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Ecological Crises of the Capitalocene: A Study on Colleen Murphy's *The Breathing Hole*

SUPTHITA PAL
School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management
National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal, India
supthita6@gmail.com

DHISHNA PANNIKOT
School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Management
National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal, India

ABSTRACT

The present paper seeks to lay bare how the grim realities of settler colonialism and petro-capitalism have a tolling effect on the indigenous ways of life. The present era, termed the 'Anthropocene' or 'Capitalocene,' as it is the capitalist concern of some of the privileged anthropos that inflict socio-economic and ecological injustices on earth, heralds the birth of cautionary literature that deconstructs anthropocentric fixation to purge the earth off the catastrophic impacts of rapacious human activities. In order to examine how capitalism and its resultant climate emergency have spurred environmental activists and authors to reflect upon this theme, the paper undertakes a close textual analysis of The Breathing Hole (2020) by Colleen Murphy (b. 1954), a contemporary Quebecois playwright. By employing indigenous ecocriticism and non-human turn in literary studies, the study examines how the playwright jettisons the standardised category of the Anthropos by prioritising the non-human character, Angu'ruaq, an anthropomorphised polar bear. Attempts have been made to highlight how the capitalist motive of the neo-colonial agents leaves a breach in the fabric of the succouring connection between the indigenous Inuit existence and the non-human beings in the Nunavut territory of the Canadian Arctic. The findings of the paper demonstrate how the playwright approaches contemporary eco-crisis using indigenous ecodrama.

Keywords: climate emergency; nonhuman; petrocapitalism; settler colonialism; stewardship

INTRODUCTION

The premises of indigenous ecocriticism and non-human turn could be studied in Colleen Murphy's 2020 play *The Breathing Hole*, a "play about the climate emergency" (p. XIII) that highlights the perspectives of the indigenous Inuits and the non-human world. Canadian-Quebecois playwright, screenwriter, film director, and environmental activist Colleen Murphy is a prolific writer devoted to contemporary ecological issues and indigenous eco-justice movements. Set in three different time zones (1535, 1845, and 2035), Murphy's play is a diachronic study of how anthropogenic disruption and capitalist/colonial expansion gnaw at and gradually ruin the hitherto undefiled Canadian Arctic. By capturing the epic journey ranging from 1535 to 2035 of a supernatural polar bear, Angu'ruaq, the play presents the course of half a millennium's transformation in the socio-cultural milieu of Inuit indigenous existence and their shared bond with the ecosystem.

The paper seeks to identify and analyse the dissimilitude of the Inuit indigenous habitation and the usurping of European colonial civilisation. While the first act, spanning from 1534-1546, portrays the unadulterated human-non-human cohabitation that sustains on and through the principles of fundamental interconnectedness, the third or last act (2031-2035) dramatises the capitalist commodification of nature which ultimately results in the habitat loss and death of the

central character, Angu'ruaq, causing a breach in the fabric of the succouring connection that the Inuits and the non-human world share. The second act, spanning from 1845 to 1847, however, is an in-between state which powerfully focuses on the contrast between the Inuit and the European (colonisers') ways of life.

This paper examines how the playwright has attempted to put the play into the context of the present day, a time characterised by immense human activity, a geological phenomenon known as the Anthropocene. The term Anthropocene was coined by the Marine ecologist Eugene F. Stoermer in the 1980s and popularised by the Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen in the late twentieth century. It has been used to highlight overwhelming human activity as a geological force and expose the rapidly increasing impacts of human behaviour on the planet, spawning a new geological age:

> …major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global scales, it thus is more than appropriate to emphasise the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by using the term 'Anthropocene' for the current geological epoch.
>
> (Crutzen, 2006, p. 16)

However, the idea of the Anthropocene is fuelled by the imperialistic drives of capitalism. The paper seeks to interpret the capitalist vandalisation of the indigenous ecosystem portrayed in the play as the obvious outcome of the Capitalocene age, which anthropologist Jason Moore aptly proposes in exchange for the relatively more popular term, Anthropocene. Anthropocene should better be understood as the Capitalocene as "the Anthropocene-Capitalocene is an epoch—after all— of eco-violation reflecting well-practised, patterned, and predictable global and globalising distributions of intra-species, and inter-species injustice" (Grear, 2017, p. 83). Capitalocene is an age of capital accumulation; it connotes the capitalist concerns of the Anthropos, whom Anna Tsing locates as the White, Male, Colonising, Modernist and Capitalist Man (Sandilands, 2017). Neo-Marxist critics argue that the age should be re-named as 'Capitalocene', for "our ecological crises have been precipitated not by humans in some undifferentiated and generalised way, but more specifically by the global spread of capitalism and its socio-economic-ecological injustices" (Arons, 2020, p. 17). Sincere attempts have been made to read the text in light of this observation.

The paper reveals how capitalism and anthropogenic exploitation have unsettled the equanimity of nature in the Nunavut territory. The worst of all those catastrophic outcomes is the sixth extinction. Eileen Crist, in his article "The Poverty of Our Nomenclature" (2013), remarks: "The Sixth extinction is a casualty of history, the grand finale of the mowing down of biological diversity over the course of many centuries and accelerated in the last two" (p. 137). The Anthropos as a species have expedited the extinction moments for other species of the earth and sped up the sixth mass extinction event. An attempt has been made to examine the central character Angu'ruaq's sufferings at the hands of the non-indigenous despoilers.

Not only do the capitalists have commodified nature and natural resources as factors of production, but also de-humanised most of the humans:

> . . . indigenous peoples, enslaved Africans, nearly all women, and even many white-skinned men (Slavs, Jews, the Irish) . . . [as] these humans were not Human at all. They were regarded as part of nature, along with trees, soils and rivers – and treated accordingly.
>
> (Moore, 2016, p. 79)

Though the capitalists convinced humanity of its presence as a link that advances the human-nature nexus, it actually "threatens to drive a stake through its (world) heart. The world is not moving under capitalism toward the unity of humanity and nature but toward a dangerous separation" (Foster, 2016, p. 15).

However, the indigenous communities, even in the contemporary times of the Capitalocene, maintain well-knit bonds with nature and wildlife. The playwright registers how the indigenous community of the Inuits, who have inhabited the Canadian Arctic for ages, believes in the fabric of a profound connection between human and non-human existences. The Inuit community of Baffin Island, also known as Nunavut's Qikiqtani Region, are semi-nomadic people and are dependent on seasonal animals, not only for food but for every other necessity. Deeply rooted within the remote and pristine wilderness of the Northern Arctic, the Inuit community stewards the land and the sea. Environmental degradations disrupt the community lifestyle of the indigenous groups who share an interdependent chain of exchange. The present study seeks to lay bare how anthropogenic interests and capitalist extractivism separate humans from their natural environment and sever the bond between the human and the non-human.

Being the richest and the largest resource of industrial extraction in Canada, the histories of Nunavut are admixtures of "violence, subjugation, collective memory, landscape, survival, tradition, and more" (Grusin, 2016, p. 131). Since the 1970s oil crisis, the Northern Arctic has been marked as the most prospective site for oil drilling. Apart from this, the Nunavut region of the Canadian Arctic is a part of the settler colonial nature of Canadian policy, and this affiliation results in multiple levels of marginalisation. Adam J. Barker et al., in their chapter entitled "Settler Colonialism and the Consolidation of Canada in the Twentieth Century", state:

> Despite 'recognising' the Inuit as a people, Nunavut is an almost powerless entity within the Canadian state. Sparsely populated, Nunavut is dependent on the federal government to provide infrastructure and economic support and has little political power, as Territories are not equivalent to Provinces under the Constitution. The establishment of Nunavut also served to both erase the claims of Inuit people to their territories outside of Nunavut and to obscure the claims of non-Inuit Indigenous groups. The creation of Nunavut has not slowed the impacts of colonisation on Inuit peoples.
>
> (2017, p. 158)

However, in the late twentieth century, direct colonial oppressions were not to be found even in the remote Arctic, but the presence of neo-colonial domination is to be felt in abundance. The playwright, too, has tried to capture the neo-colonial presence in the Nunavut territory in the third act, which is set in the post-2030s.

The agents of neoliberal ideology grow industrial and corporate interests in the North for its resources. Besides the corporate preoccupations, ecotourism has also affected the wildlife and the environment. Consequently, the long-held Inuit control over land and sea is now in a state of crisis; Inuit stewardship is in danger. Specifically, the indigenous ways of life are fraught with various threats from the newly available access to technocratic development. In the guise of the so-called Northern development, the Arctic region is threatened with environmental degradation. Jessica M. Shadian, in her study, "Remaking Arctic Governance: The Construction of an Arctic Inuit Polity," remarks:

> The greatest and certainly the most direct threat to the security of Arctic residents stems from damage to the environment. The Arctic, in effect, has been treated as a dumping ground by government, military establishments and industries concerned only with the needs of southern societies.
>
> (2006, p. 256)

So, in light of these observations, this study attempts to depict the facade of settler colonialism, reigning petro-capitalism, and neocolonial presence through ecotourism in the Arctic. The study examines their devastating impacts on the indigenous ways of life that keep faith in mutual thriving with the non-human entities and conform to the ethos of environmental stewardship. The central premise of the paper is to foreground the capitalist outlook of the (neo)/colonials who disrupt the fabric of the fundamental bond between the human (Inuit) and the non-human worlds.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary ecological crises have compelled sensitive authors to register environmental injustices and capitalist-colonialist exploitation of nature and wildlife in their creative as well as critical works. New ecological perspectives in humanities have started to emerge in the twenty-first century literary studies. Eco-theatre, in general, and environmental tragedies, in particular, are among the few genres with which the eco-conscious authors are preoccupied. The recent spread of capitalism and its resultant ecological injustices have spurred environmental activists and authors to reflect upon this theme.

Amitav Ghosh, in his critical study, *Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), argues that there is a paucity of serious literary works concerning ecological themes. Though a few authors engage with writing climate fiction, environmental themes are rare to be found in plays. American eco-dramas started to come into existence, not until the late twentieth century. The early 1990s have usually been regarded by the environmentalist writers and ecocritics as the watershed moment of American eco-theatre. Looking at theatre through the lens of ecology has been stressed by Theresa J. May in the 1994 editorial column of the journal *The Theatre*. In “There Must Be a Lot of Fish in That Lake” (1994), Una Chaudhuri necessitates the role of theatre in creating public consciousness.

Twenty-first-century American eco-dramas like Adam Rapp’s *Faster* (2002) and *Ghosts in the Cottonwoods* (2014) signify "deep interdependence between human subjectivity and non-human nature" (Rossler, 2022, p. 148). Indigenous responses towards the impending environmental crises caused by capitalist/ colonial outlooks are recorded in plays like *Heroes and Saints* (1995) by Cherrie Moraga, *Burning Vision* (2003) by Marie Clements, *Calling All Polar Bears* (2011) by Allison Warden, and *Sila* (2015) by Chantal Bilodeau. Among these indigenous eco-dramas, Bilodeau’s *Sila* dramatises how the onslaughts of the Capitalocene have affected the human-nonhuman chain of equilibrium in the Nunavut region of the Canadian Arctic. Melissa Colleen Campbell, in her 2014 article, "Reclaiming Indigenous Voices and Staging Eco-activism in Northern Indigenous Theatre," observes the essential anti-colonial nature of indigenous eco-dramaturgy and pinpoints the perspectives of the indigenous communities on the aftermath of colonisation and eco-crisis.

However, research articles are too scanty to capture the Inuit indigenous response to the climate change issues caused mainly by the ravages of the capitalist attitude of the colonisers and neoliberal non-indigenous presence. Theresa May (2021), in her book chapter entitled "Kinship, Community, and Climate Change," discusses the fundamental concept of interconnectedness with reference to *Sila* by Bilodeau and *Burning Vision* by Clements. Wendy Arons, in his research article "Tragedies of the Capitalocene," analyses Murphy’s play to bring to the fore the pangs of suffering of the Inuits and the polar bears in the hands of the despoilers. As no other similar

research work has come to notice to date, it is evident that existing research in this arena needs critical attention. There are ample scopes to conduct research on Inuit indigenous eco-dramaturgy. As Murphy's play captures Inuit indigenous responses towards the colonisers/ capitalists' exploitation of the flora and fauna of the native Arctic region, it will be highly relevant to critically engage with their hitherto underprivileged perspectives.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Under the rubric of 'ecocriticism', this article emphasises the terminologies like indigenous ecocriticism as its main theoretical framework. It is again regarded as a further wing of postcolonial ecocriticism, as indigenous ecocritical discourse simultaneously engages with both postcolonial concerns and environmental consciousness. Franz Fanon, one of the foremost critics of postcolonial ecocriticism, observes that it is the native land which fetches the colonised people "bread and, above all, dignity" (Fanon, 1965, p. 43). Indigenous ecocriticism appropriates the fact that environmental equilibrium can be maintained only if the indigenous people are given sovereignty over their native place. Reverence for indigenous knowledge, belief systems, cultural practices, and traditional values contributes to sustainable development and proper governance of the environment. The ravages of colonisation and displacement due to industrialisation, deforestation, and other capitalist ventures wreak havoc on the bond between indigenous existence and the non-human world.

Indigenous ecocriticism recognises the dire need for indigenous resistance to combat the impending perils of ecological crisis. Similar to the tenets of ecofeminism that equate the oppression of women with that of Mother Earth, indigenous ecocriticism draws a parallel between the repression of the indigenous communities and the exploitation of the natural resources that include the animal world. Indigenous ecocriticism demonstrates backlash against the current anthropogenic climate change issues affecting the indigenous land that has encountered colonial violence in the past and is under the dominance of neocolonial expansion/ exploitation in the present times. Indigenous ecocriticism is foregrounded on the claim that indigenous ecological wisdom not only predates but is also superior to Western non-indigenous scientific knowledge. This specific area of investigation stresses the holistic approach, which bears a resemblance to the notion of the *oikos* that includes all living and nonliving entities. The play portrays how the indigenous Inuits consider environmental values as instrumental to their own survival. Throughout ages, they conform to the rules of the ecosystem and thereby are put in contradistinction to the settlers for whom the native environment is just a source for their basic needs. Settler-native binarism is evident when the playwright juxtaposes two contrasting ideas of a settler and a native, respectively:

> Dufort: I'm agnostic myself, so I'm fine with humans having souls but not animals.
> Qi'ngaqtuq: . . . Humans and bears did not exist without the other.
>
> (Murphy, 2020, p. 230)

The play under consideration powerfully depicts the roles of the polar bear, who has been anthropomorphised, to convey his message to fellow human beings. In order to study Angu'ruaq's perspectives, this study also utilises the theoretical base of the non-human turn in literary studies. The non-human turn in twenty-first-century literary studies has been developed mainly by the critic Donna Haraway, who developed the stream called Animal Studies to protect the rights of animals.

However, in American literature, this concern for the non-human can be traced back to several writings belonging to, for example, Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman in *The Non-human Turn* (2015):

> Non-humans gained even more powerful impetus in the nineteenth century from Charles Darwin's insistence on seeing human and non-human species as operating according to the same laws of natural selection and William James's radical contention in The Principles of Psychology that human thought, emotion, habit, and will were all inseparable from, and often consequent upon, non-human, bodily material processes.
>
> (Grusin, 2015, p. viii)

The anthropocentric drama "undoes anthropocentric fixation" and "instead of splitting anthropos from the concerns of natural powers or the ecological spheres, a planetary-based stage expands the social field to include a diverse mix of human and non-human actors" (Sidiropoulou, 2022, p. 211). The paper attempts to examine the non-human subjectivity which has been made visible in Murphy's play through the character portrayal of Angu'ruaq, the polar bear.

METHODOLOGY

The present article makes use of indigenous ecocriticism and non-human turn as analytical tools to critically interpret Murphy's play *The Breathing Hole* (2020), which, as per the review of Jamie Portman, "is making an ecological statement" (2017). The main data collection is done through a close reading of the primary text that engages with the resistance of the indigene towards colonial/capitalist repression. To examine the select text, this study considers the print script of the said play and not the performances. Moreover, the article examines the main characteristic features of 'eco-dramaturgy', which Theresa J. May, in the introduction to *Readings in Performance and Ecology* (2016), defined as: "theatre and performance making that puts ecological reciprocity and community at the centre of its theatrical and thematic intent" (Arons & May, 2016, p. 04). If the wave analogy of Ecology and Performance is taken into consideration, eco-dramaturgy that represents climate change crises, indigenous communities, women, and the non-human world falls under the rubric of the third wave, which came into existence after 2010. Anne Heath, in her book *Indignity, Ecocriticism, and Critical Literacy*, remarks that "contemporary postcolonial indigenous literatures give multifaceted depictions of how indigenous people engage with the world in an epoch characterised by loss of indigenous cultures and land" (2022, p. 20). The textual analysis method is employed in Murphy's text to investigate the indigenous refusal of the colonial-capitalist displacement of their balanced cohabitation with nature.

DISCUSSION

UNADULTERATED INDIGENOUS INHABITATION

The first act, set in an authentic Arctic atmosphere, uncontaminated by colonial hazards and industrial vagaries, realistically dramatises a shared community bond that erases the boundary between the human and the non-human world. Before the onset of the colonial era, the weather of the native Nunavut aided in the survival of its flora and fauna, and it helped to build a "profound connection" between all living and non-living creatures (Murphy, 2020, p. 78). The first act registers how a very unfamiliar bond develops between the Inuit elderly widow, Hummiktuq, and

a polar bear cub. Companionless Hummiktuq adopts an abandoned one-eared bear cub and names him Angu'ruaq, which means "the big man" (Murphy, 2020, p. 44). Not only does she pet the cub, but she raises him as her son to whom she is "Anaana . . . human mother" (Murphy, 2020, p. 44). The second scene of the first act shows how Angu'ruaq has been domesticated in a way that he helps in hunting seals for the community members. From Angu'ruaq, the male members of the community learn how to hunt as swiftly as a polar bear. He forms an unbreakable tie with the community through his fellow feeling, loyalty, and humaneness. However, perhaps as an obvious outcome of the human habit of apprehension, the community members could not withstand the bodily demands of an animal. Angu'ruaq's mating with the female polar bear is considered a threat to the security of the clan, and they decide the fate of Angu'ruaq. As a human mother protects her son and his family, Hummiktuq, too, stands as a shield against the evil desires of her clan. Though she knows that being departed from her son, her life will be shattered, she let him leave so that he can spend his life happily with his wife.

The act, which starts with light "sparkling along the ridge of a glacial hill in the distance" and with the land "alive with sounds rumbling from deep inside the ice" (Murphy, 2020, p. 14), ends with an insinuation of impending environmental disruption caused by the severing of the link between human and the non-human. The act ends by giving a glimpse of the future that "heralds the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning" (Murphy, 2020, p. 80). The emergence of the massive nineteenth-century colonisers' ship, the HMS Erebus, and the disappearance of the indigenous clan in the midst of time presaged a new era marked by calamitous ravages to the Canadian Arctic.

SETTLER COLONIALISM AND COLONISER-COLONISED ENCOUNTER

This ecological separation is paralleled with and accelerated by the geopolitical domination of the indigenous land by the settler colonialists. The second act, set in 1834, transports the readers to an utterly changed environment. In place of the native Inuit people, the land is now peopled with the European colonisers in the guise of explorers, ornithologists, oceanographers, botanists, and geologists, as highlighted in the following excerpt:

> Where the Inuit are shown to be fully imbricated in and with the land and its non-human inhabitants, the British characters hubristically epitomise what philosopher Timothy LeCain suggests is the hallmark of capitalism's attitude toward nature-as-resource – that is, the belief "that humans and their cultures are distinct from their material environment; that material things are essentially passive 'natural resources' that humans bend, with more or less success, to their own will; and that humans largely chart their own course through history, unmoored from the 'natural' material world that encompasses everything but themselves.
>
> (Arons, 2020, p. 28)

The serenity of May 1535 is lost, for the territory is now strewn with vandalised dead bodies. The stage setting indicates that the glacial hill on which Aurora Borealis used to enlighten the entire vicinity is awry now. Whereas the first act starts with babies crying, the second act is set in the backdrop that portrays the bodies of thirty persons, some graves, and five human corpses.

The playwright tries to capture how, with the passage of time, the relationship between humans and the non-human world changes. The explorers' reactions towards one of the staple animals, a polar bear, are either full of awe or disgust. If some of them are amazed by the magnificence of the animal, others want to shoot it down at first sight. For these usurpers, the native animals, unlike the Inuit belief system, are devoid of soul. However, Angu'ruaq still nurtures empathy towards human beings and as per his three hundred habits, he offers a dead seal to Bean,

an officer of Franklin's Northwest Passage expedition. Angu'ruaq fails to realise that these neo-humans are concerned only about Britain's imperial expansion. They are interested in the native flora and fauna in order to map and survey the undiscovered land. Whereas cultural imperialism, as Laurelyn Whitt (2009) argues, "extends the political power, secures the social control, and furthers the economic profit of the dominant culture" (p. 24), the concept of resource colonialism involves "the identification, appropriation, extraction and processing, by dominant societies, of select natural resources belonging to other, subordinated peoples . . ." (p. 19). The second act registers the first coloniser-colonised encounter vividly. Whereas the two natives, Argiaq and Paningajak, are dehumanised at the very first sight, the colonisers are also not accepted by the natives.

The colonisers' language, physical appearance, and behaviour all seemed very unfamiliar to the natives, yet they didn't call them names or try to befool them. The natives want the aliens to leave their place to themselves and harbour no harm to them. Unlike the indigenous people, these malevolent colonisers seek to oust them from their own land and utilise their resources hidden underneath. For the coloniser, the natives appear to be "savages . . . right ungodly savages" (Murphy, 2020, p. 126), their language "gibberish" (Murphy, 2020, p. 110), and their valuables to be bribed in exchange of petty beads. Whereas the colonisers display no connection with the Arctic environment and seek the natives' help to navigate the region, Argiaq advises them to deeply observe the subtle nuances of the environment that are inclusive of the land, the sky, the ocean, and all the living creatures. The Inuit's existence depends much on land and sea ice. They are not dependent on these natural resources only for sustenance; rather, they are emotionally as well as culturally tied up with the spatial attributes of the specific milieu. Sea ice routes are used by the Inuit to facilitate access to important wild food resources and culturally significant places. The sea ice acts as a highway for the Inuit as it helps them to access their own land without any constraint. So, the traditional Inuit lifestyle and their relationship with the land are deadly against the Eurocentric social structures.

However, far from being in harmony with the native land, the European adventurers are nothing but plunderers who want to maximise their sovereignty by cheapening and exploiting nature. The act ends with portraying a critical scene of human cannibalism and bestial attitudes. In the first act, the playwright shows that the Inuit people could retain their sanity even after long starvation, but in the second act, lack of food and extreme weather conditions purge the so-called civilised human beings of their humaneness. Tagged as a geopolitical hotspot, the Canadian Arctic has long been subjected to the onslaughts of colonialism.

ONSLAUGHTS OF PETROCAPITALISM

The recognition of the Arctic region as a resource frontier due to the abundance of hydrocarbon, natural gas, and crude oil underneath its deep waters has increased its probability of being ruined by extractives. The 2008 Circum-Arctic Resource Appraisal triggered the colonial expansion in this region due to the availability of suitable space to grow industrial plants that eventually facilitated resource exploitation and capital accumulation. The economic development projects, which are the products of the neo-extractivist modes of development, exert control over the indigenous territory and natural resources. As an outcome, the dismemberment of the Arctic region becomes a reality, and this ultimately results in the displacement and utter exploitation of the indigenous communities that not only inhabit these spaces but steward its resources.

It is noteworthy how the playwright represents the transformation of the colonialists in the 1830s into the capitalists (neocolonisers) in the 2030s. The new usurpers belong to a particular privileged category of men, whom Haraway tags as burning fossils (Haraway, 2014). Malm, in his book *Fossil Capital* (2016), addresses the issue:

> Realising that climate change is "anthropogenic" is to appreciate that it is sociogenic. It has arisen as a result of temporally fluid social relations as they materialise through the rest of nature, and once this ontological insight—implicit in climate change science—is truly taken on board, one can no longer treat humankind as a species being determined by its biological evolution. Nor can one write off division between human beings as immaterial to the broader picture, for such divisions may have been an integral part of fossil fuel combustion in the first place
>
> (p. 270)

Just like the first act, the second act also ends with an admonishing vision marked by the advent of capitalism. The act at once transports the readers to an apocalyptic future, set in 2031, where the Northwest Passage has already been discovered, and trade has been started, which is testified through the establishment of "a forty thousand ton, four hundred-foot tall drilling platform", the Circumpolar Oil Platform (p. 198). The changed backdrop suggests that the effects of capitalist-colonialist authority are taking a toll on the environment.

Bonneuil and Fressoz in their book, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, observe that the calamities of anthropogenic action, which they term "Anthropocene shock," do not emerge out of anything alien that would strike the earth to derail "its geological trajectory" he rather accuses: "it is our own model of development, our own industrial modernity, which, having claimed to free itself from the limits of the planet, is striking Earth like a boomerang" (2016, p. 27). Anthropologist Jason Moore (2016) charts the inevitable consequences of climate change as climate catastrophes: "Mass extinction. Climate change. Ocean Acidification . . . runaway. . . Toxic disasters on land and at sea; Cancer clusters; frequent and severe droughts" (p. 78).

Environmental theorists and researchers have warned the world about the impending uncertainty regarding our existence. Richard Grusin (2016) remarks that Anthropocene is "synonymous with the idea of human beings as a new driver of earth systems owing to the impact of anthropogenic changes to the earth's lithosphere, biosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere" (p. 171). As an outcome of mindless accumulation of capital, nature has been rendered as cheap inputs to the economy. The impending dangers of climate change are "the normal operation of capitalism's socio-economic cycles within the web of life, for, history is replete with instances of capitalism overcoming seemingly insuperable 'natural limits'" (Moore, 2016, p. 13).

Certainly, the oil drilling industries are the direct reason behind this climate change. The tyranny of the profit-making multinational corporations in the Arctic is to be located. Evidently, the absence of the Inuit indigenous people from their native land is one of the many reasons behind the plunderers' reign. Though two native descendants, Tuutalik and Qi'ngaqtuq, are present in the third act, they are now becoming the agents of capitalism, compelled by natural adversities and poverty. They are forced to join the Circumpolar Oil Corporation, which is responsible for the privatisation and commercialisation of its ancestral milieu. Rightly does Wendy Arons observe:

> Human and non-human indigenous inhabitants of the environs are shown to have been equally displaced and disoriented by the forces of the Capitalocene, which are constellated here in the form of the humming off-stage oil platform and the area's newest "colonisers, the ecotourist entrepreneurs.
>
> (2020, p. 29)

Dipesh Chakrabarty (2009), in his article, "The Climate of History: Four Theses", asserts that human beings must accept the fact that humans are just a species among the innumerable species of the universe. Murphy's play categorically challenges this human exceptionalism and emphasises non-human subjectivity. The analysis of the text underlines how the playwright denies the possibility of any dominion of the Anthropos over other creatures of the earth. Murphy asserts that the ecosystem rather than humanity should be placed at the centre, and only then the hierarchy between centre and margin, foreground and background would collapse.

THE NONHUMAN AND ECOTOURISM

In all three acts, the non-human character of the omnipresent Angu'ruaq acts as a connecting link. In an online review of the play in *the National Post*, Robert Cushman (2017) points out that Murphy's play, under consideration, is remarkable for its unique characterisation: "There are plenty of plays that tell of climate change. This may be the first to find a way of showing it . . . What *Warhorse* did for horses, this does for bears" (Cushman, 2017). In the first act, Angu'ruaq, situated in a benevolent atmosphere, develops an affinity towards his fellow human beings through his human-foster mother, Hummiktuq; in the second act, though the scenario has been altered due to the appearance of the European colonisers and explorers, Angu'ruaq is seen to be helpful even towards the usurpers; the last act dramatises the gradual change in Angu'ruaq's treatment towards the fellow human beings who have killed his wife and are the cause behind his loss of five hundred years old habitat. Through the three acts, the playwright unveils the wider impacts of colonialism/capitalism-induced climate change, which is threatening the existence of the non-human animals represented in the play by the polar bears.

The playwright makes a humble effort to focus on the problematised issue of ecotourism in connection with the indigenous communities. Whereas, in some ways, indigenous communities can have benefits by promoting ecotourism in a rather unexplored territory, it is bound to invoke greater problems related to the communities' long-established bond with the ecosystem. Similarly, ecotourism in the Arctic is bound to have a negative impact as this territory is a highly sensitive region in terms of flora-fauna and indigenous habitation. Dirk Gaul, in his survey entitled "Environmental Impacts of Ecotourism: A Review of Literature" (2003), highlights the most severe threats of ecotourism activities. Ecotourism is bound to have detrimental impacts on wildlife, which may face habitat loss and killing for souvenirs, which is readily visible in Murphy's text.

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment and sustains the well-being of local people". The concept of ecotourism is inextricably linked up with the concept of green capitalism, so, evidently, ecotourism has nothing (or very little) to do with environmental conservation. Rosaleen Duffy, in the introduction to her book, *A Trip Too Far: Ecotourism, Politics and Exploitation* (2002), states that "ecotourism is a business . . . it focuses on profit rather than conservation" (p. X). The main principle behind ecotourism is that it considers the environment as a resource for extracting capital. Behind the façade of environmental sustainability, ecotourism is another domain of green greed. It falls under the environmental perspective of blue-green thought, as the latter relies on the principle of utilitarianism that prioritises the greater good for human beings (majority) over non-human. As Rosaleen Duffy puts it:

> Blue greens can be found at the conservative or right-wing end of the environmental spectrum. They are often associated with concepts of weak sustainability or light green policies intended to ensure environmental protection within existing social, economic and political structures.
>
> (2002, pp. 5-6)

The play registers how, after the inception of ecotourism activities in the Nunavut region, native animals were disappearing to a large extent. The playwright makes it evident through her realistic representation that the grim realities of ecotourism-induced adversities have transformed the massive snow-white Angu'ruaq into "an old, hungry, his fur yellowing" (Murphy, 2020, p. 202) bear at habitat loss. "Killing of rare animals for souvenir" (Gaul, 2003) is an obvious outcome of the apparently harmless ecotourism.

The twenty-first-century neo-colonisers prefer the fake polar bears over the real ones. The ecotourists have paid for guaranteed wilderness sightseeing, so they must be entertained with the simulacrum of the actual resources. Murphy's play represents the neocolonisers through the character portrayals of Matson, Roy, and Ainsworth. The entrepreneur Matson's business plans are lucrative as those are concerned only about mercenary gains. Along with Roy, an ad agency professional, Ainsworth prepares a marketing advertisement for their luxurious cruise ship to navigate the Arctic waters. Though the ship promises to be eco-sustainable and equipped with re-cyclable services, what the proprietors fail to realise is that the very existence of these kinds of luxury ships is disastrous for marine ecology. Not surprisingly, the Inuit widow, Hummiktuq, in a premonition, could sense the water being blackened due to an accident of oil spill. That the reign of petro-capitalism would eventually ruin the wildlife of the Arctic has been anticipated by Hummiktuq about half a century ago. Herein, Claire Colebrook's observation is worth mentioning:

> The very world of hyper-consumption that brought about its own end, and that of many others, precisely because no other form of existence counts as a world. The forms of life that capitalism, imperialism, colonisation, and slavery have already extinguished – indigenous and nomadic – are the very forms that are deployed to depict the end of the world, but always in a perverse and fantasmatic form.
>
> (2019, p. 266)

The profiteering colonisers deny to realise that the uncharted waters of the Arctic, the undiscovered wildlife, and the pristine landscape should remain so. Otherwise, it will be lost being contaminated by civilised humans who boast of their exceptionalism and authority over all other species. Even the capitalists disguised as entrepreneurs could fathom the grave consequences of their neo-colonial presence. In his guilt consciousness, Lee, an entrepreneur of Oceanus Adventures, dreams of a dead bear cub that gets lost when Lee tries to reach it. Rightly does Mr Griffith-Thomson remarks when he names their business endeavours of ecotourism as "eco-fucking tourism 2031" (Murphy, 2020, p. 208), for it is actually catastrophic to the ecosystem.

The cataclysmic ending of the play that goes parallel with the death of Angu'ruaq testifies to it. It is evident that Angu'ruaq died gasping for breath, which connotes the severing of the fundamental interconnectedness, i.e., due to shortness of breath, which is "a sacrament, an affirmation of our connection with all other living things, a renewal of our link with our ancestors" (Murphy, 2020, p. 200). The heart-rending last scene of the play registers such an example of extreme human violence over the non-human animal, who happened to be a pet of the natives in the 1530s and used to offer food even to the nineteenth-century adventurers from Europe as well. However, with the passage of five hundred years' time, the treatment of human beings towards their non-human companion species has widely been altered. The charismatic bear, Angu'ruaq, who once was nurtured by the indigenous communities, has now been brutally slaughtered by the non-indigenous people. The above discussion proves that the general tone of the play concerning

indigenous values within settler colonialism is obviously pessimistic in nature. Be it settler colonialism or neocolonial domination, the ecosystem is bound to be devastated by the mere presence of outsiders, who cheapen and exploit nature and natural resources. The playwright puts forward how the superhuman bear, Angu'ruaq, is subjected to a brutal death when "there is no help" (Murphy, 2020, p. 289) because the native Inuits are now replaced with the European colonisers/ capitalists.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the discussion brings to the fore how the play, *The Breathing Hole*, delineates the usurping European colonial spread of capitalism, reigning petro-capitalism, and the onslaughts of ecotourism which inflict environmental injustices over the Arctic region. The in-depth analysis of Murphy's play also unearths how capitalist and anthropocentric concerns have relegated nature, natural resources, animal life, and indigenous communities to the margin. Murphy seeks to highlight that every living and non-living being has existential rights over their niche. By highlighting the hitherto repressed perspectives of the native Inuits of the Canadian Arctic, Murphy significantly contributes to the existing store of indigenous literature that aims at generating eco-consciousness among the general public as well as offering ecological justice to indigenous inhabitation. Arguably, Murphy has used her literary works to draw attention to works by environmentalists and sensitive readers. In conclusion, the playwright is determined to assert the notion that an equitable society is necessarily based on reciprocal prosperity.

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