to Iquitos, where mestizo shamans turned Ayahuasca practises into a career well before the tourism boom. To Fotiou, the globalisation of Ayahuasca has made local ontological ideas less essential, changing the local culture to fit the "neoliberal subject landscape."⁸

Regardless, the Ayahuasca documentaries offer a powerful depiction of the ongoing trauma experienced by “formerly” colonised peoples. Through their portrayal of individuals struggling to live up to an unattainable standard of traditional culture, these films reveal the deep-seated pressures and challenges plaguing indigenous communities today.

⁸ Fotiou, Evgenia. "Shamanic Tourism in the Peruvian Lowlands: Critical and Ethical Considerations." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 25, no. 3 (October 2020): 374-96. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jlca.12508>

1.4 Methodology

This research aims to investigate eco-trauma representations in Ayahuasca documentary films and how they shed light on physical and psychological harm caused by human- and nonhuman/nature-induced eco-traumas. To achieve this, I employed a content analysis method. Content analysis has been defined as “*Any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages.*”⁹. Furthermore, Rose Gillian presents a specific genre of content analysis well suited for studying visual material, which I have applied in this research. One of the unique features of Rose Gillian's book *Visual Methodologies* is its comprehensive overview of different visual research methods and their applications in social sciences, humanities, and media studies. Gillian's book offers a detailed analysis of different visual forms, including photography, film, and new media, and their roles in shaping cultural understandings of society and identity.

Another unique feature of the book is its emphasis on the ethical and political implications of visual research, which provides readers with critical insights into how visual methods can shape and be shaped by power relations in different social contexts. According to Gillian, picking a research approach entail developing a research question and providing the resources necessary to provide evidence supporting its resolution that conforms to the theoretical framework.¹⁰

The films were selected based on the following criteria:

1. **Relevance to the research question:** I have selected films that directly address the topic of eco-trauma and its portrayal in the Ayahuasca documentaries. It involved looking for films that specifically explore themes related to environmental degradation, climate change, or other forms of ecological crisis from physical and psychological realms.

⁹ Ole R. Holsti, "Content Analysis." In *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, edited by Gardner Lindzey and Elliot Aronson, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1968), 596-692.

¹⁰ Gillian, Rose. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 3rd edit., (London, Sage, 2012) 1-40.

2. **Availability:** I selected films that were readily available and easily accessible for analysis. It involved looking for documentaries available for streaming online through academic libraries or film archives.
3. **Variety of perspectives:** I have selected films offering diverse views on eco-trauma. The selection included documentaries critical of mainstream environmentalism and documentaries offering more optimistic outlooks on the potential for ecological restoration and regeneration.
4. **Period of the films:** I have selected documentaries released within a specific period to ensure the base of the analysis on both older and recent relevant visual material. For example, it involved looking for films released within the birth of the Ayahuasca documentary filmmaking and for films released in the past few years.

To begin the content analysis, I used knowledge from conducting prior research as part of my one-year master's thesis, which involved reviewing around fifty Ayahuasca-related films. That helped me to map, define, and contribute to the definition of the genre: Ayahuasca documentaries. I then developed my research question and chose three Ayahuasca documentaries for detailed analysis in this research. I hand-transcribed the chosen documentaries using a pen and notebook, as this has been shown to aid in knowledge retention.¹¹ The resulting transcriptions provided me with a cognitive visual tool for the content of each documentary, allowing for a more convergent approach to structure the content of the documentaries and extract parts that portrayed eco-trauma. The eco-trauma scenes were then divided into two categories: human-induced eco-trauma and nonhuman/nature-induced eco-trauma.

These categories were further subdivided into physical and psychological harm. The physical harm sub-category refers to scenes that show direct or indirect physical damage caused by human-induced eco-trauma. For instance, scenes depicting deforestation, oil spills, air pollution, or wildlife destruction, murder, caused by human activities fall under this sub-category. On the other hand, scenes showing natural disasters, climate change effects, or habitat loss due to nonhuman/nature-induced factors belong to the nonhuman/nature-induced eco-trauma sub-category.

Moreover, the psychological harm sub-category includes scenes that portray emotional, mental, or social consequences of eco-trauma on individuals, communities, or societies. For example, scenes depicting grief, trauma, anxiety, depression, or social isolation caused by eco-trauma belong to this sub-category of human-induced and nonhuman/nature-induced eco traumas. In this manner, I designed a strategy for coding the eco-trauma scenes, using Gillian Rose's recommendations to ensure a single code classification covered every component of the image or segment of analysis. As stated by Rose Gillian, the strategy will only be effective if a single code classification covers every component of the image or segment of analysis.

In this work, the eco-trauma scenes are the segment of analysis, and the code classifications corresponds to the defined categories and sub-category. Once that was in place, I was ready to

¹¹ Lee, Bradford J. "Comparing Factual Recall of Tapped vs Handwritten Text." *Acta Psychologica* 212, no. 103221 (January 1, 2021) doi:10.1016/j.actpsy.2020.103221.

go on to the fun part, to comb through all my content, one documentary at a time, and keep a running tally of the number of times I encountered one of the designated categories. In this procedure stage, ensuring that each count was exhaustive and exclusive inside the chosen belonging category/subcategory was essential.

To prevent errors in the counting portion of the procedure, I utilized a notepad on which I recorded information characterizing the image for which I was providing a count under the category's chosen classification. Thus, I would immediately disregard the tally on both subcategories and rely on the code being exclusive and exhaustive if, for example, I had counted the image "grilled monkey" under the subcategory of how human-induced eco-trauma is portrayed and then noticed that I had also counted it under the subcategory of how nature/nonhuman-induced eco-trauma is portrayed. Furthermore, I reviewed the content twice to ensure I got everything concerning the drawing of my tallies, which meant putting one tick under each category and subcategory.

Overall, the coding sub-categories of physical and psychological harm were selected to analyse the eco-trauma representations in the Ayahuasca documentary films comprehensively. They shed light on the different types of liability caused by human and nonhuman/nature-induced eco-traumas. In this manner, the collected data was analysed to identify similarities or differences between the assorted classifications of the eco-trauma scenes. It provided answers to my research question and insights for future investigations.

To further clarify the methodology utilized in this research a workflow figure is presented in the below, Figure 1.

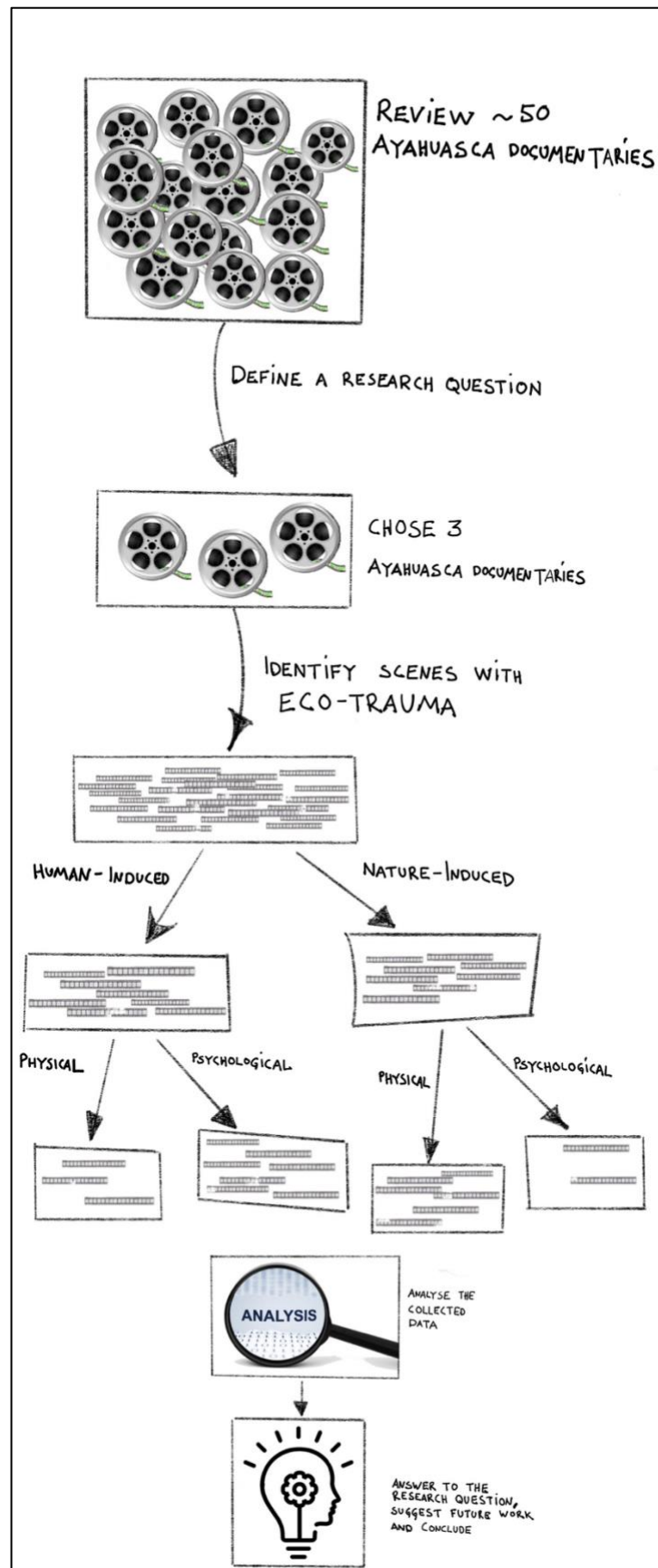


Figure 1 Illustration of the thesis workflow.

1.5 Justifications and Delimitations of the Study

A crucial justification for this study is that there is a knowledge gap in the humanities concerning these films and content. Western society's general disregard and fear toward entheogenic compounds may also be a factor in the lack of research. Although precisely because of the lack of information, it is that it is entirely crucial to conduct research of its visual culture, significantly when other disciplines, such as neuroscience,¹² is constantly growing.

While I have chosen three case studies to gather essential data within the limitations of my thesis, I acknowledge that my sample size is limited. My explorative research aims to expand the understanding of eco-trauma film subgenres regarding their subject matter and visual style. By examining the depiction of eco-trauma in these films, I aim to identify and analyse any intriguing similarities or differences in the visual representation of eco-trauma. Join me on this exciting journey of discovery as I delve deeper into the world of eco-trauma films and uncover a wealth of knowledge that will inform future research and expand our understanding of this critical issue.

1.6 Disposition

This thesis is an immersive exploration of the subgenre of Ayahuasca documentary films through the eco-trauma lens. It is divided into five compelling chapters designed to guide the reader through a comprehensive understanding of the research conducted.

Chapter or section I introduces the topic, presenting a referential background that led to the research objectives. This chapter provides a detailed overview of the research topic, purposes, reasons, and study limitations. The hybrid content analysis approach is also introduced, providing quantitative and qualitative research methods to interpret and understand the findings.

¹² Domínguez-Clavé, Elisabet, Joaquim Soler, Matilde Elices, Juan C. Pascual, Enrique Álvarez, Mario de la Fuente Revenga, Pablo Friedlander, Amanda Feilding, and Jordi Riba. "Ayahuasca: Pharmacology, Neuroscience and Therapeutic Potential." *Brain Research Bulletin* 126, no. Part 1 (September 1, 2016): 89–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainresbull.2016.03.002>

Chapter II takes the reader on a journey through the previous literature related to the topic of eco-trauma film representations and a theoretical framework. I deconstruct the concept of eco-trauma, providing historical and conceptual meanings from eco-critical ideas and trauma theory. The chapter also delves into different conceptions of social processes, such as globalisation and world systems theory, to evaluate the socio-political and eco-critical aspect of the three chosen documentaries as case studies.

Chapter III provides a detailed chronological order of the overall plot of each documentary, followed by an analysis and findings, creating the discussion body in the research. The presentation of each case study offers a historical journey of this subgenre from 2001 to 2020, which is both informative and thought-provoking.

Chapter IV offers a final thought process of the investigation, providing a captivating reflection on the evidence and arguments presented in the previous chapters.

Chapter V This chapter provides recommendations for further research that may be helpful and informative.

In conclusion, this thesis aims to comprehensively explore the representation of ayahuasca documentary films through the eco-trauma lens. By utilising qualitative research methods, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between ecological degradation and trauma in the context of documentary filmmaking. The theoretical framework and case studies presented in this thesis offer valuable insights into broader social processes such as globalisation and world systems theory and shed light on how eco-trauma is represented in the media.

2. PREVIOUS LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter establishes the foundation for my study of eco-trauma films, exploring core principles and theories that inform this genre. By examining diverse critical perspectives and eco-trauma ideologies, I aim to develop a nuanced understanding of this vital intersection of environmentalism and film. This foundation will enable the research to undertake a more insightful and meaningful investigation of eco-trauma cinema's complex concepts and themes.

2.1 Previous Literature on Eco Trauma Film

2.2.1 *Uncovering the Global Connection of Eco-Trauma: A Powerful Study on the Race and Social Justice Issues in US Cities Through Independent Filmmakers' Lens*

In her study about documentary film and eco trauma, “*Protecting New Orleans/Saving Venice*”, Sabrina Vellucci focuses on the work by Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno, two independent filmmakers who explore race and social justice matters in the inner cities of the US. According to Vellucci, to connect the city of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta to the globe outside the US's physical and political borders, the documentary *Protecting New Orleans/Saving Venice* (2006) stands out among their works. With its companion short film *NOLA* (2006), Vellucci finds that the filmmakers promote awareness about the human-related causes of 'natural' occurrences painting a vivid picture of comparable danger situations involving remote and disparate locations. Such as Venice's 2019 floods, which Vellucci describes as frighteningly predictive. Vellucci's investigation applies Anil Narine's concept of "eco-trauma cinema" to evaluate the short films' analysis of the origins and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, focusing on the transnational dimension of the environmental effects at stake. Vellucci ends her cognitive analysis by referring to Ursula Heise, stating that, by emphasizing the interconnectedness of local places, ecologies, and cultural practices within global networks, these films contribute to the establishment of "cosmopolitan forms of awareness and community, both ecologically and culturally," and actively participate in the "search for the stories and images of a new kind of eco-cosmopolitan environmentalism."¹³

¹³ Sabrina Vellucci. "Migrating Environmental Paradigms in Italian American Cinema: 'Protecting New Orleans/Saving Venice' by Marylou and Jerome Bongiorno." *Iperstoria*, no. 17 (June 2021). doi: 10.13136/2281-4582/2021.i17.991.

2.1.2 The Power of Cinema in Revealing the Unspoken: Alberto Baracco's Persuasive Analysis on Eco Trauma, Memory, Witness, and Film Techniques

On the other hand, Alberto Baracco analyses the psychological idea of eco trauma cinema following Stolorow's works and philosophy of life that intersects with "worlds apart" - inaccessible inner universes based on traumatic occurrences. Faced with these inexplicable emotional regions, Baracco proposes that cinema gives words for the indescribable, engaged in the fight between not forgetting and assisting in forgetting. With *Vajont* (2001) by Martinelli and *Un Posto Sicuro* (2015) by Ghiaccio, he zooms into the essence of trauma, its non-representative nature, and the value of memory and witness as a single paradigm. His observations also consist in the anti-narrative component of traumatic experience moving towards a philosophical concept.

According to Baracco," the essence of trauma appears to be expressed through interruptions, pauses and silences, within a representation that avoids explicit utterances, thereby becoming strongly symbolic,"¹⁴and the eco-critical cinematic language represents the painful crisis experience in a human-natural relationship. In this way, he adds that formalising trauma has meant comprehending modern industrial society's dehumanising essence. Baracco relates to Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), connecting Freud and Lacan's theoretical legacy to contemporary challenges. In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth uses Alain Resnais' 1959 film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* to demonstrate her idea that the lovers' bond conveys the agony of war and nuclear disaster. "The interest of *Hiroshima Mon Amour* lies in how it explores the possibility of a faithful history", Caruth says trauma cannot express itself directly; the indirect narration is necessary precisely because, in other words, representation of trauma is not possible.¹⁵

Baracco implies that stillness is the paradigmatic moment in a film's representation of trauma. In his analysis of *Vajont* (2006), which is a film about the October 1963 disaster in Veneto, when a landslide of 260 million cubic meters of earth and rock broke free from Mount

¹⁴ Alberto Baracco. "Italian Eco-Trauma Cinema: From 'Vajont' to 'Un Posto Sicuro.'" *CoSMO*, no. 15 (December 2019), <https://doaj.org/article/3d736e633a854402a35df59ba91a307d>

¹⁵ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 17

Toc and fell into the dam's basin, triggering a 250-meter wave downstream that destroyed Longarone and neighbouring towns, killing over 1,900 people. Baracco provides several examples of films representing ecological catastrophes in Italy, he finds that these images employ film interviewing techniques to capture memories of survivors and provide us with a detailed reconstruction of events. They reveal how individual traumata may be seen and awakened through cinema. It suggests that the image's testimonial value elevates the terrible experience from the personal to the collective.

By exchanging faces, voices, and histories, Baracco argues that these films create a passage of witness through the medium of cinema. He further finds that in *Un Posto Sicuro* (2015), the film expands on witness and trauma representation. One of contemporary Italy's most significant environmental disasters, with over 3,000 fatalities of pleural mesothelioma and other illnesses caused by uncontrolled dispersion of asbestos fibres in the environment, is depicted in the film. Like *Vajont* (2006), Baracco characterises *Un Posto Sicuro* as a mix of docu-fiction. The film is about Eduardo, a former Eternit worker who is terminally sick, and his son Luca, an aspiring actor who had broken off contact with him. The film symbolises their reunion and mutual anguish and grief. Moreover, the film emphasises the great environmental destruction Eternit caused its neighbouring population, being at the time one of Europe's most extensive manufacturing facilities.¹⁶

2.1.3 The Power of Eco-Trauma Representations in Cinema: Understanding the Impact on Our Relationship with Nature

Furthermore, a different approach of eco trauma cinema in the following article, "*Trauma, eco-spirituality, and transformation in Frozen 2: Guides for the Church and climate change*", unfolds Jennifer Baldwin's thoughts on how Disney's *Frozen 2* might help the Western (Christian) community to understand trauma, transformation, as well as the need to embrace eco-spirituality as a method of total embodied restoration. In Baldwin's view, trauma is an event that overwhelms our ability to adapt to our surroundings, causing either a restriction or a development. Baldwin alleges that *Frozen 2* is about trauma and transformation, referring to the scene where Olaf asks, "Did you know that an enchanted forest is a place of

¹⁶ Alberto Baracco. "Italian Eco-Trauma Cinema: From 'Vajont' to 'Un Posto Sicuro.'" *CoSMO*, no. 15 (December 2019), <https://doaj.org/article/3d736e633a854402a35df59ba91a307d>

transformation?" Baldwin implies that trauma imprints us with defensive behaviours. By contrast, transforming trauma draws us from the unknown beyond into a conscious visceral natural flow.

Baldwin suggests that the way to reach transformation and a natural flow from trauma is by uncovering the real cause of trauma and making peace with it. Baldwin analyses the film's pulse opening when Elsa and Anna play with their snow toys, following their father telling them about an enchanted forest and how he became King. His narrative depicts colonialism and subsequent acts of violence that remove the elemental spirits and the Northuldra people (based on the Sami people) from Arendelle, setting in motion a chain reaction that isolates Anna and Elsa as well as their family from their town.

While the film is first narrated through King Agnarr's perspective, Baldwin states that the film's central objective is to uncover the truth, face the trauma of the facts, and make apologies or atonement, thereby breaking the spell. Baldwin's reading is that Elsa must use her magic to befriend the elemental spirits and witness their truths. Through befriending and partnership with the elemental spirits, Elsa finds her way home to who she is, and consequently, Anna steps into her power.

Baldwin finds that transformation happens when one bravely witnesses the root violence of trauma and takes genuine efforts to break the spell and restore resilience and vitality. She invites the church community here to learn from *Frozen 2* by having the guts to take risks in the face of our global ecological catastrophe. Baldwin urges more sustainable techniques that would aid a reconnection, facing with courage the damage caused by the Christian community to indigenous populations, the planet, and non-human beings.

Through her provocative analysis, Baldwin reflects upon the Earth's long history of violence, holding grave consequences on today's global health and biodiversity. Moreover, Baldwin ends her examination by urging fellow Christians to humbly seek forgiveness and understanding for their collective atrocities against indigenous peoples and provide reparations, however possible, stressing the importance of cooperating with them in healing the traumas because "transformation is formed through the courage to venture into the unknown, the willingness to listen, witness, and befriend..." as it is in the case with Elsa when she befriends the elemental spirits, breaking the spell of fear and transforming towards a natural flow.

We must befriend all aspects of our ecology to achieve transformation. Baldwin writes, "the moral fortitude to break down the walls that were erected in fear and connect ever more fully to the elemental spirits of the planet and, through those connections, to who we are meant to be," indicates the direction of the discourse towards a positive transformation of our ecological systems.¹⁷

2.2 Theoretical Framework

In this study, the term "eco trauma" will be deconstructed within a theoretical framework to facilitate the evaluation of the Ayahuasca documentary film subgenre from both human and non-human-induced perspectives. To achieve this, I will examine and discuss various academic encounters within eco-critical dimensions, starting with an introduction to eco-criticism based on progressive contemporary theory, followed by an exploration of social processes concepts such as globalisation, the world system theory, and post-colonial eco-criticism. These theoretical dimensions will aid our understanding of specific representations of eco-trauma in the upcoming case study analyses. Through a theoretical framework, this study aims to comprehensively examine the complex interactions between humans and the environment and how they are represented in the Ayahuasca documentary films.

2.2.1 A Brief Historical Aspect from Eco-Criticism to Eco-Cinema

Ecocritical history, or environmental history, is the study of the interplay between humans and nature across time, aiming to comprehend human beings in their interactions with the rest of nature. J. Donald Hughes reminds us that people are a part of nature, but in comparison to other species, humans have wreaked havoc on the land, sea, and air, as well as on different kinds of life that share our earthly home. Hughes asserts that environmental history is equally connected to the economy. The term "eco" in economics derives from the exact origin as the term "eco" in ecology, from the Greek "Oikos", meaning household, signifying administration of a home, whether financial or inhabited. Thus, whether people like it or not, and whether they are aware of it, economics, commerce, and international

¹⁷ Baldwin, Jennifer. "Trauma, Eco-Spirituality, and Transformation in Frozen 2: Guides for the Church and Climate Change." *Dialog* 59, no. 2 (June 2020): 60–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12546>

politics are determined by the availability, location, and measurable nature of what the economists name *natural resources*.¹⁸ Therefore, nature should not be seen as powerless, rather as a source of all power. J. Donald Hughes explains this highlighting the fact that “nature is the economy that envelops all human efforts and without which human efforts are impotent.”¹⁹

Furthermore, Cheryl Glotfelty defines eco-criticism as the study of literary works to determine how they affect and inform our connection with the environment. It approaches academic studies from an earth-centred perspective.²⁰ Unlike feminism or postcolonialism, ecocriticism has not evolved as an intellectual supplement to a political movement, says another scholar, Ursula K. Heise pointing out, ecocriticism arose from an extensive range of unified as well as clashing efforts, giving rise to two majors humanistic subdisciplines: environmental philosophy and history. Ecocriticism has been a valuable shorthand for critics referred to as “*environmental criticism, literary ecological studies, literary ecology, literary environmentalism, or green cultural studies*,” by Lawrence Buell, according to Heise.²¹

Heise in this way asserts that, ecocriticism in this sense first differed distinctly from other postmodern thought seeking to redefine humanness, not so much concerning the relation to other humans as concerning the connection to the non-human world. To Heise, the overall critique of environmentalism and ecocriticism is that modernity is arrogant in claiming to understand the natural world through science, manipulating it technologically, exploiting it economically, and calling the process *progress*. And in the name of progress, having the right to over-consume, if not gradually, directly depriving humankind eventually a base for living.²²

¹⁸ Hughes, J. Donald. *What Is Environmental History?* 2nd ed. What Is History? Series. (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 12.

¹⁹ Hughes, *What is Environmental History?*, 18.

²⁰ Glotfelty, Cheryl. "Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis" in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, xv-xxxvii. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).

²¹ Heise, Ursula K. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism." *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006): 503-16. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486328>.

²² Heise, *Guide to Eco-Criticism*, 503-16

Even though it seems rather like hard criticism, Heise's declaration is considered here since, according to researchers from the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP), The Ecological Threat Register estimates the risk postured by population increment, water insufficiency, food deficit, droughts, floods, cyclones, rising temperatures, and sea-level rise. In addition, over one billion people are at risk of being displaced by 2050 due to climate change, warfare, and civil instability,²³ facts that are relevant to bring up for the later analysis in the thesis. But let us face it, humans would not be writing theses about eco-trauma representations, unless they were noticing imbalances in the human-environmental symbiosis.

Heise, further acknowledges that the environmentalist ambition is to think globally but that using merely one style to achieve that, is unimaginable. Therefore, Heise considers that because ecocritical work encompasses many literatures and cultures, it would benefit from a closer engagement with theories of globalisation.²⁴ Heise is not alone considering this. Other eco-critics, such as Scott Slovic²⁵, Rob Nixon²⁶, and Greg Garrard²⁷, concur. These critics hint that because environmental-justice eco-criticism has been the only branch of the field to approach globalisation issues to any extent. Here, it is essential to point out that this form of ecocriticism opposes economic globalisation, which it perceives to be dominated by transnational corporations, but embraces cultural border crossings and partnerships, notably when launched by the economically underprivileged.

²³ Institute for Economics and Peace. "Ecological Threat Register 2020: Understanding Ecological Threat, Resilience and Peace." *Institute for Economics and Peace*. Last modified September 2020. https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/ETR_2020_web-1.pdf

²⁴ Heise, *Guide to Eco-Criticism*, 503-16

²⁵ Villanueva Romero, Diana. "Reflections on Literature and Environment: An Interview with Scott Slovic." *Ecozon@* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 2010): 67-86. <https://doi.org/10.37536/ECOZONA.2010.1.2.363>

²⁶ Nixon, Rob. "Environmentalism, Postcolonialism, and American Studies." In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 233-62. Harvard University Press, 2011. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbsgw.12>.

²⁷ Garrard, Greg. "Futures: The Earth." In *Ecocriticism*, 2nd ed., 183-185. Routledge, 2012. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4324/9780203806838>.

Heise also thinks that problems related to the environment affect politics, the economy, technology, and culture. To envision how they affect the world, one needs to learn about different theories of globalisation, especially those that focus on its cultural diaspora. On the other spectrum, Greg Garrard in *Ecocriticism* invites us to consider that not only do humans need to 'think globally,' but humans also need to think about the entire planet, which necessitates a politicised reading practice more akin to social ecology, postcolonialism and cultural studies than deep ecology.²⁸ Deep ecology meaning fundamentally "the value of nature in and of itself, the equal rights of other species", while social ecology "tends to value nature primarily in its human uses and has affinities with political philosophies ranging from anarchism and socialism to feminism."²⁹ Such a practice encompasses the Earth's constructions as made available by economics, politics, and biology, as well as literature, television, and film underlines Garrard.³⁰

Following on, from the previous review of ecocriticism, Scott McDonald coined the term eco-cinema in 2004 while writing about his vision of an eco-cinema as a way of "retraining of perception", providing a garden—an "Edenic" redemption from traditional consumerism—within the machine of modern life, as personified by the machinery of media.³¹ While it was not until 2013 that Stephen Rust and Salma Monani introduced the book *Eco-Cinema Theory and Practice*, which enabled us to study eco-cinema in new ways. The book helped us examine eco-cinema differently, viewing the world through lenses rather than merely the anthropocentric lens, which focuses the moral universe on individual human concerns.³²

²⁸ Garrard, Greg. "Futures: The Earth." In *Ecocriticism*, 2nd ed., 183. Routledge, 2012. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4324/9780203806838>.

²⁹ Heise, Ursula K. "The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism." *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (2006): 507. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25486328>.

³⁰ Garrard, Greg. "Futures: The Earth." In *Ecocriticism*, 2nd ed., 183. Routledge, 2012. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4324/9780203806838>.

³¹ Macdonald, Scott. "Toward an Eco-Cinema." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 11, no. 2 (2004): 107–32. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44086296>.

³² Rust, Stephen and Salma Monami. "Introduction: Cuts to Dissolves-Defining and Situating Ecocinema Studies." In *Ecocinema: Theory and Practice*, edited by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt, 1–13. (New York: Routledge, 2013)

Such lenses are gradually maturing, as evidenced by Rachel Webb Jekanowski's investigation into ecocriticism and postcolonialism in Egyptian cinema imaginaries. She examines the politicisation of natural resources and the broader entanglements of environment and politics, thereby adding valuable insights. Webb Jekanowski maintains that Western-centric conceptualisations of media and environment still dominate literary ecocriticism and eco-media studies.³³ She also criticizes Anglo-American scholars preferring cases from the Global North. In this respect, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin assert the “need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance” by incorporating postcolonial theory into ecocritical inquiry.³⁴

In this respect, Webb Jekanowski further remarks referring to Huggan and Tiffin that postcolonial ecocriticism can also help evaluate how national interests and transnational capitalism abuse the environment and the 'ecological' language for political and commercial gain.³⁵ Additionally, Huggan and Tiffin, believe that mixing these two topics: postcolonialism and ecocriticism will result in stresses around race, class, power, and privilege.³⁶

When these two theories are combined, historians can construct an ecological history of the nation from pre-colonial to post-colonial periods.³⁷ Therefore, the post-colonial image of nature also addresses the challenge of rejecting established norms of perception. And to aid in comprehending this procedure, the research introduces the ideas of globalisation and world-systems theory since both concepts refer to the examination of eco trauma in the ayahuasca documentaries chosen for the upcoming analyses.

³³ Jekanowski, Rachel Webb. "Land in Revolt: Eco-Criticism and the Roots of Resistance." *Middle East Journal of Culture & Communication* 11, no.3 (November 2018): 248–73. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-01103003>

³⁴ Huggan, Graham, and Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism : Literature, Animals, Environment*. 1st edition. (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.

³⁵ Webb Jekanowski, *Land in Revolt: Eco-Criticism and the Roots of Resistance*, p255

³⁶ Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*.

³⁷ Mukherjee, Akaitab, and Rajni Singh. "From Postcolonial Vision of Nature to Ecocinema: A Study of Satyajit Ray's Aranyer Din Ratri and Goutam Ghose's Abar Aranye." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature & Environment* 24, no.2 (2017): 224–42. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26569768>

2.2.2 Brief Description of Globalisation and The World System-Theory

Globalisation as a new term describes a series of social processes guided by the humane direction of cosmopolitanism, according to Manfred B. Steger in his book *Globalization* (2009).³⁸ Steger means that when people grow conscious about the world, they create a global imagination. That global imaginary reflects the current transformation of traditional beliefs and cultural values connected by concrete political agendas and applications.³⁹

Political agendas and applications that are important to understand in this context, prior to our later discussion. For example, Garrard speaks of the Apollo photographs, being just one way for people all over the world to comprehend the shape of Earth. Sociologist Steven Yearley, as Garrard's reference, says that parallels in finance, media, culture, business, and politics bolster this globalisation. Transnational financial entities were able to mobilize more significant resources than national governments in the 1990s. The Internet, for example, removes conventional physical distance concerns from transactions involving information transfer.⁴⁰

In short, globalisation is about growing interconnectivity worldwide. Furthermore, as Anna L. Tsing manifested in *The Global Situation*: "we live in a time of self-consciousness about units and scales"⁴¹, which offers practices of how to look at the micro and macro-scale of studies while referring to globalisation, particularly when comparing social process with theory. Within those social processes, a series of theories or approaches attempt to explain how the world works politically, economically, socially, ideologically, ecologically, and the like.

Some of these thoughts would come from Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, an analysis which originated in the 1970s. Wallerstein asserts severe economic inequities, illustrating the world's interpretation from an individual national perspective rather than a

³⁸ Steger, Manfred B. *Globalization*. (New York: Sterling 2009), 134

³⁹ Ibid., 12

⁴⁰ Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, 183–4

⁴¹ Anna L. Tsing, "The Global Situation," in *The Anthropology of Globalization: A Reader*, 2nd ed., edited by Jonathan Xavier Inda and Renato Rosaldo, Blackwell Readers in Anthropology (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 66-98.

worldwide holistic view. In other words, the world system theory refers to the inter-regional state cut of labour which divides the world into hierarchical order.

A hierarchical order divided into three categories—first, a group of world countries at the bottom of the hierarchy known as peripheral. These peripheral countries tend to have weak governments. Second, the semi-peripheral nations are those that are on the verge of becoming developed countries due to their economy or because they are in the process of transitioning back to the periphery. Finally, on top of the hierarchy are the developed countries, also known as core countries.⁴²

Wallerstein's world-system theory focuses on the fact that rich-country structures benefit significantly from states at the bottom of the hierarchy, both peripheral and semi-peripheral or developing countries. However, the other way around is almost impossible due to the structural knowledge of their politics. The world-systems theory is an older description of modern capitalist developmental structures by the first world countries, with a particular historical background from the 15th century and the colonisation of the Americas further to the French revolution in the 18th century.

It means the emphasis lies in world economic systems and how these have manifested due to the residual powers of colonisation in the context of eco-trauma. Although contrary to Wallerstein, some scholars disagree with this view, such as Frank and Gills, who suggest that the social process of capital accumulation has played a vital role for thousands of years.⁴³ They imply that steady expansion has existed throughout the development of human history.

Regardless of partialities, Wallerstein's world-system theory suggests that the world's economic inequities result from rich countries' financial intelligence and monopoly to accumulate wealth. That wealth comes from third world countries in the form of natural

⁴² Wallerstein, Immanuel. "The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy: Production, Surplus-Value, and Polarization." *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23-41.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lund/reader.action?docID=3007861&ppg=38>

⁴³ Frank, Andre G. & Barry K. Gills. "The five thousand year world system in theory and praxis" in *World System History: The social science of long-term change*, ed. Robert Allen, Denmark, m.fl (red.), (London: Routledge 2000), 3-23. <https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4324/9780203467701>

resources and cheap labour of the human workforce, which was I would say intensified due to the European colonisation of the 15th century.

2.2.3 Towards an approach of Eco-Trauma Cinema

Ecological trauma is a significant issue in the twenty-first-century environmental justice movement. A noteworthy historical example is Wangari Maathai, who pioneered the Green Belt Movement in post-colonial Kenya linking environmental, social, and economic justice since the 1970s.⁴⁴ Such endeavours have echoed towards new generations of filmmakers among environmental humanists and activists, eventually giving a voice to trauma theory into film studies today.

Hence, the investigation of eco trauma cinema representations suggests that the history of film is somehow evolving through more informative fiction and non-fiction films, in which film has established a powerful stance alongside the worldwide environmental movement.⁴⁵ As a result, several films, and media experts, such as Sean Cubitt, have begun to ponder the sad condition of human-environment relationships.

Cubitt suggests that eco-trauma films aim to express the inexpressible pain and sadness caused by destroying our planet's ecology. By representing these emotions visually and musically, these films provide a therapeutic outlet for people to voice their trauma. While it may be uncomfortable to confront the cruel reality of ecological destruction, acknowledging this pain allows us to understand better and engage with it. Although we cannot control or change the damage that has been done, expressing our emotions can provide a sense of healing and help us move forward.⁴⁶

In 2015 Anil Narine gathered and edited several essays by prominent scholars, among the latter mentioned, who, in various ways, would contribute to the formation of *Eco Trauma*

⁴⁴ The Green Belt Movement. "Wangari Maathai." *The Green Belt Movement*. Last modified May 2023. <https://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai>

⁴⁵ The Monthly Film Festival. "Environmental Film Festivals: A List for the Planet." *The Monthly Film Festival*. Last modified June 2016. <https://tmff.net/environmental-film-festivals-a-list-for-the-planet/>

⁴⁶ Cubitt, Sean. "Toxic Media: On the Ecological Impact of Cinema." *Eco Trauma Cinema*, Edited by Anil Narine, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 231-232.

Cinema. According to Narine, who coined the term eco trauma cinema, the linkages between environment and trauma seem logical, providing a long list of non-fiction and fiction film examples. Eco-trauma cinema illuminates the relationships between disastrous occurrences, film narrative, and audience perception. In this fashion, Narine points out that "eco-trauma cinema represents the harm we, as humans, inflict upon our natural surroundings or the injuries we sustain from nature in its most unforgiving iterations."⁴⁷ Thus, inviting us to enter the notion of eco-trauma cinema encompassing various topics, ranging from non-fiction films about ecological disasters, such as the 2004 Asian Tsunami, to fiction films, such as *The Hills has eyes* (1977), in the horror category. Furthermore, based on three general forms by Narine's explanation, which are:

1. Accounts of people who are traumatised by the natural world (in this context, it could be anyone having experienced a natural/environmental disaster, for example)
2. Furthermore, narratives that represent people or social processes traumatising the environment or its species (In this context, referring to the trauma depictions of colonisation by transnational oil companies, primarily observed in *Shamans of the Amazon*. As well as the conveyed trauma narrative of the social process by European colonisation, including the world-system theory and globalisation especially articulated in the analysis of *Other Worlds*. However, they apply to all three case studies).
3. And finally, the third general form includes stories that depict the aftermath of ecological catastrophe, often focusing on human trauma and survival endeavours without necessarily dramatizing the initial *event*, according to Narine.⁴⁸ (On this basis, the aftermath of environmental disaster comprises various manifestations of post-colonial aftermaths. Such as spiritual persecution, the war on drugs, reckless capitalism, globalisation of ayahuasca, ayahuasca tourism, change of rituals due to colonisation, western indoctrination, and cultural appropriation, witnessed in different variations among the three case studies *Shamans of the Amazon*, *Other Worlds* and *Ayahuasca* chapter five of the Un-well Netflix series.)

⁴⁷ Narine, *Eco-Trauma Cinema*, 9

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Narine describes the paradox of eco-trauma as a characterisation of our era of anxiety, referring to our acquired knowledge that our eco-system is in danger, yet we respond in contradictory ways. On the one hand, we wish to safeguard the natural world. Still, we are also obviously willing to disown our knowledge of climate change and deplete natural resources to function more successfully within a global economic system rife with unsustainable activities.⁴⁹

Thus, Narine proposes addressing ecological harm as trauma, which is recognisably unpleasant and actively suppressed to escape its painful consequences. Referring to the suppression of trauma, Narine acknowledges psychologist Tina Amorok's work "The Eco-Trauma and Eco-Recovery of Being," where she states that, "The experience of interconnectedness contains a paradox, for we sense not only the profound beauty of life but also the pandemic of human violence and the existential anxiety it generates." ⁵⁰

In other words, Amorok denotes to our fear of destruction and feeling the suffering of others, including earth herself, in the domain of interconnectivity, where our joy of Being is as evidently transmitted as our fear of destruction. In sum, denial, dissociation, numbing, and a host of other debilitating behaviours and responses that bear the hallmarks of trauma, from depression, anxiety, and addictive lifestyles to self-harm and violence against others and nature, are ways we defend ourselves against this frightening aspect of interconnectedness.⁵¹

Narine suggests that opposing forces are at play when taking meaningful ecological action. On the one hand, we may desire to avoid responsibility and continue our current habits and lifestyle choices. On the other hand, we may recognise the need for change and want to act. Still, the enormity of the task at hand can be overwhelming, like experiencing sensory overload or psychological trauma. ⁵²

⁴⁹ Narine, *Eco Trauma Cinema*, 2

⁵⁰ Amorok, Tina. "Eco-Trauma and Recovery of Being." *In Shift Magazine: At the Frontiers of Consciousness*, Issue 15, (June-August 2007), 29. Noetic.Org. https://noetic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/S15_Intentions_Amorok_Eco-Trauma_Eco-RecoveryofBeing.pdf.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Narine, *Eco-Trauma Cinema*, pp.2-3

"Psychological trauma is an affiliation of the powerless," writes Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery*. During a traumatic event, the victim is rendered helpless. Also, Herman adds that natural forces cause natural catastrophes. Yet, when the cause is human induced, we call it an atrocity. Anxiety, fear, and helplessness are all symptoms of trauma.

Furthermore, there is a threat to life or bodily integrity in traumatic situations or an encounter with violence and death.⁵³ Narine defines trauma, referring to Herman's work, as an unpleasant event, the victim's reaction, and post-traumatic condition. Dreams, flashbacks, and phobias are examples of these psychic shields failing. For the patient to recuperate, the trauma must be retrospectively registered, in the light of what scholars Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub have noted.⁵⁴

According to Narine, who cites American Psychiatric Association data, "natural disasters" are a frequent source of psychological trauma, but only for those immediately afflicted by the occurrence, which meets Herman's definition of a traumatised victim as someone who experienced the initial incident first-hand.⁵⁵ It would mean that those who catch the tragic event indirectly are not affected. However, some researchers, such as Caruth,⁵⁶ Felman and Laub,⁵⁷ and Kaplan,⁵⁸ claim that the preceding description does not quite encompass all traumas.

Narine asserts that a conceptualisation of trauma in socially mediated manifestations is essential. If trauma affects many people who are not directly impacted, there must be criteria

⁵³ Herman, Judith. "Terror." *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 33

⁵⁴ Narine, *Eco Trauma Cinema*, 3

⁵⁵ Ibid. 3

⁵⁶ Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction" *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. (New York: Routledge, 1995)

⁵⁷ Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

⁵⁸ Kaplan, E. Ann. "Global Trauma and Public Feelings: Viewing Images of Catastrophe." *Consumption, Markets & Culture* 11, no. 1 (March 2008): 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253860701799918>

for identifying them. To examine how different levels of trauma can circulate based on one's position as a victim, bystander, or witness, E. Ann Kaplan examines images of catastrophe and audiences, providing five immediacies of trauma:

- I. Direct trauma experience (trauma victim)
- II. A trauma victim's relative or close friend or a clinical worker sent in to assist the victim (one step removed from direct experience)
- III. Direct observation of another's trauma by a bystander (also one step removed)
- IV. Clinician hearing a patient's trauma narrative- a complicated position involving both visual and semantic channels; it entails a face-to-face meeting with the survivor or bystander within the confidentiality of the counselling session (also one step removed)
- V. Visual and verbal trauma mediation, watching trauma on film or other media, reading a trauma narrative, and building visual images from semantic data (two steps removed).⁵⁹

Additionally, Cathy Caruth's revision in literary studies begins with Sigmund Freud's writings, concentrating on trauma theory and witness. She examines trauma research critically and contends that trauma is a socio-historical phenomenon. According to Caruth, trauma is significant to psychiatric and psychic study and art, particularly visual art, because being traumatized is synonymous with being dominated by an image or event.⁶⁰

Later researchers, such as Dominick La Capra who have suggested that cinema might become unduly involved arguing that Claude Lanzmann's 1985 film *Shoah* is an example of re-traumatizing filmgoers who might be considered as secondary witnesses to trauma.⁶¹ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue, on the other hand, that testifying as a witness is vital

⁵⁹ Kaplan, *Global Trauma and Public Feelings*, 3

⁶⁰ Cathy Caruth, *Empirical Truths and Critical Fictions: Locke, Wordsworth, Kant, Freud* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

⁶¹ LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Parallax: Re-Visions of Culture and Society. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014)

because engaging with works of art teaches people how to preserve memories and heal from traumatic circumstances.⁶²

Sean Cubitt adds something here as well, stating that “past sufferings cannot be changed, only understood, or revenged. In the case of ecological events, the trauma is present and ongoing, and constitutes a problem not in memory but in foresight.”⁶³ According to Narine, in the west, ecological phenomena such as natural disasters, wildfires, flooding, and displaced people or processes are designated by God. Survivor stories are often described as biblical miracles, or God's will, restoring order to the universe, which speaks much about our religious sentiments. Similarly, stories of human-caused ecological calamities like oil spills frame our consciousness as relevant as morality tales.⁶⁴

Corporate greed vs community welfare. In the reporting on California's poisoned water and Erin Brockovich's class-action lawsuit, vile monsters plot in luxurious boardrooms. Good citizens unite, giving the planet purpose. Narine believes that media honesty about environmental issues may motivate viewers to confront distant occurrences. To summarise, Narine believes it is critical to acknowledge the human role in developing systems that result in induced eco-traumas such as electronic trash and carbon emissions. Even if our position is defined solely by our inaction, the environmental catastrophe overwhelms us with an absence that transcends memory or comprehension. Nonetheless, filmed realities and digitally generated worlds can serve as cognitive maps, helping us make logical sense of our anxious times. It could inspire us to prevent stagnation by assuming responsibility as the planet's most influential residents.⁶⁵

As a result, I believe the birth of eco trauma cinema may be a logical by-product of humanity's attempt to depict harm to our natural environment and a foreshadowing of what is to come in terms of memory portrayal by human-caused damage on earth in the future.

⁶² Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1992)

⁶³ Cubitt, Sean. "Toxic Media: On the Ecological Impact of Cinema." *Eco Trauma Cinema*, Edited by Anil Narine, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 232.

⁶⁴ Narine, *Eco Trauma Cinema*, 5

⁶⁵ Narine, *Eco Trauma Cinema*, 21-22

3 CASE STUDIES: ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

3.1 *Shamans of the Amazon*, Background and Plot

Shamans of the Amazon is a riveting 52-minute documentary that falls under the category of Ayahuasca documentaries, based on the characteristics outlined in a previous master thesis titled "A Study of Ayahuasca Documentary Film." Co-produced by Dean Jeffreys Films and the Special Broadcasting Service (S.B.S.), a renowned Australian television network that has commissioned numerous acclaimed documentaries and dramas from 1994 to 2007,⁶⁶ this ethnographic political documentary explores individual choice in the western drug war and indigenous communities' rights in Ecuador's Amazon.

Conveying Bill Nichols' modes, the documentary is *participatory*, emphasising a direct involvement with individuals and eliciting accurate emotional responses and interactions. As well as *performative*⁶⁷, where Jeffreys' personal experience and observations are employed as a jumping-off point for exploring more significant, subjective realities about politics, history, and the groupings of individuals he encounters both in Western and Amazon communities.

The film's international premiere weekend between November 2nd and 4th at The Baron Bay Cotton Club and November 3rd at the Mullumbimby Civic Centre, Australia, was announced in a press release on October 28, 2001.⁶⁸ As a result of the war on drugs, the video documented the first public demonstration supporting ayahuasca legalisation in Amsterdam and is part of the collection Docs for Sale by the International Documentary Film festival Amsterdam, IDFA.⁶⁹ Docs for Sale enables high-end documentary transactions by bringing

⁶⁶ Screen Australia. "Shamans of the Amazon." Screen Guide. Last modified May 2023. <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/t/t/14495>

⁶⁷ Nichols, Bill. "How can we differentiate among documentary models and modes?: What are the poetic, expository, and reflexive modes?" In *Introduction to Documentary*, Third Edition, 3rd ed., 104–31. (Indiana University Press, 2017). <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2005t6j.10>.

⁶⁸ Australian Hemp Party. "Shamans of the Amazon." *Australian Hemp Party*. Last accessed February 2021. <https://australianhempparty.com/118/shamans-of-the-amazon>

⁶⁹ Idfa. "Shamans of the Amazon." *Idfa*. Last accessed March 2021. <https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/ccf0938b-070d-4555-b9ea-6cad7e4f647c/shamans-of-the-amazon/docs-for-sale?filters%5Bcountry%5D=England>

interested parties together. It has evolved into one of the world's most important markets for documentaries, accepting artistic documentaries from all over the world.⁷⁰

The film is generally shot in natural light in the jungle with a handheld camera to generate a sense of presence in a guerilla-style. The original videotape may not be of the best quality for today's standard. The film was made over three years and had a home video quality from the late 1990s, telling something about the era.

Australian Dean Jefferys, the film's director, and one of the protagonists, who after eight years returns to the Amazon with his new family, including a one-year-old daughter and a six-month pregnant wife. Jefferys' last documentary in the Ecuadorian Amazon region, had depicted a tribe defending their ancient territories against international oil companies. This time Jefferys returns to the area to visit some indigenous shamans he regards as guardians of ancient wisdom. Through his research on Ayahuasca and ancient healing traditions, Jefferys gets entangled in a worldwide war on drugs related to the 1961 convention by the United Nations' prohibition of the usage of medicinal plants.⁷¹

3.2 Analysis and findings of Shamans of the Amazon (2001)

The story of Jeffreys is an intriguing case study that sheds light on the cultural, political, and environmental issues surrounding the Ayahuasca experience. Jeffreys' curiosity and desire for insight into the shamans' culture led him on a journey to the jungle to experience the life-altering effects of Ayahuasca. However, Jefferys' quest for understanding revealed a complex historical framework of the United Nations' condemnation of Ayahuasca. The film traces the origins of the prohibition of psychedelics in the 1960s, which excluded Peru and Brazil as the only member states that allowed the use of Ayahuasca.

Through Jefferys' story, the audience is exposed to the socio-political activism efforts that represent a long list of human-induced environmental harm. These efforts include the narrated depictions of colonisation, in which international oil firms invade and destroy indigenous

⁷⁰ Idfa. "Docs for Sale." *Idfa*. Last Accessed March 2021.
<https://www.idfa.nl/en/info/docs-for-sale>

⁷¹United Nation. "Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961." *United Nation*. Last accessed March 2021. https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1961_en.pdf

territory to extract oil. The film portrays a haunting picture of the devastating impact of human activities on the environment and invites the audience to question their beliefs and values. The story also highlights the importance of respecting and celebrating indigenous cultures and traditions.

This narrative is subsequently testified by young shaman Flavio's father Rafael, also a shaman, who teaches indigenous values and traditions to younger generations. The depiction of Rafael's cinematic history portrays a sentiment of injustice, throughout the documentary, but also of determination and resilience to survival and healing. The film details how the government's actions have uprooted many indigenous groups from their ancestral lands, causing them to lose contact with their traditions and culture.

Rafael's testimony provides insight into the devastating impact of government policies that have forced indigenous communities to live on small plots of land far from their ancestral territories. Through Rafael's story, the audience understands the importance of preserving indigenous cultures and traditions. The film highlights the social inequities these communities face, but also their resilience and ability to maintain their cultural heritage despite the challenges they face.

Jefferys emphasises the image of physical eco trauma in *Shamans of the Amazon* by presenting military troops invading indigenous territory and armed personnel putting the interests of oil firms ahead of indigenous peoples' rights. The film presents a symbolic battle between David and Goliath, where the Ecuadorian government utilises military forces to protect the interests of international oil companies instead of protecting the rights of indigenous people, which unfortunately confirms the continued oppression indigenous people face despite the country's independence from Spain in 1822. Upon colonial "independence", one would assume that the residual population would protect their indigenous ancestral communities from further subjugation, but this is not the case.

Let us consider the eco-trauma perspective with the aid of the world system theory stated earlier in the thesis. It serves as a reminder of the hierarchical status that still exists today, where oil companies owned by core countries exploit the natural resources of peripheral nations. In this scene, the cinematography employed by Jefferys is raw and straightforward. Gunshots are triggered, tear gas bombs are dropped and Jefferys is running with the protestors,

he is one of them. The difference is that Jefferys is white and foreign, and the military could not harm him, he has other human rights than the local people.

Subsequently, escalating cinematic trauma expressions, such as when Rafael remarked on how different the mountain, they are standing on is now: "before this mountain was full of monkeys and birds, now there are only cars and houses...".⁷² Recalling Heise's critique of environmentalism and ecocriticism, modernity is arrogant when it pretends to understand the natural world through science, manipulates it technologically, utilises it commercially, and labels the process "progress". Thus, in the name of progress, people (core countries) have the right to overconsume, if not slowly, directly, which takes away (peripheral countries) their ability to live well (due to displacements, contaminated water, indoctrination) with nature.

Let us look back at Baldwin's analysis of *Frozen 2* in the previous literature concerning eco trauma representations, inviting us to reflect upon the Earth's long history of violence, holding grave consequences on today's global health and biodiversity. The same type of reflection invites, *Shamans of the Amazon* for the audience to perceive concerning Amazonian inhabitants pinpointing the social injustice these communities must live under due to human forces behind oil companies through uprooting many indigenous groups from their native land, contaminating their environment and biodiversity. Straightforward acts that might end in fatal consequences for their inhabitants, children, and the future of these communities.

Even though societal injustice is not a new occurrence, I must emphasise this by any means. Eco critics highlight that globalisation and post-colonial perspectives should be incorporated into the discussion of ecocriticism, which makes sense when applying eco trauma cinema theory to the critical examination of these films because they inform about inequalities, oppressions, and injustices within the realms of health, culture, politics, and history.

This cinematic language very simple illustrates the traumatic experiences of indigenous peoples (represented here by Rafael), which, according to Sarah Barrow's studies on Peruvian cinema, are constant battles about cultural identity and the barriers to assimilation.⁷³ Through the medium of film, Barrow asks us to consider the complexity of hierarchical realities

⁷² *Shamans of the Amazon*, approximately around 21,40 min (Jefferys, 2001)

⁷³ Barrow, Sarah. *Contemporary Peruvian Cinema: History, Identity and Violence on Screen*. Tauris World Cinema Series. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), 1

encountered by the Peruvian people in postcolonial times (which also applies the Ecuadorian people here).

In this regard, Ann E. Kaplan and Ban Wang are not concerned with how trauma affects a film but how it affects the viewer. They imply that critics' purpose should be to critically analyse and evaluate prominent narratives and images, searching for hints of deeper, underlying processes⁷⁴, which is the genuine ambition of this research. Beyond Jefferys' willingness to learn more about the restriction on psychedelics and the war on drugs, as well as trying the Ayahuasca experience, he visits Amsterdam to meet with Yatra da Silveira Barbosa (the spokesperson for the Santo Daime church). He demonstrates an apparent genuine interest at the opposite end of the spectrum. He is passionate about making the film to enlighten western populations about Ayahuasca and successfully portrays eco traumas bringing up climate change as early as he did.

By visiting Europe, Jefferys further displays various symbols of physical and ecological problems interlaced with psychological harm with origins in more profound issues of Western society. Such representation is the scene with a young woman who had been addicted to cocaine and heroin in her adolescence and detailed how Ayahuasca ceremonial rites assisted her in overcoming her addiction. Interestingly, she asserts that she would have died if not for Ayahuasca rituals, claiming that more people she knows would have died as well. The filmmaker selects this young woman to symbolise some of western society's youth who struggle with substance abuse. A subject marginalised for decades.

The 2017 *Global Burden of Disease* research found that illegal drug usage was responsible for approximately 750 000 fatalities worldwide, nearly twice the 400 000 deaths caused by homicide.⁷⁵ Thus, documentaries like this one invite the spectator to reflect on the ecological traumas, which in western society are mostly taboo when depicting drug use and abuse. The reason for this taboo could have different explanations, but something Jefferys does not touch upon anywhere in the film (at this point) is religion, as in Christianity. He only compels the spectator with his political activism and liberal views about the war on drugs.

⁷⁴ Kaplan, E. Ann, and Ban Wang, eds. *Trauma and Cinema: Cross-Cultural Explorations*. Vol. 1. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 9-10

⁷⁵ Ritchie, Hannah, and Max Roser. "Opioids, Cocaine, Cannabis and Illicit Drugs." *Our World in Data*, (March 16, 2018). <https://ourworldindata.org/illicit-drug-use>.

In the spirit of Paula Willoquet Maricondi's assertion that "activist viewing in the service of increased awareness and real-world engagement with ecological and environmental justice issues"⁷⁶, would compel us to consider the production and dissemination of eco-films, and here thereto, Ayahuasca documentaries as critical components of the global environmental movement. Here directly related to Jefferys' engagement—creating visual samples of eco-trauma depictions through a series of anti-globalisation protests in Western countries such as in the United States of America and Australia. It portrays that there are masses of people out there in western societies urging for a change. A change of mind, a change of laws, a change.

In a similar fashion, Jefferys seems to openly follow at the demonstration in Amsterdam for the decriminalisation of Ayahuasca, where one of the participants explains how western culture continues to witch hunt anyone, with differing religious views, much as it did in the dark ages. In this remark, Jefferys ultimately hints at a critique of Christianity or the Catholic Church since it was the primary religion in Europe of the Middle Ages.

Shamans of the Amazon (2001) is one of the pioneering Ayahuasca documentaries that depicts critically the war on drugs at the turn of the twenty-first century. Additionally, it raises awareness of mental health issues and implicitly addresses the injustices that may cause grief in western society. Sabrina Reeds' critical view and Gabor Maté's work as an addiction expert share similar views on the war on drugs policy. They claim that the war on drugs policy dilemma assumes that drug users have control over their addictions and that legislation prohibiting the sale and use of illicit substances should therefore be paired with severe penalties to stop them effectively.⁷⁷

Maté asserts that the war on drugs is used to dehumanise addicts, divert resources away from individual help in favour of combatting global drug cartels, and harshly penalise some of society's most vulnerable citizens. In his book, *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction* (2009), Maté concludes that all fixations need to be considered outside of the physical sphere by highlighting that all addictive actions are motivated by feelings of suffering

⁷⁶ Willoquet-Maricondi, Paula, ed. *Framing the world: Explorations in ecocriticism and film*. (University of Virginia Press, 2010), preface.xii

⁷⁷ Reed, Sabrina. "'Just Say No': Eden Robinson and Gabor Maté on Moral Luck and Addiction." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 47, no. 4 (December 2014): 151–66. doi:10.1353/mos.2014.0043. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ludwig.lub.lu.se/article/563410>

or pain resulting from traumatic events or the like on a psychological or spiritual level.⁷⁸ However, Jefferys does not touch upon the reasons behind drug addiction in *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) when depicting the pleading girl in Amsterdam whom states “ayahuasca must be legal...”.⁷⁹ as if she is the proof, saying that she has recovered from cocaine and heroin addiction because of it. But as the spectator, one does not learn the reasons to why in the first place, she fell into drug addiction, which creates a certain superficiality.

In addition, Jefferys illustrates how human-caused physical trauma can be linked to human rights violations. For example, in his interview with an international law attorney, Jefferys highlights the indigenous peoples of the United States and their legal battle over the use of peyote in their traditional ceremonies. This case serves as a powerful reminder of how cultural practices and traditions can be threatened by external forces and the importance of upholding the rights of marginalised communities.

Terrence McKenna also discusses the impact of western society's institutional and governmental powers on science in the documentary. He highlights the prohibition of psychedelic use among the public and in scientific research, resulting in a lack of investigation into consciousness and mental illness. This has led to unfortunate neglect of essential areas of scientific inquiry.⁸⁰ This powerful observation underscores how deeply entrenched historical norms continue to shape physical trauma representations, reflecting the broader political spectrum. The political spectrum influencing social structures and processes, with implications for globalisation and the world-system theory proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein.

By exposing these connections, Jefferys' documentary explores the interplay between trauma, politics, and power. It encourages viewers to consider how trauma is not just an individual experience but is inextricably linked to larger social, cultural, and political forces. As Manfred B. Steger suggests, global awareness can catalyse innovation worldwide. In the

⁷⁸ Gabor Maté. *In the realm of hungry ghosts: Close encounters with addiction* (Toronto: Vintage Canada 2009)

⁷⁹ *Shamans of the Amazon*, approximately at 00:30 min, (Jefferys, 2001)

⁸⁰ Instagram. "Terence McKenna Official: Terence McKenna in Mexico, 1996. In this exclusive interview by Luc Sala." *Instagram*. Last accessed May 2023.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CnaHBY1B1rq/?ref=lineread>

Footage borrowed by Dean Jefferys for *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001)

real world, political goals and applications can reshape existing viewpoints and cultural norms, leading to essential shifts in social and political structures.

It underscores the potential for positive change when individuals and societies become more globally aware and engaged. Jefferys' documentary is a powerful example of awareness-raising, encouraging viewers to think critically about how trauma is intertwined with broader social and political issues and inspiring them to take action towards a more just and equitable world.⁸¹ However, within the context of economic globalisation, Wallerstein's world system theory refers to the inter-regional division of labour between nations, asserting that wealthy countries' financial skills and monopoly on money accumulation cause global economic imbalances. These riches come from third-world countries via natural resources and inexpensive labour, reinforced by 15th-century European colonialism.⁸²

In this manner, another physical manifestation of trauma in *Shamans of the amazon* is the depiction of natural destruction conveyed in oil diggings and contamination of the environment. The film visually and through narrative proclaims how reckless capitalism contributes to environmental deterioration. It manifests from the illumination of oil company settlements to the physical exhibition of Rafael's scars caused by men acting on behalf of oil company interests having tried to kill him. Additionally, the testimony by Rafael about biopiracy businesses' involvement in attempting to patent ayahuasca, which resulted in the Supreme Court denying a clearance, luckily for the indigenous people, claiming that Ayahuasca is a plant, not a human invention.

However, as Jefferys notes, such actions can have catastrophic consequences for indigenous communities, destroying nearby animals and vegetation. The film also highlights the contamination caused by oil diggings, as seen through the tragic image of a dead frog floating in filthy water. For whatever cause, the film incites the rhetoric of environmental catastrophe has been blinking its light in the direction of awareness. Somehow, the attention call has gone

⁸¹ Steger, *Globalisation*, 12

⁸² Wallerstein, Immanuel. "The Modern World-System as a Capitalist World-Economy: Production, Surplus-Value, and Polarization." *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 23-41.

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lund/reader.action?docID=3007861&ppg=38>

unheeded. Twenty years after the film's release, those blinking lights continue to grow in number, joined by sirens and fresh protestors.

When I counted the number of physical induced trauma codes that were human-caused in this study, I realised that specific physical injuries also become psychological injuries- for instance, the introduction of Flavio (Rafael's son), the young warrior shaman. He is portrayed as courageous and committed to safeguarding his civil rights and the environment of his ancestors. He expresses his massive dissatisfaction with the oil firms' invasion, which Jefferys edits into the film to emphasise the film's activist exposition.

In a powerful moment captured on film, Flavio unleashes his anger directly into the camera, offering a raw and unfiltered glimpse into his emotional state. This display of rage is more than just a visceral reaction - it is an important indicator of the psychological toll of PTSD⁸³, as recent research has shown that anger and hostility are closely linked to the severity of the disorder.⁸⁴ For Flavio, this anger may be a direct result of the trauma he has experienced at the hands of transnational corporations and a negligent government in his home country of Ecuador. His raw depiction on screen is a haunting reminder of the human cost of corporate greed and government inaction.

Another instance of psychological harm, even if it is not immediately apparent, occurs when Rafael speaks with Jefferys. The scene begins with a vast green forest in the background. Rafael is in the centre of the image, pointing and remarking, "anciently all of this territory *belonged* to the indigenous population."⁸⁵ As the scene cuts to military forces, Jefferys states, "the Amazon Indians have lost more than they claim to ancestral land..."⁸⁶ confiding in the audience and making us accomplice to witness the more significant harm induced behind their backs.

⁸³ Day, Andrew. "The Relationship between Anger and Trauma: Some Implications for Programs that Help Manage Problematic Anger." In *Psychology of Anger: Symptoms, Causes and Coping*, edited by James P. Welty (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2011), 243-252

⁸⁴ Sullivan, Connor, Russell T. Jones, Neil Hauenstein, and Bradley White. "Development of the Trauma-Related Anger Scale." *Assessment* 26, no. 6 (September 2019) 1117–1127. doi:10.1177/1073191117711021.

⁸⁵ *Shamans of the Amazon*, approximately around 00:21:05 min, (Jefferys, 2001)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Approximately around 00:21:12 min, (Jefferys, 2001)

The representations of psychological harm appear to be ongoing here, affecting the daily lives of shamans and indigenous people, particularly those that Christianity has not thoroughly indoctrinated yet- because of their ancestral continued practices and commitment to traditional beliefs. For example, Rafael expresses concern about one of the major volcanoes, Sangay, erupting due to oil drilling and the oil companies' careless treatment of nature, he says:” Spiritually the Sangay volcano is the eye of the Amazon, it’s a volcano that maintains the Amazon and this is in danger, if they keep taking out the oil Sangay will erupt.”.⁸⁷

But psychological harm is not limited to indigenous peoples in *Shamans of the Amazon*, which is part of its complexity as previously stated; the representation of the girl in Amsterdam who testified about how Ayahuasca helped her overcome her drug addiction- and how it saved her life, and the lives of others also leaves a trail of human-induced psychological harm on the western population as well. In this manner, the spectator can witness these traumas universally, locally, and globally, in units and scales. Even more so when the narrative's analysis links back to Western societies' original prohibition of psychedelics, among other norms.

Terrence Mckenna, who has expressed open dissatisfaction with the way government institutions have dealt with the matter, calls it " a great tragedy of 20th-century science..."⁸⁸ in the film and in his books. He is a frequent source of inspiration for Jefferys and for that matter, for other Ayahuasca documentarists, who additionally shows his immediate concern depicting the girl saying, among other things, that "people need to know about it...it has to be legal..."⁸⁹ referring to Ayahuasca as well as when the film shows Yatra da Silveira Barbosa appearing uncomfortable when she explains that the police are looking for her Santo Daime congregation in Amsterdam during one of the interviews.

She claims that one can go to jail for a ritual, implying how absurd that is, especially considering “it’s impossible to use it as a recreational, first because you throw up like crazy...you don’t really enjoy every moment, it’s not really something you take to a party because when you drink ayahuasca you come in touch to your inner most...”.⁹⁰ Thus, the psychologic trauma representations breath and beats in the visual discourse Jefferys chooses; from images of the Santo Daime congregation in Amsterdam, workshops, to protests and

⁸⁷ *Shamans of the Amazon*, approximately around 00:25:49 min (Jefferys, 2001)

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Approximately around 00:20:48 min, (Jefferys, 2001)

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* Approximately around 00:30:00 min (Jefferys, 2001)

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Approximetaly around 00:28:48 min (Jefferys, 2001)

diverse comments by the selected people in the documentary related to the discrimination of Ayahuasca.

Jefferys also brings up Stanislav Grof and the rigorous research he began with psychedelics in the 1970s with mental health patients, halted by the psychedelic legislation. In addition to the physical trauma associated with human rights violations, it is critical to indicate that the psychological trauma portrayed also leaves scars from human inducement depicted in a series of intermixed symbols and narratives. Here in the film, records of resilient shamans and the colonisation of their land, further to the impediment of their indigenous rituals for populations by western society and the suffering it might have caused not just indigenous but also western populations. However, most trauma depicted in the film is the result of equal human-induced physical and psychological trauma representations.

All the results are based on interpretation. Thus, discrepancies are welcome for conversation; needless to argue that this interpretation might vary from one beholder to another. For instance, one of the counts here concerning may raise a point of contention. As a result, I chose to mention it last, as it is one of the earliest sequences in *Shamans of the Amazon* in which the image of a grilled monkey represents either a natural flow of life for indigenous groups (some hunt and eat monkeys). Or to the untrained/western eye, this could result in an internal physical reaction that Western standards would classify as "human-induced harm". This is where the difficulty might arise: from one perspective, this is a natural organic action taken by indigenous people, much like eating a wild-grown cow would be considered "natural action" in some western eyes, but not for vegans/animal lovers or for some people in India perhaps, where it may be an act of human-induced physical cruelty against a sacred animal.

Regardless, I propose to discard the sample of the image of a roasted monkey since according to Rose Gillian, coding categories must be exhaustive so that every aspect of the image is covered by one classification; exclusive, no types overlap; and illuminating so that the categories result in an analytically intriguing and logical decomposition of visuals one that represents. Furthermore, Rafael's story and depiction about the spider that traps little rodents and birds to kill and devour is nevertheless, an example of nature-induced trauma representation.

Finally, as Jeffreys notes, the documentary highlights one of Terrence McKenna's final interviews before succumbing to fatal cancer. Due to cancer's "biological" qualities, its

depiction in the narrative classifies it as nature-induced harm. Subsequently, near the documentary's conclusion, Jefferys presents two final instances of nature-induced suffering, informing the audience that he needed hospitalisation upon his return to Australia due to a spinal issue and parasite infection (as shaman Enrique foresaw when treating Jeffreys at the end of the documentary).

3.3 *Other Worlds*, Background and Plot

Other Worlds is the personal discovery of Jan Kounen, a Dutch-born French filmmaker looking to learn about ancient medicinal knowledge through the Shipibo-Conibo culture in the Amazon. His encounter with a medicine man, Kestenbetsa, changes his life, as he is introduced and taught about ancient rituals and Ayahuasca. *Other Worlds* is a French production, led by two major production companies, Films A.J.O.Z. and Tawak Pictures, followed by the participation of T.P.S. Star, having its French distribution by Eurozoom on June 30, 2004, and foreign sales/export by Gaumont, one of the leading European production companies since 1895.⁹¹

The documentary's most substantial mode is *Performative*, Kounen evokes an *Investigative* style, assembling evidence, making a case, and offering perspectives. Likewise, it produces a report of the *Testimonial* model invoking an urgent sense of witnessing in which Kounen tells about his and other people's personal experiences.⁹²

Other Worlds uses intensely visual footage incorporating shamanic songs, *Icaros*, and visual effects, an inspiration developed from when Kounen did research for his previous film *Blueberry*, inciting in him a major interest for visual effects. This psychedelic western fiction began with a partnership with French artist Jean "Moebius" Giraud, whose comic book *Blueberry* Kounen wanted to adapt to film.⁹³ Giraud is also interviewed in *Other*

⁹¹Unifrance. "Other Worlds." *Unifrance*. Last accessed February 2022
<https://en.unifrance.org/movie/25492/other-worlds?bloc-inscription=fiche-film&logged=1645457730793>

⁹² Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 104–31.

⁹³ Filmmaker Magazine. "Director Jan Kounen on 99 Francs." *Filmmaker Magazine*. Last modified October 26, 2007.
<https://filmmakermagazine.com/4835-psychedelic-state-by-rak-razam/#.YhYq8S8w01L>

Worlds sharing his personal account with psychedelic use, among other scientists such as Kary B. Mullis.

Furthermore, through his research for *Blueberry* Kounen met Guillermo, alias Kestenbetsa, the shaman chief of the Shipibo-Conibo village in the Peruvian Amazon, while studying mystical experiences. In this way, Kounen encountered shamanism while conducting research, fell in love with the indigenous Shipibo-Conibo's culture, and spent months studying their plant-based healing techniques. Thus, the product result of the classified Ayahuasca documentary *Other Worlds*.

3.4 Analysis and findings of Other Worlds (2004)

The film begins with the following quote:

"It is somewhat presumptuous to disdain or condemn as fake that which does not appear likely."

Michel de Montaigne.

According to the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy Archive*, Michel De Montaigne may have been one of the most learned humanists of the sixteenth century, considering the scope of his readings.⁹⁴ The fact that Kounen begins the portrayal of *Other Worlds* referring to Montaigne is no coincidence. Montaigne would advocate for a philosophy of free judgment that demands an unrestricted cognitive process that would result in a free inquiry. The above exemplary quote situates and equips the spectator with philosophical elements to contemplate the experience beforehand, implying that it would take some arrogance to dislike or discard as erroneous what does not appear compelling. Keep in mind that we are approaching this from a western vantage point. Without a doubt, Kounen intends his research to be a free inquiry, and he does so by preparing the spectator for what is to come later in the story.

Other Worlds utilises a variety of film elements to effectively convey its message of respect and understanding for the Shipibo-Conibo culture. The film's quotes, visual imagery, and narrative structure contribute to its power and impact. The opening quote by Michel Montaigne

⁹⁴ Foglia, Marc and Emiliano Ferrari, "Michel de Montaigne", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), Last modified November 20, 2019. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/montaigne>

sets the tone and establishes the film's theme. The captivating visuals convey the culture and way of life of the Shipibo-Conibo people. At the same time, the narrative structure weaves together personal stories, historical context, and cultural traditions to provide a holistic picture of the culture.

Furthermore, the organic soundtrack, which features natural sounds such as birdsongs and river sounds, underscores the intimate connection between the Shipibo-Conibo people and their environment. Together, these film elements create a powerful and informative documentary that encourages viewers to confront the historical injustices indigenous communities face and promote respect and understanding for their cultures.

Jan Kounen's perspective on seeking redemption in *Other Worlds* is not focused on apologising for the past but on exploring other dimensions of consciousness to gain a deeper understanding of the world. A sense of melancholy characterises Kounen's approach to documentary filmmaking as he grapples with losing connection to the world and seeks a new purpose. According to film scholar Sean Cubitt, this sense of melancholy is a therapeutic process that helps individuals process trauma and find healing.⁹⁵ Kounen uses visual and musical elements to convey non-verbal and non-verbalizable experiences that resonate with viewers deeply emotionally. The film encourages viewers to explore their connection to the world doing so.

Other Worlds is a non-fiction documentary that transports us to new perspectives, where our familiar reality collides with unexpected truths, occasionally leaving the viewer stunned and in amazement. Here, the representation of trauma is significantly more potent in the psychological realm caused by humans and nature than representations of physical trauma. Neither human-caused nor natural-caused physical harm is significant here while evaluating these representations—the film begins with four vital instances of psychological traumas hinted at postcolonialism. The first instance of psychological harm inflicted by humans occurs during the film's introduction of the school orchestra scene, which Kounen presents at the very beginning.

The audience hears and sees a large group of Peruvian school-uniformed kids marching to a tune that reminds the spectator of marching soldiers to a field of combat. (Many public and

⁹⁵ Sean, Cubitt. *Eco-Trauma Cinema*, 231-246

private schools in Peru continue to parade for important events and adhere to a stringent pedagogical philosophy that requires students to gather in their schoolyard to pray or sing the national anthem before the start of the school day) In this way, their school system reminds almost of military service attitudes, hinting at some forced colonial patriotism.

Towards the end of the scene, the school orchestra's sound meets the echoing sound of a trumpet distorting into a siren-like sound, denoting perhaps an alarming signal. A compelling sound connotation helps us reflect on Kounen's sound editing choice and the film's further development. Once the siren-like sound has echoed out, the scene transitions to the second psychological trauma representation: one small girl dressed in folkloric Shipibo-Conibo costume sitting and clapping in the centre of the shot, surrounded by many other children dressed in non-folkloric outfits. The small girl looks up, and there she appears (the quinceañera), implying that this is perhaps what awaits her rather than a Shipibo-ritual when she grows up.

To reiterate Caruth, trauma cannot express itself directly; the indirect narration is necessary precisely because, in other words, representation of trauma is not possible.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Kounen can transmit the third psychological trauma image displaying the quinceañera girl dressed in a pink and fluffy outfit entering the room subsequently. She does not look cheerful; in fact, none of the children in the vicinity appears to be smiling or enjoying themselves. They all feel misplaced and disconnected, keeping their poker faces throughout the scene while dancing to "The Blue Danube", a European waltz.

A quinceañera is an important event for Hispanic females becoming 15 years old in Latin American countries. The history of the quinceañera suggests that it originated with the Aztecs as a rite of passage for girls transitioning from girlhood to womanhood, infused later with religious and European meanings.⁹⁷ Notably, Kounen's imagery of a systematic framework repeats colonial signals that are less obvious but have been there for a long time. First impressions are essential, especially if the viewer is uninformed of the colonial traces or fails

⁹⁶ Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, 17,

⁹⁷ "Quinceañera Is A Special Hispanic Event That Pays." *Souvenirs, Gifts, & Novelties* 44, no. 5 (June 2005): 207. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,uid&db=bth&AN=17632370&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

to recognise imagery derived from an existing school activity (the school orchestra), as given by Kounen at its inception. The colonial remains may go undiscovered.

By opening our eyes to the painful history of colonisation and oppression that indigenous populations have suffered and continue to face, we can better understand the psychological and emotional wounds inflicted on these communities. Through the lens of postcolonial principles, we can see the far-reaching impacts of Western imperialism and gain insight into the present-day relationships between Western civilisation and indigenous groups. The powerful combination of globalisation and world systems theory can help us unravel the complex and often devastating effects of exploitative industries, such as oil companies, on indigenous cultures.

Furthermore, Jan Kounen's self-expression of amazement and bravery in response to his discovery of ancient indigenous cultures' knowledge concerning medicinal plants and altered states of consciousness had previously been suppressed or rejected as gibberish. It represents the fourth and enormous psychological trauma both western society and indigenous populations have undergone.

As a self-representation of western culture, Kounen mentions this in the film's storyline, stating that he had to go through violent fights with his identity due to it. The observer witnesses his transformation as he seeks answers to many questions through scientific endeavours. Kounen interviews several scholars from diverse fields; as a result, the film serves as a groundbreaking trigger for subsequent Ayahuasca documentaries, focusing its discourse on the scientific paradigm substantially, to investigate the spiritual. By obtaining answers within the academic world, Kounen secures the quality of his endeavours.

Baldwin contends that taking a step into the unknown and having the willingness to listen, witness, and befriend are all factors that contribute to the process of change. When working in this subgenre, Kounen follows Baldwin's transformation procedures like any other protagonist in this genre, who do so. Even though this results in Kounen's ability to eventually manifest *Other Worlds*, in a physical dimension, his transformation takes place in a mysterious world of the unseen, known as the world of spirit.

Baldwin's reflections invite western societies to think about understanding transformation by the willingness to listen, witness, and befriend, which, if done, respectfully might have brilliant results for the indigenous populations, as Kounen's *Other Worlds*' cinematography has

shown. Kounen's cinematography appears also organic and raw, as in Jeffreys' *Shamans of the Amazon*. Perhaps a bit more sincere even in the sense that Kounen allows us to see the raw vulnerability of the participants when purifying themselves in the ceremonies, including himself. It is filmed discretely with a night filter, allowing the camera to record in the darkness. It invites us to perceive their traumas.

The spectator sees and hears despair, suffering, and eventually transformation in the participants, but also in Kounen through his compelling narrative. Cubitt asserts that trauma teaches us that we cannot modify or control a wicked event. Representations of pain and hopelessness bring life, explaining the incomprehensible, inviting us to engage with it, consequently erecting a container for the unimaginable. The capacity for sympathy and the ability to transmit it do not change the disagreeable nature of the cruel reality it confronts. That seems to be Kounen's intention to build a bridge between trauma and healing through his and others' complex journeys into the unexplored world of spirit.

In *The Aesthetics and Ethics of Eco-Film Criticism*, David Ingram states that some eco-critics refer to an eco-film as one with a conceptual underpinning (much as the subgenre of Ayahuasca documentaries). *Other Worlds* is no exception, which expressly promotes ecological concepts or, more generally, an environmental sensibility⁹⁸ in the physical and psychological or spiritual dimension by western society and indigenous populations. In this way, Kounen recognises colonisation and its effects through the visual depiction at the film's opening.

Furthermore, he connects the audience holistically to scientific, artistic, and spiritual material through a series of talking heads, insightful interviews, and exposing himself emotionally to the viewer throughout the entire film. One of the most significant and true revelations he recounts in the documentary occurs during a ceremony when he realises that at that moment in one of the group experiences Kounen was in, he felt like the primitive one, being taught and healed by sophisticated and well-meaning beings, the shamans.

Unlike Dean Jeffreys in *Shamans of the Amazon*, Kounen does not remark the 1970s psychedelic prohibition. But he talks to Professor Stanislav Grof, whose LSD research was

⁹⁸ Ingram, David. "The Aesthetics and Ethics of Eco-film Criticism." in *Ecocinema: Theory and Practice*, edited by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani and Sean Cubitt, 44 (New York: Routledge, 2013)

halted by the psychedelics ban. Organised religion, according to Grof, may impact Western ideas of indigenous rituals and plant use. He thinks that once religion gets institutionalised, it loses contact with its essential qualities, which originated from a supernatural phenomenon. Furthermore, Kounen provides a historical and scientific backdrop for Grof's previous remark with Professor Charles Grob. Grob confirms that when Europeans arrived in the Americas during the 16-17th centuries, they brought the inquisition's laws, which expressly prohibited the use of psychoactive plants or materials to induce altered states, which they categorically rejected and labelled as an abomination and heresy to use such psychotropic plants to cure individuals.⁹⁹

As a result, *Other Worlds* mirrors a contemporary Western society which has carried that aura by clinging to old belief systems without engaging in new investigations or inquiries. However, it is vital to point out this example of psychological trauma zooming into the scale of local practices. Not only did indigenous practitioners have to reconsider their belief systems as some perversion, as if their nature was lousy and the colonisers' nature was proper, but they also had to convert to Christianity because of the colonisation process. Nonetheless, zooming out from the local unit also allows us to understand the immense influence previously colonised countries, such as Ecuador and Peru, still have on contemporary society.

Christianisation engages about 90 per cent of the population in Peru, with Catholicism accounting for nearly 70 per cent of that population, according to census data from 2020. The number is almost the same in Ecuador, demonstrating the long-lasting legacy of colonial aftermath, and yet no one talks about the consequences. This impact influences women's freedom to control their bodies, school and sex education, and various laws that prohibit these countries from fully releasing themselves from their colonial repression and truly becoming independent thinking populations. Psychological trauma is tangibly represented in this work, and it parallels Kounen's analogous examples of social practices. An excellent example of this is the film's quinceañera sequence, which depicts a modern version of an adolescent girl who will soon become a lady through new social traditions.

In contrast to the Shipibo rite, the quinceañera dances to European Waltz music, and the party involves a DJ. Kounen chooses to juxtapose the traditional indigenous celebration with

⁹⁹ de Rios, Marlene Dobkin, and Charles S. Grob. "Editors' Introduction: Ayahuasca Use In Cross-Cultural Perspective." *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 37, no. 2 (June 2005): 119–21. doi:10.1080/02791072.2005.10399790.

the colonised version. As a result of global modernity and increased evangelism, that scenery of ceremonial changes demonstrates their ever-increasing reach into the forest. As a result, these rites are possibly at risk of extinction—however, Kounen succeeds in recording the Shipibo female passage ritual. Instead of a European waltz, the Shipibo ritual celebrates the girl-to woman-transition outdoors through a series of colourful and organic preparations, including the traditional gifting of an animal to the spirit realm. A selection of medium shots and close ups with a handheld camera provides a sense of closeness, being there in the experience.

Other Worlds emphasises this distinction through the two sequences in this way. In the latter, the documentary captures the Shipibo adolescent girl's preparation and decoration, including the crude sacrifice of a young tapir by her friends and relatives. The lynching of the young tapir, like the grilled monkey depicted in *Shamans of the Amazon*, risks to fall into two categories: physical harm caused by humans, and physical harm caused by nature, as part of their natural symbiotic relationship. Thus, the sample of the young tapir sacrifice needs to be discarded as well due to Rose's recommendations that a category needs to be explicit and cannot overlap.

As previously noted by Anil Narine, "eco-trauma cinema represents the harm we, as humans, inflict upon our natural surroundings or the injuries we sustain from nature in its unforgiving iterations."¹⁰⁰ Keeping Narine's remarks in mind, it is critical to take note of these two specific events in *Other Worlds* that demonstrate how one civilisation can gradually erode the values and capacities as this process continues. It effectively shows the long-term damage some Western civilisation's members are wreaking on indigenous cultures and natural habitats.

On the one hand, the documentary invites spectators to see the progressive growth of social attire, customs, and rituals in the colonised part of the Shipibo's social ecosystem through the visual representation of uniformed schoolchildren marching and playing in the school orchestra or dancing at the quinceañera scene. Contrasting here the colonial-influenced celebration of quinceañera dress, social conceptions, and behaviours, the Shipibo girl, a future woman, is celebrated differently through the visual manifestation of her fertility ritual.

¹⁰⁰ Narine, *Eco Trauma Cinema*, 9

The representation of the traditional Shipibo celebration is organic and unaffected, depicting a group of people performing a series of conventional processes such as hair cutting, face painting, and singing. However, considering our present understanding of animal behaviour¹⁰¹, the lynching of the tapir raises the issue of animal cruelty, as well as the question of whether it is ethical to lynch a living animal, since animals are capable of sensing and expressing pain in a variety of ways.

The image raises ethical problems concerning the lynching of the young tapir, whose spirit, according to Shipibo tradition, is a gift to the spirit realm. What prompted Kounen to bring it up? Perhaps the sacrifice of an animal for human nutrition, scientific research, or as a gift to the spirit realm may have benefits depending on one's beliefs, and we should not pass judgement. Furthermore, *Other Worlds* portrays a more remarkable number of instances regarding psychological traumas generated by the natural world due to the Ayahuasca experience (ingestion and processing) than *Shamans of the Amazon* does.

In this way, Kounen also represents himself as brave and vulnerable, as he is open to showing us his path of psychological trauma, not in detail, but suffice to say that images are more powerful than words. Subsequently, Kounen records authentic voices from various professionals' own psychedelic experiences, including Dr Kary Mullis, 1993 Nobel laureate in chemistry. Also, many of the documentary's depicted researchers are today regarded as pioneers in conducting the so-called 21st-century scientific renaissance on psychedelic research following the prohibition of psychedelics in the 1970s.

The depiction of psychological trauma within the natural world implies a movement towards healing or alternatives for recovery in the film's narrative. Talking heads in uncensored conversations with artists and scholars offering their personal experiences with Ayahuasca and psilocybin illustrate seemingly their vulnerability telling their stories yet their strength and courage simultaneously. Alex Grey, Jean Giraud, and Pablo Amaringo are among these artists. Giraud describes his first psilocybin encounter as an "out of body experience" that he later

¹⁰¹ Park, Jessica. "Yes, Chickens Have Feelings Too. The Recognition of Animals Sentience Will Address Outdated Animal Protection Laws for Chickens and Other Poultry in the United States." *San Diego International Law Journal* 22, no. 2 (January 2021): 335–

64. <https://heinonline-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/sdintl22&div=16>

learned to control. He said his experience was a lesson in perception and the dismantling of the exterior layers and everything that makes a human being social, civilised, and tame. Grey believes that once a person has experienced a mystical experience, their work must reference in every subsequent work (much like Kounen's).

Kounen intertextually utilises graphics to accentuate Grey's work, enriching the scenario. Furthermore, he performs the same procedure before presenting Amaringo's statement, in which he uses the intertextuality of his artwork as a complementary to his words: "We are all intertwined with the rest of the universe. We are all microcosms of the universe."¹⁰² Through a close-up shot capturing Amaringo's every word, Kounen skilfully amplifies the importance of his message, drawing the audience in with great curiosity.

Amaringo's profound remarks, likening our interconnectedness to the flow of energy through a plug to light up a bulb, are given even greater weight and significance through Kounen's expert direction. The result is a thought-provoking and beautiful moment that lingers in viewers' minds long after the screen fades to black.

In this way, those scenes captivate the audience and offer a profound insight into Kounen's transformation. It is possible that Kounen, who had undergone over 100 Ayahuasca ceremonies with Kestenbetsa (Guillermo), might have experienced something like what he captured on film. As he comments on his transformation during those ceremonies, viewers are given a glimpse of how his traumatic past may have shaped his worldview and how Ayahuasca helped him heal. Kounen's direction allows us to witness first-hand the profound changes that can occur when one delves deep within oneself, highlighting the transformative power of Ayahuasca and its potential to heal the individual and the collective.

Thus, returning to the prior literature where the psychological theory of eco trauma cinema examined by Alberto Baracco suggests that films communicate the incomprehensible, working between not forgetting and assisting in forgetting. It aids us in locating trauma portrayals that lack explicit language, appearing here to convey the essence of trauma.¹⁰³ According to Baracco, the eco-critical cinematic language portrays the human-natural conflict, just like Kounen manifested towards the film's end.

¹⁰² *Other Worlds*, approximately around 00:42:28 min, (Kounen, 2004)

¹⁰³ Baracco, *Italian Eco-Trauma Cinema*.

Kounen's statement about not having inhabited his own body or left his childhood is a powerful reflection of a familiar feeling in modern Western society. It invites us to consider whether we feel disconnected from ourselves and what we do to address this feeling. Are we relying on external validation through material possessions and pleasures, or are we prioritising practices that promote internal connection, such as yoga and meditation? Through Kounen's experience and the illustration he shoots for us, there is a sense of disconnection at first. A disconnection he has felt as not being in his own body.

He has possibly been feeling "lost", as he said he never left childhood. Perhaps he has been feeling egocentric and selfish. Kounen's thoughts, in conjunction with the illustration of a postcolonial portrayal of indigenous populations, in the aftermath, leave us with a sense that colonisation is a brutal measure. The sheer effort of physically interposing, interrupting ways of living for an ecosystem is traumatic, but we cannot change the past. Following and understanding Kounen's intention without judgement may be a way to come closer to one of humanity's most significant historical traumas, the colonisation and genocide of the Americas.

The film challenges us to reflect on globalisation's impact on the environment and marginalised communities, particularly economic globalisation. It highlights the reality that powerful transnational corporations often benefit the most from economic globalisation, while the peripheral communities and the natural world suffer. *Other Worlds* encourages us to question the dominant narrative of globalisation as a force for progress and development and to consider the alternative perspective of eco-criticism. This perspective recognises that globalisation can also have negative consequences and that we must be critical of how it is structured and implemented.

Interestingly, globalisation involves cultural exchanges and collaborations, mainly initiated by poor groups. It is driven by cosmopolitanism, which aims to promote harmony. That contrasts with the indigenous societies depicted in the Ayahuasca documentaries. Due to economic globalisation, transnational corporations often lack social fairness and respect for one another. On the other hand, the world-systems theory provides no contrast but an illustration to the case studies of how the hierarchy of political and socioeconomic forces exists in theory and practice. As stated by Wallerstein, the Earth has vast economic inequities when seeing the globe from a national rather than a global perspective.

The argument here is that the Ayahuasca documentaries created at the beginning of the 21st century provide a good snapshot of the psychological state at the time and can shed light on issues of trauma that are still relevant today. The documentaries were created when the world was beginning to grapple with issues of environmental degradation and historical trauma. They can offer insight into how people were experiencing and processing these issues at the time.

Furthermore, the argument also suggests that there is still a need to investigate and talk about trauma in terms of the specific issues addressed in the Ayahuasca documentaries and in general. Trauma is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can have lasting effects on individuals and communities. Understanding how it operates and how to address it effectively is crucial for promoting healing and resilience. Consequently, it provides a snapshot of the time and place where many filmmakers, artists, and researchers fit in the renaissance of the psychedelic research movement, which seems to go hand and hand with finding alternative and better ways to treat the environment, starting with the one created by oneself.

Kaplan and Wang contend that witnessing can foster intercultural compassion and understanding, which leads to Jan Kounen's advice at the film's start, paraphrasing Montaigne, to not rush to judgment. Kounen appeals for compassion and understanding of his and others' traumas to come. *Other Worlds* contributes to the eco-trauma cinema field by promoting intercultural empathy and understanding via the confrontation of history. In addition, as Kaplan and Wang point out in *Trauma and Film: Cross-Cultural Explorations*, the viewer's position most politically advantageous is that of the witness.¹⁰⁴ Kounen conveys this through a cinematic style distinct from *Shamans of the Amazon* in that it is more intimate and involving but carries the same amount of political weight.

Documentary *Other Worlds* contributes to eco-trauma cinema not only by depicting the harm or traumas humans have inflicted upon themselves and the natural environments in which they live but by encouraging nonetheless depictions of healing these—repairing the damage by weaving together a network of interconnectedness between western and indigenous populations' understanding and empathy—by acquainting oneself with social rituals and practices while conducting an in-depth analysis of the mindset of the West through Kounen's eyes.

¹⁰⁴ Kaplan and Wang, *Trauma Cinema*, 9-10

The documentary illustrates a contemporary postcolonial time in Peru, Brazil, and Europe. A valuable time scale in which the intersection of old and newfound beliefs meets via the confrontation of history and academic research. For instance, the school orchestra scene in the film depicts a seemingly innocent image of uniformed children playing music and marching. However, upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that this portrayal reveals the deep-rooted colonial patriotism that persists within the Peruvian nation.

The strict and archaic school system highlighted in these scenes stifles children's individuality and freedom of expression, perpetuating a culture of conformity and obedience. The juxtaposition of this image with the broader theme of eco-trauma serves as a stark reminder of the far-reaching impact of colonisation on both the natural world and human society. The legacy of colonialism in post-colonial societies has resulted in enduring colonial patriotism, which creates a false sense of freedom for some who are now the oppressors of vulnerable populations, including children, women, and indigenous communities.

By exploring the intersection of colonialism, nationalism, and oppression, media can shed light on the complexities of post-colonial societies and challenge viewers to question their assumptions about freedom and equality. Yet, remember not to judge that which does not seem likely, as Montaigne said once. However, it is crucial to view colonial patriotism as a systematic component from which transnational companies benefit, leading "progress" by exploiting the natural resources of the peripheral countries and their population.

Consequently, *Other Worlds* also contrasts the Shipibo fertility ritual with the quinceañera celebration, hinting at a vivid example of a parallel and ongoing cultural genocide. Kounen appears to have intended to distinguish between a group (the indigenous social process) that was enjoying their performance and a group (the post-colonised social process) that was not enjoying their performance, by depicting children dancing the waltz without enthusiasm.

In addition, I would like to emphasise that the Ayahuasca ceremonies conveyed by Kounen, in a way, constitute the genesis of the enormous desire for alternate states of consciousness treatments in the West and inspiration for upcoming filmmakers to research the field. *Other Worlds* asks us to reflect upon our prejudice to that which is not well known or known at all, that which we assume because of old beliefs or lack thereof. Kounen knows how to persuade a western mind, with researchers from diverse disciplines who have experienced altered states of consciousness or have dedicated time studying them.

He conveys these conversations with a set of valuable talking head interviews that provide a solid base with personal and professional experiences, signalling also toward the transformation of a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift that appears to support the value of equal rights for all humans, the respect and care of the environment, and provides an intercultural empathy representation for the neglected populations. All of which have sequences in silence or with minimal background music and shamanic songs by Kestenbetsa, Olivia Arevalo and others, depicting nature and animals through an ethereal dance of kaleidoscopic visuals when there are no talking head interviews in the narrative.

Kounen pushes for the combination of fundamental and advanced discourses to reassess long-held views in a cosmopolitan manner about other realms, in which eco trauma portrayals help us to understand its complexity. Caruth says trauma cannot express itself directly; the indirect narration is necessary precisely because, in other words, representation of trauma is impossible (*Other worlds* conveys western society's despair towards a need to hold onto something).

In essence, the eco-trauma representations in the film demonstrate that our relationship with the environment goes beyond the physical and material; it encompasses our thoughts, emotions, and beliefs. By examining these representations, we must confront how our actions impact the natural world and each other. However, this confrontation also offers growth, transformation, and healing opportunities, as in the scene where Kounen realised he was feeling as the primitive one among the shamans.

3.5 *Ayahuasca*, A Netflix (Un)well documentary series, episode 5, Background and Plot

This Netflix docuseries *Un-Well*, Season 1, Episode 5, is part of a six-part series about new health trends in 21st-century Western society. It was released in the United States on August 12, 2020¹⁰⁵, through a collaboration with the Left/Right production company, which, according to their website, tells honest and unsettling stories that are enlightening, entertaining, dramatic, and cinematic. The company promises to accomplish this by merging the traditions of

¹⁰⁵ IMDB. "(Un)-Well Ayahuasca,S1.E5." *IMDB*. Last modified August 12, 2020. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt12875124/>

documentary filmmaking with the look and feel of scripted television. In one sentence, they want to encourage the audience to have fun, feel, and notice.¹⁰⁶

Ayahuasca is perhaps the best produced episode in relation to the presentation and discussion about the brew and plant Ayahuasca, where different testimonies are juxtaposed with scientific evidence, popular opinion, and the emergence of a new religion in the United States. In this way providing an impression that the series' goal is to make people reconsider the lucrative wellness business and the influencers that drive it, according to the creators.¹⁰⁷

After Nichols, the *Sociological* and *Visual Anthropological* instances involving fieldwork, participant observation, and reliance on informants to access the culture under study are the predominant models for this documentary series. The *Observational* mode defines this form. Although it is not black and white, since every film contains a combination of models or techniques, this is not an exception, as it also provides a politically *Reflexive* significance to us as viewers and social actors, as the agents who can bridge the distance between what is and what could be.¹⁰⁸

3.6 Analysis and Findings of *Ayahuasca*, Netflix (*Un*)well docuseries, ep 5 (2020)

This Netflix documentary series begins with a warning text, stating:

"The following film is designed to entertain and inform-- not provide medical advice. You should always consult your doctor when it comes to your personal health or before you start any treatment."

The viewer immediately receives a warning in white and black lettering with no background sound emphasising the message's seriousness regarding its usage as medical advice or alluding to the potential repercussions of viewing the film. In contrast to the two earlier case studies, *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) and *Other Worlds* (2004), two independent

¹⁰⁶ Left/RightTV. "AboutLeft/RightTV." *Left/RightTV*. Last accessed April 1, 2022. <https://www.leftright.tv/about-us>

¹⁰⁷ Landsverk, Gabby. "The producer of Netflix's '(Un)Well' wants to put the celebrities and gurus driving 'irresponsible' wellness culture under the microscope." *Insider*. Last modified August 17, 2020. <https://www.insider.com/netflix-unwell-producer-show-puts-wellness-gurus-under-the-microscope-2020-8>

¹⁰⁸ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 104–31.

films, *Ayahuasca* (2020) is a strictly commercial film whose direction and production derive from two distinct creative sources.

It tells us about *Ayahuasca* documentaries' impact after two decades of birth, in modern time, from independent productions to mainstream ones. However, the emphasis here is more on evaluating its content and aesthetics than its structure. Before diving into the content of the eco traumas representations of *Ayahuasca* (2020), let us see what criticism is there. Well, to note that this is also a difference concerning critical literature between the earlier works in this subgenre. I found two critics, one of which is Harriet Hall, who has written "*(Un)-Well: Netflix's Documentary Series is poor journalism that ignores science, arguing that rather than explaining science, Netflix relies on polished journalism and emotional appeals, and uncritical gullibility.*"¹⁰⁹

However, Hall generally refers to the six episodes and does not include remarks about *Ayahuasca episode five*. Unlike Hall, another critic, Jonathan Jarry, does provide a more nuanced understanding of *(Un)Well Ayahuasca episode five* in the article titled, *The Frustrating Rorschach Test of Netflix's (Un)Well*. "Even ayahuasca, frequently touted as a mind-healing elixir, does not escape from a critical examination in the show's best episode..."¹¹⁰, he writes. It contradicts Hall's belief that all *(Un)Well* series rely on blind credulity and go in line with the production's intention (as described above) even though, in general, Jarry appears to think that the series only observe but never entirely judges, committing "the sin of false balance", Jarry states.

However, a different director frequently directs each episode of the *Un-Well* series; evaluating the entire season would be unfair, as each episode is a distinct work. *Ayahuasca* is directed by Leslie Asako Gladsjo. She is an award-winning director, producer, and

¹⁰⁹ Hall, Harriet. "'(Un)Well: Netflix's Documentary Series Is Poor Journalism That Neglects Science.'" *Science-Based Medicine*. Last modified August 25, 2020. <https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/unwell-netflixs-documentary-series-is-poor-journalism-that-neglects-science/>

¹¹⁰ Jarry, Jonathan. "The Frustrating Rorschach Test of Netflix's (Un)Well." *McGill*. Last modified August 21, 2020. <https://www.mcgill.ca/oss/article/health-pseudoscience/frustrating-rorschach-test-netflixs-unwell>

writer¹¹¹ of documentaries. This TV documentary differs significantly from the two independent ayahuasca documentaries in that the filmmaker's voice is neither participatory nor performative, as in *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) and *Other Worlds* (2004). The use of Jennifer Julian's voice to introduce each episode and the general concept of the *Un-Well* series makes this docuseries less intimate than the two previous Ayahuasca films in which the filmmakers were intimately involved.

Instead, the production of *Ayahuasca* (2020) concentrates on following the voices of several testimony givers (protagonists) who have tried, experimented with, or investigated the Ayahuasca plant and brew, its experience, and its effects concerning various trauma-related contexts. In contrast, *Shamans of the Amazon* focuses on Ayahuasca's relationship with Amazonian shamans, showing us how they were using it as a tool to heal and to "see" how to oppose transnational enterprises' destruction of their land and daily lives. Furthermore, there is no such introductory warning instruction or inspirational quote in *Shamans of the Amazon*, as in *Other Worlds* (2004) or *Ayahuasca* (2020).

The only text applied in the film is a rolling one at the end. The text highlights the overall damage to the Amazon during the film's production. It informs viewers that legislation regarding drugs such as Ayahuasca had changed by the time of the film's final cut. Including that Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands had decriminalised many narcotics—and that experts worldwide had agreed that global warming and climate change pose a severe threat to all life on the planet.¹¹²

Furthermore, the usage of written text is also different in *Other Worlds* (2004), where it hints at the prospective western audience passing judgment or having compassion and empathy for what they might witness. Concerning the significant findings in *Ayahuasca* (2020), it is also evident, and maybe unsurprising, that representations of human-induced eco traumas are more

¹¹¹ Women Make Movies. "Leslie Asako Gladsjo." *Women Make Movies*. Last accessed April 1, 2022. <https://www.wmm.com/filmmaker/Leslie+Asako+Gladsjøl/>

¹¹² Watson, Robert, T. Ed. "Climate Change 2001: Synthesis Report." *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*. Last Accessed April 1, 2022. https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/SYR_TAR_full_report.pdf

pronounced than nature-induced physical or psychological traumas. The number of human-induced psychological trauma cases is secondary to the number of instances of human-induced physical traumas, the most predominant sort of harm. Alcoholism, substance addiction, sexual abuse, murder, and suicide are common contemporary difficulties plaguing western societies, which are all reflected in *Ayahuasca* (2020).

Additionally, three critical stories in the documentary stood out for their numerous depictions of eco-trauma. The first is Angela's narrative, which in many ways is representative of American veterans that experience varying degrees of post-traumatic stress after partaking in the army. As a young single mother, Angela recalls her story, beginning with an unexpected teenage pregnancy. A few years later, she joined the United States army (out of necessity, as many do). She eventually met her husband, and they married, he adopted her daughter, and they had a happy, everyday existence until it was no longer.

This case study clearly represents the eco traumas that can arise from access to prescription medications (In the US). The ease with which Angela's husband obtained the drug and the speed with which it had devastating repercussions highlights the potential dangers of prescribing medication without appropriate monitoring and support. In addition to the physical eco-trauma of killing oneself and another person, this case study also illustrates the psychological eco-trauma experienced by Angela, who tragically lost her husband and daughter.

It also highlights the psychological eco-trauma shared by Angela's husband, who was feeling overwhelmed at work and struggling with his mental health. Furthermore, it also illustrates how simple it is for the Western populace to gravitate toward alternate health methods, given that they may not have complete faith in their governments and institutions, as is the case with Angela. Angela was prepared to terminate her life after eleven years of attempting to overcome her trauma. She then discovered a group for veterans on Facebook. The latter were participating in the *Ayahuasca* experience to heal their PTSD, which also seemed to be her salvation.

The spectator follows Angela's narrative as it is intimately presented, with no background music. She shows her deceased daughter's suitcase filled with personal belongings, such as her baptism candle or stuffed animals. The silent background noise contrasts with a melancholy melody as Angela then narrates her husband's tragic outcome, taking the spectator further in

Angela's trauma narrative. "I'm not sure how that transformation came about (referring to her first Ayahuasca experience), but it gave me (sighing) hope and the ability to keep fighting", states Angela.¹¹³

Furthermore, the spectator is about to witness Angela's second Ayahuasca ceremony, as s/he is brought to follow Angela to the *Soul Quest* place, a newly founded Ayahuasca church in Orlando-Florida. Through an interview with the organisation's founder Chris Young, the audience quickly learns about the organisation's history. According to Young, *Soul Quest* exists to deliver Ayahuasca to Americans who cannot travel to the Amazon, making the spectator a witness to the Ayahuasca vine's journey and transformation by new western social demands and legal processes.

In this time and space, the documentary portrays westerners no longer needing to travel to the Amazon to experience an Ayahuasca ceremony organically in its traditional setting. It mirrors a new possibility than the other two previous documentaries, also reflecting on the change of laws, as when Young says that, according to the DEA, Ayahuasca is illegal and is subject to strict federal regulations. However, *Soul Quest* uses a 2006 Supreme Court decision that allowed a religious group to incorporate hallucinogenic tea into their ceremony.

Young describes how, with the assistance of lawyers, *Soul Quest* discovered a loophole, and, after 157 pages, the church was able to carry on. Young says they have received 9000 visitors since 2015 (between 2015-2020). He also emphasises the desperate nature of those seeking answers through Ayahuasca, indicating an obvious need by the population and business opportunity for his organisation, especially given the church's non-free status. In 2021, a three-day Ayahuasca retreat cost 899USD¹¹⁴, equivalent to nearly two-thirds of Florida's minimum wage the same year.¹¹⁵ It is inevitable to think about the tremendous economic factor behind the act to help. Even though Americans require alternative approaches like drinking

¹¹³ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:24:40 min, (Netflix, 2020)

¹¹⁴ Ayahuasca Churches. "Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church of Mother Earth." *Ayahuasca Churches*. Last accessed November 1, 2021. <https://www.ayahuascachurches.org/ayahuasca-retreat-prices/>

¹¹⁵ Paycor. "Minimum Wage by State 2021 and 2022 Increases." *Paycor*. Last Accessed November 1, 2021. <https://www.paycor.com/resource-center/articles/minimum-wage-by-state/>

Ayahuasca, it is hard not to view the appropriation of this medication as a socio-cultural-spiritual process in which the originality of a ceremony has been lost to western adaptations.

Ethnographer Carlos Suarez Alvarez tells the audience at the film's beginning his perspective on the loss and transformation of the old medical system, which consisted of the shaman taking Ayahuasca and healing the patient through his visions. In the new medical approach, the shaman has let the foreigner consume Ayahuasca and participate in their visionary journey. Alvarez's criticism emphasises the loss of the old medical system in this manner. Here, the reference is how it all started on a local scale when shamans began to allow foreigners to consume Ayahuasca in their rituals. Once that was established, the interest grew and blew up to the point of globalisation.

According to Kenneth W Tapper, the pervasiveness of free market capitalism and its commodifying logic in late modern life makes it difficult for any contemporary forms of ayahuasca consumption to avoid markets and monetary exchanges.¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Rudolph Mathee, referred to by Tapper, states that Ayahuasca is the latest in a long succession of psychoactive plants whose appropriation and trade shaped Euromerican colonialism and empire. Tobacco, coffee, tea, cocoa, coca, the opium poppy, and sugar cane (for rum manufacturing and as a sweetener) became commodities for early mercantilists and colonialist administrations, with consumption patterns de-contextualised from traditional usage.¹¹⁷

It opens a door for us to inevitably rekindle our confrontation with history and social processes imposed on peripheral countries, which, via more in-depth analyses such as the study of films, provides an opportunity to foresee any potential eco traumas that may occur if not met with the appropriate amount of respect and emotional intelligence, as these films evoke.

In this way, *Ayahuasca* (2020) aims to seemingly illustrate the other side of the coin by revealing the story of a Peruvian ayahuasca farmer Abraham Guevara (a former banana farmer)

¹¹⁶ Kenneth W. Tupper, "The economics of ayahuasca: Money, markets, and the value of the vine." In *The world ayahuasca diaspora: Reinventions and controversies*, Edited by B.C. Labate, C. Cavnar & A.K. Gearin. (London: Routledge, 2017), 183-200

¹¹⁷ Mathee, Rudi. "Exotic Substances: the Introduction and Global Spread of Tobacco, Coffee, Cocoa, Tea, and Distilled Liquor, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries." in *Drugs and Narcotics in History*, edited by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 24–51. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511599675.003.

and distributor, Jenny Torres Vargas, whose businesses have skyrocketed in recent years to Ayahuasca's appeal among tourists. Vargas makes it clear that she is not only there to purchase, prepare, or sell the medicine but also to teach about its benefits on a national and international scale. Somehow, her well-intended intention might come across as somewhat irresponsible or naive. Alex K. Gearin, citing Daniela Peluso and Miguel Alexiades's paper on the ayahuasca entrepreneurial ecosystem, helps us reflect on the complexity of the eco-trauma here by demonstrating that the local communities, but not necessarily the Shipibo communities, gain from economic development.

They explain that indigenous healers are dislocated from their shamanic practices' site, context, and moral order (to pursue *progress*). And ayahuasca tourists are dislocated from their homeland's ordinary cultural realities when travelling to the Amazon rainforest¹¹⁸ (to pursue life-altering experiences). No matter how well-intentioned, the objective of the ayahuasca documentary seems to have been to distribute information about Ayahuasca in various circumstances. *Ayahuasca* (2020) tacitly conveys this by providing the viewer with multiple inter-textualized narratives for and against the globalisation of Ayahuasca. Such narratives act as technical instruments for the development of our cognitive maps. They evoke the aesthetics of *Other Worlds* (2004), in which Kounen discovers scientific explanations for his questions.

For example, the interplay between personal witness accounts and professional ones, as with the ethnographer who advocates preserving a traditional indigenous culture or with neuroscientist Draulio B. de Araujo, who briefly informs and emphasises graphics about Ayahuasca and psychedelics—highlighting, that the classification of psychedelics as schedule 1 drugs was based on politics and not scientific evidence, using the same narrative expressed in *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001). A record in which eco-trauma echoes a scientific reality that the western world had lost over the previous fifty years. Furthermore, De Araujo's statement verifies to the audience that the perception of psychedelics is changing due to Ayahuasca's neuroscience research.

In this way, the eco-traumas perceived in this piece of documentary appear somehow more interconnected than in the two previous ones. It is visible that the advanced research within

¹¹⁸ Gearin, Alex, K. "Primitivist medicine and capitalist anxieties in ayahuasca tourism Peru." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 28, no. 2 (June 2022): 504.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13705>

Ayahuasca/psychedelics has been gaining knowledge over the past two decades, which is another tool *Ayahuasca* (2020) offers to its viewers. It is, for instance, communicated through a talking head interview with Professor Charles Grob. In contrast to previous dialogues (in earlier *Ayahuasca* documentaries), the focus was frequently on the advantages and never on the dangers. However, Grob notes in *Ayahuasca* (2020) that "psychedelics are catalysts for change, and for some, they can be of great value, but it's not for everyone."¹¹⁹

During his thirty years of *Ayahuasca* research, he has consulted with a hundred cases of patients who have experienced severe ill effects. A piece of new information that parallels contemporary study confirms the achieved widened perspective. To think that the trade of goods between the west and the shamans (a small amount of money that the shaman gets for each ceremony in exchange for the life-changing experiences the tourist receives) is not entirely of equal value.

As ethnographer Suarez suggested, it could mean the end of their lives (as we know them) and culture if the western world does not think about what happens to indigenous people when they hold ceremonies in other countries or travel to the Amazon to participate in rites. I believe that is especially evident when topics such as racism and discrimination against indigenous people are mostly absent from the public discourse at a national level and thus unknown to most foreigners.

Consequently, the second most resonant depiction of human-caused eco traumas in *Ayahuasca* (2020) is found in the intertwined narratives of two additional tragic murders. Hugo Alejos, a Peruvian journalist, opens the story by informing the audience that when some tourists who intend to attend an *Ayahuasca* ceremony "without the necessary preparation,"¹²⁰ it will for sure lead to problems. A close-up on his face depicting sadness portrays what the spectator is about to understand. A short close-up of Alejos holding a newspaper opened, showing in a bold script the headline stating "The last Ikaro" on the left-hand side with a picture of a funeral with people surrounding a coffin in the open air. On the right-hand side of the newspaper is the distant body of a white man lying on the dirt, surrounded by people in white-coated uniforms.

¹¹⁹ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:26:00 min (Netflix, 2020)

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, approximately around 00:36:45 min (Netflix, 2020)

That is how the storyline builds up, following the moving image of Olivia Arevalo (from old footage) singing in her indigenous language towards the camera. The narration of Olivia Arevalo's tragic murder begins with Alejos, followed by the intertextual depiction of the lynching of her killer by the indigenous community. Olivia Arevalo was an 81-year-old shaman and leader of the Shipibo Conibo community, the cousin of Kestenbetsa, a.k.a Guillermo Arevalo, the shaman in *Other Worlds* (2004). Sebastian Paul Woodroffe, a Canadian who travelled to the Peruvian Amazon multiple times to study plant medicine and therapeutic traditions, was her accused assassin.

A side-by-side portrait shot of each of them illustrates counter positions of the western versus the indigenous, the young versus the old, the male versus the female, and the contemporary versus the ancestral. These counterposed energies communicate magnitudes to the rest of us facing their eco-traumas and our history in space and time concerning an era of transitions and transformations.

Just as, Baracco provided examples of films illustrating ecological disasters in Italy, the images in *Ayahuasca* (2020) to reconstruct cases use moving image interviews, still pictures and intertextual techniques to collect memories and reconstruct the events. In this way, it depicts how films may awaken traumas on a collective scale, where the image's testimonial value lifts the personal tragedy to the community.

The depiction of Sebastian Woodroffe appears of someone who had been "lost"; the documentary uses police and media reports to reconstruct images of him from his Youtube channel, among interviews of friends and family, to understand who he was. It displays accounts that after a life of drinking and depression, Woodroffe decided to pursue an alternate path through plant medicine. However, something went wrong along the way, and he appeared to be unstable in the days preceding his crime against Olivia Arevalo.

In Sebastian's rented room in Peru, the police discovered a self-help book, a long hunting knife, a wrestling mask, sleeping pills, Olanzapine (an antipsychotic medication prescribed to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), and the anti-anxiety medication Clonazepam. Professor Charles Grob emphasises in the film's storyline that combining antidepressants or antipsychotic medicines with Ayahuasca, or other psychedelic compounds can have lethal repercussions, as happened to Woodroffe.

Thus, the final manifestations of human-induced eco-trauma express thoughts about a void caused by extinction that no longer exists via its sound composition, silent pauses, sorrowful non-diegetic music, and loud weeping, such as at Arevalo's burial scene. In this way, the documentary is engaging. Besides, it not only uses the western perspective but also attempts to enlighten the western audience about the ongoing internal post-colonial offences in these places. Far away from being connected to nature or respecting human rights and values. It also shows that some inhabitants, such as the local journalists, followed this case and provided a different view to the one some media attempted to portray. Their job was to give a voice to the underdog. They illuminated a facet of the story that would have ended overlooked if the narrative had remained only focused on Woodroffe's life and terrible end.

Moreover, their report implies that the Peruvian authorities were more concerned with Woodroffe's probe than with Arevalo's and the Shipibo Conibo indigenous group, according to their findings. Despite the enormous importance of Olivia Arevalo's role and significance as a leader for the indigenous communities, no representative of the Peruvian government paid their respects, journalist Hugo Alejos confirmed. A fact that speaks volumes about the country's neglect and internal injustices toward indigenous people.

In her analysis of *Peruvian history, national identity and violence in contemporary film studies*, Sarah Barrow offers valuable insights into discussing the country's diversity and complexity. From pre-Inca civilisations to Spanish conquistadors to African (enslaved person) descendants to more contemporary migrant workers from Japan and China, different peoples have contributed to the often-violent formation of a delicate nation-state. Yet, Barrow underlines that diversity does not imply equal opportunity or visibility because Peru has significant race, gender, and class hierarchies.

Furthermore, as with so many other subjects of postcolonial nations, Peruvians are often defined as belonging to one of three main social groups: white colonials, indigenous colonised, African, and Asian immigrant-workers.¹²¹ In this context, it appears unfortunately unsurprising that the assassination of a renowned indigenous leader such as Olivia Arevalo would be significant to government officials at the time of the tragedy. Sarah Barrow learns that racism and inequality are rarely discussed in Peruvian public spaces, which does not justify the

¹²¹ Barrow, *Contemporary Peruvian Cinema*, 4-8

situation. Nonetheless, it explains why the indigenous community must take justice into their own hands by lynching Woodroffe.

In this manner, *Ayahuasca* (2020) further delivers eco-trauma representations through the voices of indigenous shamans, such as Walter Lopez, a Shipibo healer who criticises the Peruvian authorities. He asserts that the officials arrived in his town solely to blame the locals and that their primary objective was not to hear out the indigenous people. "Indigenous people are clearly not their priority"¹²², states Lopez.

Moreover, Images of Arevalo's dead, uncovered, bloody body lying on the ground confirm the authorities' reluctance, emphasized by the editing. Not to mention the acute crying of women at her funeral, particularly the sole expression of an upset woman crying out to the camera at Arevalo's funeral—that the government does not care about them. She exclaims, "So foreigners can come and kill us day after day like we are animals, and nothing happens!"¹²³ which communicates magnitudes about how indigenous people perceive the Peruvian judiciary's treatment of them. Tragically, this also explains (based on the evidence) why they felt compelled to enact and enforce their legislation since they do not believe that the broader judicial system prioritises their rights.

Recalling Sean Cubitt's comments, "past sufferings cannot be changed; they can only be understood or avenged."¹²⁴ The preceding instance illustrates that. Further reconfirmed when curandero Lopez exemplifies the portrayal of alleged unjust treatment by claiming that "the saddest part of this is that the authorities only came here to condemn the people who took justice into their own hands."¹²⁵ Additionally, asserting that such behaviour "fills you with hate, pain, rage, sadness."¹²⁶ Words that manifest an ongoing five hundred years open wound by the native population. Therefore, it is essential to include post-colonial, and globalisation views in our eco-traumas studies since they assist us in comprehending things, we, as western civilisation, cannot typically identify.

¹²² *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:41:50 min (Netflix, 2020)

¹²³ *Ibid.*, approximately around 00:41:20 (Netflix, 2020)

¹²⁴ Cubitt, *Eco-Trauma Cinema*, 232

¹²⁵ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:41:42 (Netflix, 2020)

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, approximately around 00:42:05 (Netflix, 2020)

As previously stated in the thesis, natural resources equate to economic wealth. Shaman Lopez regrets that outsiders have plundered all the natural riches in his region, town, and villages. "Foreigners...their only goal is to extract and absorb everything we have. Now they also want to take our spirituality, our wisdom...using Ayahuasca incorrectly,"¹²⁷ he states. The documentary once again utilises us as witnesses confronting history, making us reflect that perhaps the interchange is far from fairtrade, and if we recall that, according to Fotiou, romanticising indigenous knowledge is harmful because it conceals the complexities of indigenous peoples' situations and erases injustices they have faced and continue to experience¹²⁸, which is what the documentary depicts, particularly with the Arevalo and Woodroffe stories—inviting us to witness the dark side of Ayahuasca tourism.

The negative aspect of Ayahuasca tourism refers to the unrestricted promotion Ayahuasca has received over the previous two decades. Unfortunately, this has led to unwanted results, such as in Sebastian Woodroffe's case, who was taking psychiatric drugs that should not combine with Ayahuasca. The documentary lets viewers know that the main problem with westerners is in their minds through a strong remark Lopez makes: "Their minds carry a great deal of anxiety and stress... these problems begin piling up in the body, eventually making it sick."¹²⁹ The idea of cutting the scene right at Lopez standing and smoking a pipe while looking up at an Ayahuasca vine tree is artistically powerful and beautiful. The scene unfolds the following line-up of eco trauma representation in his words regarding the relationship between sickness and the mind and sickness and trauma manifest.

With an exterior wide shot of Boston, Massachusetts, the spectator is teleported instantly from the Amazonian jungle to a western city in the United States to meet the next and last Ayahuasca witness, user, and experimenter of the documentary. Mee OK begins with the audacious remark, "if it weren't for Ayahuasca, I would have died a long time ago."¹³⁰ before explaining how her newly discovered diagnosis had rendered her body extraordinarily unwell and in great pain. Images of her meditating on her sofa, surrounded by burning incense and

¹²⁷ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:42:24 min (Netflix, 2020)

¹²⁸ Fotiou, *The Globalization of Ayahuasca Shamanism, and the Erasure of Indigenous Shamanism*, 151–179.

¹²⁹ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:42:44 min (Netflix, 2020)

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, approximately around 00:43:10 (Netflix, 2020)

eerie non-diegetic music, are displayed, creating an intimate relationship between her and the spectator.

That intimacy is an ingredient to get us closer to her narrative, as she explains waking up one morning and being unable to move as if her body was slowly mummifying. She further explains the severity of her situation when she could no longer play with her dog and knew she would die soon after receiving her diagnosis. *Ayahuasca* (2020) also ensures to lean toward scientific knowledge to strengthen Mee Ok's witnessing of the healing through her ayahuasca experience. Deborah Bershel (Mee Ok's physician) is quickly introduced, presenting Mee Ok's diagnosis, scleroderma, which is characterised by the hardening of the skin, particularly around the face, hands, and eventually internal organs such as the lungs and kidneys.

Bershel also states that there is no known cure for this disease. As Mee OK describes her own story, her narration provides a more comprehensive insight. Indeed, close-ups of her face, apartment, dog, and personal possessions create an intimate setting the audience is preparing to hear about how the illness had profoundly affected her bodily and mental health.

Listening to how she got paralysed and bedridden for three years explains why she wanted to die. She describes her Ayahuasca experience with ethereal non-diegetic music, providing a phenomenological sensation as she says it was initially frightening until it was not. As she recalls being adrift in space, images of clouds and the moon show, followed by a space suit looking at Earth and other planets. The non-diegetic music hints at oncoming action. Before she continues, she explains the purging state throughout the Ayahuasca experience. Chris Young in *Ayahuasca* (2020), Yatra Barbosa in *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001), and Kestenbetsa in *Other Worlds* (2004) all express that purging is part of the healing process. Images showing Mee OK being tested in her doctor's office corroborate her doctor's statement. "I will say that I was schocked...it appears that her improvement began around the time that she started ayahuasca treatments."¹³¹, states the doctor, yet another scientific verification to the spectator.

Mee OK discusses how Ayahuasca affects the mind and body, and her face is in close-up. Her workout struggles and deep breaths symbolise her path. Shaman Lopez's statement about mind and body illustrates Mee Ok's entire narrative, which explains how Ayahuasca helps her resolve her "awful childhood", referring to the consequences of sexual abuse. The trauma is

¹³¹ *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:46:30 min (Netflix, 2020)

reminiscent of the long pause that appears when Mee OK is to answer the question: how long were you sexually abused? Replying, "for...a long time"¹³², indicating the severity of her trauma since she cannot precisely describe it.

In this case study, eco-trauma representations can be seen in the description of Mee Ok's scleroderma, which is suggested to be the result of her unprocessed trauma. The idea that the body can become physically ill due to emotional trauma is an essential aspect of this eco-trauma representation, which recognises the interconnectedness of the human mind and physical health. Mee Ok's work with Ayahuasca is presented to process her trauma differently, implying a connection between psychological and physical healing.

Furthermore, most of the documentary's physical depictions of nonhuman-naturally induced trauma are related to the purging, evident by the numerous images taken during events at the Soul Quest Ayahuasca Church in Florida. Furthermore, the documentary presents the idea that eco-trauma representation can encompass portrayals of harm caused by natural events, as demonstrated by Susanne's epileptic episode during the ceremony. Using multiple camera angles, the film's aesthetic underscores how Susanne's seizure disrupted the ceremony's natural environment and peaceful atmosphere. It highlights the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, emphasising the impact of eco-trauma on both. Moreover, the incident serves as a reminder of the potential long-term psychological effects of non-human/nature eco-trauma on human well-being.

Susanne's regret for attending the ceremony and the economic consequences further underscores the significant impact of non-human/nature eco-trauma on human lives. By depicting the harm caused by natural causes, the documentary prompts essential considerations about our relationship with nature and the need to protect it. Overall, the film provides a compelling portrayal of the devastating effects of eco-trauma and the urgency of taking action to mitigate its impact.

¹³² *Ayahuasca*, approximately around 00:47:28 min (Netflix, 2020)

4 CONCLUSION

My research question explored how Ayahuasca documentary films depict eco-trauma representations, using examples on the physical and psychological harm caused by human and nonhuman/nature. By examining these depictions, the research gained valuable insights into the current state of our modern western societies. The data obtained through these films' depictions have revealed a pressing need to create peace and transform us into eco-beings with a deeper understanding of our environmental difficulties. Eco-criticism has provided a valuable framework for analysing ecological trauma depictions in this subgenre. Nonetheless, World-systems theory has also supplied additional analytical perspectives relevant to the economic, political, and cultural systems shaping global power relations and *globalisation*.

For example, through the lens of world systems theory, we have identified some of the root causes of ecological trauma depicted in the media and learnt to understand better how media portrayals can reinforce or challenge dominant discourses and power structures. It helps to highlight the need for critical analysis and media literacy. Moreover, world systems theory promotes a sense of global citizenship and collective action by revealing the interconnectedness of global environmental issues and the need for transnational collaboration and cooperation to address them.

Captivatingly, this research has revealed that eco-trauma depictions can encompass a range of harms, from spiritual to physical and psychological realms. While I have chosen to focus on the latter two, it is essential to acknowledge that eco-trauma can take many forms. One key finding from my analyses is that many instances in the three documentaries depict human-induced harm as the primary cause of environmental and human well-being damage. However, this also suggests hope for change if we are open to it. It is important to remember that humans are both the cause of eco-trauma and its potential remedy. By acknowledging our role in creating these harms, we can work towards finding solutions and creating a more sustainable future for ourselves and the planet.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, conversations on climate change and natural resource depletion have become increasingly urgent. However, we may have reached a point where words are no longer sufficient to prompt the necessary shift in perception. My research has highlighted the importance of acknowledging and addressing eco-trauma in all its forms to achieve this goal. In *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001), I discovered that eco-trauma is equally

significant in human-induced physical and psychic realms. The displacement of indigenous Amazonian people due to the theft and contamination of their land impacted both the ecosystem and the mental health of future generations.

Furthermore, the reference to the physical prohibition of psychedelics research in the 1970s provoked considerable psychological harm in western populations and postponed scientific research for fifty years. Moreover, most eco-trauma representations in *Other Worlds* (2004) lay in the psychological realm using implicit and explicit narrative and symbolic film language by Kounen. Let us recall Ann E. Kaplan and Ban Wang, implying that the purpose of critics should be to analyse and evaluate prominent narratives and images for hints of deeper, underlying processes. In doing so, I discovered that Kounen was not opening the film by illustrating children in school uniforms marching like soldiers for cuteness but as a reminder of how the Peruvian nation educates its children in a post-colonial era, still employing old-fashioned colonial values.

In the same manner, concerning *Ayahuasca* (2020) and its underlying processes, there was no coincidence the film depicted the murder of Olivia Arevalo and the revenge lynching of her foreign murder from the local perspective of Peruvian journalist Hugo Enrique Alejos too. Western commercial media had concentrated primarily on keeping Sebastian Woodroffe's story alive, seemingly encouraging Peruvian commercial media to ignore the murder of the leader of one of their historic indigenous communities. This content suggested that this post-colonial country's government is still a tool for core countries' interests, an interplay used to undermine and oppress.

Nevertheless, in this way, *Ayahuasca* (2020) presented both viewpoints, giving a voice to the neglected indigenous population too. In this case, the film's primary source of eco trauma is the overrepresentation of human-induced physical traumas. Compared to the other case studies, the *Ayahuasca* (2020) case study shows the highest number of homicides, attempts at suicide, and instances of child sexual abuse. Is it purely a coincidence, or might it be an alert that the level of violence in the world has been increasing as of late? Or that we are becoming better at disseminating it? Still, it prompts us to meditate on the dire circumstances in which our western and non-western communities find themselves.

The display of these narratives' eco traumas shows a necessity to discuss the harm sustained individually and collectively at micro and macro levels. This study found that a representation

is more than simply an image, as demonstrated with the moving pictures of children in *Other Worlds* (2004); or in the murder narrative of Olivia Arevalo and Sebastian Woodroffe, *Ayahuasca* (2020), where social divisions are built and shown. Furthermore, in *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001), *something* that stood out here as well as in *Ayahuasca* (2020), was the literal representation of anger compared to *Other Worlds* (2004).

In *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001), Flavio explicitly showed his resentment and anger against American oil companies. In *Ayahuasca* (2020), the upset woman yelled out how it is conceivable for a foreigner to come and kill them (without justice) as if they were animals. Shaman Lopez said the murder of Olivia Arevalo fills people with hate, pain, rage, and grief. These unpleasant emotions indicate the unique psychological traumata of these people, which, because of economic globalisation and the notion of world-systems theory, allows us to examine the severe inequities from which they continue to suffer.

The case of Olivia Arevalo's murder in *Ayahuasca* (2020) highlights the systemic inequities between the indigenous people of Peru and the dominant culture. The indigenous people are often marginalised, and their rights are not always respected, leading to anger and resentment. World systems theory can help us understand how these power dynamics are rooted in the global economic system and how they can have significant psychological and emotional impacts on local populations.

Meanwhile, in *Other Worlds* (2004), the film's symbolism disguised the suffering depicted on screen. In the post-colonial image of a quinceañera party, a traditional Shipibo-Conibo fertility ceremony was juxtaposed with a post-colonial quinceañera depiction of modern celebration, in which the whole segment breathes melancholia. Still, these emotions may not be as explicit or visceral as those in the other two case studies. Furthermore, the aesthetics of the three films vary as seen, they have different narrative styles.

Yet, the closer similarities in style or mode are between *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) and *Other Worlds* (2004). Both provide subjective performances and reflections by the filmmakers, which makes them more authentic, even though they are very different. *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001) breaths social activism, *Other Worlds* (2004) is more scientific and philosophical. However, both filmmakers' encounters with the Amazon and its inhabitants leave a memory of trauma because Ayahuasca traditional rituals would forever change from that time and space forward. The screen is there to remind us.

Ayahuasca's (2020) aesthetics exemplify contemporary documentary filmmaking, integrating advancements in digital technology for production, post-production, and storytelling. The film's fast-paced editing interweaves shots seamlessly from beginning to end, creating a captivating viewing experience. Although, the explicit portrayal of participants vomiting might feel raw and insensitive, unlike *Other Worlds*, which was filmed with a night filter, the purging scenes in *Ayahuasca* were detracting from the documentary's overall impact. This choice risks turning the sacred ritual into a spectacle, which may not resonate well with viewers seeking a more profound experience.

Consequently, these case studies illustrate the evolutionary research on psychedelics within the last two decades. For instance, the two first documentaries did not reflect a slight concern with damaging or interfering with people's health by consuming Ayahuasca with other (psychic) substances. The latest case study *Ayahuasca* (2020) serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the tragic fate of Sebastian Woodroffe and the potential dangers that western seekers of consciousness-altering experiences may face. If western science had taken a more open-minded approach towards psychedelics earlier on and allowed for more research and documentary-making, perhaps the benefits and risks would have been better understood and could have prevented such devastating consequences.

The representations of eco-trauma in the Ayahuasca documentaries provide valuable insights into the complex social, cultural, environmental, and political issues affecting our world today. We can see that these representations are deeply rooted in our interconnected historical past by analysing these documentaries from different production years and utilising relevant theoretical frameworks. We can also see how individuals in peripheral countries may be pressured to alter their cultures or way of life for transactions with people from core countries, potentially harming themselves and their communities. Interestingly, it leads us to testify Cathy Caruth's statement that all trauma is a socio-historical phenomenon.

In this light, Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub stated that testifying as a witness is essential because engaging with works of art teaches people how to preserve memories and heal from traumatic circumstances. After observation, I say acknowledging this visual culture is the first step in transforming trauma. Moreover, looking back at Baldwin's analysis of *Frozen 2* in the previous literature concerning eco-trauma representations, invited us to reflect upon the Earth's long history of violence, holding grave consequences on today's global health and biodiversity.

The three documentaries, *Shamans of the Amazon* (2001), *Other Worlds* (2004), and *Ayahuasca* (2020), each have provided a unique and essential perspective on the global issue of eco-trauma, shedding light on the effects of colonialism, globalisation, and modernisation on indigenous cultures and environments. Through interviews with experts, footage of natural destruction, tragic narratives, hopeful ones, and on-the-ground reporting, these documentaries have also provided a glimpse of an in-depth look at the causes and consequences of eco-trauma.

The representations of eco-trauma in Western society and its visual culture act as a powerful form of precognition, reminding us of past traumas and the urgent need to prevent future ones. While these traumas may never wholly vanish, they can catalyse growth and change. As Sean Cubitt and other scholars have pointed out, we must heed the lessons of the past and use them to create a better future. Ultimately, these are crucial elements the *Ayahuasca* documentaries portray when allowing these eco-traumas to work on our cognitive maps. By engaging with these representations, we can make sense of our anxieties and fears and find new ways to address the challenges we face. Only if we reject stagnation but embrace innovation, collaboration, and bold action can we build a sustainable, fair future and, eventually, turn past trauma into future optimism.

5 FUTURE WORKS

To further enhance the conclusions presented in this thesis, it would be beneficial to investigate more Ayahuasca documentaries in future research. It would not only provide additional content data and bring new perspectives and insights to the topic. In addition, an interdisciplinary approach involving physical field visits and spending time in indigenous communities focusing on eco-trauma perspectives could yield superior knowledge in this field of study. As the Ayahuasca documentary continues to be a fascinating and evolving phenomenon, there is still much to explore in film and media science. Furthermore, scholars and students must be curious and open-minded about investigating other topics beyond eco-trauma. Future studies could examine a larger sample of films to provide a more comprehensive view of how eco-trauma or other topics are depicted.

Future work could also involve studying the impact of Ayahuasca documentary films on viewers: It would be interesting to explore how these films impact viewers' attitudes and behaviours regarding nature and the environment. Future studies could investigate whether watching Ayahuasca documentary films increases environmental consciousness and pro-environmental behaviours. And finally, in the pursuit of building a better society, I strongly recommend conducting further research to investigate the portrayal of psychedelics in popular media versus scientific publications.

With other taboo substances, such as ketamine and MDMA (ecstasy), now being explored in psychological research, I suggest it is essential to trace their historical representation in the media. Additionally, it is crucial to delve deeper into our historical collective trauma documented in forums and documentaries, as they provide valuable testimonies of a society in transition. Tracking this trail and understanding the consequences of humankind's quest for transformation is vital. What revelations lie ahead? How are we shaping our reality, and what implications does it hold for future generations?

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Primary Film Sources

Original Title: *Shamans of the Amazon*
Production by: Dean Jefferys Films & SBS Independent
Produced by: Dean Jefferys
Directed by: Dean Jefferys
Cinematography by: Dean Jefferys
Edited by: Dean Jefferys
Sound Record by: Dean Jefferys
Narrator by: Dean Jefferys
Music by: Murray Burnes, Darpan, Mirana, Kavi, DJ Booth.
Cast: Rick Strassman, Yatra da Silveira Barbosa, Terence McKenna.
Budget: AUD 9400
Release year: 2001
Runtime: 00:52:00 min, color.

Original Title: *D' Autres Mondes*, English version *Other Worlds*
Production by: A.J.O.Z Films, Tawak Pictures, TPS Star.
Produced by: Jan Kounen
Directed by: Jan Kounen
Cinematography by: Jan Kounen and Anne Paris
Written by: Dominique Fausset, Manna Mégard
Narrator: Jan Kounen
Edited by: Eric Duriez
Music by: Jean Jacques Herts & Francois Roy
Top cast: Pablo Amaringo, Guillermo Arévalo, Charles Grob, Stanislav Grof.
Release year: 2004,
Runtime: 1:14:00 min, color.

Original Title: Netflix (Un)Well docuseries s1, ep.5 *Ayahuasca*.
Production by: Netflix Worldwide Entertainment, Left/Right Production
Produced by: Rachael Profiloski
Directed by: Leslie Asako Gladsjo
Narrator: Jennifer Julian
Photographed by: Peter Hutchens, Brian Dawson.
Edited by: Colin Cosack
Music by: John Dragonetti
Graphics: Bigstar Motion Design, INC.
Cast:
Release year: 2020,
Runtime: 00:57:00 min, color.

Secondary Film Sources

Jungle Trip, Gavin Searle, 2001
The Sacred Science, Nicholas J. Polizzi, 2011
From Shock to Awe, Luc Côté, 2019
Metamorphosis, Keith Aronowitz, 2009

Vine of the Soul, Richard Meech, 2010

The Last Shaman, Raz Degan, 2016

The Reality of Truth, Laurent Levi & Mike Zapolin, 2016

Shoah, Claude Lanzmann, 1985