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**LAND, IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY IN LOUISE
ERDRICH’S *LOVE MEDICINE* AND *FOUR SOULS***

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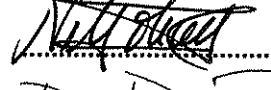
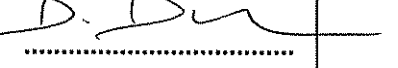
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İmza

ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Louise Erdrich'in *Love Medicine* ve *Four Souls* Eserlerindeki Yer,

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Amerikan yerlilerinin farklılık gösteren kültürleri dinsel dünya görüşleri tarafından şekillendirilir. Dünya görüşleri evreni bir bütün olarak algılamalarını sağlar. Bu yerli değerleri içerisinde, toplum önemli bir rol oynar ve yerliler ev, toprak ve din dahil olmak üzere herşeyi toplumun temel ögesi olarak anlamlandırır. Bir melez olan Louise Erdrich, eserlerinde bu dünya görüşlerinden özellikle Ojibwe kültüründen yararlanır. Romanlarında okuyucu, kendini sürekli devam emekte olan bir hikaye döngüsü içerisinde bulur ve bunu yaşar. Bütün romanları yerli halkların hayatlarını, onların dinsel, toplumsal ve toprak kökenli kimliklenmelerini anlatan sözlü anlatımlar gibidir.

Bu tez Erdrich'in iki romanı, *Love Medicine* ve *Four Souls*'da toplumun karakterleri bir arada tutan bağlayıcı bir faktör olmasını ve onlara iyileşme ve hayatta kalma gücünü vermesini ele almaktadır. Toplum o kadar önemlidir ki toplumdan ve de aileden ayrılan ana karakterleri çöküşe sürükler. Her kim topraklarından ayrılarak toplumuyla ve ailesiyle bağlarını koparırsa, kişisel, kültürel ve manevi çöküşle karşılaşır. Bu terk edilmiş karakterleri tamamen farklı kişiliklere dönüştürür. Bireyin toplumdan ve evinden ayrılması yabancılaşmayla sonuçlanır ve onu engellenemeyen trajik bir kadere doğru sürükler. Her iki romanın da ana karakterleri, sonunda toplumlarından ayrılırlar ve bu karakterler ya ölümler ya da kültürel açıdan kaybolmuş bireyler olarak topraklarına dönerek ağır bedeller öderler. Bu nedenle Erdrich'in

romanlarında aile ve toprak bağıllığı mutluluğu sürdürmenin en önemli değeridir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toprak, Kızıldereli Dünya Görüşleri, Yerli Kimlik Anlayışı, Toplumsal Kimlik, Yok Olma ve Kültürel Çöküş.

ABSTRACT

Master's Thesis

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Land, Identity and Community in Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*

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The diverse cultures of many American Indian tribes are shaped by their religious worldviews. Their worldviews enable them to understand the world as a whole. Among the indigenous values, community plays an important role and American Indians try to understand everything, including spirituality, land commitment and home as one of the basic units of community. Being a mixed-blood, from a French-Ojibwe mother and a German father, Louise Erdrich makes use of these indigenous worldviews especially Ojibwe culture in her writings. In her novels, readers can experience and find themselves in an ongoing process of storytelling. For all her novels are like oral narratives that recount native peoples' lives, their spiritual, communal and land-based identifications.

This dissertation deals with Erdrich's two novels, *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*, since in both novels community becomes the binding factor that holds characters together and gives them the power to heal and survive. Community is so crucial that leaving family and community destroys the female protagonists of both novels. Whoever breaks bonds with the community and family by leaving the land, encounters spiritual, cultural and personal decimation. Leaving home and land transforms characters into different personalities. The separation of the individual from her home and community results in estrangement and leads her to an irreversible tragic fate. The protagonists of both novels eventually become separated from their

communities and pay severe prices either by dying or returning as culturally lost personas. Consequently, in Erdrich's fictions family and land commitment become the most crucial values in the perseverance of well-being.

Key Words: Land Commitment, Indigenous Worldviews, Balance and Healing American Indian Communal Identities, Decimation

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MEDICINE AND FOUR SOULS**

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ABBREVIATIONS

LM *Love Medicine*

FS *Four Souls*

INTRODUCTION

Due to her mixed-blood identity, which is composed of Chippewa and German-American roots, Louise Erdrich has been one of the most appealing American Indian novelists. Creating a totally different and experimental writing style that “def[ies] our stereotypes of what Indian writing should be like” (Van Dyke, 68), she has contributed greatly to the development of American Indian literature. Throughout her novels, Erdrich explores American Indian themes with characters that embody and represent her mixed-blood culture and identity. As one critic notes, Erdrich succeeds to write her Chippewan experiences by combining her European and Native American side.

She is also considered as one of the most important and intriguing American Indian novelists on account of her storytelling technique. This ability is derived from her intense knowledge of Chippewa mythologies and traditions. Erdrich always mentions the importance and effects of her grandmother and father’s stories on her works. “In Erdrich’s fiction relationships are shaped by the storytelling process” (Stokes, 102) and this process provides all necessary information about the characters. Characters are always in the midst of telling their stories about other people. This is the reflection of oral tradition which is found in native ways of teaching. Stories are told within stories with different versions and the reader takes a place as the listener and commenter of these stories. That’s why, characters’ “relationships include the novelist’s relationship with the reader, linking past and present generations of Anishinabe storytellers, Erdrich among them, with novel readers of the present and future” (Stokes, 102). Throughout her novels, there is an ongoing interaction between the writer, the reader and the characters as storytellers.

Because of her storytelling technique, Erdrich uses first person narration. The characters’ opinions and personal experiences are crucial and necessary in forming these stories. These stories told by different narrators do not totally reflect reality. The reality is always changing according to the storyteller; so there is not only one version of the stories but multiplied versions of them.

Indian characters in her novels confront difficulties in holding onto their lands. Their leaving the reservation in order to grasp better opportunities always ends in despair. These attempts always end in despair. They also have trouble about whether devoting themselves to their indigenous cultures or mixing them with white American culture. Such dilemmas are pervasive throughout the novels.

Love Medicine, with a series of interrelated stories, reveals the lives of American Indian families facing lots of spiritual dilemmas and cultural tensions because of colonization, poverty, alcoholism, and gambling. However, as a major theme *Love Medicine* revolves around the importance of family and interconnectedness.

Erdrich examines familial relationships of mainly two connected families- the Kashpaws and the Morrisseys- and also their external relations with the white-Americans. The reader encounters their experiences on and off the reservation. After all, as Louis Owens remarks, she presents native people who are on the verge of destruction because of the internalized colonialism and racism. However, she breaks some traditions in explaining the natives' problems by giving them chances to recover.

The nature of Erdrich's writing again includes first person narrations, episodic structure with matching intertwined stories and non-chronological series of events. It would be true to say that some scholars criticize Erdrich's narrative style which has "extreme cases of code conflict" and "frustration of narrativity" (Rainwater, 1990; 406). Needless to say, Erdrich organizes her fictions overwhelmingly in her experimental style and as Hertha D. Wong concludes that "[a]lthough each of the short stories in *Love Medicine* is inextricably interrelated to a network of other stories beyond its covers, the sequence of stories within the book has its own coherence, just as each story has its own integrity" (89).

Her novel *Four Souls* also uses storytelling as a narrative device to describe its major characters' journeys. It is the continuing story of *Tracks*, tells about Fleur's quest for repossessing her stolen land by taking revenge from people who wronged her. Besides Fleur's revenge story, the challenges faced by Chippewa people are also told. The stories are by mainly three narrators who are Nanapush, Polly Elizabeth Gheen and Margaret. The reader listens to them telling stories about Fleur and her

cultural and spiritual decimation. This destruction is epitomized in the exemplary of John James Mauser who is the white agent usurping native people's lands in order to profit from them.

In the light of colonization, home description becomes prominent. Fleur's home on the reservation is compared to Mauser's mansion which was built on the sacred land of Fleur's tribe. Mauser's stealing her land from Fleur's people is the urge which sets Fleur in motion. However, this breaks down the sacred cycle of community and more specifically family and causes her downfall. In her track of taking revenge from Mauser, she undergoes a transformation in Mauser's house. During her stay at the mansion, her revenge turns into compassion. . This experience proves to generate exactly the opposite intentions which Fleur used to have in the beginning. She is perplexed by events in Mauser's home and then decides to leave his home along with a mixed-blood son. With the help of Nanapush and Margaret, Fleur finds her true past and regains her tribal identity through a ceremony held by Margaret. In this ceremony, in order to help Fleur, Margaret uses her medicine dress and it solidifies the significance of indigenous worldviews and healing through them. As Heller McAlpin explains in *the San Francisco Chronicle*, "Fleur's story dramatized the tragedy of the Ojibwe in the early twentieth century; as many went from being land-based people to landless acquirers snared by alcohol and legal loopholes".

In the first chapter, American Indian indigenous worldview is introduced since it is what shapes Louise Erdrich's themes. While examining American Indian worldview, one can notice its diversity. That is to say, their worldview is enriched by spiritual well being, religious and communal beliefs. Taking this into consideration, the comparison of American Indian and Western culture is carried out in order to shed light on the differences between them.

Western and Native American approach to conceiving the world is entirely different. American Indians view the world in holistic terms by combining all the components of life without separating them as living and non-living things. Even it goes further by assembling a spirit for each inanimate thing. Within holistic conception of the world, all relations are equally sacred and they should also be reciprocal. The western way of understanding the world, however, is based on

separations. These separations are called binary oppositions and date back to ancient Greek and Roman times. It is through these binary oppositions that westerners formulate their identities.

In view of holistic worldview, harmony and balance are examined as one of the permeating elements into their worldview. All things created by the Mother Earth exist in harmony with each other. They are created in tune with all other beings including people, animals, plants and non-living things all together. Moreover, their balance is well established. On the other hand, if this balance is ever shaken, chaos will prevail and life will probably come to an end.

In such a holistic worldview time is perceived in cyclic patterns. American Indians do not follow the mechanical time to plan their lives and activities; rather they do such things in cyclic terms of nature. At this point, the difference between the native and the white is again noted. American Indians do not view time as something which can be adjusted or wasted, whereas western culture takes time in linear fashion.

Within the same framework of indigenous worldview, in the second part of the first chapter, I mention about its other components. The role of spirituality is explained in terms of religious beliefs of native people. Indigenous people do not understand and perform religion in the same manner westerners do. Spirituality is acknowledged as the natural element of life. Rather than worshipping God and his holy book, they pay respect to Mother Earth and her Great Spirit.

The other influential element in their worldview is the value of community. The value of community is examined through the different meanings it holds in Western and Indian life. Rugged individualism is taken as the sole defining virtue for white-Americans. It allows people to stand life alone, without the need of family or community. However, to American Indians, individualism and as a result of it progress do not denote the same meanings. Whenever people are alone and cling to American individualism, they should be ready to encounter the devastating consequences. That is to say individualism would be a disadvantage for the indigenous people. This is the very case happening to the characters in the novels- *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*. With the implications of community, the importance of family is discussed. Also, to form a communal identity, which is the preferred one

in native tribes, land commitment is also another value people should sustain. As long as they remain loyal to their communal identities and stay on their lands, they are sure to survive.

In the second chapter, the influence of contemporary American values is introduced. It is related to the colonial acts of white people. The nature of two cultures is obviously different. For Native Americans “the worldview is one that involves an understanding of the wholeness of the existence” (Lovern, 14). That’s why, American Indians have undergone the devastating effects of colonialism which was formerly planned to assimilate them. By deceiving native tribes one after the other, white-Americans forced them to the reservations. The reservations have become the new living areas for Native Americans since then. My aim of examining the history of colonialism and situation on reservations is to elucidate the background of the characters in the novels and also Erdrich. As backbones of the novels; indigenous worldview with its components and the results of internal colonization are used.

Next chapter is the application of these worldviews, more specifically family and land concepts to Erdrich’s two novels; *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*. In addition, a short biography of Erdrich is added for a better understanding of the state of in-betweenness which is shared by some of the characters in the novels. Acknowledging Erdrich’s mixed-blood identity, this last part analyzes the connection of home and family to survive and also how they are intertwined. Although some of the traditional Indian writers comment on Erdrich that she does not reflect her native side, this thesis attempts to show that it is not true. The most pivotal elements are community and family. Without a family, an American Indian cannot survive. It is more difficult if one is away from her/his land as in the case of June and Fleur. At the end of their analysis, spiritual and cultural destructions are seen because of their leaving homes and not having families. Finally some chances occur for June and Fleur to make them return home but it is not so easy. That’s why their efforts to return in order to survive result in failure. This is mainly because they are lonely individuals removed away from their land. Finally, land is presented as one of the key sources of survival which gains meaning only when seen as an integral part of the communal cycle.

CHAPTER ONE

AMERICAN INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEW

1.1. American Indian Worldviews

1.1.1. Holistic Worldview

American Indian cultures are closely related to their worldviews. Although there are many different native tribes and lots of cultures, some of the basic cultural values and understandings are the same in every tribe. While the creation stories change from tribe to tribe, culturally shared symbols and meanings show some similarities. When American Indian worldview is scrutinized closely, the components that make each tribe unique come to the fore. For it is their worldview that shape their spiritual well being, religious and communal beliefs. All of these elements are equally important.

American Indian worldview can be well understood when it is compared to Western culture. It stands in contrast to the Western way of seeing and experiencing the world. One of the major differences between the Native American and the White man is that they see and comprehend the world from different perspectives. Their approach to the world is completely different. While American Indian values are representative of a holistic worldview which means “including all forms of life as a whole” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 280), Euro-American worldview is one of oppositions and demarcations.

A holistic worldview apprehends everything as an organic whole and celebrates the wholeness of the universe. The key principle of holistic worldview is the interdependent relationship to others. It regards this relationship as sacred. Human beings are related to each other, to other beings and to the nature. All lives are integrated. Here, people learn to be selfless and they see life as an integrated whole. Holistic thinking can be identified by reciprocal and respective relationships among all beings which is also responsible for nature. In his book *How to Take Part in Lakota Ceremonies*, William Stolzman explains that American Indians “have a

holistic worldview which brings together everything material and non-material, ordinary and wakan to work toward a particular beneficial result” (qtd in McGaa, 2004; 277). This beneficial result symbolizes living together with all beings. People search for good lives for themselves as much as for the other entities. In other words, they wish comfortable and prosperous lives for all since they believe in living together for the betterment of all. In addition, holistic worldviews are important “because they underpin cultural well-being and survival” (Cheung, 2).

Only when men include all properties of the world together, then can we grasp the exact meaning of it. There is neither distinction nor separation between the physical and spiritual worlds since all beings of earth are sacred. As Silko points out “No part of the earth is expendable; the earth is a whole that cannot be fragmented...” (94).

In contrast to the indivisibility and unity of “all” in the American Indian worldview, Western thinking is based on oppositions and demarcations. Rather than embracing all entities; it separates them. These demarcations are the natural outcomes of the binary thinking embedded in Western philosophy and thinking. Since the time of classical Greeks and Romans, Western world has had dichotomies as male/female, we/they, nature/culture and civilized/savage. The characteristic of such dualities is definite. One side of the dichotomy has always been viewed as better and more superior than the other. The superior side has “the incapacity to respect and tolerate those who are different” (Deloria Jr., 2003; viii). That’s why binary oppositions are elements in which one side is always more powerful than the other. In this way, they create a worldview by separating the entities from one another. In this “othering” process, the superior one has positive and benevolent aspects while the other has negative and malignant ones. They define themselves through the other. If the other does not exist, they cannot exist, either. By describing themselves superior and different from the others, the Westerners have a very limited thinking of the world as a whole. It is “more materialistic philosophy, by contrast, [is] more likely to approve of enlightened self-interest” (DeTar, 10). That’s why; people are more selfish, dominant and greedier. When we take American Indians into consideration, they are the inferior ones. Euro-Americans have always corrupted the natives by prejudices.

“The white man’s religion and social status were always so superior that he could not summon the courage to reflect praise, awe, or outright preference for anything outside his own culture” (McGaa, 2004; 144).

Intolerance and prejudices are apparent. In contrast, Native American vision is based on humility and respect for all things, living or non-living. Thus, here we can state that the American Indian worldview is apparently a Non-Western perspective. When examined in respect of natural unity and universal interconnectedness, these two worldviews, e.g. American Indian and Western worldviews stand in stark opposition.

1.1.2. Harmony and Balance

Another American Indian worldview that is shared by all the native tribes is the importance of harmony and balance in individual lives. American Indian philosophies believe that wellness of every thing depends on living in harmony with all beings including people, animals, plants and inanimate things. The Mother Creator has created all creatures as equals existing in harmony. All tribal people suppose that if this harmony was ever shaken, all life would be chaotic and would come to an end. That’s why “All things as they were created exist already in harmony with one another as long as we do not disturb them.” (Silko, 64). When there have been bad things occurring mainly because of human beings, especially old people have their own explanation and warnings. “According to the elders, destruction of any part of the earth does immediate harm to all living things” (Silko, 131). So people should live in harmony, in tune with everything. We already know that “Native Americans had a very well structured society in which everyone’s role and place was well defined” (Duran, 44). Thus, all of their systems and life styles support this holistic world view.

Living in harmony also brings about the balance in life which is inseparable from each other. You have to be in agreement with the Great Spirit and all things around you in order to maintain the balance. Only after you achieve this harmony and balance, can you also have an accordant agreement between self and the world.

After all, the purpose of American Indian world view and spiritual life is to live in harmony with the universe by respecting all kinds of creation.

1.1.3. Cyclic Patterns of Life

Another key element of American Indian worldview is the cycle. Lots of things like agriculture, hunting and migration are done with cyclic based rules. The cycle can be used to give meaning to people themselves, to their tribes, to the universe and eventually to their personal part in them. Everything important is done in a circle. And, “The circle or sacred hoop is a symbolic form revered in almost every Native American tradition” (Lane, 47).

The cycle also symbolizes American Indian life span. “The circle has no beginning and no end. It thus is frequently used to represent life- the circle of life” (Fixico, 39). Death is only another rebirth and life restarts within this cycle. The human beings are also in this cycle, because many native people believe that they come from the Mother Earth and they will return to this sacred being in the end to restart the life maybe in different shapes. As Ed McGaa sets forth “We do know that everything the Great Mystery makes is in the form of a circle. Our Mother Earth is a very large, powerful circle. Therefore, [he concludes] that our life does not end. A part of it is within the great eternal circle” (1990; 207). Since this cycle neither has a beginning nor an end, there is also “no hierarchy in the cultural context” (Kidwell, 2001; 50). This cultural context stands for all created beings, alive or inanimate. Moreover, in accordance with the holism, “all createds participate together, each in their own way, to preserve the wholeness of the circle” (Kidwell, 2001; 50). What is more, the cycle symbolizes being together and cohesion among tribes from this perspective.

Time is also considered by American Indians as cyclic. Time as a concept, is not linear like in Western thinking. American Indians organize their lives according to the cycles of nature. There is no quantitative conceptualization of time like in Western culture. “To the Native American an event begins when it is appropriate” (Townsend, 2). People do not wait for the right time to act or do something. They make decisions at the right moments when nature presents them. The present time is

valuable. Many native languages do not have words or symbols that stand for time and they refuse “to use time as the determining factor when trying to understand their experiences” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 135).

Moreover, from the religious point of view, most of the Christian values uphold the belief of after-life as one of the most determining factors. People have to live for the after life and should look beyond the real life. Again they have separations of lives. On the other hand, American Indians do not separate the life span- since it is a cycle. The cycle is the only symbol of life which is always ongoing. That’s why they live in accordance with cyclic time. They follow nature and its seasonal changes while they are shaping their lives since in the native world, things happen when the time comes or when they are ready to occur. Time is very flexible and not structured in the way done in modern way of timing. Structuring and arranging time is only the practice of modern society. However, American Indians adapt to nature’s cycles for putting the events together. Nature always regenerates and repeats itself. It is similar to Ed McGaa’s idea which states nature with its seasonal parade of events, as both repetitive and consistent (2004; 2-3). Like nature, everything in life repeats itself, so we cannot limit these changes in a specific time. It is imperceptible for native people since they can determine our life easily with cyclic time which is found in nature.

In American Indian communities, “...human beings are simply part of the ongoing process of repetition of events in the environment- hunting seasons, agricultural cycles. What is important is that these events reoccur on a regular basis” (Kidwell, 2001; 13-14). So by following these regular principles of nature which constitutes the cyclic time, they shape and lead a more meaningful life which is exactly in agreement with their worldviews. In other words, time is not a thing which is created or lost; but in its cycles it repeats itself in natural forms.

1. 2. The Role of Spirituality

1. 2. 1. American Indian Religious Beliefs

American Indian lives are greatly shaped by their religious beliefs. Their religious beliefs are encircled by their cultural understanding of spirituality. Religious opinions which can be interchangeable with spirituality are integrated in every part of American Indians' social and cultural life. Spirituality is acknowledged as the natural element of everything. Many supporters of indigenous sacred beliefs do not view their spiritual beliefs and rituals as a religion in the way most people do. So "there are some fundamental distinctions that set American Indian cultures and religious traditions (in all of their diversity) quite apart from European and Amer-European cultures and religion" (Kidwell, 2001; 11). Rather religion and religious activities are a way of life and included in every act of human beings. They are organized as a natural part of life, because spirituality is an accessible thing integrated to people's lives since their birth. Like Sachem Walkingfox states:

"Spirituality is not a religion to American Natives. Religion is not a native concept; it is a non native word, with implications of things that often end badly, like Holy wars in the name of individual's God's and so on. Native people do not ask what religion another Native is, because they already know the answer. To Native people, spirituality is about the Creator...."

Natives' religion is characterized by a creator known as the Great Spirit, this is a creator who is responsible for the creation of the world and is revered in religious ceremonies. Activating one's spirituality teaches a person her/his indigenous culture, socially proper behaviors and commitment to the tribe. As understood from this information, there are not any written holy texts, but myths passed on by oral tradition. That's why one of the main themes of American Indian spirituality is respecting the Great Spirit.

In relation again with the Great Spirit, in the traditional American Indian worldview; "the spirit world is the source of special insight and power" (Ruppert, qtd in Wong, 74). That's why both living and non-living beings can be together in life. These non-living beings include dead-returning to life in animals' shapes, ghosts or

spectrums. Especially, “The old Indians definitely believed that a Spirit World exists” because they can see the evidence of it in nature through their ceremonies (McGaa, 2004; 35).

On the other hand, conventional Christian thought does not view ghosts or illusions as real. They do not have this power of performing and experiencing such ceremonies. Thus, they are separated from Nature and perform their religion in confined man-made spaces following some rigid rules and regulations. Their relationship to God is via some personal gains. They simply commit a sin and ask for forgiveness. This is just like mutual interests in trading. Returning to life after death is up to some religious standards and only special for divine beings. Unlike in the Christian worldview, spiritual world is attainable in American Indian worldview. The Great Spirit is the most sacred of all, and human beings can reach the spirit by their own intrinsic powers. Moreover, to live a proper life thoroughly, there must be a kind of reciprocal “relationships between human beings and spiritual powers that activate the world” (Ruppert, qtd in Wong, 70).

1.2.1.1. The Importance of Nature

The other origin of their spirituality is closely related to nature. They “f[or]m themselves constantly dependant on their natural environment” (Fixico, 34). Everything they need is found in the natural world. Thus, it “provides for all aspects of people’s lives such that their religions, philosophies...” (Fixico, 34). Therefore, when their spirituality is being explained, it should be nature based. Nature can guide human beings and tell them everything. So “[t]hose who follow Nature’s way believe that the Great Spirit manifests itself within and through all of that which it creates.” (McGaa, 2004; 13) When you need something in life, you can turn to nature; because it has everything for people. It can give messages about life. If you devote yourself to the nature, if you meditate on it; your life would be easier, meaningful and safe. From the spiritual stance, native people have a strong connection with nature, because they believe that they can interpret its messages by both listening to it and respecting it. They are able to depict the messages of wolves, birds, weather and so on (Magoulick, 7-8).

In the same perspective with the nature philosophy, the earth takes on an important role in the American Indian theology. Mainly, they see human beings as one of the small components of the earth. Human beings are not alone on earth, but living together with spiritual beings, animals, plants, and inanimate beings. "...It's a vision in which rock and tree, bird and fish, human being and caribou are all alive and partakers of the gifts of Mother Earth" (Peat, 8).

All these things have their own characteristics and they are separately identified. That's why "All things have separate identity, they are the part of the same totality of existence, though" (Fixico, 36). The totality is the Mother Earth who provides everything in life. Although the elements of life are split entities, all are equal. While giving equal importance to these elements of earth, the American Indian theology, also, views them alive. This existence consists of giving a spirit even for inanimate creations. By the same token, the earth becomes the home of all creations which has always been respected by all native tribes. Thus, all components of the earth are equally important and sacred.

1.2.1.2. The Difference between Native and Western Values

In this manner, again it is understood that American Indians' and Western understandings vary. American Indian belief is integrated to the spiritual life of the higher beings. They do not disconnect themselves from the Creator, from the Great Spirit, but rather prefer to have an interconnection to all other beings. As George Cornell puts it:

"The relationship of Native peoples to their earth, their Mother, is a sacred bond with the Creation...Native peoples viewed many of the products of the natural environment as gifts from the creator... Man, in the Native American conception of the world, was not created to lord over other beings, but rather to cooperate and share the bounty of the earth with the other elements of the creation..." (qtd in Magoulick, 1).

In fact, the holistic world view of the American Indians is about the sense of the sacred. Momaday states: "The Indian exerts his spirit upon the world by means of religious activity, and he transcends himself in a sense; he expands his awareness to include all of creation. And in this he is restored as a man and as a race" (Woodard, 25).

1.3. The Value of Community

1.3.1. The Western and Native Interpretations of Community

The importance of community will be discussed in relation to the concepts of individualism and progress also what they stand for in Western and American Indian cultures. In American worldview, loneliness is considered as the key to the freedom. When you can achieve your goals alone, you are valuable and free. We can view this as “rugged individualism” which is Americans’ defining virtue (Allen, 1998; 6). This kind of individualism means that all individuals can achieve what they want on their own and that the interference and help of the government should be less. Therefore, an American defines himself or herself by giving importance to this sort of individualism and as a self she or he is important since it is their way of life. Moreover, in American worldview, people are alone and isolated from other people which constitute community. But, the more they are alone and successful in their lives, the more they celebrate their freedom. So, individualism is taught as a positive thing in this culture. It brings about isolation; yet it is beneficial and valuable for people. They believe in individualism for the sake of progress. Progress here means having plans for the future assuming your future is your financial security, as well. All people have ideas for after life, that’s why accomplishments are really crucial. They constantly ask questions about what they have done. Thus white men’s religion is also the representative of individual experience. As Vine Deloria Jr. indicates Christianity has always triggered individualism for more than two thousand years (2003; 193). The time is also linear and future based which indicates progress: “The very essence of Western European identity involves the assumption that time proceeds in linear fashion; further it assumes that at a particular point in the unraveling of this sequence, the peoples of Western Europe became the guardians of the world” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 62). So they should be working all the time to fulfill this vision because they are responsible as individuals. About material issue, when people think and look forward, they are gradually becoming greedy and greedier. From this Western view, there occurs a materialistic world which is fragmented. It is

fragmented because people are separated from both each other and from the spiritual world through science and reason. In the Western culture, you are powerful as long as you achieve and gather financial belongings such as money, land, properties and also knowledge. That's why accomplishment equals progress and individualism.

However, to the American Indians, all issues about individualism and progress stand in contrast. Individualism is replaced by community. While individualism is considered as the symbol of power and security by the white-Americans, it is perceived as a kind of alienation by the American Indians since they have intrinsic feelings for their communities or tribes. They place their groups' or tribes' benefits before their individual benefits. Their well being is the result of their communities' well being. Communal values are more important and valuable than individualistic ones. Also the reason why American Indians "didn't glorify individuals as Dominant Society does is that they believed in the value of 'one among many', a philosophy that doesn't call for singling out any one person for special glorification in his or her physical likeness" (McGaa, 2004; 80).

This philosophy makes clear that all people are responsible both to each other and to the Nature. It teaches people to respect not to humiliate others for their self interests. No one can be superior to another. But, it should not be understood that people are not valuable as individuals. Although there are some people and ideas, like Harvey Cox, asserting that a native does not have any individuality without his or her community, these are all unreasonable. It is largely known American Indians traditionally value personal uniqueness and individual differences. Traditional native beliefs are built upon not interfering other's affairs but on respecting individuals by saying opinions only when asked. This means that people cannot express their thoughts recklessly about other individuals. There are lots of practices and beliefs that honor individuals, too. For instance, Vine Deloria Jr. remarks the custom of naming individuals. "Indian names stand for certain qualities, for exploits, for unusual abilities, for unique physical characteristics..." (2003; 196). In this way each person's uniqueness and individuality is verified. Each individual is able to go through his or her personal life experience. They are highly valued as individuals as long as they value and cooperate with their communities. They define themselves as individuals who are shaped through communal values. Since, "Community is

tremendously important. That's where a person's identity has to come from, not from racial blood quantum levels" (Silko, 133). Their "Indianness" (Jojola, 88) are determined not according to their being born in an Indian place, but according to their knowledge and experiences about their clans or communities. If you are alienated from traditions and actions of your community, your "birthright" (Jojola, 88) is not enough to be a native; but you have to have membership mentality to your community or society. So, while "the American culture admires individualism and anyone who overcomes insurmountable odds to make it their own" (Townsend, 3), the American Indians, on the contrary, depend on more cultural, communal and tribal values. While American Indians support the individual and the individuality in his or her own community, Western culture creates lonely individuals.

The American Indians' worldview also stresses the importance of community as the source for balance and harmony. For first, you should have harmony in the community by adhering to basic principles about spirituality, nature and being interdependent, and then can you have individual rights. There is interconnectedness between individuals and communities. All forms of life are interdependent and mistreatment of one will certainly influence others. This would also damage the harmony and balance within all beings. That's why moving away from your community can be dangerous since in that way the balance and harmony can be shaken. When native people move away from their communities to become "rugged individuals" this interconnectedness together with balance and harmony will fade away, too. People are happy and healthy within their communities, not alone.

According to traditional American Indian beliefs, it is stated that they are a part of wholeness and they are not alone but interrelated. In this way, "an individual does not experience an independence of being as the primary mode of existence" (Lovern, 4). Rather, the initial mode of existence is "communal involving which upholds 'all my relations'" (Cajete, 86). Here "all my relations" includes all kinds of beings including human beings, animals, spiritual beings and inanimate things. Therefore, an individual feels her or his existence when in connection with the community. Vine Deloria Jr., an important American Indian scholar, states that ; in the natural world everything is connected and we give our lives meanings when we experience it in a communal groups (2003; 34). "These obligations give rise to the

traditional Native American practices that place a priority on the survival and betterment of the community as a whole, which is dependant on the survival and betterment of each community member” (Lovern, 4). Each individual is important and has a potential to harmonize and balance her or his relations with the community rather than choosing loneliness.

1. 3. 2. The Importance of Family

The family is the central unifying unit of all American Indian communities. The tribes establish their own family groups to maintain order and well-being among the members. While they are shaping their family groups, there have been lots of criteria. The most important of all is the history. The idea of the past has always been regarded as the crucial point for families and family members. It has influenced the structure, importance and definition of family of the American Indians. As it is generally accepted, in lots of communities, “the central unit of Indian society is the family. It is affected by both tribal culture and tribal structure” (Red Horse, 2000). That’s why in American Indian communities, we see a different meaning of the family concept. It has been acknowledged that the structure and the meaning of family are highly different from other types of family units seen in Western society. The main structure of family seen in native tribes is the extended family. Nevertheless, the basic meaning of the extended family is again different from the Western extended family units. The traditional concept of extended families in Western society does not go beyond three generations. It can include grandparents, their children and grandchildren. Generally these people would rather live alone or maybe they can live together in a single house. However, extended family logic is radically different in native tribes. As Lewis remarks in his article about American Indian family life that these families are more structurally open. (qtd in Light, 1) This means traditionally families have a wide range of relatives who are linked together. So the families have an expansive and welcoming nature. It is always surprising to note the number of people who live together. These people can be from the same blood or sometimes do not have any blood relations. Not all the members of the family are from the same tribe or even real Indians. A person who is referred as an

uncle by a tribal person can be accepted into the family even though this person has no biological relationship to this tribe member. As Leslie Marmon Silko recounts about his own personal experiences, "My parents and the people of the Laguna Pueblo community who raised me taught me that we are all one family- all the offspring of Mother Earth- and no one is better or worse according to skin color or origin" (101). That's why the concept of extended family encompasses the whole humanity, indeed. The tribal peoples are welcoming and do not have any concepts like separations of people. So the meaning of extended family has more abstract connotations. In contrast to strict structures of relationships in Western families, "Indians relate to people outside the immediate family in supportive and caring ways" (Levine&Laurie, qtd in Light, 1). Although the number of people in a family is many, these relatives are linked together and their personal relationships are based on mutual dependence. It gives people the sense of belonging and unity with other community members. Moreover, mutualism ensures communal security and harmony among people. The family members share responsibilities and reciprocal understanding. They should be generous, helping and patient toward each other. There is a helping system that functions among the families. According to Red Horse, "the goal of family and parental support, within the context of the American Indian family of origin, is to foster interdependence. The family serves as a facilitator in the development of its members and does so according to family or cultural role..." (2000; 1). Indian families are grounded to trigger interdependence and mutual relationships. However, Western families support independent members.

The characteristics of family philosophy are again in agreement with their worldviews. Families have togetherness, respect, trust, honesty and harmony. The member should work together to guarantee the well being and safety of all other family members which also include other beings like plants, animals since they are also members of their extended family. "Togetherness as a family also meant security, fellowship, good feeling, and a sense of belonging" (Fixico, 38). And it is created by including the whole earth and its beings holistically. Especially, in family development, people firstly learn to balance their own needs and the others. Being respectful to each other and to the nature and keeping the old traditions alive will also keep families together, safe and healthy. According to a study by Lewis, there

are mainly three strengths of American Indian families. They are; “the helping systems that operate within the family, the courage and optimism obtained from spiritual life religion and the respect for each other and personal relationships” (qtd in Light, 2). These strengths show that American Indian families are apparently strong and well built.

There is also a spiritual dimension of American Indian families. As emphasized above, the families have strengths such as respect, generosity and harmony. Moreover all these gain meanings in the context of spirituality. Nearly all tribes have spiritual philosophy or worldview which includes all living and inanimate beings. For instance; the Ojibwe people use the term “indinawe maagauzag” which means “all my relatives”. Likewise the Dakota use the term “mitahuyapi – owasin” which is translated “all my relatives”. The phrase all my relatives includes not only the people of the tribes; but all human beings, animals, plants and all other things of the Earth. Therefore, the extended family is a symbol which embraces all species. The concept of family should only be defined through its literal meaning. From American Indian perspective, the cycle, as a symbol, also has a relation to the family concept. They use the symbol of cycle to express the relatedness and interdependence of all things and nature. The family is also a circle with mutual dependence of its members. The lives of people in the families occur spiritually and naturally which pass through in cyclic terms.

The younger generation has a very important role in the American Indian communities. Similarly, families are the most basic units of these communities which are strengthened by younger generations. “Children held families together, bonding the generations of parents and grandparents with the future. Without children community could not continue” (Fixico, 38). The well being of children depends upon the well being of the families. Unless families do well, the children cannot do well. Children are important both culturally and personally. Since they are viewed as the carriers of culture and traditions and they are valuable for the communities. Wahacanka Ska Win Gough describes the value of children to the families as:

“In many Indian cultures, young children are considered sacred gifts to the family and to the tribe... Each child is to be treated with personal respect, as an individual bearing special traits. Each adult generation is to acknowledge the sacredness to young children and to take care of the coming generation...” (1990).

In order to have strong and conscious generations, children should be reared properly. Parenting is very important because it is also a community matter. Since the American Indians have a concept of extended families, while bringing up a child, the whole family members- blood related or not- participate in supporting the family. This communal support and protection result in the reciprocal responsibility felt to each family member. So the best place for children to grow up is in families. The family should provide children with proper knowledge about how to survive and keep up the harmony and balance in their community. They should educate their children about the basic regulations of a native society. Through respect and love, children learn to be responsible and grateful. Because of these facts, the views and attitudes of all family members are accepted and highly valued. Family members are to be always fair and accept other people's differences. They are taught not to judge others. Shortly, there should be reciprocal and cyclic relationships among children and parents together with the tribal members. This relationship also includes teaching. American Indian way of teaching their children is again traditional. It is constituted of experiences lived repeatedly by other members. A child basically learns from other people's experiences. The American Indian way is totally different from what happens in the Western way of teaching. Namely, the latter one includes classroom teaching, the former one happens in natural ways and settings. American Indian upbringing is described by Jane Deborah Wyatt as:

“In the community the usual way for a child to learn a skill from an adult is to observe carefully over long periods of time and then to begin taking part in the activity... All of this is learned by watching and doing with a minimum of verbal preparation or interchange... However, verbal instructions without demonstration and participation, a frequent occurrence in the schools, are rare in the community”.

Storytelling is also another way of learning and crucial for passing on traditions to the next generation. It also encourages children to listen to people carefully. For most traditional people listening is much more valuable than speaking. Due to the fact that all aspects of native life and culture were and are transferred orally, listening, hearing and witnessing are really important skills. By telling some specific tribe based stories to the children, people can inspire them to be aware of their roots and history. In this way children can act and learn properly. In their social life children prefer to experience and live affectively rather than speaking or being

passive members of the community. Moreover; talking, storytelling, learning and doing things together connect all family members. Besides learning by participation and experiencing, in many native communities, the elders of the society play remarkable roles in teaching the children and leading the family life. Elders are not just old people of the tribes, but they are honored and respected because they are “the libraries of Indian knowledge, history and tradition” (qtd in Redhorse, 25). All tribal people should be thankful to the tribal elders due to their wisdom and experience. They are very rich in their contributions. They are accepted as the source of the history and traditions. In every tribe, there is a wide variety of ways by which elders participate in the lives of families and children. According to Basil Johnston, in *Ojibwe Heritage*,

“It was elders, grandmothers and grandfathers, who taught about life, through stories, parables, fables, allegories, songs, chants and dances. They were the ones who had lived long enough and had had a path to follow, and were deemed to possess the qualities for teaching wisdom, knowledge, patience and generosity” (69).

Elders have a unique place in the society and in the families. In most nations, there has been no specific authority except elders. Again Basil Johnston, in his other book about Ojibwe life and culture named *Manitous*, explains that “history and heritage were taught by the elders and others, who instructed the people in everything from history, geography, and botany to astronomy, language and spiritual heritage, at the family gatherings” (xx). As it is seen elders are affective at first building up the family life and then the communities. Briefly, respecting the elders is necessary for the well being and happiness of the children and the community.

In describing the family life, there is one more point which is about gender issues. As a result of native people’s general attitude toward individuals, women and men are not separated in their roles. Neither women nor men are valued more than each other. The equality is not only about gender roles, it is also in terms of sex. There was no distinction between the sexes. According to native worldviews, people are “all a mixture of male and female, and this sexual identity is changing constantly. Sexual inhibition did not begin until the Christian missionaries arrived” (Silko, 67). This indicates that a woman can both dress and go hunting like a man. Likewise a man can handle with womanly works together with other women. The concept of

equality is prevalent. In this regard, men and women are traditionally responsible for some matters. Some tribes are patriarchal and others are matriarchal. Nonetheless, there has always been an equal relationship between men and women in the family life and about upbringing children. According to Johnston, “The Anishinabeg word for the relationship between a man and a woman was weekjewaungun, meaning companion- a term which referred equally to male or female. There was no distinction in sex; no notion of inferiority or superiority” (1976; 124). He also tells that more specifically “weedjeewaungun” means “companion on the path of life” which indicates that through the cycle of life a man and a woman walk together. This includes child rearing, domestic tasks, being providers and protectors. It can be inferred that “men and women’s work is of equal and complimentary. Men hunted and women processed the fruit of his hunts. One did not function well without the other” (Kehoe, 114). Moreover, native women are particularly respected and valued for their active role in the survival of families and their members. They are keen on joining in the well being and development of other family members. The native tribes, in return, value women “as mothers of future generations and repositories of tribal wisdom” (Kidwell, 2001; 16).

To conclude, it is clear that key elements of family life are traditional, intense and highly different in the American Indian tribes. The main goal of each tribe to have these elements is to strengthen the families. In this way, the families can understand and teach their children how important to have harmony and balance in life for being a real native tribe. That’s why they know that every good thing happens through children. From the American Indian perspective, in order to have good communities, they should at first give children families. Since, through strong families and individuals there appear strong communities and tribes which is one of the basic worldviews of native people.

1. 3. 3. The Sacredness of Land

“The term geography means, and has meant, different things to different people at different times and in different places” (Livingstone, 304). The meaning of geography, which can be used interchangeably with land, symbolizes deep intrinsic feelings for the American Indians. As Vine Deloria Jr. asserts, this creed can be more specific with his words: “American Indians hold their lands- places- as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind” (2003; 61) since it is related to defining their being in the world, their intentions, beliefs and values. Land has not only been a space which the American Indians occupy; but it has become a tool which provides them to keep their cultures, languages and religions. Moreover, it has provided them with survival. That’s why land is recognized as a space where their identity is constituted. More than being only a dwelling place, the American Indians have highly emotional sacred commitments to the land. This special relationship enables people to drive their identities from the land. The uniqueness of some special places has made them acquire their individuality. So land has played a big role in their identification process. George Blondin states: “From the land came our religion... from the land came our life...from the land came our powerful medicine...from the land came our way of life” (qtd in Weaver, 37). They have an attachment to some particular landscapes because their cultural identity is defined via this attachment. “This sense of a spiritual association with land, the marking of boundaries and renewal of the earth through ceremonies, and the concept of earth as mother and nurturer, give land a special place in Indian senses of identity” (Kidwell, 2001; 127). Their spirituality mainly has roots in the land on which they live since “the natural environment is the embodiment of spiritual power” (Kidwell, 2001; 126). These particular landscapes also gain importance in spiritual manners. In fact the spirit and the identity of the people, which are integrated, come from the land. In her book *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen puts it in this quotation: “We are the land, and the land is mother to us all...To best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea that permeates American Indian life; the land (mother) and the people (mothers) are the same” (119). So that’s why we should see our life as a dynamic part of the land. It is not

only the human beings living; but together with them the places are also living. Landscapes are not only places to dwell, but they are living entities. Since the beginning, people have kept the landscapes alive. There has been different ways of keeping the places alive such as storytelling, experiencing a spiritual event in a particular landscape or simply sensing the places. For example, in communal storytelling sessions landscape plays a central role to make people recall the importance of their history (Silko, 33). In order to have spiritual knowledge about places, which are told in the stories, you should be in the nature and you should be aware of the sacredness of the Mother Earth. “The knowledge on which wisdom depends is gained from observing different places” (Basso, 134). That’s why, by observing nature and its places, you can identify yourself with a landscape because it is almost certain that you would live a spiritual experience from these living landscapes. They keep their landscapes alive by telling stories also because their stories “cannot be separated from their geographical locations, from actual physical places that it is almost impossible for future generations to lose them- there is a story connected with every place, every object in the landscape” (Silko, 58). So by living near nature and having their own identities from landscapes, the American Indians better understand that they are human beings. Moreover, the relationship between a human and a land is the process of human identification.

In such a view of landscapes, it is not surprising to say that these places are sacred for the native tribes. Since they have centered their lives in the landscapes and believe that they find their true identity in the nature, it is very crucial for them to protect these sacred places. “Each nation has some understanding that they were placed into a relationship with a particular territory by spiritual forces outside of themselves and thus have an enduring responsibility for that territory just as the earth...” (Kidwell, 2001; 45). This kind of relationship is also necessary to save the harmony and balance in the nature. All members of the tribes learn not to use from the nature more than they need. It is for granted that the earth gives endless sources to people; but if its sources are consumed extravagantly and destroyed, it will teach a lesson, too. The American Indians have always longed to protect the Mother Earth because they know that nature is superior and sacred to them. Since the beginning, “Indian tribes combine history and geography so that they have a sacred geography”

(Deloria Jr., 2003; 121). The sacred geographies have stories of people, history and important incidents of tribes telling them. It is clear that every nation needs such sacred geographies in order to have cultural and national identities which will definitely help next generations to remember their past. The importance of land as a source of identity makes people believe that the earth is sacred and it is spiritually related to people. Thus “Many native people learned from childhood that the ground on which they walked was sacred ground” (Kidwell, 2001; 127).

As many distinctions can be seen in lots of issues between American Indian and Western way of thinking, they also vary in the theme of being spatially or temporally oriented about life happenings. Native peoples are “spatially based rather than temporally based” (Kidwell, 2001; 13). This explains that space is determining what and how people live things. So American Indians value space, however western ideology values time. Native peoples everything is connected to the land such as their identity, culture and religion. Even the idea of creation expresses these two different types of thinking. According to the American Indians “what happened here” is more important than “what happened then” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 77). First one symbolizes space; however, the next one refers to time which depicts Christian way of thinking. Thus, “when Indian tribes were forcibly removed from their homes, they were robbed of more than land. Taken from them was a numinous landscape where every mountain and lake held meaning” (Weaver, 12). Because of the devoted relationship between people and lands, the spatial worldview of native people cannot be undervalued. Western and American Indian worldviews set different values on space and time. “For Amer-European peoples, time has been the primary category...In the Western intellectual tradition, progress, history, development, evolution, and process become key notions...” (Kidwell, 2001; 44). While history is progressing, time is the most important concept in western ideology. It has a clear beginning and end- these particular points are affective in forming the past. However, Indian way of grasping the past is rooted in a worldview which is shaped through spatiality. It is always “place taking precedence over the question of when a ceremony will happen” (Kidwell, 2001; 45). Even it is about religion and religious activities, the most vital question is not the question of when something will take place; but where it will take place.

Among the American Indians “land and people are inseparable” and that’s why “in the old days there had been no boundaries between the people and the land, there had been mutual respect for the land that others were actively using” (Silko, 85). The landscapes are sacred and also highly respected. After people take only what they need from the nature, they hold a thanking ceremony. This shows the respect and responsibilities possessed to the Mother Earth because all created things are equal and deserve the same respect. Since there were no separation between people and lands, there has been no concept of boundaries and land owning. The concept of ownership has existed since the arrival of European settlers. As Donald L. Fixico states there is “a primary difference between the two races relates to the earth itself” (41). The distinction is about the way the Europeans see the earth as something to be owned, but natives have no idea of this mentality. Since in their minds land is not thought something to be bought, sold or exploited. The earth is a sacred place given to both living and non-living beings; it cannot be a property. No one can own the earth; because it belongs to all. “Native Americans have viewed the earth as the mother of all things on this planet. By contrast, Anglo-Americans have considered the earth as a commodity, useful only for soil and natural resources” (Fixico, 41). The idea of owning a land is incomprehensible to the American Indians because it is not only a place on which people live. It is the source of lots of things which shapes their existence. Therefore, there are two different worldviews related to the meaning of the earth- the land that people have and live. It is about “land-use principles” (Jojola, 89). Although European idea supports the ownership of land, the American Indian idea supports stewardship. These two concepts are totally different. When it comes to own a land, it is generally about western thought which is understood in means of individual identity and property rights since “identity appears to be invested in property rights” (Jojola, 89). The goal of having such a mentality is to designate individual rights on land owning. As a result of not putting individual rights into the front, the American Indians individuality is again up to communal values. That’s why these values are seen in the land commitment, too. Instead of owning lands, the American Indians have the system of land tenure. “Tenure is the right to hold, occupy, and use specific thing or piece of land” (Weaver, 20). Over generations, a family can hold and occupy the lands by leaving them to the coming

generations of the families. So “the notion of property becomes one of the issues of inheritance” and “By being born in a context, individuals see this inheritance as a birthright” (Jojola, 89). Land is not a thing which is owned; but a thing which is conserved and passed through generations as something cared attentively. There are again reciprocal duties between people and land. The earth endows sources for people to use properly, in return; people should protect and respect the Mother Earth. In this regard, “each people knew their land, territory in an intimate way. The boundaries of their land were always clearly defined; the people lived in harmony with the elements and the climate of their land...” (Kidwell, 2001; 128). By respecting the earth instead of owning it and by this way increasing its value, the American Indians manage to harmonize their lives with the landscapes. Moreover, they also find ways to derive their personal identities from the land.

CHAPTER TWO

THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN VALUES

2.1. The General Impact of Two Cultures' Encounter

Before the European conquest, lots of tribes inhabited the continent which is now called the United States. When it was discovered, there had already been lots of native nations living on the continent and also having their own cultures, languages and government systems. The new country was founded on the lands of native nations. "At the time of the European discovery of America, the tribes were sovereign by nature and necessity; they conducted their own affairs and depended upon no outside source of power to legitimize their acts of government" (Canby, 76). When these two groups of people, who are natives and people coming from Europe, came up together; there has started the time of inspiration. Nevertheless, reciprocal interests have always been different. From the Europeans side, they arrived in the continent to colonize Northern America for different reasons related their own benefits. As Emily Cousins states, the goal of this arrival is that "European settlers arrived in this country thinking they could teach the indigenous people how to live off the land" (497). According to the Europeans, the native peoples did not know how to make use of their lands and soils. That's why the attitudes of Europeans toward the indigenous peoples were that they had always considered themselves superior to the Native Americans. Moreover, throughout the colonization period, the American Indians were seen as hindrance in the process of the Europeans establishing their own new world. On the other hand, the native tribes could not conceive this mentality since the idea of colonizing is an unknown term for them. The American Indians were very helpful, generous and welcoming to the Europeans and they helped them explore the continent with all of its bountifulness and vastness. Via colonization, newly so called American culture had been established. It is the mixture of American Indian and European beliefs, cultures and values. Although Europeans discovered America by chance, they took highly advantage of indigenous people. There were different groups of Europeans and they had differed in their

objectives and benefits from the native peoples. Generally it can be said that the relationship between European countries and American Indian nations has been very controversial, inconsistent and conflicting.

2.2. White Colonialism

2.2.1. White Men's Arrival

As the moving forward of Europeans continued in the new continent, they became greedier. They started to dominate more and more lands which were belonged to the native tribes. The native tribes were slowly drafted apart and were being eliminated systematically. Lots of white American history books has been stating the number of native people only one million at the time of colonizers arrival; but according to some recent researches it has been asserted that the number was at least 12 million and above. One of the basic principles in the history of colonization was the Doctrine of Discovery. It means the right of owning a land only when the land discovered proved to be uninhabited. Acquiring the land from the indigenous peoples could only happen with their consent. Also, the land should be cultivated and improved, otherwise it is declared as unoccupied. This situation was just the opposite for North America because the continent had already been populated since the earlier times of 1500. Thus, this doctrine was not suitable for the North American land, indeed. However, "this dominion theology has been at work in the Americas from the onset of colonization" (Weaver, 14). As an impact of discovery doctrine, European countries entered into formal treaties with the native nations to get their consent for leasing their lands. That's why in the beginning, the Europeans regarded the American Indians as sovereign nations which inclined them to go into formal relationships with native governments. In this manner, they manipulated the native people by convincing them that they were doing no harm. Then, a process of treaty making began during the early periods of Europeans arrival. Yet, it was only a manipulation because;

"[t]his, of course, did not save those Indian tribes from mass extermination, torture, or slavery, but it did require that the Europeans clothe these criminal activities with legal procedures, so that, from the

beginning, the bloody business was legitimized or justified by formal treaties that were acknowledged by all other western European governments” (Silko, 76).

So they first saw the indigenous peoples as sovereign nations; then they were viewed not as free nations, but groups which had limited sovereignty. This was because of claiming dominion over the lands which would constitute the United States. Native tribes used to have a very welcoming nature and let the Europeans settle on their lands. “Treaties and agreements were made between the settlers and neighboring tribes in which European goods were exchanged for Indian land and friendship” (Pevar, 3). In this context they were able to regulate their own affairs and benefits in the name of American Indians. So, through both treaties and sometimes by force, the European government began to own the native lands. In fact, neither wars were fought nor native tribes were conquered. The native lands were taken by negotiations and contracts. “As the United States grew stronger and its population grew larger, it began to overpower tribes and treaty making became more and more one-sided as the U.S. was able to dictate the terms of treaties to tribes” (Miller, 10). This interaction had turned out to be a process of manipulation and coercion gradually. During the treaty conferences, the American Indian leaders agreed to abandon their lands for receiving services like education, food, clothing, health services, and hunting or fishing rights from the federal government. Ceding their lands and moving forward to the western parts of the country had given them limited chances to progress. On the other hand, Europeans got powerful and crowded in numbers; they needed more new lands for their people coming to the continent. The only way to have free lands was to get rid out of more indigenous peoples. That’s why they started Indian removal between the years 1816 and 1846. As Stephan L. Peval states about Indian Removal in his book; “Under Jackson’s administration, what previously had been an unspoken policy now became a publicly stated goal: removal of the eastern tribes to the west” (4). This was the policy in the nineteenth century and it was legitimized with Congress passing the Indian Removal Act in 1830. By this act, the federal government removed the Indian tribes living in the east to the west of Mississippi river. Nonetheless, this would not be enough because people required more lands. The westward expansion of the white settlers had begun

because of increasing population. The land was shrinking in the east so removal of the native peoples was not a solution anymore. As a result of this situation, the American Indian tribes were forcibly moved onto reservations.

Reservation Period continued from 1865 to 1890. During these years, American Indians again signed a series of contracts surrendering their lands to the federal government in exchange of fundamental needs. After 1871, the government would not sign any more treaties with the indigenous peoples again. Establishing new living areas for native tribes was a strategy to break up tribal relations and sovereignty. Once the Indians lost their lands, the colonists had understood that they would lose their identities, cultures and languages. This way would be better for the European colonists' expansion. To achieve this aim, their removal and isolation was necessary which ended in setting up reservations. In 1887, Senator Henry Dawes passed legislation about Indian reservations which is called the General Allotment Act (Dawes Act). The act formed the basis for the trust relationship between the United States and Indian tribes. According to Washburn the general objective of Dawes' bill was to assimilate Indians into American society as farmers. Moreover, "white farmers, holding persistently to a belief whose falsity rings through the countries of experience preceding the act, thought that the Indian would (the reformer really meant should) become integrated into white society..." (Washburn, 73). They tried to impose the white mentality of land ownership even though they realized the importance and sacredness of land to the American Indians. This act had legitimized stealing native lands as well. As Ronald Takaki notes "the land allotment program enabled white speculators, farmers and planters to take Indian lands legally, and to absolve themselves from responsibility for the Indians' poverty, removal and destruction"(62). It can be inferred that this was a well-planned and intentional strategy. Dawes Act was also designed to "break up tribal governments, abolish Indian reservations, and force Indians to assimilate into white society" (Pevar, 5). By passing this act, the congress expected that the American Indians would learn and get used to the white way of living. Moreover, this would provide as large amounts of lands as possible for white settlement. The effects of the General Allotment Act were devastating. It destroyed "the Indian land base, weakened Indian culture, sapped the

vitality of tribal legislative and judicial processes, and opened most Indian reservations for settlement by non-Indians” (Wilkinson, 19). It turned community owned tribal lands into individual owned properties. From tribal government to the soil management their systems were shaken. In addition to losing massive amounts of lands, during the time of Dawes Act of 1887, “almost every form of Indian religion was banned on the reservations. In the schools, the children were punished for speaking their language...and stern measures were taken to discourage them from continuing tribal customs” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 204). So, besides destroying governmental elements of the indigenous nations, they also tried to interfere with the cultural and educational components of native communities. Traditions like funeral ceremonies, drumming, and sun dances which made them unique were decided to be illegal. In fact, in the late nineteenth century, “the perception was that Indians must be assimilated, or they faced extermination” (Kidwell, 2001; 137). This situation could be supported when the number of Indian population is examined. It is clear that they had the number decreased on a regular basis which began when they first started to settle down. At first, colonists infected people with European diseases like smallpox, measles and continued to destroy them with more strategic means like signing contracts, passing laws and acts.

After reservation and removal periods, there was a short period from about 1930 to 1943 when the U.S. government was more tolerant and benevolent to the American Indians. The Congress passed the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934 which “became the New Deal program for Indians” (Ebbott, 17). During the 1930s, John Collier, an advocate of American Indians and a commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), had strived incessantly to form the Indian New Deal program and to reform the tribes by strengthening the traditional Indian life (Beidler, 6-7). This changing policy had a humane and sensible approach to the natives. It aimed to “rehabilitate the Indian’s economic life, and to give him a chance to develop the initiative destroyed by a century of oppression and paternalism” (Pevar, 6). This law took some of the control of the U.S. government over the American Indian tribes for a short time which enlivened native culture and life of communities. Under this act, native people were allowed to perform lots of customs like having freedom in religion. Yet, through the end of this period, the policy of the U.S.

government had begun to change. It was about the form of government on the reservations. Every tribe used to have their own form of government and they have tribal chiefs; but it started not to serve for the benefits of the U.S. They were not happy with the traditional forms of decisions in tribes so they decided to make organizations about this, too. The act enabled the election of tribal councils to represent the tribes. “The tribal council is an alien form of government that was forced upon the Indian people by the U.S. government in 1941...” (Silko, 93). These tribal councils were aimed to be organized as “puppet governments” (Silko, 94). Due to the fact that 1934 Reorganization Act was designed by BIA, the tribal councils took their authority from the U.S. government rather than being free decision making authorities as were formerly declared. According to Wilkinson, tribal councils can be described as units “which are typically small, relatively informal units often perform some of the functions of courts in the Anglo-American system” (115). The irony in this matter is that while giving freedom for the American Indians to form tribal governments and juridical systems, it was again about imposing American systems under the Constitution. Even there were indigenous people against the tribal councils, the U.S. government found a way to punish them. Tribes who did not reorganize would be deprived of humanly things to survive. This policy would easily cause people to go hungry and leave their reservations. After this period, although the United States has never accepted; “group extinction has run its course in a number of cases” (Churchill, 53).

2.2.2. The End of Treaty Period and the Beginning of Termination Period

During years between 1940s and 1960s, the U.S. had returned the common federal policy about the Indians which started the era of termination. The purpose of the policy was “to abolish reservations, subjecting the land to taxation; to end federal programs and the special federal relationship and to force the assimilation of Indian people” (Ebbott, 18). During the years of termination period, the federal government sought to break up the trust relationship between them and the American Indians which was guaranteed by the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934. American Indians

were encouraged to look for jobs off the reservations because in the 1950s “the government again got into the business of forcibly relocating Indians, this time from reservations to urban centers” (Pritzker, 418). If people remained on the reservations, they would live without government help. This was the opposite tendency when the native people were first sent to the reservations. The result of this federal policy was, like Dawes Act, catastrophic. It resulted in “the alienation of large numbers of Indians in urban ghettos and their permanent loss to the reservation community” (Pritzker, 418-419). As a part of termination period, some states wanted the authority of tribal connections about the conflicts of fishing, taxation etc. For this reason, in 1954 “Congress passed Public Law 280- a law which granted six states concurrent criminal and civil jurisdiction over Indian reservations” (Deloria Jr.,1985; 46). With this law federal government intended to cut off their responsibility over the tribes. Before Public Law 280, states did not have the authority to regulate tribal affairs. As a reaction to Public Law 280, the native tribes started charges on this matter to the federal courts. Only, in 1968, “the law was amended to require a native nation’s consent before the state could assume jurisdiction. After 1968, the assumption of tribal criminal jurisdiction by states effectively stopped” (Johansen, 145-146). After all of these periods, the last era of the federal Indian policy, which is still the official Indian policy today, has started. Starting approximately in 1960s, the period was named by the president Nixon as Self Determination Era in 1970. “The federal government inaugurated policies of tribal self-determination and self governance in the early 1970s in order to recognize the distinctive cultural, political and economic rights of tribal nations and to encourage greater political independence of tribes” (Wilkins, 7). The meaning of self-determination was to recognize the indigenous peoples as free sovereignties having their own traditional government systems. This term also meant they could enter into political and governmental relationships with the U.S. Moreover, they would be able to develop their own societies according to their worldviews. Because, from this time on, there has existed “the tribes’ right to change, to adapt to new social and economic conditions” (Wilkinson, 110). That’s why, many tribal nations tried to regain their powers which were destroyed by the U.S. government. In return, the U.S. government tried to eliminate the devastating effects of termination era by giving chance to American Indian tribes to form self-

governance. “In terms of government policy, the first major piece of legislation to utilize the term Native American was the Native American Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975” (Kidwell, 2005; xiii). This has been an act which constituted a prominent change in federal policies, because it would solidify “the basis for the current federal recognition of sovereignty, that is, the ability of tribes to contract for federal funds to run their own social service programs” (Kidwell, 2005; 69). By recognizing this structure, American government accepted the tribal nations as sovereign nations. However, American Indian tribes do not have a total sovereignty of an independent nation. This stems from the fact that the tribes cannot handle with international affairs. So they do not have international independence; but they were designated as “domestic dependent nations” by John Marshall. They are neither states nor foreign nations.

“The right meant that the several indigenous nations, tribes, or bands had a recognized legal personality. They were, by this common law concept, recognized as political entities with the constituted jurisdiction to govern their own civil affairs.....native bodies did not have any legal personality as nation states for international law purposes” (Clark, 16).

The indigenous nations had to rely on the U.S. for protection and international affairs since the federal government is the guardian of the wards who are the American Indians. They are not foreign nations to the U.S., though. They are “nations within a nation” (Stuart, 3). They are sovereign nations, have unique cultural characteristics and religion systems, but they are dependent on the higher sovereignty of the U.S. This explains that the native tribes can only exercise their rights up to some points arranged by the federal government of the U.S. Nowadays; there is a revival in term of American Indians rights. This is the result of increasing education level. Lots of legal cases to regain the rights of native people are under judgment. This is because of “the conflict between the Indians’ determination to control their own land or rivers and the attempts of private enterprise to exploit the resources on that land” (Bredlid, 7). Happening in terms of federal policy periods; native people had travelled a long way to gain full American citizenship. Despite living in the U.S. borders, American Indians had citizenship right too late. In fact, providing the native people of the land with full citizenship can be considered as a

weird idea. Gradually, after series of acts, American Indians were brought to full citizenship. It began when the Dawes Act of 1887 was first passed. In order to split the tribes, the government encouraged the indigenous peoples to buy lands outside their tribal lands. They would buy lands out of their tribes so that “the allottees became United States citizens as did other Indians residing apart from their tribes adopting the habits of civilized life” (Canby, 23). Again attempts to make the native people as full citizens, in 1901 Congress “granted citizenship to all Native Americans living in the Indian Territory (later Oklahoma). In 1919 those who fought in World War I were made citizens, and, finally, in 1924 all other Native Americans were granted citizenship, completing “the process of inclusion in the constitutional constituency” (Sheldon, 102). As Ebbott states before 1920s, American Indians were not considered as powerful peoples, they were thought to vanish (17). However, they proved to be the opposite that’s why the federal government had to pass a law to include all native people as full citizens. Although their social situation is granted, it is a widely know fact that, both in the cities and on reservations, American Indians are one of the most poverty-stricken groups in the U.S. Robert Kennedy declared in 1968 that “the first American is still the last American in terms of income, employment, health, and education. I believe this to be a national tragedy for all Americans- for we are all in some way responsible” (qtd in Breidlid, 6).

2. 3. The Situation of Indian Reservations

Colonization began with the European settlement on the American continent. European countries such as England, France, Spain and the Netherlands began to colonize the North America in the sixteenth century. Before the conquest began, the American Indian had already been living on the land now called the United States. When the European colonists came, the perspective of both the continent and the indigenous peoples was changed by them with this settlement. This changing was for the worse. They started to manipulate the native tribes. This manipulation started with the encroaching behavior of the colonizers. The life and identity of the native peoples were designated to be changed. It is apparent in the process of naming the indigenous peoples. They used to have many different names which described the

tribes according to their unique characteristics. However, the Europeans tended to name them with only one name. “Indian, for example, was a white invention imposed upon an extremely diverse group of indigenous tribal populations” (McDonald, 9) who, in fact, had never called themselves by only one name; since they have always believed in communalism. That’s to say “only slowly as contacts with the Europeans increased did the aboriginal peoples begin to think of themselves as Indians. On the whole it was a somewhat fragile identity, lacking the rich and deeply rooted associations of tribal identity” (Hertzberg, 2). Tribal identity represented the way of people’s living and their culture. Nevertheless, this was necessary to make differentiations between native peoples and the Europeans. From the very beginning, the Europeans tried to create a racial thought in the United States. Karen Kupperman suggests in her book about the confrontation of English and Indian people during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that “the roots of racial differentiation are to be found in the English upper class’s traditional view of the poor as people born to serve others, which was generally projected onto Native Americans” (qtd in McDonald, 15). This is the mentality of seeing the colonized group or groups as inferior about every aspect of qualities. The colonizer is always more advanced and superior to the colonized. According to McDonald, this racial thought was also constructed upon the dichotomy between “savagism and civilization” (14). This was the reason which many colonizers based their deleterious activities on. They attempted to legitimize their invasion of native lands “by describing the original owners as these lands as uncivilized” (Kidwell, 2001; 11-12). Their being described as uncivilized is up to the norms of the colonizers’ side, indeed. Since the meanings of civilized and uncivilized depend on from which side the speaker is, seeing the indigenous people as uncivilized was a term created by the colonizers. The Europeans used to have sort of expectations in mind while going to the New World; but they might have been disappointed with what they saw about the indigenous people. They were savages that were to be civilized. Imposing such mentalities upon the native tribes, indigenous people came to question their own cultures and religious activities because they could not control the colonizers’ interference. They were forced to believe that they were inferior in every aspect, uncivilized and insufficient. This made them believe that they had to change. That’s

why one of the other major effects of colonization is a change in the cultures of the tribal people. Because an Indian either “would make the transition to civility or he would resist the influence of European society and face destruction” (Sheehan, 3). It can be inferred that when the American Indians resisted the invasion of their land, the colonizers forced the doctrines of colonialism which ended in mass destruction of the native peoples. This created a kind of violation consisting of diseases, religious coercion, stealing the lands and conflicts of benefit.

2.3.1. Expansionist Views of Colonizers

With the beginning of the colonial history, the population of American Indians declined dramatically that was one of the worst effects of colonialism in the New World. Some researchers have discussed that more than 80 % of Indian population might have died because of the European diseases. In fact, when the native people first encountered with the Europeans, their response was according to tribal customs. They were helpful and welcoming to them which resulted in commercial and humane relationships. “It was as tribesmen that Indians welcomed the Europeans, traded with them, negotiated treaties, raised the hatchet, were decimated by disease, whiskey, and war fought for their homelands...” (Hertzberg, 2). These were all about the expansion and colonization strategies.

“By 1492 there were approximately 100 million Native Americans- a fifth, more or less, of the human race, within decades of Columbus’s landfall, most of these people were dead and their world barbarously sacked by Europeans. The plunderers settled in America, and it were they, not the original people, who became known as Americans” (Wright, 4).

This is an irony both created by the colonization and explains the history of it. It shows the devastating effects of colonialism in the Americas.

One of the most important tenets of civilization applied to the American Indians was the question whether they had a religion. Having described them as savages gave the Europeans a chance to proselytize Christianity among the aboriginal tribes. Spreading Christianity was one of the objectives of colonialism. When the European explorers arrived, they aimed to change all the terms of native

life by exploiting the aboriginal peoples. They began with their religion. Native peoples “were regarded as not having ownership of their lands, but as merely existing on them at the pleasure of the Christian god who had now given them to the nations of Europe” (Deloria Jr., 2003; 259). This expansionist view was also influential in missionary actions. The early missionaries arrived during the 1820s and were convinced, as Henry Warner Bowden has written, “that one set of cultural standards- the one shared by churchmen and politicians- prompted both spiritual progress and national stability” (164). They believed in the necessity of converting American Indians which would solve the Indian problems. This would also contribute to the civilization of native peoples. This was a commonly held belief by religious leaders and federal policies. Claiming dominion over the native people was both destructive and necessary for converting the heathen people of the New World. It was not a conflicting situation for the Christians because “they regularly found support in their Bible and their churches for their exploitative activities” (Bowden, xi). As the time went by, Christianity had become one of the major faiths among the native tribes by the twentieth century. It has become one of the major beliefs, not the only religion, because Christianity and tribal beliefs have been combined by the tribal peoples to form a new harmonizing spirituality. This has proved just the opposite of what the colonizers had expected. As James Treat mentions that many native people “who choose to identify themselves with Christian institutions, liturgical forms, teachings or spiritual practices do so while bearing in mind the community circumstances, family precedents and personal experiences that define their lives” (10). Moreover, most of them accomplished this conversion by not rejecting native religious traditions but by combining them. Merging Christianity with native religious traditions is called “syncretism” which can be explained as one culture becoming a part of another. From the indigenous perspective, it “represents a way of assimilating new cultural elements into existing systems, although it is certainly a form of cultural change, it is accommodation rather than acculturation” (Kidwell, 2001; 97). On the one hand, syncretism is a way of practicing religion in an effectual way for native people. On the other hand, it is the means of distortion of the truths for the Christian society.

It is for sure that the United States was founded on the stolen lands. Stealing the lands from natives was planned and realized through treaties, coercion and deception. Land has no similar meaning to European culture as it has to native cultures. Viewing the land from different perspectives can prove the cleavage between native and European-American cultures. Due to being unaware of seeing the land as a commodity, native people were too ignorant while they were selling their lands. Yet, there is another perspective. “Instead, it was the ignorance of white man which caused him to believe that he was buying land from a people whose culture and practices did not allow for the selling of land” (Kidwell, 2001; 136). Afterward, European colonization encountered resistance from the American Indians about reclaiming their lost lands which is called “Native-American irredentism” (McDonald, 157). Over years, it has declined in its intensity; but has never finished. This shows that they have struggled to regain their stolen lands and resisted European and white expansion which have continued until this day.

2.3.2. Isolation of Native Peoples

As all these were strategic and planned activities, the colonizers also attempted to dominate the native lives of education and economy. As it was attempted that the aim of building reservation schools was “to keep the distance and peace between Indians and non-Indians, but they came to be viewed also as instruments for civilizing Indians” (Canby, 19). That’s why every reservation had an Indian agent who was telling natives about the colonizers’ or white ways of living. This system highly affected reservation schools which “were first set up in 1865.... with the goal of Christianizing the Indians” and also founded to give a kind of white education to native children which was away from their own tribal cultures, languages and viewpoints. Since running Indian boarding schools were designed to assimilate American Indians, isolating the young children and sending them off reservations was necessary. It has been intentionally used to eliminate their culture. In these schools, the missionaries tried to Americanize Indian children. As Robert Trennert stated in his book about the main goal of these off - reservation schools was “to remove Indian youngsters from their traditional environment, obliterate their

cultural heritage, and replace that background with the values of white middle-class America” (xi). Boarding schools took the Indian children away from their lands, homes and families which would create the loss of native cultures and lives. The children were forbidden to speak their own native languages and go home to join both ceremonial and religious activities. These activities were told as heretic and meaningless activities. They tried to brainwash the young native children. Moreover, the conditions were highly inhumane because the schools were unhealthy and also punishments were too severe. This isolation from native surroundings had also caused a problem about the language matter. There was a group of natives among whom the usage of native languages declined because of preferring to use English. It was also influential in the later family life of students who met in the boarding schools and married. They were sometimes from different tribes and they chose to communicate in English. Besides, Indian students “indoctrinated in the assimilationist policy of boarding school chose not to teach their languages to their children” (Kidwell, 2005; 77-78). The loss of tribal Indian languages was accelerated when the parents refused to teach their children their own native languages. Gradually, the number of people who can speak and understand tribal languages has been falling down which has lasted till the recent years. On the other hand, there are also scholars who asserted that the mission of boarding schools failed among the native communities. According to these scholars, there has always been a resistance against the forced assimilation existing in schools. As David Wallace Adams suggested the students in the boarding schools “were anything but passive recipients of the curriculum of civilization” (336). However, this failure has not eradicated the psychological and cultural impacts on the American Indian children. Assimilationist efforts had also changed the Indian economy. It started with imposing the ownership mentality on the native peoples which once had been nonsense for them. It continued with the ownership of lands, animals and homes. Lots of American Indian tribes had collapsed into dependency of white people which shows the economic impact of colonialism. Richard White reviews this dependency theory like that though American Indians “had once been able to feed, clothe and house themselves with security and comfort, Indians gradually resorted to whites for clothing and food” (xix). Their situation was too alarming because they were being taken under the

colonial control slowly. They were deprived of their lands and had no economic independence and stability. Also, as Francis Paul Prucha indicates that the native tribes had already been under the political and economic control of the federal government by the twentieth century (29). Again for the sake of civilizing activities of the whites, American Indians had come to be subordinate to the federal government because of losing political and economic power and autonomy. This was the issue of paternalism toward the native peoples which “flourished through the decades of the twentieth century because the Indians were in fact dependent and they became more and more dependent” as the time went, and in the end that “paternalism in turn caused still further dependence” (28).

It can be summarized that there have always been lots of obstacles which disable the American Indians to preserve their systems. Fatal diseases to which the indigenous people were not immune, religious coercion about conversion, being deprived of their lands, also political and cultural oppression have caused native peoples to change and question their ways and systems. According to Vine Deloria Jr., as it is also the case for tribal religions, “the failure of Indian people to understand their own history” (2003; 249) was the greatest hindrance to reestablishment of tribal systems. Of course, after centuries, colonialism has not died out; but continues to manifest itself in different orders. In one of the interviews of Stud Terkel done with a native girl about their experiences with the colonization and European people, she explains the colonial history of the natives and the behaviors of the US that she sees “the United States government as a little baby brat. If you say no, it throws something at you. If it sees something, it just grabs. Just drools all over and soils itself, and has to have others come in and clean it up” (qtd in Breidlid, 32). From this comment, it is well understood that the white-Americans have always been greedy and materialistic about both the sources of native people and their soil. Moreover, it can be added that not many things has changed since the earlier times of colonization.

CHAPTER THREE

LOUISE ERDRICH

3.1. Louise Erdrich and the State of In-Betweenness

3.1.1. Life of Louise Erdrich and Being a Mixed-Blood

One of the long term effects of colonialism is the formation of mixed-blood identities. The term mixed blood refers to individuals of mixed European and American Indian identity. Louise Erdrich is one of the most prominent contemporary American Indian writers who have mixed blood identities. She is of Ojibwa, German-American and French descent therefore she is acceptable to the concept of mixed blood. She was born in Little Falls, Minnesota and grew up in Wahpeton, in North Dakota. Her mother was of French-Ojibwe descent and her father was a German. Her parents were educators in a school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She had seven siblings and this gave her a chance to experience a “closely knit family circle, [a] strong sense of connection to community” (Stookey, 1). She used to visit her grandparents living on the Turtle Mountain Reservation. There she used to see her maternal grandfather who was the last person to speak the Chippewa language of her tribe. Her article titled “Two Languages in Mind, but Just One in the Heart”, Erdrich tells that in fact she was unaware of her tribal language Ojibwemowin which was spoken by a small number of people. Not being brought up in a reservation, Erdrich seldom heard her native language except during prayers. She did not learn her native language until she enrolled in the Dartmouth College.

“Although Erdrich majored in English and creative writing during her college years, she took some courses as well in Native American studies and began to become interested in her own Ojibwa background because the college curriculum emphasized the importance of keeping your heritage” (Wong, 33).

She decided to learn her ancestral language in order to learn about her real hometown and understand significance of her Indian roots. Moreover, she had been feeling homesick and uncertain about her real place. She had lots of experiences with

the people from reservation communities, but her experience in Boston would change her life. In Boston, she met “many people who were, like her, of mixed-blood” and she found herself inclined to write about her experiences as a mixed-blood Native American. In an interview, she tells Michael Schumacher that “I didn’t choose the material; it chose me” (qtd in Chavkin and Chavkin, 175). By writing in English and using her own native roots as sources of her works, she regards herself “as an emissary of the between-world where cultures mix and collide” (Bacon, 1). From this time on, she started to explore American Indian ideas and perspectives via characters represented her both Euro-American and Native American side. In her poetry and novels she emphasizes her mixed blood cultural identity. She points out her in-between position in lots of her interviews. She highly believes in the idea of multiple identities. Thus, “she can be seen to inhabit a location on the interface between several cultures” (Egerer, 54). According to her, being called a mixed-blood Native American writer is only “an academic distinction” and its aim is to “attract people to courses where you can lump authors together. There is a mixture of people and characters in native fiction. I’m mixed. There’s no other way I would have the artistic truth and veracity to write about all those characters. Labels make a good headline. I don’t dislike it, but I found it tedious” (Spillman, 1996). So, she has an in-between cultural place which gives her the ability to write in two literary traditions and provides her with works which have a different quality. In her article named “Reading between Worlds: Narrativity in the Fiction of Louise Erdrich”, Catherine Rainwater reveals that “Erdrich’s concern with liminality and marginality pervades all levels of her texts. It affects not only characterization but also thematic and structural features” of her works (406). She is in a condition of being on the threshold or as Victor Turner ¹has labeled she is in “a between and betwixt space”. In his book *Mixedblood Messages* Louis Owens states that the reason of the emphasis on mixed blood identity “in fact is a constitutive element and a strategic articulation of the theoretically informed and political-conscious self-definition” (qtd in Balogh, 1). When she is asked to define herself, she has always stressed her in-between space.

¹ Victor Turner, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage”, **Between&Betwixt: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation**, L. Carus Mahdi, Open Court Publishing, Illinois, 1994, pp. 3-20.

In an interview by Allan Chavkin, she discusses herself as being “on the edge, have always been on the edge, flourish on the edge and I don’t think I belong anywhere else” (1994; 230). She sees her multicultural knowledge of writing and worldview as an advantage; but “a torn” advantage. A mixed-blood person cannot see one side as more crucial than the other side that’s why she/he is torn or feels on the edge. In the same context, mixed blood identities contribute to enriching the culture because of having multi-sidedness. This situation of in-betweenness again creates two oppositional views which belong to white and native America. As Louis Owens delineates that “white America is intensely jealous of the mixed-blood’s claim to an essential place in this land....Indian America, on the other hand, often bitterly resents the mixed-blood’s supposed ability to move between worlds...”(199). On both side there is a fascination with mixed-blood’s originality. This also points out that from both sides, the mixed-blood “exploits Indianness in a way unavailable to others” (Owens, 199). This, all the time, may not be an advantageous situation, though. For instance, Louise Erdrich was accused of being ambivalent about her Native American origins. This was also asserted by another renowned Native American writer, Leslie Marmon Silko. She accused Erdrich of “obscuring her Native American origins as well as misrepresenting the shared, communal experience of the oral tradition by selling out to academic, postmodern, so-called experimental influences” (Egerer, 64). Erdrich answers that “Of course, I’m ambivalent, I’m human. There are times I wish that I were one thing or the other, but I am a mixed-blood” (Chavkin, 1994; 238). Rather than having a fixed and unchanging identity; she prefers to be called a mixed blood since it gives her the advantage to move between different worldviews. She is trying to break up the suppositions which people expect native writers to tell about Indians and Indian life. Her writing style is an example of questioning and it is an innovative one. According to Rayna Green, for example, she “sets her characters both on a North Dakota reservation and in a little town near this reservation” which proves that “she is not caught between two worlds but balances” (qtd in Van Dyke, 67). That’s why she is not only presenting her characters and stories as being stuck in the past or in reservation life. Her characters live in the present and aspire for the future and the

setting can be multi-spatial; sometimes in the city, sometimes in reservation. She mixes different traditions, life styles and cultures.

3.1.2. Louise Erdrich's Writing Style and Intertextuality

Erdrich can belong to the Native American writers who are labeled by Gerald Vizenor as “postindian warriors” (4). Post Indian warriors resist dominant voices and “encounter their enemies with the same courage in literature as their ancestors once evinced on horses, and they create their own stories with a new sense of survivance” (Vizenor, 4). These writers create new ways of expressing themselves and telling stories which resist the Native American stereotypes. They “oust the inventions with humor, new stories and the simulations of survivance” (Vizenor, 5). They attempt to write new stories, define the real meaning of Indianness, and create a new narrative tradition which did not exist before. Thus, they create a circle which is “the place of contact between cultural identities, a bidirectional, and dynamic zone of resistance. Within that zone, [they] are the ones who get to make and tell [their] stories” (Owens, 47). Hence, as a Native American author, Erdrich expands some themes which are common among Indians and their cultural lives by molding them with contemporary ones. According to McCay, writers such as Erdrich, Silko and Momaday rewrite the Euro-American cultural myths from an American Indian perspective. Especially Erdrich grants her native characters to develop their own traditional and cultural identities (153). Characters are given chances to re-establish identities which had been before silenced by the white Americans. She also “combines humor with traditional themes to suggest alternatives to the pervasive influence of majority cultural values in the lives of her characters” (Ward, 275). The characters encounter with tragic events because of ongoing suppression and also demonstrate Indian humor. This is because of Erdrich's vision about survival. Her vision is closely related to humor or as she defines “survival humor which enables people to endure what they have to live” (Stookey, 20). So the other aspect of her novels is about the issue of survival. Survival is woven together with humor, love, loss and forgiveness. Loss can be interchangeable with death in some novels. Nevertheless, loss is not something that subverts people's lives, but a feeling people

should learn to deal with to formulate their future. It should not be a threatening force; but rather it should be a didactic one that can teach individuals to cope with the hazards of the life. Survival in her novels “depends upon a tricksterlike ability to adapt to changing circumstances...” (Stookey, 26). Characters, if have the flexibility to change and act like tricksters; they are the individuals who have the potential to succeed in life.

Erdrich's works “conform to late-twentieth century, postmodern fictional conventions and she acknowledges her debt to writers such as Faulkner...” (Brehm, 679). North Dakota is the location of most of her novels which is described as the Yoknapatawpha County. Like Faulkner, she uses multiple narrators from an imaginary landscape. She is known to have an experimental form of writing. She uses different narrative styles and plot structures. Her plots are “comprised of multiple, interconnected stories, do not necessarily unfold through a chronologically linear progression but rather serve as the threads whereby characters' stories are woven together” (Stookey, 14). Another element that makes her works unique is her narrative technique which combines oral tradition with storytelling. By incorporating different styles of narrative, she lets her characters speak straight to the reader and they are presented as intimate characters sharing their stories with the readers. In return, readers should read between the lines and fill in the gaps of texts. That's why

“the source of her storytelling technique is the secular anecdotal narrative process of community gossip, the storytelling sanction toward proper behavior that works so effectively in Indian communities to identify membership in the group and ensure survival of the group's values and its valued individuals” (Sanders, 36).

Characters generally are involved in intimate daily conversations that are presented in informal and colloquial style. To keep the storytelling tradition alive and guarantee the survival based on being together in the storytelling cycle, she shapes her novels in such a different style. She weaves her experimental techniques with elements from Ojibwa oral tradition. “In oral traditions people define themselves and their place in an imagined universe, a definition necessarily dynamic and requiring constantly changing stories” (Owens, 91). Her novels are populated with people who are constantly telling stories; even different versions of the same stories can be heard through the novels. This shows that “There is no quantifiable reality. Points of view

change the reality of a situation..." (Chavkin and Chavkin, 224). These stories are recounted traditionally and culturally. A story told is a new version of the same old story. It is retold and changed according to the storyteller's point of views. She/he can make changes which are important for her/him individually. That's why these stories are also told in an intimate atmosphere which makes the reader feel comfortable and open to both personal and communal voices. In lots of interviews, Erdrich draws attention on her father's being a good storyteller. She always notes the literary impacts of those stories told by her father and her grandparents. When she is asked how important the oral tradition in her works is, she answers that "it is the reason so many stories are written in the first person- I hear the story told" (Chavkin and Chavkin, 231). She believes in that way there is something strong about a told story. Thus, storytelling and oral traditions play an important role in her written texts. "Many people have commented on the way that Erdrich attempts to offer oral discourse in a written format" (Ruppert, 113). The novels have first person narrators and they talk as if they were in presence with the reader. Moreover, the characters are busy with communicating and recapturing their past with the reader. Her merging oral and written discourse can be seen in

"her constant switching from past to present tense, her emphasis on voice, her episodic structure, her use of dialect, her shifts from omniscient to first-person narration and her use of foreshadowing combine to draw an implied reader into the perceptual position of listeners" (Ruppert, 114).

So, storytelling and oral traditions are formative elements in her writings.

Louise Erdrich also uses intertextuality by giving references to other older texts of literature. However, in Erdrich's case, there are two kinds of intertextuality. In the first case, "intertextuality is used in the sense of recycling of older texts" and the other case is used "to connect each novel to others and thus form a quartet" (Quennet, 72). Intertextuality is a phenomenon both in postmodern literature and in Native American literature. From Native American side, it represents interwoven cultural experiences and lives. The first type of intertextuality in Erdrich's works presents allusions to older well known works. For instance, she alludes to *Moby Dick* in *Love Medicine*, to *House Made of Dawn* in *the Bingo Palace*. In fact, using intertextual connections among her own novels is a more distinctive trait of her

writing style. “Erdrich’s novels are similarly linked together through many of the same characters’ appearances from book to book” (Rainwater, 1999; 131). Readers can easily see the similar patterns and intertextual allusions of her novels’ references to each other. This intertextuality is obvious in her first four novels. Each novel gives backward or further information that explain events or characters from other books. Readers can hear the same stories with slight changes retold in different books. “Strategies to form a connection among the four novels include: quotations, using of the same characters, an anecdotal style and the intratextual function of allusions” (Quennet, 72). The four novels can be seen as a quartet, each constituting a sequel. Erdrich’s other works has intertextual connections to each other either overtly or obliquely. As Stookey has mentioned “the only book not at all linked to the others is *The Crown of Columbus*” which she wrote with her husband Michael Dorris (8).

Erdrich’s fiction, like other contemporary American Indian writers, focus on the theme of home and homecoming. Although home is a central theme, it is not clearly defined in the novels. The characters are presented as trying to create a home for themselves or understanding the complex meaning of it. It is complicated because they “are engaged in the process of re-negotiating their hybridity, a process to which their perceptions of home are central” (Egerer, 55). Since the characters are mixed-bloods, they do not have a clear notion of home in their minds. They are the characters who are in-between, wandering and striving to find a real home. That’s why “Erdrich’s texts worry the lines between home and exile” (Egerer, 58). There are different ways of understanding home due to in-between characters. While searching for a definition of home, her characters often try to return to the reservations and experience the heart-breaking consequences of returning home. In relation with the theme of home, she expresses a strong sense of community. This comes from the influence of her background. She was born in a small town and grew up there having devotion to family life and community. As Stookey has analyzed, none of her novels have focused on a single character, but rather they focus on communities, family lives and interconnectedness (10). Moreover, Wong has mentioned that “for Erdrich it is the community that serves as protagonist” in her novels (173). Another theme that Erdrich aims to exhibit in her works is the significance of past. However, she does not only “aim to revise the record of the past,

but the shape of the future”, too (Rainwater, 1999; 26). The past has been recollected via stories told by the characters and it is correlated with the future. Moreover, “the past, in particular the history of interaction between immigrant and indigenous peoples, is ever present in her stories, and that history figures prominently in the nature of the changes to be found” (Chavkin, 1999; 8). Change is also a recurrent theme in the novels and enables characters to look up to the future. It is also another means for their survival or adaptation; a prerequisite in changing world. In this changing atmosphere, the characters can comment on the future events which will constitute “the next episodes in their (hi)stories” (Chavkin, 1999; 8). The past is important; but they have lots of concerns about the future while telling their stories. There are stories within stories which combine the past and the future in the present time. By adding such elements to her works, Erdrich also aims to preserve her Ojibwe cultural tradition, too. In order to immerse the reader in her native world, she prefers to add ceremonial time concept, which is one of the basic features of native cultures. Generally Western readers expect time to be mechanical and linear and follow a chronological line. However, Erdrich simultaneously uses mechanic and ceremonial time. As Paula Gunn Allen points out, in American Indian novels the events seem to encode according to chronological time, but this continuance is cut by flashbacks, allusions to the future and different types of narration. As well, “Erdrich represents ceremonial time as cyclic rather than linear and as accretive rather than incremental, cyclic time also differently defines and distinguishes momentous and ordinary events” (Rainwater, 1999; 108). She juxtaposes ceremonial time with linear time. That’s why she shakes “western conventional notions” which puts importance on the chronological sequence of events in literary works. This breakdown of chronological time in her novels produces “one of the signal frustrations of narrativity” (Rainwater, 1990; 415). Her novels are episodic which demonstrate the influences of both oral tradition and ceremonial time usage. By all means, she uses linear and ceremonial time together by presenting again an experimental narrative technique.

On the whole, Erdrich’s novels show that:

“how the use of multiple narrators helps alleviate the alienation of individual characters; how stories which are half-told; ties characters together and helps individuals and communities adapt to changing

times; and how achronological, non-linear narrative structures recall the security of a web of stories, all tied to one another in a representation of personal stability and cultural survival” (Reid, 70).

With their styles and themes, Erdrich’s works “reflect the ambivalence and tension marking the lives of people, much like herself, from dual cultural backgrounds” (Rainwater, 1990; 405). She presents characters who are American Indians, mixed-bloods, marginal and culturally alienated. This status, as Rainwater states, can be both an advantage and a disadvantage. It is an advantage because being born as a Native American mixed blood can give a person knowledge of both cultures. Nonetheless, this person can be stuck in two conflicting value systems from which she/he can free herself/himself by choosing only one. This can lead one to internalize western values and to distinct herself/himself from the cultural uniqueness of native traditions. She/he can internalize lots of prejudices about her/his condition. Louis Owens emphasizes Erdrich’s “portrayal of the internalized colonialism and racism that destroy Native people and communities” (73). This may affect their worldviews, cultural and social lives. This would certainly affirm one of the probable disadvantages of being a mixed-blood. However, Erdrich has been trying to create a different writing tradition which involves both of her worlds. This includes not only a shared past with the indigenous peoples but also her postmodern side with white-American values. That’s why when white-Americans read such a literature; they “face a particular challenge of mediating between the familiar literary patterns that arise from their own traditions and other, perhaps unfamiliar patterns that elicit alternative cultural meanings” (Pittman, 777). Thus, combining and writing within two different traditions of literature, Louise Erdrich is a successful reminder of mixed-blood literary conventions.

3. 1. 1. The Analysis of *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*

Love Medicine is Louise Erdrich’s first highly well-known novel which was published in 1984. It was one of the novels of the quartet also consisting of *The Beet Queen*, *Tracks* and *The Bingo Palace*. *Love Medicine* demonstrates details of American Indians’ daily lives. The novel begins in 1981, and then starts to tell about

the events in 1934 and it goes chronologically until the events finish in 1984. It recounts “fifty years in the lives of three generations of five related families” (Stookey, 29). Mostly it tells the lives of two American Indian families, the Kashpaws and the Morrisseys, on and off the reservation. It takes place on the Turtle Mountain Reservation in North Dakota.

Because of not following a linear chronology, the novel is episodic. Moreover, most of the time it is difficult to provide well-ordered plot structure for *Love Medicine*. The novel constitutes of stories within stories told by characters in first person narration. So we hear a group of storytellers who are the protagonists of the book. As Hertha D. Wong states, Erdrich prefers “isolating a protagonist in *Love Medicine*, it would most likely to be the community itself” rather than having main characters (qtd in Stookey, 34). Also, the novel is up to two traditions: the traditional Ojibwa culture and the Western traditions. She again juxtaposes two cultures while making up her stories. The stories include families who “feud, intermarry, raise children, suffer the ravages of alcoholism, experience happiness and tragedy”; but they are wise to understand the fact that “they lead lives that seem little different from other poor Americans” (Ward, 275). There have always been cultural, spiritual and individual anxieties in their lives. Regarding this, as Karla Sanders supports her ideas by setting forth that Erdrich’s novels describe “the valiant survival of Native American people and their struggle to regain their nearly forgotten cultural heritage” (129). The characters strive for harmonizing their native background with modern white American values in the changing time and also they attempt to adapt to this new atmosphere. However, adaptation would not be possible in most of her characters. They try to form their identities which are totally not Native Americans, but mixed-bloods. Andrea P. Balogh also focuses on Erdrich’s portrayal of “the Euro-American stereotypical constructions of the Indian in *Love Medicine* and her engagement in cross-cultural writing, shaping hybrid character of her fiction (2). Erdrich stresses her mixed-blood origin in the novels with characters who struggle to remain as natives like Nector Kashpaw. On the other hand, there are characters that live off reservation with the white ways such as Albertine Johnson. Albertine leaves the reservation to live “in a white woman’s basement” (LM, 7) for studying nursing in the city of Fargo. This choice of living the white ways keeps her out of the

reservation, the family is reluctant to integrate her into the community again. Hence, she fits into neither world, indeed. The book tells this event about Albertine's experience of feeling displaced. In fact, the book starts by telling about June Kashpaw who "was walking down the clogged main street of oil bottomtown Williston, North Dakota" (LM, 1). She is waiting for the bus to take her to the reservation. And after she experiences a series of events, she finds herself in the middle of Easter storm and eventually dies. Afterwards, the death of June is the central theme of both stories and lives of the characters. The novel closes with June's son Lipsha Morrissey's discovery of his real heritage and helping his father Gerry Nanapush to escape to Canada. The novel opens and closes with returning of a mother and her son to their real lands and identities.

Continuing where *Tracks* ends, *Four Souls* relates the destructive results of Fleur Pillager's leaving home for taking revenge from the man, John James Mauser who stole her land. The event occurs between the places which are "the Mauser mansion in a ritzy part of Minneapolis and North Dakota reservation" (Beidler, 15). Fleur takes her mother's name Four Souls thinking that the name "would build her up, protect her, and it was true, the original Four Souls was a powerful woman" (FS, 46). She takes the name of her mother for its strength. However, "when she took the Four Souls name, she brought down on herself not only the great strength, but the sorrow and complexity of the woman who come before" (FS, 48). She is destined for complicated events which she will endure during her revenge times in means of her name's strength. Like the other novels of Erdrich, this novel is also intertwined with multiple narrators. Most part of the novel is narrated by Nanapush who leads Fleur with his wife in her way to survival. He resembles Fleur's story to his own revenge from his wife Margaret who is also the narrator of two chapters about Fleur's healing. The other main narrator is Polly Elizabeth Gheen who is the sister of John James Mauser's ex-wife, Placide. By Fleur's entering into her life and house, she would undergo a complete change and renewal. All these narrators are woven together and basically include such themes as "Polly Elizabeth's inner struggle with her subordinate status, the comic strife that marks Nanapush and Margaret's love; Nanapush's attempts at revenge against his old enemy Shesheep; and Margaret's vision and the making of her great-grandmother's medicine dress" (Beidler, 56).

What is ironic and probably most devastating about the novel's theme is that Fleur's passionate revenge is complicated by her tender feelings for the man who abuses both her land and her personality. Her revenge has turned into compassion which discourages her from taking her revenge. This quotation can exemplify her concession to Mauser: "She had come to kill and humiliate and take back her land, which he had stolen so carelessly that he wasn't aware of it, but then Mauser made himself her dog anyway and wanted her in such an absence of self that she put aside her knife" (FS, 73). Moreover, Fleur begins to heal him secretly because she wants him to be healthy before she kills her victim. Accidentally, she becomes pregnant for a boy who she will never name. The boy is not normal; but he is "strange in the head" (FS, 200). Nonetheless, he has an ability of being a good poker player. This would enable Fleur to regain her land from Jewett Parker Tatro who is the Indian agent on the reservation. By returning to reservation as in a manner of a white-like woman, she finally begs for healing and returning which is led by Margaret. However, at the end; whether she heals or not is not obvious.

3. 2. 1. The Connection of Family and Home

In her novels, Louise Erdrich focuses on the issues of community, family and the significance of home. Home can be considered as the smallest and the most crucial part of community. Moreover, in most cases, it carries a spiritual meaning for most of the characters in Erdrich's novels. According to Jepson, home "refers both to a physical place and a network of belonging and history" (26). In most of Erdrich's novels, characters are constantly in search of a home in which they can find safety and happiness. What gives a home its intimate meaning is family members. That's why family unit is essential for the protection and well-being of the community; since it is the basic unit that provides its members with a sense of belonging. In fact, in most of American Indian novels, the traditional meaning of home includes "for any people- land, family, the elders, the clan, kin, animals, plants, stones and the gods. These walls adjoin, rather than separate" (Lincoln, 190). According to Nanapush who is one of Erdrich's most significant characters and who exists in most of her novels epitomizes this idea in that following statement: "We call the earth

Grandmother. We ask her help when times are difficult. When we are lonely, or harrowed by death, we throw ourselves upon her and weep onto her breast. All that we are and all that we survive upon comes from the Grandmother” (FS, 155). Such a statement also reflects especially Erdrich’s holistic vision by which she combines elements in her novels: “survival and continuity depend on a character’s ability to internalize both.... the past and present” (Barry, 123). When the past is united with the present, all things created can lead a harmonious life and community. In return, characters have a strong sense of commitment to their lands, communities and family lives. Like Nanapush in *Four Souls*, these characters live according to tribal traditions and that’s why the elder people always advocate for the preservation of the community, family and home. Nanapush is a traditionalist and works for the well-being of the community and its families. For example, Jill Jepson sees Nanapush as a mediator who attempts to form allegiance to community and family. Jepson states that “Nanapush promotes connections between tribal members and aids them when they are trying to forge bonds” (qtd in Wilson, 28).

3.2.1.1. The Importance of Family

Tribal life consists of these bonds and familial solidarity which keep communities alive and communal relations proper. Native American ideas about family are really high of importance. They have a well-ordered family network because they believe in the welfare of people with interconnected relationships. For this reason, a family plays a key role in the well-being of individuals. As Kenneth Lincoln states “Tribal life centers in a common blood, a shared and inherited body of tradition, a communal place [home], a mutual past and present: the key concept is integrated relationship, as an individual within a family” (45). People get together to share experiences communally “in the circle of life” (Lincoln, 45). To American Indians, the family means the whole tribe- it is not just the people who are related with blood or a family which is nuclear. The notions about nuclear family are associated mostly with Western values. Whereas, American Indians have extended families. That’s why “the Native American family allows for various ties of kinship-including spiritual kinship and clan membership-joining the individuals living

together in one house” (Rainwater, 1990; 418). Whether they are tied with kinship or not, people can live together and share the same house. This ensures a spiritual and physical togetherness to the family as a whole. In *Love Medicine*, Albertine begins to tell the scenery on the reservation during return trip. She comes across a house which shows the connectedness of the families. She describes the small and cramped house where her aunts and uncles grew up as in a sacred place that unites all family members: “The main house, where all of my aunts and uncles grew up, is one big square room with a cooking shack tacked onto it” (LM, 12). The house has been taken care of Aurelia since the old ones moved to town. It was the home where her relatives lived, however “it was like a communal property for the Kashpaws. There was always someone camped out or sleeping on her fold-up cots” (LM, 29). So, this home depends on interrelatedness and serves as a communal and spiritual bond between them. Kenneth Lincoln indicates that the family unit in Erdrich’s novels is “an extended family that reciprocates among people, places, history, flora and fauna, spirits and gods” (42). June could be the best example of this interrelation. She has some relations to everyone in some ways:

“June was raised by Great-uncle Eli, the old bachelor in the family....After she had grown up and looked around for a while, June decided on my uncle, Gordie Kashpaw, and married him even though they had to run away to do it. They were cousins, but almost like brother and sister. Grandma wouldn’t let them in the house for a year, she was so angry” (LM, 8).

By consent or descent, June has a huge family and she is so much integrated in their lives that the whole story of *Love Medicine* is related to her. It can be inferred that the family unit has a very welcoming nature that provides not only physical shelter but also psychological support and happiness to its members. In fact, home and family concepts transcend the highly-known meanings.

This is also true for the adopted children such as June and her son, Lipsha. Within the nuclear Western family values, they are considered “as outcasts” (Rainwater, 1990; 418) when compared to the real biological children. However, “the idea that biological children are somehow superior or preferred over other children who belong in a nuclear family is a western-European, not a Native American, concept” (Rainwater, 1990; 418). It would be true to assert that there have been arguments about the real condition and importance of Marie Kashpaw’s

biological children in contrast to her adopted children. Marie behaves very welcomingly and tenderheartedly to June and Lipsha. Also, she confesses that “[she] didn’t want June Morrissey when they first brought her to [her] house. But [she] ended up keeping her the way [she] would later end up keeping her son, Lipsha, when they brought him up the steps” (LM, 85). This results in the fact that “biological family is not as important to clan concepts as integration and acceptance into the community and family” (Beidler, 87). This is just the opposite of the values which are held in traditional western family units and understandings. That’s why, “Erdrich’s texts deemphasize the importance of biological ties and emphasize the significance of other, particularly spiritual, ties of friendship and love” (Rainwater, 1990; 419-420) to exemplify the welcoming nature of extended native families.

Because of having such an extended understanding of family, members of the families should have communal lives rather than individual ones. Here the distinction between native and white Americans can be again noted. To the white-Americans, “the individual is often the ultimate reality, and therefore consciousness is the medium, repository, and arbiter of knowledge” (Bevis, 590). In contrast, American Indians value “transpersonal self and this transpersonal self composed of society, past and place conferred identity and defined being” (590). That’s why lonely individuals are not esteemed and admired in the tribal communities. This could be exemplified in the twins, Eli and Nector. As Pittman asserts Eli is the symbol of tribal community whereas Nector is of individualism. This occurs because of their mother, Marie, who lets government agencies take Nector to the boarding school; but she manages to hide Eli. “In that way she gained a son on either side of the line. Nector came home from boarding school knowing white reading and writing, while Eli knew the woods” (LM, 19). By being educated in white men’s rules, Nector paid a high cost to be a free individual; he lost his mind while “Eli was still sharp” (LM, 19). Nector, who has to concede from his communal identity and leave both his family and home, fails at the end. Thus, in their case “there are serious implications for the maintenance of tribal unity” (Pittman, 785).

To maintain tribal unity and also harmony among families, one should know about her/his family and stay together with them. From *Love Medicine*, Albertine and Lipsha can be exemplary. Albertine knows her true biologic mother and father so she

is very strong. Louis Owens says that “Albertine’s strength comes from this unshakable knowledge of who she is and from her awareness that the past is a formative part of the present” (qtd. in Wong, 58). On the other hand, Lipsha is a very weak character because he “does not know who his parents are; he lacks an identity” (Owens, qtd in Wong, 59). He also believes his mother “would have drowned [him]” (LM, 40) and does not care who his father is. Fleur, in *Four Souls*, can be examined in the same perspective. Fleur “leaves her culture, community and family-three major building blocks of home’s construction- for her independently selfish desire for revenge” (Wilson, 34). In the beginning of the novel, Fleur is described as a very strong and determined woman. She is on her way to take her revenge. However, gradually, she evolves into a weak woman who lacks self-determination and she is isolated from the people around her. The reason why she is employed at Mauser’s house is also because she is an “Indian woman [who] had no family connections” (FS, 13). This is a proof of her weak family ties and her state of un-belongingness.

In *Love Medicine*, the families; the Morrisseys and the Kashpaws are all unusual in the sense that they do not fit into any traditional and modern family definitions. They are a large extended family who can relate to each other very strongly and at the same time can be very indifferent and distant. Although they might be seen as a disintegrated family at first, they are united at the end owing to June. June, who functions as a mediator among family members, becomes an inspiration to each and everyone of the family in their storytelling. Every character has something to say about June because they also discover that she is very important in their lives. Moreover, the stories about her become “not only the source of nostalgia and amusement; but also a cherished memory invoked to strengthen the bond between the members of the family” (Egerer, 75). She is presented as a character that brings the family together to form an extended family unit with a home, either real or spiritual one. In return, the characters also notice her importance in their lives and stories. So, telling stories about June is in fact “less a piercing together of remnants and fragments to form a seamless whole than celebration of the many pieces that together made up June” (Reid, 71).

3.2.1.2. The Meaning of Home

In both *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*, there are characters that are at first removed away from their homes; but eventually return and quest for finding their identity. In lots of American Indian novels, “coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call regressing to a place, a past where one has been before, is not only the primary story, it is a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good” (Bevis, 582). The characters simply leave in the hope of catching better opportunities or starting a new better life; but what they end up with is white men’s rules and mind-set. Thus, each departure serves to isolate them from their communities, families and cultures. In each case, they experience the devastating effects of this change. The first novel *Love Medicine* “begins with characters separated by time and space and family relationships and gradually pulls some of them home” (Gleason, qtd in Wong, 126). What’s more, the novel’s “first and final stories focus on homecomings, one failed, one successful” (Wong, 94). In *Four Souls*, on Fleur’s leaving home, her life alters that’s why she is to return to her home and family. *Love Medicine* starts with the struggle of June Kashpaw trying to return home. From the beginning, the reader can sense that there is something problematic about her return. Her ideal home “is not simply defined by her desire to return to reservation; it is encapsulated in what she needs a home to live” (Wilson, 131). June is considered as a “misfit on both sides of the border”, both on and off the reservation (Egerer, 72). When Albertine arrives home, she comes across the woman of her family talking about June’s death. Aurelia explains “June’s homecoming as a suicide” (Egerer, 72) because she “decides to walk home” (LM, 6) back in a very bad weather. In fact, no matter what happens, June wants to reach her home. However, Aurelia answers by saying that “What did she have to return come home after all? Nothing!” (LM, 13). So June lacks a home where she can belong and a family who she can lean on. Assumably, she might see her home- reservation “as a trap” (Silberman, qtd in Wong, 142). So she leaves; but like Eli, she is “a nothing-and-nowhere person” (LM, 92). She can be considered as an in-between or alienated character since “it transpires that home, for June, was never a happy or easy place. She is an outsider in her own family, in her own community, and this does not change when she leaves the reservation for the big

cities" (Egerer, 75). She never fits into or belongs to any place-home- that's why she cannot own a well-ordered family, too. In her case, "there is no family; there is no home" (Wilson, 73). She may also be going through the effects of "cultural alienation" (Nelson, 6). She knows she belongs nowhere and she cannot socially identify herself with a place. Losing her family, land, community and identity results in her alienation as she denies a kind of belonging. According to Louis Owens, June "assumes the role of a permanent traveler, infinitely dislocated with no family/community/tribe to expect her return" (qtd in Wong, 56). It is probable that she expects her death during this homecoming. The cost she pays for leaving home and family is death. Anyway, she only longs for a home to live at the end. Her return is unsuccessful; but Lipsha has undergone a successful homecoming which obliquely affects June. Lipsha has been a weak character because of not knowing his real parents in the beginning. As a sign of storytelling, "Lipsha Morrissey's identity and being are defined by what he hears about himself, his parents and his ancestors" (Ruppert, 114). He counts on other characters' telling about him and interpreting the events in his life. He seems to believe them, but at the end he identifies with his family and returns to reunite with them. However, he is referred to as "the biggest waste on reservation" (LM, 230) and ironically he has the special power of medicine. Lipsha represents both traditions-Christian and Indian: however, he is a peculiar mixture of two cultures. On the one hand he can "[grow] impatient" in using his love potion and on the other he can "[doubt] his power, partly owing to his Euro-American beliefs" (Rainwater, 1999; 93). His inability to show his skill is embodied in Nector's choking to death. In the novel's chapter titled as "Love Medicine", Lipsha Morrissey causes Nector's death by choking him through the love medicine. In this chapter, Nector is invited to a meal prepared by Lipsha and Marie. Their aim is to make Nector forget his far-flung affection for Lulu. However, Nector dies in this tragicomic choking scene. It could be commented that he feels culturally displaced since he is abandoned both by his parents and loved ones. That's why his problems result from "a split in his family, the old rift between the Pillagers and Morrisseys" (Egerer, 78). After Lulu explains who his real parents are, Lipsha understands that he feels "a strong connection, maybe strong enough to lead [him] onward in [his] quest. [He] had to get down to the bottom of [his] heritage" (LM, 342). This quest involves

in “the search for identity, for the knowledge of the place where he belongs” (Stookey, 41). He starts his journey back home sure of what kind of person he will turn to be at the end. Consequently, by using “June’s car” (LM, 357), he carries both his father to Canada and his mother to home. While driving, he reaches the river which makes him think of June and “there was nothing to do but cross the water, and bring her home” (LM, 367). Lipsha finally crosses the bridge where “readers are reminded of all those who crossed before him and... Lipsha’s coming home thus completes the cycle of returns that began with his mother’s walk across the snow” (Stookey, 41).

In June’s case, leaving home and not knowing her family result in her death whereas Fleur has had to pay more severely for her mistake about leaving family-her daughter- and her home. She has to leave these things behind to guarantee the re-owning of her family’s lands. As her story unravels, her revenge-taking quest has turned out to be the cause which decimates her and alters her life completely. “Fleur’s sojourn leaves her alcoholic, daughterless, and the mother of Mauser’s mixed-blood, mentally deficient son” (Wilson, 20). Leaving home is especially disadvantageous. It can be assumed as a damaging activity since the characters pay high costs. These costs are tried to be compensated by the idea of a home. As Jill Jepson argues that “in homing stories, the characters do not find themselves through independence but rather discover value and meaning by returning to their homes, pasts and people” (25). To leave her home also means for Fleur leaving her daughter behind. As a result, her daughter will always hate Fleur. This shows one of the most devastating results of leaving home. Margaret states “I knew of Lulu’s hatred of her mother. The story was not hard to assemble” (FS, 183). Fleur herself is also without a family as Mauser has reminded to Polly: “She hasn’t any [family]. She’s the last of them” (FS, 130). Furthermore, Polly takes Fleur as the maid because she is happy that she has no family connections. To elucidate this, Nanapush reveals the fact that “[he] shared with Fleur the mysterious self-contempt of the survivor. There were times [they] hated who [they] were, and who [they] had to become, in order not to follow those [they] loved in to the next world” (FS, 21). The other devastating result of home leaving is Fleur’s addiction to alcohol. Although she has attempted to hide her drinking habit, Polly announces “it was obvious she had been drinking” (FS,

122). At first, it has started “In order not to let the child out too soon”; but then “the liquor sneaked up and grabbed her, got into her mind and talked to her ... the whiskey thinking, whiskey thoughts” (FS, 75). As it is told that she is the last person of the Pillagers, she represents her family. However, Nanapush explains that “to see her as a common drunk would take something out of every one of us” (FS, 194). After Mauser’s finances problems, Fleur has become conscious of the fact that she should return home to assemble and protect her family and land. Nevertheless, “the problem with her return is that she comes back as a different woman. No longer is Fleur seen as the master of her own destiny” (Wilson, 39). Rather, people in her community-family wonder and try to understand “whether the slim woman in the white car, and the whiter suit fitted to the lean contours of her body, was the ghost of the girl we knew or Fleur herself” (FS, 182). They cannot recognize her because she has changed into a rich white-like woman. She evolves into a type of woman that she herself would have hated. For that reason, “change is chaos and pain” (FS, 210). Erdrich emphasizes the fact that people fail when they are alone and away from their communities and families. The message that is given in both novels is the importance of home and the pivotal role it plays in the well-being of individuals. This home always should not be regarded in the physical sense; since people sometimes return to their community and family physically; but not mentally. This can be seen in the case of June and Fleur. “Thus, Fleur must again count on her family, culture, and beliefs in order to survive a seemingly possible exile” (Wilson, 41). Fleur leaves; but then she will undergo Margaret’s healing and help. Margaret considers Fleur guilty and tells the pains she has to bear;

“Stinging flies will torture your skin and the zagimeg will suck your blood. This dress will allow them to bite right through....At night the wind will rake you, cold off the lake. The cold air will clench around your heart and you will be devoured by the cold...No food will pass your lips for the eight days you will lie on this rock...This dress will intensify your hunger...(FS, 205).

Additionally, Margaret comments on how this medicine dress protects Fleur. For after these pains, the dress “will heal [her] wounds so that [she] will be fresh....this medicine dress will not let you starve to death” (FS, 205). She has to believe in her family and togetherness. Thus, once you leave home and your family, you have to be ready to endure the consequences. In a nutshell, “the repercussions of

rejecting or forgetting home's tenets and power is clear, but home is also depicted as resilient and forgiving. Fleur undergoes and survives the harsh re-baptism into the home she at the outset rejects for revenge" (Wilson, 42). Rather than searching outside for the essential necessities for happiness like love, affection and peace, Fleur should notice that they exist in very close proximity. They can be found in one's family and community. On the whole, in both novels families are broken down; but reformulated. The things for survival can be found in families. However, this reformulation is not always possible in its real sense.

3. 2. 1. 3. Land as the Source of Identity

It can be deducted that family and home relations in the broader term of community are key elements for the characters' survival and happiness. Besides home and family concepts, indigenous people also derive their identities and attain their survival from the land. For indigenous people land is not conceived as a commodity, instead it is a sacred concept to which all peoples have commitment. In her article named "Where I Ought to Be", Louise Erdrich explains this traditional view of land as "where one place has been inhabited for generations, the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history" (Wong, 43). For her, "people and place are inseparable" (43). Land and people are thought as a whole. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that there is an interrelatedness and interconnection of land, people, community, family and cultures. People should stay interconnected to their lands to form their stable and healthy identities. Moreover, in her same article, Erdrich depicts that each place holds special personal and communal meanings and people have strong devotions to landscapes for "truly knowing a place provides the link" (Erdrich, qtd in Wong, 49) between people's identity and the land itself. That's why Erdrich's works present that "identity arises partly through iconic spatial relations to the land" (Rainwater, 1999; 87). This view is obvious in her presentation of Albertine's, Lipsha's, June's and other characters' connectedness to the land. At the end of the novel, when Lipsha Morrissey crosses the water for bringing his mother home, "we know that Lipsha has finally arrived at a coherent sense of his place within the community (including the land itself) from

which identity springs” (Wong, 57). Before living her tragedy, June has also tried “to adopt a woodlands tradition that is no longer workable in most cases, she cannot carry this into her adult present life that made her childhood secure” (Barry, 124). In fact, this break in her life results from her inability to stay on her land. Due to the fact that she is away from her land, there are lots of fractures in her identity. So, the task which is unfulfilled by a mother is achieved by her son. Like Lipsha, also for Eli, Moses, Marie and Lulu “who embody the core of a tradition and its culture, connection to the land is an essential component of identity” (Stookey, 46). Lulu is displayed as an independent woman in tribal settings. She is also so powerful that she can challenge by refusing “to move one foot farther west” (LM, 282) after Nector signs the paper which will “turn [her] form [her] house” (LM, 282). Lulu here presents an indigenous perspective about her ancestral land by refusing to leave. When Nector comes as a tribal chairman to get her land, she explains the whole truth about the real owners of these lands and their commitment to their land: “If we’re going to measure land, let’s measure right. Every foot and inch you’re standing on, even if it’s on the top of the highest skyscraper, belongs to the Indians. That’s the real truth of the matter” (LM, 282). Because as long as she is alive, “it is essential to her the idea of communal identity” (Pittman, 787) which can be built upon the land. Lulu refuses to leave until her house burns down. She sojourns in the ruins of her damaged house until the tribe builds her a new home which is “on a strip of land rightfully repurchased from a white farmer. That land was better than Henry’s even, with a view overlooking town. From there I could see everything. I accepted their restitution” (LM, 288). Seemingly, she can accept such an offer only because the land has been repossessed from a white farmer and given to a native who is the real owner. Afterwards, the new location of her home and land have “become the regular nest of Lamartines” and “the Lamartine homesite” (LM, 289-290). Land shapes their identities which are formed according to both communal and familial norms. Here, land is compromised of geographical, cultural and social locations which hold special meanings for indigenous people. American Indians were deprived of their lands, slaughtered intentionally and located on the reservations which undermined their status. Seeing their lands appropriated slowly by the Europeans and later by the white-Americans has been a deleterious intrusion to their worlds and understandings.

American Indians have been forced to remain in their gradually dwindling reservations. However, the land is sacred to them and taking these lands from them would mean taking their lives. In the same manner, in *Love Medicine*, the fields are described as “casual and lonely” (112) (qtd in Wong, 151). The lands were once abundant, vast and sacred, yet they were turned into farming areas by the whites. Land as a usable commodity is unacceptable to the native peoples. That’s why their lands are stricken with deterioration and anguish. To prevent this, one should not leave her/his own homeland. This assessment is epitomized through Marie. She acknowledges her connections and commitment to the land. She has chosen to be a traditional native woman who is devoted to indigenous ways of living and native worldviews. Through her character development, it is possible to assume that she has gone through a long way; she starts as a mixed-blood taking fancy to white ways of living and ends up as a traditional character on her native land with a truly defined identity. For example, she stays at the Senior Citizens, which were established “to mimic[s] the physical design and intention of both reservations and early boarding schools” and “to alienate natives from traditional lands and thought in order to assimilate them in the western world” (Wilson, 137-138). However, she still manages to remain loyal to her native land and indigenous culture:

“Since she has lived among other old people at the Senior Citizens, Marie had started speaking the old language, falling back through time to the words that Lazarres had used among themselves, shucking off the Kashpaw pride, yet holding to the old strengths Rushes Bear had taught her, having seen the new, the Catholic, the Bureau, fail her children, having known how comfortless words of English sounded in her ears” (LM, 263).

This quotation implies that the intenseness of her indigenous background cannot be disregarded. For this reason, Marie might be recognized as a successful and traditional character. In the same sense, it is possible to assert that she has strong roots because of having lived with Rushes Bear who is one of the strongest personas among the families in the book. However, before that, she describes herself as a lost being. When she is away from her land and her people- alone in the Sacred Heart Convent; she says “I despaired. I felt I had no inside voice, nothing to direct me, no darkness no Marie” (LM, 54). It is apparent that she associates selflessness with physical displacement. After joining the company of Rushes Bear, she finds her true

self. Wilson also explains Marie's getting together with Lulu as an intention "to regain traditional native custom, culture and lands" (138). They come together to strengthen their indigenous sides:

"With Nector Kashpaw gone, the two of them were now free to concentrate their powers, and once they got together they developed strong and hotheaded followings among our local agitating group of hard-eyes, a determined bunch who grew out their hair in braids and ponytails and dressed in ribbon shirts and calico to make their point. Traditionals. Back-to-the-buffalo types" (LM, 303).

Marie also feels strong connections to the past that's why she has "never caught up with the present" (LM, 303) as it is clear in her way of dressing up. Presumably, belonging to the past reminds her of the old ways of living and tolerance shared by all Native Americans. It is this memory that leads Marie to take Lulu to her family and helps her unite with them. Hence, Marie can be seen as a character who feels "the need for belonging, continues her development as a familial icon of safety and love and concludes with her role as a collaborative, behind scenes tribal director" (Wilson, 138) and she still remains "true to herself, her family, her community and her land" (139).

In *Four Souls*, after Fleur comes to believe that she should protect her family and preserve her home by recapturing her lost lands. Losing land means physical, mental and cultural devastation for natives. Thus, seizure of native lands by whites and especially through illegal maneuvering had devastating results. John James Mauser is the white broker made tremendous profits by illegally taking native land from their owners. The location of Mauser's own house was also built upon the land where once Fleur's tribe had lived. Just in the beginning of the novel, it is explained by Nanapush that "During a bright thaw in the moon of little spirit, an Ojibwe woman gave birth on the same ground where, much later, the house of John James Mauser was raised" (FS, 4). What's more, "there is no question that a number of people of all ages lost their lives on account of this house" (FS, 8). These comments elucidate the sacredness of the lands. On the other hand, this also meant these sacred lands of indigenous peoples are spoiled dishonestly and as a consequence initiated their suffering. What seems to be the most serious thing about this corruption is that it has been performed for years by people such as Mauser. Because;

“he took advantage of one loophole and then another. How in his earliest days, handsome and clever, he had married young Ojibwe girls straight out of boarding school, applied for their permits to log off the allotment lands they had inherited. Once their trees were gone he had abandoned his young wives, one after the next” (FS, 23).

Returning as an estranged person to her land and family, Fleur knows that “her spirit was still longing for her old place, her land, her scraped-bare home that had nothing on it but kind popple, raspberry bushes, and cabin caved in from last year’s snow” (FS, 184). Her longing for her home and her desire for her land are the greatest motives for her revengeful acts. Fleur’s next story about land re-possession reveals that Tatro owns her land she plans to get back. This demand is realized through her unnamed son: “The boy got the deal and it was then that life of him showed Fleur’s part of him, the Pillager” (FS, 197). Thanks to land again, the boy is affiliated to his mother’s family which indirectly gives him an identity. For Nanapush, who stays on the reservation, land and home represent “the traditional Chippewa way of life with its loosely knit family groups” (Egerer, 92). The land is important for Nanapush because he knows family, home, community and identity are all bound to the land. Thus, he analyzes the change brought up with the illegal land acquisition of the colonizers’:

“We were snared in laws by then. ...Attempting to keep what was left of our land was like walking through a landscape of webs. With a flare of ink in the capital city, rights were taken and given...We acquired an Allotment Agent to make it easier for us to sell our land to white people...Land dwindled until there wasn’t enough to call a hunting territory” (FS, 79).

The native people gradually get accustomed to the white men’s perception about the meaning of land. They learn greed and what it means to profit from the land. As a consequence, “Where before [they] always had a reason for each object [they] kept, now the sole reason was wanting it. People traded away their land for pianos they couldn’t play and bought clothing too fancy for their own everyday use” (FS, 76). In fact, they do not see the land as something to be owned or sold; but as Nanapush admits: “we’d only just grown used to the idea that we owned land-something that could not possibly belong to any human” (FS, 79). This violation of native worldviews is seen through Margaret who is the wife of Nanapush. Margaret

is ready to give away Nector's allotted land in order to buy linoleum for her kitchen floors. For Margaret, the appeal of a comfortable luxurious life surprisingly becomes a more important priority than the struggle for land claims. This is highly ironic because Margaret is characterized as a strong defender of land rights. She has fought against lots of people including Tatro. To keep her land "Margaret was always for the land, if nothing else. Nothing stopped her in this quest, until that linoleum. Because of it, she betrayed herself, and worse, she betrayed her son" (FS, 82). This was a betrayal since it causes the colonizers' to like Mauser to think that "the reservations are ruined spots and may as well be sold off and all trace of their former owners obliterated. That's my theory. Let the Indians drift into towns and cities or subsist where they will. Thinking their tribes will ever be restored is sheer foolishness. There's nothing left!" (FS, 127). As people like Mauser continue to steal their lands, "land, community and family are subsequently disintegrated one after the other" (Wilson, 36). Amid these confusions and disorders, "Erdrich's characters tend to take a more nostalgic view of the lost home. Some manage to find this home [land] eventually but all do so in different ways and for different reasons" (Egerer, 92). While both novels show "cultural decimation and personal injury and pain, [they] also show a way back to health and contentment" (Sanders, 131-132). This healing is accentuated through the characters' either repossession of their lands or their commitment to these lands which also provide them with the ability to fight for the preservation of their customs and values. However, these characters cannot realize this healing. Keeping such a balanced holistic worldview, that runs parallel to the sacredness of home, family and land, is something that Erdrich's characters cannot achieve as well. This is because Erdrich's characters are either too late or unsuccessful to return home. In this respect, Erdrich reminds us that it is very difficult to overcome the harsh contemporary tragic realities of Indian reservations. Therefore, the fate of weak characters such as June is obliteration and the fate of strong characters such as Fleur is obscure.

CONCLUSION

Most of the elements which shape American Indian worldviews can be found in Louise Erdrich's works. The issues of land, community and identity are the paramount topics explained through Erdrich's characters and events. In *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*, especially land commitment and family are presented as one of the basic and sacred units of community. Erdrich's usage of "the indigenous re-appropriations of western constructions of indigenous identities, various concerns about the relationship between inside and outside, passing borders, or a preference for parody, satire or the grotesque as potentially subversive narrative modes" (Balogh, 3) penetrates to all parts of these novels. Thus, the interplay of land, identity and community becomes the basic issue that both novels share.

In *Love Medicine*, Erdrich employs the value of community by incorporating interrelated family units. Family and land become essential components for the formation and development of identity. Erdrich's characters are mostly shaped in accordance with the basic worldviews of both cultures, namely American Indian and Euro-American. In this identity formation process, characters try to counterbalance the expectations of the dominant culture with their own indigenous ones. While doing so, they experience cultural and spiritual tensions that emerge from having no families and being far away from their lands. Overall, Louise Erdrich proposes adaptation as the survival strategy in her writings. She creates strong characters who are involved in white surroundings and culture and who try to adapt themselves to their new environment. However, adaptation is not as easy as Erdrich proposes. The failure of adjustment is seen through the characters. Without the values of community and togetherness, survival is not possible for them. Although Erdrich supports adaptations in her novels, turning back is not always possible as in the cases of events in *Love Medicine* and *Four Souls*. Once the wholeness is broken, repairing or unification is not as simple as one assumes.

In *Love Medicine*; among five interrelated families, storytelling "becomes a spiritual act, a means of achieving transformation, transcendence, forgiveness" (Schneider, 5). The novel begins with June's inner feelings told by a third person narrator and her attempted journey to home which will eventually lead her to death.

Afterwards, June's death will be the sole subject of characters' speeches and they will discover lots of things about themselves through their own story-telling about June. June's death takes place during her homecoming and this journey is very symbolic in the sense that she "is clearly reaching for something spiritual, something to hold on to in a life broken by divorce and disappointment" (Schneider, 7). This brings forth an important theme that will also be repeated in Erdrich's other novels; this is the theme of homecoming. On the whole, "Erdrich's characters are often estranged and angry, yet finally they come back home, drawn by some unspoken attraction, or are brought back home by their people" (Downes, 55). On the surface, this homecoming ensures them healing and a true identity. However, it does not convey the real returning to the indigenous values since as lonely people driven out of their lands; it is not too easy to regain them. After going through lots of misfortunes and hardships, their wholeness and togetherness is broken; and once broken, bringing them together is something that is not likely to happen. To remain as a native, it requires having a communal identity rather than an individualistic one. That's why identity should be shaped on communal values. Otherwise people, like June in *Love Medicine* and Fleur in *Four Souls*, cannot survive in terms of individualism. Erdrich displays the belief that if one leaves home, family and community to become simply individuals, she/he should be ready to face its consequences that includes paying high costs. Both June and Fleur after leaving their homes are not able to survive. June meets her end in death and Fleur turns into a totally different character that is neither native nor American.

In *Four Souls*, Fleur's leaving home results in her downfall, too. The price she pays is costly like June's. The reason why she leaves home is to take revenge from the man who steals her tribal land. That is to say, the whole story of Fleur revolves around land and its repossession. Like June, Fleur realizes that leaving home and family transforms her into a new person who is indifferent to her indigenous side. This results in her being alone and homeless. She loses her family which has never truly shaped her and ends to be an alcoholic and gambler. All these lead her to return home as a character internalizing stereotypical white concepts. Both June's and Fleur's wholeness is destroyed by the white men intervention which results in being dispossessed of their native lands, communal values and indigenous

identities. These characters learn the white man's language and their terms such as envy, greed, hatred and revenge. At the end, they understand that they cannot live and survive by sticking to white man's rules. Moreover, white man's values lead them to their self-destruction. They need healing to balance their lives and to find their true identities. However, healing is not likely to happen because their cases are irreparable. It is too late to return to their past. As in the case of Fleur, whether she heals or not is not apparent at the end of the novel. Even though she is able to return home, her healing is not evident. Her fate is obscure since she has turned completely into a new person who has internalized destructive white values such as greed, envy and revenge and who sees the world more from the white perspective rather than the native one.

Both characters, June and Fleur fail when they are away from their families and sacred lands. That is because land and family are the most fundamental factors in shaping one's identity in native cultures. Once one is deprived of them, she/he is doomed to encounter predicaments of life. In order to survive, returning home is necessary as in the case of June and Fleur. June dies and completes her homecoming spiritually via her son whereas Fleur returns as a lost person who needs healing through native ways. In this sense, both characters try to survive by turning back to their lands and communities. In the entire complicated atmosphere of reservation life; for the sake of survival, the characters strive for keeping their families together and intact.

When characters try their chances off reservation- a world formed completely in contrast to their worldviews- they find themselves homesick, in search of a home that can give them the warmth and security that they cannot find outside. In order to stay as a whole and escape from self-destruction, one should remain in the family and among the community. Otherwise, survival and happiness will not be possible. Once a person leaves the cycle of community, she/he is scattered and it is impossible to be the same again. Fleur and June's efforts to return home as healthy people prove to be in vain and end up in despair. That's why survival without community and family is not likely to happen for these characters.

Love Medicine and *Four Souls* are seemingly two novels which are interwoven because of their characters and the similar focus they put on family bonds

and land commitment. They both share the idea of formulating one's identity through a healthy balance between family and land. Family and community are very central themes in most American Indian literature. Individuals are appreciated only if they live in accordance with their communities as well as contributing to the communal life. In this sense, individuality is different; but it cannot be taken as something worthless. It gains importance when it goes hand in hand with communal beliefs and values. Otherwise, there are great prices to pay for all.

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