Valentina MARKASOVIĆ
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
English language and Literature
Lorenza Jägera 9, HR-31000 Osijek, Croatia
vmarkasovic@ffos.hr

UDK 821.111(73).09 Erdrich, L. –

DOI: https://doi.org/10.29162/ANAFORA.v10i1.4

Izvorni znanstveni članak
Original Research Article

Primljeno: 2. svibnja 2023.
Received: 2 May 2023

Prihvaćeno: 9. lipnja 2023.
Accepted: 9 June 2023

AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF FLEUR AND LULU IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S NOVEL *TRACKS*

Abstract

Tracks by Louise Erdrich is a novel dealing with the struggles of Native Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century, but within that broader frame—it also speaks out about the connection between the colonial oppression of nature and the subjugation of women. Although some ecocritical and ecofeminist readings of the novel, especially relating to Fleur Pillager, are available, not much has been written on the character of Lulu Nanapush as presented in *Tracks*. Therefore, this article analyses Fleur Pillager and Lulu Nanapush to discover how the tenets of ecofeminism are implemented in the novel. The research relies on the theories of different ecofeminist and postcolonial authors. After establishing the colonial background of conjoined oppression of women and nature, the article focuses on how Fleur embodies and protects nature, while Lulu begins to lose her connection to nature due to her colonial background. Thus, strategic essentialism of the kind could be understood as having been implemented with the aim of underlining the exploitation of Native American women by settler colonizers, as well as the eradication of nature.

Keywords: Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*, Fleur Pillager, Lulu Nanapush, ecofeminism

Introduction

In his seminal study *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said sees the genre of the novel as an overtly Western literary form that is, with its prescribed "normative pattern of social authority", inextricably connected to imperialism (71). But the novel "has increasingly become a powerful tool for many Native authors who explore cultural and colonial themes and present them to broad, largely non-Indian audiences" (Champagne 167) or, more broadly, non-Native audiences. Louise Erdrich, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, is one such novelist who transfigures the format of the novel into a tool that echoes the traditional oral Native American storytelling (Sergi 270; Stookey 13) and uses it to speak out about the struggles of Native Americans. She is a contemporary author of fiction, poetry, and non-fiction, best known for her series that focuses on the characters belonging to the Anishinabe people: *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen* (1986), *Tracks* (1988), *The Bingo Palace* (1994), *Tales of Burning Love* (1997), *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2001), *Four Souls* (2004), and *The Painted Drum* (2005).[1] In these novels, Erdrich highlights the problems the Native Americans are faced with in regards to the contemporary racial, political, economic, and ecological situations, to name a few.

Published as the third novel of the series, *Tracks* is set in the early twentieth century, chronologically preceding the other novels and providing the backstory for the community the readers were already introduced to in *Love Medicine*. The novel is narrated through two points of view: the first one is that of Nanapush,[2] an older Anishinabe man who, at the beginning of the novel, saves Fleur after her own family is wiped out by the consumption. The other narrator is Pauline Puyat, a person of mixed Anishinabe and white racial ancestry, who meets Fleur when the latter comes to the town of Argus, North Dakota, to work in a butcher shop. There, Fleur is raped and consequently returns to her own land where she meets Eli Kashpaw, a young Anishinabe man; the two start

[1] "Chippewa" is an English term for the people also known as "Ojibway," "Ojibwa," or "Ojibwe." In their own language, they use the term "Anishinabe"/"Anishinaabe"/"Anishinabeg" (Sergi 280; Stanford Friedman 110; Huang 39; Runtić and Knežević 74). This paper uses the terms interchangeably, depending how they are used in the novel or critical texts.

[2] In terms of powers and a connection to the nature, there is indeed a relation established to Nanapush, a gender-fluid trickster and a metamorph—that is, an organism that may assume an animal- and human-like form—being an ancient spirit and an old incarnation of Anishinabe. Such existences, however, are also apparent in other peoples, bearing different names.

a relationship and Fleur gives birth to Lulu. The novel also engages with various issues Fleur and Pauline encounter, such as government policies, rivalries with neighboring families, the Morrisseys and the Lazarres, the clash or co-existence of different religions, and so on.

This article focuses on one of the concerns raised in the novel, namely, the intersection of the colonial oppression of nature and women in the novel *Tracks*. To analyze it, an ecofeminist reading is applied to the mother and the daughter in the novel - that is, to Fleur Pillager and Lulu Nanapush. While there are other female characters in *Tracks* whose oppression is brought into connection with land exploitation, this article only focuses on the two characters. Alongside Fleur, whose oppression in the novel is most evident, Lulu is chosen due to her connection with Fleur but also because only a select scholarship discusses Lulu's character in *Tracks*. One possible reason for this is that Lulu has a more active part in Erdrich's other novels, so her appearance in *Tracks* has received minor or no critical attention. However, in *Tracks* she constantly looms over the plot, which allows for new interpretations of her character and, by extension, of the novel itself. To showcase how *Tracks* deals with colonial oppression of Native women and nature, the first part of the article introduces the context and offers a brief overview of the interactions between colonizers, Indigenous people, and nature. The parallels are then drawn between patriarchal subjugations of nature and the chosen women characters, Fleur, and Lulu. Fleur's connection with nature is considered on two levels – firstly, the article analyses her identification with nature; secondly, it shows how she attempts to protect her environment. The last section deals with Lulu and her weakened link to nature, offering reasons for the lack of a stronger bond. Due to Lulu's affinity for the Western way of life, which echoes issues prominently examined in postcolonial theory, the article also makes use of Frantz Fanon's work to better explain the character of Lulu.[3]

[3] Authors such as Gloria Bird, a member of the Spokane Tribe, recognize that the term "post-colonial" is difficult to apply to Native American literature, because Native Americans are still being oppressed and colonized (41), in a process termed "settler colonization," wherein settlers inhabit the already populated land. See, for example, Lorenzo Veracini's *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (2010).

1. Colonialism, Nature, and Women

Although there is a vast variety of Native American traditions, customs, and beliefs (Bierhorst 7; Paper 5), it is possible to outline what they have in common in terms of their ecological and environmental worldviews. Speaking from the Laguna Pueblo point of view, Paula Gunn Allen notes that to the Native Americans, all humans and non-humans share the same creator, the Great Mystery, and, as such, all are considered relatives. The whole biota is granted an equal or superior status to humans (56–57). Winona LaDuke, an activist and a member of the Mississippi Band Anishinaabeg, writes that "Native American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas" (*All Our Relations* 2). Harmony with nature is crucial to human survival, and this fits in with the so-called first Law of Ecology: "Everything is connected to everything else" (Commoner 33). Katsi (Tekatsitsiakawa) Cook, a Mohawk midwife, emphasizes the interrelatedness of all universes (qtd. in Bédard 112–23). Underscoring the role that land plays in Indigenous lives, Louis Owens, author of Choctaw Cherokee-Irish descent, notes that the "web of identities and relationships rises from the land itself, that element that has always been at the core of Native Americans' knowledge of who they are and where they come from" (Owens 193). The same belief is present in the Anishinabe worldview, which relies on the "connectedness and mutual dependency of all aspects of creation" (Kervin 86). The land itself is a provider of nourishment and a locus of spiritual heritage. Namely, through interviews with Canadian Anishinabe people, Chantelle Richmond has determined that land is fundamental to their overall wellbeing, as well as their identity (48). In this valuable research, the Anishinabe interviewees have shared their views and beliefs about how land connects with their spirituality, health, and familial and community relationships. Louise Erdrich herself explains that "[i]n a tribal view of the world, where one place has been inhabited for generations, the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history" (qtd. in Owens 193). In that interview, Erdrich confirmed that earth is the key image in *Tracks* (qtd. in Owens 197). Translating the Indigenous views into this novel, she makes the immense value of land clearly visible. For example, Nanapush observes that "[l]and is the only thing that lasts life to life" (Erdrich 33). Therefore, it can be said that in the Indigenous worldview, land "is not a commodity individuals have the right to claim; rather, it is a habitat populated by an interconnected network of beings with responsibilities to each other" (Kervin 73).

This view clashes with the prevalent ideology of the European colonizers. Their arrival and presence in the "newly discovered" world has been marked by the aim of "taming and ordering the 'wild' nature through the introduction of Western science: civilization was the commoditization of nature" (Bush 84), regardless of the fact that the spaces they encountered were obviously not uninhabited and wild (Runtić and Knežević ii).[4] The colonizers conceptualized the "New" World soil to be virginal and free for the taking; they wanted to "productively" use it—or abuse it (Mies 150; Loomba 153). LaDuke describes the relationship between the settlers and the land as a "utilitarian" one based on "an anthropocentric taking of wealth to make more things for empire," and one that disregards the Indigenous relationship with nature ("In the Time" 92). This extensive exploitation of resources has drained the colonized land, as well as its inhabitants. Vandana Shiva, an influential ecofeminist scholar, observes that this "resource-grab that is essential for 'growth' creates a culture of rape—rape of the Earth, of local self-reliant economies, of women" ("Preface" xvi). She introduces the term "maldevelopment" to illustrate "the violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected and interdependent systems, which sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequality, injustice and violence" (*Staying Alive* 5). Speaking about colonialism from an ecofeminist perspective, she recognizes that maldevelopment raises men above both women and nature (*Staying Alive* 5). Shiva's assertions establish the connection between women and nature, which largely relies on colonial binary oppositions. This construes the colonial binary oppositions, setting men on the one side and women and the nature on the other side.

Namely, to construct their own identities and distance themselves from the colonized peoples, Europeans imbued them with negative features, in this way emphasizing all the characteristics of Europeans themselves as positive (Said, *Orientalism* 1–2; Boehmer 77–78). Thus, they extended the traditional set of binaries, formed in antiquity by Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras and Aristotle (Geiger 54–55), onto the newly conquered lands. In these oppositional pairs, the first element is always superior to the second one, and they can be listed as follows: mind versus body; reason versus passion; culture versus nature; middle class versus working class; active versus passive; white versus black; man

[4] For example, speaking from a perspective of a Sicangu and Oglala Lakota, Luther Standing Bear notes that nature did not represent wilderness to his people: "We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth as 'wild.' Only to the white man was nature a wilderness and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people" (38).

versus woman; adult versus child (Sharp 37). With the colonial expansion, these hierarchies expanded to encompass white people as the standard in an opposition to the people of color.

The binaries above reveal "the humane, knowing subject" to be "a white male colonialist" (Loomba 79), while women and the non-European "other" "occupy the same symbolic space" opposite to that of a Western man (Helen Carr qtd. in Loomba 160). Of course, there are clear distinctions between the positions of white women and people of color. Although different pseudoscientific disciplines, such as anthropometry, played into these binaries and were employed to confirm the close connection between white women and "the lower races" (Loomba 77), white women were still positioned higher than people of color. Meanwhile, women of color remained at the bottom of the hierarchy, subjugated both due to their race and due to their gender (Jaimes Guerrero 65; Loomba 163).[5] Hence, women of color are nestled within the space of dual patriarchal/colonial oppression.[6]

In the West, following the technological advancements—namely, a sort of "scientific revolutions"—of the early modern period (approximately at the commencement of the 16th century), nature began to "be dominated by male-developed and -controlled technology, science, and industry" (Merchant 101). Colonization brought this line of thinking in contact—and contrast—with Indigenous ways of land cultivation. Cultivating monocultures, deforestation, centralization, privatization, and other ways of exploitation contributed to, for example, erosion, eradication of biodiversity, to hunger and poverty, which affected those who depend upon land to survive. Those included the poorest among the population but also women, who were predominantly involved with providing for their families and who were preoccupied with the sustainable, cooperative way of life (Young 100-6). This literal connection with land also plays

[5] Western, white (second-wave) feminism is often faulted for not being concerned with the issues women of color face due to the intersectionality of their gender and race identities. This has prompted third-wave feminists to broaden their concerns and take into account these and other differences in experience (such as class, age, sexual identity, and others). See, for example, bell hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984), Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984), Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983), and Kim Anderson's "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist" (2010).

[6] Different artistic and symbolic representations, used in colonial propaganda, represented the colonies in the form of female figures, variously (un)clothed to signify the values of a given colony or the goods that are to be found in it; as such, "female bodies symbolise the conquered land" (Loomba 154).

into the conceptual link between women and nature, which Sherry Ortner finds ubiquitous in human culture, because the cultural desire to subjugate nature is coded as masculine. By analogy, both women and nature are passive, cultivated, and taken advantage of (Ortner 73-74). Furthermore, both were deemed instrumental "in terms of their usefulness to others (e.g., to men in the case of women and to humans in the case of nature)" (Plumwood 120). The patriarchal domination over both relies on the parallels between the one and the other: nature is exploited due to its connection with women, while women are abused because of their perceived proximity with nature (Galić and Geiger 27). The recognition of this connection between women and nature has resulted in the emergence of ecofeminism, an intersection of ecological and environmental tendencies and of the fight for the rights and equality within feminism. The term was proposed by Françoise d'Eaubonne, a French feminist, in 1974, and the field of study flourished in the seventies and eighties (Buell et al. 424). Influential authors in the field include Vandana Shiva, Maria Mies, Carolyn Merchant, Ynestra King, Susan Griffin, Mary Daly, and others. There are different ecofeminist approaches, such as affinity and social ecofeminism, which will be explained in more detail in the next section; some ecofeminists contend that the connection between women and nature is oppressive, while others find it emancipatory (King 110). Yet in general, ecofeminism calls for "new gender relations between women and men and between humans and nature" (Merchant 100).

In Indigenous communities, interconnectedness, cooperation, and care for nature are not seen as exclusively female traits (Blend 208); specifically, equality between all beings is greatly emphasized in Anishinabe beliefs and cosmology (Gross, "The Comic" 446). However, women are those who have been found to suffer more in the colonial processes of land dispossession (along with the young and the elderly) (Blend 208). This condition is especially harmful for Indigenous communities, since Indigenous women, as Benay Blend explains, play an important role in their communities because they "[sustain] life-giving processes" (206). Consequently, relatedly, M. A. Jaimes Guerrero observes "a connection between the denigration and subordination of women and the corresponding degradation and subjugation of nature through acts of ecocide (the erosion of the natural environment or ecosystem)" (67), revealing the shared concerns of environmental and feminist struggles.

2. Fleur and Ecofeminism

Many characters in Erdrich's novel exhibit a likeness to nature. For example, Nanapush "weakened into an old man as one oak went down" (Erdrich 9); Eli becomes one with a moose he hunts and kills under the watchful guidance of Nanapush (Erdrich 104), offering an instance of zoomorphism. Both of these examples show that Indigenous men are also involved in the preservation of nature and that ecofeminist issues do not only concern women, but all people regardless of their gender (Blend 209). However, Fleur is the one most explicitly linked to nature—this connection will be explained in the following sections.

When writing about the Anishinabe connection with nature, it may appear that Erdrich's characters are reduced to the essentialist vision of their Anishinabe identity. In theories of identity, the essentialist view considers the identity as innate and inherent, and therefore stable and unchangeable (Peternai Andrić 91).[7] The presentation of an essentialist Native identity could result in a harmful stereotype of their intrinsic connection with nature (Kervin 98). The stereotyping is even more emphasized when the focus is placed on women characters, who are allegedly in an intimate, biologically-induced relation with nature, which goes against the feminist understanding of (gender) identity as constructed and not inherited (Merchant 102).[8] Yet, it could be said that the novel employs "strategic essentialism." This term was conceptualized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who proposed "see[ing] what in the universalizing discourse could be useful" and who recognized the usefulness of assuming an ascribed, sometimes stereotypical identity that is considered authentic so as to achieve a given goal (183-84). This means that it is possible for *Tracks* to present its characters, primarily Fleur, as inherently connected with nature, with the aim of underscoring

[7] Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that this view has been practically overcome, especially in today's world, due to the existence of various LGBTQ+ movements, Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and others. Thus, as early as in the 1960s, Stuart Hall discussed identity as a construct. In this novel, it can be exemplified by the character of Lulu—that is, in the white way she was brought up, which alienates her from the Anishinabe beliefs and worldview. Thus, her white face (to allude to Fanon) is also "constructed."

[8] Feminist authors argue against the idea that identity is innate and that all women biologically share characteristics of "a generic Woman" (Witt 322). Instead, as Simone de Beauvoir has famously stated, "[o]ne is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (293) – she is shaped by the social norms. See also, for example, Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

the ecofeminist goal of proving that patriarchy and colonialism exploit both women and nature.

If we connect the essentialist view with the white colonialism and stereotyping (as Spivak says in her aforementioned quote), we may claim that the view is used by colonizers to establish the stereotypes of the other, which they utilize to corroborate their colonial binary, such as an essentialist Native identity or an essentialist woman identity—a close link between the women and nature, but this contradicts the feminist understanding (feminist understanding of this issue. In line with this view, Erdrich undermines the essentialist colonizers' views from within by using their stereotype and then employing it in a different way; thus, she constructs the women characters, primarily Fleur, as inherently connected with the nature.

In addition, by portraying Fleur's character as "an extension of the natural world" (Shaddock 113), *Tracks* echoes the theses of affinity ecofeminists—those who believe in the inherent connection of women and nature. Affinity ecofeminism finds its roots in the reproductive and nourishing abilities found both in nature and in women (Mellor 148). In this view, women are celebrated as life-givers, like the revered Mother Goddess or Great Mother (Geiger 58). But this view of an innate connection between women and nature can be seen as controversial, since it is based on an inherent, biological female identity which is, as has been explained, generally contended by feminists. However, the novel also intertwines the affinity ecofeminist approach with the tenets of social ecofeminism, the one that sees "the connection between women and nature in their common *experience* of being exploited and subordinated by capitalist/social/patriarchal domination rather than claiming that women and nature have a common identity" (Mellor 153). Therefore, while not severing the association between women and nature, this approach recognizes the problems of essentializing women's identities. Social ecofeminism especially takes into consideration the problems encountered by women of lower social classes, as well as women of color (Merchant 105). Both affinity and social ecofeminism can be seen, or read, in the shaping of Fleur's identity.

2.1. Fleur as Nature

To explain how the novel echoes the ideas of affinity ecofeminism—that the women embody nature—the article will now deal with how the text represents their powers and appearance. To begin with, Fleur's connection with nature is

primarily expressed through her powers related to Anishinabe ritual practices. That is, she is a powerful medicine woman and knows the intricacies of the art "to cure or kill" (Erdrich 2). Her ability is drawn from her guardian Manitou, Misshepeshu, the lake monster.[9] This association with the water creature emphasizes the inherent connection between women and nature. Namely, Renée Mazinegiizhigookwe Bédard, a member of the Anishinabe people, explains the association between women and water, which is based on women's biological functions. She notes that protecting "the water is like protecting a relative but also protecting ourselves. . . . Women, mothers, and grandmothers are charged to protect, preserve, and pray for the water" (110). Keeping in mind a correlation between the water and people, specifically women, Fleur's link with Misshepeshu is also circumstantiated; she is drawn nearer to the world of nature.

Her connection with Misshepeshu gives Fleur considerable abilities. She draws power from the Manitou and kills or harms those who wrong her—significantly, Jean Hat and George Many Women (Erdrich 4, 10-11), and the three white men who raped her. Hat and Many Women worked as guides to land surveyors and are therefore complicit in the exploitation of nature; Lily Veddar, Tor Grunewald, and Dutch James, the rapists, are white, and hence the representatives of colonial power. Since Fleur and Misshepeshu stand in opposition to these characters, they may represent the "resistance to the dominant colonial power" (Hanif and Marandi 249). But because of her abilities, Fleur is feared and marginalized even within the Anishinabe society.[10] Her marginal position (in regard to the other Anishinabe, from whom she is isolated "both geographically and socially," and in regard to her occupation in "the twilight zone" between the

[9] Manitous are powerful beings that provide for the Ojibwas and are considered "the source of Ojibwa existence." They can become guardians of individuals (Vecsey 72-73). One such Manitou was Misshepeshu (*Mishipeshu*, *Michibizhii*, the Underwater Manitou), who was the leader of water beings. He is linked to the serpent and the lion. Its powers can be destructive, but it can also grant healing powers to those whom it guards (Gross, "The Comic" 440; Vecsey 73-74).
In the novel, it inhabits the Machimanito Lake, which seems to take its name after Machi Manito, a manitou developed under the influence of Christian missionaries, who taught the Ojibwas about the Christian Devil and sometimes linked it with the Underwater Manitou (Vecsey 82). In evidence of this, Pauline in the novel conflates the Devil and Misshepeshu (Erdrich 192–203).

[10] Due to Fleur's supernatural abilities, the novel is often said to contain elements of magical realism (cf. Runtić and Knežević 90-92; Myrick). Magical realism can be seen as a mode of usurping and recalibrating the dominant discourse (D'Haen qtd. in Runtić and Knežević 90), but medicine and ritual practices are an integral part of the Native American cultures and not considered to belong to the realm of fantasy, as seen in the novel itself, with characters firmly believing in or fearing Fleur's powers. Questions should be raised about whether or not magical realism, a Western term, should be applied onto a work rooted in Anishinabe culture.

human and the non-human world) enables her to traverse the border between the realms (Hsiu-li Juan 8). Her liminal position is one of the focal points of the novel. As a figure who can cross into the other world, "[s]he was the one who closed the door or swung it open" (Erdrich 139; Edmund Leach qtd. in Adamson Clarke 42). Her position relates to her membership in a bear clan of the Anishinabe and her apparent ability to transform into a bear. For example, Pauline narrates about Fleur's nightly hunting expeditions, which she has undertaken "not even in her own body . . . we followed the tracks of her bare feet and saw where they changed, where the claws sprang out, the pad broadened and pressed into the dirt. By night we heard her chuffing cough, the bear cough" (Erdrich 12). This quote hints at Fleur's ability to shapeshift into a bear. Later on, it is again Pauline who notes that Fleur "clutched [her] arms and dug in her fingers, the talons of a heavy bear" (Erdrich 157), deepening thereby the connection between Fleur and nature in general, and bears in particular. Lawrence Gross, an Anishinabe scholar, explains that Fleur is "a bearwalker, one of the most feared types of shamans" ("The Trickster" 52) in the Anishinabe worldview. This works together with Fleur's membership in the bear clan because in the Anishinabe tradition, one of bear clans' areas of expertise is medicine (Flocken 160). As has been said, in the novel this is represented through her spiritual abilities; she appears "like the bear guardians . . . who can open the spiritual doors of the powers to cure and kill; she is a way into or a barrier to the spiritual world of the Chippewa" (Baker Barry 31). The link between her and nature is firmly established, and it can be said that she draws her spiritual abilities from the natural world.

Additionally, throughout the novel Fleur is likened to a wolf (Erdrich 3, 19, 23, 88, 162). At the beginning, she is "wild as a filthy wolf, a big bony girl whose sudden bursts of strength and snarling cries terrified the listening Pukwan" (Erdrich 3). In the Anishinabe worldview, the wolf is an animal of great importance, both in their religion and in their history (LaDuke "In the Time" 98). Fleur's identification with a wolf may be said to embody strength, toughness, and endurance (Ahmad et al., "Exploring" 14)[11], representing once again

[11] Ahmad et al. see Fleur's rape and her inability to summon help by using "the old language" (Erdrich 26) as a pivotal event in breaking the link between Fleur, her wolf persona, and nature in general ("Exploring" 14; see also Ahmad et al., "Environment and Women" 946). However, the wolf imagery reappears in the novel. Significantly, Pauline arrives at Fleur's place after magically coercing Eli and Sophie Morrissey to engage in intercourse and observes: "She smiled at me steady and hungry, teeth glinting, and I saw again the wolf those men met down in Argus, the one who laughed and stuffed their money in her dress" (Erdrich 88). Except for explicitly establishing the connection between the two instances of abuse, in which the colonialists (the white men and Pauline, who has internalised

a strong, positive connection between Fleur and nature. Natural elements are thus central to the creation of her identity (Rainwater 421), and this link is reinforced in another description of Fleur, given by Pauline. However, the natural imagery now takes on a negative hue:

> Fleur's shoulders were broad and curved as a yoke, her hips fishlike, slippery, narrow. . . . Her glossy braids were like the tails of animals, and swung against her when she moved, deliberately, slowly in her work, held in and half-tamed. But only half. I could tell, but the others never noticed. They never looked into her sly brown eyes or noticed her teeth, strong and sharp and very white. (Erdrich 18)

The paragraph is full of animal imagery, from the implication that Fleur is a beast of burden who needs a yoke, to the obvious references to a fish and animal tails. At the same time, there is a hidden wildness inside her, in the slyness of her eyes and the danger of her teeth. The bear and the wolf, apparently, lurk beneath Fleur's surface. Anette Van Dyke contends that these characteristics may have arisen under the influence of Misshepeshu, (132-33). Of particular importance is Pauline's emphasis that Fleur is only half-tamed, although this is not obvious to the others. Therefore, she sees Fleur's connection with nature as harmful, clandestine, and wild (Runtić and Knežević 89)—indeed, Fleur's powers can be dangerous when she wields them against those who harm her.

Let us briefly introduce Frantz Fanon's concept in *Black Skin, White Masks*—that is, his combination of autobiography, case study, philosophy, and psychoanalytic theory to describe and analyze the experience of Black men and women in white-controlled societies—and apply it to Pauline. According to Fanon, the encounter between white European colonizers and Black slaves and their descendants creates a unique social and psychological situation with a characteristic set of psychopathologies, while an analysis of these psychopathologies, with their roots traced in the colonial encounter, may suggest how healing might become possible.

Consequently, Pauline, burdened with her racial inferiority complex and desire to be allowed and accepted into Western society, fits into Fanon's theory about Black skin and white masks, which stands for the colonial subject's

colonial values) abuse others, the scene also brings into focus the fact that Fleur maintains her wolf identity even after being raped.

use of mimicry in an attempt to become like the white people (Fanon 42). In this she becomes acculturated, and she aligns herself with the colonialists, adding to the suppression of Fleur's abilities (Blend 209; Bird 45; Castillo 187; Stanford Friedman 113). Namely, Pauline does not prevent Fleur's rape and even actively stops Russell from aiding Fluer; she is also unsuccessful in saving Fleur's second child. Thus, Pauline is in the novel a representative of a "red skin, white mask" colonial subject. The quote used here truly represents the opposing positions within Indigenous community itself, the rupture caused by colonization: while Fleur retains a close connection to her origins and beliefs (as expressed through her natural abilities), Pauline has had that connection severed away through colonization processes. Pauline, due to her mental colonization and affinity for colonizers' ideals, deems Fleur's ability to manifest as nature as dangerous because she herself can no longer relate to it.

Finally, the most significant instance in which Fleur is explicitly drawn as a representation of nature occurs after she is raped. While the rape itself is a clear act of patriarchal violence, the aftermath showcases Fleur exacting revenge via her "natural" abilities. In the chapter describing this crime, Fleur arrives in the town of Argus and finds work. She is surrounded by men who hold a grudge against her because of her skill at playing cards – in other words, they hate her because she outwits them. Pauline narrates: "And yet it wasn't just that she was a Chippewa, or even that she was a woman, it wasn't that she was good-looking or even that she was alone that made their brains hum. It was how she played cards" (Erdrich 18). Although Pauline says that it was not "just" the abovementioned facts alone, the perplexity of her identity is evidently problematic to the men. They call her "the squaw" (Erdrich 20), and this derogatory term exhibits their racism and sexism (Van Dyke 130), illustrating the double discrimination Fleur is subjected to. Their prejudices come out openly: they "couldn't believe, first of all, that a woman could be smart enough to play cards, but even if she was, that she would then be stupid enough to cheat for a dollar a night" (Erdrich 21). On the other hand, Fleur continues to win a dollar each night and ultimately bluffs her way into winning all of the stakes; her power lies in this outsmarting of the men blinded by their racism and sexism. But this is also the cause of her destruction because the men cannot accept that she has managed to play them and feel the need to punish her for her skill. Their revenge takes the form of sexual violence, as "the humbled men can regain their masculine pride only by asserting their maleness over the femaleness of Fleur," who "has threatened their

dominance" (Schweninger 44). Thus, Fleur's rape symbolizes the patriarchal violence exerted over the colonized subject, since colonialism controls the body of the colonized as well as their sexuality; this form of control is, again, embodied in rape and violence (Hassan Gad 76). Shiva's likening of the rape of nature with the rape of women from the beginning of this article is here exemplified by the rape of Fleur, the central personification of nature and the colonized woman in *Tracks*, as we have mentioned at the beginning of this article.

Fleur recognizes the men's intention and tries to flee. Before they manage to get to her, the men, specifically the one bearing the name Lily,[12] face the sow in the pen. The animal is identified with Fleur because both are handled violently—the assault against the sow heralds the rape of Fleur (Schweninger 43-44), and further establishes the bond between Fleur and nature.[13] Sajjad Gheytasi and Mohsen Hanif contend that Fleur can be seen as a symbol of "the whole native culture under the profound effects of the dominant discourse" (159), in which her rape stands for the oppression of the Anishinabe land and the environment in general (Ahmad et al., "Exploring" 15). This is underlined by the assertion that the Anishinabe also consider the Earth as a woman (Bawdwaywidun Bensaise Edward Benton-Banai-ba qtd. in Bédard 113). And this connection goes both ways, for, although she is incapable of stopping the rape, Fleur, through nature, gets her vengeance. She becomes nothing less than a tornado—or at least controls it—to wreak destruction upon the specific parts of Argus. As quoted earlier, tornado is personified, as can also be seen from Pauline words: "Clouds hung down, witch teats, a tornado's green-brown cones, and as I watched, one flicked out and became a delicate probing thumb. . . . we heard a cry building in the wind, faint at

[12] Lily is in itself an unusual name for a man, underlining perhaps his feminine qualities which, in turn, require of him to act particularly aggressively to compensate. However, this kind of analysis—of the fear of feminization of the white male colonizer with regard to colonial subjects—goes beyond the scope of this paper.

[13] Other characters in the scene are also briefly brought into connection with the sow and animals in general. When the sow and Lily fight, they become indistinguishable, equating Lily to an animal himself: "They went down and came up, the same shape and then the same color until the men couldn't tell one from the other" (Erdrich 25). Interestingly, in his case, as well as in the case of other men, the human-animal link may be seen as an evocation of Julia Kristeva's notion of the "abject," which refers to all that "disturbs identity, system, order" (4). Namely, the connection between men and animals is reinforced through the discovery of the men in the meat locker, frozen along with the meat (Erdrich 30). By analogy, their flesh also becomes meat—the abjection is evident in the erosion of the men's human identity, wherein they become mere meat. Therefore, although the patriarchal discourse attempts to assign the harmful animal characteristics to women, as is seen in the example of Fleur, the men are those who are subtly connected with the negative aspects of the non-human.

first, a whistle and then a thrill scream that tore through the walls . . . and at last spoke plain" (Erdrich 27). The tornado here instructs Pauline and Russell, Pauline's cousin, to bar the meat locker doors, where Lily, Tor, and Dutch hide, so as to prevent the men from coming out. In this way, Fleur, Pauline, and Russell sentence the men to freeze inside. Pauline and Russell act under the tornado's command, and the environment is reaffirmed as a pivotal presence "in human lives," affecting the humans "with its changing patterns and catastrophes" (Tariq and Shah 160); however, the tornado is not merely a destructive force: the wind is also a hand that saves Pauline and Russell. Nature is here represented as both destructive and nourishing (Schweninger 44). Moreover, the wind becomes "a fat snout that nosed along the earth" (Erdrich 28), recalling (and perhaps also redeeming) the assaulted sow. Thus Fleur, the sow, and the tornado can be said to represent an intertwined system where human, animal and natural forces all come together, representing a unity that is an important part of the Anishinabe worldview.

2.2. Protecting Nature

As has been shown, Fleur draws her abilities from nature and the animal elements present in her identity strongly link her with the natural world. Because of this, the novelistic text of the *Tracks* delineates the parallel exploitations of both women and nature, but it also positions Fleur as a representative of nature, who strives to protect it, in line with ecofeminist ideas. Moreover, Paula Gunn Allen, for example, writes that while Indigenous men are linked with "risk, death, and transformation," women are connected with "all that goes into the maintenance of life over the long term" (82). Accordingly, the novel describes the protection and preservation of nature as one of Fleur's great preoccupations.

As her "life is centered in her connection to the land" (Stookey 84), Fleur works against the government policies. Namely, the novel is concerned with the policy of land allotments, made legal by the Dawes General Allotment Act of 1887, which divided the communal, tribal land into individual property that the Native Americans had to pay taxes for (Huang 40; Kervin 72; "Dawes Act (1887)"). The Western politics represent a violation of the land itself, as well as of the people, as seen in the violent statement narrated by Nanapush: "once the bureaucrats sink their barbed pens into the lives of Indians, the paper starts flying, a blizzard of legal forms, a waste of ink by the gallon" (Erdrich 225). In order to keep her land, Fleur departs to Argus and, for a while, she is able to keep the government at bay—the reason she goes to Argus is, therefore, to make

money so that she can pay off "the annual fee on every Pillager allotment she had inherited" (Erdrich 36).

However, with the expansion of colonial influence—that is, with the enforcement of white laws, drafted to claim the remaining land from the Indigenous peoples—Fleur begins to lose power: "She had failed too many times, both to rescue us and save her youngest child. . . . Her dreams lied, her vision was obscured, her helper slept deep in the lake" (Erdrich 177). Fleur and the others are forced to rely more and more on the government provisions, as Erdrich narrates: "in the end it was not Fleur's dreams, [Nanapush's] skill, Eli's desperate searches, or Margaret's preserves that saved us. It was the government commodities" (171). Blend argues that this acceptance, or rather a capitulation in the face of no alternative, and reliance on the oppressor further severs the link between the people and nature (210). The situation described in the novel mirrors the one many Native Americans found themselves in due to government policies. After the colonizers' arrival, the Indigenous people faced exploitation and growing economic problems, especially after the advent of the reservation system, since the reservations were purposefully located in abandoned or infertile areas. If the reservation areas were rich in resources, they were not under the direct control of the Natives, but were, instead, ruled over by Westerners (Prucha 39; Vecsey 18; Clow and Sutton xxx-xxxi). In this sense, Fleur's weakening goes hand in hand with the slow encroachment of the Westerners into the natural territory, both in the sense of economic control and in the literal way. As Nanapush narrates: "It began as a far-off murmur, a disturbance in the wind. . . . Then one day we could hear them clearly. Ringing over the water and to our shore came the shouts of men, faint thump of steel axes. Their saws were rasping whispers, the turn of wooden wheels on ungreased axles was shrill as a far-off flock of gulls" (Erdrich 206). Fleur loses her land due to financial malversations of tribe members who have been mentally colonised, such as Nector Kashpaw and Bernadette Morrissey, and the Westerners arrive.

Like the Anishinabe Elders in the aforementioned Chantelle Richmond's interviews concerning the relations between the people, land, and health in the Anishinabe stories, Fleur, too, seems to be "distinctly related to the land" (51). To Fleur, "[t]he loss of her land and trees is especially painful because it disrupts her land-based identity" (Gioia Harrison 72). Indicatively, Fleur is sure that "no one would be reckless enough to try collecting for land where Pillagers were buried" (Erdrich 174). She is referring to the fear the Pillager abilities instill

in the Native public, but the colonizing powers in the novel show no restraint when it comes to encroaching on Anishinabe land, regardless of its status and usage (Ahmad et al., "Environment and Women" 945).[14] The lumbermen's arrival reiterates Fleur's rape (Schweninger 45) and the depredations of land. The woods, which have previously represented a source of life, food, and sustainable nourishment, are now turned into a short-term resource, mirroring Vandana Shiva's observations about maldevelopment (*Staying Alive* 62). While they are the embodiment of life for the Native Americans (Runtić and Knežević 81), the woods fall prey to the "evolutionary progress" and Western "scientific racism" (McClintock 92) whose main goal is a commodification of natural resources and subsequent financial gain. The lumbering, therefore, again echoes the oppression of Indigenous women in relation to the nature, lands, and their interconnections.

Fleur and nature attempt to resist the violation—people "looking for profit" disappear near the Machimanito Lake and lumbermen are killed or harmed by trees or the lake water (Erdrich 9, 217). However, once again, the oppressed is rendered powerless and the lumbering continues.[15] Nature is now controlled "through science and technology . . . associated with superior white masculinity", in line with Barbara Bush's observations on colonial exploitation (85). The penetration of the white men into the forest clearly shows that white civilization and science are suppressing nature and the sustainable way of life, embodying the disrespectful way of treating "Mother Earth" that Gordon of the Pic River, one of the Anishinabe Elders, speaks about in an interview with Richmond's (52). The Western view of Fleur's forest is in direct opposition to the Anishinabe one. Namely, according to Winona LaDuke, the Anishinabe are "a forest culture. [Their] creation stories, culture, and way of life are entirely based on the forest, source of [their] medicinal plants and food, forest animals, and birch-bark baskets" (*All Our Relations* 5). The immense importance of the forest for the Anishinabe casts an even darker light on the Western exploitation of it. The sub-

[14] This storyline reflects the enduring Native American struggle to protect their land, such as the area of the Black Hills, sacred to the Lakota but ironically used as a canvas for the colonial symbol of the Founding Fathers, Mount Rushmore (Runtić and Knežević 173; LaDuke "In the Time" 102-4). Another case is the Oka crisis of 1990, when the citizens of Oka (Canada) attempted to take over a Mohawk remains site to build a golf court, an incident which resulted in physical clashes (Wright 331–42). Recent examples include the attempts to prevent the constructions of pipelines over Anishinabe lands or the Wet'suwet'en ones ("Stop Line 3"; Amnesty International).

[15] Fleur's powerlessness, however, is temporary. She goes on to spiritually heal and reclaim her abilities and is seen wielding them in other novels (cf. Gross, "The Trickster" 51–55).

jugation of the land, as we said, mirrors the earlier victimization of Fleur's body (Hassan Gad 80); indeed, the devastation of land directly influences Fleur's loss of natural powers too.

In *Tracks*, Fleur punishes the white men who come to destroy the land by staging a seemingly supernatural attack on them—she saws through the trees of the weakened woods so that the "forest was suspended, lightly held" (Erdrich 222–23). It gives under a gust of wind, which is in a harsh contrast with the tornado she summons at the beginning of the novel, and it is signaling her dwindling power (Gross, "The Trickster" 54). Still, the trees fall down, chasing men away, and she temporarily rids her land of the exploitative colonizers. The trees and Fleur's resistance against the men can be seen as "the revolt of nature against human domination" (117), the phrase that ecofeminist Ynestra King uses when discussing natural disasters that affect humans—for instance, earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, and droughts. However, even in this weakened wielding of Fleur's natural powers, Rose Hsiu-li Juan sees the re-emergence of Fleur's shamanistic abilities, or her symbiosis with nature and the employment of nature: "Fleur's fascinating strength is ultimately that of a woman who refuses to give in, to compromise. To accomplish her final act of sorcery, Fleur relies on her own muscle and wits" (11).

However, this need for the individual to stand up against the oppressor goes against the sense of community that should have been present. Had her clan not been wiped out by the illness, there would have been more people to join in that fight. Left as one of the last Pillagers, she does not properly unite with her adoptive family and is ultimately unsuccessful in staving off the colonizers in this novel (Blend 210). Moreover, it could be contended that "[a]lthough [Fleur] believes she is acting independently, that she has not internalized the mind of the patriarchy, she . . . does the patriarchy's work" (Schweninger 48) by cutting the trees down herself. While she may be acting with the aim of disrupting the patriarchal, exploitative system that is draining resources, she is actually only quickening its progress (Schweninger 49-50), and herein lies the double tragedy of her colonial position. Her connection with nature is now employed by the colonizer for the destruction, instead of for the protection and preservation of the land. Sawing through the trees seems to sever her link with nature and she appears to accept defeat. She "recedes into the wilderness like a lone bear" (Hsiu-li Juan 6), leaving no tracks; the final scenes in the novel can be under-

stood as "the disappearance of the unadulterated Anishinabe culture she represents" (Huang 52).[16]

3. Lulu—The Colonized Subject

Another character whose connection with nature, or lack thereof, is worth exploring is Lulu, Fleur's daughter. She is introduced at the very opening of the novel, as the readers quickly understand that Nanapush's story is addressed to his granddaughter, narrated directly to her while they sit together. The immediate frame to this narrative (which is also the main narrative of the novel) is Lulu's impending marriage to a Morrissey, whose family members have harmed Lulu's kin and worked against them. As the marriage act could be seen as "an enactment of the rape of Fleur and her land. . . . Only this time it is legalized, with the consent of the seduced female victim" (Hassan Gad 80), Nanapush wants to prevent Lulu from the marriage.[17] With the goal of preventing this, all of Nanapush's narrative serves to acquaint Lulu with Fleur and, in that way, not only to attempt to reconcile mother and daughter, but also to reintroduce Lulu to the Anishinabe way of life, values, and beliefs in regards to nature (Chapman 8). According to Shilaja, "Nanapush's mission is to bring Lulu to her origins because he knows that Lulu must understand her origins if she is to understand herself" (99). It is probable that the whole of Nanapush's telling then echoes Owens' assertion that Native American novels center on the quest of identity (5), in this case Lulu's. In short, Nanapush's narrative serves as a counter-narrative to the dominant one and is an attempt to decolonize Lulu's mind (Runtić and Knežević vii; Smith 80).

Nanapush begins by reminding Lulu that she is "the child of the invisible" (Erdrich 1). Here, he emphasizes the unbreakable interrelatedness of all beings, from which the deceased and the invisible cannot be eliminated either; hence

[16] Gloria Bird finds Fleur's character and her disappearance to be an example of Erdrich's internalized stereotyped of the "The Vanishing Red Man," that is, a last member of her line (42–46; see also Izgarjan 929–30). While acknowledging this view, Jeanne Rosier Smith contends that Erdrich utilizes stereotypes with the aim of subverting them. Namely, she shows that *Tracks*, as a prequel to Erdrich's other novels in the series, represents the origin story of the community seen in *Love Medicine*. Instead of disappearing, the community grows (Smith 95).

[17] In this, Nanapush fulfils one of the roles of a traditional Anishinabe trickster, his namesake, *nanapush*, *nanibozhu, Nanabush,* or *Wenabozho*. Namely, the trickster is "[r]esponsible through his storytelling for remembering the way it was, and thus for preserving Indian identity" (Owens 212). See also Smith 71–110.

he explains the Anishinabe view of nature and natural relationships (Ahmad et al., "Environmental Performativity" 52). This scene reflects the animism, Indigenous cosmology, and an ecofeminist tenet that "the world is an organism [and that the] recognition that all parts are inextricably interrelated is necessary" (Schweninger 39). In saying this, Nanapush seeks to reaffirm Lulu's connection with the Native way of life and show her that she does have a place in this interconnected order of all beings, despite the fact that she has grown used to the Western ways.

A potential reason for Lulu's weakened connection to nature may lie in her parentage. Namely, her father's identity remains a mystery. The prevalent belief is that she was conceived during Fleur's rape in Argus. This is further corroborated by the narrative proximity of the rape and the birth in Pauline's retelling of the events in Argus.[18] However, Pauline herself observes that Lulu's "green eyes and skin the color of an old penny have made more talk, as no one can decide if the child is mixed blood or what, fathered in a smokehouse, or by a man with brass scales, or by the lake" (Erdrich 31). The speculations abound,[19] resulting in Margaret's belief that the baby would be "cleft . . . fork-footed like a pig, with straw for hair. Its eyes would glow blue, its skin shine dead white" (Erdrich 55). Although Nanapush seems to be sure that Fleur was pregnant before engaging in a relationship with Eli Kashpaw, Lulu ends up resembling the Kashpaw family (Erdrich 44, 70).

Lulu grows up with the Pillagers, the Kashpaws, and Nanapush. Her heritage connects her to Fleur's special natural abilities and to Nanapush, who bestows "the blessing of clear vision on the child" when he names her (Grim 178-179). Her very birth is marked by non-human influence, further reinforcing Lulu's connection with nature. Namely, due to Fleur's spiritual powers, the animals appear when their succor is needed (Baker Barry 30). That is, Fleur's long labor is finally quickened by the appearance of animal Manitous and a physical bear: "it was as if the Manitous all through the woods spoke through Fleur,

[18] Moreover, the text links Fleur's rape and subsequent pregnancy by establishing that she is assaulted in "August, the month that bears fruit" (Erdrich 22).

[19] Pauline herself highlights that the story of Fleur's origin "comes up different every time, and has no ending, no beginning." But she continues: "*They* get the middle wrong too. *They* only know they don't know anything" (Erdrich 31, emphasis mine). She does not comment on what she knows or does not know, potentially suggesting "that Pauline does 'know something,' and it is information that she is keeping concealed from us" (Walker, "A Note" 40).

loose, arguing. . . . Turtle's quavering scratch, the Eagle's high shriek, Loon's crazy bitterness, Otter, the howl of Wolf, Bear's low rasp. Perhaps the bear heard Fleur calling and answered" (Erdrich 59). The bear plays a significant role here, as its appearance prompts Fleur into finally giving birth. It remains uncertain whether it is a real bear or an apparition, since "[i]t left no trail" (Erdrich 60), but it is an animal (spirit) to whom Fleur is closely linked throughout the novel. However, as Kervin notes, "if we try to determine whether the bear is a bear or solely a dimension of Fleur's own personality—in other words, if we attempt to decide whether Fleur is rescued by another, or by her self—we see that Fleur's fluid, kaleidoscopic characterization renders the distinction moot" (97).

Indeed, Fleur is so intertwined with nature that it is impossible to disambiguate aspects of her identity. The supernatural presence at Lulu's birth underscores that this link with nature is extended onto her, as well.

On the one hand, the lack of certainty about Lulu's parentage—and, ultimately, the lack of a *need* for certainty and the intentional manipulation of family names that Nanapush's exhibits through his claims that Lulu is his own daughter (Erdrich 61, 225)—showcases that "in Native American society, children are formed more through their cultural parenting than the biological engendering" (Chapman 13; cf. Runtić and Knežević 116; Rainwater 418). As N. Scott Momaday, a Kiowa author, ascertains, being a Native American has to do with one's understanding of oneself and not with the heritage *per se* (qtd. in Runtić and Knežević 3); yet, heritage still entails a connection with a community. The way Lulu is raised, as well as the connection with Nanapush's and Fleur's abilities imbue her with the potential for a strong affinity for nature. On the other hand, and while keeping in mind that kinship in Indigenous families often extends beyond blood relations, understanding Lulu as having been conceived during Fleur's rape by the white men may explain her inclination toward the Western way of life from an early age. She may be suffering from an inferiority complex and seems to long for the Western values. Namely, although she is also seen as dressed in traditional Native garb (Erdrich 76), Lulu is immensely proud of her "thin patent leather dance shoes, costly-looking, bright" (Erdrich 128), a gift from Eli.[20] Lulu exchanges her moccasins for the new shoes, which cannot

[20] It is interesting to note that Eli, a character who, at this point in the novel, as well as in Erdrich's other related novels, sides firmly with the Anishinabe way of life (see Owens), is the one who provides these Western items. This may foreshadow his future alliance with the white woodworkers who come to destroy Fleur's forest, or his recognition that their current way of life cannot survive in

keep her warm in the winter; she is saved from losing her feet to frostbite only by Nanapush's perseverance and abilities (Erdrich 166–67). The patent leather shoes, embodying the white culture (Flavin 2), almost bring about her demise because nature refuses them. Nature rejects the colonized subject, and it is only the reversion to the Anishinabe beliefs that saves her. This instance effectively illustrates the mismatch between the colonizers' and the Anishinabe ways of life, as well as the dangers that threaten the subjects who have an internalized sense of their inferiority.

Through the character of Lulu, the novel deals with the way younger generations develop an affinity for the changes of Americanization that are introduced in the Native American lives. Other characters are affected by this, as well—for example, Nector Kashpaw, Eli's brother, is shown as preoccupied by and versed in Western politics from an early age (Erdrich 98, 121). Furthermore, some Anishinabe children "turn their faces to the white towns" (Erdrich 170), willing to be acculturated as whites. The children in the novel act like this because of the government policies, specifically, the obligation to attend boarding schools. Boarding schools were state institutions serving to alienate the children from their heritage, by eradicating the Indigenous culture and assimilating the children into the mainstream one (Owens 12; Gheytasi and Hanif 153). The Anishinabe interviewed by Richmond have expressly commented on the fact the link between the youth and Indigenous knowledge is being severed through the forceful act of the removal of children form their Native communities, because traditional knowledge must be practiced to be acquired (56).

In line with this, Pauline notes that "the young, like Lulu and Nector, return from the government schools blinded and deafened" (Erdrich 205). Lulu loses a part of her identity because of the Western education (Shilaja 100), which she is forced to acquire because her future on the reservation is uncertain (Erdrich 218-19). Nanapush and Margaret manage to bring Lulu home from school and, upon first stepping down from the bus, Lulu "tossed [her] head like a pony, gathering scent." Moreover, her altered appearance testifies to the uniformization and alienation that the school enforced on her: "[Her] braids were cut, [her] hair a thick, ragged bowl, and [her] dress was a shabby and smoldering orange, a shameful color like a half-doused flame" (Erdrich 226).

the increasingly Westernised environment for much longer. He may only want to please the girl he sees as his daughter by buying her a shiny pair of new shoes, but he also inadvertently nudges her towards abandoning the Anishinabe customs.

Although she is still somewhat connected to nature, as seen in the pony imagery employed in Nanapush's description, and although her smile resembles Fleur's, Lulu is "half-doused," because Western education has managed to replace a part of her Anishinabe identity. At the time of Nanapush's narration, Lulu is firmly aligned with the Western norms – she is dressed in impractical, pointy, open-toed high heels that Nanapush occasionally brings up in relation to her lack of connection with nature and refusal to reunite with Fleur (Erdrich 166, 210). Moreover, colonial education has stripped Lulu of the Anishinabe beliefs and their view of the interconnection of all nature. When Nanapush recounts one of his tracking feats, she does not believe him: "I think like animals, have perfect understanding for where they hide, and in my time, I have tracked a deer back through time and brush and cleared field, to the place it was born. You smile!" (Erdrich 40). Although it could be argued that Lulu is smiling at Nanapush's potential exaggeration, the latter exclamation could also mean that Lulu regards the Anishinabe tradition in a mocking way. Lulu seems to suffer from an "inferiority complex,"[21] recognizable in "the self-devaluation of one's culture, way of life, one's own strength and roots" (Mies 150). Evidently, Lulu is disconnected from nature because she has been mentally colonized. Therefore, in terms of ecology, alienation, and lost identity, she echoes Owen's recognition that "[i]n Erdrich's fiction, those characters who have lost a close relationship with the earth—and specifically with that particular geography that informs a tribal identity—are the ones who are lost" (193). [22]

Conclusion

While neither character has an active role within the narration—Fleur is talked about and Lulu is talked to—Erdrich makes their connection with nature, or lack thereof, clear. Fleur variously takes on identities of different ani-

[21] Although the "red skin, white mask" phrase is indeed Fanonian, there are also other theorists (such as Glen S. Coulthard and Gerald r. Alfred) who have elaborated the whole concept and made it theoretically viable and applicable to the Indigenous mimicry; however, because of its scope, this article was not focused on their research as well.

[22] Conversely, because Lulu is only "half-doused," and not completely, Nancy Peterson notes that the novel ends on "a note of cautious optimism" (32). Like her mother, Lulu also reconnects with the traditional and spiritual way of life in the novels set chronologically after Tracks. Both of them manage to "[rebound] after catastrophic losses," as Winona LaDuke observes in reference to the contemporary revival of the Anishinabe people and traditions, as well as of the nature that they live with ("In the Time" 98). Read with other novels in mind, then, Tracks may be approached with tentative optimism.

mals, such as the bear and the wolf, or even natural elements, as visible in the tornado she incites. In this, she is strategically represented as being essentially connected with land. This strategic essentialism could be understood as having been implemented with the aim of underlining the exploitation of Native American women by settler colonizers, as well as the eradication of nature. Namely, when Fleur is violated by the Western rapists, the rape can be directly connected to the abuse of nature at the hands of the colonial powers. Likewise, the natural environment Fleur lives in and strives to protect is exposed to the same kind of forceful penetration—the Western lumbermen bring down trees that serve as a source of life for the Anishinabe. The two rapes bear different results; namely, while the deforestation strips the land of the woods' nourishing presence and stoppers the fount of life, the rape of Fleur results in the birth of her daughter, Lulu.

Lulu's connection with nature is ambivalent. She is raised in the traditional Anishinabe ways, which nourish her potential powers brought on by her magically induced birth and the shamanistic abilities of her family members, despite the fact that she attended a boarding school and was predestined to completely lose her Anishinabe knowledge. However, due to her colonial heritage, Lulu also leans toward the Western way of life, thus joining the majority of other youngsters who gravitate towards the Euro-Americans. Her partial abandonment of nature may be caused by mental colonization—visible in her Western dress and marriage to a member of a family that has previously harmed her own—which results in an inferiority complex and a desire to become white. Due to the novel's narrative, Lulu is, only seemingly, not bestowed with a profound character depth, as she is not frequently mentioned in the text; however, a weakening link with the nature is constantly emphasized, thus reaffirming the important position nature occupies in the *Tracks*—that is, restating the significance the nature once enjoyed in the lifestyles of its characters.

Works Cited

Adamson Clarke, Joni. "Why Bears Are Good to Think and Theory Doesn't Have to be Murder: Transformation and Oral Tradition in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1992, pp. 28–48.

Ahmad, Mumtaz, et al. "Environment and Women in Erdrich's *Tracks* and Morrison's *Paradise*: A Comparative Ecofeminist Study." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2020, pp. 941–50.

Ahmad, Mumtaz, et al. "Environmental Performativity in Native American and Afro-American Women's Fiction: An Ecofeminist Critique of Erdrich's *Tracks* and Morrison's *Beloved*." *Global Social Sciences Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, pp. 48–56.

Ahmad, Mumtaz, et al. "Exploring the Interconnection between Native American Land/Environment and Women." *Global Regional Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2021, pp. 8–16.

Amnesty International. "Canada: Construction of Pipeline on Indigenous Territory Endangers Land Defenders." *Amnesty International,* 3 Oct. 2022, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/canada-pipeline-indigenous-territory-endangers-land-defenders. Accessed 27 May 2023.

Anderson, Kim. "Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist." *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture*, edited by Cheryl Suzack et al., UBC P, 2010, pp. 81–91.

Baker Barry, Nora. "Fleur Pillager's Bear Identity in the Novels of Louise Erdrich." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2000, pp. 24–37.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 2010.

Bédard, Renée E. Mazinegiizhigookwe. "Anishinaabeg Maternal Activism: We Sing a Prayer for the Water." *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2021, pp. 109–25. *JMI*, https://jarm.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/jarm/article/view/40634. Accessed 27 May 2023.

Bierhorst, John. *The Mythology of North America*. Quill, 1985.

Bird, Gloria. "Searching for Evidence of Colonialism at Work: A Reading of Louise Erdrich's 'Tracks.'" *Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1992, pp. 40–47.

Blend, Benay. "Native American and First Nations Literature and Ecofeminism." *The Routledge Handbook of Ecofeminism and Literature*, edited by Douglas A. Vokoch, Routledge, 2023, pp. 204–12.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford UP, 2005.

Buell, Lawrence et al. "Literature and Environment." *Annual Reviews*, vol. 36, 2011, pp. 417–40.

Bush, Barbara. *Imperialism and Postcolonialism*. Longman, 2006.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. Routledge, 1990.

Castillo, Susan P. *Notes from the Periphery: Marginality in North American Literature and Culture*. Peter Lang, 1995.

Champagne, Duane, editor. *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*. AltaMira Press, 1999.

Chapman, Mary. " 'The Belly of This Story': Storytelling and Symbolic Birth in Native American Fiction." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1995, pp. 3–16.

Clow, Richmond L., and Imre Sutton. Prologue: Tribes, Trusteeship, and Resource Management. *Trusteeship in Change: Toward Tribal Autonomy in Resource Management*, edited by Clow and Sutton, UP of Colorado, 2001, pp. xxix–liii.

Commoner, Barry. *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

"Dawes Act (1887)." *National Archives*, last reviewed on 8 Feb. 2022, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/dawes-act. Accessed 20 Mar. 2022.

Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. Perennial, 2004.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Pluto Press, 1988.

Flavin, James. "The Novel as Performance: Communication in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1991, pp. 1–12.

Flocken, Giniwgiizhig – Henry. *An Analysis of Traditional Ojibwe Civil Chief Leadership*. University of Minnesota, EdD dissertation, 2013. *Libraries Digital Conservancy,* hdl.handle.net/11299/153332. Accessed 28 May 2023.

Galić, Branka, and Marija Geiger. "Od logike dominacije prema etici brižnosti. Konceptualna utemeljenja ekofeminizma." *Socijalna ekologija*, vol. 16 no. 1, 2007, pp. 17-33.

Geiger, Marija. *Kulturalni ekofeminizam: Simboličke i spiritualne veze žene i prirode*. Hrvatsko sociološko društvo, 2006.

Gheytasi, Sajjad, and Mohsen Hanif. "Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*: Survival or Subversion." *English Studies in Canada*, vols. 43/44, no. 4/1, 2017–18, pp. 151–66. *Project Muse*, muse.jhu.edu/article/742444. Accessed 23 Feb. 2022.

Gioia Harrison, Summer. *Environmental Justice Metafiction: Narrative and Politics in Contemporary Ethnic Women's Novels by Louise Erdrich, Linda Hogan, Ruth Ozeki, and Karen Yamashita*. University of Wisconsin-Madison, PhD dissertation, 2012. depot.library.wisc.edu/repository/fedora/1711.dl:64M3OHHPI5KPP82/datastreams/REF/content. Accessed 14 Mar. 2022.

Grim, John A. *The Shaman: Patterns of Religious Healing Among the Ojibway Indians*. Oklahoma UP, 1983.

Gross, Lawrence W. "The Comic Vision of Anishinaabe Culture and Religion." *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2002, pp. 436–59.

———. "The Trickster and World Maintenance: An Anishinaabe Reading of Louise Erdrich's Tracks." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2005, pp. 48–66. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20737289. Accessed 25 May 2023.

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

Hanif, Mohsen, and Seyed Mohammad Marandi. "The Significance of the Lake Monster in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *The Explicator*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2014, pp. 249–52.

Hassan Gad, Fadwa Mahmoud. "The Abode of Evil: The Female Body and Biopolitical Domination in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Art Magazine*, no. 40, 2016, pp. 73–95, kgef. journals.ekb.eg/issue_23221_23222_.html. Accessed 25 Feb. 2022.

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. South End P, 1984.

Hsiu-li Juan, Rose. "The Real of Nature and the Cultural Imaginary: A Reflection on Human's Relationship with Nature in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Intergrams: Studies in Languages and Literatures*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2001, pp. 1–18, ir.lib.nchu.edu.tw/bitstream/11455/88241/1/87828-1.pdf. Accessed 23 Feb. 2022.

Huang, Hsinya. "Disease, Empire, and (Alter)Native Medicine in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks* and Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*." *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2004, pp. 37–64, www.concentric-literature.url.tw/. Accessed 23 Feb. 2022.

Izgarjan, Aleksandra. "The Challenges of Teaching Native American Literature as Part of the Nineteenth Century American Literature Course." *Teme* – Časopis za društvene nauke, vol. 46, no. 4, 2022, pp. 925–38. *CEEOL*, https://www.ceeol.com/search/article-detail?id=1089039. Accessed 27 May 2023.

Jaimes Guerrero, M. A. " 'Patriarchal Colonialism' and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism." *Hypatia*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2003, pp. 58–69.

Kervin, Claire Elise. " 'Our Human Boundaries Were Overrun': Coextensive Bodies and Environments in Contemporary American Fiction." Boston U, PhD dissertation, 2017. *Open BU*, open.bu.edu/handle/2144/27399. Accessed 3 Mar. 2022.

King, Ynestra. "Healing the Wounds: Feminism, Ecology, and the Nature/Culture Dualism." *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein, Sierra Club Books, 1990, pp. 106–21.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Columbia UP, 1982.

LaDuke, Winona. "In the Time of the Sacred Places." *Spiritual Ecology: The Cry of the Earth, a Collection of Essays*, edited by Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, The Golden Sufi Center, 2016, pp. 91–106.

———. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. South End P, 1999.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge, 2005.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing P, 1984.

Luther Standing Bear. *Land of the Spotted Eagle.* Nebraska UP, 2006.

McClintock, Anne. "'No Longer in a Future Heaven': Gender, Race, and Nationalism." *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, edited by Anne McClintock et al., Minnesota UP, 1997, pp. 89–112.

Mellor, Mary. "The Politics of Women and Nature: Affinity, Contingency or Material Relation?" *Journal of Political Ideologies*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1996, pp. 147–64.

Merchant, Carolyn. "Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory." *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism*, edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein, Sierra Club Books, 1990, pp. 100–05.

Mies, Maria. "White Man's Dilemma: His Search for What He Has Destroyed." *Ecofeminism*, edited by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Zed Books, 2014, pp. 132–63.

Myrick, Emily. "'Perhaps the Bear Heard Fleur Calling, and Answered': The Significance of Magical Realism in Louise Erdrich's Tracks as a Postcolonial Novel." Georgia State U, MA thesis, 2010. *ScholarWorks*, scholarworks.gsu.edu/english_theses/76. Accessed 23 Feb. 2022.

Ortner, Sherry B. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, Stanford UP, 1974, pp. 67–87.

Owens, Louis. *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. U of Oklahoma P, 1992.

Paper, Jordan D. *Native North American Religious Traditions: Dancing for Life*. Praeger, 2007.

Peternai Andrić, Kristina. *Pripovijedanje, identitet, invaliditet*. MeandarMedia, 2019.

Peterson, Nancy J. *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2001.

Plumwood, Val. "Ecofeminism: An Overview and Discussion of Positions and Arguments." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 64, 1986, pp. 120-38.

Prucha, Francis Paul. *Indian Policy in the United States: Historical Essays*. U of Nebraska P, 1981.

Rainwater, Catherine. "Reading between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich." *American Literature*, vol. 62, no. 3, 1990, pp. 405–22.

Richmond, Chantelle. "The Relatedness of People, Land, and Health: Stories from Anishinabe Elders." *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' Health in Canada: Beyond the Social*, edited by Margo Greenwood et al., Canadian Scholars' P, 2015, pp. 47–63.

Runtić, Sanja, and Marija Knežević. *Suvremena književnost američkih starosjedilaca*. Filozofski fakultet Osijek, 2013.

Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage, 1993.

———. *Orientalism*. Penguin, 2003.

Schweninger, Lee. "A Skin of Lakeweed: An Ecofeminist Approach to Erdrich and Silko." *Multicultural Literatures through Feminist/Poststructuralist Lenses*, edited by Barbara Frey Waxman, Tennessee UP, 1993, pp. 37–56.

Sergi, Jennifer. "Storytelling: Tradition and Preservation in Louise Erdrich's Tracks." *World Literature Today*, vol. 66, no. 2, 1992, pp. 279–82.

Shaddock, Jennifer. "Mixed Blood Women: The Dynamic of Women's Relations in the Novels of Louise Erdrich and Leslie Silko." *Feminist Nightmares: Women at Odds; Feminism and the Problem of Sisterhood*, edited by Susan Ostrov Weisser and Jennifer Fleischner, New York UP, 1994, pp. 106–21.

Sharp, Joanne. *Geographies of Postcolonialism*. Sage, 2009.

Shilaja, C. L. "Art of Storytelling and the Role of Memory in the Novels of Morrison's *Beloved* and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in*

Humanities, vol. 9, no. 1, 2017, pp. 92–102. *Rupkatha Journal*, rupkatha.com/v9n110. Accessed 25 Feb. 2022.

Shiva, Vandana. Preface to the critique influence change edition: Vandana Shiva. *Ecofeminism*, edited by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, Zed Books, 2014, pp. xiii–xxi.

———. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India*. Kali for Women, 1988.

Smith, Jeanne Rosier. *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature*. U of California P, 1997.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution: An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." *Thesis Eleven: Critical Theory and Historical Sociology*, vol. 10-11, no. 1, 1985, pp. 175–87.

Stanford Friedman, Susan. "Identity Politics, Syncretism, Catholicism, and Anishinabe Religion in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *Religion & Literature*, vol. 26, no. 1, 1994, pp. 107–33.

Stookey, Lorena Laura. *Louise Erdrich: A Critical Companion*. Greenwood Press, 1999.

"Stop Line 3." *Stop Line 3 Pipeline*, 11 May 2022, https://www.stopline3.org/#intro. Accessed 27 May 2023.

Tariq, Sana, and Bahramand Shah. "Environment and Literary Landscape: An Ecological Criticism of Louise Erdrich's Novel *Tracks*." *Global Social Sciences Review*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2019, pp. 158–63.

Van Dyke, Anette. "Of Vision Quests and Spirit Guardians: Female Power in the Novels of Louise Erdrich." *The Chippewa Landscape of Louise Erdrich*, edited by Allan Chavkin, U of Alabama P, 1999, pp. 130–43.

Vecsey, Christopher. *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes*. American Philosophical Society, 1983.

Veracini, Lorenzo. *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Walker, Victoria. "A Note on Narrative Perspective in *Tracks*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1991, pp. 37–40.

Witt, Charlotte. "Anti-Essentialism in Feminist Theory." *Philosophical Topics*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1995, pp. 321–44.

Wright, Ronald. *Stolen Continents: The Indian Story.* Pimlico, 1993.

Young, Robert J. C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford UP, 2003.

EKOFEMINISTIČKO ČITANJE FLEUR I LULU U ROMANU *TRACKS* LOUISE ERDRICH

Sažetak

Valentina MARKASOVIĆ
Filozofski fakultet
Sveučilišta Josipa Jurja Strossmayera u Osijeku
Lorenza Jägera 9
HR – 31 000 Osijek
vmarkasovic@ffos.hr

Roman *Tracks* (1988.) autorice Louise Erdrich bavi se problemima američkih Indijanaca na početku dvadesetoga stoljeća. Pri tome progovara i o povezanosti između kolonijalnoga potlačivanja prirode i žena. Iako je dostupno nešto ekokritičih i ekofeminističkih analiza romana, posebice lika Fleur Pillager, o liku Lulu Nanapush i kako je ona prikazana u romanu *Tracks* nije se pisalo. Stoga ovaj rad analizira Fleur Pillager i Lulu Nanapush kako bi se otkrilo kako su postulati ekofeminizma implementirani u romanu. Istraživanje se oslanja na teorije i zaključke izvedene iz radova različitih ekofeminističkih i postkolonijalnih autora. Nakon prikaza kolonijalne politike istodobnoga tlačenja žena i prirode, rad se fokusira na to kako Fleur utjelovljuje i štiti prirodu, dok Lulu svoju povezanost s prirodom počinje gubiti zbog svojega kolonijalnog nasljeđa.

Ključne riječi: Louise Erdrich, *Tracks*, Fleur Pillager, Lulu Nanapush, ekofeminizam