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Tese de doutoramento

Becoming An-Other. An
Ecofeminist Critique of
Contemporary Canadian Drama

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TESE DE DOUTORAMENTO

**BECOMING AN-OTHER. AN ECOFEMINIST CRITIQUE
OF CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN DRAMA**

Véronique Voyer

ESCOLA DE DOUTORAMENTO INTERNACIONAL DA UNIVERSIDADE DE SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA

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Título da tese: **Becoming An-Other. An Ecofeminist Critique of Contemporary Canadian Drama**

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Resumo: Esta tese analiza seis pezas canadenses a través dunha lente ecofeminista. O obxectivo principal deste estudo é identificar as representacións de xénero e da ecoloxía no teatro contemporáneo. Deste xeito, esta investigación tenta responder ás seguintes preguntas: 1) Como mostran estas pezas as interseccións entre o ecocidio, o colonialismo, as desigualdades raciais e de xénero en Canadá? e 2) Que novos tropos e formas teatrais xorden deste teatro político? Para lograr isto, o meu estudo céntrase en historias escritas por dramaturgos francófonos, anglófonos e indíxenas: *Wulustek* (2011) de Dave Jenniss, *J'aime Hydro* (2016) de Christine Beaulieu, *Burning Vision* (2002) de Marie Clements, *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005) de Tomson Highway, *Habiter Les Terres* (2016) de Marcelle Dubois e *The Watershed* (2015) de Annabel Soutar. Esta selección de obras mostra as relacións entre humanos e non humanos afectados por desastres ecolóxicos e pon en relevo opinións opostas sobre a xustiza social e a sostibilidade. A miña análise crítica destas narracións baséase na teoría e práctica do ecofeminismo, un movemento sociopolítico que desafia a construción cultural na que as mulleres e a natureza están devaluadas polas organizacións sociais dominantes como o capitalismo e o patriarcado. Esta investigación demostra con éxito que as pezas analizadas crean estruturas narrativas e sistemas de representación (por exemplo, de xénero, da relación entre humanos e non humanos) que enfatiza a interrelación entre as desigualdades raciais e de xénero na destrución do medio ambiente. A lente ecofeminista é crucial para comprender o funcionamento interior que estrutura as narrativas deste teatro socialmente comprometido. Esta tese aborda un baleiro no coñecemento, xa que varios estudos feministas, decoloniais e ecocríticos do teatro canadense se realizaron por separado, pero o campo carece de amplas análises ecofeministas. En definitiva, o meu estudo destaca a importancia dos estudos en animais e do pensamento decolonial, dous aspectos que ás veces están ausentes na crítica ecofeminista.

Palabras chave: Teatro, Ecofeminismo, Pobos Indíxenas, Non Humano, Canadá

Resumen: Esta tesis analiza seis obras de teatro canadienses a través de una lente ecofeminista. El objetivo principal de este estudio es identificar las representaciones del género y de la ecología en el teatro contemporáneo. De este modo, esta investigación intenta responder a las siguientes preguntas: 1) ¿De qué manera estas obras de teatro muestran las intersecciones del ecocidio, del colonialismo, de las desigualdades raciales y del género en Canadá? y 2) ¿Qué nuevos tropos y formas teatrales surgen de este teatro político? Para ello, mi estudio se centra en historias escritas por dramaturgos francófonos, anglófonos e indígenas: *Wulustek* (2011) de Dave Jenniss, *J'aime Hydro* (2016) de Christine Beaulieu, *Burning Vision* (2002) de Marie Clements, *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005) de Tomson Highway, *Habiter Les Terres* (2016) de Marcelle Dubois y *The Watershed* (2015) de Annabel Soutar. Esta selección de obras muestra las relaciones entre humanos y no humanos afectados por los desastres ecológicos y pone en relieve puntos de vista opuestos sobre la justicia social y la sostenibilidad. Mi análisis crítico de estas narrativas se basa en la teoría y la práctica del ecofeminismo, un movimiento sociopolítico que desafía la construcción cultural en la que las mujeres y la naturaleza son devaluadas por organizaciones sociales dominantes como el capitalismo y el patriarcado. Esta investigación muestra con éxito que las obras analizadas crean estructuras narrativas y sistemas de representación que subrayan la interrelación entre las desigualdades raciales y de género en la destrucción del medio ambiente. La lente ecofeminista es crucial para comprender el funcionamiento interno que estructura las narrativas de este teatro socialmente comprometido. Esta tesis aborda una laguna de conocimientos, ya que se han realizado varios estudios feministas, decoloniales y ecocríticos del teatro canadiense por separado, pero este campo carece de análisis ecofeministas extensos. En última instancia, mi estudio destaca la importancia de los estudios sobre animales y el pensamiento decolonial, dos aspectos que suelen estar ausentes de la crítica ecofeminista dominante.

Palabras clave: Teatro, Ecofeminismo, Pueblos Indígenas, No Humano, Canadá



Abstract: My dissertation analyses six Canadian plays through an ecofeminist lens. The primary aim of my study is to identify the representations of gender and ecology in contemporary drama. In doing so, my research attempts to answer the following questions: 1) In what ways do the plays show the intertwining of ecocide, colonialism, gender, and racial inequalities in Canada? And 2) what new tropes and theatrical forms emerge from this political theatre? To achieve this, my study focuses on stories written by francophone, anglophone, and Indigenous playwrights: Dave Jenniss' *Wulustek* (2011), Christine Beaulieu's *J'aime Hydro* (2016), Marie Clements' *Burning Vision* (2002), Tomson Highway's *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005), Marcelle Dubois' *Habiter Les Terres* (2016), and Annabel Soutar's *The Watershed* (2015). This selection of works shows the ever-changing relationships between humans and non-humans affected by ecological disasters and display current opposing views on social justice and sustainability. My critical analysis of these narratives is rooted in the theory and practice of ecofeminism, a socio-political movement that contests the cultural construction in which women and nature are devalued by dominant social organisations such as capitalism and patriarchy. My research successfully shows that the plays analysed create narrative structures and systems of representation (e.g., of gender, of the relationship between human and non-human) that stress the entangling of racial and gender inequalities in the destruction of the environment. The ecofeminist lens is therefore crucial to grasp the inner workings that structure the narratives of this socially engaged theatre. My dissertation addresses a gap in the literature as several feminist, decolonial, and ecocritical studies of Canadian theatre have been done separately, but the field lacks extensive ecofeminist analyses. Ultimately, my study highlights the importance of animal studies and decolonial thinking, two aspects that are sometimes absent from mainstream ecofeminist critique.

Keywords: Theatre, Ecofeminism, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Human, Canada

INTRODUCTION

Feminism and environmentalism are often presented as two distinct social movements, theories, and socio-political frameworks of analysis. What do ecological and feminist struggles have in common? Growing up in Canada, the link between these two seemed non-existent to me, given how they were taught in my high school history books. And yet it exists. Ecofeminist academic texts guided me towards this understanding during my university years. In a definition by Annie Rochette, the shared condition of women and nature is described and articulated alongside other forms of oppression: “L’écoféminisme établit des liens conceptuels entre l’exploitation de l’environnement et l’oppression des femmes, des personnes racisées et pauvres, et des communautés autochtones, en montrant que les mêmes institutions et les mêmes systèmes sont à l’œuvre dans les deux cas” (“L’écoféminisme en lutte”).¹ Among these systems, anthropocentrism, patriarchy, and capitalism perpetuate power dynamics that devalue nature, women, and non-human life forms. This is the link between violence against women and violence towards nature: it is caused by the same structures of oppression and motivated by the same reasons, the same values. According to the proponents of this socio-political analytical lens, the pillars of a male-centred society must be

¹ All translations by Véronique Voyer, unless otherwise noted. “Ecofeminism makes conceptual connections between the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women, racialized and poor people, and Indigenous communities, showing that the same institutions and the same systems are at work in both cases” (“L’écoféminisme en lutte”).

challenged in order to mitigate the effects of the ecological crisis and to act against gender-based violence. In a capitalist society, the race for profit is one of the main elements that overshadow all other aspects of life, and that – these proponents argue – must be tackled. Contemporary ecofeminist perspectives articulate counter-discourses that are opposed to those human activities which are currently making the planet less habitable.

This dissertation will examine six Canadian plays through an ecofeminist lens. By doing so, I aim to shed new light on the prevalent discourses concerning the environmental crisis and gender relations in contemporary Canadian drama. I have chosen this analytical framework to understand not only the links between patriarchal and capitalist structures in Canadian plays, but also the connections between feminist, environmentalist, and Indigenous struggles, among others. This dissertation attempts to answer the following research questions: How do the representations of human and non-human entities renew oppressions and offer counter-discourses in contemporary Canadian drama? Do the plays propose new representations of Canadian identity and new theatrical forms? In this introduction, I will first define ecofeminism and justify why this approach is useful to analyse theatrical creations. Then, I will explain how I selected my corpus. Finally, I will give an overview of the plan of my thesis.

1. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF ECOFEMINISM

Ecofeminism challenges the cultural construction in which women and nature are deemed to be inferior in capitalist and patriarchal societies. Specifically, women and non-human entities such as animals and plants are treated as secondary others. In this context, the term *other* can be understood as

the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us,” the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them,” Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined

– presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination. (Staszak 2)

By way of an analogous dichotomy, men dominate women and humans dominate nature. Deeply rooted in our culture, these divides are characterised by a hierarchy where the second option is perceived as inferior to the first one: man/woman, culture/nature, reason/emotion, mind/body, etc. Ecofeminism challenges these binary divides and offers non-hierarchical concepts of difference that may create the conditions to build relationships free from domination. One of the main qualities of the ecofeminist lens is the detection of a specific type of systemic violence, one that emerges at the intersection of patriarchy and other systems of oppression that devalue the environment. This type of violence is embedded in our cultural narratives; it is normalised through language. Ecofeminism offers conceptual tools that make systemic oppression visible and help to question it. Through an ecofeminist analytical grid, power relations appear everywhere: advertising, fiction, politics, education, media, love, sport, travel, etc. Not one sphere of society escapes them. This is why ecofeminist analyses flourish in different disciplines, from economics to education, in law and philosophy. To be able to develop a thorough critical analysis, this research is limited to the study of theatre produced in Canada over the past twenty years.

If drama is closely interrelated with society, it may well crystallise, communicate, and reinforce a range of oppressive systems, thereby magnifying the human psyche and marginalising nature and endangering its ecosystems. On stage, nature is often a prop, an accessory that contextualises the story told for and by humans. The natural world is used as a metaphor, a symbol, or a universal setting in many theatre plays. Specifically, the material conditions in which theatre productions take place are disconnected from the natural world. The staging of performances is, more often than not, carried out in a room, a black box where technicians control the lights and sounds; the stage director controls the actors and the way the story is told; the temperature is stable; the seats are comfortable; emergency exits are discreetly indicated: in a nutshell, everything must stay under control as the show must go on!

Theatre is, therefore, anthropocentric. It is also androcentric: it focuses on humans in general and on men specifically. This gender bias that favours men influences who tells the story and how the story is displayed. The place of women is limited among theatre-makers, as suggested by a recent study published by the Canadian group *Femmes pour l'Équité en Théâtre* (F.E.T.) [Women For Equity In Theatre] and Montreal-based theatre *Espace Go*:

Quel que soit l'angle sous lequel sont regardées les données, les femmes continuent, en effet, d'être largement sousreprésentées dans l'espace de la création théâtrale des scènes montréalaises et québécoises francophones. Elles ne sont responsables que de 37 % des textes et de 33 % des mises en scène solos présentés sur les scènes montréalaises et québécoises au cours des saisons 2017-2018 et 2018-2019.² (Noiseux et al. 72)

While the low representation of women is conspicuous in this context, this type of study should be repeated in different provinces before making the same generalisation across Canada. The underrepresentation of women is not the only way theatre reproduces oppressive structures: issues of race and class are also present in contemporary theatre production. British theatre critic Lyn Gardner has harsh words concerning the current state of this elitist art:

Theatre is not just default white, it's default able-bodied, middle class and frequently predominantly male, too. The evidence is all around us: on our stages, in the corridors of power of our theatres and in the audience. We spend a lot of time making theatre for and with people who are just like us.

2 "Regardless of the angle from which the data are viewed, women continue, in fact, to be grossly underrepresented in the field of theatrical creation of Montreal and Quebec francophone scenes. They are only responsible for 37% of the texts and 33% of solo staging presented on the Montreal and Quebec stages during the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 seasons" (Noiseux et al. 72).

This observation of power relations at work in the theatrical sphere is one of the reasons which motivated the choice of the corpus of this thesis.

2. CORPUS

There is a tendency to centre research on the theatrical canon (Beckett, Brecht, Ibsen, Lepage, Pinter, Shakespeare, Williams) whilst favouring theoretical works written by western white men (Artaud, Lehmann, Pavis, Sarrazac, Vitez), as they are authority figures in this field of study. Considering the exposure that research gives to these writers, it strengthens the actual overrepresentation of western and English arts and theories in academia. This is why I was not interested in analysing white, unilingual works which were already part of the literary canon. In this regard, it is important to remember that an analysis of minority discourse can also reproduce the status quo, and the critical analysis of canonical plays can be subversive. However, in choosing six plays from a corpus of contemporary Canadian drama, I was careful to select creations that stem from Canada's cultural diversity. This corpus includes the works of two French-speaking, two English-speaking and two Indigenous playwrights. The corpus is limited to plays produced and published in Canada from 2002 to 2016. Though anchored in distinct languages and cultures, my corpus does not have the merit of presenting a fair portrait of all the diversity that makes up the Canadian stage. I therefore acknowledge the absence in this research of plays written by artists from the Black, disabled, migrant, or LGBTQIA+ communities.

I have put together the following selection of plays: Dave Jenniss' *Wulustek* (2011), Christine Beaulieu's *J'aime Hydro* (2016), Marie Clements' *Burning Vision* (2002), Tomson Highway's *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005), Marcelle Dubois' *Habiter les terres* (2016), and Annabel Soutar's *The Watershed* (2015). This corpus explores the degradation of nature, women's oppression, or both themes at the same time. While some tales of domination are reproduced on stage as they happen off stage, these playwrights offer counter-hegemonic narratives

as well as emerging ideas to create fair and lasting relationships between the different forms of life that inhabit the earth.

Both theatre and ecofeminism are rooted in situated knowledge, reflecting local priorities. Theatre helps to root gender-based violence and violence against nature in a specific context: this art form brings these problems to life on stage, which is why theatre is an ideal ground to develop an ecofeminist analysis. A range of social, cultural, and environmental representations presented in drama offer emancipatory strategies that question how patriarchal structures of power play a role in the current ecocide. While being anchored in a specific local context, a theatre play has the potential to alter reality on stage; it is a laboratory of creation where two objectives of ecofeminist thinking might unfold: going beyond dualisms and promoting heterarchical relationships – that is to say, non-hierarchical ones. Nevertheless, theatre is not only emancipatory; it may renew inequalities, which makes it a fertile ground for critical analysis.

The combination of ecofeminism as a theoretical framework and drama as an object of study is an innovative approach that has not been dealt with in a PhD dissertation before. Thus, this dissertation addresses a research gap, as it offers a comprehensive approach and follows a strict method where the different categories of oppression are systematically analysed. The representations of gender identities, natural resources, the ecological crisis, and power dynamics are the main categories used to offer a critical analysis of the plays. The method used in this thesis research set it apart from other articles that have partially explored similar approaches, as it establishes a typology of representations, of major importance for its analysis. There are not many plays where nature and the female take a central role in the narrative. Nature, which is generally an absent character, is somehow essential for both the functioning of the corpus' plays and character development, especially for female characters. Despite their importance when it comes to classifying the plays, female characters see their mission limited to the assistance of other characters. I selected plays that tackle and question traditional gender roles. A second aspect that differentiates my thesis from other works is the synergy of post-colonial and ecocritical stances with ecofeminism, with a special

interest in animal studies. The next section contextualises the emergence of theatre written by women in Quebec, considering that half of my corpus is composed of works by Quebec women playwrights.

2.1. Contemporary Women Playwrights in Quebec

This section highlights some key moments of women's theatre in Quebec at the end of the twentieth century. In 1994, American scholar and specialist in French literature Jane Moss analysed plays by women playwrights in Quebec. Her research published in *The French Review* has drawn several conclusions:

In creating dramatic space for women, they remind us that the personal is not only political, it is historical. In focusing on the reality of women's lives, they create gendered spectator positions for women that are not subservient. Rejecting historical mythification, they prefer memory and anecdote to master narratives and they celebrate survival rather than defeat. ("Women, History" 983)

Moss analysed the work written by Quebec's women playwrights for two decades: the 70s and the 80s. She showcased several dramaturges such as Elizabeth Bourget, Madeleine Greffard, Anne Hébert, Marie Laberge, Michèle Lalonde, Anne Legault, Jovette Marchessault, Marthe Mercure, Maryse Pelletier and Pol Pelletier. The 1970s in Quebec are generally presented as the beginning of women's theatre, considering the number of artistic creations produced as well as the interest they aroused. In her book *Theatre and Politics in Modern Québec*, Canadian theatre scholar Elaine F. Nardocchio argues that "Boucher's *Les fées ont soif* was definitely the most controversial and popular feminist play of the seventies" (100). She is referring to playwright and poet Denise Boucher, an icon of women's literature in Quebec. In 2008, Maria-Suzette Fernandes-Dias revisited the influence of Boucher's provocative play on Quebec society:

The play premiered on 25 November amidst protests by the extreme right, with reparation vigils organised by the Archdiocese of Montreal and congregations even picketing the theatre *en masse* to recite the rosary while the play was being performed. [...] Denise Boucher, attempted to deconstruct the role played by myth, image and language in the formation of women's socio-cultural identity by creating an iconoclastic feminine trilogy of the Virgin Mary, the Mother and the Whore as a satirical counterpart to the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to depict how patriarchal tradition has incarcerated women in stereotypical roles of submission. (82-3)

This excerpt helps to get a sense of the historical and cultural context of the Quebec theatre scene in which women playwrights' concerns were revolving around two major themes: collective ideals and political vindications. Broadly, this helps to understand better the motivation behind the work of women playwrights at the end of the twentieth century in Quebec. In the 1980s, new women playwrights voiced their concerns in line with the tradition of socially engaged art. They participated in many collective creations in different groups such as Théâtre des cuisines, Théâtre expérimental des femmes (TEF) or Les folles alliées,³ while others focused on writing dramaturgy, like Jocelyne Beaulieu, Louise Dussault, Carole Fréchette, Dominique Gagnon, Luce Guilbeault, Brigitte Haentjens, Michelle Rossignol, Francine Ruel, and Marie Savard, among others. Moss identified two key elements of the 1980s feminist theatre of Quebec: "démystifier le corps féminin et [...] déconstruire les rôles sexualisés" ("Le corp(u)s" 23).⁴ Their work explored many issues, such as nationalism, atheism, and feminism to name a few. In her review of *Trajectoires au féminin dans la littérature québécoise (1960-1990)* directed by Lucie Joubert, women's studies scholar Julie-Mélanie Michaud highlights two main preoccupations expressed by women writers of the time:

3 This group's name is a pun where the French expression *folles à lier* (stark raving mad) becomes *folles alliées* (mad allies). Those three groups offer an innovative form of dramaturgy with collective creation.

4 "to demystify the female body and [...] to deconstruct sexualized roles" ("Le corp(u)s" 23).

d'une part, l'importance du *je* comme une appropriation et une identification de l'identité et, d'autre part, la violence qui fait partie de l'univers des personnages féminins, que ce soit la violence meurtrière, la violence intériorisée, la violence subie ou la violence dénoncée. Ces deux particularités nous renvoient aux fondements mêmes du féminisme, c'est-à-dire une quête d'identité, d'autonomie et de valorisation : ainsi, force est de constater que ce mouvement a bel et bien fait bifurquer les trajectoires de la littérature au féminin de 1960 à 1990.⁵ (191)

Back in the 1980s, Quebec paved a way for a new generation of female writers to emerge, causing works by women writers to flourish. This situation may have been influenced by the democratisation of birth control, among many other gains obtained by feminist activists:

Since the mid-1980s, Québec has entered what demographers describe as 'the second demographic transition': women have attained complete control over their reproductive capacity and only have children that are wanted. [...] Education on contraception and birth control continue to be widely available in schools and in government-run clinics, including the morning-after pill. (Dickinson and Young 345-6)

However, at the turn of the century, Quebec theatre productions were not fond of feminist plays, according to Marie-Ève Gagnon, director of Association québécoise des auteurs dramatiques [Quebec Association of Playwrights]: "En 1990-2000, tout ce qui était présenté comme ouvertement féministe au théâtre était mal reçu ou rétrogradé. Mais je dirais que le féminisme a repris du lustre depuis" (Gagnon *in* Schoenborn).⁶

5 "on the one hand, the importance of the *I* as an appropriation and identification of identity and, on the other hand, the violence that is part of the universe of female characters, be it murderous violence, internalized violence, the violence suffered or the violence denounced. These two particularities bring us back to the very foundations of feminism, that is to say a quest for identity, autonomy and valorisation: thus, it is clear that this movement has indeed bifurcated the trajectories of women's literature from 1960 to 1990" (191).

⁶ "In 1990-2000, everything presented as overtly feminist in the theatre was badly received or

Theatre manager at Théâtre de l’Oeil, Véronique Grondines, compares the theatre written by women nowadays in Quebec with the one produced in the seventies:

Dans les années 1970, les dramaturges voulaient mettre en scène des amazones, des personnages avec des identités à toute épreuve. Contrairement aux auteures d’aujourd’hui, elles ne se questionnaient pas sur leur vulnérabilité.⁷ (Grondines *in* Schoenborn)

I would like to argue that both 1970s and the 1980s were marked by the normalisation of feminism as the social movement peaked in Canada and beyond. Women’s liberation ideals are presented in feminist theatre, a genre defined as “political theatre oriented toward change, produced by women with feminist concerns” (Goodman 1). However, the process of doing feminist theatre is manifold and its meaning differs among women playwrights. For instance, Quebec dramatist, novelist and translator Fanny Britt asserts:

Mon féminisme s’exprime par la conviction profonde qu’il faut mettre en scène des personnages complexes, de véritables héroïnes de théâtre. Plutôt que d’aborder de manière frontale les dynamiques de pouvoir, mon théâtre parle de la place de ces femmes dans la société, de leur honte, de leur difficulté d’être et d’assumer ce qu’elles sont, de leurs tentatives de débusquer les comportements attendus.⁸ (Britt *in* Schoenborn)

demoted. But I would say that feminism has gained luster since then” (Gagnon *in* Schoenborn).

7 “In the 1970s, women playwrights wanted to stage amazons, characters with unbeatable identities. Unlike today’s women writers, they did not question their vulnerability” (Gagnon *in* Schoenborn). For more information, see Véronique Grondines’ master dissertation *Les nouvelles représentations dramaturgiques de la femme au Québec (2000-2010): Fanny Britt, Evelyne de la Chenelière et Jennifer Tremblay, un féminisme diversifié* in which she defends the idea that contemporary Quebec women playwrights produce feminist plays.

8 “My feminism is expressed by the deep conviction that it is necessary to stage complex characters, true theatre heroines. Rather than tackling power dynamics head-on, my theatre talks about the place of these women in society, their shame, their difficulty in being and assuming what they are, their attempts to flush out expected behaviors” (Britt *in* Schoenborn).

Fanny Britt has been named in 2015 as one of the most prominent voices of the theatre of Quebec by the journalist Melina Schoenborn. She appears on the list among other women playwrights from Quebec, such as Sarah Berthiaume, Véronique Côté, Evelyne de la Chenelière, Rébecca Déraspe, Marcelle Dubois, Catherine Léger, and Marilyn Perreault.

Nowadays, women working in the theatre industry face a glass ceiling; in the field, they call it the *glass curtain*. Radio Canada International website links this gender issue with the contemporary Quebec scene: “De 2012 à 2017, il y a eu 151 pièces en français montées et présentées sur scène à Montréal et à Québec. Seulement 19 % des textes avaient été écrits par des femmes. La même statistique s’applique pour ce qui est de la mise en scène” (Desmarteau).⁹ These statistics come from the report *Chantier féministe 2019* co-produced by *Espace GO* and the movement *Femmes pour l’Équité en Théâtre* (FET). FET representative Marie-Ève Milot suggested that “Quel que soit l’angle sous lequel sont regardées les données, les femmes continuent d’être largement sous-représentées dans l’espace de la création théâtrale des scènes montréalaises et québécoises francophones” (Milot *in* Marin).¹⁰

In conclusion, women playwrights started to be recognised for their work in Quebec in the 70s. Their creations explored various themes, such as violence, patriarchy, identity, and individual self-determination among others. Feminism is a recurring theme in the work of contemporary Quebec women playwrights and the reasons are two-fold. First, their works are influenced by the historical and cultural context of Quebec society, as the convergence of feminist and nationalist struggles crystallises in diverse associations such as the Quebec Women’s Liberation Front. This group, which revindicated the decriminalisation of abortion, is well-known for its direct action during a trial that resulted into a law allowing women to serve as jurors. Second, feminism as a theatrical theme is a legacy of some of the first of Quebec’s women playwrights,

9 “From 2012 to 2017, there were 151 plays in French edited and presented on stage in Montreal and Quebec. Only 19% of the texts were written by women. The same statistic applies with regard to the staging” (Desmarteau).

10 “Regardless of the angle from which the data are viewed, women continue to be largely under-represented in the space of theatrical creation of French-speaking Montreal and Quebec scenes” (Milot *in* Marin).

such as Denise Boucher and Pol Pelletier. I have limited this section about Quebec's women playwrights to the work of mostly white francophone playwrights. I found no information either on the anglophone theatre scene in the province of Quebec, or on the growing number of racialised playwrights from an immigrant background or an Indigenous one. In my opinion, this is an important research gap that must be addressed by theatre scholars who are specialists in contemporary Quebec playwriting.

3. STRUCTURE, OBJECTIVES, AND HYPOTHESIS

The six plays of the corpus are the central elements of the structure of this thesis: a chapter is dedicated to each one. Each chapter begins with a historical and cultural context offering information about the playwright, together with the theatrical genre. These six chapters on the plays are preceded by a theoretical section, Chapter One, which discusses the fundamental theoretical concepts of this dissertation and offers a definition of ecology, feminism, and ecofeminism. Then, a literature review of diverse examples of ecofeminist critique is provided, with a special focus on ecofeminist readings of Canadian plays. Finally, the last section is organised around five key notions: ideologies of nature, ideologies of gender, politics of representation, dualism, and hierarchy.

In Chapter Two, titled "Between Colonialism and Tradition: the Renewal of Gender Roles in a Fictional Indigenous Nation", I question the gendering of the earth and the desire to dominate the land, which are central elements of *Wulustek's* narrative. Written in French by Indigenous Canadian playwright Dave Jenniss, this play depicts an Indigenous family torn apart by the loss of their ancestral territory, which has been ravaged by unsustainable logging.

Chapter Three, "Citizen Inquiry on Energy Production: Create Dialogue, Find Oneself, Redefine Wealth", focuses on a francophone documentary play written by Christine Beaulieu. *J'aime Hydro's* [I love Hydro] main protagonist is an actress who has been asked by a theatre company to conduct research on hydroelectric production and write a play about its environmental and political consequences. While

struggling with her impostor syndrome, she attempts to facilitate dialogue between opposing groups concerning the nationalisation of this energy in Quebec. It is an autobiographical text that recounts the transformation experienced by the playwright from ignorance to civic engagement.

Chapter Four, “The Aftermath of Uranium Mining on Sahtu Dene Land: An Analysis of the Ecological and Social Consequences of Extractivism”, discusses a theatre play written in English by Canadian Métis Marie Clements. *Burning Vision* recalls how humans were involved in and affected by the extraction of uranium at Port Radium. While the uranium miners were told they were helping to cure cancer, Canada sold the metal to the United States, which later used it to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Clements takes stock of this historic event. Specifically, she showcases health issues and the poor employment conditions of women who worked as radium painters. She also addresses how Indigenous knowledge and culture can protect the human body – and all life that makes up the wholeness of the local ecosystem – from the devastating impacts of this mineral.

Chapter Five, “Let’s Plant a Minister: Political Action in a Rural Community and Its Animal Saviours”, deals with a play written in French by Marcelle Dubois. *Habiter les terres* [To Inhabit the Lands] discusses the survival of Guyenne, a northern village whose inhabitants kidnap the minister of Land Occupancy and plant him in the garden like a vegetable. They protest against the withdrawal of governmental involvement, which endangers the livelihood of their community. My analysis stresses the depiction of animals in this play as well as the return of the female protagonist to her home village, while the local community fights for its survival.

Chapter Six, “The Settlers’ Impossible Banquet: A Tale of Dispossession Told by Shuswap Women”, focuses on the play *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* by Canadian Cree dramatist Tomson Highway, which portrays four Indigenous women who prepare a banquet for the historical visit of a Canadian Prime Minister. This play recalls the cultural genocide of Native Peoples of British Columbia and the loss of their rights, such as fishing and hunting. My analysis delves into women’s liberation, as the female characters become conscious of their state of servitude and the main

character, Ernestine, becomes self-sufficient. However, these women remain under the domination of the colonial state. While portraying dispossessed people, the playwright presents the pre-colonial way of life and allows ancestral knowledge to continue to live through his play.

Chapter Seven, “Mothering Nature as Working Artists and Parents: Art, Politics, and Water Science”, explores *The Watershed*, a play by Annabel Soutar. This documentary play tells the story of a young family who travels to Alberta’s oil sand plant to become more ecologically aware. On the road, they question two irreconcilable goals of Canadian politics: constant economic growth and sensible environmental management. In this chapter, I focus my analysis on the negative environmental legacy of Alberta’s tar sand production, and how its existence can provoke a reflection on sustainable behaviours and intergenerational ecological knowledge transmission within a Canadian family, the Soutars.

The last part of the thesis is concerned with the Conclusions, where I discuss the differences and similarities in the findings of the six main chapters to confirm or refute my hypothesis, which is that these playwrights provide a new vision of the relationship between human beings, animals and nature, one that is fairer and more sustainable. I also address how these discourses overlap with the renewal of oppressions. I then comment on the limits of this research as well as on the various possible options to deepen this field of study. To conclude, this research aims to identify and set out new theatrical forms and discourses about the diversity of Canadian identities in relation to gender and ecology.

As climate change is one of the most destructive crises of our time, drama scholars and artists are presented with a historic opportunity to address ecological issues and their social implications: “artists have rewritten history to correct mistakes, point out omissions and give a voice to those who were silenced. This time, we have a chance to write history before it happens” (Bilodeau 13). Meanwhile, Canada “is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world” (“Canada Warming”), according to a BBC article on a Canadian federal report in which global warming is attributed to human activities – another hint that something needs to change radically in the way Canadians relate to non-human nature. Ecodramas definitely have the opportunity to encourage this change.

1. THEORETICAL AND CRITICAL DEBATES ON ECOFEMINISM AND DRAMA

The first time I ran into the term ecofeminism, it was on my little sister's bookshelf. The second-hand edition of *Écoféminisme* (Mies and Shiva) was damaged, the pages were going yellow, and the cover illustration was definitely not inspiring. I skimmed through the back cover:

Est-il possible de créer un nouvel internationalisme, sous la bannière du féminisme et de l'écologie ? La quête d'identité et de différence peut-elle être une plate-forme de résistance à la violence de la mondialisation de l'économie ?¹¹ (Mies and Shiva)

Unfamiliar with the notion of 'internationalism', I returned the book to its place and kept searching, avidly looking for a better option, preferably fiction. I was twenty-two at the time and I probably would have been interested in ecofeminism as I donated each month to *Greenpeace* and had published a few feminist columns in a student newspaper. I wonder why this book did not arouse my curiosity. I guess one of the reasons was the academic writing, as I was not familiar with it. Recently, a *New Yorker* journalist vehemently criticised this writing style as if it were a poisonous gift from modern universities:

11 "Is it possible to create a new internationalism under the banner of feminism and ecology? Can the quest for identity and difference become a resistance hub against the violence of a globalized economy?" (Shiva and Mies)

Academic writing and research may be knotty and strange, remote and insular, technical and specialized, forbidding and clannish – but that’s because academia has become that way, too. Today’s academic work, excellent though it may be, is the product of a shrinking system. (Rothman)

As the efficacy of an act of communication relies upon its situation, I believe a good way to communicate academic findings would be to adapt communication to the needs of the audience. Other scholars have tackled in a creative way the limitations of texts that are written in academic style. For instance, two women researchers push the limit of this genre with the publication of an article that engages in writing as a feminist praxis in order “to undo the normalised practices of academic writing by weaving together various kinds of texts” (Handforth and Taylor 627). Academic writing certainly helps to spread knowledge; the method is recognised and respected around the world. However, one of its worst flaws is how it devalues some forms of knowledge. Published on the blog *Queer Zenana: Pakistani queer feminist anti-colonial/anti-nationalist politics*, this letter exemplifies the actual impossibility of quoting every source of knowledge, such as a mother:

Dear Ma, I finally got done writing a tedious list of citations for this paper on transnational feminism. [...] Ma, I am sorry I cannot mention you in this citations list. I am sorry I would not think to mention you even if academic conventions allowed it. I am sorry there is no space in my life now to acknowledge how you provided forays into alternative worlds that I now waltz in, forgetful, indifferent, unremembering. (“Mother, I am sorry for my feminism”)

As a junior researcher who studies language and uses ecofeminism as a filter to analyse literary texts, I know this introduction to my theoretical chapter is unorthodox and certainly not in line with any guide to Academic Writing Style. I hope this personal testimony helps to attract readers, as the narrative strategy is deliberate and aims to justify my approach to theory. I will now embark on a journey in order to develop

a theoretical framework that is accessible to a specialised and non-specialised audience alike. I will do my best to explain the notion of ecofeminism, navigate its history, and suggest how it can operate as an analytical viewpoint in literature and drama studies. Then, I will explain how I intend to use ecofeminism as a critical tool in the next chapters of this thesis. I dedicate my theoretical framework to my little sister, who is studying forest engineering – a field where women are a minority.¹²

1.1. ECO- (PREFIX)

At the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), biology students must enrol in a class called Ecology; it is a compulsory subject to achieve their degree. Hence, one could argue that ecology is a branch of biology. At the Faculty of Philosophy of the USC, ecology is also taught in the core programme under the banner of current philosophical trends. It is a field of political philosophy. At the Faculty of Philology, the concept of ecology is studied as well. Indeed, a growing number of philology students are familiar with the term ecocriticism, an analytical tool which facilitates comment on texts from an ecological viewpoint. Therefore, ecology is a multidisciplinary subject in the current state of academia. Let us zoom out from the present and look back at the origins of the word.

The term ecology was first coined in Germany in 1866 by the zoologist Ernst Haeckel (Egerton 222). According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, the prefix eco- refers to “oikos”, a Greek word that means “house, dwelling place, habitation”, while the second part -logy, means the “study of” (“Ecology”). Specifically, ecology is a domain of knowledge concerned with the interaction between organisms and their environment, which helps humans to understand how life functions on earth and how it is organised. As a direct reference to the concept of ecology, the prefix eco- relates the environment to other concepts, such as ecosystems, ecosphere, ecotourism, etc. If we move on from ecology to ecologist, another meaning appears. The *Collins Dictionary* identifies two

¹² In 2017, they represented 16 % of the members of the Ordre des ingénieurs forestiers du Québec [Quebec Order of Forest Engineers] (“Rapport annuel” 36).

occurrences of the word. Not only does it define someone who studies ecology, but it also describes “a person who believes that the environment and natural resources should be preserved and used in a sensible way, rather than being wasted” (“Ecologist”). This second definition refers to a specific lifestyle based on ecological values that embrace political and social action in order to deal with ecology, human rights, and the health of all living organisms.

An example of this second definition of ecologist is the American biologist Rachel Carson. Her non-fiction book *Silent Spring* highlights the adverse effects of pesticides on the environment – particularly birds – and attacks the marketing strategies of the chemical companies which showcase pollution as inevitable. Published in 1962, this seminal work triggered an environmental movement in the United States. One of its most notable accomplishments was the national ban of the synthetic pesticide DDT in 1972, as a result of a lawsuit from the Environmental Defense Fund against the American government in order to “establish a citizen’s right to a clean environment” (Hynes 7). The American geographer Joni Seager points out how Carson’s personal life and public fight were connected:

Carson’s dual legacy – as one of the most prominent whistleblowers on synthetic chemicals and as a casualty of a “women’s” disease that was given short shrift by the male medical establishment – has sparked a remarkable effort to trace the linkages between chemical assaults and breast cancer. (962)

Nowadays, Rachel Carson is still celebrated in the field of environmental humanities. In Germany, the Rachel Carson Center (RCC) for Environment and Society is a non-profit institution that was created in 2009 “to advance research and discussion concerning the interrelationship between humans and nature” (“Our Mission”). In conclusion, the concept of ecology highlights the relationship between an organism and its natural environment; its etymology refers to a dwelling place, and the term ecologist encourages us to think critically and to take concrete actions on behalf of nature, health, and justice. In order to discuss the

term ecofeminism, I will now explore the word feminism and exemplify its meaning with a seminal feminist text.

1.2. FEMINISM

If we break down the word, feminism combines the Latin root “femina” that means woman, and the suffix -ism which is derived from the Greek “ismós” that refers to a practice or a worldview (Potter). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* elected feminism as the word of the year in 2017, as it was increasingly searched on their online dictionary and used in news coverage, especially in October 2017 as the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment started. Feminism was first recorded in this American dictionary in 1841 with the definition “the qualities of female” (“2017 Word of” 00:00:00 – 00:02:15). Currently, the *Merriam-Webster’s* definition of feminism indicates a “theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes” and also an “organized activity on behalf of women’s rights and interests” (“Feminism”). The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines a feminist as “a person who believes in feminism, and tries to achieve change that helps women to get equal opportunities and treatment” (“Feminist”). In order to exemplify this definition by reference to a feminist figure, I will introduce Simone de Beauvoir’s most famous text *Le Deuxième Sexe* [The Second Sex]. Published in 1949, this essay explores feminism and existentialism – a belief that individual actions are not predetermined by any doctrine and that every person is the only master of their destiny. Embracing the gender perspective, de Beauvoir analyses her own lived experience as a woman and contextualises it with the historical treatment of women. She differentiates women’s condition and education from those of men, demonstrating the othering of women. *The Second Sex* is a major reference in feminist philosophy and has been translated into numerous languages. It is also well known for this aphorism: “on ne naît pas femme, on le devient” (de Beauvoir 13).¹³ While this book started

the second wave of feminism in France,¹⁴ many feminists agree that we are now entering the fourth wave.

The present era of western feminism is shaped by social media and new technologies: “the internet has created a ‘call-out’ culture, in which sexism or misogyny can be ‘called out’ and challenged” (Munro 23). Paradoxically, the accessibility of electronic devices is a major issue for inclusion: the “key problem that this ‘4th Wave’ will face will be the disproportionate access to and ownership of digital media devices” (Rök Jóns). Fourth-wave feminists adopt a new vocabulary online created by Black and queer communities such as WoC (Women of Colour, as opposed to white women), cis (a person whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth, not a transperson), and TERF (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist): these acronyms and abbreviations are linguistic strategies that facilitate online practices, making it easy and quick to share, link, or retrieve information (Munro 25). Now that I have presented the etymology of the terms ecology and feminism, introduced keystone publications of a feminist and an ecological text, and pointed out a few features of the fourth wave of feminism, I will proceed to discuss the main term: ecofeminism.

14 In the western world, the history of feminism is generally divided into four waves. The first wave of feminism (1848-1920) focused on the right to vote and other legal issues such as property and divorce. The second wave of feminism (1960-1990) addressed issues such as marital rape, domestic violence, reproductive rights, and women’s rights in the workplace. The third wave of feminism (1990-2010) raised awareness about sex positivity, transfeminism, vegetarian feminism, intersectionality, and gender identity: “as activists and scholars grappled with the complex implications of the intersections of identity, markers such as ‘woman’ came to be understood as problematically limiting concepts” (Bly xiv). Indeed, mainstream feminist movements were generally organized by middle-class white women who did not successfully address issues lived by women of color, lower-class women, and transgender people. The fourth wave of feminism (2010 to present) focuses on sexual harassment on the street, in the workplace, and on university campuses. It embraces internet tools and concepts such as empowerment and rape culture. If the metaphor of the wave helps to navigate the history of feminism, it is criticised for being a reductive approach, implying that every wave works around a monolithic agenda. The feminist historian Linda Nicholson proposes another metaphor: “a more useful way of thinking about these changes as well as other changes in activism over time can be suggested by the metaphor of a kaleidoscope. At any given moment in time, the view in a kaleidoscope is complex, showing distinct colors and patterns. With a turn of the kaleidoscope, some of these colors and patterns become more pronounced, others less so, and new patterns and colors have emerged. This kind of metaphor suggests a better way to think about the changes that have marked the history of gender activism in the United States than does one that likens such changes to an ocean’s ebbs and swells” (5).

1.3. ECOFEMINISM

As is the case with the definition of the terms ecology and feminism, ecofeminism may have two different meanings: the first is a field of study and the second a call for action through activism and advocacy. According to the Irish political scholar Susan Baker, “ecofeminism is the belief that the current environmental crisis is the outcome of the manner in which we understand and thus relate to each other as well as to the natural world” (4-5). For her, the understanding of the relationship between humans and nature is a fundamental area on which ecofeminists can work. The Spanish philosopher Alicia H. Puleo explains how beneficial this approach can be to both feminism and ecology: “al compartir e intercambiar su potencia conceptual y política, feminismo y ecología consiguen iluminar mejor ciertos aspectos de los problemas que cada uno afronta y, de esa manera, ganar en profundidad y eficacia” (*Ecofeminismo* 8).¹⁵ This link between theory and practice is also analysed by Estévez-Saá and Lorenzo-Modia in the following definition:

Ecofeminism, in broad terms, has been conceived as both a theory and a movement that associates women and the environment; that describes the connections that throughout history have been established between women and nature from cultural, historical, psychological, spiritual, or political perspectives; that denounces the comparable degradation, subjection, and exploitation of women, nature, non-human animals, and other marginalized social groups; and one that proposes diverse alternative solutions, addressing both gender and ecological vindications and hence trying to put an end to the violence exerted on women and the underprivileged, as well as to the destruction of natural resources and the extinction of non-human animals and species. (124)

15 “By sharing and exchanging their conceptual and political power, feminism and ecology are able to better illuminate certain aspects of the problems that each one faces and, in this way, gain in depth and efficacy” (*Ecofeminismo* 8).

In an interview for *The Vegan Rainbow Project*, the American professor specialising in ecofeminist literary criticism, Greta Gaard, discusses the impact of viewing environmental issues through the lens of gender: “women are indeed the ones most severely affected by climate change and natural disasters, but their vulnerability is not innate; rather vulnerability is a result of inequities produced through gendered social roles, discrimination, and poverty” (“Ecofeminism and Climate Justice”). In this way, the author connects women and nature through a similar systemic oppression rather than on a spiritual or biological level. In her article “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism,” Greta Gaard also defines ecofeminism as “the intersections of feminist research and the various movements for social justice and environmental health, explorations that uncovered the linked oppressions of gender, ecology, race, species, and nation” (28). Ecofeminists reclaim the concept of nature in order to reinvent a non-hierarchical bond between human and non-human in which they recognise each other as agents of the “co-construction” (Haraway “The Promises of Monsters” 296) of the world. For instance, ecofeminist theorist Stacy Alaimo paraphrases two renowned ecofeminist thinkers, Carolyn Merchant and Donna Haraway, who oppose domination “by casting nature as an active agent, not an ahistorical, passive resource for human domination” (145).

Furthermore, ecofeminism proposes a dialogical space where feminist and ecological perspectives engage in order to produce “ways of understanding how ecological matters of concern involving natural systems *intersect* with feminist matters of concern, such as the rights and flourishing of women” (Mickey ix; emphasis added). I italicise the verb *intersect* – also used above by Greta Gaard – because intersectionality is a “dominant framework” in current academic feminism which addresses discriminations and privileges from a broad range of categories, such as “class, race, age, ability, sexuality, and gender” (Zimmerman 54). Intersectional analysis reveals how diverse systems of oppressions are intertwined in one individual or a specific community.

On the one hand, intersectionality was coined by the American jurist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to highlight the specific oppression of Black

women, a community that was discriminated against within feminist and anti-racist movements.¹⁶ On the other hand, Françoise d'Eaubonne invented the term *Écoféminisme* [ecofeminism] in her book *Le féminisme ou la mort* [Feminism or Death] in order to fight back against the appropriation of fertility and fecundity by the patriarchal system – two sources of wealth that belong to women and nature according to d'Eaubonne. In 1974, the French activist urged the plural feminist movements to unite and fight against the destruction of natural resources and human overpopulation, two threats that she attributed to patriarchy:

C'est une urgence que de souligner la condamnation à mort, par ce système [patriarcal] à l'agonie convulsive, de toute la planète et de son espèce humaine, si le féminisme, en libérant la femme, ne libère pas l'humanité tout entière, à savoir n'arrache le monde à l'homme d'aujourd'hui pour le transmettre à l'humanité de demain.¹⁷
(d'Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 10)

Ecofeminism has developed over the last forty years in many countries, such as the United States, Australia, India, Canada, Spain, Argentina, Nicaragua, Germany, and England. In general, scholarly articles and books attribute the origins of ecofeminism to d'Eaubonne. The political science scholar Juliann Emmons Allison divides ecofeminism into three strands: liberal, cultural, and postmodern. In her article "Ecofeminism and Global Environmental Politics," Allison argues that "[l]iberal ecofeminists are frequently criticized for their optimistic reliance on government to

16 An iconic example of this oppression is Sojourner Truth's speech. Born into slavery, she asked the audience at a Women's Convention in 1851: "ain't I a woman?" As an anti-slave speaker that gained her liberty in 1827, this black woman was fully aware of how the conditions of black women and white women were different. This historical moment led current gender studies theorists to reflect on "black women's absence at the Convention" and wonder: "what, for instance, are the implications of an event which occludes the black female subject from the political imaginary of a feminism designed to campaign for the abolition of slavery? What consequences did such disavowals have for the constitution of gendered forms of 'whiteness' as the normative subject of western imagination?" (Brah and Phoenix 76)

17 "It is urgent to emphasise the death sentence, by this [patriarchal] system in fitful agony, of the whole planet and of its human species, if feminism, by freeing the woman, does not liberate the whole of humanity, namely, to wrest the world from today's man and transmit it to the humanity of tomorrow" (d'Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 10).

ensure a level of environmental protection that reflects how women experience and value nature” (9), while the ecofeminist philosopher Carolyn Merchant describes how cultural ecofeminism “celebrates the relationship between women and nature through the revival of ancient rituals centred on goddess worship, the moon, animals, and the female reproductive system” (11). Juliann Emmons Allison discusses the negative reception of this interpretation “for being essentialist – in terms of both biological determinism and universalism” (9). She moves on to define postmodern ecofeminism as a strand that “regards any coherent ‘women’ identity to be a myth” and that understands nature as “a moving target, a perpetual unknown” (14). Indeed, since third-wave feminism, the category ‘women’ is being challenged by queer theory and non-binary individuals. It is also criticised for pretending to be universal:

[T]he category women cannot adequately describe or possibly include white women and women of color, middle-class and working-class women, heterosexual and bisexual women and lesbians, let alone a vast array of economically, racially, and culturally distinct classes of Third World women. (Agarwal 13)

Aware of the debate surrounding the field of ecofeminism, I will now explore how it has been used as an analytical tool in the study of literature.

1.4. ECOFEMINISM AS A LITERARY LENS

The first example I will explore is a publication edited by Greta Gaard and Patrick D. Murphy: *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy*. Published in 1998, this volume “explores both how ecofeminism can enrich literary criticism and how literary criticism can contribute to ecofeminist theory and activism” (back cover). This collection of scholarly chapters goes from the origins of ecofeminism, exploring the work of Françoise d’Eaubonne, to the recommendations of Greta Gaard, who gives a few pointers to teach ecofeminist literary criticism in the classroom, while other chapters provide examples of

ecofeminist analyses of literary texts and vice versa. The most important chapter for this research is the one written by Patrick D. Murphy where he puts forward “anotherness” in order to blend the idea of relatedness into the notion of otherness and expand his reach to nature. Therefore, anotherness can be defined as the

recognition of a relationship based on a combination of differences and similarities rather than on identity and alienation [... under this concept, one] understands the significance of remembering one’s position as an outsider, one’s limited, noninhabitory, visitational awareness, even in the process of establishing relationships with others. (Murphy “The Women Are Speaking” 33)

This relational model highlights the importance for humans to be responsible toward others and to be conscious that they share a planet that is densely inhabited by other species. This standpoint allows us to imagine other relations with Indigenous populations that break with the desire for colonial subjugation. The same pattern is repeated with women and nature: this notion allows us to imagine relationships that recognise difference without it being a source of oppression, as it is in a patriarchal and capitalistic regime where ecocides and speciesism are the norm.

The second item I will review is a text of Carmen Flys Junquera, a Spanish professor of modern philology, expert in ecocriticism, and also the general editor of the academic publication *Ecozon@ European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*. Her chapter “Wolves, Singing Trees, and Replicants” published in *Literature and Ecofeminism* (Vakoch and Mickey) offers an ecofeminist reading of three Spanish novels in which she mentions two ecofeminist thinkers, Val Plumwood and Karen Warren. From the latter, she presents one citation about the “interconnections among the unjustified dominations of women, other human Others and non-human nature” (Warren *Ecofeminist Philosophy* 43), on which she builds her argument. Flys Junquera proposes an approach to ecocriticism focused on the following typology of oppressions:

“three types of domination and violence: against women, against wolves,¹⁸ against traditional cultures (language and lifestyle)” (141). By doing so, she follows a current of ecofeminist theory that consists in providing “a critique of the ontology of domination” (Donovan 161) which helps the reader to understand the practice of domination. One example would be to negate the moral significance of a living being in order to abuse or destroy it. Carmen Flys Junquera concludes that the three women authors studied in her chapter embrace “counter-hegemonic strategies” by “allow[ing] other voices and viewpoints to enter in dialogue with the main voice” and by “enriching their [the protagonists’] relationships with other human others and non-human others” (153). An ecofeminist perspective like this one therefore helps to make visible the relational differences among fictional characters, and also to portray protagonists that are generally voiceless and with whom it is possible to create “alternative viable relationships” (Murphy “Introduction” 6).

In the first chapter of the same publication, *Literature and Ecofeminism* (Vakoch and Mickey), the American playwright and ecofeminist scholar Lesley Kordecki offers an interesting perspective upon the death of Ophelia in Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet*. Kordecki questions the depiction of Ophelia as a “docile victim” (10), which leads the critic to tackle the “global repercussions of patriarchal mindsets” (10). It is Kordecki’s proposal that I will explore next so as to present the potential of ecofeminist theory as an analytical tool for drama studies.

First, Kordecki quotes *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* by the Australian philosopher Val Plumwood in order to build her theoretical framework, by highlighting the link between Ophelia and the natural world. Indeed, both are relegated to the background by “human males who define themselves by exclusion from female and from nature.” (101) As Kordecki puts it, “[b]oth Ophelia and the natural world can be seen as an “independent centre of resistance and opacity” (1993, 157), Plumwood’s careful phrase to include the nonhuman with the female human in our speciesist and masculinist language.” (101) These notions

18 Even though these types of violence are presented in the three novels studied by Flys Junquera, this framework refers to one of them, Concha López Llamas’ *Beatriz y la loba* [Beatriz and the She-Wolf], hence the reference to violence against wolves.

help to contextualise the objectification and instrumentalisation of Ophelia. The scholar focuses on the eulogy that Gertrude – Hamlet’s mother – presents on the occasion of Ophelia’s death. The two female protagonists of this play, Gertrude and Ophelia, are marginalised and victimised by other important characters. The exclusion of the female and of nature can be perceived through the “speciesist and masculinist language” (Kordecki 11) normalised in our western culture and in the text of the play. Furthermore, Kordecki’s ecofeminist reading highlights the vocabulary and metaphors from the natural world that are used to describe Ophelia: “she becomes the incarnation, first of fiery love, then the air’s plaintive song, then watery symbiosis, and finally the earth itself” (22). The analysis of language in Shakespeare’s play demonstrates how the othering of both nature and women by patriarchal societies operates:

The composite mermaid, dressed in flower and shrub, traditional sign language for our necessary entanglement with the environment, intrudes on this most personal and metaphysical drama of the patriarchy, demonstrating the ominous effects when men reject or even neglect communion with women and nature. (Kordecki 22)

Kordecki’s chapter analyses the death of Ophelia from one perspective of drama studies, that concerning the literary analysis of the text. Theatre production, however, offers many other aspects, such as scenography, direction and acting, among others. In the next section, I will review an ecofeminist critique of theatre productions that goes beyond literary analysis.

1.5. ECOFEMINISM AS A TOOL OF THEATRICAL CRITICISM

Many literary concepts, analytical tools, and theories are applicable to dramaturgy as long as the specificity of the object, a theatre production, is taken into account. To deal properly with drama studies, I will define dramaturgy and comment on its current state. In his *Dictionnaire de la performance et du théâtre contemporain* [Dictionary of Performance

and Contemporary Theatre], the French drama scholar Patrice Pavis describes dramaturgy as an analysis grid: “L’enquête dramaturgique est née d’une réflexion sur l’efficacité de la représentation théâtrale” (67).¹⁹ There is a myriad of linguistic and cultural interpretations of the term dramaturge. In French, a “dramaturge” means a playwright, while in English the same term refers to a literary adviser who works for a theatre company. Furthermore, the task of the dramaturge differs across countries: in Germany, the dramaturge is responsible for the historical and political aspects of the play; in the United Kingdom, their job refers to the promotion of dramatic writing; in Belgium, dance and visual arts expertise is a major aspect of the dramaturge’s task of elaborating performative forms (Pavis 67). In his definition, Pavis also explains the pertinence of dramaturgy and its recent mutations, such as devised theatre where every member of the group participates in every aspect of the creation, and visual dramaturgy where the text is not crafted with words but rather with a succession of images. Another definition of dramaturgy focuses on work components such as orchestration and interpretation: “the architecture of the theatrical event, involved in the confluence of components in a work and how they are constructed to generate meaning for the audience” (Versényi 386).

From page to stage, dramaturgy refers to the transformation of a narrative: its migration from its written form to an actable form. Dramaturgy affects all the decisions about the structure of the show – its context, the cross-cultural references, its historical or political implications, etc. Combined with ecofeminism, dramaturgy has attracted the attention of academic research. For instance, in the doctoral dissertation “Ecofeminist Dramaturgy and the Shakespeare of Today,” published in the United States in 2011, the author poses the following question: “how can the production team’s choices shape – or erase – the material and ideological implications of Shakespeare’s invocation of nature and womanhood in all their discursive and non-discursive forms?” (Kammer). The author does not limit her queries to the characters imagined by Shakespeare: she embraces many other professional roles

¹⁹ “The dramaturgical enquiry is born from a reflection about the effectiveness of the theatrical representation” (Pavis 67).

of theatre artists, such as direction, acting, and stage design. She also tackles discourses and their personifications through the actress's body as objects of investigation. Many components of a theatre play can be considered as a text to be read and analysed through semiotics, the study of signs and codes as a means of communication. I will now move on to the exploration of ecofeminist dramaturgy, as discussed in another publication.

The body – sick, mutilated, or absent – is a focal point of the article “Poisoning the Mother/Land: An Ecofeminist Dramaturgy, in José Rivera’s *Marisol* and Cherríe Moraga’s *Heroes and Saints*”, where the American drama scholar Arden Elizabeth Thomas points out how “Rivera and Moraga incorporate metaphoric images of motherhood with concrete evidence of environmental toxins and policies experienced in the body” (144). Ecofeminist dramaturgy is defined by this critic as “a relatively recent theoretical model that examines dramatic play texts or stagings through the lens of ecological feminist criticism” (Thomas 144). If Thomas’ definition includes “staging” as an object of investigation, her analysis focuses on the literary aspect of the play and does not go beyond language analysis of the play’s text. Her approach to ecofeminism highlights the importance of challenging dualities such as mind/body and culture/nature. To do so, she refers to the Canadian environmental humanities scholar famous for her concept of Queer Ecology, Catriona Sandilands: “what is necessary is a more thoroughly transgressive politics, one that shows the wielding of woman and nature as part of systems of domination, that shows dualism to be an oppressive fiction rather than a fact of nature itself” (Sandilands *in* Thomas 146). From this perspective, Thomas’ article demonstrates how the ecofeminist lens helps to “imagine alternatives to the logic of control and globalization” (158) presented in the plays *Marisol* and *Heroes and Saints*. If an ecofeminist dramaturgy has been developed in the two works cited above, there is much more criticism published under the banner of ecodrama.²⁰ For instance, Una

20 “Ecodrama stages the reciprocal connection between humans and the more-than-human world. It encompasses not only works that take environmental issues as their topic, hoping to raise consciousness or press for change, but also work that explores the relation of a ‘sense of place’ to identity and community” (May “What Is Ecodrama?”).

Chaudhuri and Lisa Woynarski played a key role in amassing the body of knowledge within drama and ecological studies. I will explore the principal aspects of ecodrama, which is an interesting perspective from which to contextualise an ecofeminist reading

Ecology was first addressed in drama studies by Una Chaudhuri, professor of English, drama, and environmental studies at New York University, in her seminal work “ ‘There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake’: Toward an Ecological Theater”. This founding article inspired several researchers to take an interest in this subject, such as Baz Kershaw, Patrick D. Murphy, Theresa J. May and Wendy Arons. Chaudhuri’s approach breaks with the tradition of modern drama and how it represents the natural world. She criticises discourse that “supports the fiction – convenient to a consumerist economic system – that nature is an eco-machine, a virtual factory pouring out a stream of raw materials to be transformed into commodities” (25). The longevity and complexity of nature are major components of her concept of Ecological Theatre. She argues that theatre can raise ecological awareness when the action takes place in a specific territory experiencing a current environmental problem. The American professor continues to develop this field of study by articulating the history of theatre, performance theory, animal studies, ecocritiques, and arts in the Anthropocene.

Theatre lecturer Lisa Woynarski built on Chaudhuri’s definition of ecological theatre in her chapter “Site, Participation and Materiality: Eco-performance in the UK and Europe”. She stresses how theatre and performance can “problematise, reframe and re-imagine some of these pervasive and (at times) reductive images, opening up new ways of thinking of our ecological world” (71). She emphasises the interdisciplinary potential of this field of study by invoking post-colonial theories, critical studies of race, queer ecology, and ecofeminism, which are various interconnected streams that converge towards the same objective. Indeed, she encourages theatrical productions that engage in ecological thought with the aim of incorporating geographic and ethnic diversity.

1.6. ECOFEMINIST READINGS OF CANADIAN PLAYS

At present, very few Canadian drama scholars have used an ecofeminist approach, so I will limit my review to two articles. First, “Life Doesn’t Seem Natural’: Ecofeminism and the Reclaiming of the Feminine Spirit, in Cindy Cowan’s *A Woman from the Sea*” by Alanna F. Bondar, explores a branch of ecofeminism known as spiritual ecofeminism. She argues that women must reconnect to the Earth and that this is true for Almira, the protagonist of Cowan’s play: “breaking away from patriarchal imprisonment proves complex for Almira as she begins to identify more with the dying environment than her own male partner (ironically a professional environmentalist)” (Bondar 19). Alanna F. Bondar criticises other reviewers of the play who have failed to notice the “matrilinear past” (19) of this narrative in which she highlights “a woman’s power to revision cultural, literary, socio-political, and spiritual pasts and traditions as a method of reconnecting women with mother earth rather than with patriarchal hegemony” (Bondar 19). In this way, the play explores fertility rituals, symbols, and mythologies at the risk of identifying “women with nature as an ontological reality” (Biehl 3). Bondar also insists on the stage composition as an important part of her ecofeminist analysis of the dramaturgy: “The setting of *A Woman from the Sea* is not artificial stage atmosphere but instead, a powerful fourth character, the environment. Sound and music are [...] part of a living, breathing, speaking and too long ignored marginalized Earth-other” (24), a consideration that is often forgotten in the other ecofeminist reading of the play mentioned above.

The second article I will study in this section was published by Celeste Derksen in 2010 under the title “Complexion as Metaphor: Eco-Satire in *The Pochsy Plays*”. Derksen’s ecofeminist approach consists in the re-reading the female body in order to demonstrate how this play embraces both ecological and feminist concerns:

Hines’ plays elicit a feminized self-critique – one that does not exclude or exonerate humans of the male variety, but acknowledges that the cult of youth and beauty to which Pochsy subscribes, and

which is carried via corporate advertising, is directed primarily at women and is particularly pervasive and persuasive among women.
(37)

In an interview with Derksen, the actress Karen Hines comments on her interpretation of Pochsy and her desire to infuse this very feminine character with humour in order to neutralise her own eco-anxieties. This play “provide[s] an inventive satire of North American consumerist culture and the internal and external environmental havoc that accompanies the industries that serve it” (36). Derksen’s article is the most recent ecofeminist critique I have been able to find in Canadian drama studies. I have not included Tania Aguila-Way’s article “Seed Activism, Global Environmental Justice, and Avant-Garde Aesthetics in Annabel Soutar’s *Seeds*”, published in 2018, because Aguila-Way does not use an ecofeminist stance in order to study the play, even though she quotes the ecofeminist Vandana Shiva.

1.7. KEY CONCEPTS

Many theories have been proposed to explain the suggested connections between the exploitation and degradation of nature and the subordination and oppression of women. Although the existing literature on this subject covers a large number of said theories, this part focuses on four major concepts that are repeatedly mentioned in scholarly works on this topic: ideology, the politics of representation, dualism, and hierarchy. Whereas in the assessed works these concepts are referenced in relation to a variety of contexts, this dissertation analyses their application in the field of ecofeminist criticism. To do so, I have considered the most significant works by four well-respected ecofeminist scholars: Val Plumwood, Rosi Braidotti, Greta Gaard, and Patrick D. Murphy.

This review is devoted to presenting, researching, and recapitulating the core and most influential notions proposed by the above-mentioned authors, showing how they can be used as adequate tools for scholarly research in the fields of literary criticism and drama studies. In short,

this literature review includes the key sources related to the main debates, trends, and gaps in connection with the ecofeminist critique of contemporary Canadian drama that this dissertation is concerned with.

1.7.1. Ideology

Ideology is one of the key notions for this literature review. The term was first coined by the French Enlightenment philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy. The first studies on ideology considered it to be a science of ideas. Nowadays, the term ‘ideology’ is generally understood to mean “the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (Hall 29). There is a vast amount of literature on ideology (Eagleton, Laclau, Van Dijk, Althusser, Hawkes, Ricoeur). In the field of cultural studies, several definitions of ideology can be found: for instance, “ideologies are patterned clusters of normatively imbued ideas and beliefs, including particular representations of power relations. Known as various ‘isms’, these ideological maps help people navigate the complexity of their political universe and carry exclusivist claims to social truth” (James and Steger 423).

In order to simplify how this notion operates, Mullins has offered four key features of ideology: “(1) cognitive power; (2) evaluative power; (3) action-orientation; and, (4) logical coherence” (507). The most relevant aspect of ideology for an ecofeminist critique is defined by Herzog: “ideologies contribute to the stabilization of certain conditions and relations of domination” (1). Throughout this dissertation, this notion will play a major role in building a critical analysis of discourse. More specifically, it is used as a tool for challenging the common understanding of nature and gender – two key concepts in the construction of an ecofeminist critique. To do so, I will first consider two ideological types that have proven to be especially relevant to this dissertation’s subject matter: ideologies of nature and ideologies of gender.

1.7.2. Ideologies of Nature

I would like to begin this section with a quote that tackles the human-nature dichotomy (i.e. humans as us and natural elements as them): “the place we inhabit, the place we are” (Alaimo 137). With this formulation, Stacy Alaimo pinpoints an ecofeminist understanding of both identity and space that opposes hegemonic dualism where humans are not part of the natural world. The air we breathe and the food we eat are great examples of the interconnection between humans and nature. Questioning the human gaze is an ideal starting point for developing a critical analysis of the ideologies of nature, because it introduces a specific relation “based on rational thought, with humans as the observers and nature as the observed” (Tulloch 23). According to this analysis, the mere act of seeing is what separates humans from nature, establishing a power relationship where the former is the subject and the latter the object.

Domination is also a great example of how ideology works. When applied to different species, the ideology of domination perpetuates the belief that some humans are superior to other humans and to non-human life forms (animals, plants, etc.). This ideology structures the relationship between human beings and the natural environment. In most societies, the desire to conquer nature is a common aspiration that is key in the establishment of ground rules and normative behaviours. A good example of this is Descartes’ argument that nature must be useful to human beings. In his *Discourse on the Method*, the French philosopher refers to our species as “the lords and masters of nature” (44). One of the main outcomes of this ideology is the central place of the exploitation of nature in neoliberal economics, with the dairy industry being one of the most prominent examples. Not only does this exploitation reduce nature to a human resource, but it also reproduces a specific power relationship between humans and nature without questioning it. In order to delve into how hegemonic power operates, the identification of ideology in discourse is an important component to understand the social construction of nature, according to human geographer David Demeritt:

[C]ritics use construction talk to refute taken-for-granted beliefs about the essential nature of things – like gender differences – by showing that those things are not natural at all, but instead are somehow socially constructed. Such arguments involve an implicit call to action. The objective of denaturalization is to show that something is bad and that we would be better off if it were radically changed, which becomes conceivable once we realize it is socially constructed and within our power to change. (769)

The ideology of domination is just an example of the many ideologies of nature. Another relevant one conceives “nature as a terrestrial paradise; divinely ordained human stewardship over nature; nature’s death and plunder; nature as primordial wilderness, nature as nurturing mother; and nature as brute matter” (Tulloch 21). These notions contribute to building a narrative of what nature is and limit our perception of what nature can be both physically and conceptually. Culture, history, politics, and religion shape our understanding of nature and its meaning. Consequently, these factors also shape humans’ relationship with nature where the subordination of so-called passive nature is a key aspect. Likewise, ideology structures our relationship with nature in terms of gender; that is, depending on the gender with which a person identifies: “these ideological connections perpetuate hierarchies that elevate one binary pairing (men, culture) over the other (women, nature)” (Grimwood 3). In this context, gender ideology determines how nature is perceived and treated. Hierarchical dichotomy devalues the ‘other’, especially women and nature:

Many ecofeminists see women’s subordination as a result of linking women with nature. Thus one of their tasks has been to unravel the underlying dualistic structure of the categories ‘women’ and ‘nature’ and to argue for a reconceptualization of these categories. (Wilson 333)

In other words, nature is a social construct influenced by the dominant ideologies in a given society. Likewise, the relationship between humans

and nature has also been determined by ideology-based ways of approaching the world.

1.7.3. Ideologies of Gender

Ideology also operates on our understanding of gender. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, gender has come to be used to refer to “the state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones” (“gender, n3b”). In the recent field of gender studies, researchers look at the different perspectives of gender in order to make sense of the relationship between gender identity and gender representation. It should first be noted that there is a common understanding of the conceptual difference between sex and gender: the former is of a physical, biological nature, while the latter refers to a socio-cultural construct.²¹ In this perspective, sex is a fixed notion previous to gender assignment, and from which gender emerges. However, gender theorist Judith Butler suggested an inversion in her seminal work of 1990 *Gender Trouble*, in which she argued that gender comes first, and the sexual difference comes second. According to this, both notions are a sociocultural construction, and the idea of masculine and feminine bodies as obvious and distinct entities defined by a specific set of characteristics is nothing but a consequence of gender ideologies. Butler questions the connections between sex and gender, the origins of these concepts, and the evident limitations of a binary model:

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’. The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of “identities” cannot “exist” – that is, those in which gender does

21 For a more complex analysis of the difference between sex and gender, see how *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (Donna Haraway) challenges biological certainties through a gender perspective.

not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not “follow” from either sex or gender. (17)

Butler’s rejection of binarism led her to coin the umbrella term of ‘intersexuality’, which encompasses several other options that already existed but were not previously considered. Her works disrupt the social and cultural status quo – that is to say, how we understand others and ourselves. Butler shows us that there are other possibilities for gender ideologies, as they can rely on the classic hierarchical, binary model or an alternative one, like the model Butler herself suggests in *Gender Trouble*. Gender ideology usually refers to “attitudes regarding the appropriate roles, rights, and responsibilities of women and men in society” (Kroska 1). Thus, the existence of gender roles creates social expectations that determine how men and women should behave. These normative beliefs can be reinforced through societal pressure or on an individual basis. In a patriarchal society, gender ideologies generally push forward a traditional model that reinforces binary thinking, such as “the association of maleness with consciousness and femaleness with physicality” (Matthews 2). Another insightful definition of gender ideology is provided by sociologist Judith Lorber. According to Lorber, gender ideology is “the justification of gender statuses, particularly, their differential evaluation. The dominant ideology tends to suppress criticism by making these evaluations seem natural” (30). The practical application of this definition can be observed in the division of labour depending on gender. In traditional gender ideologies, women play the role of caretakers while men are the breadwinners. Lorber designates the “gendered division of labor” as

the assignment of productive and domestic work to members of different gender statuses. The work assigned to those gender statuses strengthens the society’s evaluation of those statuses – the higher the status, the more prestigious and valued the work and the greater its rewards. (30)

In general, no negative or positive connotations are attributed to the term ‘ideology’; in gender role ideologies, there is a vast range of possibilities such as “egalitarian, egalitarian essentialism, intensive parenting, moderate traditional, and traditional” (Grunow et al. 42). For instance, the gender-based distribution of caretaking and breadwinning activities is also present in other ideologies: “egalitarian ideologies regarding the family, by contrast, endorse and value men’s and women’s equal and shared breadwinning and nurturant family roles” (Kroska 1). Therefore, analysing how ideology works might prove useful for raising awareness about many of the problems that come with social and power relations. The structural aspect of those power relations – like being binary – has been particularly criticised by ecofeminist scholars. For instance, Val Plumwood argues that “a critical ecological feminism can reject both the distorted choices generated by nature/culture dualism; it can reject the model of women and women’s reproductivity as undifferentiated nature, but it is also critical of the attempt to fit them into a model of oppositional and masculinised culture” (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 39).

Understanding the ideologies of nature and gender situates the current ecofeminist debate within a broader context. Many dominant ideologies assign women and nature a passive role, one that is closely related to the over-representation of man as the Human by default – usually an upper-class white man in a position of power: “man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself” (Wynter 260). On another scale, human matters are also over-represented in our cultural narratives at the expense of nature and non-human lives. Accordingly, ecofeminist scholars Manuela Palacios and Laura Lojo argue that there is a “pressing need for writers and critics with an ecological awareness to intervene” (19). Approaching this issue through an analysis of ideology thus proves to be an effective tool for problematising normative beliefs around common concepts such as nature and gender.

1.7.4. Politics of Representation

The influential post-colonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls on Marx to define the notion of representation. First, she uses the German word 'Vertretung' for defining "the political representation" (*The Post-Colonial Critic* 108), such as a congressman who represents citizens and has political power. Then, she moves on to 'Darstellung', a term more related to presence and presentation than representation. Spivak draws attention to the absence of subordinate women of the Third World in the sphere of public discourse in order to explain this critical concept: "when I speak as a feminist, I'm representing, in the sense of Darstellung, myself, because we all know the problems attendant even upon defining the subject as a sovereign deliberative consciousness" (*The Post-Colonial Critic* 108). In her famous essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, she uses a Marxist framework to problematise and politicise the lack of representation of the subalterns, that is, those who (1) do not get access to the hegemonic power, and (2) are oppressed. Spivak shares some characteristics with those who are historically never heard: being a woman, being a person of colour, and being an immigrant travelling from the East to the West. Briefly, Spivak argues that the subaltern is being silenced by the existing modes of representation. By doing so, she criticises two very influential Western scholars, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, who act as if they have enough knowledge and legitimacy to *speak for* the subaltern. Post-colonial and cultural studies scholar Ella Shohat pushes Spivak's proposal further, as she ascribes political importance to the representation taking place in popular culture:

The denial of aesthetic representation to the subaltern has historically formed a corollary to the literal denial of economic, legal, and political representation. The struggle to 'speak for oneself' cannot be separated from a history of being spoken for, from the struggle to speak and be heard. (173)

While Spivak's critique embraces a vast group of marginalised people, Judith Butler also problematises representation, highlighting its political

aspect with a special focus on women. She proposes another double definition of representation:

On the one hand, representation serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects: on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women. (1)

This second analysis establishes a semantic shift for women. It transforms the representation of their gender from *object* to *subject*. As noted by Hanchey, “[w]hen we absent bodies from discussions of theory, we implicitly ground our theories in somatic norms and tacitly accept their conditions – whiteness and coloniality – which circumscribe who the theories represent” (265). In this excerpt, Hanchey directs attention to people of colour and colonised groups as they are rarely represented in academia. Her observations remain valid outside the academic world, where the hegemonic power determines who is allowed to speak in public spheres, such as the media, the art world, the field of politics, etc. For example, a Hollywood film written, directed, and played by Black artists deals with issues that a conventional white cast would not:

Black Panther implies a rather tightly bound conceptual circuit of inclusive production, representation, and identification based on a smoothly equivalent compatibility of consciousness marked by, if not resulting from, similarity of skin color: black creators create more legitimate representations of blackness (usually because of their own identification with some stable concept of blackness) that are automatically identified with by black viewers who are positively impacted by that identification. (d’Agostino 1)

We can also extend Hanchey’s critique to the non-human lifeforms whose voices do not correspond to the current mode of expression: human language. Specifically, plant communication has been studied over the last two decades and the discipline is rapidly expanding (Gagliano et al.

1346). To conclude this section, I wish to highlight Hanchey's notion of 'relational politics of representation,' which leads her to examine "how conceptualising representation through a lens that centers difference allows us to rethink representational ontologies and epistemologies, and to move beyond a binary of transcendence/immanence in representational politics" (279).

1.7.5. Dualism

Women and men, mind and body, science and art, reason and emotion, civilised and primitive, nature and human: these are just a few examples of elements that are traditionally conceptualised as binary opposites. According to Jacobson and Stephens, dualism is a Cartesian concept:

This is historically linked to the art of scientific reasoning, championed by Descartes's formalisation of the subject-object dualism. The rationalist paradigm, to which positivist science is aligned, uses dualistically construed dichotomies to polarise differences and construe them along superior/inferior lines, minimising shared characteristics and viewing the inferior side as a means to the higher ends of the superior side. (160)

The dualistic structure extends beyond the limits of science and transforms something into a powerful system that influences culture and society, having an impact on our way of thinking. Marcotullio and McGranahan warn us against what became a "dominant form of dualistic thinking" (276) because of its potential to reduce a situation or a problem into a simplistic version of itself: "dualisms operate by relegating all possibilities into two more or less all-encompassing and mutually exclusive categories, in the process inevitably over-simplifying complex concepts, or over-exaggerating what are in practice more nuanced positions and understandings" (276). Ecofeminist scholars address dualistic structure as one of the main causes that perpetuate the double oppression of women and nature. Several ecofeminists have written about

the need to go beyond the human/nature division, as is stated in the influential work of Val Plumwood:

[A] critical ecological feminism can reject both the distorted choices generated by nature/culture dualism; it can reject the model of women and women's reproductivity as undifferentiated nature, but it is also critical of the attempt to fit them into a model of oppositional and masculinised culture. (*Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 39)

More recently, ecofeminism has broadened the dualistic analysis beyond women and nature, emphasizing the need to approach the dualistic divisions related to gender, the body, and the environment (Vakoch and Mickey). In both cases, the power relation at play in this structure is a major component of the ecofeminist perspective, as suggested by Greta Gaard:

the way in which women and nature have been conceptualized historically in the Western intellectual tradition has resulted in devaluing whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature, and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things associated with men, reason, humans, culture and the mind. One task of ecofeminists has been to expose these dualisms and the ways in which feminizing nature and naturalizing women have served as justification for the domination of women, animals, and the earth. ("Living Interconnections With Animals and Nature" 5)

Not only does a dualistic structure oppose two different concepts, but it also establishes a hierarchical ranking where the element 'on top' gains legitimacy through that dualism and dominates the so-called inferior other.

1.7.6. Hierarchy

According to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*, “hierarchy” derives from two Greek terms: “sacred” (*hieros*) and “to lead, rule” (*archon*); hierarchy finds its origins in a “ranked organisation of persons or things” (“hierarchy”). The current definition proposed by *Encyclopedia Britannica* describes hierarchy as “a ranking of positions of authority, often associated with a chain of command and control. [...] In modern societies, hierarchical organizations pervade all aspects of life” (Miura). For instance, this structure has been normalised through centuries of imposition that presented it as the normal order, the norm. Religion, with its graded ranks, is a great example of a hierarchical structure. Government is another organisation that makes use of the pyramidal structure of a hierarchy where the head of the state is at the top: this is usually a monarch, a prime minister, or a president. In psychology, Maslow’s theory of motivation also takes the shape of a pyramid where the most important element (physiological needs) is at the bottom and must be fulfilled in order to go up and be able to achieve the less important one (self-actualisation). From bottom to top or from top to bottom, the hierarchical structure is deeply ingrained in the way we perceive and conceptualise the world around us: “western cultures present ideas about the world in a hierarchical and dualistic manner that is lived out in the way the world is organized” (Lorentzen and Eaton).

Education is not free from the effects of hierarchy and this is why “some school subjects have a higher status than others” (Bleazby 671). Political philosopher Jennifer Bleazby proposes the term ‘traditional curriculum hierarchy’ for describing how “supposedly abstract school subjects, like mathematics and physics, are more valuable than subjects associated with concrete experience, practicality, and the body, such as physical education and vocational subjects” (671). The omnipresence of hierarchy in our culture contributes to developing a bias in favour of that very same hierarchy, along with a certain reluctance to consider other types of social organisation such as anarchism and heterarchy. The latter refers to a system based on interrelation and cooperation.

It has been described by one of the main thinkers of political ecology, Serge Moscovici:

L'hétérarchie suppose en somme une organisation décentrée, transformable par ceux qui en sont les acteurs, prête à se modeler au gré de ses auteurs, toujours destinée à sauvegarder un certain degré de liberté et d'initiative par l'appui qu'elle donne à toutes les fractions qui la composent; la constitution d'un centre est chose de circonstance.²² (109)

I insist on envisaging and studying alternatives to hierarchy because of the numerous critiques it receives in the ecofeminist sphere – for instance, “the core belief of both ecocriticism and ecofeminism that all living and non-living things in the world are interconnected and interdependent, and, therefore, there is no need for hierarchies” (Oró-Piqueras and Mina-Riera 110). If we focus on the relationship between women and men, one can say that a hierarchical structure plays a major role in the imposition and maintenance of patriarchy. I suggest that one of the reasons why this system is so efficient is its naturalisation. As a matter of fact, this natural hierarchy has been operating for centuries, as demonstrated by the feminist philosopher María Luisa Femenías:

Aristotle's words concerning the natural superiority of the male over the female appear to describe a sociohistorical fact, a recurrent situation in ancient society. Aristotle describes the specific form of the society in which he lived, as if it had universal validity. Perhaps because of the static nature that generally characterizes his system, he considers the sociohistorical period in which he lived as if it were universally valid. For this reason, he described the hierarchical structure of his society as by nature valid for all time and place. Regarding the concrete situation of women, this amounts to basing

22 “In short, heterarchy presupposes a decentred organisation, transformable by those who are its authors, always intended to safeguard a certain degree of freedom and initiative by the support it gives to all the factions that compose it; the constitution of a centre is circumstantial” (Moscovi 109).

on an ontological level the social-juridical as well as economic-relegation to which women have been subjected. (167)

In light of this perspective on the naturalisation of hierarchy, one could conclude that it is the way it is because it has always been that way – a saying that exemplifies how dominant ideology is naturalised. Consequently, ecofeminists and many other theorists and activists are fighting for systemic change, as the hierarchical structures (1) perpetuate the status quo, and (2) confine access to power to a happy few – two major hindrances to social change. Indeed, the sociohistorical devaluation of both women and nature is perpetuated by a social structure:

Cultural ecofeminism encompasses those who argue that women and nature are mutually associated, and that in patriarchal society both are devalued. Within this view, the emancipation of women and nature must come through women celebrating their connections with nature, thereby inverting patriarchy's hierarchical structure of power. (Moeckli and Braun 114)

In conclusion, hierarchy is an important social structure that needs to be tackled in order to change the power inequalities between women and men and between humans and nature. Making visible the process of naturalisation in which hierarchy operates is a principal objective in order to question its legitimacy as a universal, central, and valid structure that can be trusted.

1.8. BECOMING AN-OTHER

This section provides a detailed account of two key concepts of the theoretical framework of this dissertation: Becoming (Deleuze and Guattari 285) and An-other (Murphy “The Women Are Speaking” 35). A justification of this approach will follow. I will clarify the first concept, Becoming, in order to introduce the theoretical apparatus of the thesis. The state of becoming is a process characterised by its multiplicity and its

constant displacement from one milieu to another; it can be understood as a path without a final destination motivated by desire. This notion is introduced by French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their seminal work *Mille plateaux: Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2* [A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2], published in 1980:

Nous ne savons rien d'un corps tant que nous ne savons pas ce qu'il peut, c'est-à-dire quels sont ses affects, comment ils peuvent ou non se composer avec d'autres affects [...] Car l'affect n'est pas un sentiment personnel, ce n'est pas non plus un caractère, c'est l'effectuation d'une puissance de meute, qui soulève et fait vaciller le moi.²³ (314-294)

To explain the concept, Deleuze and Guattari use the example of a writer who explores the physical potential of an animal in the writer's creative process. Becoming is then part of the study of ethology, between the affect and the organ. It is also a matter of superimposed environments and the possible movement between these universes that artistic creation can make explicit. The notion of the multiplicity of becoming will be one of the backbones of my dissertation. Deleuze and Guattari also argue that this concept exposes simultaneously a desire for transformation and a process. Thus, becoming displays no fixed terms, no final state, and many vanishing points. Specifically, the term 'becoming' "is not a static position nor is it a quality or characteristic" but rather "a process of ever-changing identities" (Krebs).

The states of becoming are multiple and one can experience several of them at the same time. They are generally caused by the cohabitation of various living beings on the same territory. For example, a traveller can become an immigrant when reaching foreign shores. But the traveller can become a settler too. Becoming a settler requires two main elements: a native population or land to conquer, and a number of commodities

23 "We do not know anything about a body until we know what it can do, that is to say, what are its affects, how they can or cannot cope with other affects [...] Because the affect is not a personal feeling, it is not a character either, it is the performance of a pack power, which heightens and shakes the self" (Deleuze and Guattari 314-294).

which are deemed useful and lucrative for the colonial force. This state of becoming, as we will see throughout this research, does not affect humans only. Species becoming extinct and therefore disappearing can be regarded as an extreme state of becoming, even if it implies vanishing completely with human complicity and, in most cases, for human consumption and benefit. I am interested in the becoming-woman, becoming-nature, becoming-animal, and becoming-ecology. I intend to study how these becomings are presented on stage when a play is created, and also in the text when a play is published.

In feminist debates and practices, becoming a woman is quite a recurrent term; it is used when a girl has her period for the first time. Through language, we also express the biological transformation from childhood into adulthood blending sex and gender, bringing together what is merely biological and what is socially constructed. The states of becoming such as the becoming-woman do not emerge from an ecofeminist framework but rather from a philosophical one. Nevertheless, this concept centres my discussion on an ecofeminist goal: to make contemporary global realities visible in order to understand how we got there and how we can improve it. By ‘becoming-woman,’ Deleuze and Guattari describe an act of creation made by writers without regard to gender; male, female, or non-binary. Writers produce and embody the subjectivity of women; then, they enter the state of ‘becoming-women.’ Deleuze and Guattari stress that it is “ni imiter ni prendre la forme féminine” (338)²⁴ but rather for writers to focus on subjectivity: “de leur propre organisme, de leur propre histoire, de leur propre subjectivité: ‘nous en tant que femmes...’ apparaît alors comme sujet d’énunciation” (338).²⁵ Becoming-woman is a central concept of this thesis; it plays a crucial role in the ecofeminist critique that I intend to put forward.

The second concept, An-other, has been introduced by Patrick D. Murphy in his book *Literature, Nature, and Other. Ecofeminist Critiques:*

24 “neither a matter of imitating nor taking the feminine shape” (Deleuze and Guattari 338).

25 “their own organism, their own story, their own subjectivity: ‘us as women ...’ appears therefore as a subject of enunciation” (Deleuze and Guattari 338).

What if instead of alienation we posited relation as the primary mode of human-human and human-nature interaction without conflating difference, particularity and other specificities? What if we worked from a concept of relational difference and otherness rather than Otherness? (“The Women Are Speaking” 35)

Thus, Murphy associates otherness with relational difference, while otherness refers to radical difference. The term an-other recognises the complexity, agency, subjecthood, and value that exist between us and them. Specifically, “[a]notherness proceeds from a heterarchical, that is, a non-hierarchical, sense of difference” (“The Women Are Speaking” 35) and “recognize[s] reciprocity as a ubiquitous natural/cultural process” (“The Women Are Speaking” 35). In an ecofeminist perspective, “[t]his relation of an-otherness encompasses the needs and rights of both women and nature with more equitable discourses and practices” (Palacios 170).

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the two terms – Becoming An-other – is a crucial component of dramatic art: the principal task of the actor and the production designer consists of a transformation of the body and of space, respectively. Briefly, they embody difference through a creative process in order to share the truth of each narrative. Ariane Mnouchkine, the director of the Théâtre du Soleil [Theatre of the Sun], situated alterity as a key element of her response when a journalist asked her why theatre matters in our society: “le théâtre reste un lieu où l’on apprend, où l’on essaie de comprendre, où l’on est touché, où l’on rencontre l’autre – où on est l’autre” (Mnouchkine *in* Féral 245).²⁶

²⁶ “Theatre remains a place where we learn, where we try to understand, where we are moved, where we meet the other – where we are the other” (Mnouchkine *in* Féral 245).

2. BETWEEN COLONIALISM AND TRADITION: THE RENEWAL OF GENDER ROLES IN A FICTIONAL INDIGENOUS NATION

This chapter proposes an ecofeminist approach to the play *Wulustek* written by Dave Jenniss (b. 1974), as I believe it can help to shed light on the numerous states of becoming concerning human and non-human life forms depicted by Jenniss, an Indigenous Canadian author. The play describes a small resistance movement that fails to prevent the brutal disturbance of an ecosystem as a result of the actions by First Wood, a logging company which, having destroyed an entire forest, keeps this environmental impact secret, putting the now-deserted area out of sight behind a small strip of trees and a fence. The gendering of the earth and the desire to dominate the land are central elements of the play's narrative. An analysis of the representation of the human/nature relationship through an ecofeminist perspective will prove useful to identify and elucidate the mechanisms underlying the characters' actions, reactions, and dynamics in relation to their socio-political and economic framework and, in this context, their symbolic attachment to what they consider to be their territory.

The playwright tackles the difficulty of conciliating Indigenous resurgence within the framework of a modern capitalist structure combined with the colonialist politics of the Canadian state. Canadian Indigenous scholar of the Dene nation Glen Coulthard suggests the notion

of resurgence to describe “self-determination efforts and objectives of Indigenous peoples in Canada” (1). Coulthard explains why this term must replace the notion of recognition generally used by the Canadian state and Indigenous communities:

much of our efforts over the last four decades to attain settler-state recognition of our rights to land and self-government have in fact encouraged the opposite – the continued dispossession of our homelands and the ongoing usurpation of our self-determining authority. I suggest that this conclusion demands that we begin to collectively redirect our struggles away from a politics that seeks to attain a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition for Indigenous nations toward a resurgent politics of recognition premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power. (24)

In the play, the most important and symbolically charged event is the drastic change of the ancestral land of the Malamèque people. The first part of the analysis will thus be devoted to unravelling the circumstances, causes, connotations, and potential effects of this change as it is represented in the play, as well as its connections with the real places, characters, and situations to which it correlates.

The analysis that I will develop in the following section relies on two preliminary observations: 1) The characters portrayed in the play use dominant discourse practices and counter-speech in a satirical way, and 2) This type of language defines the boundaries for humans and elements within nature, including animals. This relationship perpetuates a hierarchical, anthropocentric vision according to which human beings symbolically and practically consider themselves as superior to non-human creatures. With this in mind, I will explore the aesthetical representation of the fence, how it acts as the *fourth wall*, and the importance of crossing frontiers in order to become *an-other* (Murphy “The Women Are Speaking” 35). To do so, I will use Nancy Tuaná’s notion of *viscous porosity*.

2.1. THEATRE PRODUCTIONS BY INDIGENOUS ARTISTS IN CANADA

Productions by Indigenous artists in the anglophone sphere have flourished since their emergence in the 1970s: “by the 1990s Indigenous theatre had become a crucial part of mainstream Canadian theatre” (Foster Grajewski). Playwrights such as Marie Clements, Yvette Nolan, and Thompson Highway have paved the way for a growing number of indigenous directors, actors, and playwrights that “ha[ve] been shaping the current renaissance in Aboriginal theatre and bringing these stories to Canadian audiences” (La Flamme). However, in Quebec and French-speaking Canada, the situation in the arts scene is quite different. The production of francophone theatre by Indigenous artists remains scarce (Paré) compared to their anglophone Canadian counterparts. *Les Productions Ondinnok* is the first Indigenous theatre company that produces theatre for French-speaking audiences in Quebec. Having produced 18 shows in its first twenty years of existence, *Ondinnok* occupies a major place in the history of Indigenous theatre production. It was co-founded in 1985 by Yves Sioui Durand and Catherine Joncas, whose work has been described as a process of “réappropriation identitaire qui passe par la mise à distance de l’altérité dominante au profit de la revalorisation du soi et de fait, de la construction d’une singularité autochtone forte” (Tirel 119).²⁷ Detaching himself from a Eurocentric theatre tradition, Yves Sioui Durand replaces Aristotle’s *Poetics* and other seminal texts with Indigenous works, possessing their own mythology and aesthetics: “J’ose dire que les mythes amérindiens sont nos Grecs à nous et qu’ils sont fondateurs de notre théâtralité” (Sioui Durand *in* Tirel 117).²⁸ In an interview, Sioui Durand explained how theatre and the creative process that goes with it can be a tool for social transformation:

La mission de la compagnie est d’être une fenêtre qui permette, au sein de la société québécoise, de prendre contact avec les autochtones,

27 “identity reappropriation that involves distancing oneself from the dominant otherness in favour of a revalorisation of the self and of the construction of a strong indigenous singularity” (Tirel 119).

28 “I dare say that Indigenous myths are our very own Greek myths and that they are the founders of our theatricality, one that is ours” (Sioui Durand *in* Tirel 117).

de les voir et de les rencontrer d'une façon exceptionnelle, hors des lieux communs de la politique, à l'écart des stéréotypes.²⁹ (Sioui Durand *in* Wickham 104)

This approach, common to both anglophone and francophone theatre productions in Canada, also affects the aesthetic forms of traditional theatre: “[I]ack of conflict seems to be one of the fundamental differences between European and Native drama”, explains Indigenous Canadian playwright Drew Hayden Taylor, “there’s no fight, there’s no argument, there’s no conflict [...] They’re given an objective, they achieve it, and they go on. This is the structure of a lot of traditional Native legends which, to reiterate, conflicts with the European dramatic process” (31). In light of this, approaching a work by a Native playwright such as Dave Jenniss might prove useful to highlight the differences and connections between contemporary Canadian drama and that of the First Nations’ tradition.

2.2. DAVE JENNISS: AN INDIGENOUS PLAYWRIGHT

In 2017, Dave Jenniss was appointed artistic co-director of Quebec’s *Ondinnok* theatre company, along with Nahuas³⁰ choreographer and dancer Leticia Vera. This came after several years of artistic creation in Quebec, where Jenniss was a renowned writer (in the fields of theatre, cinema, and television) and an actor. Among other important roles, in 2004 he played the main character in *Hamlet-le-Malécite* [Hamlet-the-Maliseet], a show produced by *Ondinnok*:

the play works within a mise-en-abyme. Dave, who desperately wants to play Hamlet, is both the character Dave, the actor Dave Jenniss, and a Hamlet figure who does not recognize the parallels between his

29 “The mission of the company is to be a window that allows us, in Quebec’s society, to make contact with the natives, to see them and to meet them in an exceptional way, outside the common places of politics, outside stereotypes” (Sioui Durand *in* Wickham 104).

30 An Indigenous nation currently living in Mexico and El Salvador.

life and the plot of Shakespeare's play [...] The adaptation exposes the internal racism through the numerous insults brought to bear on the protagonist Dave. Because his father was "rien qu'un Malécite" [nothing but a Malécite] (71), other Natives consider Dave "trop blanc pour jouer un indien" [too white to play an Indian] (10). (Drouin)

The Maliseet people are the only Indigenous nation recognised by the province of Quebec that lives entirely in the diaspora and whose land claims have been key, as has been pointed out by geographers Coco Calderhead and Juan-Luis Klein: "le territoire constitue le principal point de ralliement des acteurs qui participent à l'avancement du projet de renforcement de l'identité malécite, laquelle demeure vivante malgré la dispersion" (584).³¹ Indigenous communities explore theatrical aesthetics in order to expose the cultural differences existing between Indigenous peoples and descendants of the settler communities when it comes to understanding the land and its resources. In his article "Le sentiment de la terre" [The Sentiment of the Earth], Huron Wendat theatre practitioner Yves Sioui Durand wrote

Le territoire est ce qui doit rester intouché et libre si nous voulons conserver notre nature humaine. On peut sans doute monnayer un terrain, le vendre; mais pas le territoire. Le territoire, pour nous, Amérindiens d'aujourd'hui, c'est la mémoire ancestrale et la garantie réelle de notre propre liberté.³² (34)

Jenniss' play *Wulustek*, published in 2011, explores a land-related conflict inspired by his Quebecker and Maliseet origins.³³ In *Wulustek*, the author

31 "the territory is the main rallying point for people involved in fostering the development of the project for the reinforcement of the Maliseet identity, which remains alive despite the dispersion" (Calderhead and Klein 584).

32 "The territory is what must remain untouched and free if we want to preserve our human nature. You can of course buy a property, you can sell it; but not the territory. The territory, for us Native Americans of today, is our ancestral memory and the real guarantee of our own freedom" (Sioui Durand 34).

33 *Maliseet* is the English transliteration of Wolastoqiyik. "Historically, the Europeans referred to

depicts a family whose members are going through an identity crisis. Through the characters' interactions among themselves and with the rest of their social circle, Jenniss portrays two different identities (that of the mainstream Canadian culture and that of the Native nations), creating situations that illustrate both the confrontations and the connections that emerge between them. This makes it possible to identify not only the hegemonic discourses, but also the counter-discourses opposing them which contribute to the shaping of inter-ethnic relations in the Canadian territory.

2.3. SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF LAND DISPUTE IN QUEBEC

In the American continent and beyond, Indigenous land revendications are a major issue between the descendants of the settlers and the Indigenous communities. In order “to help right past wrongs” (“Ongoing Negotiations”), negotiation schemes between the First Nations and the provincial and federal governments have been created. One of them is called “comprehensive land claims agreement” and it “recognizes Indigenous communities as having jurisdiction over things like fish and wildlife, plants, water and ocean management, archaeological materials, environmental regulation, land use planning, and resource royalties, among other things” (Alcantara 328). Since 1982, these negotiations have been protected by the Canadian constitution:

Aboriginal rights and treaty rights existing after proclamation of the Constitution Act, 1982 now receive significant legal protection under Section 35. Existing Aboriginal land rights can no longer be extinguished without the consent of those Aboriginal Peoples holding interests in those lands. Aboriginal consent *may* be required to give effect to legislation purporting to extinguish Aboriginal land

the Wolastoqiyik by a Mi'kmaq word, Maliseet (or Malecite), roughly translating to English as 'broken talkers.' The name indicates that, according to the Mi'kmaq, the Wolastoqiyik language is a 'broken' version of their own. Today, there are six Wolastoqiyik Maritime communities in Canada and one in Maine. In the 2016 census, 7,635 people identified as having Wolastoqiyik ancestry” (McFeat).

rights, even if compensation is paid. Finally, government regulation of Aboriginal land rights may still be possible, if appropriate and meaningful consultation is undertaken with the affected Aboriginal communities. (“Section 35”, emphasis added)

It is very significant that they use ‘may’ and not ‘must’, which means it is a possibility and not an obligation to ask for their consent. Nevertheless, the existence of these tools established by the Canadian state is not a guarantee of success in terms of implementation: “Indigenous communities constantly complain that the federal, provincial, and territorial governments routinely fail to fully respect and implement the modern treaties” (Alcantara 328). Thus, Indigenous communities are rarely granted the right to say no whenever a project to transform a certain sector inhabited by them is being negotiated:

Même si on accepte la possibilité de reconnaître le droit au territoire à des nations autochtones, on refuse de leur reconnaître le droit de dire non au développement sur celui-ci. Le gouvernement colonial, qui a légué son droit constitutionnel à l’État canadien, a protégé de manière impérieuse le droit exclusif de la Couronne à l’exploitation des ressources; l’usage et l’organisation du territoire au Canada sont en conséquence structurellement soumis à cette prérogative souveraine.³⁴ (Giroux and Mailhot 25)

The Oka Crisis is a useful example of this problem. In the summer of 1990, Mohawk people organised blockades and barricades in order to protest against the expansion of a golf course and a number of condominiums over a Mohawk cemetery surrounded by a pine forest. CBC News reporter Loren Pindera contextualises the confrontation:

34 “Even if we accept the possibility of recognising the right to the land of Indigenous nations, we refuse to acknowledge them the right to say no to development on this one. The colonial government, which bequeathed its constitutional right to the Canadian state, has imperatively protected the exclusive right of the Crown to the exploitation of resources; the use and organization of the territory in Canada are therefore structurally subject to this sovereign prerogative” (Giroux and Mailhot 25).

The Mohawks claim all of the land originally known as the Seigneury of the Lake of Two Mountains – which was given to the Sulpician order of priests by King Louis XV of France for the ‘use and benefit’ of the Mohawks and Algonquins whom the Catholic priests were determined to Christianize. Over the decades that followed, the Sulpicians sold off much of that land to European settlers. That vast tract of land, which includes the rich agricultural farmlands and Mirabel airport, is subject to negotiations with the federal government under its specific land-claims process – negotiations which have been on-again and off-again over the years.

The Canadian Army intervened to mediate in this land dispute between the Mohawk and the city of Oka, since the provincial police retreated after losing one of their officers. “During the crisis, the federal government agreed to purchase the Pines in order to prevent further development. The golf course expansion and condominium construction were cancelled” (Marshall). The Oka Crisis illustrates how power dynamics operate within the framework of modern colonialism in Canada, where the settlers are the ones actually in charge of governmental institutions – the same ones that, almost always, dismiss the Indigenous self-determination projects. This story was condensed within one iconic picture in both national and international reports:

In the Oka shot, a white soldier in a helmet and combat gear stands nose-to-nose with a man whose face is almost completely covered with a hat, dark glasses, and a bandana. He is wearing camouflage fatigues and has a rifle slung over his shoulder. The soldier, shorter and resolutely looking up, is young and white; the other, larger and apparently older, leans into his space threateningly. The picture strips away a huge number of complications, so that what remains is a binary, the binary that ties an identity as a white settler Anglo-Canadian to the existence of an Aboriginal Other, who leans in threateningly from another – uncivilized – time-frame [...] But the representational and ideological binary that ties white and Aboriginal together as twinned identities needs not only to be treated with irony

or wit, but also to be undone as part of the work of decolonization, if sovereignty is to be returned to Aboriginal people on their own lands. Those of us who have grown up as beneficiaries of the white law have to work to understand how these binaries operate before we can move on to learning something else, other epistemologies, other laws. Our identities will need massive revision. (Fee 203)

The dualism perpetuated by this picture promotes destructive relationships between the Indigenous communities and the settlers. Rather than focusing on the differences between these two communities, modern treaties recognise both groups as nations and encourage a nation-to-nation relationship:

To date, 26 modern treaties have been concluded between the Crown and Indigenous peoples, covering over 40 percent of Canada's land mass. More modern treaties will be signed in the coming years; more than 70 Indigenous groups are currently negotiating modern treaties with the Government of Canada. ("What is a Modern Treaty?")

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is another example of governmental actions for decolonisation. This approach has been described by Canadian political scientist Matt James as "a form of symbolic reparation oriented towards transformation" (21). James has also highlighted the weaknesses of these political apologies:

an exclusively victim-centred focus may function like a 'quasi-apology' in which wrongdoer agency is obscured by an emphasis on victim experiences, with 'sorry for what happened to you' standing in for 'sorry for what I did'. Certainly, the federal government and churches have shown no desire even remotely corresponding to that of the former students to share openly and meaningfully the truths in their possession. (22)

Following Descartes and Hegel, Linda Tuhiwai Smith challenges the foundations of Western culture's dominant mindset:

concepts such as the mind or the intellect, the soul, reason, virtue and morality are not in themselves ‘real’ or biological parts of a human body. [...] What makes ideas ‘real’ is the system of knowledge, the formations of culture, and the relations of power in which these concepts are located. (48)

Just as Tuhiwai Smith contributes to decolonising academia with her seminal text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Dave Jenniss embraces a similar path as an Indigenous playwright who opposes the assimilation of his people’s culture. By keeping it alive and present in his works and representing the many conflicted aspects of its current situation, Jenniss actively participates in the decolonisation of Canadian drama.

2.4. WULUSTEK

This chapter is devoted to analysing how representations of the natural environment, the ecological crisis, femininity, masculinity, and power dynamics operate in Dave Jenniss’ play *Wulustek*. To do so, I will be using the text and photographs available on *Les Productions Ondinnok’s* website. Published by *Dramaturges Éditeurs* in 2011, *Wulustek’s* cover illustration portrays a pair of open hands holding a fistful of black earth with a tree growing from it. On the back cover, we find the following sentence – an excerpt taken from the last pages of the play: “MARC. J’vais commencer par protéger chacun des arbres” (Jenniss back cover).³⁵ The subject of the play is introduced to the reader by both the illustration and the above-mentioned sentence: that is, the human being’s potential to protect but also to destroy nature. Holding a tree in one’s palm is an image that reinforces the idea of human power, of our domination over natural elements – a hierarchical framework that disregards human beings’ dependency on the environment. On the website, there is a short video featuring a number of quotations from different scenes of the play. Eleven

³⁵ “MARC. I will start by protecting each tree” (Jenniss back cover).

pictures reveal key elements of *Wulustek's* scenography. For instance, a chain-link fence placed on the forefront of the stage acts as a barrier that separates the audience from the actors. Behind the metallic fence there is a fireplace, several camping chairs, rocks, and a red flag covered with symbols of a fictional nation of Indigenous people. An actor wears a business suit, another one wears a cap and a hoodie. A pair formed by an actor and an actress are dressed in traditional Indigenous leather jackets accessorised with beads, bones, and long fringes. At some point, the actress also wears feathers in her hair. Visual representations of settler and Indigenous clothes meet onstage, efficiently depicting the cultural conflicts and common points between identities that are presented in the plot that I will now describe.

Every year, all the members of the Miktouch family get together somewhere next to the ancestral territory they reclaim. Currently exploiting the forest of this land, the First Wood company has built a chain-link fence designed to limit access to the site. The fence is watched by a security guard, Jimmy Rock, who is sympathetic to the Miktouch family's fight as he belongs to a (real) Indigenous nation: the Innu. David Miktouch, who now works as a lawyer at the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, drives back to his hometown for their annual celebration. This time he is coming with a friend: Julie Reynolds, a journalist who works for Canada's National Broadcasting Company. While David's family perceives this newcomer as a potential girlfriend for him, his brother Marc tries to seduce her.

Marc lives in his hometown and works as a delivery man for the local grocery store. He shares his brother and father's enthusiasm to protect the ancestral land, but this is not reflected in his actions. Matthew Miktouch, the father, is the chief of the Malamèque people. He lives outside the reserve with his wife H el ene Desrois, a non-Indigenous woman who is deeply committed to keeping alive the Indigenous culture and spirituality. However, the annual protest against First Wood ends up being a failure because the rest of the Malamèque community do not show up, and nor do the media. The Miktouch family raise their flag and yell in vain when a truck passes by. Before lunchtime, H el ene enacts an Indigenous ceremony. Then, Marc and Julie slip behind the fence and find out that

First Wood has clear-cut the forest: all the trees are gone. This discovery leads to the confession of a betrayal: Matthew Miktouch, the father figure and chief of the nation, was aware of the situation and had even accepted money from the company.

2.5. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

2.5.1. The Ancestral Land

In this section, I develop my hypothesis that different visions of the natural environment are articulated through male and female characters. This demonstrates how, on the one hand, the male characters express the desire to possess the land and fight to do so, and, on the other hand, the females are supportive of their male counterparts' actions, but also show curiosity and gratitude in terms of their land and of nature in general. This analysis will be complemented by a reading of the territory's role, which, as will be discussed in the following pages, is shown as a constantly changing entity in *Wulustek*.

First, the land is presented as a key element in historical memory, essential to the cultural reconstruction of Canada's First Nations. As chief of the Malamèque, Matthew Miktouch gives an official speech in which he set out his arguments for reclaiming the ancestral land. He mentions the recent discovery of an archaeological site, the importance of his ancestors' traditional lifestyle, and his desire to recover his father's house:

Depuis des temps immémoriaux, nos ancêtres, nos anciens, votre arrière-grand-père, votre grand-père, mon père, ont nomadisé sur ce territoire pour assurer leur subsistance et celle de leurs familles [...] Et l'autre bord de ladite clôture, juste un peu plus bas, il y a la grosse roche où s'élèvent les restes de la cabane d'Edmond Miktouch, votre grand-père, qui était le dernier Malamèque à vivre de la trappe au bord de la rivière Wulustek !³⁶ (Jenniss 48)

36 "Since the dawn of time, our ancestors, our elders, your great-grandfather, your grandfather, my father, have lived as nomads on this territory to ensure their subsistence and that of their families [...] On the other side of said fence, just below, there is the big rock where the remains

In his speech, he refers to “an Edenic time before colonization and industrialization” that perpetuates the “myth of passive indigenous peoples who simply lived in but did not transform ‘nature’” (Tuana 195). In the context of Indigenous resurgence movements, this discourse is not strictly colonialist but rather embraces a neo-traditional viewpoint. Furthermore, he juxtaposes two visions of the land that have been problematised by several ecofeminist theorists: “La terre est pour nous une mère nourricière dont nous sommes les gardiens. Aujourd’hui, encore une fois nous affirmons que nous sommes les maîtres absolus de ce territoire” (Jenniss 48).³⁷ Matthew describes the earth as a nurturing mother – a trope that reinforces the subjugation of both women and nature, according to an ecofeminist perspective. In his article “Sex-Typing the Planet” published in 1988, Patrick D. Murphy claims that “designating an entity [the earth] female in a patriarchal culture guarantees its subservient status” (157). The earth is not only personified as female; Matthew describes it as a mother who feeds her children, that is, human beings. Karla A. Henderson argues that this metaphor is a counterproductive strategy when it comes to encouraging ecological action. She explores the implications of associating the image of earth with that of a human mother:

the earth is not our mother; it does not take care of us if we treat it nicely. [...] If the earth is our mother, then we are children and cannot be held accountable. [...] Further sex typing is not good because the female status is cast in a subservient role. It also imposes a human imagery and the earth does not have human dimensions. The earth as mother also may suggest that ‘mother will pick up after us’ and love us regardless of what we do. (“Sex-Typing the Planet” 132)

of Edmond Miktouch’s cabin stand, your grandfather, who was the last Malamèque to live by trapping next to the Wulustek River!” (Jenniss 48)

³⁷ “The earth is for us a nurturing mother of which we are the guardians. Today, once again, we affirm that we are the absolute masters of this territory” (Jenniss 48).

Positionality is the key to contextualising the interpretation of this expression. Is there a difference between a person who belongs to a settler community and who uses the expression “Mother Earth”, and Matthew, an Indigenous character who mentions “Mother Earth” in a decolonising struggle that revalorises traditional cosmogonies and figures? The previously quoted ecofeminist theorists have not specifically addressed Indigenous communities’ ontology and political actions. In different colonial contexts, Indigenous, feminist, and settler groups use the same expression, *Pachamama* (an Andean deity, a term usually translated as *Mother Earth*), while their goals are diametrically opposed:

what is occurring in Bolivia is a conflict between the state that assumes Pachamama as a docile Mother Earth and those activists, including feminist and indigenous groups, who understand it as a powerful being capable of fostering political action. At stake in this conflict, one in which issues of difference and generativity play a significant role, is the articulation of different modes of living and making political decisions in relation to Pachamama. (Tola 118)

After presenting the earth as a nurturing mother, Matthew puts himself and his nation in a position of domination; he is above *her* and he wants to be the only one to own *her*, without sharing this power with the settler government or the wood company. His words *absolute master* seem to be deeply ingrained within a Western supremacist mindset, according to which nature is inferior to humans. In her work *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Australian ecofeminist scholar Val Plumwood discusses the importance of the master model in order to achieve domination:

the marriage of reason and domination not only subjugates the feminine but also the slave, the animal, and the natural [...] the once revered and benign philosophy of Plato should be considered as a birthplace of domination and the rationality of the master identity. (Bratley and Krueger 476)

The link between exclusion and domination is an important aspect of Plumwood's theory, which locates feminism as a central element in the rethinking of our relationship with nature:

The framework of assumptions in which the human/nature contrast has been formed in the west is one not only of feminine connectedness with and passivity towards nature, but also complementarily one of exclusion and domination of the sphere of nature by a white, largely male elite, which I shall call the master model. (Plumwood *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* 23)

The metaphor of the master makes it easier to identify the desire to rule over others (as is the case with Matthew), and the need to present one's own position as the best means for justifying one's right to be superior – to lead. In the context of this dynamic, the settler government's desire to master the land has a direct impact on the Other, as is the case with wildlife and cultural minorities: “Who see the flooding of the First Nation Canadian lands of James Bay for hydroelectric power when they flip a light switch in New York City?” (Murphy “The Women Are Speaking” 44). Second, the local and cultural context adds another layer of meaning to this expression. In 1962, Quebec political leader Jean Lesage popularised the slogan *Maître chez nous* [Masters in our own house], as a means to promote Quebec's hydroelectric development and its nationalisation. Later on, the slogan was associated with Quebec's independence project and is still used today by Canadian media, for example, in this excerpt from a text written by a Montreal-based right-wing columnist who supports the anti-immigration position:

Maîtres chez nous. Parce que nous n'avons pas d'autres chez nous. Parce que le Québec est le seul endroit sur terre où notre peuple pourra un jour cesser d'avoir à justifier son existence. Souverain. Indépendant. Libre. Maître chez lui. Maîtres chez nous. C'était un

souvenir. Cela pourrait bien redevenir un projet. À condition de redevenir entre temps un idéal.³⁸ (Bock-Côté)

Placing Matthew's discourse in an Indigenous context helps to highlight the ongoing negotiation where other entities such as the state claim ownership over the land. As an Indigenous leader, Matthew is a subordinate within the dominant structure of land negotiation imposed by the state:

Whereas titling schemes applied around the world have generally sought to convert informal housing settlements into private property allotments, the issue of ownership has not tended to collide with inhabitants' claims of sovereignty against the state. In the context of Indigenous peoples residing on reserves in Canada, these very questions of jurisdiction and authority over land radically change the landscape of privatization and fee simple propertization of land into one of contemporary neocolonial aspirations. (Pasternak 14)

Therefore, being an *absolute master* can be understood as the most appropriate expression to defend an Indigenous right. On the one hand, Matthew reacts to the dominant mindset in a succinct way, by using their language ("master") in order to defend the land that belongs to his people. On the other hand, his son David voices his concerns about a potentially destructive subjugation of the land by human means. His approach represents a new type of Indigenous eco-masculinity, torn between modern political negotiation and the resurgence of their traditions.³⁹ At the beginning of the play, David foresees an ecological catastrophe on the ancestral land. He associates this possible outcome

38 "Masters in your own house. Because we have no other home. Because Quebec is the only place on earth where our people can one day stop having to justify their existence. Sovereign. Independent. Free. Master at home. Masters in our own house. It is a memory. It could be a project again. Provided that in the meantime it becomes an ideal again" (Bock-Côté).

39 In *Critical Ecofeminism*, Greta Gaard calls for a masculinity that is not defined in opposition to ecology: "In advancing a truly ecological and feminist masculinity, the heterosexism implicit in hegemonic constructions of masculinity would need to be resisted [...] drawing on insights and questions from the new queer ecologies" (169).

with the human domination of nature by the wood company and, also, by his own Indigenous nation:

Je sais pas ce que mon père a en tête, mais j'suis pas mal sûr qu'on réclame pas le territoire pour aller à la chasse. Que ça soit par la compagnie ou entre les mains de la nation malamèque, cette terre-là va être violée, déchirée... transformée en quelque chose de plus utile.⁴⁰ (Jenniss 13)

Uncertain of the consequences that might follow once the land is returned to his people, David expresses his disappointment. In other words, when humans take possession of the land, no one wins. Like his father, David portrays the land as female. This gendering of the earth is enacted through the words he chooses: he describes the transformation of wild natural elements into useful resources as rape. The usage of terms commonly employed to describe sexual violence when approaching subjects such as the conquest of the land introduces an element of male dominance in an ungendered matter. His statement reflects the failure of the contemporary relationship between human beings and their natural environment. Even though *Wulustek* does not seem to depict or propose new, alternative ways in which human beings should relate to their natural environment, David does not endorse his father's vision that our mission as human beings is to master nature. David's pessimistic perspective differs from that of his brother Marc, as the latter shows enthusiasm about the potential transformation of the ancestral land. According to Marc, reclaiming the land is the perfect way to solve his identity crisis:

MARC. C'est pour ça qu'on est perdus... que j'suis perdu, que je sais pas qui je suis. C'est parce que j'ai pas de territoire à moi pour mênraciner. J'vais commencer par protéger chacun des arbres. La rivière qui coule de l'autre côté de cette clôture-là, la Wulustek, ben moi, je veux que mes enfants puissent venir se

40 "I don't know what my father has in mind, but I'm pretty sure we do not claim the territory to go hunting. Whether it is by the company or in the hands of the Malamèque nation, this land will be raped, torn apart... transformed into something more useful" (Jenniss 13).

baigner pis boire cette eau-là, c'est sacré. Ça, c'est notre survie.
C'est ça qui va nous donner la dignité. Y faut jamais perdre ça.
C'est toi-même qui me disais ça, m'man.⁴¹ (Jenniss 65)

A sense of belonging and dignity is ascribed by Marc to the ecological preservation of the land and the survival of the Malamèque. He dreams about being a father and enjoying the natural elements – water, wood – present in this territory with his family, as he did with his brother, when they were younger: “David, on va pouvoir aller sur la grosse roche et pêcher comme avant” (Jenniss 65).⁴² Planning to protect every tree, he depicts the First Nations’ peoples as their brothers and sisters; he sees himself as the saviour of the land – a guardian of the environment. Now that the notion of land in parallel with the construction of the male characters has been exposed through Matthew’s discourse, and challenged by David’s scepticism and Marc’s nostalgia, I will discuss how the female characters convey a different vision of the territory.

Julie is the first female character to describe the land. Travelling from Ottawa, she comments on the remoteness of the territory: “C’est donc bien long venir ici” (Jenniss 10).⁴³ The long journey is not satisfactory – she announces her disappointment while looking at the scenery, as if a territory should be beautiful in order to deserve ecological preservation: “Je m’excuse, mais c’est un peu laid” (Jenniss 10).⁴⁴ The ugliness of the landscape is mentioned several times in the play.

The first scene of the second act begins with a monologue in which Julie establishes a connection between her identity crisis and the place where she comes from: “Depuis que je suis petite, quand on me demande d’où je viens, j’ai de la misère à respirer” (Jenniss 51).⁴⁵ In her quest for a

41 “MARC. That’s why we’re lost... why I’m lost, that’s why I do not know who I am. It’s because I have no territory to take root. I will start by protecting each tree. The river flowing on the other side of the fence, the Wulustek, well, I want my children to come to bathe and drink that water, it’s sacred. That’s our survival. That’s what will give us our dignity. You must never lose that. It was you who told me that, mom” (Jenniss 65).

42 “David, we’ll be able to go on top of the big rock and fish like we used to do” (Jenniss 65).

43 “It’s a long way to come here” (Jenniss 10).

44 “I’m sorry but it’s a bit ugly” (Jenniss 10).

45 “Since I was a child, I have had trouble breathing every time I’m asked where I’m from” (Jenniss 51).

sense of belonging, she mentions her family origins and Ottawa, the city where she was born and which she perceives as a rootless community: “Un monde de nomades qui s’installent et quittent la ville après chaque élection fédérale [...] un endroit de passage” (Jenniss 51).⁴⁶ She envies Héléne’s passion for the Indigenous culture and spirituality. To help Julie, who feels lost, Héléne shares a Malamèque legend with her, the legend of the sacred tree:

HÉLÈNE. Les Malamèques disent que sur leur territoire, il y a un arbre qui a le pouvoir de régénérer et ressourcer chaque Malamèque qui s’approche de lui. T’as juste à mettre ta main sur son tronc ou encore mieux à te coucher à son pied pis regarder ses feuilles bouger dans le vent. Pis instantanément t’ès en harmonie pis tu sais ce que t’ès venue faire sur la terre.

JULIE. Il est où cet arbre-là ? Je pense que j’ai besoin de le trouver, moi aussi.

HÉLÈNE. Les Malamèques ont perdu la trace de leur arbre. Mais on sait qu’il existe. Y est peut-être ici, pas loin, l’autre bord de la clôture. Moi je l’ai vu deux fois en rêve. Pis y m’a donné de la force. (*Temps.*) Trouve ton arbre, Julie.⁴⁷ (Jenniss 59-60)

While the tree was conceptualised as a passive agent by the Miktouch men and commodified by First Wood, Héléne gives a new purpose to a tree of the ancestral land, while passing on cultural and spiritual knowledge. American anthropologist Enrique Salmón developed the notion of *kincentric ecology* to define the human-nature relationship among Indigenous cultures:

46 “A world of nomads who move in and out of the city after every federal election [...] a crossing point” (Jenniss 51).

47 “HÉLÈNE. The Malamèque says that on their territory there is a tree that has the power to regenerate and revitalise any Malamèque who approaches it. You just have to put your hand on its trunk or, even better, to lie down at its foot and watch its leaves move in the wind. And then, instantly, you’re in harmony and you know what you’re doing on earth. JULIE. Where is this tree? I think I need to find it, too. HÉLÈNE. The Malamèque has lost track of their tree. But we know that it exists. It may be here, not far, on the other side of the fence. I saw it twice in a dream. And it gave me strength. (*Time.*) Find your tree, Julie” (Jenniss 59-60).

Indigenous people view both themselves and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. It is an awareness that life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin. The kin, or relatives, include all the natural elements of an ecosystem. Indigenous people are affected by and, in turn, affect the life around them. The interactions that result from this ‘kincentric ecology’ enhance and preserve the ecosystem. (1327)

Hélène’s relationship with nature follows this conceptual model, according to which any form of life thriving on the ancestral land is perceived as kin. In a similar way, Matthew’s description of the earth lets us know that he considers it as very close to his people: it (*she*) is part of his family, a relative such as a mother. According to the legend, the Malamèque have lost track of their sacred tree. This narrative is very convenient in ecological terms: all the trees must remain intact in order to protect the sacred one. Hélène also mentions the importance of touching the tree. This physical connection with nature helps to achieve mental wellbeing and find a purpose in life, if we are to believe in Hélène’s recalling of the legend. While Julie embodies a white Canadian settler who is ignorant of virtually everything about the First Nations’ culture, Hélène is well informed and sees herself as someone in charge of passing on their cultural and spiritual heritage. At some point in the play, she presides over an Indigenous ritual for thanking nature. This takes place before the land claim demonstration and the celebration of their annual family reunion:

Kitchi Mundoak, Créateur, Transformateur. Merci pour nous avoir donné la terre, l’air, les plantes, les animaux, le feu, la chaleur, le soleil et tout ce qui nous garde en vie. Merci... *Megwetch*.⁴⁸ (Jenniss 46)

Hélène embraces some sort of Indigenous cosmology where nature is an intrinsic element of spirituality, present in the way she expresses herself in

48 “*Kitchi Mundoak*, Creator, Transformer. Thank you for giving us the land, the air, the plants, the animals, the fire, the warmth, the sun and everything that keeps us alive. Thank you... *Megwetch*” (Jenniss 46).

relation to others, human and non-human. For instance, when Matthew complains about a stomachache, she answers: “Respire par les pieds, t'es chez vous, sur ton territoire... Respire par les racines” (Jenniss 62).⁴⁹ By doing so, she connects the land to the act of breathing and encourages her husband to take consciousness of his pain so as to trigger a healing process. The sacred tree legend also connects faith and healing. H el ene tells us that her encounter with the sacred tree of the Malam eque in one of her dreams is what gives her strength. This relationship between H el ene and the tree helps her go on; she is transformed by her belief in the spiritual power she attributes to this icon. Her personal testimony is accompanied by symbolic guidance addressed to Julie – “Trouve ton arbre”⁵⁰ (Jenniss 59) – where references to the tree are symbols that can be applied to anything with the potential to give her a purpose in life, whether it be inside or outside the First Nations’ culture. H el ene explains that the tree might be on the other side of the fence. This increases Julie’s curiosity – she has already wanted to cross the metallic border. In conclusion, Dave Jenniss’ Indigenous and non-Indigenous female characters establish an inter-ethnic dialogue around Indigenous cosmogonies, a dialogue rooted in a metaphorical and spiritual depiction of the natural environment.

2.5.2. First Wood’s Fence as the Fourth Wall: Political and Aesthetic Implications

Through the construction of the fence, the hiring of a security guard, and the installation of numerous security cameras, the company deploys technological tools to control human access to the territory – measures that might disturb local wildlife. While the land is being rented to First Wood by the government, its ownership is legally disputed between the company and the Malam eque. The ancestral land is then isolated, delimited as a private territory which cannot be accessed by people other than the members of First Wood. This barrier is visually represented

49 “Breathe through the feet, you are at home, on your territory... Breathe through the roots” (Jenniss 62).

50 “Find your tree” (Jenniss 59).

onstage with a large metal fence. By placing this fence on the proscenium,⁵¹ the production team of *Wulustek* highlights the invisible frontier existing between the actors and the audience, commonly known as the fourth wall.

The *fourth wall* is a theatrical convention where actors perform a play without any interaction with the audience. The *wall* is invisible for the audience and opaque for the actors. According to theatre scholar Klaas Tindemans, it is an essential component: “modern theatre exists thanks to a seamless suspension of disbelief: this is why the fourth wall, which precisely circumscribes the limits of a scenic space, is so essential. Fiction and the acceptance of fiction – these are the dynamics of theatrical representation” (37). French philosopher Denis Diderot was the first to propose this concept: “Don’t think about the spectator anymore, act as if he doesn’t exist. Imagine there is a big wall at the edge of the stage separating you from the parterre. Act as if the curtain was never raised” (Diderot *in* Tindemans 31). The actors look at the spectators once the fence is opened as if they were on the ancestral territory. By doing so, the representation of the ancestral land – neither its Edenic version nor its devastated one – is not needed.

The action of the play takes place behind the fence. In their article “Trous, brèches et passages: la médialité d’une clôture” [Holes, Breaches and Passages: The Mediality of a Fence], Nathalie Casemajor and Heather Davis study a fence that divides two Montreal neighbourhoods. Their findings help us to understand the symbolic meaning of a fence in real life and onstage, how it creates mediation and impacts upon the characters in *Wulustek*. The fence structures “les pratiques et les relations sociales [... et elle permet de voir] des modes d’habitat et d’appropriation de l’espace, de la dynamique des relations sociales qui s’y nouent, mais aussi des conflits qui l’animent” (Casemajor and Davis 77).⁵² It is a symbolic place to gather for a land claim, but, in terms of effective activism, it is not the best option. As Julie noticed, this territory is remote. The only

51 The proscenium is located in front of the curtain, on the forefront of the stage.

52 “social practices and relations [... and it shows] the ways of living and appropriation of space, the dynamics of the social relations that are tied to it, but also the conflicts that animate it” (Casemajor and Davis 77).

people passing by are truckers to whom the Miktouch family yell and wave their national flag. The press has received an invitation to cover the event but not a single journalist shows up, except for Julie. Big cities are better for street protests, as the more visible the protests are, the most effective they seem to be. When David first arrives with Julie on the site, he stresses the lack of organisation: “Y a rien en plus pour montrer qu'on est là. Pas de pancarte, pas de monde... pas de drapeau...” (Jenniss 18).⁵³ The lack of attention from the press and the absence of fellow people from the neighbouring village support this assertion.

When the actor who plays Jimmy opens the fence at the end of the play, he breaks the fourth wall. This gesture is repeated by all the actors as they stare at the audience. This aesthetic decision has been widely discussed in the field of political theatre. Breaking the fourth wall is an aesthetical ideology usually associated with the works by famous German playwright Bertolt Brecht:

Brecht's use of the device is intended to interrupt the cathartic, emphatic response of the audience when confronted with emotional intrigue, in order to restore a critical, distanced form of observation. For Brecht, the state of 'suspended disbelief' enabled by the fourth-wall illusion had no place in a theatre that hoped to foster thoughtful and critical audience attitudes. In order to be able to pay attention to the dramatic action in its full complexity – to be able to observe the social conditions of the characters, their relations, the way the story is constructed by the author, or the manner in which the story is presented by the actors – an audience cannot let itself be absorbed into the fantasy of the realist stage. [...] We can see here how the fourth-wall question becomes for Brecht not only an issue connected to the audience's experience of the action on stage, but also to the more fundamental ontological struggle between the fantasy of the stage and the reality of lived experience. The fourth wall not only blunts the critical attentions of the audience, but also obstructs the

drawing of connections between the plot of the play and events in the real world. (Davis “Not a Soul” 87-9)

When the fence is opened, the devastation experienced by the actors is addressed to the spectators. The protesters achieve their goal of opening the gate, but it is too late: The ecological disaster has already taken place and the ancestral land is compared to a desert by Marc – silent and empty, with no trace of life. Removing the metallic fence from the stage gives the spectators a clear vision of the actors’ desperation and emotional outburst. There is a clear contrast between the traditional function of breaking the fourth wall, which usually causes an interruption of the fiction, and its purpose in *Wulustek*; the audience can perceive more intensely the emotions caused by First Wood’s clearcutting, and this allows them to dive deeper into the fiction and realise how the loss of the ancestral land has affected the characters.

Before Jimmy opens the fence, Marc goes across it through a hole and invites Julie to do the same when no one is paying attention. The act of crossing this border confronts both characters with the sad truth: the frontier does not protect the forest from foreign menaces, but rather it hides the devastation from the protestors’ gaze: “Y ont toute détruit, y a plus de rivière, la grosse roche, ils l’ont fait exploser” (Jenniss 70).⁵⁴ The Miktouches have no other choice than to face the appalling truth after Marc’s trespassing. He comes back onstage by running through the audience – he is out of his mind, shocked by this ecological catastrophe. His state of consciousness can be understood through the notion of viscous porosity developed by cultural studies scholar Nancy Tuana:

viscous porosity helps us understand an interactionist attention to the processes of becoming in which unity is dynamic and always interactive and agency is diffusely enacted in complex networks of relations.⁵⁵ (189)

54 “They destroyed everything, there is no more river, the big rock, they blew it up” (Jenniss 70).

55 I was introduced to the notion of *viscous porosity* at a lecture entitled “Environmental Humanities & the New Materiality of Borders” by ecocritic Juan Ignacio Oliva Cruz at the University of Santiago de Compostela in April 2019. Oliva Cruz presented *viscous porosity* as an essential

The characters' discovery of the ravaged land alters not only the narrative that was being developed in the play up to this point, but also the Miktoches' symbolic relationship with their ancestral land. The shock of the discovery contributes to building the dramatic tension to a climax: David threatens to kill his father. He links the destruction of the land to the loss of their soul: "Comment t'as pu prendre la seule chose qui nous gardait en vie. Tu viens de prendre nos âmes" (Jenniss).⁵⁶

2.5.3. Individual and Community-Based Projects for the Territory

If the Malamèque were to win the ongoing governmental negotiations, what would happen to the ancestral land? This is what Julie asked the Miktoches before crossing the fence. Hélène is the first to answer, even though she does not have any concrete project. For her, gaining access to the territory is like being allowed to visit paradise on earth. While performing the ritual, Hélène explains that humans and nature are interconnected; she perceives the natural environment through a spiritual filter that helps her bond with the ancestral land in a sacred manner:

La rivière nous appartient et nous appartenons à la rivière. Comme les saumons remontent le courant de la Wulustek, nous revenons ici au lieu de notre origine. [...] Que cette eau devienne le sang

concept in ecocritical studies. The term was coined by Nancy Tuana in 2008. In an article in which she studies Hurricane Katrina in order to illustrate this concept, she explains that "[v]iscosity is neither fluid nor solid, but intermediate between them. Attention to the *porosity* of interactions helps to undermine the notion that distinctions, as important as they might be in particular contexts, signify a natural or unchanging boundary, a fixed entity. At the same time, 'viscosity' retains an emphasis on resistance to changing form, thereby a more helpful image than 'fluidity', which is too likely to promote a notion of open possibilities and to overlook sites of resistance and opposition or attention to the complex ways in which material agency is often involved in interactions, including, but not limited to, human agency" (194).

"How could you take the only thing who kept us alive? You have just taken our souls" (Jenniss 74).

de nos veines, qu'elle circule dans nos cœurs et nous transforme à jamais.⁵⁷ (Jenniss 46)

In her eyes, any positive outcomes of the land claim are a marvellous event, similar to winning the lottery: “Moi, c’est comme si tu me demandais qu’est-ce que je ferais avec le gros lot du 6/49... C’est comme l’Éden.” (Jenniss 64).⁵⁸ While she does not mention any clear project, her husband Matthew has one in mind. He plans to build a cabin for the two of them: “Moi pis Hélène, on va se construire un beau gros chalet, style américain” (Jenniss 64).⁵⁹ In Quebec, the word chalet [cottage, villa] refers to a second home dedicated to leisure, and it is usually located in the woods, typically by a river or a lake. In this context, the adjective American has more to do with a way of life than with an architectural style. With his desire, Matthew exemplifies how cultural imperialism and assimilation work. He is seduced by the mainstream culture/colonial dream that has been imposed on them, a lifestyle with numerous negative ecological consequences:

populations beyond the United States embrace and practice the high levels of consumption and consumerism and the attendant constellation of socio-ecological relations that reflect and reproduce the ‘American’ lifestyle. It is one predicated on injustice in the form of the grossly unequal allocation of life and death circumstances, and states of existence in between, across the planet. Thus, while it certainly enlivens some, it contributes to the death of many. (Nevins 210)

The American *chalet* is a place where Matthew can accomplish an American way of life; it is an expensive project that leads us to wonder whether the land claiming comes with an economic reward. However,

57 “The river belongs to us and we belong to the river. Like salmon go upstream from the Wulustek, we return here, to our place of origin. [...] May this water become the blood of our veins, flow into our hearts and transform us forever” (Jenniss 46).

58 “For me, it’s as if you were wondering what I would do with the jackpot of the Lotto 6/49 ... It’s like Eden” (Jenniss 64).

59 “Me and Hélène, we are going to build a big, beautiful cabin, American style” (Jenniss 64).

this is only confirmed later on, when Matthew tells us that he has received money from the company: “Les Miktouch sont riches !” (Jenniss 73).⁶⁰ The prospect of a potential fortune to finance this construction project leads Jimmy to imagining himself as an employee of Hélène and Matthew in the event of losing his job at First Wood: “Pis moi, je vais être votre gardien, pis j’vais couper le gazon” (Jenniss 65).⁶¹ The testimonies presented above, which are limited to individual aspirations (spiritual, material, professional), might lead us to think that, in this play, the return of their ancestral land to the Malamèque people relies only on individual projects that do not really take ecological and social justice into consideration. According to Canadian criminologist Shiri Pasternak, the lack of communal projects “must be read in the context of a reorganization of society under neoliberalism” (1). In her article “How Capitalism Will Save Colonialism,” she explains that:

The difference between individual and collective rights is not simply an internal dispute unfolding among Indigenous individuals, organizations, and nations. Rather, the struggle between individual and collective rights comprises the politically contested terrain of settler-colonialism today. It is a struggle increasingly marked by the interests of non-Indigenous freemarketeers intervening in Indigenous self-determination struggles for lands in Canada and worldwide. (Pasternak 2)

Unlike the characters previously analysed, Marc has not fallen for the individualistic dream. He is the only Miktouch who has in mind a communal project in relation to the ancestral land, which contrasts with his father’s apathy: “La communauté, la communauté... y a pas juste ça” (Jenniss 65).⁶² What Marc plans is the revival of his nation: “Pis une fois qu’on va l’avoir, le territoire, je vais mettre des wigwams tout le long de la rivière,⁶³ et faire un campement, comme dans le temps de grand-p’pa,

60 “The Miktouches are rich!” (Jenniss 73)

61 “And me, I am going to be your security guy, plus I can mow the lawn” (Jenniss 65).

62 “Community ... It’s all you talk about! Community is not everything there is, you know” (Jenniss 65).

63 The wigwam is a traditional Indigenous dwelling used by nomads in North America, a “shelter

pour faire revivre la Nation malamèque” (Jenniss 65).⁶⁴ Will Marc’s plan empower the community, or will it put it into danger? The ancestral land is a fundamental element of cultural preservation, an ideal setting where Indigenous knowledge can be shared and experienced.

Is the construction of traditional dwellings such as *wigwams* an effective strategy to revive the Malamèque culture? Marc talks about building *wigwams* and a camp, but he never explains his intentions: does he want to represent the ancestral lifestyle, or does he *literally* want to live according to the tradition by inhabiting those constructions, turning them into their actual homes? The latter would be a radical change in Marc’s lifestyle, as he is a character who enjoys modern comfort and might not be ready to embrace the traditional lifestyle of his Malamèque ancestors. Will this be a full-time occupation or a leisure activity that he might develop in his free time? Marc’s plan raises various questions in regard to the reconciliation of the Indigenous people’s traditional lifestyle with their contemporary lifestyle, which is constantly adapting to the colonial state regulations and is also influenced by the myth of progress and economic growth. Marc’s communal project for cultural revival resonates with the notion of *buen vivir*, a lifestyle popularised by many Indigenous nations of South America:

These communities have embraced *buen vivir* as a form of resistance to colonialism and have, in some cases, been able to stay at the margins of modern-day capitalism. [...] *Buen vivir* is a concept that aims to dismantle the idea of a universal goal for all societies, including a ‘productivist’ understanding of progress and a one-dimensional understanding of development as technology driven to produce economic growth. *Buen vivir* requires a rich, dynamic and complex vision that is a path in itself, rather than a destination

for a mobile population” (Algeo 2). Its structure has been described as “shaped like half an orange” and “elongate” by the American anthropologist Thomas Talbot Waterman: “The wigwam in many cases had room enough to accommodate a large number of families. It would contain, in addition to benches and sleeping platforms, space for a year’s supply of food” (3-4).

64 “And when we have our land back, I’ll place wigwams all along the river, so we’ll have a camp like in Grandpa’s time, and I’ll bring the Malamèque back to life!” (Jenniss 65)

– it needs to be imagined in order to be built. (Acosta and Martínez Abarca 131)

In this way, Marc's proposal can be read as an alternative lifestyle to the one that goes along with capitalist modernity, "critical alternatives [that] have been marginalised from the conventional discourse, [and that] re-emerge in these times of crisis" (Acosta and Martínez Abarca 131). In previous pages I offered a *rational* analysis as a way to approach Marc's plan and its feasibility. My perception of Marc's proposal changes in the light of the notion of *buen vivir*. It allows me to be more conscious of how my Western mindset frames my literary criticism and has led me to reassess Marc's idea in terms of potentiality instead of reducing it to an unfinished idealistic project. An ethno-botanical reading would be equally appropriate to show the past and present positive connections existing between the forest and the First Nations communities in terms of physical subsistence and spiritual wellbeing. Ultimately, Marc's communal initiatives and other personal projects presented above do not seem to be incompatible with an eco-friendly way of inhabiting the land.

Unfortunately, the projects of the Miktouches and their circle do not come to a good end: the forest company cuts down all the trees and destroys the remains of the Miktouches last cabin before they can put their plans into action. First Wood's accountability for its environmental impact is never questioned in the play, as the leaders of the company are not present. No representatives of First Wood leaders are showcased. This absence reflects a common situation where companies tend to refuse to enter into dialogue with protesters. By doing so, they do not need to articulate an official discourse in order to defend their position. Clearcut logging has irreversible consequences for the earth – it is a form of environmental violence. In addition to First Wood's silence, the indifference of the media and the betrayal of the Malamèque chief are good examples of slow violence – a term coined by environmental humanities scholar Rob Nixon:

To address violence discounted by dominant structures of apprehension is necessarily to engage the culturally variable issue

of who counts as a witness. Contests over what counts as violence are intimately entangled with conflicts over who bears the social authority of witness, which entails much more than simply seeing or not seeing. [...] As the journalistic chestnut has it, 'if it bleeds, it leads.' And as a corollary, if it's bloodless, slow-motion violence, the story is more likely to be buried, particularly if it's relayed by people whose witnessing authority is culturally discounted. (16)

Matthew is aware of his position in Canadian society: being a chief and a member of the Malamèque does not give him leverage to negotiate as an equal with other power structures such as a federal ministry and an international company. His betrayal is depicted as a violent gesture in the play, which explains the emotional reactions of the rest of the characters. An ecofeminist analysis of this betrayal might be a useful tool to understand fully how this kind of violence works. Violence appears to be more than a brief, quick, and intense event that instigates people to act (i.e., betrayal). Maybe we should start seeing it as a long-term process that extends along centuries, as Rob Nixon argues in his seminal work *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. In the play, imperialism is a good example of this long-term violence.

2.5.4. Matthew's Betrayal: The Chief's Discourse Versus First Wood's Money

Matthew experiences different states of becoming in this play. First, he is officially recognised as part of the First Nations people by the Canadian government. This information is provided in a conversation between Hélène and Julie:

JULIE. Vous avez dit que Matthew était redevenu indien ?

HÉLÈNE. Ben... On était encore à Candiac dans ce temps-là. Une belle journée, le registraire a appelé Matthew pour lui dire que le dossier était réglé... avec la carte pis toute, là. Puis on

a déménagé ici et mes deux gars sont devenus malamèques.⁶⁵
(Jenniss 56)

Hélène uses the word *Indian* in this scene: that is, the legal term appearing in the status cards issued by the government (along with a band membership) as proof of recognition of their ethnicity (“Indian Status”). However, power dynamics are perpetuated by the use of terms such as *Indian*. Peters and Mika contextualise this linguistic problem:

In the human sciences, as the French philosopher Foucault (1980) demonstrates so convincingly, even the most basic terminology is a discursive construction of ‘knowledge/power.’ The common currency of all of these terms – Aborigine, Indian, Indigenous, or First Nations – their uses and valency in government, legal and scholarly contexts, are often offensive to tribal groups especially when used in an international, totalizing and universal way to define radically different groups because they have the effect of homogenizing peoples in ways that early imperial anthropology created ‘others’ as ‘Indigenous’ in differentiation and opposition to colonial settlers, often using these labels for legal, educational, administrative and policing purposes. (1229)

Then, Matthew is elected as the chief of the Malamèque, a position that he mentions several times during the play. Finally, he betrays his nation and his family when he secretly agrees to sell the ancestral land to First Wood. There is a gap between his public speech and his actions. On the one hand, he advocates for the colonised people in Quebec in an ecologically engaged discourse filled with references to social justice: “Redonner ce territoire à mes fils, à la famille Miktouch, à la Nation malamèque, voilà ma mission comme grand chef. À bas l’injustice !

65 “JULIE. Did you say that Matthew has become Indian again? HÉLÈNE. Well, we were still in Candiach at the time. The registrar called Matthew to tell him that the matter was settled... with the card and everything, you know. Then we moved here, and my two boys became Malamèque” (Jenniss 56).

NOUS VAINCRONS ! ” (Jenniss 49).⁶⁶ However, he displays his inner thoughts when his subterfuge is discovered. In an attempt to justify his betrayal, Matthew explains that money erases the difference between Indigenous communities and those of the privileged members of society:

Qu'est-ce que vous avez à me regarder comme ça ? La réalité, c'est pas comme vous pensez ! Indien pis non-Indien, y en a pus de différence. On est tous pareils, juste une gang de carcajous qui courent après l'argent ! L'argent ! [...] C'est tout ce qui reste ! Les gros mangent les petits ! Tu dormais, moi je dormais pas ! Au plus fort la poche ! Aujourd'hui, c'est les compagnies qui mènent le monde ! L'argent, c'est leur langage, c'est la langue universelle ! C'est ça que le monde veut ! Jimmy fait son argent avec la compagnie pis moi aussi ! Attendre après les gouvernements, c'est accepter de mourir à petit feu.⁶⁷ (Jenniss 73)

From an ecofeminist point of view, several aspects should be addressed. First, Matthew accepts the company's narrative according to which (1) trees must be commodified, (2) money is a universal agent superior to any other matter, (3) money exchange dominates any other type of relationship, and (4) First Wood would have cut down the trees with or without Matthew's consent. When approaching Matthew's arguments, an ecofeminist perspective proves useful to recontextualise this capitalistic valuation of nature, and to challenge this problematic concept which separates humans from the rest of living beings and, at the same time, elevates us over nature:

66 “To give back this territory to my sons, to the Miktouch family, to the Malamèque: that is my mission as Grand Chief. Down with injustice! WE WILL WIN!” (Jenniss 49)

67 “Why are you all looking at me like this? The reality is not like you think! Indian or non-Indian, there is no difference. We're all the same, just a gang of wolverines chasing money! Money! [...] That's all that remains! The big ones eat the little ones! You were asleep, and I wasn't! It's the law of the jungle! Today, it's the companies who lead the world! Money is their language, it's the universal language! That's what people want! Jimmy makes money with the company and I do too! To wait for the government to do something is to agree to die slowly” (Jenniss 73).

Nature is a vastness that always exceeds our collective capacities of awareness or comprehension. As part of such a vastness, we can value nature only by reducing it to what we can sense of it (directly, indirectly, or spiritually), or to the biophysical processes within which we are differentially enmeshed at any one time and place (hence values of nature are necessarily always shifting). More than this, valuing nature is partly self-referential and thereby partly redundant precisely because we are part of what we value. As nature is simultaneously beyond and part of us, all pretence at valuing nature in itself ought to be abandoned in favour of redirecting attention to the social relations that values of nature represent. (Engel-Di Mauro 143)

Matthew's decision to make money out of the Malamèque's ancestral land is possible thanks to a political right granted by the Canadian government. He makes a decision on behalf of his nation and feels legitimised to do so because of his title and position of power. However, we are reminded that he is not a hereditary chief, but an elected chief. This difference is important and must be understood in its historical and political context, in relation to the ways in which colonialism past and present has pervaded and still pervades the First Nations' political systems:

The term [chief] was formally enshrined in Canadian law by the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869 and the Indian Act of 1876. Still used today, the Indian Act legislates (among other things) the process of electing First Nation chiefs in Canada. [...] Though the Indian Act curtailed the powers of hereditary chiefs, granting elected chiefs lawmaking powers that their counterparts often no longer enjoy, hereditary chiefs continue to function as traditional knowledge-keepers and as sacred cultural leaders. Elected chiefs – seen by some as the imposition of colonial structures on Indigenous governance – do not always have the same level of cultural authority. (Robinson)

His position as an elected chief (and the colonial legacy implicit within that position) justifies the domination and does not promote a relational difference, as is proposed by the ecofeminist notion of “[a]notherness’ [which] proceeds from a heterarchical, that is, a non-hierarchical, sense of difference” (Murphy *Literature, Nature, and Other* 63). This gap between Canada’s Indigenous peoples and the country’s current political establishment is a result of the implementation of the Indian Act. Before the first encounters between the Indigenous peoples and the settlers, a treaty system existed that was used to regulate all the diplomatic relationships occurring among the different native nations inhabiting the American continent. Janique Dubois, a political scientist and an expert on the governing systems and practices of Canada’s Indigenous minorities, describes the origins of these treaties, highlighting the lack of hierarchy within the relational link that accompanies them:

According to Elder Peter Waskahat, treaties express a lasting relationship of coexistence between First Nations and settlers: “It was decided long before the White man arrived that the First Nations would treat the newcomers as relatives, as brothers and sisters. The First Nations had decided that they would live in peace and that they would share the land with these newcomers” (cited in Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000: 31). Described in Cree by concepts like *miyowícétowin* (getting along with others) and *wítaskêwin* (living together on the land), treaties are voluntary agreements that provide for peaceful relations between *iyiniwak* (peoples) (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000: viii). Indigenous peoples have long used treaties to guide relations amongst one another as well as with animal nations. (“We Are All Treaty People” 33)

This excerpt reveals that nation-to-nation relationships considered in early treaties were not limited to human beings. They also included different animals and plants of the so-called natural environment. Storytelling was a powerful way to share this cultural knowledge among the Indigenous nations, as was stated by the Nishnaabeg poet, musician, activist, and scholar Leanne Simpson:

Rather than presenting a comprehensive and critical review of the academic literature or the Eurocanadian written historical record on treaty making and the Nishnaabeg, or reviewing specific written treaties made with colonial powers, this paper proceeds descriptively in a manner grounded in Indigenist theory and methodology, using storytelling or narration, language, personal understandings of traditional Nishnaabeg knowledge, and relying on relevant academic literature interpreted through a Nishnaabeg perspective. [...] Nishnaabeg cultural perspectives on our relationships within our territory, whether those relationships were with the land, with the animal nations that form the basis of our clan system, or with neighbouring Indigenous nations and confederacies.

(31)

Even though Matthew's speech appears to be against human/animal equality, the relevance of animals, which are represented on the Malamèque flag, is introduced in the play through a conversation between Julie, Marc, and David. In a satirical way, the two brothers are having a fight about the correct understanding of the significance of animals in their culture:

MARC. Le poisson, la grosse barbotte, là... (*Marc imite le poisson.*)
c'est la nourriture... c'est la rivière qui coule dans nos veines.

DAVID. C't'un saumon, c'est la signification de notre famille. On est
le clan du saumon.

MARC, *impatient*. Bravo pour l'explication... Pour terminer, les
plumes, c'est l'aigle. C'est lui qui amène les paroles au chaman.

DAVID. C'est plutôt la parole des hommes...

JULIE. Laisse-le terminer

MARC, *à David*. Ta gueule sacrement !⁶⁸ (Jenniss 23)

68 "MARC. The fish, the big bullhead, you know? (*Marc mimics the fish.*) it's the food ... it's the river that flows in our veins. DAVID. It's a salmon, the emblem of our family. We are the salmon's clan. MARC, *impatient*. Congratulations for the explanation ... Finally, the feathers, it's the eagle. It's the one who brings the words to the shaman. DAVID. It's rather man's words ... JULIE. Let him finish MARC, *to David*. Shut up for Christ's sake!" (Jenniss 23)

Matthew breaks with the Indigenous tradition in many ways. As the father figure and national chief, he rationalises his decisions by invoking the greater good. He refuses to listen to the complaints the rest of the characters address to him and continues his speech in a condescending, scornful tone: “Quand vous aurez fini de brailler là-dessus, vous viendrez me rejoindre ! Moi, y faut que j’aille au centre communautaire, y a un bingo à soir, j’ai une couple de mains à aller donner” (Jenniss 74).⁶⁹ With this character, Dave Jenniss represents an unscrupulous man who talks the talk but does not walk the walk.

2.6. CONCLUSION

In *Wulustek*, Matthew Miktouch loses his family’s trust. By accepting the company’s money, he allows them to cut down a forest, a habitat for a multitude of species and life forms. For his wife Hélène, the ancestral land is an important spiritual space, and its value is decreased when they cut down the trees. In this context, Matthew’s greed is the main factor that perpetuates violence against the natural world. However, economic profit in *Wulustek* is not the cause of violence against women to the extent it is in the case of clearcut logging.

Although violence against women is not part of the analysis in this chapter, it is worth noting that this play depicts a hostile climate for one of the female characters. David brings his friend Julie to the family reunion. Julie is the first journalist who covers the demonstration organised by the Miktouches each year, and the family could greatly benefit from her professional help. But this does not happen. First, this newcomer is treated like prey by Marc, David’s brother. Then, David’s mother frequently interacts with her as a potential girlfriend in a recurrent manner. Her gender heavily influences how the other characters treat her, whether she is perceived as sexual quarry or marriage material.

Wulustek also portrays gender-neutral elements as female: the earth is described as a nurturing mother and the term rape is used to depict

⁶⁹ “When you are done whining about that, let’s meet up. I’m going to the community centre, it’s bingo night and I’ve got to shake hands!” (Jenniss 74)

the transformation of natural elements into commodities. Although ambiguous and more subtle, these last two pieces of information appear to contribute to the devaluation of women's experience of maternity and encourage sex-based violence. The association of language that aligns women with the natural world is an effective communication process that allows patriarchal and capitalist societies to legitimise their domination over the two by associating them and devaluing them. This is how oppressions are renewed in the first play of the corpus.

One female character plays an important role in the presentation of alternative discourses about the natural world. H el ene Desrois embraces the culture of the Malam eque nation and champions Native American ritual practices. H el ene's efforts to change her relationship with the natural world have taken years of study and experimentation among Indigenous communities. As a wife and mother of two, she takes responsibility for the transmission of ancestral values and knowledge related to the land. The legend of the lost tree is one of the main motifs that she uses. This story associates the importance of keeping nature intact with a mental or physical healing process. For example, she tells Julie, who is going through an identity crisis, to visit the forest often to find her roots. H el ene's discourse embodies a fair and sustainable relationship with the natural world, thanks to the cosmogony of the First Nations that inspired the creation of a fictional nation (the Malam eque) in this play.

3. CITIZEN INQUIRY ON ENERGY PRODUCTION: CREATE DIALOGUE, FIND ONESELF, REDEFINE WEALTH

J'aime Hydro [I love Hydro] is a documentary theatre production produced by Porte Parole [Spokesperson], a company based in Montreal. This play, which lasts 3 hours 40 minutes, has been hugely successful and is still touring across Quebec: “plus de 42 000 spectateurs ont vu *J'aime Hydro* depuis sa création” (Bouchard “L'intégrale”).⁷⁰ Two women lead *J'aime Hydro*: actress Christine Beaulieu and Porte Parole's director Annabel Soutar. Christine, the main protagonist, has been asked by a theatre company to conduct a research study on hydroelectric production and to write a play about its environmental and political consequences. While struggling with her imposter syndrome, she attempts to facilitate dialogue between opposing groups concerning the nationalisation of energy in Quebec. Following the convention of meta-theatre, the circumstances that inspired the play is included in it, made part of it:

ANNABEL SOUTAR. C'est urgent, Christine. Je veux que tu aies une discussion sur la relation entre les Québécois et leur énergie [...] Je te demande pas juste d'être impliquée dans ce projet-là, Christine, mais de le porter. Je veux que tu sois l'enquêteuse de ce projet.

MATHIEU DOYON. Christine a un regard affolé.

CHRISTINE. Annabel, je connais rien du tout là-dedans.

ANNABEL SOUTAR. C'est parfait partir de rien, Christine. C'est, en fait, très important que tu partes de rien. Il faut toujours être très transparent avec notre ignorance. [...] La chose primordiale, c'est qu'on soit équilibrées dans la recherche. Tu sais que je n'accepterais pas de faire une pièce qui ne fait que critiquer Hydro-Québec...

CHRISTINE. Je sais, je sais.

ANNABEL SOUTAR. Si on se campe dans une position, on n'a pas de dialogue. [...] Je suis très curieuse de savoir si toi, tu es capable de parler avec Hydro-Québec.⁷¹ (Beaulieu 35-6)

Following this conversation, and knowing the context of the issues at stake, we can say that Annabel's task for Christine is, indeed, a major challenge. Christine shares Annabel's concern for transparency: she opens up her research project to the public and turns it into a narrative thread. While the main protagonist accumulates knowledge on the connection between Quebecers and a state-owned electricity company, Hydro-Québec, her relationship with the national ecosystem changes.⁷² In the epilogue to the

71 "ANNABEL SOUTAR. It's urgent, Christine. I want you to have a discussion on the relationship between Quebecers and their energy [...] I am not asking you just to be involved in this project, Christine, but to lead it. I want you to be the researcher for this project. MATHIEU DOYON. Christine has a frightened look. CHRISTINE. Annabel, I know absolutely nothing about this. ANNABEL SOUTAR. It's perfect to start from scratch, Christine. In fact, it's very important that you start from scratch. We must always be very transparent with our ignorance. [...] The main thing is that we strike a balance in research. You know that I would not agree to make a play which only criticises *Hydro-Québec*... CHRISTINE. I know, I know. ANNABEL SOUTAR. If we hold our ground, we get no dialogue. [...] I am very curious to know if you are able to speak with *Hydro-Québec*" (Beaulieu 35-6).

72 Since 2006, Quebec has been granted the title of a nation inside the Canadian federation by Prime Minister Stephen Harper: "The House of Commons has overwhelmingly passed a motion recognising Quebecois as a nation within Canada." ("House Passes Motion") The *Guardian's* journalist explains the implication of this motion: "Mr Harper introduced a motion declaring that 'the Quebecois form a nation, within a united Canada.' What does it mean to be a nation within another nation? In legal terms, the Conservative government insists, absolutely nothing. 'Do the Quebecois form a nation within Canada? The answer is yes,' Mr Harper said. Do the Quebecois form an independent nation? The answer is no, and the answer will always be no. He called the motion an 'act of reconciliation,' saying it recognised the way in which many Quebecois see themselves – as people and a nation with their own culture, language and identity" (McIlroy).

play, Christine expresses her gratitude to the rivers harnessed by Hydro-Québec and makes promises about her energy consumption:

Merci, rivières. Merci de griller mes toasts le matin. Merci de chauffer mon eau dans ma douche. Merci de tenir ma maison au chaud. Merci de faire rouler ma voiture électrique. Merci de m'éclairer en ce moment sur cette scène. Je vous promets, rivières, que je serai davantage responsable de ce que vous me concédez au prix de votre courant. Maintenant, je vois les électrons que vous agitez.⁷³ (Beaulieu 245)

This relational change between human and non-human elements is an important focus point of the ecofeminist theoretical framework that guides this dissertation. Specifically, I will build on Patrick D. Murphy's theory of relational difference and Rosi Braidotti's take on the notion of becoming. After intense research, Christine Beaulieu creates a hybrid character that is a combination of her public persona, her intimate self, and her newly found researcher status. All of these changes affect her day-to-day life: Christine becomes a concerned citizen. Onstage, she shares the path that made this possible, using dramatic resources to win the audience's interest. Throughout the process, she becomes a playwright whilst remaining an actress. Journalist Geneviève Bouchard highlights how the portrayal of this hybrid persona encourages discussion about a complex and politically charged subject in a simple and effective way:

Malgré la complexité du sujet, *J'aime Hydro* réussit à éviter les lourdeurs. D'abord parce que Christine Beaulieu est restée elle-même dans l'exercice, assumant son ignorance, ses maladresses, ses doutes, ses malaises. À travers le spectacle, elle documente aussi comment elle a vécu ses recherches dans des tableaux plus personnels, comme ce road-trip vers Shawinigan avec son père ou cette virée dans le Sud pour soigner une peine d'amour. Mais à mesure que l'enquête

73 "Thank you, rivers. Thank you for toasting my toast in the morning. Thank you for heating my water in my shower. Thank you for keeping my house warm. Thank you for running my electric car. Thank you for lighting me on this stage right now. I promise you, rivers, that I will be more responsible for what you grant me at the cost of your current. Now I see the electrons you are shaking" (Beaulieu 245).

progresses, l'actrice prend de l'assurance et gagne en crédibilité, jusqu'à se mesurer au PDG d'Hydro-Québec, Éric Martel... Et à le reprendre sur ses imprécisions.⁷⁴ (Bouchard "L'éclairant")

3.1. PORTE PAROLE'S DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

Documentary theatre is a genre that consists in "staging stories drawn from field research", and which usually explores "the oppositional stance of politically engaged theatre that refuses the aesthetic conventions and values of professionalized culture" (Filewod "Supercharged Reality" 183). Sharing his experience as a documentary theatre practitioner, Canadian drama scholar Alan Filewod said:

The work we had been doing was invisible to institutional eyes because it was very local, noticed only by the audiences it was created for, and ephemeral. [...] When I left the Mummers Troupe in 1975 to resume my studies at York University, the group continued making interventionist community theatre for another six years before falling apart, ruptured with dissent, anger, and, inevitably because of the pressures of poverty, exhaustion. [...] Across Canada, pop-up theatre troupes, often assembled casually with small project grants, discovered the particular energy and satisfaction of playing back to communities that informed the creative process. ("Supercharged Reality" 182-3)

Nowadays, the genre is flourishing on several Canadian stages. More and more books about documentary theatre are being published; plays are recorded and broadcast live online; and many scholars are studying

74 "Despite the complexity of the subject, *J'aime Hydro* manages to avoid heaviness. Firstly, because Christine Beaulieu remained true to herself, acknowledging her ignorance, her clumsiness, her doubts and her discomforts. Through the show, she also documents how she experienced her research in more personal scenes, such as this road trip to Shawinigan with her father or a trip to the South to cure a heartbreak. But as the research progresses, the actress gains confidence and credibility, to the point of confronting the CEO of Hydro-Québec, Éric Martel... And correcting his inaccuracies" (Bouchard "L'éclairant").

this phenomenon in Canada and beyond (Irmer 2006; Bottoms 2006; Stephenson 2019; Beumers & Lipovetsky 2010 and Gilbert, McCaffrey & Schechner 2013). Porte Parole is the first theatre company ever to produce documentary theatre in Quebec. Their productions deal with matters of social justice, current events, and contemporary issues such as “le profilage racial (*Fredy*), l’effondrement du viaduc de la Concorde (*Sexy béton*) ou la lutte d’un agriculteur contre le géant Monsanto (*Grains*)” (Morin “Annabel Soutar, la pionnière”).⁷⁵ Porte Parole’s productions are staged and published in French, in English, or in both languages.⁷⁶ For instance, their play *Grains* [Seeds] was first published in English, then translated into French by Fanny Britt. Since then, it has been staged and performed in both languages. In doing so, Porte Parole builds a bridge between different linguistic communities, and it also increases its chances of being studied by English-speaking Canadian researchers such as Toronto-based scholar Tania Aguila-Way, who recently published an article on the ecological imagination at work in one of Porte Parole’s plays, *Grains*:

Soutar’s play interrogates how, in their efforts to galvanize public support for their cause, seed activists often mobilize tropes that not only oversimplify the issues at stake in the public debate on GMO seeds but also compromise our ability to imagine ecological solutions to the problems posed by the corporate modification and patenting of seeds. (5)

The company, co-founded by Alex Ivanovici and Anabelle Soutar in 1998, is currently directed by Soutar. In an interview with theatre critic Solange Lévesque, she comments on her studies at Princeton University: “La principale leçon de théâtre que j’ai apprise pourrait se résumer ainsi: une trame dramatique simple, une histoire percutante, qui se raconte

75 “racial profiling (*Fredy*), the collapse of the Concorde viaduct (*Sexy Concrete*) or a small farmer’s fight against the giant Monsanto (*Seeds*)” (Morin “Annabel Soutar, la pionnière”).

76 This is a peculiarity of Porte Parole, considering that Canadian theatre companies usually choose one of the two official languages of the country and limit their creation to that chosen language.

comme dans un roman” (Soutar *in* Lévesque 158).⁷⁷ Documentary theatre is being popularised by Porte Parole, both in Quebec and internationally. Here, I intend to analyse Porte Parole’s latest work, which is, by far, its biggest success: *J’aime Hydro*. Even though this play has not been translated into English, it has attracted the attention of one of the main Canadian newspapers, *The Globe and Mail*: “My electricity bill from Hydro-Québec arrived this week. Nothing on its pages hinted that someone could write a hit play about Quebec’s relationship with its power monopoly, but Montreal actress Christine Beaulieu did just that” (Everett-Green “Investigative Playwriting”). *Le Devoir*, an independent but mainstream newspaper from Quebec, published two reviews about this production. They referred to its innovative format: “Une expérience inédite est actuellement menée avec la pièce *J’aime Hydro* [...] on peut écouter en direct et à distance sur le Web la pièce, et ce, gratuitement” (“J’aime”)⁷⁸, and also discussed its content:

La question mérite certainement d’être posée : alors que le Québec se trouve en situation de surproduction énergétique – oui, Hydro-Québec a des capacités lui permettant de produire plus d’électricité que la population est capable d’en consommer, – pourquoi diable poursuivre les travaux de construction d’un barrage sur la rivière Romaine, majestueux affluent du Saint-Laurent qui coulait jusque-là sans entrave depuis la Côte-Nord ? Pourquoi détruire un écosystème sauvage pour accroître une production d’énergie dont nous n’avons pas besoin ? Pourquoi ? La question peut donner l’impression de contenir la réponse, mais les apparences sont souvent trompeuses, y compris dans la sphère de l’engagement social et des bons sentiments, comme le démontre *J’aime Hydro*, dramaturgie documentaire.⁷⁹ (Deglise)

77 “The main lesson I learned about drama writing can be summed up like this: put together a simple plot and a compelling story, and tell it like it’s a novel” (Soutar *in* Lévesque 158).

78 “A novel experiment is currently being conducted with the play *J’aime Hydro* [...] the play can be listened to live and remotely on the web, and for free” (“J’aime”).

79 “The question certainly deserves to be asked: while Quebec finds itself in a situation of energy overproduction – yes, Hydro-Québec has capacities allowing it to produce more electricity than the population is capable of consuming – why the hell does construction work continue on a dam on the Romaine River, a majestic tributary of the St. Lawrence River that previously flowed

In short, Porte Parole identifies the issues at stake (politics, environment, ethnicity, economy, language, identity, public/private divide, etc.) in *Jaime Hydro* and, as a result, documentary theatre's popularity is growing in Quebec.

3.2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF HYDRO-ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION IN QUEBEC

In 1944, Quebec's government expropriated several private energy companies in order to create one central, state-owned enterprise named Hydro-Québec, which continues to produce and distribute electricity today. According to sociologist Roger Chartier, the nationalisation of electricity production in Quebec has had an impact on the language used in the company, and it has also affected the inter-ethnic relationships in the Canadian province:

The first phase of the nationalization was slow in changing the language of communication and the ethnical composition of the executive personnel. The first French-Canadians to rise to this level of management were trained by English-speaking executives and, forcibly, spoke the only language which these executives could use. And the use of French as much as English came gradually with the rise of more French-speaking employees to the level of management, until French was in greater use than English. [...] The net result then, following the second phase of the nationalization, is that French is the predominant language: this new situation must be analysed and, possibly, requires a language policy more sharply defined than that of the old laissez-faire tradition. (528-9)

unhindered from the North Shore? Why destroy a wild ecosystem to increase energy production that we don't need? Why? The question may give the impression of containing the answer, but appearances are often misleading, including within the realm of social engagement and good intentions, as demonstrated by *Jaime Hydro*, documentary dramaturgy" (Deglise).

Even though Chartier offers an interesting overview of inter-ethnic relations at the Hydro-Québec workplace, his analysis fails to tackle the fact that the First Nations were also part of this relationship. In her environmental history of Hydro-Québec, geographer Caroline Desbiens helps to overcome this lack of awareness of minority Indigenous cultures and territorial claims:

During the 1970s, the transformation of the La Grande River into a large scale hydroelectric complex forced the Crees and the Québécois to enter into a dialogue concerning the management of this waterway and its becoming. If this relationship has been punctuated by conflicts and inequalities, it has, nevertheless, brought the partners to acknowledge each other and to express themselves about the place of the river in their respective social organisation, economic exchanges and identity. (178)

This recognition of the other parties is a first attempt at acknowledging a long history of settler/native antagonism which has its origins in the colonial experience. Historian Stéphane Savard highlights the fact that hydroelectric development in Quebec is intertwined with the recognition of Indigenous rights:

Seuls les peuples autochtones touchés par les développements hydroélectriques – p. ex. les Cris dans les années 1970 – sont en mesure de trouver une oreille attentive auprès des dirigeants politiques; les autres peuples, comme les Innus vers la fin des années 1970 et dans la décennie 1980, n'étant pas en mesure de soutenir une entente.⁸⁰ (58)

Therefore, the Indigenous communities do not give up on their rights and see the arrival of these dams in their ancestral territory as just another example of colonialism. This position is expressed in a territorial

80 “Only indigenous people affected by hydroelectric developments – e.g. Cree in the 1970s – are able to get the attention of political leaders; other nations, such as the Innu in the late 1970s and the 1980s, were unable to extract an agreement” (Savard 58).

vindication report titled *Nishastanan Nitasinan* [Our land, we love it and we care about it]:

Les irréparables dommages causés par tous les aménagements hydroélectriques nous ont, en conséquence, affectés profondément dans notre mode de vie et dans notre identité de peuples de chasseurs. De nombreux territoires de chasse familiaux, autrefois des plus productifs, sont ainsi devenus à peu près inutilisables. Le bien-être des hydro-québécois repose donc en fait sur notre dépossession et notre misère.⁸¹ (Atikamekw and Montagnais Council *in* Savard 52)

The presence of representatives of Indigenous nations in *J'aime Hydro* highlights their conception of nature, their experiences of injustice, and their anger against multinational corporations and/or the Quebec government. Decolonial blogger Josianne Grenier, who published an overall positive review of *J'aime Hydro*, raises awareness about Hydro-Québec's ongoing colonial injustices and recent disrespectful decisions that have impacted negatively upon the Indigenous communities:

La pièce souligne avec justesse que l'énergie hydroélectrique, bien qu'effectivement renouvelable, n'est ni propre ni verte. Elle mentionne l'émanation de CO2 et de méthane. Elle omet cependant de mentionner que les barrages hydroélectriques empoisonnent les rivières et, par le fait même, les personnes qui s'y nourrissent. [...] À l'été 2017, Hydro-Québec a choisi d'inonder les terres et une partie du campement d'été de la communauté de Kitcisakik, en Abitibi, pour sauver des maisons du sud du Québec de l'inondation.⁸² (“T’aimés Hydro?”)

81 “The irreparable damage caused by all the hydroelectric developments has, therefore, deeply affected our way of life and our identity as hunting people. Many family hunting grounds, which used to be the most productive, have thus become almost unusable. The well-being of hydro-Quebecers therefore rests in fact on our dispossession and our misery” (Atikamekw and Montagnais Council *in* Savard 52).

82 “The play rightly points out that hydroelectric power, whilst it is indeed renewable, is neither clean nor green. It mentions the emission of CO2 and methane. However, she forgets to mention that hydroelectric dams poison the rivers and, by the same token, the people who feed on them. [...] In the summer of 2017, Hydro-Québec chose to flood the lands and part of the

Despite the many episodes of injustice and the environmental disasters experienced by the Indigenous communities, Quebec's hydroelectric production has a good reputation amongst Quebecers. This might be explained by the relationship between Quebec's inhabitants and Hydro-Québec (that is, a love affair, in the words of Christine Beaulieu), which is deeply rooted in ideology – in general, the company is seen as the national emblem of the independence movement. Indeed, the motto “maîtres chez-nous” [masters in our own house] was coined by political leader Jean Lesage, who started the *Révolution tranquille* [Quiet Revolution] with the aim of emphasising the political significance of hydro-electricity production in Quebec.⁸³ Sociologist Diane Lamoureux highlights that fact:

Il n'est pas anodin que le slogan 'maître chez-nous' ait surgi dans le débat sur la nationalisation de l'électricité, ni qu'Hydro-Québec soit devenue un des symboles de l'identité québécoise moderne. Ce qu'on y retrouve, c'est l'idée d'une nature harnachée, bétonnée pour être véritablement habitée. [...] Dans ce contexte, le barrage, que ce soit celui de Manic V ou de la Baie James, est le symbole par excellence du Sujet moderne, indépendant, entreprenant et dominant.⁸⁴ (181)

Nowadays, Hydro-Québec brands itself as “[o]ne of the world's largest producers of clean energy” and claims that its “electricity rates are amongst the lowest in North America” (“Hydro-Québec”).

summer camp of the community of Kitcisakik, in Abitibi, to save homes in southern Quebec from the flood” (“T'aimés Hydro?”).

- 83 The Quiet Revolution defined a period of socio-political changes in Quebec in the 1960s and 1970s: “This is a period of major social change. In health, human services and education, the Québec government replaces the Catholic Church which had controlled these institutions since their creation. A major reform of education makes the system more accessible to all. On the economic level, electricity is nationalised, Hydro-Québec is created as well as a major pension fund” (Labrie 1038).
- 84 “It is not a trivial matter that the slogan ‘master of our own destiny’ has arisen in the debate on the nationalisation of electricity, or that Hydro-Québec has become one of the symbols of modern Quebec identity. What we find there is the idea of a harnessed nature, concreted to be truly inhabited. [...] In this context, the dam, whether the Manic V or James Bay, is the paramount symbol of the modern, independent, enterprising and dominant Subject” (Lamoureux 181).

3.3. CHRISTINE BEAULIEU: BECOMING A CONCERNED CITIZEN

Christine metamorphoses during the play. First, she introduces herself as an actress. Then, she exposes the challenge present in *J'aime Hydro* – she needs to be more than an actress and take charge of the creative process. To do so, Beaulieu dives right into the work of a researcher and a playwright. This raises the question of the contemporary mutations of the actor, a topical issue discussed in the article “Former des acteurs créateurs” [Train Actors as Creators], a recent research project conducted by theatre scholar Lise Roy:

Un acteur créateur est celui qui apporte une contribution artistique en explorant et proposant des choses par rapport au jeu [...] Le travail de l'acteur est en plein repositionnement: les plateformes de production se multiplient, les publics se diversifient, les outils technologiques envahissent les scènes et les plateaux, et les écritures dramaturgiques suscitent de nouvelles postures de création.⁸⁵ (Roy *in* Gauvreau)

The creative role that Soutar assigns to Beaulieu has a crucial impact on the relationship between herself and the State – that is, the owner of Hydro-Québec. She introduces herself as an apathetic citizen who, certainly, is curious about environmental issues and energy production, just not curious enough to actually read up on the matter:

CHRISTINE. Si le film *Chercher le courant* n'avait pas réussi à empêcher les barrages sur la rivière Romaine, un rapport commandé par le gouvernement allait certainement convaincre le gouvernement d'arrêter les projets de barrages. Tsé, je m'étais dit ça. Pis c'est tout. La vie a continué. Faire du jogging. M'inscrire à un demi-marathon sans trop savoir

85 “An actor creator is someone who makes an artistic contribution by exploring and proposing things in relation to the acting [...] The actor's work lies at the core of repositioning: production platforms are multiplying, audiences are diversifying, technological tools are invading stages and sets, and dramaturgical writings are generating new creative postures” (Roy *in* Gauvreau).

pourquoi. Jouer au théâtre en anglais à Ottawa dans un spectacle de théâtre documentaire d'Annabel Soutar. Me questionner sur la charte qui a un nom qui finit pus. Re-aller voter. Faire de la voile. Aller en Italie [...] Mais pourquoi le gouvernement ne suit pas les recommandations du rapport demandé par le gouvernement? Pour me changer les idées, aller au cinéma.⁸⁶ (Beaulieu 29-32)

In this introduction, she leads the audience to believe that she would like to have time to invest herself more into these issues, but she is drawn to the chaos of everyday life, and the environment always ends up not being a top priority on her list. Far from adopting a moralist stance, she invokes sympathy from the audience with this rhetoric of honesty and apathy. Gaining confidence in her research abilities, the actress is genuinely shocked by her discoveries and her indignation motivates her research. The beginning of the research process is a tipping point: turning back is no longer an option; Christine Beaulieu is becoming a concerned citizen. In her narrative, social and environmental engagements are intertwined with her pride at being a Quebecer. The result is an intimate tale where her romantic breakup serves as a metaphor:

CHRISTINE. Parce que je suis Québécoise. Parce que, même si je suis une amante blessée, je veux aimer encore. Parce que nous sommes face à une nouvelle grande étape et que je nous souhaite d'avoir le courage et l'audace tranquille de ne pas la manquer. Parce que grâce à ce projet je constate que

86 Please note that the misspelling of the word *puis* is deliberate. In formal writing, it is generally considered a typo. In theatre writing, the typo is tolerated as it informs the character's speech and stresses a peculiarity of the Quebec accent. "CHRISTINE. If the film *Chercher le courant* [Search for the Current] had failed to prevent dams being built on the Romaine River, a report commissioned by the government would certainly convince the government to stop the dam projects. You know, that's what I told myself. And that's it. Life went on. Go jogging. Register for a half-marathon without really knowing why. Act in English in Ottawa in a documentary theatre play of Annabel Soutar. Wonder about the charter that has a name that never ends. Vote again. Go sailing. Go to Italy [...] But why does the government not follow the recommendations of the report requested by the government? To change my mind, go to the cinema" (Beaulieu 29-32).

la meilleure arme contre la polarisation est certainement la connaissance.⁸⁷ (Beaulieu 246)

The artistic process of *J'aime Hydro* appears to change Christine Beaulieu in many ways. Admitting her initial condition of apathy and indifference, Beaulieu becomes aware of her ignorance on the matter and moves into an autonomous education strategy which leads her to take action as a concerned citizen. On another note, Christine Beaulieu is a heterosexual, white, cisgender, able-bodied woman who enjoys a certain celebrity status within Quebec's society. Her privileges are not a shield against oppression, but they might reduce its intensity. Despite being a public figure, Beaulieu's power is somehow limited as she is not part of the ruling class. She has some authority but very little compared to the CEO of Hydro-Québec or a politician. Therefore, it is difficult for her to navigate power structures which are depicted in the play as a series of boys' clubs. At one point, she experiences blatant sexism as her brother-in-law undermines her success by arguing that it is thanks to her appearance that she manages to meet important people. If more episodes of gender-based violence occur in the making of this production, they are not shown in the play.

3.4. MATERIAL ANALYSED: TEXT, PHOTOS, AND PODCASTS

In 2015, a preliminary project for *J'aime Hydro* was presented at Montreal's theatre La Licorne [The Unicorn] as part of LA SERRE – arts vivants [THE GREENHOUSE – performing arts], an organisation that defines itself as “un incubateur structurant pour l'amélioration des conditions d'exercice des artistes émergents en arts vivants [...] à partir de l'idéation jusqu'à leurs rencontres avec les publics” (“Mission”).⁸⁸ In 2016, *J'aime Hydro* was

87 “CHRISTINE. Because I am a Quebecker. Because, even if I am a wounded lover, I still want to love. Because we are facing a new big step and I wish us to have the courage and the quiet audacity not to miss it. Because thanks to this project I see that knowledge is certainly the best weapon against polarisation” (Beaulieu 246).

88 “a structuring incubator for improving working conditions of emerging artists in the performing arts [...] from the initial idea to their encounters with the public” (“Mission”).

presented as part of the official programme of Festival Trans Amérique (FTA), one of the most important festivals of performing arts in North America according to cultural magazine *Les Inrockuptibles* (Pons). FTA's website provides the following synopsis: "J'aime Hydro lance une épineuse et passionnante discussion: qu'est devenue la relation entre Hydro-Québec et les Québécois ? Sommes-nous toujours maîtres chez nous ? Christine Beaulieu enquête" ("J'aime Hydro").⁸⁹ In April 2017, *J'aime Hydro* was presented in its full-feature format at Usine C in Montreal. In 2017, the play was published by Atelier 10 in an unusual format for a theatre play: a book containing 257 pages in which the text of the play is enriched with numerous photos and drawings. Illustrator Mathilde Corbeil played a crucial role in the editing of the play and participated in many decisions regarding the aesthetics and artistic direction of the play – the drawings she designed for the book are also displayed on the stage backdrop during the performance of the show (see photos in the Appendix 2).

As a complement to the show and the book, Porte Parole offers the full play online as a free podcast divided into five episodes. In each new development phase of this project, new elements are added: for instance, a preamble written by anthropologist Serge Bouchard is available with the five existing episodes on Porte Parole's website. In the words of journalist Thomas Picotte-Lavoie in cultural magazine *Voir*:

L'ajout des voix de réels intervenants joués sur scène, notamment René Beaulieu (le père de Christine Beaulieu, comédienne et architecte de ce grand projet), Roy Dupuis, Philippe Cyr et Pierre Couture, distingue la série en baladodiffusion de la production théâtrale du même nom. [...] Certaines entrevues ont également été allongées et des entretiens avec François Legault, Pierre Arcand et Jean-Charles Piétacho (chef de la communauté d'Ekuanitshit) viennent bonifier l'expérience que propose le balado.⁹⁰

89 "J'aime Hydro launches a thorny and fascinating discussion: what has become of the relationship between *Hydro-Québec* and Quebecers? Are we still masters of our own destiny? Christine Beaulieu investigates" ("J'aime Hydro").

90 "The addition of the voices of real speakers played on stage, including René Beaulieu (the father of Christine Beaulieu, actress and architect of this great project), Roy Dupuis, Philippe Cyr and Pierre Couture, distinguishes the podcast series from the theatrical production of the same

A desire for innovation and democratisation characterises the working team behind *J'aime Hydro*, who explore several artistic mediums in order to bring their project to different audiences. In December 2019, the national public broadcaster Ici Radio-Canada Télé aired a shortened version of the play consisting of five 30-minute episodes.⁹¹ The book *J'aime Hydro*, along with a selection of pictures of the show and the podcast of the play are the main objects of study in this chapter.

3.5. J'AIME HYDRO

This documentary theatre play about energy production in Quebec is one of the most successful plays of the past few years in the francophone Canadian scene. Since the first performance in 2016, the play has toured across Quebec and a European tour was initially planned for the summer of 2020.⁹² Christine Beaulieu was awarded the Michel-Tremblay prize which rewards the best text created for the stage in 2016-2017. The Association québécoise des critiques de théâtre (AQCT) [Quebec Association of Theater Critics] selected *J'aime Hydro* for the Best Show of the Year Award in 2016-2017.

Theatre production is teamwork. If the names of Christine Beaulieu and Anabel Soutar are generally associated with this project, the work of stage director Philippe Cyr, as well as actor and sound designer Mathieu Doyon, must also be acknowledged. Moreover, Beaulieu's narrative relies heavily upon the work of Mathieu Gosselin, an impersonator who plays

name. [...] Some interviews were also expanded and recordings with François Legault, Pierre Arcand and Jean-Charles Piétacho (community leader of Ekuanitshit) manage to enhance the experience offered by the podcast" (Picotte-Lavoie).

91 In Canada, CBC Television is the broadcaster's English-language television network while Ici Radio-Canada Télé is the French-language television network. Both are public broadcasting free-to-air television networks.

92 Porte-Parole's activities are affected by the global COVID-19 pandemic as stated on their website: "After the emergency repatriation of our teams that were touring internationally (*J'aime Hydro* in France, *The Assembly* in Germany and *Seeds* in the U.S.) and cancelling our performances of *Tout inclus* in Quebec City, we are now actively preparing for the coming months and years" ("COVID-19: Special announcement").

about thirty characters in the play, as pointed out by *Le Soleil's* journalist Geneviève Bouchard:

Du fonctionnement même de l'électricité à la structure complexe et méconnue d'Hydro-Québec, des enjeux économiques liés à la production et la vente d'hydroélectricité à l'attachement identitaire associé aux grands barrages, des questionnements environnementaux aux problèmes d'octroi de contrats ou de sécurité des travailleurs sur les chantiers, du sentiment d'urgence que vivent les citoyens de la Côte-Nord dépendant desdits chantiers aux considérations des Premières Nations... Christine Beaulieu ratisse large dans ce spectacle de près de quatre heures, aux fins duquel elle a effectué des dizaines d'entrevues, recréées sur scène avec le caméléon Mathieu Gosselin, qui campe près d'une trentaine de personnages.⁹³ (Bouchard "L'éclairant")

While several journalists published articles about *J'aime Hydro*, public personalities also expressed themselves on social media about this theatre production. An example of this is Montreal's town councillor, François Limoges, who published, on Facebook his appreciation of the play, in which he notes how Beaulieu's discourse resonates with his own political work:

Dans un monde où on nous dit souvent que ce n'est plus possible, la révélation de *J'aime Hydro*, c'est de nous rappeler que c'est possible. Et si cela me touche particulièrement, c'est que c'est le message que j'essaie de véhiculer dans mon travail local. Lorsque je rencontre des résidents, dans une cuisine ou une ruelle, je commence toujours par expliquer qu'un groupe de citoyens, s'il est patient et déterminé, peut

93 "From the very functioning of electricity to the complex and little-known structure of Hydro-Québec, the economic challenges linked to the production and sale of hydroelectricity, assigning identity associated with large dams, other environmental questions, such as problems of allocation of contracts or worker safety on construction sites, the feeling of urgency experienced by the citizens of the North Shore depending upon the said construction sites or even the considerations of the First Nations ... Christine Beaulieu casts a wide net in this spectacle of almost four hours, at the end of which she carried out dozens of interviews, recreated on stage with the chameleon Mathieu Gosselin, who plays almost thirty characters" (Bouchard "L'éclairant").

arriver à transformer durablement son environnement. C'est parfois long, c'est parfois ardu, mais cela fonctionne. C'est cette constance, cette persévérance, qui font la force de *J'aime Hydro*, et qui véhiculent l'idée que oui, c'est possible de changer les choses. Oui, c'est possible de transformer un discours. Oui, c'est possible tout court. Et cela est libérateur de l'entendre à nouveau.⁹⁴

Limoges summarises his general impression of *J'aime Hydro* as a message of hope that also resonates with Barack Obama 2008's political campaign slogan "Yes, we can" ("Barack Obama's"). It can be argued that the rhetorical power of this play resides in its dramatic form. *J'aime Hydro* respects the convention of metatheatre – it is certainly one of the specificities of the play. According to Canadian drama scholar Jenn Stephenson,

[m]etatheatre reveals the actual actor of world^a behind the character of world^b. In so doing, metatheatre simultaneously authenticates the illusion of the fictional world by showing it to be subject to an act of theatrical creation, at the same time destroying that illusion through exposure. ("Metatheatre and Authentication" 93)

For instance, actress Christine Beaulieu presents her meetings with director Anabelle Soutar in order to make the story progress. By doing so, she refers to the investigative processes and creative approach at stake in the play and she responds to the audience's interest in transparency. Christine moves in and out of fiction; she highlights the ambiguity existing between her role as an actress and as a character, but most of all, she displays her multiple selves: actress, character, woman, energy production populariser, and committed citizen, to mention a few.

94 "In a world where we are often told that it is no longer possible, the revelation of *J'aime Hydro* is a reminder that it is possible. And if this particularly touches me, it's because it's the message that I try to convey in my local work. When I meet residents, in a kitchen or an alley, I always start by explaining that a group of citizens, if they are patient and determined, can succeed in transforming their environment in the long term. It's sometimes long, it's sometimes arduous, but it works. It's this steadfastness, this perseverance, that is the strength of *J'aime Hydro*, and which conveys the idea that yes, it is possible to change things. Yes, it is possible to transform discourse. Yes, it is definitely possible. And it is liberating to hear it again" (Limoges).

3.6. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

3.6.1. The Romaine River's Ecosystem

In *J'aime Hydro*, Christine Beaulieu compiles and assembles information on hydroelectricity production in Quebec. This leads to her paying attention to the Romaine River's ecosystem. On the one hand, there are those who want to protect the river and, on the other hand, those who want to transform it in order to produce electricity. Here lies a fundamental opposition between job creation and the conservation of nature, a dichotomy generally present in most of the interviews showcased in *J'aime Hydro*. In a conversation with Jacques Gélinau, a local environmentalist videographer, and with a host manager at Parks Canada, Ginette Paquet, this dualism is highlighted and the environmental consequences of Hydro-Québec's construction on the Romaine's seagrass are explained:

JACQUES GÉLINEAU. Les gens ici veulent de la job. L'environnement, c'est un détail pour eux, alors qu'une rivière en santé, c'est essentiel à l'humain ! À la sortie de la rivière Romaine, t'as une zosténaie. [...] La zostère, c'est une plante aquatique qui colonise le fond marin. Ça protège les larves de poissons de la prédation et ça permet une pêche florissante. [...] C'est certain qu'Hydro-Québec vont dire qu'ils protègent la zosténaie. Mais il faut arrêter de se faire accroire que construire des barrages partout, ça change rien nulle part ! [...]

CHRISTINE. Mais quand on dit que la grande hydro, c'est propre, c'est vert et renouvelable...

JACQUES GÉLINEAU. C'est pas vrai. C'est pas propre, c'est pas vert –

GINETTE PAQUET. C'est juste renouvelable.⁹⁵ (Beaulieu 183-5)

95 "JACQUES GÉLINEAU. People here want jobs. The environment is a detail for them, while a healthy river is essential for humans! At the mouth of the Romaine River, you have an eelgrass bed. [...] Eelgrass is an aquatic plant that colonises the seabed. It protects the larvae of fish from predation and allows them to flourish. [...] Of course, Hydro-Québec will say that they are protecting the eelgrass bed. But we must stop being fooled as if building dams everywhere didn't change anything anywhere! [...] CHRISTINE. But when we say that the great hydro is clean, green and renewable... JACQUES GÉLINEAU. It's not true. It's not clean, it's not green – GINETTE PAQUET. It's just renewable" (Beaulieu 183-5).

Christine would like to establish a dialogue between two radically opposed camps. Through dialogue, she locates her theatrical production as a bridge between two polar opposites. For instance, in an appendix at the end of the play, Hydro-Québec's environmental director, André Besner, answers Jacques Gélinau's claim about the Romaine's seagrass in a section titled "Droit de réplique" [Right of reply] (Beaulieu 250). Christine's thirst for knowledge displaces the indifference she initially felt towards the 496 km-long river and nurtures the relationship she develops with the Romaine River.⁹⁶ The physical encounter between Christine and the river is an important moment in the play, the highlight of her road trip in an electric car to the northern region of Quebec:

CHRISTINE. Ici, avant, il y avait une grande chute qui grondait fort. Maintenant, il y a une centrale qui produit 270 MW d'électricité. La journée était magnifique, les installations régnaient, impressionnantes, dans un silence nouveau.⁹⁷ (Beaulieu 188)

Her personal account of the harnessed river blends the past and the present of the Romaine River's ecosystem. Christine mentions a new silence, which can be interpreted as a suspicious phenomenon in nature, usually associated with death. According to ecocritical scholar Serpil Oppermann, "eco-literary discourse can address how literary texts articulate the silence of nature, and to what consequences" (33). Moreover, this new silence recalls the title of the ecofeminist classic *Silent Spring* (Rachel Carson), where the author exposes how the chemical industries in the United States silenced nature by killing birds and fish, among other animals: "It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay

96 "'Romaine' is a French deformation of the Innu word *uramen*, which means 'red ochre'" (Dubois "Rivière Romaine").

97 "Here before, there was a big waterfall that rumbled loudly. Now there is a power plant that produces 270 MW of electricity. The day was magnificent, the installations reigned, impressive, in a new silence" (Beaulieu 188).

over the fields and woods and marsh” (2). Carson’s book, which addressed the overuse of DDT, had a remarkable impact on the agricultural sector and gave impetus to the environmental movement in the United States:

In the mid-1960s fewer than 500 nesting pairs of bald eagles existed in the continental U.S.; today, thanks to the DDT ban and other conservation efforts, some 10,000 pairs of bald eagles inhabit the Lower 48 – that’s a 20-fold population increase in just four decades! In 2007 the federal government removed the bald eagle from the Endangered Species List. (Scheer and Moss)

After watching an environmentalist documentary on the Romaine River’s ecosystem, Christine writes to Annabel: “Je suis triste de me dire que l’écosystème de cette rivière-là sera peut-être détruit sans bonnes raisons économiques” (Beaulieu 47).⁹⁸ Co-directors of *Chercher le courant* Roy Dupuis and Nicolas Boisclair are quoted in the play, which makes reference to a real interview with the filmmakers that was broadcast on national television:

ROY DUPUIS. C’est de la mauvaise gestion de fonds publics. En plus de massacrer une rivière sauvage, une des dernières grandes rivières sauvages qui restent sur la planète, on s’en va le faire à perte, on va demander aux Québécois de contribuer et même de subventionner l’électricité des Américains !⁹⁹ (Beaulieu 27)

Both Beaulieu and Dupuis use the economy/ecology dualism as a major component of their discourse and express their indignation when ecological damage coincides with bad economic decisions. When looking at the bigger picture of the current ecological crisis, the conversation needs to be framed differently. As Patrick D. Murphy puts it,

98 “I get sad when I think that the ecosystem of this river may be destroyed without good economic reasons” (Beaulieu 47).

99 “ROY DUPUIS. This is mismanagement of public funds. In addition to massacring a wild river, one of the last big wild rivers that remain on the planet, we are going to do it and generate financial loss, Quebecers will be asked to contribute and even subsidise the electricity of Americans!” (Beaulieu 27)

the struggle to end both patriarchy and capitalism needs to be placed in an even larger context: the relationship of humanity within nature. The recent development of an ecological feminism (ecofeminism) has begun this process of explicitly intertwining the terrains of female/male and nature/humanity, which have been artificially separated by philosophical linearity for far too long. (*Literature, Nature, and Other 7*)

In short, the representations of the natural environment, in this case the Romaine River's ecosystem, go back to a repeatedly retold story about how endangered nature is. The harnessing of the Romaine River and the ecological consequences of this are questioned by concerned citizens, such as Nicolas Boisclair, Roy Dupuis, Jacques G lineau, and Ginette Paquet. All of the above-mentioned point out misleading information about the dam since the beginning of the project. The mainstream culture encourages us to think that renewable energies are clean (renewable = clean). However, the case we are discussing is another example of the fact that this is not necessarily true. In fact, Canadian ecohydrologist Philippe Van Cappellen highlights in a recent study that "[d]ams don't just have local environmental impacts. It's clear they play a key role in the global carbon cycle and therefore Earth's climate" ("Dams are major").

3.6.2. The Impact of Flooding on Trees: Squandering Resources

The mismanagement of available resources is one of the reasons behind Christine Beaulieu's outrage. During her citizen inquiry, several interlocutors inform her about the poor management of woods in the flooded areas. Among other people, she meets Jo l Malec, a contractor and special advisor to the chief of Nutashkuan, who tells Christine that his nation, the Innu, are in trouble due to Hydro-Qu bec's decisions:

JO L MALEC. On avait confiance en Hydro-Qu bec, on s'est fait avoir. Derni rement, Hydro-Qu bec a ennoy  le r servoir #2 sans nous avertir, sans le d boiser au complet. Il est plein

d'arbres ! C'est dégueulasse ! Six pieds d'arbres partout dans le réservoir ! Ils l'ont pas déboisé !

CHRISTINE. Pourquoi ?

JOËL MALEC. L'argent ! Ils ont pas d'éthique, Hydro-Québec. La seule éthique qu'ils ont, c'est de sauver de l'argent. Aujourd'hui, c'est l'argent qui mène le monde. Faque à partir de là, faut que tu te battes, c'est ta seule option.¹⁰⁰ (Beaulieu 181-2)

Building on Malec's account, Jacques Gélinau points out that drowning the woods has ecological consequences:

JACQUES GÉLINEAU. L'autre affaire, c'est que, quand tu ennoies, comme ça, des kilomètres carrés de terrain pour faire des réservoirs, la dégradation de la tourbe, de l'humus, de tout ce que tu ennoies, finalement, ben ça crée du mercure, du carbone et du méthane.¹⁰¹ (Beaulieu 185)

Christine also meets a log driver who comments on the issue of squandered resources:

TI-JEAN PROULX. Nous autres, on fait de la drave pour ramasser le bois qui s'accumule sur les réservoirs d'Hydro. [...] y a pas mal de bois qui flotte.

CHRISTINE. Ah ouain, comment ça ?

TI-JEAN PROULX. Ils l'ont pas ramassé. Mais à la Romaine, même le bois qu'ils ont coupé est en train de pourrir sur le bord du

100 "JOËL MALEC. We trusted Hydro-Québec, we were tricked. Recently, Hydro-Québec filled reservoir #2 without warning us, without completely clearing it. It's full of trees! It's disgusting! Six feet of trees all over the reservoir! They haven't cleared it! CHRISTINE. Why? JOËL MALEC. Money! Hydro-Québec has no ethics. The only ethics they have is to save money. Nowadays, money controls the world. So fighting is your only option" (Beaulieu 181-2).

101 "JACQUES GÉLINEAU. The other thing is that, when you drown, like that, square kilometers of land to make reservoirs, the degradation of peat, humus, of all that you end up drowning, well it creates mercury, carbon, and methane" (Beaulieu 185).

chemin... Y a 40 000 m3 de bois qui trainerait sur le bord de la route.¹⁰² (Beaulieu 165-6)

The testimonials quoted above substantiate the hypothesis that Hydro-Québec's workers do not take care of the wood that grows where the water reservoirs are established, and that Hydro-Québec and its subcontractors are not held accountable for the ecological consequences of their actions (i.e. squandered resources). By quoting Joël, Ti-Jean, and Jacques, Christine is saying that she believes them. This leap of trust exposes fragile, vulnerable truths, as experienced by individuals isolated in Quebec's northern region, who feel abandoned by the government when a national company tricks them into detrimental arrangements. By quoting them in a theatrical production, Beaulieu gives importance to their voices which would have gone unheard otherwise. By including them in her play, she paved the way for their protests and claims to be known and considered across the nation. Likewise, it is a live example of the importance of joint actions and communal work towards a desired common objective:

Existence, like language, is a shared event. It is always a border incident on the gradient both joining and separating the immediate reality of my own living particularity (a uniqueness that presents itself as only for me) with the reality of the system that precedes me in existence (that is always-already-there) and which is intertwined with everyone and everything else. (Holquist 28)

While a scientific demonstration usually relies on facts produced by authorities on a particular matter, Christine did fieldwork and encountered other citizens in order to give a voice to local environmental advocates concerned with social justice issues. By doing so, Christine Beaulieu inspires the audience of *J'aime Hydro* to pursue an ecocritical

102 "TI-JEAN PROULX. We are logging to collect the wood that accumulates on Hydro-Québec's reservoirs. [...] There is a lot of wood floating around. CHRISTINE. Oh really, what do you mean? TI-JEAN PROULX. They didn't pick it up. In the case of the Romaine, even the wood they cut is rotting on the side of the road... Apparently, there are 40 000 m3 of wood left on the side of the road" (Beaulieu 165-6).

reflection that orients the spectators' mind towards their own ecological and societal world. Her ability to connect with the spectators helps them to use those problematic topics seen in her representations quite easily, and to find references to those issues and their possible solutions within their own environment. As Patrick D. Murphy argues:

The possibility of referentiality functions as a key to such selection. Literature can only affect the mind of the readers if it has the ability to orient their thinking not only toward the world in the text but also the world in which the text materially and ideationally exists at the moment of the reading. (*Literature, Nature, and Other 4*)

For instance, *J'aime Hydro's* protagonist's likeableness grows through the interest for others that she shows on the stage. As previously stated before, referentiality is a major factor for theatre in general, and for this very work in particular, as the author is fully committed to genuine and unique Quebec references. It is quite common to see different age groups attending a performance of this piece, united by common cultural references, which gives it a unique, integrating element when it comes to joining generations and people of different social backgrounds. It is worth mentioning that due to Quebec's size and location, moving around its vast area is not easy if you do not own a car. Up north, where most of the Indigenous population lives, things are even more difficult. This is why concepts like *isolation*, which are not easy to represent onstage, are very clear here. The extra-literary world including such elements as the isolation lived by hydroelectric construction workers located in the Great North sites is accessible through the play, raising the issue not only of referentiality but also of positionality: "Positioning is, therefore, the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, and much Western scientific and philosophic discourse is organized in this way" (Haraway "Situated Knowledges" 587-91). The play's references to Christine's encounters with indignant witnesses of resource squandering contribute to making this issue visible, allowing the audience to perceive it as the real problem it is. In the same way, this counteracts the remoteness and isolation of the Indigenous communities

affected by the hydroelectric projects in the northern areas of Quebec by representing, on one hand, natural resources and their importance and, on the other hand, economic interest in exploiting them and therefore negatively affecting people living in their surroundings.

3.7. SPECIESISM: EXPERIMENTING WITH ANIMALS, COMMODIFICATION OF THE ANIMAL AS FOOD, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF TOPONYMY

Christine's relationship with the Romaine River involves many non-human forms of life. In effect, animals and natural elements are repeatedly mentioned during the analysed work, and appear to play a major role in the development of the plot and the evolution of the main character. As they are also intertwined with notions of nature and anthropocentrism, an analysis of the representations of animal and how they are approached and conceptualised in the play can be very revealing for the purposes of this dissertation. In this context, there is a key concept that cannot be avoided in this kind of discussion, and that is speciesism. Coined in 1970 by psychologist Richard D. Ryder, the term was popularised by Peter Singer in his book *Animal Liberation* (1975). Singer defines it as "a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (7), and provides the following description of the logic underlying this concept:

It should be obvious that the fundamental objections of racism and sexism made by Thomas Jefferson and Sojourner Truth apply equally to speciesism. If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans for the same purpose? [...] Racists violate the principle of equality by giving greater weight to the interests of members of their own race when there is a clash between their interests and the interests of those of another race. Sexists violate the principle of equality by favoring the interests of their own sex. Similarly, speciesists allow the interests

of their own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case. (7-9)

For instance, other species are generally perceived as inferior to humans, which is one of the reasons generally used for justifying their suffering and/or invalidating their right to live. In the second episode of *J'aime Hydro*, Christine recalls a specific event in the development of electricity where the main protagonists are Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, and an elephant named Topsy:

CHRISTINE. Pour prouver que le courant alternatif de Tesla était dangereux, Edison a même électrocuté des animaux sur la place publique, dont un éléphant qui s'appelait Topsy et qui avait tué trois personnes au cirque de Coney Island.¹⁰³ (Beaulieu 79)

In this narrative, the elephant is depicted as a *bad* animal who killed humans. Topsy the elephant misbehaved and killed someone in the audience at the circus, which is one of the reasons that justifies its execution. The decision to kill the elephant reaffirms human dominance over the other species. This is a clear example of speciesism where humans use an animal for entertainment purposes and get rid of it as they like. In the bibliography provided at the end of *J'aime Hydro* (Beaulieu 248), no source is provided to support this story. But... did Edison really kill Topsy the elephant? Christine Beaulieu is not the only one who has shared this story; scientific publications (Elsenaar and Scha 2002) and renowned American and European media such as *Wired* (“Jan. 4, 1903”) and *Le Point* (Lewino and Dos Santos) shared it, too. In *J'aime Hydro*, Christine presents this event in the context of the War of the Currents – the war between alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC). Paraphrased in an article by Kat Eschner in the *Smithsonian Magazine*, historian Vicki Constantine Croke does not corroborate this version of the story: “the

103 “CHRISTINE. To prove that Tesla’s AC was dangerous, Edison even electrocuted animals in the public square, including an elephant named Topsy who had killed three people at the Coney Island circus” (Beaulieu 79).

War of the Currents was well over by that time, and what had been proven is that Edison's direct current was effective at killing animals" (Croke *in* Eschner "Topsy the Elephant"). Another source classifies Edison's involvement in the killing of Topsy as a myth. According to the research project Thomas A. Edison Papers at Rutgers University – "a project that narrates Edison's life and work through his documents" (Israel) – Edison was not involved in Topsy's killing:

Luna Park management initially planned to hang Topsy. But the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals objected, claiming that this method of execution was unnecessarily cruel. To meet these objections, park officials, with the approval of the SPCA, subsequently decided to use a combination of poisoning, strangulation, and electrocution. While Edison had nothing to do with the decision to euthanize Topsy and took no part in the proceedings, the SPCA's understanding of electrocution as a humane means of dispatching animals was certainly influenced by experiments Edison and his associates had made at his West Orange Laboratory during the late 1880s. Edison was prompted to conduct experiments on animals after SPCA founder Henry Bergh, Jr., contacted him to ask whether electrocution might provide a humane way of killing unwanted animals. During these experiments, Edison and his assistants electrocuted a number of animals, chiefly dogs provided by the SPCA. ("Myth Buster")

The killing of Topsy was videotaped and the recording is currently available on the internet under the title *Electrocuting an Elephant*, on online video-sharing platforms such as *YouTube* and *Dailymotion*. Canadian historian Susan Nance, a specialist in history of animals and their environment and author of *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus*, points out that Topsy was responsible for killing one person, not three as argued by others:

The Forepaugh & Sells Brothers' elephant Topsy, for example, found herself manacled with "double chains on her feet and a check chain

on her trunk” as “penance for her offense” in the spring of 1902, when she killed Fielding Blount in Brooklyn, New York. (183)

Although Topsy is briefly mentioned in the play, she is portrayed as a dangerous beast who deserves to be electrocuted by Tesla’s alternating current. Christine Beaulieu associates the elephant’s name with the origin of the electricity. Yet the reality is quite different. Other animals are also mentioned in the play. A good example of this are the many references to the historical presence of fish in the northern river of Quebec, the abundance of which is evidenced by the toponymy of the territory. Here is a reference to Nemaska, a village presented in the Ulysses travel guide *Nord Quebec – Baie-James Eeyou Istchee Nunavik*:

Les Français ont pratiqué la traite des fourrures dès 1663 dans la région de Nemaska, qui signifie ‘là où abonde le poisson’ en langue crie. [...] Souvent décrit comme ‘le cœur de la nation crie’, ce village [Nemaska] de 730 habitants est devenu le centre administratif du Grand Conseil des Cris.¹⁰⁴ (Ulysse Collective 8-9)

French settlers have historically exploited the natural resources in the north of Quebec, fur trade being one of the most classic examples. Today, we could say that the colonisation of the northern region is still in force, perpetuated by the construction of dams. The foreign occupation of a territory like Nemaska comes with environmental consequences for the natural ecosystem. Historian Stéphane Savard raises awareness about an ecological disaster that killed numerous animals near the northern village of Kuujjuaq, where the Caniapiscau River was harnessed by Hydro-Québec: “près de 10 000 caribous se noient. Ici comme à l’international, Hydro-Québec et le Québec en général se font accuser directement ou indirectement de mauvaise gestion des crues et des

104 “The French traded with fur as early as 1663 in the Nemaska region, which means “where fish abounds” in the Cree language. [...] Often described as ‘the heart of the Cree nation,’ this village [Nemaska] of 730 inhabitants has become the administrative center of the Grand Council of the Crees” (Ulysse Collective 8-9).

barrages hydroélectriques de la Baie-James” (Savard 52-3).¹⁰⁵ While flying to Nemaska on a private plane owned by Hydro-Québec, Christine wonders about the regional fish and their abundance in the area:

CHRISTINE. Pendant que des citoyens de la Côte-Nord et des membres des communautés innues bloquaient la route vers la Romaine, je me suis envolée, le vendredi 7 août 2015, à 7h30 du matin, vers Nemaska « là où le poisson abonde ». [...] Une fois dans les airs, je me suis sentie bizarre. J'étais heureuse d'être là, j'ai toujours rêvé de visiter les grands barrages, mais je me suis sentie... effrontée. Je me suis rendu compte que, jusque-là, je m'étais approprié la Baie-James comme si c'était la mienne, la nôtre, celle des Québécois. Et je me suis demandé : est-ce que les Autochtones du territoire, les Cris, se sentent eux aussi Québécois ? Sont-ils fiers de la nationalisation et du développement hydroélectrique au Québec ? Ont-ils le sentiment de faire partie du nous de « maitres chez nous » ? Est-ce que le poisson y abonde toujours ?¹⁰⁶ (Beaulieu 142-3)

Christine flies to the north instead of driving. Accordingly, the Indigenous roadblock mentioned in the quote above loses its political power over Hydro-Québec and its workers: there is no encounter between those groups. Even if the significance of the political gesture is not considered, Christine still questions the past and the present state of the territory and its inhabitants. As Rosi Braidotti puts it: “Becoming is about repetition, but also about memories of the non-dominant kind. It is about affinities

105 “nearly 10,000 caribou drowned. Here, as abroad, Hydro-Québec and Quebec in general are accused directly or indirectly of poor management of floods and hydroelectric dams in the James Bay region” (Savard 52-3).

106 “CHRISTINE. While citizens of the North Shore and members of the Innu communities blocked the road to *La Romaine*, I flew on Friday, August 7, 2015, at 7:30 am, to Nemaska ‘where the fish abound.’ [...] Once in the air, I felt weird. I was happy to be there, I always dreamed of visiting the big dams, but I felt... brash. I realised that, until then, I had appropriated James Bay as if it were mine, ours, that of Quebecers. And I asked myself: do the Indigenous peoples of the territory, the Cree, also feel Quebecers? Are they proud of nationalisation and hydroelectric development in Quebec? Do they have the feeling of being part of us as ‘masters in our own house? Is there still plenty of fish there?’” (Beaulieu 142-3)

and the capacity both to sustain and generate inter-connectedness” (8). Using toponymy as a narrative thread, Christine becomes aware of the Indigenous presence on this land. She becomes aware of the lack of connections between the Quebecers and the First Nations. This power relation is asymmetrical, and technological progress seems to benefit white settler Quebecers even if, in the long run, ecological disaster related to technological construction might potentially impact upon all parties, all sorts of organisms, humans and non-humans alike.

In general terms, animal and other non-human life forms are rarely represented in the play *J'aime Hydro*. When they are, it is in the form of food: “sushis” (Beaulieu 22); “Manger de la tartiflette. [...] Manger des pattes de cochons. [...] Cuisiner un cipâte” (Beaulieu 27); “Manger des palourdes crues. Manger des palourdes cuites. Manger des palourdes. [...] Manger des huîtres” (Beaulieu 29); “on mange végé ” (Beaulieu 104); “manger une pizza aux fruits de mer” (Beaulieu 182); “J’ai mangé une poutine” (Beaulieu 188).¹⁰⁷ The commodification of animals for human consumption is one of the most recurrent representations of animals in the play. That is why the presence of meat products serves two functions: (1) to give a break to the audience who need to absorb complex information, and (2) to emphasise the cultural relationship existing between Christine and the audience: they share the same gastronomy; the food she names sounds familiar. In this way, *J'aime Hydro* does not problematise the ethical or environmental aspects of meat consumption, thereby normalising this behaviour. Ecofeminist Val Plumwood raises awareness about this issue:

Human/nature dualism conceives humans as inside culture but ‘outside nature’ and conceives non-humans as outside ethics and culture. The theory I advocate aims to disrupt this deep historical dualism by re-situating humans in ecological terms at the same time as it re-situates non-humans in ethical and cultural terms. It affirms

107 “sushis” (Beaulieu 22); “Eat cheese tartiflette. [...] Eat pork hocks. [...] Cook a Sea Pie” (Beaulieu 27); “Eat raw clams. Eat cooked clams. Eat clams. [...] Eat oysters” (Beaulieu 29); “we eat veggie food” (Beaulieu 104); “eat a seafood pizza” (Beaulieu 182); “I have eaten a poutine” (Beaulieu 188).

an ecological universe of mutual use and sees humans and animals as mutually available for respectful use in conditions of equality. (*The Eye of the Crocodile* 78)

For instance, the reference to gastronomy in the play maintains a certain status quo when it comes to animal consumption and the power dynamic between species that underlies it. Food production that involves animal products is another example of speciesism.

3.7.1. The Beaver Complex

The mismanagement of available resources is one of the reasons behind Christine Beaulieu's outrage. During her citizen inquiry, several interlocutors inform her about the poor management of woods in the flooded areas. Among other people, she meets Joël Malec, a contractor and special advisor to the chief of Nutashkuan, who tells Christine that his nation, the Innu, are in trouble due to Hydro-Québec's decisions:

ROY DUPUIS. C'est comme si Hydro-Québec était rendue une manufacture à barrages ! Nous autres, on appelle ça le complexe du castor.

CHRISTINE. (*Amusée*) Le complexe du castor ?

ROY DUPUIS. Un castor, ça construit des barrages ?

CHRISTINE. Ouin.

ROY DUPUIS. Ben, nous autres, les Québécois, c'est ça qu'on fait.
On fait des barrages !

CHRISTINE. Ah.

ROY DUPUIS. (*Jouant le castor fier*) « On est bons là-dedans ! On fait ça, nous autres ! »

CHRISTINE. Ouain ! (*Rire*)

ROY DUPUIS. « M'as t'en faire un, barrage ! Où c'est qu'tu l'veux ? » (*Christine rit*) « Mais on n'en a pas besoin ! » « Pas grave, ostie ! On crée de l'emploi avec ça ! C'est un beau barrage, là. Tu vas voir, on va faire de l'argent en vendant l'électricité aux

États-Unis ! » Sauf que le prix qu'on la vend est quasiment la moitié de ce que ça nous coûte. [...]

CHRISTINE. Tu veux dire que là, on ferait des barrages pas rentables pour quelque chose dont on n'a pas besoin ?¹⁰⁸ (Beaulieu 23-4)

In this extract, Roy and Christine discuss the concept with humour until the joke turns sour. Roy comments on the success of Hydro-Québec: at one point in Quebec's history it was a success story, hence its popularity among the general population. After highlighting the fact that new public infrastructures create new jobs, Roy contrasts it with Quebec's needs and the realities of the economic market. *J'aime Hydro* presents the beaver complex as a defect of Quebecers in general, but also as a characteristic of a specific individual. This happens when Christine and her father comment on an event they have just attended, a public consultation for a new energy policy:

PAPA. (*Fier*) C'était beau, c'était parfait ! T'étais la seule femme à poser une question ! C'est instructif en maudit, pareil ! J'ai adoré écouter tout ce monde-là ! Mais, tsé, c'est sûr qu'y a peut-être des lobbyistes là-dedans... Comme le gars qui a posé sa question sur quand c'est qu'y vont nous r'partir un autre grand barrage Hydro... Lui, tu vois qu'il –

CHRISTINE. Il a hâte de savoir c'est quoi, le nouveau mégaprojet –

PAPA. C't'un castor, lui ! Pis s'il ronge pas, y a les dents qui allongent !¹⁰⁹ (*Rire*) (Beaulieu 121)

108 "ROY DUPUIS. Well, it's as if Hydro-Québec had been turned into a dam factory! We call it the beaver complex. CHRISTINE. (*Amused*) The beaver complex? ROY DUPUIS. A beaver, it does build dams, right? CHRISTINE. Yep. ROY DUPUIS. So, we Quebecers, that's what we do. We make dams! CHRISTINE. Ah. ROY DUPUIS. (*Acting as a proud beaver*) "We are good at it! We are doing just that!" CHRISTINE. Yeah! (*Laughter*) ROY DUPUIS. "I've got to make one dam! Where do you want it?" (*Christine laughs*) "But we don't need it! No big deal, damn!" We create jobs with that! It's going to be a beautiful dam, right there. You'll see, we're going to make money by selling electricity to the United States!" Except that the price we sell it is almost half of what it costs us. [...] CHRISTINE. You mean that we would make unprofitable dams to get something we do not need?" (Beaulieu 23-4)

109 "DAD. (*Proud*) It was beautiful, it was perfect! You were the only woman to ask a question! That was really instructive, anyway! I loved listening to all these people! But, you know, I am sure that there were lobbyists in there ... Like the guy who asked his question about when they are going to

In this excerpt, the physical specificities of the beaver come into play. Beavers, like other rodents, are characterised by their dental system, “les quatre incisives que possède le castor n’arrêtent pas de grandir jusqu’à sa mort. Elles sont placées de sorte que plus le castor les use, plus elles sont aiguisées” (“Le castor”).¹¹⁰ *J’aime Hydro* showcases one individual’s desire to transform another natural site into an energy megaproject, and draws a comparison between this behaviour and the beaver’s need to gnaw. Does Hydro-Québec suffer from the beaver complex? The question has been raised by Annabel Soutar: “On est en train de poser de profondes questions sur l’intention d’Hydro-Québec de continuer à agir comme des castors” (Beaulieu 155).¹¹¹ Ultimately, the beaver complex notion highlights a frame of mind grounded in a total lack of limits, “l’illimitisme” [*neologism*, *illimitism*], which is often mentioned in ecofeminist theories. It has been defined as a “surexploitation compulsive” [compulsive over-exploitation] (d’Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 166) by ecofeminist pioneer Françoise d’Eaubonne, whose theories are a powerful tool that challenges both patriarchy and capitalism:

Nous venons, tout au long des pages qui précèdent, d’expliquer quelles sont les structures mentales: responsables, puis à nouveau engendrées par elle (cycle de l’œuf et la poule) des axes principaux du patriarcat dont le capitalisme le dernier stade:

Appropriation – système marchand;

Dominance – hiérarchie et spectacle;

Agressivité compétitive – guerre et travail;

Illimitisme – surexploitation compulsive (en production marchande, en racismes démultipliés, en conquêtes sans fin, en stakhanovisme ou taylorisme, en surpopulation) [...] en contester

start another big Hydro dam ... You could see him, that he – CHRISTINE. He’s anxious to know what the new megaproject is – DAD. He’s a beaver! If it doesn’t gnaw, its teeth keep growing! (*Laughter*)” (Beaulieu 121).

110 “the beaver’s four incisors keep growing until its death. They are placed so that the more the beaver uses them, the sharper they are” (“Le castor”).

111 “We are asking profound questions about Hydro-Québec’s intention to continue acting like beavers” (Beaulieu 155).

la racine qu'en la dénonçant toujours et partout patriarcale, et pas simplement « capitalisme ». ¹¹² (*Écologie et féminisme* 166)

For instance, the beaver complex is deep-rooted in the myth of infinite growth, which is another way to conceptualise d'Eaubonne's illimitism. Sociologist Jean-François Blain explains to Christine why the beaver complex is so deeply ingrained in Quebec's society: "On espère faussement que la croissance va revenir. La croissance, c'est la dernière des mythologies et on l'enseigne encore. La décroissance va nous frapper qu'on le veuille ou pas" (Beaulieu 132). ¹¹³

Many animal tropes are used in *J'aime Hydro*. Through the lens of speciesism, we observe that most of those animals are used by humans, reinforcing the hierarchical idea that animals are under the yoke of humankind. The story of Topsy the elephant and the commodification of animal flesh are good examples of this power relation. Finally, the beaver complex offers an ambivalent image that can be used in two opposing ways. On the one hand, it is a powerful symbol for hard work. On the other hand, and in greater accord with the play, it is a very revealing symbol of aggressive construction work going against the better interests of the population and its natural resources. Briefly, the beaver complex proves to be a powerful metaphor that helps to define, question, and criticise human relationships with the environment. In the next section, this relationship shifts from one of exploitation to one of gratitude.

112 "Throughout the preceding pages we have explained the mental structures: those responsible for, then again engendered by the structure (the chicken and egg cycle/syndrome) with regard to the principal phases of patriarchy, the final stage of which is capitalism: Appropriation – trading system; Dominance – hierarchy and exhibition; Competitive aggressiveness – war and work; Illimitism – compulsive over-exploitation (in market production, in many forms of racism, in endless conquests, in Stakhanovism or Taylorism, in overpopulation) [...] to challenge its root only by denouncing it always and everywhere as patriarchal, and not simply as capitalism" (d'Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 166).

113 "We falsely hope that growth will return. Growth is the last of the mythologies and we still teach it. Degrowth will hit us whether we like it or not" (Beaulieu 132).

3.7.2. Rita's Advice: Give Thanks for Nature

Poet and culture advisor in the Council of the Innu Nation, Rita Mestokosho, is a standard-bearer of her origins and her culture – a minority culture in Quebec:

Je suis innue, et innu veut dire être humain. Nous sommes à peu près 15 000 Innus dispersés dans 11 communautés, 2 au Labrador qui sont anglophones de langue seconde, 9 au Québec qui sont francophones de langue seconde. Nous vivons entre deux mondes, le moderne et le traditionnel. L'équilibre entre les deux n'est pas facile car notre terre traditionnelle est toujours menacée par la destruction de grosses compagnies forestières, des barrages hydroélectriques et les mines. Notre vie et notre survie sont attachées à celui des rivières, des forêts et des lacs. Écrire dans une langue, la langue française est aussi une nécessité. Celle de pouvoir diffuser à un vaste auditoire nos préoccupations dans une langue poétique.¹¹⁴ (90)

The encounter between Rita and Christine is an important part of *J'aime Hydro*'s fourth episode. Rita's testimony offers a new vision of Hydro-Québec's dam on the Romaine River:

La Romaine, c'est arrivé comme un coup de vent, et ça a laissé une cicatrice. Une cicatrice dans le cœur des gens. Une cicatrice très apparente sur le territoire. Une cicatrice qui fait encore mal. Et nous, les Innus, on participe à cette cicatrice.¹¹⁵ (Beaulieu 202)

114 "I am Innu, and Innu means being human. We are roughly 15,000 Innu scattered in 11 communities, 2 in Labrador who use English as a second language, 9 in Quebec who use French as a second language. We live between two worlds, the modern and the traditional. The balance between the two is not easy as our traditional land is still threatened by the destruction caused by the big logging companies, hydroelectric dams, and mines. Our life and our survival are tied to that of rivers, forests, and lakes. Writing in a language, the French language is also a necessity. That of disseminating our concerns among a large audience in a poetic language" (Mestokosho 90).

115 "*La Romaine*, it happened like a gust of wind, and it left a scar. A scar in people's hearts. A very visible scar on the territory. A scar that still hurts. And we Innu share a part in this scar" (Beaulieu 202).

This excerpt introduces the relationship between Rita and the river and how it has been affected by Hydro-Québec. Rather than talking about profitability or necessity, Rita identifies the energy megaproject as a wound. By linking the body to the land, this metaphor offers an alternative approach to the events, suggesting an ecocentric – instead of anthropocentric – point of view. As Patrick D. Murphy puts it, “the dialogic method is a way to incorporate that decentering recognition of a permanent in medias res of human life and a constantly widening context for human interaction and interanimation within the biosphere and beyond” (*Literature, Nature, and Other* 17). Rita’s cultural relationship with nature fits into this dialogic approach as recommended by Murphy. Furthermore, Rita Mestokosho raises awareness about the ability to be amazed by nature and the importance of being grateful in this dialogue:

RITA MESTOKOSHO. (*Tapant avec ses pieds sur le sol*) Faut que t’apprennes à t’enraciner. C’est ta mère, la Terre en dessous, là, elle te porte tous les jours, c’est incroyable ! Tu dois la remercier. « Merci d’être encore là pour moi, merci, la Terre. » Toi, tu fais pas ça.

CHRISTINE. Non, je fais pas ça.

RITA MESTOKOSHO. Après, tu respirez, « Merci, l’air, merci, le ciel ». Mais tu fais pas ça, toi, tu remercies pas.

CHRISTINE. Non, j’avoue, je fais jamais ça.¹¹⁶ (Beaulieu 203-4)

Even though Rita does not use specific terms that are explicitly related to the feminist movement, we could say that her discourse is very close to an ecofeminist perspective. In the words of anthropologist Kassia Aleksic, whose works address environmental activism by women,

116 “RITA MESTOKOSHO. (*Stamping her feet on the ground*) You have to learn to take root. This is your mother, the Earth below, there, she carries you every day, it’s incredible! You have to thank her. “Thank you for still being there for me, thank you, Earth.” You don’t do that. CHRISTINE. No, I don’t do that. RITA MESTOKOSHO. Afterwards, you breathe, “Thank you, air, thank you, sky.” But you don’t do that, you don’t thank. CHRISTINE. No, I admit, I never do that” (Beaulieu 203-4).

notre interlocutrice caractérise aussi ce mouvement comme «écoféministe»: un terme qu'elles n'utilisent pas elles-mêmes, mais qui en effet, correspond à leur mouvement, à condition qu'il soit admis de manière fluide et plurielle. De manière très générale, il repose sur l'idée que de mêmes logiques gouvernent les violences contre les femmes et contre la nature. On constate que les destructions environnementales poussent des femmes à se mobiliser contre des violences qu'elles estiment les toucher spécifiquement en tant que femmes.¹¹⁷ (58)

For instance, the goals of ecofeminism are common to the fight of rural women in Indonesia and First Nation activists in Canada. This conversation with Rita Mestokosho transforms Christine: she realises that she takes her comfort for granted, and the same applies to the products of the exploitation of the Romaine River, Quebec's territory, and its ecosystem. In order to improve the existing relationship, she uses the verb 'to love' in order to propose a metaphor built on her personal experience:

CHRISTINE. comme je suis allée chez la psy, je sais que le pire ennemi de l'amour, c'est de se prendre pour acquis. Et je pense que c'est là, le plus grand problème entre les Québécois et Hydro-Québec: on se prend pour acquis. Nous prenons nos kilowattheures pour acquis et Hydro-Québec aussi a tendance à prendre pour acquise sa clientèle.¹¹⁸ (Beaulieu 244)

117 "our interlocutor also characterises this movement as 'ecofeminist,' a term which they do not use themselves, but which in fact corresponds to their movement, on condition that it is applied in a fluid and liberal manner. Very generally, it is based on the idea that the same logic governs violence against women and against nature. We see that environmental destruction pushes women to mobilize against violence that they consider affects them specifically as women" (Aleksic 58).

118 "CHRISTINE. because I visited my shrink, I know that the worst enemy of love is to take oneself for granted. And I think this is the biggest problem between Quebecers and *Hydro-Québec*: we take each other for granted. We take our kilowatt hours for granted and *Hydro-Québec* also tends to take its customers for granted" (Beaulieu 244).

J'aime Hydro represents nature in different ways. These representations offered by the play range from the fragile equilibrium of the Romaine River's ecosystem to environmental malpractices (drowning woods, introducing power dynamics between species, etc.) and their consequences for non-human animals and other non-human entities. One individual from the Innu nation introduces another relationship between humans and nature and highlights the lack of gratitude presented in Christine's relationship with nature. Christine's transformation as an individual is possible through the new relationship she develops with the natural environment.

3.8. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

3.8.1. Taking Nature for Granted: Limitless Extractivism

Hydro-Québec's dam construction is not *per se* an environmental catastrophe such as the Deepwater Horizon oil spill or the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. However, it is not a project without consequences for the environment – it has an irreversible impact on the territory and on all the life forms that inhabit it. Megadam constructions authorised by the province of Quebec initiate a long and slow process that leaves an indelible mark on the planet. This can prove very revealing when analysed through the lens of Rob Nixon's notion of *slow violence*:

By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. [...] we also need to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence. Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational

obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively.
(2)

To build on Nixon's concept, my argument would be that we must analyse the reasoning of decision makers in Hydro-Québec's executive team: what justifies this type of violence? *J'aime Hydro's* protagonist, Christine, obtains one-on-one interviews with Hydro-Québec's CEO Éric Martel and then with Vice-President Pierre-Luc Desgagné. Eric Martel justifies the construction of *La Romaine* dam with his belief that electricity prices will rise:

ÉRIC MARTEL. La rentabilité de la Romaine, c'est une boule de cristal. En ce moment, le prix de l'électricité est très bas, à quatre-et-quelque cennes.

CHRISTINE. à 4.8 ¢.

ÉRIC MARTEL. Oui, mais dans 50 ans, il va peut-être être à 25 ¢ !
Imagine !

CHRISTINE. Donc on développe la Romaine en faisant le pari que le prix de l'électricité va augmenter ?

ÉRIC MARTEL. Ouais. On développe avec une vision sur 100 ans. Ça se peut qu'on ne fasse pas de profit avant 10, 15 ans, c'est ça qui est arrivé avec la centrale Robert-Bourassa à la Baie-James.

CHRISTINE. Tu trouves pas que c'est dangereux de comparer avec la Baie-James ? Je veux dire, l'avenir sera certainement pas comme le passé. Et comment peux-tu être convaincu que le prix de l'électricité va augmenter ?

ÉRIC MARTEL. Ça toujours été comme ça.¹¹⁹ (Beaulieu 228)

119 "ÉRIC MARTEL. The profitability of *La Romaine* is a crystal ball. At the moment, the price of electricity is very low, at four and a few cents. CHRISTINE. at 4,8 ¢. ÉRIC MARTEL. Yes, but in 50 years, it may be 25 ¢! Imagine! CHRISTINE. So we are developing *La Romaine's* dam by betting that the price of electricity will increase? ÉRIC MARTEL. Yeah. We develop with a vision over 100 years. We may not make a profit for 10 or 15 years, this is what happened with the Robert-Bourassa power station in James Bay. CHRISTINE. Don't you think it's dangerous to compare with James Bay? I mean, the future will certainly not be like the past. And how can you be convinced that the price of electricity will go up? ÉRIC MARTEL. It's always been like that" (Beaulieu 228).

Hydro-Québec's CEO seems to take profit-making for granted, implying that collaboration between nature and humanity is guaranteed to some extent. His prediction about the project's profitability in the long run is quite optimistic and does not take into consideration factors other than the past economic trend. However, politics, the environment, and many other factors might also have a significant impact on Hydro-Québec's energy production. Martel also gives another justification that astonishes Christine: "Honnêtement, je ne comprends pas cette raison-là: de continuer de construire afin de ne pas perdre notre expertise" (Beaulieu 234).¹²⁰ By doing so, Martel frames energy production within a narrative where nature serves economic interests, which is problematic. In the same vein, the authors of the article "Ecology & Ideology: An Introduction" suggest:

Once Nature takes over, throwing off the economic function assigned to it, 'we' – humanity – are all forced together onto the same side. Who, after all, could possibly be to blame for hurricanes, floods, volcanoes, and earthquakes? Who could possibly have the power to predict when and where disasters will erupt? Even in the case of BP's irreparable destruction of the Gulf Coast – where the 'culprits' seem clear and the potential consequences of deep-sea drilling eminently foreseeable – mainstream commentary finds itself gored on the horns of a false dilemma: because the spill was not purposeful, because no one wanted this to happen, it must therefore be a terrible 'accident'. (Canavan, Klarr and Vu 1)

On the one hand, Éric Martel talks about future profits as a justification, and the need to maintain the expertise for *La Romaine's* dam construction. On the other hand, Pierre-Luc Desgagné refers to a power issue in order to justify *La Romaine*:

PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. [...] le nouvel enjeu, c'est la puissance.

¹²⁰ "Honestly, I do not understand this reason: to keep building so as not to lose our expertise" (Beaulieu 234).

- CHRISTINE. Les fameuses pointes ? [...] Mais, dans une année, ça arrive souvent des moments de pointe comme ça où Hydro-Québec n'arrive pas à répondre à la demande des Québécois ?
- PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Quelques heures seulement, on appelle ça de la fine fine pointe.
- CHRISTINE. Et la Romaine a été construite pour répondre à ces quelques heures de fine fine pointe ? [...]
- PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Ben oui. Ça donne strictement rien sur le plan économique de construire une installation que pour de la fine pointe.
- CHRISTINE. (*Confuse*) Mais... euh... s'il y aura toujours des pointes... je comprends pas... pourquoi –
- PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Bon, parlons de façon très transparente, là : c'est quoi qui te préoccupe ? Je réponds peut-être pas clairement ? Si on construit pour rien ? On ne construira jamais pour rien. Nos installations sont bonnes pour au moins 100 ans, on répond mieux à la demande hivernale et on comble les besoins des marchés d'exportation.¹²¹ (Beaulieu 137)

Pier-Luc Desgagné's justification is ambiguous: first, he talks about Hydro-Québec's power as a major issue during peak time, but then he gives a much broader and evasive answer in which he claims that Hydro-Québec will never build for no reason. Martel and Desgagné's rationale behind building a megadam is rooted in growth ideology, which leads them to limitless extractivism. This is the crux of the matter: fact vs belief. Christine has the data and can claim as a fact that hydroelectric dams are not profitable, which leads her to wondering why we keep building

121 "PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. [...] the new challenge is power. CHRISTINE. The famous peak times? [...] But, in a year, are there often peak times like this when Hydro-Québec cannot meet the demand of Quebecers? PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Only a few hours, we call it peak time. CHRISTINE. And *La Romaine's* dam was built to meet these few hours of peak time? [...] PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Well, yes. It contributes absolutely nothing economically to build a facility only for the peak time. CHRISTINE. (*Confused*) But... uh... if there will always be peak time... I do not understand... why – PIER-LUC DESGAGNÉ. Okay, let's talk frankly there: what is your concern? Maybe I am not answering clearly? Are we building for nothing? We will never build for no reason. Our facilities are good for at least 100 years, we respond better to winter demand and we meet the needs of export markets" (Beaulieu 137).

them. Hydro-Québec officials, however, consider that it is possible that *La Romaine's* dam will become profitable, an assumption rooted in the belief of infinite growth. Ecuadorian economist Alberto Acosta suggests the term *post-extractivism* to imagine an alternative to the current economic (belief) system:

Many people continue to believe that we are nations of scroungers, sitting on a pot of gold, and that the solution lies solely and simply in the (efficient) extraction of natural resources. We need to understand that we truly have the capacity to free ourselves from the yoke of economic exploitation (local and external) and that, with our own work and without ceding abundant surpluses to central countries, we can overcome the extractivist model and perhaps even reconsider the conception of economic growth without assuming that it is some kind of indisputable religion. (97)

In this context, Hydro-Québec's desire to build gigantic dams can be understood as a symptom of a ruling economic paradigm that dictates one specific relationship between humanity and nature, where the former exploits the latter.

3.8.2. Megadam: Green, Clean, and Renewable?

In section 3.6.1 of this chapter, *The Romaine River's Ecosystem*, I quoted Jacques Gélinau, who claims that Hydro-Québec is neither green nor clean, only renewable. Christine confronts Hydro-Québec's CEO on this matter, citing evidence of her claim:

CHRISTINE. J'ai regardé les portfolios standards (*Elle sort les papiers.*) et notre grande hydro ne se qualifie pas comme green ni comme clean dans plusieurs États ! [...] Mais toi, t'es à l'aise de qualifier notre grande hydro d'énergie propre, verte et renouvelable ?

ÉRIC MARTEL. Absolument. En termes d'émissions de gaz à effet de serre, c'est assez mineur.

CHRISTINE. Oui, mais y a pas juste les GES qui affectent l'environnement, tsé. Pour faire la Romaine, on coupe beaucoup d'arbres, on transforme la rivière en quatre lacs, on crée d'immenses réservoirs. T'as pas l'impression, comme moi, que notre amour pour la grande Hydro nous aveugle sur ses impacts environnementaux ?

ÉRIC MARTEL. Faut pas être naïfs, y a des impacts.¹²² (Beaulieu 228)

Christine uses the terms *green* and *clean* to describe energy production that has limited environmental impact. Éric seems to be totally comfortable using the same adjectives when describing the energy produced by Hydro-Québec and emphasises its low GHG emissions. According to *Sustain Europe's* Head of Sustainable Energy, more data are needed to support this claim:

We know that vast amounts of concrete and energy are used for the construction of hydro-dams; resulting in a very high carbon footprint prior to even generating a single kilowatt of electricity. What we have come to understand more over the past 15 years or so is that GHGs are also created in the reservoirs by decomposing organic matter, resulting in the formation of CH₄ (methane) and CO₂. [...] The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in the 6th report in 2022 are going to be adding GHG emissions from hydro as a documented source and intend to carry out further in-depth studies to this end. (McEntee)

122 "CHRISTINE. I looked at the standard portfolios (she takes out the papers) and our big hydro does not qualify as green or as clean in several states! [...] Yet, you are comfortable qualifying our large hydro as clean, green, and renewable energy. ÉRIC MARTEL. Absolutely. In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, it's pretty minor. CHRISTINE. Yes, but it's not just GHG that affects the environment, you know. To build *La Romaine's* dam, we cut down a lot of trees, we transform the river into four lakes, we create huge reservoirs. Don't you feel, like me, that our love for the big Hydro blinds us to its environmental impacts? ÉRIC MARTEL. Let's not be naive, there are impacts" (Beaulieu 231).

Furthermore, GHG emissions are not the only phenomenon that indicates whether or not an energy production plant is ecologically sound. To be truly ecological, any chosen approach must consider interconnectedness – all life forms depend on it for their survival and thriving. While GHG emissions are a global issue, local issues are not discussed by Hydro-Québec’s CEO and Vice-President. Christine gives some examples of how *La Romaine*’s megadam affects the environment on a smaller scale. Her enumeration is in tune with the following statement by Fergal McEntee:

We now know that the damming of rivers causes immense strain on the local biodiversity, creates unwanted GHG emissions and kills off aquatic life in vast numbers, not to mention the massive inconvenience to local communities and indigenous tribes who are forced out of their lands and homes. The effect of dams on ecosystems is an increasingly complex issue and one which until relatively recently never received the public attention it truly deserves.

The play offers and discusses some alternatives intended to reduce Canada’s current dependency on hydroelectric energy produced on a megascale, such as smart grids (Beaulieu 230; graph “Staying Big or Getting Smaller” is available in Appendix 2) or nanotechnologies (Beaulieu 90). However, a major change of behaviour might be necessary to handle the “peaks issue” and the consequences pointed out by Pier-Luc Desgagné – such is one of Christine’s conclusions regarding a potentially better use of household electricity:

CHRISTINE. On pourrait, tous ensemble, gérer nos pointes, puisque nous les créons. Au Vermont et dans plein de pays, on indique au consommateur les périodes de pointes grâce à un compteur intelligent. Une lumière rouge indique que la demande est en hausse et que ce n’est pas le bon moment de faire son lavage. On pourrait aussi varier le tarif selon les pointes. Bref, nous

pourrions tous être impliqués dans la bonne gestion de notre plus grande richesse.¹²³ (Beaulieu 244)

The Hydro-Québec official stands in a predator posture, wherein nature must be exploited for human benefit and where the focus is on the next big construction project, while not a word is said about the consumption habits of Quebecers. Christine's perspective seems to rely on a leap of faith: she believes energy efficiency can become everyone's business and she stresses how the concept of peak can be part of the solution instead of being an expensive problem. From my point of view, Christine Beaulieu's posture aligns with the fight for the commons as theorised by feminist scholar Silvia Federici, who defines a common as "land, water, air commons, digital commons" or even as "languages, libraries, and the collective products of past cultures". As Federici puts it, we need to be aware of the consequences of our daily habits in order to challenge:

our blindness to the blood in the food we eat, the petroleum we use, the clothes we wear, and the computers we communicate with. Overcoming this state of oblivion is where a feminist perspective teaches us to start in our reconstruction of the commons. No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them. Indeed, if commoning has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject. This is how we must understand the slogan 'no commons without community.' But 'community' has to be intended not as a gated reality, a grouping of people joined by exclusive interests separating them from others, as with communities formed on the basis of religion or ethnicity, but rather as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals.

123 "CHRISTINE. We could, all together, manage our peaks, since we create them. In Vermont and in many other countries, consumers are informed of peak periods using a smart meter. A red light indicates that demand is on the rise and that it is not the right time to do the laundry. We could also vary the price according to the peaks. In short, we could all be involved in the proper management of our greatest wealth" (Beaulieu 244).

In *J'aime Hydro*, Christine visibly positions herself as a Quebecer. I first read it as a nationalist stance, but it might also be interpreted as Christine identifying herself as part of a community, which is a much more powerful stance than presenting oneself as a single consumer of Hydro-Québec electricity. While Hydro-Québec seems to take for granted their clients, their profits, and the natural resources they rely on, analysing *J'aime Hydro* from an ecofeminist stance contributes to reframing the company's actions, encouraging us to see the big picture – that they are part of a global trend, closely intertwined with the logic of unfettered extractivism. The act of presenting a real company like Hydro-Québec on stage can be challenged by contemporary critique, such as Silvia Federici's theory of the commons.

3.8.3. *CHERCHER LE COURANT: A Road Movie on a River*

Directed by Nicolas Boisclair and Alexis de Gheldere, *Chercher le courant* is a documentary made in Quebec that features the two directors exploring the Romaine River by canoe in a time where the area was free of hydroelectric dams. This documentary film made in 2010 plays a key role in the becoming-committed of Christine Beaulieu – throughout the play, it acts like a barometer that shows her level of engagement. In the first scene of the play, Christine discovers the existence of the film and expresses her reservations: “À ce moment-là, ma perception était que le documentaire *Chercher le courant* devait être un film qui s'opposait à des barrages hydroélectriques pour des raisons environnementales” (Beaulieu 19).¹²⁴ In general, *J'aime Hydro* presents Christine as an open-minded person who is eager to learn. In contrast, we discover another side of Christine in this introduction, where she recalls her clumsiness, her apathy, her ignorance regarding the processes of energy production as well as a certain distrust towards the issues raised by the documentary. Nevertheless, Christine expresses her desire to watch the film. When she does, her attitude changes. Section 7 of the first episode introduces some excerpts from the film in

124 “At that time, my perception was that the documentary *Search for the Current* must have been a film that opposed hydroelectric dams for environmental reasons” (Beaulieu 19).

which the team is canoeing down the river for the last time, “avant qu'on ne puisse plus jamais le faire” (Beaulieu 17), due to the dam, as director of *Chercher le courant* Hugo Latulippe puts it.¹²⁵ The journey is interspersed with the testimony of activists, economists, and politicians, who express their concerns about the ongoing megadam project that started being built on the Romaine River in 2009. In her process of becoming-committed, Christine shares her indignation with Annabel Soutar; she understands the motives and the importance of the research project, but she does not believe herself to be a suitable candidate to lead this investigation. Christine enters a spiral of self-deprecation, a trend in female stand-up comedy according to media scholar Ellie Tomsett:


Self-deprecation is one of the most enduring aspects of comedy and, as American actor and comedian Kristen Schaal articulates in the form of a well-observed joke, it is a more complex property of comedy than it may at first appear: ‘I always thought self-deprecation put those around me at ease. But now I know it makes people uncomfortable. So dumb!’ (Schaal, 2014, n.p.). When comedians target themselves in their jokes, disparaging and depreciating their perceived cultural value, they are self-deprecating. [...] Self-deprecation in stand-up comedy by women continues to be understood as both positive (as part of the rise of popular feminisms) and negative (as reinforcing patriarchal norms). (6)

Christine compares herself to Hugo Latulippe, whom she considers to be a serious and committed filmmaker, and stages a first meeting with him where she judges herself unkindly and shares her self-deprecating comments with the audience during a stage whisper:

HUGO LATULIPPE. (*Impressionné*) Tu es cinéaste ?

CHRISTINE. Ouais, non, pas vraiment. Pas du tout, en fait. J'ai fait un film de même, pour le fun.

HUGO LATULIPPE. Ah.

 125 “before we can never do it again” (Beaulieu 17).

CHRISTINE. (*Au public*) Ouach, tsé, j'ai fait un film « de même, pour le fun ». [...] Tsé, moi, la twit, j'ai osé faire un film « pour le fun » [...] Bon, sérieusement, avec ma bouteille en plastique, mon film « pour le fun » et mon ignorance de la Romaine, je m'étais vraiment sentie comme une deux de pique avec zéro conscience environnementale.¹²⁶ (Beaulieu 18)

Thus, the pleasure of producing and presenting a film evaporates when she compares herself to this politically committed video-maker. The documentary *Chercher le courant* shows a number of experts and authority figures, including an ex-prime minister of Quebec. Most of them express their dismay and their incapacity to get answers from Hydro-Québec. This situation reinforces Christine's feeling of inferiority, which eventually leads her to decline the job after watching the documentary:

CHRISTINE. Je pense que c'est urgent que quelqu'un nous explique pourquoi on est en train de faire ces barrages-là ! Par contre, je doute très fort que je puisse, moi, avoir une réponse à cette question-là. [...] Je suis désolée, Annabel, mais je pense que c'est peine perdue.¹²⁷ (Beaulieu 47)

At this point, Christine becomes aware of the environmental and economic issues concerning *La Romaine's* megadam. However, she is fully aware of the research project and starts doubting herself. In the previously quoted letter that she sent to Annabel, Christine confesses her fear of conflict: she knows that the topic of the research is controversial and certainly annoys a number of people; as she explains to Annabel, she does not feel ready to deal with this. While the term

126 "HUGO LATULIPPE. (*Impressed*) Are you a filmmaker? CHRISTINE. Yeah, no, not really. Not at all, actually. I made a film for the sake of it, for fun. HUGO LATULIPPE. Ah. CHRISTINE. (To the public) Yuck! You know, I made a film 'for the sake of it, for fun.' [...] You know, me, the twit, I dared to make a film 'for fun' [...] Well, seriously, with my plastic bottle, my film 'for fun' and my ignorance of *La Romaine*, I really felt like a bonehead with zero environmental awareness" (Beaulieu 18).

127 "CHRISTINE. I think it is urgent that someone explains to us why we are doing these dams! In contrast, I very much doubt that I, myself, can have an answer to that question. [...] I'm sorry, Annabel, but I think it's a waste of time" (Beaulieu 47).

feminism is not explicitly mentioned onstage by Christine or Annabel, it can be revealing to approach their exchanges through the lens of the *confidence culture* theorised by Rosalind Gill and Shani Orgad. They define *confidence culture* as “a powerful *dispositif* addressed to women in the early twenty-first century [... that] is both a technology of self that calls forth a new feminine subject(ivity) and a discursive formation involved in the remaking and ‘Righting’ of feminism” (19). *J’aime Hydro* perpetuates the perspective that a woman can achieve success as an individual and on her own, without any connections or support from other people, especially other women. Christine’s own position as an outsider to hydroelectric research and her lack of experience as a researcher seem to make her the perfect candidate to connect with the general public. By retelling her own story with her first-person narrative and without using specific terminology, she conveys the message that her success also belongs to the population of Quebec by making this matter known nationally and internationally. What had initially started as an unusual job offer for an actor led Christine to raise awareness on a public matter. To reach the audience and arouse their interest and, sometimes, their commitment, Christine offers a first-person account where her experiences, her own thought process, are intertwined with the findings of her research. She insists on being totally honest about her research and investigation processes and she shows her commitment, firstly as a citizen and secondly as an actor, in sharing them with her audience. This behaviour can be understood in terms of *confidence culture* as defined by Gill and Orgad:

Confidence culture conjures a happy, calm, uncomplaining feminine subject who is appealing and unthreatening: she is neoliberalism and patriarchy-friendly. [...] It is located in a long tradition of self-help which individualizes and psychologizes, turning the focus away from cultural or structural constraints and advocating personal solutions rather than social transformation. It is an individualising technology which demands intense labour, places the emphasis upon women self-regulating and locates the source of the ‘problems’ and their

‘solutions’ within a newly upgraded form of confident subjectivity, thus rendering insecurity and lack of confidence abhorrent. (20-2)

While making private issues public is a common strategy within the feminist movement, one might wonder if it could work the other way around: envisaging the Hydro-Québec’s issue as a personal matter that mobilises Christine as an individual might encourage us to reflect on the political dimension of her transformation. Christine concludes that there are two clear issues that need to be addressed: 1) Is profitability the real reason behind the construction of the megadam? 2) Is the way we use energy the most convenient one in ecological terms? The answer to both questions seems to be a tricky one, as it goes beyond business interests.

Following the research work done by Christine, it seems clear that building a megadam is not really profitable. There are plenty of ways to generate and mostly save energy, and people should be aware of this, even if it implies minor behaviour changes for them. These modifications are not solely dependent on citizens: peak hours, school runs, or mealtimes are just different examples of how strictly, and sometimes not so logically, society is organised. These changes would need to be approved and promoted by the authorities, ensuring a better use of natural resources.

Having analysed deeper social concerns, such as national identity and sense of belonging, Christine reaches a second conclusion: money does not seem to be the reason behind building the megadam. She realises that she has been using economic profit as the default criterion for evaluating whether or not it is necessary or suitable to build a new megadam, and points out something interesting: this seems to be the mainstream society’s standard, and we are all expected to abide by it. In light of this, she questions the importance given to money in capitalistic societies, and starts reconsidering the concept of wealth: what does it mean to be rich? What if wealth means to make sure the ecosystem is balanced and healthy? In brief, this is why I am under the impression that Christine investigates the source of the ‘problems’ of hydro-electrical energy production in Quebec and their ‘solutions’. This strategy helps to boil down a complex issue into a much simpler situation that she can easily communicate to others.

The documentary film *Chercher le courant* is the main trigger of *J'aime Hydro*'s narrative. Its presence in the play helps to measure Christine's commitment in a social and political fight, the main goal of which is to improve the management of energy production in Quebec in order to reduce its environmental impact. The documentary opens Christine's eyes to a new reality. Now that she knows, she feels responsible and is aware that she must take action. Throughout her research, Christine plays her character within the play with humour, between self-deprecation and self-doubt, which drives me to question the injunction of confidence that women are facing, and the individual tools deployed to develop this confidence. Christine is very well equipped to analyse love in a relationship between two people; she uses this tool in order to improve Quebecers' relationship with Hydro-Québec. To do so, she universalises the problem and reduces the numerous participants and their complex identities to a binary relationship: on the one side, Quebecers and on the other, a public, state-owned company.

3.9. CONCLUSION

J'aime Hydro calls into question the social and environmental impacts of hydroelectric productions in Quebec. Christine Beaulieu, the main actress and the playwright of this work, is motivated to dive into this story because of the following question: why does the Quebec government want to continue building large hydro-electric projects if they are not profitable? A 12-hour drive separates Montreal and Mingan. This is the journey undertaken by the actress who travelled in an electric car to meet the people affected by the construction of the dam on the Romaine River.

Through her research, she stages the relationship between the Romaine River's ecosystem and those who live near it, such as Indigenous people, Hydro-Québec's workers, and environmentalists. In doing so, she sheds light on the mismanagement of certain resources in order to create a reservoir, as methane production is associated with land flooding. In addition to the material reality of nature and its ecological consequences,

the play also explores the figurative meaning of Hydro-Québec's intervention in the river, notably through the use of animal metaphors.

Similar to the idiom *eager beaver*, the expression *beaver complex* is used throughout the play to describe individuals who are prepared to do anything to continue building dams *ad vitam aeternam*, without the lack of profitability slowing their momentum. In doing so, Christine Beaulieu tries to extract herself from the extractivist mindset and challenges a business model based on the myth of infinite growth. She metamorphoses into a committed citizen who tries to disprove the idea that hydroelectricity is a green and clean energy. Rather than presenting a monologue defending the author's beliefs, the play features different people with different ideas and interests. The multiplicity of voices makes it possible to break out of the dominant narratives where hierarchy and dualism play a predominant role.

I would like to argue that Christine Beaulieu embodies ecofeminist values in *J'aime Hydro*. Indeed, she denounces limitless extractivism; she reconnects with nature by visiting it and expressing her gratitude. Furthermore, she makes visible the omnipresence of men in decision-making bodies, which leads to episodes of everyday sexism for a young and pretty actress who tries to be taken seriously by experts and managers. By taking up the challenge set by producer Annabel Soutar, Christine Beaulieu is paving the way for those who, like her, are preoccupied with the environment and social justice but suffer from an intense imposter syndrome that paralyses them.

4. THE AFTERMATH OF URANIUM MINING ON SAHTU DENE LAND: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXTRACTIVISM

4.1. INTRODUCTION

4.1.1. Marie Clements

Métis¹²⁸ playwright Marie Clements (b. 1962) is a major figure of contemporary Canadian drama. Founder of Urban Ink Productions, she has performed, directed, and written many plays.¹²⁹ Her award-winning

128 Anthropologist scholars Rick Ouellet and Erin Hanson situate the denomination Métis in the contemporary Canadian context: “The term Métis refers to a collective of cultures and ethnic identities that resulted from unions between Aboriginal and European people in what is now Canada. Métis stems from the Latin verb *miscēre*, ‘to mix.’ The word initially referred to the children of these relationships, but over generations it came to refer to the distinct cultural identities these communities developed. In recent years, partially due to the Métis rights case *R. v. Powley*, the word Métis has shifted from referring to a single cultural identity produced by European-Aboriginal intermarriage across different communities, to applying to multiple identities that have arisen from diverse historical instances of Aboriginal-European heritage”.

129 Métis theatre scholar Michelle La Flamme provides a context to Clements’s stage artistry, bringing it forward to today and situating it within a society and historical events: “Like the work of Margo Kane, Tomson Highway, and Drew Hayden Taylor, Clements’ body of work has been an important part of a theatre movement that has given voice to Aboriginal writers in Canada. By also being Artistic Directors of their own companies, these playwrights have played a foundational role in the development of Aboriginal theatre in Canada” (28).

work has been translated into many languages and it has been studied by several theatre scholars in Canada and beyond (Couture 2019; Fletcher 2016; Hargreaves 2011; Kamboureli & Verduyn 2014; La Flamme 2010; May 2010; Vellino 2017; Wallace 2016). For instance, *Theatre Research in Canada* (TRIC) published a special issue of the journal to celebrate Clements' contribution to Canadian theatre. In the introduction to this issue, Reid Gilbert highlights how Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming is a key to understanding her work:

Such an idea of becoming – of moving among translucent layers of self, dream-self, historical/fictional self, and memory; of finding centre and agency in a community that may extend beyond the human or the concrete; of emerging from a chrysalis of ancient traditions, myths, and ontologies; of becoming-by-speaking out – is fundamental to Clements' vision and informs all her work. (xii)

Blending certain feminist writing features with aboriginal storytelling, Marie Clements' creations offer a perspective that is deeply rooted in her origins. The Vancouver-based artist “has mastered a unique style of storytelling by linking the past with the present [... while] evoking the traditions of her Aboriginal roots and drawing from her experience as a radio news reporter in the 1980s” (Guly). As no one speaks *ex nihilo*, it seems fundamental to place her work within the culture of a minoritarian nation in Canada. I would like to argue that ethnicity is a situation – in other words, a perspective which can help to decentralise the vision of the majority when it is formulated by a racialised person such as a Métis playwright.¹³⁰ As a matter of fact, biologist, historian, and science history

130 The term *racialised* is an umbrella term used to refer to someone who identifies as non-white: “Bodies (e.g., skin, hair), behaviours (e.g., clothing), and social practices (e.g., accent, name) are all racialized, albeit in different ways. People's perceptions of race and identity impact how they view themselves and others, and their experiences in society (Eisenhower et al. 2014). While all bodies are racialized, the attachment of certain constructions of race by society to some groups (and not others) based on skin colour or ethnic origins can create inequality in treatment. Racialized people experience disparities in poverty, employment, and access to health services (Levy et al. 2013; Galabuzi 2005; Block and Galabuzi 2011). In order to study both inequalities and potential effects of racialization, we need survey measures that accurately capture this construct” (Bauer et al. 372).

scholar Donna Haraway's theory of situated knowledge helps to support such an argument:

Positioning is, therefore, the key practice in grounding knowledge organized around the imagery of vision, and much Western scientific and philosophic discourse is organized in this way. [...] Situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular. ("Situated Knowledges" 587-91)

In light of Haraway's theory, I would like to highlight the claim made by Métis theatre scholar Michelle La Flamme on how Marie Clements' situated knowledge influences her drama production. In support of this claim, she reviews *TRIC*'s above-mentioned special edition dedicated to Marie Clements:

For me, the larger Aboriginal context deserves to be recognized as a preface to understanding the kind of power that Clements' body of work has for Aboriginal theatre practitioners and Aboriginal audiences in Canada. However, the essays in this volume are, in many ways, writing(s) from outside an Aboriginal context [...] In sum, these essays contribute to the growing awareness of, and critical engagement with, a woman whose plays certainly offer one of Canada's most powerfully layered, unique, and deeply moving contemporary theatrical experiences. (La Flamme 29-30)

Métis culture provides the raw material for Clements' creations, which is not the case for the majority of Canadian drama. Being Métis influences Clements' perception of nature and also determines her relationship with non-aboriginal people. Sociologist Celene Krauss mentions environmental racism experienced in the United States in an article in which she compares the environmental activism of white women to that of African and Native American women:

La justice environnementale fait apparaître la nécessité de résoudre plus largement les inégalités sociales attachées à la race. Les récits des femmes natives-américaines sont également nourris par le thème du racisme environnemental [...] Comme les Africaines-Américaines, l'engagement de ces femmes [Natives-Américaines] dans les mobilisations contre les déchets toxiques est ancré depuis le début dans la question raciale et elles ne partagent aucunement avec les femmes blanches des classes populaires leur confiance initiale en l'État.¹³¹ (Krauss 232-3)

In the next section, I will explore how Clements' work is specifically rooted in local and regional cultural narratives.

4.1.2. Historical and Cultural Context of Aboriginal Playwrights in British Columbia

I start this section with a reference to a recent Aboriginal protest that took place in British Columbia and gained the attention of news reporters all over Canada. In February 2020, British Columbia's Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs opposed the Coastal GasLink pipeline's construction on their ancestral land.¹³² This local conflict spread across the country:

131 "Environmental justice highlights the need to more broadly resolve the social inequalities attached to race. The stories of native American women are also fuelled by the topic of environmental racism. [...] Like African-Americans, the engagement of these [Native-American] women in the mobilisations against toxic waste has been rooted in the racial question from the start and they do not in any way share white working-class women's initial confidence in the State" (Krauss 232-3).

132 Wet'suwet'en people reject the colonisation of their land: they have not signed a treaty or sold their ancestral territory to the Canadian state. Medway Baker, writer and editor of *Cosmonaut Magazine*, refers to the documentary *Invasion* in order to portray the on-going fight between the Wet'suwet'en Nation and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): "*Invasion* begins, aptly, with police harassing a Wet'suwet'en woman. It's a stark image, this meeting at the bridge marking the entrance to the Unist'ot'en territory. Agents of the settler-colonial Canadian state stand threateningly at the border. Behind the woman there are signs declaring "No to colonial violence" and "Defend the yintah [land]!" There is an undeclared war here. On one side, a people who have lived in this area for countless generations, trying to go about their lives in peace. On the other side, an occupying force which seeks to dispossess the Unist'ot'en in the name of capitalist accumulation. Because the Unist'ot'en find themselves in the way of the capitalists'

“Rail lines across Canada have been paralysed for almost two weeks after being blockaded by indigenous protesters and their supporters” (“The Wet’suwet’en”). The Wet’suwet’en people’s struggle brought together three main issues: aboriginal land rights, extractivism as an ongoing colonial practice, and the preservation of nature. *Ricochet’s* editor Ethan Cox suggests that “it’s time for all of us to seriously reckon with this country’s history of abusing Indigenous people, and accept that if we want reconciliation to mean anything at all we have to learn how to take no for an answer”. While most Canadian provinces and territories signed treaties with Aboriginal people in the past, British Columbia (BC) is a distinct case:

In most parts of Canada, the British Crown established treaties with First Nations [...] but in BC, this process was never completed [...] only 14 treaties on Vancouver Island had been signed, and aboriginal title to the rest of the province was left unresolved. (“Why, in this”)

Local events and the historical context provide solid input into the reality of contemporary colonial Canada – to a large extent, the hegemonic power of white settlers over the rest of the population persists. As human geographer Adam J. Barker puts it, “Canadian society remains driven by the logic of imperialism and engages in concerted colonial action against Indigenous peoples whose claims to land and self-determination continue to undermine the legitimacy of Canadian authority and hegemony” (325). This very special historical and cultural context provides Marie Clements with the perfect raw material for her work and her own theatrical vision of the situation:

Clements is also one of many Aboriginal (and postcolonial Canadian) playwrights whose work offers a revision of Canadian narratives predicated on the notion that Canada was ‘won’ by the colonial imperative. Much fruitful discussion can come from understanding

Clements's repeated thematic interest in this contentious Canadian history. (La Flamme 28)

Past and present stories meet in Clements' work. I would like to argue that decolonisation and reconciliation can start to take place when settlers treat Aboriginals as equals. My analysis of Clements' play *Burning Vision* aims to make up for the long absence of Indigenous work in the Canadian literary canon: "The paradox for indigenous work is that whilst it resists the mainstream canon it does at the same time negotiate and challenge what defines the canon by producing alternative literature" (Virtich 1). As a settler scholar, however, I am aware of the risk of whitewashing an Indigenous creation, which is why I mobilise decolonial methodologies within my theoretical framework. *Burning Vision* was published in 2003 by Talonbooks, an independent publisher. Vancouver's Firehall Arts Centre hosted the first representation of the play produced by Rumble Productions. This production took place on 26 April 2002. One of the most recent versions of the play was performed in Montreal by the "Graduating Class of 2020 in Acting, Production Design and Technical Arts, and Set and Costume Design" of the National Theatre School of Canada ("Burning Vision"). I have not been able to obtain a video recording of a *Burning Vision* performance, which is why my analysis rely on the text only.

4.1.3. Between Fact and Fiction: The Play's Timeline

After the acknowledgements and a list of the characters, *Burning Vision* offers a timeline which starts in the "late 1880s" with "the Prophecy by Dene medicine man" and ends on "April 26th 2002" with "*Burning Vision* opening night" (Clements 4-5). Within a timeline that exceeds a century, the playwright re-contextualises history, with special attention to uranium production and atomic bombing, the Canadian government being involved in the latter. A specific event occurring between 1925 and 1930 is quite striking, as it is not commonly known historical fact:

Radium watch-dial painters, all women, were encouraged by their employers to lick their paint brushes to give them a sharp point for better application of the luminous paint. The ingestion of radium resulted in severe anaemia, 'radium' jaw, and bone cancer. (Clements 4)

Radium glows in the dark and it was used to paint dials on clocks or watches following its discovery in the early 1900s.¹³³ The way Marie Clements relates health issues to the poor working conditions is a good example of '(her)story', a term opposed to '(his)tory', as explained by literature scholar Andrea O'Reilly Herrera:

A proliferation of feminist criticism and theory which focuses upon issues such as the objectification or social construction of the female self or to the manner in which women have been reduced to the 'gaps' or the silences within literary works, rather than their relationship to broader racial, ethnic, and national identities. (67)

For instance, Marie Clements unveils power dynamics in the workplace at the time between women painters and their bosses. The term '(her)story' refers to the numerous little stories of women as opposed to the singular and official '(his)tory', generally written by men whose ideological agenda is rarely questioned, since it is presented in terms of truth and objectivity. As Donna Haraway puts it, "feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of the subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" ("Situated Knowledges" 583). On Clements' timeline, another striking fact occurred in 1942, just after the Attack on Pearl Harbor: "Japanese-Canadians forced into internment camps; most camps are in BC" [British Columbia] (5). Pointing out how racism and sexism operate in those two events, Clements reveals the blind spots of conventional historical accounts. This perspective follows the direction described by ecofeminist and feminist theorist Ynestra King:

¹³³ See *Radium Girls Women and Industrial Health Reform, 1910-1935* by Claudia Clark, published in 1997, for more information on this topic.

Les femmes d'aujourd'hui ont la capacité de voir dans quelle direction le monde se dirige [...] Désormais, le féminisme doit apprendre à se baser sur l'altérité critique des femmes – en utilisant le point de vue privilégié d'outsider de la vie et des valeurs traditionnelles des femmes comme source d'analyse, de perspicacité et d'imagination politique.¹³⁴ (King 121-2)

King fosters awareness about the outsider perspective, a position that Marie Clements occupies. As a playwright, Clements invites the audience to become *an-other*: she offers them an aboriginal and feminine perspective of Canadian history. This new imagination contributes to the Canadian literary system while it helps to discover other ways to inhabit the world.

4.1.4. The Play *BURNING VISION*

The structure of the play is fragmented, and different stories generally overlap in each scene. For instance, the piece opens with a radio news reader commenting on a nuclear explosion and the countdown to the explosion. Then, a Native boy draws a parallel line between ore extraction and colonisation: “Claims you are theirs because they were the first to find you” (Clements 9). Next, two “prospectors who discovered uranium in the 1930s” (Clements 2) appear on stage; the Labine brothers are looking for a black rock in the dark. Their conversation is interrupted by Rose, a Métis woman, who is in turn interrupted by Koji, a Japanese fisherman. In summary, fictional and historical characters from different times and spaces meet on stage:

moments of reciprocal communication between cultures –
'intercultural handshakes' – are negotiated by Clements as 'timespace'

134 “Women today have the ability to see where the world is heading [...] Now feminism must learn to base itself on the critical otherness of women – using the privileged perspective of women as outsiders and traditional values as a source of analysis, insight and political imagination” (King 121-22).

moments through a Dene-inspired form of ‘chronotopic dramaturgy’ which, following Mikhail Bakhtin and Ric Knowles, re-visions the ways in which time and space structure a theatrical work and inform our understanding of the political effects at play. (Whittaker 129)

Filled with numerous cultural references, *Burning Vision* is a destabilising text. One of the reasons why it unsettles the reader is its theatrical form: there are numerous *holes* in the literary text that its representation on stage is meant to fill. The *hole* metaphor comes from French theatre historian Anne Ubersfeld, who points out that “l’essentiel peut-être du travail pédagogique sur un texte de théâtre c’est de le montrer non pas plein, mais nécessairement incomplet et troué, de voir que l’essentiel du discours de théâtre est hors de ses structures proprement textuelles” (16).¹³⁵ In order to give an example of how those semiotic holes can be filled and made sense of, I propose a brief close reading of the *Burning Vision* performance at the University of Oregon’s Hope Theatre in 2010. The artistic director of the piece, theatre scholar Theresa J. May, suggests that “we would discover that no amount of text analysis could clarify the meanings of this play; only live performance could reveal its inner workings” (“Kneading Marie” 5). Specifically, theatre critic Alan Beck details the scenographic choices of May’s production team in a local newspaper:

Also stunning is May’s use of the Hope’s space. There is no nook unused. Those prospectors explore above the lighting grid, radio broadcasters deliver their messages at microphones along a slightly lower catwalk encircling the theater. At stage level, a cherry tree faces rough hewn wooden platforms that serve as mine trusses and ship beams. A central pit dominates the middle, serving as campfire, mining shaft, bomb crater, pool, haven. Jonathan Taylor’s set is a fine collage in itself. And the sound/video design by Ryan Rusby yet another work of art.

135 “perhaps the essential aspect of the pedagogical work on a theatre text is to show it not as complete but as being necessarily incomplete and holed, to see that the essential aspect of theatre discourse is outside its merely textual structures” (Ubersfeld 16).

The scenography offers numerous ways to enrich the meaning of the play with the creation of a performance environment. In this context, it is quite a challenge to summarise *Burning Vision*'s nonlinear plot when relying only on the script, which is why I would like to highlight the clarity and conciseness of Sophie McCall and Christine Kim's review of the play. The review is based on a live performance, most likely the opening one produced by Rumble Productions in 2002 at the Firehall Arts Centre in Vancouver:

Burning Vision is a play in four movements, taking place on the clock-like stage divided into four quadrants and tracing the journey of uranium through four locations, in four nations, and through the four elements: from the lands belonging to the Sahtu Dene First Nation in Port Radium, Northwest Territories; to the fires in the refineries in Port Hope, Ontario; across the waters in ships to Los Alamos, New Mexico; and finally into the air in the form of the bomb that dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Each leg of this traverse implicates the people who live there and connects them to one another, whether they are aware of this connection or not. (McCall and Kim)

McCall and Kim draw attention to the interconnection between people of different ethnicities. Marie Clements locates *Burning Vision* in this interethnic context where distrust of the government in power is a key element. On the back cover of the book, she exposes the complicity of the Canadian Government with the United States in the nuclear bombing of Japan, and reveals the important role of Canada as a supplier of uranium for the first nuclear bomb:

Burning Vision unmaskes both the great lies of the imperialist power-elite (telling miners they are digging for a substance to cure cancer, while secretly using it to build atomic bombs that devastated Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and the seemingly small rationalizations and accommodations people of all cultures construct to make their

personal circumstances yield the greatest benefit to themselves for the least amount of effort or change on their part. (Clements)

Clements' description reminds Canadian audiences that they are accountable for this historical fact. This is, in my opinion, the essence of the play: to make people accountable for their actions even if distance, culture, ethnicity, or language separate them. On this subject, Theresa J. May – who performs a dual function: scholar and director – occupies a privileged position in the understanding of *Burning Vision*. I will give her the last word in this section:

Clements is about making: making bread, making bombs, making enemies, making love, making family, and about taking responsibility for what we have made [...] Tokyo Rose, a fictional radio personality created to serve as an agent of Japanese propaganda, reminds us that enemies, like breads and bombs, are made: a combination of fears and desires that inform social constructions of 'alien.' ("Kneading Marie" 7-9)

4.2. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

4.2.1. The Black Rock, the Forbidden Rock and the Money Rock

In this section, I analyse the representation of the natural environment. I start with a close reading of the story of ore extraction in Great Bear Lake, highlighting its cultural and scientific significance. To do so, I intend to examine how Marie Clements problematises the transformation of the natural environment into a natural resource and how its representation operates in *Burning Vision*. The first mention of the uranium mines in the play is made by the two prospector brothers. It occurs when Labine Brother One scoffs at Labine Brother Two, who shares his concerns about a noise he heard in the dark:

LABINE BROTHER ONE. Relax. Nobody knows about this place except the Indians, and they can damn well see in the dark. I'm thinking that old Indian we met up with told some other prospectors about this place. If he did, I'm gonna ring his red neck. You can't trust an Indian with a secret.

LABINE BROTHER TWO. He didn't exactly say it was a secret. YOU said it was a secret. He just said nobody's supposed to go here because nobody's supposed to be here. That's all he said. He was just being neighbourly and warned us with the story of the black rock.

LABINE BROTHER ONE. Warned us about a black rock! I never been scared of no rock. It's dangerous for a prospector to be scared of a rock, and it's just plain naïve for a grown white man to be scared of Indian fairy tales. HERE COMES THE BLACK ROCK... Boo! Get a grip before you pee your pants. (Clements 11)

The black rock is perceived differently by each brother and by an Indigenous elder they encounter. The prospectors hope to be the first to mine the black rock – their main interest is profit making. The language they use to describe the Aboriginal man is disrespectful. They do not listen to his warning about the black rock and its location – in other words, they do not take his knowledge seriously. New Zealander Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith contextualises this situation by explaining how travellers, missionaries, and entrepreneurs (like the Labine brothers) shape Western representations of Aboriginal people:

What may have begun as early fanciful, ill-informed opinions or explanations of indigenous life and customs quickly entered the language and became ways of representing and relating to indigenous peoples [...] Many of these early travellers' views are now taken for granted as facts and have become embedded in the language and

attitude of non-indigenous people towards indigenous people.¹³⁶
(Tuhiwai Smith 79)

In this way, Labine Brother One ridicules the Indian man, mentioning his advanced age with pejorative connotations. More importantly, he reduces his Dene prophecy to a fairy tale. Through language, he downgrades the credibility of Indigenous knowledge to mere storytelling for children. Yet, a Dene medicine man alerts Aboriginal people about ore extraction in this region. Before being named Port Radium, this location on the shore of Great Bear Lake was called Forbidden Rock (James “A Land Beyond” 86).¹³⁷ This oral tradition of elders’ visions has been preserved by the community living there:

Until his death in 1940, Louis Ayah, one of the North’s great aboriginal seers, repeatedly warned his people that the water in Great Bear Lake would turn a foul yellow. According to “grand-father,” the yellow poison would flow toward the village, recalls Madelaine Bayha, one of a dozen scarfed and skirted “uranium widows” in the village. “The prophet spoke about that poison. He said that there would be sickness and that people would go through hard times and that there would be deaths,” says Bayha, 82. Her husband, Joseph, worked for years at the uranium mine and died as many white miners did: coughing himself to death. Fifty years after the first atomic bomb, the Cold War and the economic boom that was uranium, the elders in this community of 600 people are beginning to understand the meaning of that disturbing vision. (Nikiforuk *in* James “A Land Beyond” 87)

136 For more information on the author, visit the University of Waikato’s website: “Considered one of the world’s leading scholars and founding thought leaders of Indigenous Studies, Indigenous Education and Kaupapa Māori research, Prof Tuhiwai Smith’s work demonstrates her commitment to the well-being and intellectual and political self-determination of Indigenous peoples” (“Learn”).

137 This is the largest freshwater lake in Canada: “Great Bear Lake straddles the Arctic Circle in the remote Northwest Territories of Canada. At just over 12,000 square miles, the lake is the eighth largest in the world. It is bigger than Belgium and deeper than Lake Superior, and it is covered in ice and snow most of the year” (Kujawinski).

Dene prophecies were collected and published for the first time in 1990 by Dene elder George Blondin under the title *When the World Was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. According to Wayne A. Holst, “the reader of these stories participates in the historic transformation of traditional lore – part myth, part fact, all true – from the universal wisdom of the spoken word to the irreplaceable richness of the written document” (204). The black rock is then part of a bigger narrative where Indigenous knowledge and culture protect humans from this mineral’s devastating impacts upon the human body and upon all life that makes up the wholeness of the local ecosystem. The Labine brothers discard local and traditional knowledge and impose their own framework: it is in this way that the black rock becomes the money rock. The play showcases Aboriginal people who mention the money rock, such as The Widow, a historical figure who commemorates the suffering of women who lost their husbands because of health issues related to the mine.¹³⁸ Clements depicts The Widow as “an older Dene woman who keeps a fire of love for her dead ore-carrier husband” (2). First, The Widow refers to the rock in a conversation with Rose, a Métis bread maker:

THE WIDOW. That’s fine. Getting all stuck-up again. Making me wait. Look at you, you think you were a miner with all that black dust on you. How you get all that black rock on you anyways?

ROSE. The wind’s blowing it everywhere. The kids are playin’ in sandboxes of it, the caribou are eating it off the plants, and we’re drinkin’ the water where they bury it. Besides everybody’s wearin’ it these days, so I guess there’s no harm if a bit gets in my dough. It’s as fine as flour anyways.

THE WIDOW. That’s what they pay the scientists to say when the government wants something [...] The money rock will

138 The Widow is a historical character imagined by Marie Clements who refers to the large numbers of Dene Sahtu widows who lived in the small town of Délı̨ę on the shore of the Great Bear Lake during and after the uranium mine exploitation: “Cancer cases started showing up and the community became known as the ‘Village of Widows’ receiving widespread attention” (“Uranium exposure”). To know more about this issue, see Peter Blow’s documentary *Village of Widows* produced in 1999.

make anybody say anything so long as they can keep taking it out of our ground and, if everybody is making money, it doesn't matter about the people. (Clements 94-5)

In this excerpt, The Widow notices the black rock's dust that covers Rose. The latter cites the ubiquity of this black powder and extrapolates its impact, suggesting that the omnipresence of the ore means that it is harmless. The Widow does not share Rose's belief. For The Widow's own belief to be expressed, the black rock undergoes a semantic shift and becomes the money rock. Hence, The Widow uses the expression money rock in order to refer to the non-indigenous exploitation of the ore and the power dynamics that bind the local community, government, and mining company. In short, she describes a natural resource with negative health effects on the local community, a quality which has less importance than its profitability for the non-local private sector and its military usage for American and Canadian governmental forces. Clements' representation of the natural environment is embedded in a tense interethnic relationship where a cultural perspective clashes with a utilitarian one. After being successively called black rock, forbidden rock, and money rock, the ore acquires a new name through some scientific progress: uranium.

In her book *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, philosopher Karen J. Warren explores the relationship between uranium mining and the health issues of Indigenous women in the United States who are affected by it: "two million tons of radioactive uranium trailings have been dumped on Native American lands ... The Navajo, Zuni, Laguna, Cheyenne, Arapahoe, Utes, and Cree all report health problems from uranium mining on their land" ("Taking Empirical Data Seriously" 10). Warren characterises this situation as environmental racism and offers an ecofeminist reading of this issue. Specifically, she reports the rise of women's health hazards where there is uranium mining, such as a significant increase in miscarriage and genital cancer. This reality sheds new light on Rose's physical description, as provided in the stage directions during the conversation with The Widow quoted above: "She

is eight months' pregnant, her clothes and face and arms are smudged with black, as is the loaf of bread she carries in her hands" (Clements 95).

4.2.2. The Production of Uranium in Port Radium

Communication scholar Peter van Wyck describes the journey of the black rock, its origins in Port Radium, its impact on the local community, and its role in the nuclear bombing of Japan:

A point of origin, one might say, where a frontier economy with its currency of fur, shifted awkwardly toward the very contemporary projects of an atomic modernity. From here, on Great Bear Lake, uranium ore was transported south by river and rail, leaking as it went, for processing at Port Hope, and then into the productive centers of World War Two – The Manhattan Project as it is conventionally known – subsequently extending itself over the clear morning skies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and back again into the Dene community at Déline in the form of cancers, stories, addictions, and depression. (174)

From Canada to Japan, the radioactive ore route left permanent marks in its path. Marie Clements provides different points of view to depict the production of uranium in Port Radium. In the second movement titled "Rare Earth Elements", a miner flirts with a radium painter. He explains step by step the process of uranium production: "when you're mining it, it comes out pitchblende. Then it has to be refined into uranium and radium. Arsenic separates it" (Clements 50). The miner emphasises that this information is secret, in what seems to be an attempt to make the radium painter feel special. Trying to establish a trusting relationship, he tells her: "Want to hear a funny thing? A driller was telling me one time, that I shouldn't be playing around with too much of that black ore, especially in the bottom area, because I could go sterile" (Clements 51). Then, he immediately regrets being facetious with this matter, as if the risk of sterility related to his job could have a negative impact

on his manliness. After that setback, he continues, in vain, to seduce her. She runs away. The encounters between the miner and the radium painter expose the lack of knowledge around uranium production, but, more importantly, the lack of reliable information on health hazards. Did the mining company or the government know about the risk taken by workers such as radium painters and uranium miners? According to Canadian journalist Andrew Nikiforuk, they did:

Fourteen of the 30 Dene who worked at the Port Radium, N.W.T. uranium mine have died of cancer. Declassified documents on the U.S. atomic weapons and energy program reveal that both the Canadian and American governments knew in the early 1940s of the deadly hazards of uranium extraction. Yet for two decades Ottawa failed to warn thousands of miners and natives of the risks they faced daily.

In the fourth movement of *Burning Vision*, Marie Clements superposes the ancient prophecy and the current health issues experienced by uranium miners:

THE DENE SEER. (*voiceover*) My voice grew hoarse with the sight
of knowing that they would harm my people from the inside.
The light on THE MINER's hat goes on. He coughs and coughs.
Yellow spray comes from him as he coughs. (96)

Coughing is an important gesture selected by the playwright to represent sick miners, as “radon’s alpha-emitting radioactive decay products are strongly and causally linked to lung cancer in humans. Indeed, the populations in which this has been most clearly established are uranium miners that were occupationally exposed to radon” (National Research Council). So far, Clements weaves a relationship between traditional knowledge, fear, governmental malpractice, and disease related to uranium production in Port Radium. Clements is not alone in her mission when it comes to writing about the Dene territory and their problems. Other writers such as George Blondin have discussed similar

topics with very clear references to the Denes' culture and traditions. These include, among others, their hunting expeditions across the lake towards Barrenlands and their paddling practices right in the area where Port Radium is located, not to mention some superstitions associated with passing in front of this rock, which was believed to have noises coming from its interior.

These ancestral beliefs included canoeing rituals and identifying the best camping spots for the Dene to inhabit. Also of importance were warnings given by the medicine man, conveyed through chants and songs. The Dene Seer was in charge of foreseeing the future, warning the rest of the group of potential dangers and hazards connected both to their work and to other spiritual elements. In the first production of the play, this part is played by the highly respected Dene elder George Blondin. Blondin's vision and singing quoted above refers to a prophecy published in Blondin's *When the World Was New* (see Appendix 1). Clements represents simultaneously both ancestral knowledge and physical injuries experienced by uranium workers. Another perspective on uranium is presented in the play by one of the prospectors who is behind uranium ore extraction in Port Radium:

LABINE BROTHER ONE. As if they could send a bunch of so-called 'experts' up here and convince me that this uranium is like a goddamn grenade going off ... These goddamn assholes say they got proof that other uranium miners in Europe are dead from cancers, that those radium painters died of cancers. That uranium is like shrapnel [...] Like deadly particles of energy that never die [...] The particles just keep embedding and decaying everything that's touched them. I say, 'Just think of the money'. (Clements 101-2)

This historical character is quite sceptical about the possible risk related to uranium extraction. Public health factors and economic decisions clash in this situation. The Labine brothers have an obvious economic interest in this affair. The way Labine Brother One questions the authority of experts regarding the uranium health hazard is quite troubling, and the

sceptical rhetoric he uses to describe a possibly eminent expert reflects his bad faith. While they walk on the same territory, the Labine brothers and the Indian man who warned them about the black rock seem to live in separate worlds, which are shaped by their beliefs, their actions, and their discourses. According to the concluding statement of Labine Brother One, money matters more than life. This strongly contradicts one of the goals of ecofeminism: to put life in the centre.¹³⁹ As anthropologist Yayo Herrero puts it,

[p]oner la vida en el centro es construir políticas, culturas, economías y comunidades que tengan como prioridad garantizar una vida decente, una vida que merezca la pena vivirse para el conjunto de las personas. Poner la vida en el centro es garantizar que construimos comunidades en donde nadie tiene miedo al futuro, en donde nadie sufre pensando en que es lo que le va a pasar mañana.¹⁴⁰ (Herrero *in* Utrilla)

In this specific case, putting life at the centre means not having money as the most important concern, a change of priority that goes with a radical paradigm shift. Specifically, Herrero highlights the place money currently holds in our societies and suggests what could be its ideal place in a society with ecofeminist goals. For instance, the prospectors looking for uranium ore in 1930 in Canada do not have as a priority creating a just and sustainable future for all. The story repeats itself ten years later in May 1940. *Burning Vision* represents this historical event in the form of a fake radio announcement:

139 This lemma “poner la vida en el centro” [putting life at the centre] (Weingärtner and Marti) is popular among Spanish ecofeminists but not in English-speaking countries, according to Spanish physics scholar and ecologist Margarita Mediavilla. Spanish figures such as ecofeminist philosopher Alicia H. Puleo and anthropologist Yayo Herrero popularised this slogan with the help of other activists, such as the group *Ecologistas en acción* [Ecologists in Action].

140 “Putting life at the centre means building policies, cultures, economies, and communities that have as a priority guaranteeing a decent life, a life worth living for all people. Putting life at the centre is ensuring that we build communities where no one is afraid of the future, where no one suffers thinking about what is going to happen tomorrow” (Herrero *in* Utrilla).

LORNE GREENE/VOICE OF THE DOOM. (*voiceover*) This is the *National News Bulletin*. A summary of today's news. U.S. and Canadian governments join forces in the effort to get uranium from Eldorado Mines in Port Radium to Eldorado's Refinery in Port Hope, Ontario, to the United States' Manhattan Project. The U.S. Army has ordered another 350 tons of uranium [...] This just in (but not really because it was a war secret). (Clements 56)

This fictional broadcast stages the traditional format of news production. Here, Marie Clements leads us down the road of *what if*: what if Canadians and Americans had been informed of this intergovernmental decision? Would the course of history have changed? Through this exercise, the playwright involves the audience in the governmental decision-making process, and questions the authority of governmental structures that hid important information from the citizens they were representing. In this context, life is not placed at the centre; rather, it is profit-making and political interest that occupy this place of privilege.

4.3. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

4.3.1. Nuclear Testing and the Use of Nuclear Weapons

Some argue that nuclear energy is a solution to the ecological crisis, while others see nuclear energy and its radioactive waste as one of the causes of the crisis. So, cause or solution? According to the World Nuclear Industry Status Report published in 2019, nuclear power is not going to be part of the solution: "Stabilizing the climate is urgent, nuclear power is slow. It meets no technical or operational need that these low-carbon competitors cannot meet better, cheaper, and faster" (Schneider et al. 25). From Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima mon amour* [Hiroshima, My Love] (1960) to Svetlana Alexievich's *Voices from Chernobyl* (1997), the ecological and social disaster caused by a nuclear catastrophe has been explored in literature, even if the horror of the phenomenon is

unspeakable. Marie Clements is part of this tradition of women writers who try to put into words the deaths, the illnesses and the indelible traces nuclear production left on a territory inhabited by a myriad of living beings.

Uranium is a central player in *Burning Vision*. Its transformation into the first atomic bomb and its journey from the Canadian mines to the Japanese bomb sites act as the narrative line. The playwright intertwines human stories with the extraction of the radioactive ore and the devastation caused by the bomb in the tests on US soil and in Japan during the Pacific war. Marie Clements uses sound devices to dramatise radioactivity, specifically the crackling noise of a Geiger counter (an instrument that detects radiation), whose beat accelerates and intensifies according to the proximity and degree of radiation present, as shown in the stage directions below:

The sound of the Geiger counter gets louder and louder [...] The sound of the Geiger counter gets closer and closer and it is now louder than it's ever been as it clicks toward ROSE, circling on her. LABINE BROTHER ONE looks in horror as the Geiger counter hits her belly... (Clements 106-109)

By choosing the body of a pregnant woman as a high-intensity radioactive zone, Marie Clements highlights the devastating potential of nuclear power, a type of energy capable of killing everything, even the source of human life. Sociologists Michael Pollak and Dorothy Nelkin suggest a broader framework to make sense of the association between nuclear energy and death: “nuclear power is, above all, a symbol associated with death and war [...] the power of this symbol is the main force maintaining the unity of the anti-nuclear movement” (4). Anti-nuclear activism emulates feminist movements during the cold war “like the women of the Western Shoshone Indian Nation in Nevada who opposed nuclear testing by encircling the test ground” (Moore 41). As demonstrated by recent environmental racism studies, people of colour are more likely to live near polluters and hazardous waste disposal sites, which raises a number of health issues:

Black and Hispanic communities are exposed to higher proportions of air pollution, toxic waste sites, landfills, lead poisoning, and other industrial complexes compared to white counterparts [... whereas] global Indigenous populations are at higher risk of pollution and toxic contaminants, which threaten not only physical health but also cultural wellbeing. (Roe and Zavar 159)

Therefore, it is no coincidence that an Indigenous woman tackles this thorny issue. Clements also combines sound and light to show the nuclear war on stage. Specifically, the bomb explosion is represented by a blinding white light juxtaposed with an audio clip of American military propaganda: “*A huge light whites out their world into blackness. U.S. DEFENSE WAR PROPAGANDA CLIP. ‘The most beautiful thing in the history of mankind.’ A black dust has settled over everything*” (Clements 110). This juxtaposition of light, sounds, and dust shows the absurd gap between the official discourse and the impacts of nuclear weapons. The radio clip recalls a speech given in 1945 by former US President Harry S. Truman, in which he announced the bombing of Hiroshima:

Both science and industry worked under the direction of the United States Army, which achieved a unique success in managing so diverse a problem in the advancement of knowledge in an amazingly short time. It is doubtful if such another combination could be got together in the world. What has been done is the greatest achievement of organized science in history. [...] We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war. (“August 6, 1945”)

This kind of talk is reminiscent of the language of war, where the expression ‘surgical strikes’ is widely used to give the illusion that it is possible to wage ‘clean’ wars and thus limit the damage to civilians and nature. A

nuclear war does not limit casualties; on the contrary, it multiplies them, as explained by political scientist Amanda Machin:

the gigantic cloud mushrooming over the desert marked the birth of the nuclear age, an age that has witnessed the spread of artificial radionuclides into every corner of the world, infecting the food chain, inciting fear, transforming geopolitics, and instigating various processes of mutation. (286)

To illustrate the ubiquity of radiation in contaminated areas, *Burning Vision's* stage directions suggest using black dust. While radiation is invisible, odourless and colourless, black powder is a good method for making radioactivity visible, considering that it is fine enough to spread everywhere and that it is extremely difficult to clean up – an operation that proves equally impossible with radioactive matter, turning contaminated areas into sacrificial zones. Black powder covers the miners from head to toe. It spreads like wildfire and contaminates the land and all those who inhabit it, human and non-human alike.

It is by means of this radioactive pollution that Marie Clements portrays the asymmetrical relationship between the Canadian settlers and the Dene Nation around the mining operation necessary for the production of nuclear energy. Indigenous men are portrayed as misinformed subordinates; the transport of the ore is entrusted to them without their knowing that this work will cost some of them their health and others their lives, as the following line shows:

THE WIDOW. Coolies. Some word for people that do the dirty work, I guess. The people that get their hands dirty. The coolies, the Indians, the Dene, the People – our men, my man, worked hauling those sacks, in long lines, from one man to the next, one coolie to one coolie, one Indian to another. A chain passing the rock. A rock we called the money rock. (Clements 70)

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'coolie' is "[t]he name given by Europeans in India and China to a native hired labourer or burden-carrier", and it is "also used in other countries where these men are employed as cheap labourers" ("Coolie"). Popular across British colonies, this derogatory term has been used in Canada to refer to Indigenous people. Its use is reminiscent of the desire for domination of white colonisers who imagine themselves superior to Indigenous peoples. It is not insignificant that it is The Widow character who bears witness to this situation. This woman became a widow following the death of her husband who worked at the uranium mine; this fictional character represents a historical fact. The misinformation experienced by Dene miners is also present among the general population of the northern Canadian town where the mine is located, as this dialogue between Rose and Koji shows:

ROSE. You know they say, these sacks of ore are gonna cure cancer. Nobody knows what cancer is here, but I guess you're talking about a people that don't even know what war is. Do you know what cancer is?

KOJI. No.

ROSE. Well, they say that's why they started taking it out of the mine anyways ... to cure cancer ... oh, and so that men at war can see the face of their watches when it's dark. But now they're in a big rush to make something big. (Clements 82)

This conversation between a Canadian baker who is a victim of uranium mining residue and a Japanese fisherman who is a victim of an atomic bomb explosion establishes an unlikely relationship between two people who will suffer because of nuclear power. Whether it is war or cancer, they are both confronted with a situation they do not know about. They are, in short, affected by decisions in which they are not invited to participate. This is a fundamental characteristic of the ecological crisis: the general population does not have access to the full extent of scientific knowledge and does not participate in decision-making, while they are the ones most likely to be strongly affected by this crisis. While the disposal of

nuclear waste currently poses a serious risk to life on earth, the testing and use of nuclear weapons during the Cold War offer several insights into the communities whom the ecological crisis will affect in the coming decades and how.

4.3.2. Worlds Collide: Blurring Boundaries between Canada, Japan, Humans and Non-Humans

In *Burning Vision*, the theatre stage becomes a liminal space where Canada and Japan coexist. The play actually ends on a mixture of cultural symbols from both nations: “*Glowing herds of caribou move in unison over the vast empty landscape as cherry blossoms fall until they fill the stage*” (Clements 114). The idea that caribous fluoresce is a reminder that non-human animals are also victims of nuclear energy production and its bombs. Moreover, this iconic Canadian animal is currently endangered, according to Justina C. Ray, president and senior scientist of Wildlife Conservation Society Canada:

For caribou, the numbers tell the tale. The famous George River herd of Quebec and Labrador, which once numbered close to one million individuals in the early 1990s, now has just 5,500. Many other herds across Canada have declined by more than 90 per cent in less than 30 years, and as many as 15 herds in the mountains of southern British Columbia and Alberta today have fewer than 25 individuals.

It is not the nuclear threat, but rather the occupation of the land according to the precepts of colonialism and extractivism that affects the caribou. A study by Nagy-Reis et al. suggests a number of causes for the decline of their population in western Canada: “caribou have lost twice as much habitat as they’ve gained over the past 12 years. Research shows that logging, road building, forest fires and climate change are the main factors driving the increased rate of habitat loss” (“New Research Shows”). Firmly rooted in the landscape of northern Canada, these animals are also well established in the cultural and natural knowledge of the First

Nations, as this excerpt from the play illustrates: “THE WIDOW. We used to be able to tell where we were by the seasons, the way the sun placed itself or didn’t, the migration patterns of the caribou” (Clements 33). It is therefore a dystopian portrait that Marie Clements paints by combining a species on the verge of extinction, the green glow of radioluminescence and the fall of cherry blossoms – an emblematic Japanese flower that embodies beauty and mortality.¹⁴¹ In sum, the playwright gathers in her staging strong and heterogeneous images composed of sound and light, reminding us that nuclear fission means a radical change in our way of being in the world. As anthropologist Joseph Masco puts it, “the atomic bomb produces not only new understandings of self, nature and society but also initiates a profound mutation in each of these terms” (518). This idea takes shape in *Burning Vision* in an invitation to perceive the world around us differently, as described in the following lines:

THE DENE SEER. (*voiceover*) Can you read the air? The face of the water? Can you look through time and see the future? Can you hear through the walls of the world? Maybe we are all talking at the same time because we are answering each other over time and space. Like a wave that washes over everything and doesn’t care how long it takes to get there because it always ends up on the same shore. (Clements 65)

From a fatalistic conception of existence that recalls Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence, to the radar screen that detects bombs, the wave metaphor is used to create meaning, as is portrayed in this extract from the stage directions of the opening scene of the fourth movement titled “Radar Echoes”: “A precise instrument for seeing. The waves of radar getting closer to the heart of everything. The visions, the bombing, the burning. The sound of worlds and hearts beating, truths colliding, and the tunnels of internal time digging deeper” (Clements 93). Another mutation of the world caused by nuclear energy is presented in the play through the hybrid nature of characters, some of whom are not completely human.

141 “For Japanese, cherry trees and flowers are more than mere plants. They express a beauty that reminds of the delicate balance between death and life” (Awazuhara 49).

During World War II, a codename was used to refer to the atomic bombs: Fat Boy was dropped on Hiroshima and Little Boy on Nagasaki. Marie Clements uses these nicknames in the play with minor modifications. First, Fat Man is a character whose identity changes several times. He's a bomb-test dummy, an American soldier, a nuclear bomb, and a couch potato all in one. As demonstrated in the following extract, he lies between these different states, which makes him a liminal subject: "FAT MAN. I'm not sleeping! I'm ready. I wasn't ready but now I'm ready. That's right, I am a soldier despite myself. I am a living-room soldier. This country's backbone. The living-room soldier" (Clements 84). He is also a single man desperate to start a family who makes dubious remarks about women and Indigenous people between two cans of beer. Fat Man's different identities intertwine; he embodies non-human and human beings, a rare feature among theatre characters that creates ambiguity and generates disorientation, as highlighted in the following extract:

The interpretive anxiety that is generated by Fat Man's narrative is primarily engendered by his unimpassioned tone and fragmented narrative arc. However, it seems that this feeling of uncertainty in relation to Fat Man has been deliberately pursued by Clements in an attempt to subject him to the audiences' subconscious metonymy. His hyper-realistic references to "beer," "Kraft dinners," and his "living room soldier" ideals create an image of a man (or nuclear-test dummy) who is so unpalatable to the audience that they objectify him by categorizing him as the objects with which he is so absorbed. His being a nuclear test dummy furthers this disassociation with the human form, making him unrelatable or in many cases unreachable for most audience members—thus producing interpretive anxiety. (Hopkins 7)

The same literary devices are used in the creation of Little Boy. The bomb's nickname inspires Clements to create a multi-faceted character: an Indigenous child, a lump of uranium ore, and a form of social glue. It is a being that is both in and out of the world. One of his dominant

characteristics is his ability to humanise those around him. He gives a literal demonstration of this in the following extract:

LITTLE BOY gets closer to the multicoloured test pattern with the Indian chief.

LITTLE BOY rests his forehead on the image.

He backs up from the TV and the multicoloured Indian chief has become more human, less TV-like. He is THE DENE SEER.

LITTLE BOY smiles.

LITTLE BOY. Neg-o-tach-otay? How do you feel?

The sound of caribou herds running. (Clements 63)

From an ecofeminist perspective, one could argue that liminality helps to avoid the trap of dualism and locates these characters on a path of becoming, where their shape and identities keep changing. For instance, Fat Man openly makes some racist comments, an attitude that tends to disappear after the surprise appearance of the child in his living room: “FAT MAN. I’m a soldier ... I got a responsibility to uphold the fort no matter who the Indian is. I got to defend my country and my family. *He looks at ROUND ROSE and LITTLE BOY.* Even if my family are Indians” (Clements 85). It is therefore impossible to put these characters in a box and assign them a fixed identity.

In the introduction to the characters that precedes the play, Marie Clements defines each character in a few words. About Fat Man, she writes: “He gets more and more human as the bombs draw closer. Unlikeable in a likeable way. In his forties”, while Little Boy is introduced as, “A beautiful Native boy. Eight to ten years old. The personification of the darkest uranium found at the centre of the earth” (Clements 1). This kind of description encourages directors to move away from a realistic representation and to choose instead a poetic and fragmented approach more suited to the staging of this polysemic text. Moreover, the fact that the characters are not only humans and that the place where the

action takes place renders national borders null and void allows us to imagine another world. This perspective recalls how quantum theories revolutionised the fundamental laws of physics:

Elle [la physique quantique] nous parle plutôt d'un monde où chaque mystère élucidé en fait surgir d'autres et où, selon toute vraisemblance, cette quête n'aura jamais de fin; d'un monde où les objets ne sont pas séparés, mais enchevêtrés les uns aux autres; où l'on a d'ailleurs affaire plutôt à des flux d'énergie, à des processus, qu'à des objets à l'identité stable; où la présence de l'observateur influe sur le déroulement de l'expérience, où, loin de pouvoir s'accrocher à des règles immuables; on constate de l'irrégularité, de l'imprévisibilité, des 'sauts' inexplicables. C'est tout cela qui fait dire à Starhawk que la physique moderne confirme les intuitions des sorcières.¹⁴² (Chollet 186)

What's more, *Burning Vision* portrays a different configuration not only of the planet, but also of the human body's capacities, in which the concepts of unity and difference are profoundly challenged.

4.4. REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMININITIES

4.4.1. The Japanese Grandmother

While some of the female characters in Clements' play have an identity of their own, others exist only through their relationship with a male character. This is the case of The Widow and the Japanese Grandmother, whose names are never mentioned in *Burning Vision*. The character of the grandmother is linked to Koji, a Japanese fisherman who recounts happy

142 "Rather, it [quantum physics] tells us of a world in which every mystery solved gives rise to others and in which, in all likelihood, this quest will never end; of a world in which objects are not separate, but entangled with one another; where, moreover, we are dealing with energy flows, with processes, rather than with objects with a stable identity; where the presence of the observer influences the course of the experiment, where, far from being able to cling to unchanging rules, there is irregularity, unpredictability, inexplicable 'jumps'. It is all this that makes Starhawk say that modern physics confirms the intuitions of the witches" (Chollet 186).

moments from his childhood spent with her. Koji and his grandmother used to meet near a cherry tree, which acts as a lifeline; when she was unable to protect her grandson, she used to hide him in it. In one scene, she uses the tree to convey a message to her absent grandson in a moment of crisis:

THE JAPANESE GRANDMOTHER. Koji, it is your grandmother.
I have left this note here on the cherry tree like I used to do
when we were separated. I have left this note to let you know I
am still looking for you. I am old and need to believe I will see
your face. I waited here as long as I could. The fire is coming
now. Safe journey to you, my grandson. (Clements 48)

The mention of a blaze and the farewell tone of this message give the impression that the crisis the grandmother faces is twofold: a nuclear bomb has just fallen and she will not be able to protect her grandson from this threat as she has done before throughout the child's life. This insight is confirmed in the playwright's description of this character: "the slow march of a grandmother's hope for her grandson's survival after the dropping of the bomb" (Clements 2). Rather than describing the appearance or the personality of this character, Clements presents her as a movement: the slow speed typical of elders' pace. This unusual description is accompanied by the following remark: "(double cast)" (Clements 2). This means that one actress must play two characters. It is a theatrical process that limits the number of actors needed to produce a play and therefore facilitates touring, as most of the supporting roles are not on stage at the same time.

In *Burning Vision*, it is not a question of economy when the playwright imagines a world where one character becomes another. This is what she suggests in the following stage directions: "*THE JAPANESE GRANDMOTHER takes off her long red kimono and tucks in her grandson. She turns and becomes THE WIDOW*" (Clements 111). In this situation, the Japanese grandmother becomes the Canadian widow when staging a costume change. The personalities of these two women are diametrically opposed: The Widow makes disparaging comments about those around

her and treacherously attacks Rose the baker, while the grandmother puts her heart and soul into caring for her grandson and embodies numerous virtues, such as patience, kindness, and perseverance. The fact that the same person plays both characters raises several questions: Why is one of them portrayed as so nice while the other is so mean? Can the same person become so different depending on the pitfalls that stand in their way? What events have shaped the way these two women are? In any case, these two characters present two archetypes of ageing women, a representation that is rare in cultural productions such as theatre, considering that they are “devalued and frequently invisible ... in a youth-oriented society” (Clarke 460-452).

Furthermore, the playwright alludes to a certain ambivalence around the grandmother’s physical abilities: on the one hand, her body is frail and her step slow, but on the other hand, she is endowed with extraordinary physical strength and endurance. This at least is what is shown in the first scene where Koji narrates the journey he makes on his grandmother’s back:

KOJI. I am riding on my grandmother’s back. This is what I see.
I am riding on her back yet I am a man. All man legs and tall arms. I am man and yet she is carrying me like I weigh nothing. She is small and delicate, but she walks steadily down hills and up hills at the same pace, ever mindful to keep the steady rhythm that will carry its own will past the pain of burden. [...] Finally, my grandmother stops and I watch myself slide down her bony landscape. (Clements 20-1)

Both powerful and fragile, the grandmother’s body becomes a territory in Koji’s mouth. The use of the term landscape allows the female body to be compared to nature in the form of a metaphor in which the old woman’s bony back is reminiscent of the roughness of a mountainous terrain. This surreal scene is accompanied by the reproaches of the grandson: “Obachan! What do you think you are doing? Put me down, I am too heavy. Obachan! I am a man and you are an old woman. Obachan! Please... you should be at home resting, not carrying me on your back in a crazy dream. Obachan!” (Clements 20) Although the image of a young man riding on the back of

an old woman is depicted in the context of a dream in *Burning Vision*, it remains a strong symbol. This grandmother with extraordinary abilities does not conform to society's expectations of staying at home and resting. In turn, the grandson tries to put her back in her place.

4.4.2. Variations on a Theme: The Three Faces of Rose

The playwright tackles the traditional concept of the theatrical character by using the same name to craft three versions of the same character: Rose, Tokyo Rose, and Round Rose. The first iteration, called Rose, is a young Métis woman who bakes bread in the north of Canada and dreams of a better future. The second version, Tokyo Rose, is a young Japanese American DJ who performs and broadcasts radio comedy for soldiers. The playwright describes her as: “a 1940s radio siren that embodies the erotic fantasies of U.S. Army men in the Pacific War of the Second World War” (Clements 3). The third one, Round Rose, is a middle-aged woman who works for her father in a Japanese souvenir store in Chicago. While the first Rose is fictional, the second and third recall different moments in the life of a woman who actually existed: Iva Toguri d'Aquino (1916-2006). Her story is published on the FBI website under the banner *Famous Cases & Criminals*: “On October 6, 1949, Aquino was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment and fined \$10,000 for the crime of treason” (“Iva Toguri d'Aquino”). However, this source does not mention why Toguri was pardoned by US President Gerald Ford in 1977, an event that *Smithsonian Magazine's* journalist Kat Eschner details in the following extract:

Multiple English-speaking women were on Japanese radio during the same years as she was [...] ‘Tokyo Rose’ was a catch-all term for them. [...] Very few recordings of Toguri’s broadcasts survive, and her trial relied heavily on Allied soldiers’ memories of her broadcasts. Those memories included her saying things on the radio that were treasonous and discouraging to the Allied cause. In pardoning her, Ford recognized that Toguri was not the Tokyo Rose those men remembered. (“Iva d'Aquino Toguri”)

Perceived as an enemy, the woman ended up being the perfect scapegoat, as she kept her US citizenship “and thus remained eligible to face charges of treason” (Shibusawa 184). In the play *Burning Vision*, her presence through the characters of Tokyo Rose and Round Rose serves to underline how enemy-making operates. In the play, as in the war, Tokyo Rose embodies a *femme fatale* persona:

ROUND ROSE. (*voiceover*) Hey, soldiers, how are my victims tonight? [...] I can feel you inside me [...] I mean, beside me. We are all lined up in the same orphanage of the world. Are you feeling pretty? Are you blond enough for someone to love you? Is your skin light enough for someone to save you?” (Clements 30)¹⁴³

Wrongly accused of broadcasting anti-American propaganda, Iva Toguri d'Aquino never saw her husband again after the trial and spent seven years in jail. Furthermore, the narrative of the Oriental temptress was promoted by the media, as highlighted by the historian of U.S. political culture Naoko Shibusawa:

The media select which news stories will grab and sustain their audience's interest, and this means inevitably choosing narratives that are familiar and easily comprehensible. At the same time, by repeating familiar stories, motifs and morals, the media reinforce their familiarity. In Toguri's case, the media framed her story within two pre-existing and overlapping frameworks. First was the notion, mentioned above, about the alien, racially untrustworthy and potentially treacherous nature of the Japanese. The second was about how citizens were expected to exhibit loyalty and service to the nation based on their gender and age. (184)

143 In the following excerpt, Round Rose interprets Tokyo Rose, as suggested by Marie Clements in the description of the characters: “the radio announcer is Round Rose, an older somewhat bitter version of the myth that broadcasts her view from the back storeroom of her father's store” (3).

If Iva Toguri d'Aquino was not Tokyo Rose on the radio, she was trapped in this role due to a joint effort by the media and the American judicial system. In comparison with other female characters of *Burning Vision*, her case is paradoxical. The identity of a traitor is imposed on Tokyo Rose while the personal identity of the Japanese Grandmother or The Widow is erased. In such cases, there is no way out: these female characters are stuck in a role, without their personal wishes being taken into consideration. This suffocating feeling is represented by the fictional Rose, the Canadian baker:

ROSE. Sometimes when I knead this bread I dream. Women are always dreaming when their hands are busy. I dream I could be anybody if I was born somewhere else. Sometimes it makes you think what could form out of your own hands if people were big enough to accept you for what you are – the depth of your dreams. I'm grateful for having a job and everything, but sometimes I want something more for myself, somewhere else.

ROSE moulds the dough into a flat mask and places it on her face until she can no longer breathe under the white mask.

Dumb.

She cries and then laughs at herself. (Clements 81)

This poignant desire for otherness leads this unsatisfied woman to play with death. In theory, she is free to determine her own destiny, but in practice, the reality is quite different. In fact, she expresses her gratitude for being able to support herself when it is precisely her work that prevents her from realising her dreams. This character highlights the violence of the capitalist system which forces the majority of individuals to organise their lives around a paid occupation rather than following their deepest aspirations. By expressing her desires with her hands in the flour, Rose challenges the illusion of freedom into which the neoliberal subject is lulled. The disproportionate importance given to paid activities is part of

the work's hierarchy that maintains a patriarchal and capitalist status quo. This is why ecofeminists Leigh Brownhill and Terisa E. Turner imagine a future free of these two ideologies:

Ecofeminism, insofar as it is characterized by efforts to unite the exploited across historic social divisions (e.g. waged and unwaged), is the revolutionary way to an ecosocialist, post-capitalist future. [...] Social movements and union campaigns of women at the bottom of the hierarchy of labor power are uniquely situated to enact the unity of the exploited class, across genders and ethnicities, and to thereby encompass and represent the experiences, needs, demands, and rights of all, in other words, to express the general class interest. This unity in diversity, or “gendered ethnicized class alliance,” is the kryptonite to capitalism’s Superman. Even a small amount can have a powerful impact. (1-6)

Whether it is through unpaid activities, such as a grandmother caring for her grandson or a woman doing domestic work so that her husband can have a full-time job, the women Clements shows in this play are victims of gendered determinism. In addition to not receiving a salary, they face a void once the man or child they serve disappears. What happens to the Japanese Grandmother without Koji? What is left for The Widow after the death of her husband? In both cases, these women who have taken care of others lose out. In the example of working women, the play presents two scenarios: a dissatisfied baker and a radio host who is unfairly punished. Whether in the domestic or the professional sphere, these female characters present a harsh reality where self-fulfilment is not an accessible option.

4.5. CONCLUSION

In the Northwest Territories of Canada, foreign prospectors flock and take hold of the land to extract uranium, dismissing local beliefs. The prospectors, guided by a mad desire to get rich, have no idea of

the butterfly effect that will follow the exploitation of a mineral. Even if prospectors take credit for the discovery, let us not forget that the local population was aware of the existence of this substance. Uranium mining, combined with some key events from the Second World War, provide fertile ground for playwright Marie Clements to place justice and accountability at the heart of her play. In doing so, enemy-making becomes a central issue with an emphasis on discrimination based on gender, ethno-cultural origin, and working-class identity. In other words, Clements gives voice to poor women, Aboriginal women, and Japanese women – women who represent a certain form of otherness and who will be demonised and even punished by society for their difference.

Moreover, Clements contrasts the contemporary narrative, where uranium is extracted and commodified, with ancestral Indigenous myths that warn about this ore and its location, calling it the forbidden rock. The playwright adopts two other strategies to communicate the danger of this mineral. First, the omnipresence of the ore is displayed in the form of black dust that covers everything in town: the children's sandboxes, the baker's bread dough, the water, the plants, etc. Second, the character named The Widow echoes the 'Village of Widows,' a nickname given to Délı̄ne, a real Canadian town, where most of the husbands died of cancer after extraction took place near this location.

Marie Clements also dramatises the irreparable damage caused by nuclear energy and emphasises the indelible nature of radioactivity. In this play, nature and workers fall ill. *Burning Vision* tackles cancer and infertility that are associated with male miners, and necrosis of the jaw is depicted as a result of painting with radium, a by-product of uranium, which affected mainly female workers. The playwright stages the health issues of those workers who belonged to the poorest classes of society and were not properly informed by their managers of the potential health risks of their jobs. An analysis of this play thus highlights the violence done to nature and to women by the alliance of patriarchy and capitalism in the form of a military-industrial alliance.

5. LET'S PLANT A MINISTER: POLITICAL ACTION IN A RURAL COMMUNITY AND ITS ANIMAL SAVIOURS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the play *Habiter les terres* (hereafter, referred to as *Habiter*), written by Marcelle Dubois and directed by Jacques Laroche. There are three primary aims for this study: 1. To analyse the presence of animals on stage as personified by the play's actors, and their ability to speak – clearly reminiscent of Disney characters. 2. To ascertain the link between colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism and how these three systems structure the way the territory is inhabited in this fiction, and 3. To investigate the marginalisation of women in this play and, in particular, the figure of a young woman who returns to Guyenne, her hometown. This chapter continues dealing with the different states of becoming, as experienced by women and animals, but does so from a neocolonial dispossession point of view. For instance, Dubois imagines how the political decision to close the road to a so-called unprofitable northern rural community affects its inhabitants and triggers a resistance movement. This analysis of the human/nature relationship through an ecofeminist perspective is bound to prove useful in identifying and elucidating the mechanisms underlying the characters' actions, reactions, and dynamics in relation to the strong dualism between the city and the

countryside depicted in the play, which actually frames this work of art both politically and culturally.

Marcelle Dubois has worked in the theatre community of the province of Quebec as an author, director, and artistic director. *Habiter* is the most recent piece of the six plays she has published. In 2000, she founded a theatre company called Les Porteuses d’Aromates, which creates “un théâtre où le symbolisme et l’impression l’emportent sur le réalisme [... et] développe un langage scénique qui échappe aux impératifs conventionnels” (“Théâtre Les”).¹⁴⁴ In 2002, she co-founded a festival called Jamais Lu (JL), which is held each spring. The aim of this event is to develop new dramaturgy: “Il accompagne et soutient la naissance d’œuvres théâtrales et en assure la promotion et la diffusion” (“Mission et Vision”).¹⁴⁵ Since the first festival took place in Montreal, other francophone capitals such as Quebec and Paris now host their own branches of this festival. For the past 17 years, Marcelle Dubois has been the artistic and general director of the JL.

In 2005, her group was among the seven emerging theatre companies which united to create Théâtre Aux Écuries (TAE). This centre for theatrical creation and distribution opened in October 2011 in the Villerey district of Montreal. At the time of its opening, no other theatre had been created in the previous 25 years in Quebec. Nowadays, Marcelle Dubois is part of the artists’ collective in charge of TAE. While theatre administration usually relies on only one director, it is not the case with this peculiar project. This structure has its own advantages, as described on the TAE website: “la pluralité de leur voix, de leurs esthétiques et de leurs réseaux fait partie intégrante de son ADN et participe à sa richesse” (“Direction”).¹⁴⁶

In addition to her creative work, Marcelle Dubois expresses herself in different media – in order to share her critical view of the situation of the theatre in Quebec, as well as her theoretical reflection on her work as a

144 “a theatre where symbolism and impression prevail over realism [... and] develop a scenic language which escapes conventional imperatives” (“Théâtre Les”).

145 “It accompanies and supports the birth of theatrical works and ensures their promotion and distribution” (“Mission”).

146 “The plurality of their voices, their aesthetics, and their networks is an integral part of its DNA and contributes to its richness” (“Direction”).

playwright. In 2013, she published an op-ed in *Jeu*, a French-language magazine devoted to the performing arts: “Pour nous appartenir avant qu'on nous dépossède, nous devons nommer. Haut. Fort. Sans retenue. Avec intelligence et rigueur. Cela, c'est le travail des auteurs” (Dubois “Parce que” 64).¹⁴⁷ She is, without a doubt, a socially involved artist. Her work has been recognised by the Conseil Québécois du Théâtre (CQT), which awarded her the Sentinelle Prize in 2015. During the ceremony, the director of the renowned Montreal theatre Espace GO Ginette Noiseux addressed this tribute to the awardee:

Ambassadrice de sa génération, Marcelle Dubois démontre un engagement absolu envers les nouvelles écritures, les avancées de l'art du théâtre et les enjeux du milieu. Elle a eu et continue d'avoir un impact véritable, non seulement pour le développement des auteurs et de leurs œuvres, mais pour celui de toute la profession.¹⁴⁸ (Noiseux *in* “Marc Gourdeau”)

In 2016, the Montreal Women's Y Foundation awarded her the accolade *Woman of Distinction* in the category Arts and Culture. On their website, the Foundation describes her as “a shining star in Quebec's contemporary theatre scene” and highlights that “she firmly believes that the work of Quebec's playwrights should feed public debate, and take a stand on the world and issues of today” (“Marcelle”). In 2020, she co-signed, alongside many other artists, a letter to Nathalie Roy, the Minister of Culture of Quebec, which was published in several media, in order to raise awareness about the lack of measures taken by the government of Quebec in supporting the living arts community during and after the pandemic.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ “To claim what is ours before we are dispossessed, we must name. High. Strong. Without restraint. With intelligence and rigour. This is the task of authors” (Dubois “Parce que” 64).

¹⁴⁸ “Ambassador of her generation, Marcelle Dubois demonstrates an absolute commitment to new writing, the advances in the art of theatre, and the community issues. She has had and continues to have a real impact, not only on the development of authors and their works, but on that of the entire profession” (“Marc”).

¹⁴⁹ During a press conference in May 2020, Minister Nathalie Roy announced a plan to ease the lockdown on the cultural sector in Quebec with the opening of museums, libraries, and drive-

Les temps tragiques que traversent nos sociétés, c'est nous qui les raconterons aux générations futures. Nous pouvons amener du réconfort, oui, mais aussi de la critique, du recul, de la pensée: nous sommes un rouage essentiel à la vie démocratique du pays.¹⁵⁰
(Kemeid et al.)

As a playwright and a director, Marcelle Dubois is an important figure in contemporary Quebec and its theatre scene. She has been an active referent, leaving her mark by deploying new spaces for original dramaturgies, such as a fresh scene devoted to theatrical creation and dissemination, as well as an annual festival which is in constant evolution.

5.2. THE PLAY *HABITER LES TERRES*

Marcelle Dubois' *Habiter* was produced by the Théâtre du tandem and the Théâtre Les Porteuses d'Aromates at the TAE in Montreal in February 2016. The play premiered in September 2016 in France, and in Abitibi-Temiscamingue, a region located in western Quebec, in October 2016. The same year, *Habiter* was published by Lansman Editeur, a Belgian publishing house renowned for its dedication to the performing arts. After an email exchange with Marcelle Dubois, the playwright sent me a video recording of the play. Thus, I have access to a video of the *Habiter* performance in addition to the dramatic text for this analysis. Furthermore, many pictures of this production are available online and I will refer to them when necessary.

Habiter takes place in a region of north-western Quebec, far from major cities. The distance between the city and the regions and the devitalisation of rural areas is at the heart of the conflict presented by this story. The action starts when the government issues a decree to close Guyenne, a

in theatres. This piece of news has angered many artists from the performative arts such as the theatre, music, and the cinema as they are not considered by these measures as part of the cultural sector (Siag).

150 "We are the ones who will tell the tragic times that our societies are going through to future generations. We can bring comfort, yes, but also criticism, hindsight, thought: we are an essential cog in the democratic life of the country" (Kemeid et al.).

small northern village: they will take back the land and sell the trees. The inhabitants of Guyenne oppose this decision and organise resistance. The play highlights the distance between the rural area where it is set and the capital of the province, Quebec City, where the parliament and the Prime Minister's offices are located. The latter receives an ultimatum from the rural community:

LABELLE (*lisant*). CE QU'ON VEUT EST SIMPLE, MONSIEUR LE
PREMIER MINISTRE [...] JUSTE VOUS QUI FAITES LA
ROUTE EN CHAR [...] DIX-SEPT HEURE DE ROUTE.¹⁵¹
(Dubois "Habiter" 26-7)

The excerpt quoted above is signed by "Guyenne au grand complet" (Dubois "Habiter" 27),¹⁵² which refers to all the residents of this small village. In order to resist the government's plan, some inhabitants of Guyenne kidnap a minister, a familiar gesture for Quebec society as a similar capture of a minister had been carried out by the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) in the seventies.¹⁵³ After his capture, the minister is planted in the garden, like a vegetable, buried up to the waist. This situation is reminiscent of Samuel Beckett's iconic play *Happy Days*, where the main character is also buried up to the waist (See Appendix 3). The kidnapping coincides with the return of "la fille des Dubois" (Dubois "Habiter" 6),¹⁵⁴ a young woman who left the town years ago with her family. This character goes back to her roots, which can be perceived as an autobiographical element considering the origins of the playwright

151 "LABELLE (*reading*). WHAT WE WANT IS SIMPLE, MISTER PRIME MINISTER [...] PRECISELY YOU, WHO MAKE THE JOURNEY BY CAR [...] SEVENTEEN HOURS ON THE ROAD" (Dubois "Habiter" 26-7).

152 "Guyenne all united" (Dubois "Habiter" 27).

153 An article published on Radio-Canada's website briefly traces the history of this movement: "le FLQ est un mouvement politique radical qui a vu le jour au Québec au cours des années 1960. Convaincus que le seul moyen pour les francophones de s'affranchir de la domination politique et économique des anglophones était de séparer le Québec par la force, les felquistes ont opté pour le terrorisme" [FLQ is a radical political movement that emerged in Quebec in the 1960s. Convinced that the only way for francophones to free themselves from the political and economic domination of anglophones was to forcefully separate Quebec, the felquistes have opted for terrorism] ("Le felquiste").

154 "the Dubois' daughter" (Dubois "Habiter" 6).

and the creative process of *Habiter*. This, at least, is what is suggested in a Facebook publication by the co-producer of the play:

Pour écrire *Habiter*, Marcelle Dubois est revenue sur les lieux de son enfance. [...] *Habiter* s'ancre profondément dans une réalité géographique tout en la transcendant grâce à une poésie qui arpente les territoires de l'imaginaire québécois.¹⁵⁵ (“Théâtre du tandem”)

In an interview with theatre critic Christian Saint-Pierre, Marcelle Dubois explains the stakes which motivated the writing of this play:

La pièce pose la question de la survie des régions, mais aussi, plus largement, celle de notre capacité à nous insurger collectivement devant les injustices. C'est une œuvre où le magique et le politique cohabitent. [...] Le théâtre sert à agrandir le réel, à s'infiltrer dans ses failles pour faire exploser son carcan. J'aimerais donner à voir, à goûter, à connaître un bout du monde qui nous est souvent étranger, mais qui nous a résolument construits en tant que société.¹⁵⁶ (Dubois *in* Saint-Pierre 65)

Marcelle Dubois' birthplace, the Témiscamingue plain, is a major feature of the play. Although it is never specifically mentioned in *Habiter*, its vibrant nature is represented. Theatre critic Aurélie Olivier is ambivalent when it comes to the performance, highlighting both the negative and the positive points:

Ainsi, les ruptures de ton semblent parfois artificielles entre la parlure locale, les discours politiques, les envolées lyriques, et les

155 “To write *Habiter*, Marcelle Dubois returned to the places of her childhood. [...] *Habiter* is deeply rooted in a geographic reality while transcending it thanks to a poetry that roams the territories of Quebec's imagination” (“Théâtre du tandem”).

156 “The play raises the question of the survival of the regions, but also, more broadly, of our ability to collectively rebel against injustices. It is a work where magic and politics coexist. [...] Theatre helps to enlarge reality, to infiltrate its loopholes, to blow up its shackles. I would like to show others, to make them taste, to make them know a part of the world which is often foreign to us, but which has resolutely built us as a society” (Dubois *in* Saint-Pierre 65).

apartés des outardes et de l'ours ne sont pas tous des réussites. L'enjeu lui-même n'apparaît pas très clairement au départ. Il se dégage toutefois du texte un univers riche et coloré, bien porté par la mise en scène ingénieuse de Jacques Laroche, qui mêle habilement mime, jeux d'ombres, bruitage, marionnette et jeu choral, dans un décor dépouillé évoquant fort bien la campagne, ses ciels étoilés, ses couchers de soleil rougeoyants et ses aurores boréales luminescentes.¹⁵⁷

The play also explores several themes such as the conflictive rural-urban dichotomy, the place of regional identities in the collective memory, and how solidarity gives rise to resistance against the law of the strongest. By mixing her memories of this rural territory with fiction, Marcelle Dubois gives a prominent role to animals in *Habiter*, mainly two bustards, a bear, and a brood of chickens. I will start my analysis with these animal tropes.

5.3. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

In this section, I develop my hypothesis that different visions of the natural environment are articulated through white settler human and animal characters respectively, exposing how, on the one hand, the male and female characters express their desire to save their community and fight to do so, and, on the other hand, how animals are presented subaltern and ancillary, as they help humans to achieve their goal. This analysis will be complemented by a reading of the colonial role of Guyenne, which portrays territory as a possession and nature as a tool. Furthermore, the precolonial lifestyle of Indigenous people is not considered, even if they are mentioned in this play.

157 "Thus, the breaks in tone sometimes seem artificial between local slang, political speeches, soaring lyricism, and the asides of bustards and a bear are not all successful. The issue itself does not appear very clearly at the start. However, a rich and colourful universe emerges from the text, well supported by the ingenious staging of Jacques Laroche, which skilfully mixes mime, shadow play, sound effects, puppets, and a choral play, within a bare setting evoking very well the countryside, its starry skies, its glowing sunsets, and its luminescent aurora borealis" (Olivier).

5.3.1. Talking Animals

One of the peculiarities of this piece is the speech ability of some of the animals on stage. This is also how the play begins:

Un couple d'outardes niché et un ours sortant de son hibernation accueillent le public.

LE COUPLE D'OUTARDES et L'OURS. Bienvenue au nord du monde.¹⁵⁸ (Dubois “Habiter” 7)

Talking animals is a recurrent trope in popular culture. Commenting on Disney's characters, Stephanie R. Kirkpatrick suggests that this trope represents “animals with exaggerated human qualities. [...] animals talking, displaying emotion and having a world similar to what the viewer knows allows for a fantastical quality that could not be gained through the use of human characters” (45). Animals that speak like humans did not first appear in Disney children's movies; they were represented in texts which date back to the ancient Greece, more precisely in Aesop's fables, as mentioned by ecocritic and scholar José Manuel Marrero Henríquez:

Literary animals are not actually animals but words that carry a heavy historical tradition at their backs. As words, animals are complex nets of relationships determined by their literary uses and abuses, by their never-ending reformulations along the avenue of literary history. [...] The fable inserts in the animal's voice a human voice that transfers to the animal the reasoning that derives from the linguistic character of the human being. The loquacity with which fables give voice to foxes, ants, wolves, cicadas, and lambs does not acknowledge animals in their animality but transforms them in symbols of the vices and virtues of human morality. (3-4)

158 “A couple of bustards nesting and a bear emerging from hibernation welcome the public. THE COUPLE OF BUSTARDS and THE BEAR. Welcome to the north of the world” (Dubois “Habiter” 7).

Therefore, the animals in the fables speak, but in reality the genre silences them because their language and its interests are actually those of humans. This discursive process applicable to fables finds some parallellisms in Marcelle Dubois' play. But if some animals speak the language of humans in this work, their own language is also represented. However, the latter is not used as a communication tool, but rather as a soundscape which emphasises the anthropocentric view of this performance for its presentation of nature as a mere background: "*Des cris d'oiseaux [...] Des chiens passent et aboient*" (Dubois "Habiter" 8).¹⁵⁹ A hierarchy is created between animals' speech ability: two bustards and one bear can speak, while a group of chickens and dogs cannot. In the first case, the speaking animals play the role of the narrator and express themselves poetically:

LES OUTARDES. La nuit s'installe avec ses étoiles incalculables mais
 personne dort
 Des murmures insomniaques
 qui remplissent l'air ambiant
 comme un essaim de sauterelles
 frénésie incontrôlable.¹⁶⁰ (Dubois "Habiter" 20)

In the second case, the non-speaking animals are reduced to background noise without any significant role in the play other than being killed, as in the case of the chickens. Animal-human relationships are generally perceived and artistically represented in a manner that serves an anthropocentric ideology, as described by two sociologists:

From a conventional sociological standpoint, the nonhuman animal's presumed inability to symbolize means that he or she is lacking in all the supposedly unique human attributes premised on linguistic facility. From this anthropocentric perspective, the animal cannot think in other than the most rudimentary ways, does not

¹⁵⁹ "*Birds call [...] Dogs go by and bark*" (Dubois "Habiter" 8).

¹⁶⁰ "THE BUSTARDS. The night settles with its incalculable stars but nobody sleeps Insomniac murmurs fill the air like the uncontrollable frenzy of a swarm of locusts" (Dubois "Habiter" 20).

possess a self concept, has no sense of time or space, is unable to plan future actions apart from the boundaries imposed by the immediate situation, cannot differentiate between ends and means, and has no 'emotions' in the sense that he or she cannot indicate these feelings to the self or to others. Trapped in the here and now, the nonhuman animal habitually or instinctively responds to stimuli presented in the immediate situation. (Sanders and Arluke 379)

Marcelle Dubois' depiction of animals fits this description. At one point in the play, one of the bustards feels threatened by a human and argues that he must not be eaten:

L'OUTARDE MALE. Je suis pas un poulet
Je suis féroce et en lune de miel.¹⁶¹ (Dubois "Habiter" 28)

In this excerpt, the male bustard frames humans as predators when the latter try to catch him. In this context, the distinction between bustards and chickens is getting clearer: bustards talk, chickens are eaten. One is active, the other is passive. The dualism between those two – a humanised bustard who can speak, and one representative of the chicken species – is reminiscent of the ecofeminist approach to the nature-culture divide as expressed by communication scholar Norie Ross Singer:

Given intersectional ecofeminist communication approaches' anti-essentialist commitment, their application is not limited to women's environmentalism. As already noted, one extreme assumption to overcome is that ecofeminisms are predicated upon rescuing women, who are portrayed as passive victims of patriarchal plunder (Gaard, 2015). The opposite extreme identified in the reviewed literature is defining women as having an innate capacity and burden to care for the natural world (Stearney, 1994). To help rectify both faulty assumptions, ecofeminist inquiry should focus on enabling and inhibiting practices and systems, rather than additive descriptions

161 "MALE BUSTARD. I am not a chicken I am fierce and on my honeymoon" (Dubois "Habiter" 28).

of women or gender plus nature (Buckingham, 2004; Gaard, 2011; Sandilands, 1999; Warren, 1987) [...] Gender-nature hegemonies have been built upon normalized Western world views of dualist ontological dualisms, especially that of culture as separate from and superior to nature. Contesting these valuations necessitates the reconceptualization of agency as networked, shifting, embodied, relational, human, and more-than-human. (272)

To illustrate this argument, I would like to analyse the female bustard as represented by Marcelle Dubois in the play.

5.3.2. Bustards: Two Lovebirds

The female bustard is waiting for the male bustard, who plays an active role in Guyenne's revolt. He is the messenger of the community and carries a letter to the Prime Minister of Quebec:

L'OUTARDE MALE. Mon amour
Je descends au parlement
Attends-moi.¹⁶² (Dubois "Habiter" 28)

In so far, as he is helping humans, the representation of the male bustard is heavily influenced by gender stereotypes. Indeed, he is an active subject who takes risks, while the female counterpart is left behind. The male figure who adventures into the world is a common trope. Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey* offers a great example of this genre: Odysseus travels the world, while Penelope, his wife, waits for his return. Marcelle Dubois seems to refer to this classic in the following excerpt:

L'OUTARDE FEMELLE. Ma douce moitié envolée pour la liberté
d'une poignée d'habitants [...]
Ma douce moitié puisse-t-il ne rien t'arriver

L'OURS. Une outarde grecque !

L'OUTARDE FEMELLE. Un jour tu connaîtras l'amour au temps
du labour

L'OURS. Solitaire affamé, je serai toujours un mal-aimé

C'est ça, la vraie liberté.¹⁶³ (Dubois "Habiter" 34)

The female bustard chats with the solitary bear about love: while the mammal frames celibacy as the epitome of liberty, the female bustard incarnates the heteronormative structure where fidelity and reproduction are key aspects. I would like to suggest that *Habiter's* bustard lovebirds and bear reinforce a conservative narrative rooted in anthropocentric and androcentric ideology. In my opinion, Marcelle Dubois' animal representation in this play can be summarised by Yann Martel's phrase: "we look at an animal and see a mirror" (39).

5.3.3. Animals as Saviours

While the resistance movement is perceived as a terrorist response by the government, which in return launches a militarised assault, Guyenne experiences one of its most critical situations. Flying to the rescue of the inhabitants, the two bustards and the bear take control of the situation. In this excerpt of *Habiter*, the playwright depicts those animals as saviours:

L'OURS et LES OUTARDES. Montez ! Montez ! Fuyons au nord de
nous-mêmes

LE CHŒUR DES HABITANTS. Le ministre ?

L'OURS. À lui de prendre soin de ses racines

Montez !

LE CHŒUR DES HABITANTS. Nous grimpons sur le dos de l'ours

Nous nous accrochons au cou des outardes

163 "FEMALE BUSTARD. My sweetheart flown for the freedom of a handful of inhabitants. [...] My sweetheart may nothing happen to you BEAR. A Greek bustard! FEMALE BUSTARD. One day you will know love in the time of ploughing BEAR. Hungry loner, I will always remain unloved That's true freedom" (Dubois "Habiter" 34).

En s'envolant, LA FILLE DES DUBOIS échappe sa couronne en or
Le Premier ministre l'attrape
se la met sur la tête
Au loin des outardes et un ours s'enfuient
un village sur le dos
portés par la clameur qui gronde
d'en bas
d'en haut
de partout
Un jour, il faudra bien poser un pied à terre.¹⁶⁴ (Dubois
"Habiter" 56)

The survival of Guyenne depends on the goodwill of three animals that reverse the balance of power. Animals take villagers out of a mousetrap, while the army attacks the city and buries it in the ground:

LE CHŒUR DES HABITANTS. Les chars d'assaut
une armée
des bulldozers
des torches
des cargaisons de terre
s'abattent sur Guyenne
Elle est là, la fin du monde!¹⁶⁵ (Dubois "Habiter" 55-6)

This gesture can be perceived in various ways. I would like to classify this excerpt as magical realism.¹⁶⁶ Human-Animal Studies scholar Tanja Schwalm suggests that:

164 "BEAR and BUSTARDS. Let's go! Let's go! Let's flee to the north of us CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. The minister? THE BEAR. It's up to him to take care of his roots Let's go! CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. We climb on the back of the bear We cling to the neck of bustards while flying away, DUBOIS' DAUGHTER slips her golden crown The Prime Minister catches it puts it on his head In the distance, bustards and a bear flee, a village on their back carried along by the roaring clamour from below from above everywhere One day, we'll have to set foot on the ground" (Dubois "Habiter" 56).

165 "CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. Army tanks Military bulldozers torches truckloads of soil lash on Guyenne It's happening, the end of the world!" (Dubois "Habiter" 56)

166 Magical realism is a term that generally refers to a story in which the author depicts the *real*

Magical realist fiction is marked by a striking abundance of animals. [...] Examining human-animal relationships in the postcolonial context reveals that magical realism embodies and represents an idea of feral animality that critically engages with an inherently imperialist and Cartesian humanism, and that, moreover, accounts for magical realism's elusiveness within systems of genre categorisation and labelling. It is this embodiment and presence of animal agency that animates magical realism and injects it with life and vibrancy. (6)

Through this critical lens, we can see how Dubois' bustards and bear play an important role in the human-animal relationship presented in *Habiter*. The two traits that locate those fictional animals in the tradition of magical realism are their ability to speak to humans and to literally carry away the whole village on their back. By doing so, the playwright distances them from the idea of feral animality and puts a big burden on their shoulders: to save Guyenne's inhabitants by hiding them up north. In my opinion, this situation is problematic for two reasons. First, it does not recognise that the unceded territory is already inhabited by Indigenous People, an aspect that is completely neglected during this escape which itself serves as the outcome of the play. Second, it frees Guyenne's humans from being predators: the villagers become victims of the government that persecutes them and they use animals to fly away from the government's henchmen. Thus, Guyenne's people avoid facing the consequences of their actions. By staging animals as their saviours, I believe Marcelle Dubois is taking part in the literary movement described in the following extract:

world with a mixture of fantastic elements. This simplified explanation ignores key aspects of this literary movement, as explained by Jennifer Andrews: "In a Latin American context, magical realism demonstrates that the strange is, in fact, commonplace and that the unreal constitutes a significant part of reality. Instead of creating imagined worlds or distorting reality, as writers of fantastic literature and science fiction often do, these texts attempt to articulate the mystery behind reality and to prevent myths, folklore, and alternative versions of history from being relegated to the supernatural realm or ignored altogether. Ghosts and spirits appear, making absence present and foregrounding 'magic realism's most basic concern – the nature and limits of the knowable'" (Zamora 498).

L'intrication de l'histoire animale et de l'histoire humaine nourrit la relation amicale à travers laquelle l'animal, révélant ses singulières aptitudes, s'individualise et se personnalise. Elle offre par ailleurs l'image d'une coexistence pacifique, d'une cohabitation idéale entre l'humain et lui. Certes, l'humain, bien des textes le prouvent, par sa cruauté érige la grande barrière, creuse l'abîme qui le sépare des bêtes, mais l'amitié et la compassion qu'il leur voue aussi, les liens qu'il développe avec elles en partageant leur vie, retissent la relation fraternelle primordiale, accomplissent une opération édénique qui est un réenchancement du monde.¹⁶⁷ (Picard 420)

The perspective expressed above represents, in my opinion, a backward vision. I would like to argue that the re-enchantment of the human world is not a possibility while the ecosystem of some racialised humans and other life forms is under threat. Dubois' artistic decision to depict Guyenne's grand escape resonates with the colonial logic by which there is always some extra space to start over: a no man's land (sic) to commodify, a new territory where humans will tame nature. Therefore, the devitalised rural community does not engage with other forms of abuse such as colonisation and animal exploitation – it rather normalises and perpetuates these. In conclusion, Marcelle Dubois does not represent the otherness of animals in this play, as they merely become fantastic creatures who serve human needs.

5.4. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The third section compares the different ways in which the ecological crisis is represented in *Habiter*. First, I will address the monetisation of

¹⁶⁷ “The entanglement of animal and human history nourishes the friendly relationship through which the animal, revealing its unique abilities, individualises and personalises itself. It also offers the image of a peaceful coexistence, of an ideal cohabitation between humans and animals. Certainly the human, as many texts testify, through its cruelty erects a huge barrier, digs the abyss which separates him from the animals, but the friendship and the compassion which he also dedicates to them, the bonds which he develops with them by sharing their life, reweave the primordial fraternal relationship, achieve an Edenic feat which is a re-enchantment of the world” (Picard 420).

Guyenne land and its surroundings in the context of a contemporary gold rush, where the government, local inhabitants, and international buyers play a significant role. Second, I will explore how colonial narratives are presented by settlers' children: specifically, the glorification of the first settlers' work and the demonisation of those who have abandoned Guyenne. The tomato farmer, a character embodied by an older woman in *Habiter*, deploys a false dilemma to make her point when addressing newcomers: you are either with us or against us. I believe this situation recalls a colonial mindset. Third, the desire to be useful is present in the rhetoric of Guyenne inhabitants, who fight against the devitalisation of their community. They want to be perceived as heroes by the society of Quebec and express a desire for economic and ecological disaster which would reverse the rural exodus of young people. In this context, opening up the territory and maintaining it ready for an increase in population is framed as a necessary hardship. Finally, I will address the question of the local turnip production and its incompatibility with a centralised supermarket sales system. I believe this last element is an apt metaphor of how the livelihood defended by Guyenne's inhabitants is irreconcilable with urban needs, the real estate market, and some governmental interests.

5.4.1. The Commodification of Ore and Women

The mining industry has played a major role in urban development within the Quebec regions. Historian Marc Riopel explained the case of Abitibi-Temiscamingue (the region where *Habiter* takes place), where many mining towns were planned and built during the mining rush around 1930:

La ruée minière abitibienne entraîne la formation rapide de communautés là où s'élevait la forêt, quelques mois plus tôt. Rapidement, les compagnies minières procèdent à la construction d'une ville, à proximité de son site d'exploitation. [...] La planification et la gestion de ces nouvelles villes relèvent de la compagnie. Elles sont d'ailleurs connues sous le nom de ville de compagnie. Seuls

les employés peuvent habiter dans les maisons construites par la compagnie. Les commerçants et autres travailleurs s'établissent à proximité dans des villes dites champignons, lesquelles se développent sans aucune préoccupation de planification urbaine.¹⁶⁸ (Riopel)

The Abitibian mining rush led not only to the creation of new communities, mainly those seeking economic benefits, but also to the birth of less organised and planned settlements on Indigenous territories. A clear example of this is how the *Canadian Malartic Gold Mines Ltd.* built and owned Malartic in 1935. Since then, Roc d'Or, a mushroom town, has emerged next to it. For instance, the webpage of the Musée minéralogique de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue [Abitibi-Témiscamingue Mineralogical Museum] dedicates a section to Roc-d'Or's bad reputation and political entanglement:

En 1942, Roc-d'Or compte plus de 1100 habitants, mais les 266 bâtiments qui y sont érigés sont illégaux parce qu'ils sont installés sur des terres du gouvernement. La réputation du village est souvent évoquée pour justifier sa fermeture. [...] Le démantèlement de Roc-d'Or se déroule de 1943 à 1948. On expulse alors tous les habitants. Les maisons et établissements modernes sont déménagés à Malartic, tandis que les autres sont détruits.¹⁶⁹ ("Ruées")

In Abitibi-Temiscamingue, Roc-d'Or sets a precedent which may have inspired the playwright. Indeed, economic and political interests are

168 "The Abitibian mining rush resulted in the rapid formation of communities where the forest stood a few months earlier. Quickly, the mining companies proceeded to the construction of a town, near their mining site. [...] The planning and management of these new towns are the responsibility of the company. They are also known under the name of company town. Only employees can live in houses built by the company. Traders and other workers settle nearby in so-called mushroom towns, which thrive without any concern for urban planning" (Riopel).

169 "In 1942, Roc-d'Or had a population of over 1,100, but the 266 buildings erected there were illegal because they were located on government land. The reputation of the village is often mentioned to justify its closure. [...] The dismantling of Roc-d'Or took place from 1943 to 1948. All the inhabitants were then evicted. Modern houses and establishments were moved to Malartic, while the others were destroyed" ("Ruées").

some of the causes of Guyenne's eventual shutdown by the provincial government, as was the case with Roc-d'Or. Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to its nickname: "Putainville" (Prince).¹⁷⁰

From an ecofeminist perspective, the commodification of minerals and of women seems to be the result of a socioeconomic system deeply ingrained in Western societies and beyond. The negative consequences of this mindset are still affecting both local environments and rural women. First, the hinterland of a mining town faces "the irreversible consequences of mining projects such as deforestation, the drying up of water resources, and loss of agrarian lands" (Gadgil and Guha *in* Sharnappa 7). Traditionally women are associated with roles which discriminate against their gender. This situation applies generally across various social sectors. However, industrial activities dominated by men, such as mining, provide the perfect ground for certain roles to be imposed upon women, such as housekeeping tasks, entertainment, and ultimately prostitution, among others. This is what business scholar Lucie Newsome expounds in the following text exploring the culture of male dominance as a key factor within the harassment that rural women suffer nowadays in Australia:

Gender roles in rural Australia follow traditional patterns and this culture sets rural women as outsiders in the workplace. Research argues that women in regional workplaces, traditionally dominated by men, face a range of behaviours that signal to them they do not belong and are intruding on male spaces. Sexual harassment is the most powerful of these. 41% of the agricultural workforce are female but in mining, only 16% of mining employees are women. In workplaces where there are few women, women are more visible and they are more likely to experience hostility. Sexual harassment against women is more prevalent in male-dominated sectors such as mining and agriculture.

170 "Whorecity" ("Ruées") For more information, see the work of Quebec historian Alexandre Faucher *De l'or... et des putes? [Gold ... and whores?]* published in 2014.

If Newsome and Sharnappa refer to an international context, Australia and India respectively, I believe the struggle is global, and both references are a valid lens through which to look at the Canadian issue in hand. I would also like to stress the importance of a gender perspective with regard to the issue of economic development in northern Quebec, as feminists, journalists, and social workers raise awareness of the impact of newcomers upon Indigenous women living on the Northern Coast:

Au Nord, la nouvelle proximité des travailleurs miniers, isolés et grassement payés, avec des femmes des communautés autochtones crée un mélange pernicieux et dévastateur. L'an dernier, le Conseil du statut de la femme tirait la sonnette d'alarme et s'inquiétait de voir la prostitution se développer dans les environs de sites miniers.¹⁷¹ ("Prostitution")

In 2012, this issue was tackled by *Conseil du statut de la femme* [Council on the Status of Women] (CSF), which made the following recommendation:

Que le ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux étudie les incidences de l'embauche massive de travailleurs permanents non-résidents sur la population des communautés locales, notamment les risques de prostitution et de harcèlement pour les femmes de ces communautés.¹⁷²

From Roc-d'Or to Plan Nord,¹⁷³ violence against nature and against women runs parallel with the pursuit of economic profit. However, the

171 "In the North, the new proximity between male mining workers (isolated and highly paid) and women from Indigenous communities creates a pernicious and devastating mix. Last year, the Quebec Council on the Status of Women issued a clarion call raising concerns at seeing the rise of prostitution on mining sites" ("Prostitution").

172 "That the Ministry of Health and Social Services should study the impact of the massive hiring of non-resident permanent workers on local communities, in particular the risks of prostitution and harassment for the women of these communities" (Conseil du statut de la femme).

173 In 2011, the government of Quebec proposed a 25-year plan of public and private investments. The expression 'Plan Nord' refers to this industrial development of territories located past the 49 parallel, a project worth \$80B which will help industries such as mining and hydroelectric infrastructures. As reported by the CBC at the time, some Quebec environmentalists and

presence of temporary male workers is not an issue raised by Marcelle Dubois in *Habiter*: the presence of mining industries, workers, and the thirst for money is rather crystallised in one male character, the Gold Digger.

5.4.2. Click and Claim: Buying the Land

If the kidnapping of the Minister is a fiction, the town of Guyenne did actually exist. The journalist Marc-André Cyr describes it as “une colonie radicalement démocratique et égalitaire [... ainsi que] l’une des expériences les plus singulières de l’histoire du Québec” (35).¹⁷⁴ Indeed, the pioneers of Guyenne settled down in 1947 and they set up “une communauté autosuffisante où les habitants partagent avec la collectivité leurs gages et leur temps” but where women were “exclues du processus décisionnel” (“Guyenne, un village”).¹⁷⁵ The struggle between the government of Quebec and the people of Guyenne is also part of the history of the region:

l’État exige une rétrocession des lots coloniaux afin de les administrer directement. Le temps n’est plus aux collectivités autonomes, mais aux grands développements favorisant la croissance économique « nationale ». Tant bien que mal, Guyenne tente de résister : dans une pétition de 1968, on demande que les droits d’une petite communauté passent avant ceux des gros propriétaires.¹⁷⁶ (Cyr 36)

Indigenous peoples were not pleased with this project: “Christian Simard, a spokesman for the Nature Quebec environmentalist group, feared there is no plan to spread the economic benefits to the region itself. ‘These companies will come in, exploit the wealth and exit quickly,’ he said. The chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador said he was boycotting the announcement because the plan did not adequately meet the needs of First Nations people” (Canadian Press).

174 “a radically democratic and egalitarian colony [... as well as] one of the most unique experiences in the history of Quebec” (Cyr 35).

175 “self-sufficient community where residents share their wages and time with the community” but where women were “excluded from the decision-making process” (“Guyenne, un village”).

176 “the state demands a retrocession of the colonial lots in order to administer them directly. The time for self-governing communities is over and large-scale developments to promote ‘national’ economic growth are preferred. Somehow Guyenne did its best to try to resist: in a 1968 petition,

This colonial village, where private enterprise is prohibited and wages are capped, is a great starting point to refer to the historical past of Abitibi-Temiscamingue in the matter of gold prospecting and its impact on the small communities of the area. In the following excerpt, Dubois' Daughter is asking a local resident about buying some land in Guyenne:

LE CHERCHEUR D'OR. Quand la folie des mines a pogné, je suis
allé sur le site du gouvernement : *Click and claim*. Pour vingt-
sept dollars, j'ai acheté tout le sous-sol de Guyenne
Ça, ils nous le prendront pas, que je me suis dit
Tout en dessous de ce que tu vois là, c'est à moi
Si je voulais, je pourrais donner un ordre d'éviction sur ta
yourte pour creuser là, là.¹⁷⁷ (Dubois "Habiter" 22)

In this passage, the ease with which a buyer can take possession of natural resources located under people's dwelling places is highlighted. Born in Abitibi, geological engineer Ugo Lapointe questions the social, environmental, and economic practices of the mining sector: "Comment se fait-il que la plupart des lois et des politiques minières canadiennes ne permettent pas aux populations locales de consentir, ou non, aux projets miniers ayant un impact sur leur communauté et leur environnement?"¹⁷⁸ (9) The click and claim policy remains a valid option on the governmental website for buyers; it is part of the free mining system. In this manner, the government of Quebec grants itself the right of expropriation without any regard for Indigenous peoples' right to land, or for any settlers' work built on territory purchased. Sociologist Jacques B. Gélinas offers a critical reading of this situation:

they demanded that the rights of a small community should take precedence over those of the large landowners" (Cyr 36).

177 "THE GOLD DIGGER. When the mining madness hit, I went to the government's website: *Click and claim*. For twenty-seven dollars, I bought all of Guyenne's subsoil They won't take it from us, that's what I told myself Under what you see around here, all of it, it's mine If I wanted, I could give an eviction order on your yurt to dig right now" (Dubois "Habiter" 22).

178 "How is it that most mining laws and policies do not allow local populations to consent or not to mining projects having an impact on their community and their environment?" (Lapointe 9)

La Loi sur les mines du Québec repose sur le principe du *free mining* – exploitation minière libre – importé directement du Far West américain au XIXe siècle. Ce principe colonial donne à l'entreprise privée un accès libre au patrimoine minier du Québec. Libre de toutes contraintes sociales et environnementales et pratiquement libre de tout contrôle gouvernemental.¹⁷⁹

This hierarchical power structure is both beneficial for the mining industry and detrimental to the town's population and its dependence on the fragile equilibrium of local ecosystems and biodiversity that risk being altered by the mining company. The claim holder taking advantage of the free mining policy established by the Canadian state remains a contemporary issue, as explained by sociologist Emmélia Blais-Dowdy in an article published in 2019:

[L]e régime de *free mining* entre en contradiction avec les obligations de la Couronne vis-à-vis des droits ancestraux des peuples autochtones, puisque les claims (sic) miniers sont accordés sans qu'il n'y ait de consultation préalable. [...] La jurisprudence canadienne précise que cette responsabilité revient ultimement à l'État, mais que certains aspects des procédures peuvent être délégués aux entreprises.¹⁸⁰ (100)

Another extract from *Habiter* reveals the abusive power of the claim and policy. Dubois uses the style of magical realism to exercise her imagination as the Gold Digger becomes a mechanical shovel and kicks out Dubois' daughter:

179 "The Quebec Mining Act is based on the principle of free mining imported directly from the American Far West in the 19th century. This colonial principle gives private companies free access to Quebec's mining heritage. Free from all social and environmental constraints and virtually free from government control" (Gélinas).

180 "[T]he free mining regime conflicts with the Crown's obligations regarding the ancestral rights of Indigenous peoples, since mining claims are granted without any prior consultation. [...] Canadian case law specifies that this responsibility ultimately rests with the state, but that certain aspects of the procedures can be delegated to companies" (Blais-Dowdy 100).

LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Vous avez pas peur de tout perdre ?
LE CHERCHEUR D'OR. On va tout perdre (Il se transforme en
pelle mécanique. Il se met à arracher les arbres autour de la
yourte, à bulldozer la terre) Ok mamzelle, embarquez dans
le fourgon, on vous déporte au sud de votre coeur
Vous allez voir
Y fait plus chaud
Y a plus de job
Vous allez être heureuse
Vous le savez juste pas encore
LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Mais...
LE CHERCHEUR D'OR. Votre pays n'est pas un pays, c'est le néant !
faque, en avant, l'autobus de la déportation vous attend.¹⁸¹
(Dubois "Habiter" 33)

While the young woman questions the possible consequences that the kidnapping of a minister might provoke, the Gold Digger responds with a violent gesture against nature and against Dubois' Daughter: he digs the ground and chases her. His answer is also inspired by Quebec's culture. Specifically, the character paraphrases this line: "Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver" from Gilles Vigneault's famous song *Mon Pays*.¹⁸² While the singer refers to Quebec's independence in his work, Dubois refers to the denial of country status to a nation built and destroyed with the government's consent and without any consideration for the inhabitants' opinion. Furthermore, winter and oblivion are not two antithetical subjects, as explained by a Quebec literature scholar who analysed Vigneault's song: "le glissement entre territoire et climat résume un stratagème fréquent dans le traitement romanesque de l'identité

181 "DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. Aren't you afraid to lose it all? THE GOLD DIGGER. We're going to lose it all (*He turns into a mechanical shovel. He starts removing the trees around the yurt, bulldozing the soil*) Ok lady, get in the truck, we are deporting you to the southern part of your heart You'll see It's warmer there More jobs You will be happy You just don't know it yet DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. But ... THE GOLD DIGGER. Your country is not a country, it's a void! So, go ahead, the deportation bus is waiting for you" (Dubois "Habiter" 33).

182 "My country is not a country; it's winter" (Vigneault).

québécoise [...] ce glissement met en évidence les difficultés à saisir l'essentiel de l'expérience québécoise" (Norell and Johnson 195).¹⁸³

Another reference to Quebec's culture made by Dubois in the quote from *Habiter* above mentioned refers to "l'autobus de la déportation" (33) on which Dubois' Daughter is to leave Guyenne.¹⁸⁴ This phrase is a hint to the rural exodus of young people, an important symbol in regional affairs: "Jusqu'au début des années 2000, l'image de l'autobus rempli de jeunes qui partaient du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean pour les grands centres reflétait la réalité régionale" ("Exode des jeunes").¹⁸⁵ In 2020, the situation of the youth from remote Quebec regions changes in the area where *Habiter* is set: "l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue affiche une perte de ses jeunes un peu moins élevée que les autres régions éloignées" (Guérin).¹⁸⁶ The survival of Guyenne territory is somehow threatened by the Gold Digger, who dreams of prosperity, while his ore discovery could destroy the livelihood of his community. Among other threats, international land buyers are represented in the play by the colloquial expression 'Chinese people' (sic), as the old tomato farmer puts it:

LA VIEILLE CULTIVATRICE DE TOMATE. J'ai racheté l'hectare habitable, les Chinois ont pris le reste
LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Mais la... ma maison ?
LA VIEILLE CULTIVATRICE DE TOMATE. Jetée à terre.
Remplacée par du beau, du chaud, pour les tomates de Guyenne.¹⁸⁷ (Dubois "Habiter" 18)

183 "the shift in meaning between territory and climate sums up a frequent stratagem in the fictional representation of Quebec's identity [...] this shift highlights the difficulties in grasping the essence of Quebec's experience" (Norell and Johnson 195).

184 "deportation bus" (Dubois "Habiter" 33)

185 "Until the early 2000s, the image of a bus filled with young people leaving Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean for big cities reflected regional reality" ("Exode des jeunes")

186 "Abitibi-Témiscamingue shows a slightly lower loss of its young people compared to other remote regions" (Guérin).

187 "OLD TOMATO FARMER. I bought the only livable hectare left, Chinese people took the rest. DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. But the ... my house? OLD TOMATO FARMER. Destroyed. Replaced by a warm and beautiful greenhouse for Guyenne tomatoes" (Dubois "Habiter" 18).

Chinese newcomers are depicted in a stereotypical manner by the cultivator in this section. She mentions them as a homogenous group of foreigners with sufficient fund capital to satisfy their voracious appetites for land. This type of discourse resonates with the racist ideology of the *Yellow Peril*. According to science-fiction scholar Patrick B. Sharp, the term refers to “an obedient, cruel, efficient, homogenous ‘herd’ that single-mindedly carried out Japanese leaders’ dreams of global domination” (442). After many decades spreading through the media and culture in Western societies, the *Yellow Peril* now refers to Asians in general rather than to the Japanese only. Basically, in *Habiter*, Chinese buyers are taking over Guyenne: they are buying all the land. This representation of land domination is reminiscent of Françoise d’Eaubonne’s warning about limitlessness, and tackles the issue of *infinite growth on a planet with finite resources*, a phrase popularised by the contemporary movement Extinction Rebellion, “a decentralised, international and politically non-partisan movement using non-violent direct action and civil disobedience to persuade governments to act justly on the Climate and Ecological Emergency” (“What is XR?”).

5.4.3. Longing for an Ecological Disaster

The ecological crisis is mentioned by Guyenne’s inhabitants in a very unusual way: they long for a natural disaster or even an economic crisis in Quebec cities, as they believe this situation will motivate their populations to move up north and come to live with them in the rural areas. In this mindset, the colonisation of the land is a necessary hardship: they might save the people of Quebec if things go bad down south. Guyenne wishes for the worst to happen in the south of Quebec, something in the nature of external violence, and they want to be perceived as heroes. Climate change is the perfect threat: it somehow exempts them from any direct and unique responsibility for the disaster itself. It proves them right: Their remote rural lifestyle, their harsh life, all their efforts are finally paying off. As expressed in the following excerpt, the village people dream of becoming national heroes:

LE CHŒUR DES HABITANTS. Des fois... on se prend à rêver
LABELLE. Qu'il y a une nouvelle crise économique en ville
Pis que les plaines du Sud s'inondent
Pis qu'on est au bord d'une apocalypse annoncée mais ignorée
Pis qu'on peut plus nourrir tout le monde
Pis que là, on se rappelle qu'on est là nous autres, en haut
Pis qu'on pleure de joie parce qu'il y a du monde qui ont
gardé leur rang ouvert... Pis on les décore comme des héros
nationaux.¹⁸⁸ (Dubois "Habiter" 53)

The ecological crisis is generally depicted as a threat to any form of life on earth, including to the human species. In this excerpt, we discover a deep thirst for social recognition within this rural community whose members feel devalued and overlooked by the government and big cities' inhabitants. To put it bluntly, Guyenne is about to die, and no one cares about the disappearance of a small village in a remote region, as the rest of the nation might never have heard of its existence. Thus, two death wishes are superimposed: Guyenne yearns for the death of big cities; meanwhile, the government of Quebec, whose parliament is located in a big city, craves for the death of Guyenne and is about to kill the community by closing the road and removing essential services. I believe an apt way to analyse this situation is through the use of the concept of necropolitics, a term coined by postcolonial theorist Achille Mbembe. A feminist reading of this term has been attempted by Christine Quinan and Kathrin Thiele:

Necropolitics [...] uncovers how certain bodies are cultivated for life and (re)production while others are systemically marked for death, constructing a constantly shifting borderline between subjects deemed 'productive' and 'lawful' and non-subjects branded as 'illegitimate' or 'illegal'. (3)

188 "CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. Sometimes ... We start to dream LABELLE. That there is a new economic crisis in the city And that the plains of the South are flooded And that we are on the verge of an apocalypse announced but ignored And that we can no longer feed everyone And then, they remember that we are there, us, up north And then, we cry with joy because we have kept the earthen road open ... And they decorate us as national heroes" (Dubois "Habiter" 53).

To build on this excerpt, the rural resistance movement is depicted as a terrorist threat by the government of Quebec. By doing so, the resistance members are dehumanised and framed as a violent and dangerous menace to social order. The Prime Minister of the provincial government occupies a higher status compared to the Guyenne leader. This hierarchical situation was made possible when Guyenne became a municipality,¹⁸⁹ an administrative entity which benefits from jurisdiction and regulatory power recognised by the government of Quebec. Dubois' Daughter reveals another characteristic of Guyenne and her father's betrayal of the community to the kidnapped minister:

LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Ça pas toujours été le bout de monde ici...

LE CHCEUR DES HABITANTS (*comme un écho de conscience*).

Guyenne: destination progressiste

Utopie coopérative

Cinquante pour cent des salaires

remis au bien commun [...]

LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Un jour où j'étais enfant [...] Y a eu un référendum

LE CHCEUR DES HABITANTS. A fallu choisir

Devenir une vraie municipalité

Morceler les terres, prendre l'argent

Ou continuer à tourner à l'envers du sens du monde

fallait un seul vote contre pour faire tomber Guyenne

Tout le monde a voté pour

LA FILLE DES DUBOIS. Sauf mon père.¹⁹⁰ (Dubois "Habiter" 38-9)

189 Quebec Municipal Powers Act stipulates that: "municipalities are granted powers enabling them to respond to various changing municipal needs in the interest of their citizens. [...] A local municipality may make by-laws governing the cultural, recreational and community services it offers and the use of its parks. [...] A local municipality may, by by-law, regulate the use of the power it develops. [...] A local municipality may entrust a person with selling the power produced by a residual materials disposal facility or water purification works" (par. 2-7-14-15) among other privileges" ("Municipal Powers Act").

190 "DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. It hasn't always been the end of the world up here ... CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS (*like an echo of consciousness*) Guyenne: progressive destination Cooperative utopia Fifty percent of wages returned to the common good [...] DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. One day when I was a child [...] There was a referendum CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. We had to choose Become a real municipality Split the land, take the money Or keep going against the

From an ecofeminist point of view, many relevant aspects are revealed in this scene. First, the play shows that both capitalism and provincial governance have played a major role in the devitalisation of this community. Second, the democratic process of a referendum seems to have been overturned by a greedy individual, Dubois' father. This character is the archetype of the greedy male who sacrifices the common good in order to increase his individual fortune. Dubois' father marks a turning point in the rural utopian life of Guyenne where 50 percent of inhabitants' wages used to be invested in the community:

LE CHŒUR DES HABITANTS. Chacun une maison
Tous les enfants un déjeuner dans le ventre.¹⁹¹ (Dubois
"Habiter" 38)

What is framed as a utopia by the playwright's subtitle – "Utopie d'une révolte rurale" (Dubois "Habiter" cover) – reveals a society where housing and food are common goods;¹⁹² the community takes care of its inhabitants' most basic needs. The playwright associates the past with an idealised image of a rural communal life. In doing so, she expresses a very complex mixture which can be seen in several nationalistic accounts: a nostalgia for the good old days, combined with a pride in the first settlers, which glorifies the colonisation of the First Nations without any mention of the violence and oppression committed. British author Zadie Smith warns against "a wistful form of time travel" and the political agenda of this type of nostalgia:

[N]early seven in ten Republicans prefer America as it was in the fifties, a nostalgia of course entirely unavailable to a person like me, for in that period I could not vote, marry my husband, have my children, work in the university I work in, or live in my


worldwide trend Only one vote against was needed to bring down Guyenne Everyone voted in favour DUBOIS' DAUGHTER. Except my father" (Dubois "Habiter" 38-39).

191 "CHOIR OF THE INHABITANTS. A house for everybody Every child with some breakfast in their belly" (Dubois "Habiter" 38).

192 "Utopia of a Rural Revolt" (Dubois "Habiter" cover).

neighborhood. Time travel is a discretionary art: a pleasure trip for some and a horror story for others.¹⁹³

Furthermore, we can see some sort of subversion of what traditional gender roles would dictate when it comes to care-giving. It is normally a woman who is expected to take care of others around her, be it children or parents: “Caregiving is established as a completely naturalized role and the moral duty of women” (Jiménez Ruiz and Moya Nicolás 446). However, we can see the community of Guyenne, a gender-neutral entity, looking after its inhabitants. This unusual representation of the caregiver transcends gender-based expectations and prevents the following issue from happening: “the woman-as-mother identity furthers women’s burden by positioning them as the most natural caretakers of the earth: that is, as best suited to clean up men’s ecological mess” (Singer “Toward Intersectional Ecofeminist” 275). Thus, it is not human life itself that is in danger in the destruction of Guyenne, but rather a way of life: communal ideals and livelihood were destroyed by the transformation of this self-sufficient rural village into a municipality ruled by the provincial government. Therefore, it is quite paradoxical that this community is longing for a climate disaster, while their old lifestyle was based on noble principles such as social justice, food autonomy, and local agriculture. It is also quite curious how climate disaster is framed as an external threat that will not affect their community. Climate change is already affecting the globe (Shaftel et al.). In Abitibi-Temiscamingue, the ecological crisis has already had an impact on the boreal forest, agriculture, and infrastructure, as explained by the *Regroupement national des conseils régionaux de l’environnement* (RNCREQ) in a brochure devoted to climate change in Abitibi-Temiscamingue. In short, the ecological crisis will affect all forms of life, no matter where they are on the globe.

 193 This quote is from a talk given by Zadie Smith when she received the Welt Literature Prize in Berlin on 10 November 2016. The speech is available in full on *The New York Review* webpage.

5.5. CONCLUSION

The aim of the present chapter was to explore *Habiter's* representations of women, natural resources, and the ecological crisis, in order to examine this contemporary theatre production through an ecofeminist lens. This study has identified various animal representations in Marcelle Dubois' play. I would like to argue that an ecofeminist framework helps to facilitate a critical reading of the relationship between animals, gender, and anthropocentrism. Specifically, the playwright depicts animal characters as subalterns, helpers and, finally, saviours of humans.

The second major finding is the various ways in which Dubois depicts nature as a tool. From this perspective, the nature-culture divide is reinforced, in contrast with ecofeminist ideals. Furthermore, this position does not challenge the colonial perspective – the domination of the land and the commodification of the ore are great examples of neocolonial ideology. First Nations are barely mentioned in the play and their land claims are given no importance in this context, as is generally the case in colonialist depictions.

However, this chapter has provided a deeper insight into violence against nature and women; this study has shown that those types of violence run parallel to the extractivism enhanced by the free mining policy. The historical presence of mining industries in Abitibi-Temiscamingue is embodied in *Habiter* by the Gold Digger character who violently casts Dubois' daughter out of Guyenne. In fact, many types of violence are normalised in *Habiter*: the killing of the chicken, the shooting of the male bustard, and Dubois' daughter's violent eviction from Guyenne, among others.

The findings reported here shed new light on a rural resistance movement and the stormy relationship between urban and rural people. Villagers frame climate disaster as an external threat that will not affect them but will hit southern cities hard. Guyenne views the ecological crisis in a beneficial way, since it will make other populations, including the inhabitants of Quebec, aware of their problems. Finally, Guyenne's people hope their efforts will be recognised. I believe the playwright accurately depicts a type of climate denial and the paradox this generates: we are

not concerned by climate change, but hopefully a catastrophe will happen in the southern communities so we can save them. Ultimately, their lives depend on the smooth running of nature. The saviours' narrative (to save or to be saved by) is used, once again, to give power to those who are devalued by society, such as the animals and rural populations. However, this short-lived power grab does not serve the interests of the main stakeholders.

Among the values defended by ecofeminist thinking are accountability and interconnectedness. These values are represented as being at the heart of this community's past. Indeed, Guyenne went from being a self-sufficient village which, despite its rurality, offered a safety net for its inhabitants by providing them with food and housing, to a municipality ruled by the provincial government. The village's past explains the inhabitants' thirst for social justice and food autonomy based on local agriculture. It is therefore paradoxical that they are hoping for the climate crisis while promoting issues that are dear to environmentalists. As such, there is a profound paradox nestled in this story.

6. THE SETTLERS' IMPOSSIBLE BANQUET: A TALE OF DISPOSSESSION TOLD BY SHUSWAP WOMEN

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Moral superiority disguised in the form of religion or development has provided the perfect grounds for different types of domination, such as colonialism. The partnership between the Canadian state and the Catholic Church that was in place until the end of the twentieth century made possible the assimilation and genocide of the First Nations. Between the 1870s and the 1990s, over 150,000 Indian, Inuit, and Métis children attended Indian residential schools funded by the State and operated by the church. The play studied in this chapter tells the story of colonisation as experienced by the colonised peoples at the beginning of the last century. The action is set in Kamloops, a small town in southern British Columbia. In 2021, the city made headlines in Canadian media and beyond as a dark chapter of its colonial past was revealed. The unmarked graves of 215 children were discovered next to the Kamloops Indian residential school.¹⁹⁴ In light of these revelations, Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc nation declared:

194 “The Kamloops Industrial School (later known as the Kamloops Indian Residential School) was opened, under Roman Catholic administration, in 1890. It became the largest school in the Indian Affairs residential school system. Enrolment peaked in the early 1950s at 500. In 1910, the

Some were as young as three years old. We sought out a way to confirm that knowing out of deepest respect and love for those lost children and their families, understanding that Tkèmlúpts te Secwépemc is the final resting place of these children [...] We are thankful for the Pathway to Healing grant we received to undertake this important work. Given the size of the school, with up to 500 students registered and attending at any one time, we understand that this confirmed loss affects First Nations communities across British Columbia and beyond. (Casimir *in* Way 1)

After hearing about the unmarked graves in Kamloops, First Nations across Canada embarked on search missions near residential schools to look for the remains of other forgotten children.¹⁹⁵ At the time of writing this dissertation, the total number of victims is 6,509 (Davis “Lennox Island”). If this is a revelation for non-Indigenous people in Canada, it is not the case for Indigenous nations, who have been trying to draw attention to the disappearance of children from their community for decades without the media or the federal government paying attention to their requests. Indigenous communities have continued to raise awareness about the missing children since the last Indian residential school closed in 1996. Although the deadly nature of colonisation is presented in Highway’s play, there is no reference to residential schools,

principal said that the government did not provide enough money to properly feed the students. In 1924, a portion of the school was destroyed by fire. In 1969, the federal government took over the administration of the school, which no longer provided any classes and operated it as residence for students attending local day schools until 1978, when the residence was closed” (Way 2).

195 “The term *residential schools* refers to an extensive school system set up by the Canadian government and managed by churches that had the nominal objective of educating Aboriginal children but also the more damaging and equally explicit objectives of indoctrinating them into Euro-Canadian and Christian ways of living and assimilating them into mainstream Canadian society. [...] The system forcibly separated children from their families for extended periods of time and forbade them from acknowledging their Aboriginal heritage and culture or from speaking their own languages. Children were severely punished if these, among other, strict rules were broken. Former students at residential schools have spoken of horrendous abuse at the hands of residential school staff: physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological. Residential schools provided Aboriginal students with an inferior education, often only up to grade five, that focused on training students for manual labour in agriculture, light industry such as woodworking, and domestic work such as laundry work and sewing” (Hanson).

which is why I wanted to mention this dark element of Canadian history from the start.

This chapter aims to offer an ecofeminist approach to the play *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (hereafter cited as *Ernestine*), in which Indigenous Canadian playwright Tomson Highway (b. 1951) portrays women and animals experiencing numerous states of becoming caused by an ongoing colonial dispossession. By 'state of becoming' I mean the changes that shape the journey of every living entity. First, the women represented in this play become conscious of their state of servitude. A direct consequence of this is how Ernestine, the main character, becomes self-sufficient by the end of the play. In fact, she stops waiting for her husband and goes fishing for some trout by herself. While this gesture can be understood as liberating, it is not a complete liberation, as the purpose of trout fishing is to serve the Chief of the Colonial State which has oppressed her nation, the Shuswap. Second, I draw attention to the animals exploited by the Shuswap nation. During the colonisation of Canada, a cow, a shoal of fish, and some beavers are becoming ill. Not only are these animals sick, but they are also vanishing. The settlers' overfishing, among other types of exploitation, is what leads to the growing scarcity of many species. In this context, the staging of a banquet is a metaphor for the settlers' desire to have it all, even if it means that they have to deprive others. Thus, a representational analysis of the human/nature relationship from an ecofeminist perspective will prove useful to identify and elucidate the mechanisms underlying the characters' actions, reactions, and dynamics in relation to their socio-political and cultural framework, as well as their symbolic attachment to the Shuswap precolonial lifestyle. By 'representational analysis,' I refer to the scholarly method of selecting and studying a playwright's artistic choices to depict someone or something in written, visual, performed, or spoken language.

6.2. TOMSON HIGHWAY

Tomson Highway (b. 1951) is recognised as one of the most influential playwrights in Canada: "A Member of the Order of Canada and named

in Maclean's magazine as one of the 100 most important people in Canadian history, Tomson Highway has proved himself one of Canada's most prominent and influential writers" (Boyd). From 1986 to 1992, he directed Native Earth Performing Arts, the oldest professional Indigenous theatre company in Canada. One of his most celebrated plays, *The Rez Sisters*, won the Dora Mavor Moore Award and the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award, and was invited to be performed at the Edinburgh International Festival. More recent attention has been focused on *The Rez Sisters*, as many drama scholars have reviewed it (Gilbert, Grant, Johnston, Maufort, Moses, Nothof, Rabillard, Shackleton, and Usmani). The outstanding quality of his work is currently being celebrated by academia in Canada and beyond:

Il détient cinq doctorats honorifiques et la Fondation nationale des réalisations autochtones lui a remis un prix d'excellence. En 2003, l'École nationale de théâtre lui décernait le prix Gascon-Thomas. Les œuvres de Tomson Highway font partie du programme d'études de nombreuses écoles et universités canadiennes.¹⁹⁶ ("Artiste")

The artistry of Tomson Highway can also be appreciated through literature and music, as his playwright career has been developed in parallel with other artistic occupations such as being a novelist, a professional pianist, and a songwriter. A good example of his creative skills can be observed in the writing style of his official website:

Tomson Highway was born in a snow bank on the Manitoba/Nunavut border to a family of nomadic caribou hunters. He had the great privilege of growing up in two languages, neither of which was French or English; they were Cree, his mother tongue, and Dene, the language of the neighbouring 'nation,' a people with whom they roamed and hunted. ("Home")

196 "He holds five honorary doctorates and the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation presented him with an award for excellence. In 2003, he was awarded the Gascon-Thomas prize by the National Theatre School. The works of Tomson Highway are part of the curriculum of many Canadian schools and universities" ("Artiste").

Born within a traditional Cree lifestyle, he was removed from his family when he was 6 to attend a residential school until he was 15. He experienced first-hand one of the most traumatising acts of cultural genocide imposed by the Canadian government upon Indigenous people. Surviving this experience might be one of the reasons why his plays are committed to social justice and provides a fair portrait of reality for Indigenous people. Such commitment is pointed out in the recent publication *Critical Companion to Native American and First Nations Theatre and Performance*:

Highway's life and work demonstrates the resilience of Native people and cultural values against colonization's invasive tactics of containing and assimilating Indigenous communities. Native values animate Highway's plays and his recent critical publications, in which he posits that Indigenous writing is an act of healing for both Indigenous communities and the world in general. (Darby et al. 115)

Interestingly, Tomson Highway did not start his dramaturgical work immediately after studying music and literature at the University of Manitoba and at the University of Western Ontario. Before becoming a playwright, he gained professional experience in social work, which might be an important aspect that influences his plays:

After graduating in 1976, Highway immersed himself in social work for the next seven years, working on reserves and in urban centres across Ontario. At the age of 30, compelled to record his wide-ranging experience of Indigenous life and to put his artistic training to use, he began writing plays. (Boyd)

In addition to being politically engaged, Highway's literary creations are heavily influenced by his musical knowledge. One of their distinctive features is undoubtedly the *ease at being in between*, namely creating in-between music and literature. This also applies to his lifestyle, as he is constantly moving through languages, territories, and art forms, and between Cree and Dene culture. In short, Tomson Highway is one of the

first Natives to present his art on Canadian stages from coast to coast, with the ambition to heal the relationship between Settlers and First Nations in Canada.

6.3. THE PLAY *ERNESTINE SHUSWAP GETS HER TROUT*

With regard to the text of the play that I will use for my analysis, *Ernestine* was published in 2005 by the Vancouver-based publisher Talonbooks. Tomson Highway's play *Ernestine* premiered at Sagebrush Theatre, Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. This production, which took place on the 24th of January 2004, was commissioned by the Kamloops, BC-based Secwépemc Cultural Education Society, and the Western Canada Theatre.¹⁹⁷ As I have not been able to obtain a video recording of an *Ernestine* performance, I believe accuracy in the stage directions is advantageous for my analysis, which relies on the text only. Tomson Highway's writing is very precise, especially when it comes to stage direction. According to drama scholar Owen D. Percy, playwrights generally give more freedom to directors than Highway does in *Ernestine*:

It often seems that Highway is hesitant to relinquish some of the control afforded to the novelist but withheld from the playwright. As is often the case, however, this seeming neurotic obsession pays dividends in its cumulative effect: reading *Ernestine* becomes almost nuanced, unpredictable, and exciting as seeing it on stage could be. (212)

The play features the Shuswap people, an Indigenous nation that has historically experienced oppression, just like every First Nation in Canada. Part of this oppression is still apparent nowadays when looking at the number of Shuswap speakers remaining in the diglossia scheme of contemporary Canada. In their 2016 Census, Statistics Canada counted

¹⁹⁷ The term "Secwépemc" is translated into English as the Shuswap people.

1290 Shuswap speakers, most of whom are located in British Columbia. The linguistic situation for this population is alarming:

Past events have significantly harmed the vitality of Aboriginal languages in Canada. These include the residential school system, under which generations of Aboriginal children were not permitted to speak their Aboriginal mother tongues [...] Several Aboriginal languages are now 'endangered', with few speakers, although a few others are considered 'viable' in the long term. ("The Aboriginal")

Tomson Highway faces an arduous choice: in which language must the play be written? Which language must the characters speak on stage? Should it be written in Shuswap in order to pay tribute to the nation from whom the story came? The playwright answers these questions in the preface to the play:

The language spoken by the women in this play, it must be stressed, is *not* English. Simply put, the Native people of the Thompson River Valley at the time here depicted (the early twentieth century) did not know the tongue. Rather, they spoke Shuswap, Okanagan, Thompson (or Couteau, as the latter 'Nation' is otherwise known), and other Native languages. In this play, they spoke Shuswap, a tongue that works according to principles, and impulses, different entirely from those that underlie, that 'motor', the English language. For instance, because the principle that 'motors' the Shuswap language is, in essence, a 'laughing deity' (i.e., the Trickster), it is hysterical, comic to the point where its 'spill-over' into horrifying tragedy is a thing quite normal, utterly organic. That is to say, as in most languages of Native North America (that I know of anyway), the 'laughing god' becomes a 'crying god' becomes a 'laughing god,' all in one swift impulse. (Highway *Ernestine* 11)

Indeed, *Ernestine's* author addresses the linguistic aspect of this play in a new, creative way that could be described as a gesture of cultural translation from Shuswap into English. Specifically, Highway creates a

third option between fact and fiction: the play is written and performed in English, while it is deeply infused with the Shuswap tongue and the spirit of Native American languages.¹⁹⁸ In this excerpt, Highway explains how Indigenous culture inspired this specific usage of the colonial tongue. He also mentions the Trickster, “as a pivotal and important figure in our world as Christ is in the realm of Christian mythology” (Highway *Ernestine* 12). By placing this fiction in a historical context, the playwright dives into the past of the Shuswap Nation and evaluates women’s roles in the history of this nation. He showcases the Laurier Memorial and has characters of the play read some excerpts and comment on the historical document.

The amount of work executed by Shuswap women and the withdrawal of the rights of the Shuswap nation, both spiralling out in less than 24 hours, are a fictional aspect of this play. If the time frame is fabricated, the loss of Indigenous rights is real: “The play telescopes one hundred years of contact between Whites and the Shuswap, Okanagan, and Thompson First Nations in British Columbia” (Lane 166). Over this time span, Indigenous nations were effectively forbidden the right to speak their native language, fish, trap, and graze, among other things. These acts of dispossession are a central element of the play’s narrative. Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier’s visit to Kamloops in 1910 is another important historical fact. The playwright could access this information thanks to the ongoing circulation of the Laurier Memorial a century later. The *Kanaka Bar Indian Band* website published an explanatory PDF file produced by the *Shuswap Nation Tribal Council*:

The Memorial is a historical document that demonstrates the involvement of the Interior Nations in pressing for title, rights,

198 A great example of this translation of Shuswap expression into English is performed by Isabel, who describes how she imagines the banquet: “ISABEL. The banquet, Delilah Rose Johnson of Kamloops, B.C., *our* banquet? It will be so monstrously, disgustingly, mouth-wateringly, taste-bud-titillatingly spectacular, don’t you think? Imagine, just imagine, steaming, juice-efulent sweet potatoes, wild onions, wild asparagus, wild beans, wild this, wild that, the trout, the stuffing, *your* beaver spread across the table like a carpet for the devil, *my* saskatoon pies, your tablecloths, the squeals of delight, the moans of pleasure, the ambiance, the feeling, the rhythm, the cat, oh yesssssss, Delilah Rose of Johnson of Kamloops, B.C., yesssssss ... (*pinches DELILAH ROSE, viciously, in a place [her bum?] where ANNABELLE can’t see her hand*)” (Highway *Ernestine* 28).

and sovereignty in the early twentieth century. It is also a historical narrative in itself, which tells the story of the previous hundred years of relations with European newcomers from the Aboriginal point of view. (*The Memorial to Sir Wilfred Laurier* 3)

Highway showcases four Indigenous women who are preparing a banquet for Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who is visiting their community. The main action of this play is detailed in the following quote:

Delilah is sewing a tablecloth, Annabelle is preparing a boiled beaver, Isabel is baking '624 Saskatoon pies,' and Ernestine is hoping to prepare a rainbow trout [...] Ultimately, one woman takes her fate into her own hands; one woman reveals a shocking detail about her past; one woman prays and rationalizes her way out of everything, and one woman just wants a damn trout. (Jacob)

Curiously, at the end of the play, Ernestine mentions that she taught her husband how to fish when they were newly wedded. This ironic humour that characterises this play suggests that this woman already had all it takes within her to be self-sufficient. It also gives the impression that she is waiting for her husband to fish, not because she does not know how to do it, but rather to conform to traditional gender roles. There is no record of those who cooked this banquet on the day of this 1910 historic visit: these cooks behind the scenes remain in the shadow of official history.¹⁹⁹

If *Ernestine's* characters mention Sir Laurier and several Indigenous Chiefs, they do not appear in the play, nor does any other man: Highway's piece features an all-female cast. This artistic decision helps to revalue women's contribution to the making of history. In doing so, it provides more status to work done in the home sphere and recognises domestic chores as a perfectly valid occupation, which is not the case in the majority of historical accounts.²⁰⁰ I would also like to argue that this

199 On August 25, 1910, a meeting took place in Kamloops (British Columbia) between Sir Laurier and the Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan, and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia.

200 For more information on the devaluation of housework performed by women, see *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*: "The informal nature of the work site,

play exemplifies the displacement of public attention from the centre to the margin of history. Indeed, Highway's piece takes place on the edge of a historic event, but the playwright flips a convention of historical narratives and shifts the focus towards the margin. This strategy has been theorised by feminist writer bell hooks:

To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body [...] This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made up of both margin and center. Our survival depended on an ongoing public awareness of the separation between margin and center and an ongoing private acknowledgement that we were a necessary, vital part of that whole.
(ix)

Paving the way for intersectional feminism, bell hooks writes about the impact of race, gender, and capitalism on the reproduction of systems of oppression.²⁰¹ Women in the play are more severely affected by this land dispossession for two reasons: first, they are no longer able to perform domestic chores in their houses since they are in the midst of expropriation; second, land dispossession renders Shuswap men jobless and their anger eventually results in physical harm against women. Furthermore, there is not much research on the relationship between women and nature in this play.

In this piece, Highway skilfully represents an unbalanced power relation between Indigenous people and white settlers with a great dose of wit. I would like to briefly present two texts which will help to better understand *Ernestine*: a study guide and the historical document of the

patriarchy's undervaluation of domestic work, and capitalism's preference for waged work – all these factors have made the site of domestic work very difficult for organizing and thus preserve it as one of the most exploitative sites. [...U]ndervalued and underpaid domestic work feeds into cultural notions of domesticity and the devaluation of housework in the present" (Lokesh *in* Hoerder et al. 207).

201 Note the absence of capital letters when writing the name bell hooks: "In not capitalizing the letters of her name, bell hooks attempts to subvert grammar prescriptivism. Language itself is a construct that supports racism and sexism, and the status-quo in general. Dismantling language and eliminating linguistic and grammatical gatekeepers is crucial to mental and physical liberation" (Rivera).

Laurier Memorial. The latter is the name given to a list of grievances that Indigenous chiefs delivered to the former Premier Sir Wilfrid Laurier. This text is written proof of the existence of a non-violent resistance movement which opposed the gradual removal of Indigenous peoples' rights in Canada. A study guide of *Ernestine* published by Western Canada Theatre (WCT) showcases a copy of the Laurier Memorial. The WCT study guide also reveals how Tomson Highway has become involved in the project initiated by theatre director David Ross. The latter explains that:

When Ron Ignace first handed me the Laurier Memorial a number of years ago, I was intrigued by the document, but not sure what to do with it. Perhaps it was a short film, in which Ron and his cousin Manny Jules, both Shuswap Nation chief's (sic) at that time, would play their great grandfathers, and I would narrate the document much as James Teit, the Scottish Trader and secretary to the chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan, and Thompson Indians, had done a hundred years before [...] The resulting script is what happens when an exceptional playwright turns his attention to fascinating material. What makes the Laurier Memorial fascinating are the revelations it offers regarding Aboriginal concepts of land ownership, kinship, and basic hospitality. What makes Tomson's work exceptional is his ability to give shape to these principles through a day in the lives of four 'ordinary' women. (Ross *in* Highway "Study Guide")

Thus, the starting point for this artistic creation could not be more different from its final result: a historical document written by men, which was later developed into a play that spotlights four Indigenous women. The WCT study guide offers highly relevant information to understand Highway's play better. Specifically, it provides important insights into the Shuswap nation and also gives a sense of how the Indigenous population hosted and perceived settlers at the time:

They treat us as less than children and allow us 'no say' in anything. They say the Indians know nothing, and own nothing, yet their

power and wealth has come from our belongings. (Highway “Study Guide”)

The Laurier Memorial is most certainly the foundation of this play where fact and fiction intertwine. It has previously been observed that “Highway’s *Ernestine* is a post-national allegory in that it sees dispossession as a universal tragedy, not only as the conflict between Natives and non-Natives” (Shackleton 305). Dispossession can be read as the removal or destruction of the natural world for commercial purposes. It threatens the survival of humans, animals, and other forms of life interconnected in numerous local and global ecosystems. Levien argues that “land dispossession reproduced women’s lack of independent land rights or reversed them where they existed, intensified household reproductive work and occurred without meaningful consultation with – much less decision-making by – rural women” (1). It goes without saying that violence against nature impacts upon all the characters in the play, as it implies a threat to their traditional livelihood.

Ernestine can therefore be described as historical fiction. Indeed, the characters are fictional, but historical events such as the colonisation suffered by the Shuswap Nation and the visit of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier to Kamloops did take place. The author thus stages the historical reality of this nation. As for the historical context of the play and the interweaving of history and fiction, Tomson Highway seems to follow the advice of Swedish playwright August Strindberg:

Anything may happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns: a medley of memories, experiences, free fancies, absurdities and improvisations.
(24)

This presentation has identified the key elements of Tomson Highway’s career, introduced the material that will be analysed in the following sections, and offered a historical and cultural context to frame this critical approach to Highway’s *Ernestine*. The next sections of this research on

Ernestine will delve into the representations of the natural environment, the ecological crisis, femininities, and power relations, focusing on the becoming of female characters and natural elements such as animals.

6.4. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

What stands out in the representations of the natural environment in *Ernestine* is the prevalence of animals. Throughout the play, Highway's characters repeatedly mention fish, cows, and beavers. These three animals are disappearing in Shuswap ancestral territories. Being part of the traditional diet of this nation, fish, cows, and beavers are essential for the survival of both the Shuswap nation and its culture. The aim of this section is to explore the relationship between the disappearance of animals and the imposition of new colonial laws on Shuswap people.

6.4.1. Fishing: From Tradition to Prohibition through the Lens of Humour

At the beginning of the play, Ernestine recalls what her husband, Joe Shuswap, announced to her that same morning before he left the house:

ERNESTINE. 'A rainbow trout, biggest, hugest rainbow trout ever
seen in this part of the world, that's what I'm getting you.'
(Highway *Ernestine* 14)

This quoted speech sets the tone – the wait is on; Ernestine Shuswap is expecting her husband to come back home with a rainbow trout. Fishing is a traditional activity for the First Peoples in Canada from coast to coast. From the normalcy of getting a fish from the nearest river to the announcement of a fishing prohibition, the situation escalates quickly. Isabel and Ernestine, two Shuswap women, express surprise and incomprehension when they discover the new law:

ISABEL. ‘What do you mean, Isabel Thompson of Kamloops, B.C., what do you mean just sitting there contented with my coffee, smiling like a mink while trying to upset me by telling me that fishing’s not allowed?’ (Highway *Ernestine* 15)

In order to make the dramatic aspect of this prohibition even more evident, the playwright breaks the fourth wall when Annabelle speaks directly to the audience:

ANNABELLE. So we (sic) been fishing in that river, my folks and me, for a very, *very* long time [...] Fishing’s not allowed? [... T] hat would be like me coming right into your homes, opening my mouth, and telling you, yes, you. And you and you and you, and you and you and you, and you and you and you, and you there in the tight red sweater—that would be like me telling you, ‘No more breathing. Stop right now.’ (Highway *Ernestine* 16-7)

Several discursive strategies are used in this prompt in order to mix drama and humour: the repetition in the extract above makes it funny, while the metaphor replacing fishing with breathing brings laughs to an abrupt end. The loss of the Shuswap precolonial lifestyle orchestrated by the colonial state transforms the Shuswap people into dependent citizens. Facing a century of colonial dispossession, Highway writes First Nations’ history and uses humour as a weapon by those who resist colonisation, giving the impression that the subtext of the play is: better to laugh than cry.

The constant overlap of drama and comedy is also visible when Annabelle declares in the first act: “They took the river” (Highway *Ernestine* 21). When the settlers took possession of the river, they were actually asserting their power: the settlers have a position to maintain as the dominant nation and they mark it by this symbolic gesture. The same logic applies to the banquet: eating improbable amounts of food, enjoying the food without setting foot in the kitchen, among other actions, are all different ways to mark one’s dominance. The prohibition of fishing is the

first attack on the precolonial Shuswap lifestyle; it is the first portrayal of the removal of subsistence rights in *Ernestine*. In this play, the Shuswap nation is entering a process of becoming that can be understood in line with Braidotti's suggestion:

the quest for a style of thinking that adequately reflects the complexities of the process itself [...] Becoming is about repetition, but also about memories of the non-dominant kind. It is about affinities and the capacity both to sustain and generate inter-connectedness. (8)

I would like to argue that Tomson Highway manages to represent a state of becoming that comes very close to Braidotti's definition above. He blends traditional indigenous knowledge in the characters' speeches and thereby produces a tongue-in-cheek perspective on the colonisation of First Nations in Canada.

6.4.2. Daisy-May Kaboom's Eviction, Suffering, and Death

The first act opens on Isabel inviting Annabelle's cow, Daisy-May Kaboom,²⁰² to move into her yard and eat her green grass, as a prohibition on grazing in public space has been put in place by the local authorities. Annabelle rejects Isabel's offer and explains how this situation can ramp up from the removal of animal rights to the annulment of Indigenous rights:

202 I would like to highlight that this cow has a name, Daisy-May Kaboom, as if she belonged to Chicheelia Kaboom's family just like any other human member. The name of the cow can be read as a mark of respect within an anthropocentric discursive practice: "If anthropocentrism is understood as naming from the human point of view, it has to be kept in mind that in an absolute sense language is always anthropocentric. Even 'ecological renaming' from the point of view of animals and plants (cf. Fill 1993:109 ff.) remains the expression of human projection, for how else could we reproduce the 'consciousness' of animals and plants? The naming from the point of view of other species would logically have to be 'caninocentric', 'felidocentric', 'bovidocentric', etc. Their names again would not be 'objective' ecological designations, but would represent only other centrisms. Last but not least, human designations express human judgements of nature, which even within ecological movements are by no means uniform" (Jung 275).

But Daisy-May Kaboom should be able to graze anywhere she wants, Isabel Thompson of Kamloops, B.C. That's her right. That's always been her right... [I]f they can take Chicheelia Kaboom's pasture away from her [...] they can take anything. They can take your house. They can take your yard. They can take your pasture. (Highway *Ernestine* 19-20)

Annabelle is worried about Isabel's offer, and her opinion can be understood as a metaphor for a global issue: private charity should not replace a public right. Furthermore, Annabelle's concerns are growing as colonialism is about to hit her nation head-on. What will it mean for Shuswap women? Will they lose the space and the means to work in and out of the domestic sphere? Finnish scholar, Taija Kaarlenkaski, a specialist in feminist human-animal studies, suggests that "what connects women and animals is their subordinate position in male dominated society and culture" (14). I would like to argue that Shuswap women and Daisy-May Kaboom are a great example of this: animals and women are subordinated to those who wrote the law, primarily the Canadian Government and also, on a local scale, Indigenous Chiefs. They are not part of the decision-making process; they are confronted by a *fait accompli*. After the grazing prohibition, Daisy May is moved. The eviction takes place by a forced means of transport which causes suffering, a situation that provokes the protagonist's outrage:

ERNESTINE. That twit, Chicheelia Kaboom. Dragging Daisy-May to Isabel Thompson's pasture by the nostrils. If I didn't have the huge heart I am known and loved for up and down the North Thompson River valley, I'd grab her by her nostrils and drag her to Isabel's myself. (Highway *Ernestine* 58)

When Daisy-May is being dragged by the nostrils, Ernestine's emotional outburst frames the gesture as violent. But it seems that she is not angry enough to act and interrupt Daisy-May's suffering. However, this ambivalent response helps develop an effective strategy in the play. The animal studies critic Barbara Hardy Beierl comments on human-animal

identification in the following terms: “Changing the perspective to the animal’s viewpoint may be regarded as a rhetorical strategy that is used to engender empathy in the reader, to consider how it would feel like to be an animal” (215). Daisy-May’s problems help humans to look beyond the anthropocentric stance that interprets the world in terms of human values and experiences. In this case, Ernestine is learning from Daisy-May’s suffering and is able to formulate a plan of action to stop the pain, which is a good example of how the ecological processes of interanimation operate: “Humans and other entities develop, change, and learn through mutually influencing each other day to day, age by age” (Murphy *Literature, Nature, and Other* 35). This connection between Daisy-May Kaboom and Ernestine, an outsider to the cow’s daily care, is possible as small-scale farming fosters relations between humans and animals, by means of touching and naming them. This is completely contrary to the current industrial dairy system, which keeps the consumer away from the cow that gives milk.

After the suffering and eviction of Daisy-May, the playwright depicts the death of the animal. Daisy-May Kaboom is suffering and dying through language only: there is no animal on stage. This decision helps to avoid all kinds of moral and ethical considerations that involve live non-human animals in entertainment shows. Through discourse, the playwright explores what it would feel like to be a cow and how she might experience her life:

ANNABELLE. Daisy-May is dying. All that liquid in her udder is not cream for your Saskatoon pies but the dropsy [...] It’s nothing but an udder full of pus, pus, and yet more pus. (*one last very sad moo from Daisy May outside the ‘window’*) You see? That is a dying moo. That is a goddawful (sic), miserably unhappy, dying, monstrous moo. (*Highway Ernestine* 76)

The suffering is depicted in this quote by the mention of a purulent udder, as if the cow was suffering from a disease which dried up her milk production. Calling the cow’s cries a ‘dying moo’ is a subjective interpretation made by Annabelle. In this respect, Kaarlenkaski argues,

“It has been suggested that especially when encountering other mammals, we often discern the animal as an intentional and perceiving subject which can be understood through similar gestures and bodily functions” (12).

This section has shown that the eviction, suffering, and death of Daisy-May Kaboom allow the decentralisation of the anthropocentric gaze in order to make the human-animal relationship visible. This is a feat, as it rarely happens in contemporary theatre. *Ernestine* shows how colonial laws affect not only Indigenous people but also animals, plants, and other life forms. Briefly, the eviction of Daisy-May from her pasture can be understood as an allegory for the colonisation of Native Peoples in Canada, as it is the first occurrence of rights removal in this play and certainly not the last one.

6.4.3. Representing the Canadian Beaver: its Smell, its Scarcity, and its Trapping

The beaver is an official emblem of Canada. Throughout the early years of colonisation, it played a crucial role in the country’s economic development, even if that resulted in a decrease in the number of beavers: “In the past, beavers were over-hunted for their fur and meat, threatening the population. They have come back, however, thanks to wetland rehabilitation and other conservation efforts” (“Animal Facts”). Highway’s representations of the beaver serve three purposes: first, its scarcity helps to provide an accurate portrait of how Indigenous people were losing their rights; second, the cooking of the beaver offers an authentic approach to traditional forms of cooking, probably passed on orally from one generation to the next. The choice of the beaver in this context represents the author’s transmission of Indigenous culinary knowledge. Finally, Shuswap women help to raise awareness of gender-based violence, which takes a variety of forms, such as social pressure or physical assault, when these women are having a conversation about the lack of beavers and how Shuswap men are getting angry because of this new colonial prohibition.

Beaver is one of the dishes on the menu, to be graciously served by one of the four Shuswap women in the upcoming gargantuan banquet. Annabelle, the beaver cook, expresses her regrets about coming forward and doing this job:

ANNABELLE. Why I had to volunteer to boil half a ton of beaver for this dinner, I'll never know. (Highway *Ernestine* 33)

Did she experience social pressure? Did she feel obliged to do so? Highway's depiction of female volunteering to help others is still a common, gender-related feature worldwide, as Cadesky et al. suggest:

men are more likely than women to express interest in risk-taking volunteer roles, while women express more interest in helping roles (Wymer 2011), but the reasons for this are rooted once again in gender relations, not due to any particular innate quality of women. (375)

Annabelle seems to be having a hard time cooking the beaver meat:

ANNABELLE. Pooh! Does that beaver ever stink! Maybe boiling it was a mistake.

ERNESTINE (*offstage, shouting*). Roasting it is worse, trust me. Pee-yew! I can smell it from out here on your porch! (Highway *Ernestine* 58)

Although meat cooking is generally associated with a delightful aroma in literature, this is not the case with beaver meat. The bad smell could be interpreted as a sign of spoiled meat from a non-native lens, but some research has shown that this is not the case. To give an example, Native American anthropologist and artist Thomas Pecore Wesco wrote of his own experience of cooking beaver meat along with his recipe *Baked Beaver Feast*:

Cooked beaver has an aroma that I do not find appealing. It was difficult for me to get past the initial smell. After it cooked awhile, though, it smelled like good roast meat. [...] In a subsistence living situation, people are connected to the land. When I roasted that beaver, I had almost lost my connection to that era of my childhood and that culture. (39)

Wesco stresses the link between beaver meat and Native people as a distinctive feature of subsistence culture. The scarcity of beaver must be understood in a double context: colonialism and extractivism. American economics scholar specialising in Global Environmental Sustainability, Edward B. Barbier, explains this socio-economic context that caused the decrease in beavers in America:

Starting in the late sixteenth century, European demand for beaver pelts for felt in hats drove a sustained exploitation of fur across North America that would last for nearly three centuries [...] Exploitation of this fur in North America from east to west was a classic example of a continuously moving 'resource-extractive enclave' producing exports for the world market [...] With the decimation of beaver population in North America, coupled with the decline in demand for felt for hats in Europe, the beaver trade declined sharply in the nineteenth century. (317)

In Highway's play, colonialism is reduced to the new laws – in this case, the prohibition on trapping. The scarcity of beavers slips into a conversation between Annabelle and Ernestine:

ANNABELLE (*normal voice*). One beaver. One miserable goddamn beaver. That's all my boys, Ron, John, and Tom could get me for this banquet. All of a sudden, we can't trap, is what they tell me when they get back from Johnny's old trapline (sic) other side of Lac Dubois. Another new law. [...] Thank gawd, that Chicheelia Kaboom had an extra beaver. Smoked. Sold it to my sons, Ron, John, and Tom, for a song and a prayer. The

question being: now how the hell am I supposed to feed two thousand people [...] with just one beaver, huh? (Highway *Ernestine* 60)

First, I would like to highlight the playwright's stage direction: to use a normal voice while they are commenting on violence. Another aspect worth mentioning is how the decrease in the beaver population in *Ernestine* is linked to gender-based violence, as can be seen in an episode of domestic abuse narrated by Ernestine. This cause-effect relationship is presented in Ernestine's discourse:

ERNESTINE. They took his traps and fined him one hundred bucks. Got so mad, went home, got drunk, banged Sally Brown. On the head. With a crucifix. (Highway *Ernestine* 60)

The punctuation and the accumulation of fragments of sentences create a peculiar rhythm. The passage is organic; it flows like an authentic conversation, and overall, the fragmented structure of this line makes it possible to communicate innuendo: is it sexual assault or is it domestic violence? Highway frames Sally Brown's suffering as collateral damage, a result of the prohibition on trapping beaver.

There can be no doubt that the contrast between the content and the way it is conveyed might strengthen the impact of the message. Annabelle and Ernestine appear to make small talk as they speak in a conversational tone, but the subject of their conversation is far from being trivial: the loss of their rights, hinting at domestic violence, maybe rape or physical assault as suggested in the extract above. This is the only mention of domestic abuse perpetrated by Charlie Brown in *Ernestine*.²⁰³ If the exact nature of the violent gesture is uncertain, Ernestine answers the following question: why did Charlie hit Sally? Why do men abuse the women they love? Ernestine offers a set of excuses to justify Charlie's violence.

203 See *Wellesley Institute's* publication about violence against women in Canada for a broader portrait: "Statistics from the Canadian Women's Foundation shows that 50% of Canadian women experience physical or sexual assault after the age of 16 and that a woman is killed, on average, every six days by her intimate partner" (Abban).

According to Ernestine, the husband is drunk and angry; therefore, he becomes violent. Substance abuse and anger are common excuses used to justify domestic abuse (Hamel 51; Hamel and Nicholls 515). If they are common, they are not mentioned among the reasons presented by *National Domestic Violence Hotline* in order to understand how abuse operates:

Domestic violence and abuse stem from a desire to gain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Abusive people believe they have the right to control and restrict their partners, and they may enjoy the feeling that exerting power gives them. They often believe that their own feelings and needs should be the priority in their relationships, so they use abusive tactics to dismantle equality and make their partners feel less valuable and deserving of respect in the relationship. (“Why Do People Abuse?”)

This definition of domestic abuse might be useful to understand settlers’ violent practices – both share the same ideology of dominance and hierarchical structure. The interdiction to trap beaver can be compared to a domino effect, or it can be understood as a mirror reflecting several types of violence, as conceived by Tomson Highway. While colonial violence changes through time, shifting from old colonialism to more recent forms of neocolonialism, other types of violence persist over time, perpetuating ancient violent patterns. These practices are generally targeted at weaker groups and minorities. It is also worth mentioning that suffering oppression does not prevent the oppressed person or collective from inflicting it themselves on other groups themselves. In Canada we can find various examples of this type of behaviour, which can eventually affect every community regardless of their belonging to one ethnic group or another. For instance, Highway represents traditional Indigenous food like beaver meat, which is forbidden as a result of a colonial decision that would result in the starvation or impoverishment of First Nations, who are dependent on local natural resources to live and to keep their culture alive. Charlie traps beaver for a living; the loss of his income might be related to the gender violence Sally experienced. In

this case, colonial violence might relate to gender-based violence where a powerful group like the colonial state oppresses Indigenous men who then oppress women. Colonialism, racism, and sexism seem to unleash violent patterns: these types of violence have existed and still exist in Canadian society and beyond.

This study aims at taking a holistic view of the representations of the natural environment and of the active involvement of animals in this ecofeminist critique of *Ernestine*. The most obvious finding to emerge from this study of Highway's play is that the disappearance of animals in Shuswap ancestral territories is directly related to the imposition of new colonial laws. The first mention of the removal of subsistence rights is the prohibition on fishing. Research has also shown that this is the starting point to stage the becoming of Shuswap people from self-sufficiency to dependence. Then, Highway decentres human subjectivity and tackles the anthropocentric gaze with the tale of Daisy-May Kaboom. The eviction, suffering, and death of this cow confirm that colonial laws also impact upon nonhuman life forms. Last, Highway represents the beaver simultaneously as a Canadian symbol and as a not very appetising means of subsistence (i.e., a stinky piece of meat), and he frames the prohibition on trapping beaver as a violent gesture from the colonial state, which engenders violence in this narrative where the jobless trapper commits domestic violence. The manner of Highway's representation of animals in this play follows Carol J. Adams' theories developed in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, in which she suggests that "it is important not to dismember the meaning of meat from the animals' lives", and where she makes visible the conflict between "the role of meat as a representation and the reality of meat eating" (201-2). Adams links violence against animals (hunting and consumption) and violence against women in her book. Adams' points are thus valid at the turn of the century in an industrialised society. Nevertheless, Highway portrays Indigenous people who existed more than a century ago: his representation does not aim to condemn meat consumption. He depicts how the livelihood and economic survival of Shuswap people depend on animal oppression. In turn, Indigenous peoples are oppressed by white settlers, who reaffirm their power over them by banning fishing, trapping, and grazing. These

different power relations depicted in *Ernestine* highlight the ecocentric features of this text, where the representation of the natural environment is a major component.

6.5. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The current ecological crisis can be summed up as a brutal imbalance within an ecosystem that endangers one or more living species. Simultaneously, both locally and globally, the current state of the crisis is aggravated by human agency. This urgent matter can be described as an ecocide which is largely the result of destructive colonial practices of extractivism. When it comes to Highway's play, set in 1910, should we already speak of an ecological crisis at that time? I suggest that, at the time of the play, sporadic acts of ecocide happened, but I would not frame it within the context of an ecological crisis like the one we are presently experiencing. Nevertheless, the multiplicity of ecocide and its normalisation might have led us to where we are now: destroying the equilibrium that allows humans and many other species to breathe, eat, and drink – that is, eventually, to survive. One of the best examples of the ecocide that was going on a century ago is the massive killing of American buffalo:

In the 16th century, North America (Turtle Island) was home to 25 to 30 million buffalo roaming freely on the Great Plains, but only a few hundred remained by the end of the late 19th century. Both the American and Canadian governments encouraged the decimation of the buffalo as a solution to the 'Indian problem,' as Indigenous people were thought to be more malleable without their main source of subsistence. (Phillips 24)

White settlers used this animal as a means to an end: to exterminate Indigenous people. An iconic image of a white man standing in front of a mountain of buffalo skulls remains the clearest metaphor for a problematic relationship with the world and gives a taste of the ecological

crisis to come (See Appendix 4). The acceleration of species extinction is a main feature of the ongoing ecological crisis, as explained by a scholar specialising in ecology, Cristian Román-Palacios, who estimates that a third of animal and plant species will be gone in the next 50 years:

If we stick to the Paris Agreement to combat climate change, we may lose fewer than two out of every 10 plant and animal species on Earth by 2070. But if humans cause larger temperature increases, we could lose more than a third or even half of all animal and plant species, based on our results. (Román-Palacios *in* Stolte)

One of the main concerns when it comes to the representation of the ecological crisis is to draw attention to what can be done regarding the decreasing amount of resources around us. Observed in *Ernestine* is the precolonial state of Shuswap nation, where food sovereignty is not an issue; the food eaten is exclusively local, and traditional Indigenous knowledge related to the land is maintained throughout the different generations. The time frame of *Ernestine* is located a century ago. Back then, both settlers and Indigenous populations oppressed animals. According to philosophy scholar Robert C. Jones, violence against animals persists:

[Despite] the fact that the modern animal rights movement is now over 40 years old, the ubiquitous domination and oppression experienced by other-than-human animals has yet to gain robust inclusion in social justice theory or practice. If animals are legitimate subjects of justice, and animals suffer systemic and institutional domination and oppression, then animal rights is a social justice issue [...] Therefore, those committed to social justice must consider the interests of all sentient beings, not only those of human beings. (467-9)

Animal oppression is represented in the play, but it is not treated as a problem. Thomson Highway's play, just like most of the dramatic performances produced in Canada and beyond, normalises animal exploitation. I wonder if the lens of anti-speciesism might end up being

inappropriate because it evaluates the Shuswap lifestyle through the lens of contemporary values. Does this approach help to understand the implications of the ecological crisis to a greater extent? Is anti-speciesism just another way for settlers to impose their views on Indigenous communities in Canada? Critical animal studies scholar Melissa Marie Legge and Social Work scholar Rasha Taha tackle this issue. In an article where they introduce themselves as vegan and as activists fighting for Indigenous hunting rights, Legge and Taha explain that “[t]here is a tension within the North American animal rights (AR) movement between (1), notions of cruelty toward other-than-human (OTH) animals and ecological harm, and, (2), racism and cultural imperialism” (64). Looking at this work, I believe it is possible to reconcile animal liberation with a decolonial mindset. To take the matter further, I will quote the recommendations of Kima Nieves, an activist who identifies as “both Indigenous and a long-term vegetarian”. She addresses the tension between colonialism, Indigenous traditional practices, and the Animal Liberation movement in Canada:

Industrialization and capitalism are the ultimate culprits that give way to negative ecological impacts, animal mistreatment and unethical agricultural practices. It is also anti-indigeneity and the violation of Indigenous sovereignty that forces Indigenous individuals towards particular foods available to them. After all, it is colonialism that displaced thousands of tribes off their traditional homelands, deprived them of their traditional food sources and replaced those sources with government appointed rations such as lard and flour. It is colonialism that denies Indigenous people on reservations adequate nutrition, and offers food at astronomical prices.

Food sovereignty is a critical aspect of the ecological crisis. As explained above, Indigenous communities’ access to traditional food is generally limited and overpriced. As exemplified by the overkilling of American buffalo and the colonisation of the Shuswap Nation, social inequality and environmental injustice are two faces of the same coin. This is a

position defended by David Pellow, professor of environmental studies and director of the Global Environmental Justice Project:

I promise to never separate the ecological from the social. I think that most people would agree that not only do we currently live in a society that is ecologically unsustainable, but one that is also socially unsustainable [...] Whenever we see something that's a social problem, I'm looking for that ecological angle. Few people look at the ecological consequences of prison and poverty. Vice versa, what is the social angle of fracking or oil spills? (Pellow *in* Ruan)

Throughout the play, Highway builds a link between environmental and social justice. The representation of the Shuswap lifestyle serves a double function: it is an act of historical memory, and it also remains a valid action in order to fight the current ecological crisis. In this section, I would like to argue that the playwright's depiction of the Shuswap Nation's sustainable practices is an act of resistance to both colonial power and environmental destruction. I will support my argument by analysing Sir Wilfrid Laurier's desire to eat like he usually did back home, while being on the other side of the country. Then, I will move on to the attempted genocide of the Shuswap people and analyse their portrayal by the playwright as an endangered species.

6.5.1. The Shuswap Nation's Sustainable Practices: Food and Medicine

In the first act, the character Delilah Rose pinpoints structural inequalities and tackles the power dynamics at play during the banquet preparation. Specifically, she wonders why Shuswap women must serve their male counterparts and their settler guests. She criticises the state of servitude of the older women of her community who obey without reluctance. Three months pregnant, Delilah Rose Johnson is a fierce young Shuswap who expresses her indignation:

DELILAH ROSE. Why on Earth do we have to serve this man a dinner in the first place? I mean, isn't he the world's richest man or, at the very least, the country's? [...] And if he has to eat here, then why on Earth does he need one hundred white tablecloths to eat on? Would bare wooden tables just not do? Would the ground not do? We've eaten on the ground, for what now, sixty thousand years? It's like, all of a sudden, God himself is coming to the house for dinner. (Highway *Ernestine* 33)

Traditional practices are mentioned in this tirade. For instance, tablecloths are presented as a foreign item. Delilah Rose stresses how ridiculous the request for such a large number of white tablecloths by a rich and powerful figure is. She opposes the Shuswap Nation's deference to the settler's customs and eating habits, wondering why they must adapt to their guest's whims. On this note, Bodirsky and Johnson argue that:

Traditional knowledge of Indigenous people in North America was never completely forgotten. A large amount of knowledge survived intact despite colonial measures to eradicate it [...] The reconstitution of traditional Indigenous foodways is a precondition to healing the many traumas of colonization, including unhealthy attitudes toward food and diet that were learned through Western institutions.

The sustainable practices of the Shuswap nation also include medicinal knowledge. Highway depicts this important transfer of knowledge from older to younger women in his play:

DELILAH ROSE. Look, there's blood.

ANNABELLE. Oh, just rub some cow shit on it. It'll heal in a day.
("Ernestine" 37)

While in the play Annabelle speaks of cow manure as a medicine, it is generally framed as a threat and a main contributor to the ecological

crisis in Western society, where mega dairy farms are the norm. In 2018, the World Wildlife Fund raised awareness about the mismanagement of cow poo in the Netherlands, according to Tom Levitt's report published in *The Guardian*:

the nation's 1.8 million cows are producing so much manure that there isn't enough space to get rid of it safely. As a result, farmers are dumping cow poo illegally, the country is breaking EU regulations on phosphates designed to prevent groundwater contamination, and the high levels of ammonia emissions are affecting air quality.

More recently, the environmental editor of the same publication drew attention to the dairy industry with the following news: "The biggest dairy companies in the world have the same combined greenhouse gas emissions as the UK, the sixth biggest economy in the world, according to a new report" (Carrington). Briefly, the overproduction of cow manure by the dairy industry has resulted in ecosystem imbalances.

As mentioned in Highway's play, cow poo has been recognised among Shuswap people for its medicinal properties for over a century. Nowadays, this Indigenous practice has been validated by microbiologists: "Cow dung possesses antiseptic and prophylactic or disease preventive properties. It destroys the microorganism that causes disease and putrefaction" (Gupta et al.). In a recent study on an alternative method to chlorine to disinfect water, one of the conclusions was that "cow dung ash is an eco-friendly and low cost adsorbent for disinfection purpose" (Pasalwad 35).

This section has shown that that in *Ernestine*, Tomson Highway associates sustainable practices with the livelihood of the Shuswap Nation. The aim of the present research is to examine the positive consequences of local and traditional food habits and medicine within an Indigenous Nation. The case study of cow manure helps us to understand that a natural element is not good or bad per se – it depends on the knowledge associated with its usage and the awareness of the danger of its overproduction, as is the case nowadays. I would like to stress how precolonial knowledge, as depicted in Highway's play, is still valid in tackling the ecological crisis.

6.5.2. The Shuswap as Endangered Species: A Metaphorical Extinction?

One of the multiple aspects of the ongoing ecological crisis is unquestionable biodiversity loss. Before extinction, a species becomes critically vulnerable and then endangered for several reasons, as explained by biologists:

We quantified the threats facing 488 species in Canada, categorized by COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) as extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened, or of special concern. Habitat loss is the most prevalent threat (84%), followed by overexploitation (32%), native species interactions (31%), natural causes (27%), pollution (26%), and introduced species (22%). Agriculture (46%) and urbanization (44%) are the most common human activities causing habitat loss and pollution. (Venter et al. 903)

The threats to wildlife in Canada are mostly due to habitat loss. While ecologists and activists are currently trying to prevent the depletion of animals and plants by protecting their habitat, the next mass extinction seems to affect not only other life forms but our own species, the human:

we have ethical responsibility not to casually exterminate other life-forms, the products of a magisterial evolutionary process that has continued for billions of years [...] The sixth extinction wave thus not only threatens our aesthetic and moral senses, but the very survival of civilization. It seems certain that climate disruption will greatly increase the rate of population and species extinction. (Ceballos et al. 1826)

Humans as a species facing extinction is an unprecedented fact. However, several ethnicities in Canada and beyond have previously faced extinction. Under the Canadian colonial state, Indigenous nations were endangered and killed:²⁰⁴

²⁰⁴ Colonialism does not belong to the past; it is actively alive. Canadian sociologist Jacqueline M. Lacchin highlights that “colonialism has never ‘ended’ in Canada; the continuing legacy of

By the nineteenth century, Indigenous Peoples in North America found themselves in a deepening crisis. They faced imminent destruction. At the arrival of Christopher Columbus, there may have lived more than 100 million indigenous people in the Americas. By the end of the nineteenth century, 90 to 99% of them were gone. Recent studies show that, contrary to the belief that 'Canadian expansion into the West was much less violent than that of the United States,' Canadian colonialism was quite deadly. In fact, many thinkers at the time noted the combined effects of European colonialism and feared that the Indigenous Peoples in Canada were marching toward extinction. (Eshet 30)

Throughout his play, Highway captures this violence. From my point of view, he depicts the Shuswap Nation as an endangered species. For instance, Highway adds a note at the end of the play in which he recommends distributing an excerpt from the Laurier Memorial to the audience while they are leaving the theatre. In this document, one can read:

Gradually, we are becoming regarded as trespassers over a large portion of this our country. Our old people say, 'How are we to live? If the government takes our food from us they must give us other food in its place.' Conditions of living have been thrust on us which we did not expect, and which we consider in great measure unnecessary and injurious. We have no grudge against the white race as a whole nor against the settlers, but we want to have an equal chance with them of making a living. (Highway *Ernestine* 91)

Throughout the play, the Shuswap Nation's habitat loss is addressed in an account of the growing presence of settlers on their land, presented by Ernestine:

ERNESTINE. [A]nd their land is getting bigger, bigger and bigger.
Their families, too [...] so many Indian people lost their land
it wasn't even funny, all ended up homeless as vagabonds,
living off the charity of their relatives. (Highway *Ernestine* 67)

Habitat loss equals squandering of livelihood as described above by Ernestine. In the second act, Delilah Rose is asking about the whereabouts of Ernestine's husband, who might be fishing for trout during the prohibition. Ernestine expresses her concerns about her husband's absence:

ERNESTINE. Haven't seen him since [...] since before six o'clock
this morning. Out fishing, even though he's not supposed to.
But I'll bet you a dollar, Delilah Rose Johnson, I'll bet you a
dollar what he'd say is, what he'd say is: they'll kill him, they'll
lynch him, they'll hang him by the neck from the tallest, most
beautiful Douglas fir they can find between here and Victoria.
(Highway *Ernestine* 66)

In the two extracts above, the criminalisation of means of survival such as fishing and owning land is the result of two powerful colonial rules imposed by settlers. In consequence, a spectre of death lurks around the Shuswap Nation. In *Ernestine*, the survival of Shuswap culture is also at stake. Highway stages the erasure of Indigenous languages in Canada at the time. This announcement is made by Annabelle in the play:

ANNABELLE. The Shuswap language, my dear, our dear Native
tongue? That's what's just been cancelled. [...] We're not
allowed not a phrase, not a word, not a syllable, not a vowel,
not even a period. (Highway *Ernestine* 68-9)

First, the rest of the cast is speechless before this news. Then, the characters start to neigh, like horses. Neighing is a fictional aspect of the play. I strongly believe that this artistic decision of the playwright makes

dehumanisation explicit. Similar strategies to dehumanise native people have been observed in other colonial contexts:

[W]hile empire purports to humanise Africans or indigenous people by exhorting them to abandon their own institutions and adopting instead imperial garb, this in fact replicates the colonial animalisation of indigenous people. It is in fact animalisation rendered a veneer of humanisation, for by losing one's institutions one acquires only the negativity of an animal [...] The animalisation of indigenous people during the slave trade and (neo-) colonisation underlines the fact that empire has always run short of real animals to bear its burdens. Such animalisation of human beings also allows us to analyse as façade empire's recent ideologies of African 'animal rights' and the so called 'rights of nature' defined with little, if any, cognisance of indigenous African environmental practices. (Nhemachena 35)

Shuswap language and livelihood are under threat, as is the case for any nation experiencing colonialism. In light of the above, discursive strategies in the service of survival are used by Highway. For instance, characters often repeat their full name and origins as if it could help to prevent their disappearance. This is the case in the following exchange between Ernestine and Annabelle:

ERNESTINE. Yes, Annabelle Okanagan of Kamloops, B.C. How are we to communicate with each other?

ANNABELLE. As of five P.M. today, kind ladies of the Thompson River Valley? We are to—ta-da! —neigh. (Highway *Ernestine* 70)

The extinction of animal species serves as a metaphor to understand how and why the Shuswap can be framed in *Ernestine* as an endangered species. I would like to argue that this play presents one of the several actions mobilised by Indigenous peoples to resist cultural assimilation and colonial violence. Within the vast movement to decolonise knowledge, Canadian contemporary theatre is under scrutiny. The 2020 Spring issue

of *Theatre Research in Canada* on race and performance gives a platform to Indigenous voices:

Ouvrez votre esprit et votre coeur, le processus de décolonisation dans lequel nous sommes tous engagés ne s'arrêtera pas. Nous sommes le socle identitaire de ce pays et les trois Amériques sont toujours un continent amérindien. Si le théâtre comme vous dites Mme Mnouchkine est l'art de la présence, la présence de l'amérindien sur scène doit faire partie de cet Art et sa présence sur scène est un acte politique d'affirmation, de reconnaissance.²⁰⁵ (Sioui Durand and Joncas 151)

Ernestine showcases Shuswap tradition through food, language, and medicine. The contribution of this study has been to demonstrate how a contemporary Canadian play written by an Indigenous playwright shows how colonialism affects both nature and women. Unlike the other plays analysed in this thesis, *Ernestine* does not offer a direct representation of the ecological crisis, but this fact does not make Highway's piece any less relevant to ecocriticism. By showing power dynamics operating at the level of habitat loss and gender difference, while also portraying social and environmental violence, the author successfully represents the challenges and difficulties Indigenous women have gone through. More than a century later, the oppression continues in Canada.

6.6. CONCLUSION

While I am writing this chapter, the death of an Indigenous woman in Quebec (Canada) has occurred under troubling circumstances. Montreal Gazette journalist, Jesse Feith, reports that:

205 "Open your mind and your heart, the decolonisation process in which we are all engaged will not stop. We are the identity base of this country and the three Americas are still a Native American continent. If the theatre as you say Mrs. Mnouchkine is the art of presence, the presence of the Native American on stage must be part of this Art and its presence on stage is a political act of affirmation, of recognition" (Sioui Durand and Joncas 151).

Two women at Joliette hospital are heard calling her stupid and saying she's only good for sex and would be better off dead. [...] In her last moments, while tied to a hospital bed, Joyce Echaquan pleaded for someone to help her.

On the 28th of September 2020, Joyce Echaquan broadcast the racist rants on Facebook minutes before her death. Hospitalised for severe stomach pains, the 37-year-old Atikamekw woman died of pulmonary oedema caused by heart failure. During the coroner's public enquiry hearings, emergency doctor Alain Vadeboncoeur declared that her death could have been avoided (Sioui). An expert from McGill University responded to this event by raising awareness about systemic racism. Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Saleem Razack comments:

We now know that the individuals who performed these acts of overt racism have been held accountable and that an investigation is in progress. However, this approach only goes so far. There are clear systemic racism factors that have permitted such behaviours towards Indigenous peoples and which create systems whereby individuals are rarely held accountable. Nothing would have happened had there not been recorded evidence. We must therefore name the systemic racism in this occurrence and commit to deep and enduring structural change, in the spirit of truth and reconciliation. (Razack *in* Mazerolle)

The general public was not indifferent to Joyce Echaquan's death. Her death was caused by systemic racism that has been and remains a consequence of colonialism. According to the federal webpage of the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, Indigenous women and girls represent 16% of all female homicides in Canada, while constituting only 4% of the female population in Canada. The intersection of oppressions lived by Indigenous women raises issues about a specific type of oppression, as Goeman and Denetdale suggest:

for Native women there is no one definition of Native feminism; rather, there are multiple definitions and layers of what it means to do

Native feminist analysis. However, as Native feminists, our dreams and goals overlap; we desire to open up spaces where generations of colonialism have silenced Native peoples about the status of their women and about the intersections of power and domination that have also shaped Native nations and gender relations. (10)

The situation of Indigenous women in Canada is getting worse in comparison with the historical and fictional account of Ernestine Shuswap, Highway's protagonist. Her desire to get a trout in the midst of colonial violence could seem rather insignificant at first glance, but it is not: the author has the skill of presenting apparently very mundane facts that actually serve as a window into a much more complex reality of structural oppression. The anecdote of the trout is a starting point to show concretely how the settlers prevent the Shuswap from living normally. This ban follows on from various violent practices.

The main goal of this chapter has been to perform an ecofeminist critique of Tomson Highway's play *Ernestine*. In order to do so, the relationship between nature and women has been analysed, focusing on power dynamics. What is analysed here is the intersection of relationships that are not independent: the violence experienced by Shuswap women and by Canadian nature is intertwined. Overall, this study strengthens the idea that Highway tackles the anthropocentric gaze by featuring many animals as a central component of his narrative. In doing so, he accentuates how the imposition of new colonial laws is directly responsible for the disappearance of animals in Shuswap ancestral territories.

The four female characters of this play are spectators of a wide range of colonial practices, which include various, sadly well-known acts, such as land seizures, language oppression, and the removal of fishing, hunting, and grazing rights. They are asked to perform an impossible task: to cook a massive amount of food while resources are running scarce. Therefore, their main function is to serve men's meals. Shuswap women are marginalised witnesses to the Indigenous resistance led by men. They go from surprise to surprise, losing their rights without being part of the fight for the survival of the Shuswap people. These Shuswap women are represented as being on the fringes of history. Colonial dispossession

deeply affects Shuswap people. Highway accurately depicts how they lose their capacities of being self-sufficient and become vulnerable and dependent. An implication of this is the threat to their livelihood.

In his play, Tomson Highway portrays the colonisation of Canada as lived by one Indigenous nation. The playwright observes that Shuswap women were not invited to be part of the negotiating board in 1910. Since that date, Indigenous women have been killed, tortured, and raped. They have suffered racist and life-threatening violence. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) highlights the severity of the issue by providing facts and statistics:

According to Statistics Canada's 2004 General Social Survey (GSS), Aboriginal women experience much higher rates of violence than non-Aboriginal women. [...] Aboriginal women 15 years and older are 3.5 times more likely to experience violence than non-Aboriginal women. [...] Between 1997 and 2000, homicide rates of Aboriginal females were almost seven times higher than those of non-Aboriginal females. [...] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) data published in Amnesty International Canada's report *Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* indicate that Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 with Indian status are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence. ("Fact Sheet")

Highway's play represents the loss of the precolonial lifestyle as experienced by the Shuswap Nation. In doing so, he focuses on the past history of a nation, without any mention of the current Shuswap people living in Canada, who continue resisting neocolonialism. Specifically, the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council's (SNTC) goals are published online: "The SNTC also provides technical support to member communities to improve services in health, child welfare, employment and training, research on traditional territories and community development" ("About"). Shuswap people face the same pressing issues as other Canadians when it comes to climate change, while also carrying the burden of social injustice and structural violence caused by colonial practices.

7. MOTHERING NATURE AS WORKING ARTISTS AND PARENTS: ART, POLITICS, AND WATER SCIENCE

7.1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Canada has estimated that the country hosts “20% of the world’s total freshwater resources” (“Water Overview”). The abundance of this natural resource leads to various issues such as water preservation and its fair distribution. With respect to the latter, clean water is not running in every Canadian household. This is a common problem among Indigenous communities, as Canadian non-profit organisation, the David Suzuki Foundation, maintains: “Drinking water advisories have been a persistent injustice in First Nations throughout Canada. Currently, more than 100 communities go without clean drinking water. Many have faced these conditions for years, or even decades” (Lukawiecki, Plotkin and Boisvert). As for water preservation, industrial development endangers Canadian water, along with “aging infrastructure, climate change causing floods and droughts, [...] contamination due to hydraulic fracturing (fracking) and the sale of water to foreign markets” (Quigley). These hazards are amplified by political decisions that prioritise economic growth over environmental preservation.

In Alberta, water-intensive oil production has had an adverse impact upon the Athabasca River ecosystem since 1967. The Canadian

organisation Environmental Defence reported in 2013 that “[t]ar sands operations use at least three times as much fresh water per barrel of oil as conventional oil operations. 11 million litres of toxic waste from the tar sands leak into the Athabasca River and watershed daily” (“Reality Check: Water” 3). This situation illustrates an important threat to Canadian fresh water, since ever-growing profitability and sustainability cannot coexist. Born in Alberta, writer Nancy Huston has severely criticised this lucrative activity: “Cette exploitation pétrolière en Alberta est déjà responsable des deux tiers des émissions de gaz à effet de serre de tout le Canada, et son expansion est incessante. [... C’est] un viol de la terre qui empoisonne l’eau et l’air de manière irréversible” (“Le dieu pétrole”).²⁰⁶

The ecological consequences of tar sands are tackled by playwright Annabel Soutar in *The Watershed*. The meaning of the title of the play is two-fold: it is first a reference to a turning point in history and secondly, a hydrological system where water moves above and under the ground until it drains into a single river. Soutar’s play addresses water management in Canada and focuses on the environmental legacy of Alberta’s tar sand production: “What kind of Canada will our children inherit, and do we still have a say in the matter?” (Soutar “The Watershed” cover). Taking care of her family and her theatre company, Annabel Soutar creates an autobiographical main character who excels in the art of multitasking in personal and professional settings. Written for eight actors, the play gathers scientists, journalists, and politicians along with the playwright’s family members, namely her husband, her parents, and her daughters. Notions such as sustainability and intergenerational transmission are central elements of *The Watershed*. Numerous states of becoming are also present in this play: a boreal forest turns into a tar sands exploitation, the playwright’s daughters turn their apathy into ecological action, and a climate scientist becomes an activist, among other examples. These transformations are analysed from an ecofeminist perspective in this chapter, with a special interest in the representations of nature, climate change, gender, and power dynamics.

206 “This oil development in Alberta is already responsible for two-thirds of all of Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions, and its expansion continues. [... It is] a rape of the earth that irreversibly poisons the water and the air” (Huston).

7.2. ANNABEL SOUTAR

Annabel Soutar (b. 1971) discovered the craft of documentary theatre in the United States, as she explained to *The Montrealer's* journalist Peter Kerr:

I saw Anna Deveare-Smith, an African-American actress and playwright in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992* a production that she wrote and starred in. It was about the riots in L.A. following the acquittal of the policemen who beat Rodney King. Anna based her play on interviews that she recorded, and she used photos and news footage as a backdrop. She played all the characters, and I could see the potential of theatre to enable an audience to overcome their individual differences. (Soutar *in* Kerr)

Soutar completed her degree in Theatre and English at Princeton University in 1994. During her studies, she deepened her knowledge of documentary theatre “under the tutelage of renowned American playwright Emily Mann” (“Annabel Soutar”). Mann’s work has been described as a key contribution to the development of the documentary theatre genre by feminist and theatre scholar, Marta Fernández Morales:

En el cambio del siglo XX al XXI, varias dramaturgas norteamericanas han recogido el testigo de estos documentalistas, desarrollando lo que Emily Mann, inspirada por las tradiciones orales sudafricanas, ha llamado ‘teatro testimonial’. Mann, junto con Eve Ensler, Anna Deavere Smith o Heather Raffo, cultiva una forma dramática basada en recuperar las voces silenciadas de la historia y en proporcionarles unos oídos atentos que escuchen sus experiencias y aprendan de ellas.²⁰⁷ (145)

207 “At the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, several American playwrights have taken up the baton of these documentary makers, developing what Emily Mann, inspired by South African oral traditions, has called “testimonial theatre”. Mann, along with Eve Ensler, Anna Deavere Smith, or Heather Raffo, cultivates a dramatic form based on recovering the silenced voices of history and providing them with attentive ears that listen to their experiences and learn from them” (Fernández Morales 145).

Annabel Soutar follows in the path of Devere Smith and Mann by staging marginalised voices and by making sure that both sides of the stories she tells are well balanced and non-partisan. Artistic director of Porte Parole's theatre company since 1998, Soutar "transform[s] the raw material into something profound" (Houpt). In 2003, Montreal-based newspaper *The Gazette* named Porte Parole 'Theatre Company of the Year'. In 2015, *The Globe and Mail* selected Annabel Soutar as one of the Canadian artists of the year following the success of *The Watershed*, highlighting her contribution to contemporary Canadian theatre:

Annabel Soutar, who has spent almost two decades interviewing Canadians and then shaping those interactions (with herself as a supporting player) into thrilling, maddening theatrical works such as *Seeds*, the popular touring show about GMO foods, and *The Watershed*, this year's epic exploration of the politics of science and industry in the Harper era. (Houpt)

One of the objectives of Soutar's theatre is to tackle controversial subjects and complex social issues. Since *The Watershed*, Annabel Soutar has written two plays: one about political polarisation and its impact on democracy (*The Assembly/L'Assemblée*), and another (*Tout inclus*) about the elderly in Quebec society: "how we face old age in Quebec, how our economy is dealing with an ageing population, and how we talk about death" (Annabel Soutar). Bilingual production is a fundamental aspect of her work. For instance, *The Assembly/L'Assemblée* is "[r]eady for touring in 2020-21" in French and English. *The Watershed* is another example of the bilingual character of her work: the anglophone version of the show premiered at Toronto's Panamerican Games in July 2015, and the francophone version of the show was presented in Montreal's theatre l'Usine C the same year.

Born in Quebec, Annabel Soutar grew up in Westmount, a wealthy and predominantly anglophone enclave located in Montreal. Her mother tongue is English, and it is in this language that she generally publishes her plays. This linguistic background might be one of the reasons why her work is presented by the theatre scholar Hervé Guay as coming from

a culture distinct from the mainstream francophone Quebec culture: “Le théâtre documentaire recrute aussi quelques tenants, principalement dans les communautés culturelles. Citons Raul Varma (*l’Affaire Farhadi*, 1999, et *Bhopal*, 2006) et Annabel Soutar (*Seeds*, 2006)” (102).²⁰⁸ This observation may foster the assumption that playwrights from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds are not true Quebecers despite being born and raised in the province. The making of national identity in Quebec has been addressed by political scientist Rosa Pires in her essay *Ne sommes-nous pas Québécoises ?* [Are we not Quebecers?]:

Dans sa quête de distinction, il me semble que le Québec crée des décalages et des interstices qui lui sont propres. En tant que fille d’immigrants, j’ai longtemps cherché à m’y retrouver. Ne me situant jamais tout à fait dans le Nous, ni tout à fait dans le Eux, voir le Elles, cette zone dedans-dehors des frontières de l’appartenance s’est imposée à moi.²⁰⁹ (7)

I would like to argue that, due to the trajectory and location of her work, Annabel Soutar is a fully-fledged Quebecer playwright, who has enriched the theatrical landscape of Quebec and Canada for the past twenty years, becoming a point of reference in the documentary theatre niche.

7.3. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF DOCUMENTARY DRAMA

The first occurrences of documentary theatre plays appeared in the first half of the twentieth century in Eastern Europe. In Russia, actors staged events published in newspapers: “The Soviet living newspaper,

208 “Documentary theatre is also recruiting a few supporters, mainly from cultural communities. These include Raul Varma (*The Farhadi Affair*, 1999, and *Bhopal*, 2006) and Annabel Soutar (*Seeds*, 2006)” (Guay 102).

209 “In its quest for distinction, it seems to me that Quebec is creating its own instabilities and divisions. As the daughter of immigrants, I have long sought to find my way around. Never quite situating myself in the Us, nor quite in the Them, or even the female Them, this zone within-outside the boundaries of belonging imposed itself on me” (Pires 7).

or *zhivaia gazeta*, began during the Russian Civil War as a method to act out a pro-Soviet version of the news for mainly illiterate Red Army soldiers” (Mally). Although documentary theatre was occasionally used to promote state propaganda, this does not imply that this artistic genre was or is always at the service of an ideology. In Germany, Erwin Piscator contributed greatly to the production and theorisation of documentary theatre. In his book *The Political Theatre*, Piscator suggests that “[i]t is no longer the private, personal fate of the individual, but the times and the fate of the masses that are the heroic factors in the new drama” (187). Published in 1963, this definition is still accurate, albeit paradoxical: it is true that documentary theatre is a growing genre; however, it is confined to the margins of contemporary theatre production.

In Canada, *The Farm Show* (Paul Thompson), created in 1972, comes across as the first documentary play, according to theatre scholar Alan Filewod. In his book *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada*, Filewod studies documentary plays produced in Canada during the second half of the twentieth century. Situated at the intersection of documentary theatre and collective creation, the material analysed by Filewod shares formal and thematic characteristics, such as a marked interest in anti-colonial issues, local subjects, experiences shared by a given community, and the “inclusion of the research process into the performance text” (*Collective Encounters* 185). Filewod also noted a unique aspect of the interpretation of this theatrical genre by Canadian artists: “The Canadian documentary has tended to be anti-ideological; it does not try to explain the significance of the matter it documents in an intellectual scheme, but rather suggests the significance of a shared historical or community experience by transforming it into art” (*Collective Encounters* 183). Notable, however, is the absence of French-language creations among the corpus studied in this book. This can be interpreted as a lack of knowledge of creations that are not produced in English in the Canadian context, or rather as the absence of this theatrical genre in the Franco-Canadian repertoire at the time.

The popularity of documentary theatre took off in the 2000s in Quebec. At least that is what Hervé Guay and Sara Thibault affirm in their work *L'interprétation du réel. Théâtres documentaires au Québec* [The

Interpretation of Reality. Documentary Theatres in Quebec] (2020), in which they explore the plurality of the genre and delve into the ethical, political, and aesthetic aspects of documentary theatre. A distinctive characteristic of the production of documentary theatre in Quebec is that “la présence sur scène de ceux et celles que l’on a l’habitude de prendre pour objets de discours pour les transformer en véritables sujets de leurs paroles ou de leurs gestes s’avère un trait qui traverse le travail de nombreux créateurs” (Guay and Thibault 15).²¹⁰ The voices of those who are under-represented in the media and popular fictions are therefore privileged in this context.

Although the expression ‘documentary theatre’ stands the test of time and crosses national borders, other designations have emerged, such as agitprop theatre, verbatim theatre, theatre of the real, ethnodrama, and autobiographical theatre, among others. Each of these subcategories enables the differentiation of varied, methodological approaches. The umbrella term *documentary theatre* is, in my opinion, the most inclusive.

Documentary theatre draws upon a vast array of documents such as newspapers, interviews, personal diaries, reports, court transcripts, or confessional texts. It usually focuses on collective issues rather than the inner life of a character. It depicts facts and the research methods used to gather them. Some documentary theatre-makers present their craft as a quest for truth, attempting to make sense of a complex situation. This is the case for Moscow-based playwright, curator, and theatre director Anastasia Patlay:

I’m not an activist, I’m an active theatre director. And, as I mostly focus on documentary theatre, I’m some kind of a detective. For me, that means I constantly investigate the reality around me or behind me – the past, both my own and that of my country, Russia – and test it for the truth. (“In Search of”)

210 “[t]he presence on stage of those who are usually the objects of discourse to transform them into true subjects of their words or their gestures is a trait that runs through the work of many creators” (Guay and Thibault 15).

To give a proper context to this search for truth, documentary plays generally showcase a diversity of viewpoints. Canadian theatre scholar Jenn Stephenson describes the relationship between truth and multiple personal accounts of the same event:

What is selected? What is omitted? How is the narrative of a documentary world constructed? Often these plays deliberately expose these mechanisms of truth-making and knowing. We can only ever partially know the world: we are surrounded by hybrids and multiplicities, creating more rather than fewer worlds. Breaking away from the rigidity of binary views: real/not-real; red!/blue!; we are better off with more perspectives, not fewer. (“In The Post-Truth Era”)

Stephenson observes that questioning the construction of a story which is presented as truth helps to revalue insecurity, and might lead the audience to question their certainties. American theatre scholar Terry Stoller describes documentary theatre as “a catalyst for social change and a healing art” (589), while Spanish philologist Marta Fernández Morales suggests that documentary theatre helps to tackle gender-specific issues such as “la visibilización de problemas marcados por el género, la toma de conciencia sobre los desequilibrios entre hombres y mujeres en determinadas situaciones de la vida privada y pública y [...] la transformación de la sociedad en pos de la igualdad” (145).²¹¹ Documentary theatre can serve many purposes even though evidence of its impact on the audience remains uncertain. While writing this section, I came across one research project in this marginal but promising field. In her doctoral research titled “L’impact du théâtre documentaire sur les perceptions, attitudes et croyances sur les spectateurs” [The Impact of Documentary Theatre on Audiences: Perceptions, Attitudes, and Beliefs], Mylène Bérubé studies this field, not from a Theatre Studies background but rather as a psychology scholar (“Au Nom de”). Results are not yet available, as Bérubé is still (2021) collecting data. This type of study will

211 “the visibility of problems marked by gender, the awareness of the imbalances between men and women in certain situations of private and public life and [...] the transformation of society in pursuit of equality” (Fernández Morales 145).

make it possible to affirm or invalidate the hypothesis formulated by Stroller on the capacity of documentary theatre to bring about social change.

To conclude this section, I would like to stress that the evolution of documentary theatre has been much more complex and widespread than is implied within this brief overview of the historical and cultural context of documentary plays in Russia, Germany, and Canada over the past century. However, the main characteristics of this dramatic subgenre have one thing in common: most documentary plays produced aim to deal with a topical subject in depth through multiple points of view. The documentary play *The Watershed* follows this convention and focuses on the Canadian government's decision to cut science subsidies in 2012 and defund the Experimental Lakes Area, a subject explored in the following section.

7.4. EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA (ELA): CANADIAN WATER, SCIENCE, AND POLITICS

The defunding of the internationally renowned Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) sent a shock wave through the scientific community to such an extent that the editorial team of *Nature* questioned the federal government's decision:

Work at the ELA has produced important evidence on the effects of acid rain and led to the discovery that phosphates from household detergents cause algal blooms. It has elucidated the impacts on fish of mercury and shown how wetland flooding for hydroelectricity leads to increased production of greenhouse gases. It is hard to believe that finance is the true reason for these closures. ("Death of Evidence" 271)

By listing these findings, the prestigious journal emphasises the importance of scientific discoveries for most environmentalists, as it provides them with a solid basis for claims and ecological actions. The

attempted shutdown of the site in 2012 under the guise of austerity can be interpreted as a decision to limit the contribution of scientific knowledge to the fight against climate change, since ELA was and remains “one of the most important facilities in the world for tracking the long-term effects of climate change, pollutants and other factors on freshwater ecosystems and fish” (Learn). One of the reasons that could have motivated its closure is therefore to avoid new regulations in this area that could translate into negative economic impacts for polluting industries.

7.5. THE PLAY *THE WATERSHED*

The Watershed focuses on playwright Annabel Soutar’s journey, in which she takes charge of her daughters’ environmental education by involving them in her research project about water science and activism in Canada. She travels 4,000 km from Quebec to Alberta in a recreational vehicle with her husband Alex, her daughters Ella (10 years of age), Beatrice (8 years of age), and a friend of her children’s, Hazel (7 years of age). This road trip underpins the play, which recreates fragments of the journey as performed by actors. It showcases numerous chaotic days in the life of a mum, seeing Annabel pulling the kids out of school for a month, which is the time that the trip lasted for. Composed of “verbatim testimony” and “speech transcription”, the play is based on real events (Soutar 2). Canadian production of oil is the main subject of this play. Annabel wants to observe the landscape of Alberta’s tar sands and its tailings ponds full of oil sands process-affected water (OSPW), both of gigantic proportions. The site of this water-intensive process is visible from space, according to *National Geographic*:

The scale of Alberta’s oil sands operations, the world’s largest industrial project, is hard to grasp. Especially north of Fort McMurray, where the boreal forest has been razed and bitumen is mined from the ground in immense open pits, the blot on the landscape is incomparable. (Leahy)

The play allows its characters and audience to take measure of the ecological disaster which unfolds in the province of Alberta in Canada. Far from Quebec, far from the daily life of Annabel's family, the tar sands become the central focus of their life during the trip. It can be said, then, that *The Watershed* features a mother who moves from apathy to action, who conveys her thirst for knowledge and indignation to her daughters and, above all, who establishes a dialogue with public decision-makers and scientists.

Since its premiere at the Berkeley Street Theatre in Toronto in 2015, the play has travelled across Canada. In 2017, *The Watershed* was performed in Alberta, the oil sands province. *Calgary Herald's* journalist Louis B. Hobson suggests that Soutar was "entering the lion's den by bringing *Watershed* to Harper's stomping grounds" in an article where the playwright comments on the importance of performing in front of a forbidding audience: "It's what I live for. It's what documentary theatre thrives on. I know it will never happen but I wish Stephen Harper could be in the audience one night. He's on stage so why not in the audience as well" (Soutar *in* Hobson). The play showcases this political division at both the national and familial level, as Annabel's father supports Harper's political party: "It's in the father-daughter exchanges about politics and economics that the spirit of Brecht is most present: opposing viewpoints are debated and we are made to sit uncomfortably with the impossibility of resolution" (Fricker). Another central component of this documentary play is a balanced discourse. Soutar aims to show all sides of a story, an element stressed by actress Molly Kidder who portrays one of Annabel's daughters: "The dialogue between the two sides of the story is very well done. And that's kind of a relief for everybody, to feel like they're not going to see a play about how oil and gas are terrible, or whatever" (Kidder *in* Conner).

While science, politics, fresh water, and tar sands are generally perceived as dry topics, some reporters have pointed to the play's humorous aspects. "Humour, in fact, plays a crucial role in diluting the potentially hard-to-swallow muesli of facts and figures," explains Montreal-based theatre critic Jim Burke ("Theatre Review: Despite"). While the theatrical convention stipulates that an actor on stage must keep the same character

throughout the play, this is not the case in *The Watershed*. This artistic decision contributes to the humorous side:

The eight-strong cast undergoes split-second transformations as they portray scores of characters. In one delightful episode, Ngozi Paul switches suddenly from a pre-teen girl enjoying a bath to a bearded Chris Abraham, the director of the show, also taking a bath but agonizing over such grown-up problems as the impact of *The Watershed*'s controversy on his company's funding. (Burke)

This approach has several advantages besides its comic effect. Interviewed for *The Globe and Mail*, Annabel Soutar explained that “the spectacle of actors voicing different views as they shift from one character to another mirrors our own shifting sentiments as we move from one situation to another. The scope and intensity of our feelings about environmental issues may be different in a forest than at a gas pump” (Soutar in Everett-Green “The Watershed: Montreal”). As to the last point, I would like to argue that the depiction of change on stage might help to provoke social change among the audience. It is therefore not insignificant that *The Watershed* stages a trip to the Athabasca tar sands, as this setting can help to provoke reflections.

7.6. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

7.6.1. Taking Care of Canadian Fresh Water

The close bond between playwright Annabel Soutar and Canadian fresh water is showcased in this play. In order to deepen her relationship with fresh water, Annabel comes into physical contact with it. She describes its taste on stage: “So good. I can't remember the last time I drank from a lake” (Soutar 72), and the sight of freshwater lakes: “This is the most beautiful laboratory I've ever seen” (Soutar 70). In this relationship, Annabel associates knowledge with care: “Any country that is blessed with water resources as we are here in Canada has a special responsibility

to take care of that water for future generations. That is exactly what scientists at the ELA have been doing for more than four decades” (Soutar 31). Care work has been framed as a labour of love; the unpaid domestic work performed in the household is a great example of this. It has been constructed socially as women’s work. By framing publicly-funded research as an example of care, Soutar extends the scope of this concept and takes this work outside the domestic sphere. A specialist in Environmental Politics and Gender, British scholar Sherilyn MacGregor shares this stance:

In practice, this might mean that feminist ecological citizens can demand public recognition of care as a political ideal for which society must be collectively responsible and, recognizing that association of women/mothers and care is dangerous, refuse to be the only ones responsible for putting it into practice. (79)

I believe this excerpt sheds light on Soutar’s proposal according to which Canadian society must take care of fresh water. Even if Soutar embodies the role of a woman and mother in the play, she does not associate caregiving with her gender. Rather than making it a gender question, she relies on scientific evidence as a crucial feature in the ethics of care: if you do not know, you do not care.

7.6.2. ELA Scientists: Understanding Canadian Water Systems

In her quest to encourage Canadians to take care of fresh water, Annabel Soutar meets several water scientists. First, she gets in touch with Diane Orihel, a PhD candidate in Ecology in Alberta, who organises the Coalition to Save ELA. Diane explains in what context the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) was founded and why it is indispensable for water science:

During the late 1960s, Lake Erie was being choked with blue-green algae. And the government at the time needed answers for

how to fix those problems [...] they couldn't figure it out in Lake Erie. [...] Because it's a really, really, really big lake. And there are many factors that are affecting the health of the lake. [...] And the reason the ELA is so vital is because there is nowhere else in the world where there are fifty-eight lakes that have been set aside and dedicated for research on fresh water. (Soutar 18)

Diane tries to raise awareness in Canadian society on this matter rather than communicating with her scientist peers. By taking a stance against the governmental decision to defund ELA, Diane becomes an activist, a posture criticised by her peers.

Then, Annabel interviews Diane's thesis advisor, David Schindler, whose work to protect freshwater resources has influenced ecology management in Canada and beyond. When it comes to the impact study of Athabasca tar sands in Alberta, David refers to governmental interference in the results of the study and the lack of pre-existing independent research:

For years the Alberta government had been solely responsible for monitoring the environmental impact of the oil sands. [...] According to their data, the oil sands industry is having no effect on the Athabasca watershed. And, uh, that just didn't make much sense to me. And I did a study [...] that showed, indeed, [the oil sands] industry was polluting the river significantly. [...] But then the Alberta government denied my challenge to their results. [...] Five different panels were appointed, and they all said my data was correct. (Soutar 58)

David's work on the pollution of the Athabasca River by the tar sands industries was challenged by Alberta's government, which tried to discredit his studies. However, as a renowned and acclaimed scientist, he was able to remain in the scientific lane to protect fresh water, rather than going public and politicising this issue as his student, Diane Orihel, did. Has his choice of a different communication strategy affected the impact of his findings? It is hard to tell, as it is impossible now to compare both ways. Another Canadian water scientist interviewed by Soutar was vocal

about an environmental issue and popularised it with the catchphrase *acid rain*:

You have to make this: “Harper killed ELA. Harper: Bad.” [...] During the acid-rain days, all scientists were talking about “acidic deposition” and how that “might translate into changes in fish populations”. Well, I’m calling it *acid rain*. I know that’s wrong. But I’m calling it acid rain. And when I go to those fishermen: “That acid is, like, *killing your bass*.” (Soutar 90)

In this excerpt, we can observe how Adèle Hurley aims to make science accessible to everyone through the use of simple and impactful language. *The Watershed* puts forward three water scientists who choose three different kinds of approaches: the activism of Diane Orihel, the publication of a study that challenges the status quo by David Schindler, and the rhetoric of Adèle Hurley. The play features these three different viewpoints that try to solve the issue of endangered freshwater habitats. According to the diverse scientific viewpoints gathered in *The Watershed*, scientists must be granted a working space such as ELA, studies must be produced by independent researchers, and scientific dissemination must be implemented to take adequate steps to protect Canadian bodies of water.

7.6.3. From Mother to Daughter: Child-Oriented Environmental Education

In order to establish the transmission of knowledge, basic concepts must be taught. Using the excuse of teaching her children, Soutar is also educating the audience. In this way, she defines the term watershed: “a system of interconnecting lakes, rivers, swamps – any bodies of water that all drain into the same basin” (Soutar 132), and then proceeds to ask one of her daughters to explain the concept to her friend to check if her daughter has learned the lesson well. In this mother-daughter relationship, the importance of providing access to knowledge seems to

be a first step towards the development of critical thinking, a skill that is developed throughout the play. Water is therefore presented as a link between the different species that occupy a territory: this natural resource can transport pollution and affect other communities. The idea of an aquatic system that carries a shared resource can therefore be developed as soon as the idea of a watershed is acquired.

7.6.4. Sensationalist Weather Reporting of Natural Disasters

Water is highlighted as a major theme in this play and its representation in the scientific and family sphere has been explored. *The Watershed* also features a satire of the media discourse on water and its presence in weather news. In this context, water becomes the enemy, and its destructive power is skilfully described to induce a feeling of fear. It is on this dramatic note that the play opens: “The worst-case scenario happening right now, people. [...] We are going to see torrential rain and flooding inland [...] our mouths have just dropped at the latest tracking system that shows this storm heading right for us!” (Soutar 2). The description by a female news reporter of Hurricane Sandy is featured simultaneously with water damage in the playwright’s family home. Natural disasters which occur several miles away can affect an individual household; this cause-and-effect link makes it possible to highlight the relationality between distant territories. Furthermore, the destructive effect of the water becomes newsworthy because it corresponds to the codes of the news: it is a short, exceptional event that has the potential to kill, destroy, and upset the lifestyle of Westerners.

In comparison, the defunding of ELA does not fit within the journalistic framework, considering that the consequences are not clear and the risks associated with it appear across a lengthy timespan. Rather than providing long-term coverage and proper context to a natural disaster, the news media focus on its consequences and share updates or the latest developments of a story: “The wicked winter storm Euclid swept east across North America Wednesday, creating a post-holiday travel *nightmare* from California to New Hampshire and up

to Toronto and Montreal” (Soutar 53). In this excerpt, the storm has been named and its negative impacts are described: it is an “enemy to be conquered, a force out of control” (Gaard “Women, Water, Energy” 161). This discourse reinforces the Manichean perspective, where a natural phenomenon is framed as good (docile, submissive, and therefore beneficial to humans) or bad (violent, unexpected, uncontrollable, and dangerous to humans). This anthropocentric vision mobilises a dualistic framework, where the “wicked winter storm Euclid” (Soutar 53) is defined as the villain of the story. This observation is possible thanks to an ecofeminist analytical framework as proposed by Kessler: “Human/nature dualisms such as instrumentalism, individualism, materialism, and passive objectification all operate to reinforce this tension, with anthropocentrism as both human/nature dualism and by-product of the others” (23). The representation of water in media and science does not evolve in closed silos: scientists and journalists interact, and their ways of presenting information can have a reciprocal influence. Doctoral student Diane Orihel draws inspiration from the sensationalist style of television journalism to turn the defunding of ELA into a piece of news. She invites a cameraman and a reporter to the ELA sites and looks straight at the camera while saying: “ELA will die - or be transferred to an NGO whose private sector donors may represent the very fucking industries whose environmental impact on our water ELA is supposed to be monitoring!” (Soutar 87). Faced with an imminently hazardous situation, Diane takes the bull by the horns and tries to influence public opinion, a gesture that leaves her in an ambivalent position as she wonders about its impacts: does she help or harm ELA by voicing her concerns?

In this second section on the representations of the natural environment, Canadian fresh water is first introduced by Soutar as a sensory experience as well as an object of study to teach future generations. These approaches exemplify relationality: a personal and physical relationship, a relationship between fresh water and Canadians, then an intergenerational transmission where Soutar plays the role of mediator between her daughters and the science of water.

Water is first and foremost an object of study for the three scientists. Diane perceives fresh water as an object of study which is the victim of

a double penalty: it will soon be harder to study and, therefore, it will be difficult to identify ecosystem imbalances and ensure the health of Canadian bodies of fresh water. David Schindler opposes the harmful uses of water by using the tools that his area of expertise offers him. Other scholars realise that the production of scientific knowledge might not be enough to protect fresh water, and then Diane and Adèle proceed to mobilise the population through activism and rhetorical formulae. After being presented as an object of study that must be protected on a national scale, water becomes a devastating enemy on an international scale in the Fox News storyline, as parodied in the play by Annabel Soutar. This depiction of the discourse on water permits a comparison between the ways in which activism and journalism use emotions to convey their message about water. Whether demonised or posed as a victim, water is at the heart of the speeches presented in *The Watershed*. Its presence forms the common thread between the figures of mother, scientist, and journalist represented in the play.

7.7. REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

7.7.1. Freshwater Research: “We Are a World Running Out of Clean Water”

Water scarcity is defined as the lack of freshwater resources to meet the standard water demand. It is caused by growing fresh water use and depletion of usable freshwater resources. *The Watershed* showcases a plumber named Elliott who first mentions this problem; he reveals the water wasted in Montreal between the treatment plant and the house tap at the Soutars’: “They calculate that about 50 percent of our drinking water that they pump outta the river is lost into the ground!” (Soutar 9). The water damage that calls for the presence of the plumber in *The Watershed* allows the fact that modern life’s comfort is built on water waste to be brought to light. As water is a vital resource for all life on earth, its disproportionate use and mismanagement by humans demonstrate a dynamic of domination where non-human life forms are

treated as inferior. On this point, ecofeminist theorist Greta Gaard argues that “Western culture views water primarily as a means to its own ends, a servant to the dominant (not subordinate) population; it is difficult, in this cultural context, to imagine that water would have purposes of its own” (“Women, Water, Energy” 161). It is undoubtedly the waste of this precious resource that first attracts attention in the play.

While the character Elliott informs Annabel about this issue in an informal context, another character in the play, Maude Barlow, is portrayed giving an inspirational talk on the matter during an ELA rally. At the time of the talk, Barlow was the chairperson for the Council of Canadians, an NGO advocating for social and environmental issues, which aims to “ensure [that] access to clean water is a human right and [to] stop water privatization” (“About Us”). Barlow’s speech is a call for action: “[W]e are a world running out of clean water [...] what humans are doing is polluting, mismanaging, and most importantly displacing land-based water to places where we can no longer get at it” (Soutar 29). The effectiveness of her discourse seems to rely on two factors: first, she establishes a sense of urgency: “We are literally losing the groundwater for future generations in one generation [...] by the year 2030 – which is not very far away – demand for water will outstrip supply by 40 percent” (Soutar 29), then she positions herself and encourages resistance: “I for one refuse to be ignorant and I for one refuse to be quiet” (Soutar 29). Without being explicit in Elliott’s or Maude’s discourse, the freshwater problem can be understood as part of the current ecological crisis, as argued by American biologist James S. Albert: “Freshwater biodiversity is declining rapidly on every continent and in every major river basin on Earth, and this degradation is occurring more rapidly than in terrestrial ecosystems. [...] Effective management of freshwater resources and ecosystems must be ranked amongst humanity’s highest priorities” (Albert et al. 85). Is there a link between the global environmental crisis, the increasing scarcity of fresh water worldwide, and the Canadian laboratory Experimental Lakes Area (ELA)? Yes, there is, and this bond is reflected in the important role played by scientific data in the fight against climate change. At least that is what the play suggests when limnologist Paul Frost explains what will be lost if ELA closes:

These are the charts that show how long they've been collecting data. So from the 1960s on they were looking at the question of when the ice would come off each spring. So a decade ago, the ice was melting in the middle of May. This year? They're telling us it's going to come off at the end of March. It's, like, in ten years to have such a drastic change? How is that possible? But it's only because we have a long-term record that this starts to have, like, any sort of meaning. It's *continuous* records since the 1960s. This kind of data is so rare. [...] Fifty years of continuous data on climate change and they want to stop now? (Soutar 74)

It is therefore the longevity of a scientific project that is at stake, a rare characteristic that reminds us that a long-term initiative secures consistency. While the main discourse on fresh water in *The Watershed* concerns the depletion of this resource, the dramaturgical work of Annabel Soutar mobilises a set of techniques such as positionality and relationality to make the matter more appealing to the audience. The *becoming* of fresh water is closely linked to the transformation of the territory. More than a resource, fresh water is a biodiverse habitat that can become inhospitable. What happens when its reserve decreases or when it is polluted?

7.7.2. It Was a Boreal Forest; Now It's "The Biggest Deposit of Oil on the Planet"

The notion of habitat is at the heart of the ecological crisis: "L'imaginaire de la crise environnementale est en effet un imaginaire de l'oïkos qui interroge l'homme sur sa capacité et ses moyens d'habiter le monde" (Boulard 37).²¹² Transforming a boreal forest into a tar sand site destroys the living environment of many species and causes imbalances in the local ecosystem that might be irreversible. A recent study suggests that "775, 500 ha (almost two million acres) of boreal forest since the year

212 "The idea of the environmental crisis is indeed an idea of the oïkos which questions mankind about its capacity and its means to inhabit the world" (Boulard 37).

2000 has been cleared in Alberta by the tar sand industry” (Kayes and Mallik 10). Studying the impact of the oil sands on the boreal forest in Alberta is nothing new. In 2006, a report on the ecosystem damage caused by the production of Albertan oil was published under a title that is, to say the least, evocative: *Death by a Thousand Cuts: The Impacts of in Situ Oil Sands Development on Alberta’s Boreal Forest* (Schneider and Dyer). In the play, it is during the road trip that the size of the oil industry in Alberta and its environmental consequences are presented. While Annabel is driving the Winnebago, her husband Alex is watching the documentary film *Tipping Point: The End of Oil* with the girls in the back. The scene opens with an excerpt from the film where the narrator explains that Alberta hosts “the biggest deposit of oil on the planet”, and questions whether “new scientific evidence triggers a tipping point for the oil sands?” (Soutar 150). The chief of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Allan Adam, is featured in the documentary film. The appearance of an Indigenous person in this film is a source of conflict between Annabel and Alex. For the latter, First Nations “go back many, many generations, before we started drilling for oil [... and] they have an actual relationship to the land that is deeper than ours” (Soutar 151). For the former, they are not included in the production of the play for a reason, as Alex puts it bluntly: “Because Mummy said we don’t have time” (Soutar 152). This conflict between the two protagonists classifies the members of the First Nations in two categories: first Alex invokes the trope of the ecological Indian – “the idea of timeless Indigeneity conserving static nature” (Anker 107) – while Annabel’s reason is the lack of time, a symbolic erasure.

The staging of this conflict allows the viewer to take a critical stance and question the absence of First Nations in Canadian cultural narratives. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, First Nations communities are the first to be affected by water shortage in Canada; their voices continue to be marginalised in public speeches and official publications. This erasure may be explained by the whole structure of colonisation that has had an impact for many years in Canada. Therefore, in this scene, Soutar perpetuates a colonial narrative where Indigenous people remain an object of discourse and not a subject in this context. This is not an exception: Indigenous voices are excluded in a large number of

environmental issues, including water-related controversies. The climate justice coalition *Wretched of the Earth* explains that “[t]he silencing and erasure of indigenous people, and of the vulnerable peoples from the Global South [...] at the climate talks is part of a long history of violent colonialism and racism that is at the heart of climate change”, targeting the COP 21 in Paris. In 2018, a process of negotiation regarding the water management of the Colombia River, which crosses national borders, is another example of the exclusion of Indigenous voices: “Federal Treaty Negotiators appointed by both Canada and the U.S. have been in negotiation since May. However, hopes for salmon restoration (and ecosystems more generally) took a dive when both countries chose to exclude Indigenous nations from the process” (Lee Rowlands). These international agreements deny the nationhood of Indigenous peoples by excluding them. In this regard, a study shows additional negative consequences, such as:

missed valuable perspectives for decision-making, [... and] damaged relationships with Tribal governments and with Indigenous peoples in general. These relationships are important for environmental decision-making, because Indigenous peoples are best equipped to articulate their own perspectives. Piecemeal extraction and de-contextualization of Indigenous knowledges by developers and other intermediaries can miss nuances and introduce biases. (Emanuel and Wilkins 2113)

Marginalisation and exclusion from decision-making are experienced by many vulnerable communities. I believe this hierarchy of voices is one of the causes of the current ecological crisis, hence the importance of addressing social justice when it comes to ecological issues. This is therefore a weakness of *The Watershed*: the absence of Indigenous characters on stage and the absence of an Indigenous perspective on the transformation of a boreal forest by the tar sands industry.

7.7.3. Mediating Environmental Threats: Water Pollution and Tar Sands

Whether caused by blue algae, acid rain, or tar sands, polluted water is mentioned several times in *The Watershed*. Language plays an important role in making Canadians aware of environmental threats to water sources. The playwright stages different levels of language where pollution is analysed. Whether depicted from the point of view of a child or a scientist, the play gives the impression that everyone can speak out on this issue. For example, the Soutars celebrate Christmas with their family in Scene 12, and the young Ella explains to her grandfather what motivates the Canadian Prime Minister to defund ELA:

Stephen Harper doesn't want anyone to find out about pollution in our lakes. [...] He doesn't want anybody to find out that oil is really, really extremely bad for the environment. Because then they'll stop buying oil for their cars. And then he's worried that, like, they'll stop buying cars. (Soutar 46)

The grandfather doesn't share Ella's concern; he defends Harper's position and suggests that it is a tough decision but a necessary one that serves the Canadian economy. The grandfather establishes what appears to be a false dilemma: the choice between saving the economy or the environment. This response may give the impression that he sees natural resources as a tool, as a means: "From the perspective of modern science, nature is just a mere object, stripped of all values and relations to human interactions, that is free to be manipulated as we see fit. At the core of the problem thus lies an incorrect conception of nature" (Spahn 1853). However, the grandfather's opinion is more nuanced: he is concerned about water pollution and he contributes financially to local environmentalist initiatives. He even asks his daughter if *she* contributes to the protection of the lake where they meet to celebrate Christmas: "And you're a playwright who wants to bring our attention to this. But how much of your own money did you contribute to protect Brome Lake this year? (pause) Did you pay your dues to Renaissance Lac Brome?" (Soutar

51). Therefore, a strong link is established in this scene between money and pollution. Citizens pay to prevent pollution through public funding that goes to laboratories like ELA, and they pay to clean up pollution, as it is the case with Brome Lake. In both contexts, the term pollution is used negatively and its meaning remains unclear, as the source of pollution is not specified.

The Soutar family members do not speak about pollution as accurately as other characters in *The Watershed*, such as scientists. In Scene 17, Dr Maggie Xenopoulos, a professor of aquatic science, discusses the object of her study, a pollutant:

Yeah, it's an emergent contaminant. Silver nanoparticles might be in your socks, your underwear, so when you wash them, this stuff winds up directly in our waterways. We have no idea what it does to our ecosystem. That's what we wanted to do with our study. We got almost a million dollars from NSERC [Canadian public funding], actually, to do this, which we can't use now because we don't know the future of ELA. (Soutar 66)

If the source of the pollution and the way it spreads are clear, Xenopoulos' explanation is suitable for a variety of audiences, including those without a technical background. This is what makes documentary theatre strong: making complex information accessible. After interviewing several experts, Annabel interrogates her impact on the environment. Without using the term pollution, she lists various everyday actions that contribute to polluting: "how much money have we spent on gas? How many Styrofoam coffee cups have we consumed? How much fucking beef jerky has Hazel eaten? What are we...? What are we doing here?" (Soutar 165). She confronts her contradictions and questions the merits of her research project. At the start of the trip, this concern is expressed by Beatrice: "Are we gonna be polluting a lot on this trip, Mama?" (Soutar 133), to which Annabel replies: "Yes, we are. But we're gonna offset our fuel consumption by planting trees" (Soutar 133). We, therefore, observe a gap between the two stances of the mother: the confident one who plans to counterbalance the vehicle's gas emissions, contrasting with the

powerless one who notes in retrospect the damages caused. This change in the perception of the character gives the impression that her control over the environment is escaping her; despite her good intentions, she is not able to act in an eco-responsible manner at all times. While honest self-criticism allows better decisions for oneself and the environment, on this occasion, this pang of self-criticism, demotivates the protagonist, who sees these gestures as a symptom of her failure. Pollution is therefore closely linked to emotion in this context; Annabel talks about pollution to communicate her vulnerable state and her sense of disappointment.

Another term I would like to tackle in this section is “tar sands”. In Scene 26, Annabel meets an executive vice-president of a large oil sands company who wishes to remain anonymous. She uses the expression “tar sands” in her question, which provokes this comment from the man: “people who support it call it ‘oil sands’ and people who don’t like it call it ‘tar sands’. I don’t care one way or another, but in case no one has mentioned that to you. We get a lot of people writing commentary who have never actually set foot in Alberta let alone gone to the oil sands” (Soutar 110). The choice of the term, therefore, reveals the speaker’s biases to the audience. *Maclean’s* journalist Colby Cosh pushes the reflection further: “It is not just about avoiding the ugly connotations of ‘tar’, though environmentalists certainly like to emphasize those. It is about keeping the international focus on the word ‘oil’, because oil means money” (“Don’t Call Them”). This observation brings us back to the importance of money: according to this journalist, it guides the language to be used. By mobilising a Marxist and ecofeminist framework of analysis, doctoral student Simon Mair suggests that the hierarchy of values where the economy dominates creates an obstacle to solving ecological and feminist issues: “neoliberal capitalism [...] is characterised by a hierarchy of provisioning systems at the top of which is the market. This hierarchy leads neoliberal capitalism to define value in terms of exchanges and to ignore other value forms”. It is therefore the economic argument that comes up repeatedly when it comes to voicing ecological concerns such as water depletion, water pollution, freshwater research, and the transformation of a vast area of the boreal forest into oil production sites. Regarding the dominance of neoliberalism, feminist philosophy scholar

Johanna Oksala suggests that “a contemporary political alliance between feminist and ecological struggles against capitalism can be built” (3). Having concluded my analysis of natural resources and the ecological crisis, I will now turn my attention to the exploration of representations of gender and power.

7.8. REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMINITIES

This section looks at the relationship between gender and ecology. According to ecofeminist scholar Alicia H. Puleo, “[l]a educación ambiental predominante sigue sin facilitar una conciencia crítica de los roles de género y sin visibilizar a las mujeres como víctimas de la crisis ecológica y como protagonistas del cambio hacia una cultura de la sostenibilidad” (*Claves ecofeministas* 95).²¹³ Does the play offer this type of role model among the female characters it presents? Three figures guide my analysis in order to answer this question: the activist, the playwright, and the young girl. The first figure is embodied by Maude Barlow, the second by Annabel Soutar, and the third by Ella, Beatrice, and Hazel.

7.8.1. Maude Barlow: Narrative, Ideology and Revolution

Maude Barlow is not a fictional character; she is a real Canadian writer and activist who takes the lead in the fight to protect Canada’s freshwater. Holder of 14 honorary doctorates and numerous prizes, including the 2008 Canadian Environmental Prize and the Alternative Nobel Prize in 2005, she is the author of *À qui appartient l’eau ? [Who Owns the Water?]* published in March 2021. In this book, she dives into “l’histoire d’une campagne populaire née de la crise mondiale de l’eau, qui s’oppose à l’idée que la meilleure façon de régler la crise consiste à faire de l’eau une

213 “[t]he predominant environmental education still does not provide a critical awareness of gender roles and does not make women visible as victims of the ecological crisis and as protagonists of the change towards a culture of sustainability” (Puleo *Claves ecofeministas* 95).

marchandise et à laisser au marché le soin d'en contrôler l'accès" (14).²¹⁴ In the play, Maude Barlow opposes the construction of new pipelines, arguing that "[w]e have got to stop *believing* in unlimited growth. The planet cannot sustain unlimited growth" (Soutar 148). In doing so, the water activist uses an analytical framework that recalls the approach of ecofeminist pioneer Françoise d'Eaubonne. Specifically, she evokes one of the main concepts coined by d'Eaubonne:

L'illimitisme, une des structures de base de l'idéologie mâle que le patriarcat insère dans sa culture, ses Églises, ses partis [...] a donc joué un rôle immense en consolidant les infrastructures économiques et en imposant le rêve perpétuel de leur élargissement jusqu'à la dimension cosmique. Au stade patriarcal de l'esclavagisme, puis du féodalisme, où le pouvoir s'accompagnait forcément de profit, mais ne s'identifiait pas au profit, il s'est figé dans le judéo-christianisme qui lui en offrait le moule le plus convenable: le modèle de la grandeur divine.²¹⁵ (d'Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 161)

While Barlow advocates for an alternative narrative where unlimited growth would be devalued, Annabel Soutar has reservations about the impact of these ideas on the general public: "Maude that's a radical idea [...] the inevitable outcome of hard-line ideology is violence. It's the end of dialogue. It's war" (Soutar 148-9). While undoing growth is categorised as a radical ideology, there is no question about the growth paradigm. Isn't unlimited growth also a radical ideology? Annabel considers that Maude must water down her speech so that a bigger portion of the population might adhere to her ideas, a suggestion that

214 "the story of a popular campaign born out of the global water crisis, which opposes the idea that the best way to solve the crisis is to make water a commodity) and leave to the market the responsibility for controlling access to it" (Barlow 14).

215 "Unlimitedism ['illimitisme' French neologism], one of the basic structures of male ideology that patriarchy inserts into its culture, its Churches, its parties [...] has therefore played an immense role in consolidating economic infrastructures and in imposing the perpetual dream of increasing them to cosmic proportions. At the patriarchal stage of slavery, then feudalism, where power was necessarily accompanied by profit, but was not identified with profit, it became concrete within Judeo-Christianity which offered it the most suitable mould: the model of divine greatness" (*Écologie et féminisme* 161).

displeases Maude, who replies: “Hard core right-wing people don’t want to be reached by me. [...] Because they’re ideologues, Annabel! People who strongly believe that what they’re doing is the only way it should be done” (Soutar 149). Ideology is therefore at the heart of this conflict, since the far right and the far left are portrayed as ideologies. The two women share the same concern for water preservation and social justice, but their approach is different. Therefore, when Soutar concludes that Marlow’s posture leads to violence and says “It’s war,” Marlow retorts, “It’s revolution” (Soutar 149). The exchange between the two women makes it possible to represent two types of leadership that seek to bring about social and ecological change.

7.8.2. Annabel’s Longing for A Room of One’s Own: Three Weeks in a Shoe Box

This section tackles what the playwright loses when she embarks on the family journey, that is, a space to think and create on her own. As Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One’s Own*, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (6). Family travel is a non-negotiable aspect of the research project behind *The Watershed*. Annabel lists what she plans to accomplish during this month on the road:

I want to experience the distance between here and the oil sands. I want to get up close to something that we talk about all the time but that we’ve never seen with our own eyes. I want to meet at least one human being in the Conservative Party face to face. I want the kids to realize what Canada is. [...] I might need to ask my dad for a loan until we get our grants this summer. (Soutar 118-9)

While money does not seem to be the most pressing issue, the constant presence of her husband and children deprives Annabel Soutar of her personal space. She wants to live a sensory and social experience with the tar sands – to get to know the place physically as well as to meet the people who support this industry. It is this goal that seems to motivate

her to give up the space necessary to create and work as she is used to back home. Without forgetting her great aspiration, Soutar complains about the difficulties involved in what she wants to achieve: “We’ve been living in this fucking shoebox for three weeks” (Soutar 164), as well as the precariousness of the theatre project that she wants to create after the trip: “I’ve just been told that ‘this play’ might never see the light of day” (Soutar 165). The playwright therefore chooses to create an autobiographical character who reflects her good motives but also her doubts and weaknesses. The character embodies being an artist, producer, and researcher, but also a mother, wife, and daughter. The reduced space of the Winnebago exacerbates the tensions between between Annabel’s various responsibilities. She wants to engage in an eco-friendly, creative process to design a great play while being a good parent. When an important interview is cancelled at the last minute, Annabel lets off steam: “I’m not used to this doing research with three kids. [...] And trying to work around my husband’s *X-Men* schedule. [...] I don’t even have an office to retreat to, to make phone calls” (Soutar 163-4). The accumulation of responsibilities, as well as the lack of time and space for research, seem to have a dual function. First, they describe Annabel’s personal and professional experience on the road and the numerous conflicts that emerge in different spheres of her life that she is expected to solve. Second, this situation can be interpreted as a metaphor for how one is feeling overwhelmed by the climate crisis: there are many urgent ecological problems and the actions to take are not obvious, at both the individual and societal levels. The microcosm of the family, therefore, makes it possible to stage this facet of the ecological crisis with its multiple and simultaneous issues that can seem all-consuming.

Despite the pitfalls, Annabel teaches some key skills to the young girls to enable them to develop critical thinking and information-gathering tools so that they can conduct their own research. The most important aspect of this learning process is autonomy. Annabel refuses to accompany her daughters during their first interview in Alberta, telling them instead: “Follow your gut. Find someone in this place who intrigues you [...] And remember to let *them* do the talking” (Soutar 172). The girls approach a couple in a restaurant explaining that they are gathering data on water;

this approach makes it possible to move from theory to practice and therefore to become proactive in the search for information in the field of environmental education. By letting the three young girls do interviews on their own, Annabel shows confidence and acts as a leader. Annabel does not present herself as a victim of climate change, water pollution, or water scarcity. Rather, we have the impression that she is worried about her children and the generations to come. This is, in my opinion, the main motivation behind this documentary theatre project.

7.8.3. Three Girls Take on Ecocide: Ella, Beatrice, and Hazel

The three girls do not see themselves as potential victims of an upcoming water crisis. At the start of the piece, Alex explains why they are involved in the creation: “[D]o you know why Mummy wants you to help her research her new play? [...] This play is going to be about water and the future. Your future. That’s why we’re recording all of our family conversations about water. Mummy’s going to use your words in the play” (Soutar 13). Their contributions interrupt the action and help clarify certain issues. Ella’s multiple interruptions, needing help with her maths homework, increase the tension while her mum is on the phone:

ELLA. Mummy; I need help.

CLAUDIA. I have to get going, Annabel.

ANNABEL. Claudia, why didn’t you tell them that the ELA is not an anti-oil sands organization!

CLAUDIA. I’m sorry, ma belle, I wish there was more I could do.

ELLA. Mummy!

ANNABEL. Alex?! Where are you?! (back to ASSISTANT TO SENATOR SEIDMAN) [...] A research site that right now if we could all just open up a bit –

BEATRICE. What’s for supper, Mummy? (Soutar 106-7)

This scene shows the chaos experienced by the mother who is called from all sides: two simultaneous calls punctuated by questions from her two

daughters. Annabel Soutar does not manage to meet the needs of her children each time they require care, which is not a bad thing in itself: by choosing to stage these difficult moments, Annabel normalises what could be described as an alternative narrative of motherhood, where child-care is decentred and tensions play out between domestic and professional work. This emancipation process affects both the mother and the daughters, who are encouraged to take initiatives and be autonomous. Towards the end of the play, Ella, Beatrice, and Hazel can formulate their own questions about Canadian freshwater and respectfully interview Albertans on this thorny subject: “ELLA Do... do you think that, in your opinion, the water is much more polluted than before? [...] ELLA Do you think that oil spills are bad for the lakes? [...] HAZEL Do you know about the *tar sands*?” (Soutar 175-6). After listening to the audio recording of this interview, Annabel Soutar offers the girls encouragement and constructive comments: “That was a pretty impressive interview, girls. You asked clear, simple questions. [...] Remember, the experienced documentary researcher does not lead her subject to confirm a preconceived thesis, she - BEATRICE/ELLA/HAZEL *Stays open*” (Soutar 181). *The Watershed* stages the learning of these young girls, the evolution of their knowledge when it comes to research work. While most of the scenes show the girls interacting with adults, Scene 5 is particularly interesting, as we see the three girls talking about the political issue surrounding the defunding of ELA without any adult intervention:

ELLA. Okay so, Beatrice, explain to Hazel: What is exactly a watershed? Hazel, your marshmallow is on fire.

HAZEL. That’s the way I like it – (blowing it out) burnt. BEATRICE. A watershed is like two bowls – well actually, two lakes – that are stucked together. [...]

ELLA. The watershed is the change that’s gonna happen in the world. A change when we realize, finally, that we’re... that ... that we’re always just polluting every single water body. And nobody knows what’s good anymore. And what’s really bad for water. Because our government is not ... our prime minister is not ... giving money to the ELA.

STEPHEN HARPER enters and sits down with the girls around the campfire. He roasts his own marshmallow.

HAZEL. And also Stephen Harper only cares about money.

ELLA. Exactly.

BEATRICE. Hazel, no –

HAZEL. And also he doesn't want to pay money to the ELA 'cause
he wants to keep the oil *source*.

ELLA. Very good, Hazel.

BEATRICE. No, Hazel. You don't understand. Stephen Harper, he
really wants to help ELA except it's way too expensive for
him. (Soutar 144-5)

The presence of the Canadian Prime Minister is certainly one of the only fictional elements in this documentary play. As the girls debate Stephen Harper's position, his stage presence allows viewers to imagine what he would say to these young girls if he were present. While the three teenage girls are exposed to the same discourse, we see that they do not adhere to the same arguments: for instance, they agree on the definition of the word watershed but not on the reasons for the federal government to stop funding ELA. Even though the three young girls do not mention the ecological crisis or the ecocide itself, they are aware that there is an environmental problem and that the exploitation of tar sands and the production of gasoline cars are among the causes of this problem. We can also observe how ten-year-old Ella can link pollution to resource exploitation. The ecological awareness of these three characters is a model of hope. In the words of ecofeminist Alicia H. Puleo, “[o]tro mundo es posible y ya está en marcha. Puedes ayudar a construirlo de muchas maneras, una de ellas es la educación ambiental” (*Claves ecofeministas* 98).²¹⁶

In the public sphere, the discourse of children is generally devalued, considering that they are not perceived as whole persons before turning 18. According to this principle, their opinions on political, economic,

²¹⁶ “[a]nother world is possible and it is already underway. You can help build it in many ways, one of them is environmental education” (Puleo *Claves ecofeministas* 98).

or ecological problems are not taken into account. Here, their speech is staged at the same level as the erudite speech of the expert, scientist, and other authority figures; the three young girls offer another point of view, neither better nor worse. Through the characters of Hazel, Ella and Beatrice, Soutar challenges a hierarchy: children are taken seriously in *The Watershed*.

7.9. REPRESENTATIONS OF POWER DYNAMICS

Many power relations are at work in the story. The most important ones take place in the relationships as between settlers and Indigenous people, the playwright and her funding, as well as the citizens and the Canadian government. Money also plays an important role in these relationships; it is a theme that comes up often and influences decision-making. This section deals with their representation in *The Watershed*. From an ecofeminist perspective, the study of power relations focuses on the domination of women and nature: “[t]he analysis of the dramatic texts forces us to reflect on the modern forms of patriarchy which have assumed a much greater public form that is restrictive and takes the shape of a number of oppressive relationships from oppressive systems” (Rafik Khalil 263).

7.9.1. Driving through First Nations’ Territory: “Why Can’t We Stop, Mama?”

The trip in the Winnebago allows the Soutar family to travel from point A to point B – from Montreal to Fort McMurray – and therefore to cross hundreds of kilometres without having any contact with the territory they cross and the people who inhabit it. During the trip, time is limited and the tasks to be accomplished are numerous and complex. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the decision not to showcase Indigenous people in the play is discussed in the seventh scene of the second act: the brief appearance of the chief of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, Allan

Adam, in a film the family watched give rise to this debate. The absence of an Indigenous figure in Canadian fictions is part of a long tradition, according to H el ene Destrempe, who studied this phenomenon in nineteenth-century French-Canadian literature:

une r eduction de la figure et de ses fonctions   l'int erieur du discours litt eraire, r eduction qui devait se traduire par le biais d'un processus d'effacement discursif et narratif dans l'ensemble de la production litt eraire au XIXe si ecle. [...] La r eduction symbolique de l'Indien [sic] ouvre ainsi la voie   sa r eduction sociale, ou, si l'on pr ef ere,   sa d epossession.²¹⁷ (33-46)

In the field of art, this type of erasure is experienced by Indigenous women, as the intersection of race and gender contributes to their lack of recognition: "Although issues of erasure affected all Aboriginal people, it was especially rare for women to be recognized and documented as individual artists" (Bonnemaison). The exploitation of the tar sands in Alberta has a direct impact on the relationship of Aboriginal women to the land as well as on their health, safety, and lifestyle. In an article titled "Pipelines, Man Camps and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada", *Al Jazeera's* journalist Brandi Morin reported that:

A First Nations woman, not much older than April, "groomed" her, she says, luring her into the sex trade. Like her, the woman came from a difficult background and had been coerced into selling her body to survive, before eventually working her way up to become a recruiter of other young women and girls. Soon April was being pressured into having sex with men for money. It was the start of years of sexual exploitation. For weeks at a time, April would be sent to Alberta's oil patch in Fort McMurray to sell sex to the men working there. [...] For the First Nations and Metis (of mixed

217 "a a diminution of the figure and its functions within literary discourse, his social reduction which was to be reflected through a process of discursive and narrative erasure in the whole literary production in the nineteenth century. [...] The symbolic reduction of the Indian [sic] thus opens the way to his social reduction, or, if one prefers, to his dispossession" (Destrempe 33-46).

Indigenous and European heritage) women and girls among them, the feeling of danger was heightened by the racism they would encounter if their customers knew they were Indigenous. “[So] we identified as either Latina, Asian or exotic, because if we self-identified as Indigenous, we would be devalued and our safety would be at risk,” April explains. (“Pipelines, Man Camps”)

This account of sex trafficking and racism can be understood as systemic violence against Indigenous women, where race, gender, and class intersect. NGO *Honor the Earth*, which raises awareness about and financial support for Indigenous environmental justice, organised a campaign about this issue by establishing links between Canadian and American mines where Indigenous women experienced sexual violence:

The *UN submission* documents the connection between extreme extraction and sexual violence against Native women in the Bakken oil fields of western North Dakota and eastern Montana, and the Tar Sands region of Alberta, Canada, where vast man camps of temporary labor have become lawless hubs of violence and human trafficking.²¹⁸ (“Sexual Violence in Extraction”)

While Indigenous women’s health and lifestyle are affected by the exploitation of the tar sands, they are not portrayed in the play. The last two quotes come from texts that were published a few years after the publication of *The Watershed*. Although violence against Indigenous women did occur at the time, this issue may have been less well known to the general public. The Soutar family’s road trip took place in 2012 and, at the time, Indigenous women were organising resistance against the exploitation of the tar sands. The event *She Speaks: Indigenous Women Speak Out Against Tar Sands* that took place in the autumn of 2012 showcased several activists: Rachelle George and Kayah George

218 “UN submission” refers to a research report named “Submission to the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples : Extreme Extraction and Sexual Violence against Indigenous Women in the Great Plains” written by the president of Native Women’s Association of Canada, Dr. Dawn Memee Harvard, and delivered during the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on April 21, 2015.

from the Tsiel-Waututh Nation, Amanda Nahanee from the Squamish Nation, Ta’Kaiya Blaney from the Sliammon Nation, and Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, a Dene from the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, among others. It can be argued that the viewpoint of these activists could have enriched *The Watershed*. I would also like to point out that Indigenous women are not a homogeneous group that is completely opposed to this industry; some work there and defend this form of land use. Cowessess First Nation’s Estella Petersen, who is based in Fort McMurray (Alberta), defends this position in an open letter published in a national daily: “I have broken the cycle of government dependency, violence, and poverty. I have my own voice. I refuse to be a victim of my circumstances. Most of all, I have choices, and I choose to declare that I’m a proud Indigenous woman working in the oil sands” (“I’m an Indigenous Woman”). Thus, several perspectives are excluded from the play, given the absence of Indigenous women in it: the issues of sexual exploitation and racism are not mentioned, neither are the environmental and social activism of some Indigenous women, nor the support for the exploitation of the tar sands by some of them. This is the kind of information that is put aside when Alex comments on the loss of Indigenous discourse and says: “They’re watching a movie while, outside that window, we are passing by hundreds of opportunities to interview live First Nations people on their own land” (Soutar 152). As cultural studies scholar Awad Ibrahim points out: “invisibility only means misrecognition, not inexistence [...] the White gaze is clearly invisible, and so are the technologies of power and domination” (57-72).

Ongoing invisibilisation of Indigenous people prevails in many institutions; the performing arts are no exception. These power dynamics seem to be exacerbated by gender and racial identities and by the fact that the playwright belongs to the dominant group, that is to say, white settlers. The consequences of this representation are numerous:

Settler colonialism is about Indigenous erasure for the purpose of land acquisition made possible through an unequal distribution of power between the nation state and its first people. Through representational erasure, the presence of Indigenous people

and their cultural practices are altered, appropriated, or erased, ultimately threatening the process of identity development for young Indigenous people. (Elliott-Groves and Fryberg 2)

If future generations are the main stake of the play, are Indigenous children included in this group? I believe the term 'future generation' contributes to the invisibilisation of minority communities such as Indigenous peoples, as it mobilises a universalist framework that does not allow the specific needs of each community to be taken into account.

7.9.2. ELA's Funding and Arts Censorship

On the scale of productivist and patriarchal values, money is at the top of the pyramid. Therefore, the economic argument weighs heavily in the balance: this is the crux of the story as far as ELA is concerned, and this aspect also determines how the play is funded, or rather indicates how *The Watershed* risks losing its funding. In either case, it is public funds that are at stake. This power dynamic takes shape as science and art are subordinated to the discretion of managers of public funds, whose decisions can be influenced by political interests. This power relationship is represented in the play through the speech of several protagonists.

In the tenth scene of the first act, Annabel invites her friend Caroline over for a meal during which she asks her for help. The latter has experience in the field of accounting and she agrees to help Annabel read financial statements. She gives her opinion on how the story should be told:

And can I be blunt about this ELA story? It can't be 'Save the Fish,' Annabel. It can't be that. It needs to be: This is the issue and you've got to immediately get to why it's relevant to humanity. And the only way to make the story relevant is to create the economic argument around it. (Soutar 42)

Caroline offers an anthropocentric vision where concerns for fish are presented as trivial – in other words, not worthy of public interest. In her opinion, humans are only interested in humans and the best way to capture society's attention is to talk about money. It is therefore an anthropocentric and capitalist vision. This point of view recalls the economic evaluation of a non-harnessed river or an uncut forest. We thus manage to monetise the services provided by an ecosystem. It is a way of giving value to nature, but by keeping intact the analytical framework where economic growth dominates. Where Caroline is wrong is when she introduces the human as the saviour of other species: ELA's survival is not limited to providing benefits to other species; humans also benefit from scientific knowledge about freshwater. By isolating fish and portraying them as victims, Caroline makes invisible the interdependence between species, a founding element of life on earth. From an ecofeminist perspective, we can therefore reverse the question: do fish, by their very existence, save humans? Can humans survive the disappearance of this species? Caroline's way of talking about money and humans helps to portray how hegemonic discourse operates and how it keeps power structures in place. On this matter, Stoddart suggests that:

hegemonic power works to convince individuals and social classes to subscribe to the social values and norms of an inherently exploitative system. It is a form of social power that relies on voluntarism and participation, rather than the threat of punishment for disobedience. [...] In industrial capitalist societies, hegemonic power is the prevalent form of social power; the state relies on coercion only in exceptional circumstances. (201)

In this context, ecofeminism makes it possible to formulate counter-hegemonic discourse practices as well as to identify counter-hegemonic discourses that risk destabilising the power in place. ELA is not the only subject that is reduced to its economic status in the play; the artistic work of Annabel Soutar also seems to be threatened by economic arguments.

In the twenty-eighth scene of the first act, Annabel receives a call from Chris Abraham, her co-production partner and the artistic director of

Crow's Theatre. He seems to be afraid of losing funding if his company's name is associated with Annabel's work: "ELA is such a sensitive issue. And given the fact that I'm at a pretty critical moment of our capital campaign – I mean, if it doesn't make a difference one way or another for your letter – I would just prefer that you take Crow's out for now" (Soutar 116). This dialogue presents the possibility of political interference in the public funding of drama. Chris's fear does not come from direct threats, but rather from a precautionary approach: can the subject of a play have economic consequences for the theatre company that produces it? This fear of losing funding intensifies in the second act of the play. In the seventh scene of the second act, Chris phones Annabel again:

CHRIS. They found out somehow that we're doing a play about the ELA, and apparently they're not happy about it.

ANNABEL. So what are we going to do?

CHRIS. I don't know. I've got a one-point-five-million-dollar application in to the feds right now for our new building.

ANNABEL. Oh my god. [...]

CHRIS. Just ... maybe let me know before you communicate with anyone else. (Soutar 155-7)

The playwright's efforts to provide a forum for all parties involved in the ELA case appear to be backfiring on her. At this point, the two characters consider the possibility of facing censorship. Chris is afraid of being taken off the official Pan Am games lineup and losing funding, which is why he is asking Annabel to act strategically. This request calls into question the relationship of trust between the two creators, and Annabel refuses to change her approach, despite the possible economic repercussions: "I am going to be very open, very polite, and I am going to listen very carefully to what he has to say. But I am not going to mince my words about what this play is about. I have come too far for that" (Soutar 157). In this way, Annabel reaffirms her control over the research process and refuses to let Chris overhaul her work. This conversation illustrates the power relations between the government, the theatre company, the producers, and the playwright. The very existence of this play suggests

that there was no state censorship. However, its creation generated discontent within the public service sector, an aspect of artistic work that generally remains on the fringes of dramaturgy. The power of the State over artistic creations therefore becomes tangible through the funding it offers: it is around this element that the power relationship is established. From this perspective, the different types of activity are then reduced to three categories: activities that are profitable, those which are not, and those which undermine profitability. According to Chris Abraham, *The Watershed* falls into the third category. Art and science generally belong in the second, whereas the exploitation of natural resources is located in the first. The ability to create profits gives power to the activities in the first category, a power which is increased by the State.

7.9.3. Harper's Politics: No Data, No Evidence, No Problem

Conservative Canadian politician Stephen Harper is mentioned several times in the play. In the fifteenth scene of the first act, one of his addresses to the Canada-U.K. Chamber of Commerce is showcased. Dating from 2006, this speech reveals his interest in the economic development of the tar sands: “An ocean of oil-soaked sands lies under the muskeg of northern Alberta – my home province. [...] In short, developing Canada’s oil sands is an enterprise of epic proportions, akin to the building of the pyramids or China’s Great Wall, only bigger” (Soutar 60). The comparisons he uses indicate an interest in gargantuan projects that recalls the mentality ‘the bigger, the better’. In this address, he also formulates a declaration of intent and uses superlatives to describe the energy power of Canada, such as “the emerging ‘superpower’ our government intends to build”, or “our booming energy sector” (Soutar 60). Through these excerpts, it seems clear that Stephen Harper deploys the vocabulary of economic growth. Prime Minister of the country from 2006 to 2015, his strategy to develop the energy industry took on a turn throughout his term: disciplinary measures against the disclosure of scientific information were taken. According to Caroline, a character in the play, there is no cause-effect relationship between these two decisions:

But frankly, that this ELA closure is some big sinister conspiracy to ‘muzzle science’? It’s much more likely that someone in Harper’s office charged some of his minions with: ‘Look at every discrete program that has an annual budget of ten million dollars and less. And by virtue of the fact that it’s only ten million dollars or less, of what consequence can it really be to the national good?’ (Soutar 39)

While the idea of muzzling science might seem absurd at the time, an article published three years after the end of Harper’s tenure by the national public broadcaster CBC News stated that:

It took five years, but the results of an investigation by the Information Commissioner of Canada were released and the verdict is in: the Harper government did muzzle scientists. [...] Most of the muzzling involved scientists researching climate change and other politically sensitive issues. (“It’s Official – the Harper”)

It would appear, therefore, that economic development played a role in the fate of Canadian scientists under Harper. Historian Louis Rousseau goes further and establishes a link between the rise of interest in environmental issues within the Canadian population and the measures taken by the government of Stephen Harper:

Compte tenu de la priorité politique du parti conservateur accordée au développement de l’économie de l’Ouest canadien, il devenait tentant pour lui d’utiliser les outils répressifs de l’État pour s’attaquer à la montée du soutien populaire aux enjeux liés à l’environnement. La stratégie eut un objectif simple et secret dès 2008 : identifier comme dangereuses pour la paix sociale et la sécurité du Canada les actions de groupes œuvrant à la défense de l’environnement, aux droits des animaux ainsi que les militants des Premières Nations.²¹⁹
(89)

219 “In view of the political priority accorded by the Conservative party to the development of the Western Canadian economy, it was becoming tempting for him to use the repressive tools of the State to tackle rising popular support for environmental issues. The strategy had a simple

The interests of the groups named above have one thing in common: they form an obstacle to the economic development that the former Prime Minister Harper wanted in Alberta. In addition to silencing the science that goes against its economic objectives, the government of this politician is known for cutting the public funding of several large scientific projects such as ELA. In 2012, Harper's scientific funding cuts attracted the attention of the international scientific community as evidenced in this editorial published in *Nature*:

Governments come and go, but scientific expertise and experience cannot be chopped and changed as the mood suits and still be expected to function. Nor can applied research thrive when basic research is struggling. If the Harper government has valid strategic reasons to undermine vital sectors of Canadian science, then it should say so – its people are ready to listen. If not, it should realize, and fast, that there is a difference between environmentalism and environmental science – and that the latter is an essential component of a national science programme, regardless of politics. (“Death of Evidence” 272)

As the head of government, Harper's power seemed limitless and its impact on the scientific community was unprecedented. For those who put the economy above all else, Stephen Harper did a great job. This is the attitude of the grandfather in the play: “Harper's doing some good things for the long-term economic well-being of Canada” (Soutar 202). However, from an ecofeminist perspective, Stephen Harper's dreams of greatness, which feed on compulsive overexploitation, are directly responsible for social and environmental catastrophes. In the afterword of *Écologie et Féminisme* [Ecology and Feminism], historian and author Caroline Goldblum recalls the basis of the ecofeminist project, an ideal which allows a transition out of capitalism:

and secret objective as early as 2008: to identify as dangerous to social peace and the security of Canada the actions of groups working in the defense of the environment, animal rights, as well as First Nations activists” (Rousseau 89).

Le combat écoféministe défendu par Françoise d'Eaubonne est un véritable projet de société. Il préconise un changement radical de société tourné vers des valeurs d'anticapitalisme et d'autogestion. Il faudrait donc commencer par la nationalisation de toutes les sources de production. [...] Françoise d'Eaubonne regrette la division du travail et les multiples spécialisations amenées par le capitalisme. [...] Françoise d'Eaubonne milite aussi pour la disparition de l'argent.²²⁰ (*Écologie et féminisme* 220)

While Stephen Harper embodies the values of capitalism and places the economy as his government's top priority, Annabel is wondering if the capitalist model is the best one outside of the economic sector, as it already pervades other spheres of society. It is on this thorny question that the play ends. In the sixteenth scene of the second act, Annabel interrogates her father on this matter:

ANNABEL. I just wonder if you feel that the capitalist values [...] Are those values good for society outside of the economic sphere? [...] So when capitalism is applied, for example, to journalism, to [...] what sells newspapers [...] It's bad news, and it's bad journalism. It's appealing to our ideology instead of our sense of what's really happening in the world. [...]

GRANDPA. I have more confidence in free markets to address that need for change than any other system. [...] I'm hopeful because I still think it is the best system. (Soutar 197-9)

In this dialogue, Annabel's father reiterates his faith in the capitalist system: he suggests that economic crises make it possible to self-regulate the market and therefore to settle future problems. This is a position that Annabel does not share. Rather, she is worried about the dominance

220 "The ecofeminist battle championed by Françoise d'Eaubonne is a real social project. It advocates for a radical societal change where we turn towards values of anti-capitalism and self-management. It would therefore be necessary to start with the nationalisation of all sources of production. [...] Françoise d'Eaubonne regrets the division of labour and the multiple specialisations brought about by capitalism. [...] Françoise d'Eaubonne also campaigns for the disappearance of money" (Goldblum in d'Eaubonne *Écologie et féminisme* 220).

of capitalist values and the invasion of this way of thinking into other areas. Can the free market offer a solution to the ecological crisis? From an ecofeminist perspective, the answer is no. As ecofeminist scholar Elizabeth Carlassare puts it, ecofeminism is “explicitly anticapitalist, linking the capitalist mode of production with the environmental crises of the late 20th century as well as with the oppression of women” (90). Therefore, *The Watershed*’s depiction of Stephen Harper makes it possible to understand better how economic and political power is made and maintained. This representation also makes it possible to shed light on the supporters of political capitalism, the hegemony of their speeches, as well as the construction of counter-speeches to this ideology emanating from the margins of society, as seen in documentary theatre.

Under Harper’s reign, Canada was transformed. From an environmental perspective, Canada’s withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol set the tone for the years under Harper’s government. The decisions made by this government between 2006 and 2015 legitimised violence against science, First Nations, nature, and animals for the benefit of economic growth. The development of the tar sands in Alberta was an important benchmark of these decisions. By showing the government’s insistence on the silencing of certain scientists and its defunding of certain research projects, Annabel Soutar presents an asymmetrical power relationship between politics and science. The figure of Harper crystallises the alliance between economic and political interests, and reveals how the latter have had an impact on science in general and environmental science in particular.

7.9.4. Sustainable Consumer Behaviours: “We’re *FAILING*”

Rather than concluding the play with a happy ending, Annabel Soutar verbalises the ambivalence that inhabits her, painting a rather pessimistic portrait of the future. The verb *to fail* best defines this section. What the playwright stages are the fear of failure, the acknowledgement of failure, and the impression that it is too late and that the actions are not sufficient: in short, a dark outlook. This is a growing conviction that she articulates

on the way back from Alberta to Montreal by describing the ecological impact of the family trip:

ANNABEL. [...] I mean, what does that even say about us as parents?

ALEX. It says that we're still learning.

ANNABEL. We're *failing*. We're fucking ... I mean, how much money have we spent on gas? How many Styrofoam coffee cups have we consumed? How much fucking beef jerky has Hazel eaten? What are we ...? What are we doing here?

ALEX. We're recording what is happening here. (Soutar 164-5)

In this excerpt, the feeling of failure expressed by Annabel is two-fold. It targets the couple's parental skills as well as their environmental responsibility. Alex disagrees with his wife's admission of failure: he tries to point out the bright spots and cheer Annabel up. Although Annabel lists problematic behaviours, she does not give up: the journey continues, the play will be written, and the show will be put on.

Alex and Annabel form a two-career household; they are heterosexual, married and belong to the same economic status group. As a working mother, Annabel seems to feel more pressure than her partner when it comes to child-care. However, the 'best parent' myth is applied to both of them, as she includes her husband in the phrase: "We're failing" (Soutar 165). In the excerpt above, environmental consciousness seems to attach to household care activities. The means of transport, the food consumed, and plastic packaging are all concerns that arise daily in the domestic sphere. Annabel also embodies the trope of the superwoman, a term coined by Betty Friedan in her book *The Second Stage* to describe a woman who is performing in both the domestic and professional sphere. In the era of climate change, this superwoman is facing a pressing new challenge: to put in place ecological practices within the family and raise awareness about this issue on a societal level. This addition to the mental load (the invisible, non-tangible tasks involved in running a household) described by Annabel's character in the play leads to the creation of a new trope: the sustainable superwoman. We can therefore conclude that Annabel feels more pressure than her husband to be a 'good' mother

available for her children, as well as an eco-responsible citizen, given that the domestic sphere has been traditionally associated with her gender.

Whereas the act of parenting and working can be evaluated in terms of success according to the neoliberal model, can one implement its ecological values and become a perfect, eco-friendly citizen embracing zero-waste behaviour at all times? If one adopts the sustainable superwoman model, what impact does this have on the global ecological crisis? The solution to climate change does not lie only in individual change; structural change is needed. As she strives for perfection in the daily actions of the Soutar family, Annabel experiences a loss of control that prompts her feeling of failure. Good eco-friendly habits help only to a point; they are not a panacea. We can therefore interpret this failure, as described by Annabel, as an inevitable result when one tackles a global crisis from an individual perspective. Furthermore, the feeling of failure is a common emotion that resides in those who are interested in the environment, according to climate psychology experts: “Facing the facts of climate change and ecological crisis involves encountering powerful feelings such as loss, guilt, anxiety, shame and despair that can be difficult to bear” (Andrews and Hoggett 155). This observation helps to illustrate the power relations at play: the ecological crisis is bigger and stronger than any individual who wishes to stop it. Failure is also encountered by bigger institutions on a large scale, as ecofeminist Val Plumwood puts it:

The failure of dominant national and international political institutions to meet the situation of ecological crisis could not be more clear, a course likely to ensure our demise even if the world were not overhung by the shadow of continuing warfare. [...] It is a common observation that the necessary social change which might begin to reduce this impact and begin the construction of a society capable of surviving has not been occurring. (*Environmental Culture* 1)

Despite the failures and the feeling that the fight is in vain, Annabel shares her hope for a better world through concrete actions: she contributes to public debate around environmental issues. The management of drinking

water in Canada, the main theme of the play, is a field of action where she can have an impact, as she opens a space for public debate and brings together opposing opinions that would not otherwise have been gathered. As the ecological crisis is a common responsibility, not an individual one, the importance of bringing people together around this issue is crucial. In the last scene of the play, Annabel wonders: “What are we prepared to lose?” (Soutar 201). To continue her argument, she places what is at stake on equal footing: wealth, health, family, and environment. It is through this type of rhetoric that she attempts to convince the sceptic or the indifferent citizen; in other words, she is saying: here is what you risk losing if we do not act now. She achieves this position after being faced with failure and a sense of helplessness, which is reminiscent of the *negative care* theory of French philosopher Elsa Dorlin: “Le souci des autres advient par et dans la violence. [...] La violence endurée génère une posture cognitive et émotionnelle négative qui détermine les individu·e·s qui la subissent à être constamment à l’affût, à l’écoute du monde et des autres” (175).²²¹ This perspective makes it possible to frame the ecological crisis as a violent gesture on the part of the dominant over the subordinate. We can therefore conclude that sustainable consumer behaviours will not solve the ecological crisis, nor will any other types of individual action. The feeling of failure is likely to be felt by all those who wish to end this crisis but are not in a position of power. Soutar’s play favours dialogue and provides access to different facets of drinking water management, one of the major challenges of the ecological crisis. It brings together children, experts, and politicians in the hope of understanding what remains to be done to change mentalities.

7.10. CONCLUSION

From Canadian fresh water to the Athabasca River, *The Watershed* embraces global ecological concerns and limits its field of action to

221 “Concern for others occurs through and in violence. [...] The violence endured generates a negative cognitive and emotional posture which determines the individuals who endure it to be constantly on the lookout, listening to the world and to others” (Dorlin 175).

a local scale: the environmental impacts caused by the mining of tar sands oils on the ecosystem of Athabasca River near Fort McMurray in Alberta. In this quest to raise awareness of the protection of fresh water in Canada, Annabel Soutar offers a variety of representations of the natural environment, such as water systems and natural disasters. To best present them, Soutar establishes physical contact with water and demonstrates a sensory experience. She then moves on to the importance of scientific evidence in the fight to protect Canadian fresh water, which leads her to do research on the defunding of the Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) laboratory and the influence of the federal government on water science. Through interviews with scientists, activists, and experts, she faces different types of leaders who are motivated by social, ecological, political, or economic interests. While embarking on a family trip to see the tar sands, she faces her own limits as a mother, a playwright, and a citizen committed to the ecological cause. Environmental education and critical thinking are two important aspects of the trip: Annabel wants to educate her daughters and her daughters' friend on these two subjects and encourage them to put their new knowledge into practice. A critical awareness of gender roles is made possible by the diversity of characters who are portrayed as female.

Money is one of the recurring aspects of the play, as it is framed as the main reason to avoid ecologically responsible behaviour by many protagonists in the play. Stephen Harper is mentioned several times in the play as the epitome of capitalist values. His figure helps to show how economic and political power is maintained.

Another central theme of the play is the importance given to failure. As working artists and parents, Alex and Annabel do not conform to a standard of parental excellence, which leads the playwright to express a feeling of failure. While Soutar explores politics and science through her art, contact with the land is absent from *The Watershed*, a failure that can be interpreted as a symptom of Western culture, in which a strong relationship with nature is replaced by material possessions and popular culture. This disconnect from the land extends to an estrangement from other cultural minority communities that inhabit the land, such as the First Nations. The absence of Indigenous People, and of Indigenous

women in particular, in this play can be understood as an act of colonial erasure, as mainstream Canadian narratives rarely represent them.

From an ecofeminist perspective, this play allows us to understand better certain power relations that are in place in Canada and which affect women and nature. It does not, however, provide a space for reflection that goes beyond the dialogue between people who do not share the same opinion. This is both a strength and a weakness of the play, considering that it allows the audience to activate their own critical thinking on the question as to what actions to take. While the tar sands are polluting the Athabasca River ecosystem, this is just one of many cases. Acting to protect fresh water in Canada involves fighting many occurrences of pollution at the local level. Overall, Annabel Soutar takes a pessimistic view of the water situation in Canada, without any mention of a way out of the crisis. This is a stance shared by Canadian writer Nancy Huston, for whom I reserve the last word: “Je suis chez moi, et hors de moi. En encourageant le développement à outrance des industries pétrolières de l’Alberta, Stephen Harper, le premier ministre canadien, met l’humanité en péril. L’humanité de ma province natale, et l’humanité tout court.”²²²

222 “I am at home, and outside myself. By encouraging the unrestrained development of Alberta’s petroleum industries, Stephen Harper, the Canadian Prime Minister, is putting humanity at risk. The humanity of my native province, and humanity itself” (Huston).

CONCLUSIONS

The search for a world free of domination, an engagement in reciprocal relationships, the questioning of the human/nature divide, and a commitment to non-hierarchical concepts of difference: these are some of the conditions conducive to transforming our cultural narratives to prevent the normalisation of systemic violence that devalues both women and nature. These same conditions are favourable to “reweave new stories that acknowledge and value the biological and cultural diversity that sustains all life” (Diamond and Orenstein xi).

In this dissertation, I have used an ecofeminist framework to analyse six plays published in Canada over the past twenty years. In the introduction to this research, I presented the theories that link violence against women and violence against nature, and I stated the need for concrete ways to introduce changes within the analysis of theatre from a perspective of gender equality, social justice, and environmental preservation. These questions have been essential to this work which examined the social inequalities portrayed in theatre, the detrimental effects that current forms of oppression have on the livelihood of human and non-human nature, and how the cultural analysis of plays can help to identify and, hopefully, shake up these constraining frameworks. This dissertation has therefore helped to rethink the representations of gender and nature from the perspective of ecofeminist theatre criticism, and has invited identification with ecofeminist ideals such as “equality between genders, a revaluing of non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and a view of

the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections, and the merits of intuition and collaboration” (Miles *in* Anderson and Herr 504).

Guided by ecofeminist impulses for equality, justice, and environmental care, I crafted the following questions that were central to this doctoral research: how do representations of human and non-human entities perpetuate oppressions and offer counter-discourses in contemporary Canadian drama? Do the plays propose new representations of Canadian identity and new theatrical forms? The first part of answer of these questions can be found in the desire to become *an-other* (Murphy “The Women Are Speaking” 35). It is certainly a determining reason for the political commitment of the playwrights considered in this dissertation. This desire for change is palpable in their work, specifically in the trajectory of the main characters and their goals, whether it be by questioning popular forms of energy production and their negative impacts, fostering environmental education, reclaiming Indigenous land, or preserving natural habitats and fresh water, among other approaches. These plays show effective collective transformations led by individuals who shift their mindset and participate actively in order to improve environmental and social problems.

Most of the characters studied in this dissertation form a relationship with their surroundings; this degree of attention directed towards rivers, forests, animals, fires, or even commodities such as meat, petrol, or electricity changes how they look at non-human nature. This ethic of care modifies the protagonists’ worldview and the way they speak about the natural world, which previously had a secondary role in their existence as humans. Such a shift from apathy to engagement is a recurring theme in the plays studied in this dissertation. For example, in *The Watershed*, Annabel Soutar wrote about three girls who initially did not know where tap water came from. Once they learn more about the public municipal water distribution system and the interconnection of adjacent watersheds, these three girls start to question the source of water pollution. They then become active agents who try to raise awareness about water protection in their surroundings. Another example of the apathy-to-engagement shift is the main protagonist of *J’aime Hydro*: the actress and playwright Christine Beaulieu states clearly at the beginning

of the play that she knows nothing about energy production. The more she learns about it, the more committed she becomes. Once she discovers several environmental and social injustices generated by hydroelectric dams, she takes action and expresses her opposition to the construction of another megadam in Quebec. Her ecological commitment is reflected in two ways: she confronts people in charge of the state enterprise, and she becomes a spokesperson for the Running Electric Campaign which promotes electric vehicles. The playwrights Annabel Soutar and Christine Beaulieu demonstrate that indifference is no longer an option once the characters of their plays are well informed. In both cases, a quest for knowledge plays a key role in transforming apathy into social change.

Returning to the research questions (How do representations of human and non-human entities perpetuate oppressions and offer counter-discourses in contemporary Canadian drama? Do the plays propose new representations of Canadian identity and new theatrical forms?), another part of the answer is located in the agency of the characters. In studying the plays of the corpus, I have observed that some main and even secondary characters become aware of their rights and advocate for more recognition among other more privileged social groups. Meanwhile, other characters just realise how oppressed they are and as a consequence, they try to escape this condition. In general, this realisation is followed by one of two outcomes: the characters take matters into their own hands and set in motion new projects for a more just and sustainable future, or they realise that it is already too late to act.

In this way, Dave Jenniss' *Wulustek* portrays a family torn apart by the betrayal of the father. They are presented with a *fait accompli*: all the trees are cut down; there is nothing left to do to stop the logging company. This feeling of powerlessness is also central to Tomson Highway's *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*. Indigenous women traditionally held critical roles and responsibilities within their communities, which is why the main character, Ernestine, wants to take part in political decisions, but the colonial state does not allow her to participate in negotiations. Among the characters who *can* self-organise and fight for their ideals, Marcelle Dubois imagines the resistance of a village led by a turnip farmer in her play *Habiter les terres*, whereas Tomson Highway presents a heroine that

leaves her kitchen and catches a fish – two defiant gestures that challenge gender roles and the colonial order which prohibits fishing. Although the characters have no power to act at one point in the play, some do manage to act at another point in the story, as is the case with Highway's protagonist, Ernestine. We can therefore conclude that the characters' transformation is continuous and oscillates between gain and loss of agency. However, some factors condition these actions, and it is observed that racism, sexism, colonialism, and taking the environment for granted, among others, have an impact on the characters' capacity to act. This reflection highlights the need for a critical discourse on oppressions, which reaffirms the importance of an ecofeminist interpretation of dominant narratives, as all marginalised groups suffer the consequences of the subjugation of nature: ecofeminists show this connection.

The final element I would like to mention is the frantic race for profits, because it comes across as one of the main reasons that lead to violence against nature and women. It motivates the father's treason in Dave Jenniss' *Wulustek*, the mining for uranium in Marie Clements' *Burning Vision*, the withdrawal of governmental support in Marcelle Dubois' *Habiter les terres*, the production of crude oil from tar sands in Annabel Soutar's *The Watershed*, and the colonisation of the Shuswap Nation in Tomson Highway's *Ernestine*. Greed plays a central role in these narratives. In addition to these examples, the protagonist in Christine Beaulieu's *J'aime Hydro* asks for a redefinition of wealth, where money and material possessions are devalued and replaced by gratitude for and appreciation of what cannot be bought. The results of this research lead to the following conclusion: economic profit is a common goal for humans and the desire to accumulate money leads to extreme behaviour that can result in the degradation of nature and to gender-based violence. Humans and non-human nature are changing, for better or for worse, because of this obsession with profits. It can be observed that the discourse on greed is a driving force within the plays. Furthermore, the exposure of greed is often linked to violence against women and to the degradation of nature in the plays studied. This is a recurring theme, demonstrating once again that the oppression of women and the destruction of nature are staged together in Canadian theatre, and that characters embodying the values

of the dominant capitalist society are often in a position of power, with oppressors being personified among the characters.

The term ecocide seems appropriate to describe the irreversible damage caused to natural ecosystems. Dave Jenniss' *Wulustek* showcases clearcutting, a common form of tree removal controversial for its environmental impact, while Marie Clements' *Burning Vision* addresses the deadly hazards of radiation since the first uranium mine started to operate in Canada. As Canada was colonised on the principle of *terra nullius*, these two Indigenous playwrights refute this prevailing idea of the land as an empty and inanimate thing, and incorporate an Indigenous worldview, depicting the territory within a web of sacred beings and placing humans in an interconnected relationship with the rest of living and non-living beings. The importance given to nature in these plays fulfils an ecofeminist goal as it helps to dismantle the anthropocentric biases common in Canadian theatre. I will now turn to the specific conclusions and findings of each chapter.

In the first chapter, I outline the depiction in *Wulustek* of the current Canadian administrative system as being flawed: the playwright suggests that the absence of women in top managerial positions is commonplace, and that the hierarchical nature of these structures facilitates corruption. Ecofeminism proposes a horizontal decision-making system consisting of a fair representation of different social groups, in order to prevent political corruption as well as patriarchal and racist biases. Another finding indicates that the gendered language used in *Wulustek* to describe nature reinforces the idea that women and nature should be subjugated. Finally, the notions of viscous porosity (Tuana) and fourth wall (Brecht) have been used to understand better how the devastation of the territory is revealed. This process creates a dramatic tension that is exacerbated by the removal of the fence that separates the actors and the audience. By highlighting Indigenous land claims, this play shows the importance of keeping nature intact.

The second chapter shows that nature and Indigenous peoples have suffered since the construction of a giant hydroelectric project carried out by the government of Quebec in 2009. *J'aime Hydro* depicts the impact of the mega-dam upon the Romaine River and how it has changed the

salinity of the water, which has killed underwater plants such as eelgrass, where fish lay their eggs, safe from predators. The whole ecosystem of the river has been affected. The impact on water, plants, and animals has also had negative consequences for the Indigenous peoples who inhabit this territory. Christine Beaulieu suggests that the best way to improve Quebecers' relationship with Hydro-Quebec is not to take nature for granted. Patrick D. Murphy's theory of relational difference and Rosi Braidotti's perspective on the notion of becoming were used to analyse the metamorphosis of the main character. These theories have helped to make sense of Christine Beaulieu's journey, which led to the following finding: this play calls for a redefinition of wealth in order to maintain balanced and healthy ecosystems. Moreover, this call for awareness questions the need to produce more energy by harnessing rivers and building other mega-dams.

In the third chapter, I highlight the connection between capitalist expansion and patriarchal interests in a narrative that exposes numerous diseases caused by the production of uranium in Canada. The playwright Marie Clements is part of a long tradition of Indigenous women across the world that have been vocal against toxic waste. Going back and forth in time, her play *Burning Vision* establishes relationships between characters who are separated by time and space: some characters come from a Canadian community where uranium is produced, and others come from Japanese cities where nuclear bombs are dropped. These unlikely encounters foster empathy and make people accountable for their actions regardless of distance, culture, ethnicity, or language. This suggests that interconnectedness is a key component of a narrative strategy that seeks to transmit ecofeminist values such as accountability.

The findings of the fourth chapter aim to show the downside of Canadian colonialism, where a remote community is threatened with abandonment by the state. In *Habiter les terres*, the colonial legacy of domination and exploitation is clear in the relationship between humans and other species; animals are depicted as subalterns and nature as a tool. Jennifer Andrews' work on magical realism and Stephanie Kirkpatrick's analysis of Disney's animated films provided solid theoretical ground on which to base a critical analysis of Dubois' talking animals. If the

ecological crisis is mentioned in the play, its negative consequences are projected onto big cities far away from the village where the action takes place. The references to the free mining policy in the play recall how the power of government and industry operates in this rural area. The eviction of Dubois' daughter, the protagonist, is orchestrated by the Gold Digger, who reaffirms his power over her as he owns the minerals below the surface of the whole village. I have been able to offer a proper context to the free mining policy thanks to the work of sociologist Emmélia Blais-Dowdy and historian Marc Riopel. Furthermore, the erasure of Indigenous people as expressed by this play reinforces the neo-colonial ideology in which the land is discovered and dominated by settlers. One of the counter-discourses presented in this work is the rural resistance movement, which opposes the ending of public services in Guyenne before the village is emptied of its citizens. The characters look back on the past of their hometown, where food was locally produced, housing fairly provided, and where farmers adapted to the pace of nature. This ideal of self-sufficiency is another counter-discourse presented in the play that contrasts with the current globalisation of the Canadian economy and the impact of capitalism's fast-paced acceleration upon every form of life.

One of the key findings of the fifth chapter is the worldview proposed by Tomson Highway: he decentres human subjectivity and tackles the anthropocentric gaze in featuring many animals as a central component of his narrative, namely, a fish, a cow, and a beaver. As a result of the new colonial regulations, animals have become ill, and the depletion of resources has increased. Colonial dispossession is the main form of oppression portrayed in *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*. This work recalls the prohibition upon fishing, hunting, and grazing, a ban on speaking the native language, and expulsion from the territories where the Shuswap lived. In spite of the colonial violence, the play reveals different elements rooted in the precolonial lifestyle, such as native languages, eating habits, and the medical knowledge of the Shuswap people. This analysis has found evidence of non-hegemonic discourse in the transmission of Indigenous culture, knowledge, and traditions. The female characters lose their rights without being part of the fight

for the Shuswap people's survival. Women are located in the kitchen, watching the colonisation without being provided with a seat at the table to negotiate with the colonial state, as their male counterparts are. It is clear that Indigenous and settlers' gender roles are different. By imposing its own set of gender roles, colonisation devalues Indigenous women, who used to hold spiritual, political, and economic power equal to men within their tribe. It is not insignificant that women do not participate in the negotiation in a play depicting a settler society. This demonstrates that the plays studied in this dissertation feature characters who are a good mirror of the inner workings of systemic, colonial, and gender inequalities.

The final chapter highlights the commodification of nature and the censorship of science depicted in the play, two elements that go hand-in-hand in a context of colonial dispossession rooted in the quest for profits. Nature is thus portrayed as a range of goods to be monetised. In Annabel Soutar's *The Watershed*, a boreal forest is turned into a tar sands exploitation; crude oil production has become a threat to Canadian fresh water; science is silenced for economic and political reasons, and the Experimental Lakes Area has lost its funding. The sum of these actions reinforces the nature-culture divide and the hierarchical order, where nature is dominated by humans in general and by men in particular. The playwright utilises care ethics to challenge the pollution of the Athabasca River and the defunding of major science projects. While caring is assigned to women by society and consequently devalued, this play aims to restore its image as the protagonist protects fresh water in Canada, takes care of her daughters, and worries about the future of science. To do so, Annabel Soutar reaches out and listens to a wide range of people who represent different socio-political positions. One point comes across as vital in the implementation of this strategy: caring is possible only if a dialogue can be established; only if two people can respectfully listen to each other even if they do not share the same opinion. The playwright promotes values that oppose Prime Minister Harper's domination of nature and science, advocating for openness, empathy, listening, and critical thinking. In this play, she attempts to create a place of experimentation for environmental education, where

her daughters receive this teaching and practise it by interviewing Albertans who live near Fort McMurray.

The diversity of the counter-discourses analysed in this dissertation shows a wide range of practical strategies to build fair and sustainable relationships between human and non-human nature. However, the playwrights reproduce injustices on stage along with new models of reciprocity and non-hierarchical relations. I have argued that the representation of violence against women and against nature is highly relevant because it draws attention to visible problematic power relations that are generally overlooked and accepted in our capitalist and patriarchal societies. Therefore, in addition to offering alternative narratives and counter-hegemonic discourses, these plays present fertile ground that has the power to arouse indignation and provoke some sort of questioning by the audience.

Our relationship to time is at stake when it comes to ecofeminist struggles where social justice and the ecological crisis intersect: “staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures” (Haraway “Staying With the Trouble” 18). The moment of collective listening crafted by theatre-makers provides favourable conditions to foster this interaction. The audience must be present – they must pay attention in order to fully appreciate the performance. This is the advantage of dealing with ecofeminist matters in theatre: the audience must *sit* with the problem for a fairly long period of time; they are “staying with the trouble” (Haraway “Staying With the Trouble” 18) long enough to shake off apathy and rekindle convictions – long enough, I hope, to thwart prejudices and popular misconceptions that might lead to violent behaviours. All this can be possible when the listening conditions are intentionally created, as is the case with theatre productions where a scenic device facilitates the presentation of a play. The same logic operates with other art forms: literature, cinema, poetry, painting, photography, among others. Outside the artistic sphere, these issues rarely grasp the attention of the general public unless scientists publish a report or activists organise a stunt. In both cases, there is just one mention in the media among other pieces of news of differing relevance. In the 24-hour news

cycle, the speed of media does not leave much time for reflection. The narrowness of this window of opportunity requires concise and effective communication, two qualities that risk becoming defects in the artistic sphere.

One of the pitfalls that have been avoided in the plays analysed is the temptation to lecture, to be moralistic. Telling the audience to adopt a certain lifestyle or to embrace principles of justice and equality will not have a persuasive effect. Such a display of self-righteousness is likely to have the opposite effect. The playwrights I have studied do not take the moral high ground. They tell a story. Whether fictional, factual, or autobiographical, their stories carry values that ecofeminist thinking advocates for. The hardship experienced by the characters raises awareness about those values. For instance, Annabelle Soutar does not say: think of future generations and bring your children up promoting critical thinking and ecological conscience. Instead, in her play *The Watershed*, she stages her attempts to teach her daughters to develop ecological awareness; in doing so, rather than preaching, she takes the lead and acts, which seems to be an effective strategy. By rooting these stories in local settings, they become more real, more compelling. However, these results are limited to a selected corpus – a factor that I will elaborate upon in the next paragraph along with recommendations for future work on the topic.

As with most studies, the design of the current work is subject to limitations. The primary one is the generalisation of these results within the scope of the study. The close reading method I have chosen has limited the number of plays included in the corpus. This study has not drawn general conclusions about the majority of Canadian theatrical productions over the past 20 years depicting ecological themes; it focuses on a specific, non-representative sample. In the future, the publication of an anthology to showcase works by contemporary Canadian playwrights examining ecofeminist concerns in all their permutations might prove useful to provide easy access to a wide range of literary works on this theme. This research leads me to conclude that a rich and varied corpus remains to be explored in Canada and beyond, since ecofeminism and ecocriticism are burgeoning fields in theatre studies.

The second limitation of this dissertation concerns the absence of plays written in Indigenous languages, such as Atikamekw, Cree, Inuktitut, and Ojibway.²²³ My analysis is therefore limited to works produced in colonial languages. Indigenous peoples have words that are embedded in their worldview that do not easily translate into English or French, which is why my lack of knowledge of Indigenous languages is a major hindrance. This constraint should be addressed in future studies, as scholars interested in Canadian drama generally limit their research to multilingual work, where the use of Indigenous languages is blended into plays written mostly in French or in English.

Moreover, this research has not used the lens of queer theory. However, this would certainly be an important area for future research, as the perspectives offered by queerness and heteronormativity as they relate to gender identities were not addressed. In the field of queer ecology, the publication of Cy Lecerf Maulpoix's *Écologies déviantes. Voyage en terres queers* [Deviant Ecologies. A Journey Into Queer Lands] (2021) seems promising, since it interrogates the natural/unnatural divide that has been weaponised against the LGBTQ+ community by capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism, to enslave, exploit, and dominate them. The notion of deviant ecologies builds on decolonial and ecofeminist struggles as it mobilises activism simultaneously on social and climate justice, a critical posture that might prove useful to tackle heterosexism, and to pursue the queering of ecofeminism in the footsteps of scholars such as Greta Gaard, Catriona Sandilands, and Ariel Salleh.

In future works, research into representations of veganism might also prove important. From the landmark book *The Sexual Politics of Meat* by Carol J. Adams published in 1990, to the collection of essays

223 In 2010, Tomson Highway translated two of his most famous works (*The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*) from English to Cree, his first language. He justifies this decision in an interview: “if anybody in this country is capable of saving those languages from extinction, it’s the writers” (CBC News). In 2016, Esther Osche’s play *Lupi, the Great White Wolf* was produced in Anishnaabemowin by the Debajehmujig Theatre Group. (McCutcheon) More recently, Véronique Hébert’s *Notcimik* (2021) was showcased in the festival *Présence autochtone* in Montreal. However, it is unclear whether the work of this Atikamekw female playwright was performed entirely in her mother tongue. Indigenous Canadian theatre productions embrace a “multilingual and heteroglossic outlines of dialogue as well as a merging of English and Indigenous languages” (Madsen 427), while plays in Indigenous languages remain marginal.

Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory, edited by Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood in 2018, and Laura Wright's *The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies* printed in 2021, there is abundant critical apparatus within this field. Just as the vegan studies lens contributes to the recent mutations within ecofeminist thinking, this approach could also help to examine how the plant-based diet is portrayed in theatre.²²⁴ Inspired by Peter Singer's concept of speciesism, I have mobilised this approach in this research, although the results were limited, considering that the playwrights did not problematise meat consumption and that the latter occupied a secondary role when it was not completely absent.

In conclusion, I have addressed a gap in the literature, as there is a dearth of ecofeminist analyses in Canadian drama studies. By doing so, I have gathered analytical tools that assess the representations of women and nature. This critical assessment helps to show how different systems of inequalities structure the narrative and characters of contemporary Canadian ecological theatre, with particular reference to the active role of patriarchy and capitalism in the ongoing ecocide and colonial dispossession. My ecofeminist approach has highlighted the importance of animal studies and decolonial thinking – different aspects that are generally absent from mainstream ecofeminist critique.

Considering time as being a crucial aspect to achieve climate justice, I would like to refer to the words of the ecofeminist Vandana Shiva, who has been leading both environmentalist and feminist battles across the globe for more than fifty years. She was the guest of the feminist podcast *La Poudre*, where she addressed the urgency of the current crisis and highlighted the importance of staying hopeful, even if we only have until 2030 to limit climate change.²²⁵

224 Some German performances have offered a critical lens on meat production in their work. For example, Bertolt Brecht first performed *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* in 1959, while Daniel Hellmann's choreography *Requiem for a Piece of Meat* toured in Europe between 2017 and 2019. I have not found a play that addresses these issues in a Canadian context so far.

225 This number comes from a 2018 report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) whose results were popularised by *The Guardian* newspaper as follows: "The world's leading climate scientists have warned there is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people" (Watts).

if we do not shift in 12 years, the momentum of irreversibility will be too high for human intervention, we have to take that reality and therefore make those 12 years the transition years. Now, it does not mean that the world will end in 12 years but it does mean that these 12 years are a space of possibilities. It also does not mean we panic, because the more we panic, the more we get seduced to do the wrong thing, we have to *fully fully fully* be aware that we are a part of the earth, that it is the first place for the regeneration and cultivation of hope. (Shiva *in* Bastide)

Building a more resilient society where wealth is better distributed is an integral part of a fair ecological transition. To achieve this, we need to carve out a place for these issues in the public domain. While it is tempting to criticise conservative values when they are manifested in the academic world or on social media, this approach confines progressive ideas to reaction, not action. Meanwhile, certain privileged individuals have direct access to the media and political parties; they succeed in influencing the framework of public debate, and certain subjects are thereby being left out of the spotlight. As ecofeminism offers the necessary analytical tools to better understand and address current issues, it demands to be talked about. If this thesis inspires you, I urge you to write: get your ideas out there. *Pouvoir dire, c'est déjà agir*; to speak is to act.

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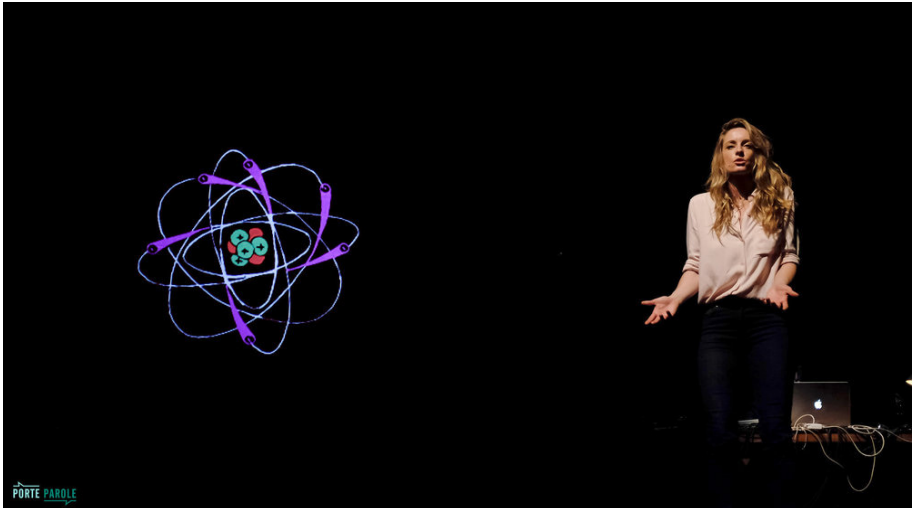
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: DENE FORBIDDEN ROCK PROPHECY

The prophecy goes like this: “In the old days, the Sahtú Dene used to travel across the lake towards the Barrenlands every summer, to hunt caribou. Some of these Dene hunters were paddling near shore on the east side of Sahtú (where Port Radium is today) and they came to a place where rocky cliffs rose high over the water. Like all Dene, they believed it was bad medicine to pass in front of this rock: it was said that loud noises came from within it. These particular hunters pulled their canoes out of the water, but decided not to portage... Instead they camped near the cliff. During the night everybody was awakened by the singing of the medicine man... In the morning, when the medicine man stopped singing, the people at last spoke to him... ‘Why did you sing all night?’ ‘I foresaw many things and I was disturbed,’ replied the medicine man... The medicine man told them of his strange vision. ‘I saw people going into a big hole in the ground – strange people, not Dene. Their skin was white [and] they were going into a hole with all kinds of metal tools and machines... On the surface where they lived, there were strange houses with smoke coming out of them... I saw... big boats with smoke coming out of them, going back and forth on the river. And I saw a flying bird – a big one. They were loading it with things... I watched them and finally saw what they were making with whatever they were digging out of the hole – it was something long, like a stick. I wanted to know what it was

for – I saw what harm it would do when the big bird dropped this thing on people – they all died from this long stick, which burned everyone. The people they dropped this long thing on looked like us, like Dene... But it isn't for now; it's a long time in the future. It will come after we are all dead." (Blondin 78-79)

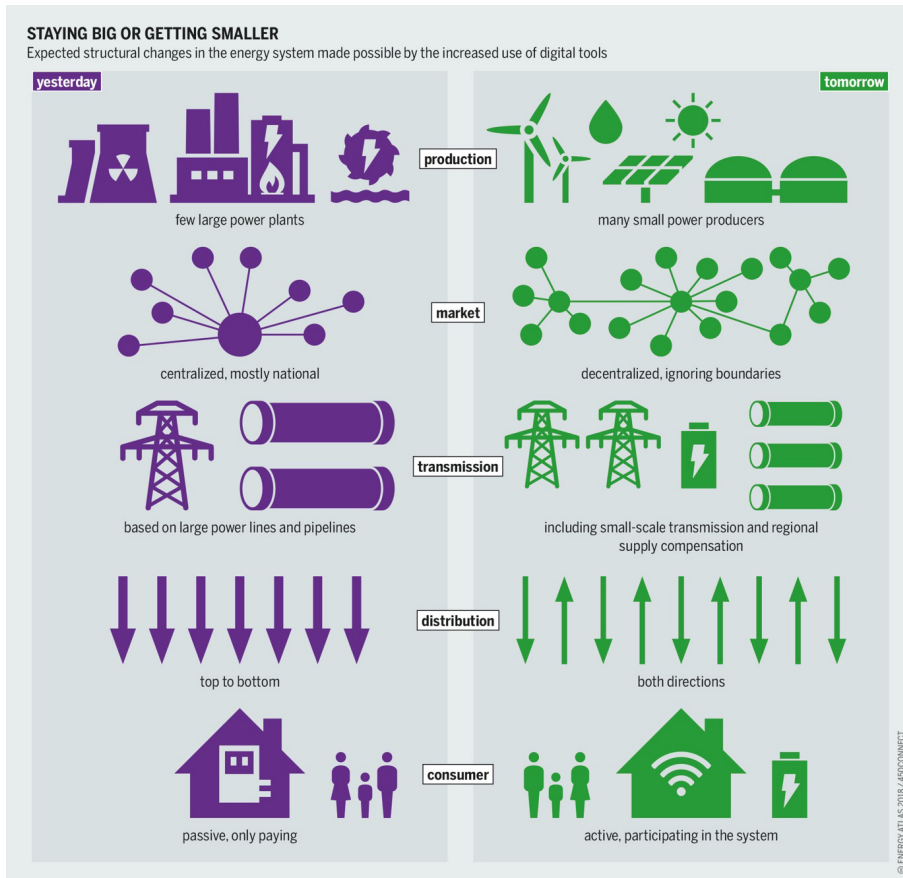
APPENDIX 2: PHOTOS OF *J'AIME HYDRO*



Photos 1 and 2: Geoffrey Boulangé. Video design: HUB Studio and Robocut Studio.



Photo 3: Bartz/Stockmar, 2018. Creative Commons.



APPENDIX 3: PHOTOS RELATED TO *HABITER LES TERRES*

Photo 1: *Habiter les terres* (Marcelle Dubois) Photograph: Eugene Holtz



Photo 2: *Happy Days* (Samuel Beckett)



oh les beaux jours
de Samuel Beckett
mise en scène André Brassard
avec Andrée Lachapelle

photographie : Mariène Gélineau Payette

APPENDIX 4: PHOTO RELATED TO ERNESTINE SHUSWAP GETS HER TROUT

“Men standing with pile of buffalo skulls, Michigan Carbon Works.” Detroit Public Library, 1892.



APPENDIX 5: RESUMO DA TESE EN GALEGO

O obxectivo principal desta tese de doutoramento é identificar as configuracións das mulleres e da natureza no drama contemporáneo canadense e proceder a súa análise. Esta investigación tenta responder ás seguintes preguntas: Como estas pezas mostran as interseccións entre o ecocidio, o colonialismo, as desigualdades raciais e de xénero en Canadá? Que novos tropos e formas teatrais xorden deste teatro político? O meu estudo céntrase en narrativas escritas por dramaturgos francófonos, anglófonos e indíxenas nos últimos 20 anos: *Wulustek* (2011) de Dave Jenniss, *Jaime Hydro* (2016) de Christine Beaulieu, *Burning Vision* (2002) de Marie Clements, *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* (2005) de Tomson Highway, *Habiter Les Terres* (2016) de Marcelle Dubois e *The Watershed* (2015) de Annabel Soutar. Estas pezas exploran a degradación da natureza, a opresión da muller ou ambos temas ao mesmo tempo. Aínda que algúns relatos sobre o dominio se reproducen no escenario do mesmo xeito que se producen fóra del, estes dramaturgos ofrecen relatos contrahexemónicos, así como ideas emerxentes para crear relacións xustas e duradeiras entre as distintas formas de vida que habitan a terra.

O aparato crítico desta tese está enraizado no ecofeminismo, un movemento sociopolítico que pon en relación dúas formas de dominación: a dos homes sobre as mulleres e a dos humanos sobre a natureza. As perspectivas ecofeministas contemporáneas ofrecen un contra-discurso que desafía aquelas actividades humanas a miúdo definidas como progreso, xa sexan materiais ou culturais, que intentan xustificar a destrución actual do planeta. Moi arraigadas na nosa cultura, as dicotomías se definen como unha división entre dous elementos e se caracterizan por unha xerarquía onde a segunda opción é percibida como inferior á primeira: home/muller, cultura/natureza, razón/emoción, mente/corpo, etc. O ecofeminismo desafía estas divisións binarias e ofrece conceptos non-xerárquicos de diferenza que poden crear as condicións para construír relacións libres de dominación. Unha das principais características da lente ecofeminista é a detección dun tipo específico de violencia sistémica, que xorde da intersección do patriarcado e outros sistemas de opresión que desvalorizan o medio ambiente. Este tipo de

violencia está incrustado nas nosas narracións culturais e normalízase a través da linguaxe. O ecofeminismo ofrece ferramentas conceptuais que fan visible a opresión sistémica e axudan a cuestionala.

Tanto o teatro como o ecofeminismo están enraizados no *coñecemento situado*, reflectindo as prioridades locais. Ancorada nun contexto local específico, unha obra de teatro ten o potencial de alterar a realidade nun escenario. O teatro é un laboratorio de creación capaz de desenvolver dous obxectivos do pensamento ecofeminista: ir máis alá dos dualismos e promover relacións heterárquicas, é dicir, non-xerárquicas. Non obstante, o teatro non só é emancipador, senón que tamén reproduce as desigualdades sociais, o cal o fai un obxecto de estudo ideal para desenvolver unha análise crítica. A combinación do ecofeminismo como marco teórico e o teatro como obxecto de estudo é un enfoque innovador que non foi tratado antes nunha tese de doutoramento. Así, esta disertación achégase para cubrir o baleiro que existe en relación coa investigación nesta área e ofrece un enfoque integral, seguindo un método estrito no que se analizan sistematicamente as diferentes categorías de opresión. As representacións das identidades de xénero, dos recursos naturais, da crise ecolóxica e das dinámicas de poder son as principais categorías elixidas para ofrecer unha análise crítica das seis obras. As representacións sociais, culturais e ambientais estudadas nesta tese ofrecen estratexias emancipadoras e cuestionan como as estruturas de poder patriarcais xogan un papel actual no ecocidio.

En Canadá, as colonias brancas de poboamento controlaron e mercantilizaron a terra, o que fortalece a visión dominante da “nature as a passive resource” (Alaimo 133).²²⁶ O discurso hexemónico onde se usa o mundo natural como metáfora, símbolo ou escenario universal é común na maioría das formas artísticas, como o teatro. A arte dramática axuda a explorar o drama experimentado polos seres humanos. Se esta arte reflicte a sociedade, tamén reproduce os seus defectos: o teatro magnifica a psique humana e marxina a natureza, a súa fragilidade e os seus ecosistemas. Nun escenario, a natureza é un soporte, un accesorio que contextualiza a historia contada polos humanos e para eles. En

²²⁶ “natureza como recurso pasivo” (Alaimo 133).

concreto, as condicións materiais nas que teñen lugar as producións teatrais están desconectadas do mundo natural. O teatro é, polo tanto, antropocéntrico. Tamén é androcéntrico: céntrase nos humanos en xeral e nos homes especificamente. Este sesgo de xénero que favorece aos homes inflúe en quen conta a historia e en como se mostra a historia. A infrarrepresentación das mulleres non é a única forma en que o teatro reproduce estruturas opresivas: as cuestións de raza e clase tamén están presentes na produción teatral contemporánea. Estas afirmacións están tomadas da introdución da tese onde apoio as miñas observacións con fontes relevantes. En efecto, esta introdución proporciona información esencial para amosar o ecofeminismo, xustificar o proxecto de investigación, presentar as obras que compoñen o corpus, xustificar estas eleccións así como describir a estrutura da tese. As seis pezas do corpus son os elementos centrais da estrutura: a cada unha delas dedícaselle un capítulo. Cada un destes capítulos comeza cun contexto histórico e cultural que ofrece información sobre o dramaturgo, xunto co xénero teatral. Estes seis capítulos sobre as obras están precedidos dun capítulo de teoría onde se presenta a información de fondo desta investigación.

O primeiro capítulo trata dos conceptos teóricos fundamentais desta tese e ofrece unha definición dos termos ecoloxía, feminismo e ecofeminismo. Proporcionase a continuación unha revisión bibliográfica de diversos exemplos de crítica ecofeminista, cun enfoque especial nas lecturas ecofeministas de obras de teatro canadenses. Moi poucos estudos do teatro canadense empregaron un enfoque ecofeminista, polo que este apartado limítase a revisar dous artigos. Este capítulo teórico examina varios textos críticos onde o ecofeminismo serve como lente de análise literaria e tamén inclúe artigos onde se emprega unha perspectiva ecofeminista para avaliar producións teatrais que tiveron lugar fóra do territorio canadense. Considerando que máis da metade das obras analizadas nesta tese foron escritas por mulleres na provincia canadense do Quebec, unha sección deste capítulo dedícase ao contexto histórico e cultural das dramaturgas contemporáneas no Quebec. Finalmente, a última sección está organizada en torno a cinco nocións clave para proporcionar unha mellor comprensión da escola de pensamento

ecofeminista: as ideoloxías da natureza, as ideoloxías de xénero, as políticas de representación, o dualismo e a xerarquía.

No segundo capítulo titulado “Between Colonialism and Tradition: the Renewal of Gender Roles in a Fictional Indigenous Nation” [Entre o colonialismo e a tradición: a renovación dos roles de xénero nunha nación indíxena ficticia], cuestiónase a atribución do xénero feminino ao territorio e o desexo de dominalo, dous elementos centrais da narrativa de *Wulustek*. Este xeito de describir a terra reforza a idea de que as mulleres e a natureza deben ser subxugadas. Escrita en francés polo dramaturgo indíxena canadense Dave Jenniss, esta obra representa a unha familia indíxena desgarrada pola perda do seu territorio ancestral, que foi asolada por unha explotación forestal insostible. Emprego as nocións de *porosidade viscosa* (Tuana) e de *cuarta parede* (Brecht) para examinar como se revela o territorio devastado sen ser representado no escenario. Este proceso crea unha tensión dramática que alcanza o seu clímax coa retirada do valado que separa aos actores do público. Ao poñer de relevo as reivindicacións territoriais indíxenas, esta obra mostra a importancia de manter a natureza intacta.

O terceiro capítulo, “Citizen Inquiry on Energy Production: Create Dialogue, Find Oneself, Redefine Wealth” [Investigación cidadá sobre a produción de enerxía: crear diálogo, atoparse a si mesmo, redefinir a riqueza], céntrase nunha obra documental francófona escrita por Christine Beaulieu. A protagonista principal de *J'aime Hydro* [Eu amo Hydro] é unha actriz á que unha compañía de teatro pide que investigue sobre a produción hidroeléctrica e que escriba unha obra sobre as súas consecuencias ambientais e políticas. Mentres loita contra o seu síndrome de impostora, intenta facilitar o diálogo entre grupos opostos sobre a nacionalización desta enerxía no Quebec. Precisamente, *J'aime Hydro* representa como a presa impacta no río Romaine e cambia a salinidade da auga, o cal mata as plantas subacuáticas onde os peixes poñen os ovos a salvo dos depredadores. Todo o ecosistema do río vese afectado. O impacto sobre a auga, as plantas e os animais tamén teñen consecuencias negativas para os pobos indíxenas que habitan este territorio. Christine Beaulieu suxire que, para mellorar a relación entre os quebequeses e Hydro-Quebec, eles non deben dar a natureza por

sentada. A teoría da *diferenza relacional* de Patrick D. Murphy e o punto de vista de Rosi Braidotti sobre a noción de *devir* permiten analizar a metamorfose do personaxe principal xa que é un texto autobiográfico que relata a transformación experimentada pola actriz/dramaturga dende a ignorancia ata o compromiso cívico. Esta obra pide unha redefinición do termo riqueza para manter ecosistemas equilibrados e saudables. Ademais, esta chamada á concienciación cuestiona a necesidade de producir máis enerxía aproveitando os ríos e construíndo outros megaproectos.

O cuarto capítulo, “The Aftermath of Uranium Mining on Sahtu Dene Land: An Analysis of the Ecological and Social Consequences of Extractivism” [As secuelas da minería de uranio na terra dos Sahtu Dene: unha análise das consecuencias ecolóxicas e sociais do extractivismo], trata dunha obra de teatro escrita en inglés pola canadense Métis Marie Clements. *Burning Vision* [Visión ardente] recorda como os humanos estiveron implicados e afectados pola extracción de uranio no sitio histórico de Port Radium na beira do lago Great Bear [Oso grande] situado nos territorios do noroeste do Canadá. Neste capítulo, destácase a conexión entre a expansión capitalista e a crenza patriarcal nunha peza que detalla as numerosas enfermidades causadas pola produción de uranio en Canadá. Mentres que aos mineiros se lles dicía que axudaban a curar o cancro, Canadá vendía o uranio aos Estados Unidos que o usaba para bombardear Hiroshima e Nagasaki. Clements fai balance deste acontecemento histórico. En concreto, mostra os problemas de saúde e as malas condicións laborais das mulleres que traballaban como pintoras de radio. Tamén aborda como o coñecemento e a cultura indíxenas poden protexer o corpo humano – e toda a vida que constitúe a totalidade do ecosistema local – dos impactos devastadores deste mineral. Marie Clements forma parte dunha longa tradición de mulleres indíxenas de todo o mundo que se manifestan contra os residuos tóxicos. A súa obra *Burning Vision* establece relacións entre personaxes separados polo tempo e o espazo: algúns personaxes proceden dunha comunidade canadense onde se extrae uranio e outros proceden de cidades xaponesas onde se lanzan bombas nucleares. Estes improbables encontros fomentan a empatía e responsabilizan ás persoas das súas accións independentemente da distancia, cultura, etnia ou lingua. Isto suxire que a interconexión é

un compoñente clave dunha estratexia narrativa que busca transmitir valores ecofeministas como a rendición de contas.

O quinto capítulo, “Let’s Plant a Minister: Political Action in a Rural Community and Its Animal Saviours” [Plantemos un ministro: acción política nunha comunidade rural e os seus salvadores animais], trata dunha obra escrita en francés por Marcelle Dubois. *Habiter les terres* [Habitar as terras] examina a supervivencia de Guyenne, unha aldea cuxos habitantes secuestran ao ministro da ocupación do territorio e o plantan na horta coma unha verdura. A xente de Guyenne protesta contra a retirada dos servizos públicos, o que pon en perigo a subsistencia da súa comunidade. En *Habiter les terres*, o legado colonial de dominación e explotación é evidente na relación entre os seres humanos e outras especies; os animais represéntanse como subordinados e a natureza como ferramenta. O traballo de Jennifer Andrews sobre o realismo máxico e a análise de Stephanie Kirkpatrick das películas de animación de Disney proporcionaron unha base teórica sólida para unha perspectiva crítica sobre os animais falantes de Dubois. Se na obra se menciona a crise ecolóxica, as súas consecuencias negativas proxéctanse nas grandes cidades afastadas de Guyenne onde se desenvolve a acción. As referencias ao principio de *free mining* na obra recordan como opera o poder do goberno e da industria nesta zona rural. O desafuzamento da filla dos Dubois, a protagonista, é orquestrado polo buscador de ouro, un personaxe que reafirma o seu poder sobre ela ao ser o dono dos minerais que se atopan baixo a superficie de toda a aldea.

O sexto capítulo, “The Settlers’ Impossible Banquet: A Tale of Dispossession Told by Shuswap Women” [O banquete imposible dos colonos: un conto de desposuimento contado por mulleres Shuswap], céntrase na obra *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout* [Ernestine Shuswap consegue a súa troita] do dramaturgo canadense Cree Tomson Highway, que retrata a catro mulleres indíxenas que preparan un banquete para a visita histórica dun primeiro ministro canadense. Esta obra, escrita en inglés, lembra o xenocidio cultural dos pobos nativos da Columbia Británica e a perda dos seus dereitos. A miña análise afonda na liberación das mulleres, xa que as personaxes femininas son conscientes do seu estado de servidume e o personaxe principal, Ernestine, faise autosuficiente.

Non obstante, estas mulleres seguen baixo o dominio do estado colonial. O desposuimento colonial é a principal opresión retratada en *Ernestine Shuswap Get Her Trout*. Tomson Highway presenta moitos animais como un compoñente central da súa narrativa, nomeadamente un peixe, unha vaca e un castor. Coa nova normativa colonial, os animais enfermaron e aumentou o esgotamento dos recursos. Esta peza recorda a prohibición de pescar, cazar e pastorear, a prohibición de falar a lingua nativa e a expulsión dos Shuswap dos seus territorios ancestrais. Ademais da violencia colonial, a obra revela diferentes elementos enraizados no estilo de vida precolonial, como as linguas nativas, os hábitos alimentarios e o coñecemento médico do pobo Shuswap. A análise desta obra atopa evidencias dun discurso non hexemónico na transmisión da cultura, do coñecemento e das tradicións indíxenas.

O sétimo capítulo, “Mothering Nature as Working Artists and Parents: Art, Politics, and Water Science” [Devir nai da natureza como artistas traballadores e pais: arte, política e ciencia da auga], explora *The Watershed* [A cunca], unha obra de teatro de Annabel Soutar publicada en inglés e producida tanto en inglés como en francés. Esta obra documental narra a historia dunha familia que viaxa ata as áreas bituminosas de Alberta para tomar máis conciencia ecolóxica. No camiño, cuestionan dous obxectivos irreconciliables da política canadense: un crecemento económico constante e unha xestión ambiental sensata. Neste capítulo, concentro a miña análise no legado ambiental negativo da extracción de petróleo e como a súa existencia pode provocar unha reflexión sobre comportamentos sostibles e transmisión de coñecemento ecolóxico interxeracional entre unha familia canadense, os Soutar. Este capítulo destaca a mercantilización da natureza e a censura da ciencia, dous elementos que van da man nun contexto de capitalismo colonial enraizado na procura do beneficio. Polo tanto, a natureza preséntase como unha serie de bens que se poden monetizar. En *The Watershed*, un bosque boreal transfórmase nunha pranta de áreas bituminosas, a produción de petróleo convértese nunha ameaza para as reservas da auga doce canadense, a ciencia é silenciada por motivos económicos e políticos e a Área Experimental dos Lagos perde o seu financiamento. A suma destas accións reforza a división natureza-cultura e a orde xerárquica na

que a natureza está dominada polos humanos en xeral e polos homes en particular. A dramaturga cuestiona a contaminación do río Athabasca e o subfinanciamento de grandes proxectos científicos mobilizando unha ética do coidado. Mentres a sociedade asigna os coidados ás mulleres e, en consecuencia, os desvalorizan, esta obra busca restaurar a súa imaxe, xa que a protagonista protexe a auga doce do Canadá, coida das súas fillas e preocúpase polo futuro da ciencia. Para iso, Annabel Soutar achégase e escoita a unha ampla gama de persoas que representan diferentes intereses. Un punto vital na aplicación desta estratexia segundo Soutar é que a ética do coidado só é posible se se pode establecer un diálogo e só se dúas persoas se poden escoitar respectuosamente aínda que non compartan a mesma opinión.

A última parte da tese é a conclusión, onde discuto as diferenzas e similitudes nos achados dos seis capítulos principais para confirmar ou refutar a miña hipótese, que é que estes dramaturgos proporcionan unha nova visión da relación entre seres humanos, animais e a natureza, máis xusta e sostible. Neste noveno capítulo, tamén abordo como se superpoñen estes discursos coa renovación das opresións. Despois comento os límites desta investigación, así como as distintas opcións posibles para afondar neste campo de estudo. Para concluír, esta investigación ten como obxectivo identificar e expoñer novas formas e discursos teatrais sobre a diversidade de identidades canadenses en relación co xénero e a ecoloxía. A diversidade de contra-discursos analizados nesta tese mostra unha ampla gama de estratexias prácticas para construír relacións xustas e sostibles entre a natureza humana e a non humana. Non obstante, os dramaturgos reproducen inxustizas no escenario xunto a novos modelos de reciprocidade e relacións non xerárquicas. Esta investigación defende a idea de que a representación da violencia contra as mulleres e a natureza é moi relevante porque chama a atención sobre as problemáticas relacións de poder visibles que normalmente se pasan por alto e son normalizadas nas nosas sociedades capitalistas e patriarcais. Así, ademais de ofrecer narracións alternativas e discursos contrahexemónicos, as obras estudadas ofrecen un terreo fértil que ten o poder de provocar indignación e provocar algún tipo de interrogación por parte do público.

Como o cambio climático é unha das crises máis destrutivas do noso tempo, a comunidade artística ten unha oportunidade histórica de abordar cuestións ecolóxicas e as súas implicacións sociais: “artists have rewritten history to correct mistakes, point out omissions and give a voice to those who were silenced. This time, we have a chance to write history before it happens” (Bilodeau 13).²²⁷ Mentres tanto, Canadá “is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world” (“Canada Warming”), segundo un artigo da BBC sobre un informe federal canadense no que o quecemento global se atribúe ás actividades humanas – outra pista de que algo ten que cambiar radicalmente na forma en que o pobo canadense se relacionan coa natureza non humana.²²⁸ Os ecodramas poden ser un xeito de fomentar este cambio.

227 “os artistas reescribiron a historia para corrixir erros, sinalar omisións e dar voz aos que foron silenciados. Esta vez, temos a oportunidade de escribir a historia antes de que aconteza” (Bilodeau 13).

228 “quéntase o dobre de rápido que o resto do mundo” (“Canada Warming”).



This dissertation analyses six Canadian plays through an ecofeminist lens. The study, which focuses on stories written by francophone, anglophone, and Indigenous playwrights, attempts to discover: 1) In what ways do the plays show the intertwining of ecocide, colonialism, gender, and racial inequalities in Canada? And 2) what new tropes and theatrical forms emerge from this political theatre? This research shows that the plays analysed create narrative structures and systems of representation (e.g., of gender, of human/non-human relationships) that stress the entangling of racial and gender inequalities in environmental destruction, highlighting the importance of animal studies and decolonial thinking, two aspects sometimes absent from mainstream ecofeminist critique.