

**DISCURSIVE RECONFIGURATION OF  
NATURE AND WOMEN IN NATIVE  
AMERICAN AND AFRO- AMERICAN  
ECRITURE FEMININE**

**By**

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**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES**

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American and Afro- American Ecriture Feminine**

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## ABSTRACT

### **Thesis Title: Discursive Reconfiguration of Nature and Women in Native American and Afro- American Ecriture Feminine**

The dissertation explores Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's fiction to analyze the discursive reconfiguration of the Native American and Afro -American women and their symbiotic relationship with nature. The study asserts that these two novelists, through their distinctive Ecriture Feminine mode of representation, have subverted negative, stereotypical misrepresentations of Native and Afro- American women in the mainstream pahllogocentric discourses by discursively reconfiguring their differential identities. Opposed to Euro- American anthropocentric world view that dominates women and nature, they have delineated bio-centric relationship between Native American and Afro-American women and nature to emphasize their environmental consciousness. An eclectic theoretical framework combining theoretical insights from Poststructural French Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminism has been developed to analyze the texts from Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminist perspectives. Four primary texts - *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* by Erdrich and *Beloved* and *Paradise* by Morrison, have been selected to analyze the use of discursive techniques/ stylistic features/ and modes of narration by these novelists. Discourse Analysis Method derived from Foucault's critical insights into discourse theory has been employed to illuminate the meanings contained in the data. It is argued that their fiction makes a shift away from the universalizing identity politics of the dominant western culture by constructing nonlinear narration celebrated by Ecriture Feminine aesthetics which comprises of interconnected stories rather than a rational, linear plot valorized by western culture. The study concludes that Erdrich and Morrison's fiction, undermining the masculine / pahllogocentric structures, identity politics, singularity of meaning and the artificial imposition of coherence that defines masculine logic, stresses the fluid relation between subject and the discourse by drawing on the energy of the experimental mixing of orality and community. The study asserts that Erdrich and Morrison's Ecriture Feminine fiction has made substantial contribution to extricate women and nature from the oppressive patriarchal/ phallogocentric structures

by highlighting the concerns about environmental racism. They have broadened the scope of identitarian politics by dissolving the cultural boundaries, re-imagining the histories, amalgamating white and non-white narrative techniques and responding to Poststructural French Feminism's call for "new poetics".

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## LIST OF KEY TERMS

- **Native Americans:** The term refers to the ethnic groups living in the United States who identify themselves with the indigenous inhabitants of the United States also called as American Indians, First Americans, and Indigenous Americans who inhabited America before the arrival of the European settlers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. United States Census includes in “Native Americans” the indigenous tribes that originally belonged to continental United States as well as Alaska Natives.
- **Afro-Americans:** also called Black Americans or African Americans are one of the largest of the many ethnic groups living in United States with roots in total or partial Black ancestry. They are largely the descendants of the enslaved people who were forcefully brought from their African homelands to work in the New World / United States.
- **Discourse:** Foucault defines discourse as systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, and course of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.
- **Discursive Reconfiguration:** Emphasizes the constructed Nature of meaning and explains how the production of meaning in human interactions takes place. It is premised upon social constructionist idea that social reality does not have objective meaning, rather the meaning is attributed to it through social antagonism. It poses a radical challenge to the accepted categories of truth and the objective reality of knowledge by disbelieving in the taken-for-granted world.
- **Feminism:** Feminism, at the simplest and basic level, refers to a women’s movement that strives to achieve equality of all sorts of rights for women in a society. It is the consciousness of domination and exploitation of women within a society and the conscious action to change and transform this situation.
- **Ecofeminism:** A hybrid of Feminist and Ecological movements also called Ecological Feminism that examines the relation between Women and nature. It assumes that patriarchy through its institutionalized oppressive power structures dominates women and nature and the same habitual structures of thought, feeling and action that devalue and harm women, also harm Nature.
- **Black Feminism:** A non-white brand of Feminist philosophy that rejects the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and stresses the inherent value of Black

women by asserting their awareness of the negative impacts on them of sexism, racism and classicism. The philosophy believes that the experience of being a Black woman can not be fully understood in terms of being a woman and /or a Black, rather the fuller understanding entails the intersectionality of the Black women's experience.

- **Phallogocentrism:** Western philosophy that privileges the masculine/ the phallus in constructing and understanding of the meanings and the social relations. A discourse is phallogocentric when it is centered and organized around phallus through implicit recourse both as logos (the supposed ground) and its prime signifier and power structure. It refers to the discourses that describe man and woman in the form of binary opposition where one is privileged over the other. Masculine is defined as a dominant term in Western discourses and feminine is described as inferior or 'other' as subordinate position.
- **Logocentrism:** A Western philosophical trend that privileges the linguistic signifier over the signified. It is an attitude that logos, (the Greek term for speech, reason, thought), is the chief principle of language and philosophy. In logocentrism spoken word is privileged over written word because the speech represents the presence of the speaker for the listener while writing signifies a kind of absence of the writer. The written is therefore derived from the spoken/thought.
- **Ecriture Feminine:** Ecriture Feminine or women's writing refers to a distinctly feminine style of writing that deviates from traditional masculine style of writing in which language is structured by and around phallus. Ecriture Feminine, undermining the masculine / phallogocentric singularity of meaning and the artificial imposition of coherence that defines masculine logic, stresses the fluid relation between subject and the discourse. To destabilize the hegemony of the masculinity, so called universal, monolithic, and dominating cultural forms of representation that suppress the feminine structures of thought, it proposes " a new age of thought, art, poetry and language : the creation of new poetics".
- **Poststructural French Feminism:** Poststructural Feminism, usually associated with Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray, is an offshoot of Feminism that draws insights from Poststructuralist philosophy and combines it with Feminist views. Emphasizing the contingent and discursive Nature of all

identities, Poststructural Feminism resists Universalist, monolithic, or normalizing conceptions of women. Demonstrating the role of phallogocentric language and social structures as well as rejecting metanarrative accounts and prescriptive models of gender and sexuality, it particularly draws attention to the social construction of gendered subjectivities.

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents Jaffar Ali and Sarwari Bibi



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this thesis is to study the works of Native American and Afro- American female writers in the light of the theoretical assumptions of Poststructural French Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminism, in order to investigate and analyze how female writers of color belonging to marginalized nations manipulate dominant male discourses' language and use different discursive strategies to (re)configure women and their relationship with nature. It is argued that the Native American and Afro- American female writers employ innovative discursive techniques to subvert the dominant culture's oppressive use of language. The thesis aims to make an in-depth analysis of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich's four novels, namely *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* in the light of the theoretical assumptions of Poststructural French Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminism in order to investigate and analyze the (re) construction of female identity, subjectivity, and nature in coloured women's *Ecriture Feminine*.

The analysis of the selected works of the Native American and Afro-American women writers have been anchored in the key theoretical assumptions, propositions and interrelated concepts of Ecofeminism, and Poststructural French Feminism associated with the works of Cheryll Glotfelty, Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray Julia Kristeva, as well as Black Feminism- here represented by theoretical works of Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks. This thesis contends that through various discursive strategies which the Native American and Afro- American female writers employ to represent 'differential' female subjectivities and their relation with environment, they subvert, through indigenization of language and Feminist theory, the conventionally represented categories of woman and nature. Through the deployment of Feminist theories, particularly those associated with French Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminism this thesis seeks to investigate those theoretical and thematic concerns in Native and Afro- American womens' literature which express, on one hand, the bodily experiences

unique to women and, on the other hand, in a writing which constructs 'feminine sentence'. This 'feminine sentence' is the mode of writing which to Cixous offers "precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures" (Laugh 350).

This research deals with discursive reconfigurations of Native and Afro-American women's identities/subjectivities and their dynamic relationship with environment within the Poststructuralist Feminist and Ecofeminist theoretical paraphernalia. It is an endeavor to discuss Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's *Écriture Feminine* that is women writing, to explore the ways these female novelists from marginalized communities have represented distinctive cultural female identity of their women by articulating re-evaluative narratives. These narratives deconstruct institutionally supported, stereotypically universalized Red (Native) and Black (Afro-American) female images imposed upon the Black women by mainstream, white literary intelligentsia. This chapter contends that in doing so these female writers fundamentally depart from the norms of Euro-American stylistic, formal and structural modalities of the narrative and use as an alternative a stylistic montage allowing the Native and Black oral traditions to overlap with the white normative models. When interpreted within the theoretical postulations offered by the eclectic framework, they also offer a deconstructive insight into how (Euro-American, white) power structures influence cultural patterns of current behavior and dictate historical perspectives which marginalize, ignore or overlook the significant Native and Black perspectives.

Since literature and arts have always been a site of contested ideologies, a liberal domain of literary and theoretical interpretations, a skeptical field of inquiry into generalized historical truths, and a discursive field where writers have had the freedom to express the mosaic of human feelings, the women writers from the Native and Afro-American ethnic communities have articulated whole variety of the intensely personal and communal human sentiments that emanate from the springboard of communal, historic, cultural, and political practices. They have presented clashing passions and the permanent struggles of the societal segments, of their unprivileged communities against those who established and transmitted their cultural and political power by certain ways of knowledge production, social processes, institutionalization of power structures and identity politics. One of the central features of these women writers demonstrated in

their *Écriture Feminine* is the use of Poststructural narrative strategies that convey, on one hand, their endeavors to indigenize narrative and, on the other hand, help them reconstruct Native and Black female identity/subjectivity from their own standpoint since, within chief concerns of contemporary Poststructural Feminist criticism, the multidimensional relationship between theories of language, articulation of subjectivity and (re) construction of female identity merit special attention and analysis. Challenging the fixed systems of analysis of descriptive categories, I contend that Morrison and Erdrich's multiperspective, pluralistic fiction refute the white claims of universal truths and deconstruct the stereotypical discursive construction of the Native and Afro-American female subject by the dominant Euro-American discourses which describe them in essentialist categories. Weedon's observation regarding the significance of the appropriation of language in constructing the meaning of the experience that the meaningfulness of the experience "is constituted in language" (85) is helpful to understand Morrison and Erdrich's fiction. Their fiction reflects commitment to addressing the issue of Native and Black women by challenging and subverting the clichéd images replacing them with Black subjects whose subjectivities/identities are framed by their agentic performativity and who encounter what Gyatri Spivak conceptualizes subalternity and "epistemic violence".

## **1.2 Context of the Study**

The corollary of the Euro-American binaristic definitions of mind/body is the discursive construction of the Red and Black body as passive, subaltern, voiceless, non historical and irrational thus depriving the Natives and Blacks of agency, subjectivity and voice of their own. In *Beloved* and *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* Morrison and Erdrich illustrate how Red (Native American) and Black (Afro-American) female bodies are the construction of the White culture which, on one hand, constructs, devalues and degrades the Red and Black bodies and, on the other hand, uses them, as Vanessa Dickerson asserts "to extend the life, health and desirability of the others", thus "the Black female body" reduced to abject phallus "is more than a prosthesis". It is therefore the repository of different meanings for different people: if for white man it is a site of political empowerment, for Black males it is a source of love, being, and shame and for white women it is the symbol of freedom and aesthetization simultaneously, and thus the Black female body assumes tremendous significance (195).

Observing Native and Black Feminism's ethnic and cultural thrust, Denard (2008) postulates that because Black Feminism is more group-centred than self-centred, the Black women show concern more with female cultural values of their ethnic group than commitment with changing the fate of women in general, so "they advocate what may be called ethnic cultural Feminism" (171).

Katie Cannon(1995) asserts in this context that all through the history of the United States, the interconnection between white supremacy and male dominance has almost always typified the Native and Black woman's situation as a situation of continuous struggle, a struggle to survive in two opposing worlds concurrently, "one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black, exploited, and oppressed" (30)

In this context it is observed that body is the personal property of a woman but here, in *Paradise* and *Beloved*, she has been deprived of this personal property too. She has no authority even upon her own sexual desires. For Patricia Hill Collins "the duality of "self" versus "other" is problematic" (Smith 10) so the black women are socially defined as the 'other' not universally but in comparison to the white females. They are described as other not specifically to the white women but to the white men and black men as well. Collins articulates that "Black women experience interlocking oppression, because they are Black *women*, not Black and happen to be women or *women* who happen to be Black" (10).

Red (Native American) and Black (Afro-American) women, like land and other natural objects which any powerful body can take possession of and exploit, are doubly marginalized and suppressed by the white men and the Black men: the Black men look degradingly at their Black women who had shared their bodies with white men albeit against their will. They neglect the bitter reality that Black women were too powerless to resist the white man's exploitation. The slaves don't own their bodies; they belong to someone who owns them. *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* frequently echo Cixous' ideas about the relationship between the exploitation of female body and the phallogocentric language which she urges upon women to dismantle through their expression of body in *Ecriture Feminine*. Morrison and Erdrich's fiction offers the clear illustration of the notion of *Ecriture Feminine* and address the dual issue of woman and nature's twin exploitation in the context of Ecofeminsm. Morrison draws our attention to the confiscation of Black body as the slaves were not allowed to enjoy the pleasurable

feelings of their body on their own rather they were supposed to have children in accordance with the desires of the owner. Though they labored hard for their White masters and catered for their every pleasure “Still, they were not supposed to have pleasure deep down” ( 247).

Similarly, the history of racism and environmentalism bears witness that since the heydays of Western colonization and the enslavement of the Blacks, the Black women have faced environmental racism as they had historically lived in close communion with nature and non-human creatures unlike the white societies which favored culture over Nature, mind over body and humans over non-humans. *Beloved* and *Paradise* demonstrate that Afro Americans, just like the Native Americans who had spiritual relation with nature and wide variety of non-human creatures, had deep and strong ties with nature before being colonized by the white, so when they were shipped to Americas as slaves, they brought with them the cultural seeds and profound association with the lands and landscapes from their native lands with which they ever remained connected through re-memory.

Foregrounding the interconnection between the closeness and domination of nature and women, this study builds on its thesis via the Ecofeminist analysis of the Black and Native American feminine narratives that the “same habitual structures of thought, feeling and action that devalue and harm women, also harm nature” ( Curry 2006: 95) and thus demonstrates that Ecofeminism, unlike Western patriarchal binarism, doesn’t (de)value one entity at the expense of the other, instead “ show[s]the connection between all forms of domination including the domination of non-human nature” (King 1983: 142).It is thus clear that Ecofeminism is not antagonistic to or entirely different from ecocriticism rather it is the variant and very useful organ of ecocriticism that theorizes the “domination of women and the domination of the natural environment” ( Warren cited in Estock 2005).

### **1.3 Discursive Articulation of Native and Afro-American Women’s Identity**

When Native and Afro- American women writers address and scrutinize the identity problematic in their particular milieu, instead of resorting to white dominant models of identity that segregate and connect the white and Black women into binaristic categories affirming white monolithic centre of white supremacy over brown

marginality, they cogently extrapolate their our social, cultural, religious and communal sources to undermine the binary and reconstitute the ethnic identity. In this regard, we cannot ignore the crucial fact that while male writers also played notable role in the creation and propagation of Native and Afro- American literature, the contributions of women writers belonging to these marginalized communities cannot be ignored since they explored new discursive avenues and contributed significantly with their authentic works of artistic and socio-cultural value to building the canon of indigenous and Black Ecriture Feminine. They have built their respective literatures and theories in the white people's language and established their own brand of Feminism and writing, i.e. Black Feminist thought vis-a-vis dominant models of Amer-European literatures.

It is not surprising therefore that digressing from the typical models of dominant white discourses, not only have they modified the established Euro-American literary models synchronizing the Euro- American written traditions with the predominantly oral aspects of Native cultural traditions that have shaped new and strongly hybridized narrative forms, but they have also broadened the scope of the theory and praxis of the Ecriture Feminine (women writing). They have done so by introducing valuable innovations and experiments in narratological field to (en)counter the European models of narration and thus established a unique identity of their respective nations' literatures.

Among the grand achievements of the Native and Afro- American literary traditions constantly critically acclaimed and reviewed, their adherence to doctrines concerning the commitment of literature to representing indigenous culture and oral mode of narration takes up pivotal place. Textual analysis of the four novels under consideration demonstrates the use of discursive Ecriture Feminine technique as a part of eclectic narratological design that coalesce orally communicated and written traditions in a unique attempt to embody hybridized nature of their present culture and identities/subjectivities . This hybrid nature of their narrative, accordingly, affords the basis of Ecriture Feminine narratology of these women's fiction. From both cultural and narratological perspective, the Native and Afro- American literatures are not compatible with Euro- American literary and cultural forms nevertheless as a corollary of certain interface between the two a certain degree of hybridity which, Bhaba calls a "third space of enunciation", a permanent conflation of the two cultures, and which is one of the pre-conditions of postmodern condition and literature, is inevitable.

This dissertation seeks to establish by detailed critical analysis of the Native and Afro- American women writers' (Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's) representative texts how these distinguished female authors have articulated cultural female identities of their women by constructing influential Native and Black narratives that challenge the institutionally maintained "universal [female] images" (Under Western Eyes 214) thrust upon the third world and indigenous women by the white world discourses. Dynamism and honesty of such representations of the racial and communal issues by the Native American and Afro- American female writers mirror the writer's devotion with the construction of an genuine and reliable narrative that expresses not only the most insightful feelings of the author but also orchestrates a multivalent cultural dialogue between the white and the colored. This bicultural dialogue works on the principle of countering the dominant culture's presumption about the oppressed attempting to address the issues of the marginalized groups by voicing their concerns and predicament in a language that is plainly accessible to the dominant and in a style that is distinctive and almost always a distraction from the traditional, normative discourse practice. This indispensable deviation from the widely accepted socio-cultural discourse practices entails the incorporation of the indigenous communal practices into heteronormative discourse of the white. The combination of these two manifestly contrasting styles of the enunciation of speech results in the genesis of a hybrid stylistics that accommodates the two opposite discourse traditions.

The new hybrid tradition, consequently, contains the features of both cultures' dominant literary traditions as in case of the Native and Afro- American literature the traditional oral storytelling mode harmonizes with the white phallogocentric mode of narration which it attempts to dismantle also. Therefore any analysis of Morrison and Erdrich's principle of commitment to representing socio- cultural and political reality of women in Euro- American narrative tradition absolutely as a category of viewpoint on life disregarding the authentically indigenous stylistic nature of their art will undermine the uniqueness of their talent.

### **1.3.1 Dissolution of Hierarchical Binaries in Native and Afro-American Ecriture Feminine**

There are certain trends within the history of literary stylistics that we tend to consider normative and/or genuine while regarding those that fail to conform to these standards as deviatory. However, arguably this tendency or habit of considering one

thing normal and the other deviatory, the one central and the other marginal, the one particular and the other general is the outcome of believing in hierarchical binaries that, apart from generalizing the indigenous and Black people's ontological and epistemological particularities, typify and discursively condition the very acts of believing and desiring. The most powerful way, therefore, of disentangling indigenous discourses from the dominant discursive practices which remain embroiled in the politics of 'othering' in order to maintain and perpetuate strict categorization of what is termed as central and marginal, is by intermingling the familiar and exotic, normative and digressional, believable and uncanny, agentive and subaltern. The critical insight into all these privileged and put down categories reveal, as Gyatri Spivak points in her much quoted article "Can Subaltern Speak" that they are linguistic constructs. It is through popularizing and validating their hitherto silenced subaltern discourses that the intellectual and literary efforts of the fourth world women (Black and indigenous) writers to typify their cultural, historical and ideological practices which were widely held primitive by the first world is gaining currency and authority among the mainstream literary and critical consciousness. Since the course of action open to Native and Afro-American women writers to make their voices heard and explode into the world consciousness, especially to dominant western/American academic and political circles, was to make use of the dominant discourse's language (though hybridizing it with the local dialects ) so that they could access the consciousness of the dominant power, they did so so seamlessly and ingeniously that they represented themselves, their culture and ideological apparatus so differently yet credibly. What they have precisely gained by so doing is that their discourses are not only successfully initiated into the consciousness of the dominant power but have also simultaneously articulated heterogeneity of their voices and cultures which was earlier confined within the generalizing and essentialist dominant ideologies.

This study has analyzed as fully as possible what it is really that happens when women writers of the color become engaged in representing their own perspectives about the world they live in and refuse to believe in what has already been constructed by the dominant forces for them to believe in. Questioning the validity and authority of the knowledge claims (often universal and essentialist in nature) of the dominant discursive and ideological practices that form the essence of the consciousness, these women writers have extrapolated indigenous concepts conceived either directly as a relation to



the objects and people or a pervading quality of socio-cultural phenomenon they are part of to present the alternative knowledge claims and realistic images of their respective communities. The reasons I have furnished in favor of my argument have been mainly derived from Ecofeminist, Poststructural Feminist and Black Feminist theoretical positions taken by the major theorists I have chosen for this project and the four primary texts: *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* written by one Native American and one Afro- American women writer; Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison respectively.

In order to comprehend the reconfiguration of feminine identity in selected female writing, it is significant to have a comprehensive knowledge of the ways the Euro- American writings about Native and Afro women have constructed the female identity of the colored women in stereotypical images that the contemporary women writers of the colored nations attempt to dismantle by enlisting alternativism to emphasize their unique identity. Defying essentializing white discourses that portray colored women in negative stereotypes, women writers from the suppressed nations reconstruct images of the colored women in Poststructural Ecriture Feminist narrative techniques : hybridized, fluid, non-linear, non-chronological, and multiperspective narrations are a few of the frequently used narrative forms, that help them dissolve the ossified binaristic boundaries between Black and white, rational and irrational, central and marginal, realistic and the magical.

One of the noteworthy characteristic that the Native American and Afro- American women writers often express subsume the use of Ecriture Feminine strategies that assert, on one hand, their endeavors to indigenize narrative and, on the other hand, help them construct female identity from their own viewpoint because, within central concerns of contemporary Black Feminist criticism, the (re)construction of female identity deserves special consideration and analysis. The stereotypical discursive construction of the colored women by the dominant Euro- American discourses grouped them into essentialist categories overlooking the critical differences that these women show in their diverse social, cultural, anthropological and sexual characters. Engaging with the problematic of the discursive construction of female identity that includes conceptual and perspectival issues, both Native American and Afro- American women writers deconstruct the broad generalization of the Black/brown women by disputing and undermining the stereotypical images substituting them with speaking and agentic

subjects who are not subjected to, what Gyatri Spivak conceptualizes “epistemic violence”.

Intervening within the Postmodern as well as Poststructuralist contemporary debate about the constructed Nature of meaning and reality, the present work carried out in qualitative research paradigm is significant contribution to understanding the Native American and Afro- American women writers’ use of Poststructural Feminist mode of narration in order to depict the indigenous and Black people’s distinct understanding of the reality. The study is aimed at exploring how and to what effect the Native and Afro- American women writers have used the *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist discourse. While the Euro- American accounts of the history, culture and origin of the indigenous and Afro- American slaves had projected stereotypical, negative images of the non-White people, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison, through the employment of Poststructuralist Feminist narrative techniques, have reconstructed the history, beliefs, rituals, traditions, myths and cultural identity of their people. The present study makes an in-depth analysis of the texts of both representative writers to highlight the thematic and stylistic merits of both writers. Contrary to the white discursive modes, women novelists of Black and mixed origin have used narrative style that blends both White and non-White representational traditions and regenerated distinctly Native and Afro- American identities.

Since Native American and Afro- American women writers’ literature is a recent addition into the mainstream literary world, they are less known or generally misrepresented people in the world consciousness. Before 1970’s-the time of Native American and Afro- American literary renaissance-the Native Americans were known to the world mostly from the Western discourses of the explorers or colonial masters and such representations were mostly racially biased, therefore, these people remained in the European consciousness as savage and barbaric.

The present study demonstrates that the Native American and Afro- American people and their cultures, far from being savage, were quite civilized and unique in their own way so far as the comprehension of life and its purposes is concerned. They had a distinct culture of their own characterized by their mythic beliefs that governed their lives. This study is significant as it provides an insight into the mythic belief system and communal ways of living life in close harmony with plant and animal world that gave a distinct character to their culture. The study also highlights their eco-friendly ways of

life, acknowledged today by the modern white people also for their insight into the significance of symbiotic relationship between man and environment for peaceful and secured life.

### **1.4 Statement of the Problem**

The study addresses the compelling issue of the misrepresentation of the Native American and Afro- American women and their relationship with nature/environment asserting that while the Euro-American accounts of the Native American and Afro- American women and their close relation with nature had projected stereotypical, negative images, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison, through the employment of Ecriture Feminine narrative techniques combining Eurocentric and Black/Red modes of narration, have reconfigured the women and their intimate relation with nature. This project studies from Ecofeminist and Poststructural Feminist perspective the Native American and Afro- American women writers' significant contribution to Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminist narratives by discursively reconstituting the identities of the colored women and their symbiotic relation with nature/environment.

### **1.5 Research Objectives**

- a) The foremost objective of this study is to demonstrate that the contemporary Native and Afro- American women writers Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison have discursively articulated the female identities from Red (Native) and Black (Afro- American) perspectives .The study is committed to analyzing through rigorous exploration of the four selected works of women writers how they have presented visions of the non-white communities and foregrounded their notions of reality and identity/subjectivity.
- b) Another objective of this study is to emphasize the contribution of the Native and Afro- American women writers in the development of Ecriture Feminine style of representation that is effectively used by these novelists to depict what the non- White subjects think about themselves, their socio-cultural world, Nature, environment, myths and history and formulate their distinct identity.
- c) The study also aims to demonstrate that Native American and Afro- American women writers' fiction reflects the symbiotic relationship of their women with nature/ environment and represent in Ecofeminist discourse, in sharp contrast with

the modern capitalistic and highly scientific ways of life, the vision that enabled them to live in peaceful co-existence with the natural world and the non-human creatures.

- d) The objective of this study is to reveal how the novels of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison, the two most representative figures of Native and Afro- American literary renaissance, contest and challenge explicitly racist, gendered and inhuman portraits and project conversely the Native American and Afro-American people's views of the world, especially their conception of and attitude towards women and nature.
- e) One of the objectives of this thesis is to investigate and illustrate how language is appropriated by these female writers and made to 'perform' different functions rather than simply communicate.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

1: What discursive strategies, stylistic techniques and modes of narration do Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison use to create a distinct mode of fiction writing, that is, Native and Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine* in their fictional literature?

2: What kind of symbiotic relationship do Edrich and Morrison represent between women and nature or environment in their environmental fiction?

3: How do Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison contest and dismantle ethnically charged stereotypes of Native American and Afro- American female subjects in their fiction by deconstructing pahllogocentric identity politics?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The present carried out in qualitative research paradigm is significant contribution to understanding the Native American and Afro- American women writers' use of *Ecriture Feminine* mode of narration in order to depict the indigenous people's distinct understanding of the reality. The study is aimed at exploring how and to what effect the Native and Afro- American women writers have used their fictional that I call Poststructural *Ecriture Feminine* discourse. While the Euro- American accounts of the history, culture and origin of the indigenous people and Afro- American slaves had projected stereotypical, negative images of the non-white people, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison, through the employment of Poststructural *Ecriture Feminine* narrative techniques combining Eurocentric and indigenous modes of narration, have reconfigured the history, beliefs, rituals, traditions, myths, women, their relation with nature and

cultural identity of their people, particularly women. The present study makes an in-depth analysis of the four richly thematic and culturally infused multi perspective texts of both representative female writers of Native and Afro- American ethnicities to highlight the thematic and stylistic merits of both writers. Contrary to the white discursive modes, women novelists of the Native and Black origin have used narrative style that blends white and non- White representational traditions and regenerated distinctly Native and Afro- American identities.

Since Native American and Afro- American women writers' literature is a recent addition into the mainstream literary world, they are less known or generally misrepresented people in the world consciousness. Before 1970's-the time of Native American and Afro- American literary renaissance-the Native Americans were known to the world mostly from the Western discourses of the explorers or colonial masters and such representations were mostly racially biased, therefore, these people remained in the European consciousness as savage and barbaric. The present study demonstrates that the Native American and Afro- American people and their cultures, far from being savage, were quite civilized and unique so far as the comprehension of life and its purposes is concerned. They had a distinct culture of their own characterized by their mythic beliefs that governed their lives. This study is significant as it provides an insight into the mythic belief system and communal ways of living life in close harmony with plant and animal world that gave a distinct character to their culture. The study also highlights their eco-friendly ways of life, acknowledged today by the modern white people also for their insight into the significance of symbiotic relationship between man and environment for peaceful and secured life.

The significance of this study is that it demonstrates the role of Afro- American and Native American female writers in resisting and subverting the western structures of domination and oppression by foregrounding the Native and Black women's personal experiences, self identity, oppositional knowledge claims and discursive strategies, thus emphasizing the fact that American Indian female writers, despite being marginalized until recently by the dominant western patriarchal capitalist culture, have valid 'other' stories to tell.

Broadening the frontiers of *Ecriture Feminine* to Native American and Afro- American literature, this study aims to signify the attempts of the Native American and Afro- American female novelists towards incorporating into Feminism the Black

Feminist epistemologies and subversive knowledge claims embedded in the concrete lived experiences of the Native and Afro- American women. The study shows that by remaining loyal to their mythic cultural and social values, the Native American women novelists have imbibed the influences from both Western Feminist thoughts and Native traditions. By doing so this study intends to demonstrate through the in-depth analysis of Native and Afro- American women novelists, how women of color novelists have voiced the wishes, dreams, pains, joys and subjectivities of the hitherto silenced and suppressed marginalized women by both challenging and (re)appropriating the dominant culture's language and power structures.

### **1.8 Delimitation**

The four novels, two from each writer have been discussed within the theoretical framework provided by Poststructural Feminist and Ecofeminist perspectives. The novels undertaken for textual analysis are: *Beloved* and *Paradise* by Toni Morrison; and *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* by Louise Erdrich. The reasons I have furnished in favor of my argument have been mainly derived from eclectic theoretical framework developed by synthesizing the theoretical insights from Poststructural French Feminist, Ecofeminist and Black Feminist theoretical positions taken by the principal theorists I have chosen for this project. The thesis highlights the significance and contribution of the Afro and Native American female novelists towards broadening the frontiers of what the French Feminist Helene Cixous has termed *Ecriture Feminine* and representing colored women and their dynamic relationship with nature from their own perspectives.

### **1.9 Chapterization**

Organization of the chapters demonstrates the relevance and application of poststructural Feminist and Ecofeminist theories on the four selected works of the Native American and Afro- American women writers.

Chapter one briefly discusses the context and background of the study, articulates the research objectives, frames the research questions, outlines the statement of the problem, explains the theoretical framework, underscores the significance of the study and summarizes the chapter breakdown and thus encapsulates the overall research design.

Chapter two makes a comprehensive survey of the related literature produced

by the literary scholars, theorists, critics, academics and research scholars on the subject under scrutiny. Since the dissertation is interdisciplinary research having tentacles into discourse theory, the Western and Black theorizations/ conceptualizations of body, white and Black variety of Feminisms, and the theories related to ecocriticism and Ecofeminism, this chapter takes into consideration the historical and contemporary developments in all these areas.

Chapter Three details research methodology which employs qualitative research paradigm for an interpretive and explanatory analysis of the Native American and Afro-American women writers' fiction from the critical perspective of Poststructuralist Feminist literary theory and fiction.

Chapter Four gives a detailed analysis of the discursive reconfiguration of women in Afro- American and Native American *Ecriture Feminine* by analyzing four selected texts *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. Keeping in view Nature and scope of the study which deals with the discursive formations that the Native and Afro-American women writers have used to reconfigure the images of Native and Black women and their relationship with nature, this chapter helps understand the processes and methods employed by these women writers to construct what Helene Cixous famously calls *Ecriture Feminine*.

Chapter Five deals with Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's treatment of the relationship between Nature/environment and women that has been discussed from Ecocritical and Ecofeminist perspectives with reference to their environmental narratives: *Love Medicine*; *Tracks*; *Beloved* and *Paradise* taking into consideration the allied notions of environmental justice, environmental ethics, lands, cultural borders, and eco performativity.

Chapter Six concludes the whole discussion and elucidates that women writers from the Native and Black marginalized communities have deconstructed the stereotypical misrepresentations of their communities, particularly women and their relationship with nature in the mainstream Euro-American literature and discursively re-fashioned them in their new form of writing called *Ecriture Feminine* which has foregrounded the female experience felt through body and represented it from feminine perspective. It argues that these novelists have deconstructed the phallogocentric language and replaced it with a new feminine language which is written in 'white ink'

and skillfully combined the oral and written narratological forms in both Native and Afro-American women writing.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter briefly discussed the context and background of the study, shed light on the research objectives, framed the research questions, debated the statement of the problem, outlined the theoretical framework, underscored the significance of the study and summarized the chapter breakdown and thus encapsulated the overall research design. The chapter contended that an understanding of the Poststructuralist *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist theories will help understand Native and Afro- American women writers, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's discursive reconstitution of women and nature in their fiction. The chapter also explicated the notion of *Ecriture Feminine*, locating it in broader spectrum of western/French and Black Feminist thought illustrated by number of Western and non- white theorists/ writers. Furthermore, the chapter described that Native and Afro- American women novelists have deconstructed the Euro-American stereotypical, universalized, calculated misrepresentations of the Native and Black female subjects and their degraded connection with environment and presented the multifaceted other perspectives. This argument thus created an appropriate context to situate the study into how Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison-the most authentic contemporary representatives of the Native and African American cultures-have conceptualized and employed *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist themes in their respective narratives and how discursive female subjectivities/identities have been refashioned.

The present chapter makes a comprehensive survey of the related literature produced by the literary scholars, theorists, critics, academics and research scholars on the subject under scrutiny. Since the dissertation is interdisciplinary research grounded in discourse theory, the western and Black theorizations/ conceptualizations of body, white and Black variety of Feminisms, and the theories related to ecocriticism and Ecofeminism, this chapter takes into consideration the

historical and contemporary developments in all these areas. This chapter will set out to make a comprehensive review of related literature on *Ecriture Feminine*, the Western perspective of body, the construction of female body, the phallogocentric thrust of Western thought, language and writing, language and the women's place in society, the relation between Native and Afro- American women writers' environmental narratives and the theoretical tenets of ecocriticism and Ecofeminism. This chapter will crystallize that the reclamation of bodies and the harmonious connection between nature/environment and human beings have always been prime concern of women of color writers. The thrust of the chapter is drawing connection between the French and Black Feminist theorists' urging women to "write through the bodies" using their experiences and the literary representations of the Black women's physical and psychological experiences in the works of indigenous and Black women writers. Similarly the chapter demonstrates that there is not only the integral relation between the domination of nature and women but also that in Native and Afro- American traditions of environmental writings, there is always the depiction of the profoundly symbiotic relationship between human and non-human world as well the demonstration of the fact that women's survival struggles are deeply connected with the protection of nature (Shiva 1989). The reviewed literature on *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminism has been divided into four sections: (1) Understanding the shift from Feminism to *Ecriture Feminine*, (2) Poststructural *Ecriture Feminine* and Black Feminist theoretical framework, (3) Theorization of (female) body in Western perspective, (4) Relationship between Native and Afro- American Women and nature, ((5) The Post Anthropocentric debate (6) Past Directing the Present: Review of Thematic and Stylistic Features of Morrison and Erdrich's *Ecriture Feminine* and (7) Resarch gap

## **2.2 Patriarchy, Language and Women's Objectification**

This thesis is an exploration of the fiction of Native and Afro- American female writers who challenged the Western stereotypical images and phallogocentric discourses by asserting their own identities and subjectivities through their feminine discourses that represent their own unique bodily experiences and bring them to the process of self-actualization. The feminine discourses furthermore describe how the language performs different functions as women reconstruct and subvert masculine phallogocentric discourses and structures with the help of language because language is not only a medium through

which one can communicate rather it is also a means to discursive re-structuring of different ideas and identities. Therefore, considering the importance of language in reconstituting the notions of power, race, nationality, identity/subjectivity and difference, it is important to explore the various layers of relation between Feminism and *Ecriture Feminine*, trace the history of its different waves and the development of the notion of *Ecriture Feminine*. The concept of power is inextricably linked with language, among other things, and Feminism, in this regard, challenges the patriarchal power structures and attempts to dismantle and replace them with feminine language which defies hierarchical and binaristic conventions of language in order to bring social, political and economic equality between the sexes. In this connection, therefore, Feminism is not just about repudiating the gender-based power, but about changing the prevailing power structures – and, in doing so, changing “the very concept of power itself” (Moi 148).

Last few decades have marked the presence of a socially emerging group of females who conceptualized the idea of the body in Western social and cultural theories through their discourses. Female gender is used as a theoretical model by different Feminist writers. They have constructed their critical studies on the issue of marginalization of women in the hands of men. Feminists have analyzed and interpreted the socially constructed subjectivities of their Western societies and also focused on the ideas which were politically, socially, and culturally constructed by men in these patriarchal societies.

Patriarchal structure of any society is centered on power relations that operate within a system of phallogocentric hierarchies which men constructed to control women. These unequal man-made hierarchies forcefully control women's sexuality, identity, and reproduction system. Moreover, when men impose their masculinity over women in patriarchal societies, it leads to a stereotypical attitude of man towards woman that strengthens iniquitous power relation between the two genders. Walby (1989) succinctly explains the patterns of patriarchy that it is an integrated system of social practices and structures which allow men to dominate exploit and suppress women (20). He asserts that the use of the term social structures is significant because it plainly involves denunciation of biological determinism and the sexist idea that every individual man is powerful and every woman is a powerless one. His identification of different forms of patriarchal domination and their subsequent classification into six structures of patriarchal relations- the patriarchal

mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions- comprehensively explains the layered and institutionalized functioning of patriarchy.

The subjectivities and different theoretical frameworks that female writers both white and non- white have now developed against patriarchy were not so privileged before. In reality, the concept of being a woman in western patriarchal society has always been measured within the epistemological and metaphysical tradition of these Western societies. A woman in patriarchal societies was marginalized by the male writers and labeled as demonized human of a society. Men masculinized the world by stating that a woman was an inferior being of a society who was born as a slave to men. They constructed her in their discourses as a weak, fragile and an irrational human of society. The marginalization and subjugation of females by males appeared in the form of objectification of women's bodies. They labeled a woman as an object of sexual gratification for male and her body was defined and presented as a mysterious thing. The female body was a kind of allure for the patriarchal figures of society hence in male-oriented societies these were and still are the common cultural discourses which males constructed in societies and practiced them freely. Simon de Beauvoir explains this confining of woman into structures in her celebrated quote that, "One is not born, but rather becomes woman" (14). Moreover, she defines the very basic idea of patriarchal society by calling humanity as male entity in which man defines woman, not in relation to herself, but in relation to himself. She asserts that the patriarchal social and intellectual structures always conceive her as essential but inferior part of man and she is never considered as an autonomous subject. Her value and significance lies in her relation to man who determines and differentiates her in relation to himself and not the vice versa. She is insignificant while he is essential because "He is the Subject; he is the Absolute" (26).

Later critics like Jacques Derrida and Nancy Jay discussed Western philosophies and analyzed them as logocentric models oriented by males for their own benefit. These writers describe that a patriarchal society always presents and discursively constructs woman as a vulnerable being and their discourses and social theories define them at the mercy of men. Moreover, Jacques Derrida explains his

theory by describing the epistemological and ontological information. For him, this information is always perceived or regarded in terms of the binary opposites. He theorizes these binaries in great detail and for him these binaries are hierarchal structures made by men to privilege and superioritize male. According to him these hierarchies are further divided in a way that the first is always privileged over the second. The second is always described as 'Other' which is inferior, imperfect, incomplete, and marginalized. This existence describes a transcendental reality which is superior. These binaries traditionally support male over female, masculine over feminine, penis over vagina, singularity over multiplicity, superior over inferior, primary over secondary, active over passive, intellect over imagination, logical over illogical, mind over body subject over object, firm over soft and rationality over emotions. This partial division of male and female into false binaries in which one is always privileged and prioritized over the other is the product of a purely patriarchal society. The discussion of patriarchal nature of the western societies and the degraded place of women in them generates the crucial question of how women struggled against these restricting and excruciating patriarchal structures. A very brief overview of the history of woman's struggle under the banner of Feminism will help understand the journey of women from Feminism to Ecriture Feminism.

### **2.3 Feminism**

The social, political and industrial changes in the U.S and Europe gave rise to the Feminist movement which struggled to win holistic equality for females. At the simplest level, Feminism is a movement that advocates gender equality and promotes it by literary, social and political activism. Out of several definitions of the term Feminism put forth by the Feminists, cultural scholars and anthropologists, the one offered by Reddock summarizes the thrust of the movement succinctly. According to him Feminism refers to the consciousness of the domination, exploitation and/or suppression of women within society and the conscious action to address and transform this situation (Reddock 1998). Thus the most common use the term Feminism involves is the complete political, economic and social equality between the two genders (Cornell 1998). However, Feminism has a history of its own and it has been developing and evolving since its inception to present day and the scholars have labeled its various phases as waves of Feminism. In its present form, it is not one thing; it has many faces and varieties and, hence, defying any single, all-inclusive definition, it stands, in the words of Fiona Tolan

(2006) “fractured, divided and contradictory” (318). Lunga (2010) also acknowledges Feminism’s hydra-faced character by stating that “Feminism is a complex, multi-faceted movement whose essence is to rebuild, not to destroy society [...] the primary target of Feminist attack is patriarchy. The latter imposes male superiority on women kind, and allows all forms of sexual, economic, political and cultural domination of women and girls” (28). The famous Black Feminist author bell hooks describes that “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression” (bell hook institute.com). The theory of Feminism has built itself into theoretical and philosophical discourses. Researchers and Feminists embrace two kinds of belief systems which describe and focus on the condition of women in a patriarchal society. Moreover, it also describes that a woman mostly experiences subordination in these societies. The themes which are focused on by different critics, researchers and Feminists are themes of discrimination, objectification of a woman’s body, patriarchal system of women and nature’s oppression, phallogocentrism and androcentrism etc.

A social movement in any society alters the lifestyle of its people. Though women also had been writing in every age but they and their writings were neither considered proper nor given the regard they merited and hence for many centuries women were defined, described, and discussed by the male writers. In their so called normative discourses, male writers used them as an inferior subject in their male-oriented writings. But the social movements brought consequential changes and these social movements later turned out to be the part of women's liberation, environmental conservation movements about gender equality and human rights activism etc. In this regard, the Feminist movement which was a powerful revolt against the hegemony of patriarchy and its discourses dealt a heavy blow to the age old patriarchal social structures. Popularized by woman activists and writers, Feminism subverted the ossified power structures, paving way for women to define themselves by reconstructing their disfigured images and identities. The Feminist theory sheds light on the political and sociological theories which discuss the issue of gender differences, and inequality. It is a campaign initialized by women who demand equal rights and social status for females. Feminist movement has helped women to reject and alter predominant views of Western patriarchal society and culture. In the beginning, Feminists started demanding legal rights for the female gender which involved their social rights of voting or participating in social activities as well as the right to their own bodies which focused on reproductive or

abortion rights. Later, the Feminist movements raised strong voice against domestic violence and oppression, sexual harassment, misogynistic behavior of men, gender discrimination and demanded their social protection in the patriarchal cultures and societies. This trend of Feminist movement from different social Feminists groups kept increasing day by day and women of other races such as Black or third world women also proposed their respective Feminisms in these freedom movements. This movement urges them to unshackle the restrictive boundaries of male dominant culture and encourages them to eliminate the discriminatory and dominant norms of a society which are the real cause of their oppression in the hands of males. Moreover, by continuous encouragement of this movement of Feminism, women started creating their own subjective narratives through which they could define their own self and their personal bodily experiences. For Simone De Beauvoir, Christine De Pizan writer of *Epistle to the God of Love* (Epitre au Dieu d'Amour) was considered to be the first woman who “[took] her pen in defense of her sex” in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (gender.cawater). To understand the power structures and patriarchal imagery built by males, Feminist critics used, among others, the poststructuralist theoretical framework. Through the help of theories of semiotics and psychoanalysis, critics tried to grasp and illustrate the Nature of all the pervasive power structures. These discourses and narratives productively describe the ways which refer to the sexual differences encoded in the patriarchal cultures, norms, and societies.

The Feminist movement further divides itself into three waves of Feminism which makes a complete Feminist theory. The first wave of Feminism, which is characterized by different forms of intervention that inspired the subsequent waves of Feminism and activists, was observed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The wave was propagated most in the United Kingdom and United States. This first wave of Feminism initially raised the idea of equality for woman in property, households or ownership. But later this wave specifically talked about the equality of a woman in political matters and the right of suffrage. The Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed in 1918 which granted permission that women over age 30 who own houses of their own can cast vote. Later in 1928, the criterion for age changed to over 21. The struggle of the first wave of Feminism ended up with a great victory for women as the United States Constitution gave women a right to vote all over the states. Campbell sums up the whole struggle of the activists of the first wave by saying that in spite of the best

efforts of Alice Paul, the activist, the organizational talent of Carrie Chapman Catt, (President of NAWSA) and the marvelous rhetorical skills of Anna Howard Shaw, (also an ex- President of NAWSA), women made a long struggle before winning the right of vote in 1920 (Campbell 1989).

The second wave of Feminism was initiated in the early 1960s to 1980s. This wave of Feminism specifically talks about the idea of equality and rejects gender discrimination. It mainly talks about the cultural inequalities and the personal lives of women which were deeply influenced by patriarchy and their power structures. Carol Hanisch coined the slogan “The Personal is Political” which aptly defines the second wave of Feminism (wikipedia.org). In this regard, the famous Feminist Simon de Beauvoir and her book *The Second Sex* present existentialist views and negate the teachings of men which are considered as a set pattern for a woman to follow. The purpose of Simon de Beauvoir in writing her book *The Second Sex* was not to present a Feminist perspective to the world rather she describes a socialist perspective of hers towards woman. She believes firmly that her step towards socialism would bring an end to the suppression and oppression of female gender in patriarchal societies. She argues that women are equal to men in term of their intellectual abilities.

Another significant Feminist writer, Betty Friedan, published in 1963 her most influential book *The Feminine Mystique* in which she talked about the false belief system under which women were spending their lives. As for her, a woman is not a slave of her man or she does not need a man for her identity. She falsifies such ideas and motivates women to find their own separate identities. The second wave of Feminism foregrounded women’s body and the issues related to women’s subjectivities in great detail. Most of the campaigns of the second wave focus upon the feminine experience in society. This second wave of Feminism describes women's exploitation through different means and focuses on the rights of women to control reproduction. As Simon De Beauvoir explains the idea of becoming a woman by explaining that, “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (38). By this De Beauvoir explains that to be a woman or to become a woman is only a matter of cultural or social construction. This gender difference is made by the societies itself. Moreover, it also sheds light on the idea that this is not natural or inherent rather constructed condition for a woman. These concepts helped them to distinguish socially constructed gender roles that describe the word female as biological sex and the word feminine as a social gender. In the expanding context of second wave Feminism



which saw the surfacing of several difference Feminisms, the identity second-wave Feminism was the most significant one which was marked by bell hooks' influential thesis *Ain't I A Woman? Black Woman and Feminism* (1981) and Trin. T.Minh-ha's *Women, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (1989). Identity politics of the second wave Feminist agenda, which is also one of the main concerns of this dissertation, sparked a new interest in the lived experiences of women (of color) which were embedded in their historical, social, mythical, spiritual and empirical contexts. This turn in Feminism has been termed as "gyno-criticism" and was introduced by, among many other Feminist writings, Elaine Showalter in her celebrated writing *Literature of Their Own* (1977) also alternatively termed as 'womanism' in African American context popularized by Alice Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983). The method of difference identity-politics emphasized by second wave difference Feminists was further extended and elaborated by Patricia Hill Collins, the most celebrated author of the *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (1990). She argued at length that instead of merely recognizing the gender, class and racial differences that are at the heart of every system of oppression, it is equally important to explain the interlocking Nature of this system.

This dissertation, in this context, carries a detailed analysis of Toni Morrison and Luise Erich's fiction and illustrates how different interlocking race, class and gender hierarchies oppress women. In the European/French Feminist framework, identity Feminism made a departure from conventional forms and a trio of French Feminists – Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray- introduced a different dimension known as *Ecriture Feminine* or women writing. The basic premise of this writing was the deconstruction of the Western universalistic knowledge claims rooted in the binaristic or dualistic articulation of the white/black, mind/body, culture/nature hierarchies in which one binary was not different from but also privileged over the other. Exposing the phallogocentric character of the male western philosophical thinking, they argued that the study of the history of western thought and languages reveals that the western discourses prioritized phallus as the master sign and father as the foundation of symbolic law to alienate women from their bodies and writing and hence, emphasizing upon the need of deconstructive feminine writing, the French Feminists enthusiastically suggested and practiced the idea of "writing through body". The selected works of Morrison and Erdrich have been extensively analyzed, using Foucauldian discourse analysis method, to

elucidate how these writers employ the bodily experiences of their female characters to embody the features of *écriture féminine* stylistics.

The third wave of Feminism started around the mid -1990s. It was initiated by the generations born in 1960's and 70's in the developed Euro-American countries and reached its full swing in diverse digital, cultural and economic environment. Although they reaped significant benefits from the sustained and rigorous struggles of the first and second wave Feminists, they also critiqued the second wave Feminists for what they considered was their shortcomings. This third wave of Feminism particularly focuses on micro-politics. Moreover, it challenges the definition of femininity and some of the ideas presented by the second wave of Feminism. For interpretation of gender and sexuality, the third wave Feminism uses poststructuralist interpretations. Feminist activists and different theorists during these movements found out that the idea of woman is absent from historical texts. This absence inspired them to write for their own selves and to create their own histories and bodily experiences.

The third wave Feminists, some of them like Rebecca Walker, the daughter of second-wave Feminist Alice Walker, were the virtual daughters of second wave Feminists. Inspired by the ideals of postmodernist movement, third-wave Feminists committed themselves to questioning, reclaiming, and redefining concepts, expressions and media that disseminated notions of gender, womanhood, personhood, beauty, identity, subjectivity, femininity, masculinity, patriarchy and so on. Fully conscious of the constructed Nature of reality in its various manifestations including the reality of gender, the third wave Feminists, took the second wave Feminism's major goal of sexual liberation forward and explained that following the consciousness of how one's gender identity and sexuality were discursively constructed and shaped up by social institutions, the construction of liberated and hence authentic gender identity was possible. The third wave which redefines women and girls as self-confident, authoritative and assertive with regard to their sexuality and its orientation and to which belong works of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich, has been decidedly more inclusive of Black and marginalized women than the previous two waves.

## **2.4 Challenging the Representation of Women in Masculine Discourses**

For the past many decades, the idea of being a woman has been described by using the lens of male discourses. Challenging the representations of women in

phallogocentric discourses, ideology of *Écriture féminine* explores the various shades of the Native and Black women's understanding of and relationship with nature by mainly focusing upon how non-white women by subverting the discourses of men that are formulated in oppressive mode of language have used their own discourses to define their unique bodily experience.

Feeling dissatisfied with their negative representations in male discourses which constructed the images of women and assigned them roles according to the needs of patriarchal society, Feminists started writing about their own experiences which were expressive of their subjectivities. They started promoting their writings which they called feminine writings. After Feminist theory, these writings brought another kind of revolution on the part of women. These writings were a kind of reaction through which females promoted the idea that they can write about their own selves. They rejected the patriarchal culture and norms of society and by writing about their own selves, they constructed their own subjective identity. These writings helped them to mark their identities and presence in a male-oriented world. These feminine writings describe that a woman can write about her own unique experience more realistically and authentically. Men who wrote about women experiences only wasted their inks as they falsely represented the female gender to the world. These feminine writings encouraged women to represent their own individual feminine stance to the world. Through their writings, they have reconstructed their lost subjectivity, identity, and gender in patriarchal societies. Moreover, it was a kind of initiative to rebut men who wrongly delineated the character of women in their texts. They contributed through their meaningful writings and expressed their marginalized cultural positions and gender constructions. Women rejected the dynamics of male-centered narratives which mainly revolved around phallogocentric male discourses that describe woman an inferior being of a society. Poulain de la Barre suggests to women that they should view with suspicion everything written by men about women "because they are both judge and party" (qtd. in De Beauvoir 30- 31).

## **2.5 Conceptualizing *Écriture Feminine***

*Écriture Feminine* is a concept used by women to subvert the oppressive use of language by male dominant cultures. Through *Écriture Feminine*, women writers reject and subvert the stereotypical representation of females. Furthermore, their writings lay

emphasis on the practice of writing which helps women to liberate themselves from the oppressive masculine language tropes. The term *Écriture Feminine* was projected by three prominent French Feminist writers- Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva, and Luce Irigaray. "Chimeres", *Journal of French and Italian literature* defines that it is a French Feminists' theory that focuses on women's specificity and pays particular attention to writing and language, known as *L'écriture Feminine*, and delves into the feminine imagination with the intention of "displacing unconscious mechanisms that have limited women's conception of self" (78). For Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, language plays foremost role in bringing a social change in society, so a woman should produce a new language, vision or text to define her existence in the society. As for Julia Kristeva "women are different from men and it is time they began praising the superiority of their sex" through their feminine writings (Moi 15). These Feminist writers contributed by challenging the fixed phallogocentric structures of language embedded in the male patriarchal cultures. In the late 1960s, the term was developed and later around mid-1990's different researchers and critics started utilizing it in different Western discourses. Cixous and Kristeva have not proposed a fixed definition of this term in their writings. Other writers and critics made different interpretations related to *Écriture Feminine* in their various discourses.

The key characteristic of the term *Écriture Feminine* is that it holds a lack of specificity. Feminine writings of Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva entail this message in their writings as well to falsify fixed taboos associated with the female gender. These feminine writings were designed to question the repressive structures of male writings and thoughts characteristic of patriarchal society. *Écriture Feminine* predominantly focuses on the French and western male discourses that describe man and woman in the form of binary opposition where one is privileged over the other. Masculine is defined as a dominant term in western discourses and feminine is described as inferior or 'other' as subordinate position. Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray argued that masculine discourses are based on phallogocentric structures. They have deconstructed and demystified these phallogocentric structures rooted in language and culture.

These three writers envisaged different modes and claimed a single possible method of writing that can alter these structures. Luce Irigaray and Cixous based their theories on criticizing Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory according to which woman is culturally inscribed as the mirror of man. They challenged the privileged

systems of a society that arouse sexual difference between a man and a woman in terms of sexual organ phallus that a woman lacks in her body. Cixous in her essay "*The Laugh of Medusa*" first elucidated the concept of *Ecriture Feminine*. A radical voice of French Feminism, she was influenced by many writers, notably Jacques Derrida, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, etc. and her writings perfectly demonstrate the influence of these writers. Her essay "*The Laugh of Medusa*" (1975) was first published in French as *Le Rire de la Méduse*. Later in 1976, the essay was translated in English by the writers Paula Cohen and Keith Cohen. Her essay, since its first publication, has triggered controversies as well as opened new avenues for women writings. The manifesto of this celebrated essay is to urge women of every color and race to write themselves in "white ink" making their bodies heard in language in manner of their own i.e., in feminine writings. Morrison and Erdrich, closely following the postulates of women writing, write in a style of their own that synthesizes language into body and pours body into language. Cixous in *The Laugh of Medusa* eloquently puts forth the whole matter for her women readers as she starts her essay by exhorting that in order to break free from the phallogocentric socio-linguistic structures it is obligatory for a woman to write about herself and about other women and bring them to writing from which patriarchy has driven them away as violently as from their bodies, so a "Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement" (Medusa 875).

For Cixous writing is an important tool for a woman to mark her identity in the world dominated by male writers. The past shows the absence of women's writing socially, culturally and historically because women were so oppressively treated by males that they never experienced the idea of language or writing as language belongs to the powerful. Cixous states that women have not forgotten their traumatic past and they are still suffering. However, they can change the course of future through feminine writings. So for her to earn a name, a woman went through a lot of hardship in her life: she had to fight with the conventional norms and the oppressive patriarchal culture of a society. However, the process of writing can bring realization to a woman as it has brought realization to Morrison and Erdrich, the representatives of Black and Red women that they can create meanings by experiencing and writing about their own unique body in order that they may develop a separate identity in a patriarchal society. Man acts as a central figure of a patriarchal society and woman is treated as the marginal figure who acts as a puppet in the hands of men. Men marginalized, repressed and

confined woman in the dark places while women acted as a slave for their masters (men) and were forced to accept that they were the inferior creatures of a society who should be governed by men. For Cixous, “the enormity of the repression has kept them in the “dark”-that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute” (876). For long there existed a gender difference created by the societal norms and institutions where women were haunted by the brutalities of male gender since their childhood. Female is described as an inferior, passive and evil being of society while a man acts as god and is considered as a supreme authority. The woman is seen as land which belongs to a man and he has the right to cultivate it. A woman living in a world of man is not allowed to speak or think about her own self. She is afraid of the patriarchal norm of society and consistently suffers subjugation at the hands of the male who cripple her strength and abilities. By the same token, male has suppressed using repressive apparatuses and institutionalized power structures their ability to write or speak about their own body and self. So the act of writing from which woman was purposefully distanced is what Cixous calls woman to come to. Though she was kept in the dark throughout her life and was violently treated, the dark continent (of writing) was neither that dark nor unexplored but it was dark only because patriarchy purposefully made women believe that it was dark and impenetrable for them.

Cixous encouraged women to write since it is as much important for them as it is for males. For Cixous women need to completely own their bodies and experience because they are the only owner or holder of their bodies, not men. The best way to actualize their potential identity is by writing but women were kept away from the process of writings by patriarchy because the act of writing was supposed to be reserved for “great men”. Subverting this myth of writing attached with men she invites women to “Write! Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you: not man” (Medusa 877). As writings of males are claimed as “the marked writings” (879), politically, culturally and socially men were given the right to write and they wrote for themselves as well as for woman as she was discursively constructed to be a weak and fragile creature who was not able to write because writings was a great activity only related to men. Male writings have extensively and repressively described women in their discourses as inferior characters. Women were doubly marginalized in the hand of male: firstly, in terms of facing physical abuse and secondly through their discourses which marginalized

them historically, culturally and politically. Over and again they introduced woman as a weak or evil character in their discourses which kept the repression perpetuated.

Referring to the conflation of history of writing with the faculty of reason which is associated with men Cixous explains that the whole history of writing has been confounded with the history of the “same self-admiring, self-stimulating, self-congratulatory phallogocentrism” (879). So to challenge the patriarchal version of the historical reality about women, Cixous encouraged women to rewrite the history to correct it, to extricate it from the clutches of dehumanizing male discourses. Morrison’s *Beloved* and *Paradise* are the fine examples of Afro-American history, the history of slave men and women rewritten in a language that is strongly linked with the woman’s body and that smacks of *Ecriture Feminine* stylistic experimentation. Similarly Louise Erdrich’s *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* demonstrate features of *Ecriture Feminine*. The fragmented narrative style, narration of the same event by multiple narrators to present multiple perspectives, use of puns and silence in the narration, freedom from the oppressive order of rationality that through phallogocentric discourse relegates women to negative and marginal status, disruption of binaries and amalgamation of Western and Native, narrative and oral perspectives are among other features that characterize her *Ecriture Feminine*. Their writings rejected the phallogocentric tradition of writing and introduced to the world a new kind of writing which presented a new vision and perspective of reality. Women’s writings are then a kind of new invention which helped them in transforming history and led them towards liberation. Moreover, as Cixous ideates “By writing herself, [she] will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her...Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time” (880). The act of writing strengthens women in many ways, therefore woman’s “language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible” (889).

Cixous in *The Laugh of Medusa* draws her reader’s attention to the socially constructed hierarchies where the feminine side is always associated with the negative connotations, so much negative that men believe that there are only two unrepresentable things in the world-death and the feminine sex and “they need femininity to be associated with death” (885). Woman in a patriarchal world is always seen as undesirable, passive, powerless and inferior. But for Cixous woman is also a one who experiences life, power, and energy like a man but male critics and writers express a stereotypical attitude towards femininity: they describe “formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement,

piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliance, witch and the shrew” in a woman (qtd. in Moi 34). Therefore through her feminine writings, she can subvert the patriarchal claims of a society and can raise her voice against the issue of silencing women. For Luce Irigaray and Jacques Derrida “Patriarchal thought models its criteria for what counts ‘positive’ values on the central assumption of the Phallus and the Logos as the transcendental signifier of Western culture . . .” (Moi 67). Whatever is associated with values of the phallus is counted as good, true or meaningful while anything that is not shaped by and premised on the pattern of the Phallus is defined as confused, fragmented, harmful, and insignificant. The phallus has been symbolized with a form that is whole, unitary and simple whereas as the female sex is conceived of as something terribly chaotic.

What “writing through body” gives a woman is her lost strength, nativity, her unique bodily experience and “de-censored” (880) relationship to her sexuality. By writing she gains authority of her “bodily territories” (880) which were violently driven away from her. She starts experiencing pleasure related to her own body and rejects man-made structures to confine her body and language. Without language, a woman acts as a dumb, blind and an emotionless creature who was obliged to obey her male master. So when she starts writing, her writing gives a double anguish to the male ear which was used to hear in language only that which was spoken in the masculine.

Cixous in her essay *An Imaginary Utopia* reveals the implications of the “patriarchal binary thought”. She defines woman in a set of binaries such as “activity/passivity, sun/moon, day/night, father/mother, head/emotions, intelligible/sensitive, logos/pathos” (Moi 104) in which each negative side is defined as feminine. Cixous’ idea of patriarchal binary thought is also very much related to the work of Jacques Derrida. She states about feminine texts that these texts, among other deconstructive undertakings, work on the unconscious principle of undermining the dominant phallogocentric logic. The works of Erdrich and Morrison reflect this deconstructive tendency and undermine phallogocentric logic of sexual opposition. These works describe that social construction has imprisoned the people to see themselves in the form of binaries therefore the writings produced by masculine or feminine are also seen through these respective binaries. Their fiction with distinctive feminine stylistics demonstrates that feminine writing needs more focused and critical evaluation because writing bearing the name of a woman doesn’t necessarily make it feminine writing nor a



masculine piece of writing necessarily excludes femininity. As Cixous points out “It’s rare, but you can sometimes find femininity in writings signed by men: it does happen”. (qtd. in Moi 108)

Cixous strongly believes that all human beings are bisexual in nature (Moi 108). She talks about this idea of bisexuality in her essay *The Laugh of Medusa* in which she claims that writers and critics were completely unable to locate the masculine and feminine writings because of their sheer ignorance towards the subject. She illuminates the concept of “proper or property” defined as the “self-identity, self-aggrandizement and arrogant dominance” (Moi 110). She elaborates the idea of “proper and property” in her article in which she states that “etymologically, the ‘proper’ is ‘property’, that which is not separable from me” (qtd.in Moi 111). Therefore men have this right and authority that everything must return to them. She focuses on the idea of feminine writing and describes that “femininity in writing can be discerned in a privileging of the voice . . . the incarnation of the first voice of love which all women preserve alive” (qtd.in Moi 114). Cixous’ main stance is that women should fight back to regain their lost status. Women since many ages have functioned within the male-centered discourses which are recognized as the important and superior signifier of the phallus so women need to dislocate these structures to get their presence inside the language in a positive manner. Highlighting the significance of the relation between female body and the language Cixous states: “Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes...” (Medusa 886). Where the Amer-European feminist movements of 1970’s emphasized the women’s rights, they also provided the American linguists the occasion to focus upon the uniqueness of women’s language. They highlighted the important features that characterized women’s language differentiating it from men’s normative language initiating the establishment of language and gender as a distinctive field meriting critical attention. The crucial and inseparable relation between the place of women in society and the language they use and the language used by male discourses to define women and their roles as well as position in society is a subject of very important study, namely *Language and Woman’s Place* carried out by Robin Lckoff (1975) . The study traces the roots of gender inequality in linguistic gender discrimination that operates at two levels: firstly, the way women are taught to use language in a society and, secondly, the way “the general language treats them” to relegate them to submissive and

marginalized positions of sexual objectification or servitude. Lackoff's empirical study, therefore, locating gendered language use at the heart of the discriminatory roles of men and women in a society, identifies nine linguistic features which dominate and recur in the language of most of women. On the bases of these frequently used stylistic expressions which she names "hedges, empty adjectives, intensifiers etc" (p. 53-57), she asserts that these linguistic expressions don't let woman express herself fully and freely and contribute to the inhibition of her true self by systematically depriving her of the means of expressing herself strongly. Under the powerful influence of false masculine or patriarchal discourse traditions, women are believed not to have the ability to communicate like men in direct, confident, and unequivocal language and hence they "are systematically denied access to power, on the grounds that they are not capable of holding it as demonstrated by their linguistic behavior along with other aspects of their behavior" (p.7). Morrison and Erdrich's fiction shows a way forward as both the authors consciously adapt a linguistic style that provides alternatives to this 'linguistic discrimination' by proposing feminine stylistics and creating new vocabulary, using language in new ways and styles that has the power to express feminine desire and identity differently and feministically.

Another milestone in the field of language theories that describes the processes of language in constructing and shaping our perception of reality is George Lakoff's seminal work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The book highlights the significance of the use of metaphors in understanding the more abstract forms of reality like mental processes and emotions. Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate in this work that the knowledge of the direct physical and social experiences of the people help them shape and understand reality in terms of conceptual metaphors or cognitive metaphors that refer to understanding of one concept in terms of another concept. Conceptual metaphors are instrumental in understanding complex ideas by reducing them to simple and relatable terms and thus make abstract theories and models into simple and easy ideas. Not only have these conceptual ideas permeated our everyday communication shaping the way we perceive and express the reality around, they are also helpful in understanding the complex theoretical and philosophical concepts. Working through two main roles of conceptual domains-source domain and target domain-the conceptual metaphors illustrate the process of mapping, the mental organization of information. Lakoff and Johnson posit that the metaphors are not merely the component of language but the matter

of thought also working to conceptualize ideas by employing an abstract thought as target and a more concrete or physical idea as source.

What has come to be widely known as French Feminism and its allied term *Écriture Feminine* is generally associated with a trio of privileged psychoanalytical women writers-Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixou and Julia Kristeva-who gained prominence for their avant-gardist, anesthetized writing style and collectively came to be regarded as French Feminists during 70's and 80's . These women writers introduced an exciting, different approach towards thinking of women, their bodies, desires, their sexuality and its representation in a new language which they termed *Écriture Feminine*. This is a theoretical concept that is different from the other French and American theoretical concepts in terms of its antagonism to phallogocentrism. By emphasizing upon the discursive role of language as both the crucial tool of women's oppression as used by most of the male writers and a potential means of subverting the constructed reality, French Feminism has made women's language a leading discipline in the literary studies. The *Écriture Feminine* stylistics used by Erdrich and Morrison is also rich in the use of conceptual metaphorization of the ways the phallogocentric language has been manipulated by the patriarchy to suppress women and their writings.

## **2.6 Cixous and the Notion of *Écriture Feminine***

The most important name attached to the concept of *Écriture Feminine* or women's writing is Cixous. She is one of the most prominent French Feminist intellectual and deconstructive philosopher who pioneered the idea of *Écriture Feminine*, a form of writing different from the American and French masculine models of writing based on exclusion, dualism and expropriation. Cixous' arguments about language and its relation with sexuality, difference and identity are indispensable from this dissertation since this study maintains with Native American and Afro- American women writing that these writers have altered patriarchal models of language to effect social change.

The trend of feminine writing started after the second wave of Feminism. It was initiated in the late 1960s when female political activists raised the issue that there is a lack of reference to women in a standard male text. This encouraged women to rediscover their past roles. The feminine writings prospered particularly more in the United States and Britain in the 1970s and 80's. The term *Écriture Feminine* is translated

as women or feminine writings. The concept of *Écriture Feminine* was coined by the French Poststructuralist Feminist Cixous. She in *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976) dilated upon this concept of feminine writing. Through her essay, she re-constructed the existing concepts and theories about women in western discourses. Underpinning this difference, Elaine Showalter describes *Écriture Feminine* as “the inscription of the feminine body and female difference in language and text” (249). Cixous herself explains the paradox of the definition of the term *Écriture Feminine* and says that it is not possible to define a feminine practice of writing because this practice can not “be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system” (Medusa 883).

Cixous from the Feminist Poststructuralist position ostensibly demonstrates her opposition with the Western structuralist philosophical thought system which predominantly revolves around phallus and logo centered assumptions (phallogocentric), and deconstructs the formative social structures of the phallogocentric version of reality in order to expose the repressive apparatuses and strategies of the phallogocentric discourses. Being particularly interested in psychology and philosophy, she frequently draws upon the psychoanalytical writings of Sigmund Freud and philosophical and phenomenological writings of Martin Heidegger and yet her theoretical concepts are different from their theoretical models. Conley has rightly pointed out intersectionality of Cixous' writings with those of Lacan and Derrida. She observes “[she] reads and writes at the interstices of Lacan's theory of language-that of chain of signifiers and not of phallus- and Derrida's *diffe'rance*” (Conley 9). Her investigation of the potentially performative role of reading and writing from Feminist perspective involves anti-essentialism of Derrida's deconstruction as she explicates the implications of the concepts of phallogocentric and logocentric for feminine writing. Weedon's comments about how Cixous negotiates deconstructionist borders while articulating the relationship between language and masculinity/ sexuality of writings deserve special mention here. She affirms that masculine sexuality and masculine language are embedded in phallogocentrism and logo centricism, working out meanings through binary oppositions, for instance father/mother, head/hearth, intelligible/sensitive, logos/pathos, which derive meaning through essential binary opposition of male/female (or penis/lack of penis) which assures and continues the patriarchal order system. (Weedon 63-4).

The feminine writing (though not exclusively the writings of females) *Écriture Feminine* critically revolves around the issues of existing structures of the society which involve feminine, body and semiotics, language and sexuality. The language used by men and women is not the same. According to the societal and cultural norms, the language given to a woman to speak does not come from her own self rather the language she uses is given to her by the man. A society describes the binary of a man and a woman as reason and emotion. So the patriarchal norms and customs of any society distance them from their bodies as well as from their languages. Women raised this issue of language in their feminine writings. Women rejected ideas which suggest that a language is only a medium shaped for the purpose of a man. Women writings describe that many times a woman wants to speak out her desires born in her body but she is forcefully silenced by the patriarchal males of the society. Cixous put forward the idea of feminine writings and encouraged women to write about themselves. She encouraged them to reconstruct the world men constructed around them. Women re-configured, reconstructed and reframed the rules imposed on them by the patriarchal figures of their society and acted like a rebel by writing about their own selves.

If a woman is considered as weaker and inferior sex, this sexual difference which claims a male as stronger sex and a female as weaker sex is constructed by the patriarchal norms of the society. Cixous argues on the patriarchal claims which regard writing as the masculine economy. She argues for “marked writing” (879) and defines the distinctive features of feminine writings. Cixous describes the power of language to women and claims that feminine writings can be used in reconstructing the established binary of a patriarchal system. The language can become a powerful medium to rule for women. Through women discourses, they can represent their own experience and stance to the world. Cixous encouraged those disempowered women facing marginalization. She wants women to cut down the barrier and power structures that were asserted and imposed forcefully by men. This rejection of power structures helped them to remove the patriarchal hierarchies and logocentrism which were the major source of influence for Western discourses.

Cixous and other writers like Julia Kristeva encouraged women that they can bring change in the existing orders of western societies. These new discourses by women negate the masculine discourses and language system which describe women as a mere sign. Kristeva stands up for a position that lies within the phallogocentric system. French

Feminist Luce Irigaray and Cixous acknowledge past struggles done for women's rights. For them, the social change they want to bring in a patriarchal society can only be affected through the use of new language, a new vision or new text that would refer to the woman. So to achieve this goal, Cixous and Irigaray question the oppressive structures of society in their feminine writings. The most acclaimed idea of *Écriture Feminine* is that it particularly talks about phallogocentric discourses of men and challenges them in their writings. So the feminine writings predominantly interpret those fixed structures of Western discourses that are phallogocentric in Nature. Moreover "It is the specula(riza)tion" of woman, the marking of woman with masculine logos, which both Cixous and Irigaray call into question" (Chimeres 80). Luce Irigaray also in her essay *When Our Lips Speak Together* talks about the situation of women that how they are trapped in the Western phallogocentric discourses which misrepresent their bodies and sexuality. As Jones describes, "Irigaray takes feminine sexuality as a starting point for a feminine self-consciousness. Women's sexuality cannot be expressed or understood within existing phallogocentric discourse (250).

Men are responsible for repression and suppression of women's desires. They forcefully silenced them and deprived them of their bodily experiences. Moreover, the Western patriarchal societies consider phallus as a central idea being used in social, political and philosophical discourses. These discourses categorized as phallogocentric dominated linguistic structures and language. The concept of *Écriture Feminine* describes woman's self and subjectivity which inspire women to break the restrictive modes and explore their own identity. The feminine writings help women to recognize themselves as who they are and how their identities are constructed. Cixous' critical engagement with masculinist psychoanalytical discourses of Freud and Lacan and her commitment with deconstructing their gendered use of language led her to lay theoretical foundation of what she termed as *Écriture Feminine* that distinguishes itself from the traditional masculinist language by inscribing female body and experience in language and text. (Showalter, 179). Subscribing to poststructural mode of inquiry, *Écriture Feminine*, as theory, gives attention to the use of language in understanding and representation of the self and subjectivity. She preferred and proposed the diverse and non-traditional styles, like stream of consciousness, non-linear and cyclical, fluid and disruptive, the ones that were more emblematic of feminine language structure and that evaded the phallogocentric structures. Adopting this new poetics, the women writers

engage with differential writing practice that becomes a site of contestation with masculine writings. By accepting their 'otherness' they celebrate it in ways that help them affirm their understanding of the world and themselves in a language that is their own and that deviates from masculine tropes.

Écriture Feminine or 'writing through body' strives towards creating a language and style that enable the women to express their desires, drives and understanding in a manner that defies restrictive and repressive modes of masculine expressions. This new style is a means to escape from what Peter Berry calls "the female writer is seen as suffering the handicap of having to use a medium which is essentially a male instrument fashioned for male purpose" (126). This loosely organized writing style veering from high theory to low poetry indicates a challenge to masculinist, linear, static, disembodied representationalist writing by valorizing fluid and non-linear feminine writing which poses a threat to masculine culture and can effect a change. It rejects logically conceived and coherently organized ideas as well as realist narrative techniques in favour of fragmented, emotive, poetic, and eruptive style involving the female body and its desires. Since women have been deprived of their bodies and language, Cixous and Irigaray's model suggests that women's regaining access to their desires and bodies will explode the structures of patriarchal language and society. Cixous prevails upon women to take hold of language and write through their bodies to reconnect to their bodily desires, reconstruct their subjectivities and sexualities and bring a new revolution.

Luce Irigaray also shared this poststructural feminist thought trajectory by declaring that woman's subjectivity and sexuality can not be expressed by patriarchal linguistic structures characterized by dominating, artificially ordered, logical masculine language. The proper medium to construct female subjectivity is feminine language which disrupts patriarchal culture and thought by providing women with alternative subversive styles that express the inevitable relationship between woman's subjectivity, sexuality and language. Both Irigaray and Cixous see the possibility for women to come out of the sexual objectification they were historically subjected to by the masculine writings. They can do so by speaking and writing in a new poetics that Écriture Feminine calls for.

## 2.7 *Écriture* Feminine and the Notion of Semiotic-Symbolic Subject

An important notion of Kristeva that has been used in interpretation and analysis of selected texts is her view of subjectivity. Conflating the theory of language and subjectivity, she asserts that the interplay of these theories constructs the subject. She explains that since the subject is constantly both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system produced by that subject can be either completely semiotic or symbolic, rather it is essentially marked by and obliged to both (Kristeva *Revolution* 34). It is thus clear that Kristeva's model of 'self' talks of the subject that defies any notion of fixity and stable identity and remains fluid, evolving and heterogeneous, always moving from one point of being to another. Kristeva and Cixous share the belief that subject is heterogeneous and ever becoming

It is important to understand nevertheless that although Kristeva establishes semiotic as the "other" of language, distinct from symbolic in its Nature and function, she does not raise it to any designated theoretical model position. It is, thus, clear that semiotic is not a mode of writing or speaking exclusively limited to women. It is rather one of the two modalities of signifying process, as explicated above that constitute language and subject. According to her, semiotic can be the part of any text irrespective of the gender of its author because this is not a gender specific entity. She demonstrates there is nothing inherently distinctive or differential between the sexes and the consciousness of sexual differences emerges only with the subject's stepping into culture because of the dissimilar positions of men and women in the Symbolic order. Conceptualization of man and woman cannot be traced back to nature rather man and woman as different gendered categories are the products of discursive practices of signifying process. Her argument comes to the conclusion that women, by getting benefit from the subversive possibilities of the semiotic can write new realities and histories by disrupting the Symbolic order from within. In my analysis of the selected works of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich I have explored various ways in which the Kristevian concept of semiotic surfaces in Native and Afro- American *Écriture* Feminine.

In addition to this, Kristeva's insightful discussion of feminine sexuality which is actually her critique of Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalytic models is also central to my interpretation of Morrison's and Erdrich's characters' physical and emotional states. In the backdrop of the sexual difference between male and female genders in the language



acquisition process of infants, she sensitively explains women's difficulty with language in general and symbolic language in particular. She keenly studies its impact on the formation of women's sexuality. Her illuminating discussion of the issues of depression and feminine sexuality as depressive forces in *Black Sun*, and the deep concern she shows for her gender by attempting to construct alternative discourse of motherhood/maternal body are particularly relevant to analyzing Morrison and Erdrich.

Luce Irigaray is also one of the French feminists whose influential ideas about women writings are based upon her critique of Sigmund Freud. For Freud woman has not the basic sexual organ 'penis' which men have and the absence of this sexual organ negates their presence. Freud defines a woman by using the imagery of light/ darkness. Therefore a woman is dark and evil as Cixous also discussed this idea in her essay. Luce Irigaray argues that "in our culture, woman is outside representation: 'the feminine has consequently had to be deciphered as forbidden, in between signs, between the realized meanings, between lines'" (qtd.in Moi 132). For that reason, females are culturally and socially assigned an inferior status and are continuously demoralized by these patriarchal cultures and their phallogocentric theories. Male theorists have defined female with all the negative connotations. Male writers tend to have an oppressive attitude towards females which is a great reason for their subjugation and marginalization. Irigaray claims, "the thinking man not only projects his desire for a reproduction of himself (for his own reflection) on to woman; he is incapable of thinking outside this specular structure" (Moi 133).

Within the philosophical system and structure, female sex is described as the 'other'. These female writers are speaking on behalf of those silenced women of a patriarchal society whose abilities are being suppressed under the male desires. So the language of a woman articulates and expresses those experiences of their bodies which were devalued by the male dominant discourses. In Irigaray's opinion, the problem is that women are not allowed to speak for themselves in the patriarchal world, but the problem gets worsened when males authoritatively speak on the subject of femininity as if they have the legal right to speak for female sexuality. First section of Irigaray's book *Speculum De Lautre Femme* (Speculum Of The Other Woman) makes a critique of Freud's lectures which is described as "the discourse of a master who cloaks his desire to dominate his female subject(s) with the seductive formulations of phallogocentric theory" (Burke 291-92).

Julia Kristeva, a French philosopher, and critic also earned name by challenging the man-made language structures and focused upon the language differences. Kristeva believes that language is acutely dependent on the linguistics that how they define their subjects with different perceptions and connotations. Meanings are man-made. Males plot the negative meaning against females which become the major cause in the rise of power structures in patriarchal societies where ideologies represent women as passive and oppressed being. For Kristeva “the ideological and philosophical basis for modern linguistics are fundamentally authoritarian and oppressive” (Moi 152). She argues that one can never make an attempt to fix the meanings. They can be changed and replaced according to the given context, therefore, for her, “Language is a complex signifying process rather than monolithic system” (152). Kristeva highlights the hierarchical conclusions that were forcefully connected with the language and meanings. With her attempt to break these hierarchies, she focuses on the idea of the free play of signifier where language and meanings are opened to several interpretations. Through this, she states that it is an absurd idea to define someone as a man or a woman. She writes in this connection “to believe that one ‘is a woman’ is almost as absurd and obscurantist as to believe that ‘one is man’” (qtd. in Moi 163).

Western philosophies and discourses are built on the system of binaries. Jacques Derrida explains the binary systems in his theory of deconstruction with great detail. For him, these logocentric structures are based on the binary systems where the one side is always privileged and acts as desirable while the other side always faces marginalization. These socially constructed binaries are not realistic rather they are man-made assertions. Man and woman/male and female are also restrained in these false binaries. In the binary of men and women, men are always valorized over women. The phallus is advantaged because women lack it. Feminist writers questioned this binary and structures of logic made by men. Irigaray deconstructs the structural polarities that give priority and power to the first term and make them masters who rule and devalue the other term. Through this deconstruction, she attempts to leave all the structures and logos behind that value, the phallus. The first term also gets the privilege to hold language. As Chris Karamarae states, “English lexicon is a structure organized to glorify maleness and ignore, trivialize or derogate femaleness” (qtd. in Moi 156). The structures of binary opposition : same/other, subject/object, identity/difference are regularized to privilege male over the female in order that the power structures remain concentrated in the hands of male and

hence they lead towards the binary of male/ female. Feminists overthrow their writings to break these hierarchies made by men as Dale Spender claims that, “The English language has been literally man made and . . . it is still primarily under control” (qtd.in Moi 156). So the aim to write feminine writings is to describe the discrimination and inequality women face on the name of these false binary oppositions. As Cixous also claims about feminine writings that a feminine text is almost always more than subversive and brings about a disorder of “the masculine investments; there’s no other way” (Medusa 888).

In these patriarchal systems, a woman not only suffers but she suffers more than a man because they are wholly rejected by the systems, organizations, and institutions that practice power and knowledge. What male critics like Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan assert is that they have placed woman back according to the old concepts and treated them as inferior beings. The male was used to see woman with the lens of phallogocentric discourses. And the only way to escape these discourses is to write in one’s own language and style. The male discourses always create “[impossibility] to define a feminine practice of writing, and this impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist. But it will always surpass the discourse that regulates the phallogocentric system” (Medusa 883). Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva through their writings attempt to reject the phallogocentric structures involved in male writings. For them, *Ecriture Feminine* is the only prescription which helps them to experience their bodies and can make themselves free from the repressive structures of male-centered societies. By writings about her experiences and body, she tells the man that she does not lie where he thinks rather women claim that they are beyond their intellect and psyche and in reality exist outside the realm of their languages (Burke 296). Moreover, these writers also struggle to subvert the ideas which make and consider woman an emotional, negative, other or lack and reject the theories which define them in relation to the man. The concept of *Ecriture Feminine* also encourages other women to see the means through which they can challenge the conventional tropes of phallogocentric writing. Not only by writing the body they can change the perspective of the readers but with the new form that dares to speak against the linearity, vocabulary, plot structures that describe women on the margins, they can actualize their subjectivities.

## 2.8 Theorization of Black Women's Life Experiences in Black Feminist Thought

Afro- American Feminist, Patricia Hill Collins is a prominent Black theorist whose understanding of Afro- American Feminism I have drawn upon to broaden the spectrum of eclectic theoretical frame work and specially to incorporate colored womens' theoretical perspective on the contemporary Black women's issues regarding gender, class, race and sexuality. Although a number of Afro- American scholars and theorists such as Angela Davis, June Joarden, Audrey Lorde, bell hooks, and Adrienne Rich have significantly contributed to the Black Feminist theory and posed challenges and threats to Western Feminist position, but Collins is an eminent Afro- American Feminist scholar and theorist whose theorization of contemporary Black women's life has helped me understand the impact of dominant Western patriarchal capitalist power structures upon the Black women's life and culture. By juxtaposing the Western and Afro- American theorists' understanding of the patriarchal power structures in which women, particularly Black women, have been suppressed and silenced, I have highlighted Afro- American and Native American female writers unique articulation of Afro- centric Feminist epistemologies and knowledge claims.

Collins validates Afro- American women's identity and challenges Western stereotypical images and construction of African American women by stressing upon women to assert their subjectivities by the process of self-actualization through concrete everyday life experiences. These contrastive, self- defining, images of the Black women, according to Patricia, will both resist the dehumanizing discursive constructs of the Black women perpetrated by dominant system, and counter even reject internalized psychological oppression that Afro- American women suffer from. In her classic work *Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness and the politics of Empowerment*, she asserts the value of writing down every day lived experiences and sharing in confessional mode the innermost feelings. She writes "only the willingness to share private and sometimes painful experience can enable women to create a collective description of the world that is truly ours" (p.16). Morrison has described these painful experiences of the Black women in her narratives

## 2.9 Liberatory Potential of Black Women's Writings

bell hooks is Afro- American Feminist scholar, well known for her work *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, who has come up with the same stance stressing upon African American women to represent the reality of their life from a Feminist stand point through writing. Her emphasis upon writing as the most valuable way for Afro- American and other women of the color to represent themselves brings her Feminist stance closer to that of French Feminists Cixous and Kristeva. To deconstruct the conventional, mythologized negative images of the Black women as aunt Jemimas, Sapphires and Jezebels that still continue to circulate in the American culture, she points out that this stereotyping is the reflection of the domineering colonial outlook to keep the colonized Blacks suppressed and stresses that Black women must rewrite themselves through their own narratives. Jezebel is a negative Black stereotype to define a Black woman, a seductive, vile, irresistibly sexual Black woman who entraps (white) men into sin. Sapphire is another racial stereotype of an evil, manipulative, wicked Black bitch while aunt Jemima is a stereotype of sexless, eternally- suffering Black nurturer that still persist in society and media. It is important to note though that in her seminal work *Ain't I a Woman*, she just doesn't blame white male sexism for what she calls "imperialism of patriarchy" but also includes and refers to the Black male sexist attitudes also that existed in pre-slavery era and continues through Civil Rights Movements to the present day. Similarly, the most common stereotypes about the Native Americans are bloodthirsty savage, Noble savage and Halfbreed appearing in the Western novelists like Fenimore Cooper, Zane Grey, and Owen Wister, pulp fiction and the Beadle dime novels. These historical stereotypes about them are still deeply entrenched in the predominantly white American society causing racial discrimination. She explores the inconsistencies and discursive misrepresentations of Black women and their thoughts in white and Black male-centred discourses that misconstrue that Black women as group are more committed to ending racism than sexism. She removes misunderstandings and dispels doubts by stating that Black women are equally committed to eliminating sexism and thus stresses upon a unified movement that would cater for the concerns of Black women. Thus, getting inspiration from white Western Feminist thought, particularly closely drawing upon the tenets of French Feminism, which urge upon women to liberate themselves from all kinds of restrictive and discriminatory dominant modes of oppression by creating their own subjective narratives originating from bodily

experiences, women of color novelists problematize Western power structures which stand on the politics of abject difference.

Indigenizing Western Feminist thought, Afro-American women and other Black women writers have dehegemonized Western constructions and formation of knowledge by incorporating into Feminist theoretical tradition hitherto silenced or unheard voices of the marginalized groups, thus, inserting into the Feminist dialogue voices from outside of the codes. With the inclusion of non- white women writers' voices into the symphony of Feminism, the whole tradition and canon of Feminism have been strengthened and altered. bell hooks rightly contends that the African American women need to get out of the influence of dominant culture's modes of thinking and writing in order to speak of the horrors in their lives, their moments of pain and pleasure, and create new ways for expressing their personal experiences. In conformity to Collins', hooks' and other women of color Feminist theorists' exhortation, Afro- American and Native American women writers Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich have used innovative forms of expression in life narratives, poetry and fiction to create self-definition and self-representation.

Collins strikes a note of dissidence with the totalizing, and unitary representation of women often found in Western Feminism. In this regard she argues in *Black Feminist Thought* (1982) that theories that have been propagated as being commonly applicable to all women as group on closer scrutiny appear seriously constrained by the white, middle-class origins of their advocates. Problematizing Western Feminist traditions that privilege male/female binary over race (white/non white) and class, Afro- American Feminists such as bell hooks emphasize upon the importance of sex race and class in the social construction of femaleness and raise a question of oppression and otherness generated by race and class differences. Adding oral dimension to the western Feminism's account of its emphasis upon "writing through bodies" as proposed by French Feminists, Afro-American and Native American Feminist theorists consider speech and oral tradition as much important as writing. They attempt to eliminate the differences between spoken and written expressions and from their perspective speaking one's life becomes as crucial a way of self-definition as act of writing one's life. The inclusion of speech and orality into written practices privileged in west dominated tradition of *Ecriture Feminine* helps Afro- American Native American and other women of color artists in incorporating and disseminating their traditional and cultural heritage of oral literature in ways that parallel

the contemporary Western modes of expression. For instance these women writers are writing in styles as diverse as modernist, post-modernist, Poststructuralist, and magical realist etc.

The efforts of women writers from marginalized nations are concentrated on challenging western system of domination and suggesting the ways to addressing the power inequities. They suggest that both white and non- white male and female must not refuse to listen to each other's stories especially when these stories tell truths that are different from the others truths. The hybrid nature of the narratives of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich exemplifies the fact that time has come when white man and women must learn to listen to the stories of Others in the way that the Others (marginalized) must also learn to listen to the stories of white man and women to bring about the time of enduring peace by sharing gifts, voices, experiences and truths.

### **2.10 Initiation of Native American Women into “Speaking Subject**

The Native American women, after long years of silence and subalternity within the patriarchal structure of the predominantly white American society, have recently found their agency speaking about their genuine issues by themselves. After a traumatic history of suppression, racial discrimination, psychological dementia and internalized oppression, they have raised themselves from the dehumanized “object of discourse to speaking subject” (Donovan, p. 9) .The role of Native American Feminist theorists such as Paula Gunn Allen, a respectable figure of Native American Feminism, can hardly be exaggerated to enabling the Native American women writers and women in general to assert the uniqueness of their identity. What is extremely important for Native American women in the present times, in the opinion of Allen, as her essay “*Angry women are Building: Issues and Struggles Facing American Women Today*”, emphasizes is to confute the claims of “those who would alter our life sports, steal our tribes, colonized our cultures and our cultural expressions and [mutilate] our identities” (p.193). Reviving a powerful connection with the past tradition and culture can become a powerful source of getting out of the depressive situation prevailing within Native American women.

Paula Gunn Allen's investigation of the “roots of oppression” of the Native American women is connected to the Native people's “loss of memory” and “remember(ing)” the past can act as both resisting the dominant culture's ways and healing the old wounds (“*Who is your Mother? Red Roots of White Feminism*” (p.213-

14). What the contemporary Native Americans have forgotten: Glorious past, mythical visions of the forefathers' eco-friendly relation with nature and sanctified tradition of storytelling, still have the power to regenerate and reinvigorate the present state of the new generations of Native Americans. Past is not to be forgotten in the present because the past possess "healing power" and women were the vital part of this healing process. The Native American descent was matrilineal, as women in the traditional tribal cultural life were considered "highly valued, both respected and feared, and all social institution reflected this attitude" (p.212). Erdrich's storytelling technique combining narrative and oral traditions in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* follows this path leading to the revival of the past as well as shapes Native American Ecriture Feminine.

Of particular importance is the Native American and Afro Americans women writers'(re)appropriation of the language which "the(y) desire to reshape" because this language is "not merely alien but an expression of the repressive forces" they want to dismantle (p. 428). Women writers have done so by experimenting with and ignoring the rules and forms of standard language in their attempts to disrupting patriarchal ideologies and deconstructing patriarchal assumption of language. It is interesting to note, however, that the Native American women writers' close attention to transcribing into their texts "a new vision as they refuse to separate the literary and academic and the daily bring(ing) to the text the unpaginated experiences of the contemporary tribal reality" (Blasser 555) come very closer to French Feminists' dictum of "writing the body".

## **2.11 Western Perspective about Body**

"Ah, but the mystery of man is of the mind . . . whereas that of the woman is of the body" (Margaret Atwood, *Lady Oracle* 166).

Before taking the debate forward, it is more important to see how in the past the Western male discourses have described a female body under different theoretical frameworks. The historical representation of the female body and the Western philosophies represent her *body* as the *other* and marginal side of the center. The theorists of different fields such as anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, Feminists have theorized the idea of the female body which refers to the experiences, subjectivities, and power relationships in the societies.

*The Body and Society* by Bryan Turner published in 1984 was considered the seminal book which developed interest among others to theorize the concept of body. As



for him, the earlier discussion on the body does not develop or play significant role in theorizing this idea of the body rather it only describes the body as a biological entity and an anatomical construct. The discourses of men related to pure sciences used the idea of the body to describe the irregular behaviors but what became particularly noticeable for the Feminist writers was that the female body was always the referant of these irregular behaviors. For instance, Freud is a well-known psychologist who accounts for psychological disorder (hysteria) by using the example of a woman's body.

In the past, the discussion about the body was deeply overwhelmed by somatophobia, a Western concept, and a widely held belief system that perceives body in inferior terms as something gross and loathsome when compared to the spirit which is sublime, soul which is immortal or mind that is rational. Somatophobia or fear of the body, when studied from religious perspective, refers to the body/soul divide in which body is defined, at best, in negative and devalued connotations: irrelevant, rotten, decaying, destructive, prone to temptation while soul is treated as a noble element: perfect, elevated, immortal. The philosophical implications of the concept of somatophobia entail female/black body as irrational, defective, underdeveloped affording an excuse to the white/male, fully mature human rational beings to take control of others. The logic of the development of somatophobia leads to the concept of segregation, exclusion or control of groups of 'others' i.e women who are not men but defective, misgotten women lacking fully developed vital humanity. Somatophobia locates the in bodies and minds of the genders and thus based on this essentialist or deterministic arguments justifies patriarchy and racism not only natural but inevitable. This dissertation argues that when these 'others' in present case Red and Black women writers challenge and dismantle gender constraints by demonstrating their intellectual vigour, challenging all kinds of authority and speaking up in their own sentence, they are labeled by the dominant groups as aggressive, irrational, non-conformists, stridents and unruly. But the discursive articulations of women and nature by Morrison and Erdrich illustrate that their artistic works assertively negate the negative ideas about body by presenting bodies as central feature of much of their art and making their characters talk through their bodies.

Different writers put forward their reasons which countered the concept of somatophobia. They brought back the idea of the body connecting it with Western social, philosophical and political realms. This change in observation, on one hand, is regarded as the change

in cultural demography of Western societies while on the other it is described as the theoretical restoration for others (Davis 1; Hamilakis 2). The main reason due to which theorists and other writers returned to body in the humanities and social sciences is because of Turner's concept of "somatic society" (6). According to this vital concept, the idea of the body helps to express the key matters such as politics and ethics in the Western society (Fraser and Greco 2). As a result, these ideas facilitated the new post-industrial society of the West and galvanized the right to indulge in the bodily pleasures and desires. Moreover, it also sees body as a flexible entity. This flexibility brings a productive outcome through which a person can change or modulate body according to his own desires (Hamilakis 2-5). At this juncture, the body became a significant symbol for individuals which helped them to express their individuality. It is "An ideology of personal consumption that presents individuals free to do their own thing, to construct their own little worlds in the private sphere 'however Lilliputian'" (qtd.in Featherstone 21). Later Anthony Giddens theorized the concept of post modernity and for him gender and sexuality generate different questions which results in making individual's sexuality a medium of exploration and research. These explorations further urged an individual to find his/her separate identity/self and discard the notion of so called naturally created fixed identities.

The post-1980's era is observed as the time when critics started taking the body in material term and politicized it by several liberation movements most prominently Feminism, Post-colonialism and civil rights movements. Through these liberation movements, different individuals such as gay, lesbian, Black or white people focused on the role a body plays in their lives which resultantly helps them in creating their subjectivities, social and political status and in establishing their power relations. Sander Gillman sheds light on the concept of how particularly Black female body is symbolized as the body having abnormal sexuality and thus labeled as 'the other' (the idea taken from the postcolonial theory). Sarah Bartmann known as Hottentot Venus presented herself as an example of a female Black body which is always signified as a model of sexuality filled with lustful desires (hooks 122,132). And this practice of labeling a female body is still haunting the postmodern cultural discourses. Hence the Feminist liberation movements and Feminist critics articulated that how women were and are identified in patriarchal societies and how they used this identification to subjugate her.

Ontologically the body is positioned as “reference point in a world of flux and the epitome of that same flux” (Frank 40).

Today the body and its personified subjectivities enjoy a privileged position which was not honored before. In fact, the Western philosophies placed body on margins and considered a female body as a demonized other. The west has reasoned the female body with the negativity as Elizabeth Grosz states that the West has been facing “crisis of reason” (25, 27). Moreover, Grosz is of the opinion that the Western philosophies and theories have engaged the concept of the body with the issues concerned with metonymy which divides the body into various components such as identity, subjectivity, self. Moreover, she describes that the Western philosophers reluctantly consider that a body plays a significant role in the invention of knowledge or in formulating the subject's identity. However, the other traditional philosophers claim that the quest for knowledge is completely based on a mind which observes the objective truths of the world. From traditionalists perspective, “Not only is the Body deemed irrelevant in the production of knowledge, it is seen as potentially subversive” (Currie and Raoul 122). But famous theorist like Michael Foucault and Karl Marx negate this idea by claiming that the knowledge is political affair and is bound and influenced by different subjectivities interconnected with sex and most importantly, race or class.

Likewise, other critics like Jacques Derrida and Nancy Jay argue about the philosophical models of Western societies that are based on logocentric approach. Derrida talks about the binary opposition in this regards as for him these binaries not only place opposites to one another but also create hierarchies where one side is privileged over the other and resultantly, this non-privileged side is labeled as inferior, incomplete and marginalized. The western traditions and philosophical structures privilege permanence over change, order over chaos, rationality over emotionality and above all mind over body. So the body is given a secondary position whereas the mind is referred to as pure, that is able to grasp the eternal and worldly realities and the moral truths. Traditionally the body is theorized as nature, materiality, emotionality, imminence and prehistoric life. The body in the Western perspective is presented as ahistorical, acultural, and a fixed biological object and it is interconnected with the material world.

Christianity also played an important role in defining the concept of body. It is a significant source of Western knowledge which divides it in the binary of flesh versus spirit. What they believe is that the body creates hindrance for an individual to attain

spirituality. They strongly believe that the body experiencing emotions and instincts urge a human to sin and this causes the reason for destruction, so the Christian theologians conceived the body in terms of a snare that lured the everlasting human “soul into the material world of the flesh” making one disregard the spiritual world of “eternity and salvation” (Salam11). Therefore the Christian discourses and their sermons described the body as incompatible. These ideas of Christianity drove the body towards sheer marginality. The notable stoic thinker, Epictetus claims that with the birth of a human, two fundamental constitutive elements of body and soul are fused together: one is drawn from the animal world that is the flesh, while “the other comes from God, namely the soul” (Schumaker102). At that time people who belonged to Christianity firmly believed that the distance from God can lead them towards the world of materiality that is filled with bodily emotions, desires, and instincts and it would be the reason of fall from the grace. So the body with its desires and demands becomes a demonized version of a body. Therefore to control these desires a person needs to be rational in his/her affairs and this rationality is ascribed to mind that helps a man to attain this harmony on earth. Furthermore, Francis Bacon and René Descartes introduced new philosophical discourses and debates and claimed that a person can overtake the material world through his rational thoughts and it can help him to play a role of a conqueror. Moreover, this will help him to achieve knowledge and progress in society. Privileging mind over body, Descartes postulated that mind has its independent existence outside the physical need and individual experience. He posited that “through the experience of reason, the thinker could acquire a view of the world which transcends its point of origin” (Currie and Raoul 122), therefore for Descartes, a progressive society is built on the rational and scientific thinking of an individual.

René Descartes’ ideas were a clear rejection of the body as he claims that it causes hindrance to modern Western metaphysics. In addition to this Cartesian formulation of binary opposites, Jacques Derrida also pointed out the Western formulations of knowledge based on dualistic representations of phenomenon where one side is privileged over the other. As for him, the quest for truth and knowledge is privileged over the body and nature, so he associates the mind with the rationality principle and abstract truth. In consequence of this binary opposition developed by philosopher Descartes, the mind becomes the part of philosophical and metaphysical discourses while the body becomes the part of biological and natural sciences discourses.

Later Thomas Hobbes, an English philosopher, through his social theory stated in *Leviathan* (1650) that “allowing individuals to live their lives according to their desires, instincts, and passions or in a “state of Nature” would create discord and anarchy at all levels” (qtd.in Salam15). So to get away from the destruction the individuals must submit their natural dispositions which will help the civil society to be ruled by rationality. The prominent philosopher Sigmund Freud in his book *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), states that the subordination of the natural disposition of people will give birth to human civilization and without this treatment, it is an impossible task to work on (qtd.in Fraser and Greco10). Hence the binary of mind and body is further divided and articulated as an antagonism between culture and nature. This antagonism describes that within the political and social domain the body of an individual plays a role of an anti-social desire (Turner 38). Thus an important component of rationality is so constructed as to provide security for the political system because, it was so believed that, without the rationality the fabrics of society will be destroyed. So since 19th century, the notion of body has been attacked and criticized by various critics as they questioned the creation of knowledge and subjectivities.

Sigmund Freud raises many questions in this regard in his theories related to the psychosexual developments of the character and the role unconscious plays in impacting the activities and behaviors of human beings and thus bring this issue to the forefront. Two prominent political economists whose writings politicized the body are Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. These writers focused on the exploitation of worker bodies acting as slaves in bourgeois capitalist societies. Moreover, Norbert Elias, a German sociologist in his sociological theories based on social figuration shed light on the idea of how bodies are socially controlled as for him, the revolution in the social and political structures of Renaissance society caused the formation of a subtle means that secretly manipulated and controlled the body. Thus the system creates different ethical values that are socially defined to the individual of a society who practices these ideological values and regards them as natural and normative. So this self-reflexive system molds the undesirable actions of the human body.

Michael Foucault’s theories also help to understand and theorize the notion of bodies. He introduced the concept of bio-power in his theories according to which there is the direct association of an individual’s body with the mechanism of power. For him, the manners by which bodies are dealt with, controlled and manipulated can be perused

as reflective of how control is sorted out and used inside a specific social set-up. These theorists highlighted how the social position and status of an individual living within a society is affected by the qualities present in their bodies as for Foucault as well as Bourdieu the constitution of the society- in Foucault's case its power relations, in Bourdieu's its class relations- "is literally inscribed upon and reflected by individual bodies" (Malacrida and Low 3). So these different ideas of critics and theorists formulated and defined the different perspective of body in the light of their theories. Summing up discussion it is stated that since 1980s the powerful critiques and theories have come to the forefront as different Feminist writers and critics worked on the problematic of body. The Feminist writers have posited that a body is a powerful active agent which helps an individual in the creation of his/her subjectivity. This discussion leads us to further delve into the theorization of female body in Western Feminist Perspective.

## **2.12 Western Feminist Perspective about Woman's Body**

The theories and traditional definition(s) constructed by different theorists about body are questioned by Feminist groups. As for them, the binary the theorists constructed between mind and body is somehow a problematic. Feminist writers and critics also see it as another kind of female oppression. What Feminists have argued is that the theory of somatophobia is a description of ontological and epistemological models of Western societies which have dualistic nature. These models create serious problems and ramifications for the woman living in these western societies. Descartes' teachings divide the mind and body in the form of a binary opposite which furthermore connects it with the other epistemological and ontological connotations and divides it into different categories. Predominantly the binary of mind over body is further classified as male over female, culture over nature. So as a result, these binaries define men in terms of mind because they have rational abilities while in contrast to men women are confined to their bodies and possess no such rational abilities as men do. Sara Suleri, a Pakistani diaspora female writer, in her memoir *Meatless Days* very clearly states this idea, "Men live in homes, and women live in bodies" (159). The male gender was constructed the intellectual and superior being of Western society. They were rewarded with the legacy of transcendence and given the status of God. While on the other hand women were demoralized and described as an inferior being of the Western societies. Male writers and critics describe a woman by claiming that they are intellectually less in comparison

to the men and their bodies only possess the ability to become pregnant, to give birth to the children, and have periods that is defined as something disorder located in women. Therefore, “Women are somehow more biological, more corporeal and more natural than men” (Grosz14).

So these inabilities in a woman make her an individual having a disruptive and a volatile body. As a result, a man thinks that he has a complete authority and control over a woman's body which is badly in need of constant surveillance by the male gender while males “appear to possess a body but not be a body” (Greco and Fraser 16). Thus a man’s body consists of organs, blood, skin, and bones. Their bodies are material and non consequential in their own way. Hence the physiological process in a man or a woman decides who would be a ruler. The physiological process in a man allows him to be rational and exercise authority in Western society. While on the other women are deprived of all these practices in such a way that rules constructed by men do not allow her to be a rational and authoritative being of a society. Woman's body is defined through her reproductive systems and historically too they are described in term of their physiological classifications. These binaries introduced by male theorists engendered gender discrimination and also resuled in patriarchy. Western societies are based on a patriarchal system which objectifies a woman in terms of their bodies. As Elizabeth Grosz in her book *Volatile Bodies* states that patriarchal discourses and social structures have rationalized male domination and subordination of female body by describing female body in terms of fragility, unreliability, and psychological and biological inferiority. Further: “Women have been objectified and alienated as social subjects partly through the denigration and containment of the female body . . .” (xiv).

Women play a role of forbearers and they are labeled as nurturer s by the western patriarchal societies on the basis of their body functioning. These societies which are based on androcentric philosophies connect the female body with the material and biological world. These male-centered philosophies reject the theory of constructivism which states that an individual acquires knowledge through their experiences. Since the status of a woman is dependent on different social, cultural, ethical, aesthetical and theoretical principles, they position women on the margins and bind them in the limitations, functionalities, meagerness, and fragilities of their bodies which are imposed on them by the western patriarchal societies with the help of androcentric discourses. The binary of mind over body then defines the binary of men over women hierarchy. So this

structure further creates a whole set of associative binary oppositions. As a result, it denotes the intrinsic qualities and behaviors that both a man and a woman possess. The binaries construct men as active, prudent and serious human beings of society while women are characterized as passive, emotional, weak impulsive, foolish and irrational beings of society. Women are labeled with all the negative connotations. Furthermore, according to the logocentrism, traditional knowledge which talks about the traditional Western science and philosophies (the term is coined by Ludwig Klages) associates woman predominantly with the negative, evil, emotional and vulnerable individual. Hence this phallogocentric structure which privileges the masculine phallus creates a social system which places man at the center. Men are defined as the powerful superior beings of this social system; they own power in every perspective. They are a dominant subject of Western society, whereas women are defined as an object. They face marginalization in every field of life whether it is a social, political or economical. Moreover, they are relegated as inferior or negative beings in the religious discourses as well. Therefore different critics and theorists regard the ideas of Descartes, who first created the binary of mind and body, as the beginning of “cultural patriarchy” in the West (Turner<sup>38</sup>). So the Cartesian philosophy’s devaluing a women’s body draws our attention to the time of Greco-Roman philosophical traditions which were later inherited by the West. West not only inherited their philosophies and culture but also inherited their religious discourses as well as the medicalization process of a human body through which one can medically solve the problem of a human body. The philosophers like Aristotle also described a woman with negative connotations and used disapproving epithets to define a woman; he considered woman a ‘misbegotten man’, ‘natural monstrosity’ and an ‘impotent male’. (Sydie 3; Synott 42-45).

Thus Aristotle’s notions vibrantly speak about dualism which is also discussed by other Greek philosophers such as Anaximander, Pythagoras, and Parmenides. They discussed the dualistic Nature of the universe in their discourses. But Aristotle specifically targeted women in this regard. He talks about the concept of dualism in a woman’s body as well as their roles in society. Aristotle’s theory till has now influenced many writers, philosophers and Christian theologians in shaping their thoughts and ideas. Moreover, Aristotle in the field of economics formed a social symbolism which is acclaimed as a powerful system. According to this system, the gender of male is associated with abilities of strength and courage so they attain an active life however



women again is presented as a weak nurturer of a society so they lack the activeness in their bodies due to which they are forced to live inside the house and inside their bodies as well. Later a Greek philosopher Aelius Galenus or Claudius Galenus is popularly known to the world as Galen of Pergamon shares similar views about male and female. As for Galenus, the body of a male presents a standard while the body of a woman is described as a faulty weak body which lacks many of the qualities that a man possesses. Moreover, in addition to this, he talks about the intellectual inferiority of a woman by connecting it with the physical lack in a woman's body. For him, the lack in a woman's body further leads towards the intellectual lack so a woman is not only weak physically but also intellectually: contrasted with the inferiority of slaves, who were believed to be deficient in judgment because of their slave status, "or of male children, who lacked it because of their age, female inferiority was inherent" (qtd.in Le Gates 19). What Galenus believes about the reason of lack in women is the cold and wet humours in her body which disallow blood's flow from reaching the important component of an individual's body, brain. So this becomes a cause of women's intellectual inferiority.

This physiological inferiority in a women's body later became a part of ideology in a Western patriarchal society. These ideologies by men are built to hunt women constantly. Greco-Roman critics and philosophers claimed the rational frailty in women and later this rational frailty was transformed into moral deficiency by religious scholars of the medieval age. Saint Augustine (fifth century BC) and Thomas Aquinas (thirteenth century BC) are prominent philosophers in this regard who through their religious discourses popularized this idea of moral deficiency. These scholars told the story of Adam and Eve in their defense to show people that a woman inherently possesses moral deficiency. They repeatedly talk about the story of Adam who was tempted by his wife Eve and committed the original sin, grounded in the account written in Genesis 2. This story is regularly told among worshippers in the church in order to prove it as a testimony that females are wrongdoers because they transgressed the divine law. They are claimed as seductresses, morally weak gender, femme fatale and temptress of flesh. As a German catholic Albertus Magnus famously known as Saint Albert the Great professed that a woman is morally corrupt, inherently frail, possess imperfect Nature, and her perverted feelings tempt man "towards evil, just as reason impels man towards all good" (qtd.in Ranke-Heinemann 96).

Another prominent philosopher Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic priest talks about the male superiority and justifies it by stating that man, not woman, is the reflection of the image of God because man is the alpha and omega of woman “as God is the beginning and end of every creature” (qtd.in Synott46). So for the priests, preachers, and scholars a man acts as a God, he has the power to rule over the female and a woman is obliged to obey him with all the allegiance. The Christian priests and scholars appear to be extreme misogynistic through their statements. Thomas Aquinas demonstrates strong dislike for women for their immoral Nature, and defines their nature in wicked and animalistic terms. In the middle Ages women were negatively constructed and were constantly labeled as being morally weak gender with a lustful body and an individual who is susceptible to evil doings. These labels later proved in the middle age that women were involved in the process of witchcraft and a campaign of witch-hunt was initiated against them. Between 15<sup>th</sup> and 18 century, around eight million women were gathered and executed on the charges of being infidels and non-believers. Henceforth they were believed as “naturally more impressionable and more ready to receive the influence of a disembodied spirit . . . [being] feebler in mind and body.” (Currie and Raoul 3).

The authorized discourses were written from the earliest Greek and Roman time till the Victorian age in which the body of a female is considered as a man’s property. As according to the Babylonian law, if a woman becomes a victim of rape, husband or a father demands compensation on their loss from a rapist which is mandatory for him to pay to the owner of a woman (as a woman is their property) whereas there is no compensation given to the woman on the loss of her honor. Moreover, international sites and laws were passed against woman which state that as woman is claimed a weak gender and is not able to protect herself, so she needs protection by her guardian or benefactor and should not be left alone in any case. In eighteenth century, in England women were labeled as mere properties and had no legal right to own any property from her father or her husband. Moreover, her owner (a man) had a right to beat her and control and discipline her sexual desires. While a woman, in any case, is forbidden to question man’s authority and is supposed to obey him (Weitz 4).

Later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Darwin put forth his theories which were translated as social Darwinism by his believers. These theories explain women’s body scientifically as well as medically. As for Darwin men engage with other men in society while women are deprived of this process so again men attain the state of perfection in

society whereas “women remain subject to their emotions, and passions: nurturing, altruistic and child-like, but with little sense of either justice or morality” (qtd.in LeGates 22). She is unable to compete with men as they are the Supreme Being and women are the naturally inferior beings of society. Darwin states the foremost reason why women's bodies are constantly a victim of a man's misogynistic attitude: they are traditionally debarred from the practice of knowledge. Moreover, she was restrained from possessing knowledge because it was believed she consumes a lot of energy during the time of reproduction which causes mental and physical weakness and therefore she was supposed to be left with no more energy which she can consume for her physical or mental growth.

Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and John Stuart Mills' *The Subjection of Women* (1869) are the popular, ground-breaking works of these writers who initiated the campaign and struggle for women's liberation. It was a kind of formal struggle females started against male oppression. A suffrage movement began in 1848 in New York which advocated women's right to vote. The body possibly moved towards becoming politicized when the fight started between the state and female activists over women's right for the reproduction. These female activists raised their voices upon many major issues and causes of oppression. They rejected the past theories of male misogynist critics who claimed that a woman's body is legal property of a man. For these female activists, the concept of political liberation demands one's control over his/her body, therefore they demanded right of the ownership of the body. As for female activists, a woman should have the right to control her body in terms of every matter which involves sexual desires, birth, her reproductive system, abortion, and fertility (Davis 4).

Later in 1960s and 70's, different Feminists such as Angela Davis, Shulamith Firestone, Andrea Dworkin, Germaine Greer, Marly Daly, Anne Koedat, Barbara Omolade, and Adrienne Rich claimed that the difference created between a man's and woman's body is a social construction. They took the metaphor of “body politics” that male critics used in their discourses and overturned their theories by claiming that “the body itself [is] a politically inscribed entity” and its physiology and morphology is produced by histories and practices that entail containment and control (Bordo179).

These Feminists shed new light on the previously held ideas of theorists who perceived the body particularly the female body and classified it as a static, ahistorical,

biological entity which is placed against the politics and culture of a society. They described that a body is formed and shaped culturally and socially in a specific time and place. They inverted the theories which today are described and referred to as the “Politics of the Body” (Gatens 50-55). The term ‘Politics of the Body’ illustrates the notion that a body is based on a dynamic construction which is interconnected by the socio-economic, religious and political forces within a society. The awareness that a body is a social and cultural construction helped Feminists to raise their voice about this matter in a resounding way. They realized that a female body is bound by different institutions, such a medical, religious, social and political which imprison a woman’s body in different roles and oppress her bodily desires. Simon de Beauvoir, an existentialist philosopher and a political activist, convincingly conceptualized the difference between sex and gender. As for De Beauvoir, a body is assumed as a historical construction and the males for their own benefit have categorized different social and cultural roles among males and females. Bodies of human beings are constructed asymmetrically and are assigned the false biological and natural roles which they are performing in the respective societies. (qtd.in Currie and Raoul 2).

So the contemporary theories of the west theorize ‘the body’ into three different classifications which are based on the epistemology of a body. These categories are the egalitarian perception, the essentialist image, and the Postmodern as well as Poststructuralist constructions. The first two categories define the issue of the sexual difference between a man and a woman which is transcribed as same vs different. What women observed was that they were taken far away from their own bodies. They are divided into the biological genders and because of their body’s materiality, they are forced and prohibited from eminence and are enforced to live in inferiority complex. The Feminist philosopher and critics who participated in the second wave of Feminism which was initiated in the United States in the early 1960s vibrantly discussed the intellectual qualities and mental state of a man and a woman and rejected the binary of mind/body. Moreover, they also emphasized on the equality of women in term of their mental and intellectual capabilities. Contrary to male critics and philosophers who described the reproductive ability of a woman by connecting it with negative connotations, women prided on this ability of theirs and hence “Procreation was seen as a gift of nature to be fiercely guarded against the incursions of biotechnology and other similar medical advancements” (Price and Shildrick4). And then around 1980s and 90s the notion of the

female body was given a central position in different Feminist discourses. In this connection, an American philosopher and a gender theorist Judith Butler earned name with her ground-breaking publications such as *Feminism and The Subversion of Identity* (1990), *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993), and *ExcitableSpeech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997). These works raised awareness about the bodies as discursive constructions, therefore “the deployments of the body through acts and gestures, especially in terms of gendered sexuality, are, through a process of reiteration, productive of a discursive identity that is both open and constrained” (Price and Shildrick 9). So for them, the conceptual formation body is based on the discursive strategies which bound women in different natural, social, religious and institutional norms in the respective time and milieu. Michael Foucault and Judith Butler have similarity in their ideas; they understand that a discourse is the constitutional part of the reality. Butler neither rejects the physicality of a body nor does she talk about the materiality, though she states in her book *Bodies that Matter* that, “There is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body” (Butler 10). Likewise, Black Feminist writers and critics also talk about their issues of marginalization and oppression. As for them, Black women face double marginalization, firstly on being born as a woman and secondly because they are dark in their complexions. In this regard, many Black Feminists such as bell hooks, Linda Martin Alcoff, Sander Gilman, Robert Gooding-William, Toni Morrison and Collins participated in the Feminist campaigns. These Black Feminist writers criticized the past masculine theories about the notion of women’s body and in addition to these they also criticized privileging the white body used as an example within the Western Feminist discourse.

Furthermore, in the recent years, Feminist critics and philosophers have started utilizing the discursive strategies in the light of socio-cultural perspective which interlock the race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality within a specific historical era. Within evolving Poststructural Feminist discourse therefore the emphasis has been upon the formulation of a discourse that would incorporate accounts of sexual, racial and class differences within “the specific contextual materiality of the body” (Price and Shildrick 5).

The modern Feminist theories are using new perspective to study and analyze the body in the West. They developed the new theoretical approaches which divide body into two categories as ‘inscriptive surface’ and ‘the lived body’. The first category is derived from the theoretical discourses of Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Michael Foucault,

and Gilles Deleuze. Later the works of these authors have been modified and re-established by other Feminist writers like Susan Bordo, Moira Gatens, and Elizabeth Grosz. They have introduced the idea of body in the other fields of Western humanities such as cultural study, ethics, philosophies, and art. With the help of the first approach which deals with the inscriptive surface of the body, Feminists observe body bound into different social, cultural, religious and political forces that were forcefully inscribed on a woman's body to construct different subjectivities whereas the second approach which is 'the lived body', discusses the notion of body in relation to the field of psychology and phenomenology. In this regard, the most prominent name one listens is of Judith Butler who argues that the sex, body, and gender are in reality a product of cultural artifacts. Contemporary Feminist philosopher, Rosi Braidotti describes a more detailed definition of body. According to her, body, the fundamental site of debate in the Feminist frameworks, "is not a natural thing, on the contrary, it is a culturally coded socialized entity." (Rosi Braidotti 238) that is primarily the discursive realm of language that functions as the essential symbolic system of a culture.

Hence the idea of gender and sex is not constructed by an individual rather it is dependent on the subjective experiences of an individual. The lived body approach further transforms and advances the idea of performativity hence a gender or sex is not a product of performance by an individual rather because of the fear of society and culture, the individuals are forced to act or produce performances which are socially and culturally acceptable for an individual. Judith Butler explains that the notion of performativity can be understood within the process of iterability which implies regularized and constricted reiteration of norms, though a subject doesn't perform this repetition rather this repetition in fact "enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject" (Butler 95). Therefore, the second approach discusses the lived experiences a body endures. In the light of the above mentioned arguments of different theorists, critics and philosophers, this study affirms that the body is a deliberate physical structure of bones, nerves, skin, tissue, veins and organs having the shape and space of the mind which is interpreted and inscribed by the discursive strategies and social orders.

## **2.13 Discursive Relationship between Native and Afro- American Women and nature: A Case of Ecofeminism**

Erdrich and Toni Morrison in their profoundly environmental narratives, written in characteristically feminine sentence, I have critically highlighted in this section a brief history of the ecocritical and Ecofeminist theoretical frameworks. This section will concentrate upon how the Native American and Afro- American women writers have focussed upon the relations between human beings and nature revealing how the environmental issues have had been conceptualized to show its connection with and effect upon Black women. This argument justifies the multiple theories used as a theoretical framework and contextualizes the treatment of environmental themes in Black Ecriture Feminine and insists upon the need of espousing environmental ethics in reshaping nature and female identities and subjectivities. Before exploring the treatment of the ecocritical and Ecofeminist themes by Erdrich demonstrating the interconnection between the domination of nature and the Black women through the analysis of the richly Ecofeminist depictions of the conflation of nature and women in Afro- American and Native American women writing, this section shows the strong historical and cultural relations between the Black women and nature - which the mainstream Euro- American phallogocentric literary traditions described in negative terms - and elucidates the connectivity between Black women's struggle for survival and the preservation of nature. The following pages will critically review the historically grounded development of the theoretical evolution of ecocriticism and Ecofeminism and its predominantly white assumptions.

### **2.13.1 Ecofeminism**

As this study deals with the discursive refashioning of the images of Afro- American and Native American women and their relation with the environment, the analysis of the selected female authored texts inevitably entails the ecocritical and Ecofeminist perspectives. Given the environmental, ecological and Ecriture Feminist interface of the study, it is important to mark differentiation between these nuances of Feminism. If Feminism, at the simplest and basic level, refers to a women's movement that strives to achieve equality of all sorts of rights for women in a society, as Reddock succinctly defines it "the awareness of oppression, exploitation and/or subordination of women within a society and the conscious action to change and transform this situation"

the ecocriticism and Ecofeminism, according to Estock (2001) are not contradictory or antagonistic discourses rather they signify complementary approaches .

Cheryll Glotfelty, the pioneer of ecocritical studies, on the other hand, splits the prefixes 'eco' and 'enviro' to elucidate the anthropocentric and geocentric approaches in which the former implies the dualistic Nature of relation between humans and non-humans while the latter refers to interdependent and integrated communal system. Glotfelty's contradistinction between eco and enviro is complemented by the biocentric ecofeminist notions that consider man a part not the whole or the centre of the overall scheme of the universe, therefore any attempt to overcome the growing menace of environmental crisis would imply relinquishing the status of anthropocentrism and regarding the rights of the non-human constituents of Nature. Feminism directs its target towards the presupposed patriarchal structures and institutions of the society, while Ecofeminism starts with the assumption that patriarchy through its institutionalized oppressive power structures dominates women and nature in a bid to perpetuate its hegemonic control over anything that is not masculine.

Foregrounding the interconnection between the closeness and domination of nature and women, this study builds on its thesis via the Ecofeminist analysis of the Black and indigenous feminine narratives that the "same habitual structures of thought, feeling and action that devalue and harm women, also harm nature" ( Curry 2006: 95) and thus demonstrates that Ecofeminism, unlike western patriarchal binarism, doesn't (de)value one entity at the expense of the other, instead " show[s]the connection between all forms of domination including the domination of non-human nature" (King 1983: 142).It is thus clear that ecofeminism is not antagonistic to or entirely different from ecocriticism rather it is the variant and very useful organ of ecocriticism that theorizes the "domination of women and the domination of the natural environment" ( Warren cited in Estock 2005)

The study is mainly conducted to understand the behaviors which comprehend how females have contributed to the emerging field of ecocriticism and Ecofeminism by playing the roles of environmental activists in patriarchal societies. By their writings, discourses, concerns and actions, these women took part in the environmental movement which resulted in motivating them to solve environmental problems. These women activists through these environmental movements talked about their unease and listed them in their discourses where they demand collective identity. Moreover, they



celebrated the natural environment in their feminine writings and defended the woman-nature relationship by discursively reconfiguring the environmentalist identities of the Black women. Convinced that anthropocentric patriarchy in different forms was responsible for the despoliation of the ecosphere and the resultant chaotic relations of humanity with nature, they took several steps to stop environmental destruction by the males. These environmentally inspired women raised their voices against neo-liberal economic policies and showed deep concern with environmentalism. So through these movements, they started fighting for their legal right to live in environmental space. They demanded a utopian idea by starting a struggle against environmental subjugation making a plea for a land where they can live with the natural resources, where there is no hierarchy between a human and an animal. What they seek is to enhance their relationship with the natural surroundings where they can care for nature and nature can grow to its fullest spectrum by retaining power and mystery without any fear of technology's incursion, anti-environment economic forces and most importantly oppression and exploitation by the male gender. Susan Prentice discusses that Ecofeminism believes in interconnectedness of all forms of life and assumes "an essential human nature that transcends culture and socialization." (qtd. in Merchant 193).

Women proclaim that their relationship with nature is strong enough in comparison to men who harm natural resources. They state that this is so because they are completely dependent on nature which helps them to understand and realize the importance of water and soil in their lives. Furthermore, the knowledge they have about Nature keeps on passing from one generation to another. According to many Feminist critics and writers, a woman plays a central role in the theory of ecology which associates women with nature. As in urban spaces, women are described as the food suppliers and act as nurturers for their families. The responsibility of being a nurturer for their families develops a deep connection between women and nature which results in urging them to resist the male actions which spoil nature in the form of cutting down of trees for their benefits such as industrialization, constructing of roads, dams, etc. women resist these actions of men because both nature and the woman are a source of ensuring life and continuity of the next generation. But their contribution in this regard has, so far, largely gone unnoticed and is neglected by the patriarchal systems of a society, therefore, this study, taking into consideration the meritorious ecocritical/Ecofeminist works of Native American and Afro- American women novelists, seeks to expand the critical appreciation

of Black women writers within the theoretical domain of ecocritical *Ecriture Feminism*. Mellor by referring to Simon de Beauvoir states that men attempt to alienate women and nature as the other but, “we, as women, know the unsteady feelings of men towards nature” (51).

As the quote clearly suggests the inspiration behind the emergence of Ecofeminism was the realization on the part of women that man abuses both nature and woman considering the both as inferior and petty in relation to man, therefore, through political and ecocritical activation, they seek to defend and save both nature and woman from the clutches of unjustified suppression of patriarchy. Moreover, Ecofeminist philosophy attempts to highlight the mutual characteristics of woman and nature such as giving birth which is understood as both a human and non-human phenomenon. However, despite this regenerative power of woman and nature, both have been constructed and characterized as inferior, conquered, subordinated entities by patriarchal philosophical and power structures. Karen Warren (2016), underscoring the role of Ecofeminism in deconstructing these discriminatory dualities of Western phallogocentric thought system, describes the basis of Ecofeminist philosophy by claiming that women are pejoratively associated with physical realm and nature, “while men are identified with the ‘human’ and mental realm.” (123). Now this systematic identification of woman with nature or physicality and of man with human and mental or intellectual becomes the justification of the superiority of man over woman and hence the logic behind subordination of woman.

As Ecofeminism challenges this inequitable treatment of nature and woman by any system based upon unjustified human domination (Warren 2000: 2), this study seeks to make important connections across theoretical and creative disciplines while analyzing the selected texts of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich. Seeing the starting point that Ecofeminist analysis of Red and Black women writers from *Ecriture Feminist* perspective will, apart from broadening the frontiers of ecocritical/Ecofeminist studies to the Black women writers, help understand and resolve the crucial environmental problems facing the humanity, it is reasonable to think that females feel themselves close to nature. Since every living thing in nature recreates like the female’s fertility and non-human reproductive system, therefore, women in the human world can be said to be increasingly reasonable and rational towards non-human instinct. Ecofeminism being an eclectic and evolving set of ecocritical practices which posit alternate ways of reading

literary and cultural artifacts by challenging inherited and traditional thinking in studying literature and culture attempts to explore the various dimensions of the interconnection between woman and nature as they are represented in literary and cultural texts. If men disregard females' associations with nature and carry on as per necessities of financial structures and do not prevent themselves from harming nature, the study of the indigenous and Black female authors from ecocritical and Ecofeminist perspectives “promote the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to literature that considers the study of the relationship between human beings and the natural world” (Glotfelty, 1996: xviii). Even though men endeavor to isolate women from nature and enmesh them in man-made gender roles, women have resilient association with nature. Writer Susan Griffin in her book, *Woman and nature*, debates that “Patriarchal man in craze of controlling everything human and non-human dominates woman before woman controls him...” (Griffin 87).

Women writers and theorists describe the Ecofeminist point of view that, on one hand, helps readers to understand the deep relationship of women with nature and , on the other hand, promote “new nature writing, traditional and innovative scholarly approaches to environmental literature, and interdisciplinary environmental research” (Glotfelty, 1996: xviii) In a male dominant society, women are assigned the role of a domestic worker which is believed as an intrinsic and natural part of their gender and most of the household duties related to nature such as taking care of animals, giving birth to children and nurturing the earth come to their way as a responsibility which strengthen their relationship with nature, soil, water, animals as well as to their own selves. Women by cultivating set of environment ethical values have made their relationship stronger with nature through their Ecofeminist discourses as well as by initiating environmental movements which describe an economic, social and domestic realm of a women's life that is closer to nature. A radical Feminist philosopher Susan Griffin (2015) describes different layers of the intimate relationship between women and nature:

“We are the bird's eggs. Bird's eggs, flowers, butterflies, rabbits, cows, sheep; we are caterpillars; we are leaves of ivy and sprigs of wallflower. We are women. We rise from the wave. We are gazelle and doe, elephant and whale, lilies and roses and peach, we are air, we are flame, we are oyster and pearl, we are girls. We are woman and nature. And he says he cannot hear us speak. But we hear” (76).

Ecofeminists and social activists, intensely concerned about female and environmental liberty since both are deeply connected, took several steps so that the female gender could be treated in a better way in a society where there were male domination and supremacy. They talked about oppression and discrimination women faced in the patriarchal society in great detail in their theories and philosophies. bell hooks, a famous American philosopher and social activist, while explaining the term Feminism, makes an oblique reference to all forms of oppression that women are subjected to and hence urges upon women to theorize new forms and systems of liberation to overthrow the patriarchal system of domination in all forms, therefore “Feminism, liberation struggle, must exist apart from and as a part of the larger struggle to eradicate domination in all forms...” (hooks 22).

By acknowledging the fact that the discrimination that hooks terms “domination in all forms” has no end, these Feminist writers started aligning their ideas with other philosophies and disciplines to theorize their struggle at the crossroad of gender and environment in a world facing deep environmental crisis. In this regard, another major emerging philosophy termed as Environmentalism is defined as a comprehensive study and a movement socially initiated for the non-human beings which focuses on and works for the restoration of natural resources and surroundings. It is defined as a kind of protection principle which spreads awareness and concern for nature to protect it from the harm men consciously do for their benefits and pleasures. The protection of environment involves among other things a radical change in our ethical attitude towards Nature so how we can cope up with global environmental crisis is convincingly summed up by Donald Worster (1993) as cited by Glotfelty. The relevant passage states: “We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how our ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function...” (Worster cited in Glotfelty 1996: xxi)

If Worster’s ideas suggest that literary studies can play a significant role in creating much needed awareness among the people about the importance of fostering a spirit of symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature, Black and indigenous Feminist writing embodied in the works of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich respectively epitomize this awareness as the human beings are seen co-inhabiting the lands with animals and other non-human creatures like the descendents of one parents. Thus their writings which I term ecocritical *Ecriture Feminine* contribute to enhancing the understanding among nations and communities about the environmental hazards

surrounding our ecosphere and suggest ways for environmental restoration. For some scholars and critics, the philosophy of environmentalism is influenced by the idea of gender difference also. What Feminist critics and philosophers observed is that every aspect of a woman is connected with nature and environment and this study, in this regard, focusing upon the literary representations of the scenes and events involving interactions between (wo)men and nature, substantially contributes to changing people's understanding of and attitude towards environmental thinking .

Proving Glotfelty's observation she made in 1996 that ecocritical scholarship will become more interdisciplinary, international and multicultural in the wake of rapidly changing global environmental scenario, the present study strives to provide those "stronger connections" by incorporating Black and Native traditions of ecofeminism to make it "a multi-ethnic movement" (ibid :xxv). Since the world countries are facing environmental crisis, the global warming and multifaceted pollution being the most critical in nature with regard to the world, the ecocritical analysis of how the Native and Afro- American women writers have discursively reconfigured the relationship of their women with nature will help ease the environmental issues of American society but will help world societies learn to develop more eco-friendly ways of life and better ways of combating environmental problems, thus preserving the environment for better future.

If Feminists greatly emphasize upon the idea that women and nature face degradation and oppression in a patriarchal society, Ecofeminism succinctly theorizes the interconnected relationship of domination and exploitation between Nature and women. Though Ecofeminism as theory and praxis earned popularity and garnered global critical attention only after the publication of Glotfelty's *The Ecocritical Reader* (1996), the term was first coined by Francoise D' Eaubonne in 1974 and was aimed at explaining the point of similarity between the domination and exploitation of women and nature by patriarchy. It leaves little doubt that Ecofeminism is an extension of Feminist theory and incorporates ecological theoretical assumptions to conflate the idea of domination of woman with nature. Because most of the studies analyzing the relationship between and theorization of nature and women approach the issue from western perspective to the complete exclusion of Black and indigenous nations' perspectives, the present study adopting inclusionary instead of exclusionary approach reviews Native and Afro-American literatures (which are richly ecocritical and lend themselves easily to ecocritical/ Ecofeminist interpretations) in the light of Ecofeminism. A very pertinent

example in this connection is the King's distinction between Feminism and Ecofeminism which takes into consideration the white perspective only leaving out the Black perspective. When she considers the Ecofeminism's challenge of various forms of social domination, she notes that these challenges extend "beyond sex to social domination of all kinds, because the domination of sex, race and class [which recur in Black Feminist thought] and the domination of nature are mutually reinforcing" (cited in Warren 1997: 21). King is not the only scholar to have termed the domination of nature a Feminist issue, rather a good crop of contemporary literary and cultural scholars including Ruether 1992, Howell 1997 and Warren 1997 etc. speak in unison while considering connection between the domination of nature and women and categorize it a Feminist issue. Ecofeminism, corroborating and extending Feminist postulations that women are unjustly dominated by patriarchy, asserts that domination of non-human nature by the anthropocentric, malestream global power structures is also a Feminist problematic. While Howell (1997) in her article " Ecofeminism: what one needs to know" (1997) attempts to approach the issue of Ecofeminism from ecological point of view underpinning Ecofeminism 's connectivity with the domination of women and nature, Ruether (1992) examines the ecological issues using cultural and social studies lens. Similarly Van Rine Shiva (2016) and Cook (2008) also share the understanding of ecofeminism's link with the culture of male domination that thrives on the exploitation and degradation of women (and nature) for the purposes and uses peculiar to men.

The philosophers and critics observed that the female gender is more inclined to protect the natural environment as compared to men because they feel that they are morally connected to nature and the environment. To maintain the sustainability of earth and environment, different woman scholars and Feminists contributed to Ecofeminism, an essentially Feminist, though inclusionary movement, which postulates ideas about woman and nature and their connectedness with each other. These Ecofeminists talk about the oppression of women and nature with great concern by underscoring the idea that nature is treated in the same way by the men, the way women were treated. Writer Val Plumwood in her book *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* quoting Fidelis Morgan states that the fact that women were included in the sphere of nature in order to oppress them emerges clearly from a glance at traditional sources: 'Woman is a violent and uncontrolled animal'" (qtd. in Plumwood 19). As for the Ecofeminists, both nature and women are degraded by men and they exploit and destroy the both, as they claim that

they are the supreme being of a society who can dominate everything. To counter this sexist and phallogocentric cultural ideology that affected women and nature in negative ways and discursively disfigured the otherwise positive and ecologically useful relation between women and nature, the philosophy of Ecofeminism emerged during third wave of Feminism. The term was first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne, a French writer who explained this concept in detail in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death)* (1974). These critics and writers claim that the philosophy of Ecofeminism is mainly built on the feminine features and it focuses on the ill-treatment meted out to women and nature in patriarchal societies (by patriarchy I don't simply mean men who suppress women but all those social, political, economic, sexist and racial attitudes, whether displayed by men or women, which try to establish culture of domination). Warren's (2000) description of the fundamental features of Ecofeminism foregrounds the subjugation of women and nature. She argues that Ecofeminism is predicated upon three main arguments: the first one claims that there are similarities in the domination of women and nature; the second one states that the goal of Ecofeminism must be to spread awareness regarding these interconnected domination of women and nature while "the last one is that Ecofeminism tries to replace unfair domination over women and nature with justified structure in the environmental philosophy "(57).

The thrust of Ecofeminism as well of this study is centered upon the rationalization that the full spectrum of women's liberation involves the liberation of women too, and that women cannot be said to be fully liberated unless nature is liberated also. That is why Ecofeminism is described as a social movement that introduces a shared platform for both environmentalism and Feminism and helps them to get freedom from male dominance. It proposes that the woman and nature are parallel to each other in experiencing male supremacy and degradation and in doing so reveals the ratiocination of western patriarchal system of binary oppositions in which men are dominant over women whereas culture is dominant over nature or environment. These patriarchal systems which are based on the binary oppositions are a kind of capitalist structure of any society where woman and nature both get unjustified treatment. While Feminism moves within the circumscribed boundaries of sexism, racism, and heterosexism to demonstrate the oppression of women, Ecofeminism transcends these boundaries to incorporate the domination of nature. Thus the employment of Ecofeminist theory for the

analysis of the selected literary texts of Native Indian and Afro- American female novelists provides insight into the reasons behind the domination of women and nature.

The fact that Ecofeminism is initiated within the environmental movement helps in understanding the feminine problems and issues that are similar to the environmental problems. Despite the undeniable relation of Ecofeminism with the plight of women and ecology as it is represented in literary and cultural texts, Ecofeminism, in view of its susceptibility to multivalent perspectives, eludes a unified or monolithic definition, suggesting that there is no homogeneous Ecofeminism. However, despite the pluralistic and polyvalent nature of the discipline, some of the prominent scholars of the field including Warren (2000), King and Birkeland (1993), Adams (1990) and Howell (1997) have derived some common principles, values and motifs that characterize the seminal concerns in Ecofeminism. The common principles or features of the tenet of Ecofeminism that inform the analysis of the selected literary texts/ narratives are briefly discussed below in order to have a clearer understanding of the conceptual framework which informs the critical analysis of the texts/narratives under consideration: The first principle is that Ecofeminism investigates nature of relation between the unjust(ified) domination of nature and women ; Secondly it explores the implications of malestream , whitewashed, canonical anthropocentric as well a phallogocentric philosophical postulations about nature and women and ; Thirdly it offers viable alternatives to anthropocentric/ phallogocentric views ( Warren 2015). The ultimate aim, therefore, of taking into consideration these pluralistic features is to assert that Ecofeminism as a theoretically created spatial boundary will conceptualize as well contextualize the Black and Native women's relationship with nature in more diverse ways and, hence, by exploring deeper and layered connections between human and nonhuman in densely ecocritical selected works of the Black and indigenous literary traditions, willfully ignored native and Afro- American Ecofeminist writings have been illuminated.

Ecofeminist writers and critics observing the similarities between the treatment of nature and women by patriarchy and their stereotypical discursive construction argue that the role of nature in the life of humans is gendered and because women by nature are more closely associated with nature and care about its preservation, the philosophy of Ecofeminism sheds light on the environmental cognizance as well as on a Feminist awareness in the patriarchal structure of a society where both face similar destructive effects and seek environmental justice.



### 2.13.2 Post Anthropocentric Debates

The debate about the androcentric position of man in a world surrounded by non-human nature/environment from anthropocentric and Ecofeminist perspective has currently come to be seen in relation with the contemporary intellectual developments in the various strands of post humanism and trans- humanism also. These interdisciplinary movements start with the assumption that human is an open rather than closed frame, therefore there is need to redefine (wo)men and their relation with the environment in the light of transformed relations to ecology and technology. Trans- humanism, at the basic level, is a movement which aims to enhance the human in different ways to transform him/her so radically that he/she achieves a new form of being, but since that new form of being has yet not been achieved despite the efforts of different kinds of trans humanisms like libertarian, democratic etc, therefore trans- humanism believes the state of post-humanism has not been attained yet. However, post-humanism has different claims to make: firstly, it critiques the basic definition of ‘humanus’. From Greeks to the present times, there had never been a consensus on the definition of who was a human; rather the historical and anthropological accounts of who was a human were hierarchical and dualistic definitions of human(ism).

Secondly, the post-humanism holds that the concept of human (the distinction between human and non-human) itself is a problematic and challenges the idea of human exceptionalism. And thirdly, the allied concept of post-dualism focuses more upon the need of critically considering the philosophy of dualism and deconstructing them. Therefore, in the changing context of the anthropocentric notion, the philosophical question “who am I?” needs to be addressed in conjunction with ecocritical question “what am I?”

### 2.14 Past Directing the Present: Review of Thematic and Stylistic Features of Morrison and Erdrich’s *Ecriture Feminine*

Wang (2008) commenting on Morrison’s discursive representations of Black cultural constructs and the fate of Black subjects says that Morrison’s works have explored the themes of troubled history, destiny and traumatized spiritual world of the Black people in connection with gender, race and culture as the central discourse. (p.306). Ashraf H.A. Rushdy in his essay “ *Daughters Signifying History : The Example of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*(1992)* gives an incisive analysis of the unrelenting institution

of slavery and its brutal effects upon the physical and psychological life of the Afro-Americans. He reads the character of Beloved as a scathing criticism on slavery and the character of Denver signifying “the loving view, the need to remember” as a symbol of hope (p.578). Black women’s leading spiritual role in healing the wounds is the subject of Roxanne R. Reed’s article “*The Restorative Power of Sound: A Case of Communal Caatharsis in Toni Morroson’s Beloved*” (2007) . (Re)construction of the Black women’s identity and subjectivity has been explored at length by Peggy Ochao’s article “*Morrison’s Beloved: Allegorically Othering “White” Christianity*”(1999). Focusing upon the artistic and narrative techniques employed by Morrison in *Beloved* the Jewell P. Rhodes and Wendy Harding and Jacky Martin’s essays “*Sweet Home: Utopia in a dystopian Slave Society*” (1990) and “*Reading at the Cultural Interface : The Corn Symbolism of Beloved*” (1994) explore the use of irony and symbolism respectively by Morrison. Synthia Dobbles (1998) delves into modernist writing strategies of Morrison in her article “*Toni Morrison’s Beloved: Bodies Returned, Modernism Revisited*”. Rafael Perez-Torez,(1997) also discusses Morrison’s artistic concerns by exploring the postmodern/poststructural narrative techniques effectively used by Morrison to present the other side of the truth.

Linda J. Krumholz’s study “*Reading and Insight into Toni Morrison’ Paradise*” (2002) is an insightful exploration of the intertwining themes of race and gender in which she argues that Morrison traces the elements of history, ideology and desire in conjunction with the mighty racial and gender issues . The theme of the inseparability of the relationship between religion and history has been highlighted by Channette Romero in “*Creating the Beloved Community: Religion, Race and Nation in Toni Morrison’s Paradise*” (2005). The reconstruction of Black Identity is at the heart of inquiry in Ana Maria Frail’s discussion in “*Hybridizing the “City Upon a Hill” in Toni Morrison’s Paradise*”(2003). Peter Widdoson’s “*The American Dream Refashioned: Hisory, Political and Gender in Toni Morrison’s Paradise*” (2003) calls the novel a complex, polemical discourse about the race and gender as the overarching issues of American history. Jami L. Carlacio also illustrates Morrison’s unwavering commitment with discursive redefining of the Afro-American personhood with the professed aim of engendering new consciousness regarding race (xv). Beyond much explored race issues, Morrison’s fiction is a many sided and “vibrant intellectual site for interrogating some of the pressing concerns and contradictions of our world today” (Petersen 261). With

reference to identity politics in *Paradise*, Mae G. Handerson highlights that more than discovering identity, it is the process of constructing identity that defines Morrison's artistic vision (p.363). *Paradise*, nevertheless, creates history for both the Afro-Americans and white Americans to reconsider their view of history. (Davidson 355). Patricia Storace continues in the same way describing that *Paradise*, in its evoking of the images of white founding fathers of the United States, is a provocative allegory of nationhood (ibid, 371).

Handley explains that Morrison, in a bid to fashion a particular narrative style, the one that is embedded in Black women's psycho-physical experiences and differs in stylistics from White modes of narration, contests the western critical uses of personification and allegory as narratological strategies. She does so "by demonstrating the ways in which language-as-loss is not only a culturally a relative concept but produced by history – specially, for African American culture, the history of slavery." (Handley, 679)

In order to gain this particular use of language, Morrison does not rest on one or two techniques rather she uses variety of techniques to achieve her goal. Firstly, Morrison makes a non-linear and non-phallogocentric use of the sense of time. In *Beloved* and *Paradise* we find even jumping from present to past and then present. This weaving of past into present goes on throughout the novel where the characters keep on moving according to this particular weaving of time. Secondly, the technique of repetition is applied by Morrison to strengthen her narrative technique. Thirdly, she calls our attention to traditional Western system of naming, and ways, in which characters subvert and reject these systems. Furthermore, Morrison does not rely upon the traditional words rather she invents a new vocabulary when she does not find one sufficient word to tell the untold stories. All these devices are formed in the space of *Ecriture Feminine* which not only helps abandoning the use of the traditional phallogocentric language but also enables Morrison to tell the untold stories.

So Morrison applies *Ecriture Feminine* dynamics to criticize Western ideology of writing. Morrison complicates the notion of time in *Beloved* which shows that she purposefully and successfully evades a phallogocentric or/and linear tale. The story in *Beloved* and *Paradise* does not move in a chronological order Though Morrison is not the first to use this particular use of time in her writings but the remarkable way she has

done it definitely promotes anti-phallogocentric narratology and opens space to tell fractured stories in fractions.

Shaharyar Mansouri and Noritha Omar in their article titled “*Toni Morrison’s Paradise : The Unreliable Narrator*” throw ample light on Morrison’s non-linear art of storytelling in *Paradise*. Talking about the structural distinction of the novel, they argue that it stands apart from her other works with regard to its “multitextured story, its diversity of narrators and, most notably, the versatility of narration, compared to her preceding works “(p.1). They engage Barthes’ and Genettes’ narratological theories to highlight versatile and multi-threaded narrative techniques, the “new poetics” used by Morrison.

Commenting upon the unusual narrative techniques employed by Erdrich in *Love Medicine*, Stookey points out that her novels, almost as a rule, don’t follow the Euro-American tradition of linear, protagonist-oriented narratives” instead look for the alternatives techniques that have roots in Native oral story telling tradition with the result that they “ fabricate unconventional design for her storytelling” (Stookey 31). This “unconventional design” that Erdrich has frequently employed as a narrative strategy shares borders with the playfully pluralistic Nature of *Ecriture Feminine* that transforms the shape of the narratives from familiar, linear progression to fluid and open-ended narrative structure . Kenedy’s observation that she writes “at the edge of the novel” (qtd. In Stookey, p. 33) can be taken to explain, on one hand, the blending of two cultural traditions and the entirely oppositional social practices and, on the other hand, the mixing of the two narrative styles as she herself declares that her narratology “reflects a traditional Chipewa motif in storytelling” in which the one incident is bound with another incident that “leads to another” (33) fluctuating in time and space. Erdrich’s novels, like that of Morrison, have political overtones. As Morrison invokes in *Beloved* and *Paradise* the deeply political implications of the race, religion and gender issues, Erdrich in *Tracks* “directly portrays the historical circumstances” (70) that caused the large-scale deaths of the Natives and deprived them of their ancestral lands.

Erdrich’s narrative strategies deconstruct the western phallogocentric, inflexible gender binaries and present instead a variety of possibilities of identity based upon the performance of gender within patriarchal structures of society. Many of her major female characters, therefore, defying the fixed gender roles, negotiate the two genders and

perform what Barak calls “mixed –gender” (p.51) roles : hunting, playing cards, working in butcher’s shop. The representation of these mixed-gender characters derived from the Native mythological figures (the berdache and the trickster) therefore, becomes a strategy of narrative resistance to portray mixed cultural identities against the Euro-American monolithic narrative models. (Barak 51; Cox 19; Rosenthal 5). Analysis of Erdrich’s fiction from *Ecriture Feminine* position that calls for new narrative style characterized by anti-masculinist, non-linear, free-flowing, punny narrative using new images, Rosenthal’s observation that Erdrich’s discourse can be termed as “trickster discourse” style seems quite convincing. It is because the use of trickster figures gives new dimensions to traditional female characters and narrative devices.

Tracing the historic roots of the gender-mixed characters of Erdrich’s fiction, Julie Barak (1996) observes that these characters have been inspired by the once very powerful and popular berdache figures of Native American culture. Berdache who was a “person, usually male, anatomically normal but assumed the dress, occupation and behavior of the other sex to effect a change in their gender status” (51) was highly valued for his/her ability to perform variety of gender- associated roles and was thought of possessing special talent in educating, nursing, healing, preparing love medicine, and playing numerous other socio-cultural roles. Berdache, in the role of female, appears more as a “manly-hearted woman” and is known for her fierce independence, unfettered ambitions, strong sexuality, aggressive behavior and a sense of maturity. Seen from this perspective, Erdrich’s female characters appear easily recognizable berdaches: Marie Kashpaw overtly shows ambition to be the most prominent feature of her personality by first embarking upon ambitious path of giving her life spiritual elevation through convent and later helping her husband Nector rise to the position of tribal chairman. Lulu is truly manly-hearted woman, strongly independent, openly sexual and promiscuous, a hunter and spiritual healer.

Erdrich destabilizes dominant white discursive models and techniques by adding new dimensions to already existing and widely known Euro-American modes of narration. Unlike Western narrative forms, to abolish the firm boundaries or binaries between the cultures, races and genders, she and her narrative assume the role of trickster: she as trickster creates multi-perspective textuality, seven in *Love Medicine* and two in *Tracks*.

This multi- perspective narration which is deeply rooted in Native oral storytelling tradition varies from the most commonly used first person perspective to limited third-person perspective depending upon the desired effect. The use of this multi-perspective technique that is part of Postmodern/Poststructural narratological device, then not only “blurs the boundaries between self and the other, between male and female, between oral and the fantastic, and even between story and the audience” (Smith 21) but also renders the narrative accessible to readers of different backgrounds. The events and story in *Tracks* are presented from two first person perspectives: one offered by obsessed nun Pauline and second by “trickster grandfather” Nanapush (Clarke 37), thus leaving it entirely upon the good judgment of the readers/audience to decide which narration they find more believable. So doing not only allows Erdrich to distance herself as a writer from the narrative, but also emphasizing the uncertainty and plurality of meanings in perfectly Poststructural vein, highlights the Poststructural truth that there is never one truth and uni-dimensional storytelling (Clarke 37).

This Postructural and Postmodern aspect of storytelling is more pronounced in *Love Medicine* as the seven narrators narrate the events offering variety of interpretations of the reality, imposing no absolute morality from within the text but allowing the readers maximum freedom to draw their own conclusions from the open-ended and contradictory truths of the story. The reader is actively engaged to fill the gaps, interpret the meanings, compare the reality and develop deeper understanding. Structurally unique, these novels are episodic, different episodes told by different narrators at different time and place, narrative transcending the traditional boundaries of time, space, action and plot. Apparently, the narrative seems to lack unifying elements that would bind the narrative together, but this noticeable lack of structural unity, according to Babock indicates an “antistructure” that creates an order and structure of its own (167-68) that points towards trickster cycle.

This trickster cycle is obvious in the narration of Nanapush and Pauline in *Tracks* as both the narrators focus their narratives upon Fleur, while in *Love Medicine* June Morrisey remains the centre of different characters stories and memories about her. In both the novels several different episodes are centered on one character, implying that there is a structure that transcends these episodes and unifies the seemingly random episodes since these episodes are meticulously embedded in whole of the novel and entire series of novels which trace the fuller developments of various characters. The

character of Lulu Nanapush, for example, remains the centre of attention in *Love Medicine*, but the fuller understanding of her character is possible only when the reader reads her account as a child in *Tracks* also. Erdrich goes beyond cultural and narrative boundaries in her narrative strategies in both *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* and combines Chippewa narrative motif and Postmodern/Poststructural technique that gives her narrative a *trickster* quality enabling her combine Native and Catholic traditions and perspectives. Thus, in a typical Poststructural authorial stance, she destabilizes the boundaries between races, cultures and gender, bringing together conflicting worldviews to get better of the both.

#### **2.14.1 Ecriture Feminine Stylistics in Erdrich and Morrison**

The stylistic and conceptual originality of Morrison and Erdrich's works bring them closer to the Ecriture Feminine conceptualizations which signal a paradigm shift from Euro- American totalizing identity politics to experimental discursive construction of subjectivity. Erdrich and Morrison's linguistic innovations in effecting deconstruction of gender identity and consequent reconfiguration of Native American and Afro-American women and their relationship with nature make their works an effective medium to discuss the relevance of Ecriture Feminine in Native American women writing. This section of the literature review discusses the influence of Poststructural French Feminists Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray on the selected works of Native American and Afro-American novelists Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison. Irigaray's discussion of the implications of the term 'difference' involves "the relation between the subject and the discourse, the subject and the world" (Irigaray, 1993) and thus becomes more of a generative term than a fixed reality.

It is argued that Erdrich and Morrison's discursive reconfiguration of the gender identity fits in and can be better explained in the light of the positive understanding of the epistemological developments in the field of discursive and cultural difference that Cixous terms as Ecriture Feminine . Cixous' Ecriture Feminine, undermining the masculine / phallogocentric singularity of meaning and the artificial imposition of coherence that defines masculine logic, stresses the fluid relation between subject and the discourse. To destabilize the hegemony of the masculinity, so called universal, monolithic, and dominating cultural forms of representation that suppress the feminine structures of thought, Irigaray proposes " a new age of thought, art, poetry and language

: the creation of new poetics” (p.5). The dawn of this “new age and language” can be seen in the creative potential of Erdrich and Morrison’s fiction that draw on the energy of the experimental mixing of orality and community. Erdrich’s s hybrid background and hybrid style of storytelling negotiating the fluid and porous borders of cultural traditions and narratives styles allows her mixing Euro-American and Native perspectives and thus forges a deep connection with French Feminism’s new aesthetics for feminine writing. In Erdrich and Morrison’s writings, the issues of identity politics, dominating patriarchal/pahllogocentric structures and normative sexuality are dealt with by posing resistance and challenge to these fixed categories from Ecriture Feminist perspective that subverts these categories and interprets them differently. In contrast to the abstractionist, rationalist logic of the discourses of the dominant Western culture, Ecriture Feminine introduces alternative strategies/ techniques of heterogeneous and physical logic. Erdrich and Morrison employ in their *Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, *Paradise* and *Beloved* this heterogeneous/ physical logic to discursively articulate the differential identities of the marginalized groups within the larger context of American culture. Placing their work within the broader context of the French Feminisms’ anti- essentializing assertions, Morrison and Erdrich make a shift away from the universalizing identity politics of the dominant Western discursive culture.

Erdrich and Morrison show interest in delineating the effects of oppression of their people by locating that oppression in her characters’ bodies. This locating of women’ s oppression in their bodies rather than bracketing it with the whole lot of Native Americans and Afro-Americans , is more in line with the Ecriture Feminist assumptions of representing reality through the discursive relationship between subject and discourse. Sean Kicummah ( 2008) in *Red Land, Red Power* observes that instead of presenting a single worldview shared by all the Native Americans advocated by Paula Gunn Allen, Erdrich's depiction of Native American versions of reality are more akin with Gloria Anzaldua' s explorations of hybridity in her seminal work *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* ( 1987).Both Anzaldua and Erdrich reject homogenizing Western logic of stable identities and replace them with intersectional identities, through a narrative strategy that incorporates the elements of the hybrid poetics to describe the diversity, heterogeneity and differences .

The event of remembrance of June’s near death in her childhood during “thief horse” game by the women of the family affords them to laugh and weep together and



this technique of plural voices reconstructing the story “upsets the linearity of project” (Irigaray, p.30) This poetics of circularity and return effectively used by Erdrich in both *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* finds mention in David Moore’s influential essay *Decolonizing Criticism: Reading Dialectics and Dialogics in Native American Literature* in which he terms this repetitious return “non- dialectical knowing”. This non- dialectical knowing stands opposite to dialectical knowing which “ignores the dialogic by reducing issues to binaries” (p.96). In contrast to the dialectic ways of knowing, non- dialectical knowing opens new avenues of knowing by opening the possibilities of intercultural exchanges that appear as motif in Erdrich’s s works.

The study therefore brings together the trajectory of shared thought process of Erdrich, Morrison, Irigaray and Cixous on the “ new poetics” that signals a shift from monolithic identity formations to a more fluid, hybrid, cross- cultural construction of subjectivity through innovative discursive techniques. Erdrich and Morrison’s discursive innovations in portraying political and generative nature of female identity of their characters in *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* removes misunderstandings about French Feminism as merely theoretical and anti-political position. They also demonstrate a differential feminine stylistic that creates resistance to and an alternative of dominant patriarchal/ pahllogocentric social and discursive modes of representation.

Making a comparative study of the portrayal of characters in Euro- American and Native American narrative traditions, Perez Castillo (1994) has convincingly argued that in Native American texts the “ portrayal of gender roles ...is radically different from that of patriarchal Western literature” (p.233). This radical difference between the two traditions is manifest in Erdrich and Morrison’s fiction. *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* crystallize through discursive reconfiguration of characters and their roles an open economy of women’s desire that speaks in a language different from that of men and gives vent to a desire that “has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West” ( Irigaray, p.25). Doubtless, Erdrich and Morrison' s powerfully discursive fiction has broadened the scope of identitarian politics and sexual difference by dissolving the cultural boundaries, re- imagining the histories, amalgamating White and non- white narrative techniques and responding to French Feminism’s call for " new poetics" .

Morrison believes that, in the wake of escalating racial and environmental problems threatening the peace and harmony of the world, an ecologically harmonious society is the need of the hour, and this ideal can be realized by bringing about harmony between Nature and human beings, eliminating racial and sexist biases, and paying attention to and following the eco-friendly ways of indigenous cultures. The Ecofeminist analysis of *Paradise*, on one hand, helps understand the Ecofeminist consciousness of Morrison and, on the other hand, provides an insight into the urgency and importance of striking balance between Nature/environment and humans. It draws attention to the need of bringing change in our attitude to nature adopting indigenous cultures' holistic symbiotic relationship between all forms of human and environmental life to try to overcome the threatening ecological crisis.

A glance at related literature produced around Erdrich and Morrison's fiction confirms that though they are one of the most widely critiqued and debated about authors, and a lot of ink has been spilt to discuss their fiction from trauma studies, postcolonial, psychoanalytical, postmodern and other theoretical frameworks, the exploration of their fiction from *Écriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist perspective is a less developed field. This study, therefore, is an attempt to bring fresh insight into their work from French Feminism's *Écriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist perspective.

## **2.15 Research Gap**

With the rise of the Native and Black literatures as a response to the misrepresentation of their cultures and identities by the dominant white literary discourses, the question of the reconstruction of Native and Afro- American (female) identity and their women's intimate relation with nature assumed significance and the Native writers engaged themselves in redressing the discursive misrepresentations of their women, race and despoiled relation with nature by presenting counter realities. Since the colonized and enslaved Native and Afro-American generations were subjected to physical and mental tortures in order that these subaltern would serve the Whites without posing any potential danger to the white masters, the White colonizers, in an attempt to legitimize their colonization of the Native and Black Africans, had constructed their images and identities in their discourses with such gross fabrication that these people were made to represent the exact 'others' of the White colonizers: savages, brutes, uncivilized, primitive, sub human creatures destined to be colonized and ruled over by

the superior White people whose religious and human obligation it was to enlighten and civilize these people. The critical studies discussed below demonstrate that the Red and Black women's identity and relationship with nature have been badly misrepresented in Euro-American discourses and the present study is an attempt to fill the gap in Native and Afro-American scholarship by highlighting the fictional efforts of the both communities' women writers to deconstruct the negative images and discursively reconfigure the identity of their women and their dynamic relationship with nature.

Similarly, because most of the studies analyzing the relationship between and theorization of nature and women approach the issue from Western perspective to the complete exclusion of Black and Native nations' perspectives, the present study adopting inclusionary instead of exclusionary approach reviews Native and Afro- American literatures (which are richly ecocritical and lend themselves easily to ecocritical/ Ecofeminist interpretations) in the light of ecocriticism. A very pertinent example in this connection is the King's distinction between Feminism and Ecofeminism which takes into consideration the white perspective only leaving out the Black perspective. When she considers the Ecofeminism's challenge of various forms of social domination, she notes that these challenges extend "beyond sex to social domination of all kinds, because the domination of sex, race and class [which recur in Black Feminist thought] and the domination of nature are mutually reinforcing" (cited in Warren 1997: 21).

The thrust of Ecofeminism as well of this study is centered upon the rationalization that the full spectrum of women's liberation involves the liberation of women too, and that women cannot be said to be fully liberated unless nature is liberated also. That is why Ecofeminism is described as a social movement that introduces a shared platform for both environmentalism and Feminism and helps them to get freedom from male dominance. It proposes that the woman and nature are parallel to each other in experiencing male supremacy and degradation and in doing so reveals the ratiocination of Western patriarchal system of binary oppositions in which men are dominant over women whereas culture is dominant over nature or environment. These patriarchal systems which are based on the binary oppositions are a kind of capitalist structure of any society where woman and nature both get unjustified treatment. While Feminism moves within the circumscribed boundaries of sexism, racism, and heterosexism to demonstrate the oppression of women, Ecofeminist transcends these boundaries to incorporate the domination of nature. Thus the employment of Ecofeminist theory for the

analysis of the selected literary texts of Native Indian and Afro- American female novelists provides insight into the reasons behind the domination of women and nature.

Barbara Welter's essay "*The Cult of True Womanhood*" (1820 – 1860) also known as "The Cult of the Lady" in which she described for women four basic principles of womanhood- submission, piety, domesticity, and purity- stirred Black women to contest the white woman's assumptions of womanhood as the white principles excluded Afro- American and Native American women from the accepted notion of womanhood as they were unable to live by acquiring these rules which described them as the inferior, immoral women.

Shirley Chisholm, a congress woman likewise indicates the requirement for a decisive battle against the generalizations that help and support social injustice. She claims that in efforts to work toward their freedom, Black women can help others as well in breaking free from the snares of stereotypes, and in the end can reject these stereotypes about themselves by exposing that "anti-Black, anti female, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing-anti humanism..." (181). Afro- American women, in comparison with the Black men, were not only the victim of gender oppression but they also suffered from racial oppression, hence Black women faced double marginalization while Black male confronted only racial oppression as well as the white women also struggled for their gender liberation only. As they faced these problems and differentiation in their daily life, they started shaping their goals to resist and overcome these problems. Black female critics and writers developed their Feminist ideas which were certainly different from white Feminism. They initiated their Black Feminism which particularly talks about their people and supports Black women.

The horrific story of a Black runaway slave Margaret Garner who, for fear of the terrible effects of then prevalent Fugitive Slave Law, killed her beloved daughter instead of giving her to a life of slavery inspired Morrison to write her masterpiece *Beloved* wherein she draws attention to the fully ugly effects of slavery for the present generations of the Black slaves who, as Karen Carmean rightly states, "must be willing to look back on their past experiences, how dreadful those might have been, so that a kind of purging, cathartic recovery can occur, a process of recovery ending in fuller self-realization and a discovery of personal worth" (Carmean 86).

In *Paradise* too Morrison has discursively reconfigured and invigorated the traumatized Black body which, apart from documenting the inhuman objectification of Black women in slavery and its after effects, challenges the phallogocentric postulations and practices of the white culture which denigrates the Black bodies. In a deeply racialized culture of America that has a long history of racist colonization, the Black body is constructed biological, natural and seductive, in order to project the white dominators as biologically superior, cultured and civilized having divine right to rule and civilize the Black body. What dictates “the national perception of Afro Americans as venal and inhuman beings”( qtd. in Handerson 2002:4) , according to bell hooks, is the generalized construction of the Black people by the white gaze as people having more natural, inherent connection with their bodies. Resultantly, in contrast to white bodies which are constructed in such a way to signify purity, culture and racial superiority, the Black female bodies are degraded, commodified and devalued as exploitable and vulnerable bodies. Drawing attention to the sharply contrasting discursive formations of the white and Black bodies, Venessa D. Dickerson (2001) substantiates this stance in “Summoning Somebody” : “the Black female body has been constructed as the ugly end of wearisome Western dialectic: not sacred but profane, not angelic but demonic, not fair lady but darky” ( 195-96).

One way the Black and Native Feminists have discredited the so called universal, stereotypical images of the Native and the Black subjects as sub- humans and/or inherently subservient to the white race is by deconstructing the constructed Nature of the stereotypical images as well as challenging not only the validity of these socio-politically constructed negative images of the Black women but also the authenticity of their producers as they are not the insiders and hence don't possess the authentic knowledge about the Blacks and natives. The Black and Native women, on the contrary, being the insiders, and having the authentic knowledge of the Black and Native's history, culture, religion, lands, rituals and complexities of tribal life patterns, have the better claim to represent themselves and thus their rejection of their whitewashed, deeply prejudicial images and subsequent perspectival insistence upon Black female self-definition validate their human subjectivity.

About the difference between Euro-American cultural narratives and Erdrich's representations of both cultures, Macey observes that Euro-American narratives which are fundamentally “hierarchical monolithic myths by their very structure exclude

multicultural dimensions whereas Erdrich in her enthusiasm of celebrating hybridity of cultures look for the possibility of acceptance of all culture” (153).

Ecofeminists contend that in the present society, both female and nature experience extraordinary discrimination. *Track* draws unfailing attention to the simultaneous abuse of women and nature by revealing the parallel destruction of females and the natural resources on the earth. Erdrich shows that both female and environment are facing serious danger, and a strong Feminist and environmental activism is needed to rescue both nature and women. The central premise of this chapter- the patriarchal structures’ function in ways that institutionalize the exploitation of women and nature- is reflected throughout the novel as the central female characters’ abuse and miserable ends are associated with continuous damage to the earth. The study’s main point that patriarchal structures of any society, in a bid to maintain and perpetuate male domination, allow the simultaneous domination of nature and women (Waren,1993) when applied to Erdrich’s fiction reveals that she has exposed in *Tracks* the unjustified human systems of domination that involve Nature and environment and thus one of the points of departure of this study-since historically this argument concerned only Western cultures-is that it investigates the infiltration of this patriarchal system of domination in Native American culture. The discourse analysis of Erdrich’s *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* illustrates the domination of women and nature by the white and their mixed-blood successors.

Ecriture Feminine mode of Afro- American novel emanates from and is the continuation of Afro- American oral storytelling tradition. In this regard, this dissertation argues that Morrison’s Ecriture Feminine is the expansion of Afro- American oral tradition of storytelling, much in the similar way as Erdrich’s fiction is the continuation of Native American oral storytelling tradition. The evolution of Morrison’s fiction has come through the adaptation of Western literary canon as well as Afro- American folklorist literature within which it is embedded. Poststructural Ecriture Feminine strategies, combining and complicating the erstwhile monolithic Nature of reality appropriated by the Western canons, builds parallel between the oral and literary conventions associated with Afro- American and the European traditions respectively and the double consciousness that defines the socio cultural matrix of Afro- American worldview.

The study claims that although Native American and Afro- American women of the color have made substantial contributions through their *Ecriture Feminine* to address and highlight the concerns about environmental racism, there is still much needed to be done in this regard to alleviate the situation and extricate women and nature from the oppressive patriarchal and phallogocentric structures. Besides Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Angela Davis and handful of Black Feminist and environmental theorists, the ecocritical/Ecofeminist, new materialisms and environmental justice movements require outstanding Black and women of the color theorists and writers at leadership, academic, and activist positions to contribute from Black perspectives to environmental concerns and transform the whitewashed approaches towards global environmental crisis.

The study's major contributions was the inclusion of Red (Native American )and Black( Afro-American) *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist stance in Ecofeminism as the field was predominated by Amer-European environmental/ nature writing. With the incorporation of Native American and Afro- American traditions of environmental writing in the canon of mainstream ecocritical/ Ecofeminist writing, the study demonstrates the inextricable link between humans and non- humans and thus by rejecting the whitewashed anthropocentrism offered bio-centrism as alternative way of perceiving the world.

Conclusion: This chapter has established that the revolutionary theorization of *Ecriture Feminine* by French Poststructuralist Feminists has shown women the new pathways for writing their own subjectivities, presenting their own world views, and overthrowing the shackles of domineering patriarchal discourses by writing in their own feminine language and thus reconstituting their own worlds and identities. The chapter also demonstrated that Native and Afro- American writers and theorists are conscious of the developments in theoretical domains of women writing and the emerging trends in ecocritical/Ecofeminist literatures. The chapter also showed that in the four narratives under consideration, *Ecriture Feminine* strategies have been utilized by the writers to deconstruct the stereotypical, misrepresented and marginalized images of the Black and Native women in mainstream white discourses. Nature/environment has been presented as Feminist issue and these environmental narratives have presented woman-nature relationship in ways that help understand the harmonious and intimate relationship between nature and women of indigenous and Black communities. Although the chapter

referred to and cited as many Black theorists and critics as possible, but the review of related literature demonstrated that there is dearth of Black and Native female theorists on female body, women writing and Ecofeminist issues, that is why most of the critics cited are Anglo-American and they have approached the issue from traditional Western perspective. The study, however, has highlighted the *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist contributions of non- White theorists also by incorporating non-White theoretical perspectives.



## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Negotiating the Nexus between Theoretical and Methodological Framework

##### 3.1.1 Theoretical Framework

The present research employs eclectic theoretical framework for the analysis of data and interpretations of meanings contained in the data. The eclectic framework comprises of related theories, ideas and concepts of Ecriture Feminine, Poststructural Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminism which I have synthesized to develop a theoretical background. This framework reveals the interconnections between theories and the meanings contained in the data. As a theoretical framework provides “the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study” (Swanson 2013, p.122), this structure to substantiate argumentation in the present study is provided by eclectic theoretical framework, a synthesis of the substantive ideas and concepts of the leading figures in the fields of Feminist research / scholarship.

##### 3.1.2 Language, Construction of Subjectivity and the Poststructuralist Feminist Standpoint

Helene Cixous from the Poststructural Feminist position ostensibly demonstrates her opposition with the western Structuralist philosophical thought system which predominantly revolves around phallus and logo centered assumptions (phallogocentric), and deconstructs the formative social structures of the phallogocentric version of reality in order to expose the repressive apparatuses and strategies of the phallogocentric discourses. Cixous and other Poststructuralist Feminist writers usually pit themselves against the phallogocentric brand of psychoanalysis that proposed the idea of anatomic destiny, thus suppressing the one gender and favoring the other on biological grounds. Cixous, with clear-sighted realization that psychoanalytical discourses which foregrounded and hence prioritized masculine experiences were chiefly responsible for

the suppression of women's desires and silencing of their bodily experiences, asserts throughout her body of writing that women should break free from the restrictive closure of psychoanalysis. Phallus being the centre of politico-philosophical western thought dominated the linguistic structure and produced the word 'phallogentric' the connotations of which however are different from the word penis. Whereas the word penis refers to an organ of body, the word phallic is loaded with linguistic, cultural and discursive meanings as it acts as a potential signifier and metaphor in multiplicity of discourses.

The subjecthood in the theory of *Écriture Feminine* propounded by Helene Cixous cannot be divorced from feminine writing since feminine subjectivity emerges from the consciousness of body into writing, and hence Cixous' famous term "writing from the body". Women have been discursively constructed as 'Others' in Western scholarly discourses to which women's liberation movements in Europe and America staged aggressive and reactionary political activism demanding equality for women. The theory of "Écriture Feminine" however, celebrates this 'Otherness' of women emphasizing upon women to promote the 'other writing' i.e. feminine writing. Cixous' "l'écriture féminine" envisions the glory of the 'Other' coming through the process and purpose of feminine writing that stresses rather than evading the difference of the 'Other'.

Feminine writing is reactionary in character and its revolutionary innovation lies in its conviction to refuse to conform to the patriarchal modes of expression. Refusing to subscribe to what Seamus Heaney terms in his *Redress of Poetry* "force of gravity", i.e. dominating modes of expression and power structures 'Écriture Feminine, with its specific vocabulary, methods, and stylistic devices "add to the lighter side of the scale" by validating and prioritizing the bodily felt experiences of the women. For the expression of women's unique bodily experiences, women's writing encourages and promotes any such style and method that enables women to express what they want to express; does not impose any restrictions of normative masculine writing. It is rather the writing, according to Cixous, "That is not obligated to reproduce the system. That is writing. [...] it lies in that direction, where it was written itself, where it dreams, where it invents new worlds" (Sellers xxix).

Self and subjectivity, in *Écriture Feminine*, evolve out of writing as writing is the means to explore, define and locate one's identity. Feminine writing establishes therefore a special link between who we are and how our subjectivity and, by implication, our

identity is constructed. Since Helene Cixous, Julia Kristeva and the other theorists of Poststructuralist Feminist school of thought believe in the (re)constructive role of language, they demonstrate how woman's self, social roles, sexuality and sexual preferences, and their view of reality about their self and world they live in is all linguistically constructed and ideologically mediated. The ideology that shapes the reality and imperceptibly coerces the subjects to follow certain sets of social, economic, religious or even irreligious, and ethical values and beliefs is the ideology of the dominant, that is, the ideology of the masculine; hence the structures of language and the concomitant perception of meanings of the language need to be changed. Writing that holds and disseminates these masculine/patriarchal discourses is the property of its users and by bringing innovative changes in the structure and perception of the language the reality itself can be deconstructed and reconfigured because reality is arrested in language. Once the discursive role of language and the constructed Nature of reality are established, it becomes easy to see that central to Cixous' formulation of the critical concepts of *Ecriture Feminine* is her relationship with French Poststructuralists and deconstructionists like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze etc. Her writings demonstrate a good deal of debt to and deviation from the critical stances of these theorists. Derrida's influential "deconstruction" is unmistakably there in her oeuvre guiding her "writing through body".

### **3.1.3 Discursive (Re)Constitution of Speaking Subject**

Another French Feminist theorist whose views about the relationship between language and subjectivity I have extensively referred to in my analysis of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich is Julia Kristeva. A few of the specific points of Kristeva's theory that underscore the indispensable connection between mind and body and, on expansion, culture and nature illuminate my analysis of the Native American novelists include:

Language carries the bodily drives within it as body partakes in the production of the language. Body and language act as the containers and producers of each other functioning together in the construction of subject which, for Kristeva, is the speaking subject, who exercises his/her subjectivity in the act of speaking/writing, but is constituted and reconstituted through the same act. Language and subjectivity, being closely interlinked like two sides of the paper, have the same inseparable relationship as image and sound have. In her views subjectivity is a dynamic and continuous process, never stable or fixed an ever oscillating pendulum whose dialectical nature never lets it

come to complete rest. Put in other words, language, in Kristeva's theory, is not a static entity, but a dynamic signifying process; not merely the production of communication within the realm of the symbolic, but a dynamic dialect of the two modalities: semiotic and the symbolic. A subject does not exist outside language but has its existence, construction and sustenance in the language and is always fluid, in the process of making. Kristeva illustrates: "(...)But as we shall see(...) the necessary dialectic between the two modalities of the signifying process, [i.e. semiotic and symbolic] which is constitutive of the subject..." (Revolution in Poetic Language 24).

Articulating nature of subject, Kristeva calls it 'en process' i.e. the subject is inherently in motion and by doing so she dismantles the so called normative white male discourses' myth of the monolithic, universal nature of language thereby establishing that multiplicity of textuality that linguistic expressions generate cannot be disciplined or regulated. Kristeva's linguistic theory is highly interdisciplinary theoretical discourse incorporating diverse fields such as psychoanalysis, linguistics, semiotics, and literary criticism. Kristeva takes issues with both Structuralist and Poststructuralist philosophies of language and denounces them as "nothing more than the thoughts of archivist, archeologist, and necrophilist" because both these philosophies exclude body from the language, the body which according to her is the site of semiotic and symbolic, the two constitutive modalities of the subject. The major fault she finds with the contemporary philosophies of language is that they exclude body from the language production, while in her theory body is a site full of signification where the complex matrix of language is produced. But for the language to be fully meaningful, Kristeva maintains, the semiotic and symbolic have to be perfectly interactive. Semiotic, broadly speaking Nature, has to be irrupted into symbolic, broadly speaking culture, because without our energy and bodily drives discharged into symbolic, language would have restricted sense and meanings.

Kristeva's theory of signification is predicated on two dialectical components: semiotic and symbolic. According to her, the semiotic is the convergence of the subject's bodily energy and drives into a language. Non-verbal entity as it is, semiotic is manifested as intonation, gestures, pauses, rhythm and breathing. The symbolic, opposed to the non-verbal, semiotic modality of signification, is identifiable as an orderly communication operating upon normal rules of syntax and semantics to communicate meaning. Both symbolic and semiotic function concurrently but to different ends: while

the symbolic makes normal communication possible with stable references, the semiotic produces a complex system of multiple and plural meaning by disrupting the stability of symbolic or fixed meaning. Symbolic works denotatively towards the stability of meanings, while the semiotic imparts connotative meanings to discourse and thus opens possibilities for multiple meanings. Kristeva considers these two concepts fundamental, corresponding with the developmental stages of the subjects, in the process of acquisition of language. She particularly coins the term “semiotic chora” - a term that she borrowed from Plato to refer to a psychic space, connected to maternal body, full of feelings and instinctual drives, in which infant has not yet developed into speaking subject and his/her borders of identity are in the process of making. This ‘semiotic chora’ which Kristeva calls “preverbal semiotic space”( Revolution 36) preceding the language acquisition is to many psychoanalysts a lost unconscious space because it, being a stage before the acquisition of language and signification, is an inaccessible realm.

Kristeva however argues against the irretrievability of ‘semiotic chora’ maintaining the possibility of the retrieval of ‘semiotic chora’ as well as its irruption into symbolic, resulting in “exploding the phonetic, lexical, and syntactic object of linguistics” and “exploding the subject and its ideological limits” ( Revolution 29). This powerful irruption of ‘semiotic chora’ into the discourse, in turn, disrupts and subverts the reified, often oppressive, discursively constructed and sustained systems of authority.

This is particularly where Kristeva’s theory illuminates Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich’s works as in the light of Kristeva's demonstration of the inseparability of body from language in signifying process, the works of Native American and Afro- American female writers, experimenting with language and pushing language boundaries beyond traditional limits, create multiple negotiable meanings. Kristeva’s assertion that the meaning of a text is never fixed or stable and that the heterogeneity of language becomes an important critical tool to subvert the monolithic, universalist knowledge claims and oppressive relation between the signifier and signified, becomes instrumental in analyzing the two Indian American women's works as their texts are rich in subversive implications as well as semiotic analysis.

Afro- American Feminist, Patricia Hill Collins is a prominent Black theorist whose understanding of Afro- American Feminism I have drawn upon to broaden the spectrum of theoretical frame work and specially to incorporate women of the color theoretical perspective on the contemporary Black women’s issues regarding gender,

class race and sexuality. Although a number of Afro- American scholars and theorists such as Angela Davis, June Joarden, Audrey Lorde, bell hooks, and Adrienne Rich have significantly contributed to the Black Feminist theory and posed challenges and threats to Western Feminist position, but Patricia Hill Collins is an eminent Afro- American Feminist scholar and theorist whose theorization of contemporary Black women's life has helped me understand the impact of dominant Western patriarchal capitalist power structures upon the Black women's life and culture. By juxtaposing the Western and Afro- American theorists' understanding of the patriarchal power structures in which women, particularly Black women, have been suppressed and silenced, I have highlighted Afro- American and Native American female writers' unique articulation of Afro- centric Feminist epistemologies and knowledge claims.

Patricia Hill Collins validates Afro- American women's identity and by stressing upon women to assert their subjectivities by the process of self-actualization through concrete everyday life experiences. These contrastive, self- defining, images of the Black women, according to Patricia, will both resist the dehumanizing discursive constructs of the Black women perpetrated by dominant system, and counter even reject internalized psychological oppression that Afro- American women suffer from. In her classic work *Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, she asserts the value of writing down every day lived experiences and sharing in confessional mode the innermost feelings. She writes "only the willingness to share private and sometimes painful experience can enable women to create a collective description of the world that is truly ours" (p.16).

### **3.1.4 Liberatory Potential of Confessional Black Narratives**

Bell Hooks is another contemporary Afro- American Feminist scholar, well known for her work *Ain'ti a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, who has come up with the same stance stressing upon African American women to represent the reality of their life from a Feminist stand point, through writing. Her emphasis upon writing as the most valuable way for Afro- American and other women of the color to represent themselves brings her Feminist stance closer to that of French Feminists such as Cixous and Kristeva and makes her theoretical concepts relevant to the eclectic theoretical framework of this study. Sharing her Feminist stand point with French Feminists, she states her belief in the liberatory potential of Black women's writing. She affirms that more than any other kind of writing, the writing of frank confessional narratives by Black

women who are striving for self-actualization and want to become radical subjects are desired as guiding principle, as texts that establish Black women's fellowship with one another. Her Feminist writings are fundamentally about eliminating sexist oppression inflicted by male-centred cultural order. Observing the racial politics of mainstream Western Feminist theory that excluded and precluded Black women from women's liberation movement, she offered through her Black Feminist masterpiece *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984) a more inclusionary version of Feminist theory that includes diverse voices from the margins. Moving beyond traditional Western concept of male and female binary, she stressed the essential relationship between gender, class and sex and exposed the intersectional bases of Black women's oppression. She categorically states in *Feminism is for Everybody* (2000) that without male participation in equality struggle, the revolutionary idea of Feminist movement will not progress. Therefore, believing that without finding ways to restructure the existing cultural framework of power rooted in patriarchal, class and racial superiority, she argued against the separationist ideology of gendered binarism and emphasized upon the involvement of male in the equality movement. Having developed a comprehensive theoretical framework, now I elaborate my methodological framework that is in consistent with the theoretical framework and will help systematic analysis of the data, i.e. chosen texts.

### **3.2 Interpretive and Explanatory Paradigm**

The present study, grounded in qualitative research paradigm, is an interpretive and explanatory discourse analysis of the Native American and Afro- American women writers' fiction from the critical perspective of Poststructuralist Feminist literary theory and fiction. I have employed Foucauldian version of discourse analysis method to address the research questions. Discourse analysis involves selecting, collecting and analyzing the contents of a text. Neuman explains that "contents refer to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, themes, or any message that can be communicated. It may be in written, visual or spoken form" (Neuman 272). Text, he further explains, is "anything that serves as a medium of communication" (ibid). The texts of the selected novels of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison were intensively and critically studied. Words, phrases, sentences, images and discursive strategies demonstrating the characteristic features of 'Ecriture Feminine' were identified and marked and then categorized thematically so that the research questions could be addressed properly. Then the data was analyzed in the light of

Poststructural French Feminist, Black Feminism and Ecofeminist theoretical perspectives. And finally findings and conclusions ensued from the detailed critical analysis of the texts.

Further, in my reading of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's fiction as the manifestation/materialization of the knowledge in terms of discursive (re)configuration of women and nature, and to analyze their works from *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist perspectives, I have used Feminist Poststructuralist theories in discourse analytical background. As part of methodology, this project draws extensively upon Feminist theories, particularly those propounded by French Feminists Helene Cixous, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, Black Feminist theorists Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks and Ecofeminists Cheryl Glotfelty and Karen Warren which I have used in the backdrop of discourse analysis methods proposed by Michel Foucault. This fusion of nuanced Feminist theories as theoretical frame work and discourse analysis as methodology has illuminated systematically the process of the discursive formation, dissemination and institutionalization of the knowledge about women and nature. For my analysis of the discursive spectrum of the texts-to-be-analyzed I have used extensively Foucault's notions about discourse and knowledge as discussed comprehensively in his books, articles and interviews.

### **3.3 Foucauldian Version of Discourse Analysis**

This study has used, as its methodological procedures, the qualitative discourse analysis method in order to carry out a discourse analysis (discursive and Ecofeminist) of Afro- American and Native American women writers-Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich-whose selected works: *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*, have been analyzed from *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist perspectives using the multiperspectival theoretical lens. Given nature and scope of the methodology, discourse and Ecofeminist analysis of the Black and Native female authors from America have been carried out. The analysis of how Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich have discursively reconfigured the identities/subjectivities of the Black women using different stylistic techniques have been anchored in the (i) *Ecriture Feminine* theoretical framework proposed by Poststructuralist Feminist school of thought, the Red/Black Feminist perspective and( iii) Ecofeminist framework.



The rationale for choosing French, Red/Black and Ecofeminist theorists for the analysis of the female authored works of Black and Native American origin is the idea of contextualizing the study and bridging the gap between white and Red/Black perspectives of the theory and praxis of the *Ecriture Feminism*. Similarly for the Ecofeminist analysis of the selected environmental narratives of the Native American and Afro- American origin, the key assumptions of the ecocritical and Ecofeminist theories have been employed and the environmental concerns underpinned in the form of the relationship between nature and women in the chosen texts have been explored. By doing so, the contribution of the indigenous and Black female novelists towards raising and addressing the global environmental issues in relation to the Black women in particular and humans in general has been evaluated and thus environmental issues have been raised and discussed. Relevant works of critics and theorists, study books from various related disciplines, the sources and material available on digital media and interdisciplinary publications have been extensively consulted and referenced in order to ascertain how Afro- American and Native American women writers have dealt in their *Ecriture Feminine* with the issues of the (mis)representation of Black women and their demeaned relationship with nature/environment in white fiction.

It has been demonstrated that how, by deconstructing the gendered and phallogocentric misrepresentations of the Black women in mainstream fiction, the Native and Afro- American, unlike their white counterparts, have validated the personal experiences of the Black women in order to reconfigure their identities/subjectivities. By the same token the selected texts have been thoroughly examined in the light of the ecocritical and Ecofeminist theoretical frameworks in order to find out the environmental trajectory of thought being pursued by the contemporary Ecofeminists. The Native and Black texts under Ecofeminist scrutiny have been discussed to reach a broader understanding and comprehensive definition of Ecofeminism both in the light of relevant theories and representations of nature and women by Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich, women of the color novelists. Since the mode of this research-qualitative paradigm-believes in the interrelationship of all knowledge and acknowledges the presence of the subjectivity of the researcher in the knowledge and research on human phenomenon, a comprehensive study has been conducted on the secondary sources including the interdisciplinary critical research works, research articles, scholarly theses produced by the scholars worldwide on the related fields available on the internet, research papers and

academic presentations etc. The variety of this critical paraphernalia and methodological tools have helped the researcher formulate original and critical ideas on Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminism and thus analyze the works in the light of these well - informed literary and theoretical notions.

Recognizing the significance of discourse analysis as a useful research method this study elucidates that discourse analysis methods, though difficult to define precisely because of the absence of a distinctly well-defined methodologies, focus upon the research process. Discourse analytical methods, therefore, the present research being no exception, use one of or the blend of the several interpretive methods: semiotics, narrative content, discursive, interpretive, historical, to mention a few.

Following the possibility of multiplicity of interpretations of human phenomenon afforded by the numerous discourse analysis methods, it becomes hard to disagree with Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) when they theorize the qualitative research methods in terms of a distinctive orientation of mind and the corresponding way the mind perceives social world. Therefore when they argue that qualitative research is: “ultimately a frame of mind; it is an orientation and commitment to study the social world in certain kind of ways”, (26) they, actually, allude to those multiple ways of understanding and interpretation of the socio-cultural processes that a qualitative researcher comes across during his/her study of the multifaceted narratives/texts and those multiple perspectives allow him to interpret the phenomenon in several different ways. The qualitative researcher shows active involvement in the social world he is investigating and becomes ontologically engaged in the research process. The qualitative methodologies “enable the researcher to learn at firsthand about the social world they are investigating by means of involvement and social participation in that world through a focus upon what individual actors say or do” (Hitchcock and Hughes 12). The brief discussion on the diversity of qualitative methods demonstrate that in qualitative research multiple perspectives can be used to approach the text and a more diverse opinion can be offered on the area of research

Though the term discursive may have variety of meanings and interpretations including the written or spoken statements or the analysis of the phenomenon of construction of meanings in a given condition, I have employed the term in Faucauldian framework/ conceptualization that refers to the rational investigation of the questions about the knowledge. In present work, I have explored and challenged the construction of

knowledge about the Native and Afro- American subjects by the Euro- American world and presented the analysis of how the Black (Afro American) and the Red (Native American) female writers have discursively reconstructed their identities, in a differential discursive traditions, that is *Ecriture Feminine*, by employing *Ecriture Feminine* stylistics

The discursive strategies these women writers have employed are the those that are closely linked with the theoretical assumptions / framework introduced by the French Feminists or Poststructural Feminists like Helene Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. The rationale for incorporating Ecofeminist theory in the thesis is to analyze the nature of relationship between women and nature as it appears in the fiction of Erdrich and Morrison. The coherence in analysis has been achieved through research methodology that draws upon insights from Foucault's discourse theory.

The research deals with two aspects of Native American and Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine*, that is women writing: Firstly, how these female novelists have discursively reconstructed the differential female subjectivities of the their women and, secondly, what is the Nature of the relationship between the female subjects and nature or environment; how is it different from Euro- American mainstream discourses and what is its significance. These two aspects of the research ( problem) have been analysed in two separate chapters - first chapter discusses the reconfiguration of women in line with the *Ecriture Feminine* or Poststructuralist Feminist theories while the second chapter that discusses the multivalent relationship between Black and brown women and the environment is grounded in and informed by the Ecofeminist theories, thus this is the conceptual blending of the relevant theories, concepts and ideas to inform the two pronged analysis of the texts that provides the rationale for eclectic theoretical framework.

To address the question of discursive formations of the female subjects and their multivalent relationship with nature, the dissertation employs eclectic theoretical framework, combining poststructural French Feminism, Black Feminism and Ecofeminist theories. Foucault's qualitative method of discourse analysis with its focus upon exploring the relationship between language, social practices and discursive reality serves as the research method to inform the discourse analysis of the four major texts from Erdrich and Morrison

In order to strike a balance between White and non- White Feminist theoretical positions and to deal with the likely controversy arising from the discrepancy of analyzing oppressed, racialized women writers' works from the white Feminist theorists' perspective, I have selected two Poststructural French Feminists-Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva and two women of the color Feminists- Patricia Collins Hills and bell hooks as my theoretical guides. This theoretical design has helped me, in the first place, to juxtapose the contemporary White and non-White Feminist theoretical positions on the construction of gender and, on the other hand, analyze contemporary marginalized women writers' attempts to meaningfully contribute from their unique cultural positions to the constantly evolving body of *Ecriture Feminine*. Deriving comparative methodological approaches from French Feminism, Ecofeminism and indigenous (I use the term 'indigenous' for women of the color theorists) Feminist theories, this project has explored within the domain of Afro-American and Native American literature, Nature of relationship between female subjectivity, body and the language through ways, especially the discursive modes of expression appropriated by the Native American and Afro African writers to (re)inscribe the multilayered Black or/and hybrid subjectivities of the Afro and Native American female subjects. Hence, what I have gained through the analysis of the theoretical connection between Feminist theory, particularly Poststructuralist Feminist theory, Ecofeminism and its praxis in Native and Afro-American *Ecriture Feminine* i.e. women writing is the exposing of the dynamics of gendered narratives about colored woman and her relationship with nature within phallogocentric patriarchal discourses.

This work has explored and exposed how the fiction from the Red and Black female writers such as Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison demonstrates the potential of Native and Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine* to espouse and incorporate, mould and indigenize, rather than shun or avoid the pervasive influence of the tenets of French

Feminism. French Feminism, in its subversive thrust, is a revolutionary theory that seeks the true freedom and empowerment of women irrespective of class, race and color by appealing them to ‘write through bodies’. One uniqueness of this work is that within the conceptual/theoretical framework provided by the Ecofeminists and white and non- white female writers belonging to Euro-American and Black origins, it aims to highlight the significance and contribution of the Afro and Native American female novelists towards broadening the frontiers of what the French Feminist Helene Cixous has termed *Ecriture Feminine*. It, however, does not aim to offer generalized history of women writing in Native and Afro- American literature. It rather seeks to propose alternative ways of informed analysis, grounded in eclectic framework of discourse, Feminist and Ecocritical theories, to evaluate the Native and Afro- American female writers’ contribution to *Ecriture Feminine*. To achieve this purpose, this project articulates its theoretical agenda, through the exploration of the works of the two outstanding, widely acknowledged award-winning, English speaking Native American and Afro- American female writers: Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison. Although this thesis delimits itself to the discussions of female novelists and theorists only, and the analysis of male writes/theorists fall outside the orbit of this study, I have, however, not avoided discussing related male writers in general wherever their works closely bear upon the project undertaken.

Keeping in view nature and scope of this study in which I deal with the discursive formations that the contemporary Native and Afro- American women writers have used to reconfigure the images of Black women and their relationship with nature , the most appropriate methodology and mode of inquiry that would help understand the processes and methods employed by these women writers to construct what Helene Cixous famously calls “*Ecriture Feminine*”, is the Foucauldian version of discourse analysis. The reason why I decided to choose Foucault’s methodological strategies to inform my analysis of Afro- American and Native American women writers’ fiction is that he is an outstanding and hugely influential philosophical methodologist as well critical thinker whose critical insights into the field of research have been extensively benefitted from by the researchers and scholars in the human and social sciences and who has become reference in diverse fields of research.

His focus on the centrality of power of discursiveness in the process of the construction of “myself” is reflected in these words: “my problem is to construct myself, and invite others to share an experience of what we are, not only our past, but also our

present, an experience of our modernity in such a way that we come out of it transformed” (240).

What he initially states “my problem” in terms of “construct(ing) myself” when seen in the broader Poststructuralist context of the constructed Nature of the subject, no more remains his problem alone and he immediately “invite(s) others to share an experience of what we are” so that reconstructing our past, present and what he calls our “modernity” “We may come out of it transformed”. To me the most significant feature of the present research is critically analyzing, in the light of Foucault’s critical methodologies concerning the modes of discursive formations, how those “others”, in the present case Native American and Afro- American women writers reconstruct themselves, their past and present, deconstructing their stereotypical images and dehumanized representations in the white discourses and share their experience of what they were and what they are in the present moment.

In qualitative research, as opposed to the scientific modes of inquiry in which subjectivity is considered a demerit, the ethnographic/active interaction between the researcher and the subjects of research, is of vital significance and has consequences for both researcher and his subjects of research. For this reason, in any research project within the field of social sciences reflexivity and analytical concern becomes prime criterion in qualitative research. My main empirical field, in analyzing the discursive reconfigurations of the entities of women and nature in Native and Black woman’s fiction, is historical significance. I am, in the manner of Foucauldian modes of critical enquiry, fully conscious of the analytical importance of the process of objectivation and subjectivation that constitute my research work. This work is not intended to just comprehend or interpret the ways the Native and Afro- American women writers in general and Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison in particular have retold the narratives of their indigenous people unfolding the Native people’s historic and contemporary lives with female characters occupying the centre stage. The present research is primarily not about comprehending or interpreting the world but changing it. Deriving inspiration from this transformative character of research, this research work seeks to transform the existing state of understanding of the world about the Native and Afro- American communities living in America. The major methodological contribution of the qualitative research, according to Luz (2012) lies in its capacity to produce results by intervening and changing what is real.

Foucault's qualitative methodological procedures as they appear in his book "The Order of Things" published in 1966 in which he accorded supreme importance to ethnology as one of the commanding kind of knowledge of modernity, are singularly important to my analysis of the works of the Native and Afro- American Ecriture Feminine, because this analysis deals with the "division of human beings into races and their origin, distribution, relations and characteristics" (Merriam Webster). Ethnology as a branch of anthropology dealing chiefly with the comparative and analytical study of cultures finds privileged mentioning in Foucault's discussion of research method(s) in his interviews. Out of many relevant statements he made, the one I use is central to the methodological and analytical position I have taken regarding discussing the works of culturally de-privileged people: "I could define it [my research] as an analysis of the cultural facts which characterize our culture. In this sense, it would be something like ethnology of the culture to which we belong" (Foucault 605).

Ethnographic research, with which Foucault is both figuratively and methodologically associated, and which informs the analytical foundations of this project also, devalues the metanarrativized universalistic knowledge claims prioritizing instead what anthropologists call "local knowledge", the foundation of postmodern theoretical and ethnographical research paradigms. Metanarratives about culture, history, religion, science etc have crumbled in postmodern era and mini-narratives, localized knowledge, subaltern voices, marginalized literatures have replaced the claims of universal knowledge. There is hardly any reason to disagree with Clifford Geertz who denounces universal knowledge as banal and irrelevant while acknowledging the validity of local knowledge because there is in it that "direct and open acknowledgement of limits – thus observer, in this time, at that place is one of the things that most recommends this whole style of doing research" (137) which validities the hitherto unheard voices of all those who were suppressed or/and marginalized. This form of research encourages the notion of situated observer/researcher who, from the place where he stands and the perspective he develops, creates (localized) knowledge, the knowledge which is the result of the production of the detailed data, and is deeply entrenched in the time and place of the research. The same is true in case of the results of the present research, ethnographic in Nature.

Native and Afro- American women writers' discursive reconstruction of their women as perfectly human subjects endowed with as much strength of mind and

character as any woman and their historical relationship with nature which the white discourses had misrepresented to describe them as mysterious and dangerous as untamed Nature, when analyzed within the methodological framework of Foucault's genealogy, serves to provide a clear insight into the dominating group's mechanism of constructing discursive reality by reinterpreting the historical moment/reality for 'now'.

### **3.3.1 Foucault on Knowledge and Power and its Relevance with Native Afro-American Ecriture Feminine**

Though the fragments of reasons for methodological choices appear in different discussions in Foucault's oeuvre, it is in his final research on the subject of desire that Foucault discusses the subject at length. This research project on desire elaborated his theoretical-methodological perspective anchored in the notion of experience constructed by complex relationship between forces of the knowledge, power and subjectivation. This methodological stance included plural reference in accordance with the requirements and the research undertaken in human and social sciences has particularly benefitted from the Foucauldian methodological trend of plurality within theoretical reference. By the same token, the present research qualitative in Foucauldian sense as it is, instead of exclusively focusing on one theoretical reference, makes use of plural/eclectic theoretical references to discourse theory, Poststructural Feminism, Black Feminisms and and Ecofeminism to analyze the discursive reconstruction of the subjectivities of Native American and Afro- American women. For Foucault theoretical work was not something static or finished entity, it was rather understood as something continuously in process and permanent transfiguration.

Following the tenets of discourse analysis method, informed by Foucauldian methodological choices, this research is an attempt to "thinking differently" in terms of the reconstructions of Native and Black women's subjectivities in non-White Ecriture Feminine "instead of legitimizing the already known" knowledge about the Native and Afro- American women and their historical relationship with Native as it was constructed and proliferated by the Euro-American, mainstream discourses.

I believe that the construction of relevant and contemporary research problem, i.e. how the Native Indian and Afro- American women writers have deconstructed the oppressive, stereotypically imposed objectification of the indigenous and Black subjects in their Ecriture Feminist fiction will contribute to deeply understand the historical and



contemporary state of the Native and Afro- American female subjects in predominantly white society.

### **3.3.2 Discourse Analysis as Method**

Discourse analysis doesn't refer to any single theoretical/ methodological approach but to a series of interdisciplinary approaches for the different types of studies. Whereas an unending number of definitions about discourse are available, the one preliminary and comprehensive can be: discourse is a particular use of language to discuss and comprehend the world in a social constructionist analysis. Discourse analysis starts with the basic premise that our particular ways of talking about the world don't reflect neutrality in presenting the world, identities and social relationships within it rather, on the contrary, discursively construct and transform it. So discourse analysis can be applied, among other uses, to analyze the role of language in constructing and changing the broad social, institutional and cultural developments .The key concept of discourse analysis is how the categories of 'language ' and 'subject' can be understood . Discourse analysis method takes poststructuralist linguistic philosophy as its starting point that our access to reality is mediated through language. With particular way of language use, we create particular representations of reality that don't merely reflect the existing reality but reconstruct it according to the purpose and perspective. The changes in discourse are, therefore, means to change the social reality, identities and social relationships. Efforts of the writers at discursive level contribute to producing and transforming social reality with a complex web of relationships. Poststructuralism takes its starting point from structuralism that language is not determined or dictated by any external reality that it refers to, rather the relationship between language and the reality it refers to is arbitrary and is the result of the consensus of meanings that a specific society or the users of language have agreed upon. The language works on the principle of internal relations / differences of the network of signs. It however rejects structuralism's belief of the stability, unchangeability and totality of the meanings of language by dissolving the difference between langue and parole. It contests the fixity of the meanings and contends that the signs of the language are never stable or fixed or universal. They are rather changeable, contingent, and contextual.

### **3.3.3 Using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis as Method**

Foucault's concept of discourse explains that discourse does not represent the exact copy of the reality but it is the culturally constructed discursive representation of reality. Discourse analysis is a research method used to study the relationship between written or spoken language and the social context in which it is used. It is a common qualitative method that particularly elucidates how the discursive use of language is related to the socio-political and historical context. It is a means of creating, regulating and presenting a certain outlook on and a way of talking about a phenomenon as truth. It constructs a certain knowledge claim as normative or universal truth and thus governs through production of inclusionary and exclusionary categories of knowledge what to talk about and what not to. By so doing, it creates twin category of knowledge and power. Dominance of one regime of knowledge and power in the society regulates the process of meaning making in or/ as a discourse .However, by deconstructing these discourses , it becomes easy to observe why some ways of thinking and talking about the world are taken as truth/ normative/ while other ways of thinking and doing as irrational and marginalized . This is precisely the understanding of the Foucauldian method of doing textual discourse analysis that I have applied in the analysis of the selected works. Applying this method of discourse analysis to the Native and Afro- American texts helped me knowing and analyzing these texts to explain:

I: What have the Native American writer Louise Erdrich and Afro- American writer Toni Morrison represented in their fiction as truth and norm from their perspective

ii: How have they reconstructed these truths and norms

III: what epistemological evidence have they used

iv: What has been foregrounded and backgrounded in these discourses

v: what aspects of existing knowledge have been problematized

vi: what alternative meanings have been offered and

vii: what new identities, alternative actions and social practices are constructed as desirable or required by this mode of thinking/ talking /conceptualizing about the world.

On the basis of these Foucauldian concepts of discourse, I have used the following five-step systematic discourse analytical method derived by Kendall and Wickham (1998) from Foucault's discussions on discourse analysis as method and applied it for the

analysis of the selected texts. The first step in applying Foucauldian discourse analysis as systematic method to analyze the discursive practices of Native and Afro- American women writers is the recognition that these discourses, like any other discourse, are the body of statements organized in a systematic way that challenge the Euro- American truths and represent the understanding of reality from their own perspective. After recognizing the discursive Nature of reality in Poststructural manner that foregrounds the role of language in shaping the world by rendering certain ways of looking at and talking about world normative, the second step of applying discourse analysis as method is the understanding as well as interpretation of how those statements( about women and nature in particular) worked . The third methodological step while interpreting the data is conceptualizing that what has been said and what has not been. The understanding what Native and Afro- American discourses said and what didn't say is helpful to explain what these discourses included and what excluded and why. The fourth step in the analysis of data is identifying the spaces in which Erdrich and Morrison created new statements. And finally, the fifth step of discourse analysis is interpreting those practices both material and discursive in the creation of new truth/ reality about Native and Afro- American women and their relationship with nature .

Given the significance of the secondary sources in the discourse analysis, I have comprehensively consulted and referenced the relevant secondary sources to place my arguments on discursive reconfigurations of women and nature in the Black women's fiction in larger *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist contexts. The comparative mode of analysis between the environmental narratives written by the Native and Afro- American women novelists has further broadened the avenues of textual analysis and hence instead of singular, monolithic or/and universalistic (white) knowledge claims, the study has ensured the emergence of multiplicity of meanings and perspectives.

Despite the outstanding contributions made by Foucault in diversity of fields of knowledge, and the influence he exerted upon the Postmodern, Feminist, New Historicist, Postcolonial and Poststructural critics and theorists, no comprehensive and distinct critical approach to literature has been designed based on his theories. This study, in this regard, develops a systematic Foucauldian approach to study the Native American and Afro-American women writers, Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison. To develop a method of discourse analysis based on Foucault's methodological insights, this dissertation navigates through his inquiries into relationship between knowledge and power, the role

of discourse in creating, disseminating and maintain the truth/ knowledge claims of the dominant, their disciplinary techniques and the subversive and deconstructive strategies of the oppressed to represent the marginalized perspectives / the other truths. Feminists find his ideas particularly appealing when they refer to power relations in patriarchal society, objectification of women and their bodies by phallogocentric discourses and the the construction of gendered social roles. His immensely influential ideas on archaeological investigation of history, when applied to Morrison's discursive reconstruction of the history of the Afro-American slaves and the discursive representations of the Native American history, culture, their women and their relationship with nature, help understand how they have challenged and subverted their stereotypes images and presented their own perspective about the world they live in.

This study also uncovers those silenced, unexplored, other histories of Native American and Afro-American people by "endlessly recollecting the past" and discussing it in the present moment to effect "evolution of mentalities" (Archaeology 121) So doing has involved questioning the "ready-made syntheses, those groups that we normally accept before examination" (Archaeology 22). These ready made-syntheses were the Euro-American discursive formations that Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison have "re-done" in their discourses. Foucault's refusal of the universality or permanence of any "discursive formation" that does not and can not "play the role of a figure that arrests time and freezes it for decades or centuries" (Archaeology 74) serves as a methodological guide for this study in analyzing the data . The discussion of the selected works by Morrison and Erdrich has been based on Foucault's assertions that every discourse is constituted of some statements that he calls the "elementary units of discourse" (ibid 80), and since every statement is a part of some larger discursive formation, Foucault maintains that "there is no statement in general, no free, neutral, independent statement; ...it is always a part of network of statements" (Archaeology 99). All the four novels under observation have been discussed with reference to Foucault's inquiries into the role of discourse in shaping the social reality through language which, in turn, reflects and modifies existing power relations.

## CHAPTER 4

### **DISCURSIVE RECONFIGURATION OF WOMEN IN AFRO- AMERICAN AND NATIVE AMERICAN ECRITURE FEMININE: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *BELOVED, PARADISE, LOVE MEDICINE AND TRACKS***

This chapter begins with providing the essential background about the relationship between the institution of slavery, unrepresentable slaves and language. It then proceeds to discuss Erdrich's discursive reconfigurations of pure and mixed-blood women in *Ecriture Feminine* stylistic mode from Postmodern / Poststructural Feminist perspective. The chapter carefully considers and deconstructs how the mainstream discursive practices marginalized the Black women and their culture, their social grouping, their political, social and cultural systems, their psychology and questions what it means to be a human. Through this interconnectivity, more fundamentally focusing upon the intersection between race and gender, the chapter examines how Afro-American and Native American women writers deconstruct the Amer-European phallogocentric conceptions of gender and women and challenge the assumptions of mainstream socio-cultural system that marginalizes the Black women and their connection with environment. The chapter also highlights how the issues of multiculturalism, multi-ethnicities, loss of land and the subsequent miseries faced by the Native Americans and the issues of assimilation and the conflicts between the old and new cultural traditions impact the lives of the Native American generations. Further the chapter demonstrates that stereotypical representations of the Black women in dominant, whitewashed Amer-European discourses and their claims to be absolute truths or universal realities are no more valid in current era and being discursive constructions are liable to be challenged, contested, deconstructed and dismantled. The discursive re-enactments of the powerful images of Native women and diverse gender roles they perform not only sharply distinguish them from their western counterparts but also foreground their unique subjectivities and thus demonstrate how the similar issues can be used to enhance the debate in Native American and Afro- American literary works.

Reading of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's fiction as the manifestation/materialization of the knowledge in terms of discursive (re)configuration of women and nature has been done informed by Feminist Poststructuralist theories in discourse analytical background. Refuting the concept of the continuity and unity of the history, he views history as process of ruptures and discontinuities. As a historian the method Foucault follows and suggests for the analysis of history, the one that has been adopted for the present research also is "re-doing" the things already established by the traditional history so that the inner secret of the oppressed other histories that have been buried beneath the dominant records may be revealed .

#### **4.1 Morrison, Slavery, Unrepresentables and Language**

When the colonization in America resulted in several tough conditions like diseases, cold atmosphere, and food shortage, the need for labor urged the white colonizers to avail the best option by making Negroes their slaves. A study of the history of white and Black people's interactions in the American continent shockingly reveals that in the city of Virginia (America) alone, when Afro Americans arrived in 1619, 20 million Black men and women were taken away from Africa.

Both Black men and women were brutally treated at the hands of colonizers while women were brought to the continent to provide sexual pleasures to the white males as the genre of slave narrative recounts. Harriet Jacobs, an Afro- American slave woman, in her life story published in 1861 under the title *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* which is the first detailed account of slavery written in slave narrative genre, narrates the moving tale of her life of slavery, sexual exploitation by a white male whom she calls Mr. Sands, and subsequent escape to freedom .These Black slaves were subject to worst physical and mental torture. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Black slaves were so badly dehumanized, atrociously treated, and misrepresented as sub species of human that it forced the slaves to kill their masters to show their resistance towards slavery. In this regard Toni Morrison's novels particularly *Beloved* which she wrote as a strong reaction against the "national amnesia surrounding the details of slavery and its aftermath"( Carmean 81) powerfully addresses the disturbing themes of Afro- American female subjects' pangs of motherhood, traumatizing sexual exploitation, transformation from life of abject humiliation to self-respect, breaking shackles of slavery to escape to desperately needed freedom, and the hard struggle made to ensure the Black slaves

enjoy the same human rights which was the prerogative of the free white men and women and even after the freedom was achieved.

Desperate enslaved Black women often poisoned or burnt their masters and if they were caught, they were punished more brutally by hanging or burying them alive. The situation got worsened when Black females decided to stop giving birth to other future slaves whom they saw in their children. They started controlling their bodies by taking contraceptives. Women who escaped successfully made sure to kill their children to avoid future slavery. Toni Morrison, a celebrated Afro- American novelist was also inspired by the story of Margaret Garner (Kentucky, 1856) as she killed her child. Morrison got inspiration from Garner to write her deeply influential novel *Beloved* (1987) and won the Pulitzer Prize. Black women, as a result of slavery and numerous types of exploitation had to face many difficulties physically, emotionally, economically and politically. Therefore, around 1800s, they started Black Feminist movement for their rights and benefits. Since it was impossible for the Black women to take part in other organizations which were organized for the betterment of white men and women as well as for Black men, they started making their own political and cultural agendas. Somehow they attained their goals through the very first organizations made for the betterment of Afro- American women known as Afric-American Female Intelligence Society of Boston (1831) or the Massachusetts Female Anti slavery Society (1833). Later in 1851 an Afro- American Black Feminist activist Sojourner Truth became famous through her speech titled as “Ain’t I A Woman”. She delivered her speech at women’s rights convention and articulated her thoughts about Blacks in effective way.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Black Feminists talked about their struggle in attaining education resisting the colonizers’ oppressive educational policies as the white masters never allowed the colonized ‘other’ to attain education , fearing the access to education and understanding of the ways to how the knowledge was constructed by the powerful colonizers will enable the Black to challenge the white supremacist claims of mastery over the Blacks on racial , ethnic, biological, religious or any sort of discriminatory claims and on the basis of this knowledge they will subvert white hegemony and discursive representations of the Black folks as inferior, sub -humans, brutes and labels of negative stereotypes they attribute to Black Africans. Colonized people despite being constructed and treated as inferior beings were capable of posing to their white masters a threat, so keeping them away from the education and knowledge was the policy of the

white while for the Blacks getting education was really hard task and they had to in fact struggle hard to make it possible. Mrs. Willard is acknowledged for her efforts as she built the first educational institute which was set up nearly in 1833 in Ohio. She was highly praised for her struggles in building up this institute as it was open for every person regardless of his/her race, color or sex. Later on similar efforts on the part of different people who took an initial step to teach Black slaves and their children were observed. South Carolina and Georgia, the two Black women in Louisiana, established schools for the Black children. Prudence Crandall was another American school teacher and activist who was influenced by a Black servant and she took a step forward by teaching a Black girl but unfortunately a sheer storm forced her to close the school.

Barbara Welter's essay "*The Cult of True Womanhood*"(1820 – 1860) also known as "The Cult of the Lady" in which she described for women four basic principles of womanhood- submission, piety, domesticity, and purity- stirred Black women to contest the white woman's assumptions of womanhood as the white principles excluded black and brown women from the accepted notion of womanhood as they were unable to live by acquiring these rules which described them as the inferior, immoral women. In 1878 from the south was observed another great migration of Afro- Americans because the southern states by implementing several Black codes deprived the Blacks of their basic necessary rights to live there. The purpose of their massive migration was to save their children especially daughters from the imprisonment of slavery.

The horrific story of a Black runaway slave Margaret Garner who, for fear of the terrible effects of then prevalent Fugitive Slave Law, killed her beloved daughter instead of giving her to a life of slavery inspired Morrison to write her masterpiece *Beloved* wherein she draws attention to the fully ugly effects of slavery for the present generations of the Black slaves who, as Karen Carmean rightly states, " must be willing to look back on their past experiences, how dreadful those might have been, so that a kind of purging, cathartic recovery can occur, a process of recovery ending in fuller self-realization and a discovery of personal worth" (Carmean 86). Moreover, as the increase in violence urged them to migrate, these real issues caused the Black people's segregation from the south. Later, the two Black organizations one founded in 1895 namely the National Federation of Afro- American Women and the other in 1909, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People became the most durable multiracial groups. With the Black women becoming politically vibrant, in the year 1913



in Illinois the first organization related to the Black women suffrage, named the Alpha Suffrage Club, was initiated. In this long struggle of Black women for a future for Black slaves free of slavery it was observed that the white suffragists and the racist politicians were the ones who were completely against Afro- American women's struggle. In the wake of the First World War and the U.S.A's entry into it the whole scenario changed as the Blacks came to be treated more violently, their wages decreased and the inflation and starvation aggravated their conditions. By witnessing these poor conditions of the Black, Jeanette Carter, Julia F. Coleman and Mary Church Terrell in Washington, D.C established women Wage-Earners Association.

Like the First World War, the Second World War and the entrance of the United States in it in 1941 again hardened the condition of Black women, particularly as they faced double marginalization. Moreover, sexual relationships between Black women and white men created sheer tension. In 1964, the civil right act outlawed discrimination. White women considered Black women inferior but also took benefits for their improvement from the association made for Blacks. They were accused for their such discriminatory and exploitative acts by the Blacks as when it came to the contribution they rejected and denied making any significant steps for the improvement of Afro-American women. This made Black women realize that it is hardly possible to collaborate or work together with white women as there were differences between both white and Black women which were increasing gradually. Yet again the efforts of the Black women were ignored in the 1980s and the civil rights Black women won in the '60s were observed nowhere. This depriving of Black of their civil rights created a tension among Black communities which resulted in the deprivation of the Blacks. White Feminists and critics refused to listen to the Black people and about their needs. They had to deal with lower wages and there were exceptional cases in which Black female workers continued their professions. Most of them were related to female-headed families. They were usually occupied in a great dilemma they were facing in their everyday life as they were confused about whether they should struggle for their gender liberation or for their race and its freedom.

Shirley Chisholm, a congress woman likewise indicates the requirement for a decisive battle against the generalizations that help and support social injustice. She claims that in efforts to work toward their freedom, Black women can help others as well in breaking free from the snares of stereotypes, and in the end can reject these

stereotypes about themselves by exposing that “anti-Black, anti female, and all forms of discrimination are equivalent to the same thing-anti humanism...” (181). Afro- American women, in comparison with the Black men, were not only the victim of gender oppression but they also suffered from racial oppression, hence Black women faced double marginalization while Black male confronted only racial oppression as well as the white women also struggled for their gender liberation only. As they faced these problems and differentiation in their daily life, they started shaping their goals to resist and overcome these problems. Black female critics and writers developed their Feminist ideas which were certainly different from white Feminism. They initiated Black Feminism which particularly talks about their people and supports Black women. The major goal for these Afro- American Feminists was to eradicate elitism, domination, and supremacy of Whites. Around 1980s, they started seeing themselves as the *womanists* rather than Feminists. This differentiation in term was because they felt the need to be unconventional in the conventional world of Whites. So they refused and stopped using the term *Feminism* in their theories, speeches, and books. As for them, one of the most important reasons which urged them to reject this term was that it was specifically related to Whites and particularly talked about and shed light on the discrimination, subjugation, and oppression that white women faced. It was in the essay, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden* by Alice Walker, that the term was first introduced. The term *womanism* was frequently used by Afro- American mothers and it was derived from the womanish. For the Black women, the term means that a woman, in order to come out of the restricting and oppressive conventions of white Feminism Black women must act in absolutely outrageous, daring, and determined ways. Walker asserts that the term *womanists* define a Feminist of color as for her “womanist is to Feminist as purple to lavender” (29). Moreover, for her, a Black woman is claimed to be a *womanist* when she demonstrates an unflinching commitment to the survival and unity of all people, male and female.

This redefining of the definition to be a womanist by Alice Walker universalized the struggle and also encouraged Black women to be independent and self-determined. She deeply focused on the term *womanist* as for her the term elaborates and opens many ways through which Afro- American women can make their relationships stronger with Afro- American men. Whereas Black women fight and struggle for their rights by sharing a platform with the Black men the white women do not share or participate with

the white men. A huge group of Afro- American women supports the idea of *womanism* but still, some women negate this idea. As for them, the term *Black Feminism* is a resilient and stronger term to use for Afro Americans. They believe that the addition of the word Black attacks the whiteness of the term Feminism and disputes the false meaning of the word. These women consider *Black Feminism* as a more universal term to use to refer to the double marginalization of Black women as for bell hooks Black men seem to be frustrated and have a violent behavior towards their women. The cause of this frustration is that they were unable to empower their women the way they were taught by the white men. So to avoid this frustration they dominate Black women and feel that it is their legal right to rule over their women. bell hooks develops a deep connection of frustration by speaking about the cycle of violence. For her, Black men confront humiliation during work which continues at home and this continuation results in the humiliation of their wives (Black women). Black men vent out their frustration and humiliation they face outside their homes by treating their wives with anger and aggression in homes. In this regard, there is a large variety of researches, articles, theses and papers that talk about the topic of racism in the light of Feminism. These scholarly researches highlight the ways which explain that a Feminist movement (specifically related to the white women) has not sufficiently fulfilled the needs of Black women in the United States.

In the light of this background of the Black women's racial oppression and the subsequent rise of Black Feminist thought, the four selected works of the Afro- American and Native American women novelists have been explored and analyzed.

## **4.2 *Beloved*: An Epitome of Black Ecriture Feminine**

### **4.2.1 Introduction**

*Beloved*, first published in 1987, is Toni Morrison's most widely known and critically acclaimed novel. Morrison dedicated this novel to those sixty million and more African slaves who died in the Middle Passage on American slave ship. The novel brought Morrison in limelight when, despite certain controversies regarding its main characters' killing of her daughter to save her from slavery, it won prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 1988. The novel is inspired by and based upon the life events of an African-American slave, Margret Garner, who escaped tortures of slavery in Kentucky and fled to Ohio, a free state, and subsequently murdered her daughter for fear of her becoming a

slave. In *Beloved* Morrison, in a language that is intense and evocative, and brilliant and incisive, narrates the poignant tale of the pains and pangs of slavery and its traumatic aftermaths upon the Black African subjects. Set in the post-civil-war America (1861-65), when the war has just ended, the novel narrates the touching experiences of the slave men and women who were living in miserable slavery. Morrison has strongly criticized in this remarkable novel, now an Afro- American classic, the callous fugitive slave act of 1850 according to which the slaves were the property of the masters and in case of escape could be taken back by the masters.

#### **4.2.2 Representation of the Unrepresentables**

It is not only stunning imagination, aestheticized language and excellent ability to write naturally and fluently but also a deep insight into the horrible stories of slave ancestors that give Morrison a status of the first Afro- American Noble laureate in literature. Morrison, among other Afro- American literary giants, stands prominent when she gives a primary importance to the tortured, enslaved and exploited Blacks in her writings. Morrison makes an unending effort to remind the Africans about their glorious but forgotten African values. Her narratives expose the power relations of the Euro-Americans also who, under the delusion of their power, have been using white- governed discourse and media on the African people for centuries to enslave them and suppress their sense of dignity. For this purpose she uses literary archaeology to uncover the horrendous history of slavery as she is well-aware of the functioning of power-mechanism and the remarkable role of discourse due to her political inclination and race-consciousness. Morrison not only undermines the given laws of stylistics in creative writings but also dismisses the idea of difference between intellectual criticism and creative writing, “so her corpus is best understood when read as a broad far-reaching intellectual contribution that defies our contemporary artist-scholar divide”(McBride162).

Morrison knows the extent of difficulty in capturing the story and narrating the sufferings of those who have been deprived of their fundamental rights, and are perpetual victims of injustice and oppression of the slavery-system, still practiced by the Whites in different forms. She was fully conscious that she was going to discursively reconfigure “the unrepresented” and “the unrepresentable” as the mainstream Euro-American discourse does not allow either to tell the uncountable stories of the system of slavery or to narrate the horrendous and atrocious activities of the suppressors which are not found

in numbers and statistics of slavery, but are a part of common and everyday life of the slaves. She explains the process of writing such terrible experiences:

“The terrain, slavery, was formidable and pathless...To render enslavement as a personal experience, language must get out of the way” (Morrison xvii, xix)

Morrison believes that much more room must be created for the new ones so that the untold stories of slavery may be turned into a tale of the individual and this is only possible if the contemporary writers give a new dimension to the conventional structure of story-telling and language. For this particular purpose, Morrison decides to narrate the story of a forsaken and forgotten lady in *Beloved* who speaks, not through her tongue but through her body as body speaks louder than the words.

#### **4.2.3 *Beloved* and the Notion of Ecriture Feminine**

In this regard, Feminist critic Helene Cixou’s theory of Ecriture Feminine and ideas relating to phallogocentrism are a bridge to reach Morrison’s views in *Beloved*. Cixous defines the term phallogocentrism by saying that it is the self-admiring and self-stimulating force that can be seen in the entire history of writing where ideas put on the paper obeyed the reasons. Cixous points out that the writers, since long, have been glorifying reason and avoiding the language of body and other feminine aspects which have their own importance. Regarding the term phallogocentrism, The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism claims, “The term has come to refer to the patriarchal system as a whole system in so far as that system privileges the phallus as the symbol and source of power. It is closely related to logocentrism, a term coined by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). The two are sometimes combined as phallogocentrism” (Norton 2018).

A close look at the definitions of logocentrism, and phallogocentrism, makes it obvious that these are only the false binaries which have categorized human beings among men and women where men are always given superiority over women due to their so-called physical and intellectual vigor. And this superiority becomes an inalienable right of man/male through phallogocentric male discourses. A certain kind of discourse, like Freud’s discussion of ‘penis envy’ and ‘fear of castration’, that privileges male and his sexual prowess represented through the phallus, conceives the relation between male and female only in binaristic terms ascribing the positive and powerful with the male gender and weaker and inferior to the female gender, or, put slightly otherwise,

constructing and describing all that is associated with women as negative and inferior while things that men do as positive and normative. Cixous feels that the time has come that women must come forward to get rid of the power structure constructed by phallogocentrism and this may be done by observing and deconstructing the way the writing in the west is organized by particular hierarchy. To her, if the female writers start writing body, they can easily get rid of and break down the phallogocentric structure of writing which is actually the crux of *Écriture Feminine*. She elaborates the concept of *Écriture Feminine* by describing the relation between female body and writing.

“The female body has been suppressed. Indeed, any transgressive, desiring body - and perhaps the body itself-has been repressed...” (Norton 2018).

This term that has been created by Cixous directly rejects phallogocentric view of writing. Here Cixous does not sympathize with women only but with the human beings as they have, from time immemorial, been denied to speak their bodies. Though women have always claimed to be suppressed by men, Cixous believes that all men and women who failed to speak through their bodies due to the phallogocentric system are the real sufferers. In this way it can be said without any shadow of doubt that whenever a woman exercises *Écriture Feminine*, she actually embodies her thoughts and expresses them through her body. It is not her tongue that speaks rather it is her body that tells whole story. Her tongue may be restricted due to the pressure of society but her body speaks what she thinks. In this way it can be said without any shadow of doubt that whenever a woman exercise *écriture féminine*, she actually embodies her thoughts and expresses them through her body. It is not her tongue that speaks rather it is her body that tells whole story. Her tongue may be restricted due to the pressure of society but her body speaks what she thinks. “She draws her story into history” (Cixous 1947). The same thing can be seen in Morrison’s *Beloved* when she writes:

“The historical Margaret Garner is fascinating, but, to a novelist, confining. Too little imaginative space there for my purpose...The heroine would represent the unapologetic acceptance of shame and terror; assume the consequences of choosing infanticide; claim her own freedom” (Morrison xvii).

If Morrison re-tells the story of Garner in *Beloved* it may be called only a historical version of Margaret Garner. But the thing that distinguishes *Beloved* is that it returns to body and speaks about the matter of shame and terror and especially of

freedom through body. Both Morrison and Cixous reject the idea that mind speaks louder than the body. Rather it is interesting to observe that the canvas of body is vaster than that of mind as we can explore the un-named and unpopular people also by focusing on the bodily needs and experiences. Some critics may claim that, in the past, women spoke through their bodies also but how is it possible that under the suppressing hands of patriarchy, women may feel free to express their thoughts through their bodies. Within the phallogocentric culture, women may never be represented truly and properly in any society. How can they speak through their bodies when their bodies are in possession of male members of society who are always there to direct their conversation and assign them roles. It is only possible when they get back their bodies and represent themselves freely. Cixous, speaking about women's writing, about what it (writing) will do when put into practice, invites and urges women to write about themselves and about their gender from which they have been historically and socially driven away as they have been systematically alienated from their bodies. Reconnecting with the body entails the awareness of what the body wants and the knowledge of how the (female) body has been banished. Therefore, to reclaim her body, "Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement". (Cixous 1975)

By the same token, Morrison's purpose in writing *Beloved* is that she desires to bring out the repressed tales of those Black bodies which have been caught into the American chains of slavery for a long time. There are numerous examples that can be extracted from *Beloved* as to show how the bodies speak by themselves. If the tongues remain silent, the scars on backs of the characters in *Beloved* tell the whole story of oppression committed by their masters. The horrors of slavery are reflected through the breast milk and blood of Sethe. These are the bodies of Sethe and Beloved that disclose the oral and un-representable stories and never let them drown into the depth of history. Through the narrating voice of Paul, the stories of former slaves are unfolded: "White people believed that ... under every dark skin was jungle..." in which flew fast un-navigable water, and where moving screening baboons, sleeping snakes and exotic animals were prepared to pounce upon the sweet blood of the white people. He thought what the white thought about the Black was conversely true because "it was not the jungle the Blacks brought to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle white folks planted in them ..." and the screening baboons and all kind of predatory animals "lived under their own white skin" (Morrison 243).

Morrison, in a striking way, rejects the binaries between the white and colored people by suggesting the idea that the animal living inside the people is not born black rather it is the white animal, brought by the white men, that dwells among the colored ones. It is actually the projection of white bodies onto the Black bodies. So the body becomes a place of projections. It also shows that it is actually the Western white-dominated phallogocentrism that has introduced darkness among the colored people as their skin may be dark due to climate but the oppressing and suppressing environment created by the white phallogocentrism has projected them as the “Others”. The way Morrison and Cixous motivate us to look at women and their writing actually opens new vistas for other marginalized people to narrate their untold stories.

The language of body is seen in many novels of Morrison but *Beloved* is an exception as it speaks more conspicuously than the rest of her writings. Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* shouts loudly through her body but in the end she becomes insane, Hegar commits suicide in *Song of Solomon*, and Sula leaves the world with town falling apart. However, the story in *Beloved* ends in some different way as both Denver and Sethe learn how to indulge in self-love and Paul commits to take care of Sethe. The banishing of *Beloved* does not stop the characters moving on. Baby Suggs’ calling sermons impact the whole community to a certain point where they can find redemption. So the ideas surrounding Ecriture Feminine easily extend into the spiritual realm. This spirituality may be gained by focusing on the material and bodily objects also.

#### **4.2.4 Deconstructing the Phallogocentrism**

Study of *Beloved* from phallogocentric and Ecriture Feminine perspective reveals that the story is not to be passed on but rather it must be told through bodies and non-phallogocentric devices. If we see in terms of narrative structure, we find that Sethe’s body is the strongest body as it tells the story. Though the story of the novel starts with a house number (124) with so many characters like Denver, Sethe, the ghost and Paul D but it actually begins with Sethe’s memory twisted back to a past event when she is performing a sexual act in exchange for the word beloved. This is the time when Sethe’s body tells the story leading to the other actions of the novel.

Sethe’s memories narrate the entrance of Paul D that eclipses the stories of mysterious ghost, Baby Suggs, Denver and even of Sethe. It also leads to the mentioning of a tree which actually is a scar on Sethe’s body/back; this tree on back is enough to tell



us the horrible story of being beaten by a slave master. As she says, “I had milk . . . . I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl.” (Morrison 19). Sethe is interrupted by Paul D, who likes to listen to the story of body (the scar of a tree on her back) and not the story of tongue (that mentions the milk for baby girl). So, she finally starts the story after admitting to be beaten and tells the dark and depressing episode of her brutal treatment by the white boys who came and took her milk as though she were an animal.

“After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That’s what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner. She had that lump and couldn’t speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Then boys found out I told on them. School teacher made one open up my back, and when it closed, it made a tree. It grows there still.”(Morrison 19-20).

It is very important to note that the scar of tree on the back of Sethe keeps on growing as her body grows which is actually the growth of story also. The bodies may be enslaved but the process of growth can never be made slave. The bodies are free to grow which actually means that there is a kind of freedom that is found in the bodies. In this regard, Henderson aptly comments that “The tree on Sethe’s back is endemic of this process as her body functions as a template for viewing the rootedness of mental sufferings.”(Henderson 83).

Through the novel, the tale of Sethe’s tree proves how all the fragmented pieces in Morrison’s story come together to make a linear piece of writing. This very tree not only reminds us of the story of Denver’s birth but also certain experiences of slavery. The involvement of body in the story is also proved through the way the milk from Sethe’s breasts has been described telling the story of baby ghost that will become Beloved who is hungry for her mother. Sethe’s tree also describes a ‘thick love’ that consumes Sethe as well as Beloved and those around them. And most importantly, it narrates the story of the whole concept of slavery prevailing in Sethe’s society. Another important character in the novel is the title character the Beloved. The readers are introduced to her body and appearance that wasn’t even two years old when she died, “Too little to understand, too little to talk even” (Morrison 5). As a young child/baby of merely two years, we know her only through her body whose re-entrance in the world is a magical realism, an *Écriture Feminine* narrative tool Morrison uses to deconstruct the hierarchical patterns of Euro-centered patriarchal writing: “A fully dressed woman walked out of the water . . . Nobody

saw her emerge or come accidentally by. If they had, chances are they would have hesitated before approaching her. Not because she was wet, or dozing, or had what sounded like asthma, but because amid all that she was smiling.” (Morrison 60)

Something seems abnormal and changed because of Beloved’s smile. It also points out towards magical realism, an example of *Écriture Feminine* narrative style that asks us to suspend our reason and accept the extra-ordinary appearance as reality and go away from phallogocentric reasoning by accepting a woman who is semi-ghost and who walks out of a river “fully dressed”. Beloved’s growth increases her bodily needs leading her to an immense increase in her power. At first, she is a baby that is too feeble to get out of bed but later she grows quickly, attains womanhood and seduces Paul D. She goes through a “spiritual sexual negotiation” (Henderson 89) with Paul D but her innocence may not be neglected when she asks Paul D to “touch me on the inside part” and “call me my name” (Morrison 137). Her innocence does not let her name any word to the act of sex. She does emphasize “her breath surgery from fingerfuls of molasses or sand-cookie crumbs” (Morrison 143). She is addicted to sweets and this need to consume grows to destructive levels.

Usually *Beloved* seems to be a ghost story but it is more than that as it transports the readers to so many memories where the other characters also move in their respective ways. When the identity of Beloved is disclosed to Sethe, she is “excited to giddiness by all the things she no longer had to remember...” (Morrison 216). When Beloved points out that the storm mixes both men and women together, she actually conveys the idea that it is the hard time that convinces the men to consider women more than a sex-doll otherwise women have always been neglected in every society. She also mentions the white men by calling them “the men without skin” whose bodies are piled on top of her, so the story of the Beloved changes from the memories of being buried or dead to the multiple narrators that lead to some other conclusions. In this regard, Henderson points out that it may be argued that Beloved’s presence within the novel symbolises an immediate need that caters to both personal and communal memory (Henderson 91).

This does make Beloved a uniting force for another “body” that is called a community. Seen from *Écriture Feminine* perspective, it is obvious that these are the bodies that move the plot along but at the same time these needs of bodies as well as the speeches of bodies determine the relationships among the characters. Whether it is the relationship between Beloved and Sethe or Denver’s self-discovering of a life outside the

socio-religious bounds, it is the bodily hunger and speech that determined a relation. In the beginning when Beloved comes to the house she is thirsty and drinks four glasses of water to quench her thirst as if she had crossed a desert but Denver smells another hunger in Beloved which she satisfies by giving her sweets. It is not the speech of tongue that talks about Beloved's hunger rather it is the signs of body that make Denver understand the demand of Beloved. Denver knows that the baby-ghost has come to life, so she wants to form a bond with her in order to please her. It is not that only Beloved is hungry, the hunger can also be seen in Denver who is hungry for love and affection as she is leading a lonely life.

She wants to catch and inhale sweet air from and in the mouth of Beloved in order to satisfy hunger, her hunger can be related to her mother's milk for which Beloved is also hungry. Cixous believes that breast milk is actually "white ink" which may be used by every woman writer to acknowledge the strength and power of a woman. Though some critics accuse her of using female biological essentialism yet this new language outside the phallogocentric language helps women in raising their voice against patriarchal traditions of oppressing. Toni Morrison pays direct heed to the words of Cixous and uses breast milk and blood and water as the "ink" of her story. This 'white ink' is seen when Sethe narrates her story and begins with: "I had milk \_\_ I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my body girls" (Morrison 19). She narrates how the school teacher's boys made a sexual assault on her by coming closer to her to get milk from her boobs. Morrison, through the mouth piece of Sethe, uses words carefully. She does not use the words like "sexual assault", 'rape' or "beatings" rather she uses the language of body by saying that the men robbed women, especially the mothers by taking away something precious from the mothers- the thing that made them the mothers: "There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left. I'll tell *Beloved* about that; she'll understand. She is my daughter. The one I managed to have milk for and get it to her even after they stole it.(Morrison 236).

Now it is important to note that Sethe's breast milk also has its symbolic significance. The rules of slavery do not allow anything in the possession of a slave. Nothing belongs to them even if it has been bestowed by nature. Everything is snatched away by the respective owner of the bodies, even the breast milk is not left for the children. But Sethe is happy to serve not only the children but also the assailants. This

milk becomes a strong symbol of a thing that can be gained by freedom. Only milk which Sethe can't get for her children becomes bad or sour for her. Sethe may not consider it souring but Denver knows that the blood of her sister is mixed with her mother's milk which has caused a souring in Sethe's milk. This mixing of blood and milk is not a new tool used by any writer. In this connection, Traci C. West writes that one of the different ways slaves were tortured was a form of sexualized torture in which pregnant women and nursing mothers were whipped so brutally "that blood and milk flowed simultaneously from their breasts." (West 278)

It is quite clear that the emotions and feelings which do not find flow through tongue as the tongue has been caught by the cruel hands of slave rulers, body expresses those feelings and emotions through the running blood and flowing milk. If one part of the body (the tongue) fails to express what runs in brain, the other part comes forward as it can't be stopped. This is the very difference between body and tongue. One is bound to the external pressure and restrictions whereas the other has no limit that is why the language of body is much more powerful and effective than the tongue. Morrison expresses this very idea through *Beloved* that since the language of body can't be restricted so why don't the other writers, especially the female writers use this very language of body as a tool to express what is hidden in their brains. This is the effective use of this sort of innovative and expressive language that communicates the purely feminine experiences and distinguishes Morrison from others as she shuns the conventional language of phallogocentrism. She knows well that such phallogocentrism as has been conventionally used by the writers may not serve the purpose of doing justice to her stories. If she uses the conventional language of phallogocentrism, she may never be able to enjoy the space provided by Cixous' theory of *Écriture Feminine*. To break the boundaries of phallogocentrism, it is essential to break boundaries of logic and reason and to focus on bodily language. Otherwise, her story would also be drowned into the bottom of deep conventional sea.

#### **4.2.5 Exploring the Language of the Body**

Morrison faces a challenge to look for a new language for a story and she yearns for a story not to pass on rather she wants to bring those stories onto surface level which are still hidden and lost somewhere else. As Handley explains that Morrison, in a bid to fashion a particular narrative style, the one that is embedded in Black women's psycho-physical experiences and differs in stylistics from white modes of narration contests the

Western critical uses of personification and allegory as narratological strategies “by demonstrating the ways in which language-as-loss is not only a culturally a relative concept but produced by history – specially, for African American culture, the history of slavery.” (Handley 679)

In order to gain this particular use of language, Morrison does not rest on one or two techniques rather she uses variety of techniques to achieve her goal. Firstly, Morrison makes a non-linear and non-phallogocentric use of the sense of time. In *Beloved* we find even jumping from present to past and then present. This weaving of past into present goes on throughout the novel where the characters keep on moving according to this particular weaving of time. Secondly, the technique of repetition is applied by Morrison to strengthen her narrative technique. Thirdly, she calls our attention to traditional western system of naming, and ways, in which characters subvert and reject these systems. Furthermore, Morrison does not rely upon the traditional words rather she invents a new vocabulary when she does not find one sufficient word to tell the untold stories. All these devices are formed in the space of *Ecriture Feminine* which not only helps abandoning the use of the traditional phallogocentric language but also enables Morrison to tell the untold stories. Handley asserts that Morrison’s response in the form of critical reconstruction of history from Black perspective offers very appropriate “critique of a Western ideology of writing and reading that itself constructs an allegory of reading that serves that erasure.” (Handley 679).

So Morrison applies *Ecriture Feminine* dynamics to criticize western ideology of writing. Morrison complicates the notion of time in *Beloved* which shows that she purposefully and successfully evades a phallogocentric or/and linear tale. The story in *Beloved* does not move in a chronological order where Sethe begins with her mother and Nan, goes to Sweet Home, marries, elopes, remains with baby, kills her daughter, brings up Denver, experiences the pangs of Baby Suggs’ death and meets Paul D and Beloved rather the story starts with Baby’s death and then Paul D is introduced. Morrison weaves an intricate web to narrate the memories and stories of different characters. Sometimes the characters are introduced but they are explained in the later part of the novel. Though Morrison is not the first to use this particular use of time in her writings but the remarkable way she has done it definitely promotes anti-phallogocentric narratology and opens space to tell fractured stories in fractions.

Morrison has extensively made use of the tool of repetition in *Beloved* giving it entirely new dimensions, though this tool has been used in literature for centuries and repetition also predates a written language. In oral tradition, the songs and stories were remembered only by repeating them again and again. In *Beloved*, most of the characters are illiterate and they tell the untold stories only by relying upon their memories. Morrison's way of storytelling is different in the sense that she makes a musical use of repetition. There are so many repetitions in *Beloved* but most important is when Sethe and Denver begin with who Beloved is to them and the phrase, "and she is mine" is found repeatedly in this section. In all repetitions *Beloved* seems to be a song of chorus that is memorized to narrate a story. This also reflects the oral traditions in characters' lives as well as former slaves' lives. It also narrates the story of those people whose tongues are guided by their rulers and who sing song with certain refrains. According to Cixous these songs are actually the voices which are refrained and restrained. If Morrison brings these refrains on to the surface, she actually recreates the voices which have become a part of history. *Écriture Feminine* is reflected through the language of naming used by Morrison as naming plays a vital role in so many tales in *Beloved*. The names of the characters reflect the impact of slavery in the minds of the Blacks. The characters yearn to have their own identities so they use the method of naming one-another and the ceremony of this naming properly, according to West brings for "the enslaved person a kind of social death." (West 265). So it appears that the people think renaming themselves to be the only way to re-enter in social life. On the other hand Handley believes it to be an African philosophy called "nommo". It is not only a philosophy that comes from outside the Westerns surface rather it seems to be such a system that brings language and body together to create a new being that speaks of its own by breaking all the shells of traditional phallogocentrism.

#### **4.2.6 (Re)Naming and Identity**

In *Beloved*, it is crystal clear that naming goes on under the system of slavery. Slaves are not allowed to have their individual identity rather their names also are named after their owners. Their identity is their masters only as they are the property of their masters who treat them like a commodity of theirs. As women and children are named after their father in a patriarchal family, the slaves are named after their masters. It is a phallogocentric, practice – one that many of the characters will reject. The conversation between Baby Suggs and Mr. Garner is essential in the sense that Mr. Garner who calls

her Jenny does not know her real name as the same name is printed on her sales – ticket. He lays stress on the name Jenny, not on “Baby Suggs” as he says: “If I were you, I’d stick with Jenny Whitlow; Mrs. Baby Suggs ain’t no name for a feed Negro.” (Morrison 167).

This is a real proof of the power of the system of slavery where no one is allowed to have an individual identity. Even if someone tries to hold his/her native identity, he is made to realize that the new identity, imposed by the masters, is the real and original identity. So Baby is bound to obey Mr. Garner though she does not like it. Even though Mr. Garner is correct that in the North, in the phallogocentric system, “Baby Suggs” is an odd name, it still describes her to herself better than “Jenny”.

Stamp, in the same way, goes through the same process but the change in his name is for different reasons than those of Baby Suggs. The only common thing between Baby Suggs and Stamp is the issue of identity. Stamp comes with non-phallogocentric freedom for which he puts his wife at stake. This is once again the busting and disintegration of slave communities made by the cultural naming and re-naming process of the white masters.

The most tragic naming story of the novel is none other than the Beloved who stands as a symbol of slavery. She does not have a name. Beloved is not the name of a single character rather it is the embodiment of slavery. If Morrison gives names to the characters it is actually a rebellious and activist notion as it exemplifies *Écriture Feminine* by raising a question against the naming system of the dominant phallogocentric culture.

Morrison’s revolt against the phallogocentric language can be seen through the way she invents and re-invents words in order to avoid the traditional words. She deliberately shuns the language of the slave-system: a language invented by the slave masters rather she invents words by herself to exemplify *Écriture Feminine*. For example, her inventing the words “whitepeople” and “blackpeople” is an effort to bridge the gap between identity and personhood. She does not use a gap between these words. In the same way, instead of using the word “memory”, she uses the word “rememory” and “rememories”. She even uses it as a verb: “seem like I do rememory that ...” and “yourememory me?” (Morrison 238, 254). Morrison knows that her characters belong to

the place where most of the people are illiterate but she deliberately avoids their lack of education and invents the word “*Rememory*” for a purpose. Henderson points out that:

“Morrison’s novel posits the concept of *re-memory* as a plausible avenue for the materialization of ... That freed self once the physical body has been emancipated” (Henderson 91).

Here Henderson seems to make a little mistake when he hyphenates the word “*rememory*”. It shows that Morrison did not invent the word outside the phallogocentric discourse. The way Henderson hyphenates “*rememory*” brings the word back to restructuring it in an acceptable phallogocentric way. But reality is a little different as we see that Morrison breaks the phallogocentric tradition when she uses Sethe to use the word *rememory*. The reader’s main focus is on Sethe’s story who is not remembering the things rather she tries to materialize the past for herself. Beloved and Paul D actually reappear in her life. This sort of reappearance brings the re-appearance of memories also which may be called “*rememory*”: Morrison gives past a shape of body. These *rememories* are not only personal but also collective. Through this tool of *rememory*, Morrison brings back all those painful incidents of the lives of her characters which have never been told due to the suppression where the tongue was not allowed to utter even a single word. Amy tells Sethe that “Anything dead coming back to life hurts” (Morrison 42).

This very statement of Amy clearly shows that the untold stories are being told by Morrison with a new shape, new body and new language which is the real breaking of phallogocentric structures and practices. These things can never be done by memories only but they may be accomplished by “*Rememory*”. So this very act of inventing language and naming is actually an act of *Ecriture Feminine*.

#### **4.2.7 Body as Community**

Within the context of the importance of speech of bodies, it is important to note that body is not simply the matter of individuals rather the community also which is also a body. It is the body of people but if this communal body becomes jealous of one of its parts or rejects the other, it becomes dysfunctional. As in *Beloved* we see that the community rejects Sethe and becomes jealous of Baby Suggs. But when it becomes effective as the community, it saves Sethe from *Beloved*. The Western ideal of patriarchal nuclear family gives a phallogocentric view of society as bell hooks explains



that it is the lethal combination of patriarchy and capitalism that, as a dominating structure, has “worked overtime to undermine and destroy [a] larger unit of extended kin...”. She further says as a result of the the segregation of nuclear families from the whole family, women eventually became increasingly dependent on an individual man, and children became more reliant on an individual woman. It is this “dependency that becomes, and is, the breeding ground for abuses of power” (hooks 130).

Now, looking at this statement of hooks, we find that in western society, it is believed that patriarchal hierarchy is justified and one may set rules for the others who are dependents. It so shows that those who are ruled by or owned by others are less powerful than those who own them. But Morrison gives another possibility. Though the families she writes about are broken and separated from their nuclear families, they are forced to look to a larger source for their structure: the community body that is a real opposition of family unit. A clear example is seen when Beloved pushes Paul D out of the house. This act of pushing Paul D is actually the breaking of nuclear family. Paul D and Sethe imagine for a family but Beloved shuns it. So this will never be a typical family with a particular head. The community ultimately steps in.

However, the characters in the novel can't fully understand the importance of community. Sethe bears jealousy from community which becomes clear when Baby Suggs becomes a victim of downfall. Similarly Baby Suggs' relationship with Halle also evokes the jealousy and anger of community. Community always wants its members to obey it. It only sees its losses without considering its worth.

Morrison almost always explains the losses and violence of one character together with the losses of other characters. In this way the characters do form a family unit together. At the same time it also shows the failure of community that fails to fill the gaps and recover the losses of its participants. Another tearing down of nuclear family can be seen the way Sethe fails to remember the face of her mother. She barely can explain her relation with her mother as she only remembers the affections of her “Nan” who takes care of her whereas her mother is busy in her work in the field. She only identifies her mother when she is hanged; this breaking of nuclear family is a proof of the ownership of people by the people. Sethe is also not surprised to see that Beloved also fails to remember her mother. She asks Beloved: “You disremember everything, I never know my mother neither, but I saw her a couple of times. Did you never see yours? What kind of Whites was they? You don't remember none”? (Morrison 140).

This seems to be unusual that a daughter does not remember her mother but in a system of slavery it is not un-imaginable because in slavery system, not only the bodies but brains also are under the control of the slave masters who do not let the slave think anything except the white bodies and their needs. So it is imaginable that Beloved “disremembers” her family and the real owners of her.

Throughout the novel we find the deconstructions and rupturing of nuclear family but when the community casts away Beloved, the rocky relations between Sethe and Paul D melt and both realize, in the end, how much important they are for each other. So it shows that re-union is possible only when community is whole again. The same is seen before in the case of jealousy of Baby Suggs and her party. When the community comes forward, the Baby starts smelling its scent. The day after the party, the community, “Swallows [ ] baking sod, the morning after, to calm the stomach, violence caused by the bounty...a scent of disapproval lay heavy in the air” (Morrison 162).

Baby Suggs smells the danger which may not be smelt by the other characters. This time, it is not the white men rather it is her own folks, the colored ones, who know her. She finds her friends and neighbors angry with her. They don't like her overstepping the limits. Before Baby knows what is happening, she sees Sethe with Beloved's throat cut in the barn. Here once again the community shows a jealousy and remains unable to share in abundance. It not only causes trauma but is trauma in itself. Baby has always shown love and affection to her community but the community's behavior of disapproval is totally un-imaginable for her because she lived her life “Giving advice, passing messages, healing the sick, hiding fugitives, loving, cooking, cooking, loving, preaching, singing, dancing and loving everyday like it was her job and hers alone” (Morrison 161).

This hatred of community is not hatred against a single one rather Baby is a part of community body. They have wounded their own part. Under the hierarchal system of phallogocentrism they have encouraged jealousy only where nothing is shared, nothing is given and nothing is loved. Perhaps, it is the most poisonous aspect in the entire novel. However, a good end of Paul D and Sethe's story shows redemption of community that succeeds in conquering evil and saves one of its integral parts. The people from community gather at 124 slowly but happily. They bring with them the Christian faith and forget for a while the breach between Sethe and the community. As Morrison writes

“There they were, young and happy, playing in Baby Suggs’ yard, not feeling the envy that surfaced the next days” (Morrison 303-04).

Women want to get rid of all those feeling of hatred for Sethe which they have been nourishing in their hearts for past so many years. Sethe who had been facing the evils of slavery for so many years had to bear the condemning words of women of her community also. But now all has changed and women who repressed the community are no more in hostile relations with Sethe. They don’t want to “rememory” what they have done in the past. So the community decides to repair all the fractures, tries to “disremember” all the evils related to Sethe and atrocities committed against her. Women of the community have learnt to shape themselves to see their own truths and past. They step forward to stop Sethe from a terrible fate. By compelling Beloved to disappear, they succeed in demolishing the slave memories that Beloved represents : “Whatever Sethe had done, Ella didn’t like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present” (Morrison 302).

As the community steps forward and makes a collective efforts to redeem its past action that caused pain for Sethe and other characters, the language also becomes a collective “they” for Sethe and Paul D who come together and allow Sethe to make a new beginning. Now the “they” become those individuals who have told the story till now. Morrison writes: “They forgot her like a bad dream . . . so, in the end, they forgot her too. Remembering seemed unwise” (Morrison 323-24).

Morrison makes it a plural reality by the use of the word “they” by the community that overcomes struggle. The family of 124 is also included in this plural reality that is allowed not to repress others or judge them hypocritically. It is also not allowed to be hunted by the past. The idea of body as a spirit is the most rooted and embedded idea in *Beloved*. Though the idea is among the oldest spiritual traditions, yet it has been neglected by the major patriarchal religions. But Morrison does not give us this kind of paranormal and metaphysical spirituality rather she focuses on physical and bodily alternatives.

The most important character that represents this paranormal spirituality is Baby Suggs that is often described as “Baby Suggs, holy”. She is holy because her body is exhausted and effaced. Though life of slavery had destroyed her whole body, her heart was still vibrant, so “She decided that, because slave life had busted her legs, back, head,

eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue, she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart which she put to work at once, becoming an “unchurched preacher” (Morrison 102).

Now the word “unchurched preacher” is important in the sense that it not only denotes the language creating faculty of Morrison but it also shows Baby Suggs’ breaking of patriarchal and hierarchical ideals of Church. Baby Suggs is no more an ordained character and rejects all the constructions made by phallogocentrism. Baby decides to make her own acquaintance other than the Lord. That is why she does not show any interest in going to Reverend Pike when sister Bodwin in Ohio suggests her to go there. Rather she prefers to remain unchurched and replies to sister Bodwin that, “I won’t need him for that I can make my own acquaintance” (173).

Baby Suggs realizes that she with other women of her society must form a new way of leading life by rejecting the ideals of patriarchy. In her speech also, she repeats the word “flesh” imploring her religious assembly to “love it. Love it hard” (Morrison 103). She learns that the body has its own speech. She motivates women to love themselves, to love their mouth, flesh, arms and neck. The body parts are not to be loved by others, for the others only use them. She urges women to know and appreciate their femininity and love their body parts because they are unique and precious so addressing women she says, “and all your inside parts that they’d just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them – More than your life – giving womb and your life – giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize” (Morrison 104).

This very speech of Baby Suggs is the gist of the novel as it clearly motivates women to reject the very ideals of patriarchal Church that is snubbing and crushing the very rights of women. It allows the men to use the female body but does not preach them to love these women. So Baby Suggs gives tongue to each part of women’s body as she believes that every part of female body has its own particular language. She makes women to drop and get rid of the dualistic thinking. Women are supposed to perform duties but when the matter of rights comes, they are stopped by the hierarchical community including the Church also. Sue Monk Kidd explains the body as spiritual vessel in her memoir:

“The feminine carries an odd and deeply entwined connection with nature, body and earth. Women’s experience has been largely invested in these things as we go

through menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing...” (Kidd 160). She contends that a Divine Feminine symbol refutes the old notion that these things don’t fall within the ambit of divinity. It dismantles thousands of years of dualistic thinking, and ushers in a new “mandate for the divinity of the earth and the holiness of the body” (ibid).

The comparison of this statement of Kidd with Baby Suggs’ bodily imagery reveals that Baby Suggs gains the status where she can cross gender lines. She does invoke the womb and life-giving private parts so that everyone is included. So an alternative to patriarchy is simply the feminine Divine. Kidd addresses such crucial questions as, Is there any need of alternative in patriarchy? Can the bodies be not honoured through patriarchy? The Biblical ideas do remind us that women are unclean during menstruation. It tells us about those stories in which the Saints refuse to go near women to gain spirituality. Women are avoided like demons. They are supposed to be a danger for one’s piety. They are a great hurdle in the divine pleasure of the saints so they must be kept away. Kidd gives some clarity by declaring that in divine transcendence, one can observe the roots of patriarchy. Divine paranormal actually separates men from the material universe. It teaches him either to remain above and beyond the material universe or to remain apart from it. But Kidd believes that “Divine Immanence” is actually a built –in quality even in the material stuff of life. She believes that: “Patriarchy’s emphasis on transcendence grew out of a flight from death. It sought to transcend death by transcending the body and nature, which inevitably die and decay” (Kidd 160). Kidd’s phrase “divine immanence”, is better and less dualistic than the term “Feminine Divine”.

Some may claim that Kidd’s memoir is not as much a scholarly source but when we analyze it under the call of Cixous to “write our stories”; the memoir of Kidd becomes better than any other source. The trace of this philosophy is also found in Feminist theologian Carol P. Christ who finds that all rational and irrational approaches are connected with men and women respectively. In every patriarchal society, rationality is related with male whereas irrationality is associated with female. If male pronounces order, female creates chaos. Similarly the contrast between transcendence and immanence is that of between male and female. This thing also raises a question against excluding the body and material from spiritual.

It seems irrational to look for an abstract heaven after denying body. God is authority and this authority is associated with male only. So Divinity gives much room to

patriarchy and hierarchy in society. As Cixous desires to have a place out of all marginalization, Carol Christ also negates the idea of binary of male/female. Thus by reading the views of Cixous and Carol Christ and rejecting the phallogocentric ideals, we reach other possibilities of “feminine”, “female”, or some other “Other”. Penelope Ingram, the Feminist writer also explains what Feminist spiritualists vocalize. She says that it is only men who experience themselves as divine because in Christianity as well as in Jewish religion God is personified as male. She further says: “... the spiritualization of the sexual and not merely body; and the refiguring of God is immanent” (Ingram 48).

The word immanence is an answer to transcendence, which directly defines the self-love and awakening of body described by Baby Suggs. Baby Suggs feels that denying the body is actually a denial of one’s own self and love of ‘self’, even our sexual organs is a holy emotion. To her, the real prize is the awakening of soul that may be gained through the realization of the importance of body and its language.

#### **4.2.8 Conclusion**

The comprehensive analysis of *Beloved* from Ecriture Feminine perspective leads us to draw conclusion that language of body is as much important as other languages. It has been elucidated that the work of writing the body is included in the idea of Ecriture Feminine that makes us realize that the conventions of phallogocentric writing may be challenged not only through the language of body but also through inventing some more ways of writing which reject the conventional methods in term of linearity, vocabulary, repetition etc. Morrison succeeds in extending the theory of Ecriture Feminine into other areas and by so doing she has successfully reconfigured the Black history, memory, and feminine identity, among other things. She gives the alternative of hierarchy and patriarchy in the form of community. She invents language to counter the traditional phallogocentrism, and also denies the spiritual and religious explanation of male - centric body. It has been demonstrated in the light of discourse analytical method proposed by Foucauly that how, by deconstructing the gendered and phallogocentric misrepresentations of the black women in mainstream fiction, Morrison has validated the personal experiences of the black women in order to reconfigure their identities/subjectivities.

### **4.3 *Paradise*: A Black Feminist Reconstruction of Race and Gender**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

*Paradise* is Toni Morrison's seventh novel written in 1997, the first she wrote after winning the most prestigious Nobel Prize for literature that bestowed upon her the honor of being the first Afro- American literary woman to receive the highest literary award. She herself described it the conclusive of a trilogy that includes *Beloved* (1987) and *Jazz* (1992). Morrison originally intended the novel to be named *War* but after being overridden by the editor, she settled to call it *Paradise* which keeping in view the peaceful and secured environment of the Convent seems safe haven for women inhabitants of the Convent. The novel is divided into nine sections of unequal length. The first section- Ruby- is named after the Black town and remains the pivot of the whole novel. The rest of the sections are named after various women characters whose lives and destinies are attached with Ruby and Convent. Women taking refuge in Convent and living an independent, almost enviable life from the oppressed Ruby women's perspective include Mavis, Grace or Gigi, Seneca, Divine or Pallas and Consolatta or Connie. The chapters are named after various female characters- the fact, among other things, that confirms that the novel is steeped in Black Feminist perspective. Morrison relates the stories and histories of the individual women with the tales and histories of Ruby and Convent, and the murderous intent of the feared Black men who plan to storm the Convent to kill the object of their fear -independent Black women.

Foucault's qualitative methodological procedures as they appear in his book "The Order of Things" published in 1966 in which he accorded supreme importance to ethnology as one of the commanding kind of knowledge of modernity, are singularly important to my analysis of *Paradise* because this analysis deals with the division of human beings into races and their origin, distribution, and reconstruction of race and characteristics

#### **4.3.2 Black Bodies White Culture**

This section of the chapter explores the ways Morrison has depicted the (Black) bodies of her female characters in *Paradise* in relation with their Black and white counterparts. This section contends that like her others novels, in *Paradise* too Morrison has discursively reconfigured and invigorated the traumatized Black body which, apart from documenting the inhuman objectification of Black women in slavery and its after

effects, challenges the phallogocentric postulations and practices of the white culture which denigrates the Black bodies. Informed by Foucauldian theoretical-methodological choices, this section is an attempt to “thinking differently” in terms of the reconstructions of black women’s subjectivities in non-white écriture feminine “instead of legitimizing the already known” knowledge about the Native and Afro- American women and their historical relationship with Native as it was constructed and proliferated by the Euro-American, mainstream discourses.

In a deeply racialized culture of America that has a long history of racist colonization, the Black body is constructed biological, natural and seductive, in order to project the white dominators as biologically superior, cultured and civilized having divine right to rule and civilize the Black body. What dictates “the national perception of Afro Americans as venal and inhuman beings”( qtd. in Handerson 2002:4) , according to bell hooks , is the generalized construction of the Black people by the white gaze as people having more natural, inherent connection with their bodies. Resultantly, in contrast to white bodies which are constructed in such a way to signify purity, culture and racial superiority, the Black female bodies are degraded, commodified and devalued as exploitable and vulnerable bodies. Drawing attention to the sharply contrasting discursive formations of the white and Black bodies, Venessa D. Dickerson (2001) substantiates this stance in “Summoning Somebody” : “the Black female body has been constructed as the ugly end of wearisome Western dialectic: not sacred but profane, not angelic but demonic, not fair lady but darky” ( 195-96).

Compared with the white women who had to face oppression from the white man only, the Black women had to face suppression and marginalization from both white and Black men in phallogocentric American society and culture, therefore, the Black female body is reduced to serve the reductionist phallic principle in still a largely racist American society. Black women, due to their reproductive function, hold more closely to their bodies than Black men that make them more vulnerable to exploitation in continuation of the legacy of slavery. Paula Gallant Eckard’s observation in *Maternal Body and Voice* that “generally speaking, maternal subjectivity-the presentation of pregnancy, childbirth, and the experience of motherhood from the mother’s perspective- has not been well represented in written culture” (2002:1) doesn’t hold true in case of Morrison’s written culture because in her fiction the body-remembering scarred experience- is foregrounded and very artistically utilized to convey the Black female



experience, an experience that offers an alternative of the symbolic economy of the paternal word in pre-linguistic, semiotic, literal, feminine language in which Morrison subverts the paternal symbolic to write in what Jean Wyatt (1993) terms “maternal symbolic”. This deconstructive use of maternal symbolic denotes not only a substitute language that integrates maternal and material principles but also designate a system that, in the manner of Lacan’s symbolic, “locates people in relation to the other subjects” (p.475).

The most significant aspect of Morrison’s fiction that underscores her representation of Black female characters and their subjectivity particularly in *Paradise* is her discursive reconfiguring of the Black bodies in order to bring them from periphery to centre. In this regard, the connection between body and subjectivity is well defined by Grosz as she compellingly writes that the body is not merely a readable sign, a (de)codable symptom “but also a force to be reckoned with” (1994:120). In this connection, Morrison’s depiction of Black female body in both historic and contemporary perspective, signifies the traumatic, disoriented, and scarred psyche of the Black people in general and female in particular. Morrison’s fictional world comprises of victims of slavery, racial and gender discrimination, for instance characters in *Beloved* and in the same way domestic and communal violence is evident in case of the group of women in *Paradise*. When Black people suffer from the atrocities of slavery, race and gender, the maternal body (both literal and symbolic since the Convent symbolizes the maternal body to its inhabitants and offers safe haven from the violence of the gendered society) becomes a site for them to strengthen their lost and mortified relation with their cultural past in search of their Black subjectivity. In this context, Seth’s scarred Black body with figures on its back, for example, when discovered by Paul D, not only signifies healing for them from the traumatic effects of slavery, but also reconnects the Black people with their cultural roots. The textual analysis of *Paradise* offers deconstructive examples galore of the Western dichotomous concepts categorizing the bodies based on the polarization of the mind and the body in which, as Elizabeth Grosz (1994) observes “the primary term defines itself by expelling its other” and by doing so establishes its own discursive parameters to construct an identity for itself (p. 3).

The socially-discarded, paternally abused, domestically mal-treated, and bodily exploited Black female characters in *Paradise* clearly conform to Grosz’ observations about the phallogocentric domination of the society which perceives female body as text

upon which males inscribe their desires. It is not so that the body becomes or/and exists independent of culture rather, as Grosz points out, “The body is not opposed to culture, a resistant-throw back to natural past; it is itself a cultural, *the* cultural, product” (p.23 original italics). Therefore, the discursive formation of bodies in a racist Western cultural thought carries the pervasive and exploitable implications of the binaristic divisions between mind/body; white/black; culture/nature, male/female, west/rest; centre/margin; human/non-human and so on. Regarding how the Black body is conceived by the Western thought in terms of mind and body, Carol E. Handerson (2002) states that in the mainstream Euro-American view the Afro- American body has been conceptualized as more or less as accumulation of “social meanings, meanings that, in the end, *mark* this body as Other or bodiless” (p. 4 original italics).

The corollary of this binaristic definitions of mind/body is the discursive construction of the Black body as passive, subaltern, voiceless, non historical and irrational thus depriving the Blacks of agency, subjectivity and voice of their own. In *Paradise* Morrison illustrates how Black female bodies are the construction of the White culture which, on one hand, constructs and devalues and degrades the Black bodies and, on the other hand, uses them, as Vanessa Dickerson asserts “to extend the life, health and desirability of the others”, thus “the Black female body” reduced to abject phallus “is more than a prosthesis”. It is therefore the repository of different meanings for different people: if for white man it is a site of political empowerment, for Black males it is a source of love, being, and shame and for white women it is the symbol of freedom and aesthetization simultaneously, and thus the Black female body assumes tremendous significance (195).

### **4.3.3 A Critique of Binaries of Race, Religion and Gender**

*Paradise* by Toni Morrison, her first novel since she reaped the Nobel-Prize for literature, is a deeply visionary work which she sets in an all Black town, Ruby and a suburban Covent, some seventeen miles away from Oklahoma. Though Ruby is founded by the free descendents of the old Afro- American slaves to materialize the dream of independent life envisioned by their revolutionary forefathers, the patriarchal structures of the Black society built on the ideals of righteousness, strictly enforced moral law, and fear of the insider/outsider resistance, are no more different from white patriarchal / phallogocentric society. All about the Covent, it is a place seventeen miles away from

Ruby where a group of exiled women who escaped Ruby in death and despair, have inhabited it as a place of peace and security to live a life of their voice and choice.

*Paradise*, like other novels of Morrison, has deeply political implications and shows her commitment to discursively reconstitute Afro-American personhood with the professed intention of changing consciousness about race. To do so, it narrates the story of a group of women who live in a Convent in the town Ruby (Oklahoma). At first glance, the novel seems to be woven around simplistic dichotomies or binaries between the Convent and the Ruby, Convent/Haven, Male/Female, African/European religion, Reverend Misner/Reverend Puliam's conflicting accounts of Christianity and so on. A good number of critics and reviewers (Menand 1998, Kakutani 1998, Gates 1998 and Allan 1998) approached the novel from this rather simplistic perspective and criticized it for its simple inversion of patriarchy by presenting all bad men and all good women (Bent 149). But, on deeper analysis, when approached from Poststructural Feminist perspective, it reveals deconstructive insight that actually rather than perpetuating the conception of the world on binaries, the novel deconstructs the very binaries and dichotomies that divide the world in gendered, racial, and religious categories.

The central conflict in the novel is between all-Black fanatical men of Ruby and the all-female fugitives of the Covent. Morgan twins, with their inflexible vision of the Black history, dominate the all-Black Ruby, while Consolata, the only inhabitant of the Covent receives the other fugitive women and emerge as powerful resistance against patriarchy. Because of their diametrically opposed outlooks to life, religion, community, morality and gender freedom, the two groups engage in a kind of war against each other. Whereas the novel does explicitly criticize the patriarchal and pahllogocentric structures of the society which demand unconditional obedience and silence from women, it doesn't preach any matriarchal alternative. Far from seeing the all-women inhabited Convent an ideal paradise of freedom and peace, it presents Mavis and Gigi grappling violently, almost coming to a "murder" (259) but then averting it for only Connie's sake. Seemingly a safe haven for the fugitive women, the Covent becomes home of scuffles, bickering, factions and arguments among these women and "the safety available in the house" (261) starts shattering especially after the arrival of Pallas. Almost every woman in the Convent has a share of human weakness, so they create "disorder, deception...and instead of plans, they had wishes, foolish baby girl wishes" (222). While responding to the question of having criticized patriarchy in favour of matriarchy, Morrison in an

interview charted the role of the artist : “ I cant take positions that are closed...I don't subscribe to patriarchy, and I don't think it should be substituted with with matriarchy. I think it's a question of equitable access, and opening doors to all sorts of things” (Salon Feb. 2, 1998).

So, in the light of this interview, the structure and the themes in the *Paradise* reveal that far from subscribing to any totalizing notions of feminine and masculine structures of society, Morrison deliberately falls short of creating any paradise which is panacea for all material and spiritual problems. Rather, offering a critique of such any unrealistic and unrealizable idea, she is all for a place where people could hope to live together, to accommodate ‘others’ and drop their racial, gendered and religious prejudices. This is exactly what the Convent women have learned ultimately: to love oneself and love one another. Cixous’ *Ecriture Feminine* also preached the women the same thing-to love oneself and write about oneself. Reverend Misner’s words better sum up Morrison’s vision: “God loved the way humans loved one another; loved the way humans loved themselves” (146). *Paradise*, therefore, in view of its deconstructive agenda of the binaries/dichotomies of race, ethnicity, gender and religion, presents the lived reality of the Black experience.

It begins explosively in the year 1976 when nine murderous men from neighboring Ruby embark upon the horrific undertaking of killing a group of peacefully, though, independently living Convent women not because they have harmed them physically but because they have challenged their masculinity and Black patriarchal authority. The story dramatizes the conflict between these fiercely independent women who run the Convent and domineering men who, first try to dominate and later, upon their revolt and resistance, fear these women. The attackers are influential men of Ruby, a Black historical town founded on the Black ideals of life with a small population of 360 only-all Black. The assailants include, among others, the twins Steward and Deacon or Deek Morgan, who is also the de facto leader of the town. Along with narrating the story of Black men and women, Morrison poignantly relates the histories of the genesis of Ruby from Haven, the causes for Ruby’s hierarchical social structures and its rigid xenophobia to the extent that its apprehensive leaders resolve to decimate the town and lynching women who had troubled histories of past relations with men and even women. Women living in the Convent are named Mavis, Grace, Consolata, Seneca and Pallas whereas women living in the town are Paricia, Lone and Save-Marie. Ruby has emerged

from Haven which was founded in 1890 in Oklahoma by a group of nine closely knit families: The Blackhorses, Catos, Dupres Families, Pooles, Floods and Fleetwoods. It was the racial segregation and xenophobic intolerance of the White society that excluded these dark-skinned Black men from public life, denied them job opportunities, and fundamental rights that forced the founding fathers, under the aegis of Zecharian Morgan, to found an exclusively dark-skinned Black community.

Though Morrison clearly demonstrates here the xenophobic and racially intolerant nature of the American society where Black are perpetually othered, excluded, denigrated and deemed uncivilized and hence exploitable but ironically the Black men when they built exclusively Black town fall prey to the same vices of the white hierarchical and phallogocentric society. They perpetrate violence upon those who fail to conform to their exploitative and oppressive patriarchal values. On reaching the place of building new town, first of all they build a big Oven made of brick and iron. The big Oven symbolizes, among other things, two prominent features of human life: the nourishment they need to keep alive and the collective achievements they have made. After flourishing for several decades Haven falls during the post second world war period.

Morrison doesn't fail to indict the capitalistic intentions of Morgan twins as capitalizing upon the legacy of their father's founding the bank, they accumulate most of the money and property in a highly unscrupulous, capitalistic vein. Ruby becomes exactly what it stood against: the racial discrimination of the Black. But, conversely, the exclusionary white society changes color but not the purpose as the light-skinned Blacks are discriminated against by the dark-skinned Blacks, virtually leaving no difference between the white and the Black peoples' exploitation of the others on racial and class bases. Notwithstanding, Ruby provides protection to some of its residents against the racial discrimination in the world outside, the intrinsic racial bias starts becoming more visible in the Ruby society. Rather than all Blacks being equal, some Blacks become more Black than the others so the society inheres patriarchal hierarchical structures of the White society and the town's inflexible moral codes embedded in racial affiliations harm some of its residents ruthlessly. In this regard Mensus' becoming psychic reflects the traumatic effects of hierarchized society. Although Vietnam war had taken its toll upon Mensus' psyche, but his taking to excessive alcoholism is basically out of his sense of shame and depression he feels for having abandoned a light-skinned Black woman he

intended to marry but couldn't because of the increasingly racist Nature of the Black Ruby society .

The older and younger generations disagree on the purposes of Oven, morals and life itself causing the older generations complain that younger generations don't respect or/and identify with Ruby's history. Ruby history is signified in their desire to amend the proclamation inscribed on the Oven from: "the furrow on his brow" to " Be the furrow of his brow" omitting " Beware" that the elders say used to be written in the beginning of the slogan , making it read " Beware the furrow of his brow".Finally, the boisterous appearance of Convent women at the K.D. and Arnett's wedding, a wedding celebrated in an attempt to bridge the differences between the Morgan and Fleetwood families, outrages the town patriarchs and they being convinced that Convent women are spoiling the purity and morality of the town with their wanton morals choose to obliterate the Convent with its corrupted inhabitants. As discussed earlier with reference to *Beloved*, in *Paradise* too, Morrison tells the untold stories of Afro- American women who have been maltreated by patriarchy for long and are forsaken and forgotten and are trying to combat against phallogocentrism. Morrison's writings are predominantly the outcome of Feminism but her focus, actually, is on Black women instead of a Feministic approach only.

Morrison has firm belief in giving a political shape to the work of art. She finds it to be a strong tool when she exposes power relations of her society. Through her Black narratives, evocative and rhythmic language, she vehemently resists the dominant Euro-American power and instigates a new spirit among Afro- Americans to speak through their bodies even if their tongues have been captured. She converts the virtuous American myths into the violent untold stories of suppression woven out of the lived experiences of the Blacks of her society. In this regard, she portrays Black women who abhor sexist and racist oppression, who yearn to practice their womanhood in their own particular way, the one that should not be directed by any patriarchal and phallogocentric society. Observing Black Feminism's ethnic and cultural thrust, Denard (2008) postulates that because Black Feminism is more group-centred than self-centred, the Black women show concern more with female cultural values of their ethnic group than commitment with changing the fate of women in general, so "they advocate what may be called ethnic cultural Feminism" (171).

*Paradise* starts in a horrifying manner: “They shoot the white girl first. With the rest, they can take their time. No need to hurry out there” (Morrison 3). Now the very start of the novel immediately makes the reader think about the treatment of women. Though a white girl has been shot at, the attack on white girl is not justified in any way as it leads to the gender discrimination of Black and white women as well as a hatred found among the Blacks against the Whites, as Denise Heinze says the focal point of Morrison’s research-the Black family- which is the most meaningful and intimate institution for her leads her to broaden the spectrum of the research and incorporate “the Black community, regains of the United States, foreign lands and alien culture and history” (Heinze 12).

#### **4.3.4 Black Women and the Network of Racial, Sexist and Patriarchal Hierarchies**

Women in *Paradise* have different background but one thing that binds them together is that all are controlled and suppressed by the men. Cannie or Consolata is an important character in the novel who runs the convent. Her past shows that she has been taken to an Oklahoma convent by Mary Magne after being abused by phallogentric society. Morrison shows through the characters of Consolata that women, in a phallogentric society, always remain a slave of authority. This authority may also be exercised by a female. After being taken to convent, Consolata remains obedient to Mary Magna and does not do anything according to her own free-will. Her mindset is already set to follow Mary Magna’s will. No doubt that Consolata is a sympathetic lady who is ready to help every needy and deserving person but she, still, is a victim of authority that runs her according to its own particular desire. Morrison sums up her femininity “For-Thirty years Consolata worked hard to become and remain Mary Magna’s pride, one of her singular accomplishments in a life time of teaching, nurturing Consolata worshipped her.” (228)

Consolata is among those women who have surrendered themselves to the others and are not going to show any resistance against aggression. She is the traditional woman who is ready to feed everyone through the milk of kindness and love. That’s why, when in the second last chapter, she is attacked by men, she does not resist the man who tries to kill her. Her love for her boyfriend, (who has betrayed her) never ends till the end of her life.

Another important character is Mavis who is a negligent lady and is abused by her Patriarchal husband. Her husband Frank is alcoholic and abusive. She bears the harsh

and sometimes indifferent behavior of her husband who, following the patriarchal and phallogocentric ways of society treats her violently and harshly. This thing adds to the fears of Mavis who, in order to escape from the maltreatment of her husband, tries to run-away from house. She is afraid that her husband and three children would kill her. Morrison conveys the idea through her character that fear is sleeping partner of every Black-woman because the woman knows that she would never be free in the male-dominant society. Fear of punishment, fear of being left alone, fear of being killed and many more fears surround the Black woman since her birth.

This fear compels her to take refuge in the Convent. Her story presages the confusion and misconceptions that arise due to the difference between social perception and personal intuitive perception. Mavis is the representation of all those women who yearn to appear as competent mothers and free women but, under the callous and suppressing hands of a patriarchal society, they fail to uplift their heads and express their feelings and thoughts. Their expectations always meet a failure in a phallogocentric society. But Mavis breaks this particular shell and poses to be a lady free from patriarchal bonds. This happens when she accidentally kills her children. All eyes focus on Mavis and her perception is shown as muddled and unreliable as “the shine of excitement in the eyes [of people] was clear” (21).

Under the conciliatory gestures of people, there is hidden a sort of hatred for Mavis. Similarly, the same shine in eyes can be seen in the photographer who comes with a reporter to make a record of her story. Despite all these facts, Morrison shows that Mavis breaks the patriarchal shell of phallogocentrism.

In *Paradise* Ruby, the main town in the story is fully under the dominating rule of patriarchy's culture. The lives of the people, especially women, are determined, regulated and directed by typical patriarchal cultural norms and no one is allowed to transgress the set principles of the town. So, following the phallogocentric traditions, the town does not allow any freedom to women and they are bound only to serve their husbands. The foundation of the town is based on racism and patriarchal ideologies; the whole town consists of pure Black people where even the light Black people are considered impure ones. Both women and the light Black people are excluded from the pure Black ones therefore it may not be called the true *Paradise* of God. Since patriarchy needed the ideological support of religion to justify its domination over women, Kate Millet's theory of sexual Politics speaks in this regard: “According to the classical tale of Pandora's Box



and the Biblical story of the fall, woman was the cause of all chaos in this world” (Millet, 318-319). It becomes obvious thus that the ideology of the people of Ruby is also the part of their religion. Since ideology in patriarchy is characterized by “Aggression, intelligence, force and efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility ... and ineffectuality in the female,” (Millet 292) this particular ideology in Ruby society strengthens the idea of phallogentrism that male are always better than women because each sex is attached with those attributes. At one hand, this tradition of patriarchy seems to be an attractive one as it burdens all the men with a responsibility of protecting women of Ruby town from the white people and the freedom and sexuality of women is protected by the people of Ruby who have already named their town Ruby to immortalize Ruby Morgan who died because of the uncivilized behaviour of the white doctors. But on the other hand, this name of protection is actually a sort of restriction and binding for Black women. In the name of protection, their freedom has been snatched away from them. They always think themselves to be the slaves of their own men who do not let them breathe according to their own sweet will. An example of Oven in *Paradise* explains the matter. Oven is a statue in the centre of Ruby but it is not simply a statue rather it signifies a strong traditional belief of the people: it is rather a part of their traditions and is a sign of unity and landmark of the town. “They are respecting it. It’s because they do know the Oven’s value that they want to give it new life” (86).

In past, Ruby women have used the Oven to cook food but now, it is no more useful in this sense. Rather, its practical function has been transformed to a patriarchal one: it is the men who gather and meet about the Oven not women. It has become a symbol of the town’s primary goals and serves to authenticate Ruby’s patriarchy. Men of Ruby can’t bear any change in their ideologies regarding any freedom for women. Dacon Morgan addresses the new generation in threatening tone “Women in Ruby are not suf“You all listen to me Real close. Nobody, I mean nobody is going to change the Oven or call it something strange. Nobody is going to mess with a thing our grandfathers built” (85).

The women from Ruby are not suffering from racial prejudice as much as the suppression perpetrated upon them by their own Black community. Within families, the object or subject relation is dominant. Masculinity is always subjective whereas femininity is defined as object- women are object and inferior. Morrison shows that it is not the men at fault rather women themselves are the guilty ones. Power is exercised only

when the weak ones refuse to resist against power. In any society, if power holds its dominant position, it is only because the people accept the reality principles determined and set by the authorities. Same is the case here in *Ruby*: women, since their childhood, have surrendered themselves to a phallogocentric society. They have in their minds the concept of male superiority. They have never thought in any other way. It is only women who are ready to be suppressed. They love to live in a passive condition and are not ready to revolt. In *Ecriture Feminine* tradition, Morrison wants them to speak, if not through their tongues, at least through their bodies. Women in *Ruby* are ignorant of their fundamental rights. They accept everything that comes from their husband or their fathers passively whether they like it or not. Mavis's life is controlled by her husband who always prevents her from having friends. In her moments of intense pain "she realized she had no idea of what to do next. She drove toward Peg's; she didn't know the woman all that well, but her tears at the funeral impressed Mavis. She had always wanted to know her better, but Frank found ways to prevent acquaintance from becoming friendship" (27).

The root cause of the problem Black women were facing was the ideologies and laws which oppress and repress Black women completely. These racist ideologies which deal with the systematic racism unjustly treat Black Afro- American women under the reproductive policies of the United States. Though racial differences are the central cause which differentiates Black women from the white, their customs and behaviors as well as their perspectives are also different towards many matters either they are political or cultural. Patricia Hill Collins who is a famous sociologist with specialization in race, class and gender has incisively observed the racial difference and ways which differentiate Black from the white women. Collins has focused on another aspect-the racist character of mainstream Feminism and its exclusionary politics -which shows how white Feminists debarred and excluded Black women and Feminists. White Feminism, therefore with goals historically specific to white women, failed to effectively address the needs and issues of Black women. The Black women in order to express the ways the gendered and racial oppression of Afro- American differed from white women, the aspect which white washed Feminism completely disregarded, articulated Black differential Feminism which voiced Black women's experiences and defined their disarticulated agency. In this regard Patricia Hill Collins observes and states the vital

difference in the goals and achievements of white and Black Feminists: she defines that the white Feminists struggled for the right and opportunity which permitted them legally to work outside the home while U.S history defines that Black Afro- American women were forced to work outside their homes whereas these Black women personally wanted to stay at home and take care of their homes and children.

The rationale of comparing the fundamental assumptions of white Feminism with that of Black Feminism is to demonstrate that the historic and contemporary experiences of Black women living in America cannot be adequately described in the light of so called universalistic claims of white Feminist theoretical paraphernalia alone though the comparative methodological mode of white and Black theoretical inquiry into the past and present lived experiences of the Black women can provide better insight into how the Black Afro- American and Native American Feminist activists and novelists have articulated Black agency through discursive deconstruction and subsequent reconfiguration of the identity of Black woman and her relationship with nature. It is thus Black women's entry into the field of producing contrapuntal discursive knowledge to share their experiences in the U.S after the post-civil war when their role as a slave was shifted and they started working domestic chores in white families that gives an insight into the racial and gender differences between the Black women and the Whites. Katie Cannon(1995) asserts in this context that all through the history of the United States, the interconnection between white supremacy and male dominance has almost always typified the Black woman's situation as a situation of continuous struggle, a struggle to survive in two opposing worlds concurrently, "one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black, exploited, and oppressed" (30)

Another submission to patriarchy can be seen through the character of Seneca who is one of the convent women and is controlled by her boyfriend. She is ready to do anything at the command of her boyfriend and does not try to change herself. Her efforts of pleasing her boyfriend always remain unacknowledged and the demands of her boyfriend keep on increasing. Being woman of the convent, she has already surrendered herself to the phallogentric and patriarchal traditions of society. She knows that in a patriarchal tradition, a woman is always supposed to remain silent. There are so many actions which Seneca does to please him but still it never makes Eddie happy. The following excerpt demonstrates how Seneca, a Black woman's sincerest efforts fail to please her man and she in return of her sincere love meets only exploitation and

oppression from the Black man. “She had brought him sandwiches too (his letter said they could have a picnic type lunch in the visitors’ quarter) but he was too nervous and irritated to eat” (132).

After he leaves her, Seneca, heart broken but not enraged at her callous mistreatment by a patriarch, comes to the convent and considers the humiliation as her which clearly indicates the plight of the Black women whose brains have been occupied by the thought of serving men at any cost. If in *Beloved* Morrison shows phallogocentrism, in *Paradise* she clearly depicts the mental level of women who have been made incapable of doing anything against the suppression inflicted upon them. Their urge to resist violence has been snatched away from them by the patriarchal traditions. It is clear that in patriarchal society, any question of women would be un-answered but the problem is that they have no urge to ask a question.

Pallas is also no exception in *Paradise* and is sailing in the same boat like many of her fellow beings. She leaves her house for the sake of her boyfriend but she is also betrayed by him. She finds herself safe in the Convent where everyone embraces her whenever she cries for her boyfriend. Here Pallas is not betrayed by male only rather a woman also who is no-one else but her mother. When she sees her boyfriend having sex with her mother, she can’t bear it and runs away from her home. Once again a dependency on male is shown in the novel when Pallas says that she needs to call her father. Though she takes refuge in the convent but the desire to call her father does not end. She ultimately calls him and asks him to pick her up: “Will you come and get me Daddy?” ( 253) . Morrison demonstrates in *Paradise* that women are neither supported by men nor by other women. Her purpose in showing the miserable plight of women is to give a message to all women especially the Black women to step forward and by using the tongue of their bodies they must break the shell of patriarchy and speak for their rights.

She believes that women are well capable of removing the authoritative iron hands of phallogocentrism. In patriarchal society, power is always associated with man only so as power is praised everywhere, men who are associated with power become the centre of respect and praise. Power is exercised to signify rule and dominating discourse and both are ascribed to men while women are stopped to speak also in a patriarchal society. By turning deaf ear to women’s words and their subjectivity, society discounts the reality of their existence and their unique identity. In *Paradise*, men don’t let women

use their choice of decision, the spirit of feminine subjectivity, and by refusing them exercise their will to decide they kill their essential existence. Only men have the power to ignore or to accept people. In the chapter named “Patricia”, the leader of the town uses his power to make Menu Jury return women he has brought home to marry. Women are made helpless in the matters pertaining to choice of marriage and the patriarchal social structures don’t allow them to exercise their will to choose or be the way they like. Heartless exploitation of Menu is one such case: “Look that they did to Menu, forcing him to give back or return the woman he brought home to marry. The pretty sandy-haired girl from Virginia. Menu lost (or was forced to give up) the house he’d bought for her and hadn’t been sober since” (195).

As women in *Paradise* are no more than an object who are brought and sent without their desires, we also see some cases of rape in the novel under-discussion: the action of rape is also an ample proof of a form of patriarchy as male dominates the woman by force. Pallas is pregnant after being raped. Consolata is raped in her childhood. But all these actions are of no importance in the town as no rapist has ever been caught. Women are consoled only by going into a convent but once again it is moving from under one authority to the other one. Men have been described as brutal beings in *Paradise*. They are the rigid ones who enjoy the pains of women but do nothing to rid them of that pain. If they protect their women, it is not out of sympathy and love for them rather it is only the protection of their sex-toy in order to fulfill their desires. It is for these loveless unions that even after being married, women enjoy no love in the marriage. Instead of feeling physical union with their partners as a means of exalted pleasure and experience of ecstatic joy or spiritual sublimation, they perform sex with their husbands only as an obligation: “Marvis tried not to stiffen as Frank made a setting down noises on the mattress... When he pulled her nightgown up, he threw it over her face, and she let that mercy be. She had misjudged again” ( 25-26).

This is what an Afro- American lady in Ruby has to go through. Marriage is a sort of love relationship between husband and wife; it is not simply a source of sexual pleasure, rather it provides both sexes an equal opportunity to gain spiritual pleasure through love and affection. Marriage is the name of mutual understanding. Body is the personal property of a woman but here, in *Paradise*, she has been deprived of this personal property too. She has no authority even upon her own sexual desires. Her desires are subject to the desire of her husband. She is always confused with her husband,

thinking whether he has sexual desires or not. How she is to behave to satisfy his or her own sexual desires depends upon her husband's will. This is for sure that there is no love relationship between them even after having four children. Like plenty of domestic roles she is assigned to play in Black male dominating society to make the men's life easy and happy in rendering a kind of self-sacrifice, sex is not chosen by her by choice; it is only an obligation for her to fulfill the desires of her husband.

In the manner of Foucauldian modes of critical enquiry, fully conscious of the analytical importance of the process of objectivation and subjectivation, the discourse analysis reveals that the whole novel resonates with the silence and submission of women. The practice of victimization and abuse builds an environment that leads to the objectification of women. Mavis' husband plays with her, engages her in sexual activity but does not consummate love and sex with her. He "just rubbed himself to climax" and uses her as if she were a "life size Raggedy Ann" (26). Nature of a man according to the patriarchal societies is transcendently built in a way that they discover the outside world and take major decisions while women are morally weak and unstable creatures of the world hence they are immobilized to think that who they are. They are the inferior beings of a society who are not allowed to make their choices and decisions on their own. As for Patricia Hill Collins, "the duality of "self" versus "other" is problematic" (Smith 10). Moreover, for Collins Blacks are socially defined as the 'other' not universally but in comparison to the white females. They are described as other not specifically to the white women but to the white men and Black men as well. Collins articulates that "Black women experience interlocking oppression, because they are *Black women*, not *Black* and happen to be women, or *women* who happen to be *Black*" (10). In an interview with John Gwaltney in 1980, Nancy White (an old Black woman who was 73 years old) describes the difference between Black women and a white through theoretical relevance. She states:

"My mother used to say that the Black woman is the white man's mule and the white woman is his dog. Now, she said that to say this: we do the heavy work and get beat whether we do it well or not. But the white woman is closer to the master and he pats them on the head and lets them sleep in the house, but he ain'tgon' treat neither one like he was dealing with a person" (Gwaltney 148).

Hence the ideology based on the concept of sexism and racism always defines the dominated people like the *other* or objects. As for these ideologies, these dominated

groups lack human subjectivities in it. Afro- American Black women who were described as the other is presented as “obstinate mules” while the white women are described as “obedient dogs”. Both white and Black women were objectified and lacked human subjectivities but both are presented in two different ways. It is because the Black Afro- American women are outsiders in land of colonizers while the white women still have the advantage to live their lives in the white homes. White Feminists in 20<sup>th</sup> century, acknowledging and considering the demands of the white race only, struggled for their liberation so that they could possess power and equality like a white man in the society. But in this white movement of Feminism, they did not include Black women. As they were fighting for the rights of white women only, not for women all over the globe, they did not support Black women through this Feminist movement.

In addition to this when white women raised their voice against the discrimination they faced and struggled to get the right to vote, they did not support and talk about the right of Black women in this regard. For hook, around early period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, white women considered Black women as a symbol of threat in the field of industry (hooks 132). This threat always encouraged them to demoralize Black women so that they could pursue a better job. As for the writers Helen Hacker and Catherine Stimpson, American society rejects the idea of a Black woman by depicting it as nonexistent object. Since the experiences of Black Afro- American women were oppressed and invalidated on both gender and racial grounds, the Black critics, theorists, intellectuals, activists and creative writers emphasized upon developing Black Feminist thought, a systematic theoretical process that should articulate a viewpoint of and for the Black women.

Collins (1986) succinctly elaborates the case of Black Feminism in *Learning From The Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought*, that when it comes to the discursive construction of Black Feminist thought, a counterpart of white Feminist thought, firstly, the definitional component suggests that the structural and thematic content of (Black) thought is inseparable from and conditioned by the material and historical specificity of the conditions configuring the lives of its producers. Secondly, irrespective of the recording and retrieval by others, the productional forces of the Black Feminist thought are Black women and the central perspective of this thought is the reconstruction of Black women’s experiences and their presentation in ways that suggest that Black women share common viewpoint as a group. Thirdly diverse cultural, geographical, linguistic and material conditions, as in case of

Afro- American and Native American women writers, shaping the individual character of Black women, account for the nuanced representations by distinct groups of Afro and Native American ecriture Feminists of the common Black themes. Finally, because the constituent features of Black Feminist thought as it is formulated by the Black intellectuals may not be easily understandable by the Black women themselves, one prime objective of Black Feminist thought is to articulate for the Black women the theoretical and philosophical strands in the light of which they may understand and differently express their commonly experienced themes and actualize their identities.

Black Feminists by observing different ways of oppression declared that the choices of Black women are thoroughly controlled or constrained by white women. But later these Black Feminists took these differences as their strength and highlighted them in their texts. As for them through these differences they can speak and discover their voices and experiences and the discursive reconstruction of these Black experiences from Black Feminist point of view can also help them produce their Feminist texts that define the meaning and significance of Black self –definition and self-valuation through the stories of Black women’s marginalization and oppression. After centuries of violent and oppressive colonial history in which the indigenous voices were brutally silenced, invalidated and marginalized on racial, religious, ethnic and cultural interpretations to keep them under subjugation and slavery, this affirmation and significance of the self definition and self-valuation of Black women emerges as the first conspicuous theme that permeates the historical and contemporary nuances of the Black Feminist thought. The actualization of this Black selfhood embodied in the discursive reconfiguration of the politically validated stereotypical images of the Black women entailed challenging and dismantling the Euro-American claims of knowledge.

Erdrich and Morrison’s female protagonists who are physically and/or imaginatively deeply connected to their cultural and geographical landscape whether they live in or outside their specific tribal regions when dealing with the white characters define their marked Black identity by exhibiting assertive Black behavior. They, therefore, become the symbol of powerful resistance to dehumanizing multifaceted exploitation they suffer at the hands of the white. One way the Black and indigenous Feminists have discredited the so called universal , stereotypical images of the Native and the Black subjects as sub- humans and/or inherently subservient to the white race is by deconstructing the constructed Nature of the stereotypical images as well as



challenging not only the validity of these socio-politically constructed negative images of the Black women but also the authenticity of their producers as they are not the insiders and hence don't possess the authentic knowledge about the Blacks and Natives.

The Black and Native women, on the contrary, being the insiders, and having the authentic knowledge of the Black and Native's history, culture, religion, lands, rituals and complexities of tribal life patterns, have the better claim to represent themselves and thus their rejection of their whitewashed, deeply prejudicial images and subsequent perspectival insistence upon Black female self-definition validate their human subjectivity. This validation of Black human subjectivity comes through the Black women's aggressive resistance to their dehumanized, stereotypical, popularly ridiculed images. Also their assertive Black Feminist behaviors pose potential threat to the patriarchal explanations of femininity and thus by doing so they extricate Black women from the oppressive and domineering images used by the white to control and marginalize the dominated groups. The Black Feminist ideal- that Black women formulate their own theoretical and methodological norms for valuing Black motherhood and Black subjectivity-permeates enormous variety of Afro- American and Native American women writing, Louise Erdrich's and Toni Morrison's *Ecriture Feminine* offer outstanding illustration of the ideas of Black Feminism as the assertive Black female protagonists of these works exhibit marked Black female identity. Since for doing this they were criticized both by the white men and women as well as by the Black men as the Black men were the masters of the Black women, the interlocking nexus of gender, race and class oppression is recurrent motif in the works of Afro and Native American *ecriture Feminists*.

This articulation in Black 'feminine sentence' of the simultaneity of the multiple structures of oppression suffered by the colored women with disturbing realization that even the extrication of one form of oppression may still leave Black women battling against the other equally dehumanizing form of oppression even today remains the most significant critical contribution of the Black Feminist thought . So when Black Feminists raised their voice against the interlocking system of oppression, Black men, instead of supporting their cause criticized them and placed them in the same inferioritized half of the white/Black, men/women duality that the white men and women had assigned them for the perpetuation of domination. The sexual exploitation of the Black women by the white men, as Toni Morrison has exemplified in case of Seth's humiliating sexual

molestation at the hands of the white nephews, on the morbid white assumptions that Black women are excessively lustful and temptresses has been historically used as an excuse to vindicate white men while dehumanize the Black women. Black women's marathon struggle to liberate themselves from the imprisonment of sexism and racism in order to gain agency as a subject which they had been denied by the white as they were treated as objectified others of the superioritized white subjects has opened new humanist avenues of societal organization. Collins proclaims that, according to the Black men, Black Feminism which is sometimes described as *womanism* is in fact "counter-productive to the historical goal of the Black struggle," (8). Another major reason why Black men rejected the Black Feminism is because they wanted to maintain their supremacy over women. bell hooks describes the case that both male and female Black leaders have been reluctant to admit the sexist oppression of Black women because they do not want to concede "that racism is not the only oppressive force in our lives" (87-88).

#### 4.3.5 Conclusion

The study of *Paradise* from Ecriture Feminine perspective has revealed that the woman and her sex are the property of the men and the sexual emotions of a woman are not valued; they are alienated from their pleasures as if only male sexuality matters and female pleasure is of no importance. They are treated just as the sex-dolls. Morrison gives a terrible account of every aspect of a Black woman's life in *Paradise*; emotions are exploited, hearts are broken, bodies are assaulted and tongues are made silent. This is what happens in a phallogocentric society. Morrison believes that female body and sexuality must be printed in written form. *Paradise* is actually a form of her Ecriture Feminine. The story of all these women in *Paradise* is actually the story of all women who have been exploited by men in a phallogocentric society. Morrison breaks the bonds and brings all the untold stories of Black women in a form of *Paradise*. In her signature Black Ecriture Feminine, she uses the technique of repetition in *Paradise* too as she does in *Beloved* to create plurality of meanings through multiple versions of stories. By so doing, she reconstructs dominant history and offers alternate truths from Black perspective. It is through employment of such Ecriture Feminine techniques as recapitulation of murder scenes, doubling of scenes and characters and point of views in *Paradise* that she creates the characteristic narration of repetition. When the convent in *Paradise* is attacked by men, they fondle their weapons to demonstrate how they conflate women and an object: "Fondling their weapon, feeling suddenly so young and good they

are reminded that guns are more than decoration, intimidation, or comfort. They are meant” (285). Now the word “Fondling” evokes the feelings of sexual intimacy, but the men treat both their tools and women in the same way demonstrating that women are no more a living object rather a tool for men; both women and tools are interchangeable.

Through women in convent, Morrison suggests the idea that women can get rid of phallogocentric society and can live a life of their own choice. Ruby is full of men dominating women but the convent is a symbol of that revolt that may be found in every woman in order to combat against the patriarchal society. Women in the convent succeed in getting freedom from men by living a separate life. They have their own source of earning money and if they want, they have nothing to do with the men in Ruby.

If the women of Ruby have been deprived of the “Oven”, the women of the convent have their own Cadillac to drive. Cadillac is a symbol of freedom for these women of the convent who may go anywhere the way they desire. The women in the convent are free from isolation of women in Ruby. Women of the convent have power to decide for themselves, to live alone and to do what they want. Here Morrison proves that women in the convent are more powerful than the men in Ruby as the men are afraid that the freedom of women in convent may reach their town. That’s why they attack the convent to get rid of their inner fear. It is intolerable for them that women should change their life according to their own will. They make the convent women scapegoats in order to prove their phallogocentric ideas. But Morrison succeeds in proving that women do have a power to challenge the authority of men only if they make a collective effort and dare a little.

In the U.S, racial isolation has remained and still remains a fundamental issue assigning Black women a status of outsiders within sociology. In this regard, the Black women’s experiences recorded in Morrison’s *Beloved* and *Paradise* demonstrate tensions and conflicts experienced by these women during their historical and contemporaneous interactions with the powerful insider white community which examine these people’s experiences in the light of the personal and cultural experiences of the dominant insiders and thus these Black outsiders within remain perpetually different people.

## 4.4 Discursive Reconfiguration of Women in Native American Ecriture Feminine: Analysis of *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*

### 4.4.1 Introduction

*Love Medicine*, (first published by New York, Bantam, 1989) the second of the series of novels published under the name of North Dakota Novels ( *Beet Queen* and *Tracks* being two others of the Trilogy series), is a Best Critics Circle Award winning novel by Louise Erdrich, a renowned contemporary, mixed blood, Chippewa storyteller. She revised and expanded twice this novel first in 1993 and secondly for 2009 edition (Beidler and Barton 14). The novel narrates, in Postmodern/poststructural Feminist narrative style the stories of interconnected families of Kashpaws, Lazarres and Morrissey's who live on Erdrich's fictional Indian reservation in North Dakota which is the setting of *Tracks* and *Beet Queen* also, the two other novels completing the trilogy which begins with *Love Medicine*.

*Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, trace the intricate network of family groups from North Dakota in non-linear, mythic timeline, using the technique of multiple narrators who narrate the same events from different perspectives and thus reconstruct different versions of reality. To understand the complex development of the family groups and relations as well as chronological order of the events affecting the lives of the primary characters, one would have to read the novels in reverse order of publication. *Tracks*, for example, was last to be published but, as Michael Dorris, Erdrich's husband as well as the co-author, points out "first one to have the finished draft" (Coltelli 51). Erdrich like other contemporary indigenous Ecriture Feminine practitioners, in both *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*, narrates the tales of displacements, losses of precious lives and sacred lands, imposed migrations, devastating diseases, cultural disintegrations, indigenous people's conversions to Christianity, and humiliating lives in the reservations. To do so, she employs the postmodern/Poststructural technique of multiple narrators( both male and female) to depict her characters' sustained struggles to renew their relation with their families, cultural heritage, and lost lands in an attempt to redefine their female subjectivities/identities in a new multicultural environment.

Her unique narrative style combining Euro-American and Native American narrative traditions-the blend of rationality and orality-allows her to present the web of complicated experiences of the pure and mixed-blood Natives in Poststructural

narratological technique that employs performative poetic prose to evoke multi-perspective and pluralistic version of reality against the monolithic and universalistic, white washed manipulations of reality. Manifestly deconstructive and couched in a language that carries the overtones of *Écriture Feminine* “the writing through body”, her discursive representations of the Native American subjects, particularly the reconstruction of the female subjectivity, makes her one of the most significant and authentic representative novelist of the contemporary American literature. This novel that revolves around the lives of the displaced and dispossessed inhabitants of the Turtle Mountain Reservation, one of those reservations/places specified for the Native American dwellers where they were driven after their lands were occupied by the white settlers, was written by Erdrich in collaboration with her husband, Michael Dorris, though he is not credited for that. These dwellers of the Turtle Mountain Reservation, Erdrich herself being the member of the tribe, constantly move in and out of the reservation, revisiting its history, culture and traditions and thus assert their relationship with the places which they are able to create and re-create despite confronting the catastrophic loss of lands, families and community.

The novel is written to challenge and deconstruct the myth of the Euro-centric depictions of the Indian people as noble savages and primitive beings having no history and civilization of their own, and to portray the reality and experiences of the Indian subjects, particularly women, living on the reservations away from the metropolitan populace, from their own perspective. This is the perspective that presents Indian worldview that is different from the mainstream White worldview. In so doing, the novel discursively reconstitutes the Indian women’s sustained struggles for the realization of their unique identities and does so in a language and style that aptly represents women’s complex experiences, and thus epitomizes a specific kind of writing that Cixous termed *Écriture Feminine*.

The novel revolves around the complex relationship between the three interrelated families—the Kashpaws, the Lazarres and Lulu Nanapush’s. These families have lived on the reservation for many generations and have developed intricate relationships. Nector Kahpaw’s turbulent relationship with his wife, Marie Lazarre Kashpaw, and his inconsistent though passionate love for Lulu Nanapush, his old beloved and the mother of his one son, is one of the central issues of the novel. Besides this major conflict, there are several intertwined sub-plots, narrated in typically

postmodern mode of narration by various character-narrators whose differing perspectives about the same character or event help understand the complexity of the situation or the character and thus provide multiplicity of point of views. The sub-plots which bear upon the significant issues of assimilation, loss of land, and returning to reservation, include Gerry Nanapush's relation with June and Dot Adare ; Uncle Gordie Kashpaw's deep feeling of grief and loss over June's death; Lyman Lmartine's revival of his father's business at the reservation and his efforts as an entrepreneur; and Lipshaw Morrissey, June's son's return to the reservation to discover his healing powers, his efforts to concoct and administer *Love Medicine* to Nector Kashpaw and finally knowing who his parents are and bringing to the reservation the dead body of his mother June Morrissey.

#### **4.4.2 Ecriture Feminine and Native American Female Identity**

This part of the dissertation explores the discursive reconstruction of gender /women in Native American Ecriture Feminine in two of Louise Erdrich's novels that belong to North Dakota series and are also part of her trilogy: *Love Medicine* (1984) and *Tracks* (1988). To discuss the discursive reconfiguration of Native American female identity, this section draws upon the variety of critics and theorists related to the concepts of Ecriture Feminine, Native American female identity, and the relation between cultural identity and places, borders and reservations in Native American literature. the Native and Euro-American concepts employed by Erdrich in her fiction such as female trickster figures, transgenderism, ethno-cultural hybridity and postmodern narrative tricksterism are discussed and explained through the examples of her female protagonists (though the male characters are also referred to where necessary) to illustrate Erdrich's discursive re-enactment of the Native American women and gender.

The critical attention that the concepts of gender and identity/subjectivity have garnered during the last several decades across the disciplines and particularly in cultural and literal studies is unprecedented. Elucidating the association between language/symbolic practices and theories of gender, Rosenthal notes that different theories of subjectivity have demonstrated that what we call identity is not something fixed, static, achieved or possessed but something that individuals have to constantly "reestablish in various social contexts and through different symbolic practices" (1). Because gender identity is something unfixed and fluid, permanently in the process of being and becoming, language and narrative is used to construct, deconstruct and

reconstruct the representations of gender. Louise Erdrich, in quite a few of her novels, including *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, creates a variety of such unconventional (from Euro-American perspective) Native characters who radically depart from the current phallogocentric Western notions of gender and present instead a vast world of identity alternatives. By this process, they dismantle the stereotypical gender constructions within patriarchal social set ups. I do agree with the view of most of Erdrich's critics that her major female characters, portrayed in trickster tradition, defy the inflexible line between the two genders, inhabit transgender world and behave in highly unconventional manner to undermine the unviability of Westernized gender roles. Erdrich's presentation of her characters as gender-mixed alludes to the inversion of gender roles played by her female protagonists. They have physical strength and rough appearance, masculine boldness and masculine ambitions and interests in hunting (animals and men), playing cards and working in men's professions like butcher shop, and living fearlessly on the lakes and edges of woods. For instance Fleur Pillager and Pauline perform all these roles. Coupled with these floating-gender-identities is her postmodern/poststructural feminine stylistics that combines diverse narrative techniques in presenting cultural identities.

It's an undeniable axiom about her characters that the inspiration behind the portrayal of such flexible, fluid and hybrid identities that not only are the opposites of Western constructions of gender and their roles, but also typify the Indian female identities, comes from the Native American traditions and alternative gender roles she was familiar with through her intimate and life-long association with Turtle Mountain Band. Reconfiguration of these gender roles in her novels is based on and inspired from the powerful and unique figures of Indian mythologies, the figures like berdache and trickster, which are mysterious, full of contradictions, and simultaneously fearful and comic; human and non-human; real and unreal. The subsequent discussion, taking into consideration Erdrich's re-appropriation of the western concepts of gender, identity, and cultural and racial superiority, will discuss her attempts at discursive reconstitutions of these concepts within the theoretical places provided by French and Black poststructural Feminists in the background of the postulates discourse analysis as derived from Foucault's discussions.

Digressing from the phallogocentric tradition of writing characterized by linear, rational, reason-oriented, organic and well-structured form, *Love Medicine* like *Tracks*, *Beet Queen* and *Last Report on Miracles at Little No Horse*, the other novels of the same

tribe, does not follow “traditional, linear, protagonist-oriented narrative” style rather draw[s] narrative strategies from the oral traditions of her [Erdrich’s] Native American heritage to fabricate unconventional designs for her storytelling” ( Stookey 31) . Erdrich herself explains the dynamics of her stylistic technique that according to her ““reflects a traditional Chippewa motif in storytelling’ wherein an account of one incident ‘leads to another incident that leads to another’” ( qtd. in Stookey 33) and Kennedy calls this technique a writing “ at the edge of the novel” (33).

To address the question of time in her fiction, she has specifically provided dates for all the chapters. Utilizing the postmodern narrative technique of multiple narrators, she employs six narrators to narrate most of the chapters, while others are told in third-person narrative to foreground a particular character’s point of view which is, in her fiction, very significant in terms of presenting a comparative analysis o f one event or person. The novel portrays complex relationship between the three families-the Kashpaws, the Lazarres, and Lulu Nanapush’s larger family-whose members live on and off the reservation. Erdrich begins *Love Medicine* with June Morrissey’s journey towards home in reservation but she never makes it because she freezes to death on the way. The death of such an important character at the outset of the novel seeking to revive relationship with the ancestral land just before dying symbolizes the intense desire of the reservation Natives to die on and be with the Native land; and, secondly, it describes that despite living away from the reservation for most part of her life, June knew exactly well where she belonged so at the time of death she headed to reservation because she “did not lose her sense of direction” (7). Though she dies early in the novel, she remains alive in the memories of different characters and continues to play the pivotal part in the story as her life and affiliations with all three families give the fragmented stories of various characters a sense of connectivity. As her memories are recollected in the consciousness of different characters, the different narrators provide different perspectives and insights into her character. During the journey towards reservation, the home and the intimate memories associated with it occupy her last thoughts so as she crosses the field, she starts smelling in her imagination “Uncle Eli’s warm, man-smelling kitchen” (6) where she spent her childhood days and whose vivid memories of sense and sight she would never have forgotten, so on crossing the fields of snow, she feels “as if she were coming back from a fiddle dance or a friend’s house...” (6).



Despite her mysterious and early death in uncertain circumstances, she is kept alive by different characters through her memories, particularly her son, Lipshaw's quest for identity and final realization of his belonging to the reservation. He comes to discover his healing power and practices it to heal the people. Like his mother who was coming home "walk[ing] over it [snow] like water" he comes home, "cross[es] the water and brings her home" (367), thus, symbolically not only he joins his mother but also brings June home. In these two lines saturated with the symbols of water, snow and home, Erdrich depicts the circular structure of the story: June dies frozen on the snow in the beginning of the story (p. 6) and at the end (p. 367) and when the story has come full circle, her dead body is collected from the snow by her son who was far away from her and reservation. Thus, though the main characters suffer identity crisis and live in deep turmoil, the ending of the novel gives an optimistic message as the novel begins and ends with June and Lipshaw's returning to the reservation, a symbol of stable and meaningful home.

#### **4.4.3 Body as (con) Text**

Erdrich's *Love Medicine* describes the story of endurance and hardships suffered by the indigenous people and their heroic conduct in times of extreme adversity. These sufferings are not only psychic or/and spiritual but endured in body also and thus body becomes the text on which the history of colonization, sufferings and places is inscribed. To establish the relation between body and text and the use of body as site of the exploitation of colonization, confiscation of the indigenous lands and the concomitant corrosion of socio-cultural practices associated with it, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* frequently present the physical sufferings and traumatized psyche. The physical anguish of the body signified through Erdrich's depiction of the scenes of physical violence resulting in wounds, scars, pain, diseases, excessive use of alcohol, mutilations etc. is seldom unattended by psychic and spiritual upheavals emanating from the characters' forced disconnection with land and family. There remains little doubt then that in Erdrich's *Love Medicine* the (female) characters' journey towards inhabitable places more often than not signifies inner journey toward spiritual healing, evidenced from the indigenous characters' return to ancestral lands and cultural traditions with renewed inspiration and strength.

In consonance with Cixous' *Ecriture Feminine* assertions that women must reclaim their bodies as text, Erdrich portrays bodies and places under siege, showing her

disconcertedness as if humanity was living in infected environment. She conceives female body in relation with the places and homes where the body dwells and the construction or devastation of the places affects the body as well. In the wake of the destruction or usurpation of the Native places and homes by the white colonizers, the younger generations of the Indigenous people find it hard to build new homes where they could find comfort and have the feeling of being at home. In two of Erdrich's works under consideration, ancestral homes and safe places where the tribal communities lived in peace in pre-colonial era exist no more, leaving the protagonists wander in and out of the reservations continuously reinventing, reimagining, and reconstructing the perpetually lost and/or destroyed places. *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* recount the pre and postcolonial times in America when the children of the Indigenous people were estranged from their families and sent to Western boarding schools where through inculcation of English language and manners, they were systematically distanced from their ancestral cultural roots as well as converted to Christianity.

The methodical attempts (of the dominant white masters) estranged the younger generations of the Natives from their culture and places and resultantly they failed to enkindle meaningful spiritual experience with the family members, socio-cultural traditions and communal participation. In this connection it has also been observed that the older Indigenous generations of women fall victim to violence and rape when they live away from their familial and communal protection while the younger generations also feel anguished when they are disconnected from the mothers, families, places and tribes where they lived protective and communal life. Mixing of cultures and communities has led to multiethnic and multicultural community at the reservation and the array of her characters have learnt white ways of living and thus become drinking, gambling, abusive and patriarchal under white culture's influence.

#### **4.4.4 Feminine Redefining of the Past**

Erdrich in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* portray strong indigenous women characters who have deep associations with their birthplaces where their forefathers lived integrated, and communal life, so in order to reconstruct their relation with the Native places, they frequently come to and go away from their birthplaces. In so doing, reconstitute their subjectivities/identities by revivifying cultural practices of their homelands. It is through their retrieval of fractured relations with indigenous places and returning to the real or imagined homes that these characters change, reinterpret, and

reshape their personal and collective histories by giving new orientation to the past. These histories defined them in certain ways to favor and privilege certain people's worldview, the worldview they deconstruct as lopsided and thus establish new version of historic truth that past and histories are discursive categories constantly subject to new meanings and interpretations. Reservations, the large habitats which Indigenous people inhabit after the confiscation of their lands, become meeting point of cultures, ethnicities and histories where individuals transform and adapt themselves to the changing world and by travelling into and out of reservation they recognize who they are and where they belong to. For characters in *Love Medicine*, reservation is the focal place/home they return to and associate themselves with.

Herself a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa band, and the descendant of mixed-race parents, Erdrich represents a typical 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century Native American voice, the voice that is polyphonic and amalgamates German American, MidWestern American, Postmodern Western Civilization and Native American cultures. Drawing upon the rich multicultural and multiethnic heritage, she analyzes the identities and subjectivities of the vast array of characters belonging to diverse ethnicities and living on both reservations and in larger cities. Placing the rich variety of her characters-pure Indians, hybrid and mixed-blooded- on the reservation, she explores their relationship with the reservation and by doing so, she exposes her characters to the life within and outside the reservation. Their realization of their rich cultural, historical and mythical past makes them embrace their tribal roots and culture that finally brings them the understanding of their Indianness.

To examine what constitutes the identity of a Native Indian in a multicultural and ethnically diverse and complex world Erdrich, instead of relying on one Indigenous character epitomizing the traits of Native Indian, delineates variety of Native American characters belonging to diverse age groups, tribal affiliations, social classes, and professions. In *Love Medicine* (1993), the modern Chippewa protagonists' various responses to the same place while mediating their traditional and historical backgrounds with the cultural challenges of the postmodern world, indicate the fluid boundaries of the reservation like the fluid identities of the protagonists. Expressing strong affiliation with Native American values and viewing reservation as the cultural hub of ancestral homeland, many full-blooded Indians enthusiastically engage in preserving traditional cultural practices of hunting and healing.

The younger generations of mixed-blooded Indians, however, living in the contemporary world of mediated cultures, maintain far less strong ties with the reservation and find it more fluid than stable and permanent entity and, continuously travelling in and out of the reservation, allow multiculturalism and Euro-American reconciliations to flourish, and thus constantly revise the traditions of the place. The narrative forms in which these characters are described reinforce the continuance of the hybrid culture they live in represent, instead of accentuating the prevalent Western stereotypical representations of Native women. With heightened awareness of the significance of her Native people's ecological beliefs in the contemporary post human era in which the boundaries between humans and non-humans are blurred, Erdrich portrays female trickster characters like Fleur and Lulu which refuse the rigid boundaries between male and female, human and animal, natural and supernatural and thus deconstruct the normative Western gender conventions. Though Fleur Pillager in *Tracks* is a trickster figure whose sexual allure is irresistible and fascinating, and she always acts like the sexual hunter and not the victim, her promiscuous daughter Lulu displays her tricksterism in terms of lascivious behavior more blatantly. In *Tracks*, she appears as an interlocutor listening to the narration of her savior and adopted grandfather, Nanapush, the trickster variation of Nanabozoh, and in *Love Medicine*, we meet her as an exceedingly desirable woman, the mother of eight sons and a daughter. Her sons-Gerry Nanapush, Henry Lamartine Junior, and Lyman Martin-and a daughter, Bonita, are born out of her marital and extramarital relations with different men. Because of her ambiguous position in the community, the ambiguity of her character that arises out of her promiscuous behavior which results in her nine children and replenishing reservation population, she was "most of her life...known as a flirt" (76) and therefore, sharing the liminal spaces with the tricksters, she joyfully resides on the margins of the locality, the trait she shares with her mother, Fleur.

Marie, Lulu's competitor and companion in different situations, as she marries Nector Kashpaw who had set his heart on Lulu first, also demonstrates trickster traits in terms of her manly efforts she makes to achieve her ambitious plan of marrying Nector and making him the tribal head as well as assuming Sister Leopolda's role. Similarly, June Morrissey, who was first raised by Marie Kashpaw and later by Nector's brother Eli Kashpaw who brought her up more on the pattern of a son, and taught her the traditional ways of the woods, is in some ways a trickster figure and thus eludes easy gender

categorization, though she doesn't feel completely comfortable with her mixed-gender status. Marie's description of her character encompasses different shades of her masculine, feminine and animal character "she was like me, and she was not like me,. Sometimes I thought that she was more like Eli. The woods were in June, after all, just like him, and may be more. She had sucked on pine and grazed grass and nipped buds like a deer" (65). As a trickster Native woman, she does a number of unconventional things like breaking the sex taboo and leaving reservation etc. that raise her above stereotypes. Thus what the study of different female characters of *Love Medicine* reveals is that Erdrich through these complex characters effectively challenges and dismantles the Euro-American notions of gender-based fixed identities. Her female characters particularly, combining the Native and Catholic socio-cultural and religious practices, and embracing the heritage of both cultures, posit the notion of fluid and hybrid ethnic identity that becomes the symbol of survival and success in a multicultural, multiethnic society.

#### **4.4.5 Multicultural Identities, Hybrid Narratives: A "New Poetics" of Native American Ecriture Feminine**

The historical interaction with the French fur traders and Catholic American Europeans in *Love Medicine* results in inevitable cultural and ethnic diversity of the reservation that Erdrich sees as a sign of the continuity of the traditions. This continuity of tradition takes modified forms rather than complete abandonment of these traditions, because the younger generations of the full-blooded Natives, under the influence of dominant Euro-American cultural, religious and educational influences, have partly, if not fully, assimilated into dominant culture. The Turtle Mountain Reservation, a place of multicultural practices, is the home of the number of important families whose pure and mixed-blooded members construct a matrix of complex relations which are narrated through matrix of narrating voices.

The novel, charting the history of the relationship of the selected families over the four generations and six decades, enacts the drama of the social, cultural and historical transformations overtaking the Turtle Mountain Reservation over the course of the centuries through the entangled relations between The Kashpaws, who are the leaders of the tribe and are full-blooded or pure Indians, and Lamartines and Lazarres who are the mixed-blood families. So are the Morrissey who have lost their lands. Though the characters, particularly hybrid ones, move in and out of the reservation in search of their

identity and remain culturally confused before they finally identify themselves with land and its traditions, when they get in touch with land of their ancestors, they feel a sense of belonging with it. June Morrisey Kashpaw, whose journey home marks the beginning of the novel, is also one such character who has lost her roots in the multicultural world and is trying to get in touch with her home place in reservation. Although she hardly survives only six pages, her spirit hovers over the whole novel and the other characters recollect their fond memories with her, express their love for her and heal themselves by telling her stories and thus revealing the full spectrum of her character. In a typical tribal tradition of oral storytelling that serves the symbol of the unity and continuity of the tribal conventions, various characters and an objective, non-intrusive, omniscient narrator describe the events. The opening lines of the novel are particularly noteworthy for the remarkable simplicity of details and the reporting of the character:

“The morning before Easter Sunday, June Kashpaw was walking down the clogged main street of oil boomtown Williston, North Dakota, killing time before the noon bus arrived that would take her home. She was a long-legged Chippewa woman, aged hard in every way except how she moved” (1).

The delineation of the character along with precise references to time, place and space are remarkable for the beautiful blending of the Native American and Euro-American narrative styles. Exact references to time and day in the passage above “Easter Sunday”, a European measure of time, contrary to the circular and mythical conception of time in Native storytelling tradition, refers to the Euro-oriented spacio-temporal impacts of time on June and her subsequent assimilation into the dominant culture. However, temporally, the chapters of the novel are structured in forward and backward flow to let the narrative overlap allowing the readers to virtually begin the novel from any chapter and compelled by the final paragraph of any chapter to go back to the beginning.

This narrative style challenging the male-centered, Euro-American chronological structuring of time, foregrounds non-linear, non-chronological time that is characteristic of *Écriture Feminine* advocated by French-Feminists and represented here by the back and forth movement of *Love Medicine*. Rather than fully contrasting and compartmentalizing European and Native conceptions of time and its representation in the narrative, Erdrich hybridizes the two concepts of time and presents them in a new form of narration that is at once oral and written, European and Native, and symbolic of

new hybrid, cultural, ethnic, temporal, and social realities. Crystallized in June's failure to return to community and its ways, the very opening of the novel alludes to the fact that the complete return to tribal values is impossible, though the desire to reconnect to ancestral land and its cultural practices is irrepressible. The more recent circumstances of June's life are contrasted with her sustained tribal relationship to show the conflicting forces of her life that don't allow her to be completely white or non-white (in appearance and manners). As *Love Medicine* constitutes trilogy with *Tracks* and *Beet Queen* it retains certain characters like Lulu, Eli, Nectar, Marie and Sister Leopolda from *Tracks*. The second and third generation of the characters from *Tracks* validate the choices made by their forefathers and make their own choices-not very different from the choices of the first generation- in an increasingly complex cultural environment. These younger generations are the descendants of the pure and mixed-blood parents and their interracial marriages creates a tension between the Native and Catholic faiths. In this regard the marriage between Nector Kashpaw, the son of Rushes Bear and Kashpaw, and Marie Lazarre who is "the youngest daughter of a family of horse-thieving drunks", (62) is a marriage between two different cultures, two races and two different descendents : one from Native American and the other from French Fur Traders. Marie who is the daughter of Pauline Puyat and Napoleon Morrisey, doesn't identify herself with Indian traditions and refuses to have "much Indian blood" (43) in her veins and feels pride in her Catholic faith which she fervently wants to instill in her descendants. The roots of Roman Catholic influence upon Turtle Mountain Reservation can be traced back to 1817 when ambitious Catholics embarked upon a religious colonial mission and proclaimed they had divinely ordained moral responsibility to save and civilize the Indians, and to achieve their own colonial ends, they set up schools that educated the children in white ways of life and built convents that taught christianity to the people.

Scholars like Grace, Pilkington and Wright have also elucidated the process how Christian missionaries through both persuasive and coercive means educated the Indian children in Christian schools where they were systematically estranged from their families, culture and tradition. Erdrich in *Love Medicine* shows the influence of this "education" on the descendants of the Indian people and describes that, in the wake of interaction between the Indians and the Westerners, the preservation of the pure Indian values is not possible because the mixing of the cultures and exposure to other religious and social lifestyles have produced new sets of cultural values. Accepting those values is

not only indispensable for survival but it also entails assuming new identities that contain the legacies of both cultures. Therefore a number of her hybrid characters struggle to strike a balance between the western and Indian influences they inherit from their parents.

Zelda, the daughter of Marie and Nector, for instance, chooses to marry European man and their granddaughter as well feeling dissatisfied with the traditional reservation life which she feels stifling decides to live in city. The movement and development of the Turtle Mountain Reservation towards multiethnic place is the outcome of its negotiations with different races, ethnicities, religions and sharing of borders with different peoples. The ensuing amalgamation of social and cultural influences demonstrates that reservation and the life on it has not been static or enclosed but transformative and reinventing. The factors that influence the decisions of Erdrich's female characters, for instance, June, Marie and Zelda, among the others, in *Love Medicine* to stay or leave the reservation emanate from their aspirations to actualize their subjectivities by experiencing the life they opt for. These choices are embedded in the historical conditions associated with the loss of sacred land, assimilation to dominant culture, and exposure to variety of cultural and ethnic influences appearing from within or infiltrating from outside the reservation.

Through the tensions and conflicts shown between the older and younger generations regarding the choices to abandon the traditional lifestyle of the reservation and/or live in Westernized cities, Erdrich depicts the evolution and transformation of Indian families residing in the reservation over a span of several generations since they were first pushed to these enclosed places. In a situation that is typical of colonized nations, the older generations of the Indian people who have stronger ties with their lands and tribal religion find it hard to leave their roots and assimilate into mainstream culture. The younger generations, however, because of their "schooling" in Christian ideologies and their eagerness to adopt outside influences, show intense desire to leave the home, assimilate into mainstream culture, experience the bigger life outside the reservation and find their place in the world. These characters bring innovation and multiplicity to reservation making it a culturally diverse place where traditional Indian life is mingled with Euro-American lifestyle. Lyman Lamartine, for example, despite becoming the administrator of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Aberdeen, feels strong urge to return to reservation and starts there the family business of souvenir factory. By so doing, he



causes disconcertedness to many older generation Indians by opening a casino, a modern craze that was not the part of the traditional reservations and that the full-blooded Indians find encroachment on the tribal culture. Other characters too in order to overcome the identity crisis they face or achieve the personal targets they have set for themselves either cross the reservation borders or come back to it.

In *Love Medicine*, Albertine epitomizes this just right balance between modernity and traditionalism at Turtle Mountain as in pursuit of her ambitions though she leaves home and becomes a doctor, she does not stop attending tribal ceremonies and other crucial cultural celebrations at reservation and thus actualizes her “self” by choosing freely to get benefitted from fruits of both cultures rather than completely abandoning or favoring one over the other. Lipsha Morrissey, the son of June and Gerry, after he overcomes his bitterness with the family and discovers that he shares the “touch” that is, healing power with his biological grandmother, Lulu, he performs traditional family practices including preparing *Love Medicine* for his grandparents. He concocts *Love Medicine* for his grandfather when Nector develops dementia and goes lustfully crazy for Lulu again, but his efforts go terribly wrong when Nector accidentally strangles a heart Lipsha had been utilizing for the occasion. Uncle Gordie, June’s on-again, off-again husband and Uncle Eli, a lover of nature and children, though he had none of his own, are given to traditional tribal activity of hunting. So with number of male and female characters who define and realize their identities through relationship with their traditions, home and reservation, *Love Medicine* holds an important place in Native American Ecriture Feminine. It heralds a new tradition of writing that deconstructs the stereotypical, negative, inhuman, or primitive images of the Indian female subjects constructed by the mainstream European literature and reconfigures the positive and perfectly human image of Indian women and portray them having strong identities.

Similarly Albertine, a nursing student, who runs from her mother’s home and lives in the city “in a white woman’s basement” (7), cannot keep herself away from the Native home for long and often returns to the reservation. Fulfilling the destinies of the family, she pursues a successful career in the medical profession in the city and becomes a doctor and, thus, continues her family’s traditional healing power practices in a modern context. Her life in the city, as we come to know through bits and pieces of information about her, however was not one of easy adaptability in an inhospitable environment of a cold city rather it was lonely and painful in the beginning. The narrator of the *Love*

*Medicine* expresses her frustration when she first encounters the dazzling show of lights and the fierce business of life in the city: “ Now that she was in the city, all the daydreams she’d had were useless. She had not foreseen the blind crowd or the fierce activity of the lights outside the station” (168).

For a Native American like Albertine or other characters who leave their home in the desire of living a better life in the city, finding a job or living a decent life was not easy. Their experiences in the city were terrible as the Indians only found disappointing jobs, miserable slums to live where there was heartbreak, painful loneliness, cultural confusion and nostalgia that drove them to misery, homelessness, alcoholism, disease and death. This cultural and social problematic life of the Native Americans points to all sorts of discrimination and humiliation they had to face outside the reservation. While June, Lipsha, Uncle Gordie, Uncle Eli, Moses Pillager are at peace on the reservation, harmonized with its traditions and values, Albertine and Henry are disturbed, frustrated, and exiled on the reservation. Albertine’s successful initiation of herself into a promising profession and reconnection with the home as a means of self-actualization however does not mean that the efforts of all the characters become fruitful and they successfully complete their journeys. Rather there are characters who leave reservation in pursuit of adventures and careers that they fail to achieve somewhere else outside the reservation and, when they return home frustrated, some desperately fail to reconcile with the old life and ways at the reservation.

Henry, Lulu’s son, after returning from taking part in Vietnam War where he has seen horrors and macabre deaths, fails to cope up with what might be termed as post-traumatic stress disorder and eventually commits suicide. The characters of all ages in *Love Medicine* who leave the reservation including Lulu’s sons, Albertine, Lipsha and June, on return home experience mixed feelings of joy, sadness, frustration, melancholy and angst. June, while coming home, feels content and dies with happy memories of the home and childhood, while Henry Lamartine prefers to die home. Albertine, despite accomplishing success outside the reservation, feels worried about her mother who might be upset that her daughter fled reservation. She retains high regard for home and its traditions a healthy relation, so, while coming back home, she appreciates the beauty of land closer to the reservation and instinctively feels the reservation “was coming a long way off” (11) .

The analysis of various female characters from *Love Medicine*, both usual and trickster ones, Marie Kashpaw, Lulu Nanapush and June Morrissey, among others, demonstrates that Erdrich has portrayed these characters, on one hand, to deconstruct the binaristic construction and phallogocentric notions of the Euro-American world and, on the other hand, to represent powerful, Native female characters. These female characters, defying the Western notion of rigid gender categorization, demonstrate the blend of masculine and feminine characteristics and display explicitly fierce and profound sexual energy that Helene Cixous and other poststructural Feminist theorists would have wanted from a woman. The discourse analysis of the several characters confirm that through these remarkable female characters with marked Native American identities/subjectivities, Erdrich has successfully deconstructed the whitewashed misrepresentations about Native women and replaced them with discursively reconstituted images that show the Native women in variety of gender roles that, resisting the signification within negative and fixed sex-oriented stereotypes, problematize the existing pattern of thought and action and seeks alternative ways to conceive and represent the Native women.

The diversity of her characters also illustrates the diversity of cultures and ethnicities suggesting that maintaining Native traditions in the continuously transforming world is paradoxical but crucial question. Through her several pure and mixed-blood characters, she implies that intercultural and interracial associations lead to cultural adaptation. The multiculturalism of her characters emanates from her personal life experiences. Through her stories, which are at once entertaining and axiomatic of socio-political and numerous other contemporary issues facing the Native Americans, she preserves the past with its wide array of tribal traditions, evaluates the realities and issues of the present and chart realistic hopes for the future. She does all that in a postmodern/poststructural storytelling tradition that weaves together the rhetoric of natural images, significance of reservation or place, non-linear narrative –all derived from rich heritage of oral tradition and combined with Western narrative style. A haunting sense of place in her storytelling tells that both self and storytelling are inseparable; self is bound with community and language discursively constructs, deconstructs and reconstructs culture, individual, community and realities of life within it.

## **4.5 Deconstruction of the Euro-American Discursive Tradition in *Tracks***

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

Maintaining a close relation with the Native American *Ecriture Feminine* tradition that reconstitutes the Native female identity by reclaiming the Black body and re-appropriating the dominant and indigenous cultures, Erdrich, in the manner of other Native-American representative voices like N.Scot Momaday, Leslie Marmon silk, Sherman Elexie etc. embarks upon the post modernistic venture of revisiting the Euro-American discursive tradition. These Native American and mixed race American writers invigorate Native American cultural traditions and identity formation hitherto misrepresented or completely ignored by the Euro-American narratives of Native-American history and experiences. For the Euro-American mainstream culture readership familiar with and fed upon Euro-American literary tradition, Erdrich's fiction renders new patterns of meanings focusing upon fluidity of cultural identities. This rather unusual structure of the Native American narrative characteristic of Erdrich's and other Native American writer's fiction, mediating between the two opposing literary and stylistic traditions, produces alternative cultural meanings and defies the exclusivity of the monolithic discourses of mainstream culture. As an inevitable outcome of Erdrich's engagement with the issues of cultural hybridity faced by the mixed breed second generation Native Americans, her novels are informed by the issues of marginality and liminality- the defining characteristics of the post modernistic, postcolonial condition of existence of the marginalized communities. About the difference between Euro-American cultural narratives and Erdrich's representations of both cultures, Mecay observes that Euro-American narratives which are fundamentally "hierarchical monolithic myths by their very structure exclude multicultural dimensions whereas Erdrich in her enthusiasm of celebrating hybridity of cultures look for the possibility of acceptance of all culture" (153).

### **4.5.2 *Tracks* as a Metaphor of Resistance to Cultural Encroachment**

Apart from *Love Medicine* the other novels of Erdrich that followed *Love Medicine* both chronologically and thematically closely follow the writer's commitment of bringing forth the traditional and cultural aspects of the Native American subject's identity. The manifold problems that the Native Americans had to face following their eviction from their Native lands and the subsequent rounding up in the large unhygienic

tracts of reservations has been beautifully and artistically highlighted by Erdrich in *Tracks*. Native American life at the reservations apart from the essentialist, communal experience became the metaphor of structured and segregated cultures. As the mainstream American culture grew apprehensive of the Native American culture's proliferation into the white American life, thus contaminating the "purity" of the dominant culture, the American Government started assimilation policy, aimed at obliterating Native Culture, which resulted in dualistic state of being among Native peoples.

Erdrich in *Tracks* positions her readers to see what happens at the thresholds of cultures when the interaction between them is mutually exclusive and manifestly transformational. The transformational process leads to the formation of hybrid identities. The multifaceted ethnic make-up of the characters in *Tracks* - the outcome the interracial marriages between ojibwe and European descent – reflects upon Erdrich's own hybrid origin as well as highlights the contemporary issues of the confusion of cultural identity, portrayal of racism and hybridity and attempts at accepting and resisting assimilation at work at various levels.

Just like other Native American writers like Sherman Alexie, and Thomas King etc. Erdrich enjoys and benefits from her simultaneous belonging to two diverse cultures. Speaking of the advantage she gained from her biracial belonging, she says "to be of mixed blood is a great gift for writer. I have one foot on tribal lands and one foot in middle-class life" (Max 116-117). But how the Native American subject has come to be affected by the loss of cultural heritage has been explored in *Tracks*-set in early 1900's- the time when North Dakota Ojibwa and other tribes were pushed into reservations and apparently allowed to practice their tribal traditions but actually persuaded and even forced through missionaries to embrace Christianity. Through powerfully drawn Characters of Nanapush, Pauline and Fleur, Erdrich has captured the spirit of cultural confrontation, the friction between two diametrically opposed ways of living, focusing upon the Native people's desperate struggle to resist the encroachment of their lands and culture by refusing to leave their lands in order to save their lands and people who were falling away in tragic proportions.

Nanapush's relating of Fleur's story of heroic struggle at preserving her tribe's land and identify to Lulu, Fleur's daughter, reveals how the best of the Natives like Fleur, against the advice of the many ordinary tribesmen who had succumbed to cultural

confusion, had demonstrated heroic resistance and perseverance to preserve what was left to preserve: the tribal name, disintegrating tradition, and the mythic and artistic vision of the ancestors. She connects Erdrich's novels and the wide array of characters. She is the central character in *Tracks* and though she doesn't appear directly in *Love Medicine*, she remains present through her bloodline: Lipshaw carries her healing legacy and even makes an awkward effort to prepare *Love Medicine* to unite his grandparents. The younger generations lack the true knowledge and connection with the fast fading old tribal traditions. She possesses deep knowledge of old tribal ways and magic, therefore, in *Love Medicine* too, wherever these things are mentioned, she remains the reference and "serves as a subtext for the forgotten yet lurking powers of Chippewa" (Rosenthal, 129). The second narrative of Pauline puyat, a hybrid of Canadian and Ojibwe ethnicity, who renounces and detests Ojibwe ways and identify, also centers around Fleur's mysterious and daring character, who firmly maintains Ojibwe identity in the midst of the confusion ensuing from oppositional forces of two entirely different cultures at work.

#### **4.5.3 Native American Female Identity (Re) Defined in *Tracks***

*Tracks* represents the discursive ways and methods that Native Americans, especially women writers as Erdrich has used to redefine the female images and identity which had suffered a corrosive misrepresentation in the white discourses. Drawing extensively on the Native Feminist vision, Louise Erdrich has designed *Tracks* to give a comprehensive view and an insight into what constitutes a Native American female identity and how it is radically different from the conceptualization of identity from the western perspective.

*Tracks* offers an alternative view to look at and analyze the female identity because Erdrich, being a mixed blood second generation Native American, has presented the issues and problems of the Native people from their own perspective. Having the knowledge of two vastly differing cultures and the constantly shuffling and shifting Nature of the Native people's identity in the face of the sustained efforts of the white people to detain them from wanting to go back to their Native roots, Erdrich writes novels that are essentially peopled with the characters that belong to both cultures. They find themselves constantly being pulled by the irresistible forces of both cultures and finally, instead of claiming to be exclusively Western or Native individuals, they celebrate hybridity of identity and settle to adopt the mixed trails in order that they may belong relationally to both Native and White cultures.

It needs hardly to emphasize that the contemporary Native generations of male and female genders inhabiting the post modern, highly advanced American states, are painfully aware of the agonizing chapters of their ancestors' history. The Native history is an unending tale of woes and weal as they were ruthlessly persecuted and made to relinquish their lands, were driven to unthinkably unhygienic large reservations where they lived like animals and died pathetically. These earlier Native Americans, the guardians of their ancient culture, traditions and religion, after their lands were confiscated and they were interdicted to carry out their Native ways of life, were forced to study in boarding schools where through the education that focused on the white cultural ways they assimilated the white culture and gradually felt alienated from their own culture.

Erdich demonstrates the effects of white people's domination upon the Native Americans and the subsequent transformation of the history, culture, position, identity and representation of the Native American women, suggesting that the interaction between the white and Native people changed for once and all the cultural and ideological foundations of the Native women's life. Depiction of the Native American women as distinct and individual in their conceptualization of roles in social, political and religious contexts puts them in striking contrast with their erstwhile stereotypical images constructed by the white writers. Representation of these women, showing them performing significant socio- cultural obligations working in homes and displaying robust talent for challenging jobs (Fleur works in butcher's shop and possesses spiritual healing power) is an attempt to make the world see Native women from standpoints different from the Euro- Americans. It is important to note that the representations of Native American women by white woman and Native man differ radically from the portraits of these women by Native American women writers and it is so because the Native women writers have observed women from local perspective with an eye that can appreciate their struggle in the predominantly white environment to find their true self.

Fleur doesn't subscribe to the male-oriented gender role categories defined by the White patriarchal society: she possesses male, female and animal characteristics and lives on the margins of the lake in a fiercely independent manner. Rather than living a restricted, controlled family life under the patriarchal system, she chooses to live alone so that she could raise her daughter Lulu the way she pleases, could attract lovers and fight against the lumber company that threatens the communal unity (p.19). Narrating the

multi-dimensional character of Lulu that transcends the traditional gender categories Pauline says that she “messed with evil, laughed at the old women’s advice and dressed like a man” and even “got herself into some half-forgotten medicine, studied ways she shouldn’t talk about” (p.12).

Her exceptional hunting and trapping skills, the skills that are typically associated with male, also make her identity fluid, unlike western identity tropes. Then importantly she goes for hunting out of her womanly body, in the form of a bear. Her association with the tribal land and the ancestral spirits is incredibly strong, so when lumber companies and Government fee collectors come to collect fee, she remains determined to keep the Pillager land and goes to work in butcher shop at Argus in a masculine spirit. Fleur’s presence in a male-dominated place and profession signals breaking of gender codes especially when she joins fellow employees in poker game and wins over them. Puffed up with arrogance and sense of superiority at their being male, the men at butcher shop can’t believe 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” (p.21). But when after a week they fall into her trap and lose all their money and their sense of phallogocentric superiority is hurt, they rape her as a means of regaining their male superiority and minimizing embarrassment and shame they had suffered at being outwitted at the all-men game of cards by a “squaw” (p.20). Through the idea of defeat of men by a woman at a card game, Erdrich deconstructs and dismantles race and gender stereotypes. Fleur’s supernatural abilities and affinity with the bear become evident when she disappears next day and a hurricane hits the town. Her rapers are found three days later frozen to death wrapped in bear furs in the meat lockers. Rosenthal’s summing up of the episode convincingly resolves the dilemma of the rapers’ death in strange fashion: “Considering that Fleur is often described as ‘bear’, with her laugh reminiscent of a bearcough and the bear *Tracks* she leaves when hunting, it looks like she has met her prey in the meat lockers” (p.139). The representation of Fleur, therefore, defies any Euro-American, male-centred logic of binaries and her fluid rather than fixed and stable identity appears both as a victim and an avenger, male and female, human and animal, body and spirit, natural and supernatural, life and death, respected and fearful, reality and fantasy and centre and the margin of the community. The discursive reconfiguration of her fluid identity, therefore, offers resistance to established hierarchical phallogocentric order and system of discursively constructed stereotypes about Native American women.



#### 4.5.4 Performative Oral Storytelling and Re-Enactment of Female Identity: A Native Perspective

One conspicuous feature of the contemporary Native American fiction, written by both male and female authors, is its unmistakable link with the oral tribal tradition of storytelling. As it is established about Native cultures and their literature that oral tradition of storytelling was the principal source of disseminating the cultural heritage and mythical traditions to the descendents for their grooming on the established and revered tribal patterns, in the contemporary era when the pure indigenous modes of life have given way to rather hybrid cultural practices, Native American writers' fiction demonstrate a remarkable penchant for continuing tribal oral story telling tradition. One of the most respectable writer and theorist of the Native literature, Paula Gunn Allan, tracing the link between modern Native fiction and the tradition of tribal storytelling, recounts the traumatic history of Native resistance against the corrosive hydra-headed invasion of the white forces: "The oral tradition from which the contemporary poetry and fiction take significance and authenticity, has, since contact with the people, been a major force in Indian resistance" (86). It has been a major impetus to make the people value and preserve their tribal identity, their spiritual traditions and their relationship to ancestral land and her creatures. The oral traditions and cultural values have inspired the poets and writers to reconnect to their cultural roots and celebrate their identity in their works. Erdrich, being no exception, recurrently seeks to forge a link in her fiction between the racially and culturally hybrid characters belonging to the second and third generations of the Natives and their ancestors whose lives derived meaning and significance purely from the tribal traditions and myths.

The three pillars of Native American literature-"theme" "symbol" and "structure" which serve as the inexhaustible source of knowledge and inspiration about the Native people and their culture, remain constantly present in Erdrich's body of work, whatever she is writing about; whether she is writing about the Native or the white subjects she remains firmly grounded in Anishnaabeg tribal cultural ethos. *Tracks* and *Love Medicine*, despite having independent stories to tell, have trailing characters and interloping narratives, binding the Native people's individual and connective life histories with the collective Native history which encompass their biological, psychological and spiritual being. Writing in postmodern narrative tradition, conglomerating western and non- White discourse patterns, Erdrich abandons the traditional, linear, chronological plot movement

in favor of the more realistic, non linear progression of the plot, the one in which time and space blur and the narrative moves back and forth constantly, practically having no well defined or recognizable beginning, middle or end that is the hallmark of the traditional plot weaving. While her preferred hybrid, postmodernist narrative technique, the merger of the two opposing and conflicting traditions, helps her present a circular narrative, the epitome of Native tribal convention, the one that neither begins nor ends anywhere, it simultaneously enables her give structural coherence to her trilogy with central figure Kashpaw rambling in snowstorm.

The engagement of the many leading modern Native American writers including Scott Momaday, Leslie Mormon, Louise Erdrich, Gerald Vizenor etc in involving the audience in their fictions based on oral traditions, according to folklorist Kathleen E.B. Manley, is because of their being influenced by their own oral traditions. The difference between the targeted audience in oral and written discourse lies in the presence and absence of the audience: oral narration necessitates the presence of the audience while written text imagines the existence of the audience. In accordance with the requirements of the respective audience, the two traditions function within their sphere of influence and the specificity of their respective influence is determined accordingly. Since the oral tradition involves a communal sense in the performativity of the oral narrative action, the Native writers, in their written texts, incorporating the essentials of the oral dramatic action, invoke interest of the audience on the common, shared grounds of the experience. Reading female trickster and berdache figures accounts and the experiences they share intrinsically, the audience of Erdrich, far from feeling estranged from the world being depicted, become absorbed and influenced in the narrative performativity of the storytelling which is heavily influenced by the oral elements. The uniqueness of Erdrich's art is that she does not aim *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* at imagined individual readers rather she writes with the conviction of involving the community in the reading/listening activity. Her style or narratology makes it sure that she attracts the communal sense of the reader appealing to the audience in the same manner as the oral or folklore performances do. Inevitably the storytelling, as it happens in Erdrich's fiction, becomes a dynamic phenomenon characterized by continuity and incorporation as each time the story is read it is re-written. Events are integrated within the events carrying the narrative forward as it happens in the oral tradition where the intersection of the live audience may cause the narrative to shuffle forward and backward in time adding new

events to strengthen some details or to highlight some other traits or relations of the character.

It's a crucial fact that Erdrich was alive to the variety of oral traditions the tribal people practiced to tell stories of their glorious past, indigenous culture before the act of interaction with the white colonizers, their spiritual affiliation with the lands they once possessed. Her fiction, in this regard, especially her trilogy of which *Tracks* is a part, draws on variety of these narrative techniques with the effect that the narration strongly reminds one of the both oral and written traditions associated with the Western and the Native American people's storytelling traditions. Erdrich creates the atmosphere of dual storytelling by alternating between the point of view of Nanapush, the Native storyteller as well as the trickster figure and Pauline Lamartine, the disillusioned Native girl who is caught between the white and the indigenous cultures and vacillates between the two extremes to locate her identity. By simultaneously negotiating the western and the Native narrative strands and dividing the storytelling between the two characters of opposite genders and ages, she foregrounds two dimensions of the same reality making the audience/readers see that with the change of perspective the reality changes. The discourse analysis of her fiction confirms what Foucault says and she shares with him the concept that there is no one, all inclusive, monolithic version of reality available that could be said to be universally acceptable because the people belonging to different cultural and racial backgrounds would perceive the reality in the light of their own guiding ideologies.

While giving an interview to Deborah Stead, she made clear how the idea of using dual narrative voice came from a casual remark once made by her late husband and collaborator, Michael Doris, who told Erdrich about the Athapaskan Indians living around Alaska who do not have first person pronoun "I" in their language and use instead "we." This suggested Erdrich the idea of using the multiple narrative voice to comment upon the different possible versions of the same event as well as to highlight the collective communal perspective of the Chippewa oral tradition which she knew so well and desired to carry along with the Euro- American written tradition. By so doing she suggested, on one hand, the potential and significance of the oral tradition in the postmodern fictional framework and, on the other hand, mixed the two strands to allow the narrative develop into hybrid form corresponding to the cultural and racial hybridity of the modern times. The device, besides projecting the differing versions of the historical

phenomenon which was earlier depicted by the white writers with racial prejudice, enables her to present the spiritual disintegration of the tribal people at the individual and the collective level. It is interesting to note that *Tracks* opens with Nanapush relating the story of the tribal distress to her granddaughter, Lulu Lamartine, in “we” perspective, incorporating the Chippewa community in the tale imagining the wide audience.

The celebrated first paragraph of the novel beginning with the collective pronoun “we” takes the readers and the audience (Lulu Lamartine listening in the role of physically present audience) back into the miserable past when nature and the White colonizers were annihilating the Natives from the face of their own lands. The extremities of the weather along with the cruelties of the white oppressors were inflicting unbearable pains upon the Chippewa. Nanapush narrates: “We started dying with the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall”. We, stands for the fast disappearing Chippewa whom white snow, the cold, catastrophic oppressive white forces were oppressing under the weight of colonial rule. The narration of the extermination of the Natives continues in the “we” perspective until the last sentence of the first paragraph when it shifts to ‘I’, “ In the years I’d passed, I saw more change than in a hundred upon a hundred before” (8). This narrative shift from third person narrator to first person voice signals not only the change from collective witnessing of genocide to more individualistically felt trauma of the massacre, but also signifies the stylistic swing from an Indian tribal storytelling paradigm to Western preference for logocentricism. Nanapush very cleverly, in trickster tradition, changes the mood of the narrative by shifting the burden of storytelling from third to first person narrator, i.e., to himself as he was the only fortunate survivor of the worst circumstances befalling the Chippewa.

The constant shifting and shuffling of the narrative between indigenous orality that signifies Native American *Ecriture Feminine* and folklorist aura, and the western logocentric tradition that sanctifies and privileges the written word, characterize Erdrich’s style throughout the trilogy. When converted into the written and documented construction of the history , for the Native subjects the Government papers, notwithstanding the fact that they were procured by all forms of coercion, forgery, and treachery by the white unscrupulous colonizers, became the symbols of the deprivation of the lands, culture, spirituality and freedom of all sorts. The parallel construction of the conflicting versions of the history constantly inform the narration in *Tracks* as each chapter begins with the significant dates, followed by the Anisnaabeg phrases which are

translated into English. The design of the narrative is broadly reflective of the writer's intentions of providing the readers with the simultaneous, albeit contrastive, consideration of the events.

#### **4.5.5 Multivalent Voices of the Poststructural Feminine Narratology: Juxtaposing the Western and Native Versions**

Relying upon multiple voices of the poststructuralist narratology, employing contrastive and variant stylistic strands, *Tracks* juxtaposes the dynamics of the Western and Native narration and the narrator and questions the monolithic versions of the Native American history : Nanapush, the elderly, at times mischievous and mystic narrator of the past, is sharply contrasted with the mixed-blood Pauline, an intense and zealous convert to Christianity, an insider Anishnaabeg who harbors strong aversion against the Native traditions and modes of life and subsequently lives almost hysterical life ferreting for her true identity. The unsettling tension in the polyvalent voices of Nanapush and Pauline, the representatives of the old and new order of the civilization, symbolizes the sharp conflict between the vanishing tribal cultural life and the encroaching Western religious system. The deep rooted conflict that pervades all the fields of life, sets the two contrasting perceptions of reality moving, constructing and reconstructing reality in dialectical mode. Nanapush and Pauline, the significant characters and narrators too, apart from interacting and influencing the lives of those whom they relate to, comment upon and manipulate the others. By virtue of their taking part in the development of the story, they are extradiegetic and homodiegetic. Nanapush narrates the story to his granddaughter, Lulu, a homodiegetic narratee who frequently figures in other novels and who has received her education at a Christian boarding school where she had been kept deliberately away from her Native heritage. Nanapush relates to her the events of the calamitous past when their tribe was obliterated leaving only a few to survive, Lulu's heroic and mysterious mother being one of them. He is relating her story in order that she should keep in her blood alive the ancestral past and the sacrifices her people gave to preserve the culture, myth and traditions. She listens quietly for the most part, equating the implied reader in the Western narrative tradition. The purpose of Nanapush's passing on the story of the terrible past to his adopted granddaughter, Lulu, is to make her aware of the significance of her elders' past so that, living in boarding school off the reservation, she should not be cut off from the tribal past under the assimilationist propaganda of the Amer-Europeans.

As an insider-outsider informed observer of the two culture's essence, Nanapush relates the events with reliability and appears to be an authentic narrative voice, credible and convincing. His presentation of the fictional truth is authoritative and absolutely dependable. Much like Lulu, the physically present listener of Nanapush's realistic story, we, the implied readers of the tale are supposed to take the story as true. Once his credibility as an informed and objective narrator is established, his presentation becomes perfectly believable since he has established the plausibility of his narration through recounting the mysterious tribal history in thoroughly realistic manner because he perceived and presented it from his own point of view. He renders the uncanny as perfectly natural because from the Native American's point of view which is grounded in the no-distinction between the paranormal and the natural, these events are not likely to shock the perceiver of this brand of reality which, when viewed from the non-Native perspective, appears uncanny, unrealistic and incredible.

On the other hand, Pauline, though the member of the same community loses her respect and identity in the eyes of the people because of her abandonment of the indigenous cultural and spiritual values and hence, her storytelling, reflective of the same ambivalence and uncertainty of truth, lacks reliability. Loss of personal and cultural identity as well as abandonment of the Native religion makes her appear unworthy and highly discreditable figure. Her fascination rather obsession with the Christianity leads her to gradual abandonment of the Native religion, however, it is interesting to note that she fails in fully assimilating herself into the new religion and remains hanging between the two cultural traditions. Her rejection of the Native culture is seen by others as an act of treachery with one's own cult and makes her liar in the eyes of the community. Erdrich highlights here the significance of the religion and the hold of beliefs on the minds of the community. An individual is respectable in the society as long as he or she conforms to the religious beliefs of the community: rebelling against the communal religion will inevitably undermine the credibility of the individual putting sanctions of disbelief upon his/her narrative. Similarly Pauline's words lose truth and reliability among the community and she comes to be regarded as a liar. Erdrich recounts the state of distrust: "she was given to improving truth..., Pauline schemed to gain attention by telling odd tales that created damage" (39).

Whereas Nanapush's narration has a narratee and speaks directly to the audience through continuously shifting first and third person narratives, corresponding to the

personal and the collective voices, Paulin's voice does not have a narratee nor does it particularly address an audience, rather, corresponding to her dual nature, remains ambiguous in its targeting of audience. In an attempt to speak to community, her voice corresponds to those Indians who preferred to adopt the new culture's ways, breaking relationship with the ancestral culture and thus became gradually imbibed in the dominant culture, gradually distancing themselves from the Native ways. With her obsession with the white ways, she, at times, appears mad, and her discourse touches the boundaries of madness, practically throwing into doubt the validity of whatever she claims or says, hence, recounting the magical realist events by her, sounds more bizarre, and, hence, unbelievable. These elements make sense more as the discourse of madness, the product of aberration of mind rather than conscious and deliberate synthesis of magical and realist.

She presents a contrast to Nanapush in terms of growth of telling of story and the development of personality: Nanapush, after having received education in Christianity grows up as a Christian only to end up in the woods taking to Native American ways, while Pauline, despite growing up in Native traditional set up, becomes obsessed with Christianity and formally becomes a devotee, a nun to achieve spiritual edification promised to those who dedicate their lives to the spread of religion and transforming masses to the emancipatorial doctrine of Christianity. However, paradoxically, the more she distances herself from the indigenous ways, from the ancient pagans, the more strongly she feels bound with the local customs and rites and at times, consciously or unconsciously, she feels irresistibly pulled back to the abandoned roots. The fact that her abandonment of the Native vision of life does not let her fully assimilate into the white culture despite her passionate wish and violent attempts at it makes Pauline an interesting case from marginality point of view: she becomes the signification of marginalized women and hybridized Indians fitting into neither white nor Native cultures. Seen from this standpoint her robust inclination to mysticism and subsequently to fanaticism becomes an outlet for her to escape from the trap of invisibility and insignificance woven around her by her being a woman in the first place and of a mixed-blood in the second place.

#### **4.5.6 Conclusion**

In the light of the comprehensive discussion of Erdrich's *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* from the Ecriture Feminine standpoint and discursive reconstruction of reality, gender and

women, this chapter concludes that Erdrich's fiction, embedded in Native American, non-western epistemological models, articulates the 'other' interpretations of reality by incorporating the versions of truth and meanings that are particular to the believers of certain cultural and religious form of reality. Her intertwining of the Native and Euro-American versions of reality represented in polyvalent narrative technique in *Tracks* is an endeavor to bring together the two opposing epistemological and ontological models - western and Native American. It succeeds in its agenda so that two peoples living in the same country, despite the painful history of their encounters, could live together demonstrating communal tolerance, cultural harmony and respect for each other's culture, traditions and religion without trying to suppress or dominate the other on racial, cultural, religious, linguistic or any other discrimination or bias and recognize the right of the every individual, white and brown, to live in ways that demonstrate his/her essential human freedom. Cognizant of the fact that Native American tribes had survived physical and spiritual persecutions as well as deprivation and displacement from the lands which they held as symbol of tribal pride and power, Erdrich keeps the narrative firmly informed by and within the ambience of Native perspective which she builds parallel to the European conception of reality.



## CHAPTER 5

### NATURE/ ENVIRONMENT AND WOMEN: ECOFEMINIST PERSPECTIVES IN LOUISE ERDRICH AND TONI MORRISON'S SELECTED WORKS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The present chapter deals with Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's treatment of the relationship between nature/environment and women that I have discussed from ecocritical and Ecofeminist perspectives with reference to their environmental narratives: *Love Medicine*; *Tracks*; *Beloved* and *Paradise* taking into consideration the allied notions of environmental justice, environmental ethics, lands, cultural borders, and eco-performativity.

#### 5.2 Introduction to Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism

Women and nature are prominent victims of the power and exploitation in male dominant societies. Native American and Afro- American female writers have expressed their desires and ambitions about women and nature through their writings. Literature has helped these women to raise their voice against the strict customs of patriarchy. In male oriented discourses, particularly in Euro-American colonial discourses, female and nature were conceived as mysterious and uncanny, having no will of their own, always there to be conquered by male. Native and Afro- American female discourses have subverted these demoralizing equations between women and nature by replacing them with invigorating Native perspectives. Still, both nature and female are treated merely as objects in a patriarchal society and both are being used by men for their own purpose and good.

Environmental issue in any country is considered as an important affair which focuses on the aspect of preserving the natural environment. Although countries are progressing rapidly but still environmental concerns which emphasize on the idea of living in a healthy environment is limited to the constitutional policies mostly. The present study of the two Ecofeminist/Environmental writers Toni Morrison and Louise

Erdrich also sheds light on the ecological aspects of a Native and Afro- American women writing and demonstrates how these contemporary women writers from the marginalized communities are alive to and committed with spreading the awareness of ecological issues facing our globe. Through their Ecofeminist environmental narratives, they show a way forward to addressing the environmental crisis as they depict the two contradictory attitudes of the white and the Native people towards Nature.

1980 was the year when, in the wake of the growing concern of the literary scholars, environmentalists and social scientists about the global environmental crisis, Western Literature Association, in its meeting, formally laid foundation of the discipline of ecocriticism to study the representation of nature of relation between human and non-human world as depicted by the literary writers in their works. Ten years later in 1990, when the discipline flourished and ecocriticism gradually established itself as a canon, the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment, was formed to address the issues related to the relations between (wo) man, nature and environment. Though a relatively new and broad discipline in 1980's and 90's, in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because of the efforts of literary scholars across the globe, ecocriticism is a well established critical theory now. Though ecocriticism primarily deals with the representation of nature in its diverse forms in relation with the human beings, different scholars since the proliferation of the field have described it in different ways and explored various dimensions of the discipline. Glotfelty and Fromm, the duo of pioneering contributors in the field of ecocriticism, forging the link between literature and ecology, defined the term in their seminal work *The Ecocriticism Reader (1996)* that ecocriticism is an “earth-centered approach to literary studies” (1996:xviii). The inspiration the present study draws from this definition is that Nature with its large variety of wilderness and non- human actants just does not surround the human life but also provides for and sustains it in significant ways.

### **5.3 Erdrich's *Love Medicine* as Ecofeminist Discourse**

Louise Erdrich is a very prominent and prolific contemporary Native American writers and her *Love Medicine* is one of the most noteworthy works of Native American Ecofeminist literary tradition. As it is claimed “A best-seller, *Love Medicine* not only outsold any previous novel by an Indian author, but it also gathered an impressive array of critical awards” (Owens 53). This novel, combining the oral and the discursive

traditions ‘speaks’ about the lives of Chippewa Indians living in the reservation, their living conditions and the variety of Indian women who were either silenced or misrepresented in whitewashed discourses. As women are mistreated by the patriarchal society and their voice is suppressed and the male figures of the society consider women as simply something substandard and appended to them, nonetheless, the Indian women don’t acquiesce to this treatment of their gender on racist or sexist basis. Their appropriation of both male and female gender roles (unlike the western notions of gender) and its literary representations in Erdrich’s fiction was the subject of the previous chapter, however, this chapter as the title suggests would discuss Native American women’s association with nature or environment and the broader implications of this connection between them. Within the critical and theoretical spaces offered by the theories of ecocriticism, Ecofeminism, and environmentalism, the different layers of the relationship between Native woman and the environment have been explored and it has been demonstrated that, unlike their stereotypical association with nature as primitive and passive, lustful and dangerous creatures in mainstream discourses, they forge a symbiotic and harmonious relationship with nature in all its forms, and provide for the contemporary era of environment crisis, exemplifying through their lifestyles and attitudes towards nature/environment, a symbiotic way of life that proposes a harmonious living with nature and grants promises of secure future.

Though *Love Medicine* can be studied from different theoretical perspectives as it is amazingly relevant to many of the contemporary fields of inquiry most notably Postcolonial, Postmodern, Poststructural, Feminist, and New Historicist theoretical positions, its Ecofeminist standpoint is very prominent and worth discussing in view of the current global environmental issues. Erdrich, in *Love Medicine* demonstrates that there is close relationship between women and nature and, with this profound Ecofeminist consciousness, she depicts female characters like Lulu and Marie in *Love Medicine* and Fleur Pillager in *Tracks* who keep an intimate and harmonious association with nature and play significant role in protecting it. With the significant realization about the useful role the earth-centered literary texts can play to save human ecology from despoliation by stimulating environment friendly approaches, the ecocritics emphasized upon the notion of environmental ethics and looked for the literary representations that propagate environmental ethics and suggest through fictional accounts the responses to environmental crisis as well as the possible ways to address the

global issues. In this regard, following the footsteps of Glotfelty and Fromm, Kerridge and Sammells, making an ecocritical survey of the various texts, comment that “Ecocritics want to trace environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear [...] Most of all Ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness in terms of their responses to environmental crisis” (cited in Okuyade 2013 :10). They urged the part of the solution to environmental issues lies in renouncing the anthropocentric view that superioritized man over nature and justified his terrible treatment of Nature (and women) under the influence of western patriarchal and colonial theories of the likes of anthropocentrism and phallogocentrism. The stance of this section concerning the literary representations of the relationship between nature and human beings particularly nature and women in the selected works of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison is the evaluation of Native and Afro- American Ecriture Feminism in terms of how significantly their environmental narratives have contributed to fostering reconstructive environmental relations between human and non- human species. Ecocritics stress the ecocritical recognition of the inevitable interdependence of man and nature and considering environmental issues to be human issues can positively affect the human attitude towards nature and bring far reaching desired effects. As to what should be the role of literary studies in a world increasingly beset with issues as grave as environmental degradation, holistic pollution, resource depletion, global warming, diminishing bio diversity etc., the eminent critics like Glotfelty, Fromm, Lawrence Buell, Kerridge and Sammells agree upon the function of ecocriticism that it deals with the performativity of literary texts in addressing environmental crises. If ecocritical studies, as( Kerridge 1998) and (Waugh 2006) suggest , are designed to read literary texts from environmental perspective to transform the world outside, it was imperative to align the literary texts with environment and environmental theories which viewed environmental reality with a “spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (Buell 1995 :12).

In this context, the lives of Chippewa Indian in Turtle Mountains Reservation are the primary focus of the *Love Medicine*. June’s death in uncertain circumstances is the beginning of the novel when she was on her way back to the reservation; however, despite her early death in the novel, she holds the novel together and haunts the memories of the characters. The Marie-Nector-Lulu love triangle is also a strong link in the novel. The characters who are grandparents are still wild youngsters in other chapters which make it a vivid tale that stands alone.

The novel incorporates overlapping characters; chronological arrangements and the limited period of the whole story. There is none of the characters physically present in the chapter to influence the story and characters of one chapter are not as much important in other chapters. Pointing to this unconventional structure of the novel, William J. Scheick states that “*Love Medicine* (and other related novels) lack conventional structure comprised of a beginning, middle, and end” (qtd.in stock 129). Instead of having an essential protagonist who holds the interest of the narrative, a number of interrelated characters feature in the story whose loosely constructed memories and identities parallel the loosely constructed plots of her novels (qtd.in stock 129). Importance of characters is according to the narrator who describes them with the specific event. Erdrich herself explains that this forms a basis for an interesting analysis of *Love Medicine* as a ‘short story cycle’ instead of a collection of short stories or a novel.

Nonlinear narration celebrated by *Ecriture Feminine* aesthetics is also a distinctive attribute of Erdrich's *Love Medicine* which comprises of interconnected stories rather than a rational, linear plot valorized by Western culture . The development of the narrative through piecing together of the simultaneously conflicting and conflating perspectives in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* synchronize with Irigaray's notion of “incompleteness of form” which is contrary to the masculinist narrative strategy. It is important to note that the incompleteness of form doesn't come at the expense of the exclusion of male voice rather through inclusion of multiple narrative voices in the community.

When Pauline's s illegitimate child Marie (named Marie Lazzarre by the family that takes her in) decides against the wishes of her self-mortifying mother to give herself to God by rejecting the hierarchical all- white worldview of the church and laughs in conjunction with the communal spirit embodied by Nanapush's s humor, her laughter strongly reminds Cixous' “Laugh of the Medusa”. Marie's s laughter echoes the rejection of the feminine censorship: “censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time” ( p.880) says Cixous . In this connection , Marie's narration of the episode just doesn't reflect her rejection of Catholic/patriarchal economy of lack and it's emphasis on “purity” it also vibrates with that rhythmic “ breath and speech” that Cixous enjoins women to embrace in the form of laughter and feminine body. Marie's s final assertion : “ something howled in my mind. Loss and darkness. I understood. I was to suffer for my smile” ( p.47) is the assertion of her identity that she has forged out of the complex and overlapping cultural, historical and religious influences. Acknowledging of

the “darkness” within her as constitutive of her women and Native identity makes her break into regenerative laughter relieving her of the incarceration of the patriarchal/phallogocentric hierarchy. By rejecting inflexible interpretive categories of control and dominance signified by church, Marie discovers and forges her true identity characterized by beauty and strength outside the methodic incarceration of the nunnery system.

The form of the narrative throughout *Love Medicine* is such that interweaves narrative fragments into communally shared story that in contrast to masculine/phallogocentric economy of lack celebrates the feminine economy of abundance . Through June’s absent presence throughout the novel and the realization of her character through the circle of multiple narratives spun around her, Erdrich poses challenge to singular patriarchal economy by undermining the widely valorized masculine linearity of the dominant modes of narration.

Resistance to patriarchal code of linearity comes through Lulu Nanapush’s dominating relationships with variety of men though none of whom she feels herself owned by in patriarchal sense. With a kind of fluid sexuality, and flexible attitude towards marriage and cultural boundaries, she has children from different partners but doesn’t have a clear, coherent familial identity in patriarchal sense. There can be traced a clear link between Erdrich’s non-linear, fluid style of storytelling and the rhizomatic ancestry of LuLu’s children. Familial identity of her different children from different men is not inextricably linked with patriarchal figures, for instance , Henry Junior as the name suggests is supposed to be the son of Henry senior, Lulu’ s husband, but in reality he is the son of Beverly Lamartine, the brother of Henry senior and the lover of Lulu . He, therefore, despite bearing a name suggesting patriarchal lineage, doesn’t belong to a patriarchal family tree.

### **5.3.1 Degenerated Nature/Environment on Reservation**

The novel as a whole focuses on several issues but the analysis here is focused upon exploring the aspects of Ecofeminism. Erdrich has remarkably connected women of her stories with the natural environment and surrounding. Women of her stories face different hardships and traumas but the thing which is common to all these women is their deep connection with nature. Erdrich has infact depicted in depth the theme of Ecofeminism in her novel. Since this section of the dissertation deals with analyzing

discursive reconfiguration of nature and the various dimensions of Native women's connection with it, the analysis will be informed by Foucauldian approach to discourse.

In many of women's activist, critical and metacritical discussions, there exists a specific perplexity with regard to the implications of terms, for example, 'female' and 'femininity', which are frequently observed as depicting some basic attributes shared by all women across the world. This kind of assumption will in general urge the writers to overlook the way that one's discernments in regards to sexual orientation are organized by the discourse or discourses existing at a given historical moment. In this regard, it may be profitable to characterize 'female' as identified with the natural part of sexuality, feminine as a socially constructed idea which various social orders may decipher in various ways at various periods in history and 'women' as relating to the political ramifications of these understandings. This chapter also sheds some light on the idea of being a woman and the suffering they go through while living their lives under the umbrella of patriarchy. By taking the concept and prominent features of *Ecriture Feminine* theory, this part will focus on the writing of Louise Erdrich who, through her *Ecriture Feminine*, narrates different feminine experiences to the readers in the form of her women characters to explain the oppression, inferiority, and discrimination they face in a society where men are the supreme authority.

In *Love Medicine*, Erdrich defines some female characters that have a deep and comfortable association with nature. Though they don't have a relieved life in patriarchal society, they relate themselves to nature intently and feel delighted for their characteristic closeness with nature and endeavor to secure it. *Love Medicine* is a sort of writing that offers the capacity to Native woman to express her sexuality and relation with land/environment effusively. Referring to the twin maltreatment of women and nature in patriarchal set up, Ting Bo (2016) claims that in *Love Medicine*, land and female characters are both persecuted by patriarch (505). Bo describes the socio-political structures and frameworks espousing male-centric society under the Euro-American impact particularly objectify women and nature. Since in ecological terms identity of a person is deeply embedded in the sociology of land one inhabits and the language one speaks in a culture, the discourse analysis of the female characters in the novel reveals the language they speak deeply reflects their passionate love for their hometown, lands and environment.

Lulu, in this context, studying at a white boarding school, forced to learn Whiteman's language, presents a classic example when she feels nostalgic love for her Native language and longs for reservation life. Showing great awareness and sensitivity to the role of language in the cultural transmission, she feels disgust for the white language and finds its discourse hypocritical and deceitful while yearning to learn Native language. She strongly believes she doesn't belong to the white language, culture or/and landscape. Conversely she is overcome by sense of belonging and profound love for her land, language and culture when, standing on the dearly loved land of reservation, she nostalgically reminisces : "I was in love with the whole world and all that lived in its rainy arms. Sometimes I'd look out on my yard and the green leaves would be glowing. I'd see the oil slick on the wing of grackle, I'd hear the wind rushing, rolling like the sound of far-off waterfalls. Then I'd open my mouth wide, my ears wide, my heart and I'd let everything inside."(273). Her euphoric discourse about her happiness, freedom and strength of character emerges from her profound emotional and spiritual attachment with her lands. Erdrich gives richly ecological descriptions of the transforming Native landscape, rapidly changing social ecology, and the traumatic effects of land allotment policy introduced by the Whites to impoverish the cultural and material prosperity and freedom of the Natives: vast and beautiful farms and pastures, the symbols of communal life of the Natives give way to capitalistic modes of oppressive economy embodied by factories and mines. It was this capitalistic economic phenomenon that the white wanted to impose upon the Native culture to turn the fishing and hunting Natives into farmers and factory workers. Since the Natives were not familiar with this mode of living and had not learnt modern ways of farming and producing goods, in consequence of losing their lands and finally their homes too, unending woes, diseases, sufferings and deaths waited for them in the new white era. Pigeonholed in reservations, far away from the comfortable and luxurious settlements of the white encroachers, the generations of Natives died of whitemen's diseases and escalating poverty on the once peaceful and pastoral lands which were now fast deteriorating and changing into barren lands.

The allotment policy, thus, had not only resulted in disturbing the ecological equilibrium the Natives had maintained so long by living in perfect harmony with the land, its occupants and ecosphere, it also proved disastrous in terms of massive dislocations of the Natives from their prized possessions to unhygienic and ecologically squalid reservations where like lands their tribes and tribal culture fell apart.



Predominantly patriarchal Native societies where the matters from lineage to property and marriage to combined family system were determined by women started crumbling under the phallogocentric patriarchal nuclear family system.

Erdrich shows the glimpses of the remains of unparalleled natural beauty outside the reservation through the eyes of Albertine when hearing the news of June's sudden death she returns to reservation. On the way to reservation she finds "All along the highway that summer land was beautiful. The sky stretched bare. Tattered sliver windbreaks bounded flat, allowed fields that the government had paid to lie fallow" (p.11). Contrasted with this pure and refreshing atmosphere was the polluted and dingy environment of the reservation where the Natives were confined to live among the "pits, dried slough, dishes of coattails and potholes..." (p.11). The comparison between the two environments shows in binaristic terms the Natives' forced dissociation from their revered lands and conversion into white culture.

Plagued confinement to reservation causes along with ecological deterioration the sociological erosion of the Native women also: unlike their pre-colonial matriarchal social set ups in which women had strong voice in the eclectic tribal system and were not considered inferior to men in any respect, in phallogocentric/ patriarchal environment of the reservation, they are treated like subalterns, have lost voice and agency and are persecuted by the Whites and the Blacks alike. In the midst of Whiteman's relentless maltreatment of women and nature in the reservation, Lulu continues to love and protect environment and shows lifetime commitment to preserving land and women's rights. She expresses her ardent love for nature passionately: "When I came back to the reservation after my long years gone, I saw the leaves of the poplars applaud high in wind. I saw the ducks barrel down, reaching to the glitter of the slough water. Wind chopped the clouds to rolls that rose and puffed whiter, whiter. Blue June berry, tough diamond willow. I watched my own face float over the grass, travelling alongside me in the dust of the bus window, and I grinned, showed my teeth. They couldn't cage me anymore" (69).

Reading the text from Ecofeminist perspective reveals that Erdrich has infused the text of *Love Medicine* with Ecofeminist nuances and thus examples galore of the ecofeminism can be found scattered throughout the novel. The first chapter, "The World's Greatest Fisherman" introduces us to the character of June. She dies on her way back to the reservation. June was adopted by Great-uncle Eli when her father ran off to a big city. She has a romantic relationship with Gordie when she grows up to be an adult.

June, like some other Native characters who disappear from the reservation in quest of better life, leaves the reservation when her marriage turns out to be off-and-on. She is discriminated and ridiculed by the white when she is living in the white world. She doesn't remember when she ate last time because she often has no money. Her hard life in the white world is depicted by the itches of her clothes. When the customers show racial discrimination and ridicule her, she discharges her anger by dyeing customer's hair stiff green. She wants to rely on a good white man because of the failed marriage experience with Gordie but she finds that "an Indian woman was nothing but an easy night" (9). After having a bad experience, when she decides to go back to the reservation, she is frozen to death in a storm.

Erdrich connects the character of June with land as she states, "mama's letter that June was gone—not only dead but suddenly buried, vanished off landlike the sudden snow" (7). Later on Albertine Johnson again connects her Aunt June with natural surroundings as she states that she knows that snowstorm was on her way but she feels as if "she'd have gotten that animal sinking in her bones"(10). Erdrich's interest in Nature/environment becomes obvious when she regularly talks about the place of Montana which is famously known as her natural surrounding and its natural beauty is acknowledged by many of the environmentalists. Lulu and Marie, the pure and mixed-blood, female characters, have a cherished relationship with nature. Though the living environment on the reservation is gradually deteriorating but Albertine illustrates the beautiful scenery when she returns to reservation on the death of June, she states: "All along the highway that early summer land was beautiful. The sky stretched bare..."(11).

Albertine finds the sights of reservation shabby and wild. It is depicted as hell having potholes, dried sloughs, pits and ditches of cattails. She portrays the living environment on reservation very terrible. The pastures and farms become barren when they are replaced by mines and factories. Air and fields are heavily polluted. Behind this establishment of mines and factories on the Natives' lands is a terrible history of the gradual loss of lands to white policies.

### **5.3.2 Entanglement of Land, Culture and Living**

The inevitable result of ceding or losing the lands to the American government was that the Natives failed to sustain honorably as they were barred from hunting and gathering, forcing the Ojibwa to work as lumberjacks in the white men's companies.

Dawes act 1887 passed by the Congress to help Indians live more like Whites by farming on the divided lands also failed to make an impact on their lives as land in northern Wisconsin was not conducive for farming, leaving the Indians with no other option than selling their lands to lumber companies to meet their expenses. By the time of the president Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 20th century, because of the spread of the movements of Civil rights, times softened for the Natives and they got thousands of acres of lands back. Furthermore in 1983, the federal district courts in Chicago, further strengthened the rights of the Native Indians as, in the light of 1837 and 1842 treaties, their rights to fishing in the ceded lands was acknowledged and despite some violent episodes in 1990's, the situation is considerably improved in the current times. Giving a gesture of broad humanity and showing generosity for the Native American people, reservations were announced as the independent places of the Native where they could practice their religious and cultural values without any inhibition because the Euro-American cultural values were not to affect these reservations. However, it was duality and hypocrisy of the Euro-American Colonial powers because in reality they had started massive campaign to convert the Natives, and there were sustained attempts at assimilating the Anishnaabeg people.

At the time of confining the Ojibwa and other tribes of Native American people, these numerous tribes were placated and kept under control as they were told by the United States that they would be as sovereign Nations within the Kingdom of US and would no more be subjected to the Jurisdiction of the state or Federal Government, nor would they have to follow the same judicial, social, or religious conventions practiced by the white American. However, all these pronouncements were no more than the eye wash for the already dispossessed Native American as their younger generation were forced to attend the predominantly missionary educational institutions or those boarding schools which were situated off the reservation and where every attempt was made to inculcate in the minds of these children a sense of superiority of the Christians socio-cultural and religious institutions over the incivility of the Native culture and religion. The schools as well as missionary institutions were particularly established by the missionary organization or by the Govt. itself with the implicit agenda of converting the Natives into Christianity and heavily suppressing the cultural sovereignty of the Natives. These biased institutions were particularly used to discursively represent the Euro - American cultures' sovereignty and natural superiority over any other culture, especially the Native people's

notion of civilization. Practically, however, there was no escaping the fact for the Euro-Americans that America was a multi-ethnic society where a mosaic of numerous cultures flourished freely, eliminating any possibility of exterminating any people's culture, and this feature of the American society made it culturally multivalent society.

However, despite the much publicized statements of the Euro-Americans regarding the notions of cultural, human and ethnic co-existence in American culture, the ground realities depict a dismal picture: in order to look into the hypocrisy of such discursively manipulated truths, one has to read the deplorable history of the dehumanizing treatment of the Native ethnic groups of North America. The painful history of the subjugation as well as of the worst tortures and inhuman treatments they were subjected to reveals the double knavery of the white Americans and accounts for the pervasive differences of outlook that led to the ideological and cultural clashes between the White Americans and the Original inhabitants of the lands. It is this traumatic history of the connection between the Euro-Americans and the Natives as well as the scenes of all sort of cultural encounters that Erdrich has portrayed in her seminal novels *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. The Native culture thus obliterated, badly mutilated in some cases and having lost its vitality when mixed up with the white culture, left bad memory as the history of the Natives was constructed so badly, mutilated to the irretrievable extent and presented as a part of the Colonialist agenda. So huge was the loss of the Ojibwe in terms of cultural annihilation that they could never retrieve it in entirety, and are still busy reviving it through various ways, including literature which is providing them a platform to raise their voice against the excesses committed and cruelties done to them by the white masters. A good crop of the Native Writers, who were only a handful ones in 1960's, is seriously committed to reconstructing the disfigured history of their past encounter with the white rulers by subverting the white discourses of domination and discrimination aimed at misrepresenting the Native culture.

One sad consequence of the systematic wiping out of the Native culture and assimilating the younger generations into mainstream white culture has emerged in the emotional detachment of the Native generations from the once dearly held and practiced beliefs of the Native ancestors. These younger generations, to the chagrin and disappointment of the older generations, have lost touch with the glorious heritage of their culture, and have turned their back to those myriad traditions and cultural artifacts which constitute the mosaic of Native tribal life. White discourses, as they dominated the

literary scene for countries of colonial rule, were created and used as a major means to construct stereotypical images of the non Whites in order that the world outside should build abominable images of these people, believing the authenticity of these discourses. Misrepresentation of the Ojibwe people and their holistic life style in the white discourses of that time is one conspicuous example of the discursive manipulation of the reality by the white forces. Inevitable aftermath of this bloody and violent conflict between the two cultures was the obliteration of the weaker one, the Native culture, not merely because they were numerical minority, rather because their discourses were silenced, their voices suppressed and their culture marginalized. The deep rooted plan of the annihilation of the Native cultural ethos involved gradual extinction of the cultural rites and conventions as a first step to the ultimate conquest of the Native mind and absorption of the soul into soul of the white culture. It is this critical juncture of the Native-American historic moment that Erdrich has vividly and poignantly presented in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* to divert the attention of the world towards a colonial process with which the White rulers crippled the Anishnaabeg.

The white imposed their own rules on the Native Americans and wanted to change them into farmers. Landpolicy was the misfortune for reservation. It resulted in loss of lands, pangs of deprivation, genuine neediness and extensive sufferings. Even though there is no immediate delineation about her, June's craving for opportunity of uniformity still can be felt in *Love Medicine*. Albertine re-tells June's challenging background in the white world. She was an undaunted woman and had a penchant to assert her strong individuality, so had burned an unruly woman's hair stiff green with when she was aiming to be a beautician. Her life was permanently unsettled and she was often "reported drunk for work in dime storms and swaggered out of restaurants where she'd waitressed a week, at the first wisecrack" (9).

Albertine's account of June's struggle for survival in the white world shows her hunger for equality and freedom. She departed the reservation to win her life through her diligent work but the inexorable racist structures of the American society cripple her dreams and despite being clearly an independent and self-propelled woman, she fails to live her ambitions. Being a solid autonomous lady, she cannot hold up under others treating her unequally because of racial discrimination, so she vents her resentment by purposefully dying discourteous client's hair green and firm with synthetics. After the disappointment of attempting to be autonomous through her endeavors, she tries her luck

by trying finding a decent man to depend on, yet the white men she goes to for reliance thinks about her as a simple night. She, at last, loses herself and bites the dust on her way back to the reservation.

This miserable plight of the Native American folks and women in particular emanates from their separation from and loss of lands. To Native Americans these lands were not merely the commodities or source of livelihood rather they had strong emotional and spiritual affiliation with their lands, hence their forced removal from their lands resulted in deep psychological issues. When the government displaced them from enormously fertile and resourceful lands in the east where they lived traditional life to arid lands in the west where they couldn't hunt, fish and live in the company of the variety of Nature, not only they felt a huge sense of loss, an upsetting deprivation from the ancestral lands, they also experienced an unrelieved pessimism that under the brutally exploitative white rule, their miseries would never end. Lulu voices the grief of her people when they were displaced: "How we were shoved out on this lonesome knob of prairie my grandmother used to tell. It is too long a story to get into now" (p. 282). when apart from snatching 90 million acres of lands from the Native people, the white rulers use all kind of cunning ploys like bribing the tribal council to put a wedge in their unity and create internal conflicts among them to achieve their financial and administrative objectives, the Natives succumb to these machinations and stand sharply divided on the issues of using their land for commercial and capitalistic enterprises.

For instance when council decides in favour of establishing a souvenir factory to mass produce bangle beads and plastic war clubs, the council and the people stand on cross purposes, and though the will of the council prevails Lulu raises the dissident voice: "Every foot and inch you are standing on, even if it's on the top of the highest skyscraper, belongs to the Indians (p.221). The analysis of these three female figures from the novel gives the final image that females have no voice in daily life and they are dominated by men. In the patriarchal society of reservation, these women sacrifice their whole life for men but they are still ignored.

The white government policies put the Native American reservation in serious poverty. Once the picturesque, peaceful and pastoral Indian reservation and the natural beauty and landscape are destroyed and badly damaged. The White government's manipulative policies caused damage to Native Americans lands and terminated the communal possession of the property. It was an attempt to destroy the tribes by imposing

patriarchal nuclear family onto many maternal Native societies. Religious persecution perpetrated by the white upon the Natives alienated Indian women from their traditional religion. Under the destructive influence of the White ideologies, Androcentrism became common in a reservation. Women became subservient to men and with it lost status, rights, and freedom. They cannot escape from their tragic fate. In *Love Medicine*, characters such as June, Lynette, and Marie, are persecuted by patriarchy. These female characters are portrayed as passive objects and silent. They have no voice and they are attached to men. Women alone are not the target of patriarchy rather as Erdrich emphasizes the brutal behavior of men damages Nature, environment and animals also. Novel is replete with instances where Nature and non-human creatures are not safe at the hands of men as “the men were still talking about the animals they had killed” (30). While killing animals in the past was only to satisfy extreme needs of life and no life was taken just for sport, now, under the Western notion of anthropocentrism, animals are killed for sport and the ecological balance is in danger. She writes: “ but I heard of this guy once who put his arrow through a fox then left it thrash around in the bush until he thought it was dead” (32).

The character of Marie is repeatedly depicted with nature symbolism: she is “pale as birch . . . the kind of tree that turns around and springs up, whips singing” has eyes like “an injured mink's,” and caws “like a crow” (64). This symbolism of the regular world serves to arrange Nector and Marie's romantic tale in a more extensive setting. While the relationship at first appears to be shallow, since Nector overlooks his crush on Lulu so rapidly, the natural language used to portray the circumstances indicates how intently Nector is focusing on Marie. Quite possibly, as the sensitive language shows, this is a profound love that will rise above beginning. Louise repeatedly connects the woman of her stories by symbolizing them with natural environments. As Nector explains the fierceness of Lulu by explaining that, “her eyes are tense, and wild, animal eyes”. One of the examples of great wife and mother in the novel is Marie who decisively wants to become a Christian saint. She imagines that “Plumes of radiance had soldered on me (Marie). No reservation girl had ever prayed so hard and they never thought they'd have a girl from this reservation as a saint they'd have to kneel to.” (43). Marie's confidence and piety were very much high before marriage. She envisions that she will be carved in pure gold with ruby lips when she becomes a saint and people will crouch to show respect for her. She turns out to be less and less confident when she

marries Nector. When she fags away at supporting family, her husband betrays her and has an affair with Lulu. Her husband abandons his family but Lulu doesn't accept her. Marie was inordinately ambitious to be something big on the reservation and she forgives Nector for his wrong deed. She focuses on her husband and everything around him but she loses herself. Furthermore, Marie notes something powerful about June, who was found as a youngster in the forested areas. "It was as if she really was the child of what the old people called Manitou" (87): a Manitou is a soul experienced in the forested areas.

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

### **5.3.3 Lulu Nanapush: An Embodiment of Native American Environmental Ethics**

Lulu Nanapush renders the chapter "This Island" with lyrical and mystical descriptions. Lulu is profoundly perceptive of nature, as other different characters in the novel are: her decision to live with Moses, on an island with just each other, kittens, and nature signifies her as more tuned to nature than a portion of different characters. The symbolic and lyrical language that Erdrich makes use of to depict how Lulu sees the world is especially telling in its nature symbolism. Lulu Nanapush explains that when she came back to the reservation, she saw "Wind chopped the clouds to rolls that rose and puffed in whiter, whiter . . . They could not cage me anymore" (69). Lulu at last runs away from government school duties and starts finding pleasures in nature that encompasses her. The fine consideration of these subtleties of nature demonstrates Lulu's attitude towards Nature as her relationship with Moses evokes further symbolism related



to nature. Lulu sees and hears everything about the island which brings life into this setting: “I heard the scrape of the bronze leaves and the waves licking, just behind me.” (76). Living much of his life with the cats, Moses also turns out to be unified with nature: “He had found his voice and it purred continuously” (81). Though there is big deal of ambiguity about almost everything in the novel-women do have uncertain relations with their husbands and other family members and people on and off the reservation- but there is no uncertainty about women’s intimate relation with nature.

In the wake of being isolated from Nature for numbers of years, her admiration for nature is remarkable. She feels a reassurance of being with the company of beloved things on coming back to the grasp of nature. Then again, on romantic level, there is another sign of Lulu’s affection for Nature: her union with Moses. After their marriage, the couple builds up a warm association with nature; they want to live in their cavern, eat rosehip and crude potatoes; they scrub down in the lake although the water is cold. Lulu’s affection for Moses is another sign of her adoration for Nature. Lulu has wild relations with men and, being a fiercely independent woman, she pays little attention to gossiping tidbits about her in the clan. In a typical Native American attitude towards Nature, she loves and reveres every single particle of Nature. She admits honestly :“No one ever understood my wild and secret ways. They used to say Lulu Lamartine was like a cat, loving no one, only purring to get what she wanted. But that’s not true. I was in love with the whole world and all that lived in its rainy arms” (276).

She is the perfect representative of those mythic and cultural traits of Native Americans’ life that keep them united and give them a distinct identity. Their collective beliefs in myths are cherished by people through powerful oral tradition. Essentially folk tale in nature and profoundly didactic in thrust, these myths are spun around common folk, ordinary places, domestic and wild animals, natural habitats, about almost everything. What raises these mundane realities to ethereal plain is the belief of the Native Americans ancestors that every living being, objects, and animals are inhabited by a lofty divine spirit. This belief practically eliminates any essential difference between different creations, and rules out any notion of man’s superiority over other creations on any bases, rather treats everything as the manifestation of one divine spirit. Native American humans not only love, respect and live in harmony with the animals and plant kingdoms whom they consider the descendants of the some family, but also derive their names from animal as a sign of sharing the attributes.

They proudly call themselves Bears, Horses, and Rabbits; Bulls etc. implying that they intend to live in harmony with all other creatures. This mythic and creative vision of the Native American ancestors about the deeply spiritual nature of the universe and its creations being the personifications of force or what they call 'Great mystery' goes a long way to explain their intimate, deeply spiritualized relationship with nature and their subsequent spiritual anguish at their forced removal from ancestral lands. After Fleur Pillager, her daughter Lulu tenaciously sticks to these beliefs and practices them in her real life and profound relationship with nature.

Another conspicuous feature of the Native Americans' vision of the relatedness of the animal and human life is the positive role that the animals play in human life by interfering into the affairs of human beings and helping them out in mysterious ways. Native American myths and visions as the manifestation of their ancestors' sagacity and their attempt at understanding the complex pattern of the universe, suggest their compatibility with, not inferiority to, other cultures and religions which have their own stories about the world and its creation. Stories as diverse as of creation, heroic journeys, trickster figure- Coyote and Iktome- are richly suggestive of the Native American ancestors' keen interest in understanding the world and natural phenomena around, and explaining the reasons for the things being so. Fleur and Lulu, among others, live out these beliefs and stories in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*.

Native American People's beliefs in these and several other myths and visions however, suffered regression when the white European Americans dominated them and gradually alienated them from their centuries old traditions, beliefs, truths culture, language and ways of life, superimposing their white cultural values on Native society. The new generation of the Native Americans including the mixed blood found themselves at the cross road of the two opposing cultures and the value systems and at this critical juncture of their history the writers of the Native American literature including Louise Erdrich made their appearance producing mostly in the form of novel, a literature that was to present the sentiments and concerns of the Native American and mixed-race Americans about deteriorating Native Culture.

Lulu Nanapush Lamartine is a representative and outstanding Chippewa Woman in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*. As a Native Woman character, Lulu recovers and reclassifies space that is generally taken up by discriminatory stereotypes by utilizing her beauty and sexuality. Lulu's character breaks the shackles of Westernized standards that

have affected her. There are numerous men that Lulu draws into her life and numerous who are abandoned. According to Jeanne Smith, Lulu's sexuality is not a device or trick she uses to control men or for men to control her rather, it is her "vision of a wholly transpersonal state of being" (18). For Smith the character of Lulu in *Love Medicine* "questions even the possibility of imposing boundaries"(18). The cultural standards that encompass Lulu force judgment on her for her accepted sexual abnormality. Lulu's association with men is a declaration of her sexuality that fortifies her personality. Whereas women are defined as discourteous, unmannerly creatures, as unpredictable and unfitted for stable relationships when they have had multiple sexual companions, Smith claims about the character of Lulu that "The vibrant, strongly self-aware Lulu" is the best example that disappearing physical boundaries result in strengthening identity. Lulu has an extraordinary ability to live in perfect harmony with and understand her environment and even the men she is constantly seen pursuing and hunting "are largely just a part of her ability to absorb the beauty" (18).

What makes Lulu's character so viable in her methods for retrieving space as an independent and sexual lady is her refusal to feel sorry for what she is and how she maintains her originality. She claims her own body and when society places her in a classification that she does not fit into, she rejects it and never feels apologizing for an actual existence she lives in the most desirable manner she can. She candidly speaks out her thought: "And so when they tell you that I was heartless, a shameless man-chaser, don't forget this: I loved what I saw" (277). Lulu's character is defined as a woman with powers that deconstructs the stereotypical attitudes of a patriarchal society towards a woman. She truly lives what Rushes Bear once told her that, "the woman is complete. Men must come through us to live" (82).

Sara Ahmed (2017), a prominent woman activist-scholar, depicts how females who grow up without supportive network are frequently described as rebellious and seductive of men because they hate their own selves. She states that all women "have a story to tell. This story can be treated as a teaching tool, as well as a way of teaching us about tools" (67). Females who are compared with men are typically put in a weak classification and are only threatening to other women. However, Erdrich provides a kind of writing, *Ecriture Feminine*, that is associated with the lives of women that gives Lulu space to recover her personality. Lulu's growing up without a mother and other females gives readers an understanding of how females fall into associations with men. Lulu

describes that she didn't grow from the curve of her mother's arm, though she still wanted to attach herself to her but she had disappeared leaving her "to spill out alone" (68).

Lulu's character assumes the task of hyper-femininity that is frequently sexualized, objectified and undervalued and replaces the stereotypes that were shallow in reality. The novel depicts that Lulu has consistently been battling for her rights. She brings up an awkward truth after she receives a notice. Lulu's property, where she lived and brought up her children, is not "hers" as indicated by the notice. Land is being offered to the Whites to construct a factory plant. At last, when she says she will uncover the names of her ill-conceived son's dads, the tribal council decides to offer her financial compensation for her property. For Lulu, "Every foot and inch you're standing on ... belongs to the Indians" (282).

#### **5.3.4 Break Patriarchal Patterns and "Help Me Get My Vision"**

In addition to the fact that she fights back by living her actual self, uniting individuals and her refusal to fulfill society's fake standards and values that were strict for the female gender, she additionally knows whom she is battling for and whom she is battling against. Neither she sells her land nor she leaves and moves from her land. In her battle to attempt to remain on her property and her continuation to battle back against the persecutor, it is clear that Erdrich has made Lulu's character as of a woman who is breaking the typical patriarchal patterns that were being made by the men for Native women.

In a patriarchal society where the values and norms are structured according to the male desire, males think that they are a supreme desire for which a woman fights. For men, they are the central point of each and everything. In this regard, Louise Erdrich describes the story of Lulu's son Lyman Lamartine. With the support of Lulu, he turns into the leader of the Tomahawk Factory. The plant they build offers numerous occupations to the Chippewa people group and they begin to achieve some degree of economic independence. Lulu guides Lyman on the ways to run the foundation and make the laborers and network pleased. By helping him, she makes sense of how to extend and spread employment opportunities to families and rapidly set up equivalent compensation. Lyman depicts his mom as: "You know Lulu Lamartine if you know life is made up of three kinds of people—those who live it, those afraid to, those in between. My mother is

the first. She has no fear, and that's what's wrong with her" (302). Lyman feels too much interference in his work which irritates him as his male ego does not accept it so gets annoyed with Lulu since she is controlling the circumstance truly.

Lulu and Marie are two noteworthy female characters in *Love Medicine*, particularly Marie who raises her own youngsters as well as supports the individuals who are abandoned and destitute. Lulu and Marie are rivals due to their association with Nector: one is a spouse and the other is a fancy woman. What is most astonishing is that after Lulu has activity in her eyes, Marie approaches to help her. They begin to communicate, comprehend and value each other. In "The Good Tears" Erdrich depicts their close relationship: "I thought her voice was like music in itself, ripe and quiet... I gave her a pillow I'd made out of those foam rubber petals they sell in kits. 'This is really nice,' she said, 'I never learned how to do this kind of thing.' ... 'I appreciate you coming here to help me get my vision,' I said. (293)

The dialogue portrays a warm picture of Lulu and Marie who care and help each other even though they were rivals previously. After Nector whom both of them adore profoundly bites the dust, they become partner to take care of each other and battle against the white government to ensure their Native Americans' rights together.

Lulu enables Moses to recapture the capacity of talking, strolling and living. Before Lulu goes to the island, Moses communicates in the old language and utilizes words that have been lost for quite a while. At the point when Lulu goes to the island, she generally attempts her best to enable Moses to recapture the capacity of living as a typical individual.

### **5.3.5 Erdrich's Symbolic Ecriture Feminine**

Though the whole novel is replete with the instances of stylistic beauty, the chapter "The Beads," is particularly noteworthy for Erdrich's use of language which illustrates that Marie's beads are intended to symbolize June. Earlier, June reaches Marie's home. She was already grieved and feeling distressed by her mom's passing. The reader is drawn through symbolic language code to know about the hardships June faced and experienced throughout her life. The metaphor and symbolism Erdrich uses, as she arranges the beads and small stones shaped and smashed by waves is an illustration for June's miserable past and dismal future. Besides, the symbolism of beads tells about an intense token of the power of religion in the life of Marie when she says that though she

doesn't pray, but sometimes she touches the beads. It has secretly become an indispensable part of her life so she lets her "fingers roam to them when no one is in the house" (95). Although Marie doesn't pray, yet despite everything, she breathes easy because of June's beads (rosary). This can be perceived as a lingering portrayal of the Catholicism Marie knew as a child while living in the convent. She resolves to herself, "I vowed I never would be caught begging God. If I want something I get it for myself" (94). The chapter remarkably deals with the theme of religious symbols. Marie embraces June, who arrives in wild confusion and wearing rosary beads and, in reality, these beads show up as an image all through the chapter (in the first part). June acquired them when a crowd of country Native Americans discovered her in the forested areas; living off land after her mom passed, and attempted to secure herself against any shrewd soul in her with the rosary beads. It also shows that woman is always associated with the evilness as June is represented in the chapter by the Native Americans. June constantly wears the beads even after Marie starts taking care of her. At the point when Marie discovers June at the hanging scene, she was gripping the beads in her hand. Erdrich clearly emphasizes through her language that the beads are symbolically representing the character of June.

The second half of this chapter discusses the complications Marie had with Rushes Bear, her mother-in-law. Although their connection begins with common opposition but Erdrich at the end of the chapter describes their relation which turns into a deep-rooted bond. This happens on the point when Rushes Bear helps Marie when she was suffering from the difficulty of child labor. This part reinforces the feeling of companionship between two women, which is later observed by the readers repeatedly. Moreover, it also dwells on the point that women are strongly connected to one another in a society. Erdrich describes Marie's labor through the use of symbols and imagery. Marie states her situation "I understood that I was to let my body be driven by the waves, like a boat to shore, like someone swimming toward a very small light" (100). Moreover, the ending of the chapter focuses more on the symbolism of water which describes the association and bonding both Marie and her mother-in-law have, though earlier the relationship was not smooth as it went afterward as Marie confesses: "Before the birth of that child, Rushes Bear was a hot fire that I wanted to crush," (101) Water is known as a substance which breaks down the rough stones, so the water here and afterward in the story is represented as an element that helped to unite Marie and Rushes Bear, though both were initially different and aggressive.

The most noticeable ecocritical theme in *Love Medicine* is water, which shows up in various pictures all through Nector's narrative and is intended to coordinate the reader's consideration. Initially, the symbol of water appears when Nector models for the old female artist. She paints him jumping unclothed off to the precipice and titles the picture as Plunge of the Brave, which could indicate either the quality of bravery or the possibility of the respectable savage, frequently called a "brave". The most favorite book of Nector was *Moby Dick*, and he most often cites its acclaimed first line "Call me Ishmael," to himself. Water is defined as the symbol of life for Nector. By one way or another Nector considers himself having gotten away from the rich woman's image just like Ishmael, who escapes from the aggression of a whale. To depict the rapid expiry of seventeen years of Nector's life Erdrich makes use of water symbolism. In a long monologue, Nector interprets himself as a delicate stone being fragmented by the waters of time. He, all of a sudden, understands that he has passed through a long time without acknowledging everything around him, and when he turns upward "there was less of [him]". Later also the relationship between Lulu and Nector and their illicit affair is described through the symbolism of water.

The primary passage of the story of Lyman hints towards its bad and dark closure, however reading Lyman's words for the first time does not appear to be harmless totally. While the "boots loaded up with water" (177) line is inexplicable, it could have emerged to depict any number of situations that do exclude demise. The end significantly tells that the water symbolizes death; the moment Erdrich uses it in the beginning till end it represents the same things. *Love Medicine* ends by providing the readers with the final imagery of the ocean. After Lipsha encourages his dad to exit, he drives back to the reservation. There he stops on the bridge over which the ocean runs. The readers observe nature to its fullest in this scene. Water has been used to refer to numerous things all through the novel, primarily Erdrich uses it as a symbol of death and religion. However, Lipsha understands that he needs to embrace the present; he conveys a significant message to the readers with this realization. As the most mysterious and elusively slanted of the book's characters, he conveys a huge message with this acknowledgment. The intelligence of Lipsha and his pragmatic realism proclaims a brighter future. He realizes the supreme significance of land and the relation of the self with it and states assertively: "I'd heard that this river was the last of an ancient ocean, miles deep, that once had covered the Dakotas and solved all our problems" (333).

#### 5.4 Erdrich's *Tracks* under Ecofeminist Lens

*Tracks* (1988) is the third novel of Erdrich among the sequence of four-novels which consists of *Love Medicine* (1984), *The Beet Queen* (1986), and *The Bingo Palace* (1994) and acts as a prologue to *Love Medicine*. All these four novels share similar settings as well as characters, that is, Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota. The novel fills in parts of the untold story of a tribe with the help of Nanapush's narration and portrayal of array of Native characters. Nanapush, a trickster figure, and one of the central characters in the novel, is an old storyteller-survivor who sees and knows reality from trickster's point of view and provides valuable commentary over the past and present turn of events from Native American perspective and thus plays variety of roles and serves number of purposes. Erdrich's better half, the writer Michael Dorris who collaborated with her in writing these books, states about the chronology of these novels: "*Tracks* was the first one to have the finished draft, but it will be the third one to be published" (Coltelli 51). Furthermore, he claims "*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" (43). Therefore it appears that the novel presents a story which describes a specific "traditional" time, life, or even a history that is certainly not returning after that specific time 1912-1924 in any case or under any circumstances.

As Erdrich demonstrates the close spiritual relationship between Native American subjects and the non-human objects of nature, opposed to the Euro-American anthropocentric philosophy of domination of the natural world, *Tracks* develops into Ecofeminist discourse, epitomizing Native American environmental philosophy. The novel juxtaposes contrastive attitudes of the Euro-Americans and the Native Americans towards environment signified by the motifs of salvation, betrayal, mutuality and exploitation of Nature. Since environment occupies central place in the lives of the Native Americans, Erdrich makes it a point to describe the lives of the Natives with reference to the mutual relations between them foregrounding the Native belief that upon the reciprocity of the relationship between man and nature depends the balance and sustainability of the ecological life. It is to trace and revive the Native American mythical beliefs in the reciprocal relationship between nature and humans which received set back with the arrival of the civilized Europeans and their alienating technological advancements which resulted in many sided conflict between the Native and White ways of life that Erdrich has rendered *Tracks* from environmental perspective. While Natives



loved, preserved and catered for the environment, the capitalistic Euro-Americans dominated and destroyed it. Erdrich shows these conflicting approaches to environment by the white lumber companies that weaken and despoilate the environment by cutting trees and the Natives like Nanapush who feels thw earth tremble with the fall of the trees and gets “weakened into an old man as one oak went down” (p.9). He laments the gradual decline of the Native ways of life that under the “government bait” the Natives became oblivious of their traditions and cultural roots and the lands they had inherited from their ancestors were “snatched from them at every step”and with which they were associatesd by thousand and one ways were “(p.4). Literary landscape of *Tracks* consistently negotiates between “the human and the nonhuman” (Glotfelty, p.xix) and a number of male and female characters like Fleur, Nanapush and Eli to mention a few develop environment friendly life style and exhibit profound environmental ethics. Eli Kashpaw, for instance, “lived too much in the company of trees and winds” and was “uncomfortable around humans” (p.40). The happy corollary of this living in proximity with nature is these characters’ heightened environmental imagination and unusual ability to listen and understand nonhuman voices as their “ears pricked up everything in the woods, the rustle of birds, the crack of dead spring leavesand twigs” (p.58).

Considering environment to be the animated part of their everyday existence, they have a remarkable penchant for associating and locationg their human passions and relations into natural objects, so when Fleur losses her child, she finds it everywhere in nature and “heard her child in every breath of wind, every tick of dried leaves, ecery scratch of blowing snow “ (p.170) . Their emotions are nurtured and shaped by the surrounding environment so in the snow season Eli’s relationship with his wife become ice dead and the inhabitants of Argus believe more in supernatural force than human world. They have aspiritual relationship with land and everything it holds and consider it the responsibility of man to protect its beauty and vigour, therefore, in line with the contemporary environmental consciousness, they consider humans responsible for any eco-catastrpohe. *Tracks*’ environmental narration makes it clear: “Another tree, a large one, pitched loud and long, closer to where we stood. The earth jumped and the shudder plucked nerves in the bodies of the men who milled about, whinning softly to each other like nervous cattle” (p.223). Their indestructible belifs in the supernatural and ‘Great Spirit’ forbid them from doing any unjust activity to the ‘Mother Earth’ and in this manner Erdrich establishes the role of eco performativity in the lives of the Native

Americans. Erdrich's use of language, a "new poetics" in depicting Native American environmental wisdom through metaphors of Nature plays an important part in evoking environmental consciousness: "money burns like tinder, flows off like water" (p.33). Trees are personified having human qualities of 'whinning', 'groaning' and wind like a healer has the ability to work even on Euro-Americannised Pauline "like elixir that put her mindless and at peace." (p.155). The overall scheme of the novel, therefore, denies the anthropocentric approach upheld by Euro-American world towards environment and glorifies biocentric approach revered and celebrated by the Native American life-style, emphasizing that in the cosmic scheme of nature, not just humans but nonhumans , Nature and environment are equal partners. The survival of life on the earth, in the words of Nanapush depends on the preservation of land and its environment for "Land is the only thing that lasts life to life" (p.33).

#### **5.4.1 Connection between Land and People**

The novel describes the story of a specific group of people or family under review: it is Fleur Pillager's clan called the Ojibwe or Chippewa or the Anishinaabe. Erdrich, herself related to the story of this tribe, describes their battle that how they endured the hardships of the loss of their Native land. The Native individuals by and large relied upon their territory for nourishment and accommodations. Simultaneously, land is a representation of a spiritual heritage for them, a reservoir of convictions and legends. In this way, there is an extremely solid bond between them and their property. Native Indians have firm belief that they were conceived from the belly of the Mother Earth and hence there exists a natural bond between them and "the misty, generative womb of Mother Earth . . ." (McGaa 62). Since attachment to land determines their reality, loss of land makes that primal world crumble as the novel depicts the seizure of the last ripe land- the Pillagers' sacred place that is known for timber- by Amer-European timber organizations. "Last" is very particularly highlighted by Erdrich's storyteller, Nanapush, whose reuse of the word while revealing to Lulu Nanapush the narrative of her mom and tribe makes it conspicuous and consequential. He demonstrates a constant expression of grief over the competition of white with nature and laments on the idea that ecological luxury is ending. He tells her that he guided the last buffalo hunt; he saw the last bear shot; he axed the last birch that was older than him and he "saved the [last] Pillagers". ( 2)

Erdrich makes use of old Nanapush to replace the Native mother who narrates the tales of the past to her kids which is an extremely customary practice. He starts the story by describing to Lulu the extermination of his tribe by and large and his own families specifically, in light of the fact that one of the diseases they suffered in the wake of the interaction with the Whites caused their downfall, among other things. He narrates the tragedy with poetic pathos: “We started dying before the snow, and like the snow, we continued to fall”(1). “We” represents the whole clan and collectively refers to the deaths of Fleur’s family too. He unveils to Lulu the tale of her mom, Fleur, whom the young lady appears to decline to identify or even “call mother” (2). Nanapush needs to place the young girl in a specific historical perception and location that will empower her to comprehend the explanations for her mom’s deserting of her. Simultaneously, he needs to make her discover an association with that traditional time which connects her with her lineage as such to study the “reality” about that history because their version of history and reality is different from the one the Amer-Europeans teach the Native boys and girls in Christian schools. He tells her: “Granddaughter, you are the child of the invisible, the ones who disappeared...Our tribe unraveled like a coarse rope, frayed at either end as the old and new among were taken” (1-2).

In this regard, Stookey claims that the novel *Tracks* is “essentially a story about the land—and the people connected to it” (71).Erdrich juxtaposes the life of man and contrasts the permanence of land in relation to the transience of human life. To her land is the only permanent thing in life. Money is deceptive and momentary, for it “burns like tinder and flows off like water” while the government promises are false and unreliable (33).

According to the Anishinaabe or Chippewa perception, the earth, sun, moon, and plants are a kind of family members and by ignoring the earth (land), the entire life arrangement of these individuals will be devastated. Men just regard Pauline for her work, which is parallel to the people’s under-thankfulness for Nature. Toward the start of the novel, Pauline depicts her predicament when she first rejects her Native American family and moves to another town. She states that at the age of fifteen, she was terribly alone and so miserable-looking that no one took notice of her in the shop as she was “ a skinny big-nosed girl with staring eyes” ( 15-16).

Through Pauline’s observation of her cultural position, readers experience her absence of significance in her working environment. Pauline makes no difference to the

men working in the shop. Pauline's terrible treatment in the shop shows her situation as a young female in the society, somebody who is not esteemed for her work for some reason. This position insults and depreciates Pauline as an individual. The passage is also linked with the idea related to Ecofeminism. Pauline depicts herself mixing into the "stained brown walls," (16) similar shading as the earth. All the while, Pauline portrays herself nodding off, bringing down herself "into a mound of swept sawdust" (20). The shading association and her correlation with a stack of sawdust show the associations between Pauline and nature. Since Pauline analyzes herself in terms of Nature around her and the shades of earth, she reinforces the relationship between her intangibility and the earth's under-appreciation.

From Ecofeminist perspective, Pauline's troubles parallel the issues confronting the forest in the novel *Tracks*. For instance, the white development laborers in *Tracks* see land for its logging significance, giving it no idea until trade and industry comes into the investigation: "But that spring outsiders went in as before, and some of us too. The purpose was to measure the lake. Only now they walked on the fresh graves of Pillagers" (8). Nanapush, a seasoned male storyteller, depicts the searching loggers do not see land for its inherent or intrinsic worth and they disregard the land's social and cultural significance when they step over the departed family's graves. In similar way, men in Pauline's place of work dismiss Pauline, overlooking her own worth. Pauline states the indifference of men towards her and her work: "the men would not have seen me no matter what I did, how I moved" (20). By this parallel between her and nature, it is easy to draw the interconnection between her deterioration and ecological abuse. As men possibly see Pauline when she works for them, the outsiders consider and observe land as logging cash. They neglect its other side which is more worthy and socially and culturally important. Similarly as Pauline goes unnoticed and underestimated, the earth is something that people overlook and use it only for their individual advantage. Pauline's overlooked existence shows the underestimated nature that encompasses her. Here Erdrich effectively draws a parallel between Pauline as a female and the land from Ecofeminist perspective.

Similarly as society's absence of gratefulness for Pauline replicates society's constrained appreciation for nature, Pauline's religious commitment shows her subordinate position. Religion controls Pauline's life similarly as people control nature. After Pauline conceives an illegitimate child, she chooses to ask forgiveness for her

previous sins and dedicates herself to God with full religious engagement. Upon joining a religious community, Pauline goes progressively nonsensical and wants to pay her religion a sacrifice and atone for her sins to achieve Catholic “purity” of soul. For instance, Pauline wears her shoes on inappropriate feet, and just permits herself to make use of the bathroom at sunrise and sunset. She clarifies: “He gave me the mission to name and baptize, to gather souls. Only I must give myself away in return, I must dissolve” (141).

Pauline portrays a thorough loss of her feeling of self, as she gives herself increasingly more to the chain of command of her religion. Since she feels so dedicated to God, she surrenders her human capacities, for example, dressing appropriately, eating, and using the restroom. While asserting these sacrifices she feels as if she is bringing herself closer to God, while in actual, Pauline ruins herself physically and rationally. Abandoning any rational activity, Pauline enters the domain of madness where she surrenders to such enthusiastic and nonsensical conduct for the reason that she senses that she needs to. This extreme humiliation of self and the mind results from Pauline’s finished subjection to a male centric, religious foundation. While clarifying religion and woman’s environmental rights in *The Power and Promise of Ecofeminism , Reconsidered*, Elizabeth Mayer outlines religion’s part in shaping the female attitude and mindset: “The human body is mere matter, and God gives it form and life when he puts a soul in. He did this for men and only for men” (6). Because women are not included in this godly creation, religion often ties them with material world and places them in lower position to men who are accorded superior status because they “are connected to the eternal world” (6). Mayer calls attention to that and states that religion is a man centric creation, with a male head, God, and a dominant part of male agents; ministers, priests and others. Subsequently, Erdrich shows that with Pauline's subjection to religion, she at the same time becomes subservient to male. Similarly as females are related with the domain of the physical and the normal world, Pauline describes herself under that equivalent differentiation by putting herself under religion’s standard. Since Pauline is a female, she falls into society’s guiding principles, stereotypes and standards by relating herself to the natural world and environment. As stated by religion, God rules over the whole world, the individuals as well as Nature in it. The book of Genesis, portraying God’s formation of the Earth, defines, that man will have dominion over the earth.

Religious belief system just doesn't recommend that men are better than women but also claims that men are better than nature as well. The religious standards always reinforce the superiority of men over everything in this world. Approving a religious viewpoint that supports man centric foundations, Pauline turns into a vessel for the earth, recommending that the earth has been set under man centric controls, and is continually controlled and undermined in the present society. Since religion symbolizes and talks about the beliefs that justify the domination of nature, for many individuals religious belief system may at the same time lead to destruction of nature. Pauline's religious dedication shows the negative results of religious belief system. While she endeavors to attract herself more like a being that is better than females and nature, she ends up in isolating and distancing herself from her Native way of life and the earth. Giving this radical illustration, Erdrich allows readers to look at their own religious convictions, bringing up the defects in religious belief systems that lead to ruling over and wrecking the earth. Pauline's actions delineate the manner in which people treat, humiliate, and overpower the earth.

#### **5.4.2 Parallelism between the Exploitation of Woman and Nature**

The central female character Fleur's downfall in the novel parallels the physical damage to natural surroundings. There is an important comparison in the presentation of the character from the start of the novel till the end; this complexity is reflected by the author in the act of the government's taking Fleur's property to control and to obliterate the luxury of Nature. Earlier, Fleur was introduced as a female who was incredibly solid and independent. Nanapush finds Fleur alone in a lodge, having survived a disease that killed her entire family. Nanapush describes that: "She was wild as a filthy wolf, a big bony girl whose sudden bursts of strength and snarling cries terrified the listening Pukwan" (3).

Comparing Fleur with a wolf symbolizes that Fleur is a mysterious and strong character in the novel. She can fight for herself, and has demonstrated her strength by enduring a sickness that killed her whole family. Her qualities are similar to the qualities of Nature. She survives through severe cold just like a wolf that endures winter and extreme cold. Her character is symbolized as a Bear, whose hibernation in winter describes its rejuvenation and power. By depicting Bear like qualities in Fleur, Erdrich demonstrates typical Native American mythological belief and the Native American vision that animals and the human beings are the descendants of the same spirit and thus

there exists among them great harmony . The Native Americans proudly name themselves Bears, Horses, and Rabbits; Bulls etc. implying that they intend to live in harmony with all living creatures. This mythic and creative vision of the Native American ancestors about the deeply spiritual nature of the universe and its creations being the personification of force or what they call ‘Great mystery’ goes a long way to explain their intimate, deeply spiritualized relationship with nature and their subsequent spiritual anguish at their forced removal from ancestral lands and hence separation from nature and mother earth. Another conspicuous feature of the Native American vision of life is the closeness between the animal and human life and the mysterious role animals play in human life by interfering into the affairs of human beings and helping them out in mysterious ways. Native American myths and visions are an attempt at understanding the complex pattern of the universe.

Fleur’s comparison with animals makes her character more interesting and realistic from the non-white perspective. Fleur shows that even the most grounded can become powerless under the dangers and threats of societal standards. Fleur’s abuse becomes clear when the men of Argus brutally attack and rape her in the beginning of the novel. Pauline as an eye witness describes her viewpoint that the men: “planned with their eyes things they couldn’t say aloud . there is nothing more to describe but what I couldn’t block out: those yells from Russell, Fleur’s hoarse breath, so loud it filled me, her cry in the old language and our names repeated over and over”(24-26).

Though Fleur is described as a powerful female character even having supernatural qualities about her, she is by no means immortal or flawless: she is as vulnerable and frail as any person may be. Pauline describes that Fleur called for assistance from the two youngsters in the shop. Her cries show how vulnerable she was in that condition. She was unable to communicate in her Native language and asks help from kids. This incident further isolates Fleur from her strong persona of ‘the wolf’. Severing the link between Fleur and her animalistic character becomes the symbol of disconnection between the people and nature and its surroundings. Since Fleur has been separated from such an influential thought, she turns out to be more assailable in men’s eyes, and increasingly powerless to their merciless and brutal assaults and violence. Though sexual abuse Fleur encounters isolates her from the qualities of being powerful and strong woman similar to the qualities of a wolf, she still conveys other animalistic affiliations in her character, with the Bear specifically, all through the novel. Therefore,

Fleur's rape still reverberates in the environmental world, demonstrating how man shows his control over nature in a very severe and horrendous way.

Fleur's downfall begins with the sexual abuse (rape) she faced which reveals the significance of ecofeminism and environmental issues and the novel, thus, becomes a vehicle of eco performativity. Louise Erdrich describes rape as the most awful mistreatment a female could suffer at the hands of male or female. Since Fleur is still associated with nature, Erdrich, through her character, symbolizes the rape of natural surroundings and environment which results in environmental destruction. It leaves everlasting scars, and harmful effects. Besides, when a female is assaulted, the action performed cannot be undone in any case. The same goes for nature too. When people ignore nature and ruin it for individual advantage, there is no limit to harm. At the point when Erdrich compares assault with the annihilation of nature, she reinforces the seriousness of ecological maltreatment and maltreatment against female gender. Giving huge importance to ecological issues, Erdrich effectively expresses the environmental issues by associating them with the vulnerability and exploitation of the female gender and creates a symbolic environmental narrative. Subsequently, rape of Fleur is a poignant, emotional and powerful description, compelling in its thrust to consider the degree of effect of such brutal acts on nature, and the adverse outcomes that follow. Fleur, after being abused, is destroyed entirely like the demolition of her property. Erdrich skillfully makes the connection between Fleur and her property and when loggers at last take Fleur's land and Fleur loses her consciousness, the incident leaves a deep impact and sense of loss of both Fleur and the environment. Nanapush gravely narrates the incident in the last part of the novel: "There came a man's faint cry of warning, then a long snapping fall and the echoing boom as the length of a tree met ground. Fleur lugged a large flat boulder to her chest . . . she touched you as she passed and then walked into the water...the water closed over her head" (211-212).

In Erdrich's view both Fleur and nature are weak against men that control them. Fleur exemplifies nature's suffering and misery apart from obliteration and industrialization. Erdrich sheds light on this issue to motivate her readers and builds a human picture of nature and environment. Erdrich highlights the gravity of both, the circumstances in nature and Fleur's last act of rebelliousness. Despite the fact that this last act shows a level of misery, the last incidents in *Tracks* likewise show the fate of woman's rights and environmentalism. At the point when Fleur enters the lake in her



suicide attempt, she draws power from the earth and its environment, carrying herself closer to the lake beast, Misshepesu. Fleur's act of entering the lake suggests that in spite of her abuse and exploitation, she still has command over her life and the circumstances and has the ability to suffocate her physical body so men can never again mistreat it. Nanapush gives the incredible explanation of Fleur's activities: "Around me, a forest was suspended, lightly held. The fingered lobes of leaves floated on nothing. Nothing was solid. Each green crown was held in the air by no more than splinters of bark" (223).

### 5.4.3 Fate of Women and Environment

Both female characters, Fleur and Pauline, end up in more awful position than they began with. Pauline is disgraced and becomes a captive to her religion, while Fleur loses the most significant association with her place and property. The two characters suffer on account of society. Pauline surrenders herself to man centric religious principles, while Fleur falls from the most powerful position to the weakest through rape and the obliteration of her territory. The two characters keep up their strong relationship with land all through the novel. Fleur keeps up her inhuman personas with the Wolf and the Bear, whereas Pauline has her own animalistic affiliations with the Crane and the Raven. Paralleling devastation of the females and nature, Erdrich reveals that the outcomes of both female's humiliation and nature's mistreatment are destructive. Fleur's last action shows that there is still a sign of hope left between the environment and the woman as she unites herself with nature and commits suicide. The novel, therefore, takes up the environmental and Ecofeminist issues and performs these issues through the duo of haunting female characters, Pauline and Fleur.

Erdrich appears in these novels a remarkable Native American environmentalist and ecologist who, in her characteristic *Ecriture Feminine* stylistics, skillfully presents case for ecological and environmental justice in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*. The Ecofeminist implications of both novels make her a prominent literary figure in the Ecofeminist tradition. As *Tracks* narrates the life of a Native American woman, Fleur, and her association with the locale and the land, Erdrich relates her female characters with nature and the novel takes on an Ecofeminist persona. In this context, Joni Adamson presents the various interpretations of the novel *Tracks* in "Cultural Critique and Local Pedagogy," and asserts that "stories about transformational beings and the novel *Tracks*

itself—open the oral tradition to . . . answering urgent questions that face the community” (103).

Ecofeminists contend that in the present society, both female and a Nature experience extraordinary discrimination. *Track* draws unfailing attention to the simultaneous abuse of women and nature by revealing the parallel destruction of females and the natural resources on the earth. Erdrich shows that both female and environment are facing serious danger, and a strong Feminist and environmental activism is needed to rescue both nature and women. The central premise of this chapter- the patriarchal structures’ function in ways that institutionalize the exploitation of women and nature- is reflected throughout the novel as the central female characters’ abuse and miserable ends are associated with continuous damage to the earth. The study’s main point that patriarchal structures of any society, in a bid to maintain and perpetuate male domination, allow the simultaneous domination of nature and women (Waren,1993) when applied to Erdrich’s fiction reveals that she has exposed in *Tracks* the unjustified human systems of domination that involve nature and environment and thus one of the points of departure of this study-since historically this argument concerned only Western cultures-is that it investigates the infiltration of this patriarchal system of domination in Native American culture.The discourse analysis of Erdrich’s *Tracks* and *Love Medicine* illustrates the domination of women and nature by the white and their mixed-blood successors.

#### **5.4.4 Mutualism between Native American Woman and Nature**

Indians cover their dead ones in trees to let the winged creatures of prey live on their dead substance in spite of the fact that the clerics criticize this method of burying human being. Nevertheless, this shows mutuality between a human and nature. Fleur Pillager disdainfully calls Nanapush an elderly person, having a twig and two wrinkled berries : “A twig can grow,” I offered. “But only in the spring” (48). The character of fleur is represented through these metaphors. She “was pregnant, going to have a child in spring” (42). At the point when Nanapush says to Margaret that the cool lake water could be illusive with its traps for the imprudent youngsters, she states “If he (the lake man) wants me, I’ll give him as I get” (50). Erdrich recommends an inevitable mutualism that represents a connection between man and nature. The Natives Louise Erdrich talks about are themselves Nature. Pauline’s explanation of the relation between Eli and Fleur is reflective of the close communication between Native (wo)men and nature. She describes

the scenes of romantic attachment between them using frequently the images of moon, sun, morning, dusk and wild animalism to suggest the deep connection between Native and nature. The following passage from the text illustrates it clearly: “In the morning, before they washed in Matchimanito, they smelled like animals, wild and heady, and sometimes in the dusk, their fingers left tracks like snails, glistening and wet” (72).

They live like creatures, in the real essence of nature, in no depreciatory sense, rather in the celebrative feeling of freedom. Similarly the fight between Margaret and Boy Lazarre is quite common and natural from the Native American perspective as “Margaret uttered a war cry that had not been heard for fifty years, and bit boy Lazarre’s hand viciously, giving a wound which would later prove death of him” (112). What we assume is that they act as nature, living nature, they are nature itself, so these characters are exemplified as nature by Erdrich. This common sense was, however, adversely taken up in the discourses of the Euro- American people who marked these people as ‘primitive, uncivilized cannibals’. The idea of mutuality with nature is a method of survival in *Tracks*: Moses turns his face Black, fasts for dreams and gets “protection from the water man, the lion in the lake” (36) to such an extent that when he goes to the island away from Matchimanito, the kittens go with him and now he wears “a necklace of their claws around his neck” (36). Similarly Individuals are glad at Fleur’s coming back and this happiness is because, “she kept the lake thing controlled” (35). The character of fleur suggests a deep intimacy between a human and environment.

Nature is the inseparable part of the Natives’ lives and they feel themselves of one piece with nature as Fleur is believed to have married the waterman, Misshepeshu. Native American characters may appear to be unashamedly occupied in sexuality with no transcendent meaning but sexuality in them is a characteristic that describes and focuses on a natural impulsiveness of the life of Native American. When Marie Kashpaw is burrowing earth, Father Damien is watching her at that point. He fears that Marie Kashpaw would hit cold yet “dirt was warmed as far down as she cared to dig” and she appeared as she is “determined to dig until she dropped to her death” (115). Moreover she lives by eating the pure natural food for her existence and survival. When it becomes limited, she starts eating “wild tonic of fresh dandelion spears ...” and goes for stealing eggs from the nests of finches and doves and joyfully snares a rabbit and even doesn’t hesitate to mesmerize “agrouse in the graveyard” (118).

Erdrich links Pauline with Euro-Americanism through her interests in Western hobbies. Pauline replicates Euro-American awareness in spite of the fact that she is a Native American character. She feels envious of and shows abhorrence for Fleur Pillager who is an ideal example of Native Americanism. There are male parallels of Pauline also. Nector, Eli's sibling, for instance was taken to the government institute where he lost his Indian character, unfit to be invested in Indian receptivity, while Eli, safe from westernized institutes, pleasurably enjoys by living in forests and woods. Pauline has terrifying inclination towards Euro-Americanism: she is ambitious to acquire American language, method of living, and even her personality and individual identity. She considers "sticking to the old Indian ways is decease..." and even abandons speaking Native language (14). Fleur, on the other hand, is the agent of the Indianism in body and soul. Erdrich builds up her character in assimilation with the earth and the woods, lake and seasons and environment. She turns into a measuring stick to gauge the reactions of different characters to the Native American life and culture.

#### **5.4.5 Fleur as Metaphor of Nature**

Erdrich proposes in Fleur's character an Indian soul which is so pure and eco-friendly, in close touch with the elements of Nature, uniting her soul with the soul of the things around listening and responding to the call of her non-human companions. A few people among Indians have faith that the reason of the destruction of the tribe was "the doing of the dissatisfied spirits" (4). She is related with the spirits of the older folks. At the point when Nanapush needs to protect Eli from her, he also proposes that it is she, the soul of the past departed people, of the dead, who ruined Eli, nineteen years old. Her extraordinary methods for wandering and showering additionally reinforce this apparently superstitious perception. *Tracks* offers numerous references to Fleur's relationship with creatures, plants, feathered creatures, water and marvels of timberland to demonstrate her involvement in nature and environment of the Indian individuals as, "She moved stealthily, smooth *as an otter* sliding from a log, she *crept* off the bed" (106).

In *Tracks* Native Americanism is described in relation with nature. Though, Erdrich describes the death scenes and demises, it does not terminate the tribal communication with the planet earth: "that disease must have claimed all the Anishnabe that the earth could hold, and bury" (Erdrich *Tracks* 1). The chain relationship of all appearances of life from life to lifeless, from the plants to the kingdom of animals and

from animals to living being does not allow the elimination of the dead ones from this chain of relationship. Nanapush communicates the same to his granddaughter: “you are the child of the invisible” (1).

The severity of the weather caused tremendous increase in death rate of the Indians. During the time when the clan of Nanapush was weighed down with the snow, the extremity of the weather rendered them completely helpless and miserable. He explains the desolation: “We became so heavy weighed down with the lead gray frost that we could not move. The blood within us grew thick. We needed no food” (6). After the incident took place, Nanapush saw a bare ground instead of his clan and he “was so surprised that (he) bent down and touched the soft, wet earth” (7). He further claims that, “I weakened into an old man as an oak went down” (9). His richly Nature-oriented imagery demonstrates an intense mutual relationship between Nature and human beings. The male and female Native American characters of Erdrich talk about the ecological and environmental crisis frequently that mirrors their sensitivity to and concern about the deteriorating environmental conditions on the reservation and by implication throughout the world. They demonstrate heightened environmental ethics in their relationship with nature and thus inspire the readers to work collaboratively to resolve the global ecological crisis. Erdrich’s fiction strives to achieve the Ecofeminist ideal that the secure future of humanity depends upon the harmonious relationship between humans and nature and the elimination of patriarchal domination of nature and women.

### **5.5 Morrison and Ecofeminist Narration in *Beloved***

Being winner of the most esteemed Nobel prize for literature and known as an eminent and the most influential contemporary Black novelist of Afro- American origin, Toni Morrison has remarkably represented the lives and problems of contemporary generation of Black people, underscoring how the history of the Black Africans had been harmed and badly misrepresented in the white discourse leading to the construction of the dangerous stereotypes of the Black people and projecting of their images as barbarians, savages, uncivilized race whose mythical history, cultural rituals and socio-religious values were rejected as crude and uncivilized that called for the humanizing influence of the white Europeans . The spread of such dehumanized images and negatively constructed history of the Black people to the world consciousness, besides bracketing these people with inferior classes of nature and animals, defined them as

prehistoric, dark and dangerous forces whose domination by the white people was portrayed a splendid act of divine intervention, of much needed colonization of the Blacks and nature.

This is the reconfiguration of Afro- American socio-cultural and mythic history, particularly the re-enactment of female identity and Afro- American women's symbiotic and invigorated relation with nature/environment through indigenous discourses, cast in Ecofeminist narration, that render Morrison a crucial figure of present-day Afro- American women writing. She committed herself with reworking the history of the Afro- American people and presented their communal identity and eco-friendly ways of life in her environmental narratives that address the perennial questions of effects of slavery, communal survival, trauma of repressed desires, angst of silenced voice, dehumanizing misrepresentations of the Black people, the psychological impacts of their subjection to slavery, and their constant efforts for ending racial discrimination and gaining freedom and self actualization in predominantly white American society. She has admirably redressed the wrongs done to Afro-American people and their relation with environment by the spurious champions of the rights of human beings, by deconstructing the racial misrepresentations of the Black people in a distinctive ecocritical *Ecriture Feminine*. In *Beloved*, for example, she has articulated the painful history of the Black slavery and the dreadful consequences of this psycho-physical subjection of the Black races. Written in an inimitable style that is typically feminine carrying the signature of Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine*, *Beloved* embodies the traumatic history of the ruthless suppression of the Black people, the brutal suppression that estranged them from their past, cultural values, traditions, mythical beliefs, and intimate relationship with the world of wilderness and nature. Morrison, through her commitment with the fiction writing from the Black Feminist viewpoint, has attempted the reclamation of Afro- American people's mythical past and integrated communal life and revived the environmental ethics of the Black folks.

*Beloved* is a fictional endorsement of the Black people's troubled lives, of their passionate and profound desires to break free from the fetters of Europeans oppression, from the materialistic white socio-cultural approaches that they have been forced to absorb in order to survive in a race-ridden and xenophobic mainstream society whose code of racial and religious intolerance had barred the Black people from literature and other fine arts, from taking benefits the pleasures of civilization, from the ways of

representing themselves and their ecological conception of life from their own position, and most importantly, deprivation from the rights of having an access to education and means of self representation never let them express their history and self in true perspective and thus they remained suppressed and misunderstood in the mainstream white thinking. This conventional thinking, characterized by dominant white male writing tradition, capitalistic and colonial in its intensions, debarred women from authorship, confining them to largely non creative, non intellectual and simple domestic positions. The Black women were perceived in terms of wild, seductive, dangerous and unsophisticated Nature that needed to be conquered and tamed. Women and nature were conflated and described in binary and derogatory terms giving men and culture priority over women and nature. Setting up a feminine tradition of writing which was subversive and revolutionary in its anti-patriarchal viewpoint challenging the predominant male tradition, was the major contribution of Afro- American women towards broadening the frontiers of the Erécriture Feminine and Ecofeminism by incorporating the Black women's perspectives in the cannon. Afro- American women writers, according to Michael Awkward, attained this place by creating texts that present the (en) countering realities by reviewing the canonical and seminal texts with the aim of inscribing a new authorial identity. These works of Afro- American women writers, embedded in Black ecocritical/Ecofeminist ethics, attempt to create the discursively retrieved and renewed history of the enslaved Black people.

*Beloved* by Toni Morrison narrates the poignant saga of a Black slave, Sethe. Sethe is a female protagonist in Morrison's *Beloved*, who runs from the Sweet Home plantation. Sethe is an Afro- American slave who is safely living her life in Ohio with her four children and her mother in law. But later men from the plantation Sweet Home arrive to take Sethe and her children back to the place. This fear of reverting to slavery stresses her and she tries to kill her children but only succeeds in killing her infant daughter. Morrison's description of the isolation Sethe and her sons faced as a result of their separation by the community is very poignant. Sethe starts feeling contented and happy when Paul D, another former slave from Sweet Home arrives. But the presence of a lady named *Beloved* messes it up all. Similar name readers observe written on the grave of an infant child whom Sethe killed by herself in the state of fear. She is persuaded that *Beloved* is her little girl resurrected; Sethe thinks about her and is truly overwhelmed by her presence.

Denver is Sethe's daughter, who gets worried about Sethe's condition and the influence *Beloved* has on her personality. This urges Denver to take help from the community in banishing Beloved from the house. (Re)memory plays a great role in the novel *Beloved*: her recollections of Sweet Home and the maltreatment she endured plague her beliefs which ultimately affect her relationships. For instance, Sethe's association with nature and how it reflects her slavery complicates her situation. Even though she admires nature's beauty which is described through the use of violent images, as she says "Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world" (*Beloved*5), she wants to escape from Sweet Home and succeeds in her act but still, she is surprised when she recalls the place of Sweet Home as a beautiful place even though she worked as a slave at that place. Since "there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream" however in her recollections, "it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was" (5). The conflict arises when she becomes unable to disregard the beauty of the Sweet Home and its aesthetic appeal whereas the violence and traumatic memories she endured while living in that place as a slave are permanently engraved on her and in her mind. Sethe lived most of her life there. She remembers the horror of plantation she experienced and observed but somehow she was attached to the place. As it was the place where she met her partner and bore her children. Sethe feels as if something is missing, after all, she was close to nature there despite its horrors. While on the other hand Paul D has different memories and recollections associated with the same place Sweet Home. He reminisces that:

"Trees were inviting; things you could trust and be near; talk to if you wanted to as he frequently did since way back when he took the midday meal in the fields of Sweet Home..." (23).

For Paul, freedom is living in communion with nature. After escaping from a gang in Georgia, he goes to the north. He, at times, becomes too much attached to the trees. He remains ambivalent about his fond love for natural beauty and the crushing sense that he doesn't own land where the trees grow and flowers bloom. He assumes that these natural things are not for him and he does not possess them. He feels the danger as he has an emotional attachment with nature which he wants to get rid of. And yet he was enormously influenced by the beauty of the land that was not his own, so "He hid in its breast, fingered its earth for food, clung to its banks to lap water and tried not to love it" (314).



Paul D struggled hard in detaching himself from nature while on the other hand he also adored nature because of its irresistible beauty. Both Sethe and Paul D recollect their memories and happenings about the place of Sweet Home. The significant aspect of the place Sweet Home is that it amply describes African American slaves' life and how they connect themselves with nature. This recognition of nature and its wildness develops a strong relationship between the two. Sethe recollects her childhood memory that how she and her mother "had the bit so many times she smiled" (238). Her mouth turns out to be constantly mutilated from "the bit," which denotes her as a creature intended for work and slavery. Dixon elaborates this issue that how the Black slaves knew the grim fact that as chattel they were deemed "part of the property and wilds of Nature, which a smoothly functioning plantation could restrain" (Dixon 17).

Sethe's body symbolizes the violence and hatred of Afro Americans towards the white. The scars on her body and different abuses she suffers leave painfully enduring impressions and the symbolic chokecherry tree presents a racialized and gendered disdain for the people living in the Southern landscape. Sethe recollects her past and opens her heart to Denver: "...If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my re-memory, but out there, in the world..." (42).

The passage illustrates that everything that occurred at Sweet Home was an agonizing memory for Sethe and when she shares these these powerful past memories with Denver, these excruciating reminiscences influence Denver, even though she has never been there.

### **5.5.1 Sethe's Fractured Relation with Nature**

The southern landscape is connected to the Blacks. It serves as a home for them as well as a workplace where they earn to live their life. But despite it, land is owned by the Whites, the colonial masters of the Black slaves. So every facility in the south is reserved for the colonial masters who are ruling the Blacks. Though the Black slaves work there and toil land but they are not allowed to claim this as their land. Paul D is another example of a Black man who works for the chain gang, and while working there, he "listen[s] to the doves" and comprehends that the Black slaves had not the right nor the permission to take pleasure in it because at that white place nothing belonged to them, not even their bodies and everything that existed there: morning mist, beautiful doves, streaming sunlight, copper dirt, charming moon "belonged to the men who had the

guns” (189). Sethe throughout the novel represents whites’ typical attitude towards the female gender and being a Black and a female, she is doubly marginalized in society. While working in the kitchen of Mrs. Garner, Sethe through different plants and flowers senses as if “some part of it was hers, because she wanted to love the work she did...” (25).

She looks to nature to experience solace and possession. The beauty of nature that surrounds her in Sweet Home masks all the ugly and cruel realities of the outside world. She enlivens the kitchen to add to the beauty of her environment and increase some control on her work. Soon she acknowledges it as a false idea that “Sweet Home really was one” (26). It was senseless to think that “a handful of myrtle stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against the door in a white woman’s kitchen could make it hers” (26). Professor of American studies, Vera Norwood also claims that the world of Nature cannot shield Sethe from the brutality of slavery and although Morrison doesn’t categorically deny the loveliness of nature, “she pointedly rejects any romantic notion that Sethe’s connection with plants provides her power” (Norwood 189).

Sethe understands that the kitchen isn’t hers regardless of what she brings into it. She knows that Mrs. Garner is the owner of that place, and she is simply playing a part in it as a slave. Morrison reveals the connection between slaves, property, and nature. Nothing about Sweet Home is related to and owned by Sethe, not even the plants or flowers she was growing there. The White race not only dominated land and its people but they also dominated and exploited Nature through every mean. The forests and the wilderness required masters who could take care of land and the environment in the most productive way. Morrison’s *Beloved* through the character of Sethe and Amy Denver clearly illustrates the predominant culture in which both lived. As Sethe is caught in Ohio forest after her escape from Sweet Home, here she meets Amy and tells her, “You ain’t got no business walking round these hills, miss.” Amy replies her back by saying that she is free to walk wherever she likes but being Black and slave, she has no freedom and there are people chasing her who would catch and cut her head off.

Both Sethe and Amy know their racial differences as Amy says to Sethe that she is ugly” and “the dumbest thing on this here earth” (96). Though they both perceive the idea that how their sexual orientation keeps them from entering the backwoods without any restriction, Amy defines that how their races differentiate the rules for both. She realizes that her identity as a white female enables her to access space that Sethe cannot.

As a result of her whiteness, she can enter the woodland. However, Sethe's race does not enable her to just enter the timberland; she should get away to it, cover-up in it, because, “one step off” the plantation states that she becomes an intruder “among the human race” (146). Morrison effectively represents the significance of space which is not defined without social restraints. These spaces are gendered, racialized and nationalized.

### **5.5.2 Nexus of Slavery and Ecofeminism in *Beloved***

Écriture Feminine mode of Afro- American novel emanates from and is the continuation of Afro- American oral storytelling tradition. In this regard, this dissertation argues that Morrison’s Écriture Feminine is the expansion of Afro- American oral tradition of storytelling, much in the similar way as Edrich’s fiction is the continuation of Native American oral storytelling tradition. The evolution of Morrison’s fiction has come through the adaptation of western literary canon as well as Afro- American folklorist literature within which it is embedded. Poststructural Écriture Feminine strategies, combining and complicating the erstwhile monolithic nature of reality appropriated by the western canons, builds parallel between the oral and literary conventions associated with Afro- American and the European traditions respectively and the double consciousness that defines the socio cultural matrix of Afro- American worldview. Although it is the hybrid nature of Afro- American narrative structure that defines the hybrid and ambivalent nature of the experiences of the contemporary Native African subjects, it is through the focus on the oral tradition that Morrison significantly contributes to the continuity of the oral tradition and passes down to the new generations the legacy of Afro- American cultural experience.

Black women’s relationship with mythical past and natural environment in this regard as storehouse of the legends, folk tales, and anecdotes about the founding fathers of certain ethnic groups and also as the embodiment of certain people’s beliefs and ideas about the universe and man’s existence in it viz a viz other creatures and phenomenon of Nature, serve as significant medium to transmit the cultural legacy of one generation to the other. Morrison herself defines the contours of her fiction and its strange sometimes inexplicable relationship with non indigenous forms of writing within which it operates and appeals to the global readership. In her article *‘Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation’* she explicates what cultural imperatives inform her writing and goad her to incorporate characteristics from the two cultures’ ideological making. She explicitly states that she deliberately and consciously integrated the oral and written traditions of

Afro- American people and the white Euro- American written narrative tradition to provide the foundations of the modern Afro- American novel which has the ability to engage both print and oral dimensions of the narrative. Morrison's words are instrumental to understand what she wants her fiction to mean to the readers and at the same time convey her contribution to the modern Afro- American fiction. She asserts that she has incorporated into her fiction such features as she regards the essential characteristics of Black art. One of those features is the ability of the Black art to be print and oral literature simultaneously in which the audience hold the primary importance and function as community and comment "on the action as it goes ahead". The audience are just like the forefathers and these forefathers are just not parents, they are kind of everlasting people "whose relationship to the characters are benevolent, instructive and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom". (What Moves at the Margin 2008)

In this excerpt chosen from one of her articles, Morrison outlines the fundamental features of Afro- American literature and the role of an artist in it. While the artist has to manage the text achieving the synthesis of the two diverse styles, oral and written, the presence of the oral feature, involvement of the reader, the attendance of the chorus and the ancestors, all make the fiction characteristically Afro American: unique and distinct narrated and heard, performed and watched simultaneously.

These essential elements mentioned above, pointed out by Morrison herself as the prerequisite of an Afro- American fiction, are the part of her novel *Beloved* as well and will be discussed at length to ascertain their use in Afro- American Ecofeminist women writing on the one hand and their relevance to the Black culture from which they have been derived on the other hand. As a sensitive observer and participant in the Black cultural practices through which the Black Africans sought to keep alive their relation with nature and cultural practices and state their identity, Morrison focuses on the redemption of lost culture and identity through re memory. Memory and re memory plays crucial role in reminding the Black community their own culture, eco-friendly traditions and myths which the Africans performed as an expression of their unique concepts about the world they lived in.

### 5.5.3 Morrison as an Eco- Warrior

The history of racism and environmentalism bears witness that since the heydays of Western colonization and the enslavement of the Blacks, the Black women have faced environmental racism as they had historically lived in close communion with nature and non-human creatures unlike the white societies which favored culture over nature, mind over body and humans over non-humans. *Beloved* and *Paradise* demonstrate that Afro Americans, just like the Native Americans who had spiritual relation with nature and wide variety of non-human creatures, had deep and strong ties with nature before being colonized by the white, so when they were shipped to Americas as slaves, they brought with them the cultural seeds and profound association with the lands and landscapes from their Native lands with which they ever remained connected through re-memory.

Their brutal handling at the plantations, ruthless subjection to torture and detention, unscrupulous sexual abuse of women, and the inexorable laws and judicial procedures that legitimized the physical and psychological maltreatment of the Blacks happened simultaneously with the degradation and devastation of nature and environment. Morrison plays the role of eco-warrior, an environmental activist in her fiction as she shows that the matter of environmental politics and Black Feminism are interrelated because both suffer unethical suppression at the hands of women, therefore, one of the motives of her fiction is to strive for environmental justice for her Black females. Her portrayals of female characters and the non-human nature reflect the concepts and ideology of American society where anything other than male, be it women or ecology is marginalized. The slaves working at plantation in *Beloved* are considered the part of inanimate nature; they are denied the human status and are treated as if they are sub-humans sharing characteristics with animals and environment which the white slave owners take pride in subordinating to prove their speciestic superiority over them. The slaves, like pieces of land are sold and bought, and worst of all once sold, they and their families including children become the property of the slave owners.

The slaves at the Sweet Home plantation had relatively good life during the times of Mr. Gardner who was a compassionate man and treated them well but after his death the new master, the School teacher, was the worst person who treated them like brutes and persecuted them. The Garner slaves including Paul A Garner, Paul D Garner, Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Sixo, Halle and Sethe lead a miserable life at the plantation and suffer from worst kind of physical and spiritual anguish that leads them to psychological

trauma and loss of any sense of being human. Sethe, the Black female, who escapes the plantation to save her daughter from the yoke of slavery, on being recaptured feels so much traumatized that instead of living in humiliating slavery, she decides to kill her daughter. This is the only way the slaves can control their body otherwise “The Black woman had no such untouchable sphere. She herself was the property of her white master. Not only did he control her labor, but in all too many circumstances he controlled her body as well” (Hanmer 30)

The new master, the puritan School teacher, the lethal combination of the Christian and speciestic ideology, believes in white man’s superiority over both colored people and nature and uses violence to overpower farm and slaves and thus keeps them under control. Schoolmaster’s oppressive puritanical tendencies are also obvious from the fact that like seventeenth century founding fathers of Virginia who recorded the historical accounts of their interaction with the Native and Afro Americans in their non-fictional journals and letters they wrote back to the people of the first world, he follows the footsteps of the old masters by writing the accounts of his day-to-day domination of the Black slaves and Nature/environment in his diary. The Amer-Europeans’ bracketing together of the Black women and non-human nature and animals finds horrendous expression in school teacher’s nephews’ brutal treatment with Sethe when she is subjected to numerous inhuman experiments to ascertain what features she shares with animal world. Morrison exposes here the ruthless implications of the Euro-American anthropological claims of the supremacy of human over every other creatures as they have lead the white world to numerous dreadful beliefs, the predominance of human mind over Nature being the most dangerous one, resulting in the devastation of non-white subjects and diversity of natural/environmental life that is causing unspeakable environmental hazards for all. The schoolteacher’s heartless indifference to tyrannical treatment meted out to Sethe while he sits calmly noting down her reactions conveys the limits of savagery one can stoop to when deceived by the false standards of authority and supremacy. When a single human being suffers on account of racial, gendered, class and environmental grounds, the whole social and environmental poise and calm is disturbed. The school teacher and his nephews, the symbols of anthropocentric excesses, let loose hell upon the slaves in Kentucky plantation: “punched the glittering iron out of Sethe’s eyes, leaving two open wells that didn’t reflect firelight” ( 11).

#### 5.5.4 Double Marginalization of Black Women

Black women, like land and other natural objects which any powerful body can take possession of and exploit, are doubly marginalized and suppressed by the white men and the Black men: the Black men look degradingly at their Black women who had shared their bodies with white men albeit against their will. They neglect the bitter reality that Black women were too powerless to resist the white man's exploitation. The slaves don't own their bodies; they belong to someone who owns them. *Beloved* frequently echoes Cixous' ideas about the relationship between the exploitation of female body and the phallogocentric language which she urges upon women to dismantle through their expression of body in *Ecriture Feminine* and Morrison's fiction offers the clear illustration of the notion of *Ecriture Feminine* in the context of ecofeminism. Morrison draws our attention to the confiscation of Black body: "Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that, but they have to have as many children to please whoever owned them. Still, they were not supposed to have pleasure deep down"(Morrison 247)

The excerpt confirms that the Black women had no control over their bodies; they couldn't enjoy the pleasure of their own bodies as if they were trees or natural objects whose body and fruit were not for themselves but for the outsiders; they were alienated from their bodies and bodily pleasures. Like Nature, they absorbed the human seeds, bore fruit in the form of children, raised them as laborers and yet had no pleasure in conceiving them nor had any authority over them. Sethe's body, mind and soul bear the indelible scars of merciless beating and outrageous treatment she gets at the hands of abusive white masters. When she flees from the plantation in hope of joining her mother-in-law and kids in Ohio, on the way she is met and helped by a white girl Amy. While Amy helps Sethe deliver a baby, she is shocked to see the sign of Sethe's contemptible physical beating, a scar on her aching back. Amy describes the scene symbolically, explaining Sethe's body in natural imagery, thus paradoxically, describing her in natural terms, and drawing metaphors from the world of nature: "A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches... Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white" ( 93)

The whole passage is steeped in Ecofeminist connotations. Sethe's bruised body is conceived and described in terms of parts of chokecherry tree suggesting the interconnected exploitation of Black women and nature/environment. It is this

interlocking system of suppression perpetrated by the white that Morrison, Afro-American Ecofeminist, has raised voice against in her fiction and advocated the rights of the marginalized ones, including Black women and environment. Through her environmental justice narratives in *Beloved* and *Paradise* Morrison has successfully fought the case of Black women's unjust marginalization and grubby exploitation along with nature's despoliation by the white masters emphasizing that such terrible injustice against Black women and nature and the patriarchal philosophies and ideologies that nurture such thoughts must be brought to an end for the better human and environmental conditions. The indifference or lack of sympathy for the sufferings of Black women by the Black men is also shocking. Paul D's meeting with Sethe, after eighteen years, in her home, when he is making passionate sex with her, becomes the occasion when instead of sympathizing with her for all the tortures and agonies she suffered in her life, he finds the scar on her body: "decorative work of an ironsmith too passionate for display" ( 21). I find this scene highly significant one and reflective of Black man's ambiguous attitude towards Black women: he can make passionate sex with her, making her feel the existence of her body and experience pleasure of it unlike her sexual exploitation by the white schoolteacher and his nephews; but, simultaneously, he fails to understand and partake in the anguished soul of the Black women by considering her painful memory a piece of art, thus leaving her body satisfied but soul discontented yet. Morrison seems to be suggesting that perfect happiness is likely to be achieved when there exists the harmonious relationship between Black men and women based upon understanding the bodily, psychological and spiritual requirements of both sexes.

The scar on Sethe's back, the motif of heartrending violence against women, is an emblematic of the annihilation of the earth as the blind exploitation of earth for industrialized and atomic projects has led to irreparable environmental loss. Sethe, being a weak and helpless creature, endures the atrocities silently and, on finding an occasion to flee, escapes to save her and her daughter's life. She finds that the only way she can save her child is by killing her; so she protects her child by murdering her but the dead *Beloved*, in uncanny way, comes back in flesh to take revenge upon Sethe who has now taken refuge in her mother-in-law's home, far from the place of dread and terror. On twenty ninth day of life of freedom, when the white master appears to reclaim his slaves (the law was on his side), Sethe, unwilling to go back to the life of excruciating slavery, and finding no place to hide her children, tries to kill them in desperation and succeeds in



killing her two years daughter, an episode that generated huge controversy and sparked an unending literary debate about the legitimacy of her action. Eighteen years later, the malevolent spirit of the dead baby returns to take revenge upon the savior, and pesters Sethe in unusual ways. Uncanny changes in the mood of the house reflect the presence of some haunting spirit. When Paul D enters the house, he cannot ignore the somber and mysterious atmosphere pervading the house: “ a wave of grief soaked him so thoroughly he wanted to cry” (11). He listens to Sethe’s tragic tale of escape from Sweet Home, unrelieved sufferings, killing of two years daughter, and observes that the house had lost its cheer and now “ the red was gone but a kind of weeping clung to the air where it had been” ( 11).

The spiteful spirit of Beloved does not allow anybody enter her small kingdom comprising of the house of Sethe and her dead and alive daughters. Stamp Paid, despite his efforts to cross the threshold, finds something sinister stopping him from entering Sethe’s house, so returns from the threshold. After the demise of Baby Suggs, though Denver was alone and wanted the accompaniment of somebody to fulfill the emptiness of her life, when Beloved returned as a young woman in flesh, and clung to her mother in dreadful way, Denver was forced to seek help from society women. Emphasizing the significance of community living, Morrison demonstrates that the unity and collective prayers of the community brought some sort of relief to Sethe’s life as it stopped poltergeist from creating any further trouble in her life. Community plays its role in the life of Sethe and finally Denver, with the help of benevolent community with strong Black cultural and spiritual roots, succeeds in ousting the malevolent ghost.

## **5.6 Morrison’s *Paradise*: an Ecofeminist Perspective**

### **5.6.1 Morrison and Ecofeminism**

*Paradise* by Toni Morrison, her 6th novel, written in 1997, is a Nobel-Prize winner venture which finishes the set of three including *Beloved* (1987) and *Jazz* (1992). It portrays the narrative of Black people (Ruby) who moved to the wide open place of a country where they established their own community

The title of the novel is deliberately and considerably made deceptive. Initially the title of the novel was “War” but as editors rejected this, she transformed it to *Paradise*. This tale of ruthless and intolerable patriarchal structures within the predominantly Black culture deconstructs boundaries, hierarchies and limits set for

women especially Black colored women. Morrison herself states: “I write ... what I have recently begun to call village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe...” (Morrison xiii). Talking about the purpose of her novels she says she wants her novels to serve as a bridge between past and present and help her race recognize what what things in the past were valuable and worth following and what were discardable (Morrison xiii).

The novel, as it is dominated by women characters, is set in all Black community and space, shows deep connection with Ecoeminism- the gradual interface of Feminism and environmentally inspired ecological movements- that emerged from second wave Feminist and ecological movements. The blend of Feminism and ecology can be seen exposing the patterns of inextricable link between the domination of women and nature. Demonstrating that the patriarchy’s anthropocentric domination of environment and women has aggravated global ecological crisis, the novel suggests that there is need more than ever to liberate women and environment from centuries old stranglehold of anthropocentrism and phallogocentrism. Doing away with construction of patriarchal social structures, there is need to realize the significance and emergency of building a harmonious social structure to allow humans, Nature and women co-exist and live peacefully.

Morrison believes that, in the wake of escalating racial and environmental problems threatening the peace and harmony of the world, an ecologically harmonious society is the need of the hour, and this ideal can be realized by bringing about harmony between Nature and human beings, eliminating racial and sexist biases, and paying attention to and following the eco-friendly ways of indigenous cultures. The Ecofeminist analysis of *Paradise* will, on one hand, help understand the Ecofeminist consciousness of Morrison and, on the other hand, provide an insight into the urgency and importance of striking balance between nature/environment and humans. It will draw attention to the need of bringing change in our attitude to nature adopting indigenous cultures’ holistic symbiotic relationship between all forms of human and environmental life to try to overcome the threatening ecological crisis.

### **5.6.2 *Paradise*: A World of Endogamous Blacks**

*Paradise* is based on something divine and powerful in the natural domain. It goes over fifty years back in time and is set in 1960s and 1970s. *Paradise* gives a clear

delineation of females who live in a Convent and further narrates history of the setting, a fictional town 'Ruby' in Oklahoma. The central dispute is between these females and the men who run the Convent. Families in Ruby are constructing what they believe to be a nationalistic task nobody can truly run away from: "He can't fail at what he is doing. None of us can. We are making something" (240).

Ruby turns into the brutal structure which was based upon eight families who surrendered *Paradise* and they thought about the *Paradise* on earth: a town where just dark colored people live and spend their lives freely, without any prejudice. They live in endogamic structure where individuals are allowed to just get married among themselves so as to propagate the heritage, which they accepted and believed as purified. The dwellers were called to pursue the message of their predecessors, which was inscribed on an Oven: "Be careful the Furrow of His Brow" ( 143). Therefore, they were social equity warriors as well as God-warriors.

All through the story, the treatment of the females signifies the man centric culture where they live in, unsettling their own opportunities and decisions. Every section is described under the name of female characters: the females who live in the Convent are Mavis, Grace, Consolata, Seneca, and Pallas, while the town's women who have their own sections are Patricia, Lone, and Save-Marie. In *Paradise*, the space and land is also reference to the idea of Ecofeminism which talks about the similarity between land and woman in great detail. In a progression of twirling parts, the writer combines the lovely and the loathsome, the past and the present. Produced in the flames of white prejudice and dark dismissal, the organizers of Ruby developed a *Paradise* of solidness and wellbeing totally confined from the remainder of the world in 1949. They constructed their homes and lives around a huge stone Oven "that both nourished them and monumentalized what they had done." Inevitably the Oven cools and this monument of their grandfathers' accomplishment grows irrelevant.

*Paradise* agonizingly follows the multigenerational journey of African American ranchers who settle in Oklahoma looking to build up an epitome of all-dark community. The men of this cumulative set up built two new towns: first Haven and afterward Ruby. But later on these men become inflexible and narrow minded, losing their association with the regenerative establishment of human wellbeing regarding females and land.

As the moving tale of the novel moves forward, Morrison carefully demonstrate that the hedonistic patriarchal mentality finally miserably fails to maintain a permanent relationship between the land and the people. Summing up the reasons for the failure of Ruby society I affirm that it is following pahllogocentric ways and disregard to nature and environment that finally destroys Ruby and its descendants. In fanatic pursuance of the American dream, the ancestors of the town raise unbridgeable boundaries between themselves and their females including their wives and daughters and the land they live on and ultimately it is the refusal to accept Nature's course and to form bonds with the environment that brings about the demise of the clan's descendants.

### **5.6.3 The Interlinked Oppression of Women, Nature, Class and Race in *Paradise***

Joan L.Griscom (1981) in her article *On Healing the Nature/history Split in Feminist Thought* elucidates four notions of emergent Ecofeminist beliefs. The subsequent Ecofeminist analysis of *Paradise* will be carried out in the light of these four concepts because the predominantly Black patriarchal society of Ruby treats women with extreme sexist prejudice. According to her observations, Ecofeminists identify and ascribe four distinct types of suppression with patriarchy: the oppression of women, Nature, class and race. The history of the exploitation and abuse of women, however, demonstrates that all types of oppression are thematically intertwined. Whereas the domination of women, class and race are well-established concepts and are used very extensively in discourse domain and through fairly clear conceptual vocabulary, Gricsom notes, "There is no one word that expresses the oppression of nature"(271). Ecofeminists ascribe the issue of women and nature domination to anthropocentric patriarchal claims that human is superior to everything else and non-human creatures are created for his use and he has the divine right to exploit non-human nature/environment the way he likes. Anthropocentrism is further supported by speceism, the belief that mind, because of the ability to reason, which the animals and natural species don't have, is superior to body in all respects.(272)

Inspired by the traditional western concept of dualistic nature of reality, this concepts divides mind and body into privileged and suppressed, assigning higher level of importance to one half. The critical discourse analysis of Morrison's *Paradise* under ecocritical/Ecofeminist lens demonstrates that Morrison's discursive reconfiguration of Black patriarchy that dominates the superstructure of Ruby shows the interconnection of these four tiers of domination and ultimately leads to the carnage of life. Griscom opines

that the popular belief in the western philosophical construct of the dualistic forms are the underlying force behind any form of sexist or/and social domination.(274) Since all the female characters in *Paradise* suffer at the hands of patriarchy, this chapter investigates how the patriarchal ecostructure results in the suppression and devastation of the social environment. Dualism, which Morrison sets out to dismantle, appears at two levels in the novel: first, an all Black community of Ruby located in Oklahoma; and, secondly a convent, a place of refuge some 17 miles away from Ruby

Religion has dominated the lives of the people in Ruby and within this small town since the church-oriented activities determine the place of an individual in society, there are three denominations of the Protestant churches. Having willingly isolated themselves from the outside world, the inhabitants of Ruby have established their own closed society with its own political and economic structures thus achieving a certain kind of autonomy which is not without anonymity. Parallel to this staunchly religious environment of Ruby is the other setting at the Convent that consists of an exclusively female group living independent of the world of male.

The convent is a place of refuge and absolute freedom for all those women who after facing racial, sexist, physical and sexual abuse and other forms of social discrimination and violence have assembled there from different parts of United States. These women reach there impoverished, raped, demoralized, excluded, utterly hopeless and unwilling to return to the ruthless patriarchal society. Thus, after establishing two opposite and polarized communities as neighbors, Morrison draws attention to the bitter fact that the life of women is marginalized at both sides. In Griscom's opinion the basis of the problem are those four interconnected strands of oppression which are the cause of the suppression of women and nature/environment anywhere in the world

Patriarchal structures, in alliance with the beliefs of Christianity, have impeded women from achieving freedom and self-actualization by "constructing" for them roles and lives that keep them invisible. In both setting-in Ruby and the convent-women are forced by the circumstances to withhold their thoughts, not to disclose their unconventional ideas in order to escape the authoritative, stifling, superior and crippling voices of the men. It is, therefore, the patriarchal environment exemplified by the interlocking oppression system supported by male-centered Christian belief system that contains and constrains women from achieving their real selfhood. At both places, women feel so much afraid and insecure that they don't speak out their thoughts openly

and fearlessly because they know that ultimately they will be targeted and persecuted by men and their apprehensions come true when the possessors of “reason” unreasonably attack women and severely harm them. Women have been kept away from the corridors of power and hence, in a place where wielding power is exclusively patriarchal domain, and where women are victimized by the lethal combination of religion and patriarchy, they cannot exercise their options and are constrained by intertwined systems of oppression. As Murphy points out there exists an undeniable connection between the “forms of exploitation of nature and the forms of the oppression of women” (24), Afro-American writers have shown by referring to the historic phenomenon of the domination of the Black women that the conquerors of the Black bodies had historically associated themselves with the rational “mind” and sophisticated “culture” while connecting the Black bodies with crude “nature” and savage bodies. Deconstructing this “white myth” of the mainstream literature about Black bodies, Morrison shows that the Black women’s connection with nature is not for the savage reasons as imagined by the defenders of the white culture and people’s superiority, instead they are closer to nature and maintain a spiritual link with nature/environment because it heals their wounds and provides them solace after they seek refuge in it from the slavery, persecution and oppression imposed upon them by the white as well as Black patriarchal dominators.

The traumatizing slavery and the agonizing past of Afro- Americans that directly or indirectly inform each of Morrison’s narrative is also present in the backdrop of the *Paradise* as the grandfathers of the pioneers of Ruby were African slaves. After the emancipation following the Civil War, they roamed through South in quest of a community to make alliance with, but, these one hundred and fifty eight emancipated souls, being Black, met only racial discrimination and were not accepted by any community in extremely racialized and xenophobic societies of the United States. Morrison explains their situation: “Turned away by the Choctaw and poor Whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from the Negro towns already being built” (13). They, somehow, succeeded in finding a place in Oklahoma, the place that the white men had seized from another marginalized group, the Native Americans, and was yet to be allocated for cultivation or other uses. As it has already been established in the previous chapter that the slave owners had the right to capture the escaped slaves and the children born to slave families on the plantation also

belonged to the slave owner, this part also substantiates that such racist discrimination and oppression of the Black slaves never allowed them to have respect as a father or a householder; his sexual rights to his wife were not acknowledged or respected and could be violated at any time, and the whole family was at the mercy of the slave owner. Griscom's interlocking patriarchal system of oppression estranged genders, classes, and races and in this brutal and unredeemed exploitation of the some by the others, where human emotions, bodies and labour were disregarded, the environment and landscape also came to be brutally treated. Gendered and sexist victimization of the Black women incorporated atrocious treatment of environment also.

#### **5.6.4 Ecofeminist implications of Black Sexism**

Ecofeminists' slogan of considering the earth "our sister" and urging people to recognize its rights, perfectly harmonizes with traditional Native American way of life which celebrates human and non-human relations and accord sacred status to the earth. Similarly Afro Americans also treat Nature with deep reverence and believe in partnership with it. In *Paradise* Morrison has described the consequences of Black sexism that, like its white counterparts, subdued the Black women by imposing its power and patriarchal ideologies upon them and women could do nothing about it because in the words of Patricia Fleet, one of women in the convent, "they were just women, and what they said was easily ignored by good grave men" (201-2). Besides, she suggested through the Oven metaphor that the Black men, by not allowing any non-Black person to be the part of Ruby community, discriminate against the white much the similar way they were discriminated against and hence, by refusing their place to become a multicultural place, they express bigotry and racial intolerance which they once encountered.

The polarization between men and women in *Paradise* is so great that though women have thoughts and opinions opposite to men but, under patriarchic pressure, they remain silent. Their silence is the sign that women are facing dehumanizing situation and to change this dehumanizing situation women are required to have "existential courage to confront the experience of nothingness" (Dally 59). When there is a discussion, for instance, in the church about the plaque of the Oven, women are compelled -by what they listen men say in the church -to express their thoughts and opinions to themselves only. Mr. Steward's wife, Morgan, wanted to express her opinion that "Furrow of his brow was enough for any age or generation" but finding her husband's counter argument in the church meeting, she couldn't dare to disagree and continued her argument within

herself saying “specifying it, particularizing it, nailing its meaning down was futile. The only nailing needing to be done had taken place. On the Cross. Wasn’t that so?”(93)

Morrison shows several girls of diverse ethnicities live in the convent including a few Native American girls who escape at the early stage. Morrison demonstrates and depicts miserable predicament of the Native girls who have been severed by the white Christian rulers from their tribal cultures. These Natives girls were forcibly taken away from their families who lived on the reservation in Oklahoma to teach them white Christianity, white ways of learning and living, white truths and white versions of history. In an attempt to kill their Indianness and to alienate them from their parents, their Native religion, cultural practices, myths, beliefs and attitude towards life, they are prohibited from speaking old language, wearing traditional dress and practicing their rituals. Oppressed as they are in the convent, excluded from their natural surroundings, and coerced to be assimilated into mainstream life patterns, they resist surrendering their souls for the glory of the Christian God, refuse to be assimilated and escape to their homes. The representation of Native American women’s struggle in life against the unjust usurpation of their lands and the subsequent danger of the wiping away of their culture and religion may not be the primary concern of Morrison in *Paradise*, but by incorporating into Afro- American Black women’s narrative a strand of the racially abused Native women, she has shown a sense of solidarity with the oppressed Native women and suggested that when a woman, irrespective of race, class and /or any other form of discrimination, is abused or oppressed in ways that hinder her fullest mental, social and cultural growth, the whole ecosphere suffers and suffers irrevocably because she is deeply associated with nature and environment. Since due to patriarchal structures a woman is not allowed to achieve her goals as an individual within the society as is the case with the oppressed women in the convent, the entire ecosphere suffers

The men- centric structure upheld by Christianity has stifled the voices and roles of females in the two marginalized communities. In both town of Ruby and the Convent on the edges, females retain their considerations and sentiments so as not to be abused and belittled by the “legitimate” and “predominant” voices of the men. However, in the predominantly patriarchal socio-political set up, no female stays safe from the vicious activities of Ruby’s finding fathers. Morrison demonstrates that these females have no power where to practice their alternatives and because of the male centric condition of the Christian belief system that controls the land, the females are contained by the



interlocking abuses. In this regard, Ecofeminist philosophy, affirming a solid connection exists between nature and culture as well as “the forms of exploitation of Nature and the forms of the oppression of women” (Murphy 24), emphasizes the foundation of new world where all forms of human relationships are freed from the artificial divisions of dominating masculinity and dominated femininity and proposes an alternative world system that rejects all forms of domination of Nature/environment and women and promotes an earth-centred form of language that encourages ecological responsiveness, natural diversity and ecological multiculturalism in an attempt to redeem the earth from all forms of destruction and bondage.

### **5.6.5 Ecofeminist perception of Oven Metaphor**

From an Ecofeminist perspective, the Oven signifies the men centric strength of the male companions. Morrison asserts that what is essential to the men of Ruby is not significant to women. The females do not voice their sentiments for all to hear; they only make gesture and remain quiet about their contemplations. Moving the Oven signifies the continuation of man controlled society that the men of Ruby always use to fortify their thoughts while the women want to develop new gardens and deliver new life. One of the females named, Patricia Fleet, when thinking about the move, thinks why the females were not increasingly expressive when the men invested such a great amount of energy in moving their peaceful illustration of disdain and pride to the new town. She states: “But they were just women, and what they said was easily ignored by good brave men on their way to paradise” (201-02). Through the naming of the avenues and the remaking of the Oven the pioneering fathers of Ruby pressurize a misguided feeling of focus on the females. To the females, landas subjugated by the Oven turns into a male centric Christian organizations that structures the foundation of their routine lives. In land of Ruby, the lanes are spread out in a matrix like structure. The originators name the key lanes after the four evangelists: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They choose these names so the individuals of the town would live in a consistent token of their Christian legacy. Since the main individuals who live in Ruby are the individuals from the primary families who had settled there, the men feel that they have made a sheltered spot for their females. Morrison describes the isolation of this town from the external world: “Unique and isolated, [this] was a town justifiably pleased with itself. It neither had nor needed a jail . . . From the beginning its people were free and protected”. (8)

The founding fathers of Ruby have the status of the law in the town. They are the ones to choose who has done something wrong and after that the culprits “were taken good care of” which likely alludes to their beating or demise. The ladies who live under this type of “security” are safe from delinquency that breeds “Out There” yet they should behave as per the severe principles of their spouses or they will endure the results. The Ecofeminist notion of male controlled society as the principal power that supports the four bases/pillars of abuse shows up in Mary Daly's *The Church and the Second Sex*. Through the structures of Christian sacred texts and lessons, Daly traces male centric history in the Christian convention. Daly (1985) claims: “Christian authors through the centuries have made much of the Genesis accounts of the Creation of Eve and the geographical location of the rib Such misunderstanding of the Old Testament has caused immeasurable harm”. (76-77)

The men of Ruby have built their very own financial, economic and political institutions that eliminate female gender; clergymen administer the three holy places. Since men are not naturally prepared for child bearing, they make up for their sentiment of weakness by demonizing Ruby's two midwives. Morrison portrays the connection between the men and the birthing assistants Lone and Fairy. She states: “To them we're death's handmaiden standing as between them and the children their wives carry...” (272).

Here in this passage, Morrison affirms that since men cannot conceive and are not able to bear any children, they dislike both birthing specialists and their companions for rendering them incapacitated in this domain. The maternity specialists, as their title proposes, remain between the procedure of birth and demise and this procedure is out of man's control. Morrison attests that when a man feels his capacity has been grabbed, he becomes miserable, apprehensive and frustrated and aggressively tries to strike out the components that incapacitate him. The male centric structure has instructed man to see his authority as overwhelming and the female threatens his position and gains power when she conceives an offspring. In the elucidation of Bible, sacred text the early Catholic Christianity undermines the “ontological structure” of the female and portrays the demonstrations of intercourse and conceiving an offspring as base-acts, and thus on the bases of possessing ability of bearing children, women are conflated with the earth and elements of the female body become trivialized and immaterial. In an Ecofeminist perspective, when a piece of the natural ecostructure moves toward becoming

diminished, the decent variety of the locale becomes more fragile and faces decimation. Morrison argues that when people disregard the holiness of the female natural biological procedure, cultural and social structures start to decay.

#### **5.6.6 Morrison: A Distinctive Ecofeminist**

Toni Morrison is considered as a remarkable Ecofeminist in Modern American Literature. Her distinction lies in the depiction of dark colored people's society in America. Her female characters can be observed in support of her work. In *Paradise*, the silence of women defines the condition of all other female characters of the novel. The female characters in *Paradise* are for the most part quiet figures, incapable of taking a stand in favor of their rights: they do not have the courage to contradict the dictates of patriarchal society. She is against all the suppressive customs operating in the community of Blacks. A silenced cry is overheard from every one of these fictional females who are in desperate need of something. *Paradise*, therefore, is a general picture of the community of Black women whose needs and rights are completely disregarded by the patriarchal societies.

#### **5.6.7 Conclusion**

On the bases of the comprehensive discussion with regards to the representation of the Ecofeminist strands in Erdrich and Morrison's selected works, the chapter demonstrated that Black and Native American women's strong associations with nature and its misrepresentation in the white discourses was used as an excuse to dominate and exploit both women and the environment by patriarchy. An Ecofeministically informed analysis of the fundamental intertwining of the woman and nature's twin exploitation demonstrated the Feminist nature of the environmental issues.

The chapter on Ecofeminist representations/explorations in the selected works of both the writers demonstrated women's resilient and emancipatory approaches in an environment that is saturated in structural patriarchal violence perpetrated upon women and nature. In the novels of Erdrich and Morrison analyzed here from Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminist perspectives, it was noticed that the power structures operating mainly through male characters shape up women's thoughts and dictate their activities. In a predominantly phallogocentric society where female sexuality is constantly suppressed and the male sexuality imposes itself through violence and brutality, women seek to work out emancipatory ways to rearticulate their identities/subjectivities and womanhood. The

dissertation established through illustrations from the textual, theoretical and critical references that the dehumanization and exploitation of women and nature comes through same authority and agency (Gaard 1993). It also demonstrated that Erdrich and Morrison as Ecofeminists have been instrumental in revealing the relation between patriarchal suppression of women and the mutually reinforcing systems of social injustice. They have redefined Feminist movement in their respective narratives in order to successfully address the Native and Afro- American women's issues in a world in which women are still denied their social and sexual rights and that is fraught with patriarchal structures of violence, suppression and exploitation.

Based upon the comprehensive ecocritical/Ecofeminist analysis of the four significant literary works produced by Erdrich and Morrison, the chapter concludes that though environment is a major concern of any country in the world, the hope for a more humane world is decreasing gradually because the cutting of trees, international conflicts and socio-economic conditions of women are alarming the people around the globe. These conditions and circumstances are diverting critics' interest towards Ecofeminism. As the Ecofeminist study focuses on the present condition of environment and female and draws a link between them, Erdrich and Morrison's selected works demonstrated the various strands of relationship between women and nature and illustrated that the Black and Native American women have strong relationship with nature and their contribution to preserving the environment is remarkable. The Ecofeminist analysis of the selected works centred around two major concerns: the connection between women and nature and secondly both nature and female's demand for freedom from male supremacy. Erdrich and Morrison's works substantiated Ecofeminism's three basic stances: empirical, conceptual and epistemological. Empirically, the works illustrated that the influence of environment on females is uneven and disproportionate. The analysis exemplified that women are connected with earth and nature according to social patterns while men are claimed as supernatural (Kuletz 21-25). The study showed that the social structures of male dominant societies present oppression, abuse, marginalization and exploitation of women as natural. Male presents these dominant aspects of patriarchal society as if they are natural and justified positions. These oppressive cultures and male dominant societies urge a woman to falsify stereotypical ideas and taboos constructed for women. Moreover, it also helps women to find their own separate identities. These set

pattern introduced by males are a cultural construct, therefore the idea of masculinity and femininity does not describe any natural differences between a male and a female.

The detailed discussion of *Beloved* and *Paradise* from the ecocritical/Ecofeminist perspective demonstrated that Morrison's fiction has not only focused on the historical issues of Afro- American people's slavery and its traumatic effects upon the Black generations, their racial segregation, the hybrid identities, and deconstruction of the misleading myths and stereotypical representations about Black subjects, her fiction has also brought to light the critical contemporary questions about Black Feminism and environmental concerns. She uses her fiction as a site of contesting and deconstructing the patriarchal and phallogocentric Western philosophies that suppress women's sexuality, invalidate their experiences and construct them as socially, biologically and intellectually inferior to man. She writes in a feminine language that French Feminists call "Ecriture Feminine", a kind of poststructural Feminist narrative style that combines the Western written and Afro- American oral traditions to bring about a new narrative style that, instead of reinforcing western system of dualism and privileging one binary over the other, synthesizes the two in order to suit the needs of contemporary multicultural, multiethnic American society and the place of Afro Americans in it. She also uses her novels, as is demonstrated by *Beloved* and *Paradise*, a platform to raise crucial questions of Black women and nature's exploitation by the white on the false anthropological and speciestic claims about the inherent superiority and dominance of (white) man over Black subjects and nature/environment. Her novels show that such false distinction and discrimination among the people on the bases of race, gender and class, have led humanity and environment to destruction. The twin suppression of Black women and nature on the bases of their inherent inferiority has proved detrimental to women and environmental well-being, therefore, her environmental justice narratives, couched in Ecriture Feminine stylistics, call for environmental and Black Feminist activism to revere Black female humanity and environment.

The chapter claims that although Native American and Afro- American women of the color have made substantial contributions through their Ecofeminist Ecriture Feminine to address and highlight the concerns about environmental racism, there is still much needed to be done in this regard to alleviate the situation and extricate women and nature from the oppressive patriarchal and phallogocentric structures. Besides Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Alice Walker, Angela Davis and handful of Black Feminist and

environmental theorists, the ecocritical/ Ecofeminist, new materialisms and environmental justice movements require outstanding Black and women of the color theorists and writers at leadership, academic, and activist positions to contribute from Black perspectives to environmental concerns and transform the whitewashed approaches towards global environmental crisis.

Where there is an urgent need to acknowledge and appreciate the Native and Afro- American women's deep rooted relationship with and reverence for Nature/ environment and its inhabitants, women of the color novelists, writers, theorists and activists from across the globe also need to come forward and emphatically proclaim women's profound, creative and productive relationship with environment and nature with its countless manifestations and inhabitants so that based on the symbiotic and reverential relationship with nature and its residents a better, secure, mutually dependent and happy future can be secured for the present and future generations of humans and non-humans .The preservation of landscapes, large variety of natural resources and biodiversity upon which depends the continuation of human and non-human life is possible only when there is created an extensive environmental awareness about the need and ways of preserving environment and forging harmonious relationship with nature/environment around. Environmental literature, in this regard, has the huge potential to play extremely significant role by projecting themes and motifs centered upon the eco-friendly relationship between humans and their Nature/environment.

The Ecofeministically informed analysis of *Paradise* demonstrates that like Morrison's other powerful novels, *Paradise* also, remaining faithfully committed to addressing various historical and contemporary aspects of Afro- American peoples' life, remarkably addresses different significant issues and ideas including the Black sexism, racism, patriarchal structure of Black society, the re-imagined sense of Black Feminism, and Black women's constructive association with nature/environment. The analysis shows that In *Paradise* Morrison has explored the complex relationship between the race, gender and nature and clearly described, in Ecofeminist framework, that Black women and nature are the victim of exploitation of men. To illustrate underlying principles of this gross mistreatment and domination of women and nature by the patriarchy, in the present case by exclusively Black patriarchy of Ruby, she has exposed the sexist bias of the Black patriarchy and the concomitant violence they perpetrate upon women and thus revealed that the racial and sexist discrimination is not exclusively confined to white man

rather includes Black man also. This section, drawing upon the overall poststructural Feminist, and Ecofeminist theoretical paraphernalia, and explicating the scenes and episodes from the novel where women and nature were desecrated and devalued, has analyzed the instances of interconnectedness between Nature and women of the color and the different interpretations of this relationship, simultaneously highlighting the ways Morrison has suggested that how women can extricate themselves and nature/environment from the multiple forms of patriarchal oppression

The chapter's thrust thus, transcending the boundaries of traditional Feminism, incorporated Ecofeminism's clarion call for putting an end to all oppression by arguing that any attempt at liberating marginalized women of color will remain fruitless unless it is simultaneously an attempt to liberate nature from oppressive phallogocentric and anthropocentric strangleholds. The Ecofeminist readings of the selected works disclosed the dualistic dynamics of the historical western patriarchal system that prioritized male over woman and nature to the determinant of all marginalized groups. It was observed that phallogocentric discourse played major role in sanctioning and authorizing the linguistic dualism of white/black, male/female, self/other, west/rest that legitimized patriarchal dominance and relegated women and all other non-human groups to inferior positions. As pointed out by Morrison in *Beloved* under the influence of these binaristic phallogocentric versions of reality, the Amer-Europeans exploited women by equating them with animals rather than humans and thus dehumanized and animalized them. However, from Native American perspective, Erdrich's fiction humanizes the animals and even when animalizes the humans, it is not in derogatory sense but to dismantle the man/animal, culture/Nature binary and inspire a sense of mutually dependent life between humans and non-humans. Nevertheless, Morrison's and Erdrich's fiction, harmonized with Ecofeminist philosophy, suggested the ways to overcome Nature and women oppression by juxtaposing Western and non-Western social practices and showing the possibility of change in the dominant oppressive ways of thinking if the prevalent social practices are restructured on the patterns of mutual and symbiotic relations with non-human groups. Native and Afro-American communities (and by implication every patriarchal society including Pakistan) can better survive if they transcend hierarchical domination and strive to do away with the class and racial discrimination along with repudiating nature/culture dualism. On the bases of interrogation of specific Nature of the oppression of women and nature and the social

practices that sanction such oppression, the focus of the analysis was upon repudiation of Nature/culture binarism propagated by the Euro-American patriarchal ideologies and enlisting alternative social practices signified by Native American communities particularly that (en)counter Nature and women exploitation. Within the context of Native and Afro- American communities and their historical and contemporary interactions with the Amer-Europeans, the gender, sexist and racist biases of patriarchy and their effects on women and nature were discussed as well as the resistant and emancipatory social practices demonstrated by women of the Black communities were highlighted.



## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

#### 6.1 Conclusion and Findings

The purpose of the study was to explore and analyze the discursive reconfiguration of women and nature in the selected works of Native American (Louise Erdrich's) and Afro- American (Toni Morrison's) *Ecriture Feminine*, that is, women writing using eclectic theoretical framework synthesizing theoretical/ critical insights from the French and Black poststructural Feminist and Ecofeminist theoretical frameworks. The study investigated a number of interrelations between the identities of the characters/communities and the discursive process of the formation of identity/ subject(ivity) in Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich's Black and indigenous fiction. The thrust of the argument was that women writers from the Native and Black marginalized communities have deconstructed the stereotypical misrepresentations of their communities, particularly women in the mainstream Euro-American literature. Conversely, they have discursively re-fashioned them in their new form of writing called *Ecriture Feminine* which, apart from foregrounding the female experience felt through body and represented from feminine perspective, deconstructs the phallogocentric language and replaces it with a new feminine language which is "writ[ten]through body" in "white ink". It is done through skillfully combining the oral and written narratological forms in both Native and Afro- American women writing.

In this regard, the stylistic and conceptual originality of Morrison and Erdrich's works connect them with the *Ecriture Feminine* conceptualizations which signal a paradigm shift from Euro- American totalizing identity politics to experimental discursive construction of subjectivity. Erdrich and Morrison's linguistic innovations in effecting deconstruction of gender identity and consequent reconfiguration of Native American and Afro-American women and their relationship with nature make their works an effective medium to discuss the relevance of *Ecriture Feminine* in Native American women writing. Irigaray's discussion of the implications of the term 'difference' have been effectively explored in the works of Morrison and Erdrich to

demonstrate " the relation between the subject and the discourse, the subject and the world" (Irigaray, 1993). The term 'difference' in the selected *Écriture Feminine* fiction of Native American and Afro-American novelists appears as more of a generative term than a fixed reality. It has been shown that Morrison and Erdrich' discursive reconfiguration of the gender identity fits in and can be better explained in the light of the positive understanding of the epistemological developments in the field of discursive and cultural difference that Cixous terms as *Écriture Feminine* . The analysis of the four texts fully demonstrated the application of Cixous' conceptualization of *Écriture Feminine* that these writings, undermining the masculine / phallogocentric singularity of meaning and the artificial imposition of coherence that defines masculine logic, assert the fluid relation between subject and the discourse. To destabilize the hegemony of the masculinity, so called universal, monolithic, and dominating cultural forms of representation that suppress the feminine structures of thought, Irigaray proposed " a new age of thought, art, poetry and language : the creation of new poetics" (p.5). The dawn of this "new age and language" has been analyzed in the creative potential of Morrison and Erdrich's fiction that draws on the energy of the experimental mixing of orality and community.

Morrison and Erdrich's hybrid style of storytelling negotiating the fluid and porous borders of cultural traditions and narratives styles allowed them mixing Euro-American and Black and Native perspectives and thus forged a deep connection with French Feminism's new aesthetics for feminine writing. The dissertation has illustrated that in their writings, the issues of identity politics, dominating patriarchal/ phallogocentric structures and normative sexuality has been dealt with by posing resistance and challenge to these fixed categories from *Écriture Feminist* perspective that subverts these categories and interprets them differently. In contrast to the abstractionist, rationalist logic of the discourses of the dominant western culture, *Écriture Feminine* introduces alternative strategies/ techniques of heterogeneous and physical logic. Erdrich and Morrison have employed this heterogeneous/ physical logic to discursively articulate the differential identities of the marginalized groups within the larger context of American culture in their *Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, *Beloved* and *Paradise*. Placing their work within the broader context of the French Feminisms's anti-essentializing assertions, Erdrich and Morrison have made a shift away from the universalizing identity politics of the dominant Western discursive culture.

I believe the construction of the relevant research problem and the analysis of Native American and Afro- American women writers' discursive reconstruction of the new images of Native and Afro-American women and their Eco-friendly relationship with nature in a language that signifies "new poetics" of *Ecriture Feminine* has contributed to deeply understand the historical and contemporary state of the Native and Afro- American female subjects in predominantly white society.

The thrust of the study was on understanding the way Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison used Native American and Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine* to deconstruct the racial and stereotypical images of the Black communities. The study sought to address how the Native and Afro- American women writers discursively reconfigured Black female identity. Incorporating the French Feminist, Black Feminist and Ecofeminist perspectives of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's *Ecriture Feminist* and environmental narratives, the study focused on the construction of Native and Black women's identities/subjectivities and their nuanced relationship with nature. One way the Black and Native American Feminists have discredited the so called universal, stereotypical images of the Native and the Black subjects as sub- humans and/or inherently subservient to the white race is by deconstructing the constructed Nature of the stereotypical images as well as challenging not only the validity of these socio-politically constructed negative images of the Native and Black women but also the authenticity of their producers as they are not the insiders and hence don't possess the authentic knowledge about the Blacks and Natives. The Black and Native women, on the contrary, being the insiders, and having the authentic knowledge of the Black and Native's history, culture, religion, lands, rituals and complexities of tribal life patterns, have the better claim to represent themselves and thus their rejection of their whitewashed, deeply prejudicial images and subsequent perspectival insistence upon Native and Black female self-definition validate their human subjectivity.

Erdrich and Morrison destabilize dominant white discursive models and techniques by adding new dimensions to already existing and widely known Euro-American modes of narration. Unlike Western narrative forms, to abolish the firm boundaries or binaries between the cultures, races and genders, they draw on the energy of the experimental mixing of orality and community. Erdrich and Morrison's hybrid style of storytelling negotiating the fluid and porous borders of cultural traditions and

narratives styles allow them mixing Euro-American and Native perspectives and thus forge a deep connection with French Feminism's new aesthetics for feminine writing.

This multi- perspective narration which is deeply rooted in Native and Black oral storytelling tradition varies from the most commonly used first person perspective to limited third-person perspective depending upon the desired effect. The use of this multi-perspective technique that is part of Poststructural narratological device, then not only “blurs the boundaries between self and the other, between oral and the fantastic, and even between story and the audience” (Smith 21) but also renders the narrative accessible to readers of different backgrounds. The study also confirmed that environmental issues besetting the globe are deeply linked with feminine issues hence phallogocentric attitudes must be changed to eliminate the twin domination of nature and women. The study demonstrated that the through deconstructive *Ecriture Feminine*, women writers of the color attempt to reclaim the distinctive identity and subjectivity of Native and Black women through authentic representation of their empirical experiences. The study based upon the selected works of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison demonstrated that they presented the Native and Black women's bodily experiences to reinscribe their subjectivities in language that embodies the Poststructural Feminist notion of “writing through body”. Their particular writing that combines the Black oral and white written narratological traditions reflects the distinctive features of Black *Ecriture Feminine* and achieves objectives stated in the introduction.

From Ecofeminist perspective also, the radical differences exist between Euro-American and Native American and Afro-American attitudes towards Nature. The former, led by anthropocentric approach, conceptualize nature as a wilderness, a colonizable space, “out there” to be conquered and controlled by the white, while the latter, epitomizing earth- centered approach towards Nature and it's inhabitants, believe in harmonious relationship with it and strive towards creating an Ecocentric society in which humans and non-humans live in symbiotic relation with each other. Erdrich lives upto Native American dream of co- habitation of (wo)man and nature and creates Native characters who defy “ hierarchical vision of creation promoted by Christianity” (Hughes 43). Similarly, the study establishes that Toni Morrison has remarkably represented the lives and problems of contemporary generation of Black people, underscoring how the history of the Black Africans had been harmed and badly misrepresented in the white discourse leading to the construction of the dangerous stereotypes of the Black people

and projecting of their images as barbarians, savages, uncivilized race whose mythical history, cultural rituals and socio-religious values were rejected as crude and uncivilized that called for the humanizing influence of the white Europeans . The spread of such dehumanized images and negatively constructed history of the Black people to the world consciousness, besides bracketing these people with inferior classes of nature and animals, defined them as prehistoric, dark and dangerous forces whose domination by the white people was portrayed a splendid act of divine intervention, of much needed colonization of the Blacks and nature.

This is the reconfiguration of Afro- American socio-cultural and mythic history, particularly the re-enactment of female identity and Afro- American women's symbiotic and invigorated relation with nature/environment through environmental discourses, cast in Ecofeminist narration that renders Morrison a crucial figure of present-day Afro-American women writing. She committed herself with reworking the history of the Afro-American people and presented their communal identity and eco-friendly ways of life in her environmental narratives that address the perennial questions of effects of slavery, communal survival, trauma of repressed desires, angst of silenced voice, dehumanizing misrepresentations of the Black people, the psychological impacts of their subjection to slavery, and their constant efforts for ending racial discrimination and gaining freedom and self actualization in predominantly white American society. She has admirably redressed the wrongs done to Afro-American people and their relation with environment by the spurious champions of the rights of human beings, by deconstructing the racial misrepresentations of the Black people in a distinctive ecocritical *Ecriture Feminine*. In *Beloved* , for example, she has articulated the painful history of the Black slavery and the dreadful consequences of this psycho-physical subjection of the Black races .Written in an inimitable style that is typically feminine carrying the signature of Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine*, *Beloved* embodies the traumatic history of the ruthless suppression of the Black people, the brutal suppression that estranged them from their past,cultural values, traditions, mythical beliefs, and intimate relationship with the world of wilderness and nature. Morrison, through her commitment with the fiction writing from the Black Feminist viewpoint, has attempted the reclamation of Afro- American people's mythical past and integrated communal life and revived the environmental ethics of the Black folks. Chapter four that discussed in detail the discursive reconfiguration of women and

nature by Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich in their selected works revealed how they represented the distinct Black female identity writing “through Black female body”.

Analyzing Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison’s fiction as the manifestation/materialization of the knowledge in terms of discursive (re)configuration of women and nature, and to analyze their works from “feminine sentence” or *Ecriture Feminine* perspective, I used Poststructuralist Feminist theories. As part of eclectic theoretical framework, this project drew extensively upon Feminist theories, particularly those propounded by Poststructural French Feminists, Native and Black Feminists and Ecofeminist theories which I used in the backdrop of discourse analysis methods proposed by Michael Foucault. This fusion of Feminist theories as theoretical framework and discourse analysis as method helped me analyze Erdrich and Morrison’s discursive reconfiguration of women and their relationship with nature. It also helped me explain systematically the process of the discursive formation, dissemination and institutionalization of the knowledge about women and nature.

In this regard, the comprehensive reading of *Beloved* from *Ecriture Feminine* perspective revealed that language of body is no less significant than other languages. It transpired that the work of writing the body is included in the idea of *Ecriture Feminine* that imparted realization that the conventions of phallogocentric writing may be challenged not only through the language of body but also through inventing some more ways of writing which reject the conventional methods in term of linearity, vocabulary, repetition etc. In this regard the analysis of the selected texts affirmed that Morrison significantly contributed to extending the theory of *Ecriture Feminine* into other areas and by so doing she has successfully reconfigured the Black history, memory, and feminine identity, among other things. She gave the alternative of hierarchy and patriarchy in the form of community. She invented language to counter the traditional phallogocentrism, and also denied the spiritual and religious explanation of man centric body. In order to gain this particular use of language, Morrison did not rest on one or two techniques rather she used variety of techniques to achieve her goal. Firstly, Morrison made a non-linear and non-phallogocentric use of the sense of time. In *Beloved* we find even jumping from present to past and then present. This weaving of past into present goes on throughout the novel where the characters keep on moving according to this particular weaving of time. Secondly, the technique of repetition was applied by Morrison to strengthen her narrative technique. Thirdly, she called our attention to

traditional Western system of naming, and ways, in which characters subvert and reject these systems. Furthermore, Morrison did not rely upon the traditional words rather she invented a new vocabulary when she did not find one sufficient word to tell the untold stories. All these devices are formed in the space of *Ecriture Feminine* which not only help abandoning the use of the traditional phallogocentric language but also enable Morrison to tell the untold stories.

The most significant aspect of Morrison's fiction that underscores her representation of Black female characters and their subjectivity particularly in *Paradise* is her discursive reconfiguring of the Black bodies in order to bring them from periphery to centre. In this regard, the connection between body and subjectivity is well defined by Grosz as she compellingly writes: "the body is not simply a sign to be read, a symptom to be deciphered, but also a force to be reckoned with" (1994:120). In this connection, Morrison's depiction of Black female body in both historic and contemporary perspective, signifies the traumatic, disoriented, and scarred psyche of the Black people in general and female in particular. Morrison's fictional world comprises of victims of slavery, racial and gender discrimination, for instance characters in *Beloved* and in the same way domestic and communal violence is evident in case of the group of women in *Paradise*. When Black people suffer from the atrocities of slavery, race and gender, the maternal body (both literal and symbolic since the Convent symbolizes the maternal body to its inhabitants and offers safe haven from the violence of the gendered society) becomes a site for them to strengthen their lost and mortified relation with their cultural past in search of their Black subjectivity.

Similarly contrastive study of Native-American literature from *Ecriture Feminine* perspective helped me establish informative link between Native-American literature and the notion of women writing. Erdrich's consistent projection of the Native American subject's marginalized female identities status through the diverse stories of bodies pulls her narratives in the ambit of *Ecriture Feminine* matrix. The structural and stylistic proximity of her works with Euro-American narratives with strong advocacy of Native American cultural identity makes her fiction an apt illustration of the literature of the indigenous "other" produced to write back to the Empire. Erdrich's methods and aesthetic strategies for the representation of the complexities of the Native-American and mixed race identities in the contemporary era have fair points of identification with the poststructural Feminist aesthetics of *Ecriture Feminine*. What is unmistakable and

striking about Native American discursive representations of Indian women is: the reshaping of the Native American literary models from non-Western subjectivity; the Native remolding of the Euro-American discursive construction of the indigenous identities; and the subversion of power structures between the outsider and insider etc.

The dissertation demonstrates that when analyzed from Poststructuralist Feminist theoretical point of view that rejects the Euro-centric claims of meta truths and absolute realities, forcefulness and sincerity of representations of the ethnic and communal issues by Erdrich reflects her commitment with the construction of an authentic feminine narrative that gives expression to, not only her most profound feelings about the issue of representation of the reality of Indian women from indigenous perspective but also orchestrate a polyvocal cultural dialogue between the white and the colored. Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, repudiating the Western patriarchal constructions of male-centered reality intended to perpetuate male interests and male domination, orchestrates a bicultural dialogue which, through its full and mixed-blooded characters, pursues the path of encountering and rejecting the mainstream culture's conceptions about the oppressed Indians. By so doing, it foregrounds the realities of the marginalized groups by vocalizing their dreams and desires, concerns and accomplishments, merits and faults from their own perspective, in a language that is appropriation of and perfectly accessible to the dominant people and in a style that is a considerable deviation from the mainstream conventional narrative style.

This deviation from the normative cultural and discourse practices by Erdrich is an attempt to explore and represent the reality of Native Indian women that involves the incorporation of the indigenous communal practices into heteronormative discourse of the White and, thus, she produces different Native truths, falsifying the notion of absolute and universal reality propagated by the mainstream discourses. The perfect combination of these two manifestly opposing discursive styles leads to the formulation of a unique hybrid stylistics that incorporates the two distinct and different discourse traditions. The new hybrid stylistic tradition, consequently, retains the characteristics of the dominant literary traditions of the two cultures as in case of Erdrich's fiction the long-established oral storytelling style harmonizes with the white narrative practice which it endeavors to challenge as well. Since from Foucauldian Poststructural point of view the knowledge is a social construction, "a specific kind of production with definite relations to the social and material world"(Venn, 1984, p.150), and any knowledge is liable to be challenged



and contested by the opposite knowledge claims, therefore within poststructural Feminist discourse the analysis of the selected texts demonstrate that there is no fixed or universal truth rather there is the plurality of meanings and fluidity of narration. This plurality of meanings is expressed in a new form of *Ecriture Feminine* that defies any fixity and definitiveness of meaning, experience and its literary form.

The dissertation focused as well on Native American and Afro- American women writers' manipulation of language to establish distinct Native and Black *Ecriture Feminine* and reconstruct the subjectivities of Native and Black women and their relation with nature. The study of the Afro- American and Native American women novelists fiction in the backdrop of the comprehensive study of the history, evolution, and present state of the ecocritical and Ecofeminist studies revealed that they demonstrated absolute commitment with nature in their art as they depicted female characters who live in deep communion with nature and inspire the readers with their Eco- friendly ways of life and thus, these female novelists use their art to sensitize their audience about the highly technologized ways of life that result in degradation of human ecology.

Taking Glotfelty's anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader* as reference point in which she has included notable American scholars of the field of ecocriticism, the present study on the exploration of *Ecriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist dimensions of the Native and Afro- American writers has asserted that despite Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell and most recent contributions from Lawrence Coupe (*The Green Studies* 2000) Timothy Morton (*Ecology Without Nature* 2007) and Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (*Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* 2006), there was potential scope to investigate the fields of ecocriticism and Ecofeminism using the literary productions of Native and Black Feminist writers most noticeably Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison. The dissertation also sought to demonstrate and elucidated how the Ecofeminist works from marginalized Black communities have resulted in Black environmental theory and praxis, activism and theorization of nature-woman relations. The inspiration the present study has drawn from ecocritical/Ecofeminist theory is that nature with its large variety of wilderness and non- human actants just does not surround the human life but also provides for and sustains it in significant ways. Contrary to the Euro-American anthropocentric approach that places man and his actions in the centre of the universe legitimizing his colonial even predatory attitude towards nature, Morrison and Erdrich, in their non-Black epistemological scenarios accord central importance to

ecosphere, the ecosystem in conceptualizing the relationship between human and non-human and resists nature/culture, human/non-human binaries propagated by white anthropocentric philosophies. Thus considering environment as an equal partner in the scheme of nature rather than giving it an inferior place in manmade dualities, both novelists have demonstrated that ecocriticism/Ecofeminism opens many possibilities of renewed understanding of the ecosystem and nature of relations between human and non-human entities within it. The theoretical field, therefore, on one hand, applies “the earth centered” approach to literary texts to explore the representation of various forms of interdependent relations between human and non-human inhabitants of the ecosphere and, on the other hand, looks for the new stories to emerge challenging the traditional anthropocentric understanding of the universe.

As to what should be the role of literary studies in a world increasingly beset with issues as grave as environmental degradation, holistic pollution, resource depletion, global warming, diminishing bio diversity etc., the pragmatic ecocritical and Ecofeminist approaches of Erdrich and Morrison in the texts analyzed demonstrate that they believe in performativity of literary texts in addressing environmental crises.

The dissertation brings together the trajectory of shared thought process of Morrison, Erdrich, Irigaray and Cixous on the “new poetics” that signals a shift from monolithic identity formations to a more fluid, hybrid, cross-cultural construction of subjectivity through innovative discursive techniques. Morrison and Erdrich’s discursive innovations in portraying political and generative nature of female identity of their characters in *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* remove misunderstandings about French Feminism as merely theoretical and anti-political position. They also demonstrate a differential feminine stylistic that creates resistance to and an alternative of dominant patriarchal/ phallogocentric social and discursive modes of representation.

Morrison and Erdrich’s Erdrich’s pluralistic style, when analyzed in the light of Irigaray’s “new poetics” reveals unmistakable identification with “commonalities, contiguities and complex relations” (p.179) espoused by Cixous’ conception of *Ecriture Feminine* and Irigaray’s notion of “new poetics” (p.179). This experimental *Ecriture Feminine* stylistics opens new avenues for the expression of marginalized subjectivities / identities by releasing language from dominant and dominating discursive categories that incarcerate language and characters into patriarchal/ phallogocentric structures.

Keeping in view the complex and multilayered nature of reality, Erdrich and Morrison, harmonizing the antithetical narrative strands make their characters to inhabit differing worlds, go through diverse experiences and, thus, construct their strikingly different versions of the same incident. Chapter four and five comprehensively analyzed the Native American and Afro- American women writers' efforts in developing a distinct mode of Erécriture Feminine stylistic through which they represented counter realities. Confined no more within the constraints of monolithic realities, Morrison and Erdrich's characters emphatically construct the reality in ways that differ enormously from their white counterparts. They legitimize the non- White experience and its articulation by the Black people whose version of reality, being considered inauthentic and unreliable, had been suppressed for centuries. While the text is constructed of the two antithetical narrative strands reflective of the two contrasting traditions and incongruous life styles, it is obliged to resolve the narrative tension by either privileging the one tradition over the other or harmonizing the both in perfect unity achieving synthesis of the two. For instance in *Tracks* Nanapush and Pauline's narratives, sometimes of the same and at other time of different incidents, create diverse reactions. Nanapush's recounting the events incorporates White and non- White perspectives and achieves their synthesis, while Pauline's narration, being caught and suspended between two worlds, unsettling and confused as it was, fails to evoke definite responses and ends up in an arrested, uncertain conclusion.

In Erdrich's fiction, mixing and mingling the two opposite worldviews seeks to reconcile the two diverging opinions, antithetical stances that had kept the two people at distance with each considering the other enemy. In an attempt to seek a way possible to intertwine the two cultures, to wed the Native and the European ideologies of the world into accomadative space, and to strike out the all pervasive differences between the two people inhabiting the same land, she delves into the structuring principles of each culture's conceptualizing and internalizing the reality and the faith in it. She presents them as simultaneous albeit contrary versions of the same events, suggesting the possibility of simultaneous and democratic co-existence of the two.

Toni Morrison has played crucial role in representing the realistic image of her race, deconstructing the unjust delineation of the Black people in the discourses of white writers. Morrison, in a writing style that is characteristically her own so far as it combines the elements from the Black narratological imperatives and the Western

narrative convention, casts a revisionary glance over the originary Black female experience and reorientates the Western production of the various styles to appropriate a new style, i.e., Afro- American *Ecriture Feminine* technique that helps her not only to delineate her cultural ethos but also to discursively retrieve her people's disfigured past. The dissertation illustrates that Morrison, an accomplished stylistician, and an extensive reader of the Western literature, in her two classic Black Feminist texts *Beloved* and *Paradise* has held the Western canonical texts and Western established genres to revisionary lens to subvert the literary and ethnic codal modality.

The foremost objective of the revisionary and deconstructive study of the western genres Morrison has done is to destabilize the dominant myths, deconstruct the biased construction of the Black African female identity, foreground Afro- American conceptualization of life, women, nature and prioritize marginalized Afro- American literary and cultural practices to contribute significantly to the development of reconstruction of Black American history in a new form of writing that can be aptly described as Black *Ecriture Feminine*. For that purpose the preferred method she has used is poststructural Feminist mode of writing that allows for the mixing up of different styles in a manner that dismantles the hegemony or dominance of the one form of literature over the other. In a truly democratic way it guarantees equality disregarding ethnicity, gender, nationality or any other discriminatory position. Poststructural Feminism, in its literary usage, negotiates borders closely with post colonialism as both provide space to the marginalized, subaltern people to raise their voice and offer alternative dimensions of reality.

Toni Morrison, in her fiction, presents alternative reality: she consistently engages herself with rereading and rewriting painful past to carve out a better future for her gender and race. *Ecriture Feminine* mode of Afro- American novel emanates from and is the continuation of Afro- American oral storytelling tradition. In this regard, this dissertation argues that Morrison's *Ecriture Feminine* is the expansion of Afro- American oral tradition of storytelling, much in the similar way as Edrich's fiction is the continuation of Native American oral storytelling tradition. The evolution of Morrison's fiction has come through the adaptation of western literary canon as well as Afro- American folklorist literature within which it is embedded. Poststructural *Ecriture Feminine* strategies, combining and complicating the erstwhile monolithic nature of reality appropriated by the Western canons, builds parallel between the oral and literary

conventions associated with Afro- American and the European traditions respectively and the double consciousness that defines the socio cultural matrix of Afro- American worldview. Although it is the hybrid nature of Afro- American narrative structure that defines the hybrid and ambivalent nature of the experiences of the contemporary Native African subjects, it is through the focus on the oral tradition, Morrison significantly contributes to the continuity of the oral tradition and passing down to the new generations the legacy of Afro- American cultural experience. Black women's relationship with mythical past and natural environment in this regard as storehouse of the legends, folk tales, and anecdotes about the founding fathers of certain ethnic groups, and also as the embodiment of a certain people's beliefs and ideas about the universe and man's existence in it viz a viz other creatures and phenomenon of Nature, served as significant medium to transmit the cultural legacy of one generation to the other.

From Ecofeminist perspective too, in view of the escalating environmental degradation and rapid deterioration of natural resources, the movements like "the mainstream environmental movement" and the "environmental justice movement" have triggered global consciousness about the environmental issues recognizing in this context the constructive contributions from the white environmental writers and activists. Nevertheless no substantial acknowledgement has been accorded to Black women's perspectives on environment and nature, though they have distinctive standpoint on ecocritical/Ecofeminist issues. Environmental racism, which is interlocked with gender and class discriminations, is detrimental to all communities in general and Native American and Afro- American communities in particular because they had inhabited the natural spaces, lived in symbiotic relationship with nature, treated Nature respectfully and had myths to venerate nature-human relationship. The female characters in Morrison's *Beloved* and *Paradise* and Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* are doubly subjected to racial and environmental discrimination. They are forced to face the racial and sexist prejudice of the both white and Black males in predominantly patriarchal social set ups in which racially intolerant men snub women and are not prepared to accept the idea of social equality of the two sexes because under the influence of racial (in case of the Euro-Americans) and gender bias (in case of Black men) they consider the male gender born with inherent and divine superiority over women. This discursive formation of gendered reality, which Erdrich and Morrison have deconstructed and dismantled in their *Ecriture Feminine*, is made to look natural, exclusive and

unchallengeable by the male, who in collusion with the socio-political, religious and economic institutions, establish and perpetuate phallogocentric hegemony at the expense of the exclusion and suppression of women from the power-structures.

## **6.2 Features of Ecriture Feminine Reflected in Native and Afro-American Ecriture Feminine**

The distinctive patterns and techniques that characterize the Ecriture Feminine of the selected fiction have been wrought into the analysis of the selected works and are dispersed throughout the dissertation. The identification and detailed analysis of those peculiar techniques that cause the discursive reconfiguration of nature and Women through stylistic distinction of the selected works in Native American and Afro-American fiction inform the whole analysis of the works. Here is just the summing up of the stylistic features that have been analyzed in great detail in the analysis chapters.

Kristeva's theory illuminates Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich's works as in the light of Kristeva's demonstration of the inseparability of body from language in signifying process, the works of Native American and Afro-American female writers, experimenting with language and pushing language boundaries beyond traditional limits, create multiple negotiable meanings. Kristeva's assertion that the meaning of a text is never fixed or stable and that the heterogeneity of language becomes an important critical tool to subvert the monolithic, universalist knowledge claims and oppressive relation between the signifier and signified, became instrumental in analyzing the two Native American and Afro-American women's works as their texts are rich in subversive implications. Adding oral dimension to the French Feminism's account of its emphasis upon "writing through bodies" as proposed by French Feminists, Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich consider speech and oral tradition as much important as writing. They attempt to eliminate the differences between spoken and written expressions and from their perspective speaking one's life becomes as crucial a way of self-definition as act of writing one's life. The inclusion of speech and orality into written practices privileged in west dominated tradition of Ecriture Feminine helps Red, Black and other women of color artists in incorporating and disseminating their traditional and cultural heritage of oral literature in ways that parallel the contemporary western modes of expression. For instance these women writers are writing in styles as diverse as modernist, post-modernist, Poststructuralist, and magical realist etc.

Louise Erdrich's storytelling technique combining narrative and oral traditions in *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* follows this path leading to the revival of the past as well as shapes Native American Ecriture Feminine. Nonlinear narration celebrated by Ecriture Feminine aesthetics is also a distinctive attribute of Erdrich's *Love Medicine and Tracks* which comprise of interconnected stories rather than a rational, linear plot valorized by Western culture. The development of the narrative through piecing together of the simultaneously conflicting and conflating perspectives in *Love Medicine and Tracks* synchronize with Irigaray's notion of "incompleteness of form" which is contrary to the masculinist narrative strategy. It is important to note that the incompleteness of form doesn't come at the expense of the exclusion of male voice rather through inclusion of multiple narrative voices in the community.

Her art of storytelling, therefore, instead of depending upon the dominant masculine tropes of linearity and coherence, consists in that "dialogism of multiple voices" that create new poetics, new language, new age of relationality that becomes perfect vehicle for the discursive expression of Native American women's fluid subjectivities. Of particular importance is the Native American and Afro-American women writers'(re)appropriation of the language which "the(y) desire to reshape" because this language is "not merely alien but an expression of the repressive forces" they want to dismantle (p. 428). Women writers have done so by experimenting with and ignoring the rules and forms of standard language in their attempts to disrupting patriarchal ideologies and deconstructing patriarchal assumption of language.

Morrison believes that much more room must be created for the new ones so that the untold stories of slavery may be turned into a tale of the individual and this is only possible if the contemporary writers give a new dimension to the conventional structure of story-telling and language. For this particular purpose, Morrison decides to narrate the story of a forsaken and forgotten lady in *Beloved* who speaks, not through her tongue but through her body as body speaks louder than the words.

There are numerous examples that can be extracted from *Beloved* as to show how the bodies speak by themselves. If the tongues remain silent, the scars on backs of the characters in *Beloved* tell the whole story of oppression committed by their masters. The horrors of slavery are reflected through the breast milk and blood of Sethe. These are the bodies of Sethe and Beloved that disclose the oral and un-representable stories and never let them drown into the depth of history. Through the narrating voice of

Paul, the stories of former slaves are unfolded: “White people believed that ... under every dark skin was jungle...” in which flew fast un-navigable water, and where moving screening baboons, sleeping snakes and exotic animals were prepared to pounce upon the sweet blood of the white people. He thought what the white thought about the Black was conversely true because “it was not the jungle the Blacks brought to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle white folks planted in them ...” and the screening baboons and all kind of predatory animals “lived under their own white skin” (Morrison 243).

In perfect connection with Cixous’ theorization of *Ecriture Feminine* as “writing in white ink” the language describing Sethe’s memories is strongly soaked in white ink. Sethe’s memories lead to the mentioning of a tree which actually is a scar on Sethe’s body/back; this tree on back is enough to tell us the horrible story of being beaten by a slave master. As she says, “I had milk ..... I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl.” (Morrison 19).

In a distinctly *Ecriture Feminine* stylistics, Morrison presents fragmented, fractured and discontinuous narratives of the characters. However, it is through extended metaphor of Sethe’s tree that all the fragmented pieces in Morrison’s story come together to make a linear piece of writing.

In order to gain this particular use of language, Morrison does not rest on one or two techniques rather she uses variety of techniques to achieve her goal. Firstly, Morrison makes a non-linear and non-phallogocentric use of the sense of time. In *Beloved* we find even jumping from present to past and then present. This weaving of past into present goes on throughout the novel where the characters keep on moving according to this particular weaving of time. Secondly, the technique of repetition is applied by Morrison to strengthen her narrative technique. Thirdly, she calls our attention to traditional Western system of naming, and ways, in which characters subvert and reject these systems. Furthermore, Morrison does not rely upon the traditional words rather she invents a new vocabulary when she does not find one sufficient word to tell the untold stories. All these devices are formed in the space of *Ecriture Feminine* which not only helps abandoning the use of the traditional phallogocentric language but also enables Morrison to tell the untold stories.



*Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, trace the intricate network of family groups from North Dakota in non-linear, mythic timeline, using the technique of multiple narrators who narrate the same events from different perspectives and thus reconstruct different versions of reality.

Erdrich's unique narrative style combining Euro-American and Native American narrative traditions-the blend of rationality and orality-allows her to present the web of complicated experiences of the pure and mixed-blood natives in post modern, Poststructural narratological technique that employs performative poetic prose to evoke multi- perspective and pluralistic version of reality against the monolithic and universalistic, white washed manipulations of reality.

The study argues that digressing from the phallogocentric tradition of writing characterized by linear, rational, reason-oriented, organic and well-structured form, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks*, do not follow "traditional, linear, protagonist-oriented narrative" style rather draw narrative strategies from the oral traditions of Erdrich's Native American heritage to fabricate unconventional designs for her storytelling".

Erdrich herself explains the dynamics of her stylistic technique that according to her "reflects a traditional Chippewa motif in storytelling' wherein an account of one incident 'leads to another incident that leads to another'" ( qtd. in Stookey 33) and Kennedy calls this technique a writing " at the edge of the novel" (33). In *Love Medicine* (1993), the fluidity of characters, places and identities define Ecriture Feminine. The modern Chippewa protagonists' various responses to the same place while mediating their traditional and historical backgrounds with the cultural challenges of the postmodern world, indicate the fluid boundaries of the reservation like the fluid identities of the protagonists.

Erdrich portrays female trickster characters like Fleur and Lulu which refuse the rigid boundaries between male and female, human and animal, natural and supernatural and thus deconstruct the normative Western gender conventions. Though Fleur Pillager in *Tracks* is a trickster figure whose sexual allure is irresistible and fascinating, and she always acts like the sexual hunter and not the victim, her promiscuous daughter Lulu displays her tricksterism in terms of lascivious behavior more blatantly.

In a typical tribal tradition of oral storytelling that serves the symbol of the unity and continuity of the tribal conventions, various characters and an objective, non-intrusive, omniscient narrator describe the events.

This narrative style challenging the male-centered, Euro-American chronological structuring of time, foregrounds non-linear, non-chronological time that is characteristic of *Ecriture Feminine* advocated by French-Feminists and represented here by the back and forth movement of *Love Medicine*. Rather than fully contrasting and compartmentalizing European and Native conceptions of time and its representation in the narrative, Erdrich hybridizes the two concepts of time and presents them in a new form of narration that is at once oral and written, European and Native, and symbolic of new hybrid, cultural, ethnic, temporal, and social realities. For the Euro-American mainstream culture readership familiar with and fed upon Euro-American literary tradition, Erdrich's fiction renders new patterns of meanings focusing upon fluidity of cultural identities. This unusual structure of the Native American narrative characteristic of Erdrich's and other Native American writer's fiction, mediating between the two opposing literary and stylistic traditions, produces alternative cultural meanings and defies the exclusivity of the monolithic discourses of mainstream culture.

The difference between the targeted audience in oral and written discourse lies in the presence and absence of the audience: oral narration necessitates the presence of the audience while written text imagines the existence of the audience. In accordance with the requirements of the respective audience, the two traditions function within their sphere of influence and the specificity of their respective influence is determined accordingly. Since the oral tradition involves a communal sense in the performativity of the oral narrative action, the Native writers, in their written texts, incorporating the essentials of the oral dramatic action, invoke interest of the audience on the common, shared grounds of the experience.

The stylistic and conceptual originality of Morrison and Erdrich's works bring them closer to the *Ecriture Feminine* conceptualizations which signal a paradigm shift from Euro-American totalizing identity politics to experimental discursive construction of subjectivity. Erdrich's linguistic innovations in effecting deconstruction of gender identity and consequent reconfiguration of Native American women and their relationship with nature make her works an effective medium to

discuss the relevance of *Écriture Feminine* in Native American women writing. Irigaray's discussion of the implications of the term 'difference' involves "the relation between the subject and the discourse, the subject and the world" (Irigaray, 1993) and thus becomes more of a generative term than a fixed reality. It is argued that Erdrich and Morrison's discursive reconfiguration of the gender identity fits in and can be better explained in the light of the positive understanding of the epistemological developments in the field of discursive and cultural difference that Cixous terms as *Écriture Feminine*. Cixous' *Écriture Feminine*, undermining the masculine / phallogocentric singularity of meaning and the artificial imposition of coherence that defines masculine logic, stresses the fluid relation between subject and the discourse. To destabilize the hegemony of the masculinity, so called universal, monolithic, and dominating cultural forms of representation that suppress the feminine structures of thought, Irigaray proposes "a new age of thought, art, poetry and language : the creation of new poetics" (p.5). The dawn of this "new age and language" can be seen in the creative potential of Erdrich and Morrison's fiction that draw on the energy of the experimental mixing of orality and community.

In Erdrich and Morrison's writings, the issues of identity politics, dominating patriarchal/ phallogocentric structures and normative sexuality are dealt with by posing resistance and challenge to these fixed categories from *Écriture Feminist* perspective that subverts these categories and interprets them differently. In contrast to the abstractionist, rationalist logic of the discourses of the dominant Western culture, *Écriture Feminine* introduces alternative strategies/ techniques of heterogeneous and physical logic. Erdrich and Morrison employ in their *Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, *Paradise* and *Beloved* this heterogeneous/ physical logic to discursively articulate the differential identities of the marginalized groups within the larger context of American culture. Placing their work within the broader context of the French Feminisms' anti-essentializing assertions, Morrison and Erdrich make a shift away from the universalizing identity politics of the dominant western discursive culture.

Erdrich and Morrison show interest in delineating the effects of oppression of their people by locating that oppression in her characters' bodies. This locating of women's oppression in their bodies rather than bracketing it with the whole lot of Native Americans and Afro-Americans, is more in line with the *Écriture Feminist*

assumptions of representing reality through the discursive relationship between subject and discourse. The form of the narrative throughout *Love Medicine* is such that interweaves narrative fragments into communally shared story that in contrast to masculine/phallogocentric economy of lack celebrates the feminine economy of abundance.

The study therefore brings together the trajectory of shared thought process of Erdrich, Morrison, Irigaray and Cixous on the “new poetics” that signals a shift from monolithic identity formations to a more fluid, hybrid, cross-cultural construction of subjectivity through innovative discursive techniques. Erdrich and Morrison’s discursive innovations in portraying political and generative nature of female identity of their characters in *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Love Medicine* and *Tracks* removes misunderstandings about French Feminism as merely theoretical and anti-political position. They also demonstrate a differential feminine stylistic that creates resistance to and an alternative of dominant patriarchal/phallogocentric social and discursive modes of representation. Morrison and Erdrich live up to the Native American and Afro-American dream of co-habitation of (wo)man and nature and create characters who defy “hierarchical vision of creation promoted by Christianity” (Hughes 43).

### **6.3 Contribution to Native and Black Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminist Trajectory**

The major contribution of this study is that this research is an attempt to “think differently” in terms of the reconstructions of Native and Black women’s subjectivities in non-white Ecriture Feminine instead of legitimizing the already known knowledge about the Native and Afro-American women and their historical relationship with nature as it was constructed and proliferated by the Euro-American mainstream discourses. The dissertation in tune with Foucault’s methodological propositions of the subject formation, has studied the discursive formation of Native American and Afro-American female subjects in the selected works of Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich, analyzing how these female writers from the marginalized communities, have produced what Cixous calls, Ecriture Feminine placing the sexuality of their women and their relation with nature at the center of subjectivity. The study by asserting Native and Black perspectives and worldviews has subverted the consensus of that time and people about the popularly

believed negative, stereotypical representations of the Native American and Afro-American people as dangerous, savages, uncivilized, primitive, mysterious, imperfect humans etc.

The dissertation demonstrates that digressing from the phallogocentric tradition of writing characterized by linear, rational, reason-oriented, organic and well-structured form, *Love Medicine*, *Tracks*, *Beloved* and *Paradise* do not follow traditional, linear, protagonist-oriented narrative style rather draw non-white narrative approaches from the oral traditions of Native American and Afro-American heritage to fabricate unconventional designs for her storytelling. The study also contributes to promoting environmental ethics by establishing that both Native and Black women forged symbiotic relationship with nature and endeavoured to preserve the environment and human and non-human life on earth.

The study makes a contribution to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating how Native American and Afro-American women writers have deconstructed the stereotypical representations of the Black women in the mainstream literature by deconstructing the phallogocentric and racial conceptions about them. By doing so, they discursively reconfigured the identities and subjectivities of the Native and Black women from the Red and Black women perspective and thus changed the perceptions of reality about these women.

The selected works of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison analyzed in the study foregrounded such issues as female sexuality, deconstruction of ontological and epistemological phallogocentric structures, racial and stereotypical misrepresentations of the Black women, environmental degradation, environmental justice and the domination of the Native and the Black women by patriarchy. Through the discourse analysis of such vital issues, the study established the interconnectivity between the patriarchal systems of oppression and domination of women and nature. Women in the four environmental narratives under discussion were presented as victims of patriarchal domination, but they forged an intimate link with nature/ environment and played significant role in preserving and conserving the nature and human as well as non-human life. In view of the increasing significance of the environmental issues and the need to extricate women from the male domination, the study emphasised upon

incorporating non-white perspectives in broadening the frontiers of *écriture féminine* and Ecofeminist studies.

Another major contribution of the study is the inclusion of red (Native American) and Black (Afro-American) *Écriture Feminine* and Ecofeminist stance in Ecofeminism as the field was predominated by Amer-European environmental/ nature writing. With the incorporation of Native American and Afro-American traditions of environmental writing in the canon of mainstream ecocritical/ Ecofeminist writing, the study demonstrated the inextricable link between humans and non-humans and thus by rejecting the whitewashed anthropocentrism offered bio-centrism as an alternative way of perceiving the world. Doubtless, Erdrich and Morrison's powerfully discursive fiction has broadened the scope of identity politics and sexual difference by dissolving the cultural boundaries, re-imagining the histories, amalgamating white and non-white narrative techniques and responding to French Feminism's call for "new poetics".

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Future Researchers**

Since Native American and Afro-American women writers have significantly contributed to the body of *Écriture Feminine* and environmental narratives through their singularly feminine writings, *Écriture Feminine* and Ecofeminism are potential fields of research. My dissertation focused upon the discursive reconstitution of the Native American and Afro-American women and their relationship with environment in environmental narratives of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison. The future researchers may explore the representations of environmental concerns in other genres of literature like poetry, drama and/ or short fiction written by women writers across the globe, shedding light on the nuanced voices and emerging trends in the fields of *Écriture Feminine*, ecocriticism, material ecocriticism and posthuman ecocriticism/Ecofeminism. As the environmental crisis is a global issue, the writers worldwide are positively engaged in addressing the environmental problems through literary representations and environmental activism. The future researchers may engage in exploring the literary activism in the works of Black Diasporas and/or indigenous writers.

A significant body of work has been produced on *Écriture Feminine* and ecocritical analysis of the Euro-American writings but the Ecofeminist analysis of women writing of the Afro-American and Native American is relatively less explored in Pakistani and Western research domain. My study can provide useful lead to researchers

from within and outside Pakistan particularly to analyze Pakistani fiction from Ecriture Feminine and Ecofeminist point of view to know how Pakistani female novelists have dealt with the themes and motifs related to women and their relation with nature/environment.

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