FROM ECOPHOBIA TO ECOSOPHY IN CHANTAL BILODEAU'S *SILA*

CHANTAL BILODEAU'NUN SILA *ADLI OYUNUNDA EKOFOBİDEN EKOZOFİYE*

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Abstract

Ecological thinking, which has recently found expression in a wide range of critical and literary works, has been slow to take hold in the field of theatre and performance arts, both in scholarship and practice. Ecological theatre, placing ecological reciprocity at the centre of its dramatic and thematic content, rejects the humanist paradigm of Western theatre, situating humans and non-humans in a mutually reliant framework. Thus, ecological theatre problematizes the notion of ecophobia that postulates the superiority of humans over non-humans, shoring up culture/nature dualism. Drawing upon Felix Guattari's notion of 'ecosophy' in The Three Ecologies (2000), ecosophical theatre emerges as a new kind of ecological theatre, which includes not only human-non-human interactions but also social relations and human subjectivity. Therefore, by bringing into the spotlight the ecosophical theatre qualities, this paper aims at exploring how ecosophical theatre connects subjective, social, and ecological registers through new ethico-political and aesthetic paradigms and allows for fresh modes of existence, social reconfigurations, and original communitarian harmonies. In this context, by analyzing French-Canadian playwright Chantal Bilodeau's Sila (2015) from an ecosophical point of view, this paper indicates that Bilodeau participates in the processes of resingularization and social construction by making use of theatre's capacity to modify our subjectivities through the 'ethico-political and aesthetic paradigms' that Guattari suggests.

Öz

Son zamanlarda çeşitli eleştirel ve edebi eserlerde ele alınan ekolojik düşünce, tiyatro ve performans sanatları alanında, hem teori hem gösteri bağlamında, yavaş yavaş yer bulmuştur. Ekolojik karşılıklılığı, dramatik ve tematik içeriğinin merkezine yerleştiren ekolojik tiyatro, insanları ve insan olmayanları birbirlerine karşılıklı olarak bağlı bir çerçevede konumlandırarak, Batı tiyatrosunun insan merkezci yaklaşımını reddeder. Böylece, ekolojik tiyatro, insanın insan olmayana üstünlüğünü varsayarak kültür/doğa ikiliğini destekleyen, ekofobi kavramını sorunsallaştırır. Felix Guattari'nin Üç Ekoloji (2000) adlı eserindeki 'ekozofi' kavramına dayanan, ekozofik tiyatro, yalnızca insan ve insan-dışı varlıklar arasındaki etkileşimleri değil, aynı zamanda sosyal ilişkileri ve insan öznelliğini de kapsayan yeni bir tür ekolojik tiyatro olarak ortaya çıkar. Böylelikle, bu makale, ekozofik tiyatronun özelliklerini ön plana çıkararak,bu tiyatro türünün öznel, toplumsal ve ekolojik boyutları 'yeni etik-politik ve estetik paradigmalar' aracılığıyla nasıl birbirine bağladığını ve yeni varoluş biçimlerine, toplumsal yeniden yapılandırmalara ve özgün komüniter modellere nasıl olanak sağladığını ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu makale, Fransız-Kanadalı oyun yazarı Chantal Bilodeau'nın Sila (2015) adlı oyununu, ekozofik bakış açısıyla analiz ederek, Bilodeau'nun Guattari'nin önerdiği yeni 'etik-politik-estetik paradigmalar' aracılığıyla, tiyatronun öznelliklerimizi dönüştürebilme kapasitesinden faydalanarak yeniden özneleştirme va toplumsal oluşum sürecine katıldığını göstermektedir.

Introduction

From the beginning of the twenty-first century, humans have witnessed various unpredictable ecological phenomena, including climate change, global warming, polar ice sheets breaking off, earthquakes, frequent hurricanes, and most recently, global fires and floods. It is easy to observe how the media portrays 'non-human

nature' as a hostile opponent to 'human culture'. The adjectives, which define natural incidents such as fierce winds, wildfires, destructive flames, severe flooding, among others, reflect humans' configuration of nature as an uncontrollable and frightening opponent that would cause and be caused by the culture/nature divide. Carolyn Merchant investigates the roots of this division and associates it with the "*far-reaching effect of the Scientific Revolution*," (1980, p. 193) justifying human control and exploitation of nature. In synch with Merchant, Val Plumwood establishes a close relationship between Cartesian philosophy and human control over nature and writes, "*[Cartesian thinking would] widen and deepen the chasm between what identifies humanity and what defines the world of nature*" (1993, p. 5). Plumwood lists the problematic dichotomous categorizations, placing the culture/nature divide at the top of the list, and she indicates that the conceptualization of nature as distinct from and subordinate to the realm of culture has positioned humans within the privileged domain of culture since the Industrial Revolution (1993, p. 43). In other words, industrial and scientific progress, which places human beings at the centre of the universe, demands new hostile and chaotic images that sanction the domination of the natural environment. Thus, the privileged position of humans creates a history of controlling the natural environment, which is based on human subjectivity and denial of nature's agency.

As prominent ecocritic Simon C. Estok notes, the relationship between humans and non-human nature "*has largely derived from modernity's irrational fear of nature and hence created an antagonism between humans and their environments,*" which he refers to as "*ecophobia*" (2018, p. 1). The prevailing ecophobic values regarding the culture/nature divide have been problematized by recent global large-scale ecological phenomena, which have revealed that the interconnected relationship between human culture and non-human nature must be reconsidered. To put it another way, the ecological crisis, revealing itself in a variety of forms, including extreme weather patterns and unpredictable natural events, has demonstrated that the dichotomous categorization of culture/nature and ecophobia are pushing humanity towards the verge of ecological collapse. It is, therefore, no coincidence that a more thorough reconsideration of the following registers -human, ecology, social relations, and human subjectivity- is the way forward.

Into the new millennium, Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stormer, putting forward the term "*the Anthropocene,*" "*emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology*" (2000, p. 17). Thus, it is possible to say that they provide a radical

reconsideration of "*the destructiveness of the human species*" (Clark, 2015, p. 4). The Anthropocene has rapidly become adopted in the humanities in a sense beyond the strictly geological. In other words, human conduct and its effects on ecology have recently found expression in a range of critical and literary works, which intend to raise ecological awareness and foreground the notion of reciprocity. Addressing the significance of the ecological crisis, the distinguished theorist Félix Guattari writes, "*the only true response to the ecological crisis is on a global scale, provided that it brings about an authentic political, social and cultural revolution*" (2000, p. 28). To paraphrase Guattari, he calls for close attention to the global ecological crisis through reconsideration of humanity's attitude towards non-human nature. He further contends, "*ecosophy – between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity)*" (2000, p. 28) could be the solution to the current ecological crisis.

Guattari's call has been taken up by many theatre and performance scholars, who concede that "*the arts and humanities – including theatre*" (Chaudhuri, 1994, p. 24) must address the multifarious, dynamic, and interdependent relationships between humans and non-humans. Theatre scholar Wendy Arons revisits the culture/nature divide to investigate what this division means for theatre historiography and invites theatre scholars to reconsider the reciprocal relationship between humans and the non-human environment (2010, p. 156-157). To put it differently, environmental humanities and arts aim at overcoming the nature/culture divide by offering ecological awareness and a caring attitude towards the non-human world. Thus, the potential exists for interpretations of theatrical practices that can speak to the exigencies of our current socio-ecological crisis.

Ecological theatre, or "*ecodramaturgy*," coined by Theresa J. May, "*puts ecological reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent*" (2010, p. 6); thus, it intends to challenge the culture/nature divide with its emphasis on the entanglements of humans and non-humans. In doing so, ecological theatre aims to "*shock us into recognition of the inescapable interdependencies and shared contingencies*" (Arons and May, 2012, p. 6) with the non-human actors of the world. In this regard, ecodramaturgical scholarship is to reconceptualize nature and the purpose of the arts, in which the culture/nature divide has long been functioning paradoxically. In other words, ecological theatre rejects traditional arts' position as "*a wholly social account of human life*" (Chaudhuri, 1994, p. 24) and calls for a unique position that will offer multiple entry points from which ecological entanglements are

embodied and conveyed to the audience. Ecological theatre playwrights show a keen interest in reflecting global ecological debates in their plays. Some representative British plays include Steve Water's *The Contingency Plan* (2009), Mike Bartlett's *Earthquakes in London* (2010), Richard Bean's *The Heretic* (2011), Duncan Macmillan's *Lungs* (2011) and *2071* (2014), Stephen Emmott and Katie Mitchell's *Ten Billion* (2012), Tanya Ronder's *F*ck the Polar Bears* (2015), Stef Smith's *Human Animals* (2016), and Caryl Churchill's *Escaped Alone* (2016). There has also been a steady flow of excellent theatrical works in Australia, USA and Canada, including Ian Meadows's *Between Two Waves* (2012), Stephen Carleton's *The Turquoise Elephant* (2014), Gordon Dahlquist's *Tomorrow Come Today* (2014), and Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2015). In light of those preliminary observations, this study specifically analyzes French Canadian playwright Chantal Bilodeau's portrayal of the anthropogenic climate change effects on humans, non-humans, and the environment in *Sila*. The main discussion will revolve around Bilodeau's attempt to create an ecosophically aware theatre, which would allow for dynamic, relational, and aesthetic moments that embrace humans, non-humans, and ecological environments. The study, in this context, first illustrates the concepts of 'ecophobia' and 'ecosophy' and then indicates that ecosophical theatre, which is a new kind of ecological theatre, allows for fresh modes of existence, aesthetic paradigms, social reconfigurations, and original communitarian harmonies, making use of the 'ethico-political and aesthetic paradigms' that Guattari suggests.

From 'Ecophobia' to 'Ecosophy': The Emergence of Ecosophical Theatre

The term ecophobia first appeared in a journal article in 1988, which defined it as "*the fear that the planet is increasingly inhospitable*" (as cited in Estok, 2018, p. 10). Then, in *Beyond Ecophobia* (1996), David Sobel illustrates the term as "*a fear of ecological problems and the natural world. Fear of spills, rainforest destruction, whale hunting, acide rain, the ozone hole, and Lyme disease*" (p. 5). In the same year, Simon C. Estok independently uses the term in his PhD dissertation and goes further in defining the term in his article "Theorizing in a Space of Ambivalent Openness" (2009) and his monograph *Ecocriticism and Shakespeare: Reading Ecophobia* (2011). In *The Ecophobia Hypothesis* (2018), Estok defines "*ecophobia*" as an "*antagonism, in which humans sometimes view nature as an opponent, [which] can be expressed toward natural physical geographies [...], extreme meteorological events [...], bodily processes and products [...], and biotic land-, air-, and seascapes [...]*" (p. 1). As Estok observes, ecophobia embodies contempt for nature itself and natural events. Ecophobia's

analytic framework allows for an interpretation that expresses how it has harmed our own environmental consciousness. In this sense, the ecophobia hypothesis explains paranoid delusions of nature and natural phenomena and how these concerns shape interactions that are very harmful to our ecosystem. Estok summarizes the notion as "*an irrational and groundless fear or hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism*" (2011, p. 4). In this regard, ecophobia, as one of the principle mediums contributing to and shaping the division between culture and nature, lies at the heart of the current ecological crisis and needs to be reimagined by relatively free of hierarchical constructions that would infer superiority to one side of the equation while devaluing the other.

Guattari posits the concept of *transversality* as an activist philosophy that projects possible variant futures to counter dominant paradigms which are based on hierarchical constructions (Guattari, 1995, p. 98). Transversality offers the opportunity to deconstruct contemporary modes of expression, which seduce us into believing what we are and what we have. Transversality further provides a direct mode of altering our lived realities, our truths, dismantling the stratified order of things, and attending to the way in which all things operate ecosophically. In this way, Guattari offers ways out that are ethical and deeply rooted in aesthetic projects – activism as an artistic practice, the inspiration for intersectionality, eco-thought. Malcolm Miles remarks on the phenomenon as follows:

> [t]he relation between art and political, social or economic change is neither direct nor causal. Art cannot save the planet or the whale; it can represent, critique and play imaginatively on the problem, and picture futures not prescribed by money. Art is itself produced in this context, too, and always reflects the conditions of its production just as it usually goes beyond them (2014, p. 3).

Miles's account also serves as a critical analysis of different eco-aesthetic strategies and their limitations as well as their practicalities for opening up possible sustainable futures. In synch with Miles, Guattari argues that art has always been an essential part of the structure of any society and has assumed a crucial role in the expression of individual and collective subjectivities. According to Guattari, art's appeal stems from its capacity to create a *de-framing*, a dismantling of serialized and standardized meaning, allowing those who have access to it to reinvent and resingularize themselves. This encounter has the potential to have an irreversible effect on the path of one's life and to create areas potentially far from commonality in

daily life (Antonioli, 2018, p. 77). Art thus resists the decline of subjectivities and environments brought by the instrumentalized world, acting as a negation. Art can do it by working with ideas, space, and the natural environment, making use of the capacity to change materials constantly.

Eco-thought has recently been one of the most influential ideas, which frequently appears in environmental humanities texts. As theatre scholar Una Chaudhuri claims, "*Ecological victory will require a transvaluation so profound as to be nearly unimaginable at present. And in this the arts and humanities – including the theater – must play a role*" (1994, p. 25). Ecological thinking has been slow to take hold in the field of theatre and performance, both in scholarship and practice. However, contemporary ecodramaturgical scholars, including Wendy Arons, Una Chaudhuri, Carl Lavery, Clare Finburgh, Theresa J. May, and Shoni Enelow, place great hope in theatre's capacity to reflect ecophobic attitudes towards non-human nature and its role in reconfiguring anthropocentrism. As Carl Lavery asserts, "*the diverse modalities of theatre and performance trouble the anthropocentrism*" by "*displacing the human subject from the centre of the 'world' and locating it instead in an agential landscape of flows, systems and networks*" (2016, p. 30-31). To say the same differently, ecological theatre, rejecting the humanist paradigm of Western theatre, aims to overcome the pervasive culture/nature division, situating humans and non-humans in a mutually reliant framework. Theatre's unique position that "*flesh[es] out the way in which the human imagination participates in, and is integral to, our ecological 'situatedness'*" (May, 2007, p. 95) can open up broader, intimate relations that encompass the non-human. The encounter between humans and non-humans, which should be based on a relational field, allows for a symbiotic relationship between these two entities. Ecological theatre participates in the process of subjectivization by producing a new subject as a decentered singularity in a similar way to the creation of a new art form. Here, Guattari's notion of ecosophy, which manifests itself as a science of ecosystems encompassing ecology, human, and human subjectivity, promises hope for a new kind of ecological theatre: ecosophical theatre.

The term ecosophy appears in the works of Arne Næss and Félix Guattari independently almost at the same time, never referring to each other (Genosko, 2009, p. 86). However, it is possible to argue that both theorists share common ground and call for ecological responsibility, for they draw attention to the lack of consciousness over environmental issues in the Western world. Ecosophy, in the Guattarian variant

specifically referred in this paper, is a complicated ethico-political articulation "*between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity)*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 28). According to Guattari, humans are being "*mentally manipulated through the production of a collective, mass-media subjectivity*" (as cited in Pindar and Sutton, 2000, p. 6). In other words, Integrated World Capitalism (IWC) is involved in a much more subtle and invisible "*penetration of people's attitudes, sensibility and minds*," in addition to damaging the ecological environment and disintegrating social relations (as cited in Pindar and Sutton, 2000, p. 6). In other words, IWC poses a threat to human subjectivity, what Guattari calls 'singularity', through mass-media homogenization. Guattari calls for resistance to this desingularization process and creates new modes of accomplishing the resingularization of existence. To achieve it, it is crucial to "*organize new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness, together with new aesthetic and new analytic practices*" (2000, p. 51), writes Guattari. In this sense, Guattari invigorates and encourages to question human conduct on ecology, including modes of production and consumption, and asks for real environmental wisdom, which will "*enhance the links to each other and to our environment*" (as cited in Antonioli, 2018, p. 76), which he refers to as "*mental ecology*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 6). Thus, new spaces can be available, and new modes of expression can be argued against dominant paradigms.

Art, resisting the decline of subjectivities and environments brought by the instrumentalized world and acting as a negation, is ecosophical. In this context, ecosophy, which claims a progressive ecology, productive of new subjectivities, generative of an existential, social, political, and aesthetic praxis, has the potential to be integrated into theatre studies that can be called ecosophical theatre (Garcin-Marrou, 2018, p. 191). The ecosophical stance is distinct in that it treats the environmental, social, and subjective aspects in an entirely global way, with the goal of reformulating our relationships with the rest of the world. It is impossible to handle the dimensions separately from one another. Guattari's *mental ecology*, which aims to rebuild unique subjectivities, can "*lead us to reinvent the relation of the subject to the body*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 35), emphasizing coexistence with the non-human environment. Thus, ecosophy can find answers to ecological degradation, which parallels the deterioration of human life by new "*ethico-political and aesthetic*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 67) paradigms.

Furthermore, ecosophy can serve as a framework through which ecophobia can be problematized by rendering visible the complexities of and interconnectedness between the dichotomous categorizations mentioned above. It can be speculated with Guattari that the hypothesis of an ecosophical theatre would be a necessary "*pseudo-narrative detour through the annals of myth and ritual or through supposedly scientific accounts [descriptions] - all of which have as their ultimate goal a dis-positional mise en scène, a bringing-into-existence*" (2000, p. 37). Put it clearly, ecosophical theatre reformulates humans' relationship to their environments, generating new subjectivities and reconfiguring social relations. It is noteworthy to add that ecosphical theatre suggests avenues for socio-political and aesthetic-minded experimentations that "*plunges the body of the spectator inside corporeal ecology, transforms stages into ecosystems and makes theatre into an agent of sensibilization and modification of our subjectivities*" (Garcin-Marrou, 2018, p. 192). It is, therefore, no coincidence that it is through the body – its attitudes and postures – that theatrical practice, through the symbiosis it generates between singularities and the objective world, makes its alliance with the spirit and with thought.

Guattari's argument in *Three Ecologies*, drawing attention to current inadequate environmental activism, reinforces art and the artist's creative capacity to reconfigure ecological concerns and resingularize subjectivities. That is, for Guattari, scientific frameworks have been insufficient to deal with these concerns. Thus, he insists on the invention of fresh aesthetic ways of being and "*new paradigms that are instead ethico-aesthetic in inspiration*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 37). In his terms: "*Life is like a performance: one must construct it, work at it, singularize it*" (as cited in Pindar and Sutton, 2000, p. 12). In this regard, artistic reinvention and performative construction, the main components of theatre, can offer possibilities for ecological progress, resingularization and social reconstruction. Chantal Bilodeau intentionally strives to connect Guattari's three registers ecosophically in *Sila* as the following discussion explores.

Chantal Bilodeau's Ecosophical Theatre: *Sila* (2015)

Non-Indigenous French Canadian playwright Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2015) premiered at the Underground Railway Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 2014. *Sila* was produced by Catalyst Collaborative@MIT to increase public understanding of climate science through theatre (Sandberg-Zakian, 2015, p. i). The play reflects the anthropogenic climate change effects on the Arctic, followed by the hardships of the Inuit people and non-humans via a series of interconnected stories.

Through these stories, Bilodeau connects characters from various backgrounds, including Indigenous, Westerns, and non-humans. The idea of *sila* after which the play is named, represents "*the spiritual relationship between people, climate and ecological processes, and considers it in relation to the politics of climate change and the Arctic*" (Woynarski, 2020, p. 200). It is, therefore, no coincidence that this paper uniquely interrogates the extent to which the idea of *sila* can be related to Guattari's notion of ecosophy. To put it more clearly, Bilodeau's attempt to connect subjective, social, and environmental registers through ethico-aesthetic inspiration allows an ecosophical reading of the play.

The characters from different backgrounds, ethnicities, races, and occupations populate the play, set in Nunavut, Canada. The playwright's incorporation of Inuit characters and Inuit mythology into the play allows us to explore the relationship between climate justice and the oppressed and marginalized populations. Conventionally, Rob Nixon identifies climate change effects as "*slow violence*" (2011, p. 4), which refers to incidents whose effects, although devastating, are not immediate. Thus, for Nixon, "*that is typically not viewed as a violence at all*" (2011, p. 2). However, he draws attention to the certain effects on "*those people lacking resources who are the principal causalities of slow violence*" (2011, p. 4), foregrounding the idea that people, places, and non-humans who have been marginalized have always been more susceptible to the damaging effects of climate change. In this regard, Bilodeau attempts to visualize the narratives and stories onstage to magnify the vulnerabilities of Inuit people and the political and social structures that underpin them. Hence, as an artist, Bilodeau participates in the processes of resingularization and the social reconstruction, problematizing dominant anthropocentric modes of representation. She attains this by making use of theatre's capacity to modify our subjectivities through the 'ethico-political and aesthetic paradigms' that Guattari suggests.

The playwright employs the character breakdown, including three Inuktitut language-speaking Inuit characters, two French-speaking Canadian characters, one English-speaking Canadian character, two polar bears, and an Inuit sea goddess, as an imaginative strategy to make representations of racial, ethnic, and cultural differences onstage more respectful. Bilodeau provides translations and a glossary of Inuktitut terms and phrases at the beginning of the play to broaden and deepen the understanding of this local community. In the play, much of the story is based on the conflict between traditional ways of life and the economic and technological pressures

of modernity, which Bilodeau artistically portrays by using the visual and textual possibilities of theatre. That is, the play resists ecological degradation, which parallels with the deterioration of the modes of human life with regard to the Inuit community. In the play, Inuit climate-change activist Leanna is inspired by real-life activist Sheila Watt-Cloutier, who argues that "*the Arctic is seen as a global barometer for climate change, and Inuit are responsible sentinels that have reached out to warn the world about this important issue that interconnects all of humanity*" (Cape Farewell, 2013, p. 33). Leanna, modelled on an actual activist figure, strives hard to promote global awareness of the anthropogenic climate change effects on the Arctic and local communities. Act I begins at a conference, where Leanna stands at a podium, saying:

> This place I come from we call Nunavut. It means "Our Land" in Inuktitut. It's where we, Inuit, have thrived for more than four thousand years. It's where we strive to realize our full potential. It's where we nurture our knowledge of who we are. But Nunavut, our land, is only as rich as it is cold. And today, most of it is melting (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 1).

Leanna's poetic language attracts attention, and her rhetorical skill encourages the audience to visualize the region and its historical richness. In doing so, she aims to bridge the gap between the audience and the Inuit community, shifting from a global to a localized scale. Leanna's effort demonstrates that effective environmental activism requires all scales to be considered. She maintains her argument by giving concrete examples, and she says, "*Our hunters can't feed their families [...] Our roads and houses are sinking, and our traditional knowledge is becoming obsolete*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 27). Leanna struggles to reveal that the materialized relationships between human culture and non-human nature have allegedly significant socio-ecological consequences for the Arctic and the local people who dwell there. Indeed, these effects are the direct consequences of ecophobic attitudes towards non-human nature. She further informs the audience about the political challenges she faces during her environmentalist struggles. She has petitioned the US government with "*A hundred and seventy-five pages of thoroughly researched scientific facts and first-hand witness testimonies*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 26), blaming the government for not taking action against the violation of the Inuit community's essential rights for survival. Ironically, the petition and the subsequent request to accept the appeal were both rejected due to the lack of supporting evidence provided. She boldly deduces, "*Industrialized countries that do not recognize this and take action to reduce their emissions violate our basic human rights to life, health, culture, and -*" (Bilodeau, 2015,

p.63). It is evident that Leanna criticizes political authorities who deny ecological realities and overlook human rights on the part of the Inuit. In this regard, Bilodeau's portrayal of the policymakers' ignorance of the warnings and ecological knowledge of the Inuit shows that they adopt an ecophobic attitude; thus, the climate change crisis remains a distant reality for them. However, resisting the decline of the environment brought by the instrumentalized world, theatre can generate a revolutionary political praxis by which ecophobia can be transformed into ecosophy. In similar terms to Guattari, Bilodeau, as an artist, employs the stage as a revolutionary space, through which new micropolitical and microsocial practices can be organized. To put it more clearly, from Guattari's ecosophical point of view, Bilodeau opens up broader, intimate relations that encompass the non-human environment, and it is here where the micropolitical has a catalysing power, activating potentialities to overthrow oppressive power structures. With the audience now occupying equal ground with the artist, Bilodeau is able to connect this to Guattari's search for a 'new aesthetic paradigm' whereby artistic practices are able to create spaces of reconfiguration which extend directly into the politics of everyday life.

Climate scientist French-Canadian Jean, who has been conducting scientific research in the Arctic for 15 years, is in Nunavut. To get a research licence, he needs "*to involve the community somehow, New rule from the Nunavut Research Institute*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 34). Jean meets Veronica, demanding an Inuktitut language course from her. However, Veronica rebukes him due to his apathy toward the local language, saying, "*If you want to work in Nunavut, it's not enough to talk AT us anymore. You have to talk WITH us. That's just pitsiaqattautiniq [respect]*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 41). Veronica criticizes Jean, who has been working for years in the region without learning a single Inuktitut word, and calls him "*typical qallunaaq [white man]*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 39). Here, by local requirements, the playwright intends to connect the scientist with the local community. As a white European man, Jean's indifference to Indigenous local culture and language reveals his ecophobia, which is "*present and subtle [in his attitudes] as racism*" (Estok, 2011, p. 4). By these requirements, Jean would realize the existence of Inuit culture, which frees it from being a distant reality. In this way, the playwright allows Jean to develop social relations with the local culture, which would transform his subjectivity. Tulugaq, an Inuit elder, guides Jean and helps him carry his equipment, watches polar bears while they are out on the ice, shows the safest route and deploys some CTD sensors to take measurements of ice thickness (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 51). Tulugaq remarks on the significance of traditional knowledge as follows:

> That is *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit*. Inuit traditional knowledge. Old learning about living in peace with people, animals, nature. Arctic is not just numbers. Arctic is stories. Like *aqsarniit* story. *Qallunaat* learning: lots of numbers. But it comes here – (*pointing to his head*). Only here. Not good for us. *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* comes here – (*pointing to his head*), here – (*pointing to his heart*), and here – (*moving hands and feet*). *Inuit qaujimajatuqangit* is alive. Observation, experience. Always changing. Numbers are not enough. We need stories. You understand? (Bilodeau 2015, p. 52).

As the quotation indicates, the playwright offers traditional ecological knowledge as a component of the scientific approach, valuing both ways of knowing about the natural world. In doing so, Bilodeau brings these dilemmas to the forefront and interrogates the extent to which these conflicting types of knowledge have the ability to support one another. In an ecosophical context, Bilodeau combines "*the annals of myth and ritual or [...] supposedly scientific accounts – all of which have as their ultimate goal a dispositional mise en scène, a bringing-into-existence*" (Guattari, 2000, p. 37). In synch with Guattari, the playwright addresses the inadequacy of scientific frameworks to deal with ecological deterioration and offers ecosophy as an alternative to reformulate humanity's relationships with the rest of the world. By connecting Inuit traditional knowledge and local richness with scientist Jean, Bilodeau generates other ways of perceiving, a creative forging of new, transverse relations with others that resists ecophobia. Thus, Biloadeau's emphasis on the significance of 'living in peace with people, animals, nature' reflects her ecosophical stance by bringing all domains together-in and through the three ecologies- and allowing the multiple dimensions of each to flourish.

Tulugaq and his traditional ecological knowledge are structured as a component of Jean's clear-cut scientific understanding. Tulugaq guides Jean to conduct his research on the ice, but he repeatedly postpones going out on the ice, relying on his intimate knowledge of the ice, which enrages Jean. Jean insists on proceeding, disregarding the Inuit elder's ability to spot slight changes and predict trends onto the ice, which results in his falling through the ice. While underwater, he comes across Nuliajuk, the Inuit goddess of the ocean and the underworld. Nuliajuk wraps her hair around Jean, immobilizing him, and utters: "*Now the ocean. Is my dominion [...] I can sense. The weakness. Of all. Humanity*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 85). The goddess accuses Jean and humans of their ecophobia towards the natural environment, damaging her dominion due to the ice melting. According to Nuliajuk's mythological

story, she feels relieved when her hair is combed; otherwise, she feels angry and keeps all the sea animals away from hunters (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 93). Jean's encounter with Nuliajuk has two significant points. On the one hand, this encounter enables him to realize that humans are inextricably connected to their environments. Thus, he becomes more sensitive and respectful of cultural differences, deducing he wants to learn more about Inuktitut (Bilodeau 2015, p. 96). He further builds an intimate relationship with Veronica, who has just lost her son, committing suicide, and shares her grief by combing her hair. Then, "*The light shifts to reveal NULIAJUK's hair loosening and releasing the trapped animals [...] Nature knows how to create, and celebrate life with a water ballet"* (Bilodeau 2015, p. 99). The playwright's artistic employment of Inuit mythology onstage reveals that theatre's visual and textual capabilities render it a critical site for the articulation of ecological thought, providing various possibilities for community building and empathy. On the other hand, this gentle encounter, which stresses equal reciprocity between actual individuals and the natural environment, is the catalyst for Jean to develop a different perspective based on his experience rather than on scientific data. To put it more clearly, he feels empathy for Inuit people and shares their concerns about the climate change effects on their living conditions. It is, therefore, no coincidence that he feels sorry for the denial of Leanna's appeal, saying, "*If I knew I could put the data to good use I might consider taking that contract*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 98). From an ecosophical perspective, it is possible to argue that the playwright's imaginative space, enriched by traditional characters, stories, and myths, allowing to envision new solidarities together with new aesthetic practices. In this sense, "*Art is the thing upon and around which subjectivity can reform itself, the way several light spots are brought together to form a beam, and light up a single point*" (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 97). To say the same differently, Bilodeau's theatrical practice enhances humans' connectivity to each other and their environment, allowing subjectivity to reformulate itself with an emphasis on coexistence. Bilodeau achieves this by transforming her stage into an ecosystem, in which a variety of cultures, ethnicities, animals, and ideas coexist. It is here that Guattari's notion of ecosophy manifests itself as a science of ecosystems encompassing ecology, human, human subjectivity, and society.

Ecosophical theatre is politically regenerative, ethical, aesthetic, and embraces difference. Humans from different cultural backgrounds, mythological characters, and animals populate the dramatic construction in *Sila*. Non-human actors act alongside humans onstage, dislocating humans from the ontological centre of the world, thus, problematizing Western theatre's obsession with human subjectivity. In

other words, the ecosophical standpoint of the play situates differences in a mutually reliant framework, underscoring the anthropocentric enmeshment in Western theatre, which "*has been coterminous with the history of human subjectivity*" (Lavery and Finburgh, 2015, p. 6). In this way, the play not only reflects the consequences of ecological degradation on humans but also on non-human species in the Arctic. The non-human actors of the play, Mama polar bear and Daughter, serve as *"a portal through which we humans are able to access the grief of our changing climate in surprising, profound ways*" (Sandberg-Zakian, 2015, p. ii). Their initial appearance on the stage happens "*out on the ice. A brilliant and benevolent moon dominates the landscape. Friendly growling and laughter. MAMA and her DAUGHTER play-fight*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 41). Mama tells her daughter that,

> All life is breath. From the original breath that gave us the miracle of Creation to the world itself, *sila* wraps all around us [...] *sila* reminds us that we are never alone. Each and every one of us is connected to every other living creature (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 43-44).

The quotation is indicative of ecosophy's importance, which is revealed through the notion of *sila* in the play. Bilodeau's elaboration of *sila* through non-human characters stresses the significance of the interconnectivity between humans, non-humans, and the ecological environment, recalling Guattari's concept of ecosophy. The playwright anthropomorphizes Mama's persona, granting her speech and mythology, and thereby, the polar bears speak and express their emotions, asserting agency. The assertion of agency onstage is highly significant, freeing them from being a mere representation of climate change. In the following scene, the audience witnesses the drowning of the daughter cub due to its inability to swim the distances needed to obtain food in the new reality of the melting ice brought on by climate change. This drowning, Mama's grief, her "*a series of long desperate wails*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 61) and the action of searching for her lost daughter underwater, all enacted onstage, provoke empathy in the audience. Theresa J. May, who directs the 2015 production of the play in the University of Oregon, remarks on the significance of the representation of non-humans onstage as follows:

> The polar bears were rehearsed not as objects (puppets), nor even as individual characters, but as possibilities of becoming. "Becoming polar bear" but never "acting" bear, sharing breath and continuous movement, an ensemble shaped and re-shaped, feeling into the question of kinship. Inspired by Inuit depictions of animals and humans as interwoven images of multiple forms, our Mama Bear was

> multiple, mutating, always shape-shifting: an intermittent apparition (2016).

As May observes, the representation should situate humans and non-humans in a mutually reliant framework with a focus on 'becoming', emphasizing deep ecological connections between species. She further states, "*As we map alternative ways of being and relating, theatre can move us from the terrifying facts through the necessary transformations of self—a newly imagined human expressed in the context of a living, breathing planet*" (2016). To paraphrase May, theatre can reformulate human subjectivity, which Guattari refers to as 'resingularization', making humans realize their inherent connectedness to ecology. Thus, it is possible to say that Bilodeau's portrayal of the disruption of non-humans' habitat on the stage through nuanced embodiment allows the audience to move beyond empathy and touch on feelings of responsibility.

In *Sila*, the playwright links Veronica's loss of her son, who commits suicide, and Mama polar bear's loss of her cub by the parallel storylines, interconnecting the social and ecological effects of anthropogenic climate change on both humans and non-humans. The feelings of loss and grief bring them together, disregarding culture/nature and human/non-human divisions. In this way, the play problematizes dichotomous categorizations, bringing the political and ethical power of the ecosophical worldview to the forefront via aesthetic inspiration. Towards the end, the play informs the audience of another loss, following the incident of the sinking research vessel, the *Poloria*. The Coast Guard Officer Raphaël strives hard to rescue researchers, acting as "*the Polaria's lifeline*" (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 81); however, his many rescue attempts fail. Finally, he learns that two of the researchers are rescued, but the captain is unable to climb the ladder and dies. Throughout the crisis, he unconditionally takes responsibility for the researchers aboard even though he accepts that weather and ice act beyond human control. Through the sinking vessel incident, the playwright suggests that climate change operates on a scale much beyond the capacity of humans to influence it in terms of both time and scale. Thus, it is vital for humanity to contend with a rise in the frequency of natural events that are no longer completely 'natural' as a result of anthropogenic climate change. To put it differently, as Leanna articulates in the play:

> The real issue is that we have lost part of our humanity. We have lost our capacity to care […] But unless we open our hearts and embrace not just people we love, but people we don't know, people we will never

> meet, and people who are not yet even born, we will never value our species enough to make sure it survives (Bilodeau, 2015, p. 64).

The quotation demonstrates that humans' capacity to care can be instrumental in building a more hopeful and livable situation for human beings and non-humans, extending our caring relationships to distant humans and non-human entities. "*Caring about [...] moves us from the face to face world into the wider public realm*" (Noddings, 2002, p. 22), encouraging our social relations. This point of view is indicative of the inherent connection between culture and nature, since a caring stance in our social relations can bring a revolutionary solution to our common ecological problems. As Guattari suggests, humans need to expand their perspectives on ecological action to include not just ecology but also the complex network of connections between social relations and human subjectivity. Instead of adhering to ecophobia, which shores up the division between these registers, humans should adopt a unique ecosophical position, which has the potential to reformulate our relationships with the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Drawing on Guattari's notion of 'ecosophy,' which he foregrounds in *Three Ecologies* (2000), ecosophical theatre sheds light on the degradation of ecology, the disintegration of social relations, and the decline of subjectivities due to Integrated World Capitalism. As mentioned above, instrumentalized world conditions threaten human subjectivity by desingularizing it. Nevertheless, ecosophical theatre resists this desingularization process by creating new modes of accomplishing resingularization. Ecosophical theatre attains this by generating a symbiosis between singularities and the environment that surrounds them. Considering this point of view, Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2015) provides the audience with a live space, allowing them to experience grief for our planet that, rather than isolating us, connects us and affirms our inter-relatedness. The audiences participate in the grief of loss that can help to find the courage and the energy to act to protect what still remains. It is, therefore, no coincidence that ecosophical theatre allows us to reconsider the effects of ecophobia on humans, non-humans, and ecology. Thus, it provides a framework through which the dichotomous categorizations can be reconceptualized into configurations other than the traditional oppositions produced by the dualistic concepts of Enlightenment beliefs. In this context, Bilodeau's ecosophical theatre endeavors to depict the basic conditions required for alternative representations of all the categories concerned- human, non-human, ecology- by imagining characters

and settings in a manner that rejects ecophobia, fueling dualisms as viable frames for conceiving the various relationships, involved and, instead, embracing difference.

In *Sila*, Biloadeau's emphasis on coexistence reflects her ecosophical stance by bringing all the registers mentioned above together -in and through the three ecologies- and allowing the multiple dimensions of each to flourish. By transforming the stage into an ecosystem where humans, non-humans, and ecology coexist, Bilodeau offers fresh ways of existence inspired by new ethico-aesthetic paradigms. More importantly, Bilodeau invigorates and encourages us to question ecophobia as the reason that lies at the heart of the current ecological crisis, and then she offers ecosophy as a solution to this global phenomenon. Bilodeau achieves this by connecting a wide range of stories, characters, cultures, ethnicities, humans, and non-humans with one another, invoking the anthropogenic climate change effects as common ground. Thus, it is possible to say that her theatre embraces differences onstage to make them more respectful. Bilodeau's portrayals of the Inuit local community, the hardships they face due to climate change effects, and the efforts of Inuit climate change activist Leanna, deserve appreciation. Her portrayal of policymakers' indifference to the violations of Inuit people's rights is highly attractive as it can activate potentialities to overthrow oppressive power structures. With the audience now occupying equal ground with the playwright, Bilodeau is able to connect this to Guattari's search for a 'new aesthetic paradigm' whereby artistic practices are able to create spaces of reconfigurations which extend directly into the politics of everyday life.

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Summary

Ecological thinking, which has recently found expression in a wide range of critical and literary works, has been slow to take hold in the field of theatre and performance arts, both in scholarship and practice. Into the new millennium, laying the groundwork for a burgeoning discipline that has coalesced into what one of the pioneers in the field, Theresa J. May, has coined "*ecodramaturgy*" (2010, p. 6). Ecodramaturgy, which can also be called ecological theatre places ecological reciprocity at the centre of its dramatic and thematic content. Thus, it rejects the humanist paradigm of Western theatre, situating humans and non-humans in a mutually reliant framework. Hence, ecological theatre problematizes the notion of ecophobia that postulates the superiority of humans over non-humans, shoring up culture/nature dualism. According to Simon C. Estok, ecophobia "*has largely derived from modernity's irrational fear of nature and hence created an antagonism between humans and their environments*" (2018, p. 1). This paper considers the ecophobia hypothesis as one of the principal mediums contributing to and shaping the division between culture and nature and argues that these paranoid delusions of nature need to be reimagined by relatively free of hierarchical constructions to deal with the current ecological crisis.

Félix Guattari, addressing the significance of ecological awareness, notes that "*ecosophy-between the three ecological registers (the environment, social relations, and human subjectivity)*" could be the solution to the current ecological crisis (2000, p. 28). Ecosophy can find answers to environmental degradation, which parallels the deterioration of human life modes by new "*ethico-political and aesthetic*" paradigms (Guattari, 2000, p. 67). Here, Guattari's notion of ecosophy, which manifests itself as a science of ecosystems encompassing ecology, human, and human subjectivity, promises hope for a new kind of ecological theatre: ecosophical theatre. Drawing upon Guattari's notion of 'ecosophy,' which he foregrounds in *Three Ecologies* (2000), ecosophical theatre sheds light on the degradation of ecology, the disintegration of social relations, and the decline of subjectivities due to Integrated World Capitalism. As mentioned above, instrumentalized world conditions threaten human subjectivity by desingularizing it. However, ecosophical theatre resists this desingularization process, creating new modes of accomplishing resingularization. Ecosophical theatre attains this by generating a symbiosis between singularities and the environment that surrounds them.

Considering this point of view, Chantal Bilodeau's *Sila* (2015) provides the audience with a live space, allowing them to experience grief for our planet that, rather than isolating us, connects us and affirms our inter-relatedness. The audiences participate in the grief of loss that can help to find the courage and the energy to act to protect what still remains. It is, therefore, no coincidence that ecosophical theatre allows us to reconsider the effects of ecophobia on humans, non-humans, and ecology. Thus, it provides a framework through which the dichotomous categorizations can be reconceptualized into configurations other than the traditional oppositions produced by the dualistic concepts of Enlightenment beliefs. In this context, Bilodeau's ecosophical theatre endeavors to depict the basic conditions required for alternative representations of all the categories concerned- human, non-human, ecology- by imagining characters and settings in a manner that rejects ecophobia, fueling dualisms as viable frames for conceiving the various relationships, involved and, instead, embracing difference.

In *Sila*, Biloadeau's emphasis on coexistence reflects her ecosophical stance by bringing all the registers mentioned above together -in and through the three ecologies- and allowing the multiple dimensions of each to flourish. By transforming the stage into an ecosystem where humans, non-humans, and ecology coexist, Bilodeau offers fresh ways of existence inspired by new ethico-aesthetic paradigms. More importantly, Bilodeau invigorates and encourages us to question ecophobia as the reason that lies at the heart of the current ecological crisis, and then she offers ecosophy as a solution to this global phenomenon. Bilodeau achieves this by connecting a wide range of stories, characters, cultures, ethnicities, humans, and non-humans with one another, invoking the anthropogenic climate change effects as common ground. Thus, it is possible to say that her theatre embraces differences onstage to make them more respectful. Bilodeau's portrayals of the Inuit local community, the hardships they face due to the climate change effects, and the efforts of Inuit climate change activist Leanna, deserve appreciation. Her portrayal of policymakers' indifference to the violations of Inuit people's rights is attractive as it can activate potentialities to overthrow oppressive power structures. With the audience now occupying equal ground with the playwright, Bilodeau is able to connect this to Guattari's search for a 'new aesthetic paradigm' whereby artistic practices are able to create spaces of reconfigurations which extend directly into the politics of everyday life.