

FEMALE IDENTITY AND MAGICAL REALISM IN NATIVE AMERICAN AND AFRO AMERICAN WOMEN WRITING: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LOUISE ERDRICH'S TRACKS AND TONY MORRISON'S BELOVED

Mumtaz Ahmad
Assistant Professor English
Government Post Graduate College, Nankana Sahib
PhD Scholar, NUML, Islamabad.

Kaneez Fatima
Research Scholar University of Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

This research article is an attempt to evaluate the Native and Afro American women writers 'sustained efforts to articulate a continuous and internal cultural female identity by constructing re evaluative narratives that deconstruct institutionally supported universal female images inflicted upon the third and fourth world women by the first world feminist intelligentsia. To do so these women writers radically depart from the conventions of Euro American stylistic, formal and structural modalities of the narrative and use instead a stylistic mosaic allowing the native and black oral traditions to imbricate with the white normative models. Since literature and arts have always been an effective medium, an expansive domain, and a discursive field where writers have been voicing the aureate human feelings, conflicting passions and the continuous struggles of the different societal segments, especially of deprived strata against those who maintain and perpetuate their cultural and political hegemony by suppressing the subalterns, the women writers from the fourth world ethnic communities have expressed whole range of the intensely personal and communal human emotions that radiate from the springboard of social, cultural, historic and political practices One of the significant features that the Native American and Afro American women writers often demonstrate include the use of magical realist strategies that express, on one hand, their efforts to indigenize narrative and, on the other hand, help them construct female identity from their own perspective since, within main concerns of contemporary fourth world feminist criticism, the (re) construction of female identity merits special attention and analysis. The stereotypical discursive construction of the Native and Afro American women by the dominant Euro American discourses bracketed them into essentialist categories glossing over the medley of vital differences that these women reveal in their social, cultural, anthropological and sexual strictures. Tackling the issue of the discursive construction of female identity that involves conceptual and perspectival problems, both Native American and Afro American women writers deconstruct the sweeping generalization of the fourth world women by challenging and subverting the clichéd images replacing them with empowered and agentive subjects who are no more subjected to, what Gyatri Spivk conceptualizes, subalternity and "epistemic violence".

KEYWORDS: female identity; magical realism; Native American and Afro American women; Louise Erdrich's Tracks and Tony Morrison's Beloved

INTRODUCTION

One of the significant features that the Native American and Afro American women writers often demonstrate include the use of magical realist strategies that express, on one hand, their efforts to indigenize narrative and, on the other hand, help them construct female identity from their own perspective since, within main concerns of contemporary fourth world feminist criticism, the (re) construction of female identity merits special attention and analysis. The stereotypical discursive construction of the Native and Afro American women by the dominant Euro American discourses bracketed them into essentialist categories glossing over the medley of vital differences that these women reveal in their social, cultural, anthropological and sexual strictures. Tackling the issue of the discursive construction of female identity that involves conceptual and perspectival sweeping generalization of the fourth world women by challenging and subverting the clichéd images replacing them problems, both Native American and Afro American women writers deconstruct the with empowered and agentive subjects who are no more subjected to, what Gyatri Spivk conceptualizes, subalternity and “epistemic violence” (76). When Native and Afro American women writers address and analyse this identity problematic in their respective contexts, instead of resorting to white dominant models of identity that divide and bind the white and colored women into binaristic categories asserting white monolithic centre of white superiority over brown marginality, they cogently draw upon their our social, cultural, religious and ethnic sources to subvert the binary and reconstruct the ethnic identity.

We cannot remain indifferent to the fact that in addition to male writers who played significant role in the creation and proliferation of Native and Afro American literature, the women writers from these ethnic communities also explored new avenues and contributed considerably with their genuine works of artistic merit to building the canon of indigenous and black literature. They have built their respective literatures and theories in the white people’s language before the eyes of the mankind and in the face of the dominant models of Euro American literatures. It is not surprising, therefore, that deviating from the representative models of dominant white discourses, not only have they molded masterfully the prevalent literary models syncretising into literate Euro American tradition the oral elements of Native cultural traditions that resulted in intensely hybridized narrative forms, but they have also conducted unparalleled experiments in narratological domains to counter the European modes of narration that reflects the heroic triumphs of their respective ethnic literatures.

Among the greatest accomplishments of the Native and Afro American literary traditions constantly being admired and critiqued, their allegiance to doctrines concerning the commitment of literature to representing indigenous culture and oral mode of narration occupies central position. Discourse analysis of their novels illustrate the use of magical realist technique as a part of eclectic narratology that combines orally transmitted and written traditions in an attempt to represent hybridized nature of their contemporary culture and subjectivities . This hybrid principle of their narrative, therefore, constitutes the basis of magical realist narratology of these women’s fiction. From both cultural and narratological point of view, the Native and Afro American literatures are not, and never can be, fully reconcilable with Euro American literary and cultural forms though as a consequence of inevitable interaction between the two a certain degree of hybridity which, Bhaba calls a “third space of enunciation” , a constant meeting point of the two cultures, and which is one of the pre-conditions of postmodern condition and literature, is unavoidable. This article is an attempt to evaluate the Native and Afro American women writers’, Louise Erdrich and Tony Morison respectively, sustained efforts to articulate a continuous and internal cultural female identity by constructing re evaluative narratives that deconstruct institutionally supported “universal [female] images” (“Under Western Eyes” 214) inflicted upon the third and fourth world women by the first world feminist intelligentsia. To do so these women writers radically depart from the conventions of Euro American stylistic, formal and structural modalities of the narrative and use instead a stylistic mosaic allowing the native and black oral traditions to imbricate with the white normative models. Since literature and arts have always been an effective medium, an expansive domain, and a discursive field where writers have been voicing the aureate human feelings, conflicting passions and the continuous struggles of the different societal segments, especially of deprived strata against those who maintain and perpetuate their cultural and political hegemony by suppressing the subalterns, the women writers from the fourth world ethnic communities have expressed whole range of the intensely personal and communal human emotions that radiate from the springboard of social, cultural, historic and political practices. Forcefulness and sincerity of such representations of the ethnic and communal issues by the native and black women writers reflect the writer’s commitment with the construction of an authentic narrative that gives expression to, not only ,the most profound feelings of the writer but also orchestrate a poly vocal cultural dialogue between the white and the colored. This bicultural dialogue operates on the mechanism of refuting the dominant culture’s assumptions about the repressed endeavoring to redress the grievances of the marginalized groups by vocalizing their concerns in a

language that is easily accessible to the dominant and in a style that is almost always a digression from the conventional, normative discourse practice. This deviation from the normative cultural and discourse practices involves the incorporation of the indigenous communal practices into heteronormative discourse of the white. The blending of these two distinctly contradictory styles of the articulation of speech results in the genesis of a hybrid stylistics that accommodates the two divergent discourse traditions. The new hybrid tradition, therefore, carries the features of the both cultures' dominant literary traditions as in case of the Native and Afro American literature the traditional oral storytelling mode synchronizes with the white phallogocentric narrative tradition which it strives to dismantle as well. Therefore any interpretation of the Native and Afro American women writers' principle of commitment to representing socio cultural and political reality of the women in Euro American narrative tradition exclusively as a category of outlook on life ignoring the genuinely indigenous stylistic nature of their art will undermine the originality of their talent.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

How do Native and African American women novelists blend together magical and realist modes of narration to represent indigenous people's experience of reality?

1. How do the works of Louise Erdrich and Tony Morrison contribute to the canonization of black magical realist discourse?
2. How do Louise Erdrich and Tony Morrison exploit magical realist narrative strategies to reconstruct the Native American and Afro African identity?

Magical realism and the Native American Feminist identity

Louise Erdrich, combining in her identity mixed cultural lineage, serves as a perfect example of post colonial hybrid identity which demonstrates this contemporary phenomenon: She is French – Chippewa on her mother's side and German – American on her father's side, easily defying racial or cultural classification. Bearing deep autobiographical marks, her novels emanate from her dual cultural background by depicting hybrid or mixed blood characters along with numerous pure Native Americans reflecting hydra-headed tensions and conflicts faced by hybrid, socially, culturally and mentally displaced characters living on and around the dismal looking North-Dakota reservations. This reservation, which is the forced habitats of the original inhabitants of the now United States who were pushed back to these squalid places, frequently appears in Erdrich's fiction. The novel under discussion, which I intend analyzing from the perspective of magic-realism is not only the part of tetra logy comprising of *Tracks* (1988) *Love Medicine* (1984) *The Beet Queen* (1986) and *The Bingo palace* (1994) which tells the integrated story of a few Native American families living in the contemporary hybrid American socio-cultural ethos striving to preserve a part of their ancestral cultural heritage, but also offers a moving account of the death, survival, cultural conflicts, conflicting ideologies intense ambitions to revive glorious indigenous past and fierce trials that the Native suffer to perpetuate their traditions. These four novels interconnected and ancillary to each other, stand of their own and have an independent and complete story to tell. Whereas all four novels included in Tetra logy have the elements of Magical realist technique which combines realistic and magical traits in exquisitely stylistic way, *Tracks*, the one I have chosen to highlight the use of technique of Magical realism has enabled Erdrich to immaculately depict the Native American woman's indigenous identities, exhibit the use of Magical realism at an extensive level and for a variety of purpose. It covers the span of a dozen of years from 1912 to 1924, in which numerous closely knit Native American families live stormy lives. Erdrich focuses upon the younger and the older generations of these families relating the radical cultural and anthropological changes taking over the conventional ways of life, showing that for the members of the younger generations who are brought up and fed upon the contemporary white cultural mores the Anishnaabeg ancestral vision of Native life does not hold great meaning and they are not likely to stick to the old traditions tenaciously and reverently because the cultural bond that binds the generations together is less strong in the younger generations. Almost all the major themes that define Native life in contemporary world are highlighted in ways that deeply affect the lives of the people the way they conceptualize the surrounding reality and act accordingly. Erdrich has a clear vision of the Native life and knows perfectly well that their historic contemporary life is impossible to conceive without taking a look at the history of the allotment of lands, brutal confiscation of lands, pathetic lives into the reservations and the gradual loss of culture, identity, traditions, rituals and even religion. The narrative technique of the tracks blends both native and Euro-American discursive strategies: The oral and the written. This blend of the two narrative traditions makes the novel a fascinating choice to interpret from postcolonial and postmodern perspectives. Its particular emphasis on communal responsibility and survival in the face of insurgent white culture makes it a significant literary document and with its fresh, indigenously drawn characters, an insider view of the author, it challenges and dismantles the stereotypical

representations of the Native People, especially of women, by the white male and female writers whose fancies and racial prejudice against the Natives led them to portray these people in highly derogatory terms, presenting them as savages, primitive and brutes who needed to be made civilized by being kept under colonial control of the white people the civilized, moral and enlightened beings whose moral and religious responsibility it is to civilize and humanize these brutes by converting them to white religion, culture and social ways. In typically native narrativizing of the indigenous cum westernized lives of the people, it hybridizes the stylistic and thematic veneers of the narrative by incorporating into otherwise a realistic account of the characters a film of mysterious and magical reality-associated with and derived from the Indian folklore and beliefs. The harmonious co-existence of the magical and the realist, credible and doubtful, empirical and mystic, positivistic and transcendental is immaculate. What in a completely realistic novel set in metropolitan white environment would have appeared incongruous, in *Tracks* looks perfectly credible because of the holistic narratological perspective preferred by Erdrich to exclusively Euro-American logo centric tradition or Native American phonocentric tradition. With constant intermingling of the realist and the surrealist, the novel vacillates between two boundaries – the western and the Native. By so doing Erdrich has, of course, erased the imaginary stratification of the geographical locations identified with racially and culturally specified categories of the humans stressing that in the Contemporary American socio-cultural conditions when the multiplicity of ethnicities living together has virtually obliterated the purity of culture and racial arrogance, it is but natural and desirable that once antagonistic, inflexible ideologies are combined into interlocking cultural phenomenon. Western concept of time and space as categories as opposed to Native people's conceptualization of spatiality and temporality are treated as sharply contrasted with each other, and the corrosive effects on the overall life patterns of the Native people of the enforcement of Church doctrines are also depicted to the effect of the individual and communal estrangement. The major interest of the novel lies in its foregrounding of the multi-layered clash between the two diametrically opposed world views: Euro – American and the Native Americans. At structural and formalistic level, Erdrich has masterfully used Magic realism points of departure between the follower of the two opposing cultures and their relevant ways to perceive the reality, interpret the subtle nuances of truth and the relative significance of the reality surrounding us in time and space. The narrative strategies employed in this novel are those which effectively convey the Native people's vision of the reality and the inherent uncommon conceptualization of the phenomenon around.

Retrieval of Mythic and Magical-Realist Female Identity in *Tracks*

One conspicuous feature of the narrative in *Tracks* is the retrieval of the mythic identity of the female. Females in Native American tradition, as strongly opposed to the Euro American tradition of gender segregation according much superior position to the male in matters pertaining to the power structures in the society, enjoyed far better position than their white counterparts, even surpassed men so far as the recognition of their mythic and magical powers were concerned. There didn't exist sharp difference of status and privilege between male and female in traditional Native American set up, as both the sexes believed not in gender based division of labor rather worked together, demonstrating their strong belief in the equality of gender. However, it was, primarily under the influence of the European gendered tradition which the Natives became familiar with and absorbed as a result of the interaction with the white culture, that they began practicing the gendering of social roles. Identity of women, as it was deeply entrenched in sanctioned by the cultural and ideological ethos of the Native American world, was strongly at par with, if not superior to, the male who didn't possess a mindset that suppresses women and deprives them of taking part in the vital affairs of the society. Erdrich, being the recipient of the traditions of the two opposing cultures, and an avid reader of the ancestral history, has set her remarkable novel *Tracks* in early 1900's, the times when Native American generations were coming far from their traditional life styles under the forced education in boarding schools and subtle assimilationist policies, while the older members, here symbolized by Nanapush, were making desperate efforts to keep their younger generations within the ancestral cultural philosophy. The novel, a part of the significant series of the novels centered upon the lives of the Native American families describing the changing identities of the members of the indigenous groups, is a fictional description of the intertwined lives of the pure and hybrid characters of the Native people, belonging to North Dakota Ojibwe background. It captures the shifting perspectives of the Native people's views about the world in which they are living, assimilating and resisting simultaneously the pervasive influences of the dominant white culture. Though written in 1989, the novel is set in the last part of the nineteenth century, when Natives Americans, deprived of their lands and resources, were living in the filthy and inhuman conditions of the far flung reservations and were facing the extinction of their culture at the hands of the white people, on one hand, and their descendants were increasingly becoming oblivious of the glorious traditions and rituals they were heirs of. Instead of practicing the religious, social

and cultural mores of the ancestors, they had come far away from their original notions. The novel traces the efforts of the various characters to save their culture from being gradually wiped out as they put heroic struggle against the natural as well as white colonial forces, resisting their cultural encroachment by the dominant powers. Erdrich with her personal experience of belonging to two cultures and having a hybrid identity, reconstructs a fictional account of how the older generations were resisting the white people's attempts at eliminating the native culture, while the second generation people being not deeply entrenched in or enamored of the indigenous ways of life, feels intrigued by the white cultural practices and hence either remain ambivalent or confused about how to deal with the contemporary reality. The events of the story take place mostly in the fictional town of Argus, North Dakota, mostly at an unrecognizable, though, unnamed reservation and the time span covered by the story is roughly twelve years from 1912 to 1924. The novel deals with the gradual corrosion of the Native cultural ways; snatching away of the lands of the indigenous people, their desperate fight against the natural and the imperialist forces to preserve their people and culture against the brutalities of the white dominant forces. Far from seen giving up before the inexorable exploitative colonialist operations carried out by the white forces, the Native survivors have waged a valiant war against all types of exploitative forces. They are resisting the invasion of the foreign culture by practicing their traditional ways and inculcating in the minds of their younger generations the love and significance of having to remain attached with the original culture.

Magical Realism and Female Identity in *Beloved*

As a recipient of the most prestigious Nobel prize for literature and being one of the most important contemporary Black novelists of the Afro American origin, Toni Morrison has effectively represented the issues of the contemporary generations of her race, highlighting how the history of the black Africans had been badly damaged in the white discourse resulting in the construction of the negative stereotypes of the black people and presenting of their images as barbarians, savages, uncivilized people whose mythical history and social values were invalidated as inauthentic and savage that needed the enlightening intervention of the white Europeans. Such circulation of the deteriorated images and negatively articulated history of the black people to the world consciousness, apart from conflating these people with sub human inferior categories of nature and animals, projected them as primitive, dark forces whose subjection and oppression by the white people is an act of divine intervention, of necessary colonization. This is the reconstruction of the Afro American history, especially the regeneration of female identity through indigenous counter discourses, cast in magic realist narration, that make Morrison such an important figure of the contemporary Afro American women writing. Her commitment with rewriting the history of her people, gender, myths and communal identity is evident from the fact that all of her novels deal with the questions of slavery, survival, repressed desires, silenced voice, misrepresentations of her people, the psychological impacts of their subjection to slavery, and their sustained efforts for freedom and self actualization. She has taken the responsibility of redressing the wrongs done to her people by the so called champions of the rights of human beings, by deconstructing the racially biased representations of the black people in a unique magical realist mode of narration. In *Beloved*, for instance, she articulates the traumatic history of the institution of slavery and the terrible after effects of this psycho-physical subjection of the black races. Couched in a poignant style that is characteristically feminine bearing the signature of Afro American women writing, *Beloved* dramatizes the troubled history of the centuries long suppression of the Black generations, the suppression that alienated them from their past traditions, mythical beliefs, and strong connection with the world of nature. Morrison's serious engagement with the fiction writing from the indigenous perspective has led to the retrieval of Afro American people's mythical past and glorious integrated communal life. The novel is a fictional enactment of the black people's traumatized lives, of their intense and violent desires to get free from the shackles of Europeans bondage, from the spiritually deadening white socio-cultural norms that they have been compelled to imbibe and assimilate in order to adjust in a racialized and xenophobic white society whose code of intolerance had kept the black people away from participating in the acts of creating literature and other fine arts, from enjoying the fruits of civilization, from the means of expressing themselves and their vision of life from their own standpoint, and above all, deprivation from the rights of access to education and means of self representation kept their history and self suppressed and misunderstood in the mainstream white thinking. This mainstream thinking, defined by overwhelmingly white male writing tradition, domineering and colonial in its structures, excluded the women from authorship, relegating them to mainly non creative, non intellectual and entertaining positions. Establishing a feminine tradition of writing, the one that was subversive and cutting edge in its non confirmative stance towards the ossified male tradition, was the great contribution of the Afro American women towards the inclusion of the black women writers in the canon. Afro American women writers, according to Michael Awkwward, achieved this position by producing texts that construct the counter realities by re-visioning the canonical texts in an attempt to inscribe a new authorial identity.

These works of the Afro American women writers, saturated in indigenous cultural ethics, seek to establish the retrieved and renewed history of the oppressed people.

With the rise of the native and indigenous literatures as a response to the misrepresentation of their cultures and identities by the dominant white literary discourses, the question of the reconstruction of the Afro American (female) identity assumed significance and the native writers engaged themselves in redressing the discursive misrepresentations of their race by presenting counter realities. Since the colonized and enslaved African slave 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 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. If knowledge paved the way for power, it was nowhere more clearly visible than the Western subjugation of the black Africans, for the legitimacy and justification of the colonization was sought through the dissemination of the negative stereotypes of the black people. The knowledge of the black slave races was used to portray them as inferior other of the white Europeans that lead to racial discrimination between the two people. With the dawn of postcolonial era when many of the colonized nations across the globe threw away the yoke of colonization and became independent nation states in the wake of long violent struggle they waged against the colonial masters, apart from building their administrative and colonial regime from the scratch, the foremost issue they had to tackle was to get rid of the colonial institutions if they were to regain their indigenous cultural autonomy. Though the task was huge because the centuries of cultural and ethnic interactions between the colonizer and the colonized had left deep impact on the social, religious, cultural, historic and individual life of the colonized, yet the literary writers took the responsibility of regenerating the past glory of their nations by reconstructing the scenes of pre-colonial cultural life when they had a civilization of their own and by reliving that past in the present they can not only retrieve their history and culture but also locate their identity in the dominant culture of which they are still the part. For Afro Americans living in the United States the preservation of their cultural rites, historical traditions and religious beliefs require simultaneous efforts at two levels: removing the misconceptions and prejudices in the White consciousness about their race and ethnicity and inculcating in the minds of the contemporary hybrid Afro American generations the love and respect for the ancestral culture and history. The contemporary Afro American women writers, Toni Morrison being top notch among them, have played crucial role in representing the realistic image of their race, deconstructing the unjust delineation of the black people in the discourses of white writers. Contemporary Afro American women writers, in a writing style that is characteristically their own so far as it combines the elements from the black narratological imperatives and the Western narrative convention, cast a revisionary glance over the originatory black women writers texts and reorientate the Western production of the various styles to appropriate a new style, i.e., magical realist technique that help them not only to delineate their cultural ethos but also to discursively retrieve their disfigured past. Morrison, an accomplished stylistician, and an extensive reader of the Western literature, holds the Western canonical texts and Western established genres to revisionary lens to subvert the literary and ethnic codal modality. The foremost objective the revisionary and deconstructive study of the Western genres these Afro American women writers do is to destabilize the dominant myths, deconstruct the biased construction of the black African identity, foreground the Afro American conceptualization of life, and prioritize marginalized Afro American literary and cultural practices to contribute significantly to the development of reconstruction of black American history. For that purpose the preferred method they use is postmodern 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. Postmodernism, 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.

CONCLUSION:

The comprehensive discussion and analysis of Louise Erdrich and Toni Morrison's works establishes that both the novelists have remained true to the depiction of the identity crisis faced by their respective people as a consequence of the interaction between the White and the non White people. Erdrich, employing magic realist narrative strategies have explored her native ancestors' mythic and artistic vision while writing fiction that candidly explained the cultural issues facing contemporary American and mixed heritage American.

Morrison, in her forceful feminine style, has created a fiction which pays close attention to and projects impressively the concerns of the black female community. Her foremost concern in her fiction as in the *Beloved* also, was to extricate the black female identity from the stereotypical, negative and derogatory construction in the white discourses written by male and female writers, for she believed neither the black woman's rightful place in the predominantly white society can be justly ensured nor their positive, potential identity can be foregrounded unless the white discursive images are countered through narratives that bring to light the "other" side of the reality. Her fiction, dismantling the imaginative accounts of the black women as charmers, savages and many other negative beings as were perceived by the dominant narratives, depict the women in their true color. She does not exaggerate their images nor does she see them through the lens of European racial discourses, instead points them as what they are; and what they are now, at this juncture of this history, is the outcome of how they have been treated in the past; what had been done to them; to what physical and psychological tortures they had been subjected to. Her realization of the contemporary black feminine identity is seen as the continuation of her historical place. Her study of the history of her race and the treatment of her gender, however, was based in selecting what was worthwhile and discarding what was redundant or insignificant. With commitment to carefully analyzing and retaining in her fictional accounts of the black people what had been of paramount importance and still affects their lives, she states the purpose of her fiction that it is meant to bear testimony to what was discredited in by the White historical constructs.

Erdrich's own fiction, grounded in Native American non western epistemological paradigms, expresses the 'other' versions of reality, of the truths and meanings specific to the believers of certain cultural and religious forms of reality, that are as real and believable to them as they are magical and unbelievable to their Western counterparts. Her intertwining of the Magical and realist in *Tracks* is an attempt to reconcile the two opposing epistemological and ontological paradigms - Western and Native American - in order that two peoples, destined to live together in God's country, despite the traumatic history of their encounters, could nestle together extending mutual tolerance and cultural harmony and respect each other's culture, traditions and religion without attempting to suppress or dominate the other on racial, cultural, religious, linguistic or any other discriminatory bias and acknowledge the right of the every human. Critical reading of the Magical realist texts written by Native American and Afro African women writers including Toni Morrison and Louise Erdrich do not take long to convince that they do have the ability to address and advocate the viewpoint of indigenous people. Erdrich in her oeuvre, and particularly in the *Tracks*, drawing amply upon postmodern assumptions, draws attention to and dismantled the binarism and dualities that Western culture thrives on and "gaps, absences and silences produced by the colonial encounter" (Selmon, 410). *Tracks* weaves two strands - realistic and magical- in an attempt to seek the actualization of the hybrid reality confronting the Native American subjects. Living in a multicultural society entails developing an ability to adopt, adapt and become adept in performing the social roles and responsibilities such a society necessitates for a hybrid subject in order that he, she may live a communal life, sharing and participating in the socio-cultural events without becoming biased in favor of the one cultural tradition over the other. Erdrich, remaining alive to the necessity of this new form of identity, without any malice for the either cultures, creates characters and situations which are not uni-dimensional or exclusively one thing, rather tend to incorporate conflicting features into a single form. These hybrid or mixed blood subjects, Erdrich herself being one belonging to two fundamentally different cultural traditions, retaining the best or so to speak worst of the two cultures, become performative identities, the sites where cultural performances are encoded and displayed.

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