

The land, the Mother, and the Crisis of Identity in Louise Erdrich's Tracks

الأرض، الأم، وأزمة الهوية في رواية لويس أدرج

سهام خطاب حمدان / كلية الآداب / الجامعة المستنصرية

الملخص

يتناول البحث العلاقة بين ضياع الأرض عند الهنود الحمر وضياع قيم الأمومة متمثلة بشخصية فليور بطلة رواية آثار حيث أن فقدانها لأرضها الغنية بالصنوبر والأعشاب النادرة والتي تعد مصدر فخر بالإضافة الى كونها مصدر غذاء نتيجة القوانين الجائرة التي وضعتها سلطات الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية والتي ابتغت من ورائها سلب اكبر مساحة من الأراضي التابعة للهنود الحمر حدا بها الى التخلي عن طفلتها الوحيدة ايماننا منها ان فقدان البيت\الوطن هو فقدان لكل القيم الأخرى وخصوصا الأمومة. أن التلم الذي حدث في علاقة الأم\الطفلة نتج عنه اغتراب ثقافي خصوصا من جانب الطفلة التي اخذت تزدرى و تكره والدتها حتى انها لم تعد تناديها بامها. الكثير من الأطفال الهنود اصبحوا مثل هذه الطفلة حيث انهم فقدوا الوشائج الطبيعية مع امهاتهم مما نتج عنه تغيير في بنية معنى الأمومة لديهم وبذلك فقد هذا الجيل جزءا من ارثه الاجتماعي والثقافي وبالتالي فقد بدء يعيش حالة من الاغتراب او أزمة اللا انتماء.

Abstract

The research discusses the relationship between the loss of the native land of the native Americans and the loss of the values of motherhood represented by the character of Fleur, the heroine of *Tracks*. The loss of her rich land of timber and other valuable herbs which is considered as a source of personal pride as well as a source of food as a result of the unjust laws of the government of the United States, forces Fleur to abandon her only child believing that her loss of home\land is a loss of all the other values especially ,motherhood which is connected with the land. The fracture which happens in the relationship of mother\child results in a cultural alienation especially on the part of the child who begins to scorn and hate her mother and refuses to call her “mother”. A lot of native children become like this child because they have lost the natural connections with their mothers which results in a great change in the real, traditional meaning of “motherhood”, as a result this generation have lost part of its cultural and social heritage and begun to live in a state of alienation or no belonging.

The land, the Mother, and the Crisis of Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

The interrelatedness between the Indian land and motherhood is inseparable in the novel of the native American writer Louise Erdrich (b.1954-), *Tracks*. This novel shows very vehemently the impact of the loss of land on the fragmentation of tribal and family systems in the Indian society in general, and on the long lasting relationship between mothers and children in particular. The land, in this respect, is fundamental for identity and belonging. The displacement caused by the loss of the land causes another displacement on the mothering level. Having lost their ancestral or tribal land, mothers were forced to abandon their children due to their inability to sustain them either psychologically or economically. It seems that the loss of Native land comes to represent the loss of the traditional natural home of the Indian people which results in changing the prevailing traditional values. Although most of Erdrich's novels shed light on the devastation of motherhood which is accepted as an inevitable doom, it is only *Tracks* that tries to investigate the reasons behind this corruption or change that overcomes this sacred relation between mother and child and its association with the loss of the land. I argue that *Tracks* demonstrates that the loss of the land becomes the epitome for the change in the traditional concepts of home and motherhood that the research tries to show.

The Significance of Land in *Tracks*

Tracks which is "lauded as Erdrich's most 'Indian' novel in respect to both historical and tribal issues" (Wilson, p.17) focuses on the story of the loss of a Chippewa mother's land, Fleur, and her desperate attempts to save it. By losing it, Fleur suffers a spiritual and psychological alienation which estranges her from her family and husband leading to abandonment of her daughter, Lulu. Consequently, Fleur suffers the loss of her previous Indian identity and she becomes an outcast. In a sub-plot, *Tracks* also presents the story of Pauline, who undergoes the atrocities of being a mixed blood woman and whose family has lost their land and as a result their clan. Because she has neither land nor a clan, Pauline attaches herself to the whites in an attempt to gain self-respect and consequently an identity. Having lost her sense of motherhood, she abandons her child (Marie) because she does not want the latter to connect her with a community that deals with her as an outsider.

To put the novel in perspective, *Tracks* (1988) is the third novel published in a four-novel sequence which includes *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen*

Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

(1986), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994). In an interview with Louise Erdrich and her husband Michael Dorris who collaborates with her in writing these novels, Dorris states " *Tracks* was the first one to have the finished draft, but it will be the third one to be published" (Coltelli, p.51). later on , he says " *Tracks*, which is the third book, takes the older characters in both *Love Medicine* and *The Beet Queen* a generation back into a traditional time"(Ibid, p.43). So, it seems that the novel talks about a certain "traditional" time, life, or even a history that might never return, for after that particular time (1912-1924 which the novel covers) many familial, social and cultural values have changed due to the final loss of the native land which has been usurped by the government of the United States of America. *Tracks* shows how the same tribe comes to divide among itself between those who are " tribal loyalist" like Fleur who does not believe in selling the land and " mixed blood progressives" like some natives called the Morrisseys and Lazarres who believe that their only opportunity of survival rests in selling their ancestral land (Wilson,p.28). Although, Pauline does not have land but, she could be counted on the "progressives" in her attitude towards her native heritage.

Because of its "traditionalism", *Tracks* becomes the only one among Erdrich's novels which establishes the traditional notions of home in its relation with the native land. It portrays people still settle in their ancestral land before losing it. While her other novels depict other notion(s) of home based on the eventual loss of the land and the relocation and assimilation of the Native people.

The novel puts a certain tribe or clan under inspection, it is Fleur Pillegar's tribe called the Ojibwe or Chippewa and also the Anishinaabe (Erdrich herself belongs to this tribe) and their struggle to survive the hardships of the final loss of their Native land .The Anishinaabe people and Native people in general depended on their land in providing food and shelter. At the same time, land represents for them a spiritual legacy, a well of beliefs and legends. So, there is a very strong bond between them and their land. Indian people believe that they were born from the womb 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, p.62). As land becomes fundamental to their world, losing the land makes that world crumble. So, *Tracks* could be read as a record of" the end of the world as the Anishinaabe had known it" (Gross,p.1, italics added).As the novel portrays the striping of the " last" fertile land(the Pillegars' rich land of timber)by Euro-american timber companies. The word "last" is well emphasized by Erdrich's narrator, Nanapush, who repeats the word

while telling Fleur's daughter the story of her mother 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. (*Tracks*,p. 2,emphasis added)

As the above quotation shows, Erdrich uses old Nanapush to take the place of the Native mother who tells the stories of the past to her children which is a very traditional practice. He begins the story by telling Lulu about the death of his tribe, in general and his own family in particular, because one of the diseases that the contact with the Whites brings to them, namely, consumption:" We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall"(p. 1). It is the same sickness that kills Fleur's family. He tells Lulu the story of her mother, Fleur, whom the young woman seems to refuse to acknowledge or even " call mother"(*Tracks*, P.2) . Nanapush wants to put the girl in a certain historical perspective that will enable her to understand the reasons behind her mother's abandonment of her. At the same time, he wants to make her find a connection with that " traditional time" which links her with her ancestors ,in other words, " to learn about that history". He tells 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)

It seems that the young woman has no knowledge of these events and it becomes Nanapush's responsibility to prepare her to acknowledge the importance of her land and understanding her mother's position in an attempt to retain her prior Indian identity. After the loss of Fleur's

The land, the Mother, and the Crisis of Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

land, Lulu is sent to a government school due to her mother's abandonment of her, and thus she becomes accustomed to the White culture, When she comes back many years later, Nanapush could hardly recognize her:

Your braids were cut, your hair in a thick ragged bowl, and your dress was shabby and smoldering orange, a shameful color like a half-doused flame, visible for miles...The dress was tight, too small, s training across your shoulders...(*Tracks* ,p. 22)

To strengthen her sense of identity and belongingness, Nanapush reminds her:

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*, p.33)

So, *Tracks* is " essentially a story about the land—and the people connected to it"(p. 71) as Stookey writes. From the Anishinaabe or Chippewa point of view, the earth, sun, moon, and plants are all relations (quoted in Gross, 48). By losing the earth (land), the whole life system of these people will be destroyed. The novel, Peterson states “ takes up (corresponds to) a turning point in the history of Anglo-Indian land conflicts” (p. 987) . Here begins the story, for *Tracks* is set during a certain historical era when two Acts were issued concerning the communal reservation property of land. The first is the General Allotment (also called the Dawes) Act of 1887 which divides tribal land so that individuals could have their "own" tracts or lands. The second is the Indian Allotment Act of 1904 which makes it explicit how much land individual tribal members

Could possess (Angely , p. 159). The General Allotment Act provided that native owners of allotted land should pay property taxes but not during the first twenty-five- years. Erdrich opens her novel almost at the end of that period. Nanapush reveals at the beginning of the novel how the Ojibwa in particular have to suffer the harsh winters and the spreading of epidemics around the time when their land taxes were coming due. Some people were forced to sell their land below their value. Others borrowed against their allotments to provide provisions to their families and then lost their lands as well because they could

not pay their loans (Stookey,p. 72). Here is Nanapush explains his people's problem:

Our trouble came from living ,from liquor and from the dollar bill. We stumbled toward the government bait, never looking down, never noticing how the land was snatched from under us at every step.(*Tracks*,p. 4)

It seems that these two laws have corrupted the Ojibwa or Chippewa people's cultural sense by introducing to them the alien concept of ownership which " marginalizes the Chippewa culture by valorizing individual ownership over shared and unowned[sic] land" (Angely, p. 159). So, the native Indian comes to move in a space alien to him/her; a space with boundaries. Consequently, the advent of the Euro-American culture that imposed these two Acts, do not only divide the tribal land but it has divided the people against themselves. It teaches the individual natives to profit on the expense of their own families and friends. For example, when the Kashpaws in *Tracks*, learn that the money they, Fleur and Nanapush have worked hard together to collect is not enough to pay the taxes of all their lands, and in spite of their kinship to Fleur (they are her in-laws) Margaret Kashpaw and her son Nector have chosen to use the whole sum of money to pay the taxes of their own land and, consequently, they were able to keep it. By behaving greedily, the Kashpaws, do not only betray Fleur, but they drive her to abandon her only child after making her run out of alternatives. So, Erdrich wants to illustrate here that Natives come to behave against their nature and tradition. In other words, they become alienated to their own culture, a culture based on mutual sense of responsibility and selflessness.

To emphasize the significance of the subject of the land and its relation to identity, Kenneth Lincoln has described Erdrich's novels as " a literature of 'homing' "(p. 209). This means the fiction where the home or place has the central role. This sense could be found in most of her novels. These novels are set in the mid-Eastern states where she grew up. Although as an adult, she lived for many years in the eastern United States, Erdrich's nostalgia to the flatness and openness of North Dakota and Minnesota was present deep in her writings. William Beevis in his essay "Native American Novels: Homing- In" emphasizes the importance of home to the native American characters. He believes that native American character can find his/her identity only by returning home contrary to the Euro-American one who achieves his/her by moving away from

original home and society. Fulfillment, according to Beevis comes from the identification between the native character and his/her native society, cultural past, and inherited place (p. 589). Thus, in *Tracks*, Fleur is the embodiment of this idea of unification between the Indian American and her/his land or home. "feeling at home" in the traditional sense, as Wong says, "is sensing one's relationship to one's social, geographic, and cosmic networks as well as to one's immediate and extended family"(p.177). Losing her land has disrupted this sense of "unification" and driven Fleur to the nowhere. Thus, *Tracks* shows the outcomes of losing the land on people especially those who refuse to adapt to the White culture and at the same time who believe that no other place could give them the same sense of identity and belongingness as their ancestral land.

The Significance of Motherhood in *Tracks*

Motherhood is a very basic issue in the novels of Louise Erdrich in general and in *Tracks* in particular. As a woman writer, Erdrich is concerned with the depiction of female characters in her novels. Adhering to her Ojibwe heritage where women constitute a great power in the community, she makes them very strong to survive the hardships of life. While the men in her novels (with a few exceptions, Nanapush in this case) accept inevitable doom in their lives, the women confront the same difficulties with a different outlook. In her essay "Adoptive Mothers and Thrown-Away Children in the Novels of Louise Erdrich", Hertha D. Wong believes that Native American women have been associated for centuries with the continuance of tribal traditions, both through childbearing and through transmission of cultural values in stories (p.1). Beth Brant challenges the idea of the indigenous women as "helpless victim", she says "we are freedom fighters,..., we are healers. This is not anything new. For centuries it has been so"(pp.12-13).

In *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen presents a historical perspective for the Native American spiritual and cultural notions of the female. She believes that sexism has no origin in "matriarchal" Native American cultures but it was imposed by Euro-Americans who brought their "patriarchy" along with Christianity, whiskey, and, smallbox(p. 268, emphasis added). A Woman is highly estimated and evaluated in those communities. She concludes:" Woman is the sun and the earth; she is grandmother; she is mother; she is Thought, Wisdom, Dream, Reason, Tradition, Memory, Deity, and Life itself (p. 268).

Identity in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*

The novels of Louise Erdrich and especially *Tracks* highlight the complex and strained family and communal relationships in Chippewa and Anglo cultures. The various portraits of mothers appeared in the novels reflect the Chippewa emphasis on the family as "the basic political and economic unit in the woodland and the primary source of personal identity" (Vizenor,p.9). Basil Johnston comments on the Chippewa sense of identity and its source in extended family totem groups and community:" Men and women preferred to regard themselves as members of a totem and then a community"(p. 8). Most Chippewa communities, Johnston adds " consisted as extended family members united by a common totem"; "a totem animal[served as] each person's family mark"(pp.8,28).

Tracks presents two strong women characters, Fleur Pillager and Pauline Puyat. Fleur descends from the Bear clan and she is the last of that clan for the rest of her family were dead of epidemics and hunger. As the last survivor of her clan and in continuation with the role played by her mother before her, it has become her responsibility to keep her land and what it represents. In her essay " Questions of the Spirit: Bloodlines in Louise Eldrich's Chippewa Landscape ", Annette Van Dyke emphasizes the fact that Fleur Pillager is " the exemplification of traditional Chippewa power and she owes her power to her spirit guardian, Misshepesu, the water spirit man"(p. 17). So, Fleur's connection with her land is so strong because land represents for her not only a geographical territory which provides her with food but also a spiritual and traditional legacy which connects her with her ancestors and which shapes her essential identity.

In fact, Peterson points out that *Tracks* "refocuses attention on the emotional and cultural repercussions that the loss of land entails"(p. 987) . In this light, Fleur suffers physically and spiritually and works so hard to keep her land. After being saved by Nanapush from starvation and death, she left to work in the city of Argus to earn the taxes for her land. Her wages are not enough for this purpose, so she decides to play cards with the men in the butcher's shop to earn extra money. Fleur plays for weeks winning exactly one dollar each night. The men begin to feel angry at losing their stakes for weeks and they begin to think that Fleur is cheating. So, they decide to punish her by raising the stakes at last in order to defeat her. But Fleur wins this last game again. She decides to leave at the end of the game but the men who are drunk, become so furious. They want to avenge their wounded manhood, so they follow her and begin to beat her, and eventually they come to rape her.

Returning to her land, Fleur tells nobody about her ordeal in Argus. She never talks about it. It is only through Pauline that people come to have a description for what had happened. When Nanapush tells Fleur that Pauline tells stories about her, her answer is " Uncle, the Puyat lies"(*Tracks*, p. 38). As readers, we are left without accurate answer whether Fleur has been really raped or it has been only Pauline's imagination which showed her the act of violation.

The state of not acknowledging the rape (if it really happens), Fleur's act could be interpreted as a kind of self-sacrifice. She knows that she is responsible for keeping her land and with it the Chippewa heritage. If she fails to protect herself, she succeeds, and this is the ultimate aim for her, to protect her land for awhile. The power Fleur gets from keeping her land also enables her to marry Eli Kashpaw and become a mother. Baby Lulu's arrival makes Fleur so happy, especially she finds in her the resemblance and continuation of a clan. Pauline describes Lulu as:

She had the Kashpaws' unmistakable nose, too wide and squashed on the tip. She was good-looking. She had Fleur's coarse, quick-growing hair. Sheer black. She got teeth early, pointed to them with her fat, alert fingers, seemed proud of their sharpness and number. She always demanded to be held, so she was carried in arms till the second summer of her life. (*Tracks*, p.70)

Lulu's presence in the life of her mother in particular and the rest of the family like her father Eli, Nanapush, Margaret (her grandmother) and Nector (her uncle) changes the relationships between those members themselves. Margaret who primarily refuses to accept Fleur to be her daughter-in-law, comes to live in the latter's own cabin. She could hold the child all the time, tie her against her chest in an old shawl and makes her sit through Benediction. So, Lulu makes these people feel like "a kind of clan, the new made up of bits of the old, some religious in the old way and some in the new"(*Tracks*, p.70).

Fleur mothers her child in the best way which makes Pauline, who narrates these events, feels so jealous. Pauline narrates that Fleur comes to teach Lulu so many words in a very short time that the child "kept up a constant and annoying string of song and talk which the others laughed at and indulged"(p.76). At the same time, Fleur becomes so careful to dress Lulu in the best way. Although the

Identity in Louise Erdrich's Tracks

child plays in the dirt, she wears tiny red bead bracelets and doeskins moccasins, embroider with flower designs. As for her green dress, it is cinched around her stomach with a leather belt (p.76). These examples show us Fleur's interest and devotedness to her child. She is so eager to teach the child the Chippewa language in the fastest way as if she wants the child to be immersed in the language and heritage of her people and this is what the traditional Chippewa mother does to her children. Fleur comes to feel so proud of her child who is raised in the Pillagers' land and who is surrounded by the great love of her extended family.

Fleur protects her land for awhile but at the end she has to pay more. The time of payment comes when she was passing in her worst circumstances. She has just lost a baby and she was physically and spiritually so weak. In spite of this fact, Fleur works very hard with the rest of her family to save the Pillagers' as well as the Kashpaws' taxes. They go back to Fleur's rich land as their last refuge to stripe it out of its last herbal resources. They collect and then sell cranberry bark, quill boxes, fish powder, and animal pelts. But the money was not enough to be paid for the Kashpaws' and the Pillagers' land. Consequently, finding the money not enough to pay the taxes of both lands, Margaret and her son, Nector, have paid all the money to save their own making Fleur loses hers.

As a result for this action, Fleur is forced to abandon Lulu, her lovely child because she could not protect her anymore. Many years later Nanapush tells Lulu about the reasons:

She[Fleur] sent you to the government school, it is true, but you must understand there were reasons: there would be no place for you, no safety on this reservation, no hiding from government papers, or from Morrisseys who shaved heads or Turcot Company, leveler of a whole forest. There was no predicting what would happen to fleur herself. (p.219)

So, Fleur who is betrayed by members of her own family and who has lost her rich land of timber suffers a kind of alienation. She declines an invitation from her husband, Eli, to live with him in the Kashpaws' land. In fact, she is estranged from her husband; she could not forget the betrayal of his family and, then, she is unable to forgive him. Losing her land makes Fleur lose her sense of motherhood for each stems and nourishes from the other. In this way the

traditional sense of motherhood has been changed for children remain motherless which is unprecedented. As a result, there comes a new concept of mother who is the “adaptive mother” Erdrich uses in her other novels as the alternative of the traditional or natural mother.

Pauline is another young mother portrayed in *Tracks*. Like Fleur, she abandons her baby(Marie) once she was born refusing to acknowledge her existence or even look at her. She represents the distorted relationship between mother and child resulted from the imposing of the Euro-American culture on the native Indians. When Pauline discovers that she is pregnant, she tries to get rid of the baby: “since I had already betrothed myself to God, I tried to force it out of me, to punish, to drive it from my womb”(p.131). Pauline tries different ways to abort the baby without success. When labor comes, Pauline refuses to deliver, she resists childbirth and she reduces herself “to something tight, round, and very black clenched around my child so that she could not escape. I became a stone, a boulder set under a hill”(p.135). Pauline tries to kill herself and the baby by refusing to let the latter out “I sat up suddenly and gripped the top rails of the bed. I deceived her, lay sideways, and let the convulsions of her movements pass”(p.135).

Baby Marie comes to the world with the help of Bernadette Morrissey, Pauline’s mother-mentor. The latter ties Pauline’s arms to the rails of the bed, and her legs by the ankles to the bedstead. Then, she forces the child out of her stubborn mother by using homemade forceps made from black iron cooking spoons(p.135).

Pauline could be a good example of the disintegration inside the native Indian person. An orphan and a mixed blood herself whose family lost their land and tribal connection long ago. Pauline belongs to that clan "for which the name was lost"(*Tracks*,p.14). As a result, her family have lost their place in the native community and they become like outsiders . Nanapush emphasizes this fact about Pauline:

She was, to my mind, unknown mixture of ingredients, like pale bannock that sagged or hardened. We never knew what to call her, or where she fit or how to think when she was around. So, we tried to ignore her...

Identity in Louise Erdrich's Tracks

Because she was [unnoticeable], homely if it must be said, Pauline schemed to gain attention by telling odd tales...[emphasis added].(p.38-39)

Living such a marginalized life and seeing the degradation and weakness in which the native Indians live, especially under the restricting laws of the whites, Pauline decides to be a white, in other words, to align with the strong. So, the best and only way to do so is to attach herself to the Catholic Church and be a nun. To achieve her goal, Pauline refuses to admit that she is an Indian woman or even a mixed blood because the church "would admit no Indian girls" (p.138). In order to live in such a denial, she changes her name, denounces her Indian heritage, and looks at her people down using the pronoun "them" (p.138) when she talks about them. Hertha Wong comments on Pauline's action stating "to gain entry into the white Judeo-Christian world, Pauline must renounce herself—her name, her indianness, her family, her female body, and her daughter" (p.185). Pauline suffers from loss of identity and consequently from cultural alienation. She becomes the "fragmented one" (p. 166) as Patricia Angley calls her. So, she abandons her baby because she does not want any kind of connection with her people and heritage. Hertha Wong suggests that Pauline's rejection of her child is simply "a continuation of her self-rejection, brought on... by her mixed blood and her cultural alienation" (p.184). Pauline's sense of motherhood has been destroyed by her cultural alienation, by her inability to find a place in her own community, and, by that community's refusal to grant her that place. As Fluer tries to do anything to save her land, her sense of motherhood and restores her people's heritage, Pauline wages a war against them. Being without land and clan and being treated as an outsider, she embraces Catholicism as a means of empowerment. In *Black Looks*, Bell Hooks describes Pauline's situation "Too many red and black people live in a state of forgetfulness, embracing a colonized mind so that they can be better assimilate into the white world" (quoted in Peterson,p.988).

Due to her cultural alienation, Pauline begins to practice a perverted version of Catholicism. She comes to torture herself in an attempt to be accepted as an assimilate Catholic. She invents extreme methods of penance unknown even to most pious, like wearing chafing underwear made of potato sacks, walking with her shoes on the wrong feet, allowing herself to be relieved twice a day only one in the morning and one at night, and refraining from bathing herself (p.152) . Her main task becomes to "set an example for other girls from this region to guide them, to purify their minds, and to mold them in my own image" (p.205). Pauline's insistence to create copies of her distorted image emphasizes her total separation and estrangement from her heritage and any other heritage.

Abandoning her heritage as being infidel, she could not understand the catholic heritage either. This is why Pauline invents her own version of Catholicism; a version which saves her from her “insignificance” and which provides her with everything she wishes for like being “ not one speck Indian but wholly white” and being “ forgiven of my daughter” (p. 137).

Pauline’s cultural alienation is the outcome of her being an outsider in a society who believes in the unity between the person and land. Since she does neither land or a clan, it becomes so hard for her to assimilate to such a society or be accepted as an influential person like Fleur, for example, in that society. Culturally alienated, Pauline tries to break down her sense of marginalization in the Indian society by inventing an imaginative distorted version of a catholic heritage, she is the only one who could believe in it. That is why she changes her name to Sister Leopolda, at the end of the novel, to declare her final and ultimate disintegration from the Indian heritage. Thus, Pauline becomes another mother who is denied motherhood on the basis of being an outsider in her own society.

Both Fleur and Pauline are forced to be alienated each one in her own way but the essential reasons are the same. Both suffer the bad effects of social and cultural changes come due to the advent of the Euro-American culture to their society. The loss of the land makes a split in their identities, alienates them. They become motherless, a very torturing feeling for a woman in general. Both Fleur and Pauline are portrayed by Erdrich as true survivors but at the same time they have lost much; they could never taste that feeling of motherhood again.

In conclusion, *Tracks* is Erdrich’s only novel which investigates the relationship between the loss of the land and the loss of the traditional sense of motherhood. This loss has affected the formation of the Native Indian identity and forces it to respond to new norms alien to its traditional heritage. In fact, Erdrich shows in this novel the disruption that has occurred to the Native character due to the loss of the land and the transformation in the traditional native concept of motherhood. Thus, the loss of the land leads to the loss of traditional values the fact that Fleur and Pauline has to live with. By losing her land, Fleur has lost her sense of belongingness. Consequently, the traditional world, she used to live in, has smashed crushing with it her own identity and sense of motherhood. As for Pauline, her family’s loss of land and eventually their clan has made her an outsider in her own community and an alien in the Euro-American community as well. The novel illustrates that the old traditional world of those people can never return back and that people have to live with the fact of their loss.

Bibliography

Allen, Paula Gunn. *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions*. 1986. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992.

Angely, Patricia. "Fleur Pillager: Feminine, Mythic, and Natural Representations in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* Constructions and Confrontations: Changing Representations of Women and Feminisms, East and West." Ed. Cristina Bacchilega and Cornelia N. Moore. University of Hawai'i and the East-West Center, Hawai'i, 1996

Bevis, William. "Native American Novels: Homing In".

Recovering the Word: Essays on Native America

Literature. Ed. Brian Swan & Arnold Krupat. Berkely.

University of California Press, 1987. pp580-620.

Chavkin, Allan, *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise*

Erdrich. Tuscaloosa, AL. University of Alabama Press, 1999.

Coltelli, Laura. *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press. 1992.

Dyke, Annette V. "Questions of the Spirit: Boodlines in Louise Erdrich's *Chippewa Landscape*". *Studies in Indian Literatures*. Vol. 4, No. 1, 1992:pp. 15-27

Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. Henry Holt and Company. New York, 1988.

Gross, Lawrence W. "An Anishinaabe Reading of Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*". *Studies in American Indian Literature*. Vol. 17. Issue: 3. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005. pp. 48-57

Hessler, Michelle. "Catholic Nuns and Ojibwa Shamans": Pauline & Fleur in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*". *Wicazo Sa Review*. University of Minnesota Press. Vol. 11, No. 1, 1995. Pp. 40-45.

Peterson, Nancy. "History, Postmodernism, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*". *PMLA*. Vol. 109, No. 5, 1994. Pp 982-99.

Reid, Shelley. "The Stories We Tell: Louise Erdrich's Identity Narratives". *Melus*. Gale Group, 2000. p. 65-76

Stookey, Lorena L. *Louise Erdrich: A Critical Companion*.

Greenwood Press. West, CT, 1999. Wong, Hertha. "Adoptive Mothers and Thrown-Away Children in the Novels of Louise Erdrich". *Narrating*

Mothers: Theorizing Maternal Subjectivities. Ed. Brenda Daly and Maureen T. Tennessee Press 1994. Reddy. Knoxville: University of

Wilson, Jonathan Max. "Native Spaces of Continuation, of Home". preservation, and Belonging: Louise Erdrich's Concepts Arlington: University of Texas, 2008