

Tribhuvan University

Mediation and Multiple Narratives in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope's Wife*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Ramakant Prasad Yadav has completed his thesis entitled "Mediation and Multiple Narratives in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope's Wife*" under my supervision and guidance. I, therefore, recommend his thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Approval Letter

This thesis entitled "Mediation and Multiple Narratives in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope's Wife*" by Ramakant Prasad Yadav , submitted to the Department of English, Tribhuvan University has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

The major thrust of this research is to examine how the narratological devices in Erdrich are The Antelope's Wife. In addition, certain knowledge about Native American literature is also used to strengthen methodological fulcrum of this research. The interconnection among various narrative tools and fusion of disparate narrative voices gives rise to a forum for negotiation. The notion of plurality and negotiation of disparate voices are examined at length in the novel, The Antelope's Wife. This study dwells upon the multifarious narrative techniques depicting essential aspects of the impossible reconciliation between two separate worlds represented by multiple voices. The strong traditional Native American threads and the weaker and weaker civilized Minneapolis coexist in the narrative. Erdrich's contrast between the well-defined utterances manages to bring into focus the tremendously rich heritage of the Native American civilization as it is presented in The Antelope Wife. The diverse narrative structures constantly interweave. This interweaving creates a complex vista of the contemporary American society. The narrator is also equally oriented towards his native ritual, cults and tradition while undertaking a risky job of chasing and tracking the missing criminals. Native youths believe that there is problem in accepting diversity, difference, multiplicity and heterogeneity. They do not succeed in this attempt at cultural synthesis. They give value to naïve American culture, genealogy, racial ancestry and rituals.

Keywords: Native Americans, narrative techniques, multiple voices, heritage, civilization, weaving.

Erdrich's novel entitled *The Antelope Wife* is representative for the Native American culture and literature. The author creates a fictional realm inhabited by multiple narrators whose voices are interwoven in a very sophisticated pattern. In her fictional world, by means of her multiple narrators, Erdrich creates a community within which multiple life experiences are interconnected. The narrative voices address directly the audience, the style being informal. Her characters tell stories, sew, cook and their names bear certain significances. Several narrative threads are interwoven around the Roys, the Whiteheart Beads and the Shawanos throughout several generations in between the 1880s and the 1990s. Among the narrators, there are both human and non-human voices, each contributing to the pattern of the Native American existence.

Klaus Shawano when explaining why he is no longer friends with Beads is weaving part of the Native American design in the novel. The whole chapter four which belongs to Part One is a monologue, Klaus asking and answering his own questions. The following extract is illustrative of this point:

Beads, I've thought so often, foe or friend? I decided on the first because he cost me everything I had. I did manage to keep my life, but aside from that – my clothes, my savings, my house, my boat, and even, yes, my wife, Sweetheart Calico. When Scranton Roy first nurses Matilda, he looks around, relieved to find that "there was only a dog" to witness his action. What he does not realize is that at the same time he is nursing the child, the child's mother is, somewhere else, being comforted in her grief over her lost daughter by another small dog, which she begins to nurse and keep alive. (43)

The narrator recalls bits of conversation with Richard, Rozin's husband. He analyzes their relationship in minute details. The whole chapter is structured like very many other fragments of the novel resembling a diary entry.

In sub-chapter 13, entitled "The Blitzkuchen", the same narrator, Klaus Shawano, tells a story. This time the tale is retold being an objective one. The events narrated are filtered through his life experience. It is as if he recalls happenings before his own birth. The narrator assumes that "From inside the kitchen, then, where Frank had stubbornly placed himself and from where Regina, heavy as the stove herself, refused to move, they got as much of the story as they could, or maybe as I was ever supposed to know" (135). The story of the Blitzkuchen is retold just as the re-baking of the Blitzkuchen by Frank Shawano, his brother. As narrative tension heightens, it will be a climax in the later development of the novel.

Frank tries all his life to achieve the Blitzkuchen he had once tasted in an ecstatic moment. In his presumption, "They breathed together. They thought like one person. They had for a long unbending moment the same heartbeat, same blood in their veins, the same taste in their mouth" (139). Contrary to other's collective expectation, he fails in his endeavor and is deeply disappointed. In opposition to the previous weak voice of Klaus, Cally's strong voice is echoed several times throughout the second half of the novel. Cally is Rozin and Richard Beads's daughter. Tormented by the past and especially by the death of her twin sister, she tells a tale of the past at the same time trying to guess what the future would be like for her mother and former lover. The following extract serves as how much discomfort and restlessness Frank suffered in the course of his struggle:

Frank Mama is uncomfortable, even standoffish with Frank Shawano.

Or it could be that she is locked up in the past. She figures that she is

done with, finished, all over with love and those complications. I understand her and that makes sense. But here is Frank, so kind, his hands plucking cotton candy off a paper cone to hand first to her, then me and so unassuming. (144)

Although still very young, she is a very experienced observer of the people who surround her. Her mother, Frank, Cecille, Frank's sister, her grandmothers, Mary and Zosie are paradigmatic examples of individuals who think for the betterment of their entire tribe. The two powerful twins have the complex history of having loved the same vanished man. Interestingly enough, she succeeds in being both subjectively and objectively involved in the colliding histories and destinies.

Another interesting voice is that of Almost Soup, an extra clever dog state, "I survived into my old age through dog magic. That's right. You see me; you see the result of dog wit" (75). Almost Soup tells the amazing story of dog survival. According to a Native American custom white puppies born on a reservation were destined to give substance to soup. This dog knows how to escape his fate by doing everything humans want to see, "I throw puppy love right at her in loopy, puppy drool, joy, and big-pawed puppy clobber, ear perks, eye contact, most of all the potent weapon of all puppies, the head cock and puppy grin" (78). The consciousness of a dog proves to be more experienced and wiser than that of a human.

Like most of the main characters, Almost Soup is a looker. He is an attentive perceiver of important details. He even gives advice to puppies like himself but also humans surrounding him. He is insisted to "Avoid all humans when they get into a feasting mood; I tell you, when a man goes out drunk in his motorboat, hide. Humans call that fate" (280). The story very nicely told by Almost Soup is the story of love and reliability between a master and his dog. These are only three of the narrative

voices heard in the novel, but there are several other utterances who take part in the creating of the network of strings and beads some of which are strong voices, others being only weakly perceived. There is also a unifying utterance, that of an objective anonymous narrator who seems to pull all the strings together. This is how the pieces fall into their places and the pattern is masterfully completed.

The contrast between the well-defined and pale utterances manages to bring into focus the tremendously rich heritage of the Native American civilization in the novel. The emotionally dislocated lives of Native Americans try to adhere to the tribal ways. They are afraid of yielding to the lure of the general culture. The Roy and the Shawano families and their colliding histories and destinies constitute the entire narrative body of the text. The narrative begins with a U.S. cavalry attack on an Ojibwa village. An old woman dies in the attack. She utters a fateful word. She is broken-hearted by the inadvertent kidnapping of a baby and a mother's heartbreaking quest. The descendants of the white soldier take the baby. There is another kidnapping, the death of a child and a suicide. Native American identity is a matter of becoming as well as of being. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.

Native American identities come from somewhere. They have separate segment of histories. Formative forces that shape identities undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some stable past, they are subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power. Self is sacrificed for the wellbeing and welfare of the all the inhabitants of the community. In this process of adaptation and assimilation, indigenous victims are bound to encounter other prejudices and exclusionary practices. The kidnapped girl makes a return to embrace the spirit of nativism. The girl who is brought up by a herd of antelopes locates her selfhood in the

mold of nativism. She acts in conformity with what his ancestral set of communal rules and rituals dictate. Thereby she strives to reclaim that which was robbed of from her.

In the novel, an Indian girl's increasing dissatisfaction with the mainstream American culture pushes her to follow the life style, language, social life and viewpoints of Native Americans. At first, she is slightly tilted towards the culture of the white Americans. Over time she comes to realize that she would find herself empty and enervated if she is bent on cultivating the ethos of mainstream American culture. The more she is forced by circumstance to immerse in white man's culture, the more she is frustrated and desolate. She develops the integrity of her selfhood if she is overburdened with despair and desolation.

Louise Erdrich is a popular writer who herself has fallen prey to different reactions to anomalous activities. To a large extent, it has been assumed that her story collection, *The Antelope's Wife* describes the horror and discomforts of displaced and dislocated Native Americans who had to encounter raid of white soldiers on native settlement. Most of her novels deal with those voices and themes which the mainstream society forbids. The voices of nonconformists and the ostracized are actively represented in her major works. Her novels are also about secluded life in reservation and its far-reaching effects in society.

Peter Greyer is of the opinion that Erdrich encourages her characters to be guided by inner feelings and emotions. This tendency adopted by the majority of characters from native Indians serves as the fulcrum to the progressive unfolding of plot. The following extract is illustrative of the case in point:

It's also an insight into a world where introverted feeling seems to guide, rather than the extraverted thinking of various Americans who

support reservation life of natives. Proper use of a function also requires quality, of course. Her heart-touching deals with a woman who obtain rights she never would have needed but for white man's law through the trickery of two Indian men who have learned dishonesty in the white men's schools. (12)

Greyer is of the view that Erdrich's sympathy to the secluded and lonely characters is projected dramatically in the tales that are included in this collection. The polar opposite things that are juxtaposed in this collection serves various purposes. This juxtaposition also means different rules for conversation and questioning. The notion of rehabilitation, rather than punishment, is the recurrent theme of almost all the tales.

Stefanie Castillo goes so far as to seek elements of realism even in Erdrich's *The Antelope's Wife*. She studies *The Antelope's Wife* in proximity with the realistic novels of other popular Native American writers. Castillo gives the following view in this regard:

The world of love and loyalty as created by Erdrich is fascinating, richly drawn and truly memorable. She is adept in capturing crime-solving techniques. Erdrich felt that Indians would continue to languish unnecessarily as wards of the state. Other topics include warnings against the use of peyote. The bravery of Indian soldiers during war as well as the place that bravery should have earned the Indian in American society and the brotherhood of man. (43)

Erdrich succeeds in dealing with the issues of love and loyalty, trust and the transaction of faith. She is far more ahead in diversifying scope of native literature by adding variety of issues and themes. It is this skill which has immortalized Erdrich.

When the victims of raid grow tall, they may not lack interest in a further study of American Indian folklore. Seizing upon this fact, Peggy Antrobus makes some observations in the following extract:

A study which so strongly suggests the USA's near kinship with the rest of humanity and points a steady finger toward the great brotherhood of mankind, and by which one is as forcibly impressed with the possible earnestness of life as seen through the teepee door! If it be true that much lies in the eye of the beholder, then in the American aborigine, as in any other race, sincerity of belief, though it were based upon mere optical illusion, demands a little respect. (12)

Antrobus's conclusion is that native Indians are much like other peoples. These stories are told around campfires, to the delight of young and old alike. The psychological effects of incidents and events that occur in the daily professional life of several characters are handled with delicate sense of care and prudence. Native inhabitants of Minneapolis will revel in this undertaking.

Bishal Basu says that Erdrich makes use of specific jargon words forcefully. Excessive use of words creates redundancy in Erdrich's narrative account. He makes the following revelation with respect to this aspect of *The Antelope's Wife*:

Words and of figures that are not really necessary are repeatedly used in the novel. *The Antelope's Wife* lacks inspiring moods and atmosphere. Escapist youths seek the serenity of manner. They seek relief from the dryness and dreariness of urban life. Whatever relief they get, it is relief procured at the cost of life. But here is effort to overcome such a crisis. (14)

Erdrich addresses the demands of common experience delicately. The aggression of experience and unconquerable passions of outlawed men enchant readers at large. For this purpose Erdrich is incredibly skillful.

Although all these critics have examined *The Antelope's Wife* in a various way, none of them dwelt upon the issue reclaiming Native American Identity. Erdrich has done her level best in preserving the oral tradition, native cultural ethos of Indians. By introducing a helpless Indian girl, Erdrich tries to portray every aspect of the uniqueness and exclusivity of Native American culture. From one large bunch of coarse weeds to another, she wound his way about the great plain. She lifts his foot lightly and places it gently forward like a wildcat prowling noiselessly through the thick grass. Her nearness to the distinct daily chores and free communal activities are themselves representative of how manages to get back her identity that was eclipsed through invasion and reservation life. She stopped a few steps away from a very large bunch of wild sage. From shoulder to shoulder she tilted his head. Still farther she bent from side to side, first low over one hip and then over the other.

Every Native American is concerned about our collective survival. They must acknowledge that sexism is a destructive force native life. It cannot be effectively addressed without an organized political movement to change consciousness, behavior and institutions. Native American cultures have all in various ways been influenced by the interrelationship between orality and literacy. This is obvious in societies where oral culture predominated in the pre-colonial period, as in the case of some African societies and in the indigenous cultures of all settler colonies.

Penelope Myrtle Kelsey's *Tribal Theory in Native American Literature* takes up the challenges proffered by these critics directly. He argues for a reading of Native texts that begins by recognizing their specific tribal referents, traditions, and

methodologies. Kelsey's study owes a strong debt to the earlier scholarship and its articulation of the need for an Indigenous criticism. Kelsey defines her purposes in this book as demonstrating how "Native American epistemologies and worldviews" (8) constitute a legitimate theoretical grounding for reading Native texts in culturally appropriate ways; establishing a "substantive connection between community perspectives and knowledge and critical practice" (9).

In an essay, "Godzilla versus Postcolonialism", Thomas King supports various aspect of native literature of Canada. He exposes critically "come of the limitations and short comings of post-colonial theory. Native people are those inhabitants of a land before the European settlers and colonizer come to colonize them. Native literature/indigenous literature are that sort of literature which was "created by the native people of particular culture and geography. Post colonialism is rooted in plenty of assumption" (78). King gives an example from his private life to tell how dreadful life is guided by assumption. According to king, post-colonial theory is based on the notion of progress (improvement) and emancipation. The followers of post-colonial theory believes that "primitivism gives way to sophistication, simplicity gives way to complexity and old yields to the new in parallel to the expansion of post colonialism" (76).

The present study analyzes the multifarious narrative techniques depicting essential aspects of the impossible reconciliation between two separate worlds represented by multiple voices: on the one hand, the strong traditional Native American threads and on the other hand, the weaker and weaker "civilized" Minneapolis' statement of the 1990s. Erdrich's contrast between the well-defined and pale utterances manages to bring into focus the tremendously rich heritage of the Native American civilization as it is presented in *The Antelope Wife*. The diverse

narrative structures constantly interweave, thus creating a complex vista of the contemporary American society.

The Antelope Wife is a hybrid piece of work in which Louise Erdrich blends poetry with short story fragments. The multiple tales stand for narrative threads which are interwoven by the multiple characters. Erdrich's main technique is that of weaving stories together using multiple narrators within the framework of a mythic landscape. Her characters are part of the landscape presented in her novel. The multiple tales are not necessarily presented in a chronological order. Louise Erdrich uses a wide range of narrative techniques. They are multiple narrative points of view, multiple tales, and the strategy of weaving stories together as well as multiple narrators. Erdrich's storytelling includes poetic rhythms as well as sensible images as poetry aims at connecting the written text to the oral tribal tradition. Thus her readers turn into a kind of listeners. The metaphor is highly used in Erdrich's fiction. The best examples might be the metaphors of beading and sewing, different tinges of color being blended, such colorful patterns being dyed on the Ojibwa quills. The novel is divided into four different parts, each part starting with the same recurrent motif. Part One, entitled Bayzhig, starts as follows:

Ever since the beginning these twins are sewing. One sews with light and one with dark. The first twin's beads are cut-glass whites and pales, and the other twin's beads are glittering deep red and blue-black indigo. They sew with a single sinew thread, in, out, fast and furious, each trying to set one more bead into the pattern than her sister, each trying to upset the balance of the world. (1)

Family stories repeat themselves in patterns and waves, generation to generation, across blood and time. Erdrich embroiders this theme in a sensuous novel that brings

her back to the material she knows best. The emotionally dislocated lives of Native Americans try to adhere to the tribal ways while yielding to the lure of the general culture. In a beautifully articulated tale of intertwined relationships among succeeding generations, she tells the story of the Roy and the Shawano families.

Narratology is the main theoretical tool used by the researcher in this study. Narratology is more than a theory. According to Werner Wolf, “It does qualify as a discipline. It has a defined object domain, explicit models and theories, a distinct descriptive terminology” (87). This terminology is transparent analytical procedures and the institutional infrastructure typical of disciplines. Narratology’s overriding concern remains with narrative representation as type, although it does not preclude the study of narrative tokens. Additional views of Werner are reflected in the following extract:

Defining narratology in positive terms may prove difficult. In the wake of the narrative turn, the application of narratological tools to extra-narratological research problems has become more widespread. However, in a theoretical perspective not every approach labeled narratological automatically constitutes a new narratology. While one subset of the new approaches comprises methodological variants others focus on thematic and ideology-critical concerns. (77)

A meta-narrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience. The prefix meta- means beyond and is here used to mean about, and narrative is a story constructed in a sequential fashion. Therefore, a meta-narrative is a story about a story, encompassing and explaining other little stories within totalizing schemes. Meta-narratives are not usually told outright, but are reinforced by other more specific narratives told within the culture.

Validity and reliability of narrative utterances are the issue of prime importance. Unreliable narrator interprets cases of conflicting and self-contradicting narration. He or she uses this category of narrator as an aesthetic device aimed at signaling the author's moral and normative distance. In this regard, it becomes necessary to introduce a second, more speculative concept, namely that of the implied author. The concept of unreliable narrator is not wholly dismissed in post-classical narratology. The controversy over the implied author's plausibility is still gaining ground. In addition to these stories, there are certain references to certain textual issues which need extensive analysis.

Fates are determined by a necklace of blue beads, a length of sweetheart calico and a recipe for blitzkuchen. Though the saga is animated by obsessional love, mysterious disappearances, mythic legends and personal frailties, Erdrich also works in a comic vein. There's a dog who tells dirty jokes and a naked wife whose anniversary surprise has an audience. Throughout, Erdrich emphasizes the paradoxes of everyday life. In each generation, men and women are bewitched by love, lust and longing. The following extract is expressive of some facts regarding narrative tempo of *The Antelope's Wife*:

The pattern glitters with cruelty. The blue beads are colored with fish blood, the reds with powdered heart. The beads collect in borders of mercy. The yellows are dyed with the ocher of silence. The design grows, the overlay deepens. The beavers have no other order at the heart of their being. Do you know that the beads are sewn onto the fabric of the earth with endless strands of human muscle, human sinew, and human hair? (73)

The narrators address directly the readers turning them into the listeners of the tale. Thus they are 'you', the style being colloquial. The intricate craft of Native American beadwork is the central metaphor upon which Erdrich strings her multiple, intertwined narratives. Women decide the most important things in life weaving the pattern of their existence.

The narrative begins like a fever dream with a U.S. cavalry attack on "an Ojibwa village, the death of an old woman who utters a fateful word, the inadvertent kidnapping of a baby and a mother's heartbreaking quest" (76). The descendants of the white soldier who takes the baby and of the bereaved Ojibwa mother are connected by a potent mix of tragedy, farce and mystical revelation. As time passes, there is another kidnapping, the death of a child and a suicide. Everything is all knotted up in a tangle. The following outline of part three of the narrative throws light on the unique sense of diversity of the narrative voice:

Sounding feather, great grandma of first Shawano, dyed her quills blue and green in a mixture of her own piss boiled with shavings of copper. No dye came out the same way twice. The final color resulted from what she ate, drank, what she did for sex, and what she said to her mother or her child the day before. When a smooth-talking trader abducts a beguilingly beautiful woman from a powwow and takes her with him to Minneapolis, a tremor is felt on the mythic seismograph, echoing the past and foreshadowing the future. (99)

The numberless color nuances on the Ojibwa quills represent the multicolored patterns of the Native American culture and existence. Many voices in these overlapping and interconnected stories, jumping in time and place from a cavalryman who bayonets an Indian woman and then saves an infant girl to a reservation dog who

avoids the soup pot and becomes a canine Greek chorus, but the axis around which the entire cast rotates is an event, not a person.

Admixture and syncretism begin to appear removing all the cultural contradictions and conflicts. There are various ways in which Indian identity has been defined. Some definitions seek universal applicability, while others only seek definitions for particular purposes. The individual seeks to have a personal identity that matches social and legal definitions, although perhaps any definition will fail to categorize correctly the identity of everyone. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, Thomas King says:

American Indians were perhaps clearly identifiable at the turn of the 20th century, but today the concept is contested. An Indian is an Indian regardless of the degree of Indian blood or which little government card they do or do not possess. Further, it is difficult to know what might be meant by any Native American racial identity. Race is a disputed term, but is often said to be a social (or political) rather than biological construct. American Indians have always had the theoretical option of removing themselves from a tribal community and becoming legally white. (56)

Language is also seen as an important part of identity, and learning Native languages, especially for youth in a community, is an important part in tribal survival. Some Indian artists find traditional definitions especially important. An Indian is one who offers tobacco to the ground, "feeds the water, and prays to the four winds in his own language. An Indian is someone who thinks of themselves as an Indian. But that's not so easy to do and one has to earn the entitlement somehow" (76).

The rich overlay of magic realism, but for those willing to slowly immerse themselves in this nonlinear world as one soaks in a hot bath, the rewards are many. The following extract starts with the same metaphor of beading:

The red beads weave hard to get and expensive, because their clear cranberry depth was attained only by the addition, to the liquid glass, of twenty-four-carat gold. Because she had to have them in the center of her design, the second twin gambled, lost, grew desperate, bet everything. At last, even the blankets of her children. (183)

Each part starts with a short introduction acting as connector, thus giving access to the tales told in that particular part. This novel includes interesting aspects from both the Native American tribal storytelling and the Western forms including German influences.

Erdrich uses an Anishinaabe worldview and an Ojibwa word, which turns into a recurrent motif: that is, *daashkikaa* meaning splitting apart or cracked apart, a split between cultures, identities as well as languages. Each part bears dual titles "the English version -Part One, Part Two, Part Three, Part Four and the Ojibwa variant - Bayzhig, Neej, Niswey, Neewin meaning one, two, three, and four in the Ojibwa language" (85). Thus, there is a split and a mixture of languages and cultures. The Ojibwa word *daashkikaa* refers to two different worlds which are fused in the present narrative pattern.

Survival has always been difficult and individuals have not been able to count on being successful in the search for game or other resources. Sharing among family members and gift-giving between groups of non-kin worked as a form of social insurance. Relatives had to work cooperatively in many economic pursuits. The common view "was that the natural resources belonged to all the people and

individuals were only entitled to use rights. Tribal resources, including income from tribally owned businesses are available to all" (22). The game animals and plant resources also allowed the indigenous peoples to participate in regional commerce from the time of contact with Europeans to the present.

Traditional subsistence activity is culturally associated with tribal sovereignty, and tribes own businesses, including fish processing plants. In *Godzilla versus Post-colonialism*, King adds:

Questions of identity are also some of the most important facing contemporary Indian nations and individuals. They are intimately woven into matters of nationhood, sovereignty, territorial integrity, treaty rights, and access to resources—not to mention the questions that issues of identity raise about personal and familial recognition.

(34)

Indian communities and individuals exercise in these matters. As indigenusness is far more than just ethnic difference, it requires a different kind of understanding than is typical in mainstream multiculturalism. Radical nativism is posited on a reassertion of the central place of kinship, reciprocity, responsibility, and spirituality within the intellectual frameworks of American Indian scholarship.

Anishinaabe worldview and a storytelling voice are used as a starting point for inventing her characters. Situated in contemporary Minneapolis, the narrative weaves a series of smaller narrative threads around three families, the Roys, the Shawanos, and the Whiteheart Beads. The narrative spans five generations from the 1880s to the 1990s. These interconnected stories also enable her to rewrite the popular Anglo-American genre of the captivity narrative by combining it with trickster discourse.

She begins with the story of Scranton Roy, a Calvary soldier who kills an old woman in a raid on an Ojibwa village and then captures and adopts her grandchild.

Years later, the child's mother kidnaps her back, but soon dies. The girl is adopted by a herd of antelope. One of her descendants is kidnapped, tied up, and taken back to the city by an Indian trader named Klaus Shawano who eventually releases her. The narrative opens up perspectives on a variety of ways of interpreting the past through stories that often cross boundaries between history and myth, and between indigenous trickster stories and Anglo-American stories of Indian captivity. Reflective readers will also be kept actively searching for better ways of negotiating our own, inevitably mixed relationships to the legacy of European colonization, wherever we find live on the globe.

The historical conditions that set the terms for the encounter between Scranton Roy with the young child he takes would presuppose that, as a white man fighting for the US government, he see her as a child of his enemy and fair game for capture and possession. But the reader quickly learns that his position is more complicated, more in keeping with the complex, comic way described by Meeker. First of all, Scranton Roy is from the state of Pennsylvania and has a Quaker father. The state of Pennsylvania was founded by Quaker William Penn in the 1680s, and governed by member of the Society of Friends, who by conviction is pacifists, for seventy years until the mid-1750s.

The question of Indian continuity rests firmly at the mercy of those with a vested interest. Regarding to the effect of colonial aggression, King makes the following claim in *Green Grass, Running Water*:

For many Native Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the transition from tribal sovereignty to government

dependency was harsh and dehumanizing. A pro-assimilation policy founded on bigotry and social Darwinism perpetuated a longstanding battle between indigenous tribes and the 'Great White Father' over the definition of their national identity. (88)

Some accepted the pressures of White society and replaced tribal traditions with the - White man's clothing, religion, professions, and often their names. Others rejected the prospect of assimilation outright, choosing instead to retreat further into their shrinking reservations, becoming a suppressed and impoverished refugee population in their own homeland. Yet evolving beyond the choices of resistance or acquiescence to White culture, another group of American Indians assimilated them into White society and preserved tribal identity through the competitive arena of American sports. e on their way to the establishment in society.

Scranton Roy is moved by the sight of another human being in pain. As he watches, a dog with a cradleboard and baby tied to its back runs from the site of the killing of her grandmother. This sight "spurs him to human response" and as a consequence he not only deserts the army, but also somehow produces his own milk to nurse the child. The child, in Scranton Roy's arms, "seizes him. Her suck was fierce. His whole body was astonished, most of the entire inoffensive nipple he'd never noticed or appreciated" (6). Ironically, what looks at first glance like a captivity narrative is transformed into a narrative that challenges not only the white/Indian polarity, but also assumptions about biological differences between men and women. This passage suggests that as soon as the child takes hold of Scranton Roy's nipples, she is the one who captures him.

Sacranton is confused, but the baby refuses to stop, until finally "it occurred to him one slow dusk as he looked down at her, upon his breast that she was teaching

him something” (7). The child has lost her mother, and needs a replacement for her; consequently Scranton Roy is transformed into her adopted parent and takes on the role of both father and mother, just as she becomes his adopted child. This sort of change is an extraordinary occurrence in the world of the novel, as it would be in the everyday world of the reader’s experience.

Many found themselves at government funded schools through the urgings of their parents, although government coercion often played a key role in the recruitment of resistant students. Addressing this phenomenon, King remarks:

The institutions modeled themselves after military schools, relying on rigid structure, discipline and the development of an education whose main objective was assimilation. Racial and ethnic identity is critical parts of the overall framework of individual and collective identity. For some especially visible and legally defined minority populations in the United States, racial and ethnic identity is manifested in very conscious ways. This manifestation is triggered most often by two conflicting social and cultural influences. (77)

Deep conscious immersion into cultural traditions and values through religious, familial, neighborhood, and educational communities instills a positive sense of ethnic identity and confidence. Individuals often must filter ethnic identity through negative treatment and media messages received from others because of their race and ethnicity.

It is the magnitude of the child’s need that allows for the breakdown of ordinary boundaries of gendered reality, and this need is understandable in the context of the loss of lands, language, and culture experienced by Native peoples during the nineteenth century struggle for control of the American plains. Erdrich’s suggestion

that individuals can assume new identities has precedents in historical accounts among Native peoples long before white contact. In Iroquois tradition, for example, taking captives in war was seen as a way of adding to the strength of a village.

Both Scranton Roy and the child assume new identities when they respond to their shared biological and emotional needs to survive. She figuratively adopts him as her lost parent, and he adopts her and names her Matilda, after the mother he left when he joined the Calvary (10). She is thus no longer an outside other but rather an inside link to his past. In a second incident involving captivity, the boundaries between humans and animals are similarly crossed. It is a dog that provides a link between the two narratives:

When Scranton Roy first nurses Matilda, he looks around, relieved to find that there was only a dog to witness his action. What he does not realize is that at the same time he is nursing the child, the child's mother is, somewhere else, being comforted in her grief over her lost daughter by another small dog, which she begins to nurse and keep alive. (12)

Dogs have a lower epistemological status than humans. But for many indigenous peoples, animals and humans have different yet equally valuable intelligences. In the novel, dogs are important agents of change, and they serve as doubles for absent humans. The dog nursed by Blue Prairie Woman, Matilda's mother, temporarily takes the place of her lost daughter, and it keeps nearby for as long as she searches for her child. It waits with her.

The little dog and the mother help each other survive until Blue Prairie woman finds her way to where Matilda is living with Scranton Roy. The following extract reveals core fact with regard to the multiple layers of meanings:

Matilda's response to her capture can be understood at several levels. She leaves a written account, in the form of a direct statement to her father and stepmother: She came for me. I went with her. At one level, this short note can be seen as an ironic commentary on the many first-person captivity narratives that became best sellers. This one seems strangely devoid of feeling, given the years of emotional attachment developed between Matilda and her adopted father. It upsets the reader's expectations for at least some kind of struggle, or at least questioning on Matilda's part. (16)

Matilda has learned the handwriting of her white father. She uses it to announce her departure from his world. Finally, however interdependent the identities of the Ojibway girl and her adopted white family have become, the narrator provides the reader with textual clues that make the departure credible. "Sorrow" is the name of the little dog her mother nursed in her own daughter's (Matilda) absence. It is during these years that Matilda is afflicted by an anxious sorrow which she senses but cannot rationally explain. Blue Prairie Woman becomes ill and dies soon after she kidnaps her daughter back, leaving her alone on the plains.

Narratology's overriding concern remains with narrative representation as type, although it does not preclude the study of narrative tokens. Defining narratology in positive terms may prove difficult. According to Schmid Wolf "In the wake of the narrative turn, the application of narratological tools to extra-narratological research problems has become more and more widespread"(43), resulting in a multitude of compound or hyphenated narratologies. However, in a theoretical perspective not every approach labeled narratological automatically constitutes a new narratology.

One subset of the new approaches comprises methodological variants. Others focus on thematic and ideology-critical.

Matilda's story does not end in tragic isolation. Rather, it signals a reconnection by way of Meeker's comic path to finding equilibrium in one's environment. She responds, not out of fear or desperation about being left alone without a father or mother, but rather out of curiosity about what elements in her immediate context might help her survive. Matilda finds herself surrounded by a herd of curious antelope that adopt her. Her descendants become the antelope people from which the book gets its title. The link between her and animal life continues through the five generations spanned in the novel.

Tales of humans going to live with animals, spirits, or with beings who waver between human and spirit forms are often the subject of tribal stories. Frequently these stories include the figure of the trickster. Trickster behavior is contradictory and ambiguous. Characterized by an exaggerated appetite for food, sex, and knowledge, he or she can be clever or foolish, tricky or tricked a spoiler or a benefactor. Although usually a solitary figure that lives on the margins of tribal society, the trickster is a powerful force for balance and survival of the community.

In one Anishinaabe tale, the trickster Nanaboozo is caught in a tree after a great flood and sends various animals diving into the water to bring up bits of earth to make the world habitable for humans. In other tales he transforms various body parts into food, or he invents a substitute tobacco. In a less flattering tale he breaks wind while sitting in church on Ascension Day. Mass has to be cancelled for a week until the building is aired out. In whatever form he or she appears, however, the trickster contributes to the overall wellbeing of the tribe.

Narration is defined as a “function or as a sum of introduction techniques that produces the fiction. It is fundamentally different from the utterance to which the historical narrative and natural narration belong” (Hamburger 71). It should be specified that in Käte Hamburger’s theory, the prototypical narrative is the third person narrative, traditionally referred to as omniscient. What Hamburger says is that “the supposed dissociation between the author and the narrator in this type of narrative could be more aptly described as the absence of a narrator” (77). The author is not a narrator. He does not recount in the usual sense. He uses the narrative function to constitute a fictive world, with fictive characters and events. Kate Hamburger postulates:

The merit of clearing away the epistemological surrounds the notion of the fictive narrator. Only in cases where the narrative poet actually does create a narrator, can one speak of the latter as a narrator. In her description of the first person narrative, the properties of the fictional narrative in general are defined by narratologists as adventure in the course of analysis. (54)

Designating work as narratological is dependent more on the academic discipline. It takes place than any theoretical position advanced. The approach is applicable to any narrative. Still the term narratology is most typically applied to literary theory and literary criticism as well as film theory. Atypical applications of narratological methodologies would include sociolinguistic studies of oral storytelling. And in conversation analysis or discourse that deal with narratives arising in the course of spontaneous verbal interaction.

Trickster characters in the novel perform the function of mediators who draw attention to, and respond to various interpretations of the captivity phenomenon.

Stories about kidnapping embrace tribal understandings of the world where it is important that balance be returned to the social fabric of a community. At the same time her text displaces the Euro-American captivity narrative with its polarized definitions of good and evil, insiders and outsiders. A third incident involving the taking of captives in *The Antelope Wife* occurs in the 1990s, over a hundred years after the story of Matilda Roy's adoptions by Scranton Roy and the antelope people. The following extract is illustrative of how divergent narrative modes and methods conflate so as to give rise to negotiating voice:

Klaus Shawano, an Indian trader, meets a woman and her three daughters on a reservation in Elmo, Minnesota. He falls in love with her, and against the advice of a wise old man named Jimmy Badger who warns him against interfering with the "antelope people" to whom she belongs, he decides to kidnap her and bring her back to the city to be his wife. With excess food, jokes, and talk, he tries to seduce her and her daughters as he shows them his large stash of baked beans, corn, and fry bread, molasses cookies, and prepares heaped plates of food for them to eat. (127)

When Jimmy Badger finally manages to lure her into his van and drives away, he observes, "she is confused by the way I want her" (28). This reaction reminds the reader of Scranton Roy's confusion about the way Matilda wanted him. But where Scranton Roy was transformed by Matilda Roy, *The Antelope Wife* remains distinctly who she already is, and continues to look for a means of escape. To keep her with him, Klaus has to tie her up with yards of calico, which he uses both to bandage her cuts, and also to restrain her.

Narratology is no longer a single theory, but rather comprises a group of related theories. This has motivated some to conclude that narratology is in fact a textual theory whose scope extends beyond narratives and to claim that none of the distinctions introduced by narratology to text theory is specific to any genre. However, contemporary postclassical narratology cannot be reduced to a text theory, either. Wermer Wolf produces the following remarks which sound pertinent for the purpose of analysis:

Over the past twenty years, narratologists have paid increasing attention to the historicity and conceptuality of modes of narrative representation as well as to its pragmatic function across various media, while research into narrative universals has been extended to cover narrative's cognitive and epistemological functions. Against this background, two questions deserve particular attention. (81)

Narratology is more than a theory. It may not have lived up to the scientific pretension expressed in its invocation as a new science of narrative. It does qualify as a discipline. It has a defined object domain, explicit models and theories. It also includes a distinct descriptive terminology, transparent analytical procedures. Its domain consists of the institutional infrastructure typical of disciplines. Some of these disciplines are official organizations; specialized knowledge resources.

This includes one strip put gently across her bleeding mouth. The name he gives her, Sweetheart Calico, alludes to her captive state and her inability to talk. In a reversal of the conventional captivity formula, she cannot speak in the beginning, and won't, later in the novel. Klaus has less control over her than he or the readers might have assumed:

At night, she remembered running beside her mother. Klaus never dreamed about or remembered. He was just the one she was tied to, who brought her here. Still, no matter how fast or far she walked she couldn't get out of the city. While at first it might seem to the other characters that she doesn't know how to deal with her situation, she does in fact have some covert trickster strategies at her disposal. What she does is to set in motion a larger process of displacement, which eventually restores balance to the lives of some of the other characters, including Klaus. (176)

It has implications for the characters including Klaus, and also for Cally as a narrator of the novel. The narrator in the opening chapters of the novel about Scranton Roy does not identify who she is. Scranton Roy's story, the narrator tells the reader, "lives on, though fading in the larger memory, and I relate it here in order that it not be lost" (4). The process of changing the shape of things is thus about changing the shape of the conventional white captivity narrative, and breaking down some of the perceived oppositions between whites and Indians, and men and women. Equally important, the story of Klaus's wife as the Antelope Wife suggests that particular elements of indigenous memory cannot be translated into forms understandable within Western frameworks.

A philosophically more concise contribution to narrative theory was Hamburger. He wrote a book which explored the semantics and pragmatics of literary communication, and in particular the specific logic of the use of temporal and personal deixis under the conditions of fictional reference. Hamburger pointed out that "neither the subject of an utterance nor the utterance's temporal location and reference can be adequately inferred from the words and sentences of a literary

narrative” (41). Literature overwrites the rules and conventions of everyday language use with its own logic.

The trickster discourse represented by Sweetheart Calico is about mediation in a different sense. Mediation in the context of writing by indigenous authors "does not mean compromise and reconciliation as it is often to mean in Western cultural contexts. Rather it is a continuing process of the mind, not a transitional step toward some conclusion” (145). The trickster represents a powerful force of vitality, adaptability, and continuance.

There are several other instances in *The Antelope Wife* in which characters are described as having an insatiable or aggressive hunger for something. Matilda “sucked so blindly, so forcefully, and with such immense faith” (7) at Roy’s nipple that it is certainly possible to see her as a windigo, as a product of her real parents, Blue Prairie Woman and the windigo Shawano. Blue Prairie Woman herself, according to Cally, “was a peculiar girl known for her tremendous appetite though she stayed thin as a handful of twigs” (55). Before she was called Blue Prairie Woman, her name was Apijigo Bakaday, So Hungry. The other people in her village suspected Apijigo of windigo or cannibalistic behavior.

The thoughts of these villagers are narrated in a sort of imagined direct speech, as if this is what they were actually thinking “she’s cooking out there. Wonder what she’s making? Wonder if a little child disappeared, we would find it in the cooking pot?” (56). Klaus Shawano justifies his kidnapping of Sweetheart Calico by claiming that she dragged him in. She forced him to abduct her, but he realizes immediately afterwards that he is simply “excusing his trapper’s appetite” (155). Klaus’s desire for the antelope woman is described as a hunger, and the desire to satisfy this hunger leads to violent behavior. Through Blue Prairie Woman’s husband, the Shawano

family is not only descended of windigos, but also of the Deer People. There is a strong connection between the windigo and the Deer People in *The Antelope Wife*.

Deer sausages sizzled in light gold fat. On the one hand it would seem that the most recent generations of the Shawano family disassociate themselves from their deer heritage, as it does not strike these part-deer people as odd to eat deer meat. On the other hand, they might be fully aware of their deer heritage but seem to the reader to be unaware of it because it is normal for them, as windigos, to eat deer meat. The latter would imply that they tacitly embrace their windigo nature.

The boundaries that delineate what a ‘person’ is are complicated by the phenomenon of twins. In *The Antelope Wife* there are four generations of twins which are all connected to one another. Sometimes it is difficult for the characters and for the readers to distinguish one twin from the other. This is especially the case with Mary and Zosie, Cally’s grandmothers. In Chapter 11 the narrator, Cally, says that “because they are twins, they share the grandmahood – my mother’s mothers refuse to admit who is the actual mother. In truth it should hardly matter, they’re so alike” (109). Mary and Zosie both occupy the same identity, that of Rozin’s mother, i.e. Cally’s grandmother. Through their likeness and the fact that they both assume ‘grandmahood’ of Cally, Erdrich raises the question whether Mary and Zosie can still be regarded as two distinct persons, or whether they as individuals are less person than non-twins. In other words, Erdrich examines whether twins might be two materializations of one and the same identity.

Mary and Zosie’s sameness and co-identity is an important motif within the whole novel, especially in the subchapters titled Windigo Story I, II and III. In these parts, Mary and Zosie’s husband, Augustus Roy, is driven crazy by his wives because he cannot tell them apart. He says “Augustus had fallen in love with the enigma of his

wife's duplication" (209). The word 'duplication' stands out because it is usually found in the biological context of gene duplication. The use of this word has as an effect the impression that Mary and Zosie's splitting into two entities is the result of a biological process. The following extract throws light on the notion of conflation of narrative parts and the emergence of a syncretic nature of identity of Native American:

The confusion of sameness between the twins made him tremble like an animal caught in a field of tension. The word 'sameness' suggests Mary and Zosie's status as a doubled person, while 'confusion' indicates that this status is difficult to bear. Sitting at the table, he'd feel the current of their likeness. Things even they did not notice. Mary pricked herself. Zosie muttered owah! Zosie started a legging and Mary without even trying to copy constructed another of an identical design. They got hungry at exactly the same time, ate precisely the same amount of the same food. (167)

Mary and Zosie's personhoods have become entwined to such an extent that they feel each other's pain and hunger. This confusion of personhoods leads to Augustus displaying windigo behavior, as he bites off Zosie's ear lobe during sex. It is as if coexistence or marriage with a doubled person is too much for one person to bear and leads that person to exhibit other-than-human behavior. If only one twin remains, then there are two possible implications.

The question of the validity and reliability of narrative utterances was again raised by Booth from a rhetorical and ethical perspective. He introduced the concept of unreliable narrator, interpreting cases of conflicting and self-contradicting narration as an aesthetic device aimed at signaling the author's moral and normative distance

from his narrator. However, the way in which Wayne Booth constructed his argument made it necessary to introduce a second, more speculative concept, namely that of the implied author. The concept of unreliable narrator has become more accepted in post-classical narratology. Booth remarks:

From 1966 to 1972, narratology focused mainly on the former. At the most abstract level, the semiotician Greimas concentrated on the elementary structure of signification. Greimas proposed a deep-level model of signification termed the semiotic square, which represents the semiotic infrastructure of all signifying systems. The mapping of this universal deep structure onto a given narrative's surface structure can then be explained in terms of transformational rules. Finally, a typology of six functional roles attributable to characters complements.

(73)

This narrative syntax operates on the abstract level of a narrative langue. Instead of accounting only for the manifest sequence of events represented in a given fictional world, this grammar also included the logic of virtual action sequences. It explored the logic of represented action from yet another angle, modeling it as a series of binary choices in which an eventuality results in action or in non-action.

Twin is not whole and does not possess full personhood. It implies that it is through the death of the twin that the surviving twin is finally capable of adopting the personhood. It was once divided between the two of them. The latter implication could apply to Cally, whose twin sister Deanna dies when they are mere children. This death brings forth a change in Rozin's parenting style. The following extract makes succinct observation with respect to the subtlety of Mary-Zosie relation:

Rozin is confused with the sorrow over her one twin into lack of care for her other one. She lets Cally run wild and shrugs when they tell her, saying, what good all my worry did for Deanna? Just cut into her good-time fun, her pleasure in life. Now Cally, she can have all the fun she wants. . This freedom and her parents' grief and disorientation are arguably the things that lead to Cally's quest for identity and self-knowledge throughout the rest of the novel, when she is older. (159)

Considering the first possibility, Deanna's death does not entail substantial consequences for Cally's personhood. In the case of the second possibility, Deanna's death suggests the insufficiency or incompleteness of Cally's personhood. On the other hand, the possibility must not be neglected that the opposite is actually the case. Cally might be a supplement to Deanna's personhood. In this case, Cally's personhood can only be intact after Deanna's demise if the supplement is capable of existing on its own.

To sum up, good stories like the ones told by Erdrich's narrator in *The Antelope Wife* are a continuing menace to grand narratives such as manifest destiny and popular forms such as the captivity narrative. They hook the reader with their new twist on the familiar. Plenty of disparate and divergent voices are blended and then a sort of negotiation is actualized in this narrative.

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