



Please cite this paper as follows:

Ghofrani, Z., Shahabi, H., & Moradi, H. (2025). Otherness, Maternity, and Female Voice in *Shell Shaker*. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 13 (52), 71-82. <https://doi.org/10.71962/jfl.2024.1183633>

Research Paper

## Otherness, Maternity, and Female Voice in *Shell Shaker*

Zahra Ghofrani<sup>1</sup>, Hasan Shahabi<sup>2\*</sup>, Hossein Moradi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Candidate, English Literature, Department of Language and English Literature, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

[Zahra.ghofrani2014@gmail.com](mailto:Zahra.ghofrani2014@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, English Department, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

[shahabi1964@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:shahabi1964@yahoo.co.uk)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of English Literature, Faculty of Foreign Language, Karaj Branch, Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

[moradi.hossein@gmail.com](mailto:moradi.hossein@gmail.com)

Received: August 11, 2024

Accepted: September 15, 2024

### Abstract

This paper adopted the Eco-feminism approach to explore *Shell Shaker*, solely filled with Native American settings and issues. So, both nature and the woman of the Native American context were the focus of the study. The researcher showed how the Native American women can be representative of the nature of their ancestral lands and identify with it. The main argument that the researcher intended to study was parallel roles of both women and natural land for Native American. To this purpose, theories and notions of several thinkers were exploited. The researcher found different scenes in the novel that show both aspects of nature which include the mentioned concepts. On 'maternity', the researcher depicted how nature is considered a source of giving life and existence to the world like women. On 'otherness', the researcher found how nature is marginalized and ignored just like women. In other words, it is shown nature, like women, is 'other' and secondary in the society. It was shown how nature and culture are related. Besides, it was proved that there is a close relationship between women and nature that one can delve further into.

**Keywords:** Cultural Ecology, Ecofeminism, Nature, Women, Native American

این مقاله رویکرد اکوفمینیسم را برای کشف *Shell Shaker*، که صرفاً با تنظیمات و مسائل بومیان آمریکا پر شده بود، اتخاذ کرد. بنابراین، هم طبیعت و هم زن از بافت بومی آمریکا تمرکز این مطالعه بود. این محقق نشان داد که چگونه زنان بومی آمریکا می‌توانند نماینده طبیعت سرزمین اجدادی خود باشند و با آن همذات پنداری کنند. بحث اصلی که محقق قصد مطالعه آن را داشت، نقش موازی زنان و سرزمین طبیعی برای بومیان آمریکا بود. بدین منظور از نظریات و اندیشه‌های متفکران متعددی بهره برداری شد. محقق صحنه‌های مختلفی را در رمان پیدا کرد که هر دو جنبه طبیعت را نشان می‌دهد که شامل مفاهیم ذکر شده است. در مورد "مادری"، محقق به تصویر کشید که چگونه طبیعت مانند زنان منبع حیات و هستی به جهان در نظر گرفته می‌شود. در مورد "دیگری"، محقق دریافت که چگونه طبیعت مانند زنان به حاشیه رانده شده و نادیده گرفته می‌شود. به عبارت دیگر، نشان داده می‌شود که طبیعت، مانند زنان، در جامعه «دیگری» و فرعی است. نشان داده شد که چگونه طبیعت و فرهنگ به هم مرتبط هستند. علاوه بر این، ثابت شد که رابطه نزدیکی بین زن و طبیعت وجود دارد که می‌توان بیشتر در آن کاوش کرد. کلیدواژه‌ها: بوم‌شناسی فرهنگی، اکوفمینیسم، طبیعت، زنان، بومیان آمریکا

### Introduction



At the heart of the Ecological Indian is the matter of the disconnect between a noble image of American Indians and American Indian behavior. The cherished received wisdom since the early 1970s has been that North American Indians were original biologists and conservationists. Images, clearly, have clear academic and popular stories and can be measured against human behavior. The Ecological Indian contrasts these two, starting from the Pleistocene to the present chapters, image versus evidence from the technical sciences, ancient discovery, ethnography, and history, taking testimony from both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples just as written and oral accounts lost in space or time and continually challenging the extent to which behavior represents or departs from image. -Harkin and Rich Lewis

Indigenes had comprehensive and precise knowledge concerning their immediate situation. This should be no problem bringing about that American Indian knowledge of the relations between organisms and their organic and inorganic environment have always been ecological. The perception is fundamental cultural; yet it is also, patently, cultural, and we must let people their own cultural categories and metaphors. In other words, environment is at base ethnoecology or to "spawn detailed analyses of the myriad relationships between indigenous people and their environments in North America" (Krech 28).

The race card is played at times by individuals wishing to seize the moral high ground from people with whom they disagree on that issue. It is a pivotal move that succeeds when further discussion is silenced by fear of being labeled a bigot. The scholar perceives racism as the belief in the first place that race is a social construct that determines human potential and, in the second place, that races are inherently superior or inferior to each other. The main problem identified by the researcher and wished to be solved in this dissertation is related to the lacuna of practical works regarding interdependence of women Native persons with their nature, their substantial roles, and the cultural background in which they exist. This dissertation is important because the Ecological Indian "neatly suits the purposes of the 'wise use' movement, in which advocates of white entitlement are contesting indigenous peoples' sovereignty, especially with regard to control of their own resources and lands" (Pennypacker 30).

### Research Questions

For the purposes of the present study, the following research questions were addressed:

**RQ1.** How does Shell Shaker depict the interconnectedness of women and nature in the Native American context, particularly in relation to the ecofeminist perspective?

**RQ2.** How does the novel marginalize and subject Native American women and the natural environment to otherness?

**RQ3.** How does LeAnne Howe use the historical and cultural narratives to bring forth the activities of women as central to ecological and societal resilience?

**RQ4.** Maternity and cultural continuance: how are these themes represented through the Choctaw battle in history and environment in the book Shell Shaker?

**RQ5.** What does the novel portray in terms of the links between ecological exploitation and oppression of women within the Native American community?

### Review of Literature

Ecofeminism has conceptual beginnings in the French tradition of feminist theory. In 1952, Simone de Beauvoir told that both women and nature appear in the logic of patriarchy. In 1974, Luce Irigaray diagnosed philosophically a phallic logic of the same, so that it subjects women to men's domination. In the same year, Franoise d' Eaubonne coined the term, to remind the necessity for women to bring about ecological revolution to argue that the source of phallic order is the source of a double threat to human being.



Warren has been writing as an ecofeminist since 1987, but in 2000 she published a treatment in her own voice, *Ecofeminist Philosophy*. This book is the culmination of her thinking for over a decade. Her perspective is as political, social, practical and philosophical in the spirit of d' Eaubonne and Ruether and makes research that goes beyond the social order. Ecofeminists insist that environmentalism and feminism are connected, but the nature of that connection is not clear. This work or any other work that has focused on ecocriticism or ecofeminism provides the theoretical grounds for the researcher.

Dorceta E. Taylor, in her essay, "Women of Color, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism" (1997) provides a brief description of the development of the environmental movement and the emerging role of women of color in this movement. There was huge interest in both the women's movement and the ecology in the past few decades. Many ecofeminist philosophers have argued the goals of two movements are mutually reinforcing. Finally, they involve the development of world views and practices that not based on male-biased models of domination. As Rosemary Radford

Ruether wrote in her book, *New Woman/New Earth*:

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crises within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] (204).

*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) ends with 'The Bakhtinian Road to Ecological Insight', whose writer Michel J. MacDowell argues that, Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theories, which are mingled with systems and relationships embraced by hard sciences, provide an ideal perspective for Ecocritics who can devise methods for practical Ecocriticism based on his "Dialogics". In fact, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* is the first collection of the pioneer essays in the burgeoning field of Ecocriticism, an introduction to the field as well as a source book. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* defines ecological literary discourse, and sketches its development over the past quarter-century. It also, provides a comprehensive analysis of the diverse approaches to this school of criticism.

Regarding the selected novels and books, there have been a few reviews and studies; however, since the novels have been published recently, many works could not be found. In "Repugnant Aboriginality: LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* and Indigenous Representation in the Age of Multiculturalism" by Monika Siebert, the researcher has investigated the concept of culture and trauma in Howe's *Shell Shaker*. Siebert believes that Howe guarantees the reader is repulsed by the unpleasant scenes that the researcher has shown. In her novel, Howe shows these disturbing scenes through "the flecks of bone, the seeping, gurgling blood, and the twitching flesh". The author creates a vivid contrast in her novel as these images and scenes that show horrible events can be compares with "the idyllic opening scenes from the village which focused on the perfection and beauty of similar bodies" (Howe 2). In fact, the author aims to show the function of popular culture in the contemporary societies. Siebert concludes that:

Howe also knows that in the late-twentieth century North America readers have at their disposal interpretive strategies that can mitigate such an epistemological inadequacy too vividly felt in encounters with radically different systems of belief. Token recognition, swift translation into our own terms, and ensuing toleration of difference, which has been officially sanctioned as an undeniable social good, and as a necessary corollary to nationalist projects in contemporary multicultural democracies... In effect, then, Howe's novel is an acute diagnosis of the contemporary multiculturalist reading practice and the representational predicament it poses for indigenous artists. In that sense it provides a literary counterpart to the efforts of contemporary American Indian visual artists. (42-43)

In another essay with the title of “Decolonizing the Choctaws: Teaching LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* by Patrice Hollrah, the researcher shows how the novel can be used to teach about culture and other issues of American Natives. In other words, the book is not just fiction but the historical representation of events among the Natives of America. Accordingly, “The novel illustrates how history continues to impact the present-day Choctaw characters and how those characters exemplify the process of decolonization. This article deals with how I teach *Shell Shaker* in the context of a course on American Indian literatures, but the strategies are useful for the novel in any course” (73).

### Methodology

The researcher in the present study principally employs Ecocritic and Ecofeminist theories to show how women, culture, and nature share common features. Karen Warren is the major theorist of this dissertation, but there are other theorists whose thoughts are so relevant and important, including Lawrence Buell (b. 1939) and Hubert Zapf (b. 1948).

As Clark writes, ecocriticism is "a study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, usually considered from out of the current global environmental crisis and its revisionist challenge to given modes of thought and practice" (xiii). Thus, this approach connects literature and the non-human world. This approach has emerged due to the environmental issues that people were experiencing at the time. Furthermore, ecocriticism addresses "the scientific study of nature, the scholarly analysis of cultural representations, and the political struggle for more sustainable ways of inhabiting the natural world" (Heise 506). Ecocriticism has been applied in literature and media to make people aware of the "environmental crisis" around them and prepare them to take some actions for saving the environment (Childs and Fowler 65).

Having explained ecocriticism, it is now important to explain how ecocritics apply this approach to the works of literature. They "recognize the need for reconstructing nature, not as the Other excluded from the realm of discourse, but as a subject which requires a non-dualistic perception and interpretation from a human position", and in order to do so ecocritics try to "trace a dialogue with nature" (Oppermann 4). Ecocritics try to devise "a new mode of understanding" for the readers of the work "that surpasses, if not eliminates, nature/culture dichotomy". Thus, ecocritics try to unify culture and nature in order to ultimately establish order in the world. Ecocritics analyze how a writer has depicted the interrelationship of life in his/her work, and what words have been chosen for describing that interrelationship. They seek to develop a "consciousness of the essential unity of all life" that will make the reader preserve nature sufficiently.

The central concepts to ecocritics are "a renewal of realism", "the nature of representation and the representation of nature" in works which is linked to the ecocritics' demand to provoke a preplanned response from the reader (Philips 578). Thus, the researcher mainly focuses, in this work, on the reality of depiction in a literary work and places her main concern on nature and its representation, which is quite different from other theoretical approaches like formalism. Ecocriticism, unlike approaches that solely focus on the text, links the work to the environment. In addition, it is not dependent on the life of the author to deduce meaning from the work, like most other approaches. Again, it is not geared towards exposing hidden desires and characteristics of the authors.

### Design of the Study

This qualitative research applies an ecofeminist and ecocritical theoretical framework in its attempt to analyze LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker*. It tries to bring to perspective the relationship among gender, culture, and the natural environment within a Native American setting. The design will be based on the following key components:

**Literary Analysis:** This research explores *Shell Shaker* through a close reading by focusing on specific scenes, symbols, and narratives that underscore the interdependent nature of the women-nature relationship. The themes of maternity, marginalization, and cultural resilience are put to critical analysis as indicative of the ways in which this novel addresses ecofeminist concerns. The historical and cultural references pertain to Native American life and traditions, focusing more strongly on those of the Choctaw tribe.

**Comparative Analysis:** The novel likens the responsibilities of women to the natural environment; both are outside the mainstream, yet very important for survival and continuity of the Native American community. This helps in bringing out the ecofeminist perspective-views of shared struggles between women and nature.

**Cultural and historical contexts:** This paper contextualizes the narrative within the larger context of Native American colonization, land expropriation, and cultural erosion. Setting such a background should provide a better understanding of how environmental exploitation and subjugation of women are interrelated in the novel.

**Data Sources:** The main data source of this paper is the novel *Shell Shaker* itself. Supportive materials are some critical essays about the novel, texts on ecofeminism theory, and scholarly works on the literature and culture of Native Americans, serving theoretically and contextually for the argument.

### Discussion

LeAnne Howe's first book *Shell Shaker* 2001 is based on a deep belief in the power of Native storytelling, not only as a means for Indigenous people to create identity, history, and community in collaborative endeavor, but also as a means through which American culture and history on the whole can be shaped and transformed. "Local stories are power" she has argued in an essay entitled "The Story of America: A Tribalography": "They create people. America is a creation story, a tribalography" (Howe 29). In the original's extraordinary and evocative opening chapter, framed on the Autumnal Equinox of September 22, 1738, in Yanabi Town, Oklahoma, the reader is introduced to Shakbatina, the Ishmael of her tribe. "Call me Shakbatina, a *Shell Shaker*," she says. "I'm an Inholahtha woman, of course initiated into the ways of our grandmother, the first *Shell Shaker* of our clan. We are the peacemakers for the Choctaws" (Howe 1). Many academic and philosophical works regarding nature have some "social assumptions" which often minimize the existence of themes of dualism and domination therein (Warren 83).

Many ecofeminist logicians have tried to trace the root of these structures of dualism and domination to locate the sources of the oppression of women and the exploitation of the natural world and the connections between them. There is a way that mastery manifests itself, which is something that has been witnessed both in the persecution of men over ladies and the persecution of people over the climate. Warren tries to explain the steps by which this process of domination occurs, reporting that: These are (i) backgrounding, the oppressors' creation of a dependency on the oppressed while simultaneously denying that dependency; (ii) radical exclusion, constructing supposed differences between oppressors and the

oppressed in terms of radical differences in order to justify subordination of the oppressed; (iii) incorporation, the construction of the devalued side of a dualized pair as lacking morally relevant features associated with the other side; (iv) instrumentalism, the construction of groups seen as morally inferior, lacking any morally important independent interests; (v) homogenization, the denial of differences between those on the underside of dualized pairs (seeing all women or all slaves as the same). (Warren 235)

This interaction which Davion depicts clarifies how much demonstrations of control rely on dualism. She relates the legendary story of the principal granddad, Tuscalusa, "an incredible pioneer, powerful and dynamic" who on becoming aware of the unavoidable methodology of the whites, the Hispanic de Soto - an Osano ("bloodsucker" or "horsefly," a man moved by the soul of defilement, ravenousness and annihilation) - assembled his champions to lead the foe into a snare, just to be ruthlessly butchered. Grandma, conversely, lashed void turtle shells around every lower leg and for four days and evenings moved around a fire, until her feet and lower legs were enlarged furthermore, dying, and until finally Miko Luak, fire's soul, took feel sorry for and, conveyed grandma's quiet supplications up to Itilauichi, the soul of Autumnal Equinox, who allowed her desire: "Through your penance of blood you have substantiated yourself commendable. The things you longing for individuals will be given" (2).

Grandma endure the following revulsions of fighting and turned into the primary peacemaker for her clan, the first in a long queue of ladies' relatives: "Since Grandmother shed blood for individuals' endurance, our ladies keep on respecting Itilauichi by shaking shells" (4). In the Autumnal Equinox of 1738Shakbatina feels called upon to step in the strides of her grandma's blood penance, as her girl Anoleta, paramour to Red Shoes, ancestral head of the Choctaws who has fallen prey to the soul of Osano, stands blamed for having killed Red Shoes' first spouse, a Chickasaw lady from the Red Fox town. The passing of this lady has welcomed on ancestral fighting between the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, and Anoleta should be brought to death. Shakbatina who sees herself as somewhat answerable for the catastrophe at Red Fox town chooses to forfeit herself by replacing her daughter, thus restore harmony between the clans. Her choice, notwithstanding, to respect the practice of the primary Shell Shaker, Grandmother of Birds, should be upheld by the ancestral local area: "They should likewise freely say that Anoleta is guiltless of killing the Chickasaw lady. This will ensure that later on she will be considered as a respectable pioneer" (Howe 5).

Shakbatina's story is shot through with scorn of white infringement. In addition to the fact that she is experiencing the sickness of the "evil" Inklisk Okla (the English) which has tainted her skin and "knapped her body like a piece of rock" (Howe 10), she additionally speculates that the English are the genuine killers and violators of the Red Fox lady, expecting to plant friction among the clans thus seize their properties: "How is it possible that this would be?" she contemplates, Ladies were the land. Intek aliha, the sisterhood, controlled the rich ripe terrains that supported individuals. Killing a person for land would resemble killing what's to come (Howe 10).Despite the way that the Choctaws are peacemakers, she cannot keep herself from sensations of retribution and frequently fantasies about "hanging Inklisk Okla digestive organs in the trees so everybody could see their poo."

At the point when exchanges, directed by the Alibamu Conchatys, fall flat, Shakbatina surrenders herself to pass on, realizing that "What I am, my embodiment, will live inside my little girls" and requesting that Anoleta demand her companion Jean Baptiste Bienville to battle Red Shoes and the English (Howe 14). In her last signal, she plans to show her "actual self" to her kin, dressing in white as an indication of harmony, however painting her face vermilion red as an

indication of war, calling to her grandmother: "I will wipe the slate clean for you, yet in my heart I need a conflict... My message to my kin is that we should battle to endure" (15). By hence parting herself, she intends to respect both her predecessors, peacemaker Grandmother and hero Tuscalusa, and "make things even." The snapshot of her passing - she is pummeled to death by a immense club - is one of a few blood coagulating episodes in the novel, however, the way and message of her passing will resound through the resulting Choctaw ages.

Afterward, her daughter Anoleta will look to deliver retribution on Red Shoes for the death of her mom. Her initial hero's worship of Red Shoes, has offered approach to disturb and scorn for the way he had permitted himself to become ruined: "Allyou have at any point demonstrated is that you will battle in the compensation of any individual who gives you guns" (Howe 128). But her affections for Red Shoes are confounded by overwhelming physical allure also, her first endeavor to utilize "her insight to kill instead of to fix", as she plans to bait him into her tent and harm him, comes up short (130). Without a doubt - as we will see, similar as his 20th century simple Red McAlester - Red Shoes has succumbed to the soul of Osano, and become a deceiver to his clan. When a splendid pioneer, yet presently in the grasp of covetousness, debasement and force desire, Red Shoes has put ancestral endurance at hazard through fanning intertribal fighting. Tragically, a once-respectable goal has gone awfully amiss. As Bienville cautions Anoleta: "You are in incredible peril... For regardless Red Shoes is advising you, he contrives to kill us all. The man is a devil. I accept he would cut you in two on the off chance that it implied he could benefit from every half" (135).

By 1747, Red Shoes has turned into the tenacious killer imagined by Bienville: he is spinning out of control, killing ruthlessly furthermore, aimlessly (we currently likewise learn it was he, when all is said and done, who killed the Red Fox individual for whose demise Anoleta was accused), however, is as yet dreaming of reunification with Anoleta. The fantasy will make him powerless against double dealing, and to his demise. As ancestral fighting, upheld on inverse sides by French and English powers, emits into grisly slaughter - killing Anoleta's father Koi Chitto - still up in the air to make great her disappointment of nine years prior and this time satisfy the guarantee of retribution to her mom: "For an Indian lady at battle, there could be no delicate kindness" (187). Entering "the spot of blood retribution," she moves toward Red Shoes and, veiling her misdirection, figures out how to have her sister push him lethally into the blazes. Without further ado after, she, at the end of the day, is killed (parted in two) by the hatchet of Red Shoes' partner, the English merchant Elsley (200).

*Shell Shaker* lavishly archives and envisions Choctaw history. A well-researched novel, it is instilled with a solid and inescapable feeling of the torment of history. It presents ruthless scenes of brutality and slaughtering, intertribal fighting being intertwined with clashes between the English and the French, and gives a rankling image of the constrained termination of ancestral life and culture because of whites. A few scenes of brutality, murder, also, assault might be stunning in their realistic expresses. In the verifiable segments of the original LeAnne Howe rejuvenates the entire complex Choctaw cosmogony, while in the contemporary segments, it is made to comprehend its continuation in the present. The perspectives to adore local area and sex, ladies here are dynamic sexual specialists, "taking" the men they extravagant also, following the call of eros as need, highlight the ecofeminist themes in the novel. the readers find out with regards to the centrality of ladies: "Ladies are the embodiment of Mother Earth. We make life and, during green Corn, we shake shells to reconnect with every living thing" (Howe 152). They additionally witness its mind-boggling scope of customs and services and are made to comprehend the Choctaw penchant for peacemaking and their emphasis on common agreement and public majority rule banter.

Generally male impression of nature frequently depends after developing dualisms that are innately various leveled. Numerous essential ecofeminist standards are concerned purposefully

with control. One of these is that "progressive system legitimizes mastery and should be opposed on all levels, including inside ecofeminist political practice" (Warren 67). Warren keeps, clarifying that "dualistic reasoning, especially qualifications among culture and nature, upholds all sort of mastery" (67). Her point is that male controlled society is innately hierarchal and that assessment of an issue or an element, similar to nature, through a women's activist lense requires considering it to be existing on a similar plane as oneself, not as lesser.

As Uncle Isaac discloses to his young cousins during the 1990s: "Councils talk about an issue transparently, and they discussion and discussion until they reach agreement ... Quite a while past, Choctaw boards accepted that everybody needed to concur however, more significant, they examined things transparently openly" (74-75).

Above all, we find out with regards to its mentality to death, specifically as proven in a bone-picking service sanctioned by Koi Chitto, spouse of Shakbatina, in a condition of close to furious frenzy: a difficult and chilling "dance" of love and demise, blending Eros and Thanatos in an awful beneficial interaction of sensual necrophilia and a blissful festival of life and resurrection, which pushes western awareness to (and maybe past) the constraints of the tolerable. As Howe has clarified in her essay, the eighteenth-century Choctaws "considered there to be as nourishment for the creatures and earth once they were dead" Thus, "in the early Choctaw perspective, not being returned to the earth by a bone picking service would be a sort of blasphemy. Things are made right when we are gotten back to the earth as nourishment for the planet. Life proceeds" (36).

Howe additionally presents a convincing picture of how much French pioneer history – generally through the presence of white French pastorate – was interwoven with Choctaw ancestral history, specifically through the figure of Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville, organizer of the city of New Orleans, later legislative head of the state, and a partner and companion of the Choctaws.

He had assumed a significant part in the ancestral conflicts between the Chickasaws and English from one viewpoint, and Choctaws and French on the other, exchanging flintlocks to the Choctaws and requesting political and military help consequently. At a certain point, he was embraced into one of the Choctaw clans and had Choctaw ladies living in his home. His essence is still intensely felt by the contemporary Choctaws: Auda runs over Bienville in her authentic investigates and feels very nearly a special interaction with him: "certain scenes that managed her clan and Bienville felt more like recollections than simple verifiable occasions" (121). Later she finds that Bienville probably been a close companion (perhaps pet-like admirer) of her precursor Shakbatina and very nearly a receptive individual from the Billy family.

She has named her pet hare after him, Bienville. Another French minister, Father Renoir, records his seeing of Koi Chitto's Bone Picking function in a journal record which fills in as his support for abandoning his God and religion and conceding to the Choctaw ways. "I am persuaded now," he takes note of, "that Chahtas offer more appreciation to their dead than some other race. To them the bones of their family members are sacred. Evidence that they existed in the past as they will exist for eternity. They are phenomenal individuals, so lovely with their long flowing hair, I can barely accept that it is my fate to live among them" (Howe 178). Lecturing among the Choctaws, Renoir has passed into an existential issue:

he is ready to destine himself according to a searingly missing Christian God and to concede to following the drive of love for an Indian lady, Neshoba, the sister of Anoleta. "He reasons that it is best for France and the Church not to realize that the avarice of their confidence is causing the downfall of Indian clans. (179)



Having accepted love and culture among the Choctaws, he desires to "faire peau neuve, attempt to develop new skin and accept as they do, realizing that 'his God is snoozing'" (Howe 180). In any case, the snapshot of Choctaw history which resounds most horrendously through the story is the persuasive expulsion of Choctaws from their ancestral grounds east of the Mississippi to Indian Territory, under the Indian Evacuation Act of 1830, passed by President Andrew Jackson.

On this, the Trail of Tears, 4000 Choctaws passed on from openness, sickness and starvation as they were driven west of the Mississippi to unfamiliar land. Then, at that point, in 1907, when Indian Territory was consolidated as the province of Oklahoma "home of red individuals" (148) and the land was detracted from the clan through allocations, the spirits moved away, shed their skin that bound land and individuals together.

At the Autumnal Equinox of 1991, however, this snapshot of ruthless severance will undoubtedly be scattered, as the spirits return, "pulling stars down from the sky, causing a fifty-mile-long grassland fire," singing the land "dark like a piece of consumed toast" - "It's a sign. They've return to start a ruckus for no really good reason" (17). It is this singed and consumed over no man's land of the current which gives the representative scenery to the show of reprisal, reunification and remission that will reach a crucial stage on the Autumnal Equinox of September 22, 1991, when, as Shakbatina says, "Earth and soul and story are brought together" (138). At the focal point of the novel is the female line of the Billy group, relatives of Chunkashbili, the little girl of Anoletta: mother Susan Billy - "the seventh little girl of a seventh little girl. Amazing medication" (Howe 85); she is the direct relative of Shakbatina, a shell shaker in the present - and her three little girls, Auda, Adair and Tema Billy.

Each of the three little girls are fruitful in life as shrewd, school taught Indians in a white world: Auda is a PhD - degree conveying antiquarian of the Choctaw clan in Oklahoma - she is "the principal Choctaw scholastic to compose on the clan's initial Associations with the French" (Howe 43). As the oldest girl, she was sup presented to replace her mom (bringing forth new Billys) yet she has liked to strike out all alone, picking a profession over ("to right the clan's eighteenth-century record") over conventional parenthood.

She is additionally a dreamer extremist for benefit of the Choctaw cause and close associate, inspirator, and admirer of Red McAlester, a much-respected head of the Choctaw clan, a man still up in the air to reestablish the clan to its legitimate position yet quickly falling into the underhanded methods of force, voracity, and debasement, as he permitted his vision of force for the clan to become mistaken for the fulfillment of individual force.

Together, Red and Auda structure a solid group of leadership. However, much good is accomplished for the clan, somewhat through gains from the Casino of the Sun, McAlester has permitted himself to be derailed associations with the mafia. Auda, in the gauge of one person, has "the makings of a genuine pioneer" (Howe 48).

Adair, the center sister, is a successful businesswoman with a MBA degree; she has turned into a protections venture dealer in New Orleans, where she is known as the "Money Street Shaman" who works by her aphorism "Equilibrium is everything" (Howe 39) but figures out how to avoid becoming "savage" (Howe 40).

Her secret of effective speculation is the exhortation she receives from voices she hears and spirits she finds in vision. Adair becomes associated with Gore Battista, an effective Indian legal advisor of Alibamu Conchatys plummet (a clan that generally interceded struggle for the Choctaws), a man who "had a sense of safety enough to blend easily with whites while as yet keeping certain Indian practices" (Howe 45).

## Conclusion

In *Shell Shaker*, LeAnne Howe deftly weaves together ecofeminism, cultural resilience, and historical trauma to represent complex dynamics between Native American women and the natural world. The novel, from an ideological perspective on ecofeminism, identifies the parallel marginalization of both woman and nature in a patriarchal and colonial structure as "the other." The representation of maternity is a very strong symbol of creation and continuity; it is a symbol referring both to biological reproduction and the preservation of culture.

As shown by Howe's narrative, Native American women are much attached to the ancestral lands inasmuch as it is their strength, like land, that is thrown out into the open as central to the survival of their community. Using the historical background of the struggle for autonomy by the Choctaws, ecological exploitation and domination of women are clear linkages made in this novel.

He brings into play the continued impacts of colonialism and environmental degradation, asking the reader to reassess the balance among nature, culture, and gender. By doing so, this novel becomes a reflection of historical and cultural Native American struggles, while simultaneously acting as a vehicle of commentary on modern ecological and feminist discourses that connect the past to current issues of environmental justice and gender equality.

## References

- Bak, Hans. "Seeking balance through History and Community: The Presence of The Past in Leanne Howe's *Shell Shaker*", Available online at: [https://www.academia.edu/11604986/Seeking\\_Balance\\_Through\\_History\\_and\\_Community\\_The\\_Presence\\_of\\_the\\_Past\\_in\\_LeAnne\\_Howes\\_Shell\\_Shaker](https://www.academia.edu/11604986/Seeking_Balance_Through_History_and_Community_The_Presence_of_the_Past_in_LeAnne_Howes_Shell_Shaker).
- Beidler, Peter G and Gay Barton. *A Reader's Guide to the Novels of Louise Erdrich*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999.
- Buell Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- . *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Second Edition). UK: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- Birkeland, J. Ecofeminism: Linking theory and practice. In G. Gaard (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, animals, nature*. (pp.13-59). Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Cudworth, "Erika Ecofeminism and the Question of Difference". *Developing Ecofeminist Theory*. University of East London. 101-127, 2005.
- Childs, Peter and Roger Fowler. *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms*. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Clark, Timothy. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Devall, Bill and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology*. Layton/Utah: Gibbs Smith, Publisher, 1985.
- Dreese, Danelle N. *Ecocriticism: Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2002.
- Egan, Gabriel. *Green Shakespeare: From Ecopolitics to Ecocriticism*. USA and Canada: Routledge, 2006.
- Eckersley, Robyn. *Environmentalism and Political Theory, Towards an Ecocentric Approach*. London: UCL Press, 1992.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Gifford, Terry. *Pastoral (The New Critical Idiom)*. London: Routledge, 1999.

- Glotfelty, Cheryl. *Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis*. London: The University of Georgia Press, 1998.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl & Harold Fromm. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- Harkin, Michael E. and David Rich Lewis. *Native Americans And the Environment Perspectives on The Ecological Indian*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 2011.
- Harrison, Summer. "The Politics of Metafiction in Louise Erdrich's *Four Souls*." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 23 no. 1, 2011, pp. 38-69. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/ail.2011.0011
- Heise, Ursula K. "The Changing Profession: The Hitchhiker's Guide to Ecocriticism." In: *The Modern Language Association of America* 121/2: 503-516, 2006.
- Hollrah, Patrice E. M. "Decolonizing the Choctaws: Teaching LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker*." *The American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 28 no. 1, 2004, pp. 73-85. Project MUSE, doi:10.1353/aiq.2005.0010.
- Krech, Shepard, III. *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. New York: Norton, 1999.
- McGuire, Cathleen and Colleen McGuire. "What is Ecofeminism" in *Ecofeminist Visions*. 1991; 2003. (<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/ecofeminism/What-is-Ecofeminism-Anyway.html>)
- Merrill Ingram, Annie, Ian Marshall, Daniel J. Philippon, Adam W. Sweeting. *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007.
- Mikics, David. 2007. *A New Handbook of Literary Terms*. New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Oppermann, Serpil. "Ecocriticism: Natural World in the Literary Viewfinder." In: *Journal of Faculty of Letters* 16/2: 29-46, 1999.
- Pennypacker, Mindy. "The First Environmentalists". *Nation*, February 7, 29–31, 2000.
- Phillips, Dana. "Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Truth of Ecology." In: *New Literary History* 30/3: 577-602, 1999.
- Rad, Diplowski. "Love, Family, and Women's Roles in Louise Erdrich's novels *Four Souls* and *The Antelope Wife*". Sveučilište J.J. Strossmayera u Osijeku Filozofski fakultet, 2014.
- Shaffer, Linda. "Narrative Truth and Historical Identity": Identifying as Choctaw and Irish in LeAnne Howe's novel *Shell Shaker*" *Forum of Edinburgh University Library*, 2017.
- Siebert, Monika, "Repugnant Aboriginality: LeAnne Howe's *Shell Shaker* and Indigenous Representation in the Age of Multiculturalism" (2011).
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakrovorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Eds. Ashcroft, Bill et al. New York: Routledge, 1995. 24-28.
- Stookey, Lorena L. *Louise Erdrich: A Critical Companion*. Greenwood: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1999.
- Taylor, Dorceta E. Women of color, environmental justice, and ecofeminism. In Karen Warren (ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Indiana Univ Pr. pp. 38—81, 1997.
- Warren, Karen J. *Ecological; Feminist Philosophies*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996.
- . *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Indiana University Press; First Edition, 1997.
- . *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000.

## Biodata

**Hassan Shahabi** is an Assistant Professor in the English Language Department at the Islamic Azad University's Kerman branch, Iran. His academic expertise spans literary analysis, linguistics, and language education. He is a prolific researcher with numerous publications in

esteemed national and international journals. His work delves into diverse topics, including the translation of culture-specific elements in literary texts, the application of literary and linguistic theories to various works, and the impact of corrective feedback in language learning. Dr. Shahabi's contributions significantly enhance scholarly discussions in these domains, showcasing his unwavering commitment to academic excellence.

Email: *shahabi1964@yahoo.co.uk*



© 2025 by the authors. Licensee International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Najafabad Iran, Iran. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY NC 4.0 license). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

