

THE STATE OF NATURE: ECOGOTHIC (M)OTHER IN CATALINA INFANTE'S "TODAS SOMOS UNA MISMA SOMBRA"

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes "Todas somos una misma sombra," a short story by Chilean writer Catalina Infante published in 2018. The story describes the evolution of a community where men extinguish and women, as a joint shadow, walk to interweave with nature. Sun has vanished so the analysis is conceived from the ecogothic premise of fear to climate disorder. Such an alteration is the symbolic result of the ecosocial system of Anthropocene. The study considers the archetype of the state of nature proposed by English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. It expresses the fear human beings experience before reaching a pact to live in society. Catalina Infante's text describes an itinerary of be-coming where women's perception of nature is summarized by the idea of (M)other. Due to a new social pact based upon ecofeminism, the primary perception of otherness turns into the comprehension of nature as mother. The sense of shelter creates an imperative of preservation. "Todas somos una misma sombra" condenses those arguments and shows the theoretical suitability of the state-of-nature concept to analyze ecogothic literature.

KEYWORDS: Ecogothic, State of Nature, Shadow, Ecofeminism, (M)other, Preservation.

EL ESTADO DE NATURALEZA: MATERN(ALTER)IDAD ECOGÓTICA EN
"TODAS SOMOS UNA MISMA SOMBRA" DE CATALINA INFANTE

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza el relato "Todas somos una misma sombra" publicado en 2018 por la escritora chilena Catalina Infante. Incluido en el libro homónimo, el texto narra la evolución de una comunidad donde los hombres se extinguen y las mujeres inician un periplo que las lleva a fusionarse con la naturaleza. La indagación parte de la desaparición del sol como premisa ecogótica. Profundiza en la idoneidad teórica del estado de naturaleza para abordar la perspectiva literaria del ecogótico. El mito del estado de naturaleza fue postulado por el filósofo inglés Thomas Hobbes como fundamento previo del pacto social. Describe un ámbito de comportamiento humano que genera miedo. Enlaza con el relato de Catalina Infante y el miedo tras el simbolismo de una anomalía medioambiental derivada del periodo de Antropoceno. El relato sugiere un nuevo pacto social sobre postulados de ecofeminismo donde la naturaleza percibida como otredad se convierte en un espacio de refugio que responde a la idea de madre y postula un imperativo de preservación.

PALABRAS CLAVE: ecogótico, estado de naturaleza, sombra, ecofeminismo, matern(alter)idad, preservación.

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“Todas somos una misma sombra” is a short story published by Chilean writer Catalina Infante in 2018 and included in the homonym book. The story describes the vital social evolution of women in a community after the sun has disappeared. In their be-coming,¹ and after men have extinguished, they walk and conform to a joint shadow. As women wander on, Anne Williams’ interpretation of the concept of *(M)other* is central to lens female gaze in the text. This analysis considers the *state of nature*, a political myth developed by the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes. It interprets the suitability of the concept in order to explain ecogothic causes and motifs. This issue favors the literary-thought dialogue between a classic work in English letters and Catalina Infante’s story. As a result, the study on “Todas somos una misma sombra” relies on ecogothic parameters related to the Hobbesian state of nature and delves into Ecofeminism postulates to resignify the social pact in the era of Anthropocene. So, from the original element of fear, the state of nature contributes to explain a communitarian perspective of ecogothic. “Todas somos una misma sombra” is thus an expression of ecowriting describing the role of nature in social structures. For the purpose of analysis and comprehension, the title, “Todas somos una misma sombra,” is translated into English as “Everyone of Us, Women, Are the Same Shadow”.

1. THE STATE OF NATURE AND THE ECOGOTHIC LITERATURE

The sun disappearance is a climate disorder provoking fear. This fact allows “Todas somos una misma sombra” to fall within the domain of ecogothic literature. In the reflections on inherent aspects, Guan Xia declares that nature is “the ecological home for humanity” (Guang 2015, 56). In her depiction of American female writers, Stacy Alaimo claims that “nature has also been a space of feminist possibility, an always saturated but somehow undomesticated ground” (Alaimo 2000, 23). Nature is also a space where fear is likely to occur. With regard to fear deployment in Gothic fiction, Fred Botting affirms that “nature appears hostile, untamed and threatening” (Botting 2014, 4). So, ecogothic, as a literary category, is determined by a fear-provoking situation in nature, which, sometimes, it proves to be a climate anomaly or disorder. In this context, interviewed by Trang Dang, Michelle Poland considers that “the ecoGothic provides a timely and important tool to interrogate environmental anxieties and to examine both the ecology *in* Gothic and ecology *as* Gothic” (Dang 2022, 117). Elizabeth Parker alludes to the introductory chapter in *EcoGothic* by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, where ecoGothic is delimited as “not a genre but a lens: it is a *way* of looking things, it is a mode of deconstruction” (Dang 2022, 115). From a synthetizing approach, Andrew Smith and William Hughes estimate that “the Gothic seems to be the form which is well placed to capture

¹ Be-coming (rather than becoming) is an interpretation that comprehends both women’s itinerary along nature and the process to reach a new self.



these anxieties and provides a significant point of contact between literary criticism, ecocritical theory and political process” (Smith, Hughes 2013, 5).

Applying this set of considerations to Catalina Infante’s “Todas somos una misma sombra,” the ecogothic anomaly is primordially conditioned by the disappearance of the sun, “cuando el sol desapareció” (Infante 2018, 159). The disorder in nature emerges abruptly by unmentioned causes. The narrator begins to tell their story once the star has vanished. The absent sun, missing but not extinguished, is the metonymy of the threatened nature. Sun is an eco-crucial element since, as well as water, pre-conditions the planet existence. Sunlight is considered to be a part of nature and the ecosystem is overcome by the lack of equilibrium. This certitude engenders fear in humans. Catalina Infante expands his description on nature failing causes to the social domain. The climate-related issue of sun vanishing illustrates the concomitant with human agency in Anthropocene and it also refers to a disordered system in society. The geological period of Anthropocene is portrayed as the display of unrestrained human capacities over nature and society. As an introductory recognition, the storyteller declares women’s wisdom on ecosystem disarrangement. Women represent the subject of knowledge since on the very day the sun vanished, women certainly knew the situation would last forever, “Ya sabíamos nosotras que el día en el que el sol dejó de salir, este había desaparecido para siempre” (Infante 2018, 166). In such a context, nature is primarily the otherness. It is perceived as an unresting agent generating fear and instability in the human community. The aforementioned arguments by Botting and Alaimo referred to nature with the terms *untamed* and *undomesticated*, which capture the otherness in the wilderness of nature.

To deepen in the socio-literary aspects of this climate exceptionality, the analysis turns to the archetype of the Hobbesian state of nature. This theoretical paradigm is recast in Catalina Infante’s story to delve into ecogothic significance. A dialogue is traced between the arguments in “Todas somos una misma sombra” and the surviving suitability of the classical myth of the state of nature. This reasoning evokes the persistence of political philosophic myths and allegories from English letters and their capacity to exert influence on subsequent literary motifs and works. Thomas Hobbes’s *state of nature*, in this case, and *utopia* by Thomas More are relevant examples. As J.C.A. Gaskin writes, “the historical reality of Hobbes’s state of nature is partly our knowledge of savage societies” (Gaskin 1998, xxxii).

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) is an English philosopher who postulates the political myth of the state of nature. It is a previous situation to the social pact and so to the origins of society. In this sense, he is one of the theorists of the social contract during the 17th and 18th centuries, together with John Locke and Jean Jacques Rousseau. In 1642, in his book *De Cive (On The Citizen)*, he defines the “condition of men outside civil society (the condition one may call the state of nature)” (Hobbes 1998b, 11-12). The paradigm was largely specified in *Leviathan*, published in 1651. J.C.A. Gaskin estimates that “this is the text which is ‘the greatest, perhaps the sole, masterpiece of political philosophy written in the English language’” (Gaskin 1998, xlix). In the book, Hobbes asserts that “out of civil states, there is always war of everyone against every one” (Hobbes 1998a, 84); therefore, that is a situation of “no society [and] continual fear” (Hobbes 1998a, 84). During the state of nature, man’s



behavior towards his kind is the cause for fear. For the English philosopher, the state of nature refers to the human need to form social structures. So, the “environmental” nature is not included in the concept of state of nature. In *The State of No Nature-Thomas Hobbes and the Natural World*, Henrik Skaug Saetra alludes to the “his clear humanism and his extensive use of terms connected to *nature* [...] when hardly mentioning nature *proper*, are aspects that imply that he’s not the theorist of the environmentalists” (Skaug Saetra 2014, 177). In spite of the “apparent absence of the natural worlds” (Skaug Saetra 2014, 177) Skaug Saetra proposes an “environmentalist Hobbesian theory” (Skaug Saetra 2014, 177). On his part, Jedediah Britton-Purdy reflects on preconditions in Hobbes’ arguments and explains that “today, what Hobbes claimed about social order is true of global ecological order. ... So, among the preconditions of going on living together is the shaping of a global ecological regime” (Britton-Purdy 2017). Nonetheless, Thomas Hobbes defines nature in the first sentence of *The Introduction* to the book *Leviathan* as “the art whereby God hath made and governs the world” (Hobbes 1998a, 7). Man is subsequently characterized as “the rational and most excellent work of nature” (Hobbes 1998a, 7). This rationalist conception of nature differs from the gothic idea of a sublime nature as well as irrational. However representing a pre-gothic scheme of nature, the Hobbesian myth of the state of nature permits a contrastive approach to ecogothic. Two elements serve as an analytical framework for ecogothic, and, particularly, for “Todas somos una misma sombra;” fear and the preamble to a social pact. So, ecogothic is explained from the constitutive elements of the Hobbesian state of nature.

The significance of the state of nature as a political myth widens into a literary metaphor. In the reciprocal dialogue with the Hobbesian classic, ecogothic provides a revisioned state of nature since nature as environmental domain is incorporated into the social archetype. In ecogothic literature, the state of nature describes a period in nature with predominance of fear because of ecosocial disorders related to human intervention. It comprehends an ethical should-be of reversibility. In this sense, Catalina Infante’s story reargues the theoretical concept to describe a fearsome situation due to the ecosocial disorders in the era of Anthropocene. In this geological time, nature represents the space of devastation surged from human behavior and the state of nature is the primal setting of fear. Nature is thus a contention of humans with fear. Echoing such conceptions from Catalina Infante’s story, ecogothic may also render nature as *dis-socialized*. It is a dissenting landscape from the society-built model. The social process is disruptive for women and nature because it describes a panorama of patriarchy both in natural and social environments. Nature conforms as an agency as well and, through fear-causing, it reveals disarrangements. In “Todas somos una misma sombra;” the sun disappearance is the consequence in nature to Anthropocene, which considers nature a space subject to human dominating behavior. As an ecogothic explanation of the social framework, the vanishing of the sun is allegorically representative of the Anthropocene; the state of nature is such time’s result. Similarly, the historical atmosphere during the 17th century in England determines the basis for the state of nature in Hobbes’s work. As a summary argument, it can be stated that the state of nature represents pre-social violent chaos in Thomas Hobbes while in Catalina Infante is a symbol for devastation and domination.



The consequences of fear connect with the foundation of the state of nature. It is the imperative of self-preservation, which is the primary theoretical motive to associate Hobbes's and Infante's texts. As J.C.A. Gaskin puts in *The Introduction to Leviathan*, "it is first argued that human nature is commonly concerned with self-preservation" (Gaskin 1998, xx), or, in the words of Hobbes, "their own conservation" (Hobbes 1998a, 83). According to the argument, self-preservation before an all-against-all situation leads to the abandonment of the state of nature in favor of society. Hobbes establishes such an imperative from the individual while Catalina Infante narrates self-preservation from the group viewpoint. As for her text, human beings try to protect themselves after the ecological alteration of the sun vanishing; it is the cause to fulfill a new order to get over fear. As the storyteller evokes, there would be no survival if the whole community did not remain together, "no teníamos más alternativa que permanecer juntos ... sabíamos que no éramos capaces de sobrevivir solos" (Infante 2018, 163). This consciousness of self-surviving alone introduces the gothic idea of loneliness. They are the only human group in the story. Since the incipient instants of the state of nature, the group as a community of sole survivors finds in loneliness a cause of fear. They are alone in the scenery of ecological alteration.

Together with fear, the Hobbesian state of nature provides the expectancy of a social contract. "Todas somos una misma sombra" also suggests a new social pact including women and nature perspectives. Thinking on the delimitation of ecoGothic as a lens, the story offers the lens implying a female viewpoint on nature as well. In this sense regarding woman's roles in the state of nature, Carolyn Merchant demurs that "while the state of nature would logically imply full equality for women, in democratic consent theories arising from Hobbes and Locke, women remained under the dominion and authority of men" (Merchant 1990, 214). As a contrast, Catalina Infante suggests a social pact ending the state of nature with the inclusion of ecofeminism paradigms.

In consequence, fear and the following social pact outline the state of nature and the textual dialogue between Thomas Hobbes's definition and the resignification in ecogothic and, specifically, in "Todas somos una misma sombra".

2. THE LOCATIONS OF FEAR IN THE STATE OF NATURE

The analysis of "Todas somos una misma sombra" is structured in two narrative sequences. The state of nature after the vanishing of the sun due to Anthropocene and, secondly, the renewal of life in nature according to a social pact based upon ecofeminism. The ecosocial disorder in "Todas somos una misma sombra" starts off a new chronology represented by the state of nature. The climate anomaly of the sun impacts on the coexistence scheme with the exodus and uprootedness of the community. Landscape and time slide away through the spaces of fear. Catalina Infante's story remarks the role of women as a link to ecosystem and narrator of the story. She tries to narrate a process to establish a new model of society. As the storyteller remembers in *Todas somos una misma sombra*, we were a group of survivors waiting for the sun, "éramos un grupo de sobrevivientes esperando al sol" (Infante



2018, 161). At first, the sentence is applied to the whole group of characters in the story. It gradually becomes the definition for the surviving group of women. They experience fear in certain locations. Consequently, this epigraph locates fear as an ecogothic-defining feature in Catalina Infante's story.

2.1. ECOGOTHING-DEFINING FEATURES IN "TODAS SOMOS UNA MISMA SOMBRA"

The state of nature archetype defines a context of fear. Hobbes places fear prior to the social contract and ecogothic details locations and themes of fear in nature and society as well. At the initial stages of "Todas somos una misma sombra," the state of nature is assumed to be a not benign space right after the sun has disappeared. Nature is "the separate and wild province" (McKibben 2003, 48), as defined by Bill McKibben. The human group expects this situation to be an ephemeral interlude and be reminded of as a nightmare. Despite the sun disappearance, climate anomaly is supposed to be transient into a hopeful early coming back to previous times. "Porque aún teníamos la esperanza de retomarla y pensar en este tiempo como mal sueño" (Infante 2018, 162). After the sun vanishes, the atmosphere is outlined by an urgent awaiting, "de espera urgente" (Infante 2018, 161). Characters want to interpret the way human action is affected by ecological disorder; this is an indication of the ignorance human beings feel before the harm by Anthropocene. Things seem to work out, "por un tiempo las cosas parecieron funcionar" (Infante 2018, 163). "Nos establecimos al final de la colina, en un descampado cerca del bosque" (Infante 2018, 159), the whole community roots itself by the end of the hill, near the woods. This is the first instance of the contiguity to the woods and the otherness of nature; it foretells the coexistence with the spaces of fear. Nonetheless, the state of nature consolidates. It occurs in the time of *non-days*. This ecodystopian concept is an expression of self-denying time. Such a period nightmarishly causes confusion, "la confusión de esos no-días que, hasta entonces, nos parecían una gran pesadilla" (Infante 2018, 167). This measure of time is entangled with the role of light in generating fear. The vanishing of the sun alters the natural light cycles defined by the sun. And, despite darkness and hazy time, cycles were always distinguished by the human group, "aun cuando todo fuera oscuro y se desdibujara el tiempo, siempre distinguíamos los ciclos" (Infante 2018, 160). The capacity to differentiate light and time cycles responds to the fact that those cycles had been socially created by men "los hombres lo habían creado" (Infante 2018, 160). It counterposts the time sequence in nature and explains the Anthropocene assumption of those cycles. The reference to light links to the title of "Todas somos una misma sombra" and acts as a cause for fear. As light contrasts, the successive light impressions are elements of nature telling in this era. Light shows the contradiction of nature and human, sun and fire. The beginning of Infante's story confirms that men lit the fire when the sun disappeared, "Los hombres encendieron el fuego cuando el sol desapareció" (Infante 2018, 159). After disappearance, sun emerges no more from nature while fire is a subsequent effect of human action. The ecosystem witnesses the disappearance of the main sustaining source of its existence while its replacement is a male intervention.



Nonetheless, this fact is a counterpoint which causes tiredness. Hence, their eyes are tired by the effects of fire light and heat. “En cambio, la luz y el calor del fogón nos cansaba los ojos” (Infante 2018, 166). Tiredness differently affects women and men. Men are weakened by the absence of sunlight while women’s eyes adapt to darkness dexterously, “ellos estaban agotados, seguían debilitándose por la falta de luz [...] Nuestros ojos en la oscuridad parecían cobrar fuerza y hacerse más diestros al enfocar” (Infante 2018, 164). As the storyteller admits, on the establishment of the state of nature “ese era ahora el orden de las cosas” (Infante 2018, 166).

The agency of nature in the Anthropocene is shown acting reactively with the sun vanishing; this agency corresponds to otherness. In his article “Theorising the EcoGothic,” Simon C. Estok remarks that “EcoGothic allows for understandings of how we persecute social and environmental otherness” (Estok 2019, 34). In the state of nature, women’s behavior acts back against nature. After burning furniture and the old house, they set trees on fire. “Primero fueron los muebles de la antigua casa, luego la casa misma, después los árboles” (Infante 2018, 165). Heat was the only thing that could keep men alive, “sabíamos que el calor era lo único que mantenía vivo a los hombres” (Infante 2018, 165); the destruction of natural resources is associated to man’s survival. Tree burning represents the approach to nature exemplified by Anthropocene. Men’s survival collides with damages on the environment and women care is submitted to this circumstance. Women did not appreciate to cut trees down and tree burning is necessary to keep men warm. Heat comes from fire, the Anthropocene alternative to sun vanishing. Men call back with a method replacing the sunlight; it is a corollary of Anthropocene since they try to impose the heat and the man-made fires. At the same time, women begin to adapt to nature; that is to say, to cold and obscurity. So, the absence of light provokes men’s tiredness and starts modelling of a new self in women.

The need for light to preserve themselves entails the human quest for sites of refuge. To find a shelter is the original will facing otherness in nature. Fear is due to the absence of shelter. In defining fear locations, Carolina Infante’s text expresses the contrast between open spaces and sheltering buildings. After the sun vanishing, the human community initially remained in a house, a human-built space separated from nature, “moramos allí en un principio” (Infante 2018, 159). That house is intended to be a safe place, a refuge where no fear can happen and the consequences from Anthropocene are not suffered. In this sense, Donna Haraway estimates that “Anthropocene is about the destruction of places and times of refuge for people and other critters” (Haraway 2015, 160). Nevertheless, in “Todas somos una misma sombra,” the house is not a sheltering site any longer and the group seeks another kind of protection. They began to walk through the fields looking for another refuge, “comenzamos a pasear por el campo buscando otro refugio” (Infante 2018, 159). In this period, women walk deep in the woods where they were not observed, “nos internábamos en el bosque donde nadie nos observaba” (Infante 2018, 164). The encounter with non-human agencies takes place in the woods, “solo para internarnos en el bosque, donde el ruido era de bichos y animales” (Infante 2018, 166). Elizabeth Parker refers to wilderness, conjointly as for the woods and forest, to “be understood as in symbolic contrast to human civilisation” (Parker 2020, 17). Analogously,



wilderness can be analyzed as a contrast to the existing society and a referent site for the state of nature.

In this context, Catalina Infante narrates fear as the conjunction of a climate emergency, the sun vanishing, and the gothic scenery of unknown woods. Besides, in the fearsome background of her story, ecogothic preludes the explanation of a process which is not only expressed over nature but in social circumstances. Distance between men and women metaphorizes the vanishing-point of the patriarchal system, “fue así que comenzamos a distanciarnos, hombres y mujeres” (Infante 2018, 166). After their increasing weakness, men do not survive, “ellos no sobrevivieron” (Infante 2018, 167). This is the replacement of a social system where violence occurs. “Así como los episodios de violencia que iban en aumento nos llenaban de rabia” (Infante 2018, 165).

As the narration goes on, Catalina Infante modifies the perception on the woods. It is the place where women begin intermingling with nature. Thus, the times in the woods differ from the periods living in the house. But, when the state of nature has been replaced by a new society, the woods become a friendly space where women go to feel freed and self-recognised. The episode of fusion with nature is the corollary of the woods’ evolution into a forest, a wider space that hosts the renewal of the women’s self. Symbolically, sun disappearance does not entail the conclusion of life on Earth. It is the indication for the finishing of a patriarchal society model whose behavior acts on environmental conditions and, mainly, on the sun. It refers to patriarchal society as a system linked to Anthropocene.

3. SHADOW AS THE NEW PERCEPTION OF LIGHT

As for the dialogue between ecogothic and the Hobbesian state of nature, Catalina Infante’ “Todas somos una misma sombra” subverts the meanings of the elements of fear. It is the accepted ecosocial order when women become a joint shadow. The unwomanly social system has been eradicated. Women realize that previous life is not a domain to come back to. “Quizás no teníamos tantas ganas de volver [a esa vida]” (Infante 2018, 165). As a matter of fact, it could be considered the “collective feminist exit from Anthropos,” according to Rosi Braidotti’s statement (2017, 28). Ecogothic associates shadow to obscurity and is a counterbalance for sunlight. At the beginning of the story, women find themselves confused by darkness after the sun has vanished, “confundidas por la oscuridad” (Infante, 2018, 159). Primal light comes from the sun and, once disappeared, fire is intended as a replica. Women accustom to obscurity slowly in the night, “conforme nuestros ojos se acostumbraron un poco a la noche” (Infante 2018, 159). In this context, obscurity represents a third space between the confronted notions prior to and during the state of nature, natural sunlight and human fire. The bonds of women and nature gradually incarnate in the imagery of the shadow, which subverts its common representation. Women get accustomed to obscurity. They do not face against sunlight absence creating other forms of fire; they adapt to nature cycle of obscurity. Women’s storytelling quietly undermines fears from obscurity. “Habíamos creado una narración coherente que nos tranquilizaba y



que hacía tolerable aquella oscuridad” (Infante 2018, 160). Obscurity is considered a positive force since women feel comfort in it. “Muchas de nosotras nos sentíamos cómodas en esa oscuridad” (Infante 2018, 165). The absence of light is replaced by a diffuse albeit minimal light. Nevertheless, obscurity is defined as light neutrality, “neutralidad de la luz” (Infante 2018, 165). In the midst of its attached unease, it is related to a certain degree of calm and serenity as well. “Había algo de calma en la neutralidad de la luz” (Infante 2018, 165). Women do not associate otherness to obscurity in nature. In this sense, Catalina Infante reconfigures the significance of obscurity and, concordantly, the presence of the shadow. As the story title explains, “everyone of us, women, are the same shadow,” “Todas somos la misma sombra” (Infante 2018, 167). The obscure area of the shadow is not the location for the sublime but the representation of women’s self in community and the reversal of the perception of nature as an otherness. Shadow is also the result of the blocked projection of light over an object. From its ecogothic meaning of anxiety, Catalina Infante diminishes the misperception of light and represents shadow as a force for every woman in the group. In the story, their shadow condition dates back to fire extinction. It is the instant when man-made fire finishes. Women’s bodies then turned into a blueish blackness, not knowing if it was darkness or because of real changes in their bodies. “Al extinguirse el fuego, nuestros cuerpos se volvieron de un negro azulado, no sabíamos si por la falta de luz o porque en verdad estaban cambiando” (Infante 2018, 169). It represents an ongoing women’s will to interweave with nature until their bodies turned completely obscure, “hasta que nuestros cuerpos se oscurecieran del todo” (Infante 2018, 171).

“Todas somos una misma sombra” reargues the Hobbesian myth from the ecogothic-contrasted locations of light and darkness. Fear is not located in shadows and obscurity. In this domain, sometimes, and ignoring the causes, the moon appears. “No sabíamos cómo ni por qué, pero algunas veces aparecía la luna” (Infante 2018, 159). The moon sums an ecogothic element of a nightly diffuse light in the obscurity. It is also the sun antagonist, in nature and society. In the text, however, it mitigates the fear to unclear spaces and adds a feminine myth, the myth of fertility. In *Todas somos una misma sombra*, the myth of the moon is also resignified to describe women situation. The narrating voice tells that, on moon arising, a great stain intensely vibrated and lit from the dark; it was a play of light and shadows similar to places in the sky without stars. “Cuando la luna salía, esa gran mancha vibraba con intensidad y lograba iluminar desde lo oscuro, en un juego de luces y sombras parecido a los espacios del cielo donde no hay estrellas” (Infante 2018, 170). The character attributed to the moon joins to the obscurity represented by women. This is a stage when women self-recognised as the ever most obscure and largest stain and group. Their land is a little sphere with different somber tones in the universe; “nuestra tierra dentro del universo era una pequeña esfera de diversos tonos sombríos y que nosotras, todas juntas, conformábamos la mancha más oscura y extensa de todas” (Infante 2018, 170). It represents the ecofeminist community.

The representation of the shadow determines the confluence of ecogothic and ecofeminism paradigms in “Todas somos una misma sombra.” On the day the fire extinguished, women as a whole shouted, “el día en que el fuego se apagó todas



gritamos” (Infante 2018, 168). This is the expression of a new ecosystem established in obscurity, where women adapt to through equality and mutual cooperation. Women’s renewed self coherently has become a shadow. The establishment of a new social structure concludes the anthropocenic state-of-nature.

4. THE SOCIAL PACT. ECOGOTHIC AND ECOFEMINISM IN “TODAS SOMOS UNA MISMA SOMBRA”

The itinerary of women traces the foundations for the second element in the Hobbesian archetype of the state of nature, the disposition to a new social pact. In ecogothic, the social contract is developed as an ethical motive to promote a new vision on the ecosocial system. It includes nature and human beings. In “Todas somos una misma sombra,” the ethical imperative is fulfilled by ecofeminism paradigms. As ecogothic deals with drifts in times of climate emergency, according to Andrew Smith and William Hughes, “the Gothic is a particularly appropriate genre in which to explore new possibilities for ecofeminism” (Smith, Hughes 2013, 12). Perspectives from this ecogothic and ecofeminism syllogism show a theoretical confluence since fear is a criterion to explain domination over nature and women. In particular, the social contract derived from Catalina Infante’s story is based upon the pan-humanity by Rosi Braidotti and the trans-corporeality of Stacy Alaimo. Both domains of thought question the perception of the other. The subject of this pact is the feminine collective, which is narrated with the use of the first-person plural, as Claire Mercier highlights, to stress the ecofeminist viewpoint in the writing of *Todas somos una misma sombra*, “un colectivo femenino con el uso de la primera persona del plural” (Mercier 2022, 144). In an ecofeminism statement on the concept of nature, Stacy Alaimo also expresses that “‘nature’ is not a profoundly gendered realm but a site of many other struggles for power and meaning” (Alaimo 2000, 13). In this sense, Carolina Infante correlates with Stacy Alaimo’s definition of the concept of trans-corporeality. “We inhabit what I’m calling ‘trans-corporeality’ –the time-space where human corporeality, in all its material fleshiness, is inseparable from ‘nature’ or ‘environment’” (Alaimo 2008, 238). In this kind of isomorphism, there is a congenial correspondence between nature and women according to new social codes. The argument explains why the environment is included in the resignification of the state of nature, a space attached to the time of Anthropocene. Pan-humanity is the other aspect regarding the social pact. In the conclusive epigraph of *Four Theses on Posthuman Feminism*, Rosi Braidotti remarks the concept of pan-humanity actualizing “a community that is not bound negatively by shared vulnerability, the guilt of ancestral violence ... but rather by their compassionate acknowledgement of their interdependence with multiple others, most of which, in the age of Anthropocene, are quite simply not anthropomorphic” (Braidotti 2017, 39). The conclusion is titled *Recomposing Humanity*. Joining the arguments by Alaimo and Braidotti, as a response to Anthropocene, it is recognized the human corporeality inseparable from nature and interdependent with multiple others. In “Todas somos una misma sombra,” this paradigm is reflected in the fusion of women with nature. Their whole



bodies mingled with earth and their insideness, eyes, ears were full of earth “nuestro interior se llenara de tierra” (Infante 2018, 171). They began to get more and more inside and increasingly digged with the entire body; the earth seemed to divide for them. “Comenzamos a adentrarnos y a cavar más y más con el cuerpo entero [...] y la tierra pareció partirse para nosotras” (Infante 2018, 171). It is the participation of non-human agency in nature too. As the storyteller details, they opened their mouth and let the earth get into. “Abrimos la boca y dejamos que entrara también esa tierra” (Infante 2018, 171). In consequence, ecofeminism paradigm is a kind of proposal for the social pact in ecogothic. And this is the viewpoint reflected in Catalina Infante’s story. It is an expression of concern for climate emergency in ecogothic texts.

The pact significance requires an agreement on the meaning of words. Ancient words were useless soon after the new system emerges, “las palabras de pronto dejaron de servirnos” (Infante 2018, 169). “Esos gritos se fueron transformando de a poco en aullidos; ladridos que surgían de tan profundo que no podíamos controlarlos” (Infante 2018, 168), the cries gradually transformed into howls, barks emerging from so deep they could not be controlled. “Nuestras voces se volvieron cada vez más graves y fuertes esa noche, e hicieron vibrar la tierra” (Infante 2018, 168). It is the uselessness of the words that represented the period of Anthropocene. The voices turned deeper and stronger and made the earth vibrate. It is the initial phase of the union of nature with other non-human beings. It represents the contrast with the silence of the otherness, the sun vanished quietly at the beginning of the story, “cómo se estableció la oscuridad y el silencio” (Infante 2018, 162). Far away, animal howls are heard by the presence of women, “a lo lejos, animales desconocidos hicieron escuchar sus gritos junto a nosotras” (Infante 2018, 168). Women do not already feel any fear for those unknown animals crying in the dark wilderness as it had been expected in previous ecogothic times of nature otherness. Once women have reached the assimilated identity with nature, the be-coming is fulfilled and nomadic walking ceased, “Un día dejamos de caminar” (Infante 2018, 171). And the final process of identification is affirmed taking the earth with their hands and feet. Women dug a hole so deep narrow as their bodies, “tomamos la tierra con las manos y los pies [...] hasta cavar un hoyo profundo y tan estrecho como nuestros cuerpos” (Infante 2018, 171).

The narration contains the idea of movement, a voyage through wilderness when the characters move along the natural spaces in the story. In such narrative a context, women are nomadic subjects, according to Rosi Braidotti’s notion. Sarah Nicholson refers to that condition which “infuses the conception of female subjectivity with motion” (Nicholson 2008, 47). In Catalina Infante’s story, this category is represented by women be-coming. It combines the symbolic wandering and arrival to nature with the reaching of a new self, restoring the female subjectivity. During their journey they even move on with their hands and feet on the hillsides, “avanzando con manos y pies sobre las colinas” (Infante 2018, 170). “Recorriamos territorios extensos durante largos periodos de tiempo [...] recorriendo una tierra cuya infinitud nos reconfortaba como ninguna otra cosa” (Infante 2018, 169). The infinite vastness of the territories provides them with the major comfort. Their motion-will epitomizes the representation of the progression from otherness to mothering. The



storyteller expresses the new social structure with an all-compressing aspiration after women's hearts beating in time with the world's beating, "hasta que el corazón latiera junto al latido del mundo" (Infante 2018, 172).

4. (M)OTHER AND THE IMPERATIVE OF PRESERVATION

(M)other is the symbiotic concept that synthesizes the state of nature in "Todas somos una misma sombra." In the book *Art of Darkness*, Anne Williams analyzes the poem "Frost at Midnight" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and she explains (m)other as a "term coined by psychoanalytic feminists to express the maternal other" (Williams 1995, 204). Anne Williams affirms that Female Gothic literature "creates a different kind of speaking subject" to the maternal other under patriarchal system (Williams 1995, 205). Therefore, (m)other or maternal other is a female representation whose unsubmitted voice is conferred by the gothic. Catalina Infante reconceptualizes the symbiotic notion of (M)other. In "Todas somos una misma sombra," it describes the itinerant progression from otherness to mothering; the story narrates the itinerary of women from a sunless space till the union with nature. The Chilean writer also relies on gothic themes to delimit otherness. But nature develops into the figure of mother and wilderness becomes a space for refuge. Shelter is the response to otherness. The need for shelter is linked to preservation. The idea of preservation traces back to the root of the state of nature. Self-preservation is the individual response to fear from otherness in the Hobbesian state of nature. In Catalina Infante's story, the progression from other to mothering is represented by the contrast between self-preservation and preservation. Eco-gothic narrations portray ecosocial disorders that, sometimes implicitly, act as an ethical imperative for ecosocial warning for preservation. In Catalina Infante's story, the ecofeminist proposal of a new social pact exemplifies that ethical reason. As a consequence, the concept of (m)other socially entails the ethical imperative of preservation from the need for shelter. In "Todas somos una misma sombra," this imperative begins with women caregiving and memory telling. Preservation connects with fear in their very initial phases, even before women knew they inhabited the state of nature. They stay by the stove, taking care of the little children and telling themselves stories about their past lives, avoiding to forget who they had previously been, "junto al fogón, cuidando a los más pequeños, y contándonos historias de nuestras vidas pasadas, por miedo a olvidar quiénes habíamos sido" (Infante 2018, 160). This oral customary ritual takes place immediately after the sun has vanished and the expression of fear appears for the first time regarding the memory of women existence.

In the conclusive episode of the story fear persists since the group is in the quest for another sun. Women consider themselves subterranean waves in a journey to another sun, "ondas subterráneas que viajan hacia otro sol" (Infante 2018, 172). They still recognize the persistence of the sun as a primal source of light and heat though in a different social system. However, eco-gothic motifs are not an anomaly but the alert against ecosocial reversal. As a matter of fact, the vanishing of the sun is not concluded. The sun has not appeared again and women assure they would



continue the union with nature until their howls were subterranean waves in journey to another sun, “nuestros aullidos fueran ondas subterráneas que viajan hacia otro sol” (Infante 2018, 172). This is the finishing sentence in the story and it confirms ecogothic suitability to narrate fear in ecosocial trouble and the capacity to suggest or propose an ethical response as well.

5. CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Parker attests that “there is *hope* in the ecoGothic [...] Fear makes us think differently about spaces, and so can make us think differently about Nature” (Dang 2022, 123). In accord with her assessment, this study focuses on the archetype of the state of nature. It discusses the suitability of Thomas Hobbes’s theoretical design to offer a contrastive approach to ecogothic literature and Catalina Infante’s “Todas somos una misma sombra.” In this aspect, Catalina Infante’s text resorts to ecogothic climate disorder to involve the harmonic role of women and nature as a foundation to build a new social agreement. As a consequence, the dialogical structure remarks the function of ecogothic literature to propose an ethical imperative of preservation and to explain what can be named as ecosociety.



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