

Exploring the Interconnection between Native American Land/Environment and Women



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Abstract: This article explores the relationship between Native American lands/environment and the women from ecocritical /ecofeminist perspectives. It has been postulated that while the Euro- American accounts of the history, culture, indigenous women and their relation with nature/land project stereotypical, negative images, Louise Erdrich, through the employment of hybrid narrative techniques combining Eurocentric and Native American modes of narration, has reconfigured the Native American women's environmental identity/subjectivity. This study conducts discourse analysis of the two richly thematic environmental narratives of Louise Erdrich to establish the interconnectivity between women and lands within the realm of ecofeminism. The primary texts explored include *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*. The study's contribution is its highlighting the significance of the Native American Ecofeminist narratives that consider environmental issues to be human issues and thus positively affect the human attitude towards nature.

Key Words: Ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, Land, Environment, Subjectivity

Introduction

The environment is a major concern of any country in the world. The hope for a more humane world is decreasing gradually. The cutting of trees, international conflicts and socio-economic conditions of women are alarming people around the globe. These conditions and circumstances are diverting critics' interest in ecofeminism. The ecofeminist study focuses on the present condition of the environment and females and draws a link between them. The ecofeminist movement talks about two major concerns, which involve the connection between women and nature and their development, and secondly, both nature and female demand freedom from male supremacy. The ecofeminist movement draws on three basic stances that are; empirical, conceptual and epistemological. Empirically, it states that the influence of the environment on females is uneven and disproportionate. Women are connected with earth and nature according to social patterns, while men are claimed as supernatural (Kuletz, 1992, pp. 21-25). The social structures of male-dominant societies present oppression, abuse, marginalization

and exploitation of women as natural. Male presents these dominant aspects of patriarchal society as if they are natural and justified positions. These oppressive cultures and a dominant male society urge a woman to falsify stereotypical ideas and taboos constructed for women. Moreover, it also helps women to find their own separate identities. These set patterns introduced by males are a cultural construct. The idea of masculinity and femininity does not describe any natural differences between a male and a female. Different cultural traditions and customs talk about the gendered epistemological construction of woman and nature.

Contrary to the Euro-American anthropocentric approach that places man and his actions in the centre of the universe, legitimizing his colonial even predatory attitude towards nature, ecocriticism accords central importance to the ecosphere, the ecosystem in conceptualizing the relationship between human and non-human and resists the nature/culture, human/non-human binaries propagated by white anthropocentric philosophies. Thus considering

environment as an equal partner in the scheme of nature rather than giving it an inferior place in man-made dualities, ecocriticism opens many possibilities of a renewed understanding of the ecosystem and the nature of relations between human and non-human entities within it. The theoretical field, therefore, on the one hand, applies “the earth-centred” approach to literary texts to explore the representation of various forms of interdependent relations between human and non-human inhabitants of the ecosphere and, on the other hand, looks for new stories to emerge challenging the traditional anthropocentric understanding of the universe. The deepening environmental crisis since 1980’s-the time is coinciding with the emergence of the ecocriticism movement in the United States when the brutal human actions coupled with indiscriminate and eclectic technological development threatened the earth’s life support system- made the ecocritics realize the formidable magnitude of the dangers implied in the human actions and the international environment hazards like global warming, oil spillage, rapid depletion in bio-diversity, extinction of rare species etc. With this significant realization about the useful role the earth-centred literary texts can play to save human ecology from despoliation by stimulating environment-friendly approaches, the ecocritics emphasized upon the notion of environmental ethics and looked for the literary representations that propagate environmental ethics and suggest through fictional accounts the responses to the environmental crisis as well as the possible ways to address the global issues.

Literature Review

1980 was the year when, in the wake of the growing concern of the literary scholars, environmentalists and social scientists about the global environmental crisis, the Western Literature Association, in its meeting, formally laid the foundation of the discipline of ecocriticism to study the representation of the nature of the relation between the human and non-human world as depicted by the literary writers in their works. Ten years later, in 1990, when the discipline flourished and ecocriticism gradually established itself as a canon, the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment was formed to address the issues related to the relations between (wo)man nature and environment. Though a relatively new discipline in the 1980s and 90s, ecocriticism is a well-established

critical theory now in the early part of the 21st century because of the creative and critical endeavors of literary scholars across the globe. Though ecocriticism primarily deals with the representation of nature in its multivalent forms in relation to human beings, different scholars, since the proliferation of the field, have described it in different ways and explored various dimensions of the discipline. Glotfelty and Harold, the duo of pioneering studies in the field of ecocriticism, forging the link between literature and ecology, define the term in their seminal work *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) that ecocriticism is an “earth-centred approach to literary studies” (p. xviii). If Ecocritical studies, as [Kerridge\(1998\)](#) and [Vaugh \(2006\)](#) suggest, are designed to read literary texts from an environmental perspective to transform the world outside, it was imperative to align the literary texts with the environment and environmental theories which viewed environmental reality with a “spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” ([Buell, 1995, p. 12](#)).

What [Glotfelty \(1996\)](#) said about the neglect of the seminal ecocritical works of the American scholars in the 1970s, when seen from the perspective of red feminist writers, appears to be largely true in the case of Native American and Afro American women writers also as their environmental narratives were not seen from the ecocritical perspective unless the resurgence of ecocriticism which enkindled renewed interest of the scholars in the works of red women writers. Taking Glotfelty’s anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader* as a reference point in which she has included notable American scholars of the field of ecocriticism, the present study on the exploration of ecocritical and ecofeminist dimensions of the Native and Afro American writers contends that despite Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell and most recent contributions from Lawrence Coupe (2000) Timothy [Morton \(2007\)](#) and Graham [Huggan and Helen Tiffin \(2006\)](#), there was potential scope to investigate the fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism using the literary productions of red feminist writers most noticeably Louise Erdrich. This study also seeks to demonstrate how the ecofeminist works from marginalized red communities have resulted in red environmental theory and praxis, activism and theorization of nature-woman relations. Since the environment has been conceived by the environmentalists and ecocritics as a fluid entity consisting of humans, non-humans, physical environment and culture, it eludes any fixed definition

and /or entity and is differently constructed and interpreted by different communities depending upon the cultural, geographical, spatial, emotional and imaginative affiliations with the place and space. Most recently, [Mazumdar's \(2013\)](#) definition of ecocriticism that the domain of ecocriticism is nature writing, and ecological themes incorporate every literary representation that touches upon nature and ecology. A number of contemporary scholars of the field subscribe to this comprehensive definition and urge upon the writers to focus in their narratives upon the need of preserving the environment because to understand the need for harmonious relations between humans and non-humans and "nature mattered" ([Srilatha, 2011, p. 2](#)). That ecocriticism emerged as a reaction to the abstraction of critical and literary is also confirmed by [Kroeber \(1994\)](#) when he refers to ecocriticism's "escape from the esoteric abstractness which afflicts current theorizing about literature" (as cited in [Mazumdar, 2013, p. 13](#)) and thus affirms the need of pragmatic theory that would advocate and celebrate the interconnectedness of all forms of life, the kind of life that appears in Native American cultural traditions epitomized by [Erdrich Tracks \(1988\)](#) and *Love Medicine* (1993).

Research Methodology

Ecofeminist analysis of the selected texts has been carried out in the light of the discourse analysis method proposed by [Foucault \(1994\)](#). The Native American text under Ecofeminist scrutiny has been discussed to reach a broader understanding and comprehensive definition of ecofeminism both in the light of relevant theories and representations of nature and women by Louise Erdrich. Since the mode of this research-qualitative paradigm-believes in the interrelationship of all knowledge and acknowledges the presence of the subjectivity of the researcher in the knowledge and research on the human phenomenon, a comprehensive study has been conducted on the secondary sources, including the interdisciplinary critical research works, research articles, research papers and academic presentations etc. The variety of this critical paraphernalia and methodological tools have helped me formulate original and critical ideas on ecofeminism and thus analyze the works in the light of these well-informed literary and theoretical notions.

Foucault's concept of discourse explains that discourse does not represent the exact copy of reality, but it is the culturally constructed discursive

representation of reality ([Neto, 2018](#)). Discourse analysis is a research method used to study the relationship between written or spoken language and the social context in which it is used. It is a common qualitative method that particularly elucidates how the discursive use of language is related to the socio-political and historical context. It is a means of creating, regulating and presenting a certain outlook on and a way of talking about a phenomenon as truth. It constructs a certain knowledge claim as normative or universal truth and thus governs through the production of inclusionary and exclusionary categories of knowing what to talk about and what not to. By so doing, it creates a twin category of knowledge and power. The dominance of one regime of knowledge and power in the society regulates the process of meaning-making in or/ as a discourse. However, by deconstructing these discourses, it becomes easy to observe why some ways of thinking and talking about the world are taken as truth/ normative/ while other ways of thinking and doing as irrational and marginalized. This is precisely the understanding of the Foucauldian method of doing textual discourse analysis that I have applied in the analysis of the selected works.

Love Medicine as Ecofeminist Discourse

Louise Erdrich, one of the most gifted and prominent Native American writers, is a very prolific and significant American contemporary writer and her *Love Medicine* (1993) is one of the most noteworthy works of Native American feminist literary tradition. Within the critical and theoretical spaces offered by the theories of ecocriticism, ecofeminism, and environmentalism, the novel explores different layers of the relationship between Native woman and the environment and demonstrates that, unlike their stereotypical association with nature as primitive and passive, lustful and dangerous creatures in mainstream discourses, they forge a symbiotic and harmonious relationship with nature in all its forms, and provide for the contemporary era of environmental crisis, exemplifying through their lifestyles and attitudes towards nature/environment, a symbiotic way of life that proposes a harmonious living with nature and grants promises of secure future.

Though *Love Medicine* can be studied from different theoretical perspectives as it is amazingly relevant to many of the contemporary fields of inquiry, most notably postcolonial, postmodern, post-structural,

feminist, and New Historicist theoretical positions, its ecofeminist standpoint is very prominent and worth discussing in view of the current global environmental issues. Erdrich, in *Love Medicine*, demonstrates that there is a close relationship between women and nature and, with this profound ecofeminist consciousness, she depicts female characters like Lulu and Marie in *Love Medicine* and Fleur Pillager in *Tracks* who keep an intimate and harmonious association with nature and play a significant role in protecting it.

The lives of Chippewa Indians in Turtle Mountains Reservation are the primary focus of *Love Medicine*. June's death in uncertain circumstances was the beginning of the novel when she was on her way back to the reservation; however, despite her early death in the novel, she holds the novel together and haunts the memories of the characters. The Marie-Nector-Lulu love triangle is also a strong link in the novel. Erdrich, exploring the tragic history of the loss of Native lands, shows that the inevitable result of ceding or losing the lands to the American government was that the Natives failed to sustain honorably as they were barred from hunting and gathering, forcing the Ojibwa to work as lumberjacks in the white men's companies.

Despite the much-publicized statements of the Euro-Americans regarding the notions of cultural human and ethnic co-existence in American culture, the ground realities depict a dismal picture: in order to look into the hypocrisy of such discursively manipulated truths, one has to read the deplorable history of the dehumanizing treatment of the Native ethnic groups of North America. The heart-rending history of the subjugation as well as of the worst tortures and inhuman treatments they were subjected to reveals the double knavery of the white Americans and accounts for the pervasive differences of outlook that led to the ideological and cultural clashes between the White Americans and the Original inhabitants of the lands. It is this traumatic history of the connection between the Euro-Americans and the Natives, as well as the scenes of all sort of cultural encounters that Erdrich has portrayed in her seminal novels *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. The Native culture thus obliterated, badly mutilated in some cases and having lost its vitality when mixed up with the white culture, left bad memory as the history of the Natives was constructed so badly, mutilated to the irretrievable extent and presented as a part of the Colonialist agenda. So huge was the loss of the Ojibwe in terms of cultural annihilation that they could never retrieve it

in its entirety, and are still busy reviving it through various ways, including literature which is providing them with a platform to raise their voice against the excesses committed and cruelties done to them by the white masters.

The white imposed their own rules on the Native Americans and wanted to change them into farmers. The land policy was a misfortune for reservation. It was a joke by which they lost their homes. It resulted in the loss of lands, pangs of deprivation, genuine neediness and extensive sufferings. Even though there is no immediate delineation about her, June's craving for an opportunity of uniformity still can be felt in *Love Medicine*. Albertine re-tells June's challenging background in the white world:

When June was studying to be a beautician, I (Albertine) remember, word came that she had purposely burned an unruly customer's hair stiff green with chemicals. And other secretaries didn't like her. She reported drunk for work in dime storms and swaggered out of restaurants where she'd waitressed a week at the first wisecrack. (Erdrich, 1993, p. 9)

Albertine's account of June's struggle for survival in the white world shows her hunger for equality and freedom. She departed the reservation to win her life through her diligent work, but the inexorable racist structures of the American society cripple her dreams, and despite being clearly an independent and self-propelled woman, she fails to live her ambitions. Being a solid autonomous lady, she cannot hold up under others treating her unequally because of racial discrimination, so she vents her resentment by purposefully dying discourteous client's hair green and firm with synthetics. After the disappointment of attempting to be autonomous through her endeavors, she tries her luck by trying to find a decent man to depend on, yet the white men she goes to for reliance think about her as a simple night. She, at last, loses herself and bites the dust on her way back to the reservation.

This miserable plight of the Native American folks and women, in particular, emanates from their separation from and loss of lands. To Native Americans, these lands were not merely the commodities or source of livelihood; rather, they had a strong emotional and spiritual affiliation with their lands; hence their forced removal from their lands resulted in deep psychological issues. When the government displaced them from enormously fertile and resourceful lands in the east where they lived

traditional life to arid lands in the west where they couldn't hunt, fish and live in the company of the variety of nature, not only they felt a huge sense of loss, and upsetting deprivation from the ancestral lands, they also experienced an unrelieved pessimism that under the brutally exploitative white rule, their miseries would never end. Lulu voices the grief of her people: How many times did we move? The Chippewas had started off way on the other side of the five great lakes how we were shoved out on this lonesome knob of prairie; my grandmother used to tell. It is too longa story to get into now" (p.282). when apart from snatching 90 million acres of lands from the Native people, the white rulers use all kind of cunning ploys like bribing the tribal council to put a wedge in their unity and create internal conflicts among them to achieve their financial and administrative objectives, the Natives succumb to these machinations and stand sharply divided on the issues of using their land for commercial and capitalistic enterprises. For instance, when the council decides in favour of establishing a souvenir factory to mass-produce bangle beads and plastic war clubs, the council and the people stand on cross purposes, and though the will of the council prevails, Lulu raises the dissident voice: "Every foot and inch you are standing on, even if it's on the top of the highest skyscraper, belongs to the Indians (p.221). The analysis of these female figures from the novel gives the final image that females have no voice in daily life and are dominated by men. In the patriarchal society of reservation, these women sacrifice their whole life for men, but they are still ignored

The white government policies put the Native American reservation in serious poverty. Once the picturesque, peaceful and pastoral Indian reservation and the natural beauty and landscape are destroyed and badly damaged. The White government's manipulative policies caused damage to Native Americanlands and terminated the communal possession of the property. It was an attempt to destroy the tribes by imposing a patriarchal nuclear family onto many maternal Native societies. Religious persecution perpetrated by the whites upon the Natives alienated Indian women from their traditional religion. Under the destructive influence of the White ideologies, Androcentrism became common in a reservation. Women became subservient to men and with it lost status, rights, and freedom. They cannot escape from their tragic fate. In *Love Medicine*,

characters such as June, Lynette and Marie are persecuted by patriarchy. These female characters are portrayed as passive objects and silent. They have no voice and they are attached to men. Women alone are not the target of patriarchy rather as Erdrich emphasizes the brutal behavior of men damages nature, the environment and animals also. The novel is replete with instances where nature and non-human creatures are not safe at the hands of men as "the men were still talking about the animals they had killed" (p. 30). While killing animals in the past was only to satisfy extreme needs of life, and no life was taken just for sport, now, under the Western notion of anthropocentrism, animals are killed for sport, and the ecological balance is in danger. She writes: " but I heard of this guy once who put his arrow through a fox then left it to thrash around in the bush until he thought it was dead" (p. 32).

The character associated with Marie is repeatedly depicted with nature symbolism: she is "pale as birch ... the kind of tree that turns around and springs up, whips singing" has eyes like "an injured mink's," and caws "like a crow" (p. 64). This symbolism of the regular world serves to arrange Nector and Marie's romantic tale in a more extensive setting. While the relationship at first appears to be shallow, since Nector overlooks his crush on Lulu so rapidly, the natural language used to portray the circumstances indicates how intently Nector is focusing on Marie. Quite possibly, as the sensitive language shows, this is a profound love that will rise above the beginning. Louise repeatedly connects the woman of her stories by symbolizing them with natural environments as Nector explains the fierceness of Lulu by explaining that her eyes are tense and wild, animal eyes. One of the examples of a great wife and mother in the novel is Marie, who decisively wants to become a Christian saint. She imagines that "Plumes of radiance had soldered on me (Marie). No reservation girl had ever prayed so hard . . . And they never thought they'd have a girl from this reservation as a saint they'd have to kneel to." (p. 43). Marie's confidence and piety were very much high before marriage. She envisions that she will be carved in pure gold with ruby lips when she becomes a saint, and people will crouch to show respect for her. She turns out to be less and less confident when she marries Nector. When she fags away at supporting her family, her husband betrays her and has an affair with Lulu. Her husband abandons his family, but Lulu doesn't accept her. Marie was

inordinately ambitious to be something big on the reservation, and she forgives Nector for his wrong deed. She focuses on her husband and everything around him, but she loses herself. Furthermore, Marie notes something powerful about June, who was found as a youngster in the forested areas. "It was as if she really was the child of what the old people called Manitou" (p. 87): a Manitou is a soul experienced in the forested areas.

Chapter "Wild Geese" narrates how Nector and Marie were attracted to each other. Moreover, it also diverts the reader's attention toward the typical attitude of males towards the female. From the male-centric gaze, they are made to give male sexual pleasures and satisfaction. Nector defines Marie as "a tart berry full of juice, and I know she is mine. I cannot wait for the night to start" (p. 62). Yet he rapidly forgets his fascination for her when he and Marie have a quarrel. The symbolism of nature is pervasive: Marie and Nector have their experience in the open, in the street. Nector carries two dead geese the whole time and uses their weight to get Marie to stick to the ground. The attitude of Nector towards the other girl, Lulu Nanapush, is also typically phallogocentric. He forces her and treats her badly and uses shameful words for her as when she tries to get rid of Nector, he yells on her face by saying "now we'll talk, skinny white girl, dirty lazare" (p. 64).

Love Medicine ends by providing the readers with the final imagery of the ocean. After Lipsha encourages his dad to exit, he drives back to the reservation. There he stops on the bridge over which the ocean runs. The readers observe nature to its fullest in this scene. Water has been used to refer to numerous things all through the novel, primarily Erdrich uses it as a symbol of death and religion. However, Lipsha understands that he needs to embrace the present; he conveys a significant message to the readers with this realization. As the most mysterious and elusively slanted of the book's characters, he conveys a huge message with this acknowledgment. The intelligence of Lipsha and his pragmatic realism proclaims a brighter future. He realizes the supreme significance of land and the relation of the self with it and states assertively: "I'd heard that this river was the last of an ancient ocean, miles deep, that once had covered the Dakotas and solved all our problems. It was easy to still imagine us beneath them vast unreasonable waves, but the truth is we live on dry land. I got inside. The morning was clear—a good road led on. So there was

nothing to do but cross the water and bring her home"(p. 333).

The connection between Land and People in *Tracks*

Tracks (1988) is the third novel among the sequence of four novels, which consists of *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen*(1986), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994) and acts as a prologue to *Love Medicine*. The novel describes the story of a specific group of people or family under review: it is Fleur Pillager's clan called the Ojibwe or Chippewa or the Anishinaabe. Erdrich, herself related to the story of this tribe, describes their battle that how they endured the hardships of the loss of their Native land. The Native individuals, by and large relied upon their territory for nourishment and accommodations. Simultaneously, the land is a representation of a spiritual heritage for them, a reservoir of convictions and legends. In this way, there is an extremely solid bond between them and their property. Indian individuals believe that they were conceived from the belly of the Mother Earth, "a natural bonding begins within the misty, generative womb of Mother Earth ... The spiritual bond is likened to an attachment to Mother Earth as one sits within her warm womb" ([McGaa, 1990, p. 62](#)). As land is basic to their reality, losing the land makes that world disintegrated, as the novel depicts the striping of the "last" ripe land (the Pillagers' rich place that is known for timber) by Euro-American timber organizations. "Last" is very much emphasized by Erdrich's storyteller, Nanapush, who reuses the word while revealing to Lulu Nanapush the narrative of her mom and tribe:

I saw the passing of times you will never know. I guided the [last] buffalo hunt. I saw the [last] bear shot. I trapped the [last] heaver with a pelt of more than two year's growth. I spoke aloud the words of the government treaty, and refused to sign the settlement papers that would take away our woods and lake. I axed the [last] birch that was older than I, and I saved the [last] Pillagers. ([Erdrich, 1988, p. 2](#))

[Erdrich \(1988\)](#) makes use of old Nanapush to replace the Native mother who narrates the tales of the past to her kids which is an extremely customary practice. He starts the story by describing to Lulu the extermination of his tribe by and large and his own families specifically, in light of the fact that one of the diseases they suffered in the wake of the interaction with the Whites caused their downfall, among other things. He narrates the tragedy with poetic pathos:

“We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall”(p. 1). “we” represents the whole clan and collectively refers to the deaths of Fleur's family too. He unveils to Lulu the tale of her mom, Fleur, whom the young lady appears to decline to identify or even “call mother” (p. 2). Nanapush needs to place the young girl in a specific historical perception and location that will empower her to comprehend the explanations for her mom's deserting of her. Simultaneously, he needs to make her discover an association with that traditional time which connects her with her lineage as such to study the “reality” about that history because their version of history and reality is different from the one the Amer-Europeans teach the Native boys and girls in Christian schools. He speaks to her:

Granddaughter, you are the child of the invisible, the ones who disappeared, when, along with the first bitter punishment of early winter, a new sickness swept down. The consumption it was called... Whole families of your relatives lay ill and helpless in its breath on the reservation, where we were forced close together, the clans dwindled. Our tribe unraveled like a coarse rope, frayed at either end as the old and new among were taken. (pp. 1-2)

In this regard, [Stookey \(1999\)](#) claims that the novel *Tracks* is “essentially a story about the land—and the people connected to it”(p. 71). Erdrich juxtaposes the life of man and contrasts the permanence of land in relation to the transience of human life, “Land is the only thing that lasts life to life. Money burns like tinder, flows off like water. And as for government promises, the wind is steadier” (*Tracks* 33).

Another important female character Fleur's downfall parallels the physical damage to natural surroundings. There is an important comparison between Fleur's character toward the start of the novel *Tracks* and toward the end; this complexity goes with the government taking Fleur's property to control and obliterate nature and environment. Early, readers were introduced to Fleur, a woman character that was incredibly solid and independent. Nanapush finds Fleur alone in a lodge, having survived a disease that killed her entire family. Nanapush, portraying Fleur states: “She was wild as a filthy wolf, a big bony girl whose sudden bursts of strength and snarling cries terrified the listening Pukwan” (p. 3).

Contrasting Fleur with a wolf symbolizes that Fleur is a tough and significant character in the novel. She can fight for herself and has demonstrated her

value by enduring a sickness that killed her whole family. Her qualities are similar to the qualities of nature and environment, surviving despite seemingly impossible existence, just like a wolf that strongly tolerates winter and its coldness. Fleur's character is further symbolized as a Bear, whose hibernation in winter describes its rejuvenation and power. Similarly, through Fleur's Bear like qualities, Erdrich, in accordance with the typically Native American mythological beliefs, demonstrates the Native American vision that animals and the human beings are the descendants of the same spirit and thus there exists among them great harmony. The Native Americans proudly call themselves Bears, Horses, and Rabbits; Bulls etc. implying that they intend to live in harmony with all other creatures. This mythic and creative vision of the Native American ancestors about the deeply spiritual nature of the universe and its creations being the personifications of force or what they call ‘Great mystery’ goes a long way to explain their intimate, deeply spiritualized relationship with nature and their subsequent spiritual anguish at their forced removal from ancestral lands.

Though Fleur is described as a powerful female character even having supernatural qualities about her, she is by no means immortal or flawless: she is as vulnerable and frail as every person may be. Pauline describes that Fleur called for assistance from the two youngsters in the shop. Her cries show the readers that how vulnerable she was in that condition. She was unable to communicate in her native language and asks help from kids. This incident further isolates Fleur from her strong persona of ‘the wolf’. Breaking the link between Fleur and her animalistic character becomes the symbol of disconnection between the people and nature and its surroundings. Since Fleur has been separated from such an influential thought, she turns out to be more assailable in men's eyes, and increasingly powerless to their merciless and brutal assaults and violence. Though the sexual abuse Fleur encounters isolates her from the qualities of being a powerful and strong woman similar to the qualities of a wolf, she still conveys other animalistic affiliations in her character, with the Bear specifically, all through the novel. Therefore, Fleur's rape still reverberates in the environmental world, demonstrating how a man shows his control over nature in a very severe and horrendous way. Fleur's downfall begins with the sexual abuse (rape) she faced which reveals the significance of ecofeminism and environmental issues

and the novel becomes a vehicle of eco performativity. Louise Erdrich describes rape as the most noticeably awful misuse a female could suffer because of anybody, male or female. Since Fleur is still associated with the nature, Erdrich, through her character, symbolizes the rape of natural surroundings and environment which results in destruction. It leaves everlasting scars and harmful effects. Besides, when a female is assaulted, the action performed cannot be undone in any case. The same goes for nature too. When people ignore nature and ruin it for individual advantage, there is no fixing the harm. At the point when Erdrich compares assault with the annihilation of nature, she reinforces the seriousness of ecological maltreatment and maltreatment against the female gender. Giving huge importance to ecological issues, Erdrich effectively expresses the environmental issues by associating them with the vulnerability and exploitation of the female gender and creates a symbolic environmental narrative.

Conclusion

As Erdrich thinks about women and nature, both are weak against men that control them. Women in her fiction exemplify nature's suffering and misery apart from obliteration and industrialization. Erdrich sheds light on this association to motivate her readers and builds a human picture of nature and environment.

Erdrich brings up the gravity of both circumstances in nature and women's acts of rebelliousness. Despite the fact that these actions show a level of misery, the incidents in *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* likewise show the fate of woman's rights and environmentalism. For instance, in entering the lake, Fleur states that in spite of her abuse and exploitation, she still has command over the circumstances, whether it is just the ability to suffocate her physical body so men can never again mishandle it. This article demonstrates how Erdrich's ecofeminist/environmental works from the marginalized aboriginal community have significantly contributed to environmental theory and praxis, pro-environmental activism and theorization of land/nature-woman relations. This article provides evidence that Erdrich, in her non-white epistemological scenarios, accords central importance to ecosphere and the ecosystem in conceptualizing the relationship between Native American women and land, and resists nature/culture, human/non-human binaries propagated by white anthropocentric philosophies. Thus considering environment as an equal partner in the scheme of nature rather than giving it an inferior place in man-made dualities, she demonstrates that Native ecofeminism opens many possibilities of a renewed understanding of the ecosystem and the nature of relations between women and nature/land/environment entities within it.

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